

**THE CHALLENGES TO
PURSUING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN PAPUA**



**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS (HUMAN RIGHTS)
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY**

Copyright by Mahidol University

COPYRIGHT OF MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY

THE CHALLENGES TO PURSUING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN PAPUA

SUPRIADI 5338051 HPHR/M

M.A. (HUMAN RIGHTS)

THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE: YANUAR SUMARLAN, Ph.D., MICHAEL GEORGE HAYES, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examined the implementation of asymmetric elections (*noken* system) in Papua Indonesia. The research was a qualitative ethnographic study, which collected data through in-depth interviews and a direct observation during the election in the Jayawijaya regency of Papua and also obtained data from document analysis. The study found different perspectives towards the asymmetric election that was mainly based on cultural inheritance and political argumentation. There was convincing evidence that the *noken* system was shaped from the bad practice of previous elections during the authoritarian regime rather than from the cultural inheritance aspect. The system neglected democratic electoral principles and norm, the voting method violated individual citizen's rights to participate in the election and disregarded the principle of one-man-one-vote. Furthermore, the Noken method allowed for political domination by 'big-men', a typical Melanesian leadership style that re-emerged in the electoral event in Papua. The research also summarized the analysis from a few electoral experts regarding the Noken system. Finally, this paper revealed a set of conclusions, which mainly argued that the Noken system was invented and that, rather than respecting it for originating from legitimate cultural practices, it should be corrected to fulfill minimum democratic standards.

KEY WORDS: PAPUA ELECTIONS/ NOKEN SYSTEM/ COMMUNAL PROXY-VOTE/ BIG-MEN

128 pages