

## Spectres of Indonesianisation and Secession in Papua

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### Introduction

In this paper, I trace and sketch the backgrounds of social, economic and political fault lines in Indonesian Papua. While reformasi policy makers in Jakarta have developed a series of inconsistent policies towards Indonesia's easternmost province over the last few years, the reactions of local elites in Papua are more than merely reactionary. For example, the apparent endorsement of the Indonesian state by supporters of Abraham Atururi (the transitional Governor of Irian Jaya Barat who preceded the current interim Governor Timbul Pujiyanto) has provoked a fundamental challenge to those elites who seek to maintain and consolidate their recent political gains under a Special Autonomy (Otsus) law written for a unified Papua. From 2000 till 2005, this political lobby was led, among others, by the late Jaap Solossa, then Governor of Papua, his Vice Governor, Constan Karma, and the Speaker of the Representative Council (DPR, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat) Papua, John Ibo.

At the same time, Papuan activists and a number of political and religious leaders incessantly reinforce the political spectre of secession because of a failure of policy in Papua. They raise their voices at local, national and international forums and usually resort to rethorics that closely link with human rights discourses in the West, but also with such intimidating and ultimately ineffectual claims as Indonesian genocide in Papua.<sup>1</sup> Locally, the independence struggle is inspired by the overlapping agendas of the Papua Customary Council (DAP, Dewan Adat Papua) and the Papua Presidium Council (PDP, Presidium Dewan Papua).

While not representing the people of Papua as an elected organisation, the DAP is growing in popularity since it appeared to many that Otsus does not better the situation for most. Significantly, the DAP was able to mobilise thousands of protesters to reject Otsus on 12 August 2005. Meanwhile, incapable of resolving the complaints about poor implementation of the Otsus Law and mounting corruption and greediness, the crisis of legitimacy of the provincial government worsened. The establishment of the Papuan People's Consultative Assembly (MRP, Majelis Rakyat Papua), the proverbial heart of Otsus, has been criticised by the DAP saying the election of its members was unfair as the government had interfered in the process.

Admittedly, any governor of Papua moves in a delicate space between the majority of people whose resentment towards the government is ever

growing (and is supported by elements of the regional elite, partly for their own interests) and policy makers in Jakarta (with significant support from still powerful nationalist elements in the central government and the armed forces) who would react with risk-bearing panic if they see that the bureaucracy in Jayapura supports such organisations as the DAP. The picture is still more complex as the new province of Irian Jaya Barat includes the region where most of today's influential legislators in Jayapura come from and find support. A loss of their local constituency would threaten their political future. Perhaps most crucial in understanding the current conflict in Papua is that to Jakarta this all appears to be confusing and thus potentially a threat to the integrity of the Indonesian nation.

That such a situation can lead to disturbing incidents is exemplified by the case of Theys Eluay. A few years ago, this Papuan customary leader was considered a reliable Golkar proxy by Jakarta and elements of the armed forces but later he made an about-turn and began to advocate independence as of 1999. He spoke passionately about the rights of the Papuans during a number of mass gatherings including the Second Papuan Congress in May 2000. As head of the PDP that was established during the *Musyawahar Besar* (Grand Gathering for Discussion) in February 2000, his popularity grew rapidly. He was killed in November 2001. There is compelling evidence that the regional command of Kopassus, the Indonesian military's Special Forces orchestrated the murder of Eluay in November 2001 (Giay 2003).<sup>2</sup>

This example illustrates that Jakarta faces problems with virtually anyone they work with in Papua and this leads to scaremongering intelligence assessments and poorly monitored military actions. Also Papua watchers are often at loss about the backgrounds of regional and personal tensions as well as the role played by deep-rooted sentiments and critical local traditions of knowledge with their 'exotic' millenarian overtones.

In the following I will provide some background information on the question why it is so difficult to understand Papua. First of all, I will briefly discuss forty years of development in Papua and the historical backgrounds of the widespread resentment towards the Indonesian government in general and policy makers in Jakarta in particular. Secondly, I will argue that we need to understand the ways in which 'chaos' in Papua offers opportunities for people in Papua who know how to play the system. I will argue that poor governance and unequal distribution of resources has contributed to and, in fact, sharpened the regional fault lines within today's elite while at the same fostering demands for sovereignty among the people.

I will illustrate this by focusing on the elites that originate from the Kepala Burung (coastal Sorong and Manokwari groups alongside 'mountain people' from Ayamaru) and the role played by people from the central highlands, southern coast, and the north coast including the elites from the Cenderawasih Bay that emerged during the post-Second World War

Dutch period. The emerging picture is sketchy at best; it is a first attempt at mapping the complex territory in terms of emerging identities and shifting political aspirations.<sup>3</sup>

The complexity lies in the different social, economic and political positions of the large variety of cultural groups each with their own distinct history of contact with outside agents of governments and religious missions. Earlier in history, contacts with other parts of Indonesia, in particular the Moluccas, affected coastal Papuans. The links at the eastern border with Papua New Guinea or with 'Melanesia' that are so much feared by policy makers in Jakarta have in fact been largely confined to limited educational migration before 1962, sometimes massive border crossings, little news about the Pacific in national and regional newspapers, and scarce messages from the thousands of refugees who dwell across the border with Papua New Guinea. But let me begin with the colonial period.

### A Late Start

Until 1935, Netherlands New Guinea was largely unexplored territory. Starting shortly before the Second World War, an increasing number of expeditions for mapping local communities and to search for oil and gold began, amid increasing Christian missionisation. After the war, the Dutch put more effort into the development of infrastructure (building on the efforts of missionaries) and providing health services and schooling to Papuans. Economic development was minimal. There were a small number of European coconut, coffee and kapok plantations and one Japanese venture which grew cotton and collected copal.<sup>4</sup>

The most significant resource extraction development was the oil industry in the Kepala Burung region where the Netherlands New Guinea Oil Company (NNGPM, *Nederlandsche Nieuw-Guinee Petroleum Maatschappij*) discovered a major oilfield near Sorong that was brought into production in 1949. However, by 1962 the production at this site had virtually ceased.<sup>5</sup> The labour-force at the oil fields was mostly non-Papuan and Dutch. Economic development during these final years of Dutch Government in New Guinea "was geared towards the discovery of ways and means to unleash the initiative of the Papuans themselves".<sup>6</sup>

In the course of the 1960s, after the transfer of West New Guinea to the Republic of Indonesia, social and economic conditions in the region deteriorated. The local administration became a refuge for mainly untrained staff that had to operate with a shortage of funds and limited infrastructure. Furthermore, a confrontation campaign that Indonesia launched against Malaysia in 1963 over the future of the former British colonies in North Borneo drained much of the country's resources. As a result, the newly acquired province of Irian Barat ('West Irian') was put significantly lower on the nationalist agenda while frustration over the United Nations' position towards the 'neo-colonial construct of Malaysia', led Jakarta to decide to quit its membership of the United Nations.

As part of the decolonization agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands, the Dutch promised the Indonesian government that they would contribute with a grant-in-aid of US\$ 30 million to a Fund of the United Nations for the Development of West Irian (FUNDWI). As a result of Indonesia's decision to suspend membership of the United Nations much of the FUNDWI effort at rehabilitation was suspended. Assessment and planning for FUNDWI programmes resumed after Jakarta decided to renew its participation in the United Nations in November 1966.

The Indonesian National Development Planning Agency (BAPPENAS) incorporated the funds into the first Five-year Development Plan (Repelita I, 1969-1974). In 1970, US\$ 21 million was allocated for FUNDWI-assisted programmes largely focusing on infrastructure and rehabilitation. It was clear that developing Irian Barat would be an arduous task. Consequently Irian Barat received about four times more funds than any other part of the nation. Until today Papua remains a particularly favoured province in terms of resource allocation while only a relatively small proportion of the funds are allocated to the development of Papuans.

As noted in the final FUNDWI report,<sup>7</sup> in terms economic activity at the community level, by far the most potent influence in the private sector was the spontaneous (and organised) influx of immigrants from other Indonesian islands, who took up a large stake in local fisheries, timber business, retail trade and supply of labour.<sup>8</sup> This development and the concurrent mounting feelings of displacement among Papuans increased over the years.

### **New Order Development**

After General Suharto assumed power in 1966, the government launched the New Order (1966-1998) approach to the development of Indonesia. Support for human development increased and primary and secondary education services were provided with many subsidies to even the most remote communities. Moreover, the government tried to stimulate development by employing a high number of people with good technical skills, but failed to prioritize the local people.

It has not always been easy though to assign seasoned administrative and technical personnel in this distant province despite financial and other incentives. On top of that, many of those deployed to the region believed that after a few decades of Dutch colonial politics encouraging anti-Indonesian sentiment they had to make Papuans into Indonesian civilians. This line of thinking also suggests that Papuans are prone to being influenced by individuals who feel discontent or by outsiders who want to destroy the unity of Indonesia. Civilisation of the Papuans became the battle cry.

One of the most prominent civilising offensives of this period was Operasi Koteka ('Penis Gourd Operation'). This operation was targeted at

highland communities most of which had experienced contact with government for periods not longer than one or two decades. One of the aims was to convince people to wear clothing so as to protect them from outsiders who might see their near-nudity as offensive. The operation met with significant resistance and after a few years the military command began to appreciate the argument of the local Catholic Church that Papuan customs should be respected. In the course of the 1970s, the civilizing effort calmed down.<sup>9</sup>

At the level of economic development, the number of permits for mining, forestry, fishing and tourism industries increased. After the government offered new arrangement allowing oil and mining companies to keep a fairly large percent of their profits, a contract with the United States-based Freeport Sulphur was signed. On the basis of exploration results dating back to the Dutch period and an initial period of mining in the mid-1960s, copper and gold mining in the western highlands got underway substantially and appeared highly profitable.<sup>10</sup> In 1973, President Suharto celebrated the mining industry and the wealth of the region when he visited the Freeport mine site. It was on this occasion that he renamed the province Irian Jaya or 'Glorious Irian'.

Throughout the New Order period, Jakarta often stressed that Papuans do not understand that Indonesia is in fact spending a lot of money to improve the living standards of the people. What was needed was to educate these masses to the point where they became full members of the Indonesian nation. This top-down line of thinking continues today and leads to miscommunication and misunderstanding between Papuans and outsiders, causing disappointment, resentment and protest.

A careful assessment of the current situation in Papua is provided by the National Human Development Report (NHDR 2004) that is produced by the UNDP in collaboration with the national statistical agency (BPS-Statistics) and the national development-planning agency (BAPPENAS). The report brings together the production and distribution of commodities and the expansion as well as use of human capabilities. The NHDR shows that the average Human Development Index (HDI) for Indonesia in 2002 is 66, ranging from 76 in the highly urbanised and industrialised region of East Jakarta to 47 in the district of Jayawijaya in Papua.<sup>11</sup>

The considerable variation across the country is related to differences in the availability of profitable natural resources, people's access to these natural resources and the distribution of the revenues of the extraction of these riches. At the national level, the situation of the resource-rich province of Papua is ranked 26 places lower in HDI than in per capita GDP, a clear indication that income from Papua's mining, oil, forestry and fishing industries has not been invested sufficiently in services for the people. An even stronger variation is found within Papua where the districts HDIs vary from 47 for Jayawijaya to 71.4 and 73 in Jayapura and Sorong respectively.<sup>12</sup>

In the statistics for social welfare produced by the BPS Papua in 2002, the districts of Jayawijaya, Paniai and Puncak Jaya show the highest number of poor families and the greatest amount of so-called 'isolated communities' (masyarakat tertinggal).<sup>13</sup> These numbers clearly reflect the limited access to services and indicate the extent to which the government has failed to increase living standards among rural Papuan communities. Highlanders experience this as an unfair distribution of resources, particularly when they reflect on their dislocation in the light of the economic growth and wealth enjoyed in the urban centres dominated by non-Papuan and Papuans from coastal regions.

Beside the fact that the vast bulk of revenues from natural resource exploitation are not shared evenly within the country and not distributed equally between the different groups in Papua, many non-Papuan are more likely to find employment in the commercial sector. Despite the fact that employment for Papuans in the bureaucracy has increased over the last few years due to affirmative action, there are still great disparities.

For most regions, funding for development programs came through the government, with the exception of private investments in urban centres and the Freeport mine location. The benefit of private expenditure tends to be weighted towards the rich of whom a large proportion is non-Papuan. This has contributed to significant regional divisions in levels of health service and educational attainment. Also, infant mortality rates for Papuans and poor migrants in both urban and rural regions are much higher than they are for the wealthy in Timika, Sorong, Merauke and Jayapura.

In conclusion, the legacy of 32 years of New Order government in Papua has led to a number of dramatic changes. Most worryingly, the statistics indicate that the region falls far below the national average in terms of health, education, and infrastructure. At the same time the country possesses an overwhelming amount of natural resources (minerals, timber, oil and gas). On top of the resulting imbalances between 'Jakarta' and 'Papua', regional divisions in development, in particular between northern coastal and central highlands communities have been reinforced by unequal distribution of resources.

### **Little Suhartos**

During the Suharto-led New Order politics, an ever-growing but relatively poorly funded military apparatus supported a network of alliances for both political control and predator business. The latter was organised around the exploitation of resources taken from rural communities without proper compensation. As noted above, Papua was one of the regions where mining became of central importance. Forestry and fishery activities were initially limited but grew significantly during the period of reform and decentralisation after the fall of the Suharto-regime in 1998.

Recently, the London-based Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and Telapak in Jakarta reported on rampant logging in Papua in a report titled 'The Last Frontier: illegal Logging in Papua and China's Massive Timber Theft' (2005). The report is an alarming indication of illegal trade threatening the last tract of pristine forest in the Asia-Pacific region. The investigation revealed how one timber species, merbau (*kayu besi*), a luxurious dark hardwood, is the main target of a billion-dollar trade route from Papua to the booming cities of China's Yangtze River delta. Many in the formal sector and the military are involved in this highly profitable timber traffic.

The national decentralisation effort following autocratic rule, has allowed many local leaders to gain a larger share of the profits that were effectively channelled to Jakarta elites during the earlier period. They became "little Suhartos" in popular expression. Nepotism, international finance, military muscle, and the siphoning of funds and revenues by the military at every level of the government became the key ingredients of decentralisation in Papua. Local security guards are developed without control by the government at all levels. Furthermore, growing lack of transparency and accountability in commercial and security affairs allows economic resources and decision-making power to remain in the hands of a few, usually the district heads alongside investors and personnel from the security forces.

Involvement of the military in large-scale resource projects such as the Freeport gold and copper mine includes security deals with the company and the establishment of the military as the main bridge between allegedly rebellious local communities and an industry that feels threatened by attacks from Papuans. In the extreme case of Freeport, a condition of systematic intimidation, manipulation and terror developed which profited the military, victimised local groups such as the Amungme and Kamoro, and did not improve the reputation of the mine. These conditions have made many Papuans feel vulnerable to outside forces, in particular the military and the police.

On top of that, limited access to services and the benefits of resource development projects sharpen the fault lines between local people and those who have arrived in Papua through transmigration programs or the larger waves of spontaneous migration. Butonese, Buginese, Makassarese and Javanese immigrants have filled manual labour and small business opportunities. As a result, economic, ethnic and religious differences play a significant and sometimes alarming role in land and resource politics.

In terms of governance, the region is still among the most poorly developed in Indonesia. Largely in line with the preceding policies of the Dutch administration, the Government of Indonesia believes that such traditional Papuan activities as exchanging cloth among the people of the western Kepala Burung, organising bride wealth ceremonies in the highlands, and implementing large-scale fertility ritual gatherings in the

south-coast plains region are hampering 'the native's' integration into an emerging Indonesian state system and economy. Most administrators working in Papua are convinced that they have to manage a process of cultural incorporation of indigenous cultures within an Indonesian administration and economy. They see themselves as being responsible for relating new structures, goals and values of a centralized administration to the different cultures of the Papuan societies.

The attitudes of both Papuan and non-Papuan government officials are often marked by a sense of not knowing how to develop the region and, in some cases, outright ignorance and apathy. Lack of knowledge and capacity, and negative ideas about the potential of Papuan communities to participate in modern development persist until today. This constitutes one of the main determinants of Papua remaining among the least developed regions of Indonesia. It was only when people in Papua were allowed to formulate and plan increased sovereignty within the framework of Regional and Otsus, that local communities and leaders were accorded a functional place in the governance of the region. The need for bridging Indonesian institutions and regulations that are founded on nation-wide centralized principles of New Order guided democracy, became a central concern during the drafting of the Otsus Law.

The responses from Papuan communities to a highly centralised administration that fits poorly with the reality on the ground and distributes resources unequally are varied. In the south-western Kepala Burung region, for example, Imyan people see their autonomy threatened due to a variety of demands by the government (for participation in development programs) and the church (demanding that people be good Christians, adhering to the Ten Commandments, attending services and contributing money and services to the church organisation), and conflicting with duties perceived as traditional (such as gardening, hunting, organising bride wealth payments, settling disputes, and so on).<sup>14</sup>

The duties for the church and the government are experienced as conflicting by local people, in particular because they clash with 'traditional' duties in terms of time and labour, while 'tradition' or 'custom' (adat) is perceived as stable and good. In this context, adat comprises all contemporary reflections on and practices that people regard as customary and containing the rules of good and just living. Tradition often becomes a marker for being different from outsiders and organising things differently than the Indonesian state does.

In many of the locations where large-scale resource extraction takes place, such as the Freeport copper and gold mine in the Mimika region and the recently initiated British Petroleum/Pertamina Tangguh LNG plant in the Bintuni Bay, as well as logging and fishery business, local communities organise themselves against neighbouring groups that also claim natural resources and compensation. One of the effects of this development is eccentric and charged revitalizations of customary structures and the establishment of customary organisations (masyarakat adat).



Due to the expectations of monetary flows that resource development projects might bring, there are often competing claims over land and resources. This poses not only a problem for local communities who no longer know whom to trust and through whom to raise their voices with outside companies and the government; but also for the government and the companies who find it increasingly difficult to deal effectively with the dispersed forms of Papuan leadership.

Besides 'tradition' or 'custom', Christianity has left a deep imprint on the culture of Papuan communities. Missionisation began in the 1855 and continues until today in remote regions of the southern plains and the highlands while two major church organisations have established a firm role in the lives of Catholic Papuans (mostly in the south and southwest) and Protestant Papuans (mainly in the north and northwest).<sup>15</sup> Local interpretations of Christianity presently form an important background for the social and political changes taking place in Papua today.

Christian symbols and rituals appear in a creative combination with pre-Christian cosmologies and rituals often become weapons of the weak, functioning as ways to subtly undermine the nation and its ideologies.<sup>16</sup> Religious tensions with 'immigrant communities' at times induce Papuans to confirm or stress that they are Christian in a nation whose majority is Muslim. At the same time, the Church is the most prominent and most sizeable good functioning civil society organisation that moreover belongs to the Papuans. On top of that, the church organisations are present in most remote areas where the government and non-governmental organisations generally fail to deliver services.

### **New Elites**

As indicated above, the province of Papua is resource rich and has the highest GDP of Indonesia but its people are among Indonesia's poorest. Educational opportunities are limited and those with training face high unemployment rates in an environment that favours employees from other regions of Indonesia. Papuan parents target government jobs if they are seeking a prosperous future for their children because competition in the commercial sector is too stiff. The government sector is also not immune to racism against Papuans, perhaps in combination with a fear of too much influence in the formal sector of people that are inclined to develop a separatist form of nationalism.

In that sense, any attempt at Papuanisation in terms of involving more Papuans in decision-making processes and employing more Papuans in the formal sector revolves in a vicious circle. A generally low level of education with a curriculum focused around making proper Indonesian citizens out of 'unruly rebellious Papuans' has subdued alternative strategies among Papuans for creating forms of nationalism and connecting to advocacy bodies within Indonesia and abroad. Recent generations of Papuans have, however, seized chances for education, in particular those

from regions where people were less disgruntled by the Indonesian takeover, and were favoured in terms of access to education, such as the Kepala Burung region.

In particular, among the recently ascended Sorong and Ayamaru elites, there is a high degree of acquaintance with Indonesian ways of doing politics and, in line with most elements of the elite, a growing appreciation for engaging in political and economic games that primarily benefit the elite, producing dishonesty and resentment among others in the bureaucracy and among the communities that they administer. Highlanders and people from the south-coastal regions are often consumed with envy about the power enjoyed by people from the Cenderawasih Bay, the Kepala Burung and Sentani.

Present-day conflicts in Papua include disputes over natural resources and economic and political power struggles, and frictions between different ethnicities, religion, and immigrants and locals.<sup>17</sup> Studies of 'the conflict in Papua', however, commonly focus on Jakarta policies and armed forces operations. Most reports produced by Papua watchers portray developments in Papua mainly in terms of violations of human rights by 'Jakarta', which in turn is a phenomenon opposing 'Papuan resistance'. This resistance is often depicted as a single actor with a uniform ethnic identity driven by a uniting national consciousness. Papuan identity is then presupposed to exist in a bounded cultural and racial sphere defined as 'Melanesia' as opposed to 'Indonesia' or 'Asia'.

The lack of attention to the variety of and changes in Papuan worldviews is astonishing as newly emerging identities and related concerns and strategies lead to tensions in and between local communities and shape largely the politics of the elite. In the virtual absence of a middle-class and very limited private investment in human development and the delivery of services, the powerful elites in Papua are to be found in the administrative sector and in religious institutions. Therefore, Papuan political power is in the hands of these new bureaucratic and religious elite.

The varied ethnic and political landscape in Papua is accentuated by the timing and nature of contact with outside powers. In pre-colonial times, contact with regional others and internal and in-migration were perhaps the most significant factors in demographic, social and cultural change in Papua. More in general many coastal groups looked for centuries towards the east. In particular the coastal communities of the Kepala Burung and the Cenderawasih Bay maintained trade and marriage relationship with the Moluccas and Islam spread along certain coastal stretches.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, people in the highland regions lived relatively isolated in mountain valleys with little direct but extensive indirect trade networks extending to the coast.<sup>19</sup>

Cultural differences between the mountains and the north and the west coast changed markedly with the advent of Christian missionisation and Dutch administration during the 20th Century. Mission activity, followed

hesitantly by the government, affected the Cenderawasih Bay, the Kepala Burung, the north coast and coastal stretches such as Mimika and Merauke along the southwest coast, while most groups in the highlands and communities in the southern plains remained 'untouched' until the 1960s. Encounters between highland people and the state and church intensified after the Indonesian government took over the territory from 1963.

Shortly before and after the Second World War economic development was limited, while at later stages, new political developments took place. Especially the rapid expansion of administration and education had a major impact on the coastal people in Biak, Manokwari, Yapen en Sentani, and to a lesser extent in the Kepala Burung and Fak-fak. Papuans from these regions absorbed Dutch teachings at high schools in Netherlands New Guinea and were exposed to European life styles. Some were given the opportunity to enjoy education in Europe and the Pacific. The figures remained modest since in the early 1960s, only about ten thousand Papuans (of a total population estimated at around one million) were in government service while a smaller number was employed in the private sector.

### **Papuanisation and Indonesianisation**

Later generations grew up in the context of the Indonesian nation-state, undertook studies at Indonesian institutions and made careers in the Indonesian civil service, equipping them with the skills and language of modern Indonesia. Whereas many members of the old Papuan elite that was created by the Dutch were marginalised, the new generations of educated Papuans (still largely from coastal regions) found their way into the civil service. Participation of Papuans in the administration and commercial ventures was however still restricted. The Indonesian government was afraid that Papuans would gain too much of a voice in the administrative sector while banking facilities are few and tend to privilege Javanese, Buginese, Moluccan and foreign investors. Moreover, the commercial infrastructure is poorly developed and bureaucratic approvals for trade are awfully slow, in particular for Papuans.

It was only in the late 1990s that sincere efforts were made to Papuanise the formal sector. Today, around 35 percent of the labour force in the government is Papuan, which is a poor reflection of the demographic reality in which approximately 60 percent of the population is Papuan. Nevertheless, over the last few years more Papuans have become legislators both at the district and provincial levels. Amid many people from elsewhere in Indonesia, the provincial bureaucracy is chiefly dominated by coastal Papuans from the Cenderawasih Bay islands of Biak and Yapen, Sentani, and, more recently from the Sorong and Ayamaru regions of the Kepala Burung.

Widjojo signalled in this respect that the biggest problem facing Irian Jaya was social and cultural polarisation and domination of the formal sector

by ethnic Biak, Ayamaru, Serui and Sentani.<sup>20</sup> In contrast to the provincial bureaucracy, in the district governments in the highlands and south coastal regions the local population is more strongly represented notwithstanding the presence of a significant number of decision makers from Biak and Yapen in the Cenderawasih Bay, the Sorong region of the Kepala Burung, and a few Javanese and Moluccans.

As mentioned above, amongst the recently ascending Sorong and Ayamaru elites, there is a remarkable acquaintance with Indonesian ways of doing politics. The acquired skills and knowledge of the present-day bureaucratic elite enables a number of influential people to establish links with Jakarta that primarily serves their own benefit. Highlanders and people from the south-coastal regions (Mimika, Merauke) are often consumed with envy about the power enjoyed by people from the Kepala Burung and the Cenderawasih Bay. Underlying this foremost regional cleavage in Papua is the serious lag in development of most regions of the highlands.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, because of isolation and due to ongoing often poorly orchestrated TNI action, the highland region is currently the chief nursery of Papuan resistance to the Indonesian government.

This Papuan resistance also translates into regional tensions as highlanders regularly challenge both the provincial government and coastal Papuans from Biak, Sorong and Sentani where they at times accuse of collaboration with 'Indonesia'. This tension highlights one of the main divisions within the Papuan nationalist movement that is illustrated by Rutherford recounting a joke in which a highlander tells another highlander that when Papua gains independence all Biaks will become foreigners (amberi) while highlanders will become Biaks.<sup>22</sup>

During the massive gatherings during the Papuan Spring Papuan leaders managed to balance representations from the highlands and the coast and Papuans felt united in their *memoria passionis*. With the advent of administrative fragmentation or *pemekaran* ('blossoming'), the tensions between elites from Biak, Yapen, Ayamaru and Sorong as well as between 'the coast' and 'the highlands' intensified. A recent Indonesia briefing by the International Crisis Group outlines that the new *pemekaran* policy alongside a certain level of support for Otsus 'has generated intense acrimony within the governing elite in Papua between those who stand to gain from the division ... and those who benefit more from the status quo'. Chauvel notes that '[t]he jockeying for position that this policy unleashed suggests that regional and tribal interests remain politically salient'.<sup>23</sup>

Many in Papua, in particular among the elites, know how the Indonesian state works and have learned how to profit from companies wanting to buy their trees, mine their ores, drill their gas, and so on. Over the last few decades, civil society organisations and Papuan intellectuals have also begun to surface in politics and policy roles in Papua in increasingly significant ways. Nation-wide appeals and support for peaceful protests, demonstrations and seminars organised by networks of Papuan stu-

dents, the drafting of and lobbying for Otsus regulations by academics and bureaucrats in Jayapura, and a growing number of critical writings by Papuans are indicative of powerful changes in the social and political landscape of the region.

The high turnout of voters and the generally smooth implementation of the 2004 national parliament, provincial legislators and presidential elections in Papua clearly demonstrated the growing will to support civilian-led government and the rule of democracy in Indonesia since the fall of New Order's President Suharto in 1998. This faith in the possibility of having a voice in the politics of Indonesia through democratic means is part of a larger process of people in Papua integrating Western and Indonesian reflections on colonial history, Christianity, and New Order nation-building and development. In general, we see that the people of Papua are moving away from colonial shackles and old and new subservient positions. Yet these positive developments occur amid increasingly unsettling disparities in social and economic development in the region and concurrent rising of ethnic tensions and fear of poorly monitored military actions.

### **Conclusion**

The post-Suharto reformasi period in Papua was marked by revivals of optimism about change and expectations of imminent far-reaching sovereignty. The prospect of justice, the acknowledgement of the 'true history of Papua', and increased respect for the Papuans, alternate with strong disappointment and mounting resentment towards 'Jakarta' due to renewed harsh and poorly controlled TNI operations.

Amid a persistent undercurrent of distrust towards the national government many in Papua show a remarkable ardour for entering into a bargaining process (albeit often with high opening bids, alarming policy makers in Jakarta). Hopes of justice be done to the Papuans were again visible during the recent national elections in which the people of Papua went to the polls in high numbers. Also the Otsus and pemekaran supporting lobbies Papua indicate that many in Papua want to participate actively in a political economy of dependence on and engagement with Jakarta.

'Dependence' is constructed and maintained as much by Papuans who support a dialogue with 'Jakarta' and are eager to cast votes during democratic elections as by political actors who try to convince Jakarta of the importance to recognise the grievances of the people of Papua, or merely seek to profit financially from this relationship. On the other hand, both the 'indigenous Papuans' and those generally labelled as 'immigrants' – the divisions between the two can never be clear, let alone desirable – have for a number of reasons quite a strong urge to live their lives largely autonomous. This is due to the general denial of their dignity and their

disappointment in the central government's policies towards Papua. When the need to distance oneself from unreliable elites and decentralisation that goes astray, people begin to revitalise traditions of relative freedom allegedly enjoyed in the past.

The voices for more autonomy in Papua are generally not about Papuan nationalism but relate to a resistant stance against the dominance of the state. The state has not brought what Papuans expected and is thus challenged by social, ethnic, religious and regional identities. Most Papuans treat the state with a high degree of suspicion. Currently, there are two points of contention among the vast majority of people in Papua. One is the unpredictability of 'Jakarta' as the model of the state that the central government is propagating to Papua is unclear, and the other is frustration over the wealth and influence of Papuan elites whose agendas are often too detached from the circumstances they suggest to address.

Many of the current internal differences in Papua and the lingering conflict with Jakarta relate to shifts in power at the centre of the state and increased concerns over access to resources as a result of decentralization at the regional level. The gap between Papuan worlds and a world coloured by an apparently organised state structure that often disguises nepotism, military business and power, and international economic interests is widening. The provincial government, civil society organisations and local communities have still a long way to go to arrive at a shared commitment to the possibility of increasing access to services in particular for rural communities, triggering pro-poor social, economic and political change, and regulating a more equal sharing of resource benefits through Otsus regulations.

The main issues that unite Papuans in a feeling of resentment towards the Government of Indonesia are frustrations over the limited successes of development, seemingly systematic marginalization, and ongoing repression. However Indonesian Papuans may behave, talk and occupy positions in the formal sector, there are clear signs that Indonesian nationalism is very limited, if non-existent, among the majority of Papuans. Partly, the sentiments of being different and of suffering are expressed in terms of local 'traditional' cultural ideas and practices, millennial expectations, and concerns with knowledge.

To remain critical of what is going on in Papua, policy makers (as well as Papua watchers) should be careful not to fall into the classical mistake of seeing that there is a united Papuan cause that is frustrated by 'Indonesia'. In fact, there has never been an all-together Papuan effort to a struggle for secession from Indonesia. There have always been strong divisions within Papua even when people organise in civil society organisations, government bodies, or alongside activist circles abroad. What most Papuans have in common though is a painful memory of development programs and democratisation efforts dogged by unfulfilled promises and failures.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 See, for example, Walsh & Rough, 'Updates on West Papua', *Arena* 1999, 43: 6-9; J. Barr, The future could be genocide, [www.westpapua.net](http://www.westpapua.net). and J. Wing & P. King, *Genocide in West Papua?* (Sydney 2005).
- 2 B. Giay, *Tanggapan masyarakat* (Abepura 2003).
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- 4 See C. Lagerberg, *Jaren van reconstructie ('s-Hertogenbosch 1962)* en P. Schoorl, 'De controleur BB als een agent van ontwikkeling op Nieuw Guinea' in: P. Schoorl, *Besturen in Nederlands-Nieuw-Guinea 1945-1962* (Leiden 1996).
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- 6 J. Pouwer, 'The Colonisation, Decolonisation and Recolonisation of West New Guinea', *Journal of Pacific History* (1999) 34 no 2, pp. 157-179. See also P. Schoorl, *op. cit.*
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- 9 See D. Vlasblom, *Papoea: Een Geschiedenis* (Amsterdam 2004) pp. 499-503.
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- 12 *Op. cit.*, p. 11.
- 13 BPS Papua 2002, p. 207.
- 14 J. Timmer, *Living with Intricate Futures* (Nijmegen 2000).
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- 16 J. Timmer, *op. cit.*
- 17 International Crisis Group 2002; Amnesty International 2002.
- 18 See:
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  - R. Ellen, 'The Last Frontier' ([www.eia-international.org](http://www.eia-international.org))
  - F. Huizinga 'Relations between Tidore and the north coast of New Guinea in the nineteenth Century' in J. Miedema e.a. ed.: *Perspectives on the Bird's Head of Irian Jaya* (Amsterdam 1998)
  - F.C. Kamma, 'De verhouding tussen Tidore en de Papoesche eilanden' (4 artt. in: *Indonesia (1947-1949)* I no 4, pp. 361-371; I no 6 pp. 536-559; II no 2, pp. 177-187; IV no 3, pp. 256-275.
  - P. Swadling, *Plumes from Paradise* (Boroko 1996)
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  - L. Visser 'The Kamrau Bay area', *Bulletin of Irian Jaya* 17, pp. 65-76..
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