West Irian and Jakarta Imperialism

KEES LAGERBERG

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PREFACE

After the take-over of West New Guinea in 1962 by U.N.T.E.A., the temporary organisation, one book after another was published in the Netherlands on the most diverse New Guinea topics. Seemingly it was some sort of self-justification after the act. My thesis on the administrative 'reshaping process' in the last Dutch overseas territory was one of them.

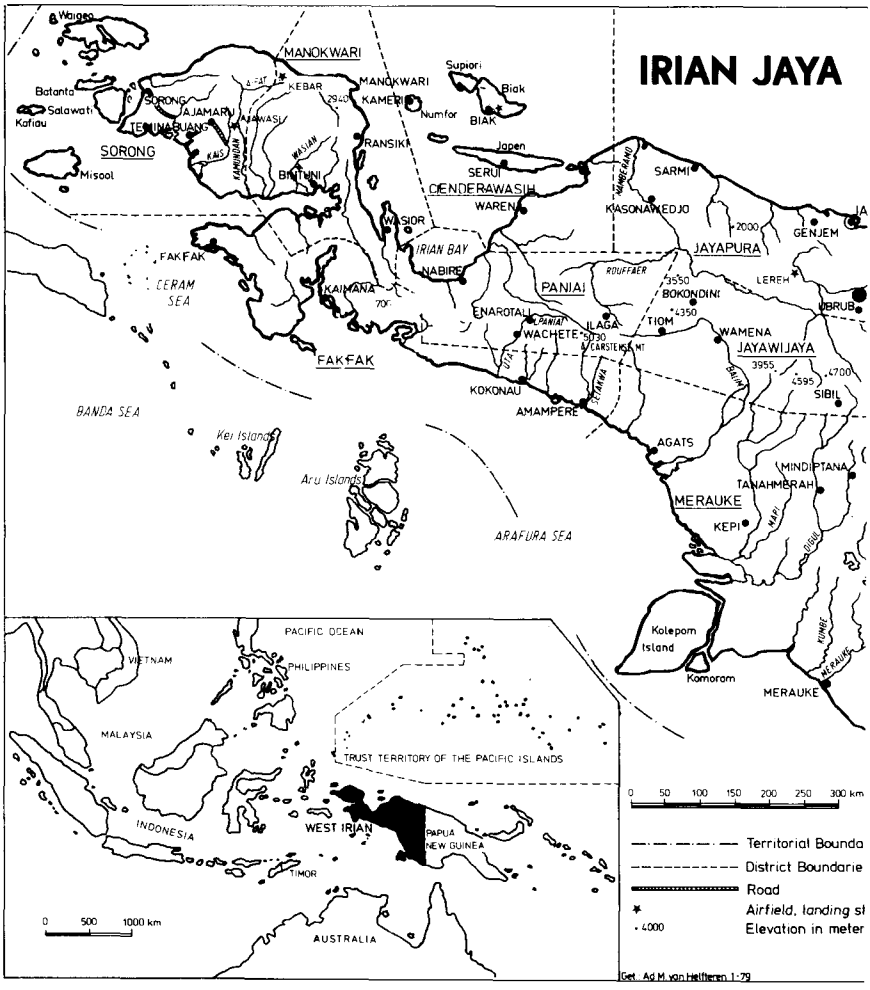
And then there was silence. No book, no article, no broadcast was devoted in the 1970s to the fate of West Irian and its inhabitants, the Papuans. Admittedly the reason was obvious. Indonesia had frustrated the course of the Dutch development policy to self-determination and at the same time offered a new opportunity to the former overlord to take part in the development process of the huge Indonesian archipelago. The restoration of this relationship, which had centuries of common history behind it, swept away the New Guinea nostalgia.

Then came an invitation from an English publisher: 'It is not high on my priority-list but ... ', and I was asked to write on the New Guinea topic again. I do not believe that this was mere chance. Later on it appeared that a clerk in the office of the former Dutch Colonial Office had saved for years a number of New Guinea photographs which should have been destroyed, and in obscure pamphlets anonymous correspondents told some of the West Irian stories. New Guinea still existed.

So I was forced to go back there, to the former New Guinea — Irian Jaya as it is called now. And again outsiders guided me to the spot and to the people, trusting that I should see and report the truth. So this is not my book; the book is due to the truth of people who feel more responsible to the Papuans than I and most of my colleagues did.

I am indebted to those very few people, and I feel relieved and grateful to have written their book. Only the mistakes are mine, and for them I apologise.

February 1979 C.L.




PUA NEW GUINEA
MANUS
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Admiralty Is
St Matthias Group
NEW IRELAND
KAVIENG
New Ireland
ANIMO
AITAPE
SEPIK
WEWAK
MAPRIK
YEP
MADANG
MADANG
RABOUL
New Britain
NEW BRITAIN
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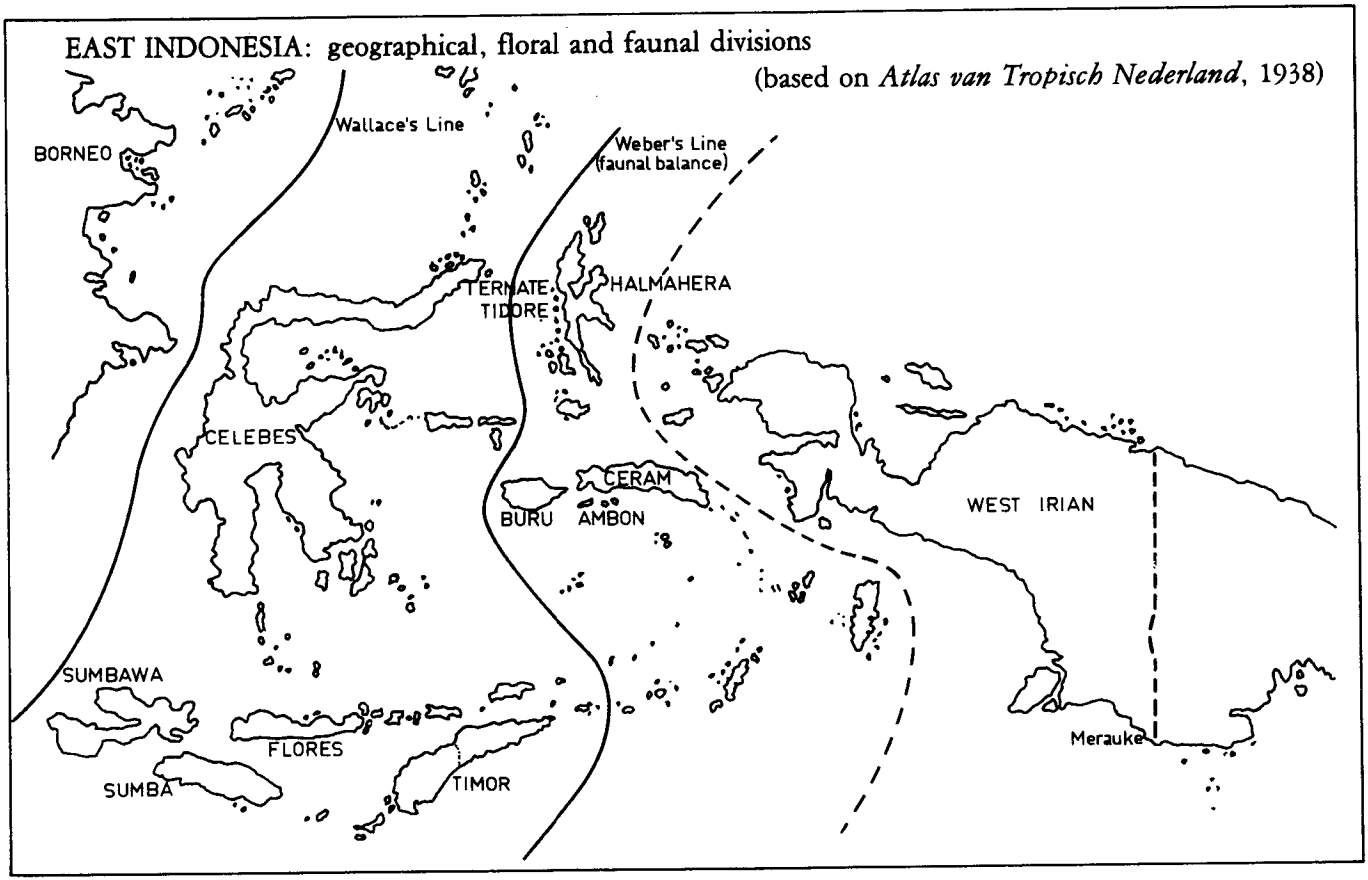
EAST INDONESIA: geographical, floral and faunal divisions
(based on *Atlas van Tropisch Nederland*, 1938)
Wallace's Line
Weber's Line
(faunal balance)
BORNEO
TERNATE
TIDORE
HALMAHERA
CELEBES
CERAM
BURU
AMBON
WEST IRIAN
SUMBAWA
FLORES
SUMBA
TIMOR
Merauke

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INTRODUCTION

In May 1978 the Indonesian Government had to admit that the military commander of Jayapura, General Ismail, the General's chief intelligence officer and a clergyman had been kidnapped by members of the organisation known as *Operasi Papua Merdeka* (O.P.M.), the liberation movement of West Irian. The act had taken place at Tuna, on the border between West Irian and Papua New Guinea, south of Jayapura. Its perpetrator was Martin Tabu,* who some weeks before had seemingly surrendered. But at the peacemaking ceremony he took all the Indonesians prisoner. The retaliation of the Indonesian army was violent. A battalion of crack troops moved in, while another 1,500 men were held in reserve. The villages were strafed from the air.

The kidnapping and its repercussions were among the more striking in a long series of events which started fifteen years earlier in May 1963, when the Dutch left West New Guinea and the Papuan flag was no longer allowed to be raised in West Irian. That flag had been designed by Nicolaas Jouwe, who was seen nearly seven years later standing before the United Nations building in New York, demonstrating in the rain with a few of his fellow-Papuans. On 19 November, when the Assembly accepted with eighty-four 'yes' votes and thirty abstentions the resolution that the Dutch-Indonesian agreement, the so-called Act of Free Choice,** had been fulfilled under the auspices of the United Nations.

*Martin Tabu, born in Fakfak, and formerly in Dutch government service, is now fighting in Markas Victoria, a secret hiding-place in the district of Jayapura. Since the leader of the 'revolutionary provisional government of West Papua New Guinea' was arrested in Papua New Guinea in October 1978 near Vanimo, Martin Tabu has been named as the leader of the provisional government in West Irian by Nicolaas Jouwe in the Netherlands, who represents the movement in Europe.

**The Act of Free Choice, resulting from the New York Agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands in 1962, is translated in Indonesian as *Penentuan pendapatan rayat* (*'Pepera'*), literally 'Declaration of People's opinion'. The Netherlands never objected to the Indonesian interpretation and it is difficult to say whether the American chairman of the New York Conference, Ellsworth Bunker, saw any reason to make an absolutely clear distinction about the difference.

The Act of Free Choice was the completion of the Ellsworth Bunker proposal, which provided the opportunity for the red and white Indonesian flag to be hoisted in West Irian on 1 January 1963, one of the inflexible demands of President Sukarno in the struggle over the territory. That was the implementation of President Sukarno's revolution. In the last days before the Dutch-Indonesian treaty was signed on Indonesia's Independence Day, 17 August 1962, tension had risen to boiling-point over Sukarno's immoveable determination to tear down the Dutch flag before 'the cock would crow' on 1 January 1963. President Kennedy's personal intervention prevented the outbreak of a war in the final stages of the struggle over the underpopulated island: 'Such a conflict would have adverse consequences out of all proportion to the issue at stake.' But in attaching such value to the symbolic significance of a flag, President Sukarno was not so wrong after all. However, he was fighting the wrong flag; what was really at stake was not Dutch prestige, nor was it the strategic or economic significance of New Guinea, but the longing of the Papuans for independence. That only gradually became evident as the Indonesians showed contempt for their feelings, and left out of consideration the fact that the newly discovered natural riches of the land were seen by the Papuans as the inalienable heritage of their forefathers, not as a contribution to the Indonesian treasury.

In many *kampongs* in West Irian, Nicolaas Jouwe's flag still lies hidden. President Sukarno did not accept the compromise proposal of U Thant that three flags should be flown in West Irian during the interregnum of the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA): those of the United Nations, Indonesia and the Netherlands. He had his way, but he underestimated and tried to suppress what happened in 1961, when the Netherlands Foreign Minister Joseph Luns initiated his plan to safeguard the Papuans' right of self-determination. The first important step on that road was the convening of the New Guinea Council. The establishment of the national council was seen by the Papuans as the first step to independence; for this reason they insisted that during the opening session in the presence of international representatives the Papuan flag should be placed next to the Dutch tricolor. However, they did not fully appreciate the ominous significance of the absence of the United States representative from that ceremony. Only after the outcome of the Act of Free Choice did the truth become

apparent: from the very beginning of the American intervention, the solution of the New Guinea dispute was expected to consist of transferring sovereignty to Indonesia and saving the faces of the Dutch. The Act of Free Choice, mockingly called the Act of No Choice, was a way of soothing the conscience pangs of the Dutch, who would not fight to uphold the moral obligation they professed.

The Papuans misjudged the political situation. The United States, caught in a dilemma between Communism and self-determination, decided to give in to President Sukarno's tenacity, although there was tension in the final days of its intervention, with the mediator Ellsworth Bunker being brought to the brink of anger by the evasive tactics of the Indonesians and the haggling over the flags. The Indonesians used their nuisance-value to the utmost. Their determination to gain possession of the whole of the Dutch colonial empire was much stronger than could be justified by any advantage to be gained by the poor, under-populated territory of West Irian. But the dream of the old Mojopahit empire including East Timor and North Kalimantan (Borneo) was still alive and the policy of confrontation towards Malaysia was more than mere tactics to divert attention away from internal problems. It was the pursuit of an imperialist ideal. When the confrontation policy with Malaysia under President Sukarno misfired, the take-over of East Timor was a means for a new President to implement the dream.

The Dutch feelings of paternalistic responsibility towards New Guinea after centuries of neglect and the newly-discovered moral obligation to the Papuans were no match for Indonesian ambitions as the Netherlands was not willing to risk a war in defence of New Guinea. In fact every Dutch soldier killed in a New Guinea ambush caused headlines in the newspapers at home. At the same time, the Papuan will to independence was still so immature that no Papuan party demanded that they should take their fate into their own hands.

Moreover the so-called Bilderberg group* in the Netherlands,

*The Bilderberg group was an informal group of influential people both in business and other activities such as Paul Rijkens of Unilever, who conferred at the Bilderberg Hotel in Holland under the chairmanship of Prince Bernhard, who actually promoted Dutch multi-nationals. It can hardly be surprising that business interests, especially in Indonesia, were difficult to combine with the Dutch New Guinea policy. The Bilderberg group was certainly no pressure-group, but exerted an influence.

consisting of international businessmen under the chairmanship of Prince Bernhard, had always been in favour of restoring good relations with the Indonesians and looked back with regret to the missed peaceful transfer of sovereignty in 1949. That group could not raise its voice so long as public opinion and the political parties were still in favour of the Papuans having the right of self-determination — a policy which seemed feasible because of the tacit support of the United States, Australia and Great Britain. Over and over again during the 1950s Indonesia lost its case in the United Nations General Assembly, where it never won the two-thirds majority to enable the *status quo* to be changed. So the Dutch silently accepted their losses, when their property was alienated and their nationals were expelled; the Indonesian breach of the union with the Netherlands had made them stubborn. But even if the Dutch kept silent, their arguments were still valid and they were bound to be voiced again when the climate had changed. It was under the direct threat of an Indonesian invasion and under American pressure that the Dutch remembered their traditional friendship with Indonesia and the material interests they had there, and accepted the American offer of mediation.

Papuan leaders sought refuge in the Netherlands, setting up a government-in-exile and hoping that in the future their hope of an independent nation would somehow be realised. They did not expect much from an act of choice under Indonesian rule, but they had faith in the integrity of the United Nations and in the interest of Australian New Guinea.

The Australians had been very much in favour of the Dutch policy of self-determination for West New Guinea. They needed a shield between themselves and Indonesia, with whom they wanted a distant partnership, but although very paternalistic in their attitude to the East Papuans themselves, they soon learned their lesson. They realised that the Netherlands would never again belong in the South-East Asian hemisphere, but that Indonesia was there to stay and intended to have Irian, so they applied the Dutch recipe to their own territory and made Papua New Guinea independent within a few years. Now, after the independence of Papua New Guinea, the Australian army is standing guard and carefully watching incidents on the New Guinea border. No Papuan in West New Guinea ever expected the eastern neighbours to be the first to become a nation.

The role of the U.N. possibly caused the greatest offence to

the Papuans' primitive feelings about justice. Self-determination after all was seen as the invention of the U.N., born out of the Second World War, from resistance to dictatorship, and it seemed unbelievable that the U.N. would sacrifice its own principles at the behest of a megalomaniac dictator.

And the Papuans misjudged themselves as well. At that time the Papuan nation, as they proudly call themselves, consisted of a very small sophisticated westernised élite; 525,000 village people under colonial rule split up into numerous tribes, bands and clans; and 250,000 more living in a Stone Age culture in isolated mountain areas such as the Baliem valley and the Paniai lakes, barely touched by civilisation and evangelisation, poor, weak and disorganised. In 1961 the inhabitants of the towns, partly politically conscious, voted by ballot to elect members of the New Guinea Council. Except for the people of Serui on the island of Japen and some near the international boundary with Indonesia, they generally displayed a remarkable aversion towards the Indonesians from the Moluccas and the Kei islands, who were sent to New Guinea as teachers and middle-level government staff.* The Papuans disliked them; they had experienced too much discrimination during the war in the absence of the colonial ruler, and they had understood the significance of independence, *merdeka*, in 1962 as well as the Indonesians had done in 1945. But there was not yet a national consciousness, born of common suffering and oppression.

The Papuans had migrated to their huge island some 25,000 years ago from the west, when the island had drifted to the Asian and Australian continents, and adapted themselves to the inhospitable country in different places. The territory had moulded the woolly-haired race into pygmy-type people in the mountains and tall seafaring tribes near the coast, self-sufficient and self-conscious, but it had never become a nation. The mountain and coastal Papuans of Dutch New Guinea were strangers to each other; there was not only the language barrier, as there were some 400 different languages and dialects, but the

*The Netherlands Indies Government used to have East Indonesian sub-district officers and teachers, both from Ambon (now called the South Moluccas) and from the Kei islands. In that position of power the East Indonesians showed a rather contemptuous attitude, especially during the Second World War. They are usually called by the Papuans '*Amberi*', and since ancient times they have tried to migrate into the West Irian mainland (by Cape Amberi on the Bird's Head in the north-west).

community was split up into more than 2,000 villages. The Dutch rulers introduced Malay as the trade language, but after the war they introduced Dutch as a language of culture to open the door to the modern world, neglecting the fact that English should have been the language of culture for that part of the world. In the minds of the Dutch rulers the idea lingered that some historical monument should be left, and so the capital was called Hollandia. Hollandia-binnen, Hollandia-Noordwijk — it is double-dutch. The names merely indicate the fact that Papuan nationalism was not very acute, least of all in the rulers' minds. (Today Hollandia is re-named Jayapura.)

There was sound reasoning behind the choice to aim at self-determination only after Indonesia had been disloyal in breaking the Dutch-Indonesian union and abandoned the idea of a federated nation, but the obvious choice was not independence, but rather autonomy in some form, preferably in a kind of Melanesian confederation. Economic independence for New Guinea was not thought to be feasible at the time, and fragmentation of all sorts could not easily be overcome. In the 1960s few people could foresee how the Papuans would unite in face of the sufferings of neo-colonial rule, and how international capital, once political stability was established, would simply exploit the resources of the country — the copper, the oil, the timber and the fish — although there was superficial exploration only.

In 1977 West Irian's total exports amounted to about $410 million; under the Dutch in the post-war period the amount never exceeded a few million dollars. And more is to come, when the resources of the western islands, Gag and Waigeo near Sorong, are exploited; the exploitable quantity is four or five times greater than what is being tapped at present. Exploration is still going on in the Central Mountains. Even though the costs of administering such an inaccessible country are high and land communications are virtually non-existant, an annual budget of $50 to 75 million can easily be obtained.

Although the country is now a target for foreigners, the Papuans are patient. In recent history they have seen Dutch, Japanese and American forces come and go, and in earlier days they resisted the tentative influx of Chinese and East Indonesian people. If only because of its inaccessibility, they feel masters of their own bush. The Dutch anthropologist Held has called the Papuan a 'culture improviser' but, however many elements he

might have taken from different cultures, in religion, language or clothing, he did not change his basic attitude to the resources of his own land: they are his. As a Papuan recently told me, 'The resources under the earth, on the earth and above the earth are ours', which means that generations of exploitation will not wipe away the feeling of injustice that is being done to the true owners of the land. So the Indonesians are in for an endless resistance, which can only be overcome by partnership.

President Suharto, understandably, is forging the unity of the Archipelago by strengthening the economy, and in an inconspicuous way has succeeded in forcing back inflation and stagnation. His anti-Communist ideology has guaranteed support from the Western world; also from Javanese Islam, although all provincial interests had to be subordinated to the universal goal of a centralised Indonesia.

The Papuans do not see themselves as Indonesians, and the use of their resources for the common interest is felt to be theft of their heritage. They have learned to live with the '*Papua bodoh, Papua binatang*' (stupid Papuan, Papuan pig) attitude, but they have never given in, even when being robbed; so at the moment injury is added to insult. On the other hand, as is the case in other Melanesian cultures, there is a strong belief in a Messiah cult, the Koreri movement. During the Second World War, an eruption of the movement took place and the Japanese could suppress the movement on Biak only at the expense of a tremendous sacrifice. In a sense, the Koreri movement triumphed, because when the Allied (especially American) forces landed, the ideals of the cargo cult had literally come true. The Dutch, in bringing some kind of heaven-state to the Papuans, inherited the exalted reputation of the Americans to some extent. The Messiah belief is not diminished by the Christian faith and the Catholics are now especially popular, because the Dutch or Western missionary staff are still there, and the Catholic church is not considered to be part of Indonesia, but rather part of the Netherlands. So also the strategic value of Papuan leaders in exile in the Netherlands is still high. The Indonesians have tried again and again to persuade Nicolaas Jouwe and Marcus Kaisiepo to co-operate with them, but the opposite has been the result. The few Papuan leaders joining the Indonesian government feel discriminated against in their own country, and even the few seemingly pro-Indonesian Papuans with whom I talked in

Jakarta in 1978 put their hands on my shoulder and said: 'We will never, never become Indonesians, not us, nor our brothers in Irian, nor our fathers in the Netherlands.'

While these leaders stay abroad, the feeling is strengthened that the promise is still alive, and even if contact is difficult, news, letters and gifts reach the Papuans by way of the international airport on the island of Biak.

The old antagonism between Papuans and East Indonesians, the South Moluccans and the people of the Kei islands, explains why the Papuan government-in-exile and the movement for an independent East Indonesia do not unite. '*Door de eeuwen trouw*'* tried to establish that unity, but it never became a real success, although such a scheme would be a serious threat to the central Indonesian Government.

In August 1978 Indonesia is accused of having captured for interrogation some hundreds of Moluccans, members of the Republic of the South Moluccas (the R.M.S.), who visited Indonesia at the beginning of that year. These visits, though made with the consent of Indonesian authorities, revive the old Moluccan dream of independence. A merger between the Papuan republic and the Moluccan republic in the Netherlands could be a real headache to the Indonesians, because the Moluccans in the Netherlands number over 30,000 and are militarily organised with an ethical attitude comparable to that of the Baader-Meinhof terrorists in Germany. If the scene of the struggle against authority, at present being waged in the Netherlands, were transferred to Irianese territory, it would be hard to control without effective co-operation from Papua New Guinea (P.N.G.).

The effective counter-policy of the Indonesians is to populate West Irian with Indonesian military and officials, followed by wild immigrants from Makasar and other poor areas. The newcomers number between 10 and 20 per cent of the population, but it stands to reason that whole areas remain inaccessible and therefore free from Indonesian influence.

The real threat to a united and centralised Indonesia lies in the independence of Papua New Guinea. In ancient times the

*'*Door de eeuwen trouw*' (Eternal Truth) is an Ambonese movement in the Netherlands, true to God (they are Christians), Queen and homeland. This movement is the backbone of the South Moluccan government-in-exile under the 'presidency' of Ir. Manusama.

Negrito-Melanesian population drifted into the island from east to west. They first populated the northern corderilla from the Bird's Head to the south-east point, but then as the Central Mountains both in the east and the west rose (and they are still in continuous movement), the Papuans moved into the east-west-running valleys, spilling over the crests of the mountain ranges and populating the long, flat swampy plains to the south and north. The cannibalistic, headhunting tribes of the coastal plains prevented mongoloid invasions. Even the fauna from the Asian continent did not penetrate the New Guinea jungle; only seeds and plants reached the huge island, with the result that the flora is the most intriguing mixture of Australian and Asian types. But the huge island as such has a biology of its own, developed during its drifting course till it came to a halt north of Australia bending in the north into the East Indonesian archipelago.

From the first moment that the idea of self-determination was inseminated, political parties in Netherlands New Guinea mentioned a unity with their 'brethren' in the east. But in 1960 the Australians hardly considered the possibility of an independent P.N.G., although it cannot escape anybody's attention, how natural is the unity between the two parts. The straight border between them is a result of a gentleman's agreement between Great Britain and the Netherlands in 1848, confirmed when the Berlin conference of 1884 asked for effective occupation.

In the scramble for pieces of Africa, the nations became concerned about the different claims, especially those of the new German empire. The new wave of colonialism, which was not motivated by the desire for trade but by the need for resources and possession of fertile land, captured the world to establish the definite dominance of the European nations. Germany got a foothold in the north of New Guinea and expanded its influence along the coasts and rivers of that part of the island; England, alerted by the Queensland colony in Australia, negotiated a division of the eastern part of the island and then the east-west border was drawn according to the Berlin principle of effective occupation. In 1886, even the Pope supported that principle because it seemed the lesser of two evils. The Dutch established their government posts first in Manokwari and Fakfak, later in Merauke in 1892 under pressure from Australia, which complained of intrusions by Papuans across the border,