

The Thinking Planet Vol I
Critical Supper on West Papua Land



From Mama
Papua's Love
to Our Fragile, Clinking Porcelain Plates

**"No host makes peace with
the thief who ravages his
home."**

– Tan Malaka

When President Sukarno called for "from Sabang to Merauke" in 1950, leading up to the annexation of Papua in 1963, from that moment on every act of land grabbing, environmental destruction, and human rights violation that has occurred in Papua has been a form of rape and violence committed by the Indonesian state.

For Papuans, the land is mama. In the language and mythology of the Muyu people, the land is called bumkon. Bumkon is seen as mama or mother, who holds the central role in society. Likewise, the indigenous Moi people teach their children that the forest is tam sini – the biological mother who provides protection and sustenance. Thus, the relentless expansion of mining, plantations, and so-called National Strategic Projects (PSN) has violated and raped the body of Mama Papua.

If you begin to understand this, you can imagine Papua's independence as the struggle to free a mother from violence, suffering, and misery at the hands of an abusive man who forces her into marriage. The mother must be free and independent – for she has nurtured us as her children, and raised us with love and affection through every meal we eat.



Photo:
Merdeka.com, Detik News,
Galeripapua.com

Welcome Drink Water and Moi Tea



Photo:
Instagram/sinagipapua

If you wake up one morning in a Moi Indigenous village in West Papua, you might join the mama-mama = the women – as they fish, gather medicinal plants, cultivate their gardens, and manage the river water that sustains daily life. You might also enjoy a cup of Moi Tea, brewed not from leaves, but from the bark of a tree known as Kamlowele.

Every activity in the Moi Indigenous community follows the egek tradition. In egek, there are rules and prohibitions on harvesting from the sea – and not only the sea; rivers and sago groves are also subject to egek – to preserve the balance and sustainability of nature's resources. Water, rivers, and the sea are the sources of life, to be protected and respected. If they are not, nature will grow angry and bring disaster upon the Moi people.

Sadly, the harmony of Moi land is under threat from the expansion of oil palm plantations and forest logging – forces that endanger the forests, water sources, food, medicines, and the very traditions, culture, and knowledge of the Moi Indigenous people.

Here, biopolitics is at work: the exercise of power over bodies, land, and community resources – deciding who has the right to live from the forest, and who must be cast out of it. It operates through the normalization of authority that distorts the human-nature relationship, tramples local knowledge, and enforces a regime of “development” that treats nature as a lifeless, limitless object.



Photo:
Pusaka Bentala Rakyat | Econusa

Papua Highland's Signature Hipere and Wam, an ancient connection between land and People

Imagine journeying into an uncharted territory. An unknown world with unknown communities. Lush endless forest greeted by the vast giant mountain ranges. You observe the past historical presence of glacial landscapes, the cold breeze brushes your cheeks yet the tropical sun reminds you that you are still in the tropics. As you set your foot on this mysterious land you're greeted by the presence of the land owners shouting words you don't understand.

Halawok! Nagaromi, Noigui (greetings).



Photo:
Pusaka Bentala Rakyat

For a second, tension arises as two worlds collide. But after that you feel at ease and you know surely that there are no threats here. You were presented with hipere (ubi) and as a sign of respect you gave them cigarettes. Then they invited you to the village to meet with the community. You feasted on the finest pork and as you attempted to bite they insisted on you feeding your members first before yourself. An ancient wisdom dating back 40,000 - 60,000 years ago.

What you went through was the experience of the first expedition of Lorentz, the first time for the Hubula People to make contact with outsiders on 29th October 1909 (did not plan this but was meant to be). More notes found from this expedition reflects how ironic that the people who are referred as primitives are the ones teaching manners to outsiders.

Little did we know that 60 years later the fate of West Papua was centered on this expedition. The annexation of West Papua by Indonesia can be tied to this very day in 1909. Here we present to you Hipere and Wam, as a sign of invitation just as Mr Lorentz was welcomed into the villages in Palim.

Hipere and wam are sacred as it is part of the landscape where Hubula People live. Hipere, wam, Agat (Land) and Hubula. The story of their ancestors represents the eco-cosmology connection between Hubula people of Palim Valley with land. The purpose of life is to maintain the harmony between ancestors and spirit through cultural practices such as eating hipere and wam.



Ro be yan Plate – Papeda with Yellow Fish Broth

“Ro be yan” is an expression used by the Biak people when they see real food – food of the their ancestors.

PAPEDA is a thick, sticky porridge made from sago. It is usually served with fish in a yellow broth flavored with turmeric. When you eat papeda, you'll taste the savory and refreshing blend of lemongrass, candlenuts, chili, lime leaves, and tomato – a harmony of spices that awaken both memory and land. By using the original spices, ‘bumbu asli’ of Papua, we aim to take back our culture for food sovereignty.

The main ingredient of papeda is **sago**. Papua's mama-mama – the women – play a vital role in planting, harvesting, and processing it. Sago holds deep significance in customary rituals and in sustaining the peatland ecosystem. It is the cultural identity of Papua.

But you must know this: the food that has nourished Papuans for over 50,000 years is now facing extinction. The reason? The Indonesian government's food estate project, which seizes and clears sago forests in Papua.



Photo:
Pusaka Bentala Rakyat

Coconut Oil

The Indonesian government claims that the food estate project will strengthen national food security. Under the pretext of anticipating a global food crisis through modern agriculture, the state dismisses local food systems, cultural identity, and the ecological role of sago.

Many mama-mama Papua resist the food estate project. They understand clearly that it is a deceptive scheme – one that benefits only the state, corporations, oligarchs, and the military. And militarism is not just about soldiers;

it seeps into norms, practices, and narratives that shape society itself.



Photo:
Pusaka Bentala Rakyat

Dessert

Indonesia's ambitious "food estate" project aims to turn a vast area of forests and wetlands into rice fields and sugar plantations, in the name of food security.

In this new video from The Gecko Project, photographer Ulet Ifansasti travels to Papua to hear the testimony of indigenous Papuans whose ancestral land falls in the crosshairs of this megaproject. In Merauke, in the far southeast of Indonesia, it is targeting an area around half the size of Belgium.

The project is being developed by the Ministry of Defence, with the assistance of a politically-connected conglomerate, the Jhonlin Group. Ulet learns how Papuan land has been taken without consent, and of the fear generated after vast numbers of soldiers descended on Merauke to enforce the plan.

"When this company first arrived, they immediately deployed soldiers," said Hariston, a civil servant in Wanam Village. "There are so many – more soldiers than local people. We don't consider this a military operation zone. So why has such a large military force been deployed here?"



Photo:
The Gecko Project

Indigenous Culinary Team



Amelia Puhili – an Indigenous woman from West Papua, works as a Researcher and Campaigner at the Pusaka Bentala Rakyat Foundation. She focuses on empowering women and the ethnoecology of indigenous communities, supporting groups like the Moi women in Sorong and Wambon Kenemopte women in Boven Digoel. Amelia shares knowledge about women's rights and sustainable livelihoods.

She conducts ethnoecological research in Sorong, Merauke, and Boven Digoel, with her writings featured in Pusaka's publications. Amelia has also documented the Customary Forest of Gelek Malak Kalawilis Pasa and contributed articles to Rainforest Rescue and the West Papua Journal.

Additionally, she is involved in the anti-dam movement in West Papua, advocating against the Mamberamo Raya dam project due to its potential for ethno-ecocide. Through her work, Amelia contributes to advancing the lives of communities in West Papua.

Indigenous Culinary Team



Elfriede Rumaseuw – an Indigenous woman journalist based in Jayapura Papua. She has maintained a keen interest in environmental and human rights issues since she was in the 6th grade of elementary school around 2014. She currently works as a journalist for PT. Media Jubi Papua, having started in August 2025 and accumulating about two and a half months of experience.

At Media Jubi Papua, she has covered environmental, political, and economic issues, and despite being new to the field, she is now focusing her reporting on environmental concerns around Sentani, Jayapura Regency, Papua, where she resides. While she's still new in formal advocacy, Elfriede began her professional journey as the Director of the Papuan Student Women Alliance in the USA from 2022 to 2024, where her responsibilities included managing donations, organizing socialization programs for schools, and handling public relations.

Indigenous Culinary Team



Ambrosius Mulait – an Indigenous Papuan who has dedicated himself to the advocacy of human rights violation cases in West Papua since 2012. His journey includes a significant event in 2019 when he and six colleagues were arrested and charged with treason (Makar) by the government following a high-profile racism incident against the Papuan people.

In 2022, he joined the Pusaka Bentala Rakyat Foundation, where he works in Human Rights monitoring—specifically covering Civil, Political, Social, and Cultural Rights in Papua. His comprehensive work portfolio further includes mapping, GIS, documentation, and organizing Indigenous Communities who have become victims of large-scale investment by both national and international corporations across the West Papua region.

Storyteller



Dina Danomira – Youth Representative, Kankain Karkara Byak/Byak Tribal House. Dina is a Youth Representative from the Byak tribal house in Papua. She works in climate organizing and youth engagement and has coordinated with Climate Strike Indonesia since 2022 to organize a global climate strike in Jayapura. In 2023, she campaigned for the Awyu Woro Clan case against a palm oil company and the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry, where she attended court hearings and filed petitions with other civil society organizations and youth community groups.

Dina is also the founder of the grassroots movement Papua Trada Sampah. Since 2018, this movement has been conducting beach cleanups and raising awareness of waste pollution, with its impact initially extending from Jayapura to other cities such as Sarmi, Nabire, Wamena, and Fak-fak. As an Indigenous woman from West Papua, Dina has contributed to reports by UN mechanisms on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and has been trained by the OHCHR and the Australian National University as an Indigenous Fellow. Dina is a recent DTP alumna of the 33rd Diplomacy Training Program in Timor-Leste.

Producer



Safina Maulida – Founder and Director of Resister Berdaya Pulih (Resilience Collective). An Ecofeminist, Peacebuilder, Cross-disciplinary Artist. With a decade of experience in human rights, security, and peacebuilding, Safina has worked across Southeast Asia and beyond—supporting feminist transitional justice in Indonesia, Myanmar, Southern Philippines, and Afghanistan. Her work bridges local realities with global frameworks such as the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, Feminist Foreign Policy, and Responsibility to Protect.

She previously collaborated with a migrant workers organization in Jakarta, a democracy keeper organization in South Korea, and peacebuilding initiatives in The Philippines where she learnt advancing gender-sensitive conflict resolution, civic engagement, and disarmament. She is also relearning activism and cultural approaches through her ongoing residency as an activist in Bangkok, using critical performance art in advocacy. Her work transforms multisensory and collective memory into radical story-truth-telling, deeply rooted in visual, aural, and somatic culture, where even scent and taste carry histories and identities of resistance.

What to Read Next

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- Masyarakat Moi Kelim Penuhi Energi dari Hutan yang Terjaga - Mongabay
<https://mongabay.co.id/2020/11/22/masyarakat-moi-kelim-penuhi-energi-dari-hutan-yang-terjaga/>
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