7. ‘Now we know shame’: *Malu* and Stigma among Highlanders in the Papuan Diaspora

Jenny Munro

When Penggu,¹ a 30-year-old university student from the highlands of Papua proclaimed that, ‘Our elders used to wear just the penis sheath [*koteka*] and did not feel ashamed, but now, now we know the feeling of shame [*malu*]’, he articulated a central problematic I had encountered during my fieldwork. Prior to colonialism and Christianity, Dani societies clearly knew shame in their own ways (Alua 2006; Heider 1979). Penggu’s comment can be partially understood in relation to Indonesian state interventions aimed at eliminating highlander men’s practice of wearing the *koteka* in the name of modernisation, and missionaries’ concerns about the moral implications of near-nudity.² Yet among young people with whom I lived in North Sulawesi and Papua, assertions that Dani people now experience themselves as *malu*, the Indonesian term for embarrassed, humiliated, ashamed, or shy, in a host of novel contexts and encounters held sway even as it contrasted sharply with their private behaviour and usual confidence among Papuan highlanders.

*Malu* is described as ‘a highly productive concept that has effects in a wide array of personal and social realms’ (Collins and Bahar 2000: 35). *Malu* connotes appropriate deference and/or shyness, and is traditionally significant in Indonesian culture in maintaining social and political hierarchies (Keeler 1983; Goddard 1996; Collins and Bahar 2000). It is commonly said that to know shame is a positive character attribute if it means that an individual is successfully submitting to gendered and status-oriented expectations of behaviour (Boellstorff and Lindquist 2004: 441).

Recent analyses of *malu* depict ways that individuals may experience *malu* in relation to living up to national values and expectations, or in relation to threats to perceived national values. Lindquist (2004: 503) found that young urban migrants were ashamed of their lack of economic success. Because economic success is linked to national ideals of modernity and development, ‘[i]n this context *malu* appears as an emotion that describes the failures to live up to

---

1 All names are pseudonyms, most chosen by the participants.
2 The earliest Indonesian state development program in the central highlands’ Balem Valley, called the *Koteka Operation*, was supposed to provide a variety of educational activities for indigenous inhabitants. In practice, these initiatives were overwhelmed by one facet of the operation: the effort to force highlander men to stop wearing penis-sheaths (*koteka*) and wear Western clothes instead. See Naylor (1974).
the ideals of the nation’. Similarly, in Boellstorff’s (2004) analysis of violence against gay men in Indonesia, those who perpetrate public forms of violence are said to be lashing out as a result of feeling malu. Malu in this case arises because a particular kind of nationalised masculinity is at stake, and the nation is perceived to be in imminent danger of being represented by non-normative men (Boellstorff 2004: 469).

What is less apparent in current explications of malu as an affective tradition is how it informs relationships grounded in cultural, ethnic and/or racialised difference. In Indonesia, large numbers of so-called tribal populations are deemed ‘different and deficient’ (Li 1999: 3), and ethnicity or tribal origins (suku) are popularly seen as predictive of cultural and personal characteristics. I am interested in how the study of malu may shed light on cultural, racialised and ethnic hierarchies that are being challenged by current patterns of education and mobility among those minority groups who have long been treated as estranged (terasing) and backward (terbelakang).

The experiences of youth from the Papuan highlands present an opportunity to examine what malu reveals about ethnic and racial politics and struggles over stigma for an indigenous minority. This paper is based on interviews and extensive participant observation over the course of 16 months of ethnographic fieldwork in North Sulawesi and Papua in 2005–2006. The context of North Sulawesi is significant because Indonesian-Dani relationships take place outside Papua, where some hazards may be minimised, and there are potential bonds around Christianity. But North Sulawesi is also home to a highly educated local population with significant levels of prosperity and concomitant cultural confidence. Despite past conflicts with the central government, today North Sulawesi is well-integrated with national perspectives and ideals (Harvey 1977; Buchholt and Mai 1994), including, I demonstrate, racial-cultural hierarchies that rank Papuans at or near the bottom of Indonesian civilisation.

Malu, I argue, as it is expressed by Dani university students, describes both the feeling of awareness, including a dimension of struggle, of being persistently viewed as primitive and uncouth, as well as the feeling that erupts when conflicts over the right to respectful recognition are aired in public. This struggle constructs scenarios that problematise practices of remaking and revision through which Papuans may position themselves anew, as this volume explores.

After situating Dani experiences in terms of cultural constructions of shame and the effects of stigma among migrant youth, I document the struggles that

---

3 This research was supported by the Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University and sponsored locally by Sam Ratulangi University in Manado, North Sulawesi. Supplementary materials were gathered during research in Papua in 2009, 2011 and 2012. Writing was supported by a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Calgary.
students engage in to define how they are seen, and treated, by others, showing how persistent stigmas of primitiveness and racial-cultural inferiority clash with students’ perception of their capabilities and accomplishments. By asking to be seen as university students (mahasiswa) – educated, up and coming, successful and politically engaged – who in many ways reflect national ideals concerning youth development, I argue that Dani youth ask to be recognised in ways that challenge racial stigma and concomitant cultural and evolutionist hierarchies. Then, case studies hone in on Dani-Indonesian encounters in which experiences of malu relate to public conflict over expectations of submission and deference in the face of disrespectful treatment by Indonesians.

Stigma and shame in migration

What Dani students describe as malu arises at the intersection of Melanesian constructs of shame, stigma and local cultural and racialised hierarchies they encounter in the context of school migration. In Melanesian cultural contexts, Strathern (1975: 35) describes shame as ‘a notion of a loss of prestige or inadequacy caused by a confrontation with the power of the community’. Epstein (1984: 32) proposes, ‘Shame tends to be elicited when one’s shortcomings are exposed to the concentrated gaze of others.’ Dani highlanders have their own culturally defined understandings of shame (nekali and nayuk) that emphasise concern over appearances, reputation and privacy. Shame is said to arise if private behaviours or personal weaknesses are exposed, or if someone fails to live up to exchange obligations, such as not having pigs to give at a funeral or marriage celebration. Traditionally, how one is seen by others comes into play for men who wish to publicly show capabilities and hide shortcomings as they jostle for authority and status in the group, while women might be said to be concerned to show their capacities for garden work and child-rearing, or to appear demure and submissive in the context of traditional marriage arrangements (Alua 2006).

Today, what counts as shameful is increasingly shaped by new cultural and political forces that lessen the potency of traditional norms and engender novel expectations and judgments (Butt and Munro 2007).

The opportunities of migration, especially for schooling, are potentially vast, and certainly form part of the attraction for Papuan youth leaving home. Leaving familiar cultural worlds where one is consistently placed by others in terms of family lineage, village and language, may open up new questions and concerns about how one will be perceived by others in a new place, questions of identity that are highly important for youth (Jenkins 1996). Colonising curricula, racism and the disciplinary efforts of the state and missionaries are well documented in the school experiences of Melanesian youth (Fife 1994; LiPuma 2000; Robbins and Wardlow 2005). Cultural and social disruption is
captured by terms like ‘disconnection’ and ‘deterritorialisation’ (Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995; Sykes 1999). Young people from communities stigmatised as primitive and underdeveloped may be forced to confront stereotypes and scrutiny (Howarth 2002).

In their interactions with Indonesians, Papuan youth may confront stereotypes that are derived from racial and evolutionist thinking that positions them as orang Papua (Papuan), an essentialising construction of ethnic and cultural difference. McCallum (2005: 100) writes, ‘[R]acialization takes place when differences between human beings are simplified and transformed into Difference, overvaluing particular bodily differences by imbuing them with lasting meaning of social, political, cultural, economic, even psychological significance.

The idea of ‘the Papuan’ as primitive and racially inferior to ‘the Malay’ predates Indonesian control of Papua (Ballard 2008; Pouwer 1999; Rutherford 2012). While initial presumptions and definitions of orang Papua varied in name and content, by the 19th century a pervasive, if inconsistent, ‘colonial racial logic’ had developed (Ballard 2008; Giay and Ballard 2003). This racial thought was initially influenced by a science of race in which key external diacritics came to stand for morality, intelligence and abilities, based on observations that position indigenous populations ‘within a gradient or hierarchy of value’ (Giay and Ballard 2003). Perhaps the most significant legacy of these early ideas is the emphasis on the racial difference of Papuans and Malays.

‘The notion that racial differences are materially true and determine the physical, intellectual, moral, or social qualities of identifiable groups’ (Douglas 2008: 3) is highly acceptable and widely popular in contemporary Indonesia. Papuans are treated as primitive and inferior to Indonesians in their alleged capacity to conform to national development agendas, and these representations serve political ends of governance (Kirksey 2002; Timmer 2000). Racial thinking creates antagonism between Papuans and Indonesians in a variety of settings including health care (Butt 2012, 2013). Contemporary stigma also positions orang Papua as poor quality human resources, a reference to level of education and skill development that is supposedly lacking among Papuans and hampered by culture, lifestyles, ways of thinking and innate psychological difference (Munro 2013).

Recent anthropological arguments draw attention to how stigma inhibits moral status, particularly when moral status depends on being able to meet social obligations and norms (Yang et al. 2007; Kleinman and Hall-Clifford 2009). Yet these arguments, developed around disease- and disability-related stigma, remain largely untested in relation to racial and evolutionist stigmas such as primitiveness. To the extent that shame relates to the ‘value of a person in her
own eyes, but also in the eyes of her society’ (Wikan 1984: 649; Pitt-Rivers 1965), racial thinking about Papuans shapes the experiences of young migrants who see themselves differently than the Indonesian majority.

**Human resources**

Dani youth see themselves as pursuing dreams of education that will translate into political and cultural power in highlands contexts (Munro 2013). The significance of education and skill development for indigenous youth has taken on epic proportions in the Papuan highlands. Politically, indigenous men and women view education as critical to overcoming Indonesian oppression and restoring indigenous control over lands and social life. A Dani informant explained the significance of human resource development for achieving independence (*merdeka*) in Papua:

> We want to become the human resources for Papua. We want independence but right now there are not enough human resources. It’s like this: if we have an exam, we have to prepare first, right? So if we want independence we have to prepare first. If people’s SDM [*sumber daya manusia*, human resources] improves they will be more prepared. (Jally)

Nation-building pressures from the Indonesian state also motivate education, albeit frequently in denigrating ways that point to alleged cultural primitiveness and racial thinking regarding Papuan capacities (Munro 2013). In Papua, shame may follow on from entrenched practices of diminishment, colonial discourses that criticise indigenous capacities for economic and cultural development (Robbins 2005: 11; Munro 2013), and derive from thoughts about how one is seen by others (Reddy 1997: 397).

The rhetoric of human resource development is entrenched in national and local discourses of progress: to contribute to, rather than inhibit, modernisation in the highlands, Papua young men and women must remake themselves to fit the criteria of skilled, worldly and pious (Munro 2004, 2009). Economically, highlanders are competing with ever increasing numbers of Indonesian and Papuan migrants for limited urban jobs. Culturally, the ability to do good things for others, a classic understanding of the big man style of political authority (Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1997), is now increasingly dependent on bureaucratic know-how, networks that include Indonesians, and educational qualifications that confer status. Confidence, competitiveness and charisma, once defining features of Dani leadership, are now often described by young people as something they lack and must learn through formal education and related accomplishments (Munro 2009).
University students (*mahasiswa*)

One way that Dani youth seek educational qualifications and new experiences that may lead to prestige back home is by migrating for education and living away from home. North Sulawesi is a popular choice. Dani and other highlanders have been travelling to this province, on the island of Sulawesi, since the late 1980s. It attracts more Papuan highlanders to its higher education institutes than any other province. Students say North Sulawesi offers an affordable educational experience in a Christian, modern and safe atmosphere.4

North Sulawesi province is home to approximately two million people, of whom over 600,000 claim Minahasa cultural origins. Duncan (2005: 28) describes a long history of regional movement among the peoples of North Sulawesi, Gorontalo, the Sangir archipelago and the Maluku Islands. Yet claims of diversity and multiculturalism are undermined by the dominance of Christianity and the Minahasa cultural majority (Jacobsen 2002).

Papuan students who call themselves *orang Wamena* (Wamena people) originate from one of three dominant cultural groups in the Papuan central highlands – Dani, Lani and Yali. Exact numbers of Papuan students in North Sulawesi are difficult to assess, but they number several thousand. The majority of Dani people in Manado, the provincial capital, and Tondano, a small town in the mountains south of Manado, are students; a handful of Dani men have married local women and remained in the area. Male students far outnumber female students (approximately 4:1), though this also varies by origins within the highlands.

Dani men and women overwhelmingly wished to embrace, indeed, embody, the identity of ‘university student’ (*mahasiswa*). The word itself was popular among my informants, and evoked pride and status that differentiated them from others. John, for example, said, ‘We are *mahasiswa* now, we have to act accordingly and not get into trouble with alcohol or otherwise.’ Other noteworthy deployments of the term came when my friend Minke regularly challenged her male relatives who requested that she wash their dirty laundry, cook for them or wash dishes by shouting, ‘We are all university students here!’ Lavinia defended a premarital pregnancy by asserting with confidence, ‘I say we are not in high school anymore. We are university students’ (Munro 2012: 1022).

Students living in the rural area around the National University of Manado were affronted by how they were sometimes treated by locals who were primarily rice

---

4 North Sulawesi is approximately 70 per cent Christian, though Minahasa regency that surrounds the capital city of Manado (population 434,000) is estimated to be 90 per cent Christian.
farmers and kiosk operators. Gigi, for example, said, ‘People around here are difficult. They never went to school but they act like they know everything (bikin tahu-tahu) and they talk to us impolitely.’

Political and social activism is a long-standing tradition for Indonesian university students (Douglas 1970; Aspinall 1993, 1999), a tradition that Papuan students embrace. In Papua, student activism is widespread but typically repressed by the state. In North Sulawesi, in contrast, there are opportunities for activism or demonstrations, and these are practices around which Papuans may build relationships with like-minded Indonesian students. Papuan students participated in many forms of activism in North Sulawesi, such as International Workers’ Day, a march I attended alongside a group of Dani students. However, they also felt increased scrutiny from authorities and faced tactics to dissuade them from taking part, even in activities that had nothing to do with Papuan independence.5

Besides activism and intellectual development, broadening one’s horizons and social networks was an important ambition among students. There was a strong commitment to new relationships with Indonesians in North Sulawesi that were perceived to be nearly impossible in a politicised context like Wamena. The concept of keterbukaan (openness) prevailed in students’ descriptions of their attitude towards the educational journey abroad, where it was hoped that politics would not interfere with relationships and academic experiences. For many students, North Sulawesi represented a place of peace, modernity and stability with a Christian atmosphere. Despite the intensity of violence, colonialism and prior trauma in highlands Papua, statements like, ‘We want new experiences here’, (Laurence) suggest they wanted different experiences from their time in North Sulawesi.6 They desired relationships in which they learned from locals, exchanged assistance with locals, and were invited to become part of the community.

---

5 In recent years there have been reports of growing concern among authorities in North Sulawesi that Papuan students are voicing separatist aspirations locally that they would be unable to express in Papua because of much tighter restrictions on speech and the presentation of emblems such as the Morning Star flag in Papua. For example: http://beritamanado.com/manado-basis-gerakan-perjuangan-mahasiswa-papua-merdeka/.

6 The time during which the Dani students I describe in this paper were abroad in North Sulawesi was perhaps a particularly difficult time in which to form bonds with Indonesians, to learn from others and to feel safe amongst non-Dani. Most of the students were in the latter stages of high school or had just left the highlands for university between 1999 and 2001 after the end of the 33-year Suharto dictatorship and at the height of the reformasi period – which in Papua was characterised by critiques of Indonesian governance, expressions of independence desires and talking about suffering. Students spoke of military violence and extreme inequalities with Indonesian migrants as evidence of the ‘trauma’ they and others were suffering at home. While these experiences could hamper new relationships with Indonesians, students were also quick to draw distinctions between circumstances in Papua and North Sulawesi, where they expressed hope for relationships with Christian Indonesians in a peaceful, developed province known for high quality education.
Bringing home results

Besides the attraction of being mahasiswa, and thus, in some understandings, worthy of respectful engagement, students had significant hopes for personal achievement in North Sulawesi. Minke, born in 1983, came to North Sulawesi through the support of her eldest sister and her sister’s husband. Minke recalled,

They said, the courses are good and you will get away from this environment in Papua, where people are drunk and quitting school. At Unima [National University of Manado] there is much spirituality (rohani), there is worship every day, and discussions and organizations where you can stand up in front of people and improve your confidence. When you return you will be respected and have the authority to tell people what to do …

There was a desire to deliver tangible results to communities back home by publicly demonstrating skills, including leadership, communication and organising. Upon graduation, a student named Kodar gave a speech to the crowd of highlander students, saying, ‘Development means making Papuans prosperous, safe and healthy. It means turning on the electricity and teaching old people to read. This is what we want to do. I hope I will become Regent some day and bring modernity to Yahukimo.’ Speeches generally expressed the need to develop Papua and the important role for graduates. Etinus, for instance, posed the question, ‘If we do not do it, who will?’

Most graduates return to Papua, many to the central highlands, as they are drawn back to the potent cultural fold of family and friends, and the attractive emotional space of Wamena, where belonging is less of a struggle. As I have described elsewhere (Munro 2009, 2013), the results that educated Dani women and men are able to achieve in the central highlands are severely limited by political conditions that continue to favour Indonesian settlers and migrants. For example, in the central highlands, local governments continue to hire more Indonesian than Papuan employees in the public service. Without increased prosperity, university graduates have a difficult time demonstrating tangible results to those who financed their studies or dealt with their absence from clan and community activities. While a few elite graduates have maintained the local clout needed to work themselves into leadership roles in village governance or church structures, for many returnees, social and personal outcomes of education, such as enhanced prestige or status, are minimal.

---

7 Diana Glazebrook (2008) also comments on the cultural potency of the notion of bringing home hasil (results) among Dani highlander refugees living in Papua New Guinea.
In North Sulawesi, the opportunities that are ostensibly offered by mobility among educated Papuans are challenged by conditions where intimidation and anxiety prevail, and racial/evolutionist constructions emphasise Papuan primitiveness.

**Racial and cultural ‘primitives’**

Racial thinking is prevalent in North Sulawesi, both in terms of how locals view themselves, and how they view Papuans. Local people regularly expressed that Dutch colonialism had contributed to the Minahasa ethnic constitution through intermarriage and education, providing locals with superior intelligence and light skin. Black or dark skin was denigrated while pale or white skin was sought after, and could determine marital choices. Mrs Dessy, a housewife with two children whom I lived with when I first arrived in Manado, explained, ‘When we want our children to get married we look at the status of the person, their heritage, their economic status, but look at me, I married someone who is black because he is a good man with a strong career as a professor and a businessman.’ Dessy and the children regularly teased their father for being dark-skinned (*hitam*, or black).

Men and women encountered racial stigma similarly, on the grounds that they are equally *orang Papua* and similarly ‘black’, and differently, in relation to gendered expectations. Women experience more judgments on their sexuality, which is seen as promiscuous because a few Papuan students have children while ostensibly unmarried (Munro 2012). Dani and other Papuan men were subjected to name-calling by children in the streets who would yell, ‘Black person!’ or ‘Monkey!’ (*monyet*) as they ran away. *Ale* and *sobat* are names that some Indonesians call Papuan men. The words literally mean ‘friend’, or ‘buddy’, but when locals call out to Papuans on the street using these terms they are often used in a provocative, aggressive way.

During a graduation ceremony Dani students held at their dormitory in Tondano, the local Minahasan government representative gave a speech. ‘I am happy to see so many Papuan kids graduate. Papuans are good-hearted. Minahasas people like to think of themselves as being white but I think Papuan students are black-skinned but with white hearts…’ There were a few laughs in the audience of students, but most looked at their neighbours, perhaps wondering, as I was, if the official was trying to be critical or friendly? Was he paying them a compliment or trafficking in racialised stereotypes? Were *orang Papua* to feel good about being black with white hearts, or did he mean that Minahasans think too highly of themselves, when Papuans are just as good-hearted? It seemed like he was saying that *orang Papua* are black, but they are still good (to his
surprise). Perhaps above all, the speech seemed to reveal what is normally not openly stated in interactions between Papuans and Indonesians but is readily identified by those on the receiving end of stigma. There is a racial construction of orang Papua, there is some judgment by local people on the character of orang Papua, and black skin colour, as a racial marker of difference, is ranked in local hierarchies. These normally unvoiced assumptions were publicly revealed and acknowledged because perhaps the government official thought he was paying students a compliment.

North Sulawesi is not the Indonesian nation writ small. Minahasans and other local people consider themselves different from Indonesians living in South Sulawesi, Sumatra or Java, yet they criticise Papuans in ways that parallel mainstream views, focusing on alleged primitiveness, inferior intellect and dangerous tendencies. When I arrived in North Sulawesi, I initially lived with a local Minahasan family and spent time with their neighbours, friends and university acquaintances in Manado and Tondano. I had many conversations with these informants about my project with Papuan students. I heard stereotypical and stigmatising perspectives that prevailed among even those who emphasised their good relationships with Papuans. I was repeatedly warned not to live in dormitories with Papuan students. Typical comments were, ‘They are drunks, you’ll never have any peace’, or ‘You’ll get raped’. Papuans were also likened to Islamic terrorists who might attack state institutions at any time. Papuan intellect was also challenged, for example,

The students are really quiet, very shy, they are slow-thinkers, like you know James and David – they have been here for ten years already but they are still students! Their minds are not yet, not yet … good. (Mrs Christo, professor’s wife)

Stigma existed in everyday contexts, on campus and in other institutional settings, and was overtly and subtly expressed (Munro 2012). Herbert, a 29-year-old Dani student, described an incident that shows the extent of stigmas of primitiveness embedded in racial stereotypes, and specifically speaks to the importance of male cultural symbols like the koteka as an emblem around which Indonesian and Dani perceptions may clash. Herbert recalled, ‘Once a student brought a koteka to campus and laughed at us. They asked us if we eat humans and all this sort of stuff …’ Herbert went on to describe how he and some other Dani students ‘beat that guy up and he moved to a different university’ (Munro 2012: 1016).
Good labourers

Not all racial thinking about Papuans was overtly negative. The most common way that students, especially males, related to locals was by providing labour. Students were often in need of money for basic daily expenses, and locals invited them to work, perceiving that Papuan men are good for yard labour, and to a lesser extent, household chores.

The Papuan students are very poor, but good, polite, hardworking. If they come asking for work we usually give them some grass-cutting or laundry to do. (Mrs L, wife of Pentecostal minister)

It was possible for significant relationships to develop out of the ongoing provision of assistance by Dani students to locals. A number of students who said that they had good relations with certain families had built those relationships based on construction and yard labour. Sometimes students were paid outright for their work, but often as the relationship developed there was more expectation that the student would do labour as requested and be paid whenever the ‘boss’ or, more commonly, the ‘uncle’ (Om) decided the time was right. I met one of my first informants, Jally, when he came to perform household chores, such as taking out the garbage and cleaning up after his uncle’s children, at the Indonesian-owned house where I was staying at the time. There, I was surprised to see Jally doing housework typically performed by women, such as cooking and serving food, but came to find that this was not unusual for Jally or other Dani students in similar relationships. Since Jally often came to me to ask for small amounts of money, usually enough for bus fare or to purchase cooking supplies, I once asked him if he did not receive money from his uncle, to which he responded, ‘Sometimes he pays, sometimes he doesn’t, but he promised when I want to go home to Papua for a visit he will give me the money for the ticket,’ and, smiling, ‘He invited me to spend Christmas with them.’

Relationships based on labour raise questions about the conditions under which Dani and locals get along. Penggu described how students have become better at establishing relationships with local people over the past 10 years: ‘We had to learn how to talk to them, and show them that we can be honest and trustworthy.’ Penggu considered members of his church, a small congregation of about 20 members, to be people with whom he had a good relationship. He and the other Papuans always sat near the back of the church, or, during a hymn, stood at the back of the group, and never went to the front of the church to sing or speak. Penggu and the other Papuans usually in attendance were always extremely deferential and helpful, consistently taking on chores such as cleaning duties, collecting offerings and stacking and unstacking chairs. Although in their absence the Indonesian church members described Papuans
as ‘stupid’ or ‘dumb’ (*bodoh*), they always invited Papuans to be part of a work party when there was church maintenance or yard labour to be done. Penggu considered this a successful relationship between Papuans and Indonesians, but it also suggests that success may hinge on the actions of Papuan men who are helpful and deferential, and who do not place themselves in positions of prominence or authority in front of Indonesians.

Relationships based on Dani labour are not necessarily problematic for students, in that some men find it rewarding to be perceived as strong, hardworking and reliable. They also appreciate the potential avenue that it opens up for them to develop relationships based on reciprocity, however uneven, so that they might call upon these resources in times of need. Experience suggests that these relationships are not, in fact, very reliable in times of need, and a sense of being exploited made some students reluctant to embrace this path to belonging. Doing good (labour) for others is a culturally valued masculine practice, but one that could also reinforce stigmas of primitiveness and intellectual inferiority. Moreover, a capacity for yard work and household chores is not the kind of skill recognition that Dani students are seeking in North Sulawesi.

**Dangerous to society**

In addition to being perceived as culturally primitive, but good for labour, Dani students were stigmatised as threats to local security. Again, men are seen as more dangerous than women. The notion of local security was highly significant for Indonesians in the area who regularly described their sense of pride and vigilance at defending peace and stability. In a region surrounded by communal violence since the Maluku riots of 1999, locals such as Sonny, a car salesman, argued, ‘We let those refugees come here, but we said to them, you will not disturb our security and order.’ As a result of this stigma, students described a constant state of concern and anxiety regarding relations with their neighbours, especially in tightly packed urban settlements (*kampung*), where they were often blamed for conflict or disagreements that took place as neighbourhood government officials (*pala*) treated students as troublemakers (Munro 2009). Certain Dani student activists reported receiving threatening phone calls and text messages and being followed around the area. Others said that Intel agents approached them on the street and questioned them about their identities and activities. Students advised each other not to travel alone, particularly after dark, because they feared being confronted by government intelligence agents.

---

8 When the local village headman raided Jally’s dorm (discussed later in this chapter), the fact that Jally was arguably friends with some of the men and had gone out of his way to be friendly and helpful to the village headman did not improve the treatment received by Jally and other students.
or by disgruntled locals. So far, students in North Sulawesi have managed to escape physical violence and punishment from the police, but the fate of fellow student activists tortured and murdered in detention in Papua is never far from their minds (see Asian Human Rights Commission 2011; Conoras 2009).

Studying shame ‘throws into relief complex struggles over meaning, manners, personal values, social allegiance and cultural survival’ (Kwok 2012: 28). Struggles over perceptions come to light most critically when expectations of deference and submissiveness are at stake. The following two cases show that malu amongst Dani students relates to Indonesian attempts to enforce deference and polite acceptance of treatment that students find unfair. Specifically, students’ attempts to exercise independent action based on educational know-how or ‘common sense’ are cut short. Both cases highlight that it is men who more often come into open conflict with Indonesians over expectations of deference in the face of disrespect.

**Case 1: Lex and the village headman**

Lex Elosak, a 25-year-old student in his ninth semester at the National University of Manado, argued that it is important for Papuans to get out of Papua and see how things are done elsewhere: ‘Even though the Papuan kids have to be careful with the locals, here we can meet with and talk with orang Indonesia [Indonesians]. Here we can also join organisations and mix with other students.’ ‘We students feel that the locals [orang sini] are quite impolite, and we advise new students to be careful […] not to get into fights with them. We have to be extremely polite to them,’ Lex said, clasping his hands together and bowing his head a little.

In January 2006, a local Lurah (Village Headman) and several of his friends (whom students refer to as anak buah, or protégé, but who are not actually government employees) raided the Yepmum dorm where I lived with Dani

---

9 The tensions between students and local people, and the degree of students’ vulnerability to violence, were powerfully revealed in October 2014 as this chapter went to press: according to media reports, on 19 October 2014, Petius Tabuni, a student from the highlands, was beaten to death by locals after he emerged in a drunken state from a graduation party in Tata Aran and caused some commotion at a kiosk. When five of his friends arrived they got into a fight with locals. Subsequently, Papuan students were unable to leave their dormitories or homestays for several days because of fears of being attacked. Government officials refused to permit students in Tondano to travel to Manado for the funeral of the deceased student. http://www.nabire.net/mahasiswa-unima-asal-papua-tewas-dibacok-orang-di-minahasa-sulawesi-utara/.

10 Students were sometimes targeted in retaliation for violent incidents that occurred in Papua and elsewhere in the region. In January 2006, Papuan asylum seekers arrived in Australia by boat seeking protection from Indonesian state violence, action that stirred emotional reactions across Indonesia. Shortly thereafter a rumour spread through Manado that Papuan students were planning to seek political asylum in the Philippines by travelling via Manado, and several students reported that police picked them up off the street and put them into a jail cell. They were interrogated and released unharmed.
students around midnight. Students who answered the door reported that the men said they had come to search for weapons. Jally, John and Ally discussed the matter and tried to convince them to come back another time. Some students in their bedrooms upstairs heard the voices as I did and came out to peer down the stairway at the men. After a few minutes, two men came upstairs, banged on doors and made everyone open their bedroom doors so they could look for weapons. The dorm’s inhabitants were alarmed and shaken at the events, and phoned their friends at the other Dani, Lani and Yali dorms in the area to warn them.

A few days later, Lex was told to appear at the office of the Lurah. Coincidentally, I was also called to appear before the Lurah that day. Jally and I heard the entire conversation while we sat in the waiting area outside his office door.

In the office, surrounded by the same men who had raided the dorm, Lex was berated because, according to the men, Dani students had been telling their friends and the locals in the area that the men who came to the dorm were intoxicated. The Lurah argued that Lex had no proof and that this was slanderous. One of the men asked Lex if he was stupid. At one point, one of them announced that he was ‘very upset (ganas sekali) about this’ and ought to ‘punch Lex in the head’. Lex tried to argue that the dormitory was under the protection of a former Wamena regent (bupati) who lives in Manado and cannot be forcibly entered as it was that night. He also asserted an argument I heard among students after the incident, namely that the Lurah should have brought a letter of explanation signed by higher authorities or the police to legitimate the late-night search. Lex also argued that the men should not have come in the middle of the night, frightening students and disturbing them from their sleep. Jally and I could hear the emotion in his voice. The heated conversation continued, with the Lurah and his men repeating their accusations and threats until Lex conceded that he agreed that it had been wrong for students to say the men were drunk and that the Lurah was within his rights to raid the dorm. The emotion in his voice suggested tears. At this point the Lurah further asserted that raiding the dorm was necessary for local security and was therefore in the students’ best interest. ‘We know there have been a lot of problems of separatism in Papua,’ he stated. He also referred to previous conflict between Manadonese youth and Dani students that resulted in injuries on both sides. Lex mumbled in agreement.

Lex emerged from the office and averted his eyes, suggesting to Jally and I that he was ashamed of the whole encounter. As we left, the Lurah demanded to know when the students were going to come and help with the construction of his office. Jally promised to get some students organised to assist with the labour. Jally tried to make light of the situation on the walk home. He said it was better not to speak at all or just to agree with everything because otherwise
‘they just go on and on’. Lex did not laugh. When another student joined us in the street and asked how things had gone Lex just said, ‘These people are difficult [susah], and I am sick and tired of talking to them.’

For the rest of the day, Lex stayed in his room. Jally and others argued that Lex was feeling ashamed (malu). He was supposed to be the leader of the dorm and speak on their behalf but instead he had been forced to agree with the Lurah. Lex was in fact normally a strong leader, articulate, organised and authoritative. Before the encounter with the Lurah, Lex expressed that he wished for new experiences abroad and advocated politeness and submissiveness as the best way to get along with locals, though he disagreed with allowing wrongdoers get away with their actions.

This case is not just about malu, which is only one part of Lex’s experience. It is also about the way that Dani students are singled out for treatment as ‘security threats’ by local officials, and the way they are made to feel that they have no rights or status. Students talked about the incident for many weeks, astonished that even when drunk men come crashing into their bedrooms in the middle of the night, they are still wrong to criticise or challenge this treatment, and should act submissively. They should not assume that the logical arguments of educated individuals who are aware of certain legal protections should hold up when they face off with Indonesian authorities. They should, as the Lurah’s actions demonstrated, accept responsibility for making other men feel shame for losing face but may claim no loss of reputation themselves, nor expect others to have regard for the feelings of malu that the sleeping dorm residents felt at the invasion of privacy. While students’ claims on the respect and status that is typically afforded university students or educated people is overruled, the Lurah asserts the ostensibly legitimate positioning of Papuan students in the local environment by insisting that they come and help build his office.

Case 2: The Dani dancers

The Lorenzo Guest House (Wisma Lorenzo) is a Catholic meeting place in Lotta, a beautiful semi-rural area on the outskirts of Manado. The large property, next to a church, contains various meeting halls and dormitory-style accommodation for guests. A Dutch priest who has spent most of his life in Indonesia operates the guesthouse. Pastor Van Paassen has taken a special interest in helping highlanders survive in North Sulawesi and succeed in their studies. He donates rice to their dorms each month, lends money to individual students, and often provides funding for their Christmas and Easter events. He also oversees the funding of two dormitories for Catholic students.
Pastor, as students call him, is 88 years old. His secretary, a Minahasan woman called Mrs Anita, is in charge of daily matters at the *wisma* and organises the assistance the Pastor provides to Dani students. On the priest’s birthday in May 2006, Mrs Anita helped organise a grand celebration attended by many clergy from the region, most of the members of the priest’s congregation and Dani students, some of whom are also regular members of the congregation. Students organised a dance for the priest in which they wore Papuan costumes which, as they explained laughing, they thought reflected something coastal Papuans would wear (Figure 7.1). They did not wear the *koteka* (penis gourd) traditional to the highlands, perhaps in consideration of how they might be regarded by the conservative religious and predominantly Indonesian crowd. They had been preparing for the dance for about a week and were extremely nervous beforehand; a few described needing to drink alcohol to get over their nerves and shyness. After mass, in front of a crowd of approximately 50 Indonesian members of the congregation, students danced outside the church and while accompanying the priest during his five-minute walk down the street to his compound where the celebration was set to begin (Figure 7.2).
Figure 7.2. Student leader accompanying priest during the dance, Lotta.

Source: Jenny Munro.

Figure 7.3. Nuns and other attendees eating lunch at the priest’s birthday, Lotta.

Source: Jenny Munro.
Guests were to sit themselves at one of the many long tables lined with banana palm leaves and then send representatives to the kitchen to pick up grilled fish and bowls of rice and vegetables to share (Figure 7.3). By the time the Dani dancers had changed out of their costumes, there were no empty tables left. There were a few seats at other tables, but no place for the Dani students to sit together. They hung back, and sat around on benches outside the main eating area. Some commented that they were hungry and asked other Dani how they thought they should proceed without a table. Eventually a few of the younger students went to the kitchen, grabbed some plates and started serving themselves. Mrs Anita saw them doing this and came over and yelled at them. She grabbed a plate out of one of the men's hands. Without asking for an explanation, she sent the group out of the kitchen. After a minute, she came out and criticised loudly, asking them why they could not eat off leaves like everyone else was doing, and commenting that, ‘Wamena people are special eh?’ One of the Dani men, Markus, dumped his food in the bush, tossed his plate on the ground and stormed off.

All of this took place approximately five metres from the main table reserved for the priest, who had not taken his place yet, and the main eating area, where approximately 100 Indonesian guests had gathered. The guests were now watching the scene near the kitchen. Mrs Anita yelled at Markus for throwing his rice and said, ‘Wait until Pastor hears about this.’ Dani students gathered nearby, some wanting to know what had happened. Markus said he could not believe how rude Mrs Anita was. He said that she had humiliated him in front of others. He was sorry about throwing food, but felt ashamed and angry about being yelled at by Mrs Anita.

The students decided they would not eat, in protest. They left the party area, some to buy snacks out on the street. They expressed that they were upset that they wanted to celebrate the priest’s birthday. The event had only just begun, and they had gone to the trouble of dancing for everyone, and they were hungry and now they felt unwelcome. One of the older students who said he had a good relationship with Mrs Anita went to apologise for the thrown food and to smooth things over. She still looked angry and she loudly stated that it was terrible to throw rice away, but after a few minutes, the priest emerged and took his place at his table. The few remaining Dani students found a space at the end of one of the long tables near the back and ate from their banana leaves.

This case highlights how public shaming may result if Dani students question the authority of Indonesians. A clash of perceptions is also evident. The students expressed a strong bond with the priest, and wanted to demonstrate their appreciation of this relationship and the material gifts they had received from him (such as rice and money) by performing at his party. They saw themselves as contributing to the event. Mrs Anita suggests that Dani students
should accept the situation without complaint or action, and in other words not expect to have their considerations or needs attended to. This may be read as an assertion that in fact students are not equals to the other guests at the party, and their feelings are less important than others’. They were allowed to participate, as cultural performers, not cultural equals, because of their special relationship with the priest, a relationship that Mrs Anita openly and regularly rejected with some hostility. Whether or not they felt valued or even welcome was not of importance; this may be seen as an assertion that Dani students should take what they are given with gratitude and obedience.

The feeling of *malu*, in this incident, also serves to ‘electrify the racial divide’ (Kwok 2012: 39). Students’ behaviour suggests that they were already uncomfortable with the situation and feeling *malu* about splitting up into groups of two or three and joining Indonesians already seated at tables with banana leaves. Many had decided to delay eating rather than do this. The result of this incident was that students were more convinced that they should stay away from events involving Indonesians in order to avoid the risk of being made *malu*.

In the foregoing cases, feelings of *malu* are linked to situations in which students, especially men, are expected to show deference, acceptance and submissiveness in the face of potentially unfair or rude treatment. Having others, especially Indonesians, bear witness to this treatment adds to the offence. Dani understandings of shame are shown to be significant, in that students are particularly concerned with having their supposed shortcomings publicly exposed to others. What is critically different from other shaming scenarios is that Dani students do not see themselves as possessing shortcomings or inadequacies in these situations. The shortcomings at stake are present in the views of Indonesians, a reflection of stigma and a refusal to accept *orang Papua* as equals. Students see themselves as trying to act respectfully and participate in local activities, thus they argue they are treated unfairly. Moreover, conflict arises due to Indonesian expectations of Papuan deference and acceptance in the face of disrespectful or offensive treatment.

Although it is more often men who take a public stand, and may suffer as a result, both men and women are struggling with the perceptions of Indonesians, and particularly views that position them as primitive, troublesome and inferior.

11 On the whole, students do not appear to suffer from shyness in front of other highlanders or Papuans, even those they do not know well. For example, at the Christmas party for the Papuan Students Network (Imipa) held in December 2005, a group of Dani students presented themselves in front of the crowd and sang songs. On another occasion, Wamena students organised a celebration that was attended by a number of Papuans; they led the events confidently and some students even participated spontaneously, giving advice to the group on successful study habits.
Views like these directly oppose their sense of being university students and members of a young generation that is embracing, if not epitomising, development, capabilities, mobility and success.

Struggles with the perceptions of others were similarly revealed during a conversation that took place in a dormitory on Unima (National University of Manado) campus that I recorded in my field notes. Penggu, Minke, Leo and I were watching television. A domestic travel program advertised that the next show would be on location in the interior of Papua. As always, students were excited that something about the highlands was on national television. Some footage of Yali people wearing penis gourds (koteka) followed. There were shouts of, ‘Oh no!’ and ‘Oh my God!’ when the pictures of the men in koteka appeared. Leo, a Yali student, said, ‘Oh no, everyone will see our parents wearing koteka. This is really embarrassing. But it is our culture and we cannot escape it.’ Penggu laughed, ‘The government tried to give them pants but they refused to wear them’

Although students are well aware of the dominant perception of the koteka, they still speak respectfully of those who wear it. Elders who wear the koteka are said to find it to be comfortable, appropriate and a statement of cultural identity.

Clothes are from the government and the missionaries. Some of our people were happy about clothes. We like wearing clothes. But some people prefer the koteka, no matter what others think or say. (Penggu)

Many male students claim to have worn a koteka for battle re-enactments (perang-perangan) or for dance competitions, or even at political demonstrations. It is said to be incredibly exciting to wear because it takes great courage to overcome the shame and embarrassment of being almost entirely nude. While students understand the primitive connotations associated with not wearing clothes or still wearing koteka, this is not the whole story for them. Wearing the koteka can be a preference. Wearing the koteka also demonstrates, for students and others, courage, tenacity and commitment. Understandings of the koteka reflect broader tensions that Papuans face: the everyday challenge to confront stigmatising views held by many Indonesians and to evaluate themselves according to their own, often different, perspectives and standards. When Dani and other central highlanders are allowed to see themselves according to their own perspectives and standards, they are tenacious and courageous. What worries them is having to see themselves through others’ gaze.
Conclusion

Feelings of *malu* can be linked to locals’ refusal to acknowledge any of the achievements of the young Papuans in their midst, and, rather, an insistence on seeing and treating them as primitive, labour-ready and potentially dangerous. Strained relationships attest to the existence of powerful racial-cultural hierarchies. Unwavering hierarchies cause concern for Dani students who are seeing themselves in the negative light of Indonesian terms, not in West Papua, but in a different environment with its own intricacies. A powerful sense of local hierarchies, and students’ positioning near the bottom, contributes to awkwardness and silences amongst normally critical and confident young people. These findings affirm the need to consider *malu* at the intersection of racial politics: ‘Interactions with whites are more potently minimised by defining or experiencing the relationship itself as one attended by shame and hence by avoidance and/or other restrictions on behaviour’ (Kwok 2012: 39). In other words, Dani assertions of *malu* should also be considered a way to justify avoiding these types of situations in the future, and by extension, public interactions with Indonesians (see Munro 2009).

Submissiveness is a key understanding of *malu* described by Keeler (1983), and public gestures of submissiveness by Dani students seem essential for maintaining relationships of tolerance with Indonesians, particularly those who hold stigmatising views of Papuans. In contrast, assertiveness by students can create open conflict. It is clear that it is more often male students who defy these expectations and may react with both shame and anger. Considering the gendered forms of propriety that *malu* usually entails (Collins and Bahar 2000; Lindquist 2004; Boellstorff 2004; Slama 2010), the public shaming of Dani men raises questions about emasculation and its role in sustaining racial hierarchies.

These experiences, and the politics of submissiveness that they evoke, should give us pause when considering mobility as a trajectory primarily characterised by opportunity rather than vulnerability. New opportunities to interact with Indonesians may become new ways to experience conflict and inadequacy when judgments and stigma are widespread, and linked to prevailing national cultural hierarchies. The confidence that allows Lex, for example, to take action when he feels that local authorities have treated Dani students unfairly, is based on a sense of being educated and living in a place where it is more possible to express discontent. On a more positive note, for every student like Penggu, who is more tolerant and satisfied with the terms on which he relates to local Indonesians, there are other students like Lex, Markus and their supporters, who seem to expect more respectful recognition. How they are seen by others fuels anger and ambition, not just shyness or shame.
Penggu's comment, ‘Now we know shame’, can be read as a new awareness of dominant perceptions and expectations associated with new relationships and cultural contexts in which Papuan youth participate. Awareness is grounded in encounters ‘where racial ideas and representations were enacted, reworked, or forged’ (Douglas 2008: 14). Considering that Dani students approach their time in North Sulawesi with a certain amount of humility and openness, acknowledging that they are not ‘masters of the house’ (tuan rumah), the relationships they achieve and the submissiveness they are expected to show exemplifies the ‘confrontation with the power of the community’ described by Strathern (1975). That new relationships, cultural understandings and the networking with Indonesians cannot take place even amongst those who call themselves ‘kin’ (saudara) united by Christianity in a region characterised by peaceful stability raises questions about whether Papuans may achieve a sense of belonging anywhere beyond their homeland.

Lindquist (2004: 498) suggests that young urban migrants feel malu because they find themselves outside national propriety, and amiss of personal expectations, when they apparently fail to live up to ideals of progress (kemajuan). Dani university students’ experiences illustrate a different possibility, in which a stigmatised cultural and ethnic minority begins to achieve national ideals and expectations, at least in terms of education, skill development and mobility. In doing so, they pose a critical challenge to powerful national precepts concerning development potentials and inherent cultural and ethnic traits. By their educational successes, Papuan youth may offer convincing proof that cultural minorities deemed backward in the Indonesian national imaginary are not, and maybe never were, held back by their ethnic and/or racial constitution. These challenges do not, and will not, go unnoticed. When so-called primitive tribals get educated, get mobile and get vocal, they pose as much of a threat to the normative nation as Boellstorff’s (2004) gay men.

**References**


From 'Stone-Age' to 'Real-Time'


From ‘Stone-Age’ to ‘Real-Time’


