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Cosmological Homelessness

How Papua's Sacred World Was Transferred to Another Place

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Abstract

This paper examines a form of colonial displacement that does not involve the physical removal of people from their homeland: the relocation of the sacred centre through which concepts such as reality, suffering, belonging and the future are understood. Focusing on West Papua, the paper argues that Christian missionisation introduced a sacred geography whose ultimate centre lay elsewhere, particularly in Jerusalem, while the indigenous population remained physically situated on their ancestral land. Using the Psycho-Cosmocide framework, the paper distinguishes between the conquest of territory and the displacement of cosmological orientation. It also examines how indigenous traditions of expectation, including the Biak Koreri tradition associated with Manarmakeri and the Me Koyeidaba tradition, provided the conceptual groundwork that made the Christian message intelligible. The paper then considers what happens when a metaphysical promise that can sustain life becomes detached from the material conditions necessary for a people to survive as a distinct group. The concept of a 'Theatre of Extinction' is developed to describe a situation in which the language and symbols of salvation are still performed, even though land, memory, language, political agency and other factors that contribute to collective continuity are gradually being weakened and destroyed. This condition is termed cosmological homelessness: people remain, but the coordinates by which they recognise their sacred centre, historical continuity and place in the world have been displaced. Drawing a comparison with Jewish practices of historical continuity, the paper raises the question of what Papuans inherit when they receive the emotional promise of liberation without necessarily inheriting the practices that maintain collective memory and continuity. The paper concludes by presenting Wonesis as a constructive response: the recovery of the capacity to recognise what must be preserved — land, memory, language, children and communal continuity — before inherited answers determine the future.

Keywords: Psycho-Cosmocide; decolonial philosophy of religion; West Papua; cosmological homelessness; Wonesis; cargo cults; anomie; koreri

PART I. THE TRANSFERRED CENTRE

1. Introduction

Colonial historiography of West Papua has generally narrated Christian missionisation in one of two registers: as civilising benevolence, or, in more critical accounts, as an instrument of pacification that prepared the ground for later political annexation. Both framings, this paper argues, miss the deepest operation of missionary Christianity in Papua. That operation is neither the seizure of the body nor the disciplining of behaviour, but the *transference* of the sacred centre itself: the relocation of the point from which reality is interpreted, from Papuan land to a sacred geography thousands of kilometres away. Drawing on the Psycho-Cosmocide framework developed across this working paper series, the paper distinguishes *physical conquest*, which seizes bodies, land, and resources, from *cosmological transference*, which relocates the metaphysical centre through which a people understands its own existence while leaving the body in place. The resulting condition, here called *cosmological homelessness*, differs from religious conversion, though it customarily travels inside conversion's vocabulary of gift and salvation. "Religion" is used throughout in its ordinary sense rather than as an analytically innocent category; the diagnosis offered here is compatible with, and partly presupposes, the genealogical argument that "religion" as a supposedly universal category is itself a European historical construction, transported alongside the missions that purported only to describe it ¹.

The argument proceeds in six movements. The first (sections 1 through 3), *The Transferred Centre*, establishes the mechanism of transference: the two-front structure of colonial domination, in which the seizure of the body and the relocation of the sacred centre operate as concealed, mutually reinforcing campaigns. The second (section 4), *The Indigenous Doorway*, identifies the specific Papuan point of contact through which the transference occurred — pre-existing indigenous messianic traditions, principally the Biak *koreri* movement and the Me *koyeidaba* tradition, whose salvific grammar rendered the Christian gospel intelligible and, in the same movement, vulnerable to capture. The third (sections 5 and 6), *From Gospel to Metaphysical Counterfeit*, develops the paper's central theoretical claim: that the same metaphysical vocabulary — love, forgiveness, resurrection, covenant — can function either as an *existential technology of survival* or as a *Theatre of Extinction*, depending not on its doctrinal content but on its relationship to the material conditions of a people's continuity. The fourth (sections 7 through 10), *The Theatre of Extinction*, traces what happens when that possibility collapses inward: fratricide among the colonised, the deportation of the mind from the tortured body, disability from within, and the naturalisation of a constructed hierarchy of meaning. The fifth (sections 11 through 13), *Cosmological Anomie and Its Contemporary Form*, extends this diagnosis through the vocabulary of the Second Cage and Cosmological Anomie already developed within this corpus, arguing that the resulting condition exceeds Durkheim's classical account of anomie as normlessness, and examines its intensified, digitally mediated form in the contemporary circulation of prosperity and rescue imagery across Papuan social media. The sixth (sections 14 through 16), *Continuity, Exodus and Wonesis*, closes with a comparative argument — a reading of Jewish diasporic historical practice against the Papuan reception of the Exodus narrative — and a statement

¹Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

of Wonesis, the constructive antidote already proposed within this working paper series, as the recovery of land, memory, and the question of continuity before any inherited answer.

None of this is offered as a claim about the truth-value of Christian doctrine, nor as an indictment of Papuan Christians, since the paper's diagnostic apparatus does not treat believers themselves as the object of analysis (section 13). The object of analysis throughout is a pattern, not a person: what a given metaphysical structure does to a people's relationship with land, memory, and the possibility of continuing to exist as themselves.

2. The Transferred Centre

Many Papuan Christians inherit a sacred map before they ever have the opportunity to question it. It is a map that may never be drawn on paper, yet it is carried inside the mind with extraordinary precision. It begins in Jerusalem. From there it crosses the Mediterranean, moves through Europe, descends through Africa and across the Indian Ocean, passes through Asia, and eventually arrives in West Papua. Missionary history has typically understood this movement as the fulfilment of the Great Commission: the carrying of the Gospel "to the ends of the earth." Papuans were not merely told that the Gospel had arrived among them; they were positioned within a larger sacred geography as one of the last peoples to receive it, as though their land were the final geographical chamber into which an already completed sacred history had entered. West Papua therefore became not the centre of its own sacred universe but the distant terminus of someone else's.

This is not incidental to the Papuan story; it is one of its load-bearing structures. A sacred geography centred thousands of kilometres away has been installed inside a Papuan cosmological world that already possessed its own centre, its own sacred ground, its own ancestral memory, its own ordering of time, and its own relationship between the living, the dead, the land, and the unseen. What happens when one cosmology is installed inside another goes beyond the adoption of a new religion. The location from which reality itself is interpreted begins to move. The person remains on the land, but the centre of the universe has departed.

This is where the wound becomes difficult to see. The body has not necessarily moved. The village may still stand. The mountains remain visible. The rivers still descend from the highlands, and the ancestors remain buried in the earth — yet the sacred centre through which the world is interpreted, and through which its meaning and purpose are drawn, has been relocated elsewhere. A colonised people can therefore remain geographically present while becoming cosmologically displaced, living upon their own land while being taught to understand ultimate reality through another land, another history, another ancestry, another sacred geography, and another promised destination. The result is not merely religious conversion. It is cosmological homelessness.

3. The Two-Front War

Colonial domination in West Papua has always operated on more than one battlefield, and the cruelty of the arrangement lies precisely in the fact that the two battlefields conceal one another.

On the first battlefield, the Papuan body is seized: stopped at checkpoints, beaten in detention, displaced from villages, hunted through forests, imprisoned for raising a flag, watched by soldiers and informants, or transformed by colonial representation into an object of suspicion, curiosity, or threat rather than a human

subject carrying memory, grief, ancestry, and claims to land. This violence is visible because the body registers it.

The second battlefield is quieter. Here the body is not seized; the mind is. The person is gradually moved from the house of their own cosmology into a house constructed by another civilisation and told that this new house is not simply another way of understanding existence but the house of ultimate truth itself. Their ancestral world is reduced to the temporary, the earthly, the primitive, the superstitious, or the demonic, while the imported world is elevated into eternity. The colonised person therefore does not experience the operation as expulsion; they experience it as salvation. This second battlefield is not unique to West Papua: the classic comparative account remains Jean and John Comaroff's analysis of nineteenth-century South Africa, where the mission encounter is shown to have colonised everyday consciousness — habits of dress, time, labour, and domestic space — well in advance of, and largely independent from, the colonisation of territory ².

This is the deeper mechanism this paper, following the wider corpus, calls *transference*.³ Physical conquest announces itself through force — the checkpoint, the gun, the bombing, the prison, the raid, and the displacement are immediately recognisable as violence. Cosmological transference does something more sophisticated. Rather than demanding that the conquered person abandon their land physically, it persuades them to abandon the land as the ultimate location of meaning. The conquered body remains, but the centre of its own reality is surgically removed and relocated. Because the transfer is presented as salvation, the victim experiences the very mechanism of displacement as a gift, as good news, even as a gift from the gods — or, more precisely, from the only god. A colonised elite can be persuaded into this same relocation and, in believing itself thereby saved, become an instrument used against its own people and land.

This is why cosmological conquest becomes more enduring than physical conquest. A colonial soldier must continually stand at the checkpoint. A cosmology stands inside the mind long after the soldier has disappeared. The most frightening form of colonial power is therefore not the power that commands a person to kneel; it is the power that teaches the person to kneel willingly before the very architecture that displaced and ultimately replaced them.

PART II. THE INDIGENOUS DOORWAY

4. Indigenous Precedents: Koreri, Koyeidaba, and the Grammar of Waiting

The transference described above did not arrive into an empty field. It arrived into cosmologies that already possessed their own messianic and salvific grammar, and it is precisely this prior grammar that allowed the Christian gospel to become intelligible so quickly, and so completely, across Papuan society. This point

²Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 1, *Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

³Yamin Kogoya, "Psycho-Cosmocide: A Theoretical Framework for the Systematic Destruction of Indigenous Cosmologies, Consciousness, and Metaphysical Order," *Psycho-Cosmocide Studies, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series*, no. 1 (2025), <https://philarchive.org/rec/KOGPAT>.

deserves more sustained attention than the existing literature on Papuan Christianity has generally given it, because it changes what "conversion" actually names in this context.

Among the Biak and Numfor peoples of Cenderawasih Bay, the *koreri* tradition anticipated a coming age of abundance and immortality inaugurated by the return of a mythic culture-hero, Manarmakeri (also called Manseren Manggundi), who had been wronged, humiliated, and cast out, and who would one day return to restore his people.⁴ Among the Me people of the Paniai region, a structurally parallel tradition, *koyeidaba*, carried the same essential shape: history bends toward a promised reversal, delivered from outside ordinary time, in which present humiliation is answered by future glory.⁵ Ethnographic and historical accounts of Papuan Christianisation are explicit that these pre-existing messianic and salvation myths *facilitated the contextualisation of the Gospel* — that missionaries did not implant an alien concept of salvation into a conceptual vacuum, but rather offered a specific, historically located answer to a question Papuan cosmology had already been asking.⁶

This is a critical qualification to the account given in section 2. The transference of the sacred centre was not experienced by Papuans as the imposition of something wholly foreign; it was received, in the first instance, as the fulfilment of an indigenous expectation. Manarmakeri's promised return and the coming of the missionary steamer were, for a significant part of a generation, genuinely difficult to distinguish. This is precisely what made the transference so effective, and it is also what makes the diagnosis offered in this paper more precise than a simple story of imposition: the colonial gospel did not defeat Papuan cosmology from outside it. It answered Papuan cosmology's own deepest question, and then relocated the source of that answer to somewhere else.

The same grammar of waiting persisted, and mutated, after the initial period of mass conversion. Twentieth-century Irian Jaya saw repeated waves of what the anthropological literature calls *cargoism*: movements among the Me, the Western Dani, the Hupla, and other groups anticipating factories, wealth, independence, or eternal life (*nabelan-kabelan*, "my skin your skin," among the Dani) delivered from outside the ordinary channels of history.⁷ These movements are best understood not as superstition external to Christian faith but as the same *koreri* structure, operating under new material pressures — Dutch withdrawal, incorporation into Indonesia, unequal development, and the loss of ancestral land — and finding, in each generation, a new external agent (a factory, a radiogram, an independence leader, later a digital image) onto which the promised reversal could be projected. The argument developed in section 10 below, concerning the digitally mediated circulation of rescue imagery, should therefore be read as the latest phase of a pattern with genuinely indigenous roots, not as an entirely new phenomenon imported by smartphones.

It should be stressed that the presence of this indigenous messianic grammar does not make the transference described in section 2 any less real, nor does it transfer responsibility for that transference onto Papuan cosmology itself. What it does is sharpen the mechanism: transference succeeds most completely not when it displaces a people's prior framework of meaning by force, but when it offers itself as that framework's own answer to its own question, arriving, as it were, through the very door the question had already opened.

⁴Benny Giay and Jan A. Godschalk, "Cargoism in Irian Jaya Today," *Oceania* 63, no. 4 (1993): 330–44, at 331, <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1834-4461.1993.tb02427.x>.

⁵Karel A. Steenbrink and Jan Sihar Aritonang, "Christianity in Papua," in *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, ed. Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 345–82, at 352.

⁶Steenbrink and Aritonang, "Christianity in Papua," 352.

⁷Giay and Godschalk, "Cargoism in Irian Jaya Today," 333–38.

PART III. FROM GOSPEL TO METAPHYSICAL COUNTERFEIT

5. The Gift That Is Not Good News

The second front arrives under the language of *euangelion* — good news. But follow the gift to the place where it lands, and the word "good" begins to fracture. The Papuan body receiving this message was simultaneously being described, through a wider nineteenth-century European vocabulary of racial classification, as primitive, pagan, savage, backward, or spiritually lost. Ancestral religion was branded as devil-worship; ritual was transformed into superstition; indigenous cosmology was recoded as ignorance waiting to be corrected. Historians of the European science of race in Oceania have traced in detail how this racialising vocabulary was constructed and disseminated — how naturalists and geographers divided Oceanic peoples into hierarchically ranked "races," with Melanesian populations, including Papuans, consistently placed beneath Polynesian and Micronesian populations in these schemes — and how missionary discourse, even where it formally resisted strict biological hierarchy in the name of Christian spiritual unity, nonetheless absorbed and retained much of this racial vocabulary in practice.⁸ A parallel southern African case shows the same frontier logic operating one register down, in the invention of "religion" itself as a comparative category: missionaries and colonial agents first had to decide whether the peoples they encountered possessed a "religion" at all before they could offer them a better one, and that decision was never theologically neutral.⁹ The contradiction this produced is almost unbearable in its simplicity: your ancestors were darkness, your world was darkness, your rituals were darkness, your body must be disciplined, your history must be rewritten — but we have brought you the light.

The violence here is therefore not confined to what is destroyed; it lies also in the replacement of the categories through which destruction can be recognised. The operation creates a metaphysical counterfeit — counterfeit not because every element of Christian faith is necessarily false, nor because every Christian believer is an instrument of colonialism, but counterfeit in the Psycho-Cosmocide sense, because a structure of meaning presents itself as liberation while simultaneously participating in the displacement of the very world from which liberation would have to emerge.

The material record of this counterfeit is not only rhetorical. In the Geelvink Bay region, the confiscation and mass burning of *korwar* ancestor figures and other ritual objects by Protestant missionaries and indigenous evangelists during waves of mass conversion in the early twentieth century is documented in detail in the surviving missionary archive itself.¹⁰ This was not incidental damage; it was the physical correlate of cosmological transference — the deliberate destruction of the material infrastructure through which an indigenous cosmology had housed ancestral presence, undertaken in the same movement, and often by the same hands, that delivered the promise of salvation.

⁸Bronwen Douglas, "Foreign Bodies in Oceania," in *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race, 1750–1940*, ed. Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008), 3–32.

⁹David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996).

¹⁰Raymond Corbey, *Korwar: Northwest New Guinea Ritual Art according to Missionary Sources* (Leiden: C. Zwartenkot Art Books, 2019).

The counterfeit is powerful because it does not simply steal hope; it steals the wound and returns a psalm. It takes grief and gives it patience. It takes dispossession and gives it heaven. It takes historical violence and gives it providence. It takes a demand for justice and moves it toward an unreachable horizon. The most efficient anaesthetic is the transformation of pain into something the sufferer is taught to regard as meaningful, necessary, temporary, or, at its most complete, as the will of God. That is why the mechanism survives across generations. The victim does not necessarily stop suffering. The victim is taught what the suffering means.

6. The Metaphysical Weapon That Became a Theatre of Extinction

The deepest mistake in diagnosing the religion of the coloniser is to assume that everything it carries must therefore be rejected. There are metaphysical teachings within the religions carried by colonising civilisations that contain truths of profound existential value: love, forgiveness, and mercy can be real; sacrifice, covenant, and repentance can be real; the dignity of the suffering body can be real; the refusal to allow hatred to consume the human being can be real. Psycho-Cosmocide as a diagnostic framework does not require the colonised to become spiritually empty in order to become free. The question is not whether the teaching contains truth. The question is what the truth does once it enters a colonised world.

Recent ethnographic work on Christian practice in Melanesia offers direct evidence that the same faith can function as the *existential technology* this paper's more affirmative register describes. Alice Street's study of Christian belief among patients at Madang Hospital in Papua New Guinea shows that *bilip* — faith, understood locally not as an abstract proposition but as a practical, cultivated relationship with God — functions as an active technique through which patients navigate institutional failure, unresolved kin obligation, and social stagnation, transforming themselves from passive, sick individuals into agents capable of prompting their own healing.¹¹ This is precisely what section 5 above calls faith becoming material: it enters the body, the family, the relationship between generations, and repairs what has been torn.

A metaphysical teaching becomes existentially valuable, in other words, when it becomes the glue of a broken people — when love becomes the force by which the wounded learn to trust one another again, when forgiveness becomes the mechanism through which generations of internalised suspicion and betrayal can be interrupted, when mercy becomes the refusal to reproduce upon one another the violence inflicted upon them, when covenant becomes an obligation to remain together when remaining together is difficult, and when faith becomes the force that keeps a people from surrendering their humanity while their enemies attempt to destroy it. In that form, metaphysics becomes material. This is where religion becomes an existential technology of survival: the colonised do not need a theology that teaches them merely how to die beautifully and receive rewards in heaven; they need a metaphysics capable of teaching them how to remain alive together and to reclaim what has been stripped from them. "Weapon" is used here, and throughout what follows, to describe a metaphysical capacity that can interrupt the psychological and social processes through which a people becomes fragmented, not an instrument of physical violence. A metaphysics of love that produces solidarity is a weapon against extinction in that sense. A metaphysics of forgiveness that restores trust is a weapon against fragmentation. A metaphysics of resurrection that insists death does not have the final word can become a refusal to surrender the living to despair. This is the

¹¹Alice Street, "Belief as Relational Action: Christianity and Cultural Change in Papua New Guinea," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16, no. 2 (2010): 260–78, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2010.01624.x>.

religious possibility that Psycho-Cosmocide, as a diagnostic framework, must not destroy in the course of diagnosing colonial religion: the question is not whether the colonised should discard every metaphysical instrument handed to them by the coloniser, but whether they can take the weapon away from the hand that delivered it. A teaching can cross a colonial boundary and cease to belong exclusively to the civilisation that transported it.

But the same metaphysics can also be transformed into something else. When love is performed while the people are being destroyed, it becomes theatre. When forgiveness is demanded from the wounded while the machinery of injury remains intact, it becomes sedation. When prayer substitutes for organisation, it becomes paralysis. When heaven becomes more urgent than the survival of the people on earth, transcendence becomes displacement. And when resurrection is endlessly performed while language dies, land disappears, children become alienated from their ancestry, and communities fragment before the eyes of their own leaders, the sacred performance begins to resemble a ritual conducted inside an extinction chamber.

This is the point at which metaphysics becomes infected. The teaching itself may not have changed; its function has. It has ceased to be existential glue and become theatre in the dramatic spectacle of extinction. The colonised gather, sing, pray, and forgive; they perform Easter, proclaim love, speak of resurrection, and announce victory in heaven — and outside the walls of the performance, the actual conditions of existence continue to disappear. The land is taken, language weakens, children forget, memory is eroded, communities fragment, the dead accumulate, and the pressure on what remains advances. Yet the performance continues.

This is where the religious form becomes what this corpus calls a virus — not because prayer itself is a virus, not because Christianity itself is a virus, and not because forgiveness is a virus, but because the virus lies in the transformation of a potentially life-giving metaphysics into a mechanism that allows extinction to continue without generating the existential response required to interrupt it. The sacred becomes disconnected from survival; the performance becomes detached from the body; the body is dying while the theology is celebrating, and the contradiction becomes so normalised that nobody asks why. This is the Theatre of Extinction: the people perform the symbols of salvation while the conditions of their earthly existence are dismantled. At this point religion has become a spectacle in which the audience is simultaneously the victim, the actor, and the disappearing subject. The most terrifying theatre is one in which the audience does not know that the play concerns its own extinction.

PART IV. THE THEATRE OF EXTINCTION

7. When the Metaphysical Weapon Turns Inward

This is also why colonised elites can become capable of fighting one another with startling ferocity while the coloniser stands at a comfortable distance, untouched by the violence its own architecture set in motion.

When the metaphysics of salvation is absorbed without a corresponding machinery of continuity, it does not simply produce passivity; it can also produce fratricide. A people taught to interpret their suffering through frameworks of sin, purity, and divine favour can begin to apply those same categories to one another rather than to the structure that produced their condition. One faction becomes the righteous

remnant; another becomes the backslidden, the compromised, the cursed. Denominational rivalry, tribal suspicion, and competing claims to spiritual legitimacy are recruited into the same theological vocabulary that was meant to offer comfort, and turned instead into instruments of internal division.

This is the Civilisational Psycho-Cosmocide Virus operating at its most efficient.¹² It does not need the coloniser to manufacture the conflict directly; it only needs to have installed a framework capacious enough that the colonised can generate the conflict themselves, using the coloniser's own categories of light and darkness, salvation and damnation, the saved and the lost. The enemy at the checkpoint recedes from view, while the neighbour, the rival pastor, or the rival clan becomes the visible target of a rage that was never actually about them. The tragedy is doubled: the wound is displaced onto the wrong perpetrator, and it is displaced onto the wrong *victim*. Energy that should have been organised against the structure of dispossession is instead consumed in disputes over doctrine and spiritual authority among people who share the same condition of extinction. The coloniser does not have to divide and rule. The theology, left unexamined, does it for them.

8. Torture of the Body, Deportation of the Mind

Here the mechanism reaches its most severe form. While the Papuan body is beaten, detained, burned, displaced, buried, imprisoned, or disappeared, the Papuan mind can simultaneously be instructed that the ultimate reality is occurring somewhere else. The decisive drama is no longer located in the village under attack, the forest being militarised, or the land being taken; it is relocated into a sacred history centred on another geography, another people, another set of ancestors, and another promised ending. The body suffers here. The mind is taught to live elsewhere. This is more than distraction: it is a form of psychological dislocation operating at civilisational scale.

A person who knows they are being harmed retains a crucial foundation from which resistance can begin: they can name the harm, remember the perpetrator, organise their testimony, and transmit the memory of what happened to their children. But what happens when the person is taught to understand their suffering primarily as a chapter in someone else's redemptive drama? The wound remains, but its location changes. The perpetrator becomes less visible. The historical cause becomes more abstract. The immediate injustice becomes part of a universal story of sin, suffering, endurance, and eventual divine resolution. The mind has been given an elsewhere.

And once the mind has been given an elsewhere, the suffering body can become strangely foreign to itself. The colonised person begins to inhabit their own body as though it were a temporary vessel. The land becomes a place through which one passes rather than the ground upon which one's ultimate obligations are constituted. This is the point at which the colonial operation becomes terrifyingly efficient: it does not merely inflict harm — it captures the organ that would have named the harm. This corpus calls the resulting condition *metaphysical counterfeit anaesthesia*: not anaesthesia because suffering disappears, but because suffering is rendered psychologically survivable by being absorbed into an externally supplied cosmology. The pain remains real; the graves remain real. But the interpretation of those realities has been reorganised: pain is converted into meaning, meaning into patience, and patience into waiting — and waiting can become a permanent political condition.

¹²Kogoya, "Psycho-Cosmocide."

The material stakes of this reorganisation are not abstract. The Amungme people of the central highlands, whose ancestral domain includes the Central Mountain Range they regard as sacred ground where spirits dwell, and whose ritual sites include Mulkine, Awinkawak, and Tundimagon, saw their land, upon the 1967 concession granted to the Freeport-McMoRan corporation, subjected to forced relocation, the poisoning of the Aijkwa River with mine tailings, and the physical destruction of sacred peaks in the surrounding Zaagkam range, alongside the degradation of Puncak Jaya (Carstensz) itself.¹³ Where a sacred geography has already been relocated to Jerusalem in the mind, the destruction of the sacred geography that remains underfoot is registered with correspondingly less force than it otherwise would be. This is the material cost of cosmological homelessness: it is not only that the sacred centre has moved; it is that the defence of what remains of the original centre is weakened by the very fact of its relocation.

9. The Colonised Disabled from Within

When this process is sustained across generations, something more profound than physical disability can emerge: the instrument through which disability itself would ordinarily be recognised begins to be altered. This is close to what Fanon identified as the deepest achievement of colonial power: not merely domination enforced from outside, but a restructuring of the colonised person's own psychic economy, such that the colonised begins to police, judge, and discipline themselves according to categories the coloniser no longer needs to enforce directly.¹⁴ A colonised Black Papuan body, historically classified through the racial hierarchies described in section 5 above, can be offered a heaven in which colour, origin, poverty, and earthly humiliation supposedly disappear. But the promised equality is deferred beyond the very historical world in which inequality is produced. The offer is remarkably sophisticated: it acknowledges the wound while relocating the cure. Yes, you suffer; yes, this world is broken; yes, injustice exists — but the final remedy is elsewhere. And because the remedy is elsewhere, the historical transformation of the present can begin to appear secondary, premature, worldly, or spiritually misguided.

The result is a being who can feel the wound with acute intensity while becoming increasingly uncertain about where the wound came from. Ask who is responsible, and the answer can drift toward providence, sin, human fallenness, divine testing, or the general brokenness of the world; the specific institutions, corporations, governments, and policies responsible for particular forms of dispossession can disappear behind a much larger theological horizon. Jamon Halvaksz's ethnography of the Biangai people of Morobe Province, whose economic frustrations under industrial gold mining are locally interpreted through the moral cosmology of ancestral cannibalism and its inherited burdens, offers a precise illustration of the same mechanism at work in a case outside Papua narrowly defined: contemporary dispossession is metabolised through inherited cosmological categories rather than through the specific corporate and colonial history that produced it.¹⁵ This is what makes the mechanism so difficult to detect. No soldier needs to stand inside the mind, no policeman needs to issue the command, and no governor needs to repeat the instruction — the mind can begin to perform the operation itself, disciplining its own anger, postponing its own demand,

¹³Stichting Papua Cultureel Erfgoed (PACE), *Amungme: Mountain Papuans Deprived of Their Land*, n.d., <https://www.papuaweb.org/>.

¹⁴Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004; first published 1961).

¹⁵Jamon Halvaksz, "Cannibalistic Imaginaries: Mining the Natural and Social Body in Papua New Guinea," *The Contemporary Pacific* 18, no. 2 (2006): 335–59.

transferring its own centre, all the while believing that it is practising faith. The most sophisticated weapon is therefore the weapon that eventually no longer needs to be held by anyone.

10. The Second Cage Mistaken for the Sky

This condition can be understood, within the wider architecture of this corpus, as a manifestation of what has elsewhere been called the Second Cage: not simply a prison of walls and bars but a constructed hierarchy of meaning so complete, so internally coherent, and so naturalised that the prisoner mistakes its ceiling for the sky.¹⁶ The distinction between the Given and the Constructed developed in that framework is fundamental here. The Given refers to conditions of existence that precede symbolic construction — land, water, air, fire, embodiment, birth, death, kinship. The Constructed consists of the symbolic worlds human beings build upon that ground — religions, states, ideologies, economies, institutions, doctrines, civilisations.¹⁷ The danger begins when the Constructed forgets that it was constructed; the cage becomes invisible because it has been mistaken for reality itself. This is one register of what decolonial theory has more recently named *coloniality*: a matrix of power that outlives the colonial administrations that installed it, continuing to organise knowledge, belief, and self-understanding long after flags have changed and soldiers have withdrawn.¹⁸ The cage, in other words, does not require an occupying army to remain standing.

Plato's allegory of the cave remains one of Western thought's most enduring images of this condition,¹⁹ but the colonial encounter extends the question beyond Plato's own frame: what happens when one civilisation's constructed shadows are installed inside another people's world and then presented as the ultimate truth? The imagined New Jerusalem can become more urgent than the ground beneath Papuan feet; the Constructed heaven becomes more real than the Given reality of Papuan existence. This cage requires no crude destruction of memory — it can operate without burning a single archive. It simply changes the question memory is permitted to answer. A Papuan child can learn genealogies, plagues, kings, prophets, exiles, miracles, and ancient empires in enormous detail and still remain cosmologically displaced if the knowledge never returns to the question of Papuan continuity. The cage does not necessarily starve the mind; it feeds it — filling it with stories, names, sacred geography, and someone else's history — and then prevents that knowledge from metabolising into the one question capable of threatening the structure: what must we preserve so that we survive as ourselves? A prisoner who possesses every book except the book describing the door may be surrounded by knowledge while remaining illiterate about their captivity.

¹⁶Yamin Kogoya, "The Given and the Constructed: Seven Existential Cages of Psycho-Cosmocide Theory," *Psycho-Cosmocide Studies*, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series, no. 29 (2026), <https://philarchive.org/rec/KOGTGA>.

¹⁷Kogoya, "The Given and the Constructed."

¹⁸Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

¹⁹Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), bk. 7, 514a–520a.

PART V. COSMOLOGICAL ANOMIE AND ITS CONTEMPORARY FORM

11. Total Cosmological Anomie

At its most extreme, this condition becomes something more severe than the anomie described by Émile Durkheim. Durkheim's anomie describes the collapse of shared norms and the resulting condition of normlessness — the experience of a society whose compass has been damaged.²⁰ The condition described here is more radical: the compass has not merely been broken; the ship itself has been dismantled. Plank by plank, the land is alienated. Language is displaced from school and church. Ancestral cosmology is reduced to superstition. Kinship is fractured by migration, labour systems, education, and institutional restructuring. Sacred places are transformed into administrative spaces, and their names, meanings, and stories are replaced. And throughout the dismantling, the crew is repeatedly told that it is being carried toward safe harbour.

This is total cosmological anomie: not merely the loss of social rules, but the loss of the internal coordinates by which a people recognises where it is, who it is, where it came from, and what future would still count as its own. A cosmologically homeless people can remain physically alive while becoming increasingly unable to answer the most elementary questions of existence in terms that belong to itself: who am I, where do I come from, where do I belong, what is sacred, what must be remembered, what must be passed to the children, and where is home? The answers begin arriving from elsewhere — someone else's geography, someone else's ancestors, someone else's sacred history, someone else's final destination. The people remain. The cosmological home disappears. That is the point at which Psycho-Cosmocide ceases to mean simply the destruction of a culture; it becomes the destruction of the capacity to recognise the destruction.

It is worth noting that this working paper series has elsewhere named this precise condition directly, in Lani terms, as *Maluk Paga* — Cosmological Anomie — the systematic dissolution of a people's coordinates of belonging that the corresponding antidote framework, Wonesis, is designed to answer.²¹ The present paper's argument should accordingly be read as a case study substantiating that more general theoretical claim through the specific historical mechanism of missionary transference.

12. A Digital Apocalypse Streamed Daily

What once travelled by pulpit, mission station, classroom, hymn book, and printed Bible now travels through the digital bloodstream of the population. The mechanism identified in section 4 above as *koreri* — the anticipation of a promised reversal delivered from outside ordinary history — has not disappeared with modernity; it has accelerated and found a new carrier. Every day, images of a suffering West Papua can circulate beside digitally produced visions of a white, blonde, blue-eyed Christ hovering above the territory in radiant light, accompanied by verses predicting divine intervention, rescue, or an imminent end to suffering. The image can appear compassionate; the message can seem sincere; the person sharing it may genuinely want to comfort another. Yet the psychological structure can remain profoundly consequential: the suffering is displayed, the rescue is imagined, the future is guaranteed, and the present becomes the

²⁰Émile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson, ed. George Simpson (New York: Free Press, 1951; first published 1897), 246–54.

²¹Yamin Kogoya, "Wonesis: Framework, Belonging, and the Antidote to Psycho-Cosmocide," *Psycho-Cosmocide Studies*, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series, no. 16 (2026), <https://philarchive.org/rec/KOGWFB>, pt. 2.

waiting room. Unlike the old mission station, the new mission station has no walls; it lives inside the phone, travelling through social media, prayer groups, diaspora networks, and church communities, crossing borders faster than armies and entering homes without knocking.

A comparative case from Papua New Guinea illustrates how enduring this underlying grammar of religious dissatisfaction and re-seeking can be. Scott Flower's study of Papuan converts to Islam finds that many are drawn away from mainline Christianity precisely because they perceive both Christianity and the surrounding cargo-cult tradition as having failed to deliver the disciplined moral order and the promised reversal they were understood to offer, and that Islam is received, in this specific sense, as a return to *kastom* rather than a rupture from it.²² The details of that case are particular to Papua New Guinea, but the underlying pattern — dissatisfaction with a promised reversal that never arrives prompting a search for a new external carrier of the same promise, rather than a reorientation toward the material work of continuity — is the same pattern this paper traces from *koreri* through cargoism to the digital image.

The danger is not hope itself; hope is one of the most ancient human responses to catastrophe. The danger begins when hope becomes a substitute for consciousness — when expectation of supernatural rescue repeatedly discharges the psychological pressure that might otherwise become historical organisation, and when the image of liberation becomes so vivid that it functions as a replacement for the difficult work of preserving land, language, memory, institutions, and collective agency. This is metaphysical sedation. A population repeatedly convinced that rescue is imminent, cosmic, external, and guaranteed can gradually lose the psychological urgency required to build the material conditions upon which collective survival depends. This is the condition the paper identifies as one possible contemporary endpoint of cosmological displacement: a subject dislocated into a civilisationally inherited heaven while remaining materially exposed to the destruction occurring around them.

13. Why the Empire Funds Church

This raises an uncomfortable question: why have colonial systems and intermediary elites so often supported religious institutions, education, pastors, churches, and religious broadcasting? No conspiracy theory is required here: systems do not need conspirators when their incentives already align. A population absorbed almost entirely in the genealogies of another sacred history is not necessarily building the institutions required for its own continuity. A population trained to interpret suffering primarily through endurance, sin, providence, and eventual divine rescue can be encouraged — sometimes unintentionally — to wait where it might otherwise organise. Prayer therefore need not be the opposite of colonial control; under certain conditions it can become one of colonial control's quietest maintenance systems, because it does not need to suppress everyone directly. It only needs to establish a symbolic environment in which the colonised begin to perform some of the work of suppression upon themselves. The greatest colonial victory is therefore not necessarily the conquest of territory but the transformation of desire: the moment when the colonised person begins to fear, admire, imitate, and aspire according to categories established by the civilisation that has colonised them. No conspiracy is necessary for the contradiction to function; the architecture can reproduce itself without a central operator.

²²Scott Flower, "Conversion to Islam in Papua New Guinea: Preserving Traditional Culture against Modernity's Cargo-Cult Mentality," *Nova Religio* 18, no. 4 (2015): 55–82, <https://doi.org/10.1525/nr.2015.18.4.55>.

Yet this diagnosis must not become another cage. Not every Papuan Christian is cosmologically captured; not every church reproduces colonial consciousness. Churches have sheltered organisers. Pastors have condemned occupation. Religious communities have preserved people under conditions of extraordinary violence. Believers have fused faith with resistance rather than replacing resistance with faith — the historical record of Christianity in Papua itself documents the rise of independent Papuan theologies and church-led human rights advocacy operating under conditions of Indonesian military rule.²³ These histories matter because they demonstrate that Christianity itself does not automatically produce Psycho-Cosmocide. The object of diagnosis is not the believer; it is the pattern. What matters analytically is not whether a person prays, but what their prayer does to their relationship with land, memory, history, collective responsibility, and survival.

A further, concrete instance of the pattern's ambivalence deserves note. At Bukit Aitumieri in Teluk Wondama Regency, the Dutch missionary and educator Izhak Samuel Kijne established, in 1925, the first formal school for Papuans, at a site now marked by a "Stone of Civilisation" bearing Kijne's own inscription anticipating the future self-determination of the Papuan nation.²⁴ The site is at once a monument to missionary paternalism and a monument to an early, missionary-adjacent articulation of Papuan political awakening — precisely the kind of ambivalent case that a diagnosis of pattern rather than person requires the analyst to hold without resolving in either direction.

PART VI. CONTINUITY, EXODUS AND WONESIS

14. The Jewish Lesson That Papuans Were Never Taught

There is one comparison that must be made with deliberate force. Papuans are taught the Exodus: the covenant, Moses, the Promised Land, exile, suffering, deliverance, and the wider Abrahamic grammar of liberation. This is not incidental to Papuan Christian identity; historians of Christianity in Papua record explicitly that grassroots liberation theologies developed among Papuans that equate the struggle for *Merdeka* (freedom) with the biblical narratives of Exodus and Israel.²⁵ Papuans are taught not merely to know this story but to inhabit it emotionally, encouraged to see themselves inside the suffering of another people and to hear, within an ancient captivity, the possibility of freedom.

But there is another half of the history that is far less frequently transferred. After centuries of dispersion, persecution, and exile, Jewish continuity depended not upon prayer alone but upon the preservation and reconstruction of language, memory, institutions, communal organisation, economic capacity, political consciousness, and territorial attachment. This is the argument at the centre of Yerushalmi's classic study of Jewish historiography, which distinguishes *zakhor* — the religious injunction to remember, sustained through ritual, liturgy, and communal practice — from history in the modern critical sense, and shows that

²³Steenbrink and Aritonang, "Christianity in Papua," 365–72.

²⁴"Bukit Aitumieri, Situs Sejarah Peradaban dan Pusat Pendidikan Pertama Bagi Orang Papua," *Papua Channel*, June 11, 2023.

²⁵Steenbrink and Aritonang, "Christianity in Papua," 358.

it was the former, not the latter, that carried Jewish collective identity across two millennia of dispersion.²⁶ Whatever one's theological interpretation of Jewish history, its historical record demonstrates a relentless concern with one fundamental problem: how does a people remain a people across catastrophe? That is the lesson. The question was never merely whether liberation could someday occur; it was whether the people would still exist, intact enough to act, when history opened a door. Theology and historical labour are not identical. Hope and continuity are not identical. A promise of liberation does not automatically preserve the people who are supposed to receive it.

This distinction is crucial in the Papuan context. Jewish historical memory was transmitted into Papuan consciousness, but something changed during the transfer. A particular people's hard-won record of survival was transformed into a universalised sacred drama. I argue that Papuan Christian reception can therefore be understood as inheriting the emotional architecture of Exodus without necessarily inheriting the historical discipline through which a people preserves itself across catastrophe — a discipline that Jewish thought has itself repeatedly turned to face directly, as in Rawidowicz's argument that every generation of Jews has lived under the shadow of its own possible disappearance, and that this anxiety, rather than undermining continuity, has historically been one of its most productive engines.²⁷ Papuans inherited the feeling of liberation, but they were not necessarily taught the machinery of continuity, still less the disciplined confrontation with the possibility of ending that Rawidowicz identifies as continuity's paradoxical condition. This is not simply an omission in religious education; it is a Psycho-Cosmocidal transformation of the question itself. The Papuan child learns to ask, with extraordinary emotional power, "How did they become free?" But the question upon which survival depends is different: "What must we preserve so that there will still be a *we* capable of becoming free?" That is the missing question. A people can become fluent in another people's Exodus while losing, generation by generation, the actual conditions under which its own Exodus could ever become possible.

Hope tells a people that freedom is possible; memory teaches a people how not to disappear before freedom arrives. Papuans were given the first in overwhelming abundance. The second was never transferred with the same force. This does not mean the theological promise itself is false; the question is what happens when the emotional architecture of liberation is transferred without the historical machinery of continuity. The result can become a dead end engineered with great care: a horizon a people can love indefinitely without being taught how horizons are reached. This is perhaps the most terrifying dimension of cosmological homelessness: the dream does not have to die. The people can disappear while continuing to dream.

15. What Would Count as Recovery

The Psycho-Cosmocide framework does not adjudicate whether a religion is true or what happens to the soul after death; those questions belong to another order and, ultimately, to the mystery of existence itself. The question here is narrower and more urgent: what conditions must remain intact, here and now, for a

²⁶Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982).

²⁷Simon Rawidowicz, "Israel: The Ever-Dying People," in *Israel, The Ever-Dying People, and Other Essays*, ed. Benjamin C. I. Ravid (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 53–63.

people to continue existing as themselves — not in heaven, not in an imagined elsewhere, not in someone else's sacred geography, but here, on this earth, on this land?

Papuans losing their land is, on this analysis, a more consequential subject than whether any individual Papuan is destined for a civilisationally imagined heaven or hell, because no one — believer or sceptic — is in a position to know the latter with certainty, while the former is a fact unfolding in the present and verifiable in the world. Land, water, language, memory, family, ancestry, fire, air, food, and children born upon the land and carrying its language into the next generation are therefore treated here not as sentimental cultural ornaments but as foundational conditions of human continuity, preceding every theology in the material sense that no theology can be embodied by a people whose material conditions of existence have been destroyed.

By this measure, the relevant question is not whether a belief system contains beautiful promises but what happens to a people's capacity to remain a people. Where faith restores memory, strengthens communal responsibility, protects land, and enlarges collective agency — as the ethnographic evidence of *bilip* in Melanesian Christian practice discussed in section 6 above demonstrates it can²⁸ — it becomes a living technology of survival. But where devotion is redirected toward an unreachable horizon while the land beneath the people is logged, militarised, sold, displaced, and stolen, another process is operating, one this corpus identifies as the Civilisational Psycho-Cosmocide Virus: a process requiring no single villain, no secret meeting, and no participant who understands the function of the system, because its components can appear independently benevolent while collectively producing displacement. Its most dangerous form is therefore not hatred; it is benevolence without memory, salvation without land, and religion without the question of who is disappearing.

The recovery this paper points toward already has a name within the wider corpus: Wonesis.²⁹ Wonesis is not a new religion competing with Christianity, nor a demand that Papuans abandon faith, nor another imported system waiting to replace the one that came before it. It is, in this sense, close to what Linda Tuhiwai Smith identifies as the first task of decolonising research and knowledge production more generally: not the immediate production of new answers, but the recovery of the community's own right to determine which questions are worth asking in the first place.³⁰ It is the deliberate restoration of the capacity to recognise the guiding principle that belonged to the people before the foreign map was unfolded across their world. It begins with the return of the question: what keeps us alive, what keeps us human, what keeps us together, what keeps memory alive, what keeps the children connected to the land, and what remains when every imported promise has been stripped away? The answer returns to the Given — land, food, water, air, fire, home, family, memory — the conditions through which life continues, and through which every cosmology that survives long enough to speak of eternity must first pass.

²⁸Street, "Belief as Relational Action," 268–72.

²⁹Kogoya, "Wonesis."

³⁰Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

16. Conclusion

This paper has argued that the deepest colonial wound in West Papua is neither purely physical nor purely doctrinal but cosmological: the transference of the sacred centre from Papuan land to a distant geography, achieved through indigenous messianic traditions that made the Christian gospel intelligible and, in the same movement, vulnerable to capture. That transference did not require a single villain and does not indict a single believer; it operates as a pattern distributed across missionary text, racial classification, ritual destruction, digital image, and the structure of hope itself. Its counterpart is not the abandonment of faith but the recovery of a different question — not "how did another people become free," but "what must we preserve so that there will still be a people capable of becoming free." Wonesis names the beginning of that recovery: the return of consciousness to the ground, the recovery of land before the map, memory before the replacement, and the question before the answer. A people can lose its land and know that it has been dispossessed; it can lose its language and hear the silence. But when a people loses the cosmological coordinates by which it recognises what has been lost, the disappearance becomes almost invisible — the cage becomes the sky, the wound becomes a hymn, and the people remain standing beneath it, praying for a home they have already been taught not to recognise. Wonesis begins at the moment that recognition returns.

The dislocation of a colonised mind is worse than the torture of the colonised body because physical wounds leave an external mark, allowing the victim to identify where the injury came from. However, cosmological dislocation destroys knowledge itself. It alters the language used to describe the wound, the history through which it is remembered, the God before whom it is interpreted, the Saviour through whom redemption is imagined, and the image through which the wounded person recognises themselves and others. No human language can fully describe what happens when something goes terribly wrong at such a deep level of the human psyche. The injury is no longer confined to what has been done to a person; it extends to the world through which they understand it. The world, the space and time that they inhabit, is wounded too. This is why the wound cannot necessarily be healed from within the machinery that produced it. A colonised consciousness cannot be repaired simply by providing more of the language, history, categories and metaphysical coordinates through which its displacement was accomplished. Healing demands an alternative reality: a different language through which the wound can be expressed; a different history through which memory can be reclaimed; a different conception of self and other; a different relationship with the land; a different understanding of the sacred; and an alternative way of encountering God and the concept of salvation. Therefore, the question is not merely how to repair a damaged mind, but also how to restore the world in which that mind can recognise itself once again. The deepest wound of psycho-cosmocide is precisely this. The colonised person is made to inhabit the world that wounded them as if it were the only world that has ever existed.

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About the Author

Yamin Kogoya is a Papuan philosopher, writer, and independent researcher from the Central Highlands of New Guinea (West Papua), currently based in Australia.

His work investigates one of the most enduring questions of human existence: how worlds are created, transformed, and destroyed. He is the originator of the Psycho-Cosmocide paradigm, an interdisciplinary philosophical framework that examines the destruction of human worlds not only through physical violence, occupation, or ecological devastation, but through the systematic reorganisation of perception, memory, meaning, and reality itself. Within this framework, he argues that words, images, symbols, signs, colours, institutions, and technologies do not merely represent the world—they participate in creating, reorganising, and erasing the conditions through which human beings inhabit it.

Kogoya introduced the concepts of the Cosmobian World and the Synthobian World to distinguish two fundamentally different modes of human existence. The Cosmobian World refers to forms of life constituted through reciprocal relationships with land, ancestry, kinship, memory, ecology, language, and the cosmos. The Synthobian World refers to synthetic, engineered systems of existence organised through abstraction, institutions, technology, production, and civilisational processes. The relationship between these two worlds forms the central philosophical architecture of his research.

Drawing upon Indigenous cosmologies together with philosophy, anthropology, history, religion, mythology, and civilisation studies, Kogoya develops original conceptual frameworks for interpreting the contemporary human condition. His work re-examines humanity's foundational myths, epics, tragedies, religions, and philosophical traditions as enduring civilisational architectures through which societies organise reality, negotiate meaning, confront mortality, remember the past, imagine the future, and participate in their own survival or extinction. Although grounded in the historical experience of West Papua, his research addresses broader philosophical questions concerning civilisation, consciousness, memory, belonging, power, and the future of human worlds.

He holds a Master of Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development from the Australian National University. His academic background also includes Religious Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Asia-Pacific Studies, and he undertook advanced study in epistemology at the University of Oxford. His research and commentary have appeared in *SBS News*, *RNZ Pacific*, *Asia Pacific Report*, *The Fiji Times*, and *The Jakarta Post*.

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