

THIS MONTH'S THEME

FROM THIS MONTH'S EDITOR



The smell of petrol disappeared for a moment when our thumbs thrust into the mandarin-orange skins, producing a plume of fine spray. The passenger next to me was handing them out. She only had a small bag of them. But in a cargo plane flying over the West Papuan highlands at seven in the morning, this was a generous breakfast treat that made us all smile.

All around their country, West Papuans want to share with you what little they have. Sweet potatoes. A lift into town. Laughter. A place to stay. One day a bank clerk lent me two million rupiah (\$200) straight from his own pocket in a highland town that's never heard of Visa cards. He gave it to me – a stone-broke stranger – with instructions about how to put the money into his account when I got back to the capital, Jayapura. No security. No commission. No questions asked.

In return for this generosity of spirit they asked for very little. Merely that I listen to their fascinating stories and tell them to you. As the e-mail that started this adventure (from a person calling himself 'Papuan Tribesman') explains: 'Your purpose is to write the articles, that is the main thing, as we have not yet got skills and access to do so.' Turn these pages and you'll discover their cause – and the challenges they now face in creating a new nation.

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West Papua The Facts



[Click above to enlarge the map](#)

West Papua combined with Papua New Guinea comprise the second largest island in the world after Greenland.

Papua New Guinea became independent in 1975, adopting a Westminster-style parliament.



PROFILE

The information from Indonesia often differs from that from West Papuans. Where there are discrepancies, the Indonesian version is given first, then the West Papuan version in brackets.

Name: Papua, formerly Irian Jaya (West Papua).

People: Total population: 2.1 million (2.5 million). Indigenous: 1.3 million (1.5 million). Migrants and transmigrants born in other parts of Indonesia: 350,000 (850,000).

Health: Infant mortality: 49 deaths per 1,000 live births (70-200 per 1,000 depending on locality) [Indonesia 35, Australia 6]. Life expectancy 64 years (40). The highland areas, where most of the indigenous population lives, are poorly serviced and therefore suffer more adverse health outcomes than the city. The 400,000 people living in the central highlands are serviced by only one hospital with 70 beds.

Language: Bahasa Indonesian, in addition to 253 tribal languages. West Papua and its neighbour, Papua New Guinea, contain 15% of all known languages.

Leader: Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri (Papua Council Leader Tom Beanal).

Government: One of 26 provinces of Indonesia. Local legislature with native Papuan upper house. This upper house has limited real power: it cannot propose legislation and has limited veto rights. Effective law-making power is retained in Jakarta where Indonesia's parliament retains control over revenue collection and distribution, the military and the police.

Literacy: 71.5% of people aged 15 years and over.

Economy: Main resources – oil, gas, copper, wood and other natural resources. GDP: the largest contributor in 1995 was mining – 53.74%, followed by construction – 7.05%. Main exports: copper concentrate – 89.97%, then plywood – 4.82%. Most indigenous people live in a traditional subsistence economy based on agriculture (taros, yams, cassava) and the breeding of animals.

Income distribution: GDP per capita: \$450.

Geography: 421,918 km². Comprises 21% of the total land mass of Indonesia, but is home to only 1% of its population.

Sources: US Department of State; World Health Organization; CIA; Indonesian Investment Co-ordinating Board (Badan Koordinasi Penanaman Modal - BKPM); Australian Broadcasting Corporation; Australia West Papua Association; Jakarta Post; a demographer from a West Papuan University who cannot be named for fear of military reprisals.

Wasior.

The indigenous population in this region is opposing logging interests. There is now a large military build-up in the area to suppress this resistance. In 2001 there were 57 forest concession-holders in operation around the country and untold other forest ventures operating illegally. About 75% of West Papua is forest – now under threat from these logging operations. The rainforests within the combined West Papua/Papua New Guinea land mass are second in size only to those of the Amazon, making it 'the lungs of Asia'.



Photo: Paul Kingsnorth

British Petroleum's Tangguh gas project at Bintuni Bay

- . Launched in 1997, the project includes three gas fields in Bintuni/Berau Bay (with an estimated 14.4 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves) and a processing plant to be built on the southern side of the bay. Estimated cost of initial development phase – \$2 billion
- . Fields to be operated by BP under a production-sharing contract with Indonesian state-owned oil company Pertamina
- . Proposed customer: China, buying up to 3 million tonnes per year for at least 20 years. Supply through a pipeline that is still to be constructed
- . Planned production start-up date: 2006. Expected contribution to West Papua when it reaches peak production in 2015: \$200 million
- . 5,000 workers to be employed during construction phase (due to begin this year) falling to 350 permanent operating employees
- . Area has largest remaining mangroves in SE Asia. Gas plant to be located in 600 hectares of rainforest. Over 500 villagers to be moved to a new location 3.5 km to the west.

Sources: Down to Earth 'BP's Tangguh gas project, Bintuni Bay, West Papua – briefing sheet' (London, 2001); John McBeth 'Enlightened mining exploitation: Irian Jaya' (Far Eastern Economic Review, 27 Dec 01-3 Jan 02).

The Baliem Valley – West

Papua's major indigenous population centre. 'Discovered' in 1938 when the millionaire adventurer Richard Archbold saw what he described as a 'shangri la'. Easily the most popular tourist destination, the Valley is over a mile and a half above sea level, about 60 km long and 16 km wide, with its main town, Wamena, in the centre.



Photo: Chris Richards



PT Freeport's Grasberg mine

- . The biggest gold deposit and the third-largest copper deposit in the world¹
- . Operated by PT Freeport. Stakeholders include parent company Freeport McMoRan, mining giant Rio Tinto (RTZ-CRA) and the Indonesian Government²
- . In many financial years the company is the Indonesian Government's biggest taxpayer. Has been paying an average of \$180 million a year in taxes and royalties,

of which only \$30 million (80% of royalties) return to West Papua³

- . Of 18,000 employees only 5,500 are West Papuans; 80,000 of the 110,000 now living around the mine are non-Papuan¹

- . Company's record on environment and human rights is poor – see page 15.

¹ Interview with the company's former Vice-President of Environmental Affairs, Bruce Marsh 'Learning the lessons of poor community development' in Van Zorge Report on Indonesia, Issue III/8 (2001) pp 33-39.

² Danny Kennedy, Pratap Chatterjee and Roger Moody 'Risky Business: the Grasberg gold mine.' (Project Underground, Berkeley, 1998) pp 22.

³ John McBeth 'Enlightened mining exploitation: Irian Jaya' (Far Eastern Economic Review, 27 Dec 01-3 Jan 02).

Sentani – home of assassinated independence leader Theys Eluay. Country's main airport is here. Next to magnificent Danau Sentani – a 9,630 hectare lake with 19 islands.



Photo: Chris Richards

Capital

Jayapura: a quarter of West Papua's population lives in urban areas; 80% of Jayapura's population is non-Papuan.



Photo: Chris Richards

Way beyond petroleum

Oil giant British Petroleum's glossy, eco-friendly advertising campaign says the company has gone 'beyond petroleum'. In resource-rich West Papua, the company seems to be living up to its claim by helping to fund an emerging government. Can it be trusted? If not, what's the alternative?



Looking out of the window as we drive up the hill behind the rambling capital of Jayapura, Dennis Heffernan is explaining how even the real estate here is political. He uses the unlit cigar in his hand to point at the houses he talks about. The Governor's house is lower on the hill than the one that belongs to the chief of the military. Not only does the military chief get a better view of the capital city and its tropical bay, but when he and the Governor meet it's the Governor who does the calling.

Dennis Heffernan is a man with many mantles. A North American by birth, he spent 20 years in state and national politics in the US before moving with his second wife to Indonesia. He's now the publisher of the Van Zorge Report on Indonesia, an elite finger-on-the pulse journal on Indonesian politics and economics. 'Very well connected,' was how the Associated Press journalist described him at breakfast. Dennis was breakfasting at the table behind me with Willy Mandowen, one of the philosophical brains behind the Papua Council. Now, as we drive, Dennis is telling me that he's also a consultant to British Petroleum (BP) and their Bintuni Bay project in West Papua. He is emphatic – BP will not make the same mistakes as Freeport McMoRan has done.

While Freeport mining has excavated an El Dorado for both the company and the Indonesian Government, it has been an ecological, social and economic purgatory for the Papuans (see [box below](#)). From the beginning, Indonesian armed forces were deployed to protect the mine from understandably angry Papuans. They have done their job through rape, murder, torture and intimidation.

Dennis argues that companies like Freeport and BP now have to undertake a radical rethink of how they operate here and elsewhere. There's a good reason for this, he says. As a result of its activities in Timika and the communities around its Grasberg mine, Freeport shareholders watched the company's share price drop from \$38 to \$8. He thinks that, before starting operations, companies must consult with local communities to form a long-term partnership, developing the community as well as corporate profit. A prerequisite for this is 'capacity building': assisting local leaders to acquire the skills they will need to bargain effectively with the company.

Sound familiar? Perhaps. But BP's 'capacity building' is not just the rhetoric of corporate PR. It reaches way past the local community where it will extract oil and gas to encompass the future leaders of West Papua. As we drive, Dennis tells me that BP is helping to pay for the Papua Council's running costs. I'm surprised. If Papua gets independence, its government is likely to emerge from this Council. So, as the floorplan for a fledgling nation is being drawn up, corporations are in on the ground floor.

**Here is an example of how
globalized markets can
capture political systems.
What will be the balance
between profit and people?**

This close connection between BP and the Papua Council explains in part why Dennis and I are being chauffeured around town by two SATGAS members: part of the volunteer police service set up by Papuans as an alternative to its corrupt and abusive Indonesian equivalent. The Council's Willy Mandowen has asked them to drive Dennis to Jayapura's Hamadi market for the afternoon, where he wants to buy some wood-carved drums. Dennis tells me that BP will use community police to secure its proposed Bintuni Bay gas project. I'm wondering whether he means this fledgling police force. Dennis is in town for Theys Eluay's funeral. He and Papua Council leaders like Willy are staying at a hotel just near where Theys was buried. When I meet Willy at the hotel for breakfast the next day, the connection between BP and the Papua Council tops my list of questions.

Willy facilitated the dialogue between the Indonesian Government and the Papuan people leading up to the people's congress in June 2000, from which the Papua Council sprung. The Council – which tries to draw together all groups struggling for independence – has two parts: a full council, with 501 legislators from all over the country, and an executive body (Presidium) of 31 members. Willy has the difficult task of facilitating the Council negotiations with the Indonesian Government, officials and corporations.

He confirms that BP and Freeport McMoRan support the Council by paying for accommodation, transportation and a quiet meeting place. As we talk over toast and coffee, he tells me that BP is also helping to set up – and will fund – international bodies to investigate human-rights abuses. In addition, it's assisting the Council's Presidium in its negotiations with Indonesia by participating on advisory committees. I've no doubt that, after 20 years in US politics, Dennis Heffernan should be able to tell Presidium members a lot about wheeling and dealing.

But I'm incredulous all the same. How can any transnational corporations be trusted as partners here, particularly after West Papua's terrible experience with Freeport? Willy acknowledges that transnationals will only provide funding and assistance when they have interests parallel with the Papuans. He points to Manokwari and Wasior in the western Bird's Head region as an example. BP wants to extract gas from nearby Bintuni Bay. It is in the interests of both the local community and the company that the military presence there should be wound back.

I've been refused permission to go there. 'Too dangerous,' say the police. For years, villagers in Wasior have been in dispute with a local logging firm over the amount of compensation they received for the trees that were felled on their ancestral forest land. Three employees of the company were shot dead at the end of March last year, when the dispute was reaching a climax. Suspecting the OPM liberation army, reinforcements from the crack force of the police, Brimob, were sent to guard all the logging companies in the area. After another armed attack that left five Brimob dead, more police were flown in to conduct Operation Sweep and Crush. Wasior is now sealed off. An untold number of civilians have apparently been killed, some after being beaten to death during police questioning. Thousands have fled into the forests.

It's near this region that BP is proposing to extract gas. Many Papuans believe that this is why the armed forces have been provoking conflict in Wasior – to justify a greater presence there. The money they receive from the Indonesian Government is much less than they need. A report by the army in 1999 showed that salaries paid to their rank and file are only enough to sustain them and their families for two weeks of each month. So they supplement their income by putting the squeeze on logging and mining businesses in exchange for security: companies big and small, international and local, whether or not there's a security risk there. In BP the armed forces see a large and cashed-up potential client. But the company says that it has learnt from Freeport's experience and will not use the Indonesian armed forces for security around its operations. This will create a dangerous precedent for the police and military. And what better way to convince BP to change its mind than by fuelling violence close to where its equipment and staff will eventually be working?

Willy Mandowen explains that BP are joining them in submitting to the Government that what's happening in Wasior is unacceptable. BP are also prepared to fund international investigators to lift the lid on the activities of the armed forces in the area.

I still want to know how transnationals can be trusted. Willy explains that control over the environment, land rights and human development will remain with the people. Local leaders haven't got the capacity to manage money yet. So a special trust fund will be set up in each region, with every company contributing to the fund. Seven or so community and church leaders will come together to make decisions about how the money will be spent. And the model for this? BP's very own – in Kuwait.

Tom Beanal, the new Papua Council head, joins the breakfast table. He's telling me how he is trying to change company culture from within, just as fresh-fruit platters quietly appear in front of each of us. Dennis Heffernan is sitting at the next table. I assume he's ordered them for us.



Photo: Chris Richards

On the recommendation of former President Wahid, Tom's been asked to join Freeport as a Commissioner. This gives him no power, but he has access to the Chairman and senior members of the company. So far, they've taken his advice to recruit more Papuan people at top levels of the company, and to give \$1.25 million compensation to landowners around their operations. He hopes that he'll be able to convince Freeport to stop contracting the military to secure their mining operations: something, he says, he could never have done from the outside.

It's 9.30 am. The fruit has been eaten and the coffee cups are empty. Tom leaves to talk with other Presidium members. Dennis and Willy have to go to Jayapura together for meetings, and will be there all day. The SATGAS police appear again to drive them there, leaving me still at the table to wonder whether the close relationship with BP is a healthy one.

For decades, corporations have been openly making donations to political parties in places like North America, Australia and Britain. So, arguably, financial assistance to the Presidium is just a version of the same thing. The difference is that the political parties of the minority world are slick machines filled with savvy operators. By contrast, West Papuans say they have yet to develop the skills they'll need to govern – and negotiate with companies like BP.

**If the Papuans need training
to manage their own country,
why aren't NGOs providing it?**

Here is an emerging example of how economics can capture political systems in globalized markets. Joint meetings with the West Papuans and the Indonesian Government should bring BP to the cutting edge of policy development in independent West Papua in any area that they care to dabble. I'm wondering what deals BP will be able to cut on issues like taxation, environmental controls around their mine, and labour regulation. And I'm also wondering what ethical framework a government built from corporate assistance can hope for. What will be the balance between profit and people?

The leaders of this fledgling nation are taking a risk. They need to establish a working democracy. Flying in more than 500 people from around the country for three meetings of the Papua Council each year, is a laudable start. The money has to come from somewhere. The Papuans don't have it. The transnationals do.

It's a dilemma that signals a challenge to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the region. If corporations don't provide the funding, where are the alternatives? If the Papuans need training so that they can manage their own country, why aren't local and international NGOs providing it?

Weeks later, activist John Rumbiak helps explain to me the absence of local NGOs from the capacity-building scene. John heads ELS-HAM, an institute for human-rights study and advocacy that bravely and regularly reports on the military murder committed in West Papua. He says that BP has garnered the support of nearly all its likely critics – academics, church and community leaders. Many are being attracted to work for BP by the comparatively large salaries on offer.

'My brothers are displaying their naïveté,' John says. 'They don't know the track record of this company. BP will continue to exploit. That's their business.' He met the head of BP, Sir John Browne, in London recently. Browne told Rumbiak that BP had done the wrong thing in Colombia, but wanted to be good neighbours in West Papua. Rumbiak responded: 'You're not a church. You're a business. All you want is money, money, money.'

I see Dennis Heffernan one more time. We talk about international NGOs. He thinks they do valuable work in Indonesia. But he says that – in the main – they only have the capacity to be critical. Indeed, the more critical they are, the more likely they are to attract funding. Consequently, he says, they've developed little or no expertise in searching for solutions. And it's solutions that are needed. He gives me two copies of the Van Zorge Report. Less than 500 subscribers receive this fortnightly report. At \$800 per annum, it's executive-only stuff.

One copy sheds more light on corporate cosiness with the Papuans. It contains an interview with Bruce Marsh, former Vice-President of Environmental Affairs with Freeport in Indonesia. He reflects on the mistakes he thinks that one of Indonesia's largest tax payers has made in West Papua. He talks about the community expectations for development that were raised when Freeport's Grasberg mine started operating. These expectations remain unfulfilled. 'The company can help by bringing in all the local community development people, but you can't do much unless you have a functioning civil government... At some point there is a line between what a company should do and what the government must do. But we had no government [in West Papua]. The government in Jakarta just took all the resources.' So Freeport took up the role of local government itself. And it failed. It set up 154 community development programmes. Many of them are not used or supported by the local community and have angered leaders.

Special autonomy legislation, implemented by Indonesia in January, will for the first time return to the province much of the Government's take from the extensive natural wealth in the region. Under the new laws, West Papua is set to receive 70 per cent of oil and gas revenues and 80 per cent of revenues from natural resources such as forestry, fisheries and mining (excluding Freeport's taxes). The problem is that there is nothing in place to give West Papuans the capacity to manage this wealth. Its neighbour, Papua New Guinea, became independent in 1975. It adopted a Westminster-style government. The wealth of its resources means that its streets should be lined with gold. But still, like West Papua, it does not have even basic infrastructure – good roads, accessible schools, safe and reliable healthcare. Its wealth has been squandered by corruption, mismanagement and inefficiency.

For BP, the best way to secure its mining operations is to make sure benefits flow back into the community after the resources have been extracted. This ensures community support. But, unless BP is to build the roads and plan the healthcare systems itself, this means the country must have local and regional government efficient enough to manage the money and spend it in accordance with the wishes of the people. Willy Mandowen has said that BP will work with the Papua Council when it suits their interests to do so. At the end of the day, establishing a capable governing structure for West Papua suits BP's interests.



Photo: Paul Kingsnorth

At the moment, at least.

Digging out the heart and soul of Papua

PT Freeport's gold and copper mining in West Papua – pictured below and on the previous page – are more than 4,000 metres (13,500 feet) above sea level in the central highlands. The company has cut the top off one of the mountains. The indigenous people of this region – the Amungme – depict this mountain as the sacred head of their mother, with Freeport now dipping into her heart. Freeport plans to increase its dumping of untreated tailings into the Aghawaghon River system to 285,000 tonnes daily: the equivalent of a ten-tonne dump-truck load every three seconds. To place this in a regional context, the controversial OK Tedi copper mine in Papua New Guinea disposed of about 80,000 tonnes of tailings per day into the Fly River system. Within 40 years all that will be left is a crater 100 metres deep surrounded by new, corporate-made mountains of crumbling, acid-leaching rockwaste, and a wasteland downstream stretching to the coast.

Compensation continues to be an issue. In 1996, CEO Jim Bob Moffett made around \$41 million, while the thousands of indigenous people living around the mine were offered \$14 million. Suspecting retaliation from an angry local community, Freeport mines have relied on security provided by the Indonesian armed forces throughout its 42-year history in West Papua. A 1995 Australian Council for Overseas Aid report described these security officers engaging in acts of intimidation and torture, in addition to shooting and 'disappearing' the local people. Hundreds of Amungme people, out of a population of 8,000, have died.

Based on information from **Danny Kennedy, Pratap Chatterjee** and **Roger Moody** *Risky Business: the Grasberg gold mine, Project Underground, Berkeley, 1998.*
<http://www.moles.org/ProjectUnderground/motherlode/freeport/tenrisks.html>


Dividing opinions

For decades, the Indonesian Government has had a deliberate policy of diluting the strength of the West Papuan population. Promises of work and land have enticed many migrants from overcrowded parts of Indonesia to West Papua: estimates range from 350,000 to 850,000. As a consequence, there are two very different peoples in the country - and West Papuans are its second-class citizens.

Until now West Papuans and the Javanese have lived together peacefully.

When the balance tips towards West Papuan rule, the power and position of the Javanese will fall. Just how far it will fall is uncertain. If it falls too far, the Javanese will leave - with skills and knowledge that West Papua could use for government. Some West Papuan leaders say that the Javanese should go. Others say that they should stay and participate equally in their emerging nation. Behind this divide, some crucial questions have yet to be answered. Will the Javanese be given a place in government? Will they even be given a vote if a referendum for independence takes place?

<p>West Papuan</p> <p>We came across the sea from Asia when Papua and Australia were joined. That was more than 50,000 years ago. Our mothers are Papuan. Their mothers are Papuan. Our land is Papuan. We are Papuans.</p>		<p>Indonesian</p> <p>We have migrated here for the last 40 years from all over Indonesia - many of us come from Java, so we are called the Javanese. We came in good faith, looking for a better life. This is our home now.</p>
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<p>West Papuan</p> <p>We put up our hands in class and answer the questions correctly. But we don't get high marks like the Javanese do.</p>		<p>Indonesian</p> <p>We are the people of commerce, the doctors, the lawyers and the teachers. Look at the universities. We are the ones who get places there.</p>
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West Papuan

The Javanese at the markets - they get the shops and the stalls. To sell our sweet potatoes, chillies and vegetables we must put them on rugs out on the pavements.



Indonesian

We have the money. We hold down the government jobs. We do all the work in this country. They are simple people: descendants from tribes, farmers and fisherfolk. What will they do if we leave?

West Papuan

We get sick eating at the Javanese warungs (food stalls). They are trying to poison us. We do not trust them. But our children won't eat sweet potato no more. They want Indonesian food. All the time - rice, rice, rice.



Indonesian

Indonesia has liberated them from the Dutch. The Indonesian flag - the red and white - flies over this province now. Our allegiance is to Indonesia.

West Papuan

Christian values are threaded through the beliefs that many of us hold.



Indonesian

Most of us are Muslim.

**West
Papua
rising**

**West Papuans
want independence.
Indonesians gun
them down.
But dead spirits
free hearts.
Chris Richards reports.**

He is being buried at the local football ground only a few hundred metres from West Papua's main airport runway. Twenty thousand have come to watch. They fill the football ground and spill into the streets. Those who've climbed on to the sloped iron roofs of the surrounding buildings stand to salute, if they can, when the Papuan National Anthem is played. Everyone else stands sweating silently in the summer swelter of a West Papuan morning, through speech after political speech. It is not until the University Choir begins singing that they relax, sit down and start to talk with one another. The choir sings well, but this is not what the crowd has come to hear. They want to hear about independence and to say farewell to the man who was its figurehead: pro-independence leader Theys Eluay.

No-one yet knows for certain how Theys Eluay died. His body was found the morning after he attended a dinner to observe National Heroes' Day at the headquarters of Kopassus, Indonesia's élite army troop, in West Papua's capital, Jayapura. The last time that the only likely witness – Eluay's driver, Ari Masoka – was heard of, he was being held in Kopassus custody. Except for a small cut near Eluay's left eyebrow and a drop of dried blood in his left nostril, his body bore no other obvious signs of trauma. An autopsy report dated four days after the dinner says that Eluay died suspiciously, due to suffocation and swelling. Much stronger conclusions were reached by the Institute for Human Rights Study and Advocacy. Its report says that Eluay was abducted, tortured and assassinated in a premeditated and politically driven act of public terrorism, and falls just short of blaming the military and police for the killing. The report also makes clear that the death is part of a broad strategy by the Indonesian Government to head off the West Papuan independence movement and the activists fighting for it. West Papuans know this without needing a report. It has been their reality for nearly 40 years – ever since their right to self-determination was shoved to one side and their country handed to Indonesia. That is why the football field where Theys Eluay is buried – at Sentani, 36 kilometers west of Jayapura – has been offered as a resting place to those who will undoubtedly follow him, dying in the struggle for independence.

Theys Hijo Eluay makes an unlikely hero of independence. He served for more than 15 years as a member of the Indonesian Parliament in the Golkar Party of President Suharto – whose government brutally suppressed West Papua's independence movement. Theys Eluay's support amongst the highland tribes was low. A leader of the highland community of Wamena tells me how, between 1961 and 1969, Theys Eluay personally requested the killing near Jayapura of 20 West Papuans who advocated independence. And in 1969 he was one of the 1,025 leaders who voted to incorporate West Papua into Indonesia (described on page 22). This sham vote – overseen by the United Nations – still enrages nearly every West Papuan I talk with. Thirty years later, in the towns and cities around

the coast where the majority of Papuans live, all is forgiven. In just three years Eluay brought together all groups fighting for independence to speak with one united voice through the Papua Council: the organization he helped form, then led. Now, high-school student Fransisca Homer tells me, he is a hero: the inspiration for the West Papuan nation – the inspiration for freedom.

Judging from the unity amongst the funeral crowd, Indonesia has already lost West Papua

waving the banned West Papuan flag – the red, blue and white Morning Star. Hundreds walk along the passage made by people lining the main street, carrying huge floral tributes. Fresh flowers are scarce. Huge artificial ones – made of paper and plastic – prove droop-free in the heat. They make up the purple and pink, the blue, yellow, green and white arrangements that are splashed on to large circles and hearts, with farewell messages written in the middle. The one from Indonesia's former President, Abdurrahman Wahid, leads the procession. It says (in Indonesian): 'Please accept my condolences on the death of Father Theys Hijo Eluay.' It is this sign of respect and recognition from Indonesia that West Papuans had hoped would be paid by current President, Megawati Sukarnoputri. It does not arrive. This is not surprising. When he was President, Wahid acknowledged West Papua's case to participate in governing its own resources, people and politics. He helped fund the Congress from which a united West Papuan independence movement – the Papua Council – emerged. By contrast, Megawati shows much less sympathy. While she has granted West Papua limited autonomy, she now talks of taking it away. Her government's response to secession has been to move in more troops. Pursuing the vision of her father, founding President Sukarno, Indonesia, with West Papua, will be One Nation.

Fransisca and I are standing watching the funeral procession that now moves down the main street of small-town Sentani. The crowd has just finished singing 'Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war', one of the more feisty Christian hymns from West Papua's missionary past. Many are

This is my first morning in West Papua. I've come here to report on how a suppressed country is shaking off its shackles, and preparing its leaders for the challenges of governing a new nation. I've chosen West Papua because its situation is especially challenging. Eighty countries have become independent since the UN was formed in 1945. There are still 17 colonial territories on the UN's Decolonization list queuing up for independence. But West Papua is not one of them. As far as the UN is concerned, West Papua lost its right to self-determination in 1969. At this moment, it cannot expect UN help to become independent.

At first glance, President Megawati would not have been displeased by what's happening on the streets of Sentani today. The country is known worldwide as Irian Jaya, a province of Indonesia. All the speeches praising independence and its dead hero are spoken in Indonesian. Culturally, too, West Papua seems firmly placed within Indonesian borders. TV sets show programmes and people that are evidently Asian. But then again, the West Papuans gathered here are quite different. Unlike Indonesians elsewhere, their skins are not light but dark; their hair is not sleek but wiry and curled. These people look Melanesian – South Pacific islanders – not Asian. And judging from the unity amongst the funeral crowd, Indonesia has already lost West Papua. Fransisca looks around. 'They have come from everywhere,' she says. 'Just look at their faces.' She points out people from Fak Fak and Manokwari, well over 500 kilometres to the east; from Timika in the southeast where the locals have fought the mining corporation Freeport MacMoRan for a just return from its huge mine; and from Wamena in the highlands – the heartland of the OPM (Organisasi Papua Merdeka) freedom movement. 'We all belong to the OPM,' she laughs.

Sure enough, in the weeks that follow, every West Papuan I meet claims allegiance to the OPM. Waitresses, students, academics, business executives, storeowners – all say that they belong to the OPM. I can't work it out. I had thought that the OPM was a small and secret band of freedom fighters based deep in the highlands, who emerged sporadically in violent protest against either the Indonesian military or the companies that rob West Papua of its resources. All these people couldn't possibly belong to the OPM. Only when I get to Kelila will I understand what they mean.

Galile wants me to visit the village of Kelila. He picks me up at six in the morning in the highland town of Wamena. We drive northwards in a truck without suspension across unmade roads for three hours to where the mountains touch the clouds. There is the village, nestled in lush vegetation with greener-than-green forest backdrops.

Galile learnt West Papuan history here, not from classrooms (where things Papuan are never taught) but from the stories that parents have to pass on to their children to keep their ancestry alive. Now 24, Galile tells me a story from before his birth that his father had told him. He wants me to see where it took place: an act of West Papuan resistance and the Indonesian's infamous reply. In 1977, the Indonesian army arrived in Kelila in helicopters and on foot. They rounded up highland leaders from around the northern Wamena region, then lined them up along the grass runway of the local airstrip. One by one, they took each leader into a hut near the end of the runway and asked them whether they were with Indonesia or West Papua. Those who said West Papua were shot. Then their bodies were put in a pit and burnt.

No-one knows how many died. Reverend Obed Komba flew into Kelila that day and saw what happened. He puts the death toll at more than a hundred. For 12 years after the Kelila incident, he says, the military killed 10,000 more people around the Wamena region, many of whom were asked the same deadly question put to the people at Kelila.

Today the tourist guides will tell you that Kelila is an OPM stronghold. This is not because there are bands of the OPM liberation army hiding in the surrounding forests: there are no such bands there. It is because of the thousands who have died for refusing to give allegiance to Indonesia, and the thousands more who are prepared to die calling themselves West Papuans. Says Obed Komba: 'We black men are all OPM. In the cities we talk. In the forests, some fight. But being OPM is in the heart – it is about being West Papuan and wanting independence.'

The Indonesians know that the spirit of independence burns in the heart of West Papuans – that the only way to win is to stop all West Papuan hearts from beating

buried, this is what matters to the crowd. Past killings, past betrayals – they are no longer important. But when Eluay's body is buried in the football ground, his heart is not.



In an ultimate outrage, it has been removed by Indonesian authorities for a post mortem examination, and not returned in time for the burial.

Like Theys, some voices are absent from the ceremony today: activists who are in exile or hiding. There are strong and powerful voices that fill the gap. But will they be strong enough to deliver freedom? Tom Beanal, who has replaced Theys Eluay as the leader of the Papua Council, promises the crowd a referendum, so that they can tell the world that they want independence. Willy Mandowen, one of the intellectual guides of the new independence movement, is behind the scenes ensuring that things run smoothly. So much is against them: a staunchly nationalistic Indonesian Government backed by thousands of murdering militia; insufficient time to build political and economic leadership amongst their people, so that they can take the reins of government; an international community determined to look the other way. How can they win against such obstacles?

But then, there is the funeral crowd – 20,000 West Papuans carrying the spirit of independence in their hearts. With such spirit and will, the fight for freedom is well on its way.



One terrible day in the highlands revealed what's at stake for West Papuans – and the strategy of violent strife being fermented by the Indonesian military, whose local commander tried it out first in nearby East Timor.



As the Morning Star was still on the horizon on 6 October 2000, the Indonesian police in Wamena were using chain saws to fell every flag bearing its name. Two Papuans who got in the way were killed. Word travelled quickly. By the end of the afternoon, 40,000 highland men and women swept into town – naked and grease-painted, ready for a fight.

Imagine – wave upon wave of highland men in nothing but feathered head-dresses and long thin penis sheaths made from gourds; highland women with nothing but small grass skirts covering their crotch. They had walked and driven for hours to get there, carrying the only weapons they possessed – bows and arrows, spears and machetes. By the next day at least 37 were dead and 89 seriously injured.

All this is hard to imagine as I walk down the streets of Wamena now. This small highland town is the stepping-off point for tourists who want to visit the Baliem Valley, which my *Lonely Planet* guide describes as 'one of the last truly fascinating traditional areas in the world'. There were less than three thousand tourists in 2000 – but they are making this town into something it was never meant to be. I have arrived in November – the off-season. Cycle-driven rickshaws (*becaks*) race up and down the streets without passengers. Men, naked but for their penis gourds, travel into town with woven bracelets and cowry-shell necklaces, setting out their wares in front of empty hostels and hotels. Mounds of uncollected garbage dot the street. A barefoot child wants to hold my hand, befriending me before asking for *rupiah*. Then an open truck drives by carrying eight armed soldiers.

In a town touting for tourists it is impossible to avoid the military and police. The police are the first to greet you at the airport. They question what you're doing, then try to corner some of the tourist dollars. 'Would you like to buy this map? I have a friend who can rent you a motorcycle.' You cannot travel here without a permit. I had lied to get mine in Jayapura. If I'd told the police why I really wanted to come to Wamena – to talk about 6 October – they would have thrown me out of the country.

Thirteen Papuans were killed that day, adding to the widely accepted death toll of 100,000 indigenous people already killed by the Indonesian armed forces. Unofficially,

West Papuans will tell you that the death toll is much higher: that more than 800,000 have died. There are presently 15 to 20,000 police and military in West Papua. So, what is the threat posed by Papuans in Wamena?

'It's the raising of our flag – the Morning Star,' says Amelia Jigibalom. 'All countries in the world have freedom when their flag is flying high.' If the spirit of independence in the hearts of West Papuans is the greatest – and unseen – enemy of the Indonesians, the most obvious outward sign of their resistance to Indonesian rule is the raising of the West Papuan flag. Amelia and four other local leaders – Reverend Obed Komba, Murjono Murib, Yafet Yelemaken and Reverend Yudas Meage – have gathered together to tell me about what took place here on 6 October. Obed is one of the 31 Presidium (Executive) members of the Papua Council. The other four are part of the broader decision-making body: panel members of the Papua Council. It's this that has made them the latest military target. Obed starts with the background.

When the Papua Council was formed to unite all West Papuan independence groups in June 2000, Indonesia's then President Wahid said Morning Star flags could be raised until 19 October 2000. But on 1 October in Wamena the head of police in the region, Daniel Suripati, came to Obed's house and told him that he would bring down the flags before then. He showed Obed a letter from Indonesia's police chief, Suroyo Bimantoro, giving the order. Obed told him this would cause conflict. So Obed arranged for another round of negotiations with police to take place on 6 October in Jayapura. Just before that meeting was scheduled to begin, Suripati gave orders for Wamena's flags to be taken down.

Obed's story confirms what I feared: that any independence the Indonesian Government gives may be clawed back by the armed forces. The Government has just passed much-publicized laws to give West Papua greater autonomy. These laws purport to give Papuans more say in government, but they allow the military to remain unregulated and police to be governed at a national level.

In Indonesia, the military are multi-functional. They are supposed to do what all armies do: protect the country from external threats. But they have also had a long-standing place in the social and economic life of the country. So the Generals sit in 38 national parliamentary seats. And the military has extensive corporate interests across Indonesia. West Papua is rich in natural resources. It has the biggest gold mine in the world, rainforests ripe for logging and oil so pure it needs little refining. These industries have proved lucrative sources of legal and illegal profit for the military. From just one entity – Freeport McMoRan's Grasberg gold and copper mine – the military has successfully demanded a one-off payment of \$35 million, supplemented by an agreement to pay an annual contribution of \$11 million. Most of this has been used to bolster the inadequate military budget for the region, so military accommodation and equipment are better here than elsewhere in Indonesia. But up to a third of this amount has gone straight into the pockets of a select group of officers and their subordinates.¹ To protect their lucrative income stream, the Generals have stationed in West Papua at least one member of the armed forces (soldiers and police) for every 170 citizens. To justify this, they support conflicts that only they can quell.

The anger caused by the downing of the flags in Wamena was entirely predictable. When the 40,000 highlanders arrived, community leaders knew that blood would be shed. They jumped on to motorcycles and into cars and sped around the town cajoling, imploring, begging for peace. Slowly but surely, the highlanders put down their weapons – in the east, the south and the north. But not in the west.

I'm in the western neighbourhood of Woma – where much of the violence took place – the night after talking with the five leaders. Tonight there is no violence. Only a feast.

Galile has come home from university, and a pig is cooked with coals in a 44-gallon drum to celebrate, with sweet-potato trimmings. It is a rare change from the usual vegetable fare. Thirty people eat in the back yard. They talk earnestly about the latest family 'fight'. Two of Galile's cousins want to marry – a brother and his sister. The family is divided about whether this should be allowed. Then the group starts laughing. The brother wants to pay five pigs as a bride-price. But he has no-one to give the pigs to – his father and the bride's father are one.

Galile is an English student. At the hospital on 6 October, when the doctors had fled, he helped sew up his friends and neighbours. I doubt if he'd ever used a needle before then. After the feast, Galile takes me down a narrow lane to the house next door. We sit on the floor and are shown picture after picture of the slaughter of 'Bloody Wamena' – bodies missing a head or a limb, machete cuts across faces and torsos, heads blown apart by gunshot wounds, charred human remains in burnt-out houses ... a child whose lifeless body is rolled into a ball, as if in hiding.

The dead faces in the pictures tell of an emerging division that will strengthen military strategy. While 13 of the 37 killed on 6 October were West Papuan, the others were non-Papuans – Indonesian migrants whom the locals call 'Javanese'. That day in October, a racial line was clearly and deliberately drawn across the community. After cutting down the flags, the police ran into 18 Javanese homes for cover. Once there, they started shooting people in the streets and markets. The West Papuans' response was immediate. They searched Javanese homes with bows, arrows and machetes raised, killing the few police they found and anyone who'd harboured them.

At least 100,000 indigenous people are widely accepted as having been killed by the Indonesian military or police

The deaths of West Papuans were never likely to excite official attention in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta. The deaths of the Javanese were another thing. No accusing finger has ever been pointed at the Indonesian police, who started the riots. Instead, 80 Papuans were arrested, including a group of school children. Most were kicked and beaten with rifle butts and canes. Some were forced to drink urine and had rifles pointed into their mouths. One died in police custody. Seventeen faced trial. They were convicted of rebellion. For this, and other lesser charges, they were given prison sentences ranging from one to three-and-a-half years. Their appeals to the courts, to common sense and to decency have failed.

Then, on 11 October, the five leaders were arrested. Two of them were told in custody that they had incited Bloody Wamena. Not because they pulled a trigger or shot an arrow. But because they had helped form the Papua Council. This, the arresting police told them, created an expectation of independence in the community that led to the unfurling of the flags. They, too, have now been convicted of rebellion. Their sentences range from four to four-and-a-half years. Their appeals have yet to be heard.

But in the eyes of the armed forces the people of Wamena had still not paid a high enough price. Two months later, hundreds of kilometers away, Jayapura police conducted a retaliatory raid on hostels accommodating students and school children from the Wamena region. More than 100 were taken into police custody. Two were killed. The brutality meted out to the others has since been described by Oswald Iten, a Swiss journalist who was awaiting deportation in the same cell complex as the students. 'Blood

sprayed the walls all the way up to the ceiling.'

West Papuans know that the legal system is being used against them. They are used to it. But, until Bloody Wamena, Papuans and non-Papuans had always lived peacefully together. Not any more. More than 13,500 non-Papuans have now fled the town. Already the military are exploiting the division. In fear for the safety of themselves and their families, 365 Javanese in Wamena now pay the military 500,000 rupiah (\$50) per day to be trained to use a gun. It is the West Papuans at whom their guns are meant to take aim.

A new arrival in West Papua means that this strategy could soon set like cement. Major-General Mahidin Simbolon is the head of the Trikora military command in Jayapura. In 1999 he helped to oversee the operation to create, recruit and finance the local militia units that turned on East Timorese separatists. It didn't stop the independence of East Timor. But it may have more of a chance in West Papua, where the UN is not acting and the international community – distracted by Afghanistan and the aftermath of 11 September 2001 – is not watching.

The Morning Star flag no longer flies over Wamena. The armed forces have won the present battle. Now what about the war?

Playing up the primitive



After being buried under 40 years of Indonesian rule, West Papuan culture is still very much alive and kicking, as **Eben Kirksey** finds out.



In May 2000 thousands of the Mee people greeted Megawati Sukarnoputri – who was then Indonesia’s Vice President – when she visited the highland outpost of Enarotali. Running counter-clockwise around her helicopter in a raucous dance called *waita tai*, wearing grass skirts and penis sheaths, the Mee waved Morning Star flags while shouting a singsong chorus. In front of the crowd stood a group of OPM (Organisasi Papua Merdeka) independence fighters armed with bows and arrows. When Megawati stepped on to the tarmac they presented her with a sign that read: ‘THE PAPUAN PEOPLES ASK FOR FREEDOM’. By all Mee accounts, she literally ‘pissed in her pants’. Scrambling back into the helicopter, Megawati was airborne within moments, apparently terrified by what she saw as a threat of ‘primitive’ violence. For a brief moment, the Mee had been able to assert their political aspirations in cultural terms. This seems to have instilled a deep terror in Megawati. In December 2001 Megawati, by now Indonesia’s President, cancelled a long-planned visit to West Papua.

The Indonesians have tried to suppress Papuan culture. Historically, any Papuan cultural expression that does not fit neatly within Indonesian national ideology has been silenced.

In 1978 Arnold Ap, who was Curator of the Bird of Paradise University Museum, founded a musical group called Mambesak. This band fused themes and melodies from local cultural groups into a regional Papuan musical style. They played songs of freedom. Their music was aired on local radio stations in urban centres around West Papua and played on battery-powered boom-boxes in the remotest of villages.

The Indonesian authorities decided to take action before Arnold Ap's renown as a Papuan cultural icon grew out of hand. The élite military task force that is now known as KOPASSUS took Arnold Ap into custody in November 1983. After being detained for 66 days with no formal charges Ap was taken by prison guards to a beach where he was shot dead with a spray of machinegun fire. According to official Indonesian accounts Ap was shot while trying to escape from jail.

The Indonesian government has also taken colourful and very lively traditions and tried to collapse them into lifeless fragments consistent with their concept of *adat* (custom). A surviving member of Mambesak named Joop Roemajauw, who fled Indonesia shortly before Ap was killed, describes how the Indonesians use the concept of *adat* in an unsuccessful attempt to absorb apolitical parts of Papuan culture. For instance, every Friday morning, throughout the Indonesian archipelago, people – from school children to civil servants – engage in a mandatory callisthenics regime. In the 1990s *Yospan*, a dance from Roemajauw's own cultural group typifying Papuan *adat*, was introduced as part of this weekly ritual. Hearing about overweight government bureaucrats shuffling grudgingly along to the same music that inspires all-night Papuan dance parties makes Roemajauw feel sick.

The selected fragments of Papuan cultural *adat* that are incorporated into Indonesian national identity function nicely within a racist system of discrimination that devalues Papuans as primitives. The Indonesian-dominated tourism industry in West Papua markets them as half-naked dancing tribesmen. Penis gourds, wood carvings of 'the noble savage' and postcards of ceremonial war dances bring in tourist dollars, encouraging contemporary Papuans to emphasize their 'authentic' *adat*.

Leopold Pospisil, who is a Yale University anthropologist, told me about a traveller who intended to demonstrate that Papuans are backward. He paid a 13-year-old girl, who happened to be Pospisil's friend, to perform a silly dance. After the girl performed the dance Pospisil became angry with her for making a fool of herself. The girl retorted: 'I am not so sure who is actually more stupid – I who performed the silly things, or the gentleman who paid for the performance.'

**We will know that independence
has truly come to West Papua when
a foreign CEO puts on a
penis sheath**

There is more to Papuan culture than a collection of dance steps, dusty museum curios and pop songs. Deep, sometimes mystical, convictions drive Papuan cultural resistance to Indonesia rule. According to Viktor Kaisiepo, who is a prominent Papuan leader exiled to the Netherlands, the membership of the OPM extends beyond the realm of humans. The rainforest – in the form of malarial mosquitoes, venomous white snakes and other dangerous creatures – regularly kills Indonesian soldiers. The Mee tell stories about a beautiful she-demon in the rainforest who invites Indonesian soldiers to sleep with her. But when the soldiers take off their clothes and try to mount the demon she vanishes and the soldiers immediately die.

The word *merdeka* (freedom) – an important political concept – is also key to understanding contemporary Papuan culture. This powerful concept unites West Papua's diverse cultural groups. *Merdeka* is broadly defined by Papuans: it is variously a desire for divine salvation, equitable development, environmental sustainability and political independence. Christianity has been practised in West Papua for nearly 150 years and a distinctively local form of this religion flavours Papuan aspirations for freedom. American anthropologist Brigham Golden describes *merdeka* as a liberation theology of moral salvation; a Christian desire for a world of human dignity and divine justice. Roemajauw equates *merdeka* with nirvana.

But once the political component of *merdeka* is realized – and it will eventually be realized – Papuans will face the fresh challenge of re-establishing an independent cultural identity. There is a danger that cultural solidarity will become fragmented, jump-starting local ethnic conflicts. For instance, with over 250 distinct cultural groups and dialects, arguments about a national language are sure to take place.

In the years leading up to the independence of Frantz Fanon's homeland of Algeria he wrote: 'Every colonized people finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country... The colonized becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.' Indonesian may be the only language that could serve as the *lingua franca* of an independent West Papua. This would result in continued dependence on Indonesia.

A more subtle and possibly more complicated problem is the language that would be used to talk about culture in post-independence West Papua. The *adat* concept makes tourist fetishes out of cultural fragments and alienates many Papuans from indigenous religion. It is possible for Papuans to go beyond this Indonesian idea. They can embrace a modern role in an international community and at the same time maintain distinctively local visions of reality.

An exiled spokesman for the Penis Gourd People's Assembly (see [article](#)) has an innovative vision for the future of West Papua. He would like to incorporate each of the Papuan cultural groups as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). In this hypothetical nation each tribal NGO would have its own autonomous territory. Tribal elders appointed to a board of directors would govern each NGO. Mee Inc, for example, would directly negotiate with the Korean logging firms that are currently clear-cutting their land. This would ensure that any resource extraction is done according to local norms. Rather than supporting a top-heavy bureaucracy in the cities, profits from development projects could be channelled directly into local communities. A national legislative assembly and judicial system – composed of representatives from the NGOs – could help mediate relations among the different groups.

Partly this vision relies on international acceptance. Globalization does not like to accommodate local government based on indigenous cultural terms. We will know that *merdeka* has truly come to West Papua when a foreign CEO puts on a penis sheath and dances *waita tai* in hope of brokering a deal with the Mee Inc board of trustees.

Anthropologist and historian
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West Papua

– a history of betrayal



The first colonizers

Humans first settled New Guinea at least 50,000 years ago, when it was connected to Australia by a land bridge. The British were the first Europeans to attempt colonization, but their 1793 colony was evacuated within two years. The Dutch were next, proclaiming on 24 August 1828 that the natives of the western half of New Guinea were to be subjects of the King of the Netherlands from that time on. But the Dutch made little effort to colonize 'Dutch New Guinea'. They opened Fort du Bus to protect their lucrative trade with the spice islands from other European powers, but abandoned the area after only 10 years. No continuous settlement was established in West Papua until 1897, and no substantial development was undertaken within the country until the 1950s.

Indonesia's competing bid

On 27 November 1949 the Dutch ceded sovereignty of Dutch East Indies to the Indonesian Republic, but excluded Dutch New Guinea (West Papua). Throughout the 1950s, they argued that Papua was geographically and ethnically different from Indonesia and the Papuans should – over time – be given self-determination. By contrast, the Indonesians argued that Dutch New Guinea had already been transferred to them in 1949, and had achieved independence then. Anti-Dutch campaigns in Indonesia, brewing throughout the 1950s, climaxed in 1957. Most Dutch people had been driven out and Dutch companies taken over by 1958. Indonesia broke off diplomatic relations in August 1960.

First steps to freedom

Undeterred the Dutch accelerated preparations for the Papuans to exercise their rights of self-determination. Elections were held for the West New Guinea Council, half of whose members were from the indigenous population. Following the installation of the Council on 1 December 1961, the territory was renamed Papua and the Morning Star flag was adopted and raised to fly next to the Dutch flag. Since then, the Morning Star flag has been a potent symbol of West Papuan resistance and nationalism, while 1 December is celebrated every year by the West Papuans as their independence day. At the UN, however, the Dutch were not able to achieve the two-thirds majority they needed to endorse their plans. Neither were the Indonesians. In 1962, 1,500 Indonesians 'invaded', either by parachute into the jungle or by submarine on to West Papuan beaches.

Theft – while the UN watches

Before this small-scale invasion, Indonesia had requested \$400 million of arms from Russia (worth \$10 billion today). Locked into Cold War rivalry, the US could not leave Indonesia to align itself to Russia. So, newly elected President JF Kennedy offered his support to Indonesia's President Sukarno to end the dispute over Papua. Under the auspices of the UN, the US urged Indonesia and the Netherlands to the negotiating table. Here retired US diplomat Ellsworth Bunker drew up a plan to transfer the administrative authority for West Papua from the Netherlands to a neutral administrator, and thence to Indonesia. Not a single West Papuan was involved in these negotiations.

The 'New York Agreement'

The 'New York Agreement' was signed by the Indonesians and the Dutch at UN headquarters on 15 August 1962. It fell well short of guaranteeing a referendum on independence, instead requiring Indonesia to make vague arrangements for West

Sham voting

Another UN team returned in 1968 to 'assist, advise and participate' in the exercise of free choice – called the Act of Free Choice – planned for the following year. The team, headed by Bolivian diplomat Fernando Ortiz Sanz, comprised just 16

Papuans to 'exercise freedom of choice'. It did however confer on all Papuans the right to participate in any act of self-determination. On 1 October 1962 – for the first time in its history – the UN was given temporary executive authority over a territory of significant size: West Papua. The handful of civil servants making up the UN Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) acted as apologists for the Indonesians, banning West Papuans from celebrating their second independence day and handing over administrative control to Indonesia after the seven-month minimum.

staff including administrative personnel. (The UN mission to organize and monitor the 1999 referendum in East Timor, by way of comparison, totalled more than 1,000 staff.) Foreign journalists consistently reported that the overwhelming majority of West Papuans did not want to be ruled by Jakarta. The Indonesians maintained that the terrain and the relatively uneducated population made 'one man one vote' impractical. They conducted a poll of only a select group of 'elected' representatives. Out of a total of 1,026 representatives, the UN managed to witness the election of only 195. One Australian journalist reported that Indonesians would go into a silent crowd and select the representatives themselves. Those local leaders who were included in the 1,026 reported being intimidated by gun-toting militia.

The Act of No Choice

Between 14 July and 2 August 1969, 1,025 representatives (one was sick) gathered in eight consultative council meetings around the country and were asked in open meetings (not secret ballots) to give their verdict. UN Secretary-General U Thant reported to the General Assembly that: 'Without dissent, all the enlarged councils pronounced themselves in favour of the territory remaining with Indonesia.' To explain this unanimous result, two annexes were attached to his report. They presented misleading – sometimes wrong – accounts of events before the vote was taken. The UN ratified the Act of Free Choice on 19 November 1969. The Ghanaian delegation to the UN called the process 'a travesty of democracy and justice'. Together with several other African countries, Ghana called for a proper vote on West Papuan self-determination to be held in 1975, on the grounds that the New York Agreement had not been properly fulfilled. This proposal was defeated in the UN General Assembly by 60 votes to 15, with 39 abstentions.

Forty years of oppression

Even though there has never been a war, almost all West Papuans can name at least one relative who has been beaten, raped, tortured or killed by the Indonesian armed forces since the Act of Free Choice. Officially, more than 100,000 have died. Unofficially, the estimate is 800,000. In February 1999, 100 West Papuan leaders met with President Habibie in Jakarta and said that they had had enough: Indonesia must leave. The team flew back to a hero's welcome by the thousands waiting to greet them at the airport. Until 1 December 1999, the Indonesians treated the raising of the Morning Star as an act of treason. Jails all over the country held Papuans imprisoned (some for up to 25 years) for raising their flag. The security forces surprised everyone by announcing that the raising of the flag would be permitted on 1 December 1999. In an emotional and peaceful ceremony, the capital city of Jayapura became 'Papuan owned' for a day. People throughout the country excitedly began preparations for the grant of independence that they thought would necessarily follow.

The road to freedom reopens

In February 2000, 400 delegates – including representatives of the armed wing of the OPM – met in Sentani and openly discussed a strategy to take West Papua towards independence. This meeting rejected the 1969 Act of Free Choice as fraudulent and illegal. It was followed by a Papua People's Congress from 29 May to 4 June 2000, when 3,000 delegates came together. The Papua Council and its Presidium (Executive) emerged from these two meetings. Throughout these developments, President Abdurrahman Wahid and his successor, Megawati Sukarnoputri, consistently opposed independence but supported greater 'autonomy' for the 'province'. Legislation implemented in January this year hands back much of the tax and royalties previously sent to Jakarta and spent elsewhere. Nevertheless, the Papuans oppose autonomy because it fails to deliver self-determination and allows continued military and police intervention.

Sources: *The United Nations in West Papua – An Unprecedented Story* (UN pamphlet, New York, 1963); *Report of the Secretary-General regarding the act of self-determination in West Irian* tabled at the UN General Assembly dated 6

November 1969 (Ref: A-7723); PJ Kuyper and PJG Kapteyn 'A Colonial Power as Champion of Self-Determination: Netherlands State Practice in the period 1945-1975' in *International Law in the Netherlands* edited by HF van Panhys et al, Vol III Ch 3 (Oceania Publications Inc 1980); Greg Poulgrain's paper 'Outside Indonesia – An international perspective on the 1962 New York Agreement and the Indonesian claim to Netherlands New Guinea.' (Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane 2000). Dr John Saltford's excellent research in the paper 'United Nations involvement with the Act of Self-determination in West Irian (Indonesian West New Guinea)' www.angelfire.com/journal/issues/saltford.html; Theo van den Broek and Alexandra Szalay 'Raising the Morning Star' in *The Journal of Pacific History* 36 (2001) 77-92; Tapol 'Secret Operation in West Papua to undermine pro-independence movement' (London, 2001); Indonesian Human Rights Network (www.indonesianetwork.org); and leaders and academics of West Papua who cannot be named for fear of military retaliation.

They walk on the leaves of trees

The wealth of its neighbours in Papua New Guinea has been squandered by a Westminster-style Parliament. No wonder the type of democracy West Papua wants is still up in the air.

Chris Richards finds an alternative model for West Papuan self-determination.



He is a human telegraph. He will travel for days to get the news. On foot and by car. Over the Papua New Guinea border, then through the jungle into West Papua. He will go there for important information and decisions – things that cannot be entrusted to e-mail or the risk of interception. He comes when summoned by one of the few members of his group still remaining in West Papua – in Wamena, Timika, Manokwari or Sarong. Or Abepura to where Mully lives. The human telegraph allows Mully to keep in touch with 3,000 people who have fled the country in fear of further beatings by the Indonesian military: members of DEMMAK (the Penis Gourd People's Assembly) who now live with their leader, Benni Wenda, in the refugee camp in Vanimo, over the border in Papua New Guinea.

Mully (not his real name) is a law student with a vision. And now is the time for vision, for experimentation, for developing structures of government not yet tried before – distinctly West Papuan. DEMMAK's model is based on tribal traditions – penis-gourd assemblies. They are designed to ensure that power does not collect in political parties but remains with the highland people, with tribal leaders retaining decision-making power while more educated lowland advisers and facilitators back them up.

Highlanders (those living inland, particularly in mountain areas) tend to see lowlanders (those living in the cities and towns around the coast) as untrustworthy and Westernized. Lowlanders tend to think of highlanders as backward. This division is reflected in the models of government each promotes, and the parties they back. While the Papua Council – the body that is trying to hold together all groups struggling for independence – has the firm allegiance of the lowlanders, it's DEMMAK that retains the real confidence of highlanders.

Male highlanders, at least. Women don't have a vote at a tribal level yet. And the term 'penis-gourd assemblies' is unashamedly about men, to the exclusion of women. Penis gourds are sheaths made of a cultivated gourd: often the only substantial body covering that is worn by tribal men. I have seen them frequently in the Baliem Valley amongst the Dani and Yali tribes. They vary in shape and size around the country. Some are long and held erect by string, while others are shorter, broader, sporty models that won't get tangled up in a dash through the forest. It is these examples of difference in culture, attitude and expression that distinguish West Papua from the Western world, and that DEMMAK wants to see represented in government – traditional features that Mully doubts the Papua Council will preserve.



Photo: Chris Richards

Nevertheless, Mully says that DEMMAK supports the Papua Council – at least in the short term. He anticipates that, when West Papua gains its freedom, the head of the Presidium (executive of the Papua Council) will automatically become President, the 31 Presidium members will become the Cabinet, and the 501 panel members will form the legislative body of a parliament.

**The term 'penis-gourd assemblies'
is unashamedly about men to the
exclusion of women**

However, DEMMAK thinks that this structure mirrors too closely the existing Indonesian parliament, which has been tainted by corruption. 'At the moment, the Indonesian Government says that it will give a tribe money for a pig project,' says Mully. 'But when this money comes out from Jakarta, every layer of the bureaucracy takes a cut until almost nothing is left for the tribe and its project. We're scared that, if we keep something close to the present system, this way of working will be replicated.'

DEMMAK want a different long-term structure. Parliament would be filled with visionary advisors in law, politics and economics. Each tribe would elect a leader – a break from the present where the leader inherits the position from his father. A leader from the NGOs and the churches would join them. They would gather once or twice a year at Parliament to make decisions based on what their communities want to do, taking advice from the parliamentarians. The parliamentarians would also help facilitate decision-making – a vital component, given the range of attitudes the leaders will no doubt bring with them.

And women? There are some women members of the Papua Council, and they have their own group within the panel system. But they are not well represented anywhere. Mully is critical. He tells me that, traditionally, West Papuan women are second-class citizens. 'Men say to women who want to talk: "You're behind in the conversation. Just shut up."' But, he says, there is progress. The men were recently shocked when a women's congress attracted 600 participants. Through events like this, women are developing into activists – speaking out publicly about what they can do for West Papua. Indeed, DEMMAK now thinks that the head of the Papua Council should be a woman, so that she can go and fight Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri 'woman-to-woman'. 'Ninety per cent of West Papuan men have been tainted by the Indonesian system,' says Mully. 'The women are still pure. At meetings now, men are falling silent when women talk. They talk the truth. They keep the peace. And they come up with good solutions.'

Paul Kingsnorth has a secret meeting with a legendary guerrilla leader, but can't give him what he wants.

Long before I meet Goliar Tabuni, I have heard more than enough about him to be – shall we say, apprehensive. The local OPM (Free Papua Movement) members, who have arranged our clandestine meeting, have told me story after story about him. He is seven feet tall, with a beard like Thor's. He can walk across the country in two days. He can 'walk on the leaves of the trees'. He can make himself invisible. 'When he comes,' they say, 'your hair will stand on end.'

In the event, Goliar and the two other guerrillas who flank him turn out to be the regulation short Papuan stature and to have genuine, if guarded, smiles. But that's about all that is normal about them. They troop, barefoot, into the living room of our safe house in Timika – the town servicing the Freeport McMoRan gold and copper mine 60 kilometers away – and sit down. Goliar has a ragged beard, ragged clothes and ragged hair and smells like he has been living in a forest for 20 years. On his left is his deputy, a stout man with dreadlocks, a filthy MTV T-shirt, armbands, necklaces and very thick biceps. On his right is a vast, bearded colossus of a man, a Major, who leans wordlessly on a huge axe and glowers at me intensely from under his hat. A two-foot knife of cassowary bone is strapped to his arm. I decide to ask my questions politely.



Photo: Paul Kingsnorth

Goliar is operational commander of the Timika branch of the TPN – the liberation army of the OPM. He is the rebels' chief military strategist in the region, and spends most of his time hidden in the forest, living in camps, which are regularly moved around to avoid the Indonesian army. He claims to have thousands of men (there are few, if any, fighting women) under his command, but the real figures are unknown. He helped plan the 1996 kidnap of seven European botanists together with their researchers and guides – a kidnap purposefully pulled to make the world pay attention to the military and corporate pillage of West Papua. He's also led sorties against the Freeport mine, with the so-far unsuccessful aim of closing it down.

These three tousled warriors are the heroes of every Papuan I have met. Veterans of an armed struggle that they have never come close to winning, largely because they are 'armed' only in the loosest sense of the word. 'I have killed 3,606 people, by myself,' Goliar explains, conversationally. 'With axes, spears, knives – and with this.' From a woven, rainbow shoulder-bag he pulls what looks like a Second World War revolver. 'This is our only gun,' he laughs, slightly despairingly. 'The Indonesians have planes, soldiers, cars, machine-guns. They have hundreds of commanders here, thousands. All over this region we have one commander – me. If we had real guns, we could drive them out.' He stares at me, intently. 'What are you activists doing in England?' he suddenly asks. 'Can't you get us guns?'

**This is our only gun.' he
laughs, slightly despairingly**

He looks disappointed when I explain that I can't. I wonder how, and why, he keeps going. 'We want freedom,' he says, simply. 'That is all we fight for. There are other ways, of course. Diplomacy is important. But fighting is important too. The Indonesians come here and they see that our land is sweet, like milk, and they want it for themselves.

They have not been interested in diplomacy, they have taken our land and killed our people.'

Things have changed in recent years, though. While, for decades, only the OPM were opposing the Indonesians, other bodies now exist – most notably the Papua Council and its Presidium (executive), which claims to have incorporated the OPM into its grand alliance for freedom. But the OPM disagrees. 'The Presidium,' sniffs Goliar, 'has never given us anything. In our culture, if you have food, you share it with everyone. The Presidium has the sort of people who keep their food to themselves.' In Papua this is a serious insult. 'We have no cars, no guns, no money,' he says. 'The Presidium has all the money they need. They are not pure, or where would they get it from?'

I explain where – from corporations like Freeport and BP. Goliar's eyebrows raise slowly. 'Well,' he says. 'Freeport are killers and if we could we would close them down. Why should these corporations be able to come here and take our land and our resources?' Recently, the OPM decided that no more corporations should be allowed to come here. 'We know BP is coming.' What is he going to do about it then, I ask. 'If we can,' he says, simply, 'we will kill them.'

Goliar is clear that, come independence, the armed wing of the OPM will not be fading away. 'We will be the army,' says Goliar, decisively, 'and we will choose the government. We will decide who is in it, not the Papua Council. We will say yes or no to presidents and governments. If I want you in the government, I will put you in the government.' I'm flattered. 'If the Papua Council are the government, where will they get their money from?' he asks, rhetorically. 'They will need to get it from BP, Shell, Freeport. The people will not stand for this. Freedom is not just about Indonesia, it is about controlling these corporations too.'

Goliar sits back and pours himself a cup of coffee from a blue china teapot that someone has brought in for him. It's an incongruous sight, and he suddenly looks almost comical. 'I knew you were coming to Timika,' he says, from nowhere. 'I could see you in the plane overhead. If I wanted, I could be in Wamena tomorrow [Wamena is hundreds of miles away]. You may have heard about my abilities. It is true. The forest gives them to me, and they are secret. Not even my two brothers here know. When my time comes I will pass these secrets on. But not yet.'

Then he suddenly reaches for my hand and shakes it, hard, with a smile in his eyes. 'We will not give up,' he says, simply. 'When we are free you will come back here and see. Then the whole world will see.'

Paul Kingsnorth was in West Papua researching his new book about the global resistance movement, to be published by Simon and Schuster in 2003.



Reach for the Morning Star

After nearly three weeks in West Papua, **Chris Richards** concludes that West Papuans are well on their way to freedom - but it's too early to celebrate yet.



My last day in West Papua starts in the same place as my first: in Sentani, 36 kilometres west of Jayapura. And once again I am in a crowd outside the house of the assassinated leader Theys Eluay – this time to commemorate the independence-day flag raising. There is singing and clapping, as the Morning Star flag flaps in the wind above our heads. Rows of seats outside the house are filled with hundreds of people. The streets are full of hundreds more.

The armed forces arrived last night by the truck-load. Now they casually walk the streets with guns slung across their shoulders. Some, with cameras and camcorders, are taking pictures of the crowd. I say hello in Indonesian to two. As I pass, one asks the other: 'Do you like her?' After the indiscriminate rapes I know the military have committed here, the hair rises on the back of my neck.

The young West Papuans standing next to me say the military presence here is an attempt to stir up unrest. We watch five soldiers sit down, then clap and sing with the crowd. The military are Theys Eluay's likely assassins, so their presence is indeed provocative.

With missionary zeal, a church leader talks about the need for non-violence. He wears a tie asking: 'What would Jesus do?' (Not wear a tie like this, I think.) I ask the young West Papuans whether peace will be maintained today. They say yes, peace is good. But if it cannot deliver independence soon, they must use other means.

Papua Council head Tom Beanal arrives after the military men leave. The Council knows that every time the crowd takes up arms this will be used to justify the military presence in the country. Its members do a remarkable job, trying to stop the people from reacting with violence, but it is an uneasy peace. Tom Beanal tells them to reject Indonesian legislation that gives the country partial autonomy, and he calls for full independence. 'We will die defending that position,' he says. He means: be killed – but do not kill.

That West Papuans deserve independence seems to me indisputable. Their country was handed to the Indonesians in a shameful referendum held at gun-point: a sham overseen by the international community through the United Nations. Since then, its wealth has been plundered by transnational corporations, by the Indonesian Government and by

--Picture caption--

Theys Eluay's supporters celebrated after political charges against him came unstuck in February 2000. Charged again in May 2000, Eluay was assassinated by some of his accusers the next year.

military generals. Even now that hundreds of thousands of West Papuans have been killed, even after thousands more have died, West Papuans will go on asserting their independence.

Like Theys Eluay. Watching the independence-day celebrations here in front of his house, with swarms of troops in the surrounding streets, I can't help thinking that his assassination was no isolated incident. It is a climax, introducing a new era of more confident brutality towards the West Papuans. As a priority, the military intervention in West Papua must be stopped. Most leaders I've spoken to in West Papua are calling for demilitarization – but from where I'm now standing at this moment that prospect is remote.

Papua Council heavyweight Willy Mandowen is more positive in his outlook. He thinks that the very reason why the military wants to hold on to West Papua contains the solution to the problem. That reason is, quite simply, money. His answer is to set up a special trust fund to pay the military, so that they can be transformed into servants of the State. Over time these payments would gradually be reduced. With an expected three trillion extra *rupiah* (\$300 million) promised to West Papua by new autonomy legislation, it sounds like a possible option. But would the Indonesian army really obey West Papuan orders? And what about more immediate funding priorities: roads, schools, houses and hospitals?

Leaders like Willy Mandowen are clearly trying to develop solutions more appropriate to their country than mere carbon copies of governance and administration from the developed world. They will need more time and assistance to develop these skills, which are so central to the capacity to govern. That this assistance is currently coming from transnational corporations highlights a worrying deficiency in the work of international non-governmental organizations.



Photo: Chris Richards

As to the legacy for a new democracy, helped from birth by corporate sponsorship and assistance, only time will tell. I'm still unclear about BP's role here. The independence celebrations are over, and as I'm travelling to the airport to leave the country I pull out a copy of a letter I have in my bag. It's addressed to Indonesia's President Megawati Sukarnoputri, urging her to set up an impartial, independent investigation into Theys Eluay's death. It is signed by eight members of the US Congress. BP consultant Dennis Heffernan spent 20 years in US politics. I asked him if the help BP gives to West Papuans also extends to lobbying for a letter like this. 'It may,' he replied.

Whatever its origins may be, this letter is a victory for West Papua, and has been greeted as such. For, more than anything else, it is international appreciation of their situation that is most needed now. International pressure on Indonesia to stop the military madness. International assistance to build the capacity to govern. International understanding that West Papuan separatists are not terrorists. And international support for a new referendum to allow the West Papuans to say freely what is in their hearts: 'We want independence – and we want it now.'

Because time is running out. Papuans now make up less than 1.5 million of West Papua's 2.5 million people. In some urban areas they are already outnumbered. West Papuan leaders say that the non-Papuan population is growing faster than the Papuan. While the official transmigration policy of the Indonesian Government is being wound down, many people are still being attracted to migrate here. One demographer inside the country estimates that the non-Papuan population could triple within the next 10 to 15 years. If these predictions are correct, the longer Indonesia can keep the UN from conducting a referendum, the greater will be the number of non-Papuan Indonesians entitled to vote, so the less likely a majority vote for independence will be. Sustained international pressure for such a vote is needed now.

**The longer Indonesia can keep the
UN from conducting a referendum,
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That is why Rahel, a university student, has come to the airport to say goodbye to me. She has wrapped some gifts in newspaper, including a wonderful worn string bag, which I suspect is her own. When I say I cannot take it, she insists. I am kept waiting at the airport counter. The people behind me move to another queue where the processing of passengers is brisk. The staff say nothing's wrong, but give no explanation for the delay.

Alarm grows on Rahel's face. After half an hour, an activist I know appears in the crowd, watching me at the counter. Rahel must have rung him. He's a law student, and his presence confirms what I fear. I prepare to be arrested. First, my notebooks. Rahel takes them. With the slight of a magician's hand they disappear down the back of her pants. Smiling at each other, I give her the contacts to ring if I'm taken into custody.

Then suddenly, after three-quarters of an hour, my ticket is processed. Rahel gives me back the books. I am on my way. I leave my momentary anxiety behind me. But it has been a salutary reminder. For it is not only death, torture or arrest that many West Papuans must regularly confront. It is also the constant fear – the unknown terror – that hour by hour assaults them all.

We should not leave them to live like this.