

schoolboys donned war paint and penis gourds to run screaming through the lines of marchers. A few months later, Sofia Moradaw forced me to take her portrait, giggling and topless under the fringe of her sash, on the opening night of a music festival in Jakarta. If I refused, the 50-year-old grandmother threatened to embarrass me, her group's co-ordinator, by singing in this costume for the ministers and honored guests. Such antics are considered good fun, but to suggest to Sofia or the boys that they take to wearing loincloths as everyday attire would fill them with horror. As Biak villagers and their town-dwelling relatives agree, scoffing at their "primitive" rivals, "authentic Biakness" was expressed in an early adoption of Western dress.

The practice of donning an outsider's garb to claim local authority can be traced to a period well before Biak's conversion to Christianity (Kamma 1982). According to Biaks, the voyager has long played an important role in this seafaring society. On what was for centuries a frontier of effective colonial rule, those who ventured to distant shores and returned with "proof" of their encounters enjoyed special prestige. In the feasts that commemorated transitions in the life of a child, porcelain plates, silver bracelets, Moluccan titles, and imported cloth entered circulation among the island's patrilineal clans. In extravagant displays of a brother's generosity and a mother's power to conserve, according to a logic of debt and expenditure I can only hint at here, sexual difference mediated between Biak and the outside world, turning the traces of disruption into the marks of identity. Sup Amber, the "Land of the Foreigners," became a zone of excess, a fetishized figure of the "desire of the gift" (Derrida 1992:29-30) that kept a gendered economy at "work."

What is important for our purposes is the manner in which Biak's poetic forms partook in the domesticating logic by which the "foreign" became "proper" to Biak. To grasp why it is so hard to construct the "real" Biak, one must imagine a perspective from which "the West" becomes the frame and trace which generates and disrupts a different center. In the following discussion, *yospan* and *wor* should not be taken as the voices of a margin. Instead, I ask you to consider them as frontier phenomena, instances in a poetics of shock.

Yospan: A Visual Poetics of Shock

The first time I encountered *yospan* was in 1988, when I joined a planeload of tourists in Bali on one of the national airline's first direct flights to Los Angeles. When we touched down in Biak, it was midnight and I had been sleeping; like most of the other passengers, I had no idea where I was. As we were herded down an endless corridor onto the transit lounge balcony, I heard drumming. Below us, a small troupe of dancers performed. Feathers bobbing, grass skirts swishing, they jogged in a circle around a handful of musicians. Then the musicians pulled out a ukulele, a guitar, and what looked like a cello and began plucking a quick Western tune. The dancers picked up the pace, skipping and hopping in a neat line of boy-girl pairs. My eyes strayed to the darkened windows, and I suddenly met the gaze of one of the large crowd of locals who were watching the tourists through the glass. "That stuff with the guitars," a friend would later

tell me, "that is Biak dancing." At the time, I could only savor the strangeness of this brief encounter with the "tourist surreal."¹⁹

Yospan is derived from two dances, yosim and pancar, which were joined by edict in Jayapura in the early 1980s at a seminar convened to select the province's official dance. Yosim, the slow jog, is an older dance from Sarmi, a regency not far from Irian Jaya's provincial capital. Pancar, the Biak ingredient in the mix, is of relatively recent origin. A local authority on Biak music traces pancar's birth to the military buildup that preceded the end of Dutch colonialism, when rumors of an impending Indonesian attack swept the island. The drills of Dutch fighter pilots inspired an "anonymous artist" to invent a step imitating an airplane entering a stall. Performing it to folk songs, some of which supposedly commemorated the "liberation" of West Irian, Biak people named the dance *pantjar gas*, literally "jet."²⁰

The quick, energetic dance was an immediate hit on Biak, as was yospan, which alternates fast and slow musical passages to let dancers catch their breath. Imported from Jayapura by students on break, yospan has become a staple at feasts and official ceremonies, great and small. In Biak Town, and in the villages, no one can plan a wedding or farewell party without seeking a police permit so that the guests can dance yospan—or, as they say, "play" (*fnak*)—until dawn.

Almost every rural community and urban neighborhood has its own yospan band, with instruments including a pair of store-bought guitars, a couple of uku-



Figure 6
A yospan band.

les carved of wood, and a gargantuan, brightly painted two-stringed double bass. (See Figure 6.) Some groups more recently have added a "percussion set," consisting of a squat metal or wooden cylinder covered in hide and one or two of the region's hourglass *tifa* drums. At parties, the band sits on benches in the center of a circling phalanx of dancers, singing in harmony, strumming, drumming, and beating the strings of the prone double bass with a stick. At the yospan "parades" held to commemorate national holidays or prepare for the tourists, band members walk as they sing, rolling their basses in elaborate little floats constructed to resemble traditional Biak houses or the war and trade canoes of the past.

Although some groups have made modest profits selling cassettes of yospan songs,²¹ yospan remains more or less an amateur art, with a shared repertoire of songs circulating among the regency's groups. With the exception of an occasional hymn or popular hit adapted to a yospan beat,²² most of the dance songs are or are derived from old Biak folk songs, anthems to the island's beauty and the loved ones a traveler must leave behind. This example is characteristic:

Apuse, kukon dao. Yara be Soren Doreri. Wuf wenso <i>baninema</i> , <i>bekipasi</i> ,	Grandmother, we sat together <i>too</i> long. I have to leave for the Doreh seas. Wave your handkerchief!
Arafabye, Auswara kwar.	Alas! You're on your way!

So goes "Apuse," the Biak song played on the intercom before takeoff on the national airline's domestic flights. I was told that the composer was a well-known teacher and evangelist who wrote the tune in the 1930s. However, most yospan songs don't hit the national airwaves, as it were, and the young men who sing them often do not know who wrote them or understand all the words.

What is important about yospan songs is that they are good for dancing. Here again, the spatial layout of a party differs from that of a contest or performance. At a village feast, dancers circle the band in an increasingly disorganized file of pairs. Typically, the line is led by a young man and woman, who might be siblings, cross-cousins, or sweethearts. They select and switch the steps, which are expertly followed by the pairs of teenagers directly behind them. After the aficionados come the trainees, school children who pick up the changing routine fairly quickly. They are followed by adult women, who bumble along happily, colliding during the tricky reverses or sideways hops. Some of them give up on yospan's complexities altogether and revert to the *fier*, an older feminine step. Then come the young men, high on palm wine, who mimic the leaders with clumsy abandon. An old man takes up the rear, prancing along with a stick or a cane, doing his best to make the onlookers laugh.

As the night wears on, the dance picks up energy. Having sung for five or six hours, the singers must strain their rasping voices to make themselves heard. The dancers sing along, and sometimes the formation comes close to disintegrating, as when the leaders double back to form two concentric circles of pant-

ing dancers hurtling past each other. A night of partying in the coastal villages sometimes end in a brawl, as inebriated band members greet the sunrise by chucking dancers into the sea. Building then releasing tension in the fashion that may once have characterized *wor*, the party ends with the celebrants dragging themselves home to sleep it off.

In the government-sponsored contests and performances, *yospan*'s drama and chaos are more or less lost. The better groups have a trainer, who drills six to eight boy-girl pairs in a routine of shifting steps, set to the clean harmonies of the band. After shuffling in neat columns to the stage or the grandstand, the dancers skip and sashay through a series of symmetrical formations in front of the jury and honored guests. Judged on creativity and costumes, but above all on unity, the competitors' brief and expert rendition of the genre seems a far cry from the playful village dances. Nevertheless, driven by a love of pleasure, on the one hand, and a thirst for victory, on the other, *yospan*'s opposing poles are linked by the circulation of new moves.

The pleasure of *yospan* lies in its ever-changing repertoire of steps. The basic steps are simple: *yosim* takes little concentration, and *pancar*, a forward double bunny-hop with hands thrown up in mock distress, is easy to pick up. The *jef* and its many variations are more complicated: two quick steps forward, one step back, two quick steps forward, one step back, four slow forward steps, and three hops back on each foot. Then there's the *pacul*, or "hoe," and a series of complicated combinations that incorporate Western dance moves: the skater's waltz, the two step, the wedding march, the swing. At contests and performances, the announcers always stress the autochthonous symbolism embodied in the latter, but it does not take a trained eye to detect borrowings. Eager to surpass their competitors, *yospan* teams find new and unusual moves, which show up at village parties with astonishing speed.²³

The pleasure of competitive *yospan* also lies in an ever-changing array of costumes. In the parades, the dancers must wear "local materials," and so they appear in a bewildering assortment of frocks fashioned from fibers, bark cloth, bones, and feathers. Many teams wear a modified version of the highlands' grass skirt, which they dye a bright pastel and raise to cover the women's breasts. A contest organizer once showed me a photograph of a group of Biak women from an old Dutch ethnography he owned. He told me that he planned to design an outfit that incorporated their loincloths, but to date, *yospan*'s costumes have reflected other peoples' "customs." This tendency becomes even clearer when a jury slackens the rules. On Armed Forces Day, one team appeared in bow ties, orange satin shirts, dress pants, and patent leather shoes.

"Anyone can do *yospan*" is the assumption and apparently the rule. Perhaps not surprisingly, the winner of the first annual parade was an ethnically mixed squad of military wives. Some government offices have taken to organized *yospan* as an indigenous form of aerobics. The activity seems to supplement *Senam Pagi*, an official routine performed to the same catchy march, at the same time each week, at schools and offices throughout Indonesia. The genre will probably never replace these ubiquitous "Morning Exercises," although the

contests stress the same conformity of body and mind. But in the end, yospan's visual openness overruns the hierarchies rehearsed across the nation first thing each Friday. The dance responds to stimuli at an alarming rate, recombining the shards of other topoi, giving its observers the sense that they are seeing themselves in a twisted mirror. It seems in yospan's logic that performances for guests always seem to end with a dissolution of the boundary between the viewers and the viewed. A lunchtime performance at the regent's mansion climaxes with the university rector linking arms with the army commander's wife and calling his Canadian funders to join the line. (See Figure 7.) Dutch guests climb the stage at a national conference; young dancers pull tourists from their chairs. In a seductive exchange of gazes, yospan takes in whatever comes into "sight."

When Irian Jaya's team entered the national stadium in Jakarta for the opening ceremonies of Indonesia's *Piala Olah Raga Nasional* (National Sports Competition, or PON) in 1993, the neat columns of athletes broke into yospan. In front of the president's box, they froze, turned, and doffed their caps, before picking up the next step without missing a beat. During the soccer final, life in Biak ground to a halt as people crowded around televisions to watch Irian Jaya take on Aceh. What commentators had dubbed the "yosim pancar team" ended PON undefeated in soccer, wowing even a German expert. Irian's skillful execution of "European strategies" made this the best Indonesian soccer squad he had ever seen.²⁴

Adaptable to varying functions, colorful and vibrant, yospan would seem to be the perfect "provincial dance," a cheery symbol of national integration. But in spite of the genre's success in marking Irian's place in the nation at PON, something about its vibrancy remains problematic. There is something too mo-



Figure 7
Officials on the lawn.

bile in yospan's imagery, too shifting, too difficult to pin down.²⁵ The innovations come too quickly, leaving the genre perpetually poised to disappear. Indonesian music videos may seem hybrid, but they are grounded in the notion that a "real" tradition stands behind the "pop." Ambonese villagers perform quadrilles imported from Portugal (Bartels 1977), but at least their references are stable. Whose past anchors yospan? Who could say?

The poster entitled "Unity in Diversity" stands not only for order but for stasis. As an emblem of Biak culture, an explicitly invented "tradition" like yospan proved difficult to sustain with the appearance of a seemingly authentic alternative. Somewhere toward the end of my fieldwork, Biak's regional government decided to shift its emphasis from yospan to wor. In the next section, I'll consider wor's very different history and logic and the effects of its recent "revival." In the New Order version of this obsolete genre, Biak "tradition" seems to be stilled.

Wor: A Vocal Poetics of Shock

The first time I encountered wor was in North Biak in October 1992. The night before I had walked for four hours in the dark to reach the coastal village where I would stay while exploring possible field sites. After a meeting with the women's union at a nearby congregation, the chair and a deacon led me and the members from the church down the beach to visit the ruins of an Allied encampment. Rounding a corner, we came upon an old man in a loincloth who started singing a song that was slow and, to me, unintelligible. He stared into my eyes, repeating the verses to the beat of a drum and the wavering accompaniment of two companions. When he finished, he led me to the water, dampened my face, and presented me with a shell necklace to protect me from local spirits. Many months later, I finally got a transcription of the song.²⁶ At the time, I was told only that it recounted local history and "welcomed me back" to the place.

I was delighted and amazed to find wor waiting for me in Biak. I had read about it in Kamma's account of Koreri, the messianic movement that repeatedly erupted in the region throughout the colonial era, most dramatically in 1939. The 1939 uprising saw thousands of people gather to greet Manarmakeri (the "Itchy Old Man"), the Biak hero believed to have created foreign wealth and power. Witnesses described how the rhythm of the drumming swept followers into a state of ecstasy as they sang and danced to speed the coming of the millennium.²⁷ The "disturbance" finally ended in 1943, after Japanese troops opened fire on the believers, costing hundreds of Biaks their lives (Kamma 1972:201). I had also read reports dating from shortly after World War II. Their Dutch scribes recounted the arrest and detention of natives found with Koreri paraphernalia, which nervous officials took as a sign of subversion (Galís 1946). In 1992, the association of wor with Koreri—and Koreri with politics—remained strong among older Biaks, who still recalled a time when they could be expelled from a congregation or even jailed for illicit singing. While I found no indication that the Indonesian government had ever banned wor, many peo-