

# “Wairon and Waimansusu”: War Boat and Trade Boat of The Biak People in Papua-Indonesia

*Albert Rumbekwan*<sup>1\*</sup>, *Singgih Tri Sulistiyono*<sup>1</sup>, *Yety Rochwulaningsih*<sup>1</sup>, *Endang Susilowati*<sup>1</sup>, *Ismail Ali*<sup>2</sup>, *Noor Naelil Masrurroh*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Doctoral Program of History, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>School of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia

**Abstract.** This article discusses the traditional boat technology of the Wairon and Waimansusu, which were the main means of transport for the Biak tribe in shipping and trade on the north coast of Papua during the 8th to 19th centuries. Although Papua has various types of traditional boats with their own uniqueness, only a few are able to sail as far as the Maluku Islands. For the Biak Tribe, the Wairon and Waimansusu boats are not only functional, but also have artistic and symbolic value in the maritime history of the eastern region of the archipelago. Using a historical and ethnographic approach, this article reconstructs the manufacturing technology, cruising ability and carrying capacity of both types of boats in the context of voyaging, trading and hunting. Today, the manufacture of Wairon and Waimansusu is increasingly rare, despite their high cultural value and great potential to support the development of marine tourism in Cenderawasih Bay, Papua-Indonesia.

## 1 Introduction

The Papuan people who inhabit the coastal areas of large lands, bays and islands in the north, have long made voyages by traditional outrigger boats to trade, fight and migrate to various regions. These voyage events had taken place long before the coming of the sailors from the archipelago, Asia and Europe, the Biak, Yapen and Waropen people had made the first voyage in the Cenderawasih Bay area, and the northern coastal area of Papua, as a result the influence of each tribe was very strong. strong in life and interactions among tribes in coastal areas. The voyage of the Biak People on the North Coast of Papua took place in three stages; first started in the 8th century until the 16th century.

The second period, 16th century-19th century and 3rd period, After the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. In the span of that period, the Biak people have met with the sailors of the archipelago, China and Europe, through barter trade relations, various types of commodities such as exchanging slaves, birds of paradise, parrots, massoy bark, with trading commodities in the form of; metal objects and china china, silk fabrics and beads, from the sailors [1]. As a result, the culture of the Biak people got a lot of influence from the sultanates

---

\* Corresponding author: [albertrumbekwan@gmail.com](mailto:albertrumbekwan@gmail.com)

of Ternate and Tidore which in the XVI century had ruled over several areas of Raja Ampat and several areas on the northern coast of New Guinea [2].

The ability of the Biak people to make traditional boats as a good product of the maritime industry, greatly supports their shipping and trade activities in Cenderawasih Bay and throughout the coast of Tanah New Guinea [3]. This article intends to reconstruct two types of Biak traditional boats, namely: *Wairon* and *Waimansusu*, which are commonly used in shipping and maritime trade on the northern coast of New Guinea.

## 2 Result and Discussion

### 2.1 Names and Meanings of *Wairon* and *Waimansusu*

The Biak tribe, in the past, owned approximately 4 types of boats, but there are two types of boats that are very well known and very important for shipping and trading activities in the waters of Cenderawasih Bay and the North coast of Papua, namely, *Wairon* and *Waimansusu*. Etymologically Biak, wai; boat and roon, the origin where the boat was made from the island area of Roon/Wandamen (now Kab. Teluk Wondama), while the word Wai (boat), man-susui said, bird neck boat. Boat for the Biak tribe has a meaning that is closely related to the dominance of Biak Culture, namely Maritime Culture. Especially for the people of the Coast and the Archipelago, the meaning and value of the boat is one of the means of transportation of everything for the life of the Biak people. The boat in the Biak cultural environment is everything for the Biak people. When the boat is there, then they can do all their activities. Both trade and war voyages, but boats are also confining [4].

*Wairon* is a war boat that is very extraordinarily beautiful decorated with *snober* / snifer carved from statues (*korwar*), for this statue the boat maker tied it with palm rope and decorated it with cassowary feathers and mounted on the sora (Najum or boat face) with imitation carvings on arfas. The bow and stern of the boat are made very strong to be able to sail the ocean. *Waimansusu* is a trading boat that is very suitable for transportation and trade because it has quite a lot of cargo. (See Figures 1,2 and 3). On the South Coast of Supiori, each keret has its own boat. For a slightly longer stay, it's easiest to buy a boat from the residents. However, the latter usually have serious objections to this, and people rarely give up the boat completely voluntarily [5].

### 2.2 *Wairon* and *Waimansusu* Boat Construction

Geelvink Bay stretches from Cape D'Urville or Amberno in the east (137° 50') to Cape Sabeba or Veakke in the west (about-130°). The only mainland places mentioned are Kwatisore on the fundus of the bay (135°), Wandamen coast on the east side of Wandamen Bay, and Manokwari (Dore, Dorey, etc.) on the northwest. At the mouth of the bay the islands of interest to us here are the Schouten (Misore) Islands, including Supiori (Suk) and Wiak (Biak). The village of Wari is on the north coast of Wiak, the village of Mokmer on the south coast, and the village of Bosnik on the far east. Korido village is on the southern coast of Supiori; maybe this is Kordo from Uhle. In the center of the bay are Japen (Jobi), on the north coast are Pom and Sirewen and on the south coast Serui, Wooi Bay, and the small island of Ansus. Numfur (Nufoor, Mafur) is located between Wiak and Manukwari [6].

The origin of the name of the boat used by the Biak-Numfor people, in shipping and trade has been narrated in Mite Koreri, that: "Yawi Nusahado or Mananarmaker, has a "secret", carves wood and composes songs (rhymes/poems). The secret was obtained when he caught Sampari on a coconut tree, when Sampari came down to drink his homemade saguwer. Sampari offered one type of tree, to Manarmakeri, that; if the leaves are carried and hung on

your body (meaning eaten) or in front of his house, he will become a great and famous boat maker to faraway places where people will compete to buy his boat. Sampari also gives a piece of wood to Manarmaker, whose function is to make anything, use that piece of wood, draw on the sand, it will happen [5].

The distribution of boats in Cenderawasih Bay to Tanjung D'Urville or Amberno in the East and Cape Saweba or Veakke in the West, originates from the Kwatisore area on the Bay of Fundus, Wandamen Beach on the East side of Wandamen Bay, and Manokwari (Doré, Dorey, etc.) Northwest. The traditional boat distribution areas or villages in the Biak-Numfor region are located on the north coast of Biak, Wari and Mokmer villages on the south coast, as well as Bosnik in the east of Biak, and Korido, Soweik villages on the south coast of Supiori island and Numfor island (Nufoor, Mafur) located between Biak and Manokwari. As well as boat technology from the Yapen archipelago, namely, Yobi, Pom, Serewen on the North coast and on the South coast of Serui, Wooi Bay, and Kampung Ansus.

The work on this boat is carried out by men, the initial process begins with choosing a type of wood that is strong (not easily broken), straight, not branched and hollow, and easy to shape, then cut it down, according to the part that was determined to be the top position at the time, the working process. The tools used include axe, machete (source), desel or marble (mangarwar). Wood trees that have been cut down, the bark is removed and then dried in the sun for approximately 3-4 days, to speed up the removal of liquid or wood sap from it, and even then, it should not be too dry because it can cause the wood to break [5].

The process of forming the body of the boat begins by pegging some of the contents of the wood, and forming it semi-finished, so that the body of the boat is more formed, a process of roughing or burning the bottom of the boat is carried out, while the part that has been removed is put in water, then burned from the bottom evenly, so that there is a widening of the boat according to the wishes of the maker. After that, several roofs were chiseled or a kind of wooden nail made of iron called "passif", measuring one finger, and at the top of the boat body was added boards on the left and right sides and the gap between the boat body was closed with rubber. from gaba-gaba (metroxyton rumpii). After the boat's body is finished, it is continued with the landlady and naju as a counterweight. The length of a boat is 12-15 meters, and the width of the hull is adjusted to the size of the diameter of the wood obtained, because the width is not evenly distributed, the boat is in the form of a mortar [6]. The carrying capacity of a boat can reach 1000-1600 kg or 1600-2500 kg, with the number of rowers for a large capacity boat, there are 30-40 people, plus the boat master (er) and family (er), helmsman, astrologer (forecaster) who used to do divination used a korwar to ask for directions before embarking on a voyage.

In the traditional boat making of the Biak people there is a ritual for magic, which is not related to the watchmen. In productive magic, women are considered dirty, and the predictive system is that women are the earth and men are the sky. Things related to productive magic are forbidding women, approaching boats, not being allowed to hold work equipment. With that reason, the woman was forbidden from the beginning of the boat building, because the boat was meant to be used to catch bad fish. So that the magic ritual process is more sacred. This means that women are considered as sinners in the process of making boats. How long does it take to finish a traditional boat [6].

## 2.3 Biak People Cruise with Wairon and Waimansusu

### 2.3.1 *The voyage of the Biak People in the Past*

The position of the Biak-Numfor archipelago in the northern waters of Papua, which is directly adjacent to the Pacific Ocean, looks like the center point of an umbrella. From this central point, the Biak people stand on the beach and look at all directions of the north coast

of Papua, along with the other clusters of islands scattered from East to West. Then the Biak people try to reach all areas on the northern coast of Papua through shipping activities, with the support of traditional boat technology and good astronomical knowledge, the Biak people can sail to any direction, which is the destination of the voyage. And the shipping activity was caused by several factors: Geographical, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Mite Koreri and Koreri Movement spread by the Konor, and inter-tribal wars in the Biak archipelago and in the Cenderawasih Bay. Biak-Numfor people, in his world of view; "seeing the sea as a bridge", which can bring them together with their relatives.

The distribution of the Biak-Numfor ethnic group to various villages and islands on the northern coast of Papua, Zendeling Geissler in his report that; "Every descendant of the Biak-Numfor clan has its own boat, and with that boat they make long sea voyages, which increase the prestige of each. The Biak and Numfor people used to make voyages as far as the Maluku islands, and even Gorontalo (North Sulawesi) and Timor are mentioned. Also visit Seram, Nusa Laut, Buru and Salayar. To the East this voyage stretches first to the islands of Arimoa and Kumamba, then to Humboldt Bay. It is certain that by the middle of the 15th century the Biak and Numfor people had reached the West (the Maluku islands), while the Biak people had visited Tidore. Perhaps it was one of their clans, the Sawai people, who settled in Halmahera and later in North Seram [7].

GJ Held, said that the cultural influence of the Biak Numfor group, in the Cenderawasih Bay area, covers the Haarlem and Moor islands, Nau island in the east, Kurudu island, towards the Padaido archipelago, to the Yapen archipelago, especially the northern part and West Yapen, to include Southwest region of Manokwari (Mansinam and Teluk Doreh), to the south of Rumberpon and Roon islands, and the Vogelkop Peninsula of Sorong region [8]. The influence of Biak-Numfor culture can be seen in the use of the Biak language in communication and the names of villages or places that use the Biak language, and the similarity of clans or kerets.

### 2.3.2 Trade Cruise and War with Wairon and Waimansusu

War relationship with various reasons that cause losses and insults. But if war activities were carried out in the past, let alone the small tribes on this earth, even the big kingdoms in Europe and China they will also go looking and look for new areas to carry out military invasions to expand their territory. his power. However, the wars carried out by small tribes in Papua are ritual wars. And boats are forever very important to the Biak people, because of head hunting. Even more ridiculous, many people assume that the two types of boats "Mansusu and Wairon" are war and trade boats. Vice versa. We must see that, the existence of Mansusu and Wairon boats. Mansusu is a two-way transport, so that going and going home can use the front and rear. Wairon is a single-lane boat, so that only the front is functioning. According to Denis Koibur: "The voyage of the Biak people is a semi-robbery voyage". So that the two types of boats Wairon and Mansusu are used according to their existence. In the custom of the Biak people, the Wairon boat is the Cross. Ritually, religious magic makes Wairon boats/customs, to prevent the power of the sea from becoming angry. To face the reality, why do Biak people tend to say that the Mansusu boat is a war boat, because of its effectiveness in avoiding the battlefield. Compared to Wairon, which is only single-sided, it is not often used for war activities, only for trading activities. The Biak tribe is a tribe of skull headhunters, therefore the area surveyed, it was stated that every corpse found was not intact with its head. Their war at that time was very brutal. The enemies in the area that were ambushed in the war, the mambri mostly had to take back the skull heads".

F.C. Kamma said that "Like peril, the island of breed appears on the horizon far to the Northeast" [9]. Name alone, is able to make the residents of the surrounding islands really stiff with fear. The people are bribed in the land, because they like to headhunt, they are tough and

not afraid to face danger. The Zending also described the Biak people as wild infidels, and the island of Biak as a place for the devil to reign. Around the 1700s, before the arrival of the two evangelists in Papua, the Biak people were familiar with cannons and firearms. The result of their robbery was not only skull heads, but they also even captured slaves. There are male slaves as a complement to the economy, and female slaves as wives. In the early days of the gospel, the zending-zending were very troubled. There are zending who say that they are shameless killers, who exhibit stupidity, evil, and sin. FC Kamma said that it was because of the understanding of the people that the gospel was able to circulate [3].

### *2.3.3 Shipping and trading objectives and strategies*

One of the objectives of the Biak Orang voyage was to pay tribute to the Sultan of Tidore. The payer of this tribute is seen as something of prestige and value, to elevate his social status in his community. However, the voyage of payment of tribute, usually determined by each Kapara (Leader), through his authority the Kapara of the region who also appointed the heads of Mnu. Appointed Kapara-kapara Mnu, to make a voyage to Tidore, to pay tribute to the Sultan of Tidore. Commodities paid for tribute are Birds of Paradise, Damar Gum, Pearls, Golden Money, Slaves, Fire Rifles and Bia Lola. In carrying out war expeditions and trade voyages at that time, previously they had to sit together in "Kankain Kakara Mnu/Syer Mnu" to arrange the voyage to be carried out.

Mandatory rules that are obeyed by seafarers before and after sailing and trading, the Biak people in the past more highly respected cultural values that were considered sacred, compared to the current Biak people. Cenderawasih birds (Mambefor) which should be considered as sacred animals, should not be used on a man's head when paying a dowry. Because the Cenderawasih bird itself, according to the culture of the Biak Tribe, is used as a ritual of affirming the Mambri from the traditional elders. The animals that are considered sacred are: (1) Bird of Paradise; (2) The crocodile is considered Faknik.

The custom of the former Mambris, the biggest decoration was used as the king's crown or the highest crown in an ethnicity or even a region. Symbols indicating status. The highest decoration of Biak culture is the "symbol of killing" as mambri, with the symbol of the white feathers of the Cenderawasih bird. As proof of the feasibility of wearing white feathers as the highest crown, then a Mambri must take the head of the enemy's skull from the war he is doing. The period of evangelism appeared, on the one hand the Biak people were too proud of themselves that those who received the gospel, they glorified the deeds of the mambri, and on the other hand they said that stealing was a very contemptible thing for them.

The Biak ethnic group has trade shipping, the trade shipping consists of two managements, namely: (1) Fyaduren; (2) Wadwai. Fyaduren: is one of the managements built by the Kapara for the necessities of life in their carts. "Manibob" is Kapara (Leader). They are not just looking for profit but have a moral responsibility that has been required to be carried out. A Manibob/Kapara can be a leader or skipper. The Biak people's leadership system is a "mixed system". Mixed system, in the sense that this system follows the situation. Wadwai: In addition to fadaduren, during the long dry season, a voyage is also carried out to find out the possibility of food sources in an area. This activity is called Wadwai. Wadwai is often carried out far from the Biak-Numfor islands.

## **3 Conclusion**

The traditional boats of the Biak tribe, the wairon and waimansusu types in the past were very important in shipping and trade activities on the north, east and west coasts of Papua Island. The Biak people-built trade relations as well as carried out headhunting and war to the Ternate and Tidore areas, to pay tribute to The Sultan of Tidore, but also with the boat,

The Biak people-built trade relations (manibob) with other ethnic groups on the coast of the large land of the island of Papua. The strategy and trade objectives of the Biak people were Faduren and Wadwai, the strategy and wisdom of a shipping leader in a precarious or dangerous situation. With Wairon and Waimansusu the Biak people reached the peak of their maritime glory from the VIII century, until the nineteenth century, when Zending was present in Papua, shipping Biak people began to decrease. And until the XX-XXI centuries, types of traditional boats and voyages were almost never done.

Nowadays, traditional boats or boats that are often used for searching are not often found on the coast or islands. This is because there are several influencing factors: Customary religion is no longer trusted, wood is hard to find, carvings are difficult to draw, the emergence of practical boats (viber), and the calculation of each cost that will be issued. Traditional Biak types of Wairon and Waimansusu, no longer exist. The types of boats that can be seen are two outrigger boats and small one outrigger boats.

This research and publication have been funded by Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Diponegoro 2022 under the scheme of International Joint Research Programme.

## References

1. J.R. Mansoben, *Traditional Leadership Systems in Irian Jaya*, LIPI Publishers, Jakarta, 270-271 (1995)
2. R. Sinaga, *The period of Dutch rule in Papua, 1898-1962*, Bamboo Community Publisher, Jakarta, 36 (2013)
3. F.Ch. Kamma, *De Mesiaanse Koreri – Bewegingen in Het Biaks-Noemfoorse Cultuurgebied*, in Indonesian by Kaleb Mnubepiom, with the title: “The Messianist Movement in the Biak-Numfor Cultural Region, The hague-martinus Nijhoffm. 43 (1972)
4. Interview, Mr. Denis Koibur, 47th, Cultural Biak, Jayapura, 9-10 August 2021
5. Willem Karel Hendrik Feulletau de Bruyn, Bruyn, WKH Feulletau de, 1920, *Medeelinggen Encyclopaedische Bureau Aflevering XXI Schouten en Padaido Eilanden, Javasche Boekhandel & drukkerij Batavia*, Indonesianized by L. Jembise, with the title; *Islands Rise Forward Supori-Byak-Numfoor-Padaido*, 168-169 (2004)
6. A.C. Haddon, James Hornell, (reprint) *Canoes of Oceania*, Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, Hawai'i. Bishop Museum Press (1975)
7. F.Ch. Kamma, “Dit Wonderlijke Werk” adapted and translated by Th. Van den End and Koesalah Soebagiyo Toer, with the title; *Miraculous in Our Eyes, Communication Problems between East and West, Seen from the Perspective of a Century of Experience of Evangelizing in Irian Jaya*, Volume 1, BPK. Mount Mulia, Jakarta, 60 (1981)
8. G.J. Held, *The Papuas of Waropen*, “Waropen in the Cultural Treasures of Papua”, translated: Dr. Dharmojo, M.Pd., Pedati Publisher, 1-2 (2006)
9. F.C. Kamma, *Kruis en Korwar” Een honderdjarig vraagstuk op Nieuw Guinea*, JN Voorhoeve - The Hague, 60 (1953)