

"... SAMPAI MERAUKE"
The Struggle for West New Guinea, 1960-62

by

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Abstract

This paper concerns the struggle among the Netherlands, Indonesia and indigenous Papuan nationalists for the territory variously named West New Guinea, West Irian and West Papua. It considers the clash of emergent Indonesian and West Papuan nationalist movements in the period leading up to 1962, when a United States-brokered agreement saw the territory pass from Dutch to United Nations administration as a transition stage to Indonesian rule.

Indonesian nationalism found in the struggle for West Irian a new integrative focus based on the map of the old East Indies and bolstered by appeals to a modernized tradition. A similar process saw West Papuan nationalism coalesce around the map of the territory and was beginning to project itself into the past as well. Indonesian nationalism asserted a claim "from Sabang to Merauke" while West Papuan nationalists counter-claimed "from Sorong to Merauke."

Both the Indonesian and West Papuan "nations of intent" were constructed in the international arena and shaped by the course of international relations. The eventual outcome of their diplomatic struggle was determined by the mental maps of policy makers in the United States, whose decisions were shaped by their need to "contain" communism.

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