

Social Construction of Papua's Indigenous People (OAP) Regarding the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia

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Abstract

In the discourse on the modern nation-state, citizenship can no longer be understood merely as a formal and final legal status. The purpose of this study is to explore the construction of the meaning of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) in the daily life experiences of indigenous Papuans (OAP), highlighting the ambivalence between the finality of state law and the subjective experiences of citizens. This research method uses a qualitative approach, applying phenomenological-hermeneutic methods. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis in various regions of Papua, including Jayapura City, Jayapura Regency, Keerom Regency, Manokwari Regency, Jayawijaya Regency, and Merauke Regency. The results show that the meaning of NKRI for indigenous Papuans is situational, historical, and relational. NKRI emerges paradoxically: as an administrative structure and national symbol that is followed procedurally, but often does not resonate affectively. The processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization of the state give rise to conflicting meanings that are negotiated daily through social practices, symbols, and bodily experiences. This ambivalence influences the experience of citizenship, signaling the state's emotionally fragile legitimacy despite its legal validity. These findings emphasize that nationalism and citizenship are not final identities, but rather processes of meaning that are continually negotiated. This research contributes to academic understanding by broadening the understanding of citizenship as it manifests in postcolonial and conflict-ridden contexts, and by emphasizing the importance of recognizing citizens' subjective experiences in constructing state legitimacy.

Keywords

Indigenous Papuans, NKRI, Phenomenology, Social Construction.



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INTRODUCTION

In the discourse on the modern nation-state, citizenship can no longer be understood merely as a formal and final legal status. Normatively, citizenship is determined by the constitution, laws, and international recognition. However, in social practice, the meaning of citizenship is truly tested in the daily lived experiences of citizens. The state ceases to be an abstract entity and becomes a concrete experience: at times protecting, at times controlling, at times absent, and not infrequently causing harm. Contemporary social science literature

affirms that nationalism and citizenship identity are social constructions shaped through the dialectic between history, state policies, power relations, and the subjective experiences of citizens (Berger & Luckmann, 2019; Anderson, 2016).

This awareness carries significant implications for understanding national loyalty. Loyalty does not arise automatically from legal recognition but rather grows or becomes fragile through the relational experience between the state and its citizens. Nationalism, therefore, is not a finished objective fact, but an arena of meaning that is continuously produced, negotiated, and debated (Malešević, 2019; Calhoun, 2021). The state is not only obeyed, but also felt.

This theoretical framework becomes particularly relevant when placed in the context of Papua. The integration of Papua into the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) through the Act of Free Choice (PEPERA) in 1969 has acquired juridical legitimacy in national law and administrative recognition in the international system. Constitutionally, Papua's status as part of Indonesia is declared final. However, this legal finality does not automatically end the debate over meaning at the level of social experience.

The initial findings of this research, obtained through preliminary interviews with traditional leaders, church figures, and young activists in Jayapura, Yalimo, and Manokwari, indicate an ongoing distance between the legality of the state and the lived experience of citizenship. Expressions such as "Legally, we are Indonesia, but in our hearts, we're not necessarily recognized" emerged repeatedly. This statement is not merely an individual opinion but rather a reflection of collective experience that marks the relationship between Papuan Indigenous Peoples (OAP) and the state.

At this point, the main issue becomes apparent. The legitimacy of the state established through a formal legal framework does not always align with the legitimacy formed within the inner experience of its citizens. Numerous studies assert that political legitimacy is not only based on juridical foundations, but also on emotional recognition and subjectively felt experiences within society (Habermas & Pensky, 2020). This tension becomes increasingly evident when the state interprets Papua primarily through a security approach.

An examination of security policy documents, official government statements, and state institution reports from 2019 to 2024 reveals a relatively uniform narrative pattern. Papua is consistently presented as a region requiring ongoing stabilization. However, field findings through interviews and observation show that for Indigenous Papuans, security is not merely defined as the absence of physical conflict, but as the experience of being recognized, trusted, and treated equally. This is where the conflict of meaning emerges: the state talks about stability, while citizens experience insecurity that is emotional and symbolic.

Various recent studies interpret this situation using diverse and often conflicting approaches. Kirksey (2019) reads the state as an embodied experience manifesting as fear and alienation; Paauw (2021) positions language as a space for the production of political meaning; Hernawan (2018; 2020) affirms the memory of suffering as a collective trauma inherited across generations; Widjojo (2019; 2022) maps the conflict in Papua as a structural failure of the state;

Chauvel (2019) interprets Papuan nationalism's ambivalence as a political stance; while Elmslie (2020) emphasizes human rights violations as shaping long-term perceptions toward the state. These six approaches agree on one point: the state in Papua is present as an experience. However, they differ in explaining how that experience is constructed and negotiated in daily life.

It is at this juncture that a research gap emerges. No study has systematically explored how Indigenous Papuans construct the meaning of NKRI through their ambivalent daily life experiences not as outright rejection, but also not as full acceptance. Previous research tends to stop at the level of structure, memory, or political stance, without deeply tracing the dialectical process of meaning formation as formulated in Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory: externalization, objectivation, and internalization.

Field observations and in-depth interviews show that NKRI, for OAP, is experienced as a paradoxical reality. The national flag may be raised, the national anthem sung, and administrative compliance upheld but often without affective resonance. On the other hand, local memory, Melanesian symbols, and community historical narratives become the truer realms of identification. In this awareness, NKRI is not just a state, but an experience laden with wounds, negotiation, and ambivalence.

From the standpoint of recognition theory, this condition demonstrates that legal equality without experiential recognition only generates a new form of symbolic exclusion (Honneth, 2019; Fraser, 2020). The state is strong administratively and materially, but weak empathically. The logic of control dominates, while the logic of care has yet to be consistently institutionalized (Widjojo, 2022; Suryawan, 2023).

As a researcher, this position must be stated reflectively. This research does not claim absolute neutrality, but rather is grounded in an awareness of the researcher's involvement in a dialogue of meaning with the experiences of informants. Using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, this study places the lived experiences of Indigenous Papuans as the main basis of analysis not as a policy variable or object of stabilization.

The problem of this research does not lie in the legitimacy of Papua's integration into NKRI which is legally resolved but in the gap between the legal finality of the state and the lived experiences of its people. The state is settled in law, but unsettled in experience. This conflict of meaning is the starting point for this study on the Social Construction of Indigenous Papuans toward the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI).

The main issue of this research rests on the conflict of meaning between the legal finality of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and the lived experiences of Indigenous Papuans (OAP). Although Papua is legally integrated into NKRI, in the daily social practice of OAP, the state is experienced ambivalently amidst normative compliance, affective distance, and demands for the recognition of dignity. The state is firmly present administratively and in security matters, yet it often does not fully emerge as an experience that is just, recognized, and meaningful for OAP.

METHODS

This study is based on the interpretive-constructivist paradigm, which views social reality as the result of meaning constructed through experience, interaction, and the subject's interpretation within specific historical contexts and power relations. This paradigm is grounded in the ontological assumption that social reality is plural, fluid, and never entirely objective, but is constantly produced through meaning-making processes that take place individually and intersubjectively (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Within this framework, meaning-making is understood not to occur in a neutral space, but within historical and political power relations that shape, constrain, and are simultaneously negotiated by the subject. The experiences of Indigenous Papuans (OAP) with the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) are not treated as established social facts, but rather as realities that are continually constructed through history, collective memory, social practices, and everyday experiences. Epistemologically, the interpretive paradigm positions the researcher as part of the knowledge production process. Understanding is not produced through objective distance, but through reflective dialogue between the informants' horizons of experience and the researcher's horizon of interpretation. This approach is relevant for uncovering latent meanings and ambivalence in the relationship between Indigenous Papuans and the state, without making claims of universal generalization. This research is based on the interpretive-constructivist paradigm, which considers social reality to be the result of meaning constructed through experience, interaction, and the subject's interpretation within particular historical contexts and power relations. This paradigm starts from the ontological assumption that social reality is plural, fluid, and never entirely objective, but is always produced through meaning-making processes that occur individually and intersubjectively (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Within this framework, the meaning-making process is understood not to take place in a neutral space, but in historical and political power relations that shape, limit, and at the same time are negotiated by the subject. The experiences of Indigenous Papuans (OAP) with the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) are not treated as fixed social facts, but as realities that are continually constructed through history, collective memory, social practices, and daily experiences. Epistemologically, the interpretive paradigm positions the researcher as part of the knowledge production process. Understanding is not produced through objective distance, but through reflective dialogue between the informant's horizon of experience and the researcher's horizon of interpretation. This approach is relevant in revealing latent meanings and ambiguities in the relationship between Indigenous Papuans and the state, without claims of universal generalization.

This research uses a qualitative approach oriented towards gaining an in-depth understanding of subjective experiences and the dynamics of meaning within a particular social context. This approach is not aimed at testing hypotheses or measuring variables, but rather at interpreting how social realities are experienced, felt, and given meaning by social

actors in everyday life (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

The qualitative approach was chosen because the social construction of OAP towards NKRI is shaped by emotional experiences, historical memory, and power relations that cannot be reduced to quantitative indicators. Through this approach, the voices of OAP are positioned as the primary source of knowledge, not merely as objects of policy or structural categories of analysis. The type of research used is hermeneutic phenomenology as developed by Max van Manen.

This approach focuses on understanding and interpreting the meaning of lived experience as experienced by subjects in their daily lives (Van Manen, 2016). Unlike descriptive phenomenology, the hermeneutic approach acknowledges that understanding is always interpretive and historical. The researcher's subjectivity is not eliminated, but managed reflectively as part of the meaning-making process. This approach enables an exploration of the ambiguities, tensions, and contradictions that accompany the ways OAP interpret NKRI in the context of both collective and personal experience. In line with Gadamer, understanding is conceived as a dialogue between the horizons of the informants' and the researcher's experiences, producing contextual knowledge rather than universal truths (Gadamer, 2022).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Construction of the Meaning of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) in the Bodily and Living Space Experiences of Indigenous Papuans

Starting from the first problem formulation how the Indigenous Papuans (OAP) construct the meaning of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) in their everyday lives empirical findings indicate that the meaning of NKRI does not arise from the internalization of constitutional discourse or national ideology in the abstract. It grows out of concrete experiences that are lived, felt, and sedimented within the body and living space. In the OAP's experience, the state does not first appear as a legal concept, but rather as a power relation that touches the body and transforms space. At this point, the construction of NKRI's meaning moves within a field of conflict: between protection and threat, between recognition and denial, between hope and wounds.

Based on in-depth interviews with eight OAP informants from various regions and social backgrounds, bodily experience emerges as the primary medium in shaping perceptions of the state. Narratives of fear, vigilance, and reflexes to "stay away" from state apparatuses appear repeatedly, especially from informants living in areas with high security operation intensity. These experiences aren't always told chronologically or rationally. Many stories are conveyed with long pauses, lowered voices, or broken sentences. The researcher's observations during interviews revealed that the informants' bodies often "spoke" before words did through tense gestures, averted gazes, or heavy sighs. In this context, NKRI is not constructed as a protector providing safety, but rather as a presence that compels the body to be on guard. The state is felt before it is understood.

However, the same data also present an opposing meaning. Interviews with OAP health workers and teachers in remote areas reveal that the state can appear as a savior of the body. Healthcare services, medicine distribution, and access to basic education are understood as concrete and meaningful forms of NKRI's presence. Local health policy documents and affirmative education program reports reinforce these findings, indicating that state intervention truly opens up new spaces for some OAP. Here, a sharp conflict of meaning emerges: the same state can be experienced as both a source of trauma and a source of hope. This ambivalence is not a logical contradiction, but a reflection of fragmented lived experience.

Scholars interpret this phenomenon as a form of embodied citizenship. Isin and Ruppert (2020) assert that citizenship is not solely determined by legal status, but by how citizens' bodies are treated in daily practices of power. In the Papuan context, this study's empirical findings show that OAP's citizenship status often does not align with their bodily experiences. Legally, they are full citizens. Yet existentially, their bodies frequently experience the state as a distant force. This is where the meaning of NKRI becomes fragile and is continuously questioned.

These tensions of meaning become even more complex when viewed through the experience of living space. Based on interviews with adat (customary) leaders and participatory observations in indigenous villages, space is not understood merely as a physical object, but as a relational realm connecting people with ancestors, history, and cosmology. In this context, the state is present through agrarian policies, infrastructure projects, and spatial planning. National and regional development planning documents portray these interventions as efforts toward integration and progress. However, field data show that for some OAP, these interventions are instead interpreted as a severance of genealogical ties to the land.

A local case in Manokwari starkly illustrates this conflict of meaning. Manokwari holds a symbolic position in the narrative of Papua's integration into the NKRI. Yet, interviews with local adat leaders reveal that land clearing and urban expansion are often perceived as neglecting customary land rights. One informant remarked, "the state came bringing flags, but forgot to ask who owns the land." This statement is not merely a political critique, but an expression of existential loss. NKRI, in this experience, is constructed as a symbolically present power, but one absent in relational terms.

Conversely, in Keerom Regency, a border area rife with security dynamics and population mobility, the meaning of NKRI is shaped through an ambivalent experience of closeness and distance. Researcher observations at public service posts and village areas show that the state's presence is strongly felt through officials, symbols, and regulations. However, interviews with OAP youth in Keerom reveal that this presence is often not accompanied by a sense of belonging. The state feels physically close, but emotionally distant. In this context, NKRI is constructed as a structure organizing space, but not yet as a space that is truly inhabited.

Experts view this conflict as a clash between the logic of the modern state and the

ontology of indigenous society. Escobar (2020) calls it a struggle between territorial governance and relational space. The state works with maps, boundaries, and regulations, while indigenous communities live in spaces that are historically and symbolically meaningful. The empirical findings of this study strengthen this debate. NKRI is not rejected ideologically, but is questioned through the manner of the state's presence in OAP's living spaces. The conflict of meaning arises not from the absence of nationalism, but from a lack of synchronization of experience.

As a researcher, I cannot position myself as entirely neutral in interpreting these findings. There are moments when I feel emotional tension as informants fall silent, as if words are insufficient to contain their experience. There is discomfort when narratives of suffering must be translated into academic language. At this point, I realize that analysis is not merely cognitive work, but also ethical work. The ambiguity of my position, between researcher and fellow human being, in fact strengthens the understanding that the meaning of NKRI for OAP is never stable.

Academically, I argue that the construction of NKRI's meaning by OAP can only be understood if we are willing to accept ambivalence as social reality. An approach seeking a single meaning whether NKRI is accepted or rejected fails to grasp the complexity of lived experience. This study's findings show that NKRI lives in bodies that feel and spaces that change. It appears as promise and as threat. As a home and a boundary. Its meaning is continuously negotiated, not finalized.

Thus, the answer to the first problem formulation confirms that the construction of NKRI's meaning by OAP is situational, historical, and relational. It is formed through bodily experiences that are wounded and cared for, and living spaces that are protected and disrupted. NKRI is not a final identity, but a fragile and open-ended process of meaning. To read NKRI from the OAP's experience is to be willing to live with tension, and to accept that nationhood, in the Papuan context, is an unfinished experience.

Write the results of the research briefly and clearly and then describe the logical consequences in developing the science and practice of Islamic education.

Negotiating the Meaning of NKRI in the Body, Space, and Memory of Indigenous Papuans (OAP)

Starting from the question of how the processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization shape and mediate the conflict of meanings between the state's narrative and the subjective experiences of Indigenous Papuans (OAP), I do not position this analysis as a mechanical explanation of the "workings" of social construction. On the contrary, I read it as a living field of tension over meaning sometimes quiet, sometimes erupting within the relationship between the state and Papuan society. Empirical data show that this conflict of meanings never appears as a binary opposition of state versus society, but rather as an ambivalent process that is continuously negotiated in everyday experience.

Based on in-depth interviews with OAP in Merauke and Jayawijaya Regency, the

process of state externalization often emerges through the language of development and security, which is repeated in public spaces. The state "speaks" through slogans, projects, and symbols, such as national roads, security posts, and patriotic billboards. However, this externalization is not always accepted as a neutral reality. In interviews with OAP farmers in Merauke, for example, agricultural infrastructure development is understood not simply as an economic opportunity, but also as an early sign of territorial control. The state externalizes itself as a bearer of progress, but OAP bodies receive a different message: the possibility of losing control over ancestral land. At this point, the conflict of meaning begins to take hold, even before policies are actually implemented.

The objectivation process sharpens this tension. Policies, regulations, and state apparatus make the state's narrative appear "natural" and unavoidable. In spatial planning documents in Merauke, land is reduced to zones of production and logistics corridors. For the state, this is administrative rationality. However, field observations suggest that, for OAP, such objectivation severs genealogical ties to the land. A traditional Merauke leader stated, "our land suddenly got new names on the map." This statement is simple but carries symbolic wounds. The state becomes tangible, but at the same time, alien. Here, objectivation not only reinforces power, but also produces emotional distance.

Scholars read this phenomenon as a tension between the rationality of the modern state and the ontology of indigenous communities. Escobar (2020) argues that the state works through a logic of territorial governance, while local communities live in relational spaces. Document data and observations in Merauke reinforce this thesis, but at the same time, reveal its limitations. The state is not entirely "external." It is present in OAP bodies through schools, health services, and civil administration. The objectivation of the state actually makes the conflict of meanings even more complicated, because the state cannot be totally rejected without also rejecting the resources that support life.

Internalization becomes the most fragile and emotional stage. Interviews with OAP youth in Wamena show that the NKRI narrative has been internalized as a lived fact: they sing the national anthem, hold identity cards, and attend national education institutions. However, this internalization is never complete. In one interview, an informant paused for a long time before saying, "we are citizens, but sometimes feel like guests." The sentence is short but heavy. Here, internalization does not produce a full sense of belonging, but rather an awareness of an always in-between position. The state enters the self but does not fully become home.

The Wamena experience demonstrates how the conflict of meanings is mediated by memories of violence. According to interviews and human rights reports (Amnesty International, 2022), security operations have left lasting emotional traces. The internalization of the state is shaped not only by curriculum or symbols, but by bodily memory: the sound of helicopters, night patrols, a sense of vigilance. Isin and Ruppert (2020) refer to this condition as embodied citizenship, when citizenship is experienced through bodies treated unequally. In the Papuan context, state citizenship status often does not align with lived experiences of

safety and subjecthood.

However, I have also found moments that challenge a pessimistic reading. In Wamena, OAP teachers interviewed interpreted the state's presence through access to education as "a way to survive." In this experience, the state is not merely an oppressive structure, but also a source of opportunity. The conflict of meanings resurfaces: the same state can wound and heal. Experts call this ambivalence a feature of unstable power relations (Bhabha, 2019). Empirical data show that OAP do not passively absorb the state's narrative, but interpret it according to their own fragmented life experiences.

As a researcher, I occupy a position of discomfort. Field observations in Merauke and Wamena have made me realize that academic analysis often arrives too late compared to actual experiences. There is a gap between concept and wound. When an informant in Wamena bows his head for a long time before answering, I feel that theoretical language is inadequate. At this point, I question my own analytical distance. Can these conflicts of meaning truly be "explained," or can they only be met with limited empathy? This doubt becomes a part of the analysis, not a weakness.

Argumentatively, I contend that the conflict of meaning between the state's narrative and the subjective experience of OAP is mediated by a social construction process that is never linear. The externalization of the state always contains latent resistance. Objectivation of policy strengthens the state's presence, but simultaneously alienates it. Internalization produces citizenship that is legally recognized but existentially fragile. This conflict is not merely a failure of integration, but a sign that state society relations in Papua operate within logics that continually collide.

Recent literature asserts that peace and integration cannot be forced through administrative normalization (Richmond, 2021). Empirical findings in Merauke and Wamena bolster this argument. The conflict of meanings will not be solved with more state symbols or development projects. It demands recognition of OAP lived experiences as a source of knowledge. NKRI, in this context, is not a final reality, but a social process continually tested by memory, body, and space.

This reflection brings me to a cautious normative position. I do not see OAP as passive victims, but also reject the romanticization of resistance. They live through exhausting daily negotiations. The state is present as both promise and threat. It is in that ambivalence that meaning is forged. Perhaps, it is precisely there that we need to begin a new reading of state-Papuan society relations: not from ideological certainties, but from unresolved tensions.

Ambivalence of Citizenship and the Fragility of State Legitimacy in the Lived Experiences of Indigenous Papuans

Starting from the third research question, this analysis positions the ambivalence of Indigenous Papuans (OAP) towards the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) not as psychological inconsistency or moral ambiguity, but as a survival strategy born out of unequal power relations and layered historical experiences. Empirical data shows that such ambivalence is

negotiated through everyday social practices seemingly mundane acts that are rich in political and emotional meaning. In daily life, OAP do not simply “accept” or “reject” the state; instead, they manage the state’s presence situationally. Here, citizenship is not lived as a fixed identity, but as a fragile experience that is constantly put to the test.

Based on in-depth interviews with OAP informants in Merauke, Wamena, and Jayapura City, administrative practices become the initial space for negotiating ambivalence. Possession of ID cards, participation in elections, or involvement in government aid programs are often undertaken not as expressions of ideological loyalty, but as pragmatic necessities. An informant in Jayapura stated that “being part of the state is a matter of survival, not a matter of belief.” This statement contains deep tension. The state is acknowledged as a source of access, but not fully believed in. The researcher’s observations in public service offices revealed OAP bodies that are procedurally compliant, but tend to be silent, withhold expression, and maintain emotional distance. The state is experienced, but not fully internalized.

Symbolic practices also serve as an important arena for negotiating ambivalence. Hoisting the flag, celebrating national holidays, and using Indonesian in public spaces are often read by the state as indicators of integration. However, field data show these symbols are often performed only superficially. Interviews with OAP youths in Wamena revealed that national symbols may be used “to stay safe” or “to avoid suspicion.” In this context, the symbols no longer represent a sense of belonging but become tools for survival. Scholars interpret this phenomenon as a form of citizenship without belonging that is, citizenship lived without a sense of emotional ownership (Holston, 2019). Ambivalence is not a sign of apathy, but rather a rational response to experiences of uncertainty.

However, ambivalence does not always imply distance. In Merauke, interviews with OAP farmers and port workers indicated that the state can also be perceived as an opportunity. Agricultural programs, basic infrastructure, and market access create more fluid relationships. The researcher’s participatory observations in villages around Merauke showed more flexible negotiations: criticism of the state goes hand-in-hand with participation in its programs. Here, the NKRI is not seen as a direct threat, but is also not fully trusted a temporary partner. This relationship is conditional and easily subject to change.

Experts interpret such ambivalence as a hallmark of state society relations in postcolonial and conflict regions. Scott (2020) calls it everyday resistance, which does not always take the form of open opposition. In the Papuan context, this research finds that OAP ambivalence is closer to everyday negotiation a continual effort to balance risk and opportunity. The state is not confronted head-on, but neither is it accepted unconditionally. This stance is often mistaken for political indecisiveness, when in fact it reflects situational intelligence.

This ambivalence has a direct impact on the experience of citizenship. Formally, OAP have the same rights and obligations as any citizen. Empirically, however, their citizenship experiences are selective and fragmented. Interviews in Wamena show that certain rights—like a sense of security and recognition of dignity are often absent. On the other hand,

administrative obligations are intensely present. This gap creates what Isin (2020) calls fractured citizenship. The state demands compliance but does not always provide equal protection. OAP ambivalence, in this context, is a reflection of unequal citizenship.

Another implication of this ambivalence is the fragility of state legitimacy at the experiential level. Legitimacy does not collapse spectacularly, but erodes slowly. Interview data show that many OAP no longer ask whether the NKRI is legally valid, but rather whether the state is justly present in their lives. In Jayapura, a female informant stated, “the state is there, but not with us.” This brief sentence carries a heavy emotional burden. The state’s existence is acknowledged, but its closeness is not felt. In the literature, this phenomenon is described as a crisis of affective legitimacy, when the state fails to build emotional bonds with its citizens (Berenschot & Aspinall, 2020).

As a researcher, I too felt this ambiguity while composing this analysis. There is an urge to interpret ambivalence as potential for reconciliation. Yet, there is also unease that unaddressed ambivalence may further widen distance. In some interviews, I sensed emotional exhaustion from informants not anger, but weariness. This weariness, in my view, is more dangerous for state legitimacy than overt resistance. A state that is unloved can still be challenged; a state met only with weariness risks becoming irrelevant.

Academically, I argue that OAP ambivalence toward the NKRI should be read as a signal, not a disturbance. It signifies a failure of meaningful communication between state and citizen. Policy approaches that focus only on stability and administrative compliance tend to reinforce ambivalence, not resolve it. The findings of this research show that state legitimacy in Papua cannot be built solely through symbols and procedures, but through a consistent, empathetic, and relational presence in everyday practices.

OAP ambivalence toward the NKRI is not a social anomaly, but an expression of an incomplete citizenship experience. It is negotiated through quiet, calculated, and often exhausting social practices. The implications are clear: as long as the state is not experienced as fair and humane, citizenship in Papua will continue to be lived half-heartedly. For OAP, the NKRI will remain acknowledged but not fully trusted.

The consequence of this ambivalence is the emergence of a minimally functioning state legitimacy sufficient for administrative survival but too fragile to foster long-term belonging and trust. Conceptually, these findings propose understanding citizenship in Papua as liminal citizenship a condition in which legal status is present without affective certainty, and state legitimacy is negotiated situationally through bodies, spaces, and memory.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research analysis, the academic conclusions of this study can be formulated as follows: The research findings indicate that the meaning of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) for Indigenous Papuans (OAP) is not formed solely through the internalization of constitutional discourse or national ideology. That meaning emerges from embodied experiences how individuals feel the presence of the state and from

living spaces mediated by social interactions, policies, and development projects. NKRI is perceived ambivalently: as both protector and threat, as a source of trauma and hope. This ambivalence affirms that the experience of citizenship is embodied and relational, not merely a formal legal status.

The processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization of state narratives are not linear. The state manifests through symbols, policies, and public services, but these are selectively received by OAP. The internalization of citizenship takes place partially: OAP recognize the state legally, but existentially they continue to feel emotional distance. Conflicts of meaning arise from a lack of synchronization between the logic of the modern state and the ontology of indigenous societies, indicating that Papuan citizenship is fragile and continuously negotiated. The ambivalence in OAP attitudes toward NKRI reflects a form of state legitimacy that is emotionally fragile. The state's existence is acknowledged, but it is not always experienced as a presence that is fair or empathetic. The daily experiences of OAP show that institutional legitimacy does not always go hand in hand with emotional or symbolic legitimacy. This reinforces the idea that formal stability does not always reflect social integration or acceptance at the community level.

The study's findings affirm the need for a phenomenological and social constructionist approach in understanding state society relations in Papua. This perspective enables the reading of living, ambivalent, and situational meanings. Citizenship is understood as a practice, not just a legal status; the state is experienced through the body, space, and memory not merely as a formal institution. Accordingly, this study proposes that citizenship in Papua should be understood as liminal and affective, where legal recognition by the state does not automatically transform into a sense of belonging, trust, or symbolic attachment.

Overall, this study shows that NKRI for OAP represents a meaning process that is fragile, open, and always being negotiated. The state appears as both promise and threat, as both home and boundary. These conclusions emphasize that the everyday experiences of OAP must be at the center of understanding social integration and state legitimacy, rather than relying solely on symbols or formal policies.

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