

Chapter 2

Culture as the conscious object of performance

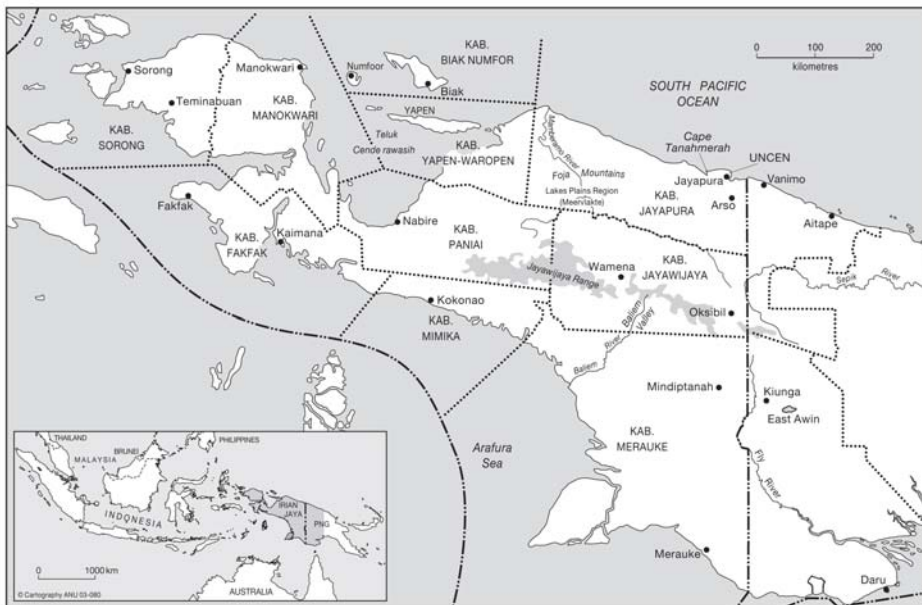
I stumbled across Arnold Ap in Benedict Anderson's book *Imagined communities* while reading for an undergraduate course in nationalism. Anderson wrote that the link between Ap's occupation as curator at the Cenderawasih University Museum in Jayapura and his 'assassination' was not accidental: 'for museums, and the museumising imagination, are both profoundly political'.¹ In 1997, 13 years after Ap's death, I visited the Cenderawasih Museum. It was in a parlous state. Walls were discoloured with mildew, and timber artefacts were so riddled with borers that unswept tailings lay piled beneath displays. The museum consisted of four galleries of ethnology and natural history. In the first gallery, various tools of war such as shields, spears and protective body vests filled the space. Being indigenous or 'Irianese' was essentialised in terms of warrior imagery. The third gallery celebrated another archetype: that of the Irianese wood carver. It was lined with exquisite Asmat artefacts, one of Jakarta's most lucrative craft exports. The second and fourth galleries exhibited items that added Irianese components to an Indonesian archipelago sequence: canoes, objects of brideprice, currency, Chinese porcelain, and cooking implements and pots. There were also two collections of photographs: one from Merauke in 1912 contributed by the Natural History Museum of America, and the other a Dutch collection from 1956.

At the time of my visit, the guide was a man of Lombok origin, an island to the east of Bali. I tried to engage him in a conversation about indigeneity by posing a question about the absence of West Papuan curators and museum staff. His answer contested my assumption that indigeneity ought to be positively discriminated. 'West Papuan-ness does not assume knowledge', he defended. 'So', I ventured, 'are there trained West Papuan curators working in museums elsewhere in Indonesia?' He appeared annoyed and it seemed pointless to continue, so I moved into the next gallery. The museum was deserted except for one other visitor, a big-haired man from Biak. In the second gallery he and I followed each other from one glass cabinet to the next without speaking.

Two weeks later I flew to Wamena in the highlands of Irian Jaya, and booked into a church guesthouse. By chance on a windswept breezeway between the bedrooms and amenities block, I ran into the Biak visitor from the museum. In spite of the roaring highland winds that would have drowned out any speech, he answered my questions in a voice that was barely audible. His nervousness

caused me to be concerned. Did he really imagine someone might be listening? After I revealed to him that I was planning a trip to PNG to do research among West Papuan refugees, he told me his name (Piet), and the names of several of his friends who were refugees in PNG. But he advised me not to write anything that he told me on paper: there should be no record of our exchange. Towards the end of the conversation, Piet pulled his wallet from his shirt pocket and showed me the photograph he had positioned behind the clear plastic window. I knew many men who carried pictures of Jesus Christ in their wallets but Piet carried a photograph of Arnold Ap. Like Luther, Piet had been a student peer of Ap's and had played in one of his performance troupes. He had not fled to Vanimo like so many others, but Ap's death had marked Piet. Almost a year later at East Awin, I extended Piet's greeting to the friends he had mentioned. They nodded vaguely, perhaps ambivalent about his success, for remaining in Jayapura had allowed Piet to rise to the rank of senior civil servant in the Indonesian administration.

Map 2. Irian Jaya and the border region of Papua New Guinea showing the location of Cenderawasih University (UNCEN), Jayapura, East Awin, and regions from where Ap recorded performance material.



Map: Cartographic Services, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University.

The form of Ap's work, and how it resonated among West Papuans at East Awin, is the focus of this chapter. His biographical details are sourced from the spoken and written words of two of his peers: Luther and George Aditjondro. Luther was a member of Ap's group Mambesak. Aditjondro's book *Cahaya Bintang*

Kejora (The radiance of the Morning Star) contains several essays on Ap including: 'Indigenisation and Westernisation: the echo of Mambesak binding the cultural identity of the Cassowary Land' and 'The overlapping of individual and collective human rights in West Papua: taking as a starting point the case of Arnold Ap and Mambesak'. During Ap's curatorship, Aditjondro was Director of the Irian Jaya Development Information Service Centre which was located in the Cenderawasih Museum. Ap was an adviser to Aditjondro's organisation. His public identity was activated during the 1969 Act of Free Choice voting period when he led a demonstration with fellow Cenderawasih University students and was imprisoned at the Gunung Ifar prison outside Jayapura. Following his release, it was said that Ap made a conscious decision to engage West Papuan people in the preservation of their cultural identity, in spite of their existence within the Indonesian nation-state.²

Ap's movement can be taken as counter-ethnicity of sorts, and we can locate its emergence in Indonesian nationalist efforts to construct the ethnic category of 'Indonesian' and 'Indonesian national culture'. Appadurai's concept of 'culturalism' as the basis of mobilisation speaks to Ap's work. Appadurai characterises culturalist movements as tending to be counter-national, and involving 'deliberate, strategic, and populist mobilisation of cultural material'.³ 'Culturalism' refers to a conscious mobilisation of cultural difference that is directed at nation-states.⁴ Appadurai makes the point that where a nation-state is preoccupied with 'control, classification and surveillance' of its subjects, it can effect the creation or revitalisation of an ethnic category that was previously fluid or nascent.⁵ The project of culturalism resonates with Ap's project which mobilised cultural performance (song, dance, music) to articulate a boundary of difference.⁶ Writing, performing and exhibiting in the 1970s and 1980s in a dominated political environment, Ap's 'model of cultural shape'⁷ that underpinned his practice rendered West Papuan cultural form localised and boundary-oriented. (More recent ideas of cultural forms as overlapping without boundaries, structures or regularities does not allow for this clear separation of entities.⁸)

In the late 1970s, Ap was appointed Curator of the Cenderawasih University Museum by Ignasius Suharno, the Director of the Institute of Anthropology. Funds were received from The John D. Rockefeller III Fund to establish a university museum, train a curator at the Bernice Bishop Museum in Hawai'i and purchase equipment and ethnographic collection items. Museum bequests were also received from the Papua and New Guinea Museum and Art Gallery. At the time, Ap was a performance artist: he sang, danced, played guitar, ukelele and *tifa*-drum and narrated satirical skits known as *mop*. He had intimate ties with customary leaders and artists and was a geography graduate from the Cenderawasih University.

Ap's museum was located within the Institute of Anthropology. The university had been established by a special presidential decree on 10 November 1962, 10 weeks after the UN Transitional Authority had taken over administrative responsibility from the Dutch, and six months before sovereignty was relinquished to Indonesia. Commentators claimed the Indonesian government hurried the establishment of a university to represent a dual symbol of the liberation of Netherlands New Guinea from Dutch colonialism, and Indonesia's reclamation of the eastern-most part of its archipelago.⁹ A university would equalise Irian Jaya's status with the other provinces of Indonesia. It boasted several faculties including the Institute of Anthropology, intended as a research institution. The Institute's flagship publication was *Irian: Bulletin of West Irian* which was published from 1971 until 1993. Funds were received from the Asia Foundation, Jakarta, for research activity and to publish *Irian*. Linguists from the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) co-edited the journal, and from 1973 produced a cooperative research program with the Institute. The bulletin's first editorial stated that *Irian's* principal function was not as an academic journal, but to serve the people of West Irian and publish research findings relevant to government policy, particularly economic development.

In the 1970s, the Institute of Anthropology sponsored research into the impact of state and foreign enterprises on indigenous people—for example, the effectiveness of cooperatives initiated by the Catholic mission in the Asmat region, culture change and development in the Baliem Valley, the impact of Macassan immigrants on the economy of Greater Jayapura, and socio-economic surveys of the copra industry at Sorong and fishing industry at Jayapura. A university workshop report described local efforts to ground the subject and practice of university research in terms of the 'state directive of community service'.¹⁰ At Cenderawasih University this was to be met through action research practice, village-based work experience, village education, provision of legal aid and co-operation with other non-government organisations. Research and teaching were to be grounded in matters relating to village life, re-settlement, transmigration areas and protection of natural resources. The function of research was to understand the community's 'issues' and build local problem-solving capacity to address the social, cultural and political issues emerging as a result of development.

This was the milieu in which Ap practised his curatorship. It has been said that the museum in the university functioned as the 'primary maker' of Irianese nationalism.¹¹ But others have proposed that the cultural performance movement on the edge of the museum, particularly the activities of Ap's performance troupe Mambesak, were more likely to inspire West Papuan nationalism among followers.¹² Mambesak's repertoire was restricted to songs and dances considered 'traditional', and originating from within West Papua. The bounded nature of

the repertoire imagined a certain cultural congruity—an overarching cultural West Papuanness. Whereas the state's discourse of nationhood imagines different ethnicities as congruent parts of a unified Indonesian archipelago. Provinces are conceived as parts that form a unified national whole. The 'unified archipelago' concept is the basis of orthodox Indonesian museum practice where sequences of material culture items from different provinces of the archipelago are displayed.¹³ Cultural items like folk stories, motifs, costumes and dances are arranged to form archipelago-wide sequences. This is evident in the second gallery of the museum, which displays canoes, objects of bride-price and cooking implements: items that can be replicated across the archipelago in sequential form. These sequences represent both the distinctiveness of an ethnic group, and its congruence as part of the archipelago.

Batik is one such cultural object that is said to manifest sequentially across the nation-state, including Irian Jaya. The Irian Jaya newspaper *Cenderawasih Post* reported on 8 July 1997 that the wife of Sultan Hamengkubuwono X of Jogjakarta visited transmigrants from her own 'sultanate' living in Irian Jaya. Known as Arso XI, this transmigration site is located near the Indonesian–PNG border. The Sultan's wife was welcomed by transmigrant children dancing Yospan, a popular dance synthesised from many local dances and represented as Irian Jaya's official provincial dance. Upon her appraisal of their dance performance, the children asked the Sultan's wife to give them a new *gamelan*, an ensemble of percussion instruments particular to Java and Bali. She agreed and then proceeded to advise them to produce batik using Irianese motifs that could become a national design. By doing so they would follow the lead of other transmigrants from Jogjakarta who produce Kalimantan motifs on batik. Batik using Irianese motifs comes to be represented as 'Irian batik', and Irian Jaya becomes incorporated into a regional cultural sequence of batik producers.

The tension between congruence and distinctiveness is also played out in the artistic display of small groups on cosmopolitan stages.¹⁴ Hughes-Freeland's review of the 1989 London tour of a group of artists from the Asmat region of the south-east coast of Irian Jaya provides an example.¹⁵ The Asmat group was organised by the Asmat Progress and Development Foundation, established by the speaker of the Indonesian House of Representatives in Jakarta. The Foundation's aim was to 'promote and preserve the existence of Asmat culture within the ethnic group in Indonesia', enabling them to 'participate in their national development without losing their identity and culture'.¹⁶ Hailing from the Jakarta Arts Institute, the choreographer's job was to 'make' dances with various groups across the archipelago. At the London performance a public announcement informed the audience that Asmat dancers did not usually perform to an audience, and that the choreographed dance would comprise six Asmat rituals including initiation and spirit rites. But the fantasy of artistic display

became unstuck, and the observer Hughes-Freeland said the London audience was disenchanted, and the performers were even less so:

The most real moment of the event was after the audience had left, and the dancers gathered behind the walls of shields and *bis*-poles and sang a lament. 'They are homesick' said the organiser; but the sickness was more permanent than that, and the song spoke of more than any part of the staged show had done.¹⁷

The idea of preserving a local or regional culture within a national one is reflected in the metaphor *khasana* meaning 'storage area'. In an essay in the edited collection titled *Aspects and prospects of the cultural arts of Irian Jaya*, Ap used the metaphor of 'treasury' or storage area for valuable objects, to imagine a national culture as a container of regional cultural sequences:

... clearly variegated arts of regional cultures need to be uncovered and cultivated and processed as well as developed in order to fill and enrich the national culture's treasury.¹⁸

Anthropologists have drawn attention to the way that regional diversity is honoured and valued by the Indonesian state as long as it remains at the level of display and performance, rather than belief or enactment.¹⁹ Robinson expresses this eloquently: '... the kinds of cultural differences which can be legitimately sustained are subjected to state-defined parameters of what kinds of cultural differences can be legitimately expressed'.²⁰ The orthodoxy of the 'unity in diversity' concept allowed Ap and his collaborator, composer Sam Kapissa, a certain liberty to represent West Papuan performance art and material culture as regional, so long as it was located alongside other regions and within the wider national culture. It provided justification for their own project, allowing a sense of 'alternative identity' to be sustained.²¹ While Ap did not explicitly represent his viewpoint in relation to Indonesian cultural forms as intrusive, or West Papuan cultural identity as alternative, it was implicit in his practice and according to some of his peers was the subject of their private conversation with him.

Ap accompanied anthropologists on fieldwork trips, and used these opportunities to notate and record songs and dances, and document material culture such as carving, sculpture and pottery. He occasionally published this research.²² In his essay 'Inventory of basic dance steps from Irian Jaya',²³ Ap detailed dance steps from four regions, and proposed that the foundation movements of every traditional dance were a response to the surrounding environment of that dance's location:

... uncovering regional dance material which is still abundant in our region must be worked on with detail and care so that we don't disregard certain elements which constitute the character or identity of the dance

material mentioned. In order that we can account for each element which is presented we need to gather information or data from around the area of the region of origin of that dance material.²⁴

Costumes made of local materials autochthonised the dance, allowing its origin to be traced to a locality. Imported materials were claimed to erase the identity of the dance.²⁵ Ap characterised the impact of the Indonesian media on local dance as 'polluting' and advocated that choreographers utilise traditional dance material:

... it is still too early in Irian Jaya to busy ourselves with 'creative dance' because that type is suitable for regions that have already exhausted their regional dance material. We need to direct our attention to unearthing traditional dance material which is still abundant and preserve it so that it can then be worked on in 'new creations'.²⁶

Ap and his peers choreographed the Yospan dance,²⁷ which was exhibited as one of several provincial icons in the Irian Jaya pavilion at the miniature cultural theme park Taman Mini, Jakarta, in the 1990s. In spite of its synthesis from several dances (Pancar, Yosim, Lemonipis and Balengan), the Yospan can be traced back to the local places of its constituent parts. Luther traced its origin as though its genealogies were constant:

The Pancar dance is reckless. It reflects Biak's hot climate. It comprises sets of leaping or jumping movements called tuna fish and forward retreat repetitions called prawn. The dancer vigorously strikes his own buttocks with the heel making a sound like crashing of waves. The leaping movement in striking is like the exhilaration one feels running alongside breaking waves. The Yosim dance from Serui is slow and inviting. It is a firm stepping dance because Serui houses are close to the ground. It may have originated from Sarmi, taking its name from the Yosim mountain there. It is said that a student from Sarmi taught friends to dance Yosim while at school in Serui. The Lemonipis dance comes from Sarmi, Jayapura. It is characterised by rules and synchronised steps. Dancers hold hands and dance in a large group usually in a field, not in a house, circling a person beating the *tifa*-drum. The Balengan dance from Manokwari is more refined with little body movement. Steps are tread lightly because houses in this region are built high above swamps.

Ap's approach as curator, composer and choreographer was to preserve foundation elements from various localities, and also use these as the basis for innovation. Such local elements included composition structures, cadences, minor form, movements and gestures and language. (Mambesak recorded songs in thirty local languages.) These elements were used to 'Papuanise' foreign music from elsewhere in the archipelago and beyond. For example, hymns were

commonly Papuanised by translating lyrics into regional languages, and utilising familiar composition structures and local instruments.²⁸ In the 1970s, Arnold Ap and Sam Kapissa complained that the European orientation of the liturgical music of the Christian Protestant Church was not 'rooted' in their own culture. In protest, they arranged religious songs in the languages of Biak, Windesi, Skou, Yali and Aitinyo, accompanied by accordion, *tifa*-drum, ukelele and guitar.²⁹ The trend toward Papuanising music in the Protestant Church in the north spread to Catholic congregations in the south.³⁰

Photo 1. Yospan dancing accompanied by Mambesak musicians in front of the Governor's Office, Jayapura (Kapissa is the spectacled dancer facing the photographer, and Ap is second guitarist from right), c.1981.



Photo: Marthen Rumabar, previously published in 'Teaching performance art is like sharpening the blade of a knife', *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 5, 1, April 2004, pp. 1–14.

In 1974, Ap, Kapissa and their Biak peers formed a performance group called Manyori, meaning 'sacred bird indigenous to Biak-Numfoor'. Four years later they changed the name from Manyori to Mambesak. The name change is explained in terms of the symbolism of birds: *manyori* was a sacred bird native only to Biak-Numfoor, whereas *mambesak* (bird of paradise) was revered throughout Irian Jaya.³¹ Mambesak member Sawaki described the bird of paradise in analogous terms.³² The bird of paradise, like any nation, includes varieties of different colour, size and movement. Like the various ethnic or tribal groups imagined as the West Papuan nation, the classification 'bird of paradise' comprises multiple species. The bird of paradise, too, has a history of

appropriation and theft. The image of the island as bird-shaped has been commonplace since the Dutch period when the northwest peninsula was named 'Vogelkop' meaning 'bird's head'. There are further layers of symbolism in the mapping of Irian Jaya as the upper body of the bird-shaped island of New Guinea:

The Island of Papua can be divided and compared with the body of a bird: Samarai to Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea is the bird's tail; Port Moresby to Nabire in West Papua is the bird's body; Nabire to Waropen is the bird's neck; Manokwari together with the Arfai mountain range is the bird's chignon; Lake Ayamaru is considered the bird's eye; Bintuni Bay in the Fak Fak region is the bird's lung and mouth/gullet; the mountain range in the middle is the bird's backbone; Yos Sudarso Island (Kimaam) and the estuary of the Digul River is the stomach and anus of the bird; the rivers on the island of Papua are the arteries; the dense forests are the bird's feathers.³³

In renaming the group, members sought a regional translation of 'bird of paradise' that was already popular among West Papuans. The Biak '*mambesak*' was chosen because it became a household name following the televised performance of a '*mambesak* dance' at Taman Mini in Jakarta in April 1975.

The Mambesak group responded to Indonesian state efforts to manufacture provincial 'Irianese' performance. At provincial and national occasions, a mandatory folksong was usually represented by the Biak tune 'Apuse', a song of farewell composed in the 1930s by a teacher evangelist.³⁴ The prominence of folksongs like 'Apuse' at such occasions must have been jarring for Ap and Kapissa. Yet many West Papuans, perhaps reflecting Indonesian attitudes, were ambivalent about their own songs and dances: 'Melanesian songs were at that time only identified with village people and not popular among town dwellers of various origin and nationalities, even the Melanesians. Songs of Melanesian origin ... folksongs, were considered rustic.'³⁵ West Papuan dance is energetic and heated, contrasting with Indonesian dance which is generally more controlled and minimalist. According to Luther, Indonesians perceived bare-breasted dancers to be shameful, and feisty dancing to be threatening as it invoked resistance. It was not that West Papuan dancing was prohibited by the state, explained Luther, it was just not actively supported. Luther's observation follows other commentators who have suggested that in Indonesia, 'primitive' people and their arts do not disappear because of progress, 'rather, they are *made* to disappear as a result, sometimes unintended, of government policies'.³⁶

Photo 2. Arnold Ap (seated fourth from the right) and fellow Mambesak musicians, c. 1981.



Photo: Marthen Rumabar.

Mambesak performed an oral narrative known as *mop* in an era when there was no field of published West Papuan literature. In this period, Ulli Beier published two volumes of indigenous writing from PNG, including the writer John Kasaipwalova whose play 'My brother my enemy' is mentioned in Chapter 9.³⁷ Yet there was not a single West Papuan inclusion in an anthology of 60 Indonesian writers titled *Blue sea blue sky* edited by Rosidi.³⁸ The form of *mop* may be a short vignette or dialogue between two characters, and its subject is often a moral commentary on a particular event or social interaction. *Mop* is written and performed in the Irian dialect, claimed to 'truly touch the ear and heart of the people'³⁹ and 'tap the feelings of rural Irianese'.⁴⁰ By Irian dialect, I refer to Suharno's research which distinguished Standard Indonesian from Indonesian spoken in Irian Jaya, in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon.⁴¹

Kapissa distinguished between 'street *mop*' and 'art *mop*'.⁴² Street *mop* is categorised as shallow, objectifying people for the sake of entertainment. Whereas art *mop* resembles a religious parable mirroring aspects of social life:

[through *mop*] a heart which is unscrupulous may be corrected, excessive ambition bridled, power which is corrupt restricted, greedy appetite controlled. This is important, for the creation of a human earth that is imperishable and eternal in this land.⁴³

Mop's humorous veil enables its performance and circulation in spite of its political subject matter of scruples, ambition, power and greed. Its meaning is often esoteric: to know *mop* is to know local social life intimately. Mambesak performed *mop* on the program 'Pinang stall' broadcast on Radio Republik Indonesia in Jayapura. *Mop* continue to be published in the daily column 'Papeda stall' of the *Cenderawasih Post*. It is fitting that it has been performed in shows, and published in columns that reference practices stereotyped as distinctly West Papuan i.e., the eating of *papeda* made from sago, and the chewing of betelnut or *pinang*. (Although it ought to be qualified that sago is also consumed in parts of Eastern Indonesia, and betelnut is chewed across the archipelago.)

George Aditjondro passed me several examples of *mop* written by Arnold Ap, published in the newsletter titled *Serikat* in 1983. Below is my translation of the *mop* 'Asnat cries':

Christmas Day. Asnat is holidaying at her uncle's village. There is no electricity. There are no kiosks. Completely dark just like Efrata [a quarter in Bethlehem mentioned in the Bible]. Everyone enters church. Some wear clothes and some merely wear *sarung katotor*. There are more people without clothes than there are with clothes. The time arrives to light the tree. But there are no candles. In her heart, Asnat thinks: in the city, there are electricity, candles and paper that go to waste. If it was sent here, it could be used. After praying, an elder divided potatoes, meat and drinking water. Everyone ate joyfully except Asnat. Asnat cried. Her uncle thought Asnat was playing, so he sang in jest: '1 2 3 1 5 4 3 4 5. Why are you crying dear Asnat?' Asnat said: 'It's nothing uncle, I feel bad seeing the children without clothes, and not eating cake or drinking tea.' Her uncle laughed: 'Here it is usual. The congregation is happy and praises God. Why should you cry? You should give thanks that you can experience such a simple, calm, wise and peaceful Christmas. Just like the environment in Bethlehem, Efrata.' Asnat reflected: 'If I become an important person [e.g., a government official], every Christmas I will send clothes, sugar and cake to the village so that the children can feel like they have friends in the city.'

'Asnat cries' can be read as a vignette which uses the commonplace binary village:town to elaborate deprivations and neglect of the village through failed development, or lack of development activity, and comparative excesses of the town (cake and sweet tea are like champagne and caviar). Asnat's uncle instructs his niece that people in the village are simple and devout. He relates the village analogously to the holy quarter of Efrata in Bethlehem and does not indulge his city niece's pity. Instead, he invites her to see village life through a different lens. It is possible that Ap means to map cultural West Papuans onto village, and multi-ethnic 'Irian Jayans', including migrants, onto town. In this case, the

village might represent a cultural state prior to colonisation. For example, Asnat's concern about the wearing of *sarong katotor* recalls the state's *koteka* campaign in the province of Jayawijaya, which attempted to replace the *koteka* with trousers.⁴⁴ Undoubtedly this *mop* romanticises village life, but it also lends integrity (honesty, devotion) to village West Papuans usually characterised as backwards and naive. The story reminds urban West Papuans living in multi-ethnic towns of the geographical territory of their birthplace which distinguishes them from migrants.

Mop and song recordings of Mambesak were embraced by West Papuan listeners. Their songs were sung at parties and festivals, and broadcast by the government's rural development programme. Between 1978 and 1983, Mambesak recorded five volumes of folksongs from nine regions. The lyrics were transcribed in the 1980 songbook *Collection of folk songs of Irian Jaya* and cassettes were marketed throughout the province. Mambesak's output was prolific and it performed 187 live broadcasts on Radio Republik Indonesia's 'Rainbow of Cultures', a program promoting 'unity in diversity'.

After leaving Mambesak in 1980, Ap's collaborator Sam Kapissa went on to develop a music industry on the island of Biak that boasted at least 10 recording groups, and produced thousands of cassettes for distribution.⁴⁵ Performance groups also proliferated throughout the northern region of Irian Jaya during this period. Groups comprised students and civil servants, and most made recordings. In a dominated political environment, dancing a dance of familiar local origin to music played by local performers using *tifa* and ukelele among people considered 'us' was affective. Collectivism is embodied in the progression or form of a dance,⁴⁶ and in audience formation. Dancing while singing in one's own regional language further intensifies the experience. Yohanes explained this eloquently: 'When we hear songs sung in our regional language it is like it is our own flag that is waving. To hear the lyrics of a song in one's own language outside of one's place is enough to make that person weep.'

In the early 1980s, Mambesak members were targeted for interrogation. In July 1982, after a group of Cenderawasih University students raised the West Papuan flag outside the Provincial Assembly building in Jayapura, Arnold Ap was arrested under suspicion of instigating the event but was later released without being charged.⁴⁷ In September 1983, the family of Mambesak member Alex Mebri was interrogated, and his father was executed in public by Indonesian soldiers.⁴⁸ Later, Mambesak technical coordinator Constant Ruhukail was arrested and detained in relation to the accusation that a lawyer called Henk di Suvero had been guided to an interview with OPM leaders in the jungle.⁴⁹ On 30 November 1983 Ap was arrested on suspicion of several charges: arranging contact between di Suvero and an OPM leader; funding the flight into PNG of Cenderawasih University (UNCEN) lecturer Fred Hatabu and OPM leader Seth

Rumkorem from the profits of Mambesak recordings; and assisting in the preparation of documentation for other West Papuans planning to flee into PNG.⁵⁰

The Military Commander of Irian Jaya claimed that Ap had confessed that Mambesak songs were intended to inspire West Papuan resistance to Indonesian rule.⁵¹ According to Aditjondro, Ap had proposed that Mambesak music be played in villages on the Indonesian–PNG border to encourage OPM guerillas to leave the jungle and return to their own villages to the west.⁵² The implication is that Mambesak music invokes nostalgia for place. The Indonesian military also alleged that a network of OPM sympathisers operated from within UNCEN and other government offices, supporting resistance activities of West Papuan soldiers who had deserted the Indonesian military and were hiding out in the jungle.

Ap continued to produce and record from prison. Another Mambesak member visited him there, ‘sometimes staying till late at night chatting, singing and making recordings’.⁵³ Ap was allowed his guitar, tape-recorder and cassettes, and he understood this favourable treatment in terms of the Biak proverb: ‘Feed your enemy well before you kill him.’⁵⁴ The lyrics of ‘I am sailing away’ suggest that Ap anticipated his fate:

I am sailing away
 I am sailing away (to make my way)
 To the place where the sun rises
 To look for knowledge as a foothold in life for the time to come
 Clouds at the peak of the blue mountain
 Sad hearted but joyful
 In the land of my ancestors
 On a certain day tomorrow
 I imagine the suffering of my people/nation
 Mother, Father as well as people
 That earthly land I leave behind with great yearning.

(Translated from the Biak language into Indonesian by Luther.)

Writing in the Biak language, Ap concealed the song’s meaning from prison guards. In it, he establishes his nativeness by mentioning his place as ancestral, and recalls his people’s colonisation by mentioning their suffering. Using a culturally stylised island metaphor of sea journey, he sails away from this world for a ‘heavenly’ other.

On 26 April 1984, Arnold Ap was killed by soldiers allegedly as he escaped from jail where he had been detained since his arrest.⁵⁵ His death occurred against a backdrop of political uprising that had resulted in heavy reprisals by the Indonesian military: house-to-house searches in urban areas; sweeping activity

in rural areas; and counter-insurgency activities on the PNG border deploying thousands of Indonesian ground troops and airforce equipment.⁵⁶ Seventeen years later, in an obituary of Sam Kapissa who had been anthropologist Danilyn Rutherford's interlocutor, Rutherford paralleled Kapissa's courage to survive for a cause with Ap's courage to die for it.⁵⁷ Following Ap's death, students did not go to the Cenderawasih campus for months. Those who arrived were fingerprinted and photographed.⁵⁸ Some students returned to their villages of origin in order to conceal themselves, others fled to Vanimo, PNG. Remaining Mambesak members were told by the authorities that if they wished to perform publicly they must 'sing not of Papuan culture, but of the unity of Indonesia'.⁵⁹

At the time of fleeing Jayapura for Vanimo in February 1984, Luther took great risks to enter Ap's office at the Cenderawasih University Museum and remove the original mastercopies of the Mambesak recordings, and a large dual tape recorder. Luther carried only these things in his flight to Vanimo. In August 1984 at Blackwater camp, Vanimo, West Papuan musicians formed a group called 'Sampari', meaning 'Morning Star' in the Biak language. From their site of exile, they arranged and recorded songs categorised as 'songs of the struggle' such as 'Blue 7 White 6', which refers to the stripes on the West Papuan flag. At East Awin in 1989, Sampari held several performances and were well received by other refugees. Gradually members dispersed, leaving East Awin for other cities in PNG and the Netherlands where some were offered third country asylum. In 1998, a member of a Netherlands-based group called 'Mambesak' visited East Awin. During the band member's visit, northerners talked about the formation of an art and culture youth group at East Awin to be called 'Mambesak'. Luther was critical of the proposal:

Mambesak cannot be used arbitrarily as a name nor is it something personally owned. The spirit of Mambesak must follow the spirit of Arnold Ap, i.e., open. Everyone must be permitted to join. Mambesak is a symbol of West Papua, not just the island of Biak, and it must not be a family enterprise but rather a national thing otherwise it will insult Arnold Ap's memory and be without basis. Also, it must have performance expertise and ought to consult original Mambesak members.

Luther's rebuke identified Ap and Mambesak as public cultural icons, and original members as custodians of sorts.

Ap was not an entirely secular figure to many Biak West Papuans. Some likened him to a Biak prophet figure known as *konor*:

In English, *konor* would translate as a philosopher, or a saint, who had many powers. These people always think good thoughts, have a true understanding of life and can even foresee the future. For example, Arnold predicted his own death well in advance. He knew that his

destiny was inevitable. In that regard you could make a comparison with the death of Christ.⁶⁰

Ap could 'spark fire' in others,⁶¹ and could even make Koreri 'live again'.⁶² In Biak terms '*konor*' is a person who receives divine inspiration from Manarmakeri, or God in the Biak language. Koreri refers to a religious-political movement of the north coast of Irian Jaya based on the expected return of a mythical figure called Manarmakeri. Koreri is also used as a metaphor for heaven, and a calm harbour where there is neither wind nor wave. Protestant pastor and anthropologist Kamma, whose monograph on Koreri is seminal, proposed that elements of the Bible were incorporated into the Koreri mythical sphere and that efforts were made to prove the congruity between the Koreri ideal and the Bible.⁶³ Rutherford however, suggests that believers claim the myth of Manarmakeri as the Bible's secret source: like the Old Testament narrative it reveals a man blessed with a son in his old age, and like the New Testament, it depicts a virgin birth.⁶⁴

The Koreri movement remains meaningful for some people from Biak-Numfoor, Serui and Manokwari living at East Awin. They narrated the legend of Koreri in historical terms, recounting the story of Mansar as a history of the Biak people and relating themselves to the territorial traces of Mansar's existence. The notion of 'an ideal state' contained in Koreri, like the Bible, allows West Papuans to imagine a liberated world. Kamma wrote that nationalistic aspirations and opposition to foreigners became part of the list of expectations connected with Koreri.⁶⁵ The logic of Ap as *konor* and Mambesak as Koreri movement is like this: if Ap's musical composition, leadership and following was considered to be bequeathed by Mansar or God, then this recognition of him as *konor* would manifest in the emergence of a Koreri movement, conceivably, Mambesak. The posthumous veneration of Ap as *konor* is analogous to the canonising of a person as a Christian saint.

At the time of Ap's death in 1984 many of his peers were living at Vanimo, across the border from Jayapura. They were subsequently relocated to the inland refugee settlement at East Awin. At the time of my fieldwork, the circumstances of Ap's death were readily recounted by those who had known him. Like the historical narratives of the previous chapter, narratives about Ap's death are constructed in terms of a rubric of colonisation. In the following account of Ap's last performance told by most northerners at East Awin, it is Ap's West Papuanness (and perhaps his Biakness) that is violated by the Indonesian state. The state's denial of matters of cultural importance to West Papuans underwrites a fundamental antagonism and basis of their struggle for nationhood:

In November 1983 at a Mambesak performance in the Parliament building, Jayapura, military officials from Jakarta led by the Minister of Defence, and guests from other nations including India, Korea and

America, were invited by Mambesak members to dance the Yospan. Then the wife of the Minister for Defence [General Murdani] asked Ap for his bird of paradise headdress. According to custom, feathers ought not be requested nor given but Ap gave her the feather. He made the comment that perhaps the gift would get him out of trouble at a later time. While Mambesak members ate outside, Ap remained inside speaking intensely with the international guests. Later in the taxi journey on the way home, he told his wife that she must be prepared for the worst. He was arrested the following day.

The standardised account of Ap's final performance places him and Mambesak in an international setting where Ap plays the role of statesman, and the provincial Yospan dance is showcased at a national function for international recognition. The request by Murdani's wife shows the state's disdain for local custom and attitude towards cultural artefacts as souvenirs. Ap's surrender of the bird of paradise feather is portrayed as a violation of custom which results in his capture. It is the culture of the gift which is violated, for Ap's gift is met with capture rather than reciprocity. The narrative juxtaposes customary local belief against the state. Narrators explained that Ap was offended by the request because he respected the north coast custom that proscribed the wearing of bird of paradise feathers by anyone who was not a tribal leader or *ondoafi*.

Ap's peers had also known his cross-cousin Eduard Mofu. They recounted the event of Ap's death in terms of his *nafirem* or cross-cousin relation with Mofu. Ap's father was Mofu's maternal uncle, his mother's brother. Mofu's own father had also been killed by Indonesian soldiers. It was explained to me that the relation between cross-cousins is more intimate than that between siblings, and resembles the relation between male in-laws. It is described by Rutherford: 'In the heat of battle, a man will leave his dying brother and flee to safety, but if his cross-cousin has fallen, he will perish by his side ... Cross-cousins cannot bring themselves to step over each other's feet, but brothers can fight to the death.'⁶⁶ By offering Mofu freedom if he abandoned Ap, the state attempted to negate Mofu's cross-cousin obligation and pitted a customary familial relationship against the state. People did not explain why Mofu was arrested, only that he was offered freedom but chose to stay:

Ap's cousin Edu Mofu was imprisoned with him. Mofu chose to remain despite the offer of his own release. Mofu's tortured body was dumped at sea. Had Mofu abandoned Ap their relatives would say: 'You forgot your cousin. Between *nafirem* it is like this: if he dies, I must also die.' Mofu had to intervene or his parent would ask of him, where is your brother? One heavy burden to bear.

After Ap's death, Mambesak member Constan Ruhukail wrote and circulated a five-page essay on the circumstances of Ap's death, and the contribution of his

work. Ruhukail wrote that the state's reaction to Ap's project revealed the boundaries of the government's own culture project.⁶⁷ Ap's work was apparently in line with the Indonesian state's inventorying of provincial cultures towards a unified national culture, but his motivations were divergent. Mambesak's performance repertoire was culturally bounded, limited to songs and dances considered traditional, and originating from within West Papua. The bounded nature of the repertoire imagined a certain cultural congruity, and an overarching cultural West Papuanness—an alternative identity.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Anderson, p. 178.
- ² George Aditjondro, *Cahaya Bintang Kejora: Papua Barat dalam kajian sejarah, budaya, ekonomi, dan hak asasi manusia*, Elsham, Jakarta, 2000, pp. 5–37.
- ³ Appadurai, p. 15.
- ⁴ Appadurai, p. 15.
- ⁵ Appadurai, p. 162.
- ⁶ Appadurai, p. 13.
- ⁷ Appadurai, p. 46.
- ⁸ Appadurai, p. 46.
- ⁹ Edward Wolfers, 'West Irian 1: The Bird of Paradise State University', *Institute of Current World Affairs Newsletter*, 1969, p.18.
- ¹⁰ D. C. Ajamiseba and A. J. Subari, 'Pengabdian pada masyarakat di Universitas Cenderawasih, disampaikan dalam seminar Lokakarya', unpublished report, Cenderawasih University, Jayapura, 1983.
- ¹¹ Anderson, p. 178.
- ¹² Aditjondro, *Cahaya Bintang Kejora*, pp. 5–37.
- ¹³ Paul Taylor, 'The *nusantara* concept of culture: local traditions and national identity as expressed in Indonesia's museums', in Paul Taylor (ed.), *Fragile traditions: Indonesian art in jeopardy*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1994, pp. 71–90.
- ¹⁴ Appadurai, p. 39.
- ¹⁵ Hughes-Freeland, 'Indonesian image enhancement', *Anthropology Today*, 5, 6, 1989, pp. 3–5.
- ¹⁶ Hughes-Freeland, p. 3.
- ¹⁷ Hughes-Freeland, p. 5.
- ¹⁸ Arnold Ap, 'Inventarisasi gerak dasar tari daerah Irian Jaya', in Don Flassy (ed.), *Aspek dan prospek Seni Budaya Irian Jaya*, Cenderawasih University, Jayapura, 1974, p. 117.
- ¹⁹ Greg Acciaioli, 'Culture as art: from practice to spectacle in Indonesia', *Canberra Anthropology*, 8, 1&2, pp. 148–172.
- ²⁰ Kathryn Robinson, 'The platform house: expression of a regional identity in the modern Indonesian nation', in V. M. Hooker (ed.), *Culture and society in New Order Indonesia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993, p. 229.
- ²¹ Rutherford, 'Remembering Sam Kapissa,' pp. 16–17.
- ²² Arnold Ap, 'Death and mourning among the Keenok', in M. Walker (ed.) *Asmat Papers I*, Cenderawasih University, Jayapura, 1974, pp. 57–73; Ap, 'Magic and Sorcery among the Keenok', in M. Walker (ed.) *Asmat Papers I*, Cenderawasih University, Jayapura, 1974, pp. 74–90; Ap, 'Beberapa aspek kebudayaan material Keenok', in M. Walker (ed.) *Asmat Papers I*, Cenderawasih University, Jayapura, 1974, pp. 221–33; Ap, 'Seni ukir Teluk Geelvink (Teluk Saerera)', in D. A. L Flassy (ed.) *Aspek dan prospek seni budaya Irian Jaya*, Pemda tingkat I Jayapura, Jayapura, 1983, pp.169–82; Arnold Ap and Sam Kapissa, 'Seni patung daerah Irian Jaya', *Lembaga Antropologi*, Jayapura, 1981; Arnold Ap and J. R. Mansoben, 'Membuat perahu Asmat', in M. Walker (ed.) *Asmat Papers II*, Cenderawasih University, Jayapura, 1974, pp. 62–75; Arnold Ap and W. G. Solheim, 'Pottery manufacturing in Abar, Lake Sentani Irian Jaya', *Irian*, 6, 1, 1977, pp. 52–70.

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- ²³ Ap, 'Inventarisasi gerak'.
- ²⁴ Ap, 'Inventarisasi gerak', p. 122.
- ²⁵ Ap, 'Inventarisasi gerak', p. 123.
- ²⁶ Ap, 'Inventarisasi gerak', p. 123.
- ²⁷ George Aditjondro, pers. comm., November 1999; cf. Danilyn Rutherford, 'Of birds and gifts: revising tradition on an Indonesian frontier', *Cultural Anthropology*, 11, 4, 1996, p. 590.
- ²⁸ Sam Kapissa, 'Randan' yang di Indonesiakan', *Oikoumene*, 1983, pp. 31–2.
- ²⁹ Aditjondro, 'Karya dan Gema 'Mambesak' di Irian Jaya', *Oikoumene*, 1984, pp. 27–30.
- ³⁰ Aditjondro, pers. comm., November 1999.
- ³¹ Aditjondro, 'Karya dan Gema', pp. 29–30.
- ³² Sawaki, pers. comm., 2001.
- ³³ Merauke Committee, 'Data sejarah Papua Barat dari tahun 1511 s/d tahun 1998', unpublished manuscript, 1998, p. 29.
- ³⁴ Danilyn Rutherford, 'Raiding the land of the foreigners: power, history and difference in Biak, Irian Jaya', PhD thesis, Cornell University, 1997, p. 263.
- ³⁵ Tom Ireeuw, 'Arnold Ap autobiography', *West Papua Bulletin*, 3, 1994.
- ³⁶ Original italics. Shelley Errington, 'Unraveling narratives', in Paul Taylor (ed.), *Fragile traditions: Indonesian art in jeopardy*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1994, p. 142.
- ³⁷ Ulli Beier, *Black writing from New Guinea*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1973; *Voices of Independence*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1980.
- ³⁸ David Hill, 'Suara Kemerdekaan: tulisan hitam baru dari Papua Niugini', *Kompas*, 2 November 1980, p. 8.
- ³⁹ Irja-DISC, Nomination letter to the Indonesian Department of Population and Environment for annual prize for outstanding contribution to environmental conservation (Kalpataru).
- ⁴⁰ Ajamiseba and Subari, p. 13.
- ⁴¹ I. Suharno, 'Some notes on the teaching of standard Indonesian to speakers of Irianese Indonesian', *Irian*, 8, 1, 1979, pp. 3–32.
- ⁴² Sam Kapissa, 'Budaya "Mop" sebagai media pesan', *Serikat*, November–December 1983, p. 5.
- ⁴³ Kapissa, 'Budaya "Mop"', p. 5.
- ⁴⁴ C. Budiardjo and L. Soei Liong, *West Papua: the obliteration of a people* (third edition), TAPOL, Surrey, England, 1988, pp. 56–7; Nonie Sharp, *The rule of the sword*, Kibble Books, Malmsbury, Victoria, 1977, p. 25.
- ⁴⁵ Aditjondro, *Cahaya Bintang Kejora*, pp. 122–5.
- ⁴⁶ Gillian Bottomley, *From another place: migration and the politics of culture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 72–3.
- ⁴⁷ Smith, pp. 173–4.
- ⁴⁸ Smith, p. 174.
- ⁴⁹ Smith, pp. 174–5.
- ⁵⁰ Aditjondro, *Cahaya Bintang Kejora*, pp. 5–37.
- ⁵¹ Budiardjo and Liong, pp. 126–7.
- ⁵² Aditjondro, *Cahaya Bintang Kejora*, pp. 5–37.
- ⁵³ Budiardjo and Liong, p. 28.
- ⁵⁴ Ireeuw.
- ⁵⁵ Budiardjo and Liong, pp. 125–36; Constan Ruhukail, 'Kasus pembunuhan Arnold C. Ap dan Eddy Mofu', *Berita Tanpa Sensor*, Gerakan demi hak-hak asasi manusia dan demokrasi, Leiden, 1985; Aditjondro, *Cahaya Bintang Kejora*, pp. 138–56.
- ⁵⁶ Robin Osborne, *Indonesia's secret war: the guerilla struggle in Irian Jaya*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, p. 100.
- ⁵⁷ Rutherford, 'Remembering Sam Kapissa,' pp. 16–17.
- ⁵⁸ George Aditjondro, 'Perkembangan keadaan tahanan eks-panorama', unpublished, n. d.
- ⁵⁹ Osborne, p. 153.

⁶⁰ Rumakiek quoted in Osborne, p. 149.

⁶¹ Ireeuw.

⁶² Kaisiepo in Sharp, *The Morning Star in Papua Barat*, p. 64.

⁶³ F. C. Kamma, *Koreri: Messianic movements in the Biak-Numfoor culture area*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, p. 282.

⁶⁴ Rutherford, 'Raiding the land', p. 415.

⁶⁵ Kamma, p. 280.

⁶⁶ Rutherford, 'Raiding the land', p. 173.

⁶⁷ Ruhukail.