
FROM IRIAN JAYA TO PAPUA: THE LIMITS OF PRIMORDIALISM IN INDONESIA'S TROUBLED EAST

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On October 6, 2000, there occurred an event that had long been dreaded by those who have followed the rise of Papuan nationalism in Irian Jaya, the Indonesian province that covers the western half of New Guinea. (Papuan nationalists call this territory West Papua; it is now commonly called Papua in Indonesia. In this context, the use of a particular toponym is a political act, even more than is usually the case.) In the Baliem Valley of Jayawijaya District, high in the province's mountainous interior, a riot broke out after the police cut down the Morning Star flag, the emblem of an independent West Papua that has been flying throughout the province for many months. Shots were fired, and in the ensuing melee, dozens of "non-Papuan" were killed. Vivid accounts of atrocities filled the national papers in the days following the incident.¹ Armed with spears, bows, and axes, local tribesmen set fire to houses belonging to traders, teachers, and bureaucrats from outside the valley, then slaughtered their occupants as they fled. In a scene reminiscent of other Indonesian trouble spots, refugees flooded the police station, churches, mosques, and the airport. Most vowed they would leave the town of Wamena and never return.

¹ See, e.g., "Ingin Pamit kepada Istri di Liang Lahat di Wamena," *Kompas Online*, October 7, 2000; "Nasib Ribuan Guru di Jayawijaya Belum Jelas," *Kompas Online*, October 10, 2000; "Korban Umumnya Pendatang, Rusuh Wamena Telan Korban Nyawa 30 Orang," *Republika Online*, October 11, 2000. See also Dean Yates, "Clashes in Indonesia's Irian Jaya Kill 30," *Reuters*, October 7, 2000; "Settlers refuse to leave shelters in Indonesian riot-torn town," *AFP*, October 10, 2000. See also Els-HAM, "War break up between the people and security forces in Wamena: More people wounded, potential for horizontal conflict," Internet posting, October 6, 2000.

Mainstream journalists tend to tell a simple story about incidents like the riot in Wamena. That story, in summary, runs like this: exacerbated by economic hardship, the "repressed passions of political, religious and ethnic difference" have erupted, now that Suharto's authoritarian New Order regime is no longer there to keep them in check.² As was the case in coverage of atrocities in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo, what is often called "primordialism" provides an easy explanation, in reports on Indonesia, for how distant others can behave in seemingly inhuman ways. The term, "primordialism," dates to the social science literature of the 1950s and 1960s. In that time of greater optimism regarding the future of "new states," Clifford Geertz used the concept to account for the emergence of allegiances broader than the immediate affinities of kinship and community, yet short of the civic ties of the modern nation-state.

By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the "givens"—or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed "givens"—of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connections mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves.³

Geertz was careful to acknowledge the historical specificity of the conflicts that arise in different "emerging nations," and he admitted that further work needed to be done on the processes that lead to the recognition of new ethnic identities. Yet his essay set the stage for the question-begging evident in much recent coverage of Indonesia. Violence is easy to explain when one takes for granted the "coerciveness" of bonds based "on some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself."⁴

If primordial sentiments were at the root of recent unrest in Indonesia, then Irian Jaya would be a place where one would expect to see much violence. All the ingredients are there: a population divided between predominantly Christian indigenes and growing numbers of Muslim migrants; an economy in which outsiders dominate trade; a history marked by repression and exploitation. But up until recently, the

² See Seth Mydans, "The World: Indonesia's Many Faces Reflect One Nation, Divisible," *New York Times*, September 5, 1999, online archives, p. 1.

³ See Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 259. This essay was initially published in 1963.

⁴ Ibid. Geertz borrows the term "primordialism" from Edward Shils, who used it in an essay that described the relationship between research and theory by way of an account of his own studies of the forces that integrate modern industrial societies in the West. See "Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties: Some Particular Observations on the Relationship of Sociological Research and Theory," *British Journal of Sociology* 8 (1957): 130-145. Shils reserves the adjective, "primordial," for relationships based on shared residence and kinship; religious, civic, and "cult" bonds are of a different sort. But the same appeal to the "ineffable coerciveness" of certain sorts of relationships is evident in Shils's explanation of what binds together groups like Nazi soldiers and revolutionary cells. For a critique of this school of sociological thought, which is based on a particular appropriation of Weberian theory in America, see Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "Further Adventures of Charisma," in *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 78-93.

province's inhabitants have not responded to current conditions with aggression along religious or ethnic lines. Although there is tension between migrants and indigenes and between coastal and highland tribes, the dozens of ethnolinguistic groups who claim an ancestral homeland in the province have not become a primary focus of mobilization. Instead, a mostly peaceful pro-independence movement has engaged its followers in a symbolic refashioning of political space.

In this essay, we confirm the wisdom of analysts who have pinpointed the weakness of explanations of violence that appeal to the primordial: these explanations cannot account for when and where violence occurs, or which particular identities will prove salient.⁵ We follow in the footsteps of those who have suggested that primordial allegiances are less a threat to nation formation than a product of the historical forces that have given rise to modern states.⁶ But we also suggest that Papuan nationalism cannot be reduced to the inevitable outcome of the population's exposure to "modernity" and/or the machinations of shadowy provocateurs. Rather, the current movement must be placed in the context of a particular colonial history, and a particular global environment, in which mass-mediated representations of violence are a determining factor in the unfolding of events in the province, as are changes in the nature of the sovereignty of modern states.

Clearly, we cannot capture the Papuan nationalist movement in all its complexity in this brief essay. Our goal here is simply to provide a context for understanding the violence in Wamena as something more than an expression of primordial animosities. We shall do this by outlining two histories, the first of which has unfolded over the course of centuries; the second, over the course of months. In the conclusion, we suggest that primordialism may well be a factor in the story of Papuan nationalism—but not in the way the mainstream media would lead us to expect.

The Birth of the Papuan

To understand current events in the province of Irian Jaya, one must return to the territory's checkered past. It is no accident that the current movement has taken as one of its aims the "straightening" of the course of Papua's history—a rectification of the way in which the province's inhabitants have been taught to envision this past.⁷ The period most salient in this project extends for two decades, from the late 1940s, when Dutch and Indonesian negotiators agreed to defer a decision on Papua's future during the discussions that finalized Indonesia's independence, to the late 1960s, when a putative "Act of Free Choice" confirmed the region's status as an Indonesian province. During the 1950s and early 1960s, the Dutch ruled western New Guinea as a separate colony—a "fetish," as Lijphart has called it, for the Netherlands' lost Indies empire—

⁵ See, e.g., Geoffrey Robinson, "Rawan is as Rawan Does: The Origins of Disorder in New Order Aceh," in *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*, ed. Benedict R. O'G. Anderson (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2001), pp. 213-242.

⁶ See Brackette Williams, "A Class Act: The Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18 (1989): 401-444; Rita Kipp, *Dissociated Identities: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in an Indonesian Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

⁷ "3,000 Irian representatives meet to 'rectify' history," *Jakarta Post*, May 29, 2000.

justifying this financially and diplomatically costly enterprise on the grounds that they were preparing the “primitive” Papuans for self-rule.⁸ Indonesia protested and eventually threatened to invade the territory. The United States intervened to broker a deal between the Netherlands and Indonesia; by the terms of that agreement, first a United Nations Temporary Executive Authority, then Indonesia, would administer the colony in advance of a plebiscite in which the Papuans would choose between independence and integration into Indonesia. In the context of the Cold War, recent scholarship suggests, the main goal of the actors in this drama was to extricate the Dutch with as little embarrassment as possible; no Papuans took part in the negotiations, and the plan for a referendum was developed merely for show.⁹ In 1969, with the Indonesian military suppressing all dissent, and the United Nations turning a blind eye to deviations from the agreement, a group of 1,025 tribal leaders unsurprisingly opted for integration. The cause of the current movement is straightforward, a community leader on the off-shore island of Biak told one of the authors: the Papuans want a new referendum, so they can truly decide their own fate.

But if this demand is simple enough, the developments that led to the Netherlands’ postwar possession of western New Guinea are not. The idea of ruling western New Guinea as a separate colony first arose in the 1930s, in the writings of right-wing colonials who proposed using the territory as a homeland for downwardly mobile Indo-Europeans, whose livelihoods were threatened by the Depression and native competition in the Indies’ job market.¹⁰ Interest in New Guinea resulted in the founding of new institutions and journals devoted to the territory, and the publication of essays that explained how the Papuans differed from the rest of the Indies’ natives. These reports of the Papuans’ peculiarity in the 1930s laid the groundwork for politicians and activists who proposed a new set of laws designed for New Guinea’s “primitive” conditions. Their proposals included the re-establishment of the penal sanction for errant contract laborers and the introduction of measures that would enable Europeans to gain full title to native land. But in earlier periods, while Dutch colonials admitted that their mastery of western New Guinea was far from complete, few were willing to draw such sharp distinctions between the Papuans and the colony’s other natives. In 1850, one Dutch observer implicitly compared the coastal people he met in the Bird’s Head to the “gentle” Javanese.¹¹ In 1893, another observer attributed the men’s houses he saw on his journeys to the influence of “Hindu priests.”¹² These representations

⁸ See Arend Lijphart, *The Trauma of Decolonization: The Dutch and West New Guinea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

⁹ See John Saltford, “United Nations Involvement with the Act of Self-Determination in West Irian (Indonesian West New Guinea), 1968-1969,” *Indonesia* 69 (2000): 71-92.

¹⁰ See Danilyn Rutherford, “Trekkling to New Guinea: Dutch Colonial Fantasies of a Virgin Land 1900-1940,” in *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, ed. Frances Gouda and Julia Clancy-Smith (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), pp. 255-272.

¹¹ See G. F. de Bruyn Kops, “Bijdrage tot de kennis der Noord- en Oostkusten van Nieuw Guinea,” *Natuurkundig Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indie* 1 (1850): 163-235.

¹² See D. W. Horst, *De Rum-serams op Nieuw Guinea of Het Hindoeisme in het Oosten van Onzen Archipel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1893). Benedict Anderson argues that speculations of this sort reflected a typical form of colonial racism in the Indies—the colony’s current “race” of natives were deemed incapable of whatever signs of art and civilization one might find. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), p. 181.

were imaginative, to say the least, yet they suggest the degree to which the image of the Papuan as utterly unrelated to the rest of the Indies' natives emerged at a particular moment, to serve particular ends.

This is not to say that there was nothing distinctive about New Guinea's place in the colony. Originally claimed as a buffer against foreign intervention into the lucrative Spice Islands trade, the enormous, rugged region gave rise to fantasies of wealth, yet proved too much of a burden to govern in a concerted fashion. Even those coastal groups with the longest history of contact with outsiders lived their lives, for much of the colonial era, just beyond the furthest limits of effective colonial rule. Papuans residing on sections of the northern and western coasts of New Guinea were nominally the subjects of the Spice Islands Sultans of Tidore, who demanded a tribute of slaves and bird skins, and periodically sent a flotilla to lay waste to unruly communities. But for the most part, the Papuan seafarers went about their business of raiding and trading, undisturbed by the Dutch war ships that sometimes accompanied the Tidoran fleet. In the period that gave rise to the configuration of islands that makes up today's Indonesia, parts of New Guinea were finally "pacified." But the establishment of permanent posts did not impinge directly on the lives of the inhabitants of the highlands, whose densely populated valleys were not reached by Europeans until the late 1930s. Still, the image of New Guinea as an untouched "virgin" land obscures a long history of interaction.¹³ The ancestors of some of today's Papuans were exposed to outsiders—in the form of the Malay and European bird hunters of the feather boom of the 1880s, and the Chinese traders who plied their wares in the steamships that reached the region in the 1890s—and as a result developed distinctive ways of coping with forces from afar.¹⁴

The prewar period of Dutch rule left the inhabitants of today's Irian Jaya with an uneven experience of colonial rule. The patchy, often illusory quality of governance in the region is reflected in the very word, Papuan, which has referred to a shifting population. For the Tidoran sultans, whose regional ties formed the basis of Dutch claims to New Guinea, the word designated the inhabitants of the Raja Ampat islands and parts of the northern coastline, at most.¹⁵ Missionaries and officials with dealings in the region adopted the ethnonym during the nineteenth century; confusingly, given current usage, it later became the name of the British colony established in southeastern New Guinea, one of the two predecessors to the contemporary nation-state of Papua New Guinea. The postwar period saw the consolidation of the colonial project—and colonial representations of the Papuans—whose descendants it left with memories of promises unfulfilled.

¹³ Arguing that we should consider this history in terms of trade cycles, rather than a gradual "opening" to the outside world, Pamela Swadling has proposed that the collapse of the Asian demand for feathers after 300 AD "explains how [New Guinea] became the 'last unknown' and the 'land of the unexpected.'" See Pamela Swadling, *Plumes from Paradise* (Boroko, Papua New Guinea: Papua New Guinea National Museum/Robert Brown and Associates, 1996), p. 17.

¹⁴ On interethnic relations in Biak, see e.g. Danilyn Rutherford, "Intimacy and Alienation: Money and the Foreign in Biak," *Public Culture* 13,2 (2001): 299-324.

¹⁵ See J. H. F. Sollewijn Gelpke, "On the Origins of the Name Papua," *Bijdragen tot het Land-, Taal- en Volkenkunde* 149,2 (1993): 318-332.

But the most strongly unifying experiences came with the region's transfer to Indonesia, which began what one observer has called a *memoria passionis*, a collective "memory of suffering," that, in one way or another, has affected all of the province's indigenous people.¹⁶ Human rights violations began with the departure of the United Nations Temporary Authority, and have continued through the New Order period and up to the present day. The litany of abuses extends from the strafing of communities near Enarotali in the mid-1960s, to the killing of unarmed villagers in and around Timika in 1995 and 1996, to the shooting of pro-independence protesters in Biak, Nabire, Sorong, Wamena, and Timika in 1998 and 1999.¹⁷ In addition, Papuans point to their suffering under corrupt and racist bureaucrats; their displacement by government sponsored and spontaneous migrants from Central Java, South Sulawesi, North Sumatra, and other provinces; and the destruction of the environment and the alienation of their ancestral lands. These experiences are made all the more bitter by the fact that, under the New Order, the territory finally began to turn a profit for its rulers. Thanks to the gold and copper mines run by Freeport-Indonesia, a subsidiary of the New Orleans-based mining corporation, Freeport McMoRan, Irian Jaya was a key source of foreign exchange earnings for the New Order government, with a GDP well above that of many nation-states.¹⁸

Under the New Order, there was little public discussion of this history; indeed, the very use of the term "Papuan" was taboo. The province's inhabitants learned to call themselves "*orang Irian*," after the Indonesian name for the territory, Irian Barat (West Irian) or Irian Jaya (Glorious Irian), said to be an acronym for "Ikut Republik Indonesia Anti-Nederland" ("Follow the Indonesian Republic against the Dutch").¹⁹ The

¹⁶ See J. Budi Hernawan and Theo van den Broek of the Secretariat for Justice and Peace of the Jayapura Diocese, "Dialog Nasional Papua: Sebuah Kisah 'Memoria Passionis,'" *Tifa Irian*, March 12, 1999. Internet posting of this article, March 25, 1999.

¹⁷ See Office for Justice and Peace, Jayapura Diocese, "Description of problems in Papua: Presentation by Catholic church leaders in Papua in a personal meeting with President Abdurrahman Wahid, Jakarta," unpublished internet posting, June 27, 2000; see also Abigail Abrash, "Papua: Another East Timor?" *In Focus* 5,37 (October 2000), Internet posting, October 6, 2000.

¹⁸ See "Treasure Island," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 10, 1994, pp. 48-52; "Irian Jaya," *National Geographic*, February 1996, pp. 2-33; Chris Manning and Michael Rumbiak, "Irian Jaya: Economic Change, Migrants, and Indigenous Welfare," in *Unity and Diversity: Regional Economic Development in Indonesia since 1970*, ed. Hal Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 77-106.

¹⁹ The late Marcus Kaisiëpo, an early Papuan nationalist, claimed to be the first to propose the name "Irian," which is based on a Biak phrase meaning either "it rises" or "it is hot." President Abdurrahman Wahid proposed a different meaning—"naked"—when he proposed changing the name of the province to "Papua" in a New Year's address in Jayapura in January 2000. Patiara and his colleagues' research on the topic suggests that Irian is, indeed, an acronym which was coined by the Indonesian nationalist and former political prisoner, Soegoro Atmoprasodjo, who served as the director of the Papuan School for Administration (Papoea Bestuurschool) at Kampung Harapan. Soegoro, who taught Indonesian nationalism to the Papuan elite, suggested that Frans and Marcus Kaisiëpo promote the use of this name. On Soegoro's recommendation, Marcus Kaisiëpo sent an essay on the proposed name change to the magazine, *Kabar Penyuluh* (Guiding News), in the internment camp for Indonesian political prisoners located in Brisbane, Columbia; it was published in the September 8, 1945 edition. Marcus Kaisiëpo's etymology of Irian makes it seem as if Irian is an indigenous term, but it seems likely that Soegoro and his students looked for an indigenous word after they came up with the acronym. When Frans Kaisiëpo announced the new name at the Malino Conference, he explained its underlying message. Needless to say, this announcement startled the Dutch and pleased the Indonesians, who later adopted Irian as the official name of the disputed territory. See John Patiara et al., *Sejarah Perlawanan Terhadap Imperialisme dan Kolonialisme di Daerah*

schoolbooks read by Irianese pupils taught them of their “liberation” from Dutch rule and their progress under the state’s paternal guidance. This is not to say that the territory’s integration into Indonesia went unopposed. A stubborn, if often disorganized, liberation movement, the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM), was founded in Manokwari in the early 1960s, and still maintains strongholds in the highlands and along the border with Papua New Guinea. In the Pacific, Australia, Africa, and Europe, OPM leaders in exile have carried on the struggle, although rarely in a concerted fashion. The leaders of today’s nationalist movement were not among the guerrillas or their international representatives. As legislators, bureaucrats, priests and ministers, and chairmen of New Order institutions, these new leaders could be counted among a seemingly pro-Jakarta elite. Many of them enjoyed a cozy relationship with the military commanders who ran Irian Jaya, officers who reaped rich rewards from the business dealings that came their way. Now on trial for treason for his leading role in the current nationalist movement, Theys Eluay, for example, represented Golkar, the government party, in the provincial legislative assembly (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah Tingkat I, or DPRD I), acted as chair of the provincial customary council (Lembaga Masyarakat Adat Irian Jaya), and was one of the 1,025 Papuan leaders who voted in the Act of Free Choice. Like all urban Irian Jayans, and many from rural areas, prominent Papuans like Eluay lived their lives in a multiethnic environment, surrounded by shopkeepers, soldiers, bureaucrats, and neighbors who hailed from other ethnic and religious groups. To comprehend the demands and dreams of today’s Papuans, one must know something of the long history of Dutch, then Indonesian, rule in western New Guinea. But to understand how such a unified movement could emerge so quickly against the Indonesian state, one must attend to the complexities of a particular historical moment: that which began when the New Order fell.

The Growth of the Movement

The recent resurgence of Papuan nationalism took place in the so-called “era of reform” which began when Suharto was forced from office. During this era, Indonesians were freed from the New Order, whose social engineering projects and “dual function” military penetrated every sphere of social life. Through torture and intimidation, the New Order spread a fog of fear affecting potential opponents, from elite intellectuals and Muslim ulama to the lower classes. The economy recalled the Netherlands Indies’ exploitative system, with wealth from the regions flowing into Jakarta to add to the fortunes of a tiny political elite.²⁰ Those brave enough to voice opposition to the regime were not only intimidated; they were often eliminated. In the resource-rich provinces of Aceh and Irian Jaya, anyone who struggled for justice risked being labeled a separatist. As Benedict Anderson and Daniel Lev have pointed out,

Irian Jaya (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Sejarah Nasional, 1983/1984), pp. 72-73. See also Pius Haryono Suryo et al., *Pahlawan Nasional Frans Kaisiëpo* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, 1996), pp. 30-31.

²⁰ Y. B. Mangunwijaya, *Menuju Indonesia SerbaBaru: Hikmah Sekitar May 21, 1998* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1998), pp. 45, 103.

the authorities were clearly less enamored of these provinces' inhabitants than of their wealth.²¹

The New Order suppressed dissent through laws restricting public gatherings and demanding "responsibility" from the press.²² The regime justified these restrictions by summoning the specter of conflicts based on SARA (*Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar-golongan*, or Ethnicity, Religion, Race, Class), obscuring the fact that New Order era riots were often the handiwork of hired provocateurs.²³ But after the collapse of the New Order, B. J. Habibie, Suharto's former vice president, who took over the presidency after his mentor resigned, not only freed political prisoners, he also revoked New Order controls on assembly and the press.²⁴ Gone were the days when all newspapers and magazines had to possess an official "press publication permit" (SIUPP, *Surat Ijin Usaha Penerbitan Pers*) from the government. This change led to a revolution not only in the contents of what was published, but also in the range of media available, with scores of new newspapers and magazines hitting the newsstands. In Irian Jaya, as well, the press quickly grew into more than just a platform for government bulletins. New weeklies appeared in the province, along with new dailies in Jayapura, Timika, Sorong, and Biak. Critical voices found their way into these new publications, in keeping with the newly embraced principle that it is important to provide a balanced view of the issues. Although the Regional Military Command (Kodam VIII/Trikora), still *roi des rois* in the province, has tried to "straighten up" the province's reporters (especially those from the popular weekly, *Tifa Irian*, now called *Tifa Papua*), to date this effort has not met with much success.²⁵

²¹ "Ben Anderson: Indonesia Hadapi Situasi Gawat," *Kompas*, March 5, 1999. See also "Ben Anderson dan Daniel Lev: Dari Kabinet Teknokrat Kembali ke Kabinet Partai," *Kompas*, October 29, 1999.

²² See Michael R. J. Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto: Order, Development and Pressure for Change* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 107-108; Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia in the 1990s* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1994), pp. 238-244.

²³ See Kees van Dijk, *A Country in Despair: Indonesia between 1997 and 2000* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2001), pp. 4-6. See also Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*, pp. 128-129 on the regime's "engineering" of political threats.

²⁴ Habibie stated at the beginning of his presidency that he was ready to accept criticism, and even insults, as a demonstration of his commitment to democracy. See "Habibie Siap Terima Kritik dan Hujatan," *Kompas*, October 8, 1998. See also "Habibie tak Marah Karena Dihina," *Kompas*, October 18, 1998. The rise of journalists as an important political force dates back to the government's banning of the magazines *Tempo*, *Detik*, and *Editor* on June 21, 1994. As a protest against the officially sanctioned Union of Indonesian Journalists (Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia, or PWI), reporters founded a number of new professional organizations: the Forum for Independent Journalists (Forum Wartawan Independen, FWI) in Bandung, the Surabaya Press Club, the Discussion Forum for Journalists in Yogyakarta (Forum Diskusi Wartawan Yogyakarta, FDWY) and the Independent Journalists' Alliance (Aliansi Jurnalist Independen, AJI). The AJI in particular attracted much support within and outside Indonesia in the "struggle" for openness and accuracy; alternative outlets soon emerged, both in print and on the internet. Suharto's "war" with the journalists was in truth a war between different factions of the intelligentsia, not just with a profession. Through the press, intellectuals played a role in politics at a time when representative institutions were simply an extension of the government's authority, not the site of any meaningful opposition to its policies. Needless to say, profit motives also played a role in the demand for reform both before and after Suharto's fall from power.

²⁵ Regional Military Command VIII/Trikora has used various methods to stifle *Tifa Papua*, ranging from intimidating reporters and the editor to pressuring donors and the printing houses that publish the weekly,

People throughout Indonesia embraced the new openness. Outside of Irian Jaya, protesters took to the streets demanding an improvement in the economy, which had collapsed in the Asian financial crisis. In Irian Jaya, the situation remained calm because the rise in prices did not affect the livelihoods of the majority of the indigenous inhabitants, who lived off the land. In Jayapura and Nabire, where the impact of the crisis was felt, surface gold was discovered during this period, providing a windfall to local communities. Some went so far as to reinterpret "Krismon"—the popular acronym for "Krisis Moneter," "Monetary Crisis" elsewhere in Indonesia—to mean "Kristus Menolong," "Christ to the Rescue." The focus of activism at this time was not the economy or poverty, but rather the Papuans' terrible experiences living as Indonesians, but feeling that they were colonized. Villagers began to speak openly about their relatives who had been killed by the Indonesian military. They bravely exposed aggressions perpetrated by the military and civil authorities: in many cases, for example, land that had been a family's only source of livelihood was seized without compensation, and those who protested were shot on the spot. Papuans in urban areas discussed how migrants and transmigrants dominated the labor market for government positions, as well as the private sector and the informal economy. Many Papuans took the opportunity to voice their desire for independence, a desire that had been kept hidden in their hearts for more than thirty-five years.

The central symbol of this desire for independence has long been the Morning Star flag, which was installed as a national emblem in 1961, when the territory was still a Dutch colony, by the West New Guinea Council, a multiracial advisory body of elected and appointed representatives.²⁶ In July 1998, Morning Star flag raisings were held in the towns of Jayapura, Sorong, Manokwari, Wamena, and Biak.²⁷ The military cracked down on these demonstrations, and hundreds of Papuans were injured or killed. The situation attracted the attention of various organizations concerned with human rights, including the National Human Rights Commission, the World Council of Churches, and the national DPR (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, or People's Representative Assembly), which sent a team to Irian Jaya. These organizations called on Habibie to open a dialogue with the people of Irian Jaya, in accordance with a letter sent to the Indonesian president in May 1998 by several members of the US House of Representatives Sub-committee on Human Rights.²⁸ When news of this letter had reached Irian Jaya in June 1998, it had had the effect of raising public awareness and enthusiasm. The fourth point raised by the sub-committee members called for the initiation of "direct, good faith dialogues with the people of East Timor and Irian Jaya on human rights protection and a just solution to their political status." Many Papuans had (incorrectly) interpreted this phrase as indicating that the United States supported their cause, and that, as a result, they could finally express their aspirations

which is owned by the Catholic Press Foundation (Yayasan Pers Katolik). But through it all, the weekly has survived, even if it sometimes comes out late.

²⁶ See Fritz Veldkamp, "Een laat experiment in democratie" in *Besturen in Nederlands-Nieuw-Guinea 1945-1962*, ed. Pim Schoorl (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996), pp. 539-564.

²⁷ The Wamena flag raising was conducted with permission from Major-General Amir Sembiring, head of Regional Military Command VIII/Trikora, who was visiting the Baliem Valley at the time; the rest, in Jayapura, then Sorong, Manokwari, and Biak, were undertaken spontaneously.

²⁸ The letter also urged Habibie to be more open to dialogue with the people of East Timor about their political status.

openly, without having to fear the military, which in the past had retaliated harshly against such displays.

President Habibie agreed to meet with one hundred representatives from all the districts of Irian Jaya, who were chosen openly from various social strata. Their visit was funded and overseen by the government, with Governor Freddy Numberi acting as escort, and facilitated by Foreri (The Forum for the Reconciliation of the People of Irian Jaya), with cooperation from the Office of the Vice President and the Office of the Secretary of State.²⁹ During the February 26, 1999 meeting, which was attended by the president and twenty-two members of the Reform Cabinet, Thom Beanal, Chief of the Amungme tribe, who acted as the leader of the Team of One Hundred, told the president that the representatives had come to ask for independence, not to discuss the province's development, as Habibie might have supposed.³⁰ Other delegates stood up and explained why. Herman Wayoi from Serui, who had participated as a prominent member of the New Guinea Council in the events of the 1960s, described how Indonesia, America, the Netherlands, and the UN had manipulated the transfer process such that the Papuans had no choice but to accept integration into Indonesia. Then, Agus Alue Alua, the Dani rector of the Catholic seminary in Abepura, described the human rights abuses committed during the past thirty-five years of Indonesian rule. Alua described an incident in which the military held Papuan villagers at gunpoint and forced them to eat sate made from the flesh of fellow residents. "Mr. President, if we are of the same nation, then how could we possibly be treated with such savagery?" he

²⁹ Before the meeting, there was debate over the format and setting of the meeting. The conflict ended after the Secretary of State, Akbar Tanjung, created a team lead by retired Brigadier General Dr. Saafrudin Bahar, then the Assistant Secretary of State for National Integration, to handle the planning. The team members included Benny Giay (a representative for the churches), Willy Mandowen (a lecturer at UNCEN), Octovianus Mote (a journalist), G. M. Satya (the director of STIE), Beatrix Koibur (a women's leader), and Ronald Tapilatu (a student leader), along with several members of the provincial parliament and officers from the Office of the Vice President and the Office of the Secretary of State. See Human Rights Watch, "Human Rights and Pro-Independence Actions in Papua, 1999-2000," *Human Rights Watch* 12,2 (C) (May 2000).

Foreri facilitated the selection of four delegates from every subdistrict in the province and several university towns outside of Irian Jaya. Each subdistrict conducted the process in a public meeting hall, with the local head of government and local military commander acting as witnesses. In some cases, a vote was held to select among the candidates nominated by those present at the meeting; in other cases, nominees were accepted by acclamation after a discussion of their merits. Either way, those selected seem to have enjoyed popular support. Representatives were chosen from each of the following categories: tribal chiefs, religious leaders, youths, and women. The delegation also included student leaders, professionals, and Papuans living outside of Irian Jaya. A total of seventy-five representatives from Irian Jaya and twenty-five students and other representatives from outside of the province made up the delegation.

The provincial government covered travel expenses for the trip from the subdistricts to Jayapura and on to Jakarta. The central government covered the delegation's costs while they were in Jakarta. The delegation used the commercial airlines, Garuda Indonesia, for the trip to Jakarta and returned to Irian Jaya by the airforce's Hercules aircraft.

³⁰ Thomas Tarcicius Beanal (age fifty-three), was a Catholic deacon from 1978-1991. Beanal chairs several NGOs, including the Lorentz Foundation, and has been a vocal participant in activities sponsored by Walhi (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia, or Indonesian Environmental Forum), Indonesia's premier environmental organization. Beanal, who took Freeport McMoRan to court in New Orleans, is renowned for his perseverance in defending the rights of highlanders who have been negatively affected by the huge mining corporation's operations.

asked. Calmly, but with tears welling in his eyes, Alua spoke of the “genocide” inflicted on the Papuan nation.

The people of West Papua are threatened with extinction as a result of the political, economic, and social policies promulgated by the Indonesian government over the past thirty-six years. These policies, which don’t take the side of the West Papuan people, represent just one element in a series: “systematic violence,” “systematic killing,” and “systematic destruction,” that is, “genocide.” The result is that we, the Papuan people, are slated to vanish from the face of this earth. During our thirty-six years of integration with Indonesia, our worth and self-respect have not been valued or honored; we have not been treated as human beings, creations of God the Almighty Creator. We’ve been slaughtered like beasts for the sake of preserving Indonesian political stability and unity.

President Habibie was astonished to hear this forthright explanation and acknowledged that the desire for independence was honest, that no one had fabricated it, and that it came purely from the Papuans’ heart of hearts. Habibie admitted that his assistants had advised him not to receive the delegates, but that he had decided to see them anyway because it was his duty as president to listen to the people. Nonetheless, the delegation’s request had come at a time when he was facing similar demands from other areas like Timor Timur, Aceh, and South Sulawesi. “I am not an angel who can solve all these problems at once,” Habibie told the delegates. “I am an ordinary human being with limitations. So why don’t you all go home and think about this request, because it is not easy founding a nation.”

The meeting of February 26, 1999 changed the face of the independence struggle. Thirty years after the Act of Free Choice, a group of Papuans had finally had a chance to express their aspirations in a democratic setting. Whereas, in the past, nationalist leaders had depended on the support of foreign mentors, these delegates had stepped forward of their own accord and talked honestly about the future of their nation.³¹ One cannot overstate the importance of this experience in bringing into view a new vision of Papuan activism. Before this historic meeting with Habibie, Papuan nationalists had relied on comparatively desperate and ineffective methods to communicate their message: armed raids on security posts, the taking of hostages to attract global attention, and diplomatic efforts sporadically undertaken by Papuan exiles, many of whom had not seen their homeland since Indonesia took control of the territory in 1963. Now peaceful discussion had become the new method—Papuan leaders were welcomed to the palace and allowed to speak their minds.

³¹ For the first generation of Papuan nationalists, these mentors were both Dutch and Indonesian. In the 1940s, young Papuan soldiers and civil servants received an education in nationalism from J. P. van Eechoud, the so-called “Father of the Papuan Nation,” who was the first Resident of Netherlands New Guinea. During this period, as we have seen, a small number of elite Papuans also were exposed to the ideology of Indonesian nationalism by political exiles like Soegoro Atmoprasodjo, Dr. G. S. J. Ratulangie and other Indonesians working for the colonial government or private concerns. Many of the so-called “red and white” nationalists were deeply disappointed later, when they saw how the Indonesians treated the Papuans. After the transfer of the territory to Indonesia, the nationalist struggle continued in exile by Nicholas Youwe and Marcus Kaisiëpo attracted relatively little attention.

Significantly, the Team of One Hundred included among its members not only ordinary citizens, tribal chiefs, NGO activists, and critical intellectuals, all of whom were sidelined under the New Order, but also individuals who had supported the regime. It included, for instance, Yaap Marey, a former OPM fighter from Nabire. Not long before the meeting, Marey had toured the province in the company of the Regional Military Commander, Major-General Amir Sembiring, campaigning for acceptance of the government's offer of regional autonomy, a planned reallocation of funds and authority designed to quell the Papuans' discontent. Besides Marey, the delegates included members of the national DPR, such as Simon Petrus Morin and Jaap Salossa, who became the governor of Irian Jaya in 2000.³² The most controversial figure was Yorrys Raweyai, the ninety-ninth signatory to the delegation's declaration requesting Papuan independence. Son of a Papuan woman from Serui and a Sino-Indonesian man from Ujung Pandang, Raweyai has long been close to the Suharto family, by way of his activities as leader of Pemuda Pancasila. Since Suharto's fall, Pemuda Pancasila has taken part in riots supposedly instigated by the ex-President's family to provide a pretext for the family's return to power or, at the very least, to divert attention from Suharto's misdeeds. Be that as it may, Raweyai took part in the Team of One Hundred as an openly elected delegate, along with three other individuals from the Papuan community in Jakarta. And as this community's "tribal chief," Raweyai arranged for security in Jakarta and hosted a lavish welcome ceremony at the airport for the delegates, who were called "Papua's national ambassadors" on the banners that greeted them as they disembarked.³³

After the meeting, the Team of One Hundred "socialized"—i.e. reported and explained—the message conveyed in Jakarta to the wider public in Irian Jaya. This process was undertaken in an open fashion, with government permission and, in some cases, government funding. The kernel of the news was that the Papuans' desire for independence had been officially conveyed. The delegates asked their constituents to stay calm and pray in support of the movement, which would proceed through dialogue and no longer through violence. They urged their supporters not to antagonize the province's many migrants, who would be given an opportunity to choose whether they wanted to remain Indonesian citizens or join an independent West Papua. The delegates explained that the movement's future depended on the people's ability to resist being baited by all manner of provocation. Of their own accord, local residents set up *satgas* (task forces) and *posko* (command posts) to maintain the peace requested by the Team of One Hundred, which had become the official core of the new-fashioned movement for independence.³⁴ The need to protect the movement's supporters and,

³² When asked whether he was concerned that he might be endangering his position in the DPR by participating in the delegation, Salossa said that, as a member of parliament, he felt obligated to voice the people's aspirations, even if they were at odds with his own.

³³ Yorrys Raweyai also arranged for Yusuf Ronny, a popular Protestant preacher, to speak at the signing ceremony and hosted a reception at the international press conference held at the Hotel NAM after the meeting with Habibie. For a discussion of Pemuda Pancasila, see Loren Rytter, "Pemuda Pancasila: The Last Loyalist Free Men of Suharto's Order?," *Indonesia* 66 (October 1998): 45-74.

³⁴ Sekretariat Keadilan dan Perdamaian Keuskupan Jayapura, "Presentasi Gambaran Masalah Papua oleh Pimpinan Gereja Katolik di Papua dalam Pertemuan dengan Presiden RI, tanggal 27 Juni 2000," Jayapura, June 2000, p. 2. This document was presented by two West Papuan Catholic bishops in the meeting with Wahid.

above all, its leaders grew after the police chief of Irian Jaya, Brigadier General Hotman Siagian, issued an official announcement banning public discussion of the February meeting and disbanding the command posts.³⁵ Despite this pressure from the government, the movement flourished. Growing ranks of Papuans from various backgrounds, from civil servants to private employees to former politicians and military officers, dared to express their support.³⁶

But while the desire for independence was widely shared, the question of who would lead the new movement proved a vexing one. Although Thom Beanal was an obvious candidate, his agreement to join Freeport's board of directors in July 2000, after decades of criticizing the corporation, tarnished his image, at least for some.³⁷ Theys Eluay soon stepped into the breach. In October 1999, friends and colleagues anointed Eluay as "Great Leader of the Papuan Nation" and Yorrys Raweyai as "Leader of the Papuan Migrant Community" at a large gathering held to celebrate Eluay's sixty-second birthday.³⁸ The gathering also resulted in an announcement calling for the raising of the Morning Star flag all over the province from December 1, 1999 until May 1, 2000, at which date it was promised the Papuans would be independent. Independence supporters throughout the province, who had been waiting for the national dialogue to continue, welcomed this news. On December 1, tens of thousands of Papuans peacefully celebrated what many believed to be the anniversary of the declaration of West Papuan independence.³⁹ At the celebration in Jayapura, a number of elite Papuans called on the provincial parliament formally to convey the demand for independence to the central government.⁴⁰ In response, the chairman of the provincial DPR, Nataniel Kaiway, led a team of DPR members and community leaders to meet

³⁵ Police Proclamation No. MK/01/IV/1999/, April 17, 1999.

³⁶ This development would have come as no surprise to scholars who have visited Papua and attempted to gauge public opinion. William Liddle observed in 1997 that the government had utterly failed to cultivate Indonesian nationalism in the hearts of the Papuans, urban and rural alike. Liddle communicated his findings, based on two visits to Irian Jaya, during a private meeting with the editorial board of *Kompas*.

³⁷ Beanal has stuck to this decision, on the principle that whatever he receives for his services from Freeport is nothing compared to what the company has stolen from his land. He claims that most of his income is used for the independence struggle; from all accounts, Beanal continues to lead a simple life.

³⁸ Needless to say, questions were raised about the legitimacy of these appointments. Theys Eluay, who, as we have noted, was a pro-Indonesia activist and provincial parliamentarian under the New Order, reinvented himself as a Papuan freedom fighter following Suharto's resignation. His house was often filled with people from the Jayapura area, who used his veranda as an open forum for discussion and debate. Several military officers, along with members of the pro-independence elite, attended his sixty-second birthday celebration. It is worth noting how the military's attitude toward the independence movement changed as a result of this gathering. Whereas before the military was not sure what direction the movement was taking, it became clear in October 1999 that its goal was independence at some future date. In the wake of the celebration, the so-called Satgas Papua changed from a loosely linked collection of informal community watch groups into a paramilitary militia involved in harassment and extortion. The strange thing is that the military, on the one hand, has accepted the Satgas Papua as a partner, allowing it to handle crowd control at public events. On the other hand, the military has used the Satgas Papua as a scapegoat whenever disturbances have occurred.

³⁹ Theo van den Broek, "Makalah Diskusi Pertemuan-Del-Del Plus; Aspirasi Merdeka Masyarakat Tanah Papua dan Perjuangan Demokrasi Bangsa Indonesia, Awal Tahun 2000," Suatu Peta Sosio-Politik oleh Sekretariat Keadilan dan Perdamaian Keuskupan Jayapura, Jayapura, February 2000, pp. 15-16. Internet posting.

⁴⁰ Interview with Agus Alue Alua, December 3, 1999.

with the president, the vice president, the heads of the national DPR and MPR (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, People's Consultative Assembly), and several ministers.⁴¹ Kaiway had already formed several special committees concerned with the movement on a provincial level: one to help determine the province's name, another to investigate the prospects for independence, and another on regional autonomy. But as he explained to Akbar Tanjung, head of Golkar and the national DPR, Papuan separatism was a national problem; there was only so much provincial politicians could do.⁴²

This flurry of activity came to a head between May 29 and June 3, 2000, when the Second Papuan National Congress was held in Jayapura, attended by 501 envoys from various districts and 21,000 Papuan and non-Papuan observers.⁴³ At this congress, which was cast as a follow-up to the first Papuan National Congress, held in 1961, it was decided that the Papuan nation would pursue its independence through four courses of action. The first would involve encouraging the Indonesian government to engage in a peaceful dialogue with the aim of rectifying history. If it could be proven by way of open, objective historical research that the Papuans really belonged to the Indonesian nation, then the nationalists would be willing to forget their aspirations and join Indonesia forever. But if the reverse were the outcome, then Indonesia would have to let the Papuans go peacefully. The second course of action would entail lobbying to get West Papua back onto the UN's decolonization list, so that the problem could be resolved according to international norms through a referendum. The third course would address the human rights violations committed over the past thirty years. By exposing what they described as the Indonesian government's "genocidal" practices in West Papua, undertaken to appropriate the huge territory and its resources, the movement hoped to attract international support. The fourth and final course of action would involve filing suit against Holland, Indonesia, the US and the UN for treating the West Papuans like livestock, instead of letting their voices be heard. Nowhere in the resolution was there any mention of armed struggle, let alone struggle against

⁴¹ Besides this official team, a number of other teams emerged, including a "Team of Twenty-Four" and a "Team of Ten."

⁴² "Irian Provincial Council Visits House to Demand Independence," *Jakarta Post*, December 17, 1999. The team led by Kaiway demanded the following: (1) an international dialogue as a follow-up to the February 26 meeting with Habibie; (2) the release of all Irianese political prisoners; (3) the holding of a general session of the Irian Jaya provincial and district DPRs to discuss the demand for West Papuan independence; (4) the withdrawal of all military and police personnel from the territory; (5) a thorough investigation into human rights violations committed between 1961 and 1999 in the territory; (6) recognition of a West Papuan state with Port Numbay (Jayapura) as its capital; (7) permission to hoist and display United Nations, Indonesian, and West Papuan flags as of May 2000 in the territory until a comprehensive solution to the problem could be found. See also "DPRD I Irja ke DPR," *Kompas*, December 17, 1999; "Temui Ketua DPR," *Media Indonesia*, December 17, 1999; "Lurusan Sejarah Papua Barat," *Berita Kota*, December 17, 1999.

⁴³ This estimate of the number of participants is from Msg. Leo Laba Ladjar, the Bishop of Jayapura. Ladjar described the meeting as a very democratic popular celebration. Whatever was announced on the floor was broadcast to the crowd gathered outside by way of high volume loudspeakers. During the opening and closing ceremonies, dance troupes from several tribes filled the field in front of the stadium and the surrounding streets. See "Mencari Jawaban Untuk Papua Barat," *Majalah Mingguan Hidup*, June 18, 2000, pp. 18-19.

migrants. According to the members of the congress, the Papuan people would use non-violent methods to seek an opportunity to decide their own political fate.⁴⁴

The Second Congress not only decided upon a strategy for obtaining independence; it also decided upon a national leadership consisting of the Papua Presidium Council (Presidium Dewan Papua, henceforth Presidium). Theys Eluay was officially selected as the Presidium's chairman, with Thom Beanal as his deputy. This too was a historic development. For the first time, Papuan nationalists had the opportunity to come together openly in a collective undertaking that was covered by print and electronic media from every corner of the world. Before this time, many autonomous groups had kept alive the dream of independence. The late Bernard Tanggahma built up a lobby in Africa. Later, Dr. John Otto Ondoame and Rex Rumaikiek developed a Papuan support network in Australia, as did Andy Ajamiseba in Vanuatu. The largest bases of support for Papuan independence were found in the Netherlands, Sweden, and Papua New Guinea. Nevertheless, there was little cooperation among these overseas leaders, who gathered information about the situation in their homeland from friends and relatives from their own ethnic group. The congress brought all these groups together. The OPM generals, Kelly Kwalik and Mathias Wenda, sent delegations to the congress. OPM leaders living abroad in the Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, and Australia also attended and came to an agreement on methods, leadership, and the detailed course of action confirmed during the Second Congress.

This is not to say there were no faultlines within the movement. As early as the Great Conference (*Musyawarah Besar*, or Mubes), held from February 24-28, 2000 to prepare for the Second Congress, there was conflict between moderate and hardline groups. Quite a few of the delegates to Mubes came from Papua New Guinea, just across the Indonesian border. As Theo van den Broek has noted,

On one hand this group comes with its own history, its own ideas often stressing the wider Melanesian or Pacific scope; on the other hand they miss the experience of daily context in Papua and of the concrete developments over the last two years in Indonesia. This difference was a source for some heated debates during the meeting.⁴⁵

The hardliners were inclined to opt for old style confrontation. The moderates, mostly consisting of members of the Team of One Hundred, attempted to develop and advocate a new, more realistic method of struggle based on an understanding of Indonesian society and politics. At the Second Congress, when the Presidium leaders proposed a timetable for their diplomatic efforts, some hardliners questioned the purpose of the exercise. They criticized nationalist leaders, like Eluay, Beanal, and Willy Mandowen, for being too intimate with the Indonesian military and political elite. Instead of viewing this intimacy as an asset in negotiations with the Indonesian government, the hardliners feared that these leaders would accept the government's offer of regional autonomy, thus selling the movement short for their own gain. Groups

⁴⁴ Hasil Kongres Nasional Papua ke Dua, 29 Mei-4 Juni 2000.

⁴⁵ Theo van den Broek, "Recent Developments in Papua: Musyawarah Besar Papua, 24-26 Februari serta Suasana Pasca-Mubes," Sekretariat Keadilan dan Perdamaian Keuskupan Jayapura, April 1, 2000, p. 3.

like the Association of Former Political Prisoners,⁴⁶ the Papuan National Front,⁴⁷ the Consultatory Council of Penis Sheath Societies (Dewan Musyarawah Masyarakat Koteka, or Demak),⁴⁸ and the Fourteen Star Group⁴⁹ had trouble accepting Eluay as their leader, given the privileges he had enjoyed under the New Order. The same was true for overseas OPM members from Jakob Prai's and Seth Rumkorem's factions, not to mention the OPM fighters still active in the jungle, none of whom entirely trusted Eluay.

The task confronting the Presidium was a daunting one. In existence for less than a year, it faced an opponent more than willing to butcher innocent civilians to preserve Indonesia's territorial integrity. At the same time, the Presidium had to answer to the movement's Papuans supporters, who wanted independence to be delivered in a matter of days. Given the situation, it is not surprising that the Presidium promoted concrete activities like flag raisings and did little to dismiss the rumor that independence was already within reach. These were all ways of improving the Presidium's bargaining position. At the same time, the Presidium attempted to use its links with the Indonesian government to put Papuan independence on the national or even international agenda. The direction taken by the Presidium was a sound one, but its success hinged on the movement's ability to transcend the differences that divide the Papuan community. Progress toward this end had been made at Mubes, with the formulation of a structure in which the Presidium would serve as the executive branch of the movement, with so-called "pillars" representing different classes, genders, generations, ethnicities, and occupations coming together as a legislative body. At the Second Congress, the participants chose leaders from various backgrounds to fill this structure, including members of northern and southern, and mountain and coastal ethnolinguistic groups, and a mixture of Protestants, Catholics, and Muslims. Tribal chiefs, ordinary citizens, intellectuals, religious leaders, and women all found a place in their ranks. Significantly, a place was reserved for migrants, both in the pillars and in the Presidium. Although the migrants' chair in the Presidium remained unoccupied, the representatives of several migrant family associations did attend the event. The

⁴⁶ Led by Filip Karma, who organized the Biak flag raising of July 2-6, 1998, this group includes individuals imprisoned by the Indonesian government for varying lengths of time for their pro-Papuan activities.

⁴⁷ Led by Herman Wayoi, this group intends to revive the Papuan National Party. Wayoi led this party during the 1960s, under Dutch rule, and remains committed to using a nationalist political party as a means of pursuing independence.

⁴⁸ This group claims to represent the inhabitants of Irian Jaya's mountainous interior, from Paniai District in the west to Jayawijaya District in the east to Merauke District in the south, areas that have been the settings for gross violations of human rights. Demak was founded in protest against the Presidium leadership, which appeared to exclude people from the interior, despite the fact that these regions have yielded many prominent OPM leaders, including Mathias Wenda, Kelly Kwalik, Titus Murip, Yudas Kogoya, Tadeus Yogi, and Bernard Mawen.

⁴⁹ This group represents the extension of the campaign begun by Dr. Thomas W. Wainggai. Its members include individuals imprisoned following Wainggai's demonstration of December 14, 1988 and others from Wainggai's home region of Yapen Waropen. The group's flag differs from the Morning Star flag, in that it features fourteen stars, rather than just one star; it also promotes its own name for the new nation (West Melanesia, instead of West Papua), its own national anthem (by Thomas Wainggai, from a hymn by I. S. Kijne), and its own independence day (December 14, rather than December 1).

leaders who emerged from the congress had a clear sense of the importance of presenting a diverse, but unified, face to the outside world.

So how did this seemingly inclusive, non-violent movement lead to the Wamena incident? To answer this question, one must consider the Indonesian government's response to the rising wave of nationalist sentiment. Basically, the government was—and remains—very worried. The Chair of MPR, Amien Rais, went so far as to declare that the matter of Irian presented a greater threat than the economic crisis.⁵⁰ But inside the government, conflicts quickly arose between factions that advocated different solutions to the problem. Unfortunately, there are political and military leaders who have used the problem of Papuan nationalism to further their own interests in the political maneuvering that has followed Suharto's resignation. The violence in Wamena might not have occurred had it not been for a power struggle between Abdurrahman Wahid, the first democratically elected president of the post-Suharto era, and Megawati Sukarnoputri, his vice president and political rival.

In June 1999, Indonesians went to the polls to choose representatives to the legislative body that would elect the Republic's next president. Voters in the province of Irian Jaya overwhelmingly supported the government party, Golkar. Golkar had won each of the heavily manipulated elections held in Irian Jaya since 1971. But this time, the victory was different, since the election was remarkably free. In part Golkar's victory in the province was the result of the Iramasuka (Irian Jaya, Maluku, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan) campaign launched by A. A. Baramuli, head of Supreme Advisory Council (Dewan Pertimbangan Agung), to promote Habibie, a native son of the region. It may also have been a sign of the Papuans' widespread appreciation of Habibie's willingness to meet with the Team of One Hundred. In any event, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (henceforth PDI-P, Partai Demokrat Indonesia-Perjuangan), led by Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of Indonesia's first president, received the most popular votes nationwide. Megawati failed to build a coalition to support her presidency, however, and in October 1999, the national parliament elected Abdurrahman Wahid, leader of the traditionalist Islamic organization, Nahdatul Ulama, and an advocate of religious and ethnic tolerance with strong credentials as a critic of the Suharto regime.

Wahid chose Megawati as his vice president, thus avoiding violent protests from her PDI-D supporters, and embarked on an ambitious campaign of reform. One of Wahid's first acts was to initiate a dialogue with Papuan leaders. Having chosen Jayapura as the city where he would welcome the millennium, Wahid used this opportunity to hold public talks with Papuan leaders on December 31, 1999. Wahid gave his interlocutors the impression that he was truly interested in learning why the Papuans wanted independence; he listened carefully to their complaints and demands. The new president agreed to permit the people to raise the Morning Star flag as long as it flew thirty centimeters below the Indonesian flag. He also allowed them to use the name Papua in the place of Irian Jaya. And finally, he not only granted permission for the holding of a Papuan Congress; he also contributed a billion rupiah towards its costs. These decisions had the desired effect of inspiring the Papuans' confidence.

⁵⁰ "Amien Rais: Masalah Papua Lebih Parah Dibanding Krismon," *Detikcom*, June 5, 2000. Rais made the same statement in the TVRI talkshow, "Acara Persepsi," on the same day.

According to Wahid's spokesman, Wimar Witoelar, the president's stance was based on his conviction that the Papuans were now misguided, but that if they were approached properly they would see the light.⁵¹

The case was very different with Megawati Sukarnoputri, who surrounded herself with figures from the Indonesian Armed Forces in her party, PDI-P, as well as in the cabinet. Wahid was committed to taking a peaceful approach to separatism and the ethnic and religious conflicts then raging in parts of Indonesia. His plan was to concentrate his attentions on Central and Western Indonesia, concerning himself in particular with the problems in Aceh, while leaving the vice president, Megawati, to deal with Eastern Indonesia, including the conflicts in Sulawesi, the Moluccas, and Irian Jaya. Judging from her reluctance to visit these trouble spots to hear their inhabitants' grievances, Megawati apparently neglected this aspect of her job.⁵² For Megawati, who replaced the embattled Wahid as president in August 2001, holding onto Irian Jaya was and remains more than simply an administrative duty. Megawati's father, the first president of Indonesia, fought to include Papua in the Declaration of Independence, in opposition to Mohammad Hatta, who proposed letting the Papuans govern themselves, since, in his opinion, they belonged to a different nation. During the 1950s and early 1960s, the "liberation" of West Irian provided a rallying point for Sukarno's populist politics. Megawati's first husband was a pilot in the Indonesian Airforce, whose plane was lost during the military campaign launched by Sukarno to force the Dutch to negotiate a settlement. Given her personal history, it is not surprising that Megawati has sided with factions of the military that favor confronting the movement with force. She seems to agree with the principle that, when it comes to national unity, there is no need to bother with democracy or human rights.

Like the meeting with Habibie, the Second Papuan National Congress came as a shock to many in Indonesia. An initial reaction was to portray the affair as the fruit of an international conspiracy to break up Indonesia.⁵³ But the image of the congress that

⁵¹ "Suara Pendatang di Irian Jaya: Pemerintah Harus Tegas, Merdeka atau Otonomi," *Kompas*, October 13, 2000.

⁵² Megawati joined Wahid on his trip to Irian Jaya at the end of 1999. During this first visit, there was no space on the vice president's agenda for dialogue. But Willy Mandowen persuaded the governor, then Freddy Numberi, to give two representatives, Thomas Beanal and Yosef Rumasef, a chance to convey the people's aspirations in a public forum in Biak at the Hotel Marau. When Megawati learned how strongly the Papuans wanted independence, she wept and begged them not to ask to secede from the republic, because Indonesia would "not be complete without Irian Jaya." Those present at the meeting report that Megawati's interlocutors did not find her tears touching. To the contrary, some laughed at this show of sorrow. Megawati was "just now starting to cry, but our tears are already dry, for we have been crying for thirty-five years over the death of our children, our husbands, our wives, our relatives, all cut down by the Indonesian military for the sake of integration."

⁵³ This conspiracy theory was based on a classic New Order assumption: that the people are too ignorant to start their own movement. Much was made at the time of the Second Congress of the presence of John Tekwie, a member of the Papua New Guinea parliament and the governor of West Sepik province, who made a speech in support of West Papuan independence. Eyebrows were also raised by the attendance of an observer from the American Embassy. Needless to say, it was quite easy to magnify trivial incidents to support this explanation for the movement. At the time of the Wamena incident, an American tourist was arrested for taking photographs; he was suspected of being a spy. See "Koboi Cula Babi itu Akhirnya Dideportasi," *Gatracom*, October 23, 2000; see also "Gara-Gara Rekaman Koboi Cula Babi," *Gatracom*, October 23, 2000; "Syafi Ma'Arif: Jangan Sepelekan Infiltrasi Asing," *Gatracom*, October 23, 2000; "Mentri Pertahanan: Perang Lebih Gampang," *Gatracom*, October 23, 2000.

proved most gripping to the Indonesian public, given the horrific situation in the neighboring Moluccas, was its representation as the prelude to an orgy of ethnic and sectarian strife. In the months following the Second Congress, Megawati and her allies in the military needed evidence of such tendencies in order to justify their decision to wipe out the nationalist movement, and Wamena provided a convenient site. The Dani, Lani, Nduga, and Ngalum who reside in Jayawijaya have had the worst experiences with the security forces of any of Irian Jaya's many ethnolinguistic groups. The vast majority of the province's documented human rights violations have occurred in this district, which has long been a military operation zone and a key field of action for the OPM.⁵⁴ The perpetrators have overwhelmingly come from the Indonesian military, which has acted on various pretexts: to protect Freeport, to capture guerrillas, and to end tribal warfare among highland groups. When Wahid announced that he would allow the Morning Star flag to be raised, people in Jayawijaya responded enthusiastically. This flag, for whose existence they had struggled, at the cost of many lives, soon was flying everywhere in the district. At the Second Congress, the new crop of nationalist leaders had successfully presented the movement as open, broad-based, and non-violent. But both the Papuan leaders and the Indonesian authorities knew that the peace was fragile, particularly in Jayawijaya, given its inhabitants' long history of pro-Papuan militancy and suffering under Indonesian rule.

Megawati had already learned of this fragility first hand. From May 18–21, 2000, the vice president finally took an official tour of Irian Jaya, during which she visited Wamena, the capital of Jayawijaya. Although Megawati had announced that she would not touch upon political matters during her visit, she was forced to confront the movement head on.⁵⁵ J. Osdar, a *Kompas* reporter who covered the tour, took note of the situation in Wamena on the day Megawati and her entourage were scheduled to arrive. Several hours before her plane touched down, thousands of people were already waiting along the road in front of the airport. The crowd included scores of people from the Satgas PDI-P, to the displeasure of the police and soldiers in the security detail, who shooed them away. But after the Satgas PDI-P members left, several other groups of people opened banners, some printed with words of support for Megawati, some with demands for Papuan independence. The commanders of the security detail were infuriated. "Where did these banners come from!" one of them yelled. Some in the crowd grew angry, but the religious and customary leaders in attendance managed to calm them down.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Prominent members of the OPM who are from Jayawijaya include Mathias Wenda, based along the Papua New Guinea border, and Yudas Kogoya and Titus Murip, who have been active on the boundary of Puncak Jaya, Mimika, and Paniai.

⁵⁵ Because of Megawati's announcement, the press did not extensively cover the tour. Nevertheless, Megawati's schedule had her stopping in every district in the province, and her entourage was very large. The vice president began the tour in the company of nine ministers and was later joined by army generals, the deputy chief of police, and the head of Bakin. The minister of finance, who announced that he would not be able to come, was ordered to join the group midway through the trip. Megawati also dispatched twenty-five of her staff members and sixteen higher level officials from various departments to come to the province in advance of her visit and remain there until after she left. See J. Osdar, "Evaluasi Sepintas Perjalanan Wapres yang Romantis," *Kompas*, May 29, 2000.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

When Megawati finally arrived at the airport, the crowd did not welcome her with cheers and applause. Instead, the vice president found herself facing a sea of Papuans waving the Morning Star flag, yelling at her to go home unless she had come to grant them independence. The troops in the security detail, which by then numbered a few hundred men, including the vice president's bodyguards, but probably also the Jayawijaya police and some Kodim troops, found themselves outnumbered by the demonstrators by more than ten to one. They stood by, immobilized, while the crowd attacked Megawati's car, yelling independence slogans and rocking the vehicle. The crowd did not stop there; they flooded into the airport, broke through a fence, and surrounded the airplane that had brought the vice president's retinue to Wamena. The situation was finally brought under control when Presidium members from Jayawijaya, who happened to be in Wamena at the time, persuaded the masses to disperse.⁵⁷ The vice president learned from this unpleasant encounter something that the intelligence service already knew: in Wamena, just a little provocation would give rise to the desired reaction, i.e., uncontrollable rioting.

The incident in Wamena provided Megawati with proof of the force of public sentiment in the province and particularly in this troubled district. After returning from her trip, she recommended that Wahid rescind his promise to open the Second Papuan National Congress. Wahid's approach to the problem in Irian Jaya had attracted criticism from the very start. Those opposed to Wahid's strategy included not only the military and New Order-style politicians like Akbar Tanjung, but also reformers like Amien Rais. Megawati had their support in condemning Wahid's contribution of a billion rupiah for the Second Papuan National Congress. Others joined her in seeking alternative strategies for dealing the movement; among her allies at the time was Ermaya Suradinata, the Director General of National Unity in the Department of Internal Affairs, who held a secret meeting with military and intelligence officers shortly after the Second Congress to plot a response.⁵⁸ This emerging anti-Wahid coalition came together formally in August 2000, during the general session (*Sidang Umum*) of the Indonesian legislature, where the Papuan problem sparked a heated debate. The resulting proclamation urged Wahid to act forcefully against West Papuan separatism. A troop build-up followed in Irian Jaya, and the focus of discussion in the

⁵⁷ Interview with Agus Alue Alua, late November 2000. Besides joining the Team of One Hundred, Agus was the chair of the organizational committee for the Papuan Congress and now serves as the general secretary of the Presidium.

⁵⁸ The June 8 meeting included representatives from Bakin (Badan Komunikasi Intelijen Negara, or State Coordinating Intelligence Service), Bais (Badan Intelijen Strategis, or Strategic Intelligence Service), Kostrad (Komando Strategis Angkatan Darat, or Army Strategic Reserve Command), and Kopassus (Komando Pasukan Khusus, or Special Forces Command). The resulting report, which was leaked to *Tifa Papua*, sketched a portrait of the supporters of independence that included the popular masses, government officials, and virtually every Papuan intellectual, including two former governors and an ambassador, and members of the provincial parliament, including Jaap Salossa, the current governor. Suradinata and his colleagues laid out a plan that called for heavy sanctions for civil servants involved in the movement, the arrest and imprisonment of nationalist leaders, and open and clandestine military operations, including the recruitment, training, and funding of pro-Indonesian militias at the village level. At the same time, their proposal called for the acceleration of the province's socioeconomic development through an allocation of Rp. 410 million to be transferred directly to the districts and the granting of special autonomy. See Richard Chauvel, "The Backlash: Jakarta's Secret Strategy to Deal with Papuan Nationalism," *Inside Indonesia* (July-September 2001): 23.

province shifted from humanitarian concerns to technical questions relating to the Papuan flag and the name change.⁵⁹ The president himself remained committed to dialogue and held many meetings with the Presidium leadership. But the new chief of police, General Bimantoro, acted in a very different spirit. During his confirmation on September 23, 2000, Bimantoro reportedly received a mandate from Megawati to crush the movement.⁶⁰ He immediately issued an instruction to Brigadier-General S. Y. Wenas, Irian Jaya's chief of police, who held a briefing in Jayapura on September 27, in which he ordered local police commanders to bring down all the Papuan flags currently flying in the province.⁶¹ In response, the Presidium held a meeting on October 3 with Muspida Tingkat I Irian Jaya, an acronym for the provincial leadership council (Musyarawah Pimpinan Daerah), which consisted of the highest ranking civilian and military officials in Irian Jaya.⁶² The two sides reached an agreement to postpone the execution of the order until October 19, in order to give the Papuan leaders a chance to speak with the president. The Presidium did not object in principle to Bimantoro's instruction, but they wanted to receive the order directly from Wahid, since he was the one who had given permission for flag raisings in the first place.⁶³ Although the governing council agreed to the Presidium's request, this discussion with the president never occurred.

On October 6, 2000, three days after the meeting between the Presidium and the leadership council, violence erupted in Wamena when the authorities forcibly lowered the Morning Star flag. On October 9, Police Chief Wenas explained that the security forces had been forced to take action because there were "too many" flags flying in Wamena.⁶⁴ Clearly, this excuse made little sense. It was not the number of flags that was at issue during the October 3 meeting, but rather the process through which they could be lowered without provoking violence. If anything, this comment indicates the degree to which the military and, by extension, Megawati, acted unilaterally in enforcing the command.

At 6:15 in the morning on the day of the incident, a unified force of Brimob (the Mobile Police Brigade) and Kostrad (Strategic Command) troops, under the command of Jayawijaya Police Superintendent Daniel Suripaty, converged on the city's seven Papuan command posts. The police and soldiers occupied these locations for roughly two hours.⁶⁵ They met with resistance at only two locations; at the others, the troops

⁵⁹ Our account of these events draws on a report authored by a team of investigators, headed up by the Jayapura Diocese's Secretariat for Justice and Peace, which included staff members from Kontras Papua, Els-HAM Papua, and LBH Jayapura. See Tim Kemanusiaan Wamena, *Bagian Investigasi, "Peristiwa Tragedi Kemanusiaan Wamena 6 Oktober 2000 Sebelum dan Sesudahnya,"* Jayapura, 2001, p. 7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8; See also Willy Mandowen, "Tragedi Wamena Akibat Dualisme Pemerintah Pusat," *Detikcom*, October 9, 2000.

⁶¹ "Peristiwa Tragedi Kemanusiaan Wamena," p. 8.

⁶² *Ibid.* The members of the leadership council in attendance included the acting governor, the military commander of Region XVII/Trikora, the rector of Cendrawasih University, and Irian Jaya's chief of police. The one member who was not present was the head of the DPR, who at that time was attending a special session for selecting the new governor.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ The following account is drawn from *ibid.*, pp. 14-29.

succeeded in cutting down the Papuan and Indonesian flags. During the operation, the security forces arrested eighty people, who were taken to the district police station and tortured. Most of the independence supporters who had gathered at the command posts retreated to the outskirts of town, where crowds had assembled at the three roads leading into Wamena. From 10 to roughly 11:00 am, members of the Presidium and "pillars," along with customary and religious leaders from Wamena, negotiated with the angry people. At two of the entry roads, the crowds slowly dispersed. But in Wouma, at the road that leads into Wamena from the south, all efforts at appeasement failed. News soon reached the independence supporters that the security forces were returning to "clean out" the command posts, even though all the flags had already been lowered. Troops had already surrounded a dormitory for students from the Yali tribe, arresting twenty-seven residents, including John Willil, Chair of the Yali Customary Council (Lembaga Masyarakat Adat Yali). At another location, the soldiers and police had shot and killed a bystander, Eliaser Alua, who had been walking past with his children. Now, the troops were advancing on Wouma. Upon arrival, they fired their rifles into the air over the crowd.

Witnesses report that after firing these shots, the security forces fled to a nearby block of migrants' houses to evade the shower of arrows unleashed by the Papuans. In this way, the security forces appeared to be trying to transform the conflict into one pitting Papuans against migrants, rather than Papuans against the military and police. If this was the strategy, it clearly worked: the riot that followed culminated in the atrocities described in the beginning of this essay, and the flight of thousands of migrants from their homes. The violence against the migrants arguably occurred in reaction to the excessive force used against the independence supporters.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, this aspect of the incident slowly faded from view because there was no timely and accurate investigation into what really had occurred. As a result, the picture of the incident that emerged was the product of popular misperception, mass-media hype, and the biased statements of the police. The outcome of such misrepresentations has been the perception that what happened in Wamena was the product of ethnic, racial, and religious strife.⁶⁷

Munir, the deputy chair of the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia, or YLBH), has held Chief of Police Bimantoro responsible for the killings.

The police provoked the violence by ordering the lowering of the Morning Star flag. If the flag was lowered at the order of the police, then the national police chief has to be held responsible for the operation undertaken at his initiative. In fact, the police should not have taken the initiative in the matter, because the police should depend on the stance of the government.⁶⁸

Munir concluded that the government had not been consistent in dealing with the Papuan problem, and that, as a result, what began as a vertical conflict between the people and the government was becoming a horizontal conflict between groups. The

⁶⁶ This conclusion accords with the findings of the team of human rights investigators who authored "Peristiwa Tragedi Kemanusiaan Wamena," pp. 51-52.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁶⁸ "Wamena Tanggung Jawab Kapolri," *Detikcom*, October 9, 2000.

Papuan migrant community in Jakarta made the same point in a demonstration in front of the vice president's office, at a rally during which they blamed the bloody incident in Wamena on a conspiracy between Megawati and Bimantoro.⁶⁹ If the purpose of the incident was to advance Megawati's agenda, it clearly succeeded. On October 11, five days after the incident, Megawati and the Coordinating Minister of Politics, Social Affairs, and Security, Lt. Gen. Susilo Bambang Yudoyono, decided upon a set of policies designed to crush the independence movement, including the banning of the Morning Star flag and an investigation into the role of the Presidium and Satgas Papua in the incident.⁷⁰ They announced their findings at a cabinet meeting chaired by Megawati, which was held the next day. On November 11, in another cabinet meeting chaired by Megawati, there was discussion of declaring a civil emergency in Aceh and Papua.⁷¹ It seems clear that the incident strengthened the position of Megawati and her colleagues who supported the violent suppression of separatism. It may well have strengthened Megawati's position in the government, as a whole.

After the incident, among those accused of being the masterminds was Reverend O. Komba, a member of the Presidium who was in Jayapura at the time of the incident.⁷² He was an unlikely suspect, for not only was he absent from the scene of the riots, but he had even spoken by telephone with several leaders in Wamena and with his domestic servants, whom he asked to convey a message of restraint to the people who were preparing to attack. And so this member of the Team of One Hundred—who all this time had managed to keep the people from resorting to violence—became a suspect. If that were not enough, A. M. Fatwa, the deputy head of the DPR and a member of the Party of the National Message (Partai Amanat Nasional, or PAN), publicized one incident, whose perpetrator is still unknown, in order to turn the Indonesian public against the indigenous population in Wamena and the Papuan independence movement more generally.⁷³ Supposedly, a female migrant was raped, then beheaded, and her head was placed beneath her buttocks. The incident was strangely similar to one rumored to have occurred during the 1965 coup, when some Communist women allegedly cut off a general's penis and put it in the victim's mouth. The coup story was apocryphal—a fiction spread to discredit the Indonesian Communist Party.⁷⁴ The Wamena narrative served a similar purpose: it portrayed Papuan nationalists as cruel and depraved, as capable of sadistic crimes.

Shortly after the incident in Wamena, there was an assault on the Papuan Dormitory in Yogyakarta, which appears to have been launched in response to the killings.⁷⁵ And on December 7, 2000, the police raided several dormitories housing students from Jayawijaya and the Central Mountains, shortly after unknown

⁶⁹ "Warga Irian Jaya di Jakarta: Mega Bertanggungjawab Peristiwa Wamena?," *Gatra.com*, October 16, 2000.

⁷⁰ "Siapa Penebar Bintang Kejora Papua," *Gatra.com*, October 10, 2000.

⁷¹ This was in line with a proposal to the president and parliament from the army chief of staff, General Endrianto Sutarto.

⁷² For accusations against the Presidium, see *Cenderawasih Pos*, October 14, 2000, p. 1.

⁷³ Fatwa, who led a parliamentary delegation to the province after the incident, was almost always at odds with Wahid; he based his assertions solely on the security forces' report.

⁷⁴ See Benedict Anderson, "How Did the Generals Die?," *Indonesia* 43 (April 1987): 109-134.

⁷⁵ "Peristiwa Tragedi Kemanusiaan Wamena," pp. 53-54.

assailants attacked a police post in Abepura, assaulting three officers and killing one. Back at the police station, a Swiss journalist listened in horror as several of the students, who by most accounts knew nothing of the killing, were tortured to death.⁷⁶ We do not claim to know what went through the minds of the independence supporters who wreaked such havoc in Wamena, but there is evidence that suggests how a context conducive to violence developed. In Wamena, the movement's rank and file became pawns in a contest to control the image of Papuan nationalism. The outcome has been an ongoing series of deaths.⁷⁷

Indonesia is certainly going to combat the Papuan nationalist movement by any means possible. But the experience of the past two years has given the struggle new roots in the next generation. Before this interlude, Papuans born after the 1960s were not familiar with the Morning Star flag and had never sung the Papuan national anthem or stood together as a nation, even if the desire for freedom lived within them. Today, these national symbols have become widely familiar; children can draw the flag and sing the songs. The task of erasing the Papuans' feeling that they are citizens of a separate nation will take a very long time.

"Primordialism" Revisited

Is "Papuanness" primordial? Clearly not in the sense that some have given the term. The quality emerged historically and has pertained to a shifting field of reference. It is no more "given" than the many other identities that people in western New Guinea have assumed. Rather than thinking of Papuanness as an assumed essence, it seems more fruitful to approach it as a secret and potent understanding of self that can only be revealed in extraordinary times. Are the affinities associated with this identity prone to erupt in outbursts of inter-ethnic violence? Not necessarily. In Wamena, innocent civilians did indeed die in the name of an independent West Papua. But until the incident, the target of animosity had not been the many migrants that live in the province, but the agents and apparatuses of the state.

Still, primordialism has a role to play in the drama now unfolding in western New Guinea. As one human rights worker has put it, the Papuans are "haunted" by the atrocities that have occurred in Ambon and elsewhere.⁷⁸ This wording associates the causes of ethnic violence with the spectral forces blamed for recent unrest in the conspiracy theories that have swept Indonesia during the past two years. In other cases, the province's inhabitants have treated ethnic violence as an epidemic that could easily spread. When a ship full of refugees from the war-torn Moluccas docked in Jayapura last July, Papuan militia members and ordinary citizens alike gathered at

⁷⁶ See "Siaran Pers Els-HAM Papua Barat tentang Kasus Penyerbuan Polsek Abepura dan Penanganannya," December 14, 2000, and "Surat Gereja-gereja kepada Komnas HAM," December 16, 2000.

⁷⁷ "Peristiwa Tragedi Kemanusiaan Wamena," pp. 54-55.

⁷⁸ "Dengan adanya perkembangan demikian masyarakat Papua merasa resah dan makin takut, dan bukan rahasia lagi bahwa terjadinya tragedi kemanusiaan seperti di Timor Timur, Maluku dan Posso makin menghantui banyak orang." This quotation is from a letter to President Wahid composed by participants in the United Evangelical Mission in Three Continents International Workshop on Human Rights, an event held in Biak on September 10, 2000. See "HR Workshop," *Kabar Irian*, Internet posting, September 16, 2000.

the port to prevent the passengers from disembarking.⁷⁹ As the episode in Wamena makes clear, the province's inhabitants have reason to fear that the outcome of the current crackdown may not simply be killings by the military, but the unleashing of an uncontrollable force.

The situation in Papua suggests that we need to approach seemingly primordial affinities as neither purely natural nor purely manufactured. These alternatives obscure the second order efficacy of the concept—the degree to which people in places like today's Papua act in a particular global context, with global audiences in mind. We may want to criticize explanations that take primordialism as the cause of ethnic violence, but we should pay heed to the concept's efficacy as a focus of fear and interest. This concept's efficacy is clear to leaders of the nationalist movement in Irian Jaya, who have tried to present a portrait of inclusiveness to the non-Papuans living in the province, welcoming even transmigrants into the independence movement. It is also clear to those who seem to have exploited the situation in Wamena for their own political ends. Expectations concerning the "repressed passions" of others can work in explosive ways to orient action. It is not necessarily the given-ness of ethnic identities that leads to the spread of terror; it is the sudden emergence into view of feared categories of personhood that can lead people to suddenly recognize a neighbor as a potential threat.⁸⁰

These considerations of audience and expectation would prove crucial to a more general analysis of Papuan nationalism. It is at a certain moment in the history of global relations—a moment when institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the UN are assuming aspects of the sovereignty formerly limited to nation-states—that the idea of an independent West Papua makes any sense. To understand Papuan nationalism in all its complexity, one would have to examine how news from afar is translated into a local context. Our essay can only end with a simple conclusion. This episode of Papuan nationalism may very well be ending with what looks like primordial violence. But that is not the way it began.

⁷⁹ See "Fate unclear for tens of thousands of unwanted Maluku refugees," *AFP*, July 31, 2000.

⁸⁰ See Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 154.

Postscript

While this essay was going to press, Theys Eluay, on trial for subversion, was found dead in his car in a ravine off a lonely stretch of highway near the Papua New Guinea border.⁸¹ Eluay was abducted on his way home from a National Heroes Day celebration, which was hosted by Kopassus at the Tribuana Military Command in Hamadi. The Kopassus commander had invited Eluay to attend the celebration, and had escorted him to the event. Eluay's driver, who has since disappeared, managed to reach Eluay's relatives by mobile phone to tell them that a group of "non-Papuans" had taken the leader hostage. Although initial reports stated that Eluay had been strangled, medical examiners have yet to confirm the cause of death. The provincial police initially suggested that Eluay had had a heart attack. The national police spokesman went so far as to speculate that Eluay had been killed by his own men.⁸² But to all appearances, Eluay's death was, as Human Rights Watch puts it, a "well-planned assassination."⁸³ Eluay's family and Papuan supporters are convinced that the military is to blame.⁸⁴

Immediately following the discovery of Eluay's body, angry demonstrators torched several buildings in Sentani.⁸⁵ No one was injured, however, and several days later, over ten thousand people accompanied Eluay's body from the regional parliament in Jayapura to his home in Sentani without any violence erupting. Yet the potential for further bloodshed—and bad publicity—is clearly on the authorities' minds. Even national politicians like Amien Rais have acknowledged the need for a probe into the death.⁸⁶ Eluay's murder followed the Presidium's renouncement of the special autonomy package recently passed by the national DPR. The package grants the province a greater share of revenue and calls for the establishment of a special indigenous council; it also confirms the change of province's name to Papua and allows for the use of the Papuan flag and anthem. Some observers are reading Eluay's assassination as an attack on the special autonomy package and, presumably, the interests it stands to threaten.⁸⁷ Whatever insights a further investigation may yield, Eluay's death, like the violence in Wamena, must be set against the backdrop of fissures within Indonesia's ruling elite.

⁸¹ See "Police on Alert in West Papua Following Discovery of Body," *Radio Australia*, November 11, 2001, 22:30:27 AEST; "Villagers Stumble upon Body in Irian Jaya," *Radio Australia*, November 11, 2001, 21:12:07 AEST; "Jenazah Theys Ditemukan di Perbatasan PNG; Massa Membakar Pertokoan di Sentani," *Media Indonesia*, November 12, 2001; R.K. Nugroho, "Papuan Independence Leader Found Dead," *The Jakarta Post.com*, November 12, 2001. See also Tapol, "Papua's Pro-independence Leader Assassinated: State Terrorism Takes Its Toll," November 11, 2001; Australia West Papua Association, Letter to Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs, November 14, 2001.

⁸² See "Eluay Killing Remains a Mystery," *Laksamana.Net*, November 13, 2001.

⁸³ See Human Rights Watch, "Indonesia: Investigate Death of Papuan Leader," November 11, 2001.

⁸⁴ Human rights activists and other analysts share this suspicion, pointing to Kopassus as the likely culprit. See, e.g., Vaudine Englang, "Red Berets' history of killing makes Kopassus prime suspect," *South China Morning Post*, November 12, 2001.

⁸⁵ See Vaudine Englang, "Freedom leader's killing triggers rampage," *South China Morning Post*, November 12, 2001; "Violence erupts after killing of Papua independence leader," *AFP*, November 11, 2001.

⁸⁶ See Marianne Kearney, "Jakarta Feels Heat over They's Death," *The Straits Times*, November 14, 2001.

⁸⁷ See, e.g., "Eluay Killing Remains a Mystery."