

Chapter 1 : INTRODUCTION

The approximately one million Papuans of Papua Barat or West Papua (known also as West New Guinea, Netherlands New Guinea, West Irian, Irian Barat , and, nowadays by Indonesia, Irian Jaya) constitute a distinct racial minority in Indonesia, comprising many diverse ethnic groups. Despite escalating attempts by the Indonesian administration to forcibly acculturate and encapsulate them into the Indonesian nation-state - by forging new identities as Indonesian rather than Melanesian citizens - the West Papuans are developing and reinforcing a sense of their own racial and cultural distinctiveness, and, through mounting politicization, recognizing their rights of greater participation in decision-making and self-determination.

This thesis will chronicle and document a series of contemporary events about which we have only fragmentary information, mostly because of a media 'black-out' in West Papua. Since first-hand detailed research has been impossible, and since those facts that have been publicized have been used to political ends by either the Indonesian or West Papuan side, it is difficult to obtain an accurate perspective on these events from the information available. Apart from publicity handouts, there is an "habitual paucity" (Hastings, 1980 : 713) of official Indonesian documentation, and a relative dearth of official records on the issue in the

English language. Much of what is disseminated by the Indonesian Government must be identified as propaganda, that is, in the interests of their own ambitions in West Papua. On the other hand, the information circulated by the West Papuans is also designed to further their interests. It is thus necessary to carefully assess the available information, in order to construct a picture of what is happening in West Papua today. At another level, the manner in which the various parties slant their accounts of events is itself of interest, and will be the subject of my investigations.

This inquiry is relevant for two separate reasons : firstly, because the situation is of contemporary interest and significance; and, secondly, because these particular events are but one of the latest episodes in the more general phenomenon of the expansion of states at their peripheries, through a combination of economic and physical domination cultural imperialism - by this latter is meant the imposition of the values and customs of the dominant group upon those of subordinate groups. My ultimate aim is to assess the aggregate consequences of these three forms of domination and the resulting avenues of protest and reaction by West Papuans, protest which stems directly from the Melanesian cultural matrix.

This study is divided into five parts. Chapter 2 focuses briefly on the ethnographic backgrounds of various

ethnic groups in West Papua, then goes on to explore the legitimacy of Indonesia's claim to West Papua from an historical perspective. The presumption that Indonesian nationalism, itself a creation of Dutch colonialism, can represent the rights of all former colonial people through their common historical experience is shown to be invalid, as was, for that matter, the Dutch claim to the territory. Chapter 3 centres on Indonesia's New Order regime's ideology in both culturally-specific and more universal terms. The first section examines the means by which Indonesia 'sells its hegemonic package', as it were, to significant others, and then tests its legitimacy in relation to West Papua. The second section puts forward the New Order's rationale for its imposed cultural assimilation as an integral part of its nation-building strategy, and attempts to evaluate the validity of its actions in terms of its rationale. In Chapter 4 the three major components of the Indonesianization process in West Papua are dealt with : inculcation with the Indonesian world-view through education; economic development in relation to social development; and transmigration as an instrument of assimilation and consolidation at the periphery. Interwoven throughout are the effects this imposed acculturation has on the indigenous people, thereby providing an insight into the causes for their culturally-specific responses to Indonesia's hegemony, which are analysed in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis, attempts some generalizations and offers some prognoses.



map A : GEOGRAPHIC & ETHNOGRAPHIC INFORMATION.