

IRIAN JAYA IN THE 1990'S: ECONOMIC EXPANSION AND WEST PAPUAN NATIONALISM.

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION.

1.1 FOREWORD.

Irian Jaya is the Indonesian name for the western half of the island of New Guinea. However, many people refer to this area as 'West Papua', principally those who reject Indonesian sovereignty and control. Within this latter group fall many of the indigenous Melanesian people of the region. Such a fundamental divergence of conceptions has resulted in a history of opposition and repression in Irian Jaya (also known as West Irian or Irian Barat), since the Indonesians gained effective control of the region in May 1963. This thesis examines the resulting conflict with particular reference to the current rapid economic growth of the province and its impact on West Papuan nationalism.

A brief synopsis of the thesis is as follows: given the historical and geo-political realities after 1949, West New Guinea was destined to come under Indonesian control. However the various problems that have arisen from one racial group dominating another have been exacerbated by Indonesian misrule. This has resulted in a deeply felt, and widely held, Papuan nationalism that has only been contained by military repression and an authoritarian state. Numerous factors have contributed to this outcome, including the economic exploitation of the region's natural resources. This has been conducted in a hamfisted manner, with little negotiation between the state and the traditional landowners, and negligible compensation paid for resources expropriated. As resource exploitation, particularly in the mining and forestry industries, dramatically increases, it can be anticipated that the anti-Indonesian sentiment held by many Papuans will grow, and that this sentiment will be expressed in the form of West Papuan nationalism. The thesis examines the historical context of Irian Jaya / West Papua before documenting the recent massive increase in economic exploitation of the province. The consequences of economic development for West

Papuan nationalism and its main manifestation, the OPM (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka*) will then be analysed. The thesis concludes that if current Indonesian economic policies are maintained, unrest will grow inside Irian Jaya. The implications of this situation for Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Australia will then be detailed.

A major aim of this thesis is to chronicle the history of the OPM, with particular emphasis on the current situation. Examination of the organisation shows it is deeply entrenched in the political landscape of Irian Jaya. Resistance against the Indonesians has been widely expressed since their arrival and is continuing. Establishing that West Papuan nationalism is a pervasive sentiment among the Irianese is necessary to provide a solid base from which the trends affecting the region can be extrapolated. Once the trend of West Papuan nationalism is combined with the trend of increasing resource exploitation, informed speculation can be used to make predictions of what will happen in the region. This will reveal that there are looming dangers ahead for the countries involved, and creative policy making will be required.

1.2 THESIS METHODOLOGY.

The thesis is based on information gained from five main sources:

1. The academic and popular literature that has been published on the subject in books, journals and newspapers. In writing the historical analysis of Irian Jaya and the OPM these secondary sources have been used extensively.
2. Interviews with OPM leaders, environmentalists, academics and journalists were conducted to canvass the differing views that are held on the issues affecting Irian Jaya, and to collect contemporary information and opinions.

3. Economic and social data obtained from the Statistics Office of the Provincial Government of Irian Jaya, located in Jayapura (the capital city of Irian Jaya). This extensive and detailed information allows opinions to be reinforced with contemporary facts and figures.
4. Information, reports and maps received from people inside the environmental movement. This information comes from a variety of sources, some of which are unsubstantiated. Where possible I have tried to crosscheck data with information from unconnected sources.
5. Personal observations made from a total of eight trips to Irian Jaya between 1988 and 1994. These visits have allowed me to gain an understanding of the complexity of the issues that are examined and to attempt predictions about peoples behaviour, which is likely to be based, I have discovered, not on facts, but emotions.

The nature of the situation in Irian Jaya means that opinions and claims about events that are occurring, or have occurred, vary widely. The OPM is a clandestine organisation operating across a vast area, with poor communications. Making any definitive statements about the OPM, for instance its exact size, is impossible, because nobody (not even the OPM itself) knows the precise membership. In fact there is no precise membership. Even looking at such issues begs the question of what constitutes an OPM member. So, with subjects that it is inappropriate to be definitive about I have tried, rather, to extrapolate trends and substantiate these with hard data where possible. Thus much of this thesis is speculation, but it is informed speculation, I hope, grounded as far as possible in facts and opinions collected from the above sources.