WEST IRIAN: POPULATION PATTERNS AND PROBLEMS

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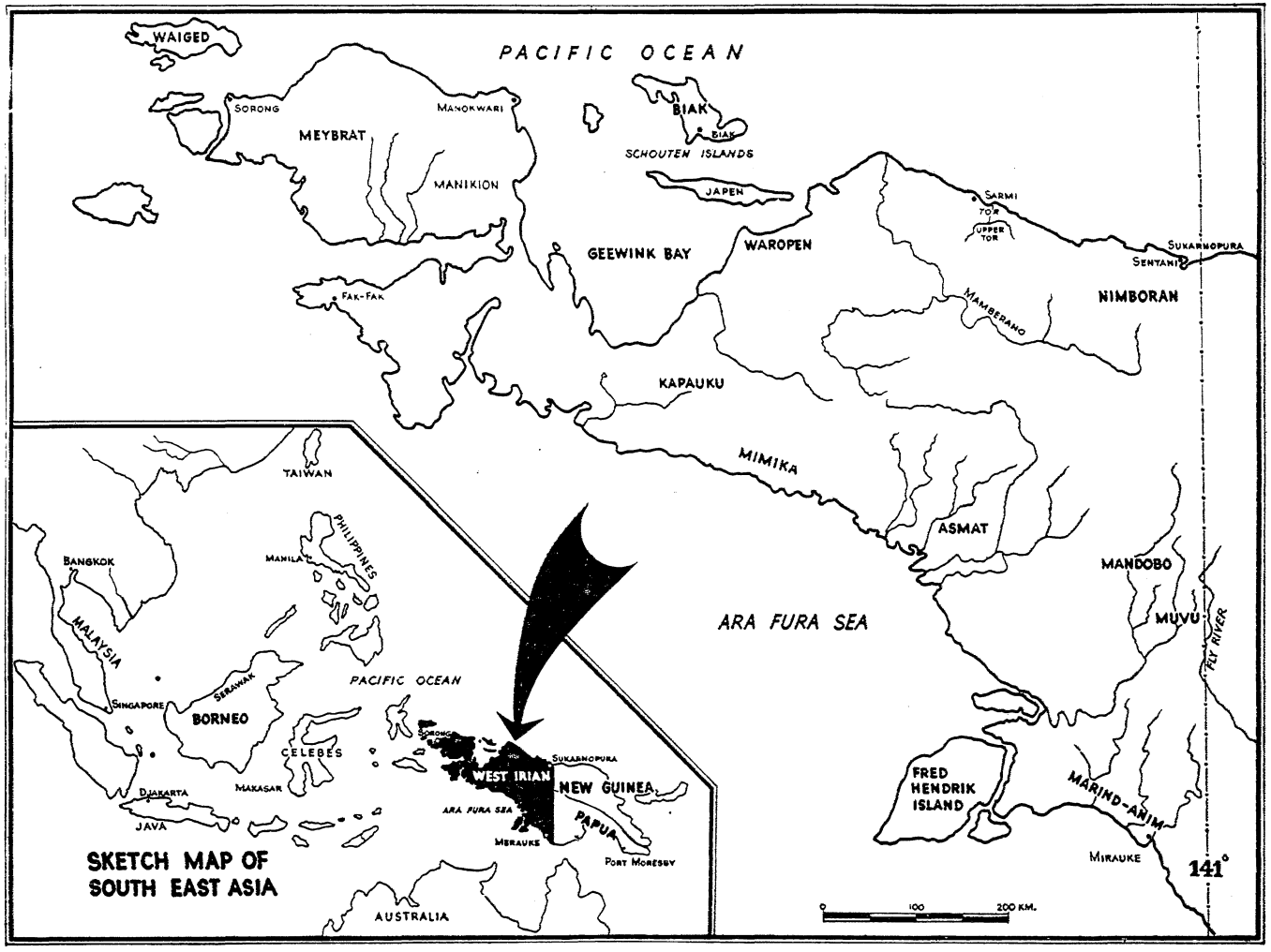
ON MAY 1, 1963, WEST IRIAN—THE FORMER NETHERLANDS New Guinea—came under Indonesian Administration. Formerly a part of the Netherlands East Indies, West Irian remained under Dutch control when the rest of that former colony became an independent nation: Indonesia (1949). The sharp dispute between Holland and Indonesia on West New Guinea that later followed, was finally settled in 1962. A United Nations resolution was then adopted: beginning May 1, 1963, Indonesia would have the control over West Irian. At the same time, Indonesia promised that by 1969, the people of West Irian—under the supervision of the United Nations—could freely determine their future political status. For this reason alone, a study on West Irian population seems to be justified.

There are other reasons besides: from 1950 to 1962, tremendous changes have taken place in West Irian which strongly affected the traditional population patterns and trends. Little or nothing has been published in English about them. Some of these population problems and trends moreover, are very similar to those in the rest of Asia and hence, important for comparative research. Since many of these problems—compared with the rest of Asia are in their initial phase only, a deeper knowledge might help those responsible for the welfare of the people concerned, to take proper actions while it is still time to do so.

The people of West Irian have commonly been called Papuas, the origin of which name remains in the dark. Some believe that the name Papua, which has been used by early Spanish discoverers in the 16th century, refers to the wooly, crispy hair of the people. It is, indeed, a remarkable characteristic. Others have suggested that the name might find its origin in a yell of early Papuan male rowers. Among other theories, the name Papua was said to mean "slave" in some of the east Indonesian islands, from where raiders came to West Irian to get their slaves. For that reason, at least, two of the (former) political parties in West Irian fervently worked for the abolition of the name Papua. They, with others, preferred the name New Guinea, the name given to the island in 1545 by the Spaniard, Yñigo Ortiz de Rates, because of its apparent similarities to Guinea on the West coast of Africa: similar climate and flora; similarities also in the physical appearance of the people.

At the conference of Malino (1946), a young Papuan delegate—Frans Kasiepo—all of a sudden suggested to change the name New Guinea into Irian, a name never heard of before. Kasiepo himself, learned about the name when he was a student at the School of National Civil Officers at Biak. An old woman—helping out in the school kitchen—replied to Kasiepo's question on how the people from Biak referred to the main island of New Guinea: "We say Irian" (Land of Birth; homeland). One of the reasons why the Dutch Government later rejected that name was because the word Irian



Sketch Map of West Irian

has so many different meanings in the various languages of the island. In the Southwest for instance, the word means: "People that are highly exalted," whereas in the key-islands, the word "ivi" stands for "slave" and "irian" for a "gang of slaves." Later, the name Irian was used by Indonesia as a symbol of the liberation of the Papuas from the Dutch. The names New Guinea and Papua then served as reminders of colonialism and imperialism; Irian came to stand for freedom.[1]

The Traditional Patterns

Whatever the name used—Papua, Irian or New Guinea—the choice of one name to refer to all of the 715,000 inhabitants of West Irian, was rather misleading. It suggests a unity that, in fact, did not exist. Besides differences in physical appearance, it was *the great cultural diversity that formed a special characteristic of the population of West Irian.* It is well, therefore, to speak about the traditional patterns rather than about one single pattern.

Compared with other areas of Asia, the population patterns of West Irian, as a whole, show a few common characteristics which make them stand out as a unit. There are, first of all, *the very small number of people* and *the very low density of population.* Table 1 gives a comparison of West Irian's area, population and density with those of other areas of Asia, excluding Hong Kong and Singapore, with a density of 7,237 and 6,750, respectively.

Table 1: Comparative figures on the density of population in Asia.[2]

Country	Areas (sq. miles)	Population (000)	Density (sq. mi.)
Burma	261,789	22,342	79
Cambodia	88,780	4,952	72
Ceylon	25,332	10,167	379
China	3,769,000	646,500	178
Federation of Malaya	50,690	7,137	132
India	1,221,880	441,631	345
Indonesia	735,865	96,750	161[3]
Japan	142,688	94,870	655
Korea (South)	34,427	26,354	676
Laos	91,000	1,850	20
Philippines	115,758	29,698	237
Taiwan	13,886	11,302	764
Vietnam (South)	65,000	14,520	209
West Irian	160,000	715	4.5

[1] This refers also to the eastern half of the island, still under Australian jurisdiction. The former Dutch part is, therefore, referred to as *West* Irian, while the territory of New Guinea and Papua, the northern and southern half of the Australian part of the island respectively, are referred to as *East* Irian, still a "terra irredenta."

[2] W. Stanley Rycroft and Myrtle M. Clemmer, *A factual study of Asia* (New York, 1963), 15.

[3] Of those 715,000, about 475,000 were under direct government control. Another 75,000 had had some contact with the administration or the missions, while an estimated number of about 165,000 people had never been in contact yet with the administration or missionary societies.

The picture above is already clear enough: West Irian, with only 715,000 inhabitants—in size, a bit larger than Japan (95 million inhabitants) and the Philippines (30 million inhabitants)—seems to be a "land without people." There were no urban centers, nor large concentrations of people before the 1950's. *The traditional pattern was that of people living in a very large number of small and very small, commonly widely scattered and isolated local units.*

From the few (reliable) statistics available before 1951,[4] it seems evident that those widely scattered small communities were rather static: the death rate being as high (or here and there, even higher) than the birth rate. The latter may be estimated between 40 to 50 (per thousand).[5] These small settlements differed in size and in form. In the interior, the majority of the settlements counted less than 75 inhabitants. In certain areas, those settlements can best be characterized as homesteads: a few scattered single extended-family houses. Often, even one or two single houses are found in the jungle where only one or two nuclear families live at a day's or more walking distance from the nearest settlement.

Along the coast, villages were, on the whole, a bit bigger. But even there, the majority (65-70%) counted less than 150 inhabitants. These differences in size between the settlements on the coast and in the interior are closely related to the natural environment: the possibilities and patterns of food production, and the level of peoples' technical civilization. Generally, the coastal areas offered greater possibilities for a varied food supply (sago, taro, cassava, coconut, fish) and contacts with the neighboring groups than the more hilly and mountainous interior (sago, sweet potatoes). Yet, on the whole—and this is another common characteristic—the natural environment in West Irian is very unfavorable and rather hostile to human occupation: high precipitation, very poor soils (eroded and depleted), the area (80%) covered with dense, tropical rain forests and, in the south, large swampy areas. Often, this geologically young area is struck by earthquakes and landslides. Malaria was number one in the list of disease and one which has been highly endemic. Pneumonia and yaws took their toll as well. Often, the birthrates could not keep pace with the high mortality rate. In fact, many reports on various areas make mention of the fact that the population is becoming extinct. Wars, cannibalism and infanticide added to the high mortality caused by shortage of food and diseases. A functional interdependence seems to exist between this unfavorable natural milieu, the very low level of technical civilization, the small number of people, and the typical patterns of widely scattered independent small communities, with their differences in culture and social organization.

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[4] Since 1951, the Netherlands administration has published statistics on the population of West Irian in its annual reports to the United Nations (Charter 73 E). The last report refers to the situation in 1961. Before 1951, data on population patterns, birth rates, mortality rates, trends, and the like, may be found in (mimeographed) administrative reports, in mission reports, in official exploration reports, and, incidentally, in a few scientific publications.

[5] These figures are comparable to the traditional birth rates in Asian countries before 1920. Though the average birth rates have been far from uniform, "for the combined area of South-east Asia the birth rate in the 1920's and 1930's... seems to have averaged about 45 per thousand." W. Stanley Rycroft and Myrtle M. Clemmer, *op. cit.*, 27-35.

This ecological approach of the population patterns of West Irian is still accentuated by a third common characteristic: *its long time isolation.* This refers to the external as well as to the internal situation. Before the Second World War, West Irian was the "land that time forgot." Besides the work of the missions, little or nothing was done to break that isolation. West Irian had practically no contact with the rest of the (Asian) world. This was apparently also the case prior to its discovery by the Portuguese in 1512. West Irian remained untouched by the large migrations in South and East Asia. It remained outside the influence of the former great empires in the Far East. It had no contact with the great cultures and remained outside the sphere of the great Asian religions. Only a few bronze adzes found in recent years seem to indicate that the Dong Son cultures, at a time, touched the north of West Irian. Along the north coast—here and there—Melanesian influences can be traced; in the extreme western part of the island, influences from East Indonesia (Tidore) are reflected in the material culture and political organization. As a result, no large immigrations developed a more dynamic population pattern.

There was no contact with other (higher) cultures that would stimulate or develop a technology, no contact that would enable the people to make a better living *(i.e.,* rice culture) and allow for larger concentration of people, another division of labor, and the like. Under these circumstances, specialists on West Irian agree that the local groups—especially in the interior—could not be bigger than about 70 people. Every increase would disturb ecological equilibrium. In large areas of the interior, a density of 1 to 2 per square miles was already a maximum. "Land without people" seems to be a rather misleading statement, therefore, since in many areas a density of 4 means already an overpopulation, resulting in infanticide or the abandoning of the old members of the group. The widely scattered, independent local community, on the other hand, is the people's "response" to their natural and cultural "challenge." It seems to be an adaptation to, and best suited for, the marginal situation in which they live.

The strong isolation applies also to the internal situation in West Irian. Swamps, mountain ridges, a high incidence of accidents, and long distances, did not stimulate an intensive contact between the widely scattered groups. The small community, therefore, was a world of its own. It was an autonomous, independent unit with strong ingroup-outgroup feelings. Local endogamy was after favored, making the small local group a consanguine group, where every member—in more than one way—can trace his blood relations with the others, as well. In case of conflict, village solidarity was considered more important than family ties. On the whole, relationships with other "people" (for many of these small communities referred to themselves as "we, the people") varied from suspicious tolerance to open hostility. Contacts between the peoples consisted of (mute) trade and barter, common religious ceremonies, wars and cannibalistic raids. One does not exclude the other.

Large political or family associations are very rare. Even clans, sibs or lineages are generally absent or rather vague, even though a mythical relationship between the groups, often speaking the same language, was recognized. And if—in a few cases—larger units did occur, the organizational ties

were rather loose and flexible. The nuclear family formed the basis of the traditional Papuan society. The strong individualism of the Papuans fits very well into this atomistic structure of the population pattern.

No doubt, it is this isolation that strongly contributed to the great cultural diversity on the West Irian scene: differences in language, social organization, religion and mythology. It is no wonder that cultural anthropologists in New Guinea have attached a great significance to community research. The study of the small community has been basic in the understanding of the cultural diversity as well as the typical aspects of the social structure and organization in West Irian.[6]

The New Era

At a time when the value of a colony was determined by the presence of "precious spices," minerals and the opportunities for large plantations and trade, it is understandable that the Dutch did not show great interest in West Irian, where they were not available. This indifferent attitude of the Dutch towards West Irian did not change with the adoption—in the second half of the 19th century—of the "ethical colonial policy" (the policy of administering a colony for the benefit of the colony itself). The more active administration at the end of the 19th century, was mainly the result of the "imperialistic activities" of the British and the Germans in the eastern half of New Guinea. In the Southwest, Merauke was founded (1902); in the West, Fak-Fak (1898); in the North, Manokwari (1898); and, close to the border of the former German part of New Guinea, Hollandia (1910), now Sukarnopura. The second World War, all of a sudden, brought an end to the isolation of West New Guinea.

A notable exception during those years of disinterest was the work of the Protestant and Roman Catholic missions. The first Protestant missionaries—Ottow and Geissler—set foot on West Irian (Geelvink Bay area) in 1855. About five decades later, the first Roman Catholic missionaries started their work in the south. Though it took many years before their work yielded fruit, in a number of areas, it definitely brought about (great) changes in traditional culture and society and largely affected the traditional population patterns. A real new era, however, started after 1950, when the Netherlands East Indies became an independent nation (Indonesia) and only West New Guinea remained under Dutch control as a self-governing territory.[7]

The effects on the traditional population patterns were noted everywhere and, all times, the same. Though, on the one hand, in some respects these contacts with the West did tend to smooth out the differences between the various patterns, on the other hand, they caused a still greater variety and differentiation: the contracts differed in nature, form as well as intensity, and the element of time is rather important. This does not only refer to the duration of the contact (some areas have been under the Ad-

[6] Anthropological Research in Netherlands New Guinea since 1950. The Bureau of Native Affairs, Hollandia, *The Oceanic Monographs*, no. 10 (Sydney, 1959).

[7] Article 2 of the charter said that the status of West New Guinea would be defined later at negotiations between Indonesia and the Netherlands. Those negotiations failed, however.

ministration for over fifty years now, whereas others have just been opened or have not had any contact with the Administration or missions at all) but also to the years in which the first contact took place. Moreover, the various cultures reacted differently to the contacts with the West and varying areas also differed in their opportunities for development—physically as well as culturally. It has to be borne in mind, therefore, that often, opposite effects were the result of Western contacts and that many of those effects and trends to be mentioned here, often apply to limited areas only.

One of the most striking changes brought about after 1950 are the larger concentrations of population in West Irian: small Administrative stations soon developed into towns and small-scale urban centers. The rapidly expanding departments of the Administration attracted large numbers of national workers. Bigger and smaller contractor companies, business concerns, trading societies, and others soon gave employment to thousands of Papuans. A number of the other young Papuans soon became attracted by the city life with its entertainments, riches and opportunities. In 1956, over 26,000 Papuans were employed in administrative (65%) and private (35%) jobs, as against less than 5,000 in 1950. About 20,000 of those employed, lived and worked in the new urban centers.[8] The town of Hollandia, for instance, grew from an Administrative station with less than 10 Europeans and a couple of hundred Papuans in 1940, to a big urban center in 1959 with over 7,000 Papuans, about 8,000 Europeans and 1,200 Asians. Figures of the other urban centers are shown, in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparative Population Figures of Urban Centers in West Irian

	Hollandia (Sukarnopura) 1951-1959	Biak 1951-1959	Merauke 1951-1960	Manokwari 1952-1957	Fak-Fak 1952-1959
Papuans	1306-7058	1452-4019	434-2427	4027-12577	466-1090
European	5281-8488	349-2747	163- 850	2125- 2265	159- 258
Asian	4451189	280- 475	1505-2712	234- 397	673- 980
Total	7032-16735	2081-7241	2102-5989	6375-15239	1298-2328

These immigrants largely consisted of males in the age group of 18-35 years. The result was, of course, a rather large surplus of males in the productive age groups in those urban centers. Special dormitory camps were built where bachelors from all over West Irian lived together. If anything, it was this living together of so many different people that helped to break down traditional cultural barriers and to establish a notion of greater unity. The schools in these urban centers attracted another group of young men (and girls) most of whom lived in school dormitories.

For those immigrants who brought their families with them, special laborer-villages were built. It is this definite housing policy that prevented, in West Irian, the growth of slums known in other areas of Asia. Of course, there were enough of the other problems created by the sudden change to a money-economy and the accelerated process of urbanization.

[8] Unless stated otherwise, these and other figures are taken from the official annual reports to the United Nations.

The typical demographic aspect of these new centers then was: a very large group of young people and people in the productive age group, with a very great surplus of males. On the whole, the mortality rate was very low, also because of the intensive medical campaigns to free these centers from malaria, pneumonia, tuberculosis; the good (free) medical care; regular inspection, and the like. Because of this, and the large number of young families, the surplus of births (as well as the birth rate) was very high. The trend, therefore, was an accelerated growth of these urban centers. The Dutch Administration tried to check and to regulate the emigration to the urban centers by labor licenses and housing policies. Moreover, special community-development projects were started to create work opportunities and to give the population in the expulsion areas, opportunities to make money through cash crops.

These expulsion areas presented quite a different picture from that in the urban centers: the young emigrated, whereas the older people stayed behind. Or the men went, leaving the women at home in the villages. In some of these expulsion areas—notably along the northern coast, east of Sarmi—a considerable depopulation was the result. In some of these villages, the population consisted of over 70% women. The percentage of old people was very high. No wonder the birth rate dropped considerably and the mortality rate often increased to over 50. The emigration of the (young) men caused other special problems: all the work, especially the very heavy work of food production, now rested on the women alone. They also had to take care of the children and the old. Marriages were postponed and sexual relations changed, and not always for the better.

A larger concentration of the population was also the result of definite administrative and mission policies. The widely scattered, rather unstable small communities, certainly did not promote an intensive administration. It took civil officers months to visit the people under their jurisdiction. Medical campaigns were hardly possible, since many of these semi-nomadic people changed their abodes every two or three months. One could hardly expect the missions to establish a school in those villages or send an evangelist there. Often, those local units had no more than 4-6 children of school age. Hence, the policy to merge a number of these small local units into bigger ones. Often, totally new villages had to be built, usually along the rivers to make them also more accessible. In some areas, this policy indeed resulted in a larger concentration of the population. The total number of villages decreased, while the number of villages with 150 inhabitants or more, increased. In 1961, the 440,000 Papuans, under direct administration, lived in about 2,900 villages. In the interior, 80% of those villages had still less than 150 inhabitants, and over 50% had less than 70. In the coastal areas, 25% of the village counted between 150 and 300 inhabitants, and only 27% of the total population lived in villages with less than 150 inhabitants. In that same year, over 6% of the total population of West Irian already lived in urban centers which did not exist before 1950.

The fact, however, that in 1961, 70% of all the villages in New Guinea (in the interior even 80%) still counted less than 150 inhabitants, shows

that this policy of merging villages into larger units, was not a success everywhere. It just caused too many problems. People had been living too long in isolation. Every village—a world of its own—mistrusted the other and the fear of sorcery *(suangi:* black magic) was always present. Morever, disputes immediately arose about property rights. Often, the newly built villages were at too great a distance from the *sago* groves. A larger concentration of people just broke the ecological equilibrium. People became either dependent on imported goods (rice and canned fish) for which they had no money, or they starved. Hunger and death, together with diseases, made people accuse each other of sorcery; soon, the larger units split again into smaller ones. In some areas, however, the desire for a school—the symbol of the strongly desired progress—everywhere in West Irian—was so great that former hostile people forgot about their feuds and disputes and voluntarily built large, new villages around a school and/or a church.[9]

Closely connected with this development into larger concentrations has been another change: *the (strong) natural growth of the population,* especially in those areas which have been, for a long time or very intensively, under Dutch Administration: Biak (Schouten-islands), the Sentani area (near Sukarnopura). The latter, because of its easy accessibility, became the pilot project of almost every medieval campaign. People, moreover, have had plenty of food and have shared all the advantages of those living in the urban centers *(i.e.)* work opportunities; medical care and others). The result was a tremendous and very rapid decrease of the mortality rate. In a few years, it dropped from about 35 in 1950 to 17 in 1960. During the same period, the birth rate showed (slight) increase to about 50 per thousand. A real population explosion was the result. As long as these areas were exceptions in West Irian, they did not create serious problems. The men found employment in the expanding urban centers. In Sentani there was plenty of land available. This was not the case, however, in the Biak area, and the result was that a number of people had to emigrate, most of them to Hollandia. Later, the production of cocoa for the world market offered some relief. But when, in 1962, work opportunities in the urban centers almost disappeared and the cocoa production rapidly decreased because of political developments, the population pressure became very serious, as is still the case at present.

In the course of the years, Biak and Sentani did not remain few isolated examples. They became the signs of a general trend in large parts of West Irian. By 1962, anti-malaria campaigns had covered over 60% of the malaria-infected areas, or 300,000 people.[10] The same holds true for the anti-yaws campaigns, which practically eradicated the disease from the whole area under Administration. Very exact figures on all areas are not available. But in Sentani, the percentage of the malaria-infected infants dropped within one year from 80% to 8%. The mortality rate dropped considerably in all of these areas, whereas the birth rate remained the same, or even increased. Fortunately, from 1950 to 1962, the economic development of West Irian kept pace with the rapidly growing population. In 1961, the Dutch Government in

[9] See G. Oosterwal, *Die Papua* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1963), 105-110.

[10] K. Groenewegen and D. J. van de Kaa, *Nieuw-Guinea als gebied voor demografische onderzoekingen,* pt. 1 (The Hague, 1964), 67-68.

vested 81 million guilders (1 D. Guilder=U.S. $0.28), while another 131 million were received from the Common Market development funds. However, after 1962, that development was rather brought to an end. In many areas, the work opportunities disappeared. Transportation caused considerable problems and many products could no longer be sold in the world market. In 1956, private employees gave work to about 9,000 Papuans. In 1962, this number dropped to less than 1,500, at a time the demand was more than doubled.

Every acculturative action leads to unforeseen and, often, unwanted reactions. This has been the case in West Irian. Among them, in relation to the topic under discussion, are the following:

a. **Epidemic diseases.** With the coming of people from the West, a number of new diseases appeared in the scene to which the Papuan population had no (natural) resistance. In some areas, these epidemic diseases were disastrous. In the Geelvink-Bay-area, it was small-pox which, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, caused a great mortality among the people. The Southwestern part of West Irian (Merauke) was struck, in the beginning of this century, by an epidemic of venereal disease. As a result, whole villages were depopulated. In others, 25-40% of the population was affected by this murderous disease, which so rapidly spread among the Marind-Anim tribes because of their ritual sexual practices and customs. The same area was later struck by an epidemic of influenza. In a rather short time, hundreds of people were killed. From 1915 to 1925, the population decreased by 30-40% or more. The epidemics of influenza were not limited to the Southwestern part of West Irian. They occurred repeatedly in the North and in the West, together with such diseases as whooping cough, dysentery and even polio. In general, it may be stated, that before the new era really started (1950), the population was static or (gradually) became extinct. The population explosion in many areas, after 1950, has been a very remarkable change.

b. **Decrease of birth rate and the process of masculinization.** The process of acculturation in West Irian is largely a one-sided affair. The West appears as the constant factor, whereas the Papuan society is radically changed. Wars and cannibalism are no longer allowed. New material riches are being introduced which made the few products of their own culture worthless in their eyes. Schools and mission work have helped to change people's world views and religions. The whole society often, has become disrupted: the women's burden became heavier than before, and the men lost their occupations and main interests. Boredom, feelings of emptiness, and a spiritual vacuum have often been the result. And since life has become meaningless, a decrease in the fertility rate could have resulted. For it is remarkable that, in quite a number of areas in West New Guinea, the birth rates dropped—sometimes even considerably. The Papuans, themselves, have ascribed the phenomenon to what they described: "We have left the ways of our ancestors." There is good hope, however, that this demographic phenomenon is only transitory in nature. Other areas which showed the same trend a number of years ago, when they first came into contact with the West (Biak), now have a growing population.

More serious, and still a demographic phenomenon that puzzles us, is the process of masculinization that is reported in quite a number of areas in West Irian. Statistics for West Irian, as a whole, already show a remarkable large surplus of males. A number of explanations have been given, which, however, seem to be of limited application. Mistakes in the census figures and estimates have been assumed. Others emphasized socio-cultural causes, such as abortion, infanticide, adoption, and the like. The suggestion has been made [11] that, in certain areas, the number of males have always outranked the number of girls. However, because of the greater mortality among the male population—as a result of permanent wars, raids, and cannibalism—this surplus no longer existed in the higher age groups. When wars and the like, disappeared after the contact with the West, the higher birth rate of males at first continued and made for the process of masculinization. However, this explanation might hold true only for those areas where a permanent state of war and cannibalism prevailed.

The trend still continues in a number of areas. The physician, Van der Hoeven,[12] states that there were 128 men to 100 women among the tribes investigated in Western Sarmi. For the age groups of 0-15 years, Van der Hoeven gives the ratio of girls to boys as 100 to 143. "So there is," he states, "an enormous surplus of boys at birth, which decreases at a higher age, but which is still noteworthy at old age." This trend is also reported from areas in West Irian which are not yet (or barely) under the control of the Administration.

The Papuans, themselves, explain this demographic phenomenon as follows: "We have left the ways of our ancestor," thus relating the phenomenon to the coming of the West to West Irian. That relationship seems to exist indeed, but it does not offer an all-sufficient explanation yet. The process of masculinization presents a number of problems to the native societies. It not only threatens them with extinction, it disrupts social life as well. In the Tor area, for instance, there are villages where 40% or more of the men in the marriageable age have to remain unmarried. In the course of the years, a new social group has come into existence, consisting only of those bachelors-out-of-sheer-necessity. The group, with a strong *esprit de corps,* has found its own functions in native society. It is a response to the typical demographic situation.[13] But the situation is unbearable. The bachelors therefore, have been leaving their villages to live in the more urbanized areas, where they hope to find food, work, and a wife. In many areas, this migration of the bachelors has led to a strong depopulation. There is good hope, however, that this process is of a transitory nature. In other areas which manifested the same trend a few decades ago, the equilibrium in the sex ratios has been restored and a rather large surplus of births is now reported. The latter trend will gradually become the general feature of the population of West Irian.

c. **A splitting and greater spread of the villages.** Before the penetration of the "pax neerlandica" in quite a few areas of West Irian, a more or less

[11] G. Oosterwal, *People of the Tor* (Assen, 1961), 40-45, 206-210.

[12] J. van der Hoeven, "Verslag van een mislukte toernee naar de Mamberamo, van 2-16 december, 1950," (Mimeographed report).

[13] G. Oosterwal, "The position of the bachelor in the Upper Tor Territory," *American Anthropologist* (1959), 829-839.

permanent state of war (hot or cold) prevailed. For reasons of safety and better defense, people in these areas often united into larger villages. When this situation changed—notably after the 1950—the influence of the Administration was felt far beyond the territory under direct control; people no longer felt the need of living together. A number of villages split into smaller units. This tendency strongly opposed the administrative and mission policies. But this individualism has been one of the reasons why, after so many years, a policy of larger concentrations of the population has yielded so little result in many areas.

Unfortunately, the political situation in West Irian has also brought an end to the trend of larger concentrations along the coastal areas. After 1962, most work opportunities disappeared. People had to leave the urban centers again and went back to their respective villages where they could more easily obtain food. In 1958, the town of Sorong had a population of over 6,000 Papuans, 1,800 Europeans, and 5,000 Asians. In 1962, there were already less than 3,000 Papuans; the year after, this number still dropped considerably. The same trend was reported from the other urban areas and towns where work opportunities no longer were available.

Perspectives

The population of West Irian is "on the way." The isolation was broken; the traditional static population patterns became dynamic and open. The development is not the same everywhere and even opposite trends are reported. But West Irian is everywhere in transition. This implies the setting of a goal, if one does not like to let it fall into chaos. Political unrest and instability, however, have not favored a "smooth" transition and the setting of such a goal. The immediate result of the intensive administration, after 1950, was a growing notion of unity among the Papuan population. And unity has been a necessity to reach such a goal. "Development," "progress," "a new era," have been the common goals everywhere in the island. The true character of, and the means how, to reach these goals, differ however. Some visualize the coming of a "millennium," when sickness and death will be no more and the people will have plenty of food as well as all the riches of the Europeans. Ancestors are expected to come (soon) with shiploads full of "cargo," bringing also the dead, which will mark the beginning of the true new era. All foreigners—white or colored—will be driven away by these ancestors, who will be the true authorities, henceforth. Other groups have been emphasizing more the economic development which will end the crises of transition as well as stress the political means to reach that end. A strong nationalism is inherent in all of these movements; it emphasizes the common goal of all the people of West Irian: to be masters in their own house.