

# “EDUCATING DIVERSITY” AND THE JAPANESE GAZE ON PAPUA: A COMMODIFICATION IN DISGUISE OF WASEDA BOYS INDONESIA TRIP (2022) VIDEOS ON PAPUA ISLAND

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## ABSTRACT

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In 2022, Nihongo Mantappu’s YouTube channel created a video series called “Waseda Boys Indonesian Trip” intended to “educate” the audience about Indonesian cultural diversity. The boys, consisting of Jerome Polin (Indonesian), with Tomohiro, Yuzuke, and Otsuka (Japanese), visited various islands and tourist attractions in Indonesia and collaborated with Traveloka to promote the holiday platform. One of the islands they visited was Papua. There, they travelled to various places, including Wamena, to meet the Dani tribe in Kumugima Village. However, the prior idea of “educating diversity” seems problematic, as it was delivered through the Japanese gaze as “the Self”, positioning Papua as “the Other.” Using Undressing Advertisement theory by William O’Barr, this research aimed to explore how the othering of Papua was achieved through idealized images, social interactions, inequality, and power. Furthermore, to analyze the discourse behind the image and text, this research employed Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen as a research method. The data source for this study was three YouTube videos of “Waseda Boys Indonesia Trip,” Papua edition by Nihongo Mantappu. The study shows that the boys from a sophisticated background positioned themselves as the ideal, while seeing Papua Island as primitive and aggressive. They even commodified the aggressive image of the Dani tribe as clickbait to attract viewers and gain YouTube trending status.

**Keywords:** Undressing advertisement; Papua Island; Japanese gaze; commodification; Nihongo Mantappu

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Travel vlogs, often called travel videos, are essential for the public to share information about specific locations (Chen et al., 2021). Therefore, content on travel vlogs is never lacking in enthusiasts. In the Indonesian context, for example, travel vlog shows have coloured various media. One of Indonesia’s travel vlogs is *My Trip My Adventure*. Since 2013, *My Trip My Adventure* has become one of the pieces of content that have successfully captured the public’s attention (Aini, 2016). The characteristic of this TV show is the exploration of Indonesia’s

nature, presented by an Asian looking celebrity host (Ilyasa & Masitoh, 2019). The face is a type of face that combines features from various races (not solely the Indonesian race). Generally, faces have white skin and slanted eyes. These physical characteristics refer to Mongoloid, Chinese, Central, and North Asian descent (Windharto, 2017). One of the hosts of *My Trip My Adventure*, who has such a face, is Dion Wiyoko. The show is also decorated with hosts of mixed backgrounds, including Hamish Daud, Nadine Chandrawinata, David John Schaap, Richard Kyle, and others. As with Asian faces, mulatto faces are also a mixture of features from various races, often resembling those of foreigners (Caucasians), with tall bodies, sharp noses, broad chests (in men), and clean, blemish-free faces (Sondakh, 2014). Through presenting content exploring Indonesia and balancing it with a diverse mix of hosts, the TV program has become popular. Seeing its success, various content creators began applying a similar formula to capture Indonesian audiences' attention.

One of the creators who often uploads travel vlog-themed content is Jerome Polin, through his personal YouTube channel, Nihongo Mantappu. Jerome Polin and his Japanese friends, later known as Waseda Boys, often made various videos of their activities. Starting from entertainment videos and learning mathematics to Japanese and Indonesian cultural education (Aqila et al., 2022). One of the videos that has caught the public's attention and even reached the trending section on YouTube is a 2022 content piece from the "Waseda Boys Indonesia Trip" edition. During the video trip, they visited various islands in Indonesia, including Java, Sumatra, Nusa Tenggara, and Papua (Ramadani, 2022). On this trip, the Nihongo Mantappu team is sponsored by Traveloka, a platform that offers a range of holiday services, from accommodation bookings to transportation tickets.

In the "Waseda Boys Indonesia Trip" project, Nihongo Mantappu claims that one of the goals of making this video was to educate the world about Indonesia's diversity and beauty. As a first step, Jerome Polin invited his Japanese friends to join him in exploring Indonesia and introduced them to how "rich" the country's ethnic and natural diversity is. One of these series of trips is to visit Papua Island. During their time in Papua, they made 8 videos about Papuan cuisine, taught at a Papuan school, enjoyed the natural beauty of Papua, interacted directly with the Dani tribe, and entered Honai, traditional houses in Papua. Unfortunately, the goal to educate diversity is ultimately trapped in an orientalist cage, because it places Papua as the Other.

Orientalism is a concept introduced by Edward Said in his 2003 book of the same name. In general, Said's *Orientalism* (2023) talks about the dichotomy between the West (Europe) and the East (non-Europe). Said intended to find out the extent of people's understanding of the East portrayed by the West, as well as to build awareness that the projected knowledge about "the East" has been legitimizing the dichotomy between these two regions and placing the West in a higher position (Loomba, 2016, pp. 65–67). The West, represented by Europe, is positioned as "us," while non-Westerners are called "them," a term close to the Other. There are three crucial points in Said's *Orientalism*, those are Orient refers to the eastern country, Orientalist is a researcher who writes about the East, and Orientalism means the production of knowledge or ideology about the East (Said, 2003, p. 2). The combination of these three things forms a new understanding of the colonized country, from the point of view of those who are colonized. He stated that Orientalism arises from a fundamentally broken and radical situation (Said, 2003, p. xii).

This difference in perspective leads to binary opposition. Binary opposition is a system of two different categories that relate and form universality (Fiske, 2011, p. 162). This binary opposition that emerges from Orientalism leads to various forms of domination, exploitation, and discrimination against the other. The binary opposition perspective did not really end, even though the European colonial period ended decades ago. This view then leads to New Orientalism, which is practiced within a sociocultural frame and is believed by society to be the truth. The notion of orientalism that distinguishes the superiority of the West from the inferiority of the East needs to be seen for its further development in the future (Said, 2003, p. 42). One of the developments of orientalism that needs to be monitored is how the dichotomy of orientalism is reproduced and merged into society.

One form of Orientalism is the "Japanese gaze." The Japanese gaze is a condition in which Japan, as a non-Western country, positions itself as the ideal and above other countries, while, on the one hand, framing itself as the other (Giannoulis, 2007). This then created an ambivalence towards Japan's position. Is it a colonizing country or one that sides with the "colonized"? In fact, Japan deliberately positioned itself as an oriental, uncivilized country as part of its efforts to build a civilized, modern nation (Hadinger, 2007).

Japan's ambivalence has earned more attention from Asian communities. Japan, as a fellow Asian, was seen as a "hero" who would liberate Asia from Western colonialism. This was reflected in the initial motto of Japanese colonization, which portrayed Japan as the light, protector, and leader of Asia (Budiarto, 2021). Through this motto, Japan indirectly participated in reproducing colonialism and its ideology. In this process of colonialism, Japan positioned itself as a superior protector and the center of Asian modernity (Atkins, 2010, p. 3). Through the reproduction of colonialism, Japan eventually engaged in various forms of discrimination

against fellow easterners deemed uncivilized. These processes of colonialism made Japan one of the most successful colonial powers (Booth & Deng, 2017).

One form of the reproduction of colonialism and a Japanese gaze is found in the “Waseda Boys Indonesia Trip” videos, Papua edition, uploaded by Nihongo Mantappu YouTube channel. The Japanese boys who participated in this trip discriminated against Papua through words and gestures that are reinforced by the camera’s point of view. Furthermore, the Indonesian crews, including Jerome Polin, a member of the Waseda Boys who initially sought to introduce the diversity of Papua, were also caught up in the Japanese gaze and considered themselves equal to Japan. Moreover, the reproduction of colonialism’s view of Papua as the Other is then commodified in the form of commercial videos that generate profits for the content creators. The commodification of Papua Island in these videos aligns with one of the missions of Japanese colonialism in the past, which sought to make the island as much a business enterprise as possible, to be used for state-building (Kublin, 2009). Therefore, it is important to examine further the practice of commodification, the Japanese gaze, and the othering of Papua in these videos.

Previous studies have been conducted on Papua Island. For example, research conducted by Andreas (2020) titled “Politik Identitas Papua dalam Iklan Telkomsel” (Papuan Identity Politics in the Telkomsel Advertisement). The results of this study, which used a semiotic method, show that Telkomsel’s advertisements position Papua ambivalently. On the one hand, identity politics is used as an instrument of resistance to domination. Still, on the other hand, it confirms and affirms stereotypes of ethnic Papuans as uncivilized, masculine, and backwards. The media also positions Papua as a passive subject and puts it as the Other. The second research was written by Christiani (2017) entitled “Representasi Identitas Etnis Papua dalam Serial Drama Remaja Diam-diam Suka” (Representation of Papuan Ethnic Identity in the Drama Series *Diam-Diam Suka*). The research, which used postcolonial theory and semiotics, concludes that Papua is often represented as aggressive, primitive, and uneducated. Moreover, this research also reveals the inequality and dominance of non-Papuan ethnicities who are full of “Western” idealism. The third study on Papua was published by Larasati (2014) under the title “Representasi Etnis Papua dalam Film Lost in Papua” (Representation of Papuan Ethnicity in the Film *Lost in Papua*). This research used the theory of Orientalism and concludes that the construction of mass media through film portrays Papua as a primitive, arrogant, and violent region. The mass media is then considered one of the parties that legitimize the stereotyping of Papua.

Based on the three previous studies above, there are correlations and differences with this current research. The correlation is the use of mass media with an Orientalist perspective that positions Papua as the Other by juxtaposing it with the Self. The difference between this research and previous research lies in its focus. While earlier studies focus on the representation of Papua in various media, this research examines the practice of commodifying and othering Papua under the guise of promoting diversity. Previous studies on Papua have focused only on othering practices. In fact, research on the practice of island commodification under the pretext of educating diversity is vital so that the media does not continue to legitimize stereotypes that have the potential to dominate and exploit certain groups for one-sided benefits.

Based on the problem above, the research questions are: (1) How does Nihongo Mantappu, which carries the Japanese Gaze perspective, view Papua? (2) How does the attempt at “educating diversity” in Nihongo Mantappu videos slip into the practice of othering and commodification of the island and ethnicity of Papua? To answer the research questions, this study employed Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen as its method.

This research can contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of media and island studies. Theoretically, this research contributes to expanding the discussion on critical media studies, especially regarding the representation of the island in a postcolonial perspective. This research also shows how the Papuan abjection mindset is still in practice, even though content that aims to educate about Indonesia’s diversity. Practically, this research can contribute to raising critical awareness among local and global content producers and consumers that the mindset that neglects Papua is still embedded in the public. Thus, it is expected that this kind of mindset will not continue to reproduce in the form of, but not limited to, travel content with diversity education narratives. In a broader sense, this research may promote a more empowering perception of Papua, especially for Indonesian and Japanese people who aim for intercultural visits.

## 2. METHODS

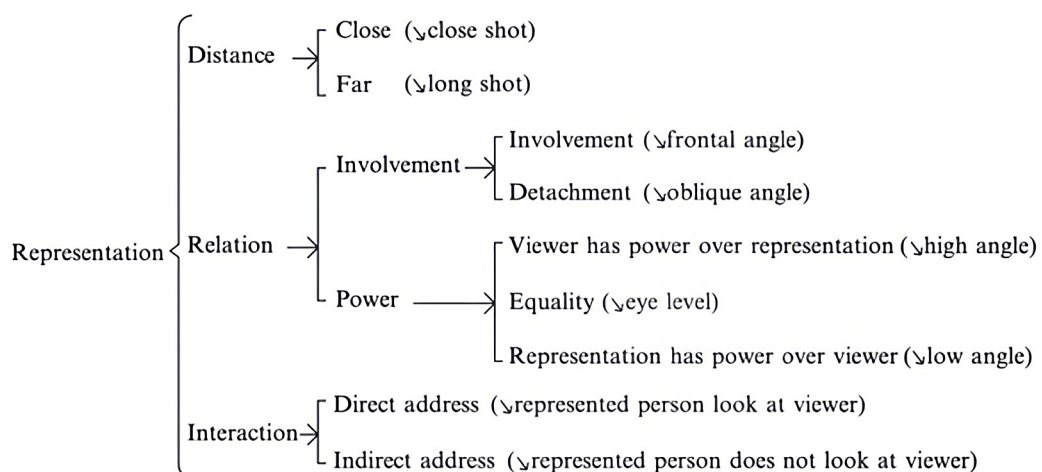
To answer the research questions, several methodological steps were carried out. The data collection process began by categorizing videos from Nihongo Mantappu’s “Waseda Boys Indonesia Trip” Papua edition on YouTube according to the research criteria. The data collection process started with categorizing the videos. There were at least six videos in the edition, which fell into three categories. These videos included two

*mukbangs* featuring Papuan food, one video about teaching at a Papua Elementary School, and three videos about exploring nature and tribes in Papua. For this research, the researchers selected three videos from the 'exploring nature and tribes in Papua' category because these videos demonstrate how the pretext of educating about diversity has evolved into the commodification of otherness. The three videos are titled "Wasedaboys Masuk Ke Pedalaman Papua! Ketemu Suku Dani! | Indonesia Trip" (Waseda Boys Enter to the Hinterland of Papua! Meeting the Dani Tribe! | Indonesia Trip), "Melihat Isi Rumah Suku Pedalaman Papua! (Honai) | Wasedaboys Indonesia Trip" (Seeing the inside of a Papua Home! (Hanoi) | Wasedaboys Indonesia Trip), and "Wasedaboys Explore Alam Papua: Ketemu Anak2, Trekking, Nyebrang Sungai | Indonesia Trip" (Waseda Boys Explore Papuan Nature: Meeting Kids, Trekking, and Crossing Rivers | Indonesia Trip). Categorization was carried out using the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis method of Gunther Kress (2015) and Theo Van Leeuwen (2008). The method involved various aspects, such as images, sounds, texts, and expressions, as elements of multimodality. Through this categorization, three videos were found to be problematic and refer to a form of Japanese commodification and orientalism towards Papua.

The data were analyzed using William O'Barr's Undressing Advertisement method to examine the form of othering across three issues: ideal image, social relations, and inequality and power in the three Waseda Boys Indonesia Trip videos. The ideal image needs to be read in the text as well as used to uncover how the text presents the similarities and differences between one social category and another. Social relations are used to identify the kinds of relations idealized between subjects in the text through gestures, positions, expressions, and so on. Finally, issues of inequality and power are used to look at the hierarchical structures and power relations that appear in the text (O'Barr, 1994, pp. 3–4).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the context of communication, words and images are equally correlated in forming meaning. Words are usually used to convey facts and explanations, while, pictures provide an interpretation of these facts (Leeuwen, 2008, p. 136). In addition to words and images, sound is one of the modalities that must be considered when constructing meaning. The combination of these semiotic modes is essential for creating meaning in analyzing multimodality (Noviani, 2018, p. 112). Furthermore, Kress (2015, p. 57) states that in communication activities, various modes are used together in ensembles. Regarding how an image represents a certain meaning and discourse, there are three imaginary dimensions: (1) the social distance between the viewer and the image (social distance), (2) the relationship between the person depicted and the audience (social relation), and (3) the social interaction between the person depicted and the audience (social interaction) (Leeuwen, 2008, pp. 137–141), as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Representation and viewer network  
Source: Leeuwen (2008, p. 141)

In this study, modes such as text, shot, and the subject's gaze at the camera were examined to uncover the discourse of the Japanese gaze and othering in the video content of the Waseda Boys Indonesia Trip Papua edition.



### 3.1 The reproduction of colonialism in Waseda boys Indonesia trip videos

In an orientalist view that presents a dichotomy between the “West” and the “East” and strengthens the hegemonic power of “Western” countries, or, in this context, Europe (Loomba, 2016). Then, Japan is one of the Asian countries included in the Eastern category because it has non-European origins. Despite coming from an eastern country, Japan has a superiority because of the legacy of colonialism in the past, to be precise, in the 1890s, when Japan managed to leave the inferiority zone that had occurred for three decades (Myers & Peatitte, 1984, p. 6). Japan is therefore considered a strong country economically and militarily (Myers & Peatitte, 1984, pp. 6–7). This superior Japanese position eventually produced the view that Asian countries or races outside Japan were considered inferior (Myers & Peatitte, 1984, p. 95). The Japanese gaze from this superior perspective is problematic because it triggers discrimination against groups outside Japan, which refers to the reproduction of colonialism.

Japan’s position as superior is also reflected in the videos of the “Waseda Boys Indonesia Trip” Papua edition. The following pictures are the forms of the Japanese gaze reflected in the video.



**Figure 2:** The Dani tribe is depicted as aggressive, as seen in the scene of tribe members running with weapons as the Waseda Boys arrive  
Source: Nihongo Mantappu (2022a)

Figure 2 is a clip from a video entitled “Waseda Boys masuk ke pedalaman Papua! Ketemu Suku Dani!” (Waseda Boys Come to the Hinterland of Papua! Meeting the Dani Tribe!). In this video, the Waseda Boys are walking like Papuans and are about to visit a tribe living in the mountains. In the middle of their journey, they are “welcomed” by the Dani tribe, who come running around them, complete with the traditional weapons they carry.



**Figure 3:** Papua is framed as dangerous and scary, illustrated by scenes of people running around with weapons, appearing to attack  
Source: Nihongo Mantappu (2022a)

In terms of *distance*, this shot began with a long shot, then pulled back to the Waseda Boys’ faces and the Dani tribe (Figure 3). When shot in close-up, the Waseda Boys look at the camera, while the tribe is shot candidly from the side. Then, from the camera perspective (*relation*), the Dani tribe is shown at an oblique angle, while the Waseda Boys take a frontal-angle shot. During this scene, the camera adopts a low angle when it is aimed at the Waseda Boys, then shifts to an eye-level and a high-angle when it shows the Dani tribe. In terms of *distance* and *relation*, it can be implied that the tribe is positioned as a stranger or the Other, and their significance is set aside. They are also depicted as having a lower social status in video footage. In comparison,

Waseda Boys occupy a position considered close to the audience and with power. The power relation is seen in this scene. Apart from that, in terms of interaction, Waseda Boys are the only ones who speak clearly. They express what they feel by looking at the camera. This shows that Waseda Boys have the power to convey their own thoughts as a representation of the audience. Meanwhile, the Dani tribe does not speak at all, does not look at the camera, and only shouts. This shows that they are considered unable to convey their own voice and must be "described" by someone else. This statement is in line with what was said by hooks (1990):

"No need to hear your voice, when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer, the speaking subject, and you are now at the center of my talk" (p. 343).

According to the statement above, it is clear that the colonial party considers the colonized subjects as unable and inappropriate to speak their own stories. So, it must be represented and told by others, or, in this context, by the Japanese point of view.

Apart from the images, the video is also interesting for its sound mode, which is displayed as text in the video subtitles. When they meet the Dani tribe, the first word they shout is "Wow." This word shows their surprise at seeing something different from them. When shouting this word, the shot was taken at a low angle and showed the tribe depicted attacking the Waseda Boys. After that, the Waseda Boys said "serem banget" (so scary) and "bahaya" (dangerous). These two words show fear when meeting new and different people. Furthermore, if these words are combined with the image analysis at the beginning, it will produce a discourse of aggressiveness from the tribe. The Dani tribe in Papua is considered aggressive, lowly, different, dangerous, and capable of attacking anyone.

This aggressiveness was then used as clickbait to attract viewers through a thumbnail that appeared to show the Waseda Boys being attacked by the Dani Tribe (Figure 4). As a result, this provocative thumbnail video garnered 2,510,070 views, 6,859 comments, and 150 thousand likes from May 28, 2022, to July 24, 2023. The number of interactions with this YouTube content ultimately drives AdSense revenue for the Nihongo Mantappu YouTube channel, which can be converted into money. This means that the depiction of the Dani tribe's aggressiveness is used as a marketing strategy. Aggressive Papuan stereotypes are codified for greater profit.



**Figure 4:** Clickbait thumbnail in Nihongo Mantappu YouTube Video, showing the aggressiveness of the Dani tribe  
Source: Nihongo Mantappu (2022a)

This video also shows that the Japanese people (represented by the Waseda Boys) still have an orientalist perspective. They position themselves as the 'West' and Papua as the 'East.' They perceive the 'difference' as aggressive and dangerous. This then leads to racism against non-Westerners and reinforces the insider (Western) construction of their "self" (Loomba, 2016, pp. 155–157). One of the forms of racism is reflected in the body gestures throughout the video that represent fear of Papuan aggressiveness. In addition to describing Papua as aggressive and dangerous, the Papua edition of the video also features othering through primitivist tropes. Papua is portrayed as primitive and far removed from modernity. This depiction of Papua as a primitive region is relevant to the "mission civilisatrice" carried out by the colonial state towards those they perceived as primitive (Atkins, 2010, p. 55). The primitives are those who are far from modernization, living on islands, forests, or mountains (Atkins, 2010, pp. 55–56). The following pictures are some video clips that illustrate this.



**Figure 5:** Depictions of Papua away from mobile phone technology  
Source: Nihongo Mantappu (2022a)

The first video that shows the primitive side of Papua is entitled “Waseda Boys masuk ke pedalaman Papua! Ketemu Suku Dani!” (Waseda Boys Come to the Hinterland of Papua! Meeting the Dani Tribe!). In this video, the Waseda Boys were surprised that the Dani tribe had mobile phones (Figure 5). They looked with a surprised expression at the man from the Dani Tribe who was recording with his mobile phone. After that, Jerome said, “Ada hp juga di sini? ada hp gais di sini” (There is a mobile phone too here? There is a mobile phone here, Guys). He uses the word “gais (guys)” which shows that they are communicating with the audience. In terms of *distance*, the video is shot in close-up, with the Waseda Boys right in front of the camera (foreground), while the Dani people are seen farther back (background). This shows that even though they are both taken from the same frame, the Waseda Boys are in a better position than the Dani tribe. This is also emphasized by the aspect of *relation*: the eye-level camera angle, which is supposed to show equality, is not applied equally. In this video, the camera angle is used differently when aiming at the Waseda Boys and the Dani tribe. When aiming at the Waseda Boys, the camera is at a frontal angle, with the Waseda Boys looking directly into the camera. At the same time, the people of the Dani tribe are shown at an oblique angle and are only seen surrounding the Waseda Boys. They do not look at the camera at all and are positioned at the edge of the frame, so they are not too visible. This angle also reinforces the Waseda Boys’ position as the center of the video. They also objectify the Dani tribe. This objectification refers to the interaction that positions the tribe as the *indirect addressee* and the Waseda Boys as the *direct addressee*.

Through this objectification, a view is produced that refers to the separation between the idealized and the non-idealized (others). Said (2003) argues that those categorized as the Other are presented to legitimize the position of the West, or, in this context, to serve as the Ideal. Japan, which positions itself as the Ideal, then reproduces this orientalist view. This can be seen in the dialogue “Ada hp juga di sini? Ada hp, gais, di sini” (There are mobile phones here, too? There are mobile phones here, guys!). It is understood that, in the minds of the Waseda Boys, the Dani tribe in Papua does not have access to mobile phones. Therefore, they are surprised when one of the Dani uses a mobile phone and films them. The word ‘*gais*’ (guys) here refers to Waseda Boys, who aim to inform the audience about the existence of mobile phones. The fact that they are surprised by the mobile phone suggests they consider Papua to be primitive and technologically backward.

In addition to the video above, the primitive side of Papua is also depicted in a video titled “Melihat Isi Rumah Suku Pedalaman Papua (Honai)” (A Look Inside a Remote Papuan Tribe’s Home (Honai)). In this video, Waseda Boys visit a traditional Dani house known as Honai. They are accompanied by a local female resident, who sits separately from them.



**Figure 6:** Depiction of Papua as an area without electricity  
Source: Nihongo Mantappu (2022b)



In this video, they were surprised to find that the house had electricity. In addition to their surprise at the presence of electricity, they were also astonished to discover schoolbooks inside the Honai.



**Figure 7:** Depiction of Papua as an area without access to education  
Source: Nihongo Mantappu (2022b)

The two video fragments, when viewed in terms of *distance*, are presented in close-up. However, this close shot positions the Waseda Boys as the central focus of the video. This is shown by the bright light that highlights only the Waseda Boys, while the woman who accompanies them is shown as distant, not spoken to, and in the dark. Then, in terms of *relation*, the picture is taken at eye level, with Jerome Polin facing front and the others at oblique angles. When they ask about electricity and schoolbooks in Honai, the Honai woman is not involved enough to speak. She only nods, while the Waseda Boys, especially Jerome, do all the talking. This then shows that they are presented as *direct addressees*, while the Dani tribe is presented as an *indirect addressee* at the interaction level.

The phrase "Tapi di sini ada listrik juga?" (But there is electricity, too, here?) refers to the notion that the Dani tribe living in Honai is originally considered a people who do not have access to electricity (Figure 6). Furthermore, the sentence "Buku sekolah, ya? Tapi ada buku, ya?" (Schoolbooks, right? But there are books, right?) uttered by the Waseda Boys also indicates that, apart from not having access to technology, the tribe is also considered not to have access to education because they live in the forest (Figure 7). Therefore, the presence of books in the Honai surprises the Waseda Boys.

This "surprise" about the presence of schoolbooks in the interior tribes of Papua led them to the second surprise: the presence of schools in the area. They look surprised and astonished when they see a school in the interior of Papua.



**Figure 8:** Papua is depicted as an area without access to education  
Source: Nihongo Mantappu (2022c)

A sense of surprise at the existence of this school is found in the video piece titled "Waseda Boys Explore Alam Papua: Ketemu Anak-Anak, Tracking, Nyebrang Sungai" (Waseda Boys Explore Papua's Nature: Meeting Kids, Tracking, Crossing the River). In this video, *distance* is depicted through a long shot taken from inside a moving car. Specifically, the video captures a view from a considerable distance, underscoring how the school's location appears unfamiliar to the Waseda Boys. In terms of *relation*, the camera is placed at eye level, which establishes an equal power dynamic. However, in this equal eye-level power, the sentence "Gais, ada sekolah lagi di situ, lumayan banyak orang." (Guys, there is another school there, quite a lot of people there),



spoken by the Waseda Boys, blurs the meaning of equality itself (Figure 8). In this sentence, the Waseda Boys, who have a strong educational background, initially assume that Papuans lack access to education. Then the assumption is vented through the interaction of astonishment. They even made a direct address, telling the audience that in Papua, there are schools with many students.

This perspective of Papua as an area far from technology, electricity, and access to education reinforces the stereotype that Papua is an underdeveloped region, or, in this case, a primitive one. Primitive, in this sense, is a region that has not yet been civilized (Mead, 1967, pp. 305–306). This Papuan primitivism is even evident in edits to the video that added dinosaurs, and Jerome Polin even said it was like Jurassic Park (Figure 9).



**Figure 9:** Depiction of Papua looks like Jurassic Park  
Source: Nihongo Mantappu (2022c)

The added element of dinosaur animation builds the discourse that Papua is depicted as a wilderness far from civilization and progress. The presence of extinct animals in this video sort of confirms that Papua is still primitive, like the days when ancient animals were still alive. This view of Papua as a primitive region is also a legacy of colonialism. Colonizing countries regarded areas they visited for the first time as still primitive. The East, a colonized country, has been considered inherently primitive (Said, 2003, p. 231). Waseda Boys, which initially intended to introduce Papua, instead portrayed it as a primitive region and reproduced the primitiveness that developed during colonialism.

Besides presenting Papua as aggressive and primitive, the Japanese gaze is also close to the element of exoticism. Exoticism itself is part of the imagination created by the colonials and legitimized as a reality lived by the other (Suwito, 2019). Everything that was done and “discovered” by the colonials would be considered something exotic that should be “saved.” This rescue mission was carried out at the same time to legitimize the West’s position as “the look” (Bate, 2003, pp. 125–127). Exoticism is also seen in Nihongo Mantappu’s video “Waseda Boys Indonesia Trip.” What they find in Papua is ultimately perceived as exotic and worthy of viewing.



**Figure 10:** Exotism of Papua  
Source: Nihongo Mantappu (2022c)

A clip from the video "Waseda Boys Explore Alam Papua: Ketemu Anak-Anak, Tracking, Nyebrang Sungai" (Waseda Boys Explore Papua's Nature: Meeting Kids, Tracking, Crossing the River), featuring them meeting Papuan children who were bathing in a river with murky brown water (Figure 10). The distance aspect of this video is taken in a close-up shot that features the Waseda Boys dominating the frame. Then, from the element of *relation*, both Waseda Boys and Papua are depicted in oblique angles. Although described from the side, there is an imbalance of power. This is evident in the camera angle, which is low when the camera is pointed at the children bathing in the river. The camera position is above the children and equal to the Waseda Boys. This shows an equal relation between the audience and Waseda Boys, yet an unequal relation between Waseda Boys and the Papuan children. Furthermore, in terms of *interaction*, the Waseda Boys are presented as observers and commenters on the children, or, in this case, as *direct addressees*. Meanwhile, the children are positioned as *indirect addressees* and become the object of spectacle for the Waseda Boys. The use of local residents as a spectacle to be enjoyed brings back memories of the colonial past. Colonizers arrived in new territories and saw all of them as exotic.

Such depictions ultimately refer to the binary opposition inherited from colonialism. People who are different from "the Ideal" will be considered "the Other." In these videos, the Ideal is represented by the Waseda Boys, while Papua and its surroundings define the Other. The Waseda Boys, who have a Japanese backgrounds, inherit colonialist thinking and portray Papua as aggressive, primitive, and exotic. This is in line with what European colonists did when they saw their colonized countries. Colonial powers often stereotyped the local populations as being inclined toward laziness, aggression, violence, gluttony, sexual immorality, animalism, primitivism, and ignorance (Loomba, 2016, p. 159). Interestingly, Jerome Polin, who is from Indonesia, also positions himself as equal to the Japanese. As an Indonesian, he slipped into the Japanese gaze and neglected his own homeland. This demonstrates that the orientalist perspective that emerged during the colonial period can persist long after colonialism ends.

This view of Orientalism, which contributed to the concept of "Western civilization", can evolve into what is known as New Orientalism (Amin-Khan, 2012). He also noted that this view, which divides the world into "the Other" and "the Ideal," is transmitted through various media, in this case, including YouTube videos. Moreover, this view of Orientalism does not only apply to the former colonizers or people from other countries. Even fellow Indonesians from colonized countries can inadvertently adopt orientalist views and exclude people from their own countries who are perceived to be of a lower social class.

The videos not only reproduce the racially orientalist view of Papua as an island with an aggressive, primitive, and exotic society, but also practice the disguised commodification of a racist perspective on Papua into likes, shares, comments, and views from YouTube, which can be converted into dollars. According to Social Blade (2023), the Waseda Boys Indonesia Trip video trailer, featuring footage of the Waseda Boys' trip to Papua, pocketed \$777-\$6.2K. This means the video, which was created to introduce Indonesia's diversity, is nothing but a new way to make a profit.

### **3.2 "Educating diversity" from the eye of the self in Waseda Boys Indonesia trip videos Papua Island edition**

One of the videos of the Papua Island edition, titled "Waseda Boys Masuk ke Pedalaman Papua! Ketemu Suku Dani!" (Waseda Boys Come to the Hinterland of Papua! Meeting the Dani Tribe!), begins with the disclaimer: "This video was made for education about the diversity of Indonesian culture." Assuming that the "education" is carried out by the Waseda Boys as the main actors as well as visitors to Papua Island, and the education is aimed at the audience, containing information about the Dani tribe on Papua Island. The video begins with the Waseda Boys walking into Kumugima Village and being welcomed by the Dani people. For about 25 minutes of the video, the Waseda Boys' activities in the village include shaking hands with residents, looking around the village, playing games to promote Traveloka features, dancing with them, watching them prepare food with the *Bakar Batu* ceremony (stone-burning ceremony), and finally eating the food while reviewing it.

In one scene, Jerome Polin, the owner of the Nihongo Mantappu YouTube channel, is seen chatting with an unnamed resident about the *Bakar Batu* ceremony, a ritual cooking ceremony. This information is then used as an agenda to "educate" the audience about the traditional Papuan ceremony. To present a visual representation of the Dani tribe to the audience, Leeuwen's factors (i.e., distance, relation, and interaction) are used to reveal a person's visual representation and to show who acts as the Self and the Other in this "diversity education" agenda.



**Figure 11:** A Dani man explaining the *Bakar Batu* ceremony to the Waseda Boys, with the bubble in the top-right containing information about it  
Source: Nihongo Mantappu (2022a)

In Figure 11, the Waseda Boys are seen talking to a member of the Dani tribe who is about to perform the ceremony. Jerome, as the only Indonesian speaker among the four Waseda Boys, conducted a conversation with a Dani man about the ceremony's process. The man replied that they put hot stones in first, then place chicken and sweet potatoes on top. In the top right of the image, a bubble explains the ceremony, citing an online source. In terms of distance, Waseda Boys is shown in a long shot or from a long distance. Meanwhile, the men of the Dani tribe are shown in close-up. Although the tribe appears close to the audience, the horizontal shot shows the Waseda Boys in a frontal angle, while the tribe man is not even at an oblique angle, but with his back to the audience. This implies that the Dani man was not involved in the "education" agenda about the Dani tribe itself. In terms of interaction, the Dani man's turning his back to the audience also shows that the tribe's representation is delivered indirectly. The identity of this man is not even revealed, and the audience is made to feel like they don't need to know who he is. The Dani tribe in this video is shown only as a spectacle for the audience, not as subjects who interact with the audience face-to-face and represent themselves through their own gaze or perspective. This is in line with Marx and Engels' critique of Napoleon's representative system during 1848–1851, that the subordinated people cannot represent themselves because they are not aware of their own situation (Marx and Engels, 1972, p. 174, as cited in Noviani, 2020). Marx and Engels suggested that those people need to be represented by their own people. Therefore, representation by someone outside the community should not be done, as it may be biased.

This kind of visual representation is referred to by Leeuwen (2008) as a disempowerment and objectification strategy. In other words, the claim of educating diversity in this video is conveyed only from the perspective of the Waseda Boys as the Self, and instead represents the Dani tribe as the Other and the object of spectacle. From O'Barr's (1994) perspective, the form of othering in the video scene involving the disguised Traveloka advertisement can be revealed through three analytical steps. First, the scene presents the Japanese as the Ideal because they face the camera directly, while the Papuans are shown with their backs to the camera, as if their identity is unimportant. This shot also shows the hierarchical social relations between the Japanese and the Papuans, as the representation of the Dani tribe is not explained directly by the Papuans themselves but by the bubble edited by the Nihongo Mantappu team. This shows the unequal position between the Japanese and Papuans, as the one with the credibility to "educate" the audience is Jerome Polin, a member of the Waseda Boys from Indonesia.

Moreover, the form of othering is used to promote a vacation to Papua Island using the Traveloka application. Halfway through the video, the Waseda Boys play a clue-finding game that promotes Traveloka's new PayLater feature. Thus, the primary purpose of this video is not purely to educate but to sell vacation app services. Moreover, the "education" is presented from Japan's perspective, as a self-guided visit to Papua Island. This kind of ideology is a common shortcut advertisers use to promote a local tourist spot (O'Barr, 1994). With this kind of narration and shooting, the audience is made to feel superior or more civilized when visiting the inlands and seeing the islanders' traditions as exotic and spectacle-worthy.



**Figure 12:** Waseda Boys and a Dani woman sitting downstairs in the kitchen of a Honai house  
Source: Nihongo Mantappu (2022b)

The next scene is from the Waseda Boys Indonesia Trip video entitled "Melihat Isi Rumah Suku Pedalaman Papua! (Honai)" (A Look Inside a Remote Papuan Tribe's Home (Honai)). In the video, they walk around the village and enter some Dani houses. The scene above (Figure 12) shows the Waseda Boys entering the kitchen building, accompanied by an unidentified Dani woman. The building is made of wood and thatch with a short door and roof, so most adults who enter the kitchen cannot stand upright. They enter the kitchen and sit down to chat. Based on the distance, the Waseda Boys and the Dani woman are shown in close-up. Then, in terms of relation, vertically, the angle shot is equivalent to eye level. Horizontally, the three Waseda Boys are shown from an oblique angle, while Jerome Polin is shown from a frontal angle. In contrast, the tribe woman is shown at an oblique angle. This angle suggests that, among the four Waseda Boys, Jerome Polin's relationship with the audience is the most dominant. Moreover, the audience is made to feel as if they are only communicating with the front-facing Waseda Boys, while the side-facing Dani tribe woman suggests a less intimate relationship with the audience. Furthermore, in terms of interaction, only Jerome Polin, as part of the Waseda Boys, consistently makes eye contact with the camera. Meanwhile, the Dani woman was facing sideways and not looking at the audience. Hence, the explanation about the kitchen building in the Honai house was delivered indirectly by the Waseda Boys, and not by the Dani woman herself. Leeuwen describes this situation as a kind of seminar, in which we listen to the speakers but do not actually communicate with each other (Leeuwen, 2008, p. 139). Jerome Polin also seemed to repeat the Dani woman's words a few times to emphasize his point to the audience. Again, this "education" about the Dani house was delivered by the Waseda Boys, who were visitors to Papua Island. The Dani people are not given the power to represent themselves to the audience directly and only appear as a spectacle in the video. This visual representation is a form of Waseda Boys' othering of the Dani people through *disempowerment* and *objectivation* strategies (Leeuwen, 2008, p. 141).

The shots also reveal the idealized images, social relations, and inequality and power in the video scenes. First, the image of the Japanese is more idealized than that of the Papuans, as seen in the lighting. The camera lights highlighted the Waseda Boys, making them appear brighter, while the lighting of the Dani tribe woman was so dark that she was almost invisible to the viewer. Then, in terms of social relations, although the Waseda Boys and the Dani woman both sit on the floor, the Waseda Boys squat, while the Dani woman sits with her knees on the floor. Here, it is seen that the Waseda Boys' seating position is higher than that of the woman, showing their hierarchical relation. Moreover, in the video, the Dani woman is not introduced by name or her position in society, as if she were only there to tell her story, but her identity is not considered necessary. This "educating diversity" is nothing but positioning the Dani tribe as mere objects, not as the speaking subjects. This objectification also reveals the inequality between the Japanese and Papuans, positioning Papuans as subalterns whose voices are not heard (Spivak, 1993). The island of Papua is also indirectly represented to suggest that the Japanese have greater power to "educate" the audience than the Papuans themselves do.

The abjection of Papua Island is nothing but a form of othering used to promote a vacation ticket purchasing service through the Traveloka application. During the Waseda Boys Indonesia Trip video, the logo watermarks for Nihongo Mantappu and Traveloka are displayed at the top to give the audience brand awareness of these two corporate bodies. These videos have used biased experiences and "education" to encourage audiences to take a vacation to Papua Island. Through this kind of othering, Nihongo Mantappu also sells the fantasy to the target audience that if they visit Papua Island, they will be in the same position as the Waseda Boys, who are considered superior, educated, and civilized than the Papuans.



#### 4. CONCLUSION

The travel vlog-type video uploaded by the Nihongo Mantappu channel on YouTube, especially in the Waseda Boys Indonesia Trip Papua edition, reproduces colonialism and commodifies islands, framed through the claim of Indonesia's "diversity education." Throughout the video, the focus is entirely on the Waseda Boys, while Papua is presented as a spectacle. In the process of this observation, a Japanese gaze leads to an orientalist view that stereotypes Papua. This Japanese gaze shares the same peculiarities as the colonial gaze, which sees the colonized as aggressive, frightening, backward, primitive, and exotic. In addition, this othering, which is covered in "educating diversity" is displayed through disempowerment and objectivation strategies that position Papua as "the Other" and a mere spectacle object. This strategy positions Japan as "the Ideal" or "the Self", making the relation hierarchical. These aspects are also shown in the video through Waseda Boys' conversations and shooting. In the end, their visit to Papua cannot be interpreted solely as an introduction to diversity, but rather as an objectification of the people and the island of Papua.

Furthermore, this process of objectification is in fact accompanied by the practice of commodification. Values considered exotic and "different" in Papua are presented for profit. This profit is generated from YouTube traffic, and AdSense is displayed on each Papua edition of the video. In fact, the traffic generated by the objectification of Papua has gone viral on YouTube, which means the exchange rate into profit is also higher. Apart from relying on the commodification of the content through YouTube traffic, Nihongo Mantappu also gets sponsors from travel agents like Traveloka. This is a separate income stream that also adds to profits. The product placement at the beginning of each video shows that the videos were not only used to educate about diversity but also to "sell" Traveloka products.

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