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The Papuan Tragic Hero

Tokoh, Resistance Leaders, and Chromatic Tragedy in West Papua

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“The tragic hero acts upon what he knows within a world whose truth exceeds his knowledge, whose consequences surpass his intentions and whose forces are beyond his control.”

— Yamin Kogoya

Abstract

This paper develops a philosophical category, the Papuan tragic hero, to describe two distinct classes of West Papuan leaders whose actions, however sincere, have repeatedly ended in catastrophe for the people they sought to serve: the Tokoh, elevated and incorporated by colonial rule, and the resistance leader, undone from within by factional rivalry. Both figures can be read through a classical tragic structure, but this paper argues that colonial conditions introduce a further complication that classical tragedy does not anticipate: they can impair the epistemic, linguistic, and cosmological capacities through which a hero might come to recognise his own tragic situation, and, at a deeper register, can collapse the very temporal architecture of past, present, and future on which any such recognition depends. Colonial tragedy, on this account, is not simply more painful than classical tragedy; it is structured so that the very conditions of recognition on which classical tragedy depends are themselves compromised. Drawing on Aristotle, Chinua Achebe, Ato Quayson, Frantz Fanon, the historiography of elite collaboration and co-optation in West Papua, and the Indigenous Melanesian philosophy of Bernard Narokobi, the paper develops this claim through the two lineages of Papuan leadership, then argues that both are trapped less by any personal failing than by a mismatch between individual agency and civilisational scale. It closes by arguing that the appropriate response to this diagnosis is not the search for a better hero but the collective, disciplined reconstruction of the capacities a people needs to survive without one.

Keywords: West Papua; tragic hero; colonialism; postcolonial theory; Aristotle; Chromatic Tragedy; elite capture; Bernard Narokobi; wounded time; Cosmobian

I. Introduction: The Papuan Tragic Hero

I write extensively about Papuan tragedy because there is a war underway in West Papua—not one war but several, and not the kind that makes headlines. Some of it is public, declared, and internationally recognised. Much of it is hidden, forgotten, and abandoned to the world’s attention, which is itself a form of tragedy. What makes it more tragic still is that this hidden war has claimed countless lives—people bombed, massacred, executed, and exiled in large numbers—leaving wounds, grief, and mourning for which there has been no justice. Papuan children have been born into war, into conflict, into exile, into bombing and massacre, and have grown up fatherless and motherless, sometimes in orphanages. Papuan resistance leaders have lived in exile for ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, even seventy years without ever returning home; they have died and been buried on foreign soil, some in unmarked graves, while others have returned and surrendered to Indonesia. Indonesian soldiers killed by armed Papuan resistance fighters have left grieving wives and children behind. Both settlers and Papuans caught in between have suffered as bystanders to a conflict not of their making. And beyond West Papua and Indonesia, a wider war has been waged against the Papuan people by industrial states that have armed and financed the occupying power while exploiting Papua’s resources. Papuan freedom fighters, meanwhile, have given their lives to this cause everywhere from the Papuan highlands to Melanesia, Oceania, Indonesia, and the wider world. Many have been captured, imprisoned, tortured, bombed, or killed.

This tragic series, of which the present paper is one part, is written as a mirror: to let us see ourselves, if and when that becomes possible—in the same way the ancient Greeks wrote their tragedies as timeless mirrors of war, choice, grief, kings and commoners, gods and mortals.

Among these mortals are Papua’s own leaders, and it is their lives, choices, and downfalls that this paper takes as its subject.

Papuan leaders across the modern history of West Papua have emerged in strikingly different guises: as chiefs, professors, governors, revolutionaries, priests, pastors, presidents, generals, diplomats, commanders, writers, and freedom fighters. Some were elevated by the colonial administrations that have governed the territory since the mid-twentieth century; others rose in direct opposition to them. This paper argues that leaders of both kinds, however different their politics, are best understood through a single philosophical category: the Papuan tragic hero.

Papuan leadership has, throughout this period, divided along two broad currents. The first is composed of those who came to be known, in Indonesian, as *Tokoh*: figures whose status, legitimacy, or advancement was elevated and sustained by the ruling state, and who entered, whether by deliberate choice or by incremental drift, into positions of dependence on the colonial order, in exchange for title, resources, and material security within a system that was, at the same time, dismantling the world their own people depended on. The second is composed of those who opposed that system outright: the leaders of a resistance movement whose sentiment, emotion, and ideological conviction have been, at every stage of Papua’s modern history, genuinely strong, but whose unity has repeatedly fractured from within.

This paper argues that both currents produce a distinct but related figure of tragedy, and that understanding the mechanism of each is a precondition for understanding why courage, sincerity, and love for one's people have not, on their own, been sufficient to reverse Papua's trajectory toward extinction. Its central claim, developed in Section II, is that colonial conditions do more than defeat their protagonists: they can impair the capacity through which a protagonist might recognise that he has been defeated, and why. This is what distinguishes the Papuan tragic hero from the tragic hero of classical drama, and it is the thesis around which the rest of the paper is organised.

II. From Aristotle to Chromatic Tragedy

Having stated why this series exists and whose lives it takes as its subject, I turn now to the analytic category itself, and to the classical account from which it departs. Aristotle's account of the tragic protagonist in the *Poetics* is more careful than the popular notion of the "tragic flaw" that has descended from it. The tragic protagonist, for Aristotle, is neither wholly virtuous nor wholly vicious; his fall arises through *hamartia*, an error or misjudgement rather than moral wickedness, compounded by *peripeteia*, a reversal of fortune, and, in the most fully realised plots, resolved through *anagnorisis*, a moment of recognition — together producing the *pathos*, or suffering, proper to tragedy.¹ In such plots, recognition becomes the moment through which catastrophe acquires intelligibility: Oedipus is devastated by what he learns at Thebes, but he does learn it, and his suffering becomes conscious of itself, nameable, and capable of being mourned.

This capacity for recognition should not obscure a harder structural point that the vocabulary of *hamartia* can understate: in the fullest tragic plots, the very qualities that make the protagonist exceptional are the qualities that produce his ruin, so that the hero becomes, without any external agency required, the source of the catastrophe he is trying to avert. Oedipus supplies the sharpest instance because the plot literalises the point: the intelligence that once solved the Sphinx's riddle and saved Thebes is the same intelligence he now turns toward finding the cause of the plague consuming the city, and the search ends not in the discovery of an external culprit but in the discovery that the investigator is himself the pollution he has been hunting.² The same structure recurs across the genre with enough regularity that it should be read as a feature of tragic form itself, rather than a peculiarity of one plot. Creon, in the *Antigone*, believes that the stability of the state requires the absolute subordination of household loyalty to civic law; the very rigidity that constitutes his authority is what turns that authority into the tyranny that destroys his own family.³

¹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Malcolm Heath (London: Penguin Classics, 1996), 1449b–1450a, 1452a–1452b, 1452b–1453a.

² Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, in *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Classics, 1982), on Oedipus's investigation of the plague at Thebes and his eventual recognition that he is himself its source.

³ Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Classics, 1982).

Achilles' honour, the quality on which his entire heroic identity depends, produces first his withdrawal from the battle he alone might have won, and then, once his rage is loosed, an excess of vengeance against Hector that the poem itself marks as a violation of the very honour it was meant to defend.⁴ Agamemnon's kingship, which requires him to command a fleet that cannot sail without a sacrifice, places him in a position where the authority that makes him a king also makes his own household an instrument of that authority — a bargain the house of Atreus goes on paying for a generation.⁵ In each case the fall is not produced by an external antagonist commensurate with the hero; it is produced by the hero's own defining excellence, encountering circumstances that excellence was never built to metabolise.

This is why the tragic hero is not simply an unlucky or a flawed ordinary person, and why the category should not be confused with villainy. The villain, in the ordinary sense, does damage because damage is what he wants; the tragic hero does damage while sincerely pursuing justice, order, honour, or the protection of his own people, and the damage becomes visible, if it becomes visible at all, only in retrospect. Sophocles gives this structure its most decisive turn for the purposes of this paper: Oedipus is not destroyed by a stranger he must hunt down; he is destroyed by his own search, conducted in good faith, for a stranger who turns out to wear his own face. The hero, in other words, can stand at the source of the very harm he has set out to cure, and can go on searching for someone else to blame precisely because the last place his own method of investigation directs him to look is at himself.

It is this template, rather than the narrower notion of a single “tragic flaw,” that this paper carries forward into the Papuan case. The claim developed across Sections IV and V is not only that Papuan leadership has, on occasion, failed or been defeated from outside. It is that the very qualities that make a Tokoh a legitimate authority, and that make a resistance leader a legitimate commander, can become, under the conditions examined below, the mechanism by which the world both figures are trying to save is instead consumed — and that, as in Oedipus's case, the last place either figure's own frame of reference directs him to look for the cause is at his own leadership.

This paper adapts that structure into a working definition. A Papuan tragic hero, as the term is used here, satisfies four conditions: significant agency, in that the person acts rather than merely suffering events; aspirational commitment, in that the action is undertaken in pursuit of a meaningful collective good; structural contradiction, in that the pursuit encounters forces whose scale exceeds individual agency; and catastrophic consequence under impaired recognition, in that the person's action contributes to, or is consumed by, a catastrophe whose true shape he is not fully

⁴ Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Classics, 1990), esp. bks. 1, 9, and 22, on Achilles' withdrawal from battle and the excess of his vengeance against Hector.

⁵ Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, in *The Oresteia*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Classics, 1977).

positioned to perceive. This definition is narrower than the ordinary use of “leader” or “hero”: not every Papuan politician, and not every casualty of the conflict, qualifies. A tragic hero, on this definition, is someone who acts meaningfully within a structure that both requires his action and forecloses his understanding of what that action costs. This definition is stated, for now, in the individualist idiom of Aristotelian tragedy, because that idiom is the most legible starting point across traditions; Section VII returns to complicate it once the two lineages below have been established, drawing on an account of personhood in which none of these four conditions is, in the end, a purely individual matter.

The fourth condition is this paper’s central claim, and it needs to be stated carefully, because a phrase this paper borrows from elsewhere in the author’s earlier work — that Papuan colonial tragedy is “more tragic than tragedy” — risks a serious misreading.⁶ (This paper draws throughout on that earlier corpus, since its argument presupposes concepts built up over several prior working papers; wherever a claim depends on that corpus, this paper also supplies independent, non-self-cited sourcing where such sourcing exists, and says so explicitly.) The claim is not a ranking of suffering: it is not an assertion that Papuans have suffered more than other colonised or tragic peoples. It is a claim about the conditions of recognition. Classical tragedy assumes that catastrophe can, in the end, become intelligible to the very person it destroys. Colonial tragedy, this paper argues, can go further: it can damage the epistemic, linguistic, historical, and cosmological conditions necessary for that recognition to occur at all. Where classical tragedy conceals the truth and then reveals it, colonial tragedy can disable the faculties by which the truth would be recognised as truth in the first place.

This paper calls this condition Chromatic Tragedy: a form of colonial suffering that does not arrive as darkness but as an excess of colour — development, education, religion, modernity, and participation, each a genuine good in isolation, together forming a spectrum so bright that both those living inside it and those observing from outside can struggle to see it as the medium of a deeper destruction. The two lineages of the Papuan tragic hero examined below, the Tokoh and the resistance leader, are both produced under this condition.

III. Wounded Time: The Collapse of Past and Future in the Papuan Tragic Hero

This section develops the fourth condition set out in Section II, catastrophic consequence under impaired recognition. Aristotle’s account of *anagnorisis*, discussed in Section II, is often read as a

⁶ Yamin Kogoya, “A Papuan Tragedy Is More Tragic Than Tragedy: Beyond the Architecture of Tragedy,” *Psycho-Cosmocide Studies*, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series, no. 12 (2026), pt. 1; pt. 9, §9.1.

purely cognitive event: the hero comes to know what he did not know.⁷ But recognition of this kind presupposes a temporal architecture that the *Poetics* never has to argue for, because in the world Aristotle is describing it can simply be assumed. Oedipus can recognise what he has done because he possesses an intact past to recognise it against, a present in which the recognition can register as catastrophe, and a future, however foreclosed, in which the consequences of that catastrophe can still be lived out and, in Sophocles' later telling, even redeemed. Anagnorisis is not simply the discovery of a fact; it is the placement of a self within a timeline coherent enough to make the fact mean something. This section argues that it is precisely this timeline, and not merely the hero's epistemic or linguistic capacity to interpret it, that colonial conditions in West Papua have targeted.

The Psycho-Cosmocide framework developed across this series distinguishes eight atlases of human existence, among them *Space/Time* and *Memory/Consciousness*.⁸ These are ordinarily treated, for analytic purposes, as separable registers. In the condition this paper describes, they are not separable, because they are wounded by the same act at the same moment: the survey that redraws the land also redraws the calendar by which that land's history will now be told; the classification that renames a people also reclassifies what that people is permitted to remember about who it was before the renaming. The destruction, on this account, is not first territorial and only afterward psychological. It is one operation occurring simultaneously across both registers.

Elsewhere in this series I have described this condition, in its experiential register, as the condition of a being stranded between wounded time and wounded space:⁹ a Papuan being whose past has been reclassified, whose present is held under permanent suspicion, and whose future has already been scheduled by a calendar he did not write and a decolonisation process suspended so completely that West Papua now occupies what a companion paper in this series calls the *waiting room of civilisation*.¹⁰ Each of these three wounds would be survivable in isolation. Taken together, and inflicted as a single, coordinated operation rather than three sequential injuries, they produce something more severe than deprivation. They produce *collapse*.

When a past has been rewritten and a future has been indefinitely deferred, both cease to function as temporal horizons distinct from the present. They fold into it. The present the Papuan tragic

⁷ Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Malcolm Heath (London: Penguin Classics, 1996), 1452a, on anagnorisis as recognition arising from within the plot's own causal structure.

⁸ Yamin Kogoya, "The Ecosystem of Papuan Extinction," *Psycho-Cosmocide Studies*, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series, no. 1 (2026), section on the Eight Atlases of Human Existence.

⁹ Yamin Kogoya, *The Psychopathology of "Last-Minute Merdeka": Papuan Struggle for Being, Space-Time, and Sovereignty* (Wone Press, 2026), sec. 3, "Wounded Time and Space."

¹⁰ Yamin Kogoya, "The Papuans: A Stranded Cosmobian Society on the Highway of Civilisation," *Psycho-Cosmocide Studies*, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series, no. 14 (2026), sec. "Stranded in a Waiting Room of Civilisation."

hero actually inhabits is therefore not a stable now, bounded by a knowable yesterday and an anticipated tomorrow; it is closer to a flash flood, arriving with the accumulated pressure of a past it will not let him set down and a future it will not let him reach, rushing toward what presents itself as a single destiny and is experienced with all of a destiny's urgency, but which turns out, on inspection, not to exist as any locatable place at all, because it was never connected to anything the Papuan being himself planted, built, or named. What elsewhere in this series I have called *Last Minute Merdeka*, and diagnosed as a pattern of chronic institutional lateness,¹¹ should be read in light of this collapse as something other than a habit of character. A person who has never been permitted a stable future has no location from which urgency about that future could be calibrated; every moment therefore arrives with the emergency pitch of a last minute, because for a being stranded in a collapsed present, every minute is functionally the last one available to him.

The image this paper wants to insist on is not metaphorical in the weak sense. A companion project in this series names the Papuan condition through the concept of the Cosmobian: a form of existence constituted, not merely supported, by reciprocal relationship with land, ancestry, and cosmology, in the way a fish's existence is constituted by water rather than merely located within it.¹² Land, on this account, is not one interest competing with others for a share of political attention; it is, in the words of a related book-length treatment in this series, "the canvas on which every other atlas is painted, and no cosmology survives if the canvas is removed."¹³ To remove that medium is not to inconvenience the being who depended on it. It is to strand him, in the full biological sense of the word applied to a fish removed from water: he continues to move, and for a time even to appear to function, but the organ system through which he would otherwise breathe meaning into his own existence is no longer immersed in the element that made it work.

What keeps the stranded Cosmobian being alive under these conditions is not, therefore, his own restored temporal capacity. It is a borrowed apparatus, assembled from the very civilisational order responsible for the stranding: a borrowed calendar, a borrowed vocabulary of liberation, even, as this series has noted, a borrowed word for freedom itself, adopted from the very occupier whose own independence first won it.¹⁴ This is the same mechanism this series has elsewhere described, through the Lani image of Wam'ndanak'me, the unfenced garden entered by whichever passing appetite finds it undefended, and through the biological analogy of the willing host, sustained by a system that redirects the host's own capacities toward an end not its own while the host continues

¹¹ Kogoya, *The Psychopathology of "Last-Minute Merdeka"*, sec. 5, "Fragmented Memory and Consciousness: Cascading Incapacitation"; sec. 6, "Fragmented Networks and the Emergence of 'Last Minute Merdeka.'"

¹² Kogoya, "The Papuans: A Stranded Cosmobian Society," sec. "The Cosmobian Society as Counter-Concept."

¹³ Yamin Kogoya, *The Papuans: Being Papuan and Papuan Being* (Wone Press, 2026), prologue, "The Child Before the World."

¹⁴ Kogoya, *The Psychopathology of "Last-Minute Merdeka"*, sec. 6, "Fragmented Networks and the Emergence of 'Last Minute Merdeka,'" on the etymology and adoption of the word Merdeka.

to experience those redirected capacities as his own initiative.¹⁵ The Papuan tragic hero survives, in other words, on life support, and the oxygen supplying that life support is not his: it is metered, intermittently available, subject to withdrawal by systems answerable to interests other than his survival, and, on the evidence assembled throughout this series regarding demographic transformation, resource extraction, and the indefinite deferral of international recognition, it is critically, measurably diminishing.

This is the deepest sense in which the Papuan tragic hero departs from his classical counterpart, and it sharpens rather than replaces the claim made in Section II. It is not only that colonial conditions impair the epistemic and linguistic capacities through which a hero might interpret his situation correctly. It is that they collapse the very temporal scaffold — an inheritable past, a livable present, a reachable future — within which any interpretation, correct or mistaken, could be metabolised into altered action at all. Oedipus's *hamartia* is an error committed inside an intact timeline. The Papuan tragic hero's condition is not, in the first instance, an error. It is the absence of the timeline an error would need in order to become recognisable as one.

It is against this collapsed horizon, and not merely a disrupted one, that the two lineages of Papuan leadership examined in the sections that follow should be understood. The Tokoh, as Section IV will argue, resolves the collapse by borrowing a future wholesale from the very order that engineered the collapse, and mistakes that borrowed future for his own. The resistance leader, as Section V will argue, refuses the borrowed future but is left defending a present so thoroughly flooded that even his own movement's account of what, exactly, is being defended begins to fragment under him. Neither error is a failure of courage or of sincerity. Both are what remains available to a hero acting inside a flash flood, in the last minute of a time that was never allowed to belong to him.

IV. The Tokoh: Elite Capture and Tragic Internalisation

The first tragic lineage is the Tokoh. The term is used here not in its ordinary Indonesian sense of a prominent person or personality, but as a specialised political category: a Papuan authority — governor, regent, pastor, youth leader, exemplar — whose status, legitimacy, or institutional advancement is mediated by, and dependent on, the structures of the ruling state, whether that dependence was sought, drifted into, or imposed. This is an analytical category constructed within this paper and the wider corpus it draws on, not a claim about how the word functions in ordinary Indonesian usage, where tokoh denotes simply a prominent or notable figure without any built-in connotation of political dependency.

¹⁵ Kogoya, *The Psychopathology of "Last-Minute Merdeka,"* sec. 4, "Tortured Body and Mind: Wam'ndanak'me and the Willing Host."

The Lani ontological vocabulary developed elsewhere distinguishes between the Ap, the person who inhabits their existence honestly, and the Ap-ap, a hollow, refashioned version of the person, made over in the image of something else.¹⁶ The production of the Ap-ap concentrates with particular intensity in the Tokoh class, whose achievement is sometimes named, in everyday political speech in Papua, with disarming directness: *dia sudah jadi manusia*, “he or she has become human.” The expression is colloquial rather than a fixed idiom, and it is recorded here as a piece of circulating political speech rather than as formal ethnographic data; what it captures, more economically than analysis can, is the logic this paper is describing — that to be human, within that logic, is no longer to exist as an authentic Papuan, but to successfully perform the values and aspirations of the colonising system.

The mechanism by which this transformation is accomplished is best captured by a biological analogy, which should be understood strictly as an analytical model rather than a claim that colonised political subjects are manipulated by the same physical mechanism as a parasitised host. The lancet liver fluke, *Dicrocoelium dendriticum*, redirects an infected ant’s behaviour so completely that the ant no longer perceives itself as obeying an external command; the analogy is useful because it names a structural possibility — that a system of incentives can reorganise a person’s motivations so gradually and so completely that compliance is experienced from within as autonomous judgement — without requiring any claim about biological mechanism.¹⁷ On this model, the relevant question is not whether the Tokoh is honest or dishonest, loyal or disloyal, but how a particular form of consciousness is produced and reproduced through schools, universities, bureaucratic incentive, and systems of symbolic prestige, until assumptions that were once historically contingent come to be experienced as self-evident. Plato’s allegory of the cave supplies a second, briefer analogy for the same point: the Tokoh functions as one of the cave’s shadow figures, a colonised elite projected back onto his own people as a model of realised humanity, whose authority depends entirely on a fire he did not light and cannot see.¹⁸

This is the condition the introduction described: the Tokoh who genuinely believed that access to power, resources, and position would allow him to build a better world for his own people. The tragedy is not that this belief was cynical. It is that the belief was sincere, and that the sincerity itself had been produced as part of the mechanism of capture. Every decision such a leader makes

¹⁶ Yamin Kogoya, “The Seven Existential Cages: A Speculative Decolonial Ontology,” *Psycho-Cosmocide Studies*, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series, no. 3 (2026), section on the Ap/Ap-ap distinction and the Tokoh class.

¹⁷ Yamin Kogoya, “Colonial Parasites and Colonised Hosts: The Psycho-Cosmocide of Cosmobian Existence in West Papua,” *Psycho-Cosmocide Studies*, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series, no. 18 (2026), section “*Dicrocoelium dendriticum*: Elite Internalisation and the Disappearance of Compulsion.”

¹⁸ Yamin Kogoya, “Plato’s Cave and the Architecture of Psycho-Cosmocide in West Papua,” *Psycho-Cosmocide Studies*, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series, no. 8 (2026), sec. VIII, “The Engineered Shadow Figures.”

appears, from within his own consciousness, as service; from the position of historical judgement, it appears as the reproduction of the very order consuming his people.

This figure has a well-developed comparative analogue in postcolonial theory. Frantz Fanon's account of the "national bourgeoisie" in *The Wretched of the Earth* describes an indigenous elite that inherits the colonial administrative apparatus without transforming its underlying structure, replacing the foreign official with the domestic one while leaving the architecture of extraction intact. Fanon located the tragedy of this class not in simple villainy but in its unpreparedness, its lack of practical ties to the masses, and the structural position into which a colonially educated elite is placed — a position from which even good intentions cannot generate an independent basis for authority.¹⁹ Historians of empire, working independently of Fanon, arrived at a related diagnosis: Ronald Robinson's theory of collaboration argued that European imperial expansion succeeded not primarily through superior force but through the degree of cooperation extended by indigenous elites, whose own local interests were, for a time, served by alignment with the colonising power.²⁰ Neither Fanon nor Robinson requires that the collaborating elite be malicious. Both frameworks converge with the account of the Tokoh given here on the same point: that a structural position can produce a class of actors whose sincerity and whose function are entirely compatible with one another, which is what makes the position so difficult to escape from within.

The West Papuan case has its own dedicated empirical literature, independent of both Fanon and Robinson. Emir Chairullah's study of the design and implementation of Papua's Special Autonomy law documents secret negotiations conducted between Papuan and national elites during President Abdurrahman Wahid's administration, and argues that the policy's failure as a conflict-reduction strategy is best explained by the dynamics of elite configuration during negotiation and early implementation — an independent empirical account consistent with the mechanism proposed here.²¹ Chris Wilson and Shahzad Akhtar's comparative study of state responses to insurgency reaches a related conclusion: set against Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas and southern Thailand, Papua is their case in which ongoing co-optation of local elites, rather than repression alone, has left the resistance movement "factionalised and weak," depriving it of exactly the leadership a rival, uncaptured elite would otherwise supply — evidence consistent with, though independent of, the account developed

¹⁹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 97–144, esp. 100–120, on the "national bourgeoisie."

²⁰ Ronald Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration," in *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, ed. Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (London: Longman, 1972), 117–142.

²¹ Emir Chairullah, *Indonesia's Failure in Papua: The Role of Elites in Designing, Implementing and Undermining Special Autonomy* (London: Routledge, 2021).

here.²² It is also worth noting, following Richard Chauvel's history of the Papuan educated elite, that this class did not originate with the Indonesian administration: the first Papuan elite was cultivated by Dutch mission schools in the years after the Pacific War, well before Indonesian rule began. This paper reads that continuity as evidence that the mechanism of elevation and capture has outlasted more than one coloniser, suggesting that the Tokoh's tragedy depends less on the identity of the particular power that produces it than on the structural position itself.²³

The Tokoh's capture also has a public register worth naming here, since the following section identifies a parallel dynamic in the resistance lineage. Where the resistance leader's fragmentation, as discussed below, is broadcast nightly and without institutional filter on social media, the Tokoh's incorporation is broadcast through ceremony: inaugurations, government press conferences, church pulpits, and state media coverage that present the Tokoh's advancement as evidence of Papua's own advancement. This too is a performance with an audience on both sides of the colonial relationship: it authorises the Tokoh to himself as much as it authorises him to Jakarta and to his own people, and it helps explain why the Tokoh's tragedy so rarely admits doubt from within — the same apparatus that elevated him also produces, continuously and publicly, the evidence that the elevation was deserved.

V. Resistance Leadership: Fragmentation and Tragic Agency

The second tragic lineage belongs to those who opposed the ruling state outright: the leaders of a resistance movement whose sentiment, emotion, and ideological conviction have been, at every stage of Papua's modern history, genuinely strong. Their tragedy is not the Tokoh's tragedy of incorporation. It is a tragedy of fragmentation: leaders entangled in their own justifications and self-narratives, who undermine and are undermined by one another, and whose rivalry, more often than any external defeat, has kept the movement's collective project from arriving at its goal.

This should not be read as a claim that Papuan factionalism is simply caused by Indonesian rule. Colonial intervention interacts with institutional incentives, historical patterns of local political competition, generational change, geography, and ordinary leadership rivalry to produce fragmentation; no single cause is sufficient on its own, and the resistance movement's internal divisions have histories that are not reducible to Jakarta's actions. The narrower claim made here is that colonial structures amplify, and are amplified by, these ordinary causes of factionalism, in ways that make unified resistance harder to sustain than it would otherwise be.

²² Chris Wilson and Shahzad Akhtar, "Repression, Co-optation and Insurgency: Pakistan's FATA, Southern Thailand and Papua, Indonesia," *Third World Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2019): 710–726.

²³ Richard Chauvel, *Constructing Papuan Nationalism: History, Ethnicity, and Adaptation*, Policy Studies 14 (Washington, DC: East-West Center, 2005).

One account of why this recurs extends Plato's allegory of the cave: a resistance movement can remain structurally inside the cave even while sincerely and courageously opposing it, if the grammar it uses to imagine liberation — sovereignty, recognition, statehood, development — was itself supplied by the system it opposes. A movement that demands recognition has already accepted that recognition by the coloniser's institutions is the currency in which liberation is measured, which is one form of the very hierarchy it seeks to overturn. On this reading, a movement does not automatically escape the cave merely by opposing its rulers; the concept of an exit available to it may itself have been manufactured inside the cave, a dynamic close to what Antonio Gramsci called hegemony operating even inside opposition.²⁴

The documented history of the Papuan resistance movement supplies the empirical record for this diagnosis. The pattern is present from the movement's founding moment. In 1971, the OPM (Organisasi Papua Merdeka, the Free Papua Movement) commanders Seth Jafet Rumkorem and Jacob Prai jointly proclaimed the Republic of West Papua; by 1976 their partnership had collapsed into rival commands, a split independent historians of the movement identify as among its most damaging episodes of factional rivalry. This paper reads that split as establishing an organisational template — of parallel, sincerely held legitimacy weakening the prospect of unified armed command and easing Indonesian infiltration — that would recur in almost every subsequent generation of Papuan leadership.²⁵ It recurred in the successive splits and re-formations of the following decades, and most recently in the disputed 2023 leadership division within the United Liberation Movement for West Papua, in which Menase Tabuni's appointment at a leaders' summit in Port Vila was followed by a rival congress in Jayapura that reinstated Benny Wenda, each side invoking the same constitutional authority against the other, with no publicly documented reconciliation to date. Neither faction could label the other an external enemy, because both were, by definition, Papuan.²⁶

²⁴ Kogoya, "Plato's Cave," sec. IX, "The Papuan Resistance Leaders — Shadows of a Different Fire," drawing on Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971); Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 533–580; and Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

²⁵ Robin Osborne, *Indonesia's Secret War: The Guerilla Struggle in Irian Jaya* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985); Yamin Kogoya, "West Papua's Soft Civil Wars: The Civilisational Psycho-Cosmocide Virus and the Architecture of Collective Fragmentation and Collapse," *Psycho-Cosmocide Studies*, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series, no. 24 (2026), sec. V.6.

²⁶ RNZ Pacific, "West Papua Independence Leader Wenda Elected ULMWP President," November 24, 2023, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/503158/west-papua-independence-leader-wenda-elected-ulmwp-president>; Asia Pacific Report, "Veteran West Papua Independence Leader Elected ULMWP President," November 22, 2023, <https://asiapacificreport.nz/2023/11/22/veteran-west-papua-independence-leader-elected-ulmwp-president/>; Kogoya, "West Papua's Soft Civil Wars," sec. V.12.

This is not incidental discord. At least seven distinguishable and recurring lines of fragmentation run through the movement's history: armed struggle versus nonviolent resistance; central command versus territorial autonomy; highland versus coastal political power; generational conflict between older leadership and younger activists; diaspora versus homeland; federal versus unitary visions of a future state; and a persistent conflict between customary authority and modern political organisation, in which chiefs, church leaders, commanders, and elected politicians each claim mandates of a fundamentally different kind.²⁷ Each line of fragmentation supplies fresh material for rivalry between leaders whose personal conviction and personal sacrifice are, individually, beyond serious doubt. Yet the tragedy is not, on the ethnographic record, a simple story of collapse. Camellia Webb-Gannon's extensive interviews with first-, second-, and third-generation Papuan leaders find that this same pattern of mutual criticism has coexisted, across three generations, with a movement that has bent without breaking; what has held it together, on her account, is not military strength or powerful allies but the body politic's own determination and hope. The account of tragedy advanced here should be read alongside, not against, this finding: the recurring rivalry among leaders is real and costly, but it has not, so far, been sufficient to extinguish the movement those leaders lead.

Where the Tokoh's incorporation, discussed above, is performed through the sanctioned ceremony of the state, the resistance leader's fragmentation is performed on a stage with no comparable institution behind it. In its present phase, this fragmentation has acquired a specific address. Resistance leaders, diplomats, commanders, and presidents-in-exile now converge nightly on social media, where accusation and self-disclosure are published before rallies, before lobbying trips, before sleep, with no institution positioned to judge or correct any of it. The problem here is not merely that leaders quarrel in public. It is that the practice of asking, before publishing a word, an image, or a name, what that disclosure will cost the collective cause has itself weakened. Every leader who appears in this space leaves behind a signature — a grievance, a weakness, an unguarded claim a rival will contest by morning — and because no Papuan tribunal or council has standing to adjudicate the dispute, it dissolves unresolved while its participants disperse feeling vindicated, having handed a genuine asset to an opponent: information.

This is not a uniquely Papuan pathology. It is close to what Zeynep Tufekci, studying networked protest from Cairo to Istanbul, identifies as a structural vulnerability of the "leaderless" movement: the same platforms that let people mobilise instantly deny them the slow work of building trust and adjudicating disagreement, so an assembled public can disintegrate into open bickering as

²⁷ Kogoya, "West Papua's Soft Civil Wars," sec. VI, "Eight Forms of Fragmentation and the Recurring Conflict Lines." See also Camellia Webb-Gannon, *Morning Star Rising: The Politics of Decolonization in West Papua* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2021), chap. 4, "Wrestling in the Dark," whose interviews with first-, second-, and third-generation Papuan leaders document this same pattern of mutual criticism from inside the movement, while arguing that it has not, historically, caused the movement itself to fall apart.

easily as it assembled, in full view of the states it opposes.²⁸ For West Papua, that exposure is documented rather than hypothetical: leaked Indonesian special-forces records from 2006–2009 show military intelligence treating the peaceful political expression of activists and clergy as a higher-priority target than the armed resistance itself, on the explicit ground that its reach “already reaches abroad”; more recent monitoring finds Papuan activists facing coordinated smear campaigns and digital attacks timed to their public statements.²⁹

A further and more corrosive dimension of this second tragedy is internal. The point at which a colonised people comes to treat its own internal critics — those who name the mechanism of destruction while it is still underway — as the true source of danger, rather than the system doing the destroying, has been described elsewhere as a psychopathology of permanent victimhood. Under this inversion, the diagnostician is experienced as the threat, and the apparatus that manufactures the suffering continues to operate behind the cover of the resulting internal conflict.³⁰ This describes a dynamic documented well beyond West Papua: colonial systems do not only occupy territory; they also divide clan against clan and faction against faction, turning a people’s own vigilance against itself.

The most difficult instance of this second tragic lineage is the armed resistance leader, whose legitimacy is contested even within Papuan society itself. The case of Egianus Kogoya, a commander of TPNPB (Tentara Pembebasan Nasional Papua Barat, the West Papua National Liberation Army), OPM’s armed wing, whose 2023 detention of a foreign pilot placed him, in international media and in Papuan discourse alike. In a world of contradictory morality and justice, regarded by some as a hero and by others as a criminal, is instructive here. That ambivalence can be read through Frantz Fanon’s account of anticolonial violence as a force that restores the colonised as historical subjects, set against Hannah Arendt’s argument that violence, whatever it destroys, cannot by itself establish legitimate political authority, because legitimacy depends on public recognition, collective judgement, and shared responsibility.³¹ The resulting position

²⁸ Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), esp. chaps. 3, “Leading the Leaderless,” and 9, “Governments Strike Back.”

²⁹ Human Rights Watch, “Indonesia: Military Documents Reveal Unlawful Spying in Papua,” August 14, 2011, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/08/14/indonesia-military-documents-reveal-unlawful-spying-papua>, citing a 2007 Kopassus quarterly report; CIVICUS Monitor, “Papuan Activists Prosecuted While Critics Face Judicial Harassment and Digital Attacks,” August 10, 2020, <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/papuan-activists-prosecuted-while-critics-face-judicial-harassment-and-digital-attacks/>.

³⁰ Yamin Kogoya, “Rethinking Sixty-Four Years of Papuan Resistance: From the Psychopathology of a Moral Spectacle to a Sovereign State-Building Strategy,” *Psycho-Cosmocide Studies*, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series, no. 9 (2026), sec. “The Psychopathology of Permanent Victimhood,” drawing on Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972); and Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

³¹ Yamin Kogoya, “Metaphysics of a Hero: Egianus Kogoya — Is He a Papuan Hero or Villain?,” Kurumbi Wone Series (2023); and Yamin Kogoya, “Beyond the Papuan Rebel — Land as First Ontology: A West Papuan

neither exempts armed resistance from ethical scrutiny nor collapses it into the same category as state violence; it insists that the legitimacy of resistance rests on its willingness to submit its own actions to the standards it demands of its opponents. This contested legitimacy is itself a symptom of the absence already described: a movement with a standing council or tribunal able to rule on the ethics of a specific armed action would not eliminate disagreement over Egianus Kogoya's conduct, but it would give that disagreement somewhere to be settled, rather than leaving it, like every other dispute among Papuan leaders, to be fought out permanently and inconclusively in public. The tragic hero here is caught between two forms of judgement that neither Papuan society nor the international order has yet reconciled.

VI. Two Tragic Lineages, One Structural Problem

The Tokoh and the resistance leader appear, at first glance, to belong to opposite moral categories: one collaborates, the other resists. Yet the two figures share an underlying structure that matters more than their evident moral difference. The Tokoh is captured by incorporation; the resistance leader is captured by fragmentation. Both are trapped less by any personal failing than by a mismatch between the scale of the hero and the scale of the structure he confronts.

A leader may have enough courage to confront an enemy but not enough institutional capacity to rebuild a whole world; a politician may obtain office without acquiring constituent power; a military leader may defend territory without restoring cosmological continuity. The leader can therefore become implicated in what he sought to overcome, not through betrayal, but through structural insufficiency. Two figures from myth illustrate the limitation: Sisyphus has endurance, but is trapped in a task whose conditions are beyond his control; Gilgamesh has strength, kingship, and courage, yet cannot overcome mortality or achieve the permanence he desires.³² Each figure is chosen for a specific reason. Sisyphus's task is not merely difficult but structurally interminable: no increase in his effort changes the shape of his punishment, which is the condition this paper attributes to the Tokoh, whose labour within the system cannot, by its own increase, alter the system's design. Gilgamesh's failure is not one of nerve or strength, which he has in abundance, but of category: he seeks permanence through the instrument of kingship and conquest, when what he seeks, if it is available at all, is available only through relationship and memory — the same mismatch this paper attributes to the resistance leader, whose courage is real but aimed at a form

Philosophical Perspective," *Psycho-Cosmocide Studies*, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series, no. 23 (2026), drawing on Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 44, on violence as "a cleansing force"; and Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970).

³² Kogoya, "More Tragic Than Tragedy," pt. 9, §9.2, on Sisyphus, Gilgamesh, and the mismatch between the scale of the hero and the scale of the structure.

of victory the structure he opposes was never going to grant. Both illuminate the limits of heroism when a problem has been engineered at the level of a world, a cosmology, or a historical structure, rather than posed as a single obstacle an individual might overcome. Papua's crisis, on this account, cannot be resolved by the arrival of a perfect president, commander, prophet, or chief, because the problem is embedded in the institutions and meanings that organise life, not in the character of any one office-holder. This is the same limit named in Section II through Oedipus, Creon, Achilles, and Agamemnon: each believed his own greatness sufficient to contain a crisis whose true scale exceeded him, and each discovered, too late, that a world is always larger than the hero who tries to save it single-handedly.

This claim needs a careful qualification, because a theory of structural constraint can be misread as a theory that excuses everyone operating within the structure. It should not be used to erase the difference between deliberate violence and unintended structural consequence: a resistance leader who makes a strategic error does not bear the same moral responsibility as an institution that knowingly carries out repression or dispossession. Constraint is not innocence, and structural conditioning is not moral exculpation. What the argument establishes is narrower: that courage alone cannot guarantee freedom from internalisation, and that a leader's failure to overcome a civilisational problem is not, by itself, evidence of personal betrayal. Both things can be true at once — a leader can be genuinely constrained by structure and still be responsible for what he chooses to do within it.

VII. The Papuan Tragic Hero in Comparative Perspective

The Papuan tragic hero belongs to a wider lineage of postcolonial tragic figures. Chinua Achebe's Okonkwo, in *Things Fall Apart*, has been read consistently as an Aristotelian tragic hero: a man of significant standing whose *hamartia* — a fear of weakness inherited from his father's failures — drives him to the heights of status within Umuofia and then to his own destruction, ending in exile and suicide after colonial administration and Christian missions dismantle the world in which his standing had meaning.³³ Raymond Williams's study of the tragic form's passage from classical drama into modern political life offers a useful bridge here: Williams traces a movement, across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, "from hero to victim," in which the tragic protagonist increasingly appears not as an individual of exceptional stature but as an ordinary person caught in historical forces that exceed him — a trajectory that anticipates, in a European register, the very shift this paper is tracing in a colonial one.³⁴ Ato Quayson's study of tragedy and postcolonial

³³ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958). On Okonkwo as an Aristotelian tragic hero, see Femi Olugboji, "Paradigms of Heroism, Hubris and Hamartia in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*," *LASU Journal of African Studies* 9, no. 2 (2021): 170–185; and Katia Lacey and Lila Guennoun, "Of the Three Faces of the Hero in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*" (dissertation, Mouloud Mammeri University, 2023).

³⁴ Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), esp. "From Hero to Victim."

literature names the further step: postcolonial tragedy does not simply borrow the classical form, it reworks it, so that an individual's downfall becomes legible as the tragedy of an entire society confronting the collision between its own order and an overwhelming external force.³⁵ Read together, these three moments describe a single genealogy: Aristotle's individual protagonist, Williams's ordinary person overtaken by history, and Quayson's colonised society for whom catastrophe is collective before it is personal.

The comparison with Okonkwo also marks a limit. Okonkwo, like Oedipus, is granted *anagnorisis*: standing before the dead body of the court messenger he has killed, he understands, with terrible clarity, that Umuofia will not go to war, that his people have changed beyond recovery, and that he has failed them. His final act follows directly from that recognition — it is the act of a man who has already seen that the social world he sought to defend can no longer support his conception of what to do next. The Papuan tragic hero, under Chromatic Tragedy, is denied even this. Where Okonkwo's tragedy is completed by a moment of devastating clarity, the Tokoh's tragedy and the resistance leader's tragedy alike are compounded by the possibility that clarity may never fully arrive — that the very languages, institutions, and categories through which either figure might recognise his own entanglement have themselves been supplied by the system he serves or opposes.

It would be a mistake, however, to let this genealogy run only from Aristotle through Achebe to Papua, as though Papuan tragic theory were simply Aristotle applied to a new setting. Bernard Narokobi, the Papua New Guinean jurist and philosopher whose work on Melanesian personhood and leadership shaped the political thought of decolonisation across the region, argued that Melanesian identity rests on a total cosmic vision in which the person is constituted through relationship — to land, to kin, to community — rather than through the separable, self-authoring individual assumed by much of the Western tradition, including its theory of tragedy.³⁶ On that view, a Melanesian leader's failure is never only his own: it is a rupture in a web of relationship that implicates and is felt by the community that constituted him. This gives the two-lineage argument of this paper an intellectual foundation independent of Aristotle, Fanon, or Quayson: the reason the Tokoh's capture and the resistance leader's fragmentation are collective tragedies, and not merely a sequence of individual failures, is not only that colonial structures exceed individual agency, as Section VI argues, but that Melanesian personhood itself was never individual to begin with. This bears directly on the four-condition definition offered in Section II, which was deliberately stated in an individualist idiom for expository clarity. Read relationally, the first condition, significant agency, is not the isolated will of a self-authoring individual but the capacity

³⁵ Ato Quayson, *Tragedy and Postcolonial Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

³⁶ Bernard Narokobi, *The Melanesian Way: Total Cosmic Vision of Life*, rev. ed. (Boroko, PNG: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, 1983).

to act on behalf of relationships that constituted the actor before any single action; the second, aspirational commitment, is not a personal project but an inherited obligation to land and kin; and the fourth, catastrophic consequence under impaired recognition, falls not on a bounded self but on the web of relationship from which the leader was never separate. The definition given in Section II should therefore be read as a working scaffold rather than a final ontology: it borrows Aristotle's vocabulary because that vocabulary travels easily across traditions, but the content each condition names is, on Narokobi's account, relational all the way down.

VIII. Beyond Heroic Redemption: Wonesis and Collective Reconstruction

If the tragedy of Papuan leadership is a mismatch of scale rather than a deficit of virtue, the conclusion that follows is not despair but a change in the object of hope. Hope invested in a single saviour — a perfect president, commander, prophet, intellectual, or international patron — becomes itself a further form of political displacement, in which responsibility is transferred to an individual, and when that individual fails, as the mismatch of scale guarantees he eventually will, the people return to waiting for another. The structure endures while heroes are celebrated, compromised, rejected, and replaced.³⁷ Wonesis, the term used elsewhere in this project for the deliberate reactivation of relational, land-grounded belonging as an alternative to both compliance and heroic resistance, names the direction this paper takes instead: not a better hero, but the institutional, linguistic, economic, and cosmological capacities through which a people can govern, educate, remember, and transmit itself without depending on any one leader's ability to carry a cosmopolitan's survival alone.³⁸ Concretely, this means Papuan-run institutions for customary dispute adjudication that do not depend on any single office-holder's authority, curricula and oral-history transmission that keep the Ap intact independently of state or church credentialing, and economic structures that do not require access to Jakarta's patronage to sustain a community's survival. Wonesis, on this account, is not a policy programme but a description of what would have to exist, in ordinary daily practice, for the two tragedies traced above to stop reproducing themselves.

A tragic hero, understood in the fullest sense, is a person of significance whose struggle against an overwhelming contradiction leads to irreversible suffering while revealing a deeper truth about the human condition. In modern and postcolonial literature, this figure does not need to be personally flawed: a people, a nation, a community, or a colonised individual can become tragic when destruction results from a devastating collision between aspiration and overwhelming historical force. The Papuan tragic hero, in both of the lineages examined here — the Tokoh captured by incorporation, and the resistance leader captured by fragmentation — fits this definition, and

³⁷ Kogoya, "More Tragic Than Tragedy," pt. 9, §9.3, "Beyond the Search for a Saviour."

³⁸ Kogoya, "Rethinking Sixty-Four Years," sec. "A Final Word to Papuan Resistance Leaders."

exceeds it in the one respect this paper has argued throughout: the very faculties by which such a figure might come to recognise his own tragedy have themselves been shaped, in advance, by the forces responsible for it.

To name this condition honestly is not to excuse the harm that has followed from it, nor to relieve any leader of the responsibility to act with judgement and integrity within the room left for it. It is, rather, to insist that the diagnosis be adequate to the scale of what it describes, so that the hope that follows is placed not in the next hero, but in the collective and disciplined reconstruction of a world capable of surviving without one.

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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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