

*Indigenous Masculinities and the
“Refined Politics” of Alcohol
and Racialization in West Papua*

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In 2013, the government of Papua Province passed a law banning the production, distribution, and sale of alcohol in the name of “protecting Papuans from extinction” (Berita Satu 2016; Poerwanto 2016).¹ As Governor Lukas Enembe later stated, “This decision has been taken to save Papuans, because every year there are Papuans and households destroyed by alcohol.”² The governor used “orang-orang Papua”—literally “Papuan people,” but normally used to refer to Indigenous Papuans—to remind “all the people of Indonesia” who want to visit Papua not to bring alcohol with them: “We will guard all the entry and exit points, all baggage will be inspected, whether it belongs to local residents or others.” He flagged the importance of the ban, noting, “It won’t be long before Papuans might be finished” (Poerwanto 2016, my translation).

Governor Enembe’s statement captures a pervasive and growing sentiment in West Papua that alcohol is a “Papuan” problem and that it contributes to the extinction of Indigenous Papuans. The subtext for the governor’s claim is the Papuan political belief that Indonesia wishes to eliminate the Indigenous population and does so through covert (as well as overt) means. Alcohol, which Papuans associate with outsiders and with Indonesian influences in Papuan lands,³ is, as this article explores, theorized by Papuans as a modality of “politik halus” or “refined politics,” a term they use to refer to covert forms of violence and strategies of domination and control. In Bahasa Indonesia (the Indonesian language), the word “halus” carries a range of possible meanings, from “smooth” to “unseen” to “refined.”

The governor’s point that alcohol is mainly a “Papuan” problem reflects long-standing though not uncontested ideologies that posit Pap-

uan ethno-racial and cultural difference from Indonesians as evidence of Papuan inferiority. Early European explorers and later Dutch colonists contributed to these views (see Ballard 2008; Rutherford 2013). But racism—meaning the discourses and practices through which people are inferiorized, excluded, and subordinated (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992)—has flourished under Indonesian rule. Indonesians tend to regard Papuans as “primitive, stupid, lazy [and] drunk” (Koentjaraningrat and Ajamiseba 1994, 434), and Papuans face “technocratic racism,” or racism that alleges that Papuans lack the expertise, skills, and capabilities necessary for “development” (Munro 2018, 23). Alcohol provides new ground for racism and for what Rupert Stasch has called “ideologies of unequal human worth” to flourish (2015). A local racist anecdote says that poor Javanese (people from the Indonesian island of Java) and rich Papuans both sleep on the street—the implication being that the Papuan “drank” his paycheck and is intoxicated (see Kompasiana 2013). An Indonesian migrant living in Papua who blogs about “myths and facts” of Papua stated that “Papuans like to get drunk” and that “they regularly drink alcohol and get drunk even in the middle of the day” (Suciana 2016). Such ideologies have tangible effects. Papuan students in Java reportedly have difficulty finding accommodation in boarding houses run by local Javanese because of “the general view of Papuans as frequently drunk, rule-breakers, and physically violent” (BBC News Indonesia 2016). Similar attitudes and experiences have been reported by Papuan students in Jakarta and North Sulawesi (see Munro 2018). Indonesian police supposedly admitted to trying to use alcohol to exploit the alleged weaknesses of Papuan male political activists (Topsfield 2016).

As a molecule, alcohol is like water, presumably neutral until culture is involved (Sahlins 1999). Yet anthropologists have drawn attention to the ongoing ways that researchers, policymakers, and the public may continue to assume that biological and cultural influences shape or even determine alcohol-related behavior (Gutmann 1999). Matthew Gutmann, writing about Latino immigrants in the United States, argued that “the etiology of alcohol abuse and alcoholism is often erroneously traced to the ‘ethnic origins’ of these men and women” (1999, 173). In this article, I view alcohol and local debates about its use as an important site of racialization of Papuan men in West Papua. Racialization is commonly understood as “the processes by which racial meanings are attached to particular issues—often treated as social problems” (Murji and Solomos 2005, 3) and by which physical and cultural differences are ascribed to individu-

als and groups (Barot and Bird 2001, 601). Racialization “draws on old notions of race as a biological characteristic” as well as “new notions of culture as a marker of difference” (Lewis 2013, 877).

This article also builds on the idea that Pacific masculinities have been shaped in relation to and in contestation with colonial racial hierarchies (Jolly 2016; Tengan 2008). I suggest that alcohol is linked to a reconfiguration of Indigenous masculinities under Indonesian rule because it contributes to the dominant caricaturing of Papuan men as violent and flawed, which is then used to justify state violence and the particular treatment of Papuan bodies. For Papuans, alcohol represents a broader struggle for control over Indigenous bodies, including what goes into them and how they are constituted, represented, and treated.

This article draws on the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous Dani women and men who live in the southern edges of Wamena, a city of about fifty thousand inhabitants located in the Baliem Valley, in the central highlands of Papua Province, where I have been conducting fieldwork on and off since 2006.⁴ Matters of clan continuity, fertility, territorial control, the flow of goods, and the health or well-being of the population are domains that Dani men have traditionally tried to control (Butt 2005; Butt and Munro 2007), and over which they feel that have lost at least some control as a result of alcohol consumption. This provides an important context for exploring the flourishing consumption of alcohol in Dani territory, not least because alcohol has been banned since the 1950s by missionaries and Dutch colonial authorities. In practice, however, alcohol is either reportedly smuggled in through the airport (in the form of spirits and beer) or is produced locally using yeast, water, sugar, and sometimes fruit juice (this “home brew” is referred to as “local drink,” or “minuman lokal” in Indonesian—“milo” for short). Most Indigenous people in the highlands consume home-brewed alcohol, which is produced by Indonesians and by Dani people and is very cheap in comparison with other types of alcohol.

In this article I focus on the results of small group discussions held in June 2012 with Dani men and women. In collaboration with a local non-governmental organization (NGO), discussion groups were conducted with a total of thirty-nine Dani men and thirty Dani women, aged eighteen to about sixty years, on the social, cultural, and political contexts of alcohol consumption and its links to violence. Most of the participants were known to each other; some were from the same few neighborhoods near the Wamena airport, but many were also friends, and some were relatives

or in-laws. Some described their own drinking practices during the course of the discussions. Discussions were audio recorded and, subsequent to reflections and further discussions with collaborators, were analyzed qualitatively through note taking and coding. Older participants were divided by gender into men's and women's groups, but men and women participated together in the youth group and the NGO worker groups. Discussions were held in the Papuan highlands style of Bahasa Indonesia, in which I am fluent, with occasional translation into the local Indigenous language by an assistant in the older men's and women's discussions, as some participants were less fluent in Bahasa.⁵

For the Dani men and women of the central highlands city of Wamena who participated in my study, alcohol symbolizes a broader contestation over Papuan bodies and may be associated with circumscribed masculine possibilities and new forms of constraint. Dani men's and women's discussions also constitute reflections on vulnerabilities and culpabilities—that is, to what extent they see themselves as vulnerable or weak in the face of alcohol, enabling what they see as Indonesian poisoning to “work.” Looking at these reflections reveals tensions between the dominant Indonesian discourses that racialize Papuan men in particular as violent drunks and Dani understandings of their own cultural and ethno-racial constitution.

COLONIALISM AND ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Alcohol consumption has been an important indicator of colonial racial hierarchies in the Pacific and elsewhere (see Lowe this issue, 105; see also Marshall 1980, 1982; Suggs 2001). Colonial authorities in New Guinea confined the right to drink alcohol to white men on the grounds that native men were too childlike, irresponsible, unsophisticated, and potentially violent (Stuart 1970, 162). Some made the case that natives should forego alcohol not only for their own good but also for the good of whites, who would not be safe if local men were allowed to drink alcohol (Marshall 1980, 15). For colonists and for Papua New Guineans, alcohol symbolized and defined gendered racial boundaries, and, for many Papua New Guineans, the right to drink came to symbolize the broader experiences and instances of racial discrimination and inequality that pervaded Australian administration (Marshall 1982; Marshall and Marshall 1990, 7).

Despite the historical racial meanings that Australians attached to alcohol consumption by Papua New Guinean men, present-day analyses of alcohol consumption in the Pacific tend to focus on masculine identities

and drinking as an expression of male sociality, especially among men with money in cities (Kelly and others 2012; Macintyre 2008; Rooney 2015). Nicholas Bainton and Martha Macintyre (2013, 151), for example, associate alcohol with the “prestige economy” of Papua New Guinea’s burgeoning resource sectors. In Papua New Guinea today, drinking and sharing beer is regarded as an expression and performance of “modern” masculinity and is associated with demonstrating both power and frustration with inequalities and the government (Macintyre 2008). Alcohol as a site of racialization, whether we mean assumptions about biology or about cultural difference, has received less attention in considering these practices.

Political conditions in West Papua, including its colonial history, may fruitfully bring to light how alcohol contributes to and reflects constructions of gender and ethno-racial configurations in a Papuan highland context. On 1 May 1963, on the basis of the 1962 New York Agreement signed by the Netherlands, Indonesia, and the United Nations (UN), the UN Temporary Executive Authority transferred power over West Papua to the Indonesian government, subject to a self-determination plebiscite to be held before 1969. After a sham referendum in 1969, the United Nations ratified Indonesian rule despite significant Indigenous opposition (Saltford 2003). Indigenous resistance and aspirations for self-determination have persisted since the 1950s and have been repressed by the Indonesian state through violence, harassment, and intimidation (Braithwaite and others 2010; Franciscans International and Asian Human Rights Commission 2011; Human Rights Watch 2011). Since the 1960s, over a million Indonesians have settled in West Papua, and they now make up the majority population in cities such as Jayapura, Sorong, and Merauke (Ananta, Utami, and Handayani 2016). Racism is strongly and clearly present in acts of state violence in West Papua, as racial stigma leads to a denial of rights and the perpetuation of second-class citizenship and treatment for Indigenous Papuans (Butt 2012; Haluk 2017; Hernawan 2015, 202; Komnas Perempuan and others 2010).

Alcohol is flourishing amid the discourses of diminishment at play in colonial situations—discourses of race, wildness, childishness, backwardness, primitiveness, and temporal behindness (Robbins 2005, 11; see also Robbins 2004; Sahlins 1992)—that encourage Papuans to take on notions of racial and cultural inferiority. At the same time, many Papuans are keenly aware of racial stereotypes, which feature in their contemporary reflections on dispossession and colonialism. Papuans often say that

Indonesians look down on them or are “arrogant” (*gengsi*). Some Papuans are aware of critical discourses on race and power via American hip hop (see Richards 2015); resistance music and literature coming out of South Africa (eg, Lucky Dube, Nelson Mandela); Caribbean reggae; books about historical resistance leaders like Che Guevara; and contemporary Melanesian music (Webb and Webb-Gannon 2016). Some expressions of Papuan nationalism and anticolonial resistance are also racialized.

Papuans and Indonesians may interpret alcohol consumption and production in relation to existing ethno-racial hierarchies and contests, but the proliferation of alcohol and its negative effects also raises questions about control over territory and Indigenous continuity. Papuans fear a “slow genocide” or feel that Indonesia would prefer to not only quash questions of self-determination and human rights but also eliminate Indigenous Papuans entirely in order to gain easier access to their natural riches and land (Butt 2005). As in some other Pacific contexts, Indigenous people may feel that their land, populations, and bodies are diminishing in size and strength due to colonial and other extreme inequalities (Clark 2000; Tomlinson 2002). In West Papua, various Indigenous movements are responding to fears of demise with efforts to “save” Papuans. This includes saving Papuans from alcohol. For example, the movement *Solidaritas Anti Miras dan Narkoba* (Solidarity against Alcohol and Drugs) has argued for a “return” to Papuan ways of acting and thinking because Papuans did not traditionally produce or consume alcohol (see *Pasific Pos* 2017). Former *Solidaritas* leader Yulianus Mabel said, “We hope that anti-drug and alcohol solidarity grows so that the “gold generation” can develop and become masters of their own territory” (*Pasific Pos* 2017).⁶ It is likely that many Papuans in fact favor the alcohol ban, but it remains important to explore the reasons why they might support it; whether in doing so they take on or put forward the colonial ideologies of alleged cultural inferiority that surround the ban; or how they might reject the racialization of Papuan men as drunks.

My exploration of “refined politics” and the Dani etiology of alcohol consumption builds on other work that explores Dani and other Papuan perspectives on how Indonesia maintains power in spite of strong local traditions of war, physical and spiritual strength, and resistance (Farhadian 2005; Kirksey 2012; Sugandi 2014). Dani men and women have expressed the view that Indonesia purposefully provided them with poor quality education in order to facilitate taking away their lands and authority while shoring up the power of Indonesians (Munro 2013). Leslie Butt

has discussed Dani views of HIV as having been introduced by Indonesia in order to kill Papuans via state-sponsored HIV-positive Indonesian sex workers and of the state's birth control program as intended to limit Indigenous fertility and damage women's bodies (Butt 2005, 2001; see also Munro 2018). In all these cases, in order to explain how Indonesia intends to eliminate them, Dani theories put forward "reasoned political analysis" (Butt 2005, 413) of evidence such as illegal prostitution monitored by the Indonesian military, military implementation of health programs, and injuries suffered by women with birth control implants.

In this article, I build on these discussions by exploring what Dani men and women say about what makes it possible for Indonesia's covert politics to work and have negative effects on their lives and population. Culturally, like members of other highland societies, Dani people tend to link health, personal, and social problems to wider social, spiritual, and political conditions (Butt 1998, 115; Strathern and Strathern 1971). Yulia Sugandi's work explores the collective social body, showing that, for Balim people, well-being "depends on a cosmological balance, particularly the relationship with the ancestors" (Sugandi 2014, 75). Importantly, Sugandi found that Dani express a sense of cultural and spiritual disruption and dispossession and of being "made naked" through Indonesian control (Sugandi 2014, 34). Thus, Indonesian and Papuan concerns about alcohol consumption sit at the intersection of long-standing and important political contestations—contestations that also symbolize and define configurations of "race" and gender.

An examination of alcohol in West Papua may prompt further interrogation of alcohol practices and ideologies in other Melanesian contexts. Several questions raised here resonate with broader regional issues: In what ways are the (gendered) racial politics of alcohol in the Pacific still at play? What cultural, racial, and gendered meanings are attached to alcohol? How are these norms policed, and by whom?

WAMENA, BALIEM VALLEY

This article is based on research in a highland city where there are palpable ethno-racial tensions as well as some stark economic inequalities between Indonesian migrants and the Indigenous Dani inhabitants. It is also an important site of Indonesian imposition and Indigenous refusals. An exploration of these dynamics helps to clarify how they fuel the racial and gendered meanings attached to alcohol production and consumption.

Missionaries established the city of Wamena in 1954 on the lands of the Baliem Valley Dani (or Balim people). The meandering brown Baliem River snakes by to the east and the Uwe River flows fast and cold around the southern, older part of the city—called “Misi” after the missions—bringing snowmelt down from the Puncak Mountains and Lake Habbema. In relation to roughly equal numbers of Indonesians, the category of “Wamena people” has developed over the years to denote Indigenous central highlanders who are mostly Dani but may include Lani or Yali people as well. Indonesians, some of whom have lived in Wamena for decades, have their own identity terms, like “labewa,” an acronym for Indonesians “born and raised in Wamena” (*lahir besar Wamena*). There is very little intermarriage between Dani and Indonesians living in Wamena, but people relate on a daily basis as Dani work for and purchase things from Indonesians. The majority of the Indigenous population survives through a combination of horticulture, the informal economy, construction work, or low-paid public service jobs. Indonesians dominate the private sector and professional jobs and continue to play powerful roles in administration and security.

Ethno-racial configurations in Wamena are sometimes forged through violence. The city is an established inland site for the Indonesian military and Mobile Brigade Police (Brimob) headquarters, and there is a massive male Indonesian security presence (Farhadian 2007). Wamena is one of only a few places in West Papua where Indigenous inhabitants have ever taken up arms and attacked Indonesian settlers in response to being attacked by Indonesian security forces. On 6 October 2000, nine Papuans were killed by Indonesian police and twenty-six local Indonesian residents were killed by Papuans, some of whom explained that they thought the battle for reclaiming their land was finally upon them (Mote and Rutherford 2001; Meiselas 2003). Today, military and police continue to mete out ad hoc violence and use their weaponry to attack Papuans. In June 2012, during my fieldwork, two allegedly drunk Indonesian soldiers on a motorbike sped down a village road, striking and seriously injuring an Indigenous child. His relatives, attending a funeral nearby, attacked the soldiers. One soldier died on the roadside while the other was seriously injured. Hearing of this, two truckloads of soldiers from the nearby army battalion attacked Honelama, a village in the western part of Wamena, killing one Indigenous man and stabbing and wounding about a dozen other people (see International Coalition for Papua 2013; Amnesty International 2012). Honelama was burned to the ground

and troops proceeded to rampage toward the Wamena city center while destroying property.

Representational politics are also significant in Wamena. Outsiders have often labeled highlanders as “penis-gourd people” (*masyarakat koteka*), after the men’s traditional wear, which may include a penis covering made from dried-out gourds. While Dani and other highlanders sometimes find pride in penis-gourd traditions, they have also been actively working to be seen as “modern,” urban, and equal in skills and intelligence to Indonesians. Still, some Indonesians and coastal Papuans continue to racialize central highlanders as primitive in their practices, politics, and ways of thinking (King 2002; Kirsch 2010).

The racial dynamics of the city are also reified in everyday practices. For example, the vast majority of Dani do not own a car, so the streets of Wamena often contain Indigenous people walking, sitting in pedicabs driven by Dani boys, or, increasingly, riding motorbikes. Indonesians almost exclusively ride motorbikes or in trucks, or, less often, hire pedicabs. With jagged mountains rising dramatically in the backdrop, around Misi there is often now a bottleneck of traffic as small, Indonesian-owned and operated trucks load and unload passengers and goods from rural areas, and as shoppers move about town. Dani boys hang off the sides of their pedicabs, calling out potential destinations to prospective passengers. Misi is the site of the “old market” (*pasar lama*), where Indonesians run small trade stores while Dani and other Indigenous women sit on the ground selling garden produce and betel nut. Next to this traffic juncture but behind the Indonesian shops, a new, labyrinthine market has been laid out. Intended to encourage Dani women to sell their wares out of the way of the traffic, so far it seems only to be used at night, for transactions involving sex and alcohol.

Built in 2013, a new concrete bridge across the Uwe River leads south out of the city to villages and into increasingly rocky terrain. This bridge replaced a wooden one (full of holes big enough for people to fall through), which the local inhabitants periodically tore up as a way of keeping Indonesians in the city. The new bridge enables dump trucks and other heavy machinery to cross in order to build roads and buildings south of the Uwe River. This provides cash for Dani men and women who sometimes dig sand and rocks out of the banks of the river to sell to contractors. Despite the fact that only a few kilometers separate one end of town from another, Indonesians are not commonly seen on the south side of the Wouma Bridge.

Contestations over space, authority, bodies, and the material conditions

of life are clearly prominent in Wamena. These contestations shape Dani explanations for and experiences with the rise of home-brew consumption and its effects. The following sections explore Dani perspectives on and experiences with alcohol, highlighting themes of racial violence, economic exclusion, and who or what is to blame for alcohol production and consumption.

THE PROLIFERATION OF HOME BREW, RACIALIZATION, AND VIOLENCE

In my research, men and women overwhelmingly expressed the view that home brew is becoming a more prominent part of their everyday lives. Men are the main consumers of home brew, often drinking at someone's home in small groups of friends or relatives. It is possible that the host will have his own home brew but more likely that home brew (or whiskey, or both) is purchased for the occasion. Home brew is sold in variously sized containers, and men usually buy enough for a few men to share. The drinking pattern is like “binge drinking”—in that large amounts of alcohol are consumed—but drinking might take place over a few days. Alcohol consumption often occurs in conjunction with a social event such as a wedding, birthday, funeral, the Christmas season, the return of a friend or relative, or sometimes just because someone has come into a sum of money.

It is not just Papuans who drink alcohol or get drunk, however. One man mentioned to me that it was his Indonesian public servant boss who kept inviting him over to drink. Etis (a male NGO worker) gave a statement that exemplifies several comments made by research participants regarding the racialization of Papuans as drunks, especially highlanders and people from Wamena more specifically:

Us Papuans are viewed or stigmatized as drinkers, drunks, like that. I think it should not be this way. Those who talk of Papuans, especially highlanders, being drunks are doing something negative [drawing on] the media that always exaggerates the issues of us Wamena people, us Papuans—that we like to drink, get drunk, and kill each other. It might be a family “battle,” but the issue gets thrown out on television or in the newspaper as a “tribal war.” . . . So outsiders think Papuans are like this. But anyway, that's the conditions of today.

Indonesians tend to racialize Papuans as innately prone to drinking and violence. In his comment that Papuans are also stereotyped by outsiders

as “killing each other,” Etis pointed to the lack of control over representations that central highlanders experience. Images and stereotypes can be broadcast faster and further than ever before due to social media and technologies, and Papuans are more aware than ever of how they are being represented. Etis also indicated that Dani and other central highlanders feel particularly vilified, and the problems that they may indeed experience are amplified and held up for broader society to watch and judge as proof of existing dominant assumptions.

Racial stigma is also gendered, and alcohol provides a conduit for both racialized and gendered violence in Papua. In a highly publicized incident in 2014 in Enarotali, another city in the western highlands of Papua, Indigenous boys were allegedly consuming alcohol in a raised hut (pondok) beside the road when Indonesian soldiers arrived and physically assaulted a twelve-year-old boy. This generated outrage among locals, who demonstrated in front of the police station the next day. Police opened fire and killed five Indigenous male high school students who were demonstrating while wearing their uniforms (see Somba 2014; Human Rights Watch 2014).

Study participants expressed the view that it was common for Indonesian police and military to treat Indigenous men and boys violently if they had been, or were perceived to have been, drinking alcohol. Sem (an NGO worker) explained, “This happens all the time now. There is a drunk Indigenous person or a mentally ill [gila] Indigenous person and the police beat him/her up.” When I was in Wamena in 2013, I heard that a Dani man who had been consuming alcohol supposedly got into an argument with an Indonesian shopkeeper in Misi. The police, seeing that he had been drinking, stepped in and reportedly punched the man, and then other Indigenous men began throwing rocks at the shop and eventually set fire to the shop owner’s car. Thus police reactions to perceived or actual alcohol consumption among Indigenous males may preface escalating violence and ethnic tensions.

Highland men who are poor and marginalized suffer the brunt of this stigmatization. In their comments, participants of lower socioeconomic status made it clear that they experience discrimination and violence, while elite, powerful Indonesian and Indigenous men who are involved in alcohol production and consumption may benefit from the alcohol trade. Martin (a university student and NGO worker) said, “At my complex there are police stationed but they don’t do anything about people selling alcohol, and the sellers say that the police let it go for a jug or a plastic

bag.” A health worker said, “It’s not just locals who make home brew, but migrants, and they sell it and make it.” Participants pointed to the contradiction of consumption: “Most of those consuming alcohol are from the government” (men’s group) and “The government consumes home brew even though they made a law against it, so they break their own laws” (female, youth group).

The growing presence of home brew provides new contexts for racism and the hardening of racial and gender configurations that have been established through Indonesian militarism. As discussed in this section, alcohol facilitates a circumscription of Indigenous masculine possibilities when men are narrowly stigmatized as violent drunks. As the next section shows, Dani view alcohol as contributing to a loss of Indigenous control in the domains of health, population, livelihoods, and land.

MEN’S LOSS OF CONTROL AND POWER

Discussions also revealed ways that Dani experience feeling marginal to current power structures, excluded from any existing Papuan-Indonesian alliances, and as having diminished social and political influence over their traditional territories. A male from the youth group reported that hard liquor is illegally brought in from the coastal provincial capital with the help of “our own government officials . . . who have very little control of anything.” This statement echoes a common perception that Indigenous government officials should be enforcing the ban and protecting the population and that they should have the power to do so, but instead they are unaware, complicit, or submitting to Indonesians who are promoting the alcohol trade. Similarly, some Dani argued that Indonesians import huge quantities of yeast, a critical ingredient for making home brew.

Who brings what kind of goods into Dani territory—especially that which ends up being consumed by Dani—is of political significance. William (youth group) articulated: “I didn’t experience the old days, but according to the old peoples’ stories, in the past, before there was a government, we lived quite simply and to an old age. . . . But as soon as the government came in, all different sorts of food and types of drinks started being imported to Jayawijaya [Regency, in the central highlands], so we learned. From there we learned about drinking alcohol, and it has become our culture, even though we didn’t know this before.” Research participants criticized the foods that have been imported to the highlands under Indonesian rule—including doughnuts, instant noodles, and rice—which

are seen as unhealthy for Dani people. Dani also expressed suspicions regarding food cooked by Indonesians, available in food carts or roadside eateries, which people say contains poison to kill Papuans. Thus, Dani constitution and health are seen as having been damaged by “the government,” represented here by consumables that, importantly, only enter the body after entering Dani territory without permission.

Losing authority over what comes into and happens in Dani territory links alcohol to political disempowerment. Sam (a health worker) reflected, “The main thing is, they want development. The Bupati (Regent/Head of Jayawijaya) wants development and to be close with Indonesians, so we can’t question this.” Jon (a public servant) said, “We cannot hope that the government will help us because they have done nothing to look at this terrible problem. They do not care about our fate.” These statements reflect the widespread idea that there are political dealings going on behind the scenes, and covert agendas operated by Indonesians in alliance with some elite Papuans such as the Bupati. The Bupati is an elected official; the position has been held by various Dani men since the late 1990s.

To address the home-brew problem, men proposed creation of a secret “field” team of Dani men who could search for producers. Also, interestingly, some in the men’s group suggested that “maybe we can create a better network with police so that they can intervene in these places.” These ideas indicate ways of trying to take back authority and highlight the importance of forming networks with Indonesian men in positions of power—networks that poor Dani men are not party to.

Dani participants also linked alcohol production and consumption to poverty and the exclusion of men from the current cash economy. They said that making home brew was often seen as a fast way to make money in response to unprecedented economic and consumer pressures. Martin (a university student) said, “What I’ve seen around my place is that everyone is making some [home brew] because of economic troubles. It’s easier to make money, so the government has to think too about what it’s doing about the economy of Indigenous people.”

To contextualize the rise of home brew as a livelihood, young men described feeling like bystanders watching development unfold in their city, while also being excluded from laboring jobs that have traditionally been racialized as “Indigenous.” Hendrik (a university student) said: “So, who is really sinful at the moment is the government. They have really sinned. . . . There is a lot of development going on here and there is not a single Indigenous person who is being employed, not as a laborer,

not even digging up sand!” It was of particular concern that Dani would be passed over for even the most menial jobs. Women agreed, as articulated by Nina (an NGO worker): “Why do I observe, especially in Wamena city, that there are lots of projects, lots of jobs, that should be the jobs of Indigenous workers, but so far those who get work developing the shops, the roads—there are no Indigenous people. I think if there was work like that, then people would focus on it, they wouldn’t be unemployed, sitting around at home or in the street.”

Participants thus situated alcohol production and consumption in relation to being displaced from labor jobs by Indonesian migrants, which was seen as a devaluation of Indigenous men’s physical prowess. Men’s expressions of bodily strength and aggression, including traditional warfare, have ceased with colonization, while the Indonesian state has construed all forms of resistance as separatism that must be violently eradicated. Indigenous men have been reduced to violent caricatures, and this stereotyping has structured certain “opportunities,” most notably for laboring jobs that require physical strength and power. When I lived among Dani university students, they were often asked by Indonesians to do manual labor, because they were seen as unintelligent but well-suited for hard physical labor (Munro 2018). However, in the construction industry today in Wamena, companies are bringing in migrant laborers from Java, whom bosses say are compliant, on time, and willing to work for less money. Dani see this as a loss because they have few economic opportunities and physical strength and hard work are culturally valued traits.

Some Dani thus understood men’s drinking as a way for men to feel powerful and confident amid loss of control over economic, political, and social domains. They also mentioned alcohol consumption in relation to the need to shed feelings of shyness and shame (*malu*) and improve their self-confidence. Freddy (a health worker) elaborated, “It is mostly men who drink related to their feelings of masculinity, macho, hotshot, and so on. He drinks with his friends and acts like a hotshot. He’s not shy but actually his self-confidence becomes really high.” Women also said men wanted to try alcohol and get drunk because it made them feel “confident” (*berani*) and like a “hotshot” (*jago*). Being and feeling *malu* or lacking in confidence are experiences that Dani men and women identify with the current era (Munro 2015b, 2018). Alcohol facilitates particular forms of masculinity (epitomized in the “hotshot”) even as others, such as physical prowess, control of territory, political influence, and economic and social advancement, are constrained.

EXPLORING VULNERABILITIES AND CULPABILITIES

Some participants suggested that “Wamena people” might be more vulnerable to alcohol consumption and thus to blame for its negative effects. Participants said that Dani vulnerabilities to drinking might be caused by culture, genetics, parenting, lack of religious commitments, and other personal failures. Tina (a health worker) suggested: “Some youth are stressed, maybe because of problems with their parents, a ‘broken home’ or something. That influences him/her; maybe there is insufficient attention from the parents.” Other informants said that young people were culturally and even genetically conditioned toward self-destruction. Veronika (youth group) said, “Us Wamena people like to live free (bebas), even if the result is killing, fighting, quarrels, brain and physical damage, weak body.” Marius (youth group) added, “Drunken behavior is passed down from father, brother, uncle to young people in the family.” Some participants shared the view, held by the governor and broader society, that Papuans are vulnerable (lemah; literally “weak”) when it comes to alcohol: “Indonesia knows our weakness so they bring in alcohol to finish off the Papuans. . . . This is Indonesia’s refined politics that is still going on in the present day” (Petrus, youth group).

Some Dani, like Markus (youth group), said that they were predisposed to being “a drunk” because of cultural attributes related to upset ancestors, male sociality, and an inability to control desires:

I apologize, because I am also a drunk. All this time I have also been experiencing it, but I don’t know what causes it. I have asked my parents to resolve their problems—maybe their problems with tradition (adat) are causing a disturbance for me. I am easy to invite. If someone invites me to drink I never say I don’t feel like it. I want to be sober and understand, but because I’m invited, I go along again. For example, if there is a meeting but my other friends invite me to do other stuff, I’m going to go along with them and disregard the meeting. I want to go to the meeting but my desires take me there [to drinking], so I do that but really I should not. . . . So it is a problem of loyalty to my friends. For us Wamena valley people, loyalty to our friends is probably number one. Even if we said we’ve had enough, if a friend gives it, there is no way we will refuse. No way.

Here Markus explained some of the cultural and social dynamics of loyalty and male friendship that he perceived as shaping his alcohol consumption, also reflecting a common Dani belief that personal and health problems can be caused by troubled social relations among other relatives or in

relation to others’ (particularly close relatives’) failure to properly follow custom (*adat*). To his first point, friendship bonds (which may also include kinship bonds) are very significant in the lives of Dani youth, especially those who live in areas where poverty inhibits mobility. Like Markus, Daniel (youth group) also questioned what makes Dani people vulnerable to alcohol, saying, “Us Wamena people like to try new things. We already know of our friends who have died because of drinking, for example, but we can never wake up [and change]. We still want to drink. Why does it so often happen like this?”

Young people also suggested that alcohol susceptibilities might stem from failing to follow religious teachings. Grace (youth group) said, “We do not follow religious or cultural teachings. If we did follow these teachings from the first instance, these kinds of things would not even enter into our area. Because we are against it, and the church teachings are now here too. The church strongly forbids alcohol.” Elvira (youth group) similarly said, “We haven’t really internalized the teachings as Christians.” A deeper embodiment of Christian values is thus seen as potentially protective against alcohol and perhaps, by extension, against other forms of refined politics as well.

Participants said that alcohol facilitated severe social and health problems. Because men apparently drink it willingly, this promotes self-blame and self-questioning. It complicates the otherwise strong tendency of Dani informants to look to structural, political, and colonial causes. A number of men and women articulated, in particular, the rise of violence against women when men had been drinking. Frans (an NGO worker) said: “When the husband is drunk, he really disturbs the security in the household. He destroys things, he demands sex, he demands food when there is no money. Any little mistake and he attacks his wife and children with uncontrolled emotions. Men usually drink with their friends, and for a few days at a time. He gets embarrassed if his wife doesn’t serve food or if she seems not to watch the children and they disturb the men.”

The consequences of men’s drinking for women should not be underestimated. Women said that they felt trapped and expressed desperation to get out of relationships that were “chaotic” (*kacau*) and “impossible” (*setengah mati*; literally “half dead”) due to poverty, alcohol, and violence. There were other deadly consequences related to home-brew production. One woman I knew suffered extensive burns when a container of home brew reportedly got too close to her small kerosene stove. After several days in the hospital, she passed away from her injuries.

An older male participant summed up his feelings about how Indigenous extinction could occur because alcohol changes men and violence increasingly shapes sexuality and gender relations: “The problems of murder, rape . . . when people are drinking, they have bad ideas. Conflict occurs, even murder among friends. It is also easy to partner up [sexually]. Diseases move from one person to the next. HIV is spreading wildly in Wamena. It won’t be long before us Papuans are finished [habis].” In this depiction, it is not the Indonesian sex worker who allegedly infects Papuan male bodies (Butt 2005), but rather it is alcohol, controlled and produced by both Indonesians and Papuans, consumed by Papuans, and possibly emboldening Papuan men to be violent toward other Papuans.

Dani discussions thus theorized various domains of vulnerability and culpability—culture, genetics, lapsing norms including being “unsupervised,” and failing to be good enough Christians—that were on the whole believed to affect men more than women. Statements suggested that they struggled with the fact that they, or others close to them, consume the alcohol (a modality of Indonesian violence) that propels further destruction and depletion—which is then so strongly linked to the stigmatization of men as violent and unsophisticated. Alcohol consumption, circulation, production, and its negative social effects may encourage Dani to feel complicit in, or even culpable for, Indigenous demise. This partially reflects but also is in tension with the dominant Indonesian view of Papuans as violent drunks who invite state repression on themselves and are to blame for poverty in their lands.

DISCUSSION: ALCOHOL AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF INDIGENOUS MASCULINITIES

Alcohol consumption in West Papua, and perhaps the broader Pacific region, symbolizes a broader struggle for control over Indigenous bodies, including what goes into them and how they are constituted, represented, and treated. We can observe some of the representational politics of alcohol consumption most clearly in terms of Dani experiences of feeling racialized as violent drunks. These echo dominant Indonesian ideologies that construct Indigenous men as unsophisticated, aggressive, and lacking in self-control. At the same time, Papuan leaders such as the governor may also express dominant Indonesian ideologies that link alcohol consumption to Papuan men. Looking at alcohol in terms of racialization—assumptions about what biology or culture determines—can give

us a better understanding of how Pacific masculinities are being configured by and around the problem of alcohol consumption. Racial or cultural assumptions and hierarchies of sophistication and refinement are alive and well in these configurations and may be revealed by examining discourses around alcohol consumption and control.

As alcohol is racialized as a Papuan male problem, it facilitates racial violence toward Indigenous men that goes beyond the now-normal Indonesian repression of supposed separatists. Indonesian soldiers and police tend to see and portray Indigenous men and boys under the influence of alcohol as primitive and aggressive, and they use these representations to justify acts of violence and deadly force against Papuans. In addition, Papuan activists and their supporters have become proficient at raising claims about state violence against accused separatists, but they may find little ground to defend men subjected to police or military violence for (allegedly) consuming illegal alcohol. Prohibition thus serves as a convenient form of social control that can be arbitrarily used by the police against whomever they want to target (Maracle 1993, cited in Brady 2000, 442).

Dani perspectives on the production, circulation, and consumption of alcohol in Wamena today draw attention to structural forces and how these have shaped and reshaped their bodies, as well as their economic, social, and political worlds. These reflections highlight diminishing influence, numbers, and opportunities. Research participants thus drew attention to the “refined” ways that Indonesia has taken over their territory by introducing alcohol (and other goods and people), which then negatively affect their ability to live.

Papuan discussions of “refined politics” may encourage analyses that recognize and seek to understand more insidious, indirect forms of violence, including those that we might call structural violence—meaning the violence of injustice and inequity that is embedded in ubiquitous social structures (Rylko-Bauer and Farmer 2016, 48). As Joshua M Price explained, “From the standpoint of the dominant culture, the violence is often unseen as *violence* because members of the dominant culture have become habituated to the inequality. . . . Deep structural elements of the society mark some people as deserving worse treatment, or even mark some people as less human. The structures responsible for the violence are also responsible for cloaking the violence as violence” (2012, 6). This is not to say that Papuans are a homogeneously oppressed group or necessarily marginalized, constrained, or suffering, but that much of the vio-

lence in West Papua today is normalized and naturalized by deep structural elements that deserve critical analysis.

Dani understandings of alcohol as a form of state violence disrupt the racialization of alcohol as a Papuan problem, but not entirely. Perceived failures of self-control are an integral part of experiences of colonialism (Robbins 2004). But in interpreting Dani discussions, their reflections on “weakness” toward alcohol should not be misrecognized as an acceptance of defeat by Indonesian structures or as simply an internalization of dominant Indonesian discourses. “Weaknesses” of the body, culture, constitution, or commitments are understood to be symptomatic of colonial rule. Dani views reflect a social-political-spiritual conceptualization of the world in which many forces—including unseen ones, like ancestors and the quality of relationships—can have profound effects on human life. If, like in Wamena, bodies are conceived of as porous to and reflecting broader political, social, and economic inequalities, analyses of alcohol consumption in the Pacific can be enriched by more attention to the body and deeper cultural conceptualizations of culpability and vulnerability.

The notion of the body being permeable to broader social, political, and cultural dynamics means that shoring up social, political, and cultural orders can have a restorative effect on the body. This view is seen in Dani responses to alcohol consumption. For example, participants proposed forming investigative networks to work with police or forming their own groups to search out and destroy home brew. Or the body itself could be the entry point to restoring Indigenous political and cultural orders. Papuan movements like Solidaritas say that alcohol has been intentionally introduced to deplete the young generation and have proposed a “return” to gardening and Christian behaviors as a way to immunize against the infiltration of alcohol (Pasific Pos 2017). This may be seen as an effort to positively reorient Papuan bodies and Indigenous masculinities around ideologies of strength and sophistication rather than weakness.

While excellent analysis of alcohol consumption in the Pacific reveals contestations around social status, the effects of increased cash flow, and expression of modern masculinities (Macintyre 2008; Rooney 2015), in the highlands of West Papua, drinking home brew is not a way that most Dani men demonstrate their wealth or sophistication. Rather, alcohol proliferation and consumption ultimately constrain Indigenous masculinities. Indigenous men are no longer seen as suited for labor work and have been displaced from that role. They have experienced a loss of control, and

others see men as having lost self-control. Stigmatization leads to exclusion from realms of opportunity, which may then contribute to violence toward themselves or others, further reinforcing stigma. There is a growing divide between elite men who are able to control goods and people and those who may suffer the brunt of regulation, collusion, and stigmatization. Economic exclusion and militarization have intensified men's concerns over women's morality, mobility, and sexuality, even as gender practices and values have become, for some men, an arena in which to disprove the alleged “backward” and “violent” propensities attributed to them by Indonesians (Munro 2017). Perhaps, as in other Melanesian contexts (see, eg, Bainton and Macintyre 2013), Dani men are sometimes seeking specific forms of power by embracing masculinities that may celebrate alcohol consumption. But if we consider the etiologies of alcohol consumption and the kinds of violence (representational, gendered, racialized, and embodied) that alcohol facilitates, it is clear that alcohol increasingly circumscribes masculine possibilities rather than opening up new avenues for expression.

Indigenous desire for and consumption of alcohol, which embodies Indonesian poisoning and destruction of Papuans, reflects the broader colonial dynamic in which Papuans are critically resentful of Indonesians for their domination and dispossession, while also being pressured to engage with them on a moment-to-moment, day-to-day basis in order to live. A close examination of Papuan perspectives on alcohol consumption and production reveals that Papuans are aware of and discuss the influence of Indonesia on their bodies and population more broadly. Controlling alcohol becomes a way to mitigate diminishment—of bodies, territories, and cultural pride.

* * *

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Notes

1 In this article, I use the term “West Papua” to refer to the western half of the island of New Guinea—which today comprises the two easternmost provinces of Indonesia (Papua and West Papua)—because West Papua is the English designation preferred by most Papuans, is the most common international term for the area, and conveniently distinguishes the area from Papua New Guinea, the independent country immediately to the east. However, it should be clear that this research took place in the highlands of Papua Province, not West Papua Province.

2 While the alcohol ban was passed in 2013, further instruction was needed to implement it, and this instruction was issued by Governor Enembe in 2016. The governor chose his words carefully, referring to “the people of Papua,” and the “inhabitants of Papua,” but it was clear in media interpretations that he was referring to Indigenous Papuans.

3 While acknowledging that these are not homogeneous categories, in this article I use the term “Indonesians” to refer to nonindigenous inhabitants of West Papua, who are sometimes also referred to as “non-Papuans.” Some Indonesians are long-term settlers, and some are recent migrants. Indigenous Papuans are “Indonesian” by citizenship, but in local cultural-racial designations, “Papuan people” are differentiated from “Indonesian people.” These are not the only categories. For elaboration on some of the designations that are common in Wamena, where this research took place, see Sugandi 2014, 41.

4 My initial fieldwork involved living for about fifteen months with groups of Dani and Lani university students in their dormitories in North Sulawesi, a nearby province, interspersed with visits to their home areas in Wamena. This fieldwork revealed that alcohol was believed to be fueling the HIV epidemic that disproportionately affects Indigenous highlander youth (Munro 2015a; Butt, Munro, and Numbery 2017). Later, my research focused on HIV, pregnancy, and sexuality among Dani and Lani youth in Wamena, including how Indigenous-led groups were responding to the growing HIV epidemic both in the highlands and in Manokwari, another Papuan city.

5 All names of research participants are pseudonyms. Because the discussions occurred in groups and I did not know all the participants well, it was not always possible to attribute comments to individual speakers. Where it was not possible, I have attributed the comment to the relevant group (ie, men’s group, women’s group, youth group). A report of preliminary findings was written in Bahasa with the partner nongovernmental organization and was made available online in 2013.

6 “Generasi emas,” or “gold generation,” is a general reference to West Papua’s natural resource wealth but specifically the massive gold mine at Tembagapura.

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Abstract

Alcohol was recently banned in West Papua in the name of saving Indigenous Papuans from extinction. In this article, I draw on fieldwork and discussions with Dani men and women in the highlands town of Wamena, where home brew is proliferating, to reveal that alcohol facilitates representational, gendered, racialized, and embodied violence. Participants drew attention to the “refined” ways that Indonesia has taken over their territory by introducing alcohol (and other goods and people), which then negatively affect their ability to live. Dani understandings of their cultural and ethno-racial constitution challenge the racialization of Papuan men as violent and drunken and argue for reestablishing control over Papuan bodies and territories. The proliferation of alcohol constrains masculine possibilities rather than opening up new avenues for expression and is thus linked to a reconfiguration of Indigenous masculinities under Indonesian rule. For Papuans, alcohol symbolizes a broader struggle over Indigenous bodies, including what goes into them and how they are constituted, represented, and treated. Looking at alcohol in terms of racialization—assumptions about what biology or culture determines—can give us a better understanding of how Pacific masculinities are being configured by and around the problem of alcohol consumption.

KEYWORDS: alcohol; West Papua; racialization; masculinity; home brew; Indigeneity; diminishment