

# Journal of Psycho-Cosmocide Studies

NATAKA Research Institute

Published by Wone Press under Kurumbi Wone Series

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## **Re-thinking 64 Years of Papuan Resistance**

*From the psychopathology of a moral spectacle to a sovereign state-building strategy*

*“Papuan ancestors never begged for survival. They engineered it. They did not ask the world for permission to exist; they organised their lives in such a way that they could not be eradicated. While empires were still learning the language of borders, Papuan societies already understood the grammar of resilience. Survival was never a plea — it was an intelligent system embedded in land, clan and memory. They did not survive by being seen. They survived by being unbreakable. A people who once shaped their world through cohesion and strategy were never meant to be reduced to fragments. The future belongs not to those who beg to live, but to those who redefine life itself. What was never built on begging cannot be restored through it”. Yamin Kogoya.*

## **Abstract**

This paper provides a concise historical and strategic analysis of West Papua's political development from 1945 to 2026. It focuses on decolonisation, international mediation, incorporation into Indonesia and the emergence of sustained resistance movements. Situating West Papua within broader post-colonial and Cold War geopolitical structures, it examines the tension between legal-political integration and indigenous self-determination. Despite decades of documentation, advocacy and international appeals — including engagement with organisations such as the United Nations, the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the ACP — the structural conditions of domination have remained largely intact. This persistence demands a rethinking of resistance, moving beyond moral visibility towards strategic and institutional transformation.

### **The Historical Trajectory of West Papua's Political Status and Resistance (1945–2026)**

After the Dutch colonial administration ended across the wider Indonesian archipelago, the Netherlands retained control over West New Guinea (now West Papua) and prepared the Papuan people for self-governance. This was formally declared on 1 December 1961 in Hollandia, West Papua. Throughout the 1950s, Indonesia asserted sovereignty claims which escalated into Operation Trikora in 1961. This dispute culminated in the 1962 New York Agreement, after which the territory was placed under UNTEA administration before being transferred to Indonesia in 1963. The 1969 Act of Free Choice, conducted under highly contested conditions, formalised the territory's integration into Indonesia, but its legitimacy remains widely disputed. Following integration, the Indonesian state consolidated administrative and military control over the territory, while indigenous resistance emerged in the form of the Free Papua Organisation (OPM). From the 1970s onwards, transmigration policies, large-scale resource extraction and sustained militarisation have fundamentally reshaped the region's demographic and ecological structures. Special Autonomy legislation was introduced in 2001 during the post-1998 reform era; however, its implementation has failed to resolve the core political grievances of the Papuan people. Subsequent administrative fragmentation of Papua into multiple provinces has only intensified contestation.

As of 2026, West Papua is still characterised by ongoing armed conflict, widespread and largely unreported human rights violations and abuses, accelerating ecological destruction, political imprisonment, an intensifying humanitarian and refugee crisis, and unresolved sovereignty issues for the Papuan people.

The following article and manifesto are written in the context of this region. For further background information, search for: Free West Papua, Papua Merdeka, Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM), TPNPB, KNPB, ULMWP, Papuan Tragedy, or West Papuan Crisis.

## **Wake Up Before It's Too Late**

For more than sixty-four years, the Papuan resistance has been caught up in one of the most painful paradoxes of modern political history. The movement has succeeded in documenting suffering, exposing violence, preserving memory and raising global awareness of West Papua. However, despite decades of reports, protests, testimonies, documentaries, church campaigns, human rights appeals and international solidarity actions, as well as resolutions from regional bodies such as the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and appeals to the UN Human Rights Council, the fundamental structures of domination remain largely intact. Papuan villages continue to be militarised and villagers tortured, abused and massacred. Forests continue to be cleared. Indigenous communities continue to be displaced. The political aspirations of the Papuan people remain unresolved.

This reality demands serious intellectual and strategic reconsideration. After sixty-five years, the central question is no longer whether the world knows about the suffering of the Papuan people. It does. The deeper question is whether the resistance has become trapped within a psychological and political framework that perpetuates the conditions of its own existence, albeit unintentionally. In other words, has the struggle become dependent on demonstrating suffering on the global stage rather than building leverage through disciplined strategic planning?

### **The Limits of Moral Testimony**

For decades, the international visibility of the Papuan struggle has relied on tragic imagery and moral appeals. Images of burned villages, tortured bodies, displaced children, grieving mothers, militarised highlands and devastated ecosystems have circulated globally, evoking sympathy, outrage and humanitarian concern. This strategy emerged from necessity. When a people are denied political representation, moral testimony often becomes their only instrument. The resistance hoped that if enough people witnessed the brutality, international institutions and democratic governments would intervene to end it.

However, history does not support this hope. Moral outrage alone has rarely overcome entrenched systems of state and corporate power. The situations of the Rohingya people in Myanmar, Palestinians in Gaza, Sahrawis in Western Sahara and Uyghurs in Xinjiang all demonstrate a common pattern of sustained documentation of atrocities, sustained international sympathy and sustained structural impunity. States and multinational corporations do not fundamentally operate based on feelings of guilt.<sup>1</sup> A state is not a human being with a sense of morality as we understand it as individuals. They operate based on power, leverage and calculations of survival, driven by security interests, territorial control, economic profit, geopolitical calculation and strategic leverage.

*'While humanitarian concern may generate temporary attention, symbolic condemnations or aid programmes, it rarely restructures the underlying architecture of power.'*

This is the central limitation of what I framed as a '*Good Samaritan Syndrome*' in resistance politics. Within this framework, resistance groups unconsciously position themselves as victims waiting for recognition, rescue or intervention from morally awakened outsiders.

However, no state will come to the aid of another unless it has both the strategic interest and the power to do so. Religious solidarity, kinship ties and ideological alignment do not substitute for capability and geopolitical will. As the black liberation thinker, Frantz Fanon observed, liberation is not granted; it must be seized by reorganising power itself.<sup>2</sup>

Humanitarian systems often alleviate suffering without dismantling the structures that cause it. Aid treats symptoms while occupation, resource extraction, cultural fragmentation and manufactured dependency continue underneath. This is not a critique of solidarity, but an observation about structural limitations.

### **The Psychopathology of a Permanent Victimhood**

The *Good Samaritan Syndrome* poses political and psychological dangers. When narratives of helplessness are rewarded on the international stage because suffering attracts humanitarian attention, a people may begin to internalise the identity of permanent victims rather than that of sovereign historical actors over time. Resistance becomes about performing pain to maintain attention rather than reorganising power to alter reality.

This dynamic is not unique to West Papua. In his analysis of anti-colonial movements, the Martinican theorist Aimé Césaire warned of the 'colonisation of the mind' — the process by which colonial subjects come to see themselves through the eyes of the coloniser and internalise categories of inferiority, passivity and dependence.<sup>3</sup> Frantz Fanon built on this, arguing that psychological decolonisation must accompany political struggle; otherwise, the liberated will remain structurally subordinate even after achieving formal independence.<sup>4</sup>

Within the Psycho-Cosmocide framework, this process is described at a deeper ontological level: colonial systems do not merely occupy territory. They colonised the colonised's psyche and poisoned it and destroy the cosmos lens from within. They divide clans, manipulate factions, commodify identity, institutionalise dependency and gradually erode the cognitive and cosmological foundations through which a people understand themselves. The result is not merely political dispossession; it is the systematic dismantling of the metaphysical architecture that enables a civilisation to perpetuate its own meaning across generations. This is Psycho-Cosmocide - the destruction of a coherent reality meaning maker.

Meanwhile, while colonised are disconnected, alienated and exiled from their own memory of being in time and space, the perpetrators are adapt, states learn to absorb international criticism while maintaining operations on the ground. Corporations develop public relations strategies to defuse outrage without changing their extraction practices. International institutions issue statements while avoiding structural confrontation. Global audiences become desensitised to tragedy through what Susan Sontag termed 'compassion fatigue'.<sup>5</sup> The suffering body becomes an image consumed by the world rather than a force capable of reshaping it.

### **The Papuan Ancestors Never Beg to Exist**

Rethinking Papuan resistance requires us to remember what Papuan peoples were like before the onset of colonialism. Today's Papuans' ancestors did not survive millennia of ecological and geopolitical challenges by appealing to the goodwill of strangers or sky gods. They identified threats, reorganised their communities and delivered strategic responses. The Papuan highlands, lowlands and coastlines were not spaces of passive suffering, but of active, adaptive cosmopolitan. The Lani, Dani, Asmat, Kimyal, Biak, Mee and hundreds more built complex systems of governance, cosmology, exchange and warfare long before the legends of Rome and Sparta were formed and long after they had faded.

*“Papuans are not moral beggars. Their ancestors were original warriors in every sense of the word before the empires of the ancient world had drawn their first boundary line.”*

The future of the resistance cannot depend on making the world feel guilty. Instead, it must depend on reorganising Papuan society itself into a coherent, disciplined and self-aware political force — one that can bargain from a position of strength rather than plead from a place of despair. You cannot keep waiting for a Good Samaritan saviour to come for a rescue while the entire villages burnt. The decisive battlefield is not just external diplomacy. It is internal reconstruction that demand a deliberate existential decision as a people.

### **From Emotional Reaction to Civilisational Project**

The next phase of Papuan resistance cannot be based solely on protest. It must also involve reconstruction. This process must cultivate internal cohesion, strategic education, economic self-organisation, technological literacy, psychological resilience, cultural continuity and disciplined political coordination. And most importantly, generate power based so that you can sit on bargaining table.

Communities that are fragmented with no or weak power cannot negotiate. A divided resistance movement is vulnerable to infiltration, co-optation, exhaustion and manipulation.

The failure of many anti-colonial movements, ranging from the early nationalist movements in sub-Saharan Africa to the internal fractures within Palestinian political organisations, demonstrates that movements lacking power are not primarily defeated because they lack moral legitimacy. They are defeated because they lack coordination.<sup>6</sup>

The required transformation is as much psychological as political. The Vietnamese resistance under Hồ Chí Minh, the internal discipline of the Cuban revolutionary movement, and the long-term strategic planning of the African National Congress under Oliver Tambo all illustrate the same principle: a liberation movement that does not develop strong institutional capacity will not survive a prolonged encounter with a determined and well-resourced state apparatus.<sup>7</sup>

This does not mean abandoning humanitarian advocacy. International solidarity still matters. Human rights documentation still matters. Global awareness still matters. However, these must function as secondary instruments within a broader strategy rather than forming the central foundation of the movement itself. Without internal strategic development, increased visibility creates dependency. External solidarity is only meaningful when it is anchored in a robust internal organisation.

*Power responds to leverage.  
States negotiate when instability becomes costly.  
Similarly, corporations adjust when extraction becomes politically dangerous.  
International actors respond when geopolitical conditions change.*

### **The Realist Pivot**

These realities may be uncomfortable. Nevertheless, serious resistance movements must confront them. The Sahrawi people's struggle against Moroccan occupation since 1975 demonstrates the importance and limits of international recognition. While the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic holds diplomatic recognition from over eighty states, Morocco still controls the territory. Recognition without leverage produces symbolic sovereignty, not real self-determination.

Conversely, Timor-Leste's remarkable achievement in gaining independence in 2002, despite facing a militarily superior Indonesian state, was built on decades of careful institution-building, organising diaspora networks, formulating strategies based on international law, and strategically converting moral arguments into political leverage at a time when Indonesia was vulnerable following the 1997 Asian financial crisis.<sup>8</sup> The lesson here is not that moral arguments are irrelevant. Rather, it is that moral argument becomes politically decisive only when organised forces are positioned to convert it into leverage.

Therefore, the future of the Papuan resistance movement depends on integrating ethics with strategy, memory with organisation, suffering with reconstruction and symbolism with institutional power. The tragedy of Papua must not continue as an endless display of wounds to the world's conscience.

At some point, the resistance must evolve into a disciplined structure capable of influencing outcomes, rather than merely recounting its history of suffering and displaying on social media for pity.

### **From Survival To Sovereignty**

This ultimate transformation is both psychological and civilisational. A people ceases to be merely victims when they begin to organise themselves as the authors of their own future. This does not erase suffering. It overcomes paralysis. It marks a shift from survival mode — which is reactive, dependent and spectacle-oriented — to sovereignty mode, which is proactive, disciplined and focused on building institutions and acting strategically.

After sixty-four years, the most pressing question is no longer how to make the world recognise the pain experienced by the Papuan people. The world has already seen it. The deeper question is whether Papuans, both in the highlands and lowlands and in diaspora communities in cities such as Port Moresby, Jayapura, Auckland, New York, London, Amsterdam and Sydney, can collectively reorganise their internal power structures, memory, strategy and civilisational willpower in such a way as to force the world to negotiate with Papua rather than merely witnessing it. This is the greatest challenge facing the Papuan resistance leaders.

*The movement must move beyond the expectation that moral truth automatically produces political victory. History shows otherwise. Many oppressed peoples were morally correct yet remained colonised because morality alone cannot reorganise power.*

This is the challenge. It is not enough to suffer more visibly; we must organise more powerfully. It is not enough to merely testify to injustice; we must also construct the institutional and civilisational foundations from which justice can be demanded and, ultimately, compelled. This is what the Psycho-Cosmocide framework terms 'decolonial praxis': not just critique, but reconstruction; not just resistance, but sovereignty.

The world — including the UN, the European Union, the ACP, the PIF, the MSG and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)— deals with the Indonesian state in Jakarta because it has the power and means to do so. As a sovereign nation under Indonesian occupation, Papua possesses immense and lethal power in the form of its land, resources, geography and strategic importance. However, Jakarta has been exploiting this power for decades to build its own empire. Papuans must now find a way to regain that power, or establish a new power base strong enough to negotiate with Jakarta or the multinational corporations stealing Papua's resources.

You cannot beg these powers — the UN, the PIF, the MSG, the ACP, the ASEAN, and the BRICS — because they are not made up of human beings, but of platforms where wolves and hyenas gather to prey on the weak. Papua has been on the menu for a very long time.

Papuan resistance leaders must now decide whether to remain sheep, become wolves or turn into hyenas themselves, in order to determine whether Papuans will survive or be completely consumed.

## **Jews and Papuans**

Editorial perspective: The Realist Pivot in the Architecture of Resistance

Consider the Jewish people, who hold the most favoured status in the religious and cultural traditions that civilisational project used to pacify Papuans. In the missionary Christian cosmology imposed on Papua, no people on Earth occupy a more sacred position. They are the chosen nation, the bearers of scripture, the people of the covenant, the ancestors of the Messiah and the inheritors of both earthly promise and heavenly favour. By the logic of that tradition, if any people were ever entitled to wait for divine rescue, it would be them.

### *And yet.*

Despite the many mythological stories recorded in ancient texts about how their God or Messiah saved them from their enemies, from the Egyptians to the Babylonians to the Romans, it has always been Jewish people who have fought, organised, bled and built institutions to secure their survival. From the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucid Empire in 167 BCE to the formation of the Haganah and Irgun as organised underground military groups decades before the establishment of the State of Israel, to the intelligence operations of the Mossad and the combined arms doctrine of the Israel Defence Forces today, it has been rigorously trained and strategically organised Jewish men and women who have secured the continued existence of their people.

No god, saviour or angel is launching those rockets and missiles or flying those jets. Throughout three thousand years of exile, persecution and near-annihilation, it has been highly disciplined human beings who have refused to outsource their survival to heaven.

This is not an assessment of the morality of any modern conflict, nor an endorsement of the policies of any particular state. Palestinians have their own legitimate history and grievances that deserve full recognition. The observation here is purely strategic and civilisational: the Jewish people demonstrate, with greater historical clarity than almost any other people on Earth, how to combine a deep spiritual identity with ruthless strategic discipline. They did not abandon their faith; rather, they refused to allow it to become a substitute for organisation, preparation and the willingness to fight.

The parallel for Papuans is direct and urgent. The same missionary tradition that elevated the Jewish people to the pinnacle of sacred history taught Papuans to pray, wait, be meek, trust in providence and defer their liberation to God's timing. It taught them to see themselves as recipients of salvation rather than agents of their own destiny. This was no accident. Spiritual pacification has always been one of the most effective instruments of colonialism — far cheaper and more durable than military suppression.

If you cannot grasp this, nothing will help you to understand the critical existential threat you are facing, Papuans. By the time you realise this, it may be too late.

The ancestors of the Papuan people — including the Dani, Asmat, Biak, Mee and Lani, as well as the many other tribes across the island — did not survive for tens of thousands of years by praying to foreign gods for rescue. They survived because they understood their land, organised their communities and fought when necessary. This ability was not destroyed by colonialism. It was buried. The work of this generation is to unbury it.

## References & Notes

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3. Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950), trans. Joan Pinkham (Monthly Review Press, 2000).
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5. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), pp. 93–114.
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8. On the Timorese independence movement's strategic architecture, see: Niner, Sara, *Xanana: Leader of the Struggle for Independent Timor-Leste* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2009).

## A Manifesto on The Nature of Coloniser and Colonised Psychopathology

*The colonial system has no human soul;  
Colonialism is not a person;  
Although colonialism appears as a person, it is not a human being;  
It carries no soul;  
It holds no mind;  
It moves without human spirit;  
It was never endowed with ethics, cursed with morality, burdened with integrity or graced with virtue.*

*Do not mistake the hand for the machine;  
Do not hate the instrument and forget the system.  
It is a system.*

*A system does not sleep, love, tire or care about your thoughts, beliefs, desires, morality or compassion;  
This system has its own morality;  
This system is not immoral; It is just different;  
It has constructed its own ethics, logic, definitions, targets, objectives, meanings and purposes;  
It operates with perfection — for itself.*

*You cannot judge it by the laws of your god, your morality, ethics and virtue;  
It does not live under your god's law;  
It has written its own scripture;  
It follows its own covenant;  
It executes that covenant without hesitation, apology or mercy;  
It does not apologise;  
The system does not say sorry;  
It does not feel guilty;  
It does not forgive, because to forgive would imply that it believes it has wronged you;  
It does not believe that it has wronged you;  
Mercy is not something it understands;  
You cannot appeal to its conscience;  
It has no conscience.*

*Those who kneel before it, asking for grace, are kneeling before a machine and calling it God.  
The machine will not answer; The machine will continue;  
It does not speak your language;  
The colonised speak a language that the system neither understands nor wants to understand;  
Your arguments, your morality, your logic, your vocabulary of dignity and your syntax of sovereignty are sounds it cannot hear;  
Not because it is deaf;  
It has simply decided that your language does not exist;  
It has built its own grammar. It writes in its own tongue;  
When you argue with the coloniser using the colonised's language, it is like speaking into a closed room — an echo chamber in the belly of the beast's digestive system;  
The door was never designed to open from your side.*

*The coloniser's heaven is the colonised land: rich, open, and taken;  
For coloniser, paradise is not earned. It is extracted.*

*The coloniser and the colonised worship different gods;  
They speak different languages;  
This is not a misunderstanding, but a structure – invented, controlled and managed for the extinction of the colonised and the survival of the colonisers.*

*You are not fighting a misunderstanding;  
You are not fighting people with bad intentions;  
You are not fighting individuals who simply need educating;  
You are fighting a system that has its own substitutes for soul, conscience and mercy: logic, law and morality.*

*It will not stop just because you have explained yourself well;  
It will not stop because you made human rights resolutions – not at the UN, PIF, MSG, and not at the ACP;  
It will not stop because you scream for human rights, because the system will never recognise your rights to be human;  
It will not stop because you pray to your god, gods, goddess, messiah;  
It will stop because you are waiting for your ancestors;  
It will not stop because you pray every Sunday, read your holy book, labelled your names with all kinds of counterfeit colonial degrees;  
It will not stop because you speak the language of revolution, wearing revolutionary uniforms;  
It will not stop because you are moral, kind, merciful, forgiving;  
It will not stop because you are marching, crying, screaming on the street;  
It will not stop because you become a good, nice, moral, likeable colonised human;  
It will not stop because you held weekly, monthly and annual meetings at the UN;  
It will not stop because your social media profile looks scary, attractive, colourful with revolutionary slogans, images, symbols, memes, icons with lots of followers and likes.*

*It will only stop when colonised realised that the coloniser's hell is the resurrection of the colonised — the moment the dead rise and remember who they were before the land was taken from them.*

*It will only stop when you wake up and realise that you are inside the digestive system of the belly of a beast  
...and...you dismantled every structure that sustains it...root by root, grammar by grammar, god by god, symbol by symbol, image by image, and institutions by institutions.*

*Know what you are facing. Then begin*