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Regaining Humanness. The Papuan Struggle for Human Rights

At Ipenburg

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Summary

In 1962 Indonesia occupied West Papua and enforced indonesianisation. Papuans have suffered from serious violations of their human rights. A massive transmigration program makes Papuans a minority in their own land. Indonesians deny Papuans a separate identity, as this was seen as resistance against Indonesian rule. Papuans were depicted as primitives, drunkards, rebels and stupid, not fully human. Papuans try to regain their full humanness, using biblical imagery. They develop a pride in their own separate identity, which is seen as God given. The churches set up NGOs to defend human rights and gave support to the initiative of Papua Land of Peace.

Background

This paper wants to discuss the Papuan effort at regaining full humanness in a context where this is denied. I want to analyze the resources used to react to the suppression of Papuan culture and identity. How is the Gospel empowering people in a climate of conflict and serious human rights violations and ethnic discrimination? How do Papuans and the churches in Papua help in changing the existing negative perspective on Papuans in general? How do they set out a path to a better future? I will analyze statements made by the churches and by individual Papuans, involved in the struggle for freedom. I will analyze the events that have taken place, especially those between 1998 and 2000. There is a strong negative bias towards them. There are differences in religion and in ethnicity with Indonesians in general. The vast majority of the population of Indonesia is Muslim, while Papuans are

in majority Christian. Indonesians have a brown skin colour and straight hair, while Papuans have a dark coloured skin and frizzy hair. These physical characteristics are used to identify the people. Papuans speak about a “straight haired”(rambut lurus) person or of an “amber person”(orang amber or amber), when speaking about an Indonesian, who is not a-Papuan.

The dominant ideology in the New Order of the Suharto era (1965-1998) was the ideology of “development” (*pembangunan*), defined as physical development in the form of roads, airports, buildings with disregard of the local culture. The, often implicit, ideology of the superiority of Indonesian culture, history, music and dance has penetrated into the educational system and the mass media. Papuan students learn in their textbooks that Papuans are backward and undeveloped. Papuans react to this by resistance to Indonesian domination and by claiming the right to self-determination. Using Christian and traditional religious values and symbols they have developed a counter ideology where they stress their pride in a separate identity, in their frizzy hair and black skin. In the Highlands and in Paniai the traditional gear of the *koteka* or penis gourd is worn as a form of protest and as a clear symbol of a separate identity. Hardly anything could be less acceptable by Indonesian culture than a *koteka* as a way of dressing. The Morning Star flag, raised for the first time in 1961 in the Dutch period, continues to serve as an important rallying point in the mass mobilization. The flag has a strong symbolic character with chiliastic overtones. In Revelations Jesus denotes Himself as “the bright Morning Star” (Rev. 22: 16). The Indonesians react with extreme violence to any such manifestation. Those who raise this Papua flag are sentenced to long prison sentences on the accusation of treason or conspiracy against the state (*makar*). By stressing their Christianity as an integral part of Papuan identity and by advocating the non-violent character of their struggle Papuans claim the moral high ground against the Indonesian security forces that use violence with impunity to maintain their control.

The Papuans of the western part of the island of New Guinea¹ are possibly the last people in the world to get into contact with the larger world. In 1855 the first couple of missionaries arrived to establish a precarious outpost on the small island Mansinam, off the North coast. The first three government posts were established at the coast in the period 1898-1902 in Fak-Fak, Manokwari and Merauke. In 1936 the Paniai area in the interior was “discovered.” The Baliem Valley, “discovered” in 1938, hidden behind huge mountain ranges, was only opened up for government and mission in the mid and late 1950s (Ipenburg, 2008). The whole Territory, half the size of Zambia, was, in fact, neglected. There were only a handful of settlers, and no large plantations or mines until the 1950s. When in 1949 Indonesia became independent West New Guinea was separated politically from the former Dutch East Indies. One argument for this action was that most of the area was still unexplored. Probably only

¹ Successively named Papua Land, Netherlands New Guinea, Irian Barat, Irian Jaya and at present Papua Barat and Papua, both provinces of Indonesia.

one third of the population was then under some form of government control. It was felt that the indigenous inhabitants should be given the right to self-determination. Indonesia rejected this idea of a separate status for New Guinea. They felt the inheritors of the whole of the Dutch East Indies. The new, independent Indonesian state was a unitary and centralized state. The different ethnic groups had to integrate, accept the national ideology of *pancasila* and had to change to the use of the national language Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*). This would unite the new nation and create a new national identity. The dominant ethnic group in Indonesia, the Javanese, who constitute about 50-60 % of the total population, had also to give up the use of their language Javanese in education and the civil service.

From 1950 onward, the Netherlands began to develop West New Guinea focussing on a path where in the end the Papuans would be granted independence. A process of papuanisation was started. Special schools were established to train Papuans to become civil servants. In annual reports to the UN progress was reported. The Territory became oriented towards the Pacific, where Australian, and British territories were in a similar position, preparing the indigenous population for independence. As a result the Papuans of West New Guinea were given in 1961 a flag, a national anthem and a legislative council, the New Guinea Council, housed in an impressive multi storey building standing at the water front in the capital Hollandia. A Papua Battalion was formed as the nucleus of a Papuan army. This led to a violent reaction from Indonesia, which prepared for a total mobilization against the Dutch, as these were setting up a “puppet state”. America supported the Indonesians. The Dutch under strong pressure of the Kennedy administration signed in 1962 an agreement to hand over the territory to the UN in the same year, which in turn would hand it to Indonesia. At this New York Agreement no Papuans were represented. The agreement stipulated that the Papuans would be given an opportunity to express their voice in an “Act of Free Choice.” This took place in 1969. The result, a 100 % vote in favour of staying within Indonesia, was generally seen as having been rigged. The UN General Assembly, under American pressure agreed with the results. Only 15 African countries, led by the Ghanaian ambassador to the UN, Mr. Akwei, objected. The Papuans of Australian controlled East New Guinea established in 1975 the independent Republic of Papua New Guinea.

In traditional society, full humanness was considered a quality reserved only for the members of one’s own ethnic and language group. People outside the family, clan and language group would have different degrees of humanness. The general name by which people denote themselves is “humans,” like the Me of Paniai, where Me means “humans”. The concept of humanness was diffuse as ancestors and other spirits would be attributed intelligence, emotions, power and other human qualities. However, those people designated as witches could be put out of society and killed as being subhuman or anti-human. There were relations between the different tribes in the form of trade, wars, and the exchange of women. In the interior pigs were used as bride wealth, and to compensate the clans of the opposite parties for the loss of life in the wars. The intertribal wars had a ritual character and never

aimed at complete extermination of the enemy. Enemies were not completely dehumanised, as today's enemies might be tomorrow's allies. Wars, at least in the Baliem valley, were initiated as part of the cycle of the planting of crops to achieve blessings for the growth of the crops. Success in war was sought to establish success with farming. In traditional culture there was not such a thing as individual human rights. The basic values of Melanesian society, however, express respect for others. This is implicit in a concept like *nareng-gareng*, or *gotong-royong* (shared communal activities), which imply balance, community, sharing, which is also basic to the concept of human rights (Kemung, 1998). It was, however, not till the advent of Christianity in West Papua, before the concept of "human being" was completely extended beyond that of one's tribal or linguistic group.

The Christian faith played an important role in the formation of a new and wider view of the world and the place of the Papuans in it. The Protestant mission came to West New Guinea as early as 1855, but it made only very few converts during the first five decades of its existence. Its influence was restricted to some small areas around the Cendrawasih Bay. From the beginning of the 20th century, people at the North Coast began to ask, village by village, for baptism and at the same time for a resident teacher-evangelist. The government became more active in outlawing tribal warfare, witch hunting and funeral practices considered unhygienic. The extension of the Pax Neerlandica was slow. Conversion had a pragmatic aspect, as Christianity seemed to offer access to the technology and knowledge of the West, seen as superior. The new converts got a wider concept of humanness to include all those who are brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world. Non-Christians are included as they are considered to be created by God. Charity was extended to Papuans beyond one's own tribal group (Ipenburg, 2001). Within the developing church structures, Papuan Christians from different areas met at meetings of the presbytery and the synod and at Christian boarding schools. A sense of a new Papuan identity developed in this way, transcending the more or less closed tribal identities.

In 1956, the church originating from the Protestant mission work became independent from the mission. This church, the Evangelical Christian Church in Papua land, became more or less the national church of the Papuans. Christianity became an important element of Papuan identity. In the Southern part of the Territory the Roman Catholic Mission was active since 1894. It stressed education in a way similar to that of the Protestants.

Humanness denied

The handover of control by the Dutch in October 1962 was a watershed in the history of West Papua. The policy of empowerment and papuanisation was, at once, disbanded. All Dutch influence in the territory had to be replaced by Indonesian influence. Malay (Indonesian) replaced the Dutch language in higher education from one day to the other. All textbooks and schoolbooks in Dutch were burned.

The primary school curriculum switched over from a local curriculum to the Indonesian one, where in reading books there is no reference to Papuans and their own natural environment and culture, but to that of Muslim Javanese with quite a different scenery, picturing railways and rice fields. This led to alienation. Indonesia also considered Papuans with a Dutch education as a security threat, and extra-judicious killing of Papuans in the first years of the Indonesian takeover was not uncommon. Others were put out of work or ended up in prison. Successful Papuan businessmen were pushed out of business with the argument that they supported financially the anti-Indonesian struggle. The Indonesian army acted more like an army of occupation than as an army that had liberated the Papuans from Dutch colonial oppression. These were conflicting paradigms. The Indonesians believed that the Papuans were not showing sufficient gratefulness for the great sacrifice they had made to liberate West Papua from the Dutch, whom they considered as their most important enemy. Those criticizing Indonesian rule in West Papua were treated as enemies of the state. The Papuans, however, felt that their chance to statehood had been blocked. They saw in a positive light the short period of active Dutch involvement in their development, which had brought them a national flag, an anthem, a representative council and a Papua Battalion.

Indonesia had already done away with parliamentary democracy and civil liberties in 1959, when it introduced a "guided democracy" with President Sukarno as Life President. In 1965 there was a bloody anti-communist coup d'état with hundreds of thousands of victims. This brought General Suharto to power. Political opposition or criticism was no longer tolerated. In Suharto's anti-communist "New Order" state, the army dominated and controlled society from the national level down to the ward level. The army introduced the doctrine of "*dwifungsi*", the double function of the army. One function is to guarantee internal security and the other is to protect the nation from attacks by outside enemies. The state ideology of Pancasila, combined with a strong anti-communism, formed the ideological basis of the New Order. Communists were seen as atheists, rebels, murderers, anti-nationalists, and traitors. They had to be excised from the body of society. There was no longer a free press to discuss in the open the plight of communists, those accused of communist sympathies and other victims of the New Order state, like Papuans, Acehnese and East Timorese. There were hardly any independent NGOs, who could take up their case to lobby for an end to human rights violations. Even churches and Muslim organizations would be treated in a high handed way, if they criticized government policy. There are parallels between the fate of the communists and the fate of the Papuans. Educated Papuans were seen as pro-Dutch, that is as enemies. Those who, even mildly, criticized the behaviour of the Indonesian army were thrown into the same category of communists, namely as "separatists", rebels and enemies of the state.

After the integration with Indonesia Papuans were forcibly indonesianised (Gietzelt, 1989). One example of an effort at enforced indonesianisation is *Operasi Koteka* (penis gourd campaign) in the period 1971 to 1973, where the army forced shorts on a reluctant population to replace the traditional penis gourd, which Indonesians considered primitive and immoral. The campaign was initiated by the Governor Colonel Acub Zainal. The campaign aimed at “elevating the level of civilization and the improvement of the social, political and economic conditions of the communities in the interior.” The campaign led to numerous victims as it was strongly rejected by the people and failed completely (Vlasblom, 2004, pp. 499-503). A Papuan identity was not allowed. Papuans had to identify with a tribal identity as Dani, Yali, Biak, Marind-anim, Me or Sentani and so on. Even the word Papua was avoided in the press and in publications by the government.”Papua” had associations with rebellion and with the OPM (Organisasi Papua Merdeka, the Organisation for Papuan Independence). Even the letter “P” was often avoided in the press. When writing about the OPM the journalists used the abbreviation GPK, meaning the “Movement of Troublemakers that threaten Peace” (*Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan*))

The New Order (“*Orde Baru*”) state legitimized itself through political stability, enforced by the army, and development. This “development” (*pembangunan*). was mainly defined as physical development, such as the construction of school buildings, roads, airports, factories, clinics, mines, plantations etc. It was less interested in the quality of education, in developing critical minds and in the human and cultural aspects of development. Papuans were in this view often more seen as obstacles than as subjects of their own development who had to be empowered. The massive transmigration program is a typical example of this type of development. With grants from the World Bank poor peasant Muslim families, mainly from Java, would get three acres of land, a small wooden house and enough money until the time they could sell their first harvest (Gietzelt, 1989). Possibly 600 to 700,000 transmigrants settled in this way in West Papua. Only very few Papuans were given the same benefits. This resulted in a “dilution” of the Papuan presence in the Territory.

In view of the relative backwardness in education of the indigenous Papuans, the migrants were getting more easily paid employment in the private as well as in the government sector. Papuans remain a small minority of about 10 % in the army and police. There is only one Papuan judge and no Papuan public prosecutor. Private companies, owned or managed by Indonesians, prefer to employ Indonesians. At the local markets (“*pasar*”) Papuans have to sell their produce outside the place on the roadside, while Buginese and Javanese traders sell their commodities inside.

The margins, within which the Church could operate and claim its independence, were except in purely dogmatic issues, quite limited. In fact the GKI had to play a role in appeasing protest against the Indonesian Government, encouraging the members to be cooperative with the Indonesian

Government. The Chairman of the Synod of the GKI, Rev. Willem Romainum, wrote in 1969 a pastoral letter asking the church members to obey the Government and let it carry out its Act of Free Choice in peace (Benny Giay, 1996: 2).

Hhumanness regained

In May 1998 President Suharto was forced to step down in the midst of a severe economic crisis and massive street protests. His Vice-President, Prof. B. J. Habibie, succeeded him. He tried to meet popular demands for political reform and more democracy. The press got more freedoms and the intelligence service (*Intel*), before virtually omnipresent, lost many of its discretionary powers. People lost their fear for it. Papuans used the new freedom immediately. Habibie offered East Timor a referendum, where it could vote for independence, which it did in 1999 to the anger of the military. Papuans were offered a “dialogue” about their status. They then openly began to demand for freedom (In Indonesian there is one and the same word for freedom and for independence, *merdeka*). In July 1998 the churches set up an organisation called Foreri, Forum for the Reconciliation of the People of Irian Jaya. It was set up just at the eve of large demonstrations, which the police had threatened to crush with violence. Foreri wanted to establish a dialogue between the government, including the army and police and the various groups in society, who were themselves, divided what to choose: freedom (*merdeka* or M), autonomy (*otonomi* or O) or rather federalism (*federasi* or F). Foreri asked the Government guarantees that the people could speak out freely. It then organized at district and regency level dialogues on these issues. In all places almost unanimously the dialogue resulted in a demand for independence (“M”). The results were written down and handed over to the head of the district or the head of the regency, with the request to forward it to the provincial authorities. The regencies elected 100 delegates to represent them and express the views of the people on the issue of the future of Papua. On 26 February 1999 this team of 100 was invited in the presidential palace by Habibie. The delegates unanimously demanded freedom (or independence) from the President as this was the result of the consultations that had taken place all over the province. Habibie in his improvised response demanded the group “to think it over again” and to forgive the perpetrators of serious human rights violations, as “they did not know what they were doing.”

Papuans began to turn around the dominant anti Papuan values. People would pray openly that they thanked God that they had been created with frizzy hair and a black skin and that God had given them their own land Papua to live in. The ideal was a “New Papua”, where Papuan values will dominate in politics, culture and society (Giay, Benny, 2000). In February 1999 a Consultation (*Musyamarah Besar*) was organized with 400 participants to decide on the future status of West Papua. In May-June 2000 a Papuan Congress² was organized with as many as 3,000 delegates to discuss and decide about policies

² This Congress, with financial support from President Abdul Rahman Wahid, was called the *Second* Papua

and an organizational structure needed to achieve unity and freedom in the Territory. The Congress voted a Council (*Dewan*) and a Presidium (*PDP* or *Presidium Dewan Papua*), to implement the decisions of the Congress. The PDP, headed by *ondofolo* (traditional leader) Theys Eluay of Sentani, soon began to function as spokesperson for the Papuans, nationally and internationally, and as a kind of an alternative government. Ad hoc organizations with huge grassroots support soon had in fact more legitimacy than the existing representative bodies, organized within the Indonesian political system. Some of such initiatives were the Papua Task Force (*Satuan Tugas* or *Satgas Papua*) and the Papuan Commando Posts (*Posko Papua*), established province wide to claim back the control over local security and to protect oneself from provocations by the secret police. Both initiatives came from Theys Eluay. In this way Papuans could have positions of responsibility and leadership. As Satgas Papua, wearing as a uniform black trousers and a black T-shirt with on it a small Morning star flag, armed with a wooden stick, they earned respect and often fear of the transmigrants. The freedom movement led to a positive attitude towards being a Papua, who were now seen as “the lords of the land” (*tuan tanah*). This movement is a movement of emancipation. It is a struggle for equal rights. In the period October to December 2000, however, police suppressed again all outward expressions of this movement with the use of excessive violence.

Religious imagery is used in the discourse, in making political demands and in political mobilization. In the freedom struggle the Papuans very often use images from the Bible, like the Exodus. When the Team of 100 went to President Habibie in February 1999 to ask for freedom it was for the people like Moses and Aaron going to the Egyptian Pharaoh to ask to let the people of Israel go to their Promised Land. The Papuans identify themselves with the people of Israel. Meetings are opened and closed with prayers. Often even a complete religious service is part of a political meeting. Prayer is seen as a non violent and effective weapon to achieve the political aims of a free West Papua. People believe that because of the continuous prayers the struggle has been relatively peaceful, at least compared with the violence in the Moluccas, Aceh and East Timor.

The Papua flag, with the Morning Star is a messianic symbol. Jesus is called the rising morning star in Revelations 22, 16b. Now there is still the dark of the night, but the day will definitely come. In August 1999 Theys called upon the people to pray and fast for three days on 3, 4 and 5 September and to decorate their houses with a cross. The people were asked, "to pray that the mighty hand of the Lord will accomplish the complete work as demanded by the struggling Papuan people, that is to achieve the recognition of their right to sovereignty in relation to freedom and independence." The letter ended with the identification of the suffering of the Papuan people with the suffering and the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. There was also an appeal to forgive “for they do not know what they are doing”. (Luke 23, 34). (*Circular Letter*, Sentani, 28-8-1999) .In December 1999 Theys Eluay called upon all

Congress. The First Congress was held in 1961 to discuss the establishment of a Papuan representative Council, the *Nieuw Guinea Raad*, to decide on Papuan Independence from the Netherlands.

Papuans to pray non-stop till independence would be achieved. In many villages every evening at a set time all the people came together at a central place to have a public prayer for freedom. On 1 December 1999 all over the Province in all the capitals of the regencies flag raisings were done of the *Sang Bintang Kejora*, Morning Star flag to commemorate the first raising of that flag on 1 December 1961. The festivities lasted till sun set, when the flags were again lowered. There were sermons, prayers and hymn singing. Police had threatened to crush the event, but amazingly stayed away. Just on that day it seemed that the land had been retaken by the Papuans, as most migrants stayed at home out of fear of getting caught in the cross fire. The army and police vowed to never allow such a thing to happen again.

At their arrival on Monday 5 February 1855 the first missionaries, the Germans Ch. W. Ottow and J. G. Geissler, had fallen on their knees on the beach and prayed. By doing so they, supposedly, had claimed the whole island for Christ, and by consequence neither Indonesia nor Muslims had a legitimate claim. In 2002 the 5th of February was made a provincial public holiday to celebrate “the Coming of the Gospel” (*Injil Masuk*). Papuans want to reclaim their history, which up to then has been withheld from them. This is a history where they are the subjects of history and where they have their own heroes. The sufferings in the past are part of this history project. This is called the *Memoria Passionis*, a term introduced by Johann Baptist Metz. The sufferings have not been in vain, but are steps on the road to liberation.³ The following questions are interesting and relevant for the project. How did Papuans react to the arrival of Christian mission? Why did they accept the new faith? How was political development with the first nationalist leaders like Johan Ariks, Nicolaas Jouwe and Marcus Kaisiepo? How was the development of the first nationalist parties like the Partai Nasional? Who played a role in the first elective bodies at district level, regency level and territory level? What was the role of the first representative council, the New Guinea Council (“*Nieuw Guinea Raad*”), inaugurated on 5 April 1961? Since the arrival of the Indonesians all these developments have been seen in a negative light or have been ignored. The focus has been exclusively on events that contributed to the formation of the Indonesian unitary state. This leads to the paradoxical situation that those are honoured as heroes, by naming streets and parts of oceans, that are considered by Papuans as people who have contributed to their destruction, like Yos Sudarso (a bay), Ahmed Yani (a street), Sam Ratulangi or even General Benny Murdani. These are all non-Papuans. Papuan heroes in official history are those that helped to realize the integration of West Papua into Indonesia like Silas Papare, Marthin Indey and Frans Kaisiepo (Biak airport). The heroes, Papuans are claiming for themselves are: Seth Jafet Rumkorem, who proclaimed Papuan independence on 1 July 1971 at the Markas Victoria, near the border with PNG. This date is also celebrated. Arnold Clemens Ap and Eddy Mofu are considered

³ *Memoria passionis*, the memory of suffering, is seen by Johan Baptist Metz as a hidden force, which stores latent energy, to be used to change the status quo (J. Budi Hernawan and Theo van den Broek, 1999. Dialog Nasional. Sebuah Kisah “Memoria Passionis” [Kisah Ingatan Penderitaan Sebangsa], in: *Tifa Irian*, quoted in Giay, 2000: 9).

martyrs.⁴ Both were killed by security troops in April 1984, on the suspicion of promoting Papuan cultural self awareness, and because of that also political awareness, with use of the traditional songs of their music group Mambesak. Dr Thomas Wanggai is another martyr. He died in prison early 1996. He had been convicted for treason after raising a home made flag of “Western Melanesia”, a flag with fourteen stars on 14 December 1988. On 10 November 2001, Indonesian Heroes Day Theys Eluay was killed by Kopassus soldiers. His funeral became a huge mass demonstration. His coffin was carried by foot all the way from the building of the provincial parliament to his home in Sentani, a distance of 30 kms. Then some people coined the idea to have a Papuan Heroes Acre, just like the Indonesian army has in Abepura, next to the military prison. The family of Theys provided a soccer field, they owned close to Sentani Airport. There is now an impressive funeral monument at the place of his burial, decorated with Morningstar flags and at night illuminated with numerous lamps. It is clearly visible for everybody who enters Jayapura from the airport. The perpetrators of the killing, soldiers from the Kopassus unit in Entrop, were after strong national and international pressure finally brought to court. However, they went away with very light sentences, while the Army Chief of Staff, in a comment called the convicted soldiers “heroes” as they had killed a rebel leader (Ipenburg, 2002 and Giay, 2006)

Papuans also try to reclaim their history by celebrating or commemorating important dates. These become from the point of view of the Indonesian security forces illegal public holidays. The first of December is celebrated as on December 1, 1961 Papuans achieved self government with the opening of the New Guinea Council, the introduction of the Papuans national flag, the national anthem and the installation of the Papuan Battalion. 1 May commemorates the handing over of government from the United Nations to Indonesia in 1963. 1 July is celebrated as the day Rumkorem proclaimed Papuan independence in 1971. 14 July is commemorated as then the Act of Free Choice began in 1969, which officially led to the inclusion of West Papua into the Indonesian Republic. This whole history project is called the “straightening of history” (*“meluruskan sejarah”*). Moreover, Papuans also demand back their historical rights. They demand a local, national and international debate about the legitimacy of their integration with Indonesia. .

There is some irony in the fact that the Government also uses the Bible to weaken opposition. The Governor, Head of the Police and the Head of the Army in West Papua are often Christian. High government and army officials, whether they were Muslim or Christian, were always visibly present at important church gatherings, like the Synod meetings, and were offered the opportunity to address the gathering, in order to provide the Government’s and the Army’s exegesis of the “signs of the time.”

⁴ Eddy’s father, Baldus Mofu, a teacher, was a member of the New Guinea Council. He was sentenced to imprisonment for his political views and died in prison in 1979.

Governor Freddy Numberi called, for instance, in October 1998 on the Christian segment of West Papua's population to accept God's divine will that their land had become an integral part of the archipelago through the Act of Free Choice which was, according to him, the final solution to the dispute over the province between Indonesia and the Netherlands. "Let us not reject God's will," he said. In this way the governor put on the gown of a church minister, disregarding a separation between church and state. When the new provincial police commander-in-charge, Brigadier General Silivianus Yulian Wenas, took office he told the press that he would try a new approach to solve the West Papuan problem, the *pendekatan kasih*, the (Christian) love approach. He even went to visit churches to speak about it. Some church leaders resented this, and complained that the police commander had the best of both worlds: the Bible and the gun. If one approach would not work the second could be tried. Wenas made that also clear himself. He said that if Papuans would demand more (i. e. independence) they would wake up the sleeping giant (referring to military might). The army commander, being an active member of the prestigious Paulus Congregation of the GKI in Jayapura, made also use of informal pressure to influence the church leadership.

The churches, especially the Baptist Church, the Evangelical Christian Church and the Roman Catholic Church, began to use the new space to speak out in the open against human rights violations (ter Haar, 2004).⁵ They established NGOs and special departments to promote dialogue and reconciliation like Foreri⁶, Elsham Papua⁷, the Roman Catholic Secretariat for Justice and Peace⁸, and the Human Rights' and Legal Department of the Synod of the Evangelical Christian Church. They give publicity to human rights violations. This has also become an important political weapon in the ongoing struggle for independence.

Conclusion

The Papuans of the Western half of the island of New Guinea have developed a new sense of a Papuan identity in reaction to their rejection by Indonesians, who introduced anti values with regard to the Papuans. Biblical imagery plays an important role in this process. The network of the churches is being used to communicate without control by the Government. Papuans, with a black skin, frizzy hair, have the for Muslims impure pig as their favourite animal. They traditionally do not cover their bodies in the way other Indonesians do. They are considered as primitive, dirty, stupid ("*bodoh*"),

⁵ An earlier effort by the GKI in 1992 to bring into the open severe and systematic violations of human rights failed, as the Indonesian Community of Churches of which the GKI is a member did not want to take up the issue, afraid of disturbing the harmony in the New Order state (Irian Jaya, 1992). The report was quietly shelved.

⁶ FORERI: *Forum Rekonsiliasi Masyarakat Irian*, Forum for the Reconciliation of the Irianese Society

⁷ ELSHAM: *Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Hak Asasi Manusia*, Foundation for the Study and Advocacy of human Rights

⁸ E.g. van den Broek e.a., 2001 and 2002; see also the official web site of the Secretariat at <http://tinyurl.com/69uoha>.

rapists, rebels and drunkards. Through this stereotyping their full humanness was denied by the Indonesians, the dominant group. This was strengthened because of the impossibility of any form of criticism or political opposition during the 32 years of the Suharto era (1965-1998). Since 1998 the Papuans make use of the new freedom to reclaim their humanness. There have been mass mobilizations in 1998, 1999 and 2000, especially around the Morning Star Flag. This has chiliastic overtones. There is a grass roots liberation movement, widely supported, empowered with a people's liberation theology. Papuans define themselves as the people of God, as a Christian remnant in a majority Muslim country. Like the people of Israel were given Canaan as their Promised Land so Papuans were also given their own land, Tanah Papua, by God. The hand of God is always perceived in events taking place. In the midst of the economic crisis (*kerismon*, *kerisis moneter*, the monetary crisis of 1998) gold was found in Papua. So in Papua there is no *kerismon*, but it is *keristol* (Kristus tolong, Christ helps). Papuan leaders are compared to biblical figures. Just as Moses led his people from Egyptian bondage so Theys Eluay and others are leading the Papuans out of Indonesian bondage. Just like Moses first worked for the Egyptians so it is the same with Theys Eluay, who worked first for the Indonesians. The individual Papuan and the Papuans as a people identify their suffering with the suffering of Christ on the cross. People sincerely believe in the efficacy of individual and collective prayer. Prayers, together with the raising and downing of the Morning Star flag, are being used as a major form of political action. ⁹

The church definitely listens to the voice of the people and tries to convey this message to the government and to sister churches in Indonesia and abroad. Pastors and church leaders are intensively engaged in the freedom movement. The churches provide a network for communication, relatively uncontrolled by the government. Pastors are for their livelihood not dependent on the government, which means they can more freely speak out. Churches and church initiated organisations continue to monitor and publicize human rights violations that still take place in West Papua to repress even non-violent and legitimate dissent of Papuans with Indonesian rule (Farhadian, 2007, Giay, 2005; Tebay and Scott, 2005; Tebay, 2005; Tebay, 2006 and Tebay, 2007). At the same time the churches provide a place where Papuans feel at home and where they can organize and communicate about important issues with regard to the future of their people and their land.

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⁹ See also M. Mawene (2004) on how Papua people's theology has to be seen as a legitimate form of liberation theology and of contextualization (Mawene, M. 2004. Christ and Theology of Liberation in Papua, in: *Exchange*, 33,2: 153-178)..

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