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Provenance report regarding Voorouderbeeld [Human figure]

Drieënhuizen, Caroline

2022

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Drieënhuizen, C. (2022). *Provenance report regarding Voorouderbeeld [Human figure]*. (PPOCE provenance reports; No. 41).

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Provenance report regarding Voorouderbeeld [Human figure]

Caroline Drieënhuizen

	Title	Voorouderbeeld - amfjanir, amphjanir (Human figure)
	Custodian	NMVW Museum Volkenkunde
	Current possessor	Dutch State
	Inventory number	RV-2432-3
	Material/technique	Wood and textile
	Measurements	50 x 20 cm

*Photo: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.
Coll.no. RV-2432-3*

Summary of findings

According to oral tradition (provided by local informants to the collector and later [also?] by Hendrik Saleo and Dominiko Saleo to K.W. Galis and F.K. Kamma in 1956¹), this korwar was made by Barakasi Omkarsbai for the soul of Mansar ('mansar' is a title used for older men) Mambibi Saleo, the leader of the Kafdarun²-clan. Mansar Mambibi Saleo (probably) died somewhere around 1800-1830 in the vicinity of the village of Asbakin (Sorong) during the clan's migration from Biak to North-Batanta.

Whether the korwar in Leiden was the first korwar made for Mambibi Saleo or the second (which means the korwar is more recent than 1800-1830) is unfortunately not clear. The artefact was obtained by

¹ Het Utrechts Archief (HUA), 1102-2. Raad voor de Zending van de Nederlandse Hervormde kerk. Inv.nr. 6684. Mon-mon yang saya tahu.

² In Dutch sources written as "kafdaroen."

missionary teacher and anthropologist (to be) Freek (F.C.) Kamma (1906-1987) probably in 1934 (during the *Koreri*-movement on North-Batanta, Raja Ampat) or 1935 (on one of his visits to the place right after the movement).

Considering the prevailing social-historical circumstances in 1934-1935 in the north of the island of Batanta (the *Koreri*-movement with its cargo cult) and the way Kamma in other instances obtained the objects (in the process of conversion to Christianity), it is probable that the korwar was handed over to Kamma in 1934 or the first two months of 1935 when Kamma visited the island.

However, one should take into account the general circumstances that caused the people in North Batanta to give up their ritual items in the 1930s, namely, that they were shaped by Western (i.e. Dutch) foreign hegemony, including the arrival of Christianity, and the resulting social upheaval local people experienced. As Corbey points out, we should at the same time be careful not to consider the people in this region as “passive recipients of external influences.” In December 1939 Kamma sold this korwar, together with two other korwar and other artefacts (a collection of 18 objects) to the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden (today’s Museum Volkenkunde, part of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen).

Reconstruction provenance

Ca. 1800- ca. 1934/1935

North-Batanta. [*Inventory card RV-2432-3, Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Leiden, inv.nr. NL-LdnRMV-A03_094_S2432. Letter of K.W. Galis, dated Zeist, 23 August 1978; S. Kooijman, De kunst van Nieuw-Guinea (Den Haag probably 1955) 29.*]

Ca. 1934/1935 - 1939

F.C. Kamma (1906-1987)

[*Inventory card RV-2432-3, Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Leiden, inv.nr. NL-LdnRMV-A03_094_S2432. Letter of K.W. Galis, dated Zeist, 23 August 1978; S. Kooijman, De kunst van Nieuw-Guinea (Den Haag probably 1955) 29.*]

1939-present

Rijks Ethnografisch Museum (today NMVW Museum Volkenkunde)

Object information and provenance

This is a korwar from West Papua (in colonial times called “[Dutch] New-Guinea”/“[Nederlands] Nieuw Guinea”): a statue made to lodge one of the two souls of a deceased relative. They functioned as the intermediaries between the living people and the spirit world and were made for people of a certain standing, such as firstborns.³ People thus actively interacted with these objects: they sought advice for their family members through these woodcarvings. Korwars were also asked for help in case of sickness. Sometimes the soul would eventually depart from the korwar. In that case, the korwars were taken to a place where they could just decompose.⁴

The korwar discussed is made from one piece wood and is rather large for a korwar: approximately 50cm in height. It depicts a sitting, stylised human figure with stretched out arms. The arms rest on a symmetric shield or balustrade that consist of two snake figures with bent tails. The head is big compared to the rest of the body.

Textile is wrapped around the korwar’s head. A red and white strip of textile hangs around his neck and in front of the statue’s upper body. All these stylistic characteristics (also including the three-dimensionality of the korwar, the position of the legs and arms, resting on a balustrade, and a straight nose and mouth with teeth) point to Biak as the maker’s place of origin.⁵ The headscarf points to the role of the deceased, for whom this korwar was made: he was a *sangaji*, the head of a district.⁶ These heads were appointed by the sultan of Tidore, who had direct control over this part of West Papua in that period.⁷

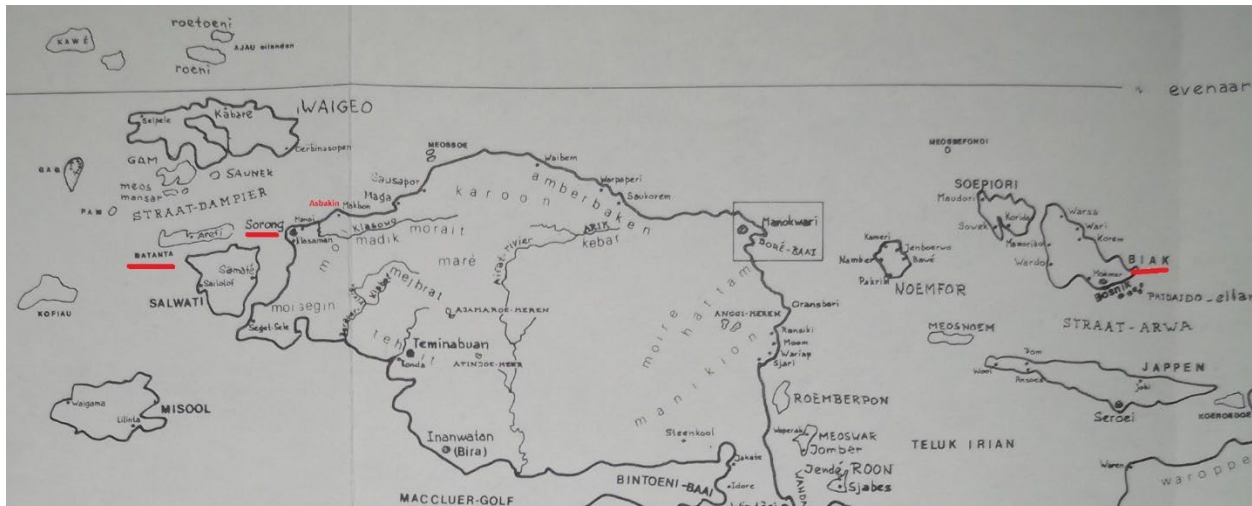
³ See for instance: Raymond Corbey, *Korwar: Northwest New Guinea ritual art according to missionary sources* (Leiden: C. Zwartenkot Art Books, 2019), 26, 31; D. Smidt, *Korwars: speaking images as intermediaries between the living and the dead* (Antwerp: Etnografisch Museum, 1996); S. Kooijman, *De kunst van Nieuw-Guinea* (Den Haag: Servire, probably 1955), 9; Th. P. van Baaren, *Korwars and korwar style: Art and ancestor worship in North-West New Guinea* (Paris / The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1968), 27-28; 21-66, 56; J.L. van Hasselt, *Gedenboek van een vijf-en-twintigjarig zendelingsleven op Nieuw-Guinea (1862-1887)* (Utrecht: Kemink & Zoon, 1888).

⁴ Idem, 20.

⁵ Raymond Corbey, e-mail to Caroline Drieënhuizen, 17 May 2021; Raymond Corbey, *Raja Ampat ritual art: spirit priests and ancestor cults in New Guinea's far West* (Leiden: Zwartenkot Art Books, 2017), 24.

⁶ Mostly called “Sengadji” in Dutch sources. Inventory card RV-2432-3; S. Kooijman, *De kunst van*, 29; F.C. Kamma, ‘De verhouding tussen Tidore en de Papoeese eilanden in legende en historie,’ *Indonesië* 1, no. 2 (1948): 177-188, 256-275, 180-181.

⁷ Inventory card RV-2432-3; S. Kooijman, *De kunst van*, 29; Bilveer Singh, *Papua: Geopolitics and the Quest for Nationhood* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2017).



According to oral tradition provided in at least 1956⁸ by the local community to the collector of the korwar, Freek (F.C.) Kamma (1906-1987) and his colleague K.W. Galis, this korwar was made near Asbakin, on the Doberai / Kepala Burung peninsula (“Vogelkop” / “Birds’ Head Peninsula”).⁹ The korwar was made for the soul of Mansar (Lord) Mambibi Saleo, the leader of the Kafdarun-clan. The korwar in Leiden is the second korwar of Mambibi Saleo. The first one, with his skull attached to it, was allegedly swept overboard when the boat tipped over.¹⁰

Hendrik Saleo and Dominik Saleo told Galis and Kamma that the korwar in Leiden was made by a man called Barakasi Omkarsbai. The korwar had been very much appreciated by people: it was placed in a cupboard behind glass for protection. Because the population was so attached to the artefact, Kamma intended to send colour pictures of the korwar to the people in Jensawei.¹¹ Hendrik Saleo and Dominik Saleo also informed Galis and Kamma of their relationship with Mambibi Saleo.¹² Based on their information, Galis reconstructed Mambibi Saleo’s genealogy. Around 1955, perhaps based upon that information, the curator of the ethnographic museum in Leiden, Simon Kooijman (1915-2005), estimated the age of the statue to be about six generations, approximately 150 years. The online museum documentation mentions as its date of origin “around 1830,” but it is unclear why. However, we need to take into consideration that perhaps this is the *second* korwar of Mambibi Saleo. This leaves open the possibility of a younger age of the korwar in Leiden.

The permanent settlement of people from Biak in the Raja Ampat-area is related to the involvement of the sultan of Tidore, who ruled the region after 1500. According to oral history, some migrants assisted

⁸ Perhaps Kamma already had received this information earlier – for instance at the moment he collected the artefact. The inventory card already mentions this story, but perhaps this card was made after 1956 (and not at the moment the korwar was acquired). HUA, 1102-2, inv.nr. 6684. Mon-mon yang saya tahu; In 1956 Galis and Kamma were together in Batanta. F.C. Kamma, *Koreri: Messianic movements in the Biak-Numfor culture area* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1972), 153.

⁹ Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Leiden, inventory card RV-2432-3; Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Leiden, inv.nr. NL-LdnRMV-A03_094_S2432. Interview report of K.W. Galis with Hendrik Saleo and Dominik Saleo, undated [1956]; F.C. Kamma, “Kunst en kunstenaar op Nieuw-Guinea,” ca. 1965. Typoscript of F.C. Kamma in: HUA 1102-2, inv.nr. 6684.

¹⁰ Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Leiden, inv.nr. NL-LdnRMV-A03_094_S2432. Interview report of K.W. Galis with Hendrik Saleo and Dominik Saleo, undated [1956].

¹¹ HUA, 1102-2, inv.nr. 6684. Mon-mon yang saya tahu.

¹² Ibidem.

the sultan of Tidore in governing the area and fighting wars.¹³ In short, there were “interlocking worlds or relationships” between diverse regions in West Papua and Tidore as well as East Seram and Halmahera.¹⁴ Perhaps (but we can only guess) this was the reason of Mambibi Saleo’s travel from Biak to Batanta. After all, as we have seen, he was a *sangaji*: one of the heads of a district appointed by the sultan. He led his clan by boat from Biak to the north of the island Batanta in the Raja Ampat-region when he suddenly died (probably) near Askabin. In Asbakin a korwar was made for him, enabling him to resume the journey to the west and in doing so, to continue leading and protecting the migration.¹⁵ The group eventually settled on the north of the island of Batanta, in the villages Arefi and Yensawai. The *marga/keret* (clan) Saleo still exists (one could find many people with the family name “Saleo” still in the area). In a recent Indonesian court case Mambibi Saleo has been put forward as the founding father of the clan in Raja Ampat with certain land use rights around 1800.¹⁶

The collector and the acquisition of this korwar

This korwar was collected by Protestant missionary-teacher and scholar F.C. Kamma (1906-1987). After his education between 1925 and 1931 at the Dutch Missionary School in Oegstgeest, Kamma arrived in West Papua in 1931 and worked there in Genyem (Nimboran), Manokwari en Sorong until 1942. In 1955 he returned to West Papua where he stayed until 1972. In this period he also earned a PhD in ethnology.¹⁷

According to anthropologist Raymond Corbey, Kamma collected approximately 40 korwars in the Raja Ampat-area in the 1930s since Sorong was his first place of employment. The korwar discussed here was sold by Kamma to the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden in December 1939¹⁸ (the current date in TMS with regard to acquisition of this specific object is incorrect). However, the moment as well as the specific circumstances and conditions under which Kamma collected the korwar remain uncertain.

Kamma arrived in Sorong in 1933.¹⁹ From newspaper reports, and based upon Kamma’s letters, we know he travelled to North Batanta early 1935 or at the end of 1934.²⁰ Museum curator Kooijman, who knew Kamma well,²¹ wrote that the korwar was collected “around 1935.”²² Corbey recently stated that

¹³ Gerrit Knaap, “Robbers and traders: Papuan piracy in the seventeenth-century,” in: John Kleinen and Manon Osseweijer eds., *Pirates, ports, and coasts in Asia: historical and contemporary perspectives* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010), 147-177, 156-157.

¹⁴ Leonard Y. Andaya, *The World of Maluku: Eastern Indonesia in the Early Modern Period* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 108-9.

¹⁵ Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Leiden, inventory card RV-2432-3; Kooijman, *De kunst van*, 29; Kamma, ‘Kunst en kunstenaar.’

¹⁶ Mahkamah Agung Republik Indonesia, direktori putusan. Putusan PT Jayapura, nr. 76/PDT/2018/PT JAP. Case between Pande Made Kurdi Suteja vs. Mrs. Afiah Saleo (11 December 2018). See: <https://putusan3.mahkamahagung.go.id/>

¹⁷ Corbey, *Korwar*, 7; D. Nauta eds., *Biografisch lexicon voor de Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme*, part V (Kampen: Kok, 2001), 299-30.

¹⁸ Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Leiden, inv.nr. NL-LdnRMV-A03_094_S2432. Handwritten inventory of the objects Kamma sold to the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden, undated.

¹⁹ Simon Kooijman, “In Memoriam Kamma,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 144, no. 4 (1988): 411-418; F.C. Kamma, “‘Dit wonderlijke werk’ het probleem van de communicatie tussen Oost en West gebaseerd op de ervaringen in het zendingswerk op Nieuw-Guinea (Irian Jaya), 1855-1972: een socio-missiologicalische benadering II (Oegstgeest: Raad voor de zending der Ned. Hervormde Kerk, 1977), 746.

²⁰ The letter is from 28 February 1935. From: “Van Strijd en Overwinning,” *Het penningsken. Maandbladje, uitgaande van de samenwerkende Zendings-Vereenigingen*, 1935, no. 7, 1 July 1935.

²¹ Raymond Corbey, e-mail to Caroline Drieënhuizen, 17 May 2021.

²² Kooijman, *De kunst van*, 29.

the korwar was collected in 1934.²³ The date of Kamma's travels to Batanta, the indicated period by Kooijman (who was in close contact with Kamma and thus could have got the information first-hand) and the occurrence of a *Koreri* movement on Batanta in 1934, make 1934 as the date of acquisition very likely. Corbey especially believes the acquisition of the korwar is related to that movement, as I explain below.

Koreri movement

In 1934 a so called *Koreri* movement took place on North Bananta.²⁴ These religious movements centred around the belief in the return of one hero (Manseren [Lord] Manggundi) who will bring a golden age in which prosperity, welfare, and peace will prevail and the dead will awake. These movements can be seen as a reaction to 'foreign' hegemony: first to the Tidorese hegemony, later the Dutch, and even later the Japanese. *Koreri* movements always took place when outsiders tried to modernise the region.²⁵ In these movements, Christianity and Western products, techniques, and people were incorporated in this belief in modernisation, particularly after the 1850s. For instance, there was the belief that Manseren Manggundi would bring Western, technologically more advanced, goods to the people (so called cargo cults).²⁶ Sometimes the West was seen as a threat: people could consider Dutchmen in West Papua as the source of all diseases and natural disasters like earthquakes.²⁷ Catastrophes would supposedly end when Manseren Maggundi arrived. According to Kamma, Christianity had reinforced the belief of the imminent coming of Manseren Marggundi.²⁸

As a result of the increased importance of Western goods, occasionally traditional items were disposed of.²⁹ Perhaps that is why Kamma wrote how during his visit to North-Batanta in 1934/1935 many people in came to turn in their "pagan attributes"³⁰ in the evening. Perhaps one of these objects was this korwar. Corbey concludes without referring to documentation: "It is probably no coincidence that Kamma was able to obtain this korwar during a local cargo cult."³¹

General context of the collecting of korwars in the colonial period

Korwars had been actively collected by missionaries since the middle of the nineteenth century. Sometimes korwars were sold to other people, for instance as (spirit)slaves. Colonial sources also mention statues being sold in the harbour of Doreh, but this concerned mostly "tourist made" statues that, according to some Europeans, did not contain a soul.³² A missionary describes how he once found a korwar tied to his ship. He explained this as an attempt of people to get rid of an evil spirit or to kill the

²³ Raymond Corbey, *Raja Ampat*, 98, figure 53.

²⁴ Kamma, *Koreri*, 150-151.

²⁵ Danilyn Rutherford, *Raiding the Land of the Foreigners: the Limits of the Nation on an Indonesian Frontier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 143.

²⁶ Ton Otto, "What happened to cargo cults? Material religions in Melanesia and the West," *Social Analysis* 53, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 82-102, 82-83; Kamma, *Koreri*, 65.

²⁷ Idem, 107.

²⁸ Kamma, "Dit wonderlijke werk," 661.

²⁹ Corbey, *Korwar*, 44.

³⁰ Kamma, "De beslissing," *De Nederlander*, 22 August 1936.

³¹ Corbey, *Raja Ampat*, 98, figure 53.

³² Corbey, *Korwar*, 34. Citing Adolf Meyer who visited Doreh in 1873.

(in this case ignorant) “buyer” of the korwar.³³ But most korwars became part of (former) missionary collections as a result of local people’s conversion to Christianity.³⁴

Missionaries like J. Geissler (active 1855-1869), A.J. De Neef (1920-1935), and A. Hueting (1896-1930) all urged the local people to hand in their korwars and ritual items after their conversion. They encouraged people to do this, but sometimes also (religiously) forced them into disposing of those items.³⁵ For instance, missionary Geissler, while referring to a local custom, threatened to leave the village if the people were not willing to listen to him.³⁶ Most korwars were burned in front of the people or thrown in the sea by the people themselves or by the missionaries.³⁷ The most beautiful or interesting ones were held back by missionaries, some were even freshly carved and were regularly sold at missionary exhibitions.³⁸

Because korwars were very ritual items, people reluctantly parted with them. Several missionaries mention how people were not willing to give up their ritual items, even when they offered them good money.³⁹ And when they did, some people stood with tears in their eyes next to the fires that devoured the ritual items that linked them to their ancestors.⁴⁰ For missionaries the korwar symbolised the pagan faith which the people from West Papua had to leave behind. They spoke of the korwars as being “booty”: “the telling proof of the recent Christian victories on New-Guinea.”⁴¹

As an aspiring ethnologist Kamma was interested in the culture and traditions of the people in his surroundings. Because of this ethnological passion, he perhaps chose to sell some of the collected artefacts he took home, like this korwar of a clan’s “founding father,” to an ethnographic museum such as the one in Leiden. But as it was for other missionaries, for Kamma the act of handing over people’s old ritual items was evidence of people’s full and thus true conversion to Christianity. He mentions, for instance, that he baptised 791 people on Pulau Ayau and “received many korwars and amulets.”⁴² When he arrived in Sel Pele, in the north of the island of Waigeo, and baptised almost the complete population, he declared: “People professed their faith in Jesus and handed over their pagan objects.”⁴³ He urged them also to “clean up” their sacrificial sites. “We don’t force anybody, but who wants to become a Christian has to choose for Christ and remove everything else.” And: “I took it home, now it is on the cupboard.”⁴⁴

³³ *Mededeelingen van het bureau voor de bestuurszaken der buitengewesten bewerkt door het Encyclopedisch Bureau*. XXI Schouten- en Padaido-eilanden (Batavia/Weltevreden: [s.l.] 1920), 96.

³⁴ Corbey estimates the number of still existing korwars to be about 500. Most korwars from that area have been collected by missionaries and just a few by military explorations. Corbey, *Korwar*, 31.

³⁵ Corbey, *Korwar*, 40; Van Hasselt, *Gedenkboek*, 93 on Geissler; Alb. J. de Neef, *Koeroedoe. Schetsen uit Papoealand* (The Hague: Boekencentrum N.V., [1937]), 79; H.D.J. Boissevain, A.M. Brouwer, J.W. Gunning, *De zending in Oost en West: verleden en heden II* (The Hague: Algemeene boekhandel voor inwendige en uitwendige zending, 1934), 38.

³⁶ Van Hasselt, *Gedenkboek*, 93 on Geissler.

³⁷ Corbey, *Korwar*, 40.

³⁸ Corbey, *Raja Ampat*, 95; Corbey, *Korwar*, 46; Jon Rauws, *De zendingstentoonstelling te Utrecht* (Rotterdam: [s.n.] [1909]), 5.

³⁹ Corbey, *Korwar*, 45.

⁴⁰ F.J.F. van Hasselt, *Lichtstralen op den akker de wereld 1: Noemfor. Eene geschiedenis van vijf jaren Zendingarbeid* (Rotterdam: J.M. Bredée, 1914), 17.

⁴¹ “Onze Tentoonstelling,” *Berigten Utrechtsche Zendingvereeniging* (Utrecht: Kemink en Zoon, 1909), 149-150.

⁴² “De beruchte 50%,” *Nieuwe Apeldoornsche Courant*, 12 January 1937.

⁴³ Alb. J. de Neef, *Papoealand: het arbeidsveld van de Utrechtsche Zendingvereeniging* (Oegstgeest: Zendingbureau, 1939), 80.

⁴⁴ Letter F.C. Kamma, 28-2-1935. From: “Van Strijd en Overwinning,” *Het penningken. Maandbladje, uitgaande van de samenwerkende Zendingvereenigingen*, 1935, no. 7, 1-7-1935.