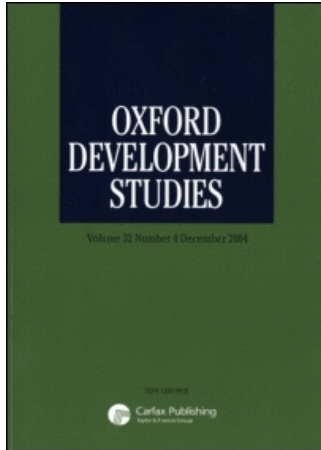


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The Wild Terrorist Gang: The Semantics of Violence and Self-determination in West Papua

S. EBEN KIRKSEY & J. A. D. ROEMAJAUW

ABSTRACT *The Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM) is the most important force uniting resistance in West Papua, formerly known as Irian Jaya, against Indonesian occupation. Rather than being a Weberian organization, the OPM can be conceived of as a cultural world view. A variety of distinct organizations are united by the principles of the OPM, but are autonomous in action. The media have depicted the OPM as dangerous insurgents who threaten the unitary state of Indonesia with violence. By employing acronyms such as GPL (Gerombolan Pengacau Liar or the "Wild Terrorist Gang") to refer to the OPM, the media has glossed over distinctions between different groups. Labelling the OPM as terrorists has serious political, economic and military implications. Media representations of the OPM are open to divergent readings by Papuans and their international network of supporters. Competing emic (local) accounts about the OPM are distributed on a global scale by new communications technologies.*

1. Introduction

Speaking the name West Papua is a political act in Indonesia that aligns the speaker with the self-determination movement that can be called the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM). Papuans and human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) maintain that Indonesia's name for the western half of New Guinea is also politically charged. Irian Jaya is the name that was bestowed on this territory by former President Soeharto in the early 1970s. According to Papuan interlocutors the name Irian is an acronym that refers to the struggle for freedom against former colonial rulers: "ikut Republik Indonesia anti-Nederland" (join the Republic of Indonesia against the Dutch).

Resistance by indigenous people to foreign rule has often been represented in the occident as violent and illegitimate. For example, the "Mau Mau" in Kenya were imagined by white settlers as "a terrorist organisation not of ordinary humans fighting for a cause, but of primitive beasts who had been made to forsake all moral codes" (Rosberg & Nottingham, 1966, p. 378, note 60). Anthropologists have also produced

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charged representations of indigenous violence. Evans-Pritchard, for example, described the Nuer as a society centred around fighting, whose political stability was based on constant warfare against foreigners (Evans-Pritchard, 1940, p. 134; Johnson, 1981).

Tables are being turned on anthropologists as their former subjects of study enjoy access to modes of representation such as museums (Fienup-Riordan, 1999), the Internet (Jeganathan, 1998), television (Schiller, 2001), journalism (Tierney, 2000) and academic newsletters (Dariawo *et al.*, 1999; Herdt, 1999). “Natives” have become anthropologists (Sahlins, 1995; Obeyesekere, 1992), and “locals” are engaging in heated debates amongst themselves about the existence and validity of “local knowledge” (Bell, 1998; Rowse, 2000). Indigenous people are becoming increasingly adept at representing themselves and are articulating their resistance to foreign domination in the language of geopolitics. Responding to, and sometimes fostering, this crisis in representation, anthropologists have developed more sophisticated understandings of the global economic, political and cultural forces that influence how their subjects are framed (Kirksey, 2000, p. 138).

In the past decade the relationship of the global with the local has received increased attention both within anthropology and in wider popular culture (Appadurai, 1998, p. 228). This discussion relates to a long-standing debate within anthropology about the distinction between emic and etic explanation.

Some scholars have simplified the emic/etic distinction by equating it with the opposition between local/global (Pike, 1954, 1990; Headland *et al.*, 1990). Indeed, when anthropologists speak of global versus local perspectives (i.e. Strathern, 1995, p. ix) at least part of what is meant is etic versus emic ways of viewing the world. In this paper we would like to go beyond the simple equation of emic/etic = local/global to unpack different shades of meaning in the word “global”. Both emic and etic perspectives can be global: both types of perspectives are accessible world-wide and can have access to information from all over the world. The global media support the world views of diasporas by providing segmented channels of information. New communications technologies are being used to distribute emic accounts of events in local homelands to fragmented audiences around the world. Global media are broadcasting increasingly specialized information that caters to emic perspectives.

The next section of our paper, “Organization”, is an emic account of the OPM read against the grain of Weber’s etic model of bureaucracy (Weber, 1970, p. 216). We argue that the OPM is an incipient nationalist movement, able to persist because it is a cultural institution rather than a bureaucracy. In the section “Designation”, we trace changes in the names used by the news media for the self-determination movement in West Papua. The name that is applied to a self-determination movement, we argue, helps determine the flow of political and economic capital to that group and to the nation-state from which it wishes to break away. Our final section, “Fragmentation”, interrogates Indonesian and Papuan interpretations of military killings, political protests and hostage situations to show how competing perceptions of the same events are maintained.

2. Organization

In this section we describe how the OPM has become the most important cultural force uniting heterogeneous Papuan groups that have the common goal of independence from Indonesia. We demonstrate that the success of the OPM in resisting Indonesian rule for nearly 40 years is linked to its flexible organizational structure. Rather than

being a bureaucratic organization that, in the words of Weber, is “dehumanized” through the elimination “from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal ... and emotional elements which escape calculation” (Weber, 1970, p. 216), the OPM is perpetuated by deep beliefs that are pervasive throughout Papuan societies.

Like other incipient nationalist movements around the world (Brubaker & Laitin, 1998, p. 428), membership of the OPM is defined along ethnic lines. There are over 250 distinct cultural groups in West Papua and the OPM has a powerful currency that cuts across traditional cultural boundaries (see, e.g. Ballard, 2002; Giay & Godschalk, 1993; Golden, 2000; Kirksey, 2000). A “Papuan” ethnicity spanning these 250 groups can be seen as a creation of the movement for self-determination in West Papua (cf. Brubaker & Laitin, 1998; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1993). It is a common saying that all Papuans are members of the OPM. Papuans, who have curly hair and dark skin, view themselves as being racially distinct from straight-haired and brown-skinned Indonesians. However, the conflict in West Papua cannot be explained exclusively in ethnic terms (cf. Brubaker & Laitin, 1998, p. 425): economic, religious and political forces have been articulated together to form a powerful cultural movement.

OPM is the most commonly used name for the self-determination movement in West Papua. There is no clear consensus about how to translate the name OPM into English: previous authors have variously translated it as the Free Papua Movement (Osborne, 1985, p. xiii; Budiardjo & Liem, 1988, p. v), the Organization of Independent Papua (Department of Information, 1976, p. 9), the Papuan Freedom Organization (Hellberg, 1999, p. 84; Echols & Shadily 1990, p. 398) and the Free Papua Organization (May, 1978, p. 179). There have been few sustained attempts by Papuans to establish one of these translations as the “correct” one. Many Papuans, however, strongly object to English language publications that have written that OPM is an acronym that stands for Operasi Papua Merdeka. These Papuan critics maintain that the substitution of *operasi*, which means a (military) operation, for *organisasi* is incorrect and implies that the OPM is by nature a military movement rather than a movement for freedom.

Viktor Kaisiepo, a prominent Papuan leader in exile in the Netherlands, maintains that the definition of the word *merdeka* (freedom) is the key to understanding the OPM: it is variously a desire for divine salvation, equitable development, environmental sustainability and political independence. American anthropologist Brigham Golden describes contemporary Papuan interpretations of *merdeka* as “a liberation theology ... of moral salvation in which [there is] a Christian desire for a world of human dignity and divine justice” (Golden, 2000, p. 1).

According to Kaisiepo, OPM membership goes beyond the realm of humans: in West Papua every rock, tree, fish and even nature (*alam*) itself is a member of the OPM. The forest has been known to kill Indonesians: malarial mosquitoes, venomous white snakes and the trees themselves are foot soldiers of the OPM.¹ There is an OPM member among the Mee people in the central highlands of West Papua who is said to have the power to become a mosquito and fly around in an invisible form. The man has already killed seven Indonesian military troops while disguised in this form.² The Mee also believe that there is a type of female demon who lives in the forest and regularly kills Indonesian soldiers. These beautiful she-demons invite soldiers to have sex with them. When the soldiers take off their clothes and try to mount the demon, it disappears. Their penises enter the earth and the soldiers immediately die.³

There is disagreement about the exact date that the OPM was founded but most sources trace it to 1964–65 (Budiardjo & Liem, 1988; Osborne, 1985; Saltford, 2000; Somar, 2001). The OPM, as a powerful cultural influence, went on to become the



Figure 1. TPN members prepare to greet Megawati Sukarnoputri.

unifying force in the Papuan self-determination movement, both throughout Papua and abroad. But since the late 1960s no clear leadership has emerged. Instead, the OPM has served as a conceptual umbrella for a variety of distinct organizations that share a common desire for freedom from Indonesia: the Dutch-created police force Papua Volunteer Corps (PVK), the Papuan National Front (FNP), the National Liberation Army (TPN, Figure 1), the Restoration of Justice (Pemka), the Troops of National Liberation (Papenal), Committee for Freedom of West Melanesia (Panitia Kemerdekaan Melanesia Barat) and Mambesak music group. Each of these groups has had a distinct leadership structure, and none of them have had a clear mandate to speak for the OPM.

The contemporary OPM is not characterized by “strict subordination” and “continuity”, in contrast to Weber’s vision of an ideal bureaucracy (Weber, 1970, p. 214). There is not a strict chain of command within the OPM and the membership of this organization is fluid yet wide-ranging. We argue that the persistence of the OPM can be explained by its non-Weberian principles of organization. A shared set of beliefs, values, hopes and theological desires are the structure uniting the OPM.

3. Designation

Under the New Order government of President Soeharto there were tight restrictions on the media and other modes of representation in Indonesia (Pemberton, 1994; Siegel, 1998). During the New Order the OPM were rarely called by name in the Indonesian media. When the self-determination movement in West Papua did enter the news it was named with symbolically charged acronyms that were imposed by the Ministry of Information. With recent developments in global communications technology there has been an increased velocity of “image circulation created by Cable News Network, the World Wide Web, faxes, phones, and other media ... exposing

populations in one place to the goriest details of violence in another” (Appadurai, 1998, pp. 242–243). One could predict that with these revolutionary technological developments, the self-determination movement in West Papua would be better able to have its name heard. Yet while there has been a shift that allows Papuan names to be heard in the global media, the legitimacy of these names continues to be challenged.

The publication of an article about the OPM by *Tempo* news magazine on 26 October 1981 marked the rising interest of the Indonesian press in West Papua and underscored the growing inability of the government to keep the region out of the public’s gaze (Osborne, 1985; *Tempo*, 1981, p. 88). Before this time news about the self-determination movement in West Papua had been effectively edited out of the Indonesian media (Budiardjo & Liem, 1988). According to Hans Keller, silence in the historical record about violent conflicts can, in some instances, be read as the result of effective extermination of the victims: “Since representation requires a presence, we would ordinarily say that the presence of an absence represents the absence of a presence” (Keller, 1997, p. 14). It is clear that hundreds, if not tens of thousands, of Papuans have been killed at the hands of Indonesian military troops (Osborne, 1985; Budiardjo & Liem, 1988; Aditjondro, 2000; Giay, 2000).

The 1981 *Tempo* article focused on an attack by Papuans on a jail in Abepera, near West Papua’s capital of Jayapura. The attackers were introduced as “Gerombolan pengacau Papua Merdeka” and later awkwardly referred to as “Gerombolan Pengacau Liar” (GPL), “Papua Merdeka” and finally simply as “OPM”. The designation GPL followed a naming convention at the time that was enforced by the Indonesian Ministry of Information. The term GPL was also applied to other self-determination movements in Indonesia, such as the GAM in Acéh and Falintil/Fretilin in East Timor. Both Osborne (1985, p. viii) and Budiardjo & Liem (1988, p. v) translate the term GPL as “Wild Terrorist Gang”, a phrase that we have appropriated as a provocative title for this article. However, few other authors have attempted an English translation of GPL and the rendering of this term is perhaps even more problematic than translating OPM. According to Echols & Shadily (1990), authors of the authoritative *Indonesian–English Dictionary*, each of the words that make up this acronym is loaded with negative connotations: *gerombolan* means “gang, band (of thieves, etc.)” (p. 187); *pengacau* (from *kacau*) signifies “agitator, disturber of the peace” (p. 252); and *liar* connotes “1. wild, primitive (animal, tribe, etc.). 2. wild, illegal, unauthorised (school, organization, etc.)” (p. 342). Indonesian uses of language about the Papuan movement for self-determination thus paint Papuan aspirations as illegitimate.

In the early 1980s the official Indonesian name for domestic terrorist groups was changed from GPL to GPK (*Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan*). In several respects this new term is sanitized when compared with GPL. The word *gerakan* means “movement” as in dance steps, a political process, or a military advance (Echols & Shadily, 1990, p. 185). *Keamanan*, from the root *aman*, signifies security, safety, peacefulness and tranquillity (Shadily, 1990, p. 14). In the words of the *Jakarta Post*, the English daily newspaper based in Indonesia, “GPK is the Indonesian acronym for *Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan* (Security Disturbance Movement), the military term used to refer to separatist rebel groups” (*Jakarta Post*, p. 1). While the explicit meaning of GPK is subtler than GPL, it is none the less loaded with negative connotations. The Security Disturbance Movement, which the *Jakarta Post* glosses as “separatist rebel group”, describes the OPM in terms that are no more legitimate than the Wild Terrorist Gang.

There has been a degree of slippage between the terms GPL and GPK. As late as 1996, more than a decade after the official change in terminology, both *Kompas* and

Cenderawasih Pos, a local newspaper in West Papua that is part of the *Jawa Pos* (PT Grafitipers) media conglomerate, ran stories about the *Gerombolan Pengacau Keamanan* (*sic*) or the GPK (*Kompas*, 1996; *Cenderawasih Pos*, 1996a). This, perhaps unintentional substitution of *gerombolan* (gang) for *gerakan* (movement) indicates that in many Indonesian minds the terms GPL and GPK are interchangeable.

In the eyes of Indonesians the acronym OPM has come to have the same negative associations as the official government nomenclature for self-determination movements. Many Indonesian newspaper articles have used the name OPM as an interchangeable term first for GPL and later for GPK (i.e. *Tempo*, 1981; *Kompas*, 1996; *Tifa Irian*, 1996a). The blurring of these distinctions has made the name OPM become illegitimate in the Indonesian lexicon.

The slippage in the Indonesian media between the GPK and the OPM was criticized in an interview with Papuan leader Theys Eluay that was published by the *Tifa Irian* in January 1996. The article states "From Eluay's perspective, the GPK cannot be identified with the OPM. The GPK is a gang (*gerombolan*) that works to disturb the order and the peace enjoyed by the people, while the OPM is an organization that is in pursuit of chances for the independence of the Papuan Homeland" (*Tifa Irian*, 1996b, p. 6). In this interview Eluay attempted to distinguish between the armed forces in the jungle and the rest of the Papuan people who desire freedom through the cultural institution of the OPM.

It has been possible for Papuan news sources to employ the official Indonesian names for self-determination movements to convey subaltern messages. In 1996, *Tifa Irian* published an article comparing the GPK in contemporary Papua with the GPK in colonial Java under the Dutch (*Tifa Irian*, 1996c). In a clever appropriation and manipulation of official discourse the anonymous author questions whether Indonesians used tactics that are similar to current GPK groups to fight Dutch colonizers.

In October 1999 Indonesian President Gus Dur abolished the Ministry of Information and initiated sweeping changes in Indonesia's media regulations (Sen & Hill, 2000, p. 8). Before this time the Ministry of Information had the authority to revoke publishing licences on a whim, as witnessed by the dramatic closing of three prominent news periodicals in June 1994 (Sen & Hill, 2000, p. 74). The regulations requiring the Indonesian national media to use the term GPK have been abandoned. Use of the term GPK by the English-language media to describe the self-determination movement in West Papua ceased in August 1999 in the time leading up to the closure of the Ministry of Information. Only two English-language stories about the GPK in West Papua have been indexed on LexisNexis Executive news service since.

Major media outlets in Indonesia have continued to publish reports that name the self-determination movement in West Papua as GPK (*Antara*, 2001; *Indonesian Observer*, 2001). There are no comprehensive electronic indexes of Indonesian-language news, but we did search the articles currently posted on *kompas.com* and *infopapua.com*, which are two Indonesian news web sites. OPM was the most frequently used name to refer to the self-determination movement in West Papua on these sites: it was used in articles more than twice as frequently as GPK.

The TPN (National Liberation Army) is a distinct organization within the self-determination movement in West Papua that has taken on the symbolic trappings of the military (Figure 1). They have few modern weapons, but have engaged in several high-profile kidnappings and acts of sabotage. In May 2000, the first LexisNexis indexed news article using the name TPN was published by the *Jakarta Post*.⁴ This article used the phrase "Free Papua Organization (TPN OPM)" to distinguish them from the Papuan Presidium, which is an urban political movement that also has

independence aspirations. Since this time there have been an increasing number of news articles published about the TPN in the English-language news media that recognize them as a distinct group. This shows evidence of an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the internal dynamics within the West Papuan self-determination movement. However, within the Indonesian-language news media the blurring of names persists. For example, the news web site infopapua.com uses the name TPN with nearly the same frequency as GPK. The online edition of *Kompas* uses the name GPK nearly four times as frequently as TPN.

On a local level in West Papua there has been an effort by the military to replicate New Order naming practices for self-determination movements now that they have been officially abolished on a national level. In October 2001, Major-General Mahidin Simbolon, who heads the regional military command for West Papua, began attempting to enforce a new name for the TPN. His new acronym "KSB" stands for "*Kelompok Separatis Bersenjata*" or "Armed Separatist Group" (TAPOL, 2001). The name KSB has not yet been successfully enforced. Domestic and foreign media outlets have not adopted KSB in their news reporting. As of late December 2001 only a single news story, which was about Simbolon's announcement concerning the new terminology, had been published on the infopapua.com web site (Infopapua, 2001). To date there have been no English-language news articles indexed on LexisNexis that name the self-determination movement in West Papua as KSB.

In this section we have described the multitude of acronyms that are used to name the self-determination movement in West Papua. The diversity of acronyms has resulted, we argue, in the blurring of the distinctions among different groups in West Papua. The slippage between the names of peaceful political groups and armed freedom fighters allowed the Indonesian government, until recently, to frame requests for social and economic equity as threats to Indonesian national security and territorial integrity.

4. Fragmentation

Emic models frequently have interesting insights that can inform etic discussions. For example, Neles Tebay, a Mee journalist who worked as a correspondent in West Papua for the *Jakarta Post*, likens two styles of news reporting about West Papua to two musical genres: gamelan and tifa.⁵ Traditionally Javanese people, who are the most numerous ethnic group in Indonesia, play arranged music pieces in gamelan orchestras. An orchestra is composed of scores of musicians who play a set of brass pots, metal xylophones and gongs. Ornately carved tifa drums are held in the hand of a single musician and are played to accompany traditional Papuan dances. The weekly Indonesian-language newspaper called the *Tifa Papua* embodies the Papuan tifa style of reporting, says Tebay. According to him, gamelan news reporting is orchestrated, while tifa reporting cleverly skirts around central government control. In this section we shall discuss how contested emic accounts of events in West Papua are maintained alongside each other. Cultural translation, where one of these emic perspectives is transposed in the media network of another group, only rarely takes place.

The news stories around the time of the April 1984 murder of Arnold Ap by Indonesian security forces serve to illustrate one method used by Indonesia to maintain their "gamelan" style of news reporting. Ap was the curator of the Bird of Paradise University Museum (Museum UNCEN) and was widely renowned both locally and internationally. A manual search for Ap's name through *Kompas* from the date of his murder till 1 week after his funeral yielded no results. On 30 April 1984, the day before

Ap's funeral, thousands of Papuans assembled on the streets (Osborne, 1985). *Kompas* ran four front-page items about West Papua on this same day, which is surprising since West Papua rarely even entered the news during this period. None of these articles mentioned the protests and painted a picture of a primitive, underdeveloped land. One article, titled "Indonesia will receive runaway Irianese from PNG", claimed that the approximately 10 000 refugees who had fled to refugee camps in Papua New Guinea earlier in the year were uneducated villagers who were frightened by a sonic boom made by a fighter plane. Arnold Ap's funeral was thus erased from these Indonesian accounts of news from West Papua. These techniques of distraction are not unique to the Indonesian media. An Algerian comedian once joked that Algerian television always shows Jacques Cousteau underwater films when there is a national crisis (Lloyd, this issue).

Papuans have not accepted these arranged Indonesian accounts passively. A graphic that appeared on the front page of the *Cenderawasih Pos*, which is an Indonesian-language newspaper based in West Papua, illustrates that there can be competing readings of news features (Figure 2). A Cambridge University expedition to West Papua was taken hostage by a group of TPN troops led by Kelly Kwalik on 8 January 1996. The taking of these hostages dramatically increased the number of English-language stories published about the OPM. Shortly after the hostages were taken, the *Cenderawasih Pos* ran a graphic featuring a picture of Kwalik's head that was titled "A list of Kelly Kwalik's sins" (*Cenderawasih Pos*, 1996). The cross hair from a telescopic rifle sight is positioned squarely on the bridge of Kwalik's nose. Kwalik, whose face is

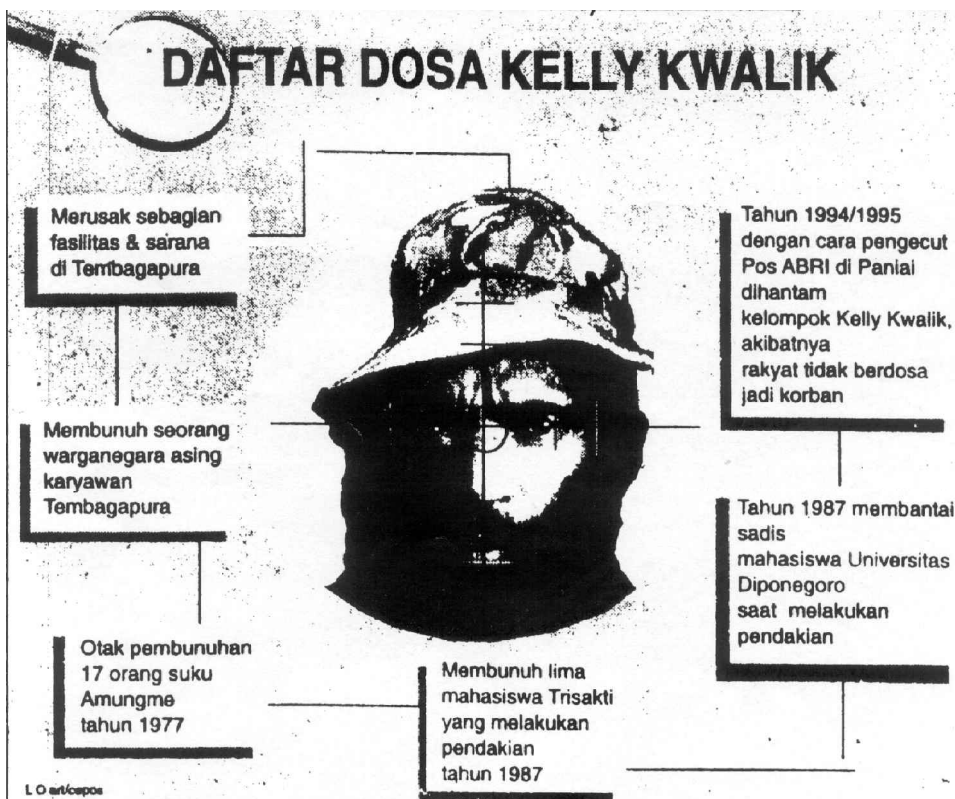


Figure 2. A list of Kelly Kwalik's Sins.

a target to be shot, appears as a victim on one level. The propensity to empathize with a human face is multiplied if the reader happens to share physical features with that face (Doris Jedamski, personal communication): most readers of the *Cenderawasih Pos* are Papuan and generally look like Kwalik.

Other elements in Figure 2 frame Kwalik's face as that of a fugitive who has escaped from justice. The magnifying glass in the upper left-hand corner hints at the search that the Indonesian military was conducting for Kwalik. A camouflaged hat sits on Kwalik's head, marking his status as a soldier. The text boxes floating around his face list his alleged "sins": he destroyed the slurry pipe of the mining corporation named Freeport McMoRan in 1977, killed a foreign national, masterminded the killing of 17 Amungme people, killed five students, caused "innocent" villagers to be killed and "slaughtered" one student. Papuans have utilized sophisticated strategies when reading such news accounts that have been composed according to Indonesian standards: they read between the lines of, and beyond, such texts. Independent of whether these "sins" are true or false, it is still possible for Papuan readers to point to this picture of Kwalik as that of a revolutionary hero. Some of these "sins", such as destroying Freeport's slurry pipe in an act of sabotage in 1977, are celebrated by most Papuans.

The underlying motive behind Kelly Kwalik taking hostages seemed to translate into a logic that was readily understood by Indonesian and international audiences: Kwalik hoped to focus attention on the self-determination movement in West Papua. Other encounters between Papuans and Indonesians are rooted in a deeper cultural logic that does not easily translate. For example, there are several competing readings of the reception of Indonesia's Vice-President Megawati Sukarnoputri⁶ by thousands of Papuans during her whistle-stop tour of West Papua in May 2000. The online edition of the *Jakarta Post* ran a story entitled "OPM supporters greet Megawati in Jayawijaya". This story described how an estimated 10 000 OPM members thronged to greet her at the highland airport of Wamena (*Jakarta Post*, 2000).

The following day Megawati visited Enarotali, the other large administrative centre in the highlands of West Papua. There she was greeted by Mee people running counter-clockwise around her helicopter in a raucous dance called *waita tai*. Within Mee society the *waita tai* dance can be performed at a ceremony that marks the end of a period of mourning where gifts are exchanged and grievances forgotten. The Mee were ready to forgive deaths at Indonesian hands and to engage in a dialogue about Papua's future. Dressed in grass skirts and penis sheaths they crowded around Megawati's helicopter while waving morning star flags and shouting a singsong chorus. In front of the crowd stood a group of TPN troops armed with bows and arrows. The troops unveiled a sign that read "The Papuan peoples ask for freedom" when Megawati stepped on to the tarmac (Figure 1). Seeing the TPN troops she "immediately peed in her pants" (*langsung kencing celana*) by Mee accounts. Scrambling back up into the helicopter, Megawati was airborne within moments and headed to her next destination in a coastal city.⁷

The official transcripts of Megawati's visit to West Papua published in the Indonesian media made no mention of her momentary stop in Enarotali (*Jakarta Post*, 2000). Indeed, Megawati's own recollection of her visit to Enarotali may differ significantly from Mee accounts: perhaps she was simply on a tight schedule and immediately returned to her helicopter because she did not have time to give a speech. While Megawati clearly disappointed the Mee by not engaging in a dialogue with them about independence, they remember Megawati's visit as a symbolic victory over the Indonesian government. Like the Wahgi of Papua New Guinea (O'Hanlon, 1989), it seems that some Mee are proud to think that outsiders may be afraid of them.

English-speaking executives and bilingual members of the political élite read the English-language *Jakarta Post* article cited above, which depicted Megawati's reception in West Papua by tens of thousands of "OPM supporters". For many Indonesians this event reaffirmed assumptions that there is a need for stricter control of the province. Behind the scenes of this encounter between Indonesian officialdom and what was perceived of as Papuan "savagery", complex political and economic forces were at work. In the weeks leading up to Megawati's visit, a series of helicopters flew in from West Papua's coastal capital to the barracks of Thadius Yogi, the TPN commander of the region around Enarotali. Colonel Armentony, who was the Head of Indonesian Military Intelligence for West Papua (Asintel Kasdam VIII/Trikora), met with Yogi and asked him to stage a demonstration during Megawati's visit.⁸ According to one of our Mee interlocutors, secret discussions took place between Armentony and Yogi. Air-drops of rice and, according to one source money, were made by helicopter to Yogi's group before Megawati's visit. But apparently some of Armentony's promises were not fulfilled. We witnessed a demand made by Yogi to one of the members of the Regional People's Assembly (DPRD) about why the "proceeds from the demonstration" (*hasil demo*) had not yet arrived.

The *Jakarta Post* article about Megawati's visit was circulated world-wide: an e-mail copy of it arrived in Kirksey's inbox shortly after it was published. It had been sent to Kirksey by TAPOL, which is a London-based human rights NGO, via an e-mail discussion group called "reg.westpapua" (a regional conference on West Papua).⁹

The *Jakarta Post* article about Megawati's visit did not present a favourable view of West Papuan political aspirations for self-determination. Instructions to read against the grain of this article were included in the e-mail that was forwarded by TAPOL: "Indonesia did not of course free West Papua from the Dutch as suggested by this piece; they merely replaced them as the colonial power" (TAPOL, 2000). According to Carmel Budiardjo, who is the Founder of TAPOL, she regularly adds comments to correct the content of items that she posts. Time constraints prohibit her from carefully reading the articles and spotting all of the news items that need correction. The commentary on the *Jakarta Post* article referred to the lines in the article that read:

Many waved the OPM morning star flag and raised proindependence (*sic*) banners, demanding a dialog with the Vice President. "Welcome, Mother of West Papua Liberation in Baliem Valley", and "Mbak (Mrs.) Mega, return the political rights of the Papua nation", read the banners. It was Megawati's father, Sukarno, Indonesia's first president, who led the country in freeing the territory from the Dutch on 1 May, 1963.

(Jakarta Post, 2000)

In distributing news items that are organized according to the Indonesian perspective, the information network for West Papuan supporters thus relies on readers to engage in textual criticism. Like Papuans who read against the grain of the Indonesian media to identify with newspaper pictures of rebel leaders, members of the reg.westpapua news group use their own emic world views to filter media depictions. This double process of filtering the news, however, does not produce accounts that are equivalent to nuanced Papuan interpretations. The only sources that we found describing Megawati's reaction were oral testimonies by Mee witnesses. Since the *waita tai* dance was not mentioned in the *Jakarta Post* article, the reg.westpapua readers were unaware that it had taken place.

Papuan renderings of their confrontations with Indonesians are distributed in the English-language news only very rarely. News articles about the missing heart of Theys

Eluay, who was Chairman of the Papuan Presidium Council, illustrate one of these unusual examples. The *Straits Times*, a Singaporean newspaper, neatly summed up the contested perspectives about the cause of death of Eluay. The headline of this article stated: "Indonesian police: Papua leader died of heart attack; Theys Eluay supporters: He was strangled" (Kearney, 2001). When Eluay's body was found "his face was blackened, his tongue was hanging out—suggesting strangulation—and his stomach was bruised and bloodied" according to eyewitness Aloysius Renwarin from the Papuan human rights NGO, ELS-HAM (Kearney, 2001). Security forces moved quickly to establish a natural cause of death backed by expert medical opinion. On the day that the body was found an autopsy was conducted by the director of the hospital in West Papua's capital of Jayapura. The autopsy concluded in a carefully worded statement that a lack of oxygen was the cause of death "because his oxygen intake channel was blocked" (*Agence France Presse*, 2001).

Apparently the initial autopsy did not produce satisfactory results for the authorities. During the autopsy, Eluay's heart was removed from his body and, according to the initial reports, flown out of West Papua to be examined in a better-equipped medical laboratory (*Agence France Presse*, 2001). Eluay's heart, however, did not arrive at the laboratory. A representative of the forensic department of the Cipto Mangunkusomo Hospital in Indonesia's capital Jakarta stated: "We haven't received it. And thus far, neither the police nor the hospital management has notified us" (*Jakarta Post*, 2001). According to an investigative reporter of the *Jakarta Post*, the missing heart had never left West Papua (Nugroho, 2001). We suggest that the Indonesian security forces deliberately took this symbolically charged organ to interrupt the ritual process of mourning in hopes of inciting violence. Thousands were meanwhile gathering for Eluay's funeral in West Papua, unsure about how to proceed with burying a heartless body. Reverend Herman Awom, who is a leader in the Papuan Presidium Council and Director of the Gereja Kristen Injil Church in West Papua, eventually decreed that Eluay would be buried "with or without the heart" (*Jakarta Post*, 2001, p. 2). The funeral went ahead and apparently Eluay's heart was not returned.¹⁰ The publication of these articles, which approach a Papuan "tifa" style of reporting, is significant. Out of the 331 articles about Eluay that were indexed on LexisNexis Executive News Service during the 9 days immediately following his death, there were 17 articles that mentioned the missing heart: the news sources that ran these stories were the *Daily Telegraph (Sydney)*, *Jakarta Post*, *The Mercury*, *AAP Newsfeed*, *Australian* and *Agence France Presse*.

The high volume of information flowing through global information media, we argue, is resulting in an increasingly specialized and fragmented form of knowledge. The reg.westpapua news group, which we described above in connection with Megawati's visit, has a distribution of only 222 subscribers.¹¹ According to Carmel Budiardjo, who is the founder of the London-based human rights NGO called TAPOL and moderator of the reg.westpapua news group, she is not always able to read an article from end to end before posting it. Even though some articles contain, in Budiardjo's words, errors and distortions, she posts them anyway because she just wants to get the information out.¹²

The large majority of Papuans have been excluded from directly engaging in this global traffic of digital information. Until 1998, when the first Internet cafe was opened in the Post Office of West Papua's capital, Jayapura, e-mail access in West Papua was limited to those who could afford to purchase computers. While increasing numbers of the educated Papuan middle classes are gaining access to e-mail and other global communications technologies, language remains another dimension of fragmentation.

Few Papuans who have e-mail are able to communicate directly with people outside Indonesia because of this language barrier. The recent development of the *infopapua.com* news web site illustrates the reversed problem of restricted access: people who are not fluent in Indonesian cannot read the local Papuan accounts of events on this web site. *Infopapua.com* distributes Papuan perspectives about the news to the world-wide Papuan diaspora, but few of my non-Papuan friends who speak Indonesian even know about the existence of this news source.

The agency of Papuans is not completely compromised when the Indonesian national and global English-language media misrepresents them. Papuans use sophisticated techniques to influence how they are portrayed. For example, when Kirksey recently visited the Edage Bage Mee, a traditionalist group in the highlands, they formally requested that he return with a film crew and an anthropological research team “from America”. The Edage Bage Mee wanted to convey stories about abuses that they suffered at the hands of Indonesians to an international audience. One of our interlocutors gave us normative standards for our research:

There are many people who come and take data like this ... from several different countries ... Is it possible that there are those who just take data like this for selfish reasons of becoming rich? ... If data is indeed taken and then made into a book that is circulated and then given to the UN commission, or that commission about freedom, God would give moral rewards for that ... Help, help convey this problem that I have—now I want freedom.

This is a compelling plea. Our research itself plays a role in the global traffic of information about violence in West Papua. Information is also flowing in the other direction. The analysis that we present in this paper will be read by some members of the West Papuan self-determination movement who may use it to catalyse further critical dialogue. Roemajauw, who is from the island of Biak on the north coast of West Papua, intends to bring insights that he learned during the conference on “Global and local cultural interfaces in the context of self-determination movements” back to his own community.

Before the recent revolution in global communications technologies and changes in the local political climate, the Indonesian “*gamelan*” style of reporting maintained a virtual monopoly over media imagery about the conflict in West Papua. Papuans, however, have been reworking texts into local terms. This process of making foreign texts local is not simply bending accounts to fit political agendas. For example, on Biak the white spaces in the margins of bibles are used by ritual specialists to divine supernatural insights (Rutherford, 2000). The information networks that distribute imagery about the conflict in West Papua are becoming increasingly partitioned. Each of the constituencies in the conflict over West Papua now tune in to separate channels of information that cater to different emic world views.

5. Discussion

The old children’s rhyme of “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me” does not apply to self-determination movements. Terrorism is a geopolitical definition and decisions are made about the provision of political, economic and military resources when terrorism is defined. Especially since the World Trade Centre came crashing down, being named as a terrorist can have very serious consequences. Nation-states, which are able to appropriate and manipulate the discourse of global terrorism, stand to gain resources for resolving their local domestic disputes by

defining self-determination movements as terrorist organizations. It is possible that an apparently neutral name, such as SDM or Self-Determination Movement, which may be useful in a comparative etic framework, can easily be equated with terrorism. The acronym SDM can be dangerous when applied to local phenomena. Like the terms GPL (Wild Terrorist Gang), GPK (Security Disturbance Group) and KSB (Armed Separatist Group), the name SDM blurs distinctions between local strategies of resistance and revolution.

The global circulation of media imagery is forming international opinion about the viability of an independent Papuan state. In this paper we have argued that both emic and etic perspectives are now distributed world-wide. Historically, an emic Indonesian nationalist view has dominated news coverage of the self-determination movement in West Papua. This has rendered West Papuan desires for freedom illegitimate and has established Indonesian military rule as legitimate. Distinguishing between competing emic voices about self-determination movements has profound implications for our subjects of study.

Notes

1. Telephone interview (not recorded) in Leiden, the Netherlands, 11 September 2001.
2. Interview in Paniai, West Papua, 9 April 2001.
3. Interview in Enarotali, West Papua, 9 April 2001.
4. "Papua congress to 'rectify' history opens in Irian Jaya", *The Jakarta Post*, 30 May.
5. Interview in Neuendettelsau, Germany, 15 October 2001.
6. Megawati became President on 23 July 2001, replacing Gus Dur who had been ousted by a vote in the national parliamentary assembly (MPR).
7. From an interview in Enarotali, West Papua, 9 April 2001.
8. Interview in Enarotali, West Papua, 13 April 2001.
9. News groups, which automatically mail items to a subscription list are available on a wide range of topics. The reg.westpapua news group was set up by a member of staff of the East Timor Action Network (ETAN) in New York. For several years the list was on GreenNet, a non-profit collective based in London which aimed "to support small to medium-sized organizations, in particular, activists and NGOs" (GreenNet, 2001). It hosts over 2000 other news groups. The description of regwespapua on the GreenNet web site states that it is a "regional conference about West Papua". The list moved on 6 July 2000 to a free hosting service at topica.com, where it is described as an "English-language news and discussion on issues related to politics, human rights, and self-determination for West Papua (Irian Jaya)" (Scheiner, 2000).
10. No articles indexed on LexisNexis explicitly state that he was buried without his heart, but an article published on the day of the funeral says that the heart was still missing (Nugroho, 2001).
11. Topica.com list statistics for the WestPapua@topica.com news group.
12. Personal e-mail communication from Carmel Budiardjo, 19 January 2002.

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