Competing Myths of Nationalist Identity: Ideological Perceptions of Conflict in Ambon, Indonesia.

A dissertation presented to the Division of Arts of Murdoch University in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By Kathleen Therese Turner
B. Asian St. (Hons) ANU 2006
I declare that this thesis is my own account of research and contains as its main content work which has not previously submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Kathleen Therese Turner
For mum and dad
Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reasons has not lost its way
into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee
into ever-widening thought and action-
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

- Rabindranath Tagore -
# Table of Contents

*List of Illustrations*  
*Abstract*  
*Publications*  
*Acknowledgments*  
*Glossary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1: Introduction</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Sources and Methodology</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1 Interviews</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 2: Nationalism in Indonesia and Constructivism</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Approaches to Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Primordialism</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Instrumentalism</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3 Constructivism</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Social Disruption</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Displaced Elites and Insecure Individuals</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Myth-Making</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 The Emotional Appeal of Nationalism</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 3: Social Disruption in Ambon and the RMS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Factors Contributing to Disunity in Ambon</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Factors Generating Disruptions</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 Colonial Changes to Traditional Structures</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2 Christianisation</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3 Colonial Changes to Structure</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Constructions of Identity: Loyalist versus Nationalist</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 The Construction of an Ambonese Identity</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 A New Construction of Ambonese Identity</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.1 Common Ancestry and Territorial Homeland</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.2 Language</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.3 Religion</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Conclusion</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Social Disruption in Ambon 1950-2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Introduction</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Disruption of Authority Structures in the Old Order</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Disruptions of Authority Structures in the New Order</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 The Disruptive Impact of Migration and the Financial Crisis</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 The Disruptive Impact of the 1999 Decentralisation Measures</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Conclusion</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: The FKM and the Construction of an Ambonese Identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 The Scapegoating of Migrants</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 A Non-Separatist Religious Construction</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 A Racial Construction</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 A Claim to Human Rights, Self-Determination and Democracy</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Support for the FKM</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 Conclusion</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: The Laskar Jihad and the Construction of Ethnonationalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Introduction</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Pre-Laskar Jihad Perceptions</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1 Muslims in Ambon</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.2 Muslims outside Ambon</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 An Ethnoreligious Construction</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 An Ethnonationalist Construction</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Support for the Laskar Jihad</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 Conclusion</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 A Contribution to Ethnic Studies 220
7.2 The Process which Links Disruption to Ideologisation 226
7.3 A Case of Counterposed Nationalisms which Developed in Response to Each Other 229
7.4 A Contribution to Indonesian studies of Post-Soeharto Conflict and Violence 233

Appendices

1. Linguistic Map of Ambon-Lease (Ambon, Haruku, Saparua, Nusa Laut) 237
2. Linguistic Map of West Seram 238
3. Linguistic Map of Central Seram 239
4. Linguistic Map of East Seram 240
5. Linguistic Map of Buru 241
6. 1950 RMS Declaration of Independence from the Republic of Indonesia 242
7. Regional and Local Administration in Indonesia 243
8. 2000 FKM Declaration of Independence from the Republic of Indonesia 244
9. 2002 Malino Peace Agreement 248
10. 2002 Declaration of War by Ja’far Umar Thalib 250

Bibliography 257
List of Illustrations

**Tables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Details of Interviewees</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>The Total Number of KNIL Soldiers between 1927-1917</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Transmigration into Maluku between 1969-1999</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Changing Poverty Rates in Indonesia in 1996 and Changes 1996-99, February 1996 and February 1999 (%)</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Poverty Incidence and Contribution to Poor in Indonesia by Occupational Sector</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>Regional Autonomy Laws of 1974 and 1999</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Maps**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Map 1</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map 1</td>
<td>Maluku Province</td>
<td>xviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 2</td>
<td>Central Maluku</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the 1999–2003 case of political conflict in Ambon, in Eastern Indonesia, in the context of political change in Indonesia from 1950-1998. It is argued that political transformation during this period was closely influenced by a much longer period of unprecedented social change preceding the politics of this period. It is suggested that the ideologisation of ethnic identities is likely to occur when structures of community are disrupted by changes in the contemporary world such as economic fluctuations or state policy interventions. One result is to disrupt traditional village communities so as to place individuals in stress situations making them susceptible to new nationalist ideologies. The other impact is to dislocate authority structures so that both incumbent and aspiring elites lose their power and authority and thus search for new ways in order to re-establish their moral and political legitimacy.

It is argued that nationalism is able to offer a resolution to social disruption and thus to the community in search of social cohesion, while also functioning to rebuild elite authority. In ethnic nationalist ideology, insecurities and feelings of isolation are ameliorated by subsequent constructions of ‘us’ and ‘them’ where members of one distinct community are demarcated from other communities. It is suggested that myths of ancestry and homeland together with counterposed moral dichotomies appealed to the Ambonese who needed this form of ideological support. It is the insecurities and fear experienced by disrupted communities which promote this powerful ideological formula.

It is asserted that conflict on the island has been characterised by this trend towards ideological absolutism where two conflicting ideological constructions have translated the conflict into a non-negotiable confrontation between opposing national rights. It is argued that these two ideological constructions have remained internalised on the island and embedded within the mindsets of both Ambonese Christians and Muslims, thereby rendering setbacks to conflict resolution.
Publications


Acknowledgments

The work of completing this dissertation has been furthered and supported by many people. I owe a special debt of gratitude to the Ambonese who willingly shared their time and thoughts with me during what was clearly a period of immense social upheaval and trauma. I can only sincerely hope that their beautiful homeland finds stability and peace.

I am grateful to David Hill for his help during the initial stages of the dissertation and to David Brown, my supervisor, who amongst his heavy engagements, managed to find some time to read, correct and give insightful suggestions. I also appreciate the friendship and support of colleagues and staff at the Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, and outside academics. These included Greg Acciaioli, Sidney Adams, Ed Aspinall, Emita Astami, Del Blakeway, David Bourchier, Nils Bubandt, Toby Carroll, Fay Davidson, Tamara Dent, John McCarthy, Michael Jacobsen, Yvonne Haigh, Taul Harp, Julia Hobson, Stuart Latter, Nigel Little, Jae Hyon Lee, Jim Meckelburg, Frank Murray, Karen Olkowski, Anne Randall, Garry Rodan, David Savat, Bernard Swan, Tsukasa Takamine, Miyume Tanji, Bev Thiele, Donna Turner, and Vivienne Wee.

I would like to express my gratitude to Muhammadiyah University in Malang, Indonesia for sponsoring my research application to undertake fieldwork. Pak Habib from Muhammadiyah University gave valuable counsel and I am in debt for his assistance. The Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University and the Australian Federation of University Women (AFUW) all provided financial assistance, which allowed for the completion of my PhD and the opportunities to conduct fieldwork and attend an international conference in Hong Kong.

The encouragement and kindness of my friends is gratefully remembered. I would especially like to thank Brian Pontifex, Jeannie Yeong, Danny Marr, Anne Ryan, Klaus Langer, Rob Richardson and Roberto Soria. To my wonderful friend Adrian
Luck who will never be forgotten even in passing, thank you for everything. A special mention also to Bernard Swan, Bernard Flood, Donna Thomas, Sue Taylor and Regina Gaujers for their support and understanding. To Sam Thomas who I met along the way. To have waited three long years has been certain anguish but to have given me such enduring love and support from so far away has truly been a special gift.

Greatest of all, my debt of love and appreciation goes to my strongest supporters, my parents, in whom I could always find consolation in the desperate times and the inspiration to keep on working. I would not have made it this far without you.
# Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ABS | *Ambonsche Burgerschool*  
A ‘European’ school set up in Ambon in the 1850s and 1860s for the children of Ambonese *burgers* |
| Adat | Customary law, custom, customary authority system |
| Alifuru | A generic term for the hill tribes in Maluku, traditionally having derogatory connotations of someone uncouth, uncultured and uncivilised |
| Anak Negeri | Village member |
| BAKIN | *Badan Koordinasi Intelijen Negara*  
Coordinating Body for State Intelligence |
| Batalyon Gabungan | Joint Battalion |
| BBM | *Bugis, Buton, Makassar*  
A reference to three of the major ethnic groups from South and Southeast Sulawesi known for their inter-island trading and settlement outside their homeland. It also denotes a certain antipathy towards these people as having their rights and privileges usurped from those whom they have traded and settled. |
| Brimob | *Brigade Mobil*  
Mobile Brigade |
| Bupati | District (*Kabupaten*) head, the chief official in the district |
**Burger**  A group of Ambonese known as free citizens (*orang bebas*) who, in return for services rendered to the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC), they and their descendents were declared to be free citizens, that is, free of the compulsory services for the VOC and the obligations of the spice monopoly

**Camat**  Leader of sub-district head (sub-regency or *kecamatan*)

**Desa Induk**  Head Village, Governing Village

**Dewan Kekaryaan**  Functional Service Board

**DMS**  *Dewan Maluku Selatan*
South Moluccan Council

**DPD**  *Dewan Pemerintah Daerah*
Regional Executive Council

**DPR**  *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*
Indonesian Legislative Assembly

**DPRD**  *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*
Assembly at provincial, regional, or municipal level

**FKM**  *Forum Kedaulatan Maluku*
Moluccan Sovereignty Front

**FKAWJ**  *Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama’ah*
Sunni Communication Forum

**Fortaleza**  Fortresses built by the Portuguese in Maluku

**F-Penegak**  *Fraksi Pembela Negara Kesatuan*
Parliamentary faction of the Defenders of a Unified State
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FPI</td>
<td>Front Pembelaan Islam</td>
<td>Islam Defenders Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPIM</td>
<td>Front Pembelaan Islam Maluku</td>
<td>Moluccan Chapter for the Islam Defenders Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAM</td>
<td>Gerakan Aceh Merdeka</td>
<td>Free Aceh Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDMS</td>
<td>Gerakan Demokrasi Maluku Selatan</td>
<td>Democratic Movement of the South Moluccas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMI-MPO</td>
<td>Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam – Majelis Penyelamat Organisasi</td>
<td>Splinter group of the Association of Islamic Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICG</td>
<td>Indonesia Crisis Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICMI</td>
<td>Ikatan Cendekiaan Muslim se-Indonesia</td>
<td>Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JI</td>
<td>Jemaah Islamiyah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kafir harbi</td>
<td>Infidel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAMMI</td>
<td>Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia</td>
<td>Indonesian Muslim Students Action Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampung</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapitan</td>
<td>Military Commander</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kepala Daerah</td>
<td>Regional Head</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kepala Kewang</td>
<td>Head of Land Affairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kepala Soa</td>
<td>Head of a collection of kin-groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiai</td>
<td>Title or reference for a teacher of Islam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KISDI</td>
<td><em>Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas Dunia Islam.</em> Indonesian Committee for International Islamic Solidarity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNIL</td>
<td><em>Koninklijk Nederlands Indische Leger</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dutch East Indies Army</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KONTRAS</td>
<td><em>Komisi untuk Orang Hilang dan Korban Tindak Kekerasan</em> The Commission for Disappearances and Victims of Violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOSTRAD</td>
<td><em>Komando Strategi Reserve Command</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Army Strategic Reserve Command</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kota Ambon</td>
<td>Ambon City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krismon</td>
<td><em>Krisis Moneter</em> Monetary Crisis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laskar Jihad</td>
<td>Java-based paramilitary group established in early 2000 who intervened on behalf of local Muslims in the conflict in Maluku</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIPI</td>
<td><em>Lemaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indonesian Institute of Sciences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LKMD</td>
<td><em>Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Village Social Activities Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMD</td>
<td><em>Lembaga Masyarakat Desa</em> Village Assembly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marinjo</td>
<td>The <em>soa</em> messenger and minor police officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masjumi</td>
<td>Modernist Muslim Party</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mata rumah</td>
<td>Household, patrilineage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negri</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negri Lama</td>
<td>Village of origin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Order</td>
<td>Soeharto, early in his tenure as President of Indonesia, described his</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>regime as the ‘New Order’ as opposed to the ‘Old Order’ government of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indonesia’s earlier and first President Soekarno.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIP</td>
<td><em>Insulinde / Nationaal-Indische Partij</em> Insulinde was founded in 1907 as</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an organisation to promote the social and political aims of Europeans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Eurasians in the Indies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIT</td>
<td><em>Negara Indonesia Timoer</em> State of East Indonesia. Part of a Dutch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>federal strategy for the creation of the State of East Indonesia in 1946-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1947</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTT</td>
<td><em>Nusa Tenggara Timur</em> Easter Lesser Sundas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NU</td>
<td><em>Nahdlatul Ulama</em> Association of Muslim scholars, a Muslim political</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>party of the 1970s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Nunusaku**  
A human rights organisation based in Ambon. Also the name of the legendary mountain in West Seram and the source of the Three Rivers, the Eti, the Tala, and the Sapalewa. It is traditionally regarded as the beginning and the end that is, the source and the destiny of life.

**Nusa**  
Island

**Old Order**  
A reference to the ‘Old Order’ government of Indonesia’s earlier and first President Soekarno as opposed to Soeharto’s subsequent ‘New Order’ regime

**OPM**  
*Organisasi Papua Merdeka*  
Free Papua Organisation, secessionist movement of West Papua

**Pancasila**  
The five basic principles of the Republic of Indonesia: the belief on one God Almighty, humanity that is just and civilised, the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by the wisdom of representative deliberation, social justice for all Indonesians

**Parindra**  
*Partai Indonesia Raya*  
Greater Indonesia Party

**Parkindo**  
*Parti Kristen Indonesia*  
Indonesian Protestant Party

**Partai Katolik**  
Roman Catholic Party

**Pela**  
Traditional ceremonial bonds of friendship and mutual obligation established between two or more villages often encompassing both Christian and Muslim villages in a single alliance. It is conceived of as an enduring and inviolable
brotherhood; an alliance that has to be renewed regularly through important ceremonies and solemn oaths.

PDIP
*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*
Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle

PIM
*Partai Indonesia Merdeka*
A political party formed in August 1946, the major pro-Indonesia party on Ambon at the time

PNI
*Partai Nasional Indonesia*
Indonesian Nationalist Party

PTB
*Persatoean Timoer Besar*
Association of the Great East

*Radicale*
A gathering of Indonesian and radical Dutch

*Concentratie*
representatives in the *Volksraad*

*Raja*
Village Ruler

*Reformasi*
Reformation

Repelita
*Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun*
Five-Year Development Plan

RIA
*Republik Islam Aceh*
Islamic Republic of Aceh

RMS
*Republik Maluku Selatan*
Republic of the South Moluccas

RUU
*Rencana Undang-Undang*
Draft of a law

STAIN  
*Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri*  
National Islamic Academy

TNI  
*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*  
Indonesia’s National Army

*Transmigrasi*  
Transmigration

*Tuan Tanah*  
The Lord of the Land

*Saniri*  
Council

SARA  
*Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar-Golongan*  
Matters pertaining to ethnic, religious, and racial relations.

*Sarekat Ambon*  
Ambonese Association  
A political party established by A.J.Patty in 1920

SMERU  
Social Monitoring and Early Response Unit

*Soa*  
Kin-Group

SPMM  
*Suara Perjuangan Muslim Maluku*  
Voice of the Maluku Muslim Struggle – Radio Station based in Ambon

*Swatantra*  
Self-governing unit, autonomous

*Tetek-Nenek-Mojang*  
Ancestors

TNI  
*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*  
Indonesian National Armed Forces
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UKIM</td>
<td>Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Christian University of Indonesia in Maluku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uli</td>
<td>A federation of family settlements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ummat</td>
<td>Members of a religious community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNPO</td>
<td>Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOC</td>
<td>Verenigde Oostindeische Compagnie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dutch East Indies Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volksraad</td>
<td>People’s Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walikota</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Map 1: Maluku Province
The development of an Ambonese nationalist movement in 2000 from a non-territorial communal riot offers an important insight into understanding the changes in ethnic and national consciousness that had taken place among the Ambonese since the eruption of violence in January 1999. The 1999 conflict in Ambon, Eastern Indonesia, began as a communal riot in which members of one group suddenly instigated a violent attack on civilian members of another group. Indeed, the conflict was classified as synonymous with ‘religious’ or ‘ethnic’ disturbances because of its obvious religious and ethnic underpinnings.

The fighting which ensued between Muslim and Christian villages and the desecration of places of worship were typical of the conflict which has traditionally been referred to by the Indonesian government as SARA (Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar Golongan), an acronym used to denote communal violence with ethnic, religious, and/or racial underpinnings.¹ When a fight broke out on Ambon between a Christian public transport driver and a Muslim youth on January 19, 1999, the events which followed

¹ These include anti-Chinese riots which have been a widespread reoccurring phenomenon in Indonesia. Violent anti-Chinese riots broke out in Jakarta on 13 and 14 May 1998 attracting extensive international attention. The Chinese community was specifically targeted with shops and houses owned by Chinese being burnt and the destruction reaching other parts of the capital and into the city of Solo in Central Java. The riots claimed the lives of hundreds of Chinese while scores of Chinese were abused in what seemed like a systematic series of rapes of women. Many outbreaks of violence, especially during the 1990’s, often had underlying themes containing obscure variables and almost always had overt expressions of anti-Chinese hostility. For examples of this see Kathleen Turner, The Rising Crescent Tide: Christian Churches and Javanese Islam in Conflict in New Order Indonesia, Honours Thesis, Faculty of Asian Studies, The Australian National University, 1997. Likewise, West Kalimantan has had a long history of ethnic violence during the New Order period of government from 1965-1998 between the immigrants from the island of Madura off the coast of East Java and the indigenous Dayak people. The most violent outbreak of the late 1990s between the two ethnic groups occurred in December 1996 and flared up again in the beginning of March 1997. For further information, see Human Rights Watch (HRW) [online], West Kalimantan, 1997 Report. Accessed 16 May 2000.
throughout Ambon and provincial Maluku (Moluccas) demonstrated the inflammable nature of ethnic and religious relationships throughout the Indonesian archipelago.

Within the first 12–24 months of the conflict, Ambon was often classified by members of the Indonesian press as another site of SARA. This was based on two factors: first was the conflict’s extreme violence in which there was the deliberate targeting of either Christians or Muslims and, second was the widespread damage to property with extensive material damage to much of the central part of the city of Ambon (Kota Ambon), the capital of Maluku province, as well as to Ambon’s neighbouring islands of Seram and the Lease Islands. Continued widespread hostility in these areas during 1999 and 2000 also caused many casualties with reports of at least 4,000 deaths and at least 40,000 displaced persons.3

In the second year of the conflict, in 2000, the Moluccan Sovereignty Front (FKM) was established in Ambon aiming to achieve an independent Moluccan state. In that same year the Java-based Laskar Jihad was formed which sought to eradicate this separatist movement. The development of these two groups represented an important phase in conflict development as each nationalist construction played off the other. The transition from riot to nationalist movement in Ambon signified not only considerable change in individual and national identity but also the transformation of the conflict into one of nationalist confrontation. The differing nationalist identities and diagnoses of the conflict from the FKM and the Laskar Jihad movements provided two competing interpretative frameworks of the nation. The politics of nationalist contention in Ambon, therefore, became a politics of ideological confrontation with resultant mutual distrust and resistance to compromise.

2 See George Junus Aditjondro, 'Guns, Pamphlets and Handie-Talkies: how the military exploited local ethno-religious tensions in Maluku to preserve their political and economic privileges', in Ingrid Wessel and Georgia Wimhofer (eds) Violence in Indonesia, Hamburg: Abera Verlag, 2001, p.100.
Some degree of interactive normality continued to exist in Ambon so that ties to an Ambonese community of Muslims and Christians, migrants and indigenous, were not completely broken. Neither the riots nor the subsequent ideological conflict were so extensive that it completely took over Ambon and its neighbouring islands. However, the development of these opposing nationalist visions in Ambon, suggest certain ideological changes within the various layers of the interactive community. The affiliation of members to these differing nationalist visions also means that there is then little chance of reconciliation between them.

The ideological constructions of both the FKM and the *Laskar Jihad* managed to mobilise significant support within Ambon and succeeded in maintaining strong support thereafter on the island. The degree of popular support achieved by elites in the face of widespread economic hardship and political turbulence is evidenced by the number of Ambonese identifying themselves in exclusivist terms and their political goal in self-determination/nationalism terms both ethnocultural and ethnonationalist. While the conflict abated somewhat, remnants of these constructions have remained embedded in Ambon suggesting that this ‘sedimentation’ has been a way in which individuals deal with the insecurities caused by disruption. Much of this is due to the successful manipulation of myths and symbols which have enhanced the legitimacy of FKM and *Laskar Jihad* elites and their political regimes.

The aim of this thesis is to explain the clash between two competing nationalisms in order to explain the dynamics of the conflict in Ambon in 2000-2004 and why it has thus become so entrenched. It is argued that the tensions of nationalist politics in Ambon have been clashes between two ideologies which were counterposed and developed in response to each other. More specifically, these tensions emerged because of the collision between two competing kinship and homeland visions, each marginalising or demonising the other. This phenomena is examined through an analysis of the nature and impact of various levels of disruption, both long-term
disruptions and disruptions involving the conflict itself, in order to show how traditional notions of identity underwent a process of reconstruction in order to account for changes within people’s immediate social and economic environment.

It is further argued in this thesis that while the development of nationalism occurred within a wide range of disruptive contexts, it is the specific nature of these disruptions which have been crucial to this shift. As will be shown, it is in the context of disruptive circumstances in which incumbent elites fear an erosion of their authority and choose nationalism as a way in which to re-establish their authority by creating new leadership roles for themselves. These dislocated elites are instrumental in the resuscitation of myths of territorial homeland, and their visions of identity of the community through the employment of a demonized “Other” which counterposes the vision of harmonious and virtuous “Us” in order to mobilize mass-based support. Hence, this thesis chooses to specifically analyse the disruption of authority structures and the disruption of communal cohesion as forming a crucial set of pre-conditions conducive to engendering nationalism as a likely response.

To achieve this purpose, there will be three distinct foci. The first is the formation of nationalist ideologies in Ambon which is explored in an examination of the 1950 and 2000 nationalist movements within a context of disruptive social, economic and political processes. The 1950 movement is examined in the context of disruptions engendered by Portuguese and Dutch colonialism between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. There is a subsequent examination of the 2000 Ambonese
ethnocultural nationalist movement and Islamic-based ethnoreligious nationalism in the context of unprecedented social change in Indonesia from 1950-1998. Political transformation during this period was closely influenced by a much longer period of unprecedented social change preceding the politics of this period.

It will be shown how, firstly, disruptive processes led aspiring elites to unite around a minority ethnocultural nationalism in 2000 which harked back nostalgically to the Republic of the South Moluccas (RMS) movement of 1950 through the employment of pre-existing ideas of identity and history, and secondly how this subsequently led many Ambonese to polarise their community along religious lines and mobilise against a perceived Christian separatist threat. The second focal concern of the thesis is the content of contemporary nationalist ideologies in Ambon. This requires an examination of those processes which have led both the Ambonese ethnocultural and the Islamic-based nationalist movements to develop counterposing ideologies of identity. Through fieldwork interviews, an invaluable opportunity was provided to the author in an attempt to demystify these sorts of issues and gain an insight into them. Those interviews were conducted with Ambonese refugees and members of the paramilitary group, the Laskar Jihad, in East Java, Southeast Sulawesi and West Timor during July-August 2001. That analysis proved particularly helpful in understanding local perceptions of identity and notions of political understanding.

---

4 I use the term ‘ethnoreligious’ simply as a categorisation that would not be dissimilar to other subcategories of ethnic conflict and nationalism such as ‘ethnolinguistic’ and ‘ethnoracial’. The term ‘ethnoreligious’ has also been used to describe the ethnic conflict in the Balkans, the dissent between Puerto Ricans and American Jews, the conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, and ethnic conflict throughout Southeast Asia. Clearly, by using such categories I run the risk of giving the impression that each term is describing a separate phenomenon in that the conflict or nationalist movement could not survive without these observable characteristics. Using variables such as these however is quite common if only to point out that a specific characteristic of a group or nation can become a particular rallying point in a communal or national struggle. For examples of usages of these terms, see Janice Broun, ‘Yugoslavian Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans’, Religion, State & Society, vol.27, no.1, March 1999, pp.140-3; Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens, ‘Ethnoreligious identity as locus for dialogue between Puerto Rican Catholics and American Jews’, Religious Education, vol.91, no. 4, Fall 1996, p.473-9; Michael A. Poole, ‘One day at a time’, Peace Review, vol.13, no. 1, March 2001, p.5-12; Peter Searle ‘Ethno-Religious Conflicts: Rise or decline? Recent developments in Southeast Asia’, Contemporary Southeast Asia, vol.24, no.1, April 2002, pp.1-11.
After using the interview material in producing an analysis of the content of these ideologies, the third focal concern of this thesis is a study of the implications of the clash between two nationalist ideologies. For this analysis, this thesis will use the explanation of Constructivism as one of the core conceptualisations of nationalism. This theoretical approach fundamentally depicts the nation as an ideological construction invented and employed by political elites. It suggests that affiliation with the ‘national community’ is based on ideological frameworks which offer a sense of identity and security for insecure individuals. In Chapter 2 constructivism will be explored as a useful analytical approach in order to develop a coherent understanding of the contemporary dispute of Ambonese secessionism in Indonesia.

It is acknowledged that it was not possible to specify contextual influences from the media, political dynamics, and/or local rumours which may have had an impact on individual perceptions in Ambon, and on the varying ways informants espoused the ideological notions of the FKM and Laskar Jihad. However, information gleaned from the interviews did, to a significant degree, espouse either support for an autonomous Ambon, or the depiction of the FKM as an evil anti-Islamic and anti-Indonesian separatist movement. Informants often referred proudly to symbols of Moluccan identity referring nostalgically to the RMS and the fight for the Moluccan homeland. Others focused on hero-worshipping Ja’far Umar Thalib and referred to historical events in East Timor and in the Moluccas as deeply symbolic of ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ identity. In this way, by adopting a fervent language of ethnic identity and championing the ideals of either the FKM or Laskar Jihad through illustrative historical examples and reverence to particular elites, informants presented compelling evidence that the nationalist visions of the FKM and Laskar Jihad constituted powerful causal factors which transformed individual perceptions of the evolving conflict in Ambon.
The following section will now discuss the sources and methodology used within this thesis. First there will be a review of the scholarly literature on ethnicity and nationalism in the Moluccas, and second there will be discussion of the field research undertaken in Indonesia during 2001.

1.1 Sources and Methodology

As stated above on page 3, the study of the content of nationalist ideologies in Ambon is examined in the context of processes of social change. A subsequent examination of the disruptions in Ambon naturally requires a review of the scholarly literature on ethnicity and nationalism in the Moluccas. In general there is very little written on Ambon. Anthropologist Frank Cooley\(^5\) examined the traditional cultural and political systems in Ambon in the early and late 1960s. Almost a decade later, Dieter Bartels\(^6\) provided a comprehensive treatment on local alliances and the local ascendant powers through the system of *pela*. More recent works have shown a tendency to examine the region in a context of rapid social transformation. Anthropologist David Mearns\(^7\), for example, explored the effects of migration and development on the island, while Franz von Benda-Beckmann and Tanja Taale\(^8\) have carried out studies on the complexities of property relationships in village communities on Ambon.

Based in a large part on Dutch and Portuguese colonial government archives dating from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, there exists some contemporary published work on the historiography of Ambon and the region during the sixteenth,

---


seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of European intervention. While not allocating any special attention to Ambon or the Central Moluccan region, Leonard Andaya\(^9\) has given significant evaluations of Maluku as a region in general, in examining European and Moluccan interactions over three centuries. Similarly, Paramita Abdurachman\(^10\) has treated Ambon as part of a region representing several centuries of colonial rule that heralded a recurrent history of profound change, while Harold Wright\(^11\) examined the reorientation of Ambonese society during the establishment of the Moluccan Spice Monopoly by the Dutch in 1770-1824.

The events of 1945-50 were crucial in relation to the formation of Ambonese nationalism in 1950 during which the declaration of independence by Sukarno and Hatto in 1945 was plagued by the surfacing of nationalist sentiment in the Indonesian peripheries. The political unification of Indonesia’s diverse ethnic communities was achieved through the imposition of order from Jakarta onto the Outer islands. The polarising effect of such centralisation was instrumental in perpetuating a series of nationalist movements in the territories striving to form their own nation-state (see Wee 2002: 497-516) Indeed, it was the proliferation of dissensions from both within Java and from the Outer Islands which propelled the early suggestion of a federal Indonesia from by Dr. H.J. Van Mook, the Dutch Lieutenant Governor General, in a memorandum in late 1945 and which was officially reflected in a Government Declaration in February 1946 for an Indonesian Commonwealth.\(^12\) This in response provoked renewed friction from the regions and ultimately failed to reach an accord with the government of the Republic of Indonesia due to a lack of consensus on the nature of federal state, and sudden Dutch military action in 1947 which impaired

---


relations between the two governments.\textsuperscript{13} During this period it was the RMS movement in Eastern Indonesia which developed as the first significant outbreak of separatism against the newly formed Indonesian Republic, which was integrated as a nation-state in 1950 after the Dutch were defeated.

The expression of an Ambonese ambition to secede from the Indonesian nation-state accounted for one of the most violent and organised separatist struggles at the time, and subsequently gave rise to a great deal of scholarly interest in Ambon. Published material quickly emerged as researchers sought critically to examine mainly the legal position of the RMS and its precarious relationship with the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{14} As the Indonesian Republic began to be plagued by problems of ethnonationalist movements with renewed violence in West Java, Aceh and West Papua, historiographers sought to provide a regional dimension in modern Indonesian history by examining the historical events surrounding the advent of the South Moluccan Republic movement in Ambon. Hence, there exist publications from scholars such as Richard Chauvel,\textsuperscript{15} Clive Christie,\textsuperscript{16} and Ronald May\textsuperscript{17} who have contributed an examination of the South Moluccan Republic (RMS) of 1950 and its implications for Indonesian nationalism.

The advent of the Moluccan Sovereignty Front (FKM) in Ambon in 2000 and rumours of an RMS return indicate a need to incorporate contemporary ethnic and political dynamics into the study of Indonesian nationalism. Scholars who have

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Schiller, \textit{Federal}, 1955, pp.20-5.
\end{itemize}
already produced works in an attempt to identify and understand the complex
dynamics of the recent conflict in Ambon (and Maluku) include Nils Bubandt\(^1\),
Jacques Bertrand\(^2\), Gerry van Klinken\(^3\), Greg Acciaioli\(^4\), and George Junus
Aditjondro.\(^5\) These analyses of the conflict have demonstrated a variety of
approaches, from Acciaioli’s anthropological perspective on migration patterns, to
Bertrand’s historical view of ‘critical junctures’ in Indonesia’s political history.
Further reports from Human Rights Watch (HRW)\(^6\) and the International Crisis
Group (ICG)\(^7\) have examined the characteristics of the conflict and possible theories
for the outbreak of violence.

### 1.1.1 Interviews

As noted above on page 4, the second focus of this thesis is a study of the content of
the Ambonese and *Laskar Jihad* nationalist ideologies, that is, of the processes which
have led each side in the dispute to develop counterposed nationalist ideologies. In
order to illuminate the issues involved, this author undertook field-work interviews in

---

\(^1\) Nils Bubandt, ‘Moluccan Apocalypse: Themes in the Dynamics of Violence in Eastern Indonesia’, in
Ingrid Wessel and Georgia Wimhofer (eds) *Violence in Indonesia*, Hamburg: Abera Verlag, 2001,
pp.228-253.

\(^2\) Jacques Bertrand, ‘Legacies of the Authoritarian Past: Religious Violence in Indonesia’s Moluccan
Islands’, *Pacific Affairs*, no.75, April 2002.

\(^3\) Gerry van Klinken, ‘What Caused the Ambon Violence?’, *Inside Indonesia*, no.60, October-
December 1999.

\(^4\) Greg Acciaioli, ‘Principles and Strategies of Bugis Migration: some contextual factor relating to

\(^5\) George Junus Aditjondro, ‘Guns, Pamphlets and Handie-Talkies: how the military exploited local
ethno-religious tensions in Maluku to preserve their political and economic privileges’, in Ingrid
Wessel and Georgia Wimhofer (eds) *Violence in Indonesia*, Abera Verlag: Hamburg, 2001, pp.100-
128.

\(^6\) Human Rights Watch (HRW) [online], ‘Communal Violence in Indonesia’, Press Backgrounder, 29

\(^7\) International Crisis Group (ICG), ‘Indonesia: Violence Erupts in Ambon’, Asia Briefing No.32, 17
Indonesia. The following section will now examine the nature of these interviews and the research methodology through a discussion of four key themes: i) field-sites and research targets, ii) the research method, iii) elements of the interview, and iv) specific problems in conducting the interviews.

**i) Designating Field Sites and Research Targets**

Two major factors influenced the task of identifying research sites. First, the political and social volatility of the Moluccas at the time rendered the area of Ambon and its surrounding islands unsafe to undertake research. In June 2000, a state of civil emergency was declared in Ambon, and elsewhere in the Moluccas, by the Indonesian President, Abdurrahman Wahid. This status was maintained for the next three years and was only revoked on 15 September 2003. Second there was greater ease of access to sites where displaced Ambonese had chosen to settle either on a temporary or permanent basis. International observers identified, at the time, that tens of thousands had fled the island of Ambon and settled temporarily in many areas outside their immediate region. Most of those fled to Sulawesi, West Timor or West Java and remained either in large refugee camps or resided collectively with friends or relatives.

The importance of selecting research participants was dependent upon gaining a wide cross-section of Ambonese society irrespective of sample size. The intention was to collect data that would reflect as much as possible, the religious, residential, and age variability of Ambonese society. Interview participants were therefore chosen in order to first, reflect the religious composition of Ambon and its surrounding islands. Approximately 85% of the Indonesian population profess to be Muslim, while the province of the Moluccas has been acknowledged as having a majority Christian population: approximately 57.5% Christian and 42.4% Muslim.
Second, research participants were chosen to reflect residency, particularly within the Muslim population of Ambon. This is because that the Ambonese Muslim population, more so than the Christian population, consists of both new migrants from outer islands and indigenous Muslims who migrated to Ambon many generations earlier. The latter, more so than the former, are recognised as having a strong affiliation with indigenous Ambonese culture, including their familiarity with *pela* or the customary alliance system between both Christian and Muslim villages.\(^{25}\) Such affiliation is less characteristic of new migrants, predominantly from Java and Southeast Sulawesi, who have been forced to compete for work alongside indigenous Ambonese.

Third, interview participants were chosen to reflect age variability. While it is not possible to specify contextual political, economic and/or social influences which may have had a positive or negative impact on individual perceptions in Ambon, the intention was to select participants with a diverse experience of significant past political, social and economic events. For example, participants were selected who were of the age to be still familiar with the RMS movement of 1950 and were in Ambon during the village government reforms of the late 1970s and the 1980s. Selected interview participants were also those who were in Ambon just after the fall of President Soeharto in May 1998 and participated in the widespread protests against the New Order regime.

In order to maximise the usefulness of specific field sites by reflecting as much as possible of those variables, the following sites were chosen:

1. Kupang, West Timor

\(^{25}\) *Pela* has been an ingrained feature of Ambonese life that has not only tied both Muslims and Christians economically but has also traditionally transcended religion by the system’s operation on the basis of a common Ambonese identity. The island of Ambon is well known to have enjoyed a history of relatively peaceful coexistence between Christian and Muslim communities as a result of this unique traditional alliance system with only occasional sources of tension based on local land boundaries and property rights. See Dieter Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain: Intervillage Alliances, Religious Syncretism and Ethnic Identity Among Ambonese Christians and Moslems in the Moluccas*, PhD Thesis, Cornell University, University Microfilms International: Michigan, 1978, pp.28-31.
2. Makassar, Southeast Sulawesi
3. Malang, East Java (also site of a regional *Laskar Jihad* office)

Information from local Indonesian academics and local non-government organisations tended to indicate that these areas were characterised by a high degree of variability amongst the refugee population in terms of age, religious affiliation, employment status, and residency.

Interviews averaging approximately 2-3 hours were conducted both in groups of 2-4 and on a one-to-one basis. Notes from the interview were recorded in written form after the completion of the interview itself. Interviews were conducted in Malang from 23 to 30 July 2001, then Kupang from 31 to 11 August 2001 and finally in Makassar from 12 to 21 August 2001. Names of interviewees have been omitted for reasons of confidentiality but other details of the interview participants are featured in Table 1 on the following page.

**Table 1: Details of Interviewees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malang</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Resident in Ambon</th>
<th>Employment status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Civil servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Civil servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>(none)</td>
<td>(Laskar Jihad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>(none)</td>
<td>(Laskar Jihad)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kupang</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Resident in Ambon</th>
<th>Employment status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>58 years</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>26 years</td>
<td>Tertiary Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Tertiary Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>45 years</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Makassar</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Resident in Ambon</th>
<th>Employment status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Petty trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Petty trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Civil servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Civil servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>26 years</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 1 on page 10, the 24 selected interviewees reflect a wide cross-section of Ambonese society shown by the variability in age, gender, occupational profession and religious background. In order to approach these individuals in the most effective and appropriate manner, a research method and interview strategy were developed which will be discussed in the following two sections.
ii) Research Method

The fieldwork was based on qualitative methods for the studied use and collection of interview material.\(^{26}\) The advantages of such an approach are firstly, that it allows the researcher to develop the analytical, conceptual and categorical components of explanation from the data itself, rather than imposing preconceived categories.\(^{27}\) In other words, qualitative research is less likely to impose restrictive \textit{a priori} classifications on the collection of data and does justice to the character of discovery in research. Secondly, this type of approach aims to elucidate and understand the internal dynamics of relationships and is, for that reason, highly appropriate in studying process, especially since the participants’ perceptions are a key consideration in this thesis.

The aim of this type of research, therefore, was not to reduce individuals to single variables but to study them in their complexity and entirety. In order to do justice to the diversity of the interviewees, the methods were characterised by an openness towards the individual. As Kleining indicates, it is necessary to regard the understanding of the object of research as preliminary until the completion of research, because the object ‘will present itself in its true colours only at the end’.\(^{28}\) Subsequently, the application of the method was orientated towards four general principles: generative narrative questions, non-direction, specificity, and depth.

\(^{26}\) Qualitative research is a field of inquiry within a rather complex historical tradition. There are separate and detailed literatures on the many methods and approaches that fall under the category of qualitative research. For a useful discussion, see Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S.Lincoln (eds) \textit{Handbook of Qualitative Research}, Second Edition, Sage Publications: London, 2000.


iii) Interview Strategy

As part of the design of the interview guide and the conducting of the interview itself, this author’s interest was linked to the expectation that the interviewed subjects’ viewpoints were more likely to be expressed in a relatively openly designed interview situation than in a standardised interview or questionnaire. While attempting to cover relevant topics and issues in the interview, this author recognised that it was important that the interviewee was given the opportunity to introduce new topics or initiate changes in the topic.

The next step was to structure the interview broadly. It began with narrative enquiries for a twofold purpose: firstly, to enable the author as a researcher to approach the interviewee’s experiences, and secondly, to stimulate important discussion in the context of biographical details. Similarly, focus was directed to the element of ‘non-direction’ so that non-directive style of conversation took place. This was achieved with several forms of questions which may have defined a certain issue: for example, “How did you feel about the intervention of the Laskar Jihad?”, allowed the response of the individual to be left open.

Often the interview needed to expose specific elements in order to prevent the interview from remaining on the level of general statements. This was achieved through a type of retrospective inspection where questions were deliberately explicit in their attempt to try and elicit an answer that would illuminate the individual’s response to a situation in question. There was the attempt, also, to encourage a degree of depth or, in other words, to focus on feelings or the emotional responses of the individual when referring to a particular situation or event. This meant that general suggestions were posed in order to shift simple assessments by the individual using expressions such as ‘good’ or ‘bad’.
In conducting the interviews, the intention was to obtain the participants’ views on the phenomena under investigation. The qualitative approach and broadly structured interviews enabled this author as the interviewer to gain explanations and information on individual perceptions, attitudes and values that is not directly accessible by alternative methods. However, there were a number of problems in conducting the interview: first was the degree of control of the process of obtaining information from the interviewee, second was the degree of rapport established with the interviewee, and third was the unwillingness to impart information as a result of the sensitivity of the topic. These will be discussed in the following section.

iv) Problems in Conducting the Interview

The assumption from the type of broadly structured interviews described on pages 12-13 is that a frame has been constructed within which the interviewee responds. However, there is the initial problem that the interview becomes a one-way construction in which respondents are likely to seek information from the interviewer to discover the boundaries of the interview, a process that can continue throughout the course of the interview. While it was advantageous to have an established set of directions that allowed myself as the interviewer to make appropriate decisions or establish necessary priorities in the interview situation, the carrying out of such interviews depended essentially on the interviewer’s situational competence. It became clear that it was a matter of negotiating through the responses as the actual interview developed. Thus, choices were made whether to mention certain issues or questions, or being completely open to the individual’s way of talking about these issues and other topics.

Secondly, there was the problem of the willingness of the people interviewed, especially as a Westerner approaching a foreign culture. Admittedly, this was alleviated by conducting the interviews in Indonesian in order to convey a sense of
familiarity. However, maintaining the relationship with the informant was often very difficult. An obvious problem which had to be faced was the negotiation of proximity and distance in relation to the individual being interviewed. This may have been a result of various factors apart from assuming that they were naturally shy and reticent individuals. There may have been expectations by either party in regard to how the interview should take place, depending on whether an individual considered these expectations as being violated or not.

Thirdly, some interviewees appeared reluctant to be communicative as a result of being defensive about the topic being discussed. While stressing the anonymity of all answers and attempting to phrase questions in an open a way as possible, there were clear problems of disclosure and transparency within the interview situation. The sensitivity of the informant’s current refugee status and the delicacy of touching upon recent conflict circumstances in Ambon may have aroused the fears in some interviewees of passing on information because of the possibility of negative sanctions by third parties.

Overall, the process of obtaining quality data from these interviews depended heavily on the quality of interaction with the respondent/s. While this author was in control of the process of obtaining information from the interviewee, but flexible enough to follow new information, the quality of data could be also attributed to the skills of careful listening and responding well. At this point, this chapter will now turn to the third concern of the thesis.

As mentioned on page 4, the third focal concern of the thesis is a study of the implications of the clash between two nationalist ideologies. The thesis will use the theory of constructivism in order to examine the impact of contemporary nationalist ideologies in the transition from riot to nationalist conflict in Ambon. The next chapter will develop a constructivist approach to ethnic nationalism. Using the
constructivist framework, this thesis contends that the disruption of authority structures in Ambon unsettled social cohesion with two effects: the disillusionment of ordinary individuals who sought new sources of identity and social security on the one hand, and the dislocation of incumbent elites on the other. It will be argued that, in such circumstances, nationalism became a liberating and inclusive force. It was able to fulfil the political demands of disgruntled elites and promised the Ambonese people a ‘Golden Age’ of stability and tranquillity. It is this approach which is developed in this thesis in order to understand the changes in ethnic and national consciousness which had taken place among the Ambonese.
CHAPTER 2

NATIONALISM IN INDONESIA
AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

2.1 Approaches to Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia

There have been numerous academic attempts to make sense of Indonesia’s nationalist politics, in particular, its problematic pursuit of a national identity. The varied responses of writers, in this respect, have generated distinct accounts of the nature of contemporary nationalist politics in Indonesia. These different approaches, moreover, reverberate some of the conceptual works on the subject of nationalism in general. In particular, they echo widely-held assertions amongst theorists of nationalism that nationalism arises out of an instinctual or primordial sense of identity and, alternatively, that national identity is tied to the instrumental pursuit of particular interests.

As a preliminary step in order to draw attention to the context of scholarly work on nationalism and identity in Indonesia we begin with an examination of the complexities of Indonesia’s nationalist politics. A perusal of the existing literature related to the dynamics of Indonesian history reveals a strong fascination with issues of integration and nationalism in the region.¹ The nature of Indonesia’s diverse composition makes these issues unsurprising topics of interest. The mosaic of differences in Indonesia’s ethnic composition, its geographical spread, religious and

cultural disparities, linguistic differences, and so on, could be seen as inhibitors of integration or an impediment to the achievement of a ‘national culture’. Yet Indonesia, as a multi-ethnic state, has attempted to promote a national identity through feelings of a collective ‘we’. With Indonesia’s tremendous diversity, nation building and national integration have been consistent goals in the past for both nationalists and successive Indonesian governments.

Prior to colonist intervention, there was no common sense of identity or unifying historical memory, with many of the pre-colonial kingdoms only exercising authority over extensive or limited sections of the Indonesian archipelago. The Dutch made various policy attempts to integrate the East Indies, or modern day Indonesia, such as the development of a centralised administrative service, the unity of coinage, and the use of Dutch and Malay as the languages of instruction. In the Old Order and New Order periods\(^2\), the government rapidly developed new symbols of nationhood to rekindle that nationalist feeling spurred by a common struggle against the colonialists. Since the 1950s, the Indonesian government initiated projects of directed economic, social and cultural change among minority groups under the auspices of the Department of Social Welfare. These projects were initiated by Presidential decrees in an effort to integrate minority groups into Indonesian society.\(^3\)

In Indonesia, ideas about a ‘national culture’ and the policies designed to ensure the integration of the various cultural groups have affected the way in which these groups have chosen to define their identity. The state’s imposition of a unifying nationalism has clearly come at the expense of a long history of adverse regional reactions to

---

\(^2\) Soeharto, early in his tenure as President of Indonesia, described his regime as the ‘New Order’ as opposed to the ‘Old Order’ government of Indonesia’s earlier and first President Soekarno.

nationalist feelings and national policies. Since the late 1990s, it has been increasingly evident that there has been a decline in the mobilising power of the state’s legitimatory nationalist ideology, including its vision of a national identity. A history of significant inter-ethnic unrest and communal violence among different groups in Indonesia has drawn attention to problems inherent in the state’s control over some of its territories.

Many scholars have drawn particular attention to the existence of internal challenges to the Indonesian nation-state which emphasise the extreme fragility of Indonesia’s integrative endeavours and its claim to legitimate authority. Despite Indonesia’s ‘feverish search’ for symbols of nationhood and sources of national inspiration, longstanding separatist demands from West Papua, Aceh, Ambon, and East Timor have demonstrated the historical delicacy of the relationship between regional groups and the state’s interpretation of the national community. Indeed, nationalist challenges have increased dramatically in Indonesia in recent years with renewed separatist claims in these areas.

Given this background of the complexities of Indonesian national identity, there are a number of approaches in the literature on nationalism that could potentially provide a map of terrain on how nationalist politics in Indonesia could be examined. The literature itself offers a great number of works on the subject, which offer diverse disciplinary perspectives and have investigated various geographical regions from Europe (Hans Kohn, Carlton Hayes, Shafer Boyd and Frederick Hertz) to the new states in Africa and Asia (Benedict Anderson, Elie Kedourie, Crawford Young).

---

4 Only until recently, the Indonesian Government’s war against the East Timorese ended with the sudden and influential transformations in Government in 1998 and the subsequent Referendum, the result of which realised the aspirations of the East Timorese to claim a state of their own.


and Benyamin Neuberger\textsuperscript{12}), and more generically on the contemporary nature and types of national identity and nationalist movements (Walker Connor\textsuperscript{13}, Anthony D. Smith\textsuperscript{14}, Montserrat Guibernau\textsuperscript{15}, David Brown\textsuperscript{16}, and Christopher Dandeker\textsuperscript{17}).

A reading of Anthony D. Smith’s major distinctions within the study of nationalism provides a grasp of most of the issues of central concern to scholars in this field and, at the same time, represents important individual discourses. His five major paradigms of nationalism are \textit{primordialism}, \textit{perennialism}, \textit{ethno-symbolism} (also related closely to constructivism), \textit{modernism} (also related closely to instrumentalism or situationalism), and \textit{postmodernism}\textsuperscript{18} each of which have attempted to give some precision to nationalist politics. Despite his five-fold typology, however, a deeper reading of Smith would reveal the fundamental distinction between the primordialist and instrumentalist approaches to nationalism which is central to this thesis.

The competing assumptions of both theories represent an influential part of the literature on nationalism and are pertinent to understanding the increasing frequency and intensity of nationalism and ethnic group conflicts. A comparison of these two conceptual languages where one asserts nationalism as an instinct of collective primordial beliefs, and the other as rational self-interest, provides a useful map that will lead the way to the development and application of the constructivist approach in the subsequent chapters. The significance of this debate for this thesis also lies in its ability to pinpoint key points of reference within which various writers on nationalism

may be located, especially those whose research may be found in issues related to nationalism and national integration in Indonesia. It is possible to recognise various characteristics of these theoretical formulations in the literature.

Two alternate paradigms, primordialism and instrumentalism, will be examined, in the first place, to show how each one has generated different stories on nationalism and may be located in the literature on nationalism and ethnic conflict in Indonesia and second, to show how specific problems arise in their overall theories of nationalism. This will be followed by a discussion on constructivism which might be viewed as a synthesis in the overall theory of nationalism.

2.1.1 Primordialism

The theory of primordialism, which fundamentally perceives nationalism as something basic and founded on attachments which are innate and emotionally powerful, argues that nations are organic and natural, and therefore have natural rights to self-determination. These ideas have essentially diverged into two well-known theoretical assumptions of nationalism, where one is fundamentally biological in character and the other cultural. Pierre van den Berghe is the main exponent of the biological approach and argues for the propensity to favour close kin groups and that nations are thus a matter of kin selection.\(^\text{19}\) Clifford Geertz and Edward Shils, on the other hand, are known to have pioneered the distinction of ‘cultural givens’, like religion, language and race, to which individuals attach a ‘primordial quality’.\(^\text{20}\)

Advances in recent decades have given a more detailed treatment of these ideas and rendered primordialism into a more sophisticated thesis. Divergent versions of the

primordial thesis have evolved rapidly, primarily in an attempt to take into account several logical and empirical problems when applying the thesis to more modern contexts of ethnic conflict. As a result, the primordialist thesis has expanded more explicitly into an array of disciplines including evolutionary psychology, biological anthropology, neurobiology, behavioural ecology and others. Many of these tend to explore the interaction between van den Berghe’s genetic preference and Geertz’s cultural selection theories, and subsequently have brought about various methodological and conceptual divisions within primordialist theory and across nationalist theory in general.

However, in recognising the conceptual diversity surrounding such formulations, it is still possible to identify the characteristics of these approaches to nationalism within the existing literature on Indonesia. Often, primordialism is used in the literature as the ‘default’ position in which ethnic conflicts are assumed to derive from cultural incompatibilities whose existence is left unexamined or taken for granted. Indeed, some writers on ethnic movements and nationalism in Indonesia have pinpointed the primordialist nature of these movements with an emphasis on cultural differences, that is, ‘the coexistence within a single society of groups possessing mutually incompatible institutional systems’.

In these approaches to nationalism and ethnic conflict there is the assumption of an underlying primordial theme of ethnic emotional bonds and primordial sentiments, implying that, as a consequence, the conflicts are so intractable as to be beyond our ability to influence them. The following example could be referred to as ‘explicit

---


22 *CJPS*, pp.42-3.

primordialism’ for its overt primordial stance. When commenting on the Dayak-Madurese conflict in Kalimantan in 1996 and 1997, commentators from Human Rights Watch referred to deep-seated ethnic hatreds based upon an inherent trait from both the Dayaks and the Madurese for ‘drawing blood’. It was said, for example, that the Madurese possessed a ‘penchant for using knives to settle scores and the Dayak belief that if the blood of a single Dayak is shed, the group as a whole must respond’.

The primordialist perspective asserts that the development of individual identity is inherent and defined by the culture of the community in which a person is born. Therefore, animosity between two opposing sides is the result of inherent cultural differences. Consequently, it is often implied that Indonesia could never become a unified nation because of its tremendous cultural diversity. While not overtly labelling themselves as primordialist, some authors have in this way perceived nationalistic consciousness in Indonesia’s history as a cultural phenomenon. Ethnic loyalties are often treated as ‘givens’ and thus not carefully examined. However, it is argued here that primordialism refers not just to the view of history as a ‘cultural phenomenon’ but rather to the view that cultural affinities and differences may have an impact on the development of ethnic and nationalist consciousness. As a description of perceptions of identity, primordialism may thus be accurate. However, it is suggested here that the development of such ‘primordialist’ ethnic or national consciousness needs to be examined in terms of the social and political factors which influence its development.

As demonstrated above, the primordialist perspective asserts that the development of individual identity is inherent and defined by the culture of the community in which a person is born. Therefore, animosity between two opposing sides is the result of

25 HRW [online], West Kalimantan, 1997 Report.
inherent cultural differences. Consequently, it is often implied that Indonesia could never become a unified nation because of its tremendous cultural diversity. While not overtly labelling themselves as primordialist, some authors have in this way perceived nationalistic consciousness in Indonesia’s history as a cultural phenomenon. Often they do not take ethnic loyalties into account, but instead take these for granted as a self-evident phenomenon or simply a natural variable affecting political behaviour.

If only inadvertently, these assertions assume the self-evidence of primordial sentiments and thereby the ‘natural’ right of minorities to demand independence from the Indonesian nation-state. In such an approach, Ingrid Wessel has implied that the nationalist movements for independence in West Irian, Aceh and East Timor have a right to self-determination and thus in some sense the ‘natural right’ to assert themselves as a separate community. She states for example,

In Irian Jaya, the Free Papua Movement (Organisasi Papua Merdeka-OPM) was founded in 1963 with the strong determination to fight for independence, and armed clashes and resistance escalated in the late 1970s and 1980s. It was formed when Irianese nationalists experienced the “Indonesianization” policy. This official policy is applied against “backward” people or against “younger brothers” and is understood as a development programme. The official understanding of the place of ethnic minorities within the Indonesian nation as bluntly formulated in 1985 by the Minister of Transmigration...The transmigration policy, the educational programme and the pembangunan policy in Irian Jaya reduced the Irianese to a minority in their own province.26

And in regards to East Timor,

The 17 years since 1975 have shown that Indonesia, presenting itself as the generous, helpful big neighbour and – after the occupation – as a brother to whom the East Timorese ought to be grateful did not act as a brother, but rather as an enemy or a colonial power.27

Similarly, there have been other scholars who have simply assumed the existence of nationalist attachments amongst Indonesia’s ethnic and regional communities without any overt explanation of its nature. As Jamie Mackie has stated,

Indonesia’s geographical diversity is an appropriate starting point for a discussion of the country’s difficulties, for there is no doubt that it has contributed to and aggravated some of her recent problems.\(^2^8\)

In this way, the nature of nationalist attachment is taken for granted and examined from the way in which nationalist sentiments may have emerged as a result of different factors. In this way, the nature of nationalist attachment is taken for granted and examined from the way in which nationalist sentiments may have emerged as a result of different factors. In this sense, ‘innate’ ethnic or nationalist attachments are analysed by the type of catalysts to which they respond. For example, Walker Connor in his book on ‘Ethnonationalism’ explains the idea that instinctive ethnic or national attachments might be taken for granted until triggered by certain external factors. He illustrates that the propensity towards the bifurcation of humanity may be triggered by an external threat which can broaden primordial fault-lines that separate groups, thereby eliciting the powerful response of national consciousness.\(^2^9\)

However, most of these analyses do not explain the politics of nationalism in Indonesia as solely based on the manifestation of instinct. Scholars often supplement their explanations of a basic ‘primordial’ nature to nationalism with other alternative arguments. It is clear that ethnic and national identities which portray themselves in the primordialist language of historical continuity, may also involve rational responses to changing situations. Whereas the primodialist view indicates that individuals subscribe to nationalism on the basis of linguistic, racial and cultural affinities, there is the alternative approach that support for nationalism comes from


those whose interests have been threatened by economic change and political oppression.

Both approaches have in common the recognition that nationalism is facilitated by the push of political elites promulgating ideological symbols of nationhood, but differ markedly in their depiction of the dynamics of nationalist construction. From a primordialist perspective, the pre-modern or primordial origins of the nation are stressed so as to appeal to the ‘innate feelings’ of the masses. From an ‘instrumentalist’ approach the ‘innate feelings’ harnessed by elites appear as ‘primordial’ only because they appeal to interests which resonate closely with the fears and aspirations of individuals so as to mobilise the masses more effectively.

In the latter case, it is the rational self-interests of individuals which are harnessed by elites who are seeking to mobilise a nationalist movement by appealing to commonalities of interest and the defence of such interests in the face of economic or power disparities. Since it is rational for individuals to identify with the social, economic or political unit which best promotes their interests, individuals then make choices in response to situational constraints and align themselves with the corresponding national community. The result is a communitarian feeling of constructed ‘common interests’ that makes collective claims. As the following section will explore, this idea forms the foundation of what has been referred to as situationalist or instrumentalist theory.

2.1.2 Instrumentalism

The argument of instrumentalist theory begins with the explanation that nationalism becomes one resource for the defence of individual interests and the common economic interests of groups. The main premise of this line of thought is the idea that nationalistic consciousness develops on an economic level. Through a process of
contact and competition in the workforce, the balance of power is affected by the relative economic advantage that groups can obtain from exploiting new opportunities. In the case of nationalist movements or ethnic conflicts, importance is allocated to inter-group differences in income, occupation, and general living standards, where the implied message is that a reduction or eradication of economic discrepancies would tend to reduce the likelihood of conflict. Moreover, the approach is sometimes presented in ‘elite versus masses’ terms, indicating that individuals may rely on elite activists to explain the nature of prevailing circumstances so as to lead individuals to identify with an interactive community. For Paul Brass\(^{30}\) and Elie Kedourie\(^{31}\), educated elites manipulate explanations of inter-group differences in order to mobilise support for an appropriate group response.

Instrumentalism has also been likened at various points to the Marxist explanation of class identity, which involves perceptions of exploitation in the production process. Scholars like Tom Nairn\(^ {32}\) have thus formulated instrumentalism along Marxist lines and depicted nationalism as a form of class-consciousness, hence its ability to mobilise large-scale intra-class support. Nationalism, in this respect, is regarded as an ‘internally-determined necessity’ associated with, for example, the creation of a national market economy and a viable national bourgeois class in a competitive working-class environment. There is a familiar connection between class-consciousness and ethnic and national consciousness where both are often regarded as developing from rational reactions to a perception of a threat to discernible competitive interests.

Similarly, it is possible to identify such characteristics in the literature on nationalism in Indonesia which tends to emphasise the economic dimension of the struggle in

---


nationalism and ethnic conflict. It is often implied that both nationalistic movements resisting the Indonesian State and conflict between rival ethnic groups in Indonesian history have been a reflection of economic interests and rational working-class group competition. This is most explicit when the rise of nationalistic sentiment is attributed to industrialisation and other forces of modernisation. It is argued as a central point in instrumentalist theory that the spread of industrialisation has been conducive to developing social and economic networks, which in turn generate a perception of an ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy between rival groups.

It has been suggested that one of the possible preconditions for contemporary nationalistic contention in Indonesia has been in the changes to the Indonesian economy through New Order developmental policies. It has been suggested, in fact, that these economic initiatives promoted economic and social interaction between ethnic groups and forged a sense of solidarity based on a common interest in the pursuit of economic benefits and social status.\(^{33}\) In this way, new investments and economic activities in Aceh, West Irian and Lampung are seen to be examples where commercial and industrial growth has initiated social contact in the workplace and the development of nationalist and ethnic consciousness within each regional community. Expansion of industrial and service sectors of these economies have increased rates of ethnic mobilisation and collective action because of diminishing ethnic segregation and increased competition between ethnic groups for jobs.

The instrumentalist approach also recognises that the sense of community, based on ethnic or national identity, can be a response to the defence of these interests in the face of economic or power disparities. Many examinations of contemporary incidents of ethnic conflict in Indonesia have focused on economic rivalry, particularly with regard to trading minorities and immigrant minorities as undercutting business rivals

in their ‘host societies’. Thus, studies of the conflict in Aceh and West Papua often focus on the Indonesian government’s transmigration policy, resulting in many of the indigenous population competing heavily with ethnic Javanese and others for employment opportunities, especially in the civil service and in development projects. Hence, analysts of the 1997 inter-ethnic clashes in Kalimantan have evaluated the conflict as a response by the Dayaks to the perceived threat of economic marginalisation:

The region’s commercial development has brought with it government-sponsored transmigration, or movement of people from the more crowded islands of Java, Bali, and to a lesser extent, Madura, to work on the plantations. It has also brought more government administrators, a better infrastructure permitting greater penetration of the interior, including by migrants from elsewhere in Indonesia, and increasing competition for resources.

Scholars who reflect a sympathetic view towards the instrumentalist approach articulate an explanation for nationalism and ethnic consciousness in Indonesia as being formed on the basis of interest-based responses to changes in the structure of the global economy. As situations change and new opportunities or threats emerge, individuals are exposed to new opportunities for power and privileges. Instrumentalism essentially identifies that there are discernible competitive interests which individuals pursue to promote a sense of self-fulfillment or self-realisation. Not surprisingly, individuals will strive to attain more power and wealth and will ally themselves with others in the pursuit of these common interests. Hence, for example, Richard Chauvel in his discussion of ‘regional resistance’ in Indonesia argues that it was the extent of economic exploitation in Aceh and Papua which propelled demands for independence.

34 I refer for example to a Seminar presented at the Murdoch University School of Law on Thursday 7 June 2001 by Dr. Fernand de Varennes, Senior Lecturer in Law at Murdoch University, entitled ‘Ethnic Conflicts in Indonesia: Aceh, Minorities and Transmigration.’
35 HRW [online], West Kalimantan, 1997 Report.
The important issue to be recognised here is that nationalism may then be one possible resource for the defence of individual and group interests. In other words, instrumentalism can be understood as explaining the construction of a sense of community and identity based on various factors of the modernising process. It follows that the emergence of reactive communities is produced by unequal social and economic interactions in the state. On this basis, it may also be recognised that, because of the numerous interests involved, these interests can be associated with feelings of fear, confusion and anxiety. It is suggested here that the diversity of interests may be so intense as to prompt individuals to support nationalism as a way in which to defend a whole way of life, rather than the defence of a specific interest.\footnote{Brown, Contemporary Nationalism, p.75.}

This implies that the perception of the individual towards the group, and his/her willingness to engage in collective action for that group, can be motivated by both the rational pursuit of group competitive interests, and also the need to protect and defend the group based on a variety of fears and insecurities. This idea that nationalism is not simply a result of goal incompatibility is crucial to the constructivist approach. Nevertheless, the idea of an individual’s perception of the persistence of an unequal distribution of resources, either against the advantage or to the advantage of the group, remains a useful starting point in order to understand the nature of the constructivist theoretical viewpoint.

\subsection*{2.1.3 Constructivism}

As shown in the previous section, changes in the contemporary world may affect people’s interests. However, this needs supporting by a study of how these changes have an isolating impact on individuals, making them prone to emotional feelings of apprehension and fear, and thus susceptible to ideological visions of harmony and stability. A constructivist approach, in this regard, allows for the examination of
national and ethnic identifications as a ‘construction’ in particular historical and social locations. It is in part a response to shortcomings in the literature embracing the instrumentalist idea that ethnic and national communities are communities with common interests.

In general, constructivist studies of nationalism and ethnicity have been diverse and have not necessarily been a unified theoretical totality. Over the last decade, research findings and writings on the subject have mushroomed, so much so, that constructivists have been distinguished between transactionalists, inventionists, instrumentalists, and proponents of moral ethnicity - an analog of the concept of moral economy. Paris Yeros\(^{38}\) identifies four different kinds of constructivism and their political implications which have evolved in the past several decades. This includes the work on ‘the invention of tradition’ by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger\(^{39}\), in which ethnic ideologies were invented and supported in colonial periods as an ideological instrument of colonial administration and social control.

Given the varying responses of different writers on constructivism, this chapter seeks to trace a map of constructivist thought which will be subsequently employed by this thesis. In summary, the thesis employs three central elements of constructivism: first the underlying principle that ethnic and national identities are socially and politically constructed as a category of understanding rather than innately given, second that ethnic national identities occur in the context of rapid social changes which disrupt and dislocate local communities, and third that the disruption of face to face communities leads to affiliation with new communitarian ideologies.


The first suggests that the nation and ethnic groups are invented or imagined by local elites who select symbols that resonate with contemporary society and use mythical terms to convey a sense of unity. These elites mobilise the masses by employing cultural myths not in innate or rational self-interest terms, but rather in constructivist terms where elites articulate simplistic formulae which resolve anomic insecurities of the masses. Nationalism’s ability to diagnose contemporary events and offer certainty to resolve what would otherwise be perceived as contemporary complexities, enables it to offer a sense of security and well-being to individuals.

The first thus suggests that the nation and ethnic groups are invented or imagined by local elites who select symbols that resonate contemporary society and use mythical terms to convey a sense of unity. This view of nationalist and ethnic identity as being socially and politically constructed has been argued by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* and in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s *The Invention of Tradition*. More contemporary studies of nationalism and ethnicity have resounded the relevance of pre-colonial collective identities, and how these associations and identities are actively ‘imagined’. Terence Ranger indicates, for example, that the ideological basis of pre-colonial ethnic identities in Africa was based on kinship, religious associations, lifestyle and occupations, and which required the presence of a powerful ideological elite.

Thomas Eriksen responds that ethnicity in Africa is tied to identities that are actively ‘imagined’ such as kinship, religion, language, political allegiance, class and locality and reasserts their importance in times of necessity when the state fails to deliver essential goods and services.

The second element of constructivism in this thesis examines how nationalism and the reversion of individuals to nationalist ideologies might be seen in the context of

---

social, economic and political processes which have disruptive impacts on individuals. In this view of nationalism, the construction of identities occurs when social cohesion is weakened and the authority structures of such communities are dislocated within the context of unprecedented changes caused by economic forces or political intervention. In an illuminating discussion, Eriksen indicates that the construction of collective identities is fundamentally tied to circumstances whereby interactive communities are unsettled by outside forces. Similarly, Edward Fischer\(^43\), in his analysis of Mayan ethnic culture, asserts that Mayan identity has been ‘dynamically constructed’, in that it has been an historically continuous construction that has adapted to changing circumstances.

In these views of nationalist and ethnic identity, the way in which perceptions of identity are continually re-orientated as a result of changing circumstances strongly underpin the dynamics behind subscription to nationalist ideologies and the manner in which nationalist elites appropriate and reinvent cultural ideas to suit their own purpose. Hence,

> Power always assumes cultural dimensions, and various modern nationalisms both exploit and manifest this. Nationalism takes form in an already cultural and changing world. Nationalist cynically appropriate and reinvent cultural ideas to their purpose, but these ideas do not necessarily come from out of the blue – a fact that can help to explain their sometimes alarmingly passionate force and the direction that some of the appalling violence may take.\(^44\)

In these disruptive circumstances, nationalism emerges as a powerful force through the construction of institutional or ideological frameworks which offer individuals a sense of identity and emotional security by providing a precise diagnosis of

---


contemporary disruptions and defining individuals as a member of a distinct member of a community.

This thesis thirdly suggests within the constructivist view that individuals seek affiliation with alternative communitarian ideologies in the face of complex social problems. The link between the reversion of individuals to ideological formulas and disruptive social forces is argued to lie both in the psychology of the individual who feels insecure in the face of these forces, and also in the ability of nationalism to offer security and well-being. In the context of Indonesia, the argument then is that those sections of Indonesian society that have experienced severe rapid social change as a result of repercussions of economic globalisation or state policy interventions will reveal a resurgence of separatist tendencies. In these disruptive circumstances, nationalism emerges as a powerful force through the construction of institutional or ideological frameworks which offer individuals, in its most straightforward form, a sense of identity and emotional security.

In recent times, it appears that these aspects of constructivist theory of nationalism and ethnicity, summarised above, have grown in popularity with the increasing number of claims for greater political and human rights under the banner of self-determination. Hence, the beginnings of a volume of work that uses constructivist approaches to the study of nationalism and ethnicity, including those in the literature on Indonesia. It has only been in recent years that there has been the emergence of a degree of interest in elements of the constructivist approach in tackling some of the contemporary issues of nationalism in Indonesia.
Researchers such as Ed Aspinall\(^ {45} \) have examined the case of Aceh, arguing that the conflict has been shaped in certain fundamental ways by the influence of international processes and structures. He shows how Acehnese nationalist agitation against Indonesia has involved a reconstruction of Acehnese identity where ‘its character has been shaped, in certain fundamental ways, by the influence of international processes and structures’.\(^ {46} \) He concludes that not only is Acehnese demands for sovereignty constructed in this way through a global discourse on human rights, but it is also constructed on the basis of a claim that the historical authenticity of Aceh automatically grants a right to sovereign statehood.

These types of constructions have also been examined by scholars such as Vivienne Wee\(^ {47} \) who has depicted ethnic nationalist movements as a phenomenon of the periphery that arises when the gap between centre and periphery widens beyond a critical distance. Wee shows how separatist ethnic movements throughout Southeast Asia, including Riau in Indonesia, have employed and reinterpreted pre-existing historical myths of cultural minority communities to provide legitimacy for movements to combat this power disparity. She uses the concept of atavism to depict contemporary ethnic communities as constructed on the basis of a specific range of myths and symbols of identity. Thus,

Atavism is an active reaching back to the past to draw upon ideational and moral resources. Atavistic construction of the past may or may not be historical. However, it is not veracity that is the point here. The point is temporal location. Cultural constructions that are temporally located in the past enable usages for present purposes. The present is thus reconstructed in terms of this constructed past, thereby legitimating a particular trajectory towards the future.\(^ {48} \)


\(^{46}\) Aspinall, ‘Sovereignty’, Paper 2001, p.44.


Nils Bubandt’s depiction of the conflict in North Maluku also reveals this type of constructivist explanation within the framework of narrative constructions and the generation of myths. He examines what he calls ‘crisis discourse’ in which ‘rumours mobilise within a discursive logic that escapes instrumentalist theories of conflict.’ In this way, he argues that the constructions of conspiracy, which mobilised each side in the North Moluccan conflict, can only be understood as the politics of paranoia.

Donald Horowitz makes an encompassing argument where he proposes a psychological theory in which ethnic riots are not only generated by rational instrumental elements such as the competition of economic or political status, but also by irrational ideological elements of in-group and out-group psychology. Amongst the vast literature on conflict and violence, Horowitz was thus chosen as being directly useful to the author’s constructivist approach which argues in a similar way that various economic or instrumental disruptions lead not just to deprived groups seeking to enhance their prospects of economic prosperity and equality, but also to insecure groups within society who seek the emotional and physical security provided by ideological formulas of nationalism. In addition, Horowitz’s proposed theory is specifically examined in the context of the ethnic riot, so that he is directly useful to an analysis of the conflict in Ambon which developed as a riot and evolved further from that basis.

The aim of the remainder of this chapter will, therefore, offer clarification of how this dissertation intends to employ the constructivist approach by analysing the main elements of this intended approach as summarised previously. To begin with, this thesis seeks to examine how ethnic and national identities arise in the interplay of social dynamics rather than through attachment to situational factors of objective interests. It is important, for that reason, to identify how identities are not ascribed but

---

emerge and develop in the dynamics of social intercourse and how these ideological visions are constructed as a result. The following section of this chapter will now seek to explain in detail those factors of contemporary change which cause the disruption of authority structures, in order to show how identities are ideologically constructed within this context.

2.2 Social Disruption

The argument of this thesis rests in part on the idea that individuals subscribe to ideological frameworks of national and ethnic identity in the context of social, economic and political processes which have disruptive impacts on individuals resulting in feelings of anomie and insecurity. The most explicit argument in the instrumentalist formulation of ethnic conflict and nationalism bases itself on theories of modernisation, in that nationalist tendencies are a by-product of globalisation and the accompanying modernisation process.

The causes of disruption relate to the suggestion that the globalising and modernising nature of society presents challenges to notions of local community. As a result of economic globalisation, state economic policies, rapid social change, migration, and/or oppressive interventions by the state apparatus, the consequential occurrence of profound and complex social changes may promote these challenges to the society concerned.

Within this complex scenario, it is suggested that the nature of these disruptions may weaken existing ties of community and expose individuals to new insecurities. This means that changes to economic and social structures through the industrialisation of developing nations may involve new industrial orientations according to governmental priorities and/or the increased participation of peoples within the workplace which have tended to erode the sense of family and locality communities.
Related economic development and the migration of individuals, particularly from rural to urban communities, can increase social mobility and economic competition in the workplace. This may result in the emergence of the type of reserved cultures and segmented political institutions detached from traditional society which may invariably present challenges to traditional leadership.

State interventions into ethnic minority homelands have involved disruptions to the social structure and the authority structure. Such attempts by the State to extend control over peripheral ethnic community regions may have long-standing effects on numerous aspects of an individual’s life. As in the case of Ambon, replacing local ethnic minority elites with government officials from the ethnic majority, and the imposition of new fiscal and administrative structures and migrations of labour provoked dislocated elites and disrupted communities to rebel through ethnic nationalist rebellion. These disruptions had widespread impact on traditional elites, educated elites, Christians, Muslims, migrants and the indigenous peoples, which ultimately caused resentment against the expanding influence of the modern State and thereby promoted the construction of nationalist ideologies.

Further to this, changes or disruptions which may have occurred several generations ago can produce changes at the community level so as to disrupt the cohesion of community or its authority structure. In this context, traditional myths of communal identity, and its ways of defining relationships with others, might come to be perceived as inadequate in terms of being able to explain these changes within the community. Subsequently, notions of identity may be reconstructed in ways which offer explanations that account for changes within people’s immediate environment, hence the articulation of a nationalist ideology which tends to offer a simple diagnosis of contemporary events.
There are also the subsequent disruptions of the conflicts themselves which might cause a change in the nature of the conflict. The transformation of the conflict in Ambon from riot into nationalist confrontation was a result of the emergence of the FKM and the *Laskar Jihad* and the process of ideological formation as each nationalist construction played off the other. The conflict in Ambon thus became characterised by a sense of interplay between the two nationalist visions as each responded to the other’s changing ideological depictions of themselves and their enemy on the basis of external social and political factors. These factors included the interventions of the Indonesian military and their perceived incapacities to offer security; the collapse of public services and the abrupt end to basic health and education services; the rise of Megawati into presidential power and her perceived lack of enthusiasm to resolve conflict in the Moluccas; and the events post September 11 and the subsequent attention on Islamic militant groups. Such disruptions managed to breed new insecurities and subsequently influenced the way in which the FKM and *Laskar Jihad* engaged in a process of transacting and redefining identity.

Clearly, disruption is not the only precondition for separatist nationalism. While it is implicit within the thesis that disruption is the important mechanism by which individuals begin to seek a sense of security through identification with the community, there must be other conditions of an instrumental grievance which can link up with disruption, a myth of residence in the ancestral homeland, and the existence of a demonized ‘Other’ which can be convincingly portrayed as the cause of the problem. The construction of nationalism is therefore been explained as responding not just to socio-economic and political power disparities but also because of ideological absolutisms in which politics becomes simplified into stereotyped ‘us’ and ‘them’ identifications.

From this perspective, the disruptions and insecurities for the main actors in Ambon included the centralizing expansion of the Indonesian state which engendered
profound changes to the orientation of regional autonomy in Maluku resulting in the loss of authority for both Ambonese educated and traditional elites. To add to this, structural inadequacies relating to decentralisation led to a greater personalisation of power and corruption and hence the further erosion of the legitimate authority of both traditional and educated elites over Ambonese society. While the disruptive impact of rapid migration and the exacerbation of existing poverty levels during the financial crisis created workplace tensions and economic discrepancies between different migrant groups and between migrants and the indigenous Ambonese community.

These changes may have diverse ramifications for the emergence of nationalist tendencies but it is suggested here that the weakening of family communities and traditional authority structures may adversely affect individuals who have difficulty in grappling with these new and unfamiliar conditions. It is argued in this thesis that it is in these circumstances that it is more likely that these individuals will search for a sense of security and affiliation with alternative visions of community and identity.

2.3 Displaced Elites and Insecure Individuals

It is argued that unprecedented social change resulting from various aspects of globalisation and the process of economic growth, industrialisation and urbanisation, has a precise link with the resurgence of nationalism. This is not to say that nationalism is the rational basis for reaction to uneven development where nationalists act more on the basis of pragmatic interest calculations. It is suggested, instead, that the way these resource-interests are perceived might be determined by the construction of ideological goals.

The rational voice of instrumentalism has attempted to justify reactive nationalism as stemming from uneven development and patterns of domination and inequality as a result of the inherent changes in modernising social, political and economic processes.
However, it is suggested that there are two frequent impacts on local community which tend to mask the recognition of material interests and make nationalism an attractive ideological formula.

The first consequence is the dislocation of local authority structures, so that traditional elites and/or aspiring elites lose their power and authority. It is suggested that it is this dislocation of authority structures of local communities which propels elites to find new political legitimacy in nationalist ideology. Processes of contemporary change thus tend to,

\[
\text{dislocate the authority structure of such communities so that incumbent or aspiring elites lose both their power and authority and thus begin to search for new ways to re-establish their authority.}^{50}
\]

It is argued here that this constitutes the basis for the crucial role of elites in promoting nationalism. In this approach,

\[
\text{Nationalism is depicted as an ideology, invented and employed by new political elites aspiring to power in the new modern state, who seek alternative sources of legitimacy to replace appeals to divine right or colonial mandate. Such elites construct new myths of unity for the control of societies characterised by socio-economic complexity and cultural diversity.}^{51}
\]

From an instrumentalist perspective, in articulating nationalism elites seek rational material self interest. While not overtly stipulating an explicit focus on the disruption of local authority structures Paul Brass, for example, specifies the independent role of elites in articulating nationalism.\textsuperscript{52} In the process of modernisation, Brass indicates that the effects of social mobilisation and the differentiation between particular groups create circumstances whereby the authority of traditional elites is threatened. In this way, where traditional leaders and/or aspiring elites prove themselves to be

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{50} Brown, \textit{Contemporary Nationalism}, p.27.
\item \textsuperscript{51} Brown, \textit{Contemporary Nationalism}, p.31.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Brass, \textit{Ethnicity}, 1991
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
unproductive, then new elites begin to create new leadership roles for themselves by articulating a new nationalist identity. Brass notes that,

If (the native aristocracy) is collaborationist or has been imposed or is ineffectual, then the development of ethnic consciousness will depend upon the creation of new elites and social classes emerging out of the modernization process itself as literacy spreads, urbanization takes place, industrialization begins, and government employment opportunities open up.\footnote{Brass, \textit{Ethnicity}, p.32.}

Social mobility invariably involves competition and conflict for political power, economic benefits, and social status between competing elite groups within different ethnic categories. From Brass’ instrumentalist perspective, the community is perceived as a modern stratified system where the elite and non-elite compete in the economic order, and ethnic mobility will develop as elite individuals identify with the social, economic or political unit that best serves their interests. Here Brass places emphasis on the promotion of a nationalist consciousness by aspiring elites as a strategy to enhance their own individual status. In other words, nationalism as an ideology is manipulated by elites out of rational self-interest and to achieve control over the local society or to take advantage of new opportunities in the developing society.

While there is the recognition by scholars such as Brass that elites manipulate nationalism for some rational ulterior end, it is argued here that in nationalist movements the elite’s conception of the nation tends to mask the search for economic gain in a competitive environment. Indeed, the way in which nationalism, articulated by elites, is transformed from being seen as a resource for the defense of individual and group interests to the defense of a whole lifestyle depends on the mass sentiment to which these elites appeal. If the mass sentiment lies with the pursuit of these self-interests, elites may generate appeal through a nationalist ideology, which is tailored
towards mobilising group support for the achievement and protection of certain material privileges. In this way elites characteristically select and define cultural elements of the community. Brass observes that,

In the movement to create greater internal cohesion and to press more effectively ethnic demands against rival groups, ethnic and nationalist elites increasingly stress the variety of ways in which the members of the group are similar to each other and collectively different from others.\textsuperscript{54}

The articulation of a nationalist ideology by elites and the unifying symbols that they employ within it are fundamental in the appeal of nationalism and the political success to which these elites aspire. Clearly, numerous interests of different groups can be involved in nationalism, which means that nationalism can be seen by these groups as a resource to achieve their goals. It is suggested, however, that underlying individual and group interests might involve associated emotions of fear and anxiety owing to the complex nature of these interests. As these emotions become more acute within the pervading sentiment of the masses, it is more likely that individuals will respond through appeals to emotions rather than reason.\textsuperscript{55}

As explained above, elites, dislocated by disruptions to authority structures, deliberately articulate a nationalism to obtain political legitimacy and authority attainable by gaining the support of the masses. The other crucial role of elites is that they independently attempt to appeal to and mobilise the support of ‘the people’, not out of rational self-interest but out of perceptions of self-interest that are constructed and changed by emotional insecurities of the masses. In this way, they articulate a nationalist ideology that selectively uses symbols of collectivity and commonality to activate individuals and groups. The ability of elites to exercise this influence lies within the strength of the ideological doctrine to fulfil the emotional needs of

\textsuperscript{54} Brass, \textit{Ethnicity}, p.21.
\textsuperscript{55} Connor, \textit{Ethnonationalism}, p.195-209.
individuals who seek relief from the complexities generated by various aspects of the modernising and globalising process.  

Along with the dislocation of authority structures, the second frequent impact of unprecedented social change is the alienating impact of these disruptions to authority structures on individuals at mass level. It is argued that unprecedented social change causes individuals to feel insecure and isolated as a result of the transformation of familiar systems of authority and community, thereby making them more susceptible to ideological solutions. As Brown notes,

> When functioning kinship and locality communities are weakened, either by economic forces or by political interventions, one result is to disrupt social cohesion so as to make anomic people susceptible to visions of harmony and unity.  

In an illuminating discussion on globalising trends in the late twentieth century, Eric Hobsbawm has indicated that the period was indicative of a characteristic surge in group anxiety and apprehension and also a simultaneous revival of an ethnolinguistic type of nationalism. A comparison was made with the nationalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, which, he contends, was based rather on unitary aspirations of a combined nation-state and national economy, and emancipatory sentiment. It was the historical transformations of political, economic and social change in the late twentieth century which gave rise to a revival of nationalist consciousness, which was based on a form of ‘political paranoia’ challenging modern modes of political organisation. As Hobsbawm notes,

> What fuels such defensive reactions, whether against real or imaginary threats, is a combination of international population movements with the

---

57 Brown, *Nationalism*, p.27.  
ultra-rapid, fundamental and unprecedented socio-economic transformations so characteristic of the third quarter of our century.\textsuperscript{59}

Here Hobsbawm refers to massive population mobility as intensifying the disorientation of individuals and causing anxiety-laden perceptions. This has been the case, he argues, for various nation-states which reflect the experiences of both small and major demographic changes. Uncontrolled immigration into Wales and Estonia of monoglot speakers of the English or Russian language respectively, and hispanophone immigration into the United States, for example, have all demonstrated an underlying fear in the community ‘that is not unconnected with the rise of local nationalism’. As Hobsbawm observes,

Whenever we live in an urbanised society, we encounter strangers: uprooted men and women who remind us of our fragility, or the drying up of our own families’ roots.\textsuperscript{60}

Hobsbawm’s reflection on nationalism in the twentieth century concedes that the nation was ‘invented’ by political elites in order to legitimate their power in a century of revolution and democratisation. However, he considers that a focus needs to be made on the underlying sentiment from ‘below’ that is the fears and aspirations of individuals and community groups.\textsuperscript{61} Hence, his analysis of nationalist movements in the late part of the latter century are essentially seen as ‘negative’ and ‘defensive’ reactions of individuals against perceived threats of modernising developments.

The late twentieth century for Hobsbawm was in this way witness to massive economic transformations on a global scale, together with significant population movements. These served to generate inevitable discomfort and uncertainty amongst individual and group members of the community, who subsequently enlisted in

\textsuperscript{59} Hobsbawm, Nations, p.165.
\textsuperscript{60} Hobsbawm, Nations, p.167.
nationalist movements directed against what was considered as historically obsolete modes of political organisation.

The analysis shows that nationalism arose in the context of social, economic and political processes, which clearly had disruptive impacts on individuals. The argument that individuals subscribe to nationalist movements can therefore be recognised in this context. That is, those who recognise that nationalism is invented and propagated by elites must also acknowledge the anxiety reactions of followers in the face of contemporary change and disruptions. Similarly, explanations of nationalism in terms of its function in the modernisation process must take into account a subsequent search for a resolution to these emotions of apprehension.

The formulation of the link between disruptive social forces, those individuals faced with the complexities of modernity, and the emergence of nationalism, is offered here as relating to the power of the nationalist ideology to induce individuals to act collectively on behalf of the group. In other words, the issue concerns the way in which individual identities are constructed by these ideologies and the reasons for individuals needing this form of ideological support. One part of the answer is the employment of myths in nationalist ideology. It is argued here that the core appeal of nationalism derives from nationalism’s inherent ideological myths, which articulate, firstly, a diagnosis of contemporary problems, and, secondly, a simple blueprint for national identity. As a fundamental focus of this thesis, the process whereby there is this distinctive myth-making in nationalism needs further exploration. The following will therefore examine in greater detail the nature of myth-making and its function within ethnic nationalist movements.
2.4 Myth-Making

The power of nationalist ideologies to induce individuals to act collectively on behalf of the group relates to how the nationalist ideology functions as a basis for people’s interpretations of current events, particularly during times of crisis and change. It has been stated earlier in this chapter that, during disruptive social processes, individuals experience feelings of anomie and insecurity. In this way, nationalism as an ideological construction can offer refuge and emotional security to individuals prone to feelings of anxiety and apprehension as a result of contemporary disruptions. By depicting the community as one based on myths of common ancestry and common residence, individuals discover feelings of security and certainty, which in turn enhances the psychological appeal of nationalism as a political attachment of identity and belonging.

Within the context of social disruption, myths function as a form of ideological support. It has been suggested that nationalism is facilitated by the actions of aspiring or displaced elites who promulgate ideological myths and symbols of nationhood within which individuals may find a sense of identity and security. The adherence of individuals to nationalist claims is significantly influenced by the extent to which these myths, symbols and historical memories resonate within the society these nationalist claims purport to govern. The elites who ideologise national and group identities, therefore, have an important role in articulating the ideology of nationalism in terms of their selection of myths and visions of identity and destiny of the national community.

Numerous writers express the opinion that there are two different types of nationalism which employ two different ‘languages’ or types of myth-making. Two types of nationalist language are distinguished here, the first is ethnic nationalist and the
second is civic nationalist which both offer differing conceptions of what constitutes the nation.

It is argued in the thesis that ethnic nationalism was intrinsically more powerful than civic nationalism in the situation in Ambon due to the widespread appeal of ethnic myths, symbols and memories which generated a powerful association with collective sentiments of a common homeland and kinship community, and the fact that the strength of Indonesian civic nationalism tended to wane in the light of growing disillusionment with the State. The conflict in Ambon was thus characterized by the polarization of two ethnic nationalisms perpetuated by both the FKM and the Laskar Jihad. These two nationalisms evoked powerful statements within the community of ethnic and kinship ties and yet offered two contrasting conceptions of what constituted the nation.

The Laskar Jihad represented an ethnonationalist vision of cultural sameness by employing a language of common ancestry and common residence but with a core Islamic constituency. In contrast, the FKM represented an ethnocultural nationalism which defined an ethnic community of common ancestry based on indigenous racial homogeneity using specific myths of common ancestry of an ‘Alifuru’ race and a common homeland. Both nationalist visions of ethnic community therefore offered two different types of membership whereby the FKM was based on a community of common language and culture, and the Laskar Jihad referred to all Indonesian citizens who formed the Islamic majority.

It has been suggested earlier in this chapter that nationalism may be explained by the ability of nationalism to offer a sense of community through myths associated with family and kin relationships. One interpretation of this is denoted as ethnic nationalism, sometimes referred to as cultural nationalism, which refers to a community united by its ethnocultural sameness and genetic or biological ties. The
other description of nationalism is denoted here as civic, which refers to a community united by their shared commitment to a common public culture embodied within its state and civil public institutions.

It has sometimes been asserted that the mythology of ethnic nationalism is more powerful than the mythology of civic nationalism. John Hutchinson believes that the ethnic movement, or cultural nationalism, is potentially powerful and influential when the strength of civic nationalism tends to wane. He argues that, whereas civic nationalism is essentially modernist and conceives the state as a civic entity of equal citizens then ethnic nationalism presents the nation as a progressive culture. He indicates that its ideal nationalist vision is one which,

Perceives the state as an accidental, for the essence of a nation is its distinctive civilization, which is the product of its unique history, culture and geographic profile.\(^\text{62}\)

It is therefore argued here that ethnic nationalism is evidently one which tends to look at the importance of historical memory and the passions it arouses in the formation of nations. According to Hutchinson, for the ethnocultural nationalist the nation is in this way a primordial expression and thus a natural solidarity that evolves organically. As Hutchinson notes,

Nations are then not just political units but organic beings, living personalities, whose individuality must be cherished by their members in all their manifestations. Unlike the political nationalist, the cultural nationalist founds the nation not on ‘mere’ consent or law but on the passions implanted by nature and history.\(^\text{63}\)

However, this does not mean that the conception of the nation as a natural solidarity is to be taken as literally applicable. It is suggested here that ethnic nationalists instead


\(^{\text{63}}\) Hutchinson, \textit{Cultural Nationalism}, pp.122-31. (Original emphasis)
suggest a resemblance of the nation as an organic entity because of its power to convey an attachment to a specific identity. Ethnic nationalism may hark back to a glorious past but it encompasses a sense of unique identity of an active community with equal participation in contemporary affairs and each with equal rights and value to the community.

Walker Connor specifically denies the power of civic nationalism and provides a discussion of ethnic nationalism which he perceives as a powerful force because of its beliefs in shared blood and soil. He indicates that this concept of ‘shared blood’ has been intrinsic to understanding how nations have mobilised successfully. He cites the Germans, the Italians, the Vietnamese, and the Chinese as examples of countries where there has been nationalistic zeal pervaded by appeals to common ancestors and the adoption of terms which connoted familial relationships.

As manifested in emotion-laden terms such as homeland or native land, or land of my fathers, territory becomes mixed in popular perceptions with notions of ancestry and family, that is to say, blood...This emotional bond to homeland flows from a perception of the latter as the geographical cradle of the ethnonational group.\(^64\)

Connor’s evaluation shows how ethnic nationalism tends to evoke a sense of the family by equating literal genetic kinship and common ancestry with the kinship and commitment to a homeland or demarcated territory. On this basis, ethnic nationalism tends to be founded on seemingly objective criteria. Consider, for example, the construct of Bondei identity and the concept of the Bondei nation in Africa, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s. Nationalist identity in the region was, and in some ways still is today, linked to the language of common ancestry. It was built directly on that of the later nineteenth century where it was asserted that the Bondei were a people linked by common ancestral origins. According to those exponents of

this view, the original Bondei clans had migrated from the north, a belief that served to cultivate aspirant Bondei leaders and the encouragement of group distinctions between the ‘pure’ Bondei and others; ‘Only those who can lay claim to this ancestry are ‘pure’ Bondei, and they should govern themselves’. 65

In comparison to ethnic nationalism, the civic formulation is argued here to be intrinsically weaker. While ethnic nationalism seeks the moral regeneration of the community, Hutchinson points out that civic nationalists are usually more modernist. He indicates that they generally aim to secure a representative state that will guarantee its members uniform citizenship rights. Usually based on one territorial homeland, civic nationalism seeks to secure a representative state acquiescent to their aspirations so that ‘it might participate as an equal in the developing cosmopolitan rationalist civilization’. 66

Their nationalist ideal, as Hutchinson points out, is that of a Civic polity of educated citizens united by common laws and mores like the polis of classical antiquity. They reject existing political and traditional allegiances that block the realization of this ideal, and theirs is a cosmopolitan rationalist conception of the nation that looks forward ultimately to a common humanity transcending cultural differences. 67

It is further suggested that, whereas ethnic nationalism holds a belief in its uniformity and its ascriptive membership based on the ancestral origins of the community, civic nationalism is at least in principle more open and voluntaristic. The nation is perceived to be identical with citizenship and believes that nationality is based on,

The belief that residence in a common territorial homeland, and common commitment to its state and civil society institutions, generate a distinctive national character and civic culture, such that all citizens,

66 Hutchinson, *Cultural Nationalism*, p.123.
irrespective of their diverse ancestry, comprise a community in progress, with a common destiny.\footnote{Brown, Nationalism, p.52.}


It is believed by some that the civic nations use of the concept of the ‘homeland’ to refer to the home of residence or the new family home in which there is a continuous integration of individuals with diverse backgrounds is problematic. Dandeker clarifies this civic concept in his discussion of the national identity espoused by the civic ideals of nation-states and the national identity of ethnic communities:

Whereas in the case of ethnies the link with territory may only be one of historical association or myth, in the case of nations it is physical and actual: nations possess territories. Thus, ethnic communities need not be “resident” in their territorial homeland.\footnote{Christopher Dandeker, ‘Nationalism, Nation-States, and Violence at the End of the Twentieth Century: a sociological view’, in Christopher Dandeker (ed) Nationalism and Violence, Transaction Publishers: London, 1998, pp.22-3.}

Connor is particularly critical of the potency of a civic nationalism and its predisposition to appeal to the ideas of common territorial residence. He classifies civic nationalism in a way where the constitutive principle of people’s attachment to the nation or ‘nation-ness’ is based on a type of ‘political socialization.’ Here he depicts the imagery of civic nationalism in the USA as an example where, through the control of public education, nationalism has celebrated the distinctiveness of their common forebears such as Washington and Jefferson.\footnote{Connor, Ethnonationalism, p.207-8.} In this respect, Connor
equates civic nationalism to a type of patriotism which simply refers to national institutions and values that are used to reflect the cultural values of ethnic majorities. The persistence of myths and symbols such as these suggests that the appeal of nationalism and its emotional conviction lies with the way in which nationalism equips itself with a selection of memories, values and traditions, which resonate both a sense of unity and a sense of differentiation from other groups. Myths, in this manner, possess a powerful capacity to convey a sense of belonging and continuity through a simplified language of the extended family. They also possess an ability to demarcate differences between ‘in groups’ and ‘out groups’ through stereotyping of groups and the scapegoating of potential threats or enemies.

Anthony Smith argues that it is pre-modern ethnic ties and histories which provide the nation with mythical and symbolic dimensions and which informs nationalist consciousness. Smith is careful to distinguish his own version of nationalism which he identifies as ‘ethno-symbolism’, positioning himself between primordialism on the one hand and modernism on the other. He argues that the construction of nations can only be understood over the longue durée, that is over several centuries, and that this perspective shows that nations were not invented in the modern era but were founded on existing, long-standing and recurrent forms of ethnic identification.

Smith recognises that ethnic and nationalist consciousness is articulated by activists or elites who promote ethnic symbols and help the community rediscover its ethnic past. These elites thus act as ‘historicists’ who manipulate authentic ethnic symbols and myths, such as common ancestry and homeland, which already exist in the memory of the ethnic community. Thus national identity is derived from the elite belief in the ideal of national authenticity and its embodiment in ‘irreplaceable cultural values’.

---

The main task of the nationalist is to discover and discern that which is truly ‘oneself’ and to purge the collective self of any trace of ‘the other’. Hence, the rediscovery, authentication and correct interpretation of a unique ethnic past becomes the focus of nationalist labours. Of these three, the process of ‘authentication’ of sifting elements of the corrupting other from those of the pure and genuine self, is pivotal: and as a rough guide, that which is ‘of the people’ is pure and genuine. Like Lenin, who discovered in the simplicity and purity of the Russian peasant the secret of virtue, so nationalists discover the authentic nation in the life and values of the common people.  

It is therefore argued here that nationalism is constructed on the basis of simple ideological frameworks which employ simply myths and symbols that enable individuals to locate themselves in relation to others. Elites are seen to selectively use myths of unity in nationalism in order to define their own ‘mythical’ interpretation of a community united by ties of common history and ancestry. The consequent development of stereotypes of ‘us’ and ‘them’ suggests that the sense of unique descent or memories of historical events in many cases does not always agree with factual history. Particularly in ethnic nationalism which employs myths of common ancestry, the community is simply defined by its sentient or felt history of the group’s origin. Furthermore, myths and symbols of commonality are only a perception of commonality and belonging, which tends to obscure facts of actual genetic descent.

It is the sense of cultural affinities, rather than physical kinship ties, embodied in a myth of descent, shared historical memories and ethnic symbolism that defines the structures of ethnic communities; and the same is true for any nations created on the basis of cultural affinity.

As an example, despite a strictly narrow definition of the ‘pure’ Bondei in Africa, a much wider simplified model of the Bondei community was in fact embraced. There

---

73 Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, p.44.
74 The argument by Walker Connor is that group identity is indeed a matter of perception, which he describes as a “priori” where there is an emotional rather than a rational conviction. Likewise both Richard Schermerhorn and Daniele Conversi refer to a collectivity based on ‘putative’ or assumed knowledge of having common ancestry and a shared historical past. See Richard Schermerhorn, ‘Ethnicity and Minority Groups’, in Hutchinson & Smith (eds) *Ethnicity*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1986, pp. 17-18; Conversi, *Millennium*, p.559; Connor, Ethnonationalism, pp.100-106.
75 Smith, *Nationalism*, p.192.
was the possibility that some of those who migrated from the north were ‘more Bondei than others’. Certainly, ‘the Bondei’ could have included all those whose ancestors were known to have come relatively recently to the area of Bonde, which subsequently included various clan origins. Therefore, a type of pan-Bondei community was embraced which resolved potential regional and clan complexities and focused on its ethnocultural sameness using imagery of home and family.

The use of stereotypes to present simplified formulas of nationhood is usually intertwined with the articulation of stereotyped perceptions of an ‘immoral’ threat. Nationalism, in this form, with the exaggeration of a hated ‘other’, constitutes a way to direct communal unrest by providing a sense of threat or impending menace. In other words, the reactive construction of an inferior and threatening ‘other’ might be a scapegoat rather than an actual ‘real’ threat. In this sense, when seen from a constructivist point of view, nationalism offers a simplified morally pure vision of the ‘us’, and externalises the evil on to others. The elites’ manipulation of historical continuity and their visions of identity, means, therefore, that the past is reconstructed to be consistent with this vision, so that it is not the real past which primordially influences the present.

All nationalisms, whether civic or ethnic, make assertions of an identity demarcating the ‘us’ from the ‘them’ in which the ‘Other’ is the external enemy threatening societal unity, or that it is a suppressive authoritarian regime or ruler. Feelings of inferiority and envy represents powerful stimulants whereby the nation becomes more aggressive and more likely to exaggerate the perception of a threatening other and thence the need to mobilize as a collective entity against that threat.

Horowitz’s discussion on ‘selective targeting’ in ethnic riots illuminates how this may be the case. He refers to ‘cumulative aggression’ or attacks produced by the

---

combination of various grievances and directed at ‘fewer than all of the frustrating
groups’. Rather than suggesting that the target of aggression might simply be chosen
for their availability and defenceless nature, Horowitz argues that if aggression
against a particular group is inhibited then multiple antipathies for certain categories
of people might make them more likely the target of aggression.

This point is exemplified by Horowitz’s example of the 1938 Burmese riot. After anti-
British action appeared futile due to ineffective hostility against British security
forces, Burman grievances were then channelled into violence against the Indians.
This antipathy towards the Indians epitomised the historical roots of inter-group
tension and the frequently harboured hostile feelings towards the Indians by the
Burmese. From this perspective, the construction of a scapegoat may work not only to
direct aggression but to complement it, especially if there is a connection with the
original target of hostility. As Horowitz notes,

The fact that some groups may receive violence that, under other
circumstances, would have been directed at other targets does not
suggest that they receive this violence because of their mere
availability, because they are convenient, vulnerable, and helpless, but
rather because they ‘have appropriate stimulus characteristics’.

As implied above and discussed earlier in this chapter, there is a certain historical
basis of social change which have implications to group sentiments and the way in
which a group either asserts or retreats from their identity. The idea that
unprecedented social, economic and political changes affect this sense of identity, and
the potential political ideologisation of group identity, also indicates specific ties to
the functions of these myths. In other words, it relates to the psychology of
nationalism and the appeal of nationalist myths and symbols.

---

80 Horowitz, *Riot*, p.149.
As explained in previous discussions in this chapter, it has often been the case where the power of nationalism to induce the individual to act collectively has been explained through rational individual concerns for defending a way of life. This thesis, however, argues that the response to disruption is to construct new identities which employ and modify the meaning of available myths and symbols. Here, the employment of myths and symbols points to the idea not of a reawakening of pre-existing instinctual attachments, but of certain internal needs of the society in question. As Ernest Gellner suggests, there is a need to examine ‘the search for a resolution by individuals to the stress and humiliation which the incongruences of modern life engender’.81 Further explanation is needed to clarify the important role of individual emotional needs that, as Horowitz points out, deals with the role of group anxiety and apprehension. He suggests therefore that,

The role of apprehension and group psychology needs specification...The sheer passion expended in pursuing ethnic conflict calls out for an explanation that does justice to the realm of the feelings. It is necessary to account, not merely for ambition, but for antipathy.82

The sudden assertion of elements of differentiation, or the exaggeration of the ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy in nationalism, tends to point to a need to examine how the articulation of nationalism fulfils certain emotional functions of the individual. The same applies to the employment of myths and symbols in nationalism and the reasons for individuals seeking such a community based upon these myth-symbol complexes as described earlier in this chapter. In other words, the concern here is the psychological dimension of nationalism, in terms of the way in which individual identities are shaped by these ideologies and the reasons for individuals needing this form of ideological support.

82 Horowitz, Ethnic Groups, p.140.
2.5 The Emotional Appeal of Nationalism

Nationalism essentially has two psychological mechanisms. The first refers to the sense of security embodied in the nationalist myth of a shared territory or homeland. The second is a sense of security in the family or myth of common ancestry. The aim here is to refine those concepts which explain the non-rational aspects of these mythical constructions and the reason for being significant in the construction of individual identities.

First, the appeal of the nationalist myth of a permanent and fixed homeland relates to the ability of the individual to develop a type of ‘static’ construction of him/herself during times of confusing societal disruptions that engender a sense of stress and anxiety. For John Breuilly, the symbolic power of territory lies in the way it acts as a ‘cognitive map in a modern world of abstractions’ and so provides a demarcation of ‘us’ and ‘them’ communities.\(^83\) From one perspective, the physical territorial dimensions of nationalism can of course be largely treated as a designated arena for distinguishing between different material and economic arenas of state power, and thereby also claiming to represent a particular people based on these clear-cut boundaries. National identity can thus be fundamentally predicated on territory. However, its manifestations as ‘homeland’, ‘fatherland’ and ‘motherland’ are symbolically important in developing, as Hedetoft suggests, ‘a feeling of a natural bond of destiny between history, origins, people, and the land they inhabit’.\(^84\)

The concepts of historical continuity and the permanence of the national community are therefore important in developing a bond between individuals and the cultural and historical dimensions of land and territory. Smith points out,

---


They only desire the land of their putative ancestors and the sacred places where their heroes and sagas walked, fought and taught. It is a historic or ancestral ‘homeland’ that they desire, one which they believe to be exclusively ‘theirs’ by virtue of links with events and personages of earlier generations of ‘their’ people.  

The type of catalyst to which individuals respond relates to the transformation of what the outsider may see as the territory populated by a nation into a motherland or fatherland. In other words, the construction of national categories is made into some extension or expression of that nation. According to psychoanalysis, national myths of historical continuity and a specific homeland provide an important channel for individual identification ‘because it responds to a collective need which assumes particular importance in complex societies’. Further to this argument, Liah Greenfeld’s formulation conveys the effects of structural and cultural change that were accompanied by a ‘profound sense of insecurity and anxiety’. The specific nature of the change and its effects rendered a situation ‘ressentiment-prone’ where individuals engaged in ‘particularistic pride and xenophobia’. The idea here is that the individual resorts to acts of demarcation of ‘us’ and ‘them’ communities based on the construction of national identities such as a common territory, statehood and shared history, in order to provide a sense of familiarity and security against the ambiguities of modern life.

The second nationalist myth is the association of the nation as one based on common ancestry. The emotional power of these myths can be explained by psychoanalysis, which attributes the power of beliefs in common ancestry to derive from a need to be with the family. These psychological attachments have been described as ‘regressive narcissism’, and ‘a desire for the cohesive extended immigrant family, or for the obedience of children to parental authority’. Donald Horowitz also attributes the

---

85 Smith, Nationalism, p.63  
86 Smith, Nationalism, p.215.  
emotional intensity of ethnic affiliations based on descent and kin to the emotional underpinnings of birth principles and early socialisation. He says that ethnic groups, for example, tend to ‘internalise the significance of distinctions based on birth principle in cooperative organisations and the significance of distinctions based on birth’. 90

The invocation of presumed kinship and ancestral ties has a certain potency to the individual psyche. According to Neil MacCormick, the concept of a familiar past relates to the liberation of feelings of anxiety and isolation by acknowledging, ‘I am not alone in being glad to know my roots’. 91 It suggests that the idea of knowing one has a kindred community and is part of a familial affiliation provides a sense of inclusion. The concept of being with the family and at home naturally defines the individual as part of some distinct community. According to psychoanalysis, it relates to the ‘fragility of the sense of self’ and the surrounding complexities in their social environment and relationships. 92 It is asserted that the individual subsequently engages in an act of constructing self-labels and retreating to simple formulas of identity, ‘an infantile splitting of the world’. 93 It follows then, that individuals feel a sense of security by subscribing to identity labels or myths that connote a sense of continuity and sameness.

The same applies to the subsequent scapegoating of the ‘other’ in nationalism as an emotional function for individuals. As discussed previously in this chapter, myths possess a powerful capacity to convey a sense of belonging through the demarcation of differences between ‘in groups’ and ‘out groups’. Such a construction includes the construction of an ‘other’ as part of this basic attribute of group distinctions. The situation whereby there is not only a stress on uniformity, common ancestry, and

homogenisation, but also the demonisation of the ‘other’ in nationalist movements, relates to a myth of categorised identification. The act of marginalising or demonising the ‘other’ represents a clear diagnosis of contemporary circumstances which may otherwise be perceived by individuals as complex and confusing. Nationalism in this form, with the exaggeration of a hated ‘other’, also constitutes a way to direct communal unrest by providing a sense of threat or impending menace.

Smith is useful in indicating that the appeal of nationalism derives from its adoption of all of these types of ethnic myths, symbols and memories which generate a kind of ‘nostalgia’ for a ‘superior way of life in the distant past’ and its simultaneous association with collective sentiments of a common homeland and kinship community.\(^{94}\) For Smith, the diversity and power of modern ethnic nationalisms can be understood better by examining the three sets of ‘deep’ ethno-symbolic resources underlying all nationalisms: the ethno-historical, religious and territorial heritages of an ethnic group. The nationalist appeal, he argues, therefore derives from these ethnic myths and symbols which invoke presumed kinship and residency ties.

Smith does not however explain fully why claims to common descent and historical continuity are politicised by these activists and why they appeal to communities. If, as Smith indicates, these types of nationalist myths fulfil ‘intimate, internal functions for individuals in communities’, then there needs to be an explanation of how and why this occurs. Smith also suggests that nationalists ‘can sometimes use the ‘ethnic past’ for their own ends’\(^{95}\) and that ‘the failures of secular state nationalisms’ and ‘relative economic deprivation’\(^{96}\) form the basis for the articulation of some nationalist ideologies bent on societal transformation. If so, then there also needs to be

\(^{94}\) Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, p.183.

\(^{95}\) Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, p.43.

further specification of the process whereby nationalist myths appeal to elites during such societal disruption.

It was originally argued in the thesis that the theory of constructivism rests on the idea that individuals subscribe to ideological frameworks of national and ethnic identity in the context of social, economic and political processes which have disruptive impacts on individuals resulting in feelings of anomie and insecurity. In other words, there is a straightforward argument to be made that individuals who experience economic or power disparities or possess feelings of exploitation, tend to develop a sense of identity and group consciousness. The constructivist argument need not seek to disagree with the instrumentalist argument which is explicit in the formulation which focuses on “relative deprivation” in that deprived groups tend to pursue their self-interests. However, constructivism suggests that the pursuit of people’s self-interests is not an all-encompassing explanation of the formation of nationalist tendencies. Indeed it is important in this respect to examine how perceptions of self interest are socially, politically, and ideologically constructed. If social disruptions do indeed seek people to construct ideologies of ethnic stereotypes, then these ethnic stereotypes will influence how the instrumentalist/situationalist interests are perceived and pursued.

The thesis argues that while instrumentalist theory is a starting point for understanding how and why identities are mobilized, it does not individually explain all the mechanisms involved. The disruption of an individual’s social structure including the dislocation of existing authority structures will cause that person to face cognitive and moral dilemmas. Changes in a person’s surrounding social, economic and political context engender disruptions and dislocations which in turn lead to feelings of stress and humiliation. These changes or disruptions to social and authority structures may vary as will the individual’s responses to the resultant anomie situations, for example, delinquency or conformism. However, if the existing
community is too weak or dislocated to sufficiently offer a sense of collective hope, then nationalism may be the beneficiary.

The emergence of nationalism is therefore merely one possible response to the disruptive impact of unprecedented social change. In such circumstances, nationalism will only occur when there are three conditions in place: 1) incumbent elites fear an erosion of their authority and choose nationalism as a way in which to re-establish their authority by creating new leadership roles for themselves; 2) the resuscitation of myths of territorial homeland by these dislocated elites who will hold important discretion and autonomy in terms of their interpretation of historical continuity and their visions of identity of the community; and 3) the employment of a demonized “Other” which counterposes the vision of harmonious and virtuous “Us” with a culturally inferior and politically threatening enemy in order to mobilize mass-based support from their constituency.

This type of nationalism may be denoted as ethnic or civic. Both refer to the distinct ideals of national development towards which the community may be mobilized by elites - ethnic nationalism depicting the aspiring religious or linguistic community as being built on an ethnic core, whereas civic nationalism depicts a community governed by principles of equal citizenship irrespective of ethnic or cultural diversity. The appeal of both rely on their respective abilities to make simplistic sense of contemporary problems by counterposing the vision of a virtuous Us threatened by a culturally inferior but politically dominant Other.

From this perspective, the Indonesian nationalist myth during the 1940s which defined the Indonesian community in its relationship with a demonized Dutch Other, did not resonate with the general populace in Ambon due to their deep-rooted historical allied relationship with the Dutch. As a result, the construction of enemy, identity and destiny was reformulated through the emergence of two alternative
nationalist versions, the *Forum Kedaulatan Maluku* (FKM) for the Christian Ambonese and the nationalism propelled by the *Laskar Jihad* employing a distinct rhetoric of Islamic brotherhood and thereby directly appealing to Ambon’s Muslim community.

This thesis specifies and illustrates the role of disruptions to show how individuals who feel disempowered in the face of disruptive social forces are more likely to be acquiescent to ideological formulas. It is suggested in this thesis that the weakening of communities by economic forces or political interventions firstly disrupts authority structures thereby displacing elites who lose their authority and power and secondly, disrupts social cohesion by making individuals confused and insecure in the face of the complexities of modernity. In this way, elites seek to construct nationalist formulas in order to re-establish and re-legitimise their authority, while nationalist myths provide a sense of community for individuals seeking refuge in nationalist visions promising harmony and security.

As discussed in this chapter on pre-colonial Ambon, there was not a precolonial stability which was disrupted by Dutch rule. Ethnic identity was instead a creation of continuous disruption, and not an innate remembering of a pre-colonial community. In a rapidly changing society, there is a continual search for cultural and ideological resolutions to the insecurities engendered by social, economic and political disruptions. Nationalism then attaches itself to the specificities of difference and cultural difference that these disruptions engender in the community.

In this sense, the process of identity construction can be continuous, with interactive communities and authority structures being repeatedly modified by external forces and engendering repeatedly modified constructions of the ‘us’ in response. In Ambon, early Portuguese colonisation brought with it a large number of foreign influences.
including the introduction of the Portuguese language which resulted in the widespread use of foreign names and the emergence of a multitude of language creolisms used throughout the Moluccas.\textsuperscript{97} The subsequent colonisation of the Dutch thus disrupted not a pre-colonial situation, but earlier Portuguese colonisation through the imposition of, for example, a Protestant Christianity and a further two alien languages (Dutch and Malay) which became the administrative and official languages of this region. Thus, constructions of an ‘Ambonese’ identity were actively modified as the Ambonese repeatedly sought to make simple sense of these incomprehensible changes which fostered advantages for some and left others underprivileged.

It has been thus so far discussed that nationalism is most likely to occur in a specific context of social, economic and political processes which have disruptive impacts on individuals. In particular, it is suggested that the disruptions of authority structures and the disruption of communal cohesion are conducive to the formation of nationalism particularly when some pre-conditions do occur. It is thus shown in this thesis that the escalation of the severity of ethnic rioting, access to earlier myths of ethnic identity and the politics of nationalist contention have been crucial elements in the generation of widespread anxiety thereby making individuals susceptible to visions and identity constructions of nationalism.

From this perspective, the reactive construction of an ‘Ambonese’ identity in 1950 resulted from the combined impact of Dutch colonialism and the experience of rapid urbanisation and economic expansion. James Collins describes the disruptive process of Dutch colonisation of Ambon as follows:

In 1605 the Dutch wrested control of the islands from the Portuguese and expelled them from the islands. There was resistance to this expulsion but the Dutch were determined to wipe out all traces of Portuguese influence. An initial step was the introduction of

Protestantism. At first administrators and clergymen tried to teach and to use Dutch in their dealings with the natives but by 1615 Malay became the language of religious and secular instruction. It became the policy in Ambon to insist that the natives attend church services. (The clergymen and their assistants were paid by the Company). Along with the opening of churches many mission schools were established.  

The dynamics of Dutch and Portuguese colonial intervention which perpetuated the emergence of the South Moluccan Republican movement produced certain changes at the community level. In the context of diverse racial, ethnic, religious and homeland boundaries, the consecutive colonial regimes managed to construct an over-arching ethnic category of the Ambonese. The resultant majority-minority complex influenced ethnic elites to adopt ethnicity as a way of defining relationships with others and to mobilise support against the colonists, hence the articulation of an Ambonese ethnonationalist movement (RMS) in 1950. During ensuing disruptions involving Indonesian state interventions into ethnic minority homelands which dislocated local Ambonese social and authority structures on the island, traditional notions of identity were subsequently reconstructed in ways which offered explanations that accounted for these changes within people’s immediate social and economic environment. Thus, during the rise of the FKM in 2000, an ethnic minority consciousness was rejuvenated in which the FKM adopted both concepts of identity from earlier periods and contemporary symbols of ethnic minority identity.

This thesis will demonstrate that the process of identity construction in Ambon in 2000 was characterised by a sense of interplay between two nationalist visions which responded to each other’s changing ideological depictions of themselves and their enemy. In this way nationalism can manifest itself in situations of conflict and rivalry which threaten to generate new insecurities and uncertainties. Thus during the course of social and ideological interactions, the Ambonese engaged in a process of

---

transacting and redefining identity in the context of internal disruptions and external provocations. Clearly then this thesis does not focus on external provocations from political Islamists or the Indonesian military to examine this process of identity construction. However from a constructivist point of view, these external factors are taken into account as contributing to a ‘dialogue’ between the way others engaged in depicting the ‘Us’ and marginalising or demonising the ‘Other’.

In this context, the emergence of Ambonese nationalism relates to a series of both internal and external disruptions which lead to stresses and insecurities that perpetuate a process of the reconstruction of identity within the community. This means that significant interactions between insiders and outsiders which bring about underlying insecurities or uncertainties of the ‘Us’ lead to a reconstruction of the ‘Us’ as a distinct community of unique heritage and one that commands virtuous strength against an immoral and evil Other.

The following chapters will provide an illustration of how unprecedented social change in Ambon engendered the dislocation of traditional elites and the emergence of aspiring individuals who subsequently constructed nationalism on simple ideological frameworks. It is noted within the thesis that the disruptions in Ambon impacted to different degrees on different sections of Ambonese society, so that there were consequent variations in the extent of the ideologisations which occurred. In other words, this is a case of limited ideological mobilisation caused by limited disruption. The core aspect of the thesis’ argument, however, remains in that the disruption of social structures in Ambon explains the shift to nationalist ideology. This thesis seeks to show, therefore, that in both the 1950 and 2000 cases, nationalist politics in Ambon involved the construction of an ethnic nationalist identity opposed to a rival vision of the Indonesian nation, thereby perpetuating the politics of nationalist confrontation.
CHAPTER 3
SOCIAL DISRUPTION IN AMBON
AND THE REPUBLIC OF THE SOUTH MOLUCCAS

3.1 Introduction

The core argument of this thesis is that it is the fears and anxieties of the disruption of social cohesion and authority structures and not the disruptions themselves, which have lead to the ideological construction of an Ambonese ethnonationalism defending themselves against an Indonesian threatening Other. Changes associated with socio-economic processes which weaken existing ties of community may have various implications for nationalism, but it is argued here that a weakening of communal structures within which individuals seek a sense of security and meaning, means that it is more likely for those individuals to seek affiliation with a vision of community which promises a resolution to these otherwise complex circumstances.

In colonial Ambon, various changes to the structure of the economy and the impact of Christianisation were processes of disruption which led dislocated traditional elites and marginalised individuals to construct myths of Ambonese racial purity and cultural identity. It was these myths of ethnic nationalism which provided a sense of direction to the existing insecurities and frustrations engendered by socio-economic change and under which the Ambonese could unite against a perceived common threat. This chapter will examine the various changes associated with these disruptions in order to show how in this way they contributed to the construction of 1950s Ambonese nationalism.

The following discussion of the ‘Ambonese’ during the colonial periods does not intend to assume that those people living in Ambon necessarily constituted an
‘Ambonese’ community. Due to the fact that there was tremendous linguistic diversity and varying political membership according to specific kingdoms, no such ‘Ambonese’ identity existed until this was explicitly constructed by various political which will be discussed later in this chapter. The following use of the term ‘Ambonese’ therefore does not refer to a pre-colonial ethnic category and is only intended at this point to refer collectively to a regional social entity in Ambon consisting of diverse social and political groupings.

As stated in the previous chapter, social and political changes can have disruptive effects on functioning locality communities. One of the factors contributing to the collapse of social cohesion is the disruption of existing structures of authority resulting in familiar authoritative figures no longer being perceived by the local community to be morally or formally legitimate. Another contributing factor to social discord is the sudden fragmentation of family units and community identity. These in turn weaken social cohesion and the sense of security and meaning with which individuals associate within their communal environment.

Within this context, nationalism appeals to the masses through its strategic ability to offer resolutions to these disruptions and its ability to provide the opportunity for local elites (people with influence and degrees of authority) to re-establish their legitimacy and authority. In this way, both displaced elites and ordinary Ambonese have been able to unite around a community of common identity articulated through the ideological myths of nationalism.

The following discussion seeks to explain the origins of Ambonese nationalism which culminated in the declaration of a Republic of the South Moluccas (RMS) in 1950 and which generated exclusivist tendencies of ethnic identity. It seeks to explain how, despite the linguistic diversity within Ambon and its separate political entities, the
Ambonese still managed to construct an identity of a pan-ethnic community with reference to a myth of a unified and peaceful past.

As the first stage of development in political consciousness it is proposed that the dramatic changes and deliberate economic reforms of colonialism disrupted local communal structures and contributed significantly to the rise of social tensions, which in turn generated claims based on ethnicity.\(^1\) While these changes are myriad, it is shown how functioning kinship and locality communities in the Ambon region were weakened by the specific dimensions of structural economic change which include changes to traditional structures of authority, the proselytisation of Christianity, and changes to class structures with the emergence of a new class of colonial clerks and soldiers.

It is suggested that the following transition to nationalist consciousness, where these ethnic claims were subsequently politicised into the RMS nationalist ideology, was a result of the disruptive impact of these factors and new complex political processes. In other words, the nationalistic movement of the RMS emerged to become an attractive prescription to resolve individual feelings of isolation generated by disruptive processes. Through the employment of familiar Ambonese symbols of group solidarity, such as those based on ancestry, religion, and language, the RMS attempted to create an ideological vision of the community, one that provided a sense of permanence and uniqueness, and one that promised a sense of identity and moral guidance.

\(^1\) Bill Bravman engages in an interesting discussion on related views of scholars who either have treated ethnicities as specifically colonial creations, or have arguably observed how some groups embraced ethnicity before colonialism. While focusing specifically on ethnic group formation in Africa, Bravman argues that it is not so much the commonalities of communities which constitute ethnicity but the mobilisation of these similarities. See Bill Bravman, *Making Ethnic Ways: Communities and Their Transformations in Taita, Kenya, 1800-1950*, Heinemann: Portsmouth, 1998, pp.10-15.
3.2 Factors Contributing to Disunity in Ambon

The recognition that, despite factors of linguistic diversity and a history of political and economic rivalry, Ambon became witness to a unified community based on myths of ethnic commonality requires, as a starting point, an examination of the nature and extent of these disparities. As the following examination will show, there was no single Ambonese community in the pre-colonial era due to a heterogeneous group of languages, ancestries, extensive population movements, and kingdoms with a clearly ranked hierarchy rather than a citizenry based on equality. The constructivist argument which will be used in this thesis is that Ambonese nationalism formed a new basis for community characterised by the redeployment of old myths to construct a new ‘us’ and legitimated by the language of history.

This thesis is concerned with the island of Ambon and the surrounding islands of Haruku, Saparua, Nusa Laut, Buru, and the coastal areas of southern and western Seram, which together constitute the Ambonese cultural area and are officially known as the area of Central Maluku or Central Moluccas (Maluku Tengah) (See Map 2). The island of Ambon is known in present-day Indonesia as the capital of the province of Maluku or Moluccas (See Map 1) as it was during the colonial regime. The RMS was based in Ambon and claimed as its territory all the islands of both the central and southern Moluccas, which then constituted the region of the South Moluccas.

Primary sources related to the study of Ambon, and Maluku in general, before the nineteenth century, are almost exclusively derived from European colonial manuscripts. Information on the concerns of the Moluccans gleaned from this material is no doubt an interpretative task with the scholar having to undertake the task with an acute awareness of the problems involved. In the absence of any contemporary sources prior to initial European intervention in the Moluccas in 1512, certain
observations and comments about Moluccan society from the material may still be made as the following will show.

European sources reveal the existence of linguistic diversity and internal power struggles in the Moluccan region. There is, however, an absence of evidence to support the existence of a collective cultural identity, one that could possibly give rise to a more broad ethnic and national identity. The Moluccan region has a proliferation of ethnic groups spread throughout its numerous islands, with a total of approximately 117 indigenous languages. This includes nine indigenous languages and nine ethnic groups in the Ambonese islands of Ambon, Haruku, Saparua and Nusa Laut – known collectively as Ambon-Lease, and closely associated with the indigenous languages of neighbouring islands such as Seram (See Appendices 1-5). The linguistic constitution of the Moluccas is heterogenous owing to extensive population movements. It has been asserted that the languages of the Ambon-Timor area are the most widely spoken of all the Moluccan languages and are west Austronesian in character but also may be related to languages from the rest of the archipelago, the Philippines and Taiwan.²

In pre-colonial times, power and authority in the Moluccas were divided between a multiplicity of separate political entities. According to information collected from archival resources, local narratives depict the region as being politically divided into four main kingdoms which were located in the area of North Maluku. These kingdoms were acknowledged as the symbolic centres of the Moluccas and politically encompassed the peripheral regions of the central and southern Moluccas.³ Often there was a clear insistence by many of the northern kingdoms to create distinctions between the ‘centre’ and the ‘periphery’, as representative of the differences in power

relations. These often occurred as a result of the aggressive territorial expansion of the northern kingdoms of Tidore and Ternate and their rapid creation of appanages in the peripheral regions particularly in the Ambonese islands. According to Paramita Abdurachman, these rivalries had been in existence for centuries, with villages often waging war on each other in order to establish their hegemony in the area. Hence for example,

In the oldest times there was a powerful ruler (*Kolano* in the local language) at Loloda in Halmahera. However in the course of times he lost his power to the ruler of Jailolo (also on Halmahera), who assumed the title of *First Kolano*. He was powerful, but a tyrant. A rebellion of his people led to the island that was later called Ternate. The newcomers formed new villages and in the course of time – 1257 – the chief of the most powerful villages was declared Kolano...The same process must have taken place in Tidore, and the other islands in the neighbourhood. The powers of the Kolano of Ternate grew and a hundred years later he waged war against the Kolano of Bacan.4

In Maluku, the continuous conquest of territories in the area by local kingdoms and ruling elites meant that politics and trading had always maintained an active rivalry. Wars between rival kingdoms remained a common occurrence in the fight for control of a specific territory. Usually a ruler’s strong position, in this respect, was based on his dominance of the spice trade with Javanese and Chinese traders.5 Different island groups within the region were thus able to assert their political and economic dominance on this basis. For example, the Banda islands and the islands of the Central Moluccas were important as spice producing areas and attracted particular rivalry from the northern kingdoms in their attempts to establish hegemony of the economic interests in the area.6

---

Cultural differences and the existence of this type of political and economic rivalry in the Ambonese islands would seem to point to a weakness in being able to forge a sense of common identity. Ambon’s nationalist movement of the 1950s, however, used mythologisations of the past to construct this past in terms of unity. The process whereby a community, with a lack of overarching factors of commonality is mobilised by myths of ethnic unity will be explored in the following section. It will be shown how colonisation and colonial rule disrupted both existing social/political communities and traditional power structures. It is suggested that these disruptions allowed the RMS to emerge, firstly as a resource for displaced elites, and secondly to mobilise support by employing myths of Ambonese ethnic unity.

3.3 Factors Generating Disruptions

In order to explain the reconstruction of Ambonese society from a fragmented sense of community to one of common Ambonese identity by the mid-twentieth century, the rest of this chapter focuses on the period of colonial intervention in Ambon and the Central Moluccas. First, there will be a discussion of those factors generating disruptions as a result of economic restructuring. Those factors include changes to traditional structures, Christianisation, and changes to class structures with emergent new classes of the Ambonese burger and the KNIL soldiers. It will be shown how each of these factors had disruptive impacts in Ambonese society by generating village discontent against the traditional village rulers, developing suspicion between Christian and Muslim communities, and promoting leadership challenges from new social groups in the community. Second, this chapter will conduct an examination of the identity construction responses to these disruptions.
3.3.1 Colonial Changes to Traditional Structures

A section of Ambon’s traditional elite cooperated with the European colonial powers with the Dutch assigning them specific roles as intermediaries between the VOC and indigenous Ambonese society. These changes at elite level had structural disruptive impacts on the authority position of all *rajas* and the society as a whole. The *raja*’s cooperation with the colonisers in effect undermined their traditional authority within the village community. This led to widespread protests and disputes throughout the Ambonese islands although the basis for these disputes changed in the 1920s when the *raja* began protesting against reductions in their power and prestige.

Initially, the sudden imposition of alien rule by both the Portuguese and Dutch became an immediate concern for traditional rulers owing to its potential to override local centres of power. The arrival of the Portuguese and the implementation of their overseas policies were ‘viewed with some alarm’ and a ‘sense of alienation’ as the traditional status of the *raja* within the village suddenly became redundant.\(^7\) The underlying policy of Portuguese expansion was based on a ‘three-pronged’ premise embodied in a policy of *feitoria, fortaleza e igreja* or trading, military domination and the gospel. Subsequent changes to traditional authority systems included the alteration of views on succession and the introduction of new Christian principles and concepts within the traditional social system.\(^8\)

The Dutch, who occupied the Moluccas in 1605, also implemented rather substantial changes to Ambonese society, including new administrative changes to local systems of governance. Similar to the Portuguese, Dutch conquest was aimed primarily at the control of the trade routes rather than territorial expansion. As a result, Ambonese social and political structures were reorganised to cater for new economic and administrative objectives. With the imposition of a clove monopoly controlled by the

\(^7\) Andaya, *World of Maluku*, p.124.
\(^8\) Abdurachman, *Indonesian History*, p.185.
Dutch East Indies Company (VOC), this meant that pre-colonial positions such as the village ruler were maintained but were allocated new functional roles within new community units. These units replaced existing Ambonese kingdoms such as Hitu and Hatuhaha which were subsequently dissolved. Other Ambonese kingdoms did not suffer interference thereafter by the colonial state as long as their status and power did not manifest as a challenge to the VOC’s authority.  

Within this reorganisation by the Dutch, original community groupings known as *uli* federations were also abolished and replaced in favour of politically independent village settlements governed by councils or *saniri*. The *saniri* comprised the village ruler or *raja*, the *soa* heads\(^9\) and a number of other traditional village leaders, such as lord of the land (*tuan tanah*), the *adat* chief, the war leader (*kapitan*), chief of the forest police (*kepala kewang*), and the village messenger (*marinjo*). Essentially the *saniri* was responsible for ensuring the security and prosperity of the village. Its functions tended to be carried out in a distinctly authoritarian manner, developed under the influence of the policy of indirect rule by the Dutch during the colonial period.  

Despite the lack of willingness to cooperate with both the Portuguese and Dutch colonial rulers, the Ambonese *raja* soon learnt that certain benefits could be achieved by establishing an affiliation with the rulers. Indeed, many *raja* found a level of dependency on the Portuguese as cooperation heralded prospects of enhancing their own personal status and prestige. Ten years of Portuguese administration in Ambon was sufficient at least for a growing awareness that forfeiting one’s traditional responsibilities to work within the colonial network could produce new opportunities.

---


\(^{11}\) Cooley, *Villages in Indonesia*, pp.154-5.
for power and reputation. Once within this network, many raja were entitled to adopt Portuguese names and titles as an overt statement of their newfound status.

This level of habitual dependency of the Ambonese raja on the colonial powers carried through with the ousting of the Portuguese by the Dutch in 1605. During the Dutch spice monopoly in the Moluccas from 1605 to 1863, the Dutch provided an increase in power to the raja as an agent of colonial rule and the VOC monopoly. In addition to certain symbolic privileges that were bestowed by the Dutch colonial government on the raja, the cooperation of local rulers with the VOC monopoly also entitled the raja and his family to personal services called heerendienst.12

Within the functioning of this new system of local government aimed to work in conjunction with the VOC apparatus, the Dutch colonial authorities provided the raja with the opportunity to integrate into the new governmental and economic system. The village elite or the raja were not only incorporated into the colonial system but elevated to positions of considerable authority, essentially as supervisors or managers of resources, and answerable to the Dutch. Some of the local raja were also assigned to certain civil positions of authority, for example positions within the Land Court system.13 As useful agents of the VOC, the raja thus enjoyed relatively privileged positions of authority and responsibility. Under the spice monopoly, and even after the abolition of the monopoly in 1863 some twenty years afterwards, the raja and his family were the direct beneficiaries of the raja’s control over the allocation of labour resources in their respective villages.14

The elevation of the raja in economic importance and usefulness to the colonial powers was negated by the rumblings of disillusionment from ordinary villagers who

12 A specified number of men called kwarto assigned to work for the raja each week while a certain number of women known as hakakil served the raja’s wife.
13 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.20.
14 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.41.
found that the economic and social structure of their society was increasingly disrupted. Evidence of the beginnings of grievances and unrest in Ambon began in the form of periodic protests. Traditional leaders felt their ruling position was being threatened by the disillusionment of the masses resulting from the changes to existing social and political structures. This was demonstrated in the first three decades of Portuguese settlement after their occupation of Maluku in 1596. During that period, Ambon and the region of the central Moluccas witnessed a continuous period of war between the Ambonese and the colonial authorities. Many Moluccans were disenchanted with Portuguese policies of expansion based on trading, military domination and the gospel. Thus,

Portuguese trading-policies, the presence of a fortress with superior armament (in particular guns), and the proselytising activities, became an unwanted factor.\(^\text{15}\)

The early Ambonese wars between 1622 and 1656 also exemplified the initial widespread discontent of the Ambonese under Dutch colonial government.\(^\text{16}\) As a figure who obtained social and economic privileges from the Dutch, the *raja* was often a target of abuse by lower-status Ambonese. Changes to the position of the *raja* and their dependence on the Dutch led to severe deviations from what the Ambonese perceived as the characteristics of a respected and legitimate ruler. Traditionally, the *raja* had been the most instrumental figure in the adaptation of new elements within the village political and social systems. However, during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the *raja* was often accused of deviating from tradition resulting in his loss of legitimacy as an authority figure in Ambonese society:

\(^{15}\) Abdurachman, *Indonesian History*, p.173. Fortifications or strongholds were established by the Portuguese throughout the Moluccas, including Ambon in order to control trade routes. These were later developed into territorial enclaves bent on developing a Portuguese administration complete with trading, political, religious and missionary activities. See Abdurachman, *Indonesian History*, pp.185-6.

\(^{16}\) There was also widespread rebellion on the island of Seram where successful raids were made on various districts in the Ambonese islands. See Harold R.C. Wright, ‘The Moluccan Spice Monopoly 1770-1824’, *Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 31, no.4, 1958, p.11.
That already for some years we have opposed our raja because we assert
that we are not supposed to follow the wishes of a raja who has opposed
adat and because of that had brought the curse of the ancestors upon
himself.\textsuperscript{17}

Many ordinary Ambonese made numerous complaints about the abuse of power by
the \textit{raja} and demanded that there be new candidates for the position of village head.\textsuperscript{18}

Forms of protest during this period ranged from complaints about the abuses of power
wielded by the \textit{raja}, preferences for a rival candidate, or the refusal to perform
traditional obligations.\textsuperscript{19} There were also bitter disputes in the coastal villages of
southwest Seram between Seramese \textit{raja}, and also between particular clans and
leading village families. Jealousies often arose in these areas, where the \textit{raja} was
often suspected of unscrupulously manipulating the spice market to his advantage
and, as a result, accumulating large amounts of wealth.\textsuperscript{20} In most villages, clan rivalry
also emanated from the fact that there were at least two clans considered to have some
sort of prerogative, the clan in power before colonial rule and the clan elevated to
power by the Dutch.\textsuperscript{21}

Conspicuous privileges, such as annual payments in the form of commodities, were
also a source of heated contention for many Ambonese, as the \textit{raja}’s obvious
accumulation of wealth was in stark contrast with the poverty of many ordinary
Ambonese. It was well-known by ordinary Ambonese that the Dutch provided annual
payments in the form of commodities such as cloth and material used for ceremonial

\textsuperscript{17} Chauvel, \textit{Nationalists}, p.93.
\textsuperscript{18} Chauvel, \textit{Nationalists}, p.99.
\textsuperscript{19} Chauvel, \textit{Nationalists}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{20} Wright, \textit{Moluccan Spice}, pp.7-8. Although it does appear that the Dutch were of the impression that
the accumulation of wealth by the \textit{raja} was a source of unwanted discontent with the villages. The
Commercial Resident at Ambon, Farquhar, in the early nineteenth century when the Dutch were
making precarious negotiations with the Sultans of the Northern Moluccas to collect spices for delivery
to the Company at agreed prices, carefully indicated that “...proper care be taken not to permit the
Rajahs to reap all the advantages to themselves, but that their subjects may also share as well in the
profit as the labour attending the cultivation of the trees.” Wright, \textit{Moluccan Spice}, pp. 34-5.
\textsuperscript{21} The circumstance would sometimes occur when the Portuguese or Dutch would elevate the \textit{raja}’s
assistant to the position of ruler simply for the fact that the \textit{raja} himself would be too proud to meet the
foreign power directly. See Cooley, \textit{Indonesia}, p.144.
purposes.\textsuperscript{22} Significantly, the abolition of this type of ‘reward’ system in 1920 for the raja and his family was based on an administrative decision to quell widespread grievances in the political systems of the village.\textsuperscript{23}

3.3.2 Christianisation

For both the Ambonese elite and lower-status Ambonese, Christianity and a Christian education carried connotations of new status and power.\textsuperscript{24} From the very beginning of the Portuguese Christian encounter, beginning in 1522 in Maluku when the first Catholic missionaries arrived in those islands, political loyalties of local indigenous kingdoms were often determined by religious preference. In this way, for the local elite, Christianity was looked upon favourably as being able to enhance their political power and standing. In northern Maluku, for example, an attack by the Ternaten kingdom on Mamuya, a powerful kingdom in northeast Halmahera, provided the impetus for the local King of Mamuya to seek conversion as ‘only by converting would he be assured protection for his soul and his state’.\textsuperscript{25}

Under the Portuguese it was initially only members of the local aristocracy or traditional elites who had privileged access to a Christian education from colonial authorities. Indeed, Portuguese policy laid a pattern for the perpetuation and formation of future Portuguese communities through Christianity by establishing good relations with local rulers. Religious instruction was, therefore, mainly for members of traditional authority\textsuperscript{26} and thus commanded appeal for its exclusiveness and prospects for an enhancement of their existing authority. Portuguese officials in fact found a large degree of success in their missionary work through the

\textsuperscript{22} Cooley, \textit{Indonesia}, pp.145.
\textsuperscript{23} Chauvel, \textit{Nationalists}, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{24} In the Ambonese islands, both education and Christianity were closely associated with each other until the twentieth century.
\textsuperscript{25} Andaya, \textit{World of Maluku}, p.122.
\textsuperscript{26} Chauvel, \textit{Nationalists}, p.25 (fn 1).
establishment of a culture of learning amongst the local aristocracy. Antonio Galvao, a Portuguese official in northern Maluku, found that he had leaders from other Moluccan islands sending their children to school to receive instruction in Catholicism:

He also opened a casa de misericordia (almshouse) and a seminary, where the children of the Moluccan aristocracy came to learn reading, writing, arithmetic and the catechism. The school became popular and chieftains from even as far as Jailolo and Moro sent their children to attend. The best students were often sent to Malacca for further learning.  

Thus, when Portuguese domination ended in Ambon in 1605, educational instruction was received warmly particularly by the raja, for its potential to enhance their existing status. When the Dutch assumed control of the Ambonese islands and the religious schools which were first established by the Portuguese in the villages, the reception from the village leaders was generally positive, particularly the raja who wished that religious instruction be a continued practice. The local aristocracy were willing to cooperate with the Dutch, who were keen to both educate and Christianise local rulers and their families from the early stages of the seventeenth century.

For the ordinary Ambonese masses, the serious threat posed by rival kingdoms in the sixteenth century encouraged many lower-status Ambonese to convert to Christianity, which was seen as acquiring not only a powerful ally but also a power in itself.

---

27 Abdurachman, Indonesian History, p.175.
28 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.25.
29 Three sons of Ambonese rulers were sent to Holland in 1607 and a further four in 1620 for the purpose of training in theological studies. See Weinand H. Tutuarima, “Ecclesiastical Aspects”, in Jan C. Bouman (and others), The South Moluccas: Rebellious Province or Occupied State, A. W. Sythoff-Leyden: The Netherlands, 1960, p.156.
Attacks by rival kingdoms were often brutal and it was with relative ease that conversions were made throughout Ambon and Seram. Jesuit missions, who were sent by the Portuguese initially in 1563 to Maluku, claimed that some twenty thousand people had become Christian by the middle of the sixteenth century. A Jesuit missionary who went to the island of Ambon and Seram and converted various village leaders into Christians observed that, ‘in these parts once the chief of a place becomes Christian there is no difficulty with the others’.

For ordinary Ambonese, Christianity embodied superior powers justified by the seeming invincibility of the Portuguese against rival Islamic convoys from Makassar, Java and Banda. As Dieter Bartels describes, the perception of the locals towards the Christian God was one of awe:

How else could the Portuguese, far outnumbered, fighting an enemy who had the same weapons, be so invincible? Obviously, they had great “magical” powers at their disposal. The natives could even witness the transfer of this power in the form of the Holy bread and wine given to the foreigners by their priests. These priests claimed that they were consuming their God’s flesh and blood to give them strength.

From a more pragmatic perspective, the Ambonese also saw the Portuguese as a strong ally against rival kingdoms. Close ties with the Portuguese would, therefore, mean access to superior weaponry as Muslims from the northern kingdoms already

---

30 The kingdom of Hitu on the island of Ambon appears to have become the first area where the Portuguese founded Christian villages on the island, as a result of increased political pressure from the Islamic kingdoms in Tidore and Ternate. The kingdom of Ternate launched periodic attacks on Portuguese settlements in Ambon during the sixteenth century. Many of the Portuguese missionaries in Ambon were convinced that the Ambonese were being encouraged by ‘false prophets’ who were ‘sworn to kill everyone until the Portuguese were totally removed’. What followed in one year was a major siege of the island by Ternaten forces, which was called locally “the greatest war that has ever occurred in these parts”. Abdurachman, Indonesian History, p.174; Andaya, World of Maluku, pp.137-8, 114-24.
31 Andaya, World of Maluku, p.129.
32 Andaya, World of Maluku, p.129.
33 Bartels, Modern Indonesian Culture, p.287.
possessed cannons and other modern weaponry imported from Malacca, Java and Banda. 34

The transition from Portuguese to Dutch administration in 1605 changed Catholic religious instruction to a Dutch Calvinist-Protestantism. 35 While the form of religious service was changed, Ambonese perceptions of Christianity prevailed with many perceiving Dutch Christianity as a power even more superior to that of the Portuguese. 36 It was soon clear that the key to this new power was through Christianity and education. As such, the colonial Dutch government expanded existing educational facilities and made them open predominantly to the Christian community.

The Dutch were aware that Christianity was a means by which they could promote the loyalty of the Ambonese to the new Christian rulers. 37 They accordingly decreed that the raja, who were links to the Dutch administration, could have access to a Dutch Christian education. However, by the mid nineteenth century, the advantages of an education became readily open to all ordinary Ambonese who professed Christianity only, as the Dutch saw Christianity as a means by which they could promote the loyalty of the Ambonese to their Christian leaders. Many ordinary Ambonese subsequently responded by readily accepting Christianity which was a Dutch prerequisite to access the sought-after educational facilities.

34 It was reported by Galvao in his ’A Treatise on the Moluccas’ that such weapons which were used by the northern Moluccas were acquired via the trading route through the Malacca, Java, Banda trade route. See Hubert Jacobs (trans), A Treatise on the Moluccas, Sources and Studies for the History of the Jesuits: Volume III, Jesuit Historical Institute: Rome, 1971.

35 The Dutch imposed strict regulations on the Christian parts of the mix of Christian and Muslim communities in order to promote ‘the true reformed Christian religion’. The raja were subject to rules only allowing Christian marriages to be contracted while all Catholics were to be refused admittance. Karel Steenbrink, Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam: contacts and conflicts 1596-1950, translated by Jan Steenbrink and Henry Jasen, Rodopi: Amsterdam, 1993, p.67


37 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.25.
For the Ambonese who became part of the expanding Dutch military and administrative service in the early 1800s, aligning themselves with Christianity provided positions of power, prestige and advantage which they could not have experienced within their traditional village environment. By availing themselves of the education facilities that existed and later earning their living from wages or salaries, these Ambonese believed that they had earned a new social status within their community. In this way, a Western or Christian education was perceived as an avenue to achieve a similar status to that of the Dutch or a personal status the local Ambonese eventually termed as ‘Black Dutchmen’.

While Christianity in one way served to bestow these privileges on the Ambonese both at elite and mass level, the changes engendered through proselytisation led to fundamental disruptive impacts in Ambon. As a consequence of colonial policy mixed with mutual mistrust and misunderstanding, a relationship of distance evolved between the Ambonese Christian and Muslim communities.

Under the Portuguese, the Ambonese witnessed a forceful segregation of their two religious communities. Physically, barriers were imposed to sharply segregate the Christian community from the Muslims. In the process of propagating the Christian gospel, the Portuguese built fortalezas or fortresses to not only protect their trading posts but also to protect the new local converts. In this way, the building of the fort created more than a physical barrier, it also became a symbol of the divisions being imposed on local society and dividing traditional communities into Christians/Europeans and Muslims. The fortifications held a life completely separate from that of the territory that surrounded them. Converts to Christianity, including the

---

40 There were a large number of Muslims in the northern part of Ambon which included the Muslim village of Hitu. Efforts by the Portuguese to convert the north coast Muslims did not succeed as Hitu was supported by strong forces lead by a noble named Leiliato from Ternate in North Maluku in 1558. Instead, Catholicism received a favourable response from the south. By 1595 the number of Catholic Ambonese numbered around 50,000.
local aristocracy, became involved in a separate enclave. In effect they became both physically and symbolically segregated from their Muslim counterparts who grew suspicious of the colonial power and their Christian religion.

Under Dutch administration, relations between the local Christian and Muslim communities came under particular strain as Ambonese Christians were favoured over Muslims in the recruitment of personnel. A Christian religious affiliation became the prerequisite to gain a Western education and to participate in the colonial enterprise. Christians were preferred to fill positions within the expanding colonial administrative and military apparatus since there were those Dutch officials who ‘had a rather low opinion of the intellectual level of the Muslims’.\textsuperscript{41} The religious issue was a central issue for the Dutch. Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587-1629), the organiser of power in the Dutch East Indies, asserted that Ambonese Christians were credible workers, even more so than the Dutch labourers:

I understand that there are some older Ambonese children who have gone to school for a long time, are able to read and write reasonably well, come of good Christian parents and are devoted to the Christian religion. These may be more suited to management positions than many of ours.\textsuperscript{42}

The relations between the two religious communities began to diverge as the Christian Ambonese developed a special relationship with the Dutch in their participation in the colonial administration. Ambonese Christians had access to education and managed to occupy important civil positions within the colonial regime while very few Muslims enjoyed the same level of privilege and material welfare.

The deepening divide between Christian and Muslim communities in Ambon also stemmed from Muslim suspicions of perceived religious pressure by the Dutch. A Dutch controller at the time, for example, commented that there was a deep-rooted

\textsuperscript{41} Steenbrink, \textit{Dutch Colonialism}, p.39. See also chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{42} Steenbrink, \textit{Dutch Colonialism}, p.63.
fear amongst the Muslims that Dutch schools were an attempt to Christianise the Muslim population. While the Dutch asserted that their attempts to educate were without religious pressure, Islam was still regarded not so much a worthy, although heretical, partner of the Christian faith ‘as a backward and superstitious religion’. Muslim participation in Dutch schools was very limited, and indeed overall in the whole colonial enterprise, remaining instead segregated from their Christian compatriots.

3.3.3 Colonial Changes to Class Structure: the Ambonese Burger and the KNIL

The Ambonese Burger

Changes in the economy meant a fundamental change in the class structure with the emergence of new class ideas which modified adat ideas of the community. Thus, the emergence during the Dutch spice monopoly in Ambon of a new generation of educated elite known to the Dutch as Ambonsche Burgers eroded the traditional standards of the Ambonese adat-based hierarchy and increasingly marginalised the stalwarts of Ambonese adat such as the raja. Ambonese identity and sense of community was in this way influenced by the small but growing new economic class who had the colonial prestige, resources and support to dominate the old traditional oligarchy.

This term was initially coined by observers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to denote a new social class of Ambonese living around Ambon city as a part of the burger or civilian community of the city. Later, the label was used to mean more

43 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.37.
44 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.36-7.
45 Steenbrink, Dutch Colonialism, p.24.
46 In the early 1920s a number of schools were established in Muslim villages although the educational facilities available were significantly less than those enjoyed by Christian schools. See Chauvel, Nationalists, pp.35-7.
generally those workers who earned their living from wages or salaries.\textsuperscript{48} This thesis uses the term \textit{burger} to denote a specific social category; one that earned wages, lost their status as villagers, and subsequently liberated themselves from compulsory labour. The following section will examine how these changes had structural disruptive impacts in the Ambonese community despite this new social class being clear beneficiaries of Dutch colonisation.

From the time Western education was first introduced into Ambon by the Portuguese to the time the Dutch government assumed control, educational instruction to the Ambonese was rudimentary with the emphasis on mainly religious teaching.\textsuperscript{49} It was not until the early 1800s with increasing government involvement of the Dutch throughout the archipelago that education became a distinct priority in order to fill positions in its lower and middle ranks of bureaucracy. By 1867 there was already underway a considerable expansion of educational facilities with the new government sufficiently interested in providing a practical orientation to local education.\textsuperscript{50}

A new educated class of Ambonese emerged prominently after the establishment of the \textit{Ambonsche Burgerschool} (ABS), an elementary education facility for the \textit{burgers} of Ambon, in the mid nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{51} Those who passed with satisfactory marks were guaranteed the civil service and many of those obtained important posts in the colonial system. Through the expansion of Dutch educational facilities there was an increase in the number of those abandoning the village community. The Ambonese were drawn to areas outside the village because the Indies government proposed to fill the lower and middle ranks of the bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{49} Chauvel, \textit{Nationalists}, pp.25-6.
\textsuperscript{50} Chauvel, \textit{Nationalists}, p.27.
\textsuperscript{52} It has been argued that by the early decades of the nineteenth century, the substantial increase in the number of Ambonese classified as \textit{burger} may be attributed to the brief intervention of the English colonists who abolished the lengthy application procedures of the Dutch for an indigenous person wishing to become a \textit{burger} in order to attract the support of the local population. Lapian, \textit{Sejarah
By 1817 there was a great demand for the status of *burger* among the Ambonese villagers who were keen to work in Ambon City and smaller towns in Hila, Saparua, Haruku, Nusalaut, Buru and Seram. This created an exodus of Ambonese from their traditional village environments and subsequent relinquishment of *adat* rights and obligations. By the mid nineteenth century, the number of *burgers* was considerable. Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was an increase in the number of Ambonese villagers migrating to urban centres looking for new work opportunities. By 1855 there were approximately 10,396 Ambonese classified as *burgers* in the Ambonese islands. The total population of these islands at that time was approximately 48,608 persons, meaning that roughly 21% of the islands’ population had become *burgers*.

The *Ambonsche Burger* were fortunate beneficiaries of colonial policy. Towards the end of the seventeenth century the indigenous *burgerij* (citizenry) possessed leaders of their own who were nominated within the various *burger* village communities that soon emerged around the city of Ambon. In this way the *burgerji* at least felt that they had achieved a certain status which was considerably higher than those within traditional village communities, despite the fact that many *burger* were financially quite poor. For other reasons, they also justified their privileged position:

---

*Sosial*, p.55. However it is likely that the British need for manual labourers as a result of the neglect of forced cultivation and compulsory labour, provoked the colonists to allow villagers to work as wage earners in the city by way of a pass from British authorities. See Leirissa, *Cakalele*, p.3.

53 There has also been a similar analysis of the *mestizo* (*Ambonese Mestiezen*) or those of mixed race, usually those of both European and indigenous blood. It has been said this new social group in Ambonese society conspicuously refused to participate in the village arena of traditional rights and customs. Instead they strove to associate themselves with the Dutch by attempting to find work within the colonial administration and outwardly appearing Dutch through their dress habits and use of the Dutch language. See Lapian, *Sejarah Sosial*, pp.52-4.


56 These leaders were usually nominated by the Political Council which was lead by the Governor and which made the major decisions concerning the town’s administration. Control from the Council meant that the indigenous *burgerij* lacked any real decision-making authority. See Gerrit J. Knaap, ‘A City of Migrants: Kota Ambon at the End of the Seventeenth Century’, *Indonesia*, no.51, April 1991, p.111. The non-Company servant population of Ambon City was vertically divided by the Dutch into three sections: the European, Chinese, and the indigenous *burgerij*.

As *burger* they did not have obligations of *heerendiensten*. In this position they were “free persons” or *vrijman*. Even every *burger* village had their own head, although the head of a *burger* village did not have the right to obtain labour (*kwartodiensten*) from its citizens as it was with the traditional village head.\(^{58}\)

As already indicated, access to educational facilities enabled many Ambonese to occupy professional positions within the colonial administration, and earn a level of respect and economic wealth which would not have normally been experienced within the traditional village environment. In reality, however, these benefits were only a façade for the ensuing structural disruptions which occurred as a result. The rise of the *burgerij* middle-class firstly resulted in considerably diminishing the *raja’s* support base. The loss of many village members through migration and the clear abandonment of traditional obligations and services usually rendered to the village and village leader, resulted in the *raja’s* loss of reputation and status when, in previous times, he was the instrumental figure in the synchronisation of new elements within the village.

Secondly, the exodus of people from the villages to the city severely disrupted internal village and family life. Not only was there a distinct loss of labour resources to the activities of the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) in *Kota Ambon*, but the *burgerij* also exposed an increasing tendency to deviate from traditional locality communities. In growing accustomed to a life of relative privilege, the *burgerij* were keen to maintain this sense of status amongst the Europeans, especially after the abolition of the *burger* as a special status group. The following section will show that in this way, enlisting within the Dutch Army became an attractive alternative for the Ambonese *burger* who became increasingly keen to contest existing positions of village authority.

---


92
Further structural changes at elite and mass level were engendered by Dutch recruitment of Christian Ambonese into the Dutch East Indies Army (KNIL). On one hand, the KNIL were recipients of a new status and privilege outside their village environment owing to their special relationship with the Dutch. On the other hand, the KNIL’s sense of status and privilege induced new uncertainties within the village and caused internal leadership rivalries as the raja’s authority was directly challenged by individuals from within this new social group.

Initially, the KNIL recruited soldiers exclusively from among the Christian population. These soldiers were then sent to Java and stationed there for military service. A large proportion of these recruits were former burgers who enlisted within the colonial army around the 1870s as a result of new government regulations in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The decline and demise of the Ambonese burger was prompted by a number of government regulations which attempted to discourage villagers from becoming burgers. The Dutch perceived that there was no further need to provide special avenues for people to work in the towns. Thus by the mid nineteenth century, the prerogatives of the Ambonese burger had disappeared with the implementation of these regulations which removed their legal status as a group.

Additionally, the formalisation of a government bureaucracy through the education system was a significant factor in displacing many of the Ambonese burgers and encouraging the burger to enlist in the KNIL. Despite the fact that schools had been established by the Dutch to cater for the provision of a rudimentary education for burgers, the recruitment of government officials was not always based on professional criteria. Instead, the selection of recruits for government positions became based on

the individual’s particular clan status with heads of their respective villages. In this way, the Dutch no longer regarded *burgers* as the main supply of workers and government officials in the Ambonese islands. 

For both the *burgers* and the Ambonese in general, the KNIL was seen as an attractive occupational alternative, first and foremost because it was recognised as a position of privilege and also because it placed them on a comparative par with the Europeans. The recruitment of mainly Christian Ambonese into the KNIL meant for many Ambonese that they could assume a highly attractive new image or identity based on their Christianity, their favourable treatment by the Dutch, and staunch service to the colonial authorities. It was noted in the ‘Manual of the Military Geography and Statistics of the Dutch East Indies’ of the Royal Military Academy (1919) that,

> The Ambonese is proud of his religion; and in this regards himself as superior to the other peoples in the archipelago – for which reason it is wise to recognise them as good Christians. Those who profess this faith are indeed granted a privileged position in the Army of the Dutch Indies. 

Second, the KNIL was an incentive for *burgers* to escape from potential economic burdens, when the introduction of new government regulations in 1927 suddenly required some *burgers* to perform compulsory labour and pay taxes from which they had previously been exempt. 

For other Ambonese, the KNIL offered attractive material privileges at a time of a struggling Moluccan economy. A significant number of Ambonese enlisted with the KNIL after 1890 at the approximate time of the collapse of the spice cultivation. It was also at this time when the Moluccan spice

---

60 Leirissa, *Cakalele*, 1995, p.10. The position of *schutterij* (city guard) was also an important characterisation of title and status for the *burger* and its abolition was a significant factor in encouraging the *burger* to enlist in the KNIL. See See Chauvel, *Nationalists*, p.14.  
62 One of the characteristics of the *burger* under the VOC spice monopoly was that the *burger* did not actually have to perform some of the more laborious obligations. See Leirissa, *Cakalele*, 1995, p.9.  
63 Chauvel, *Nationalists*, p.43. The spice monopoly collapsed in 1863 with world demand and prices reaching an all-time low.
monopoly ended that Ambon suddenly became a ‘peripheral region’ politically and economically, as the Dutch subsequently shifted its trading nucleus to Java and Sumatra. This sense of ‘peripherality’ counterposed against the developing economy of Java was to become an important point in the forthcoming nationalist period.\textsuperscript{64}

As the Dutch endeavoured to expand and control their position throughout the archipelago, there existed an obvious need for loyal and skilled soldiers. The \textit{raja} was paid 150 guilders and 200 guilders in 1873 as an incentive to encourage the recruitment of Ambonese villagers.\textsuperscript{65} As Table 2 below indicates, numbers did increase after this, and it has been of general consensus that the fall in the spice market and the consequent decline in the Ambonese economy influenced many locals to look toward the KNIL as an attractive alternative to the hardships experienced within the village.\textsuperscript{66}

\textbf{Table 2: The Total Number of KNIL Soldiers between 1827-1917 from Ambon-Lease}\textsuperscript{67}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td>103 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>197 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860 – 1867</td>
<td>300 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867 - 1873</td>
<td>280 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>1661 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>2777 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>4093 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>5104 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>5706 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>6080 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>9277 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>9495 persons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{65} Van Kaam, \textit{South Moluccas}, p.29
\textsuperscript{67} Lapian, \textit{Sejarah Sosial}, p.70.
With recruitment numbers continuing to grow by the 1940s, the KNIL soon transformed itself into an independent identity among the Ambonese, where even some institutional expression evolved, including the publication of soldier’s magazines and local Ambonese newspapers which contained accounts glorifying the deeds and expeditions of the soldiers. The exclusive mentality of the soldiers to the rest of the Ambonese community could be particularly highlighted in the tangsi or army barracks, which signified a preference for living in closely associated communities, within or located around, the walls of the Dutch forts. To add to this exclusiveness, a school resembling the Ambonese burger school, mentioned previously, was established in 1889, specifically for Ambonese, Manadonese and Timorese KNIL soldiers. Schooling was conducted in Dutch and was intended to train the KNIL community in military and administrative service with overall emphasis on their loyal relationship to the Dutch.

The recruitment of Ambonese into military service had structural impacts within Ambonese society in several ways. From the beginning of colonial rule in Ambon, the recruitment of men from villages for military purposes introduced a new attitude towards traditional concepts of rank and status. Looking back at the time of Portuguese rule, local rulers were particularly concerned with the fact that the recruitment of men on the basis of remuneration meant that these men relinquished their status as anak negeri (village member) and subsequently relinquished this contact with the traditional way of life encompassing traditional rights and obligations. In the traditional system, any person who left the village community was no longer bound by certain obligations to the community, including the defence of their territory and lands. Subsequently those male villagers who became part of the

---

68 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.47.
69 Willard A. Hanna, “The Republic of the South Moluccas”, Southeast Asia Series, vol. 23, no. 2, April 1975, p.3. The exclusiveness of this type of living by the KNIL can also be seen by the fact that marriage was only permitted with those within their immediate community or otherwise specifically with a partner originating from their village. See Lapian, Sejarah Sosial, p.77.
70 Lapian, Sejarah Sosial, p.78.
new militia forfeited their commitments to the tradition and were immediately classified as ‘Portuguese’ rather than Ambonese.\textsuperscript{71}

In physical terms the number of those who pursued a soldier’s career was a disruptive element in the village as a traditional social entity. In the Ambonese islands, the effects of Dutch KNIL recruitment had quite a significant impact on village family units as demonstrated by the sheer numbers.

By approximately 1930 there were 22,773 Ambonese. Amongst these, there were 9366 Ambonese situated outside Ambon-Lease, and from those there were a total of 4257 who were members of the KNIL. This meant that practically every family on Ambon-Lease had one or more family member a soldier within the KNIL.\textsuperscript{72}

The mass departure of villagers to the KNIL not only had a significant impact on the disruption of familial communities, but also represented an economic loss of manual labour with the departure of each recruit. As a result, villages in Ambon experienced an alarmingly rapid decline in clove production and subsequent income from its production. Money sent to individual families by soldiers and money from KNIL pensions became an important supply of alternative funding:

In 1936, for example, it is estimated that money sent from soldiers and soldier pensions totalled £416,945, - and £745,905, -. And income from the sale of cloves in the same year only reached £91,000, - for the whole of Ambon-Lease. This meant that families of soldiers became a very important source of income for the inhabitants of Ambon-Lease.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{71} Abduarachman, \textit{Indonesian History}, p.186.
\textsuperscript{73} Lapian, \textit{Sejarah Sosial}, pp.80-1. My translation of “Pada tahun 1936, umpamanya, diperkirakan jumlah uang dari wesel dan pensiun itu sekitar £416,945, - dan £745,905, -. And hal hasil dari penjualan cengkih pada tahun yang sama hanya mencapai jumlah £91.000, - untuk seluruh Ambon-Uliase. Ini berarti bahwa keluarga para soldadu ini merupakan sumber penghasilan yang sangat penting bagi penduduk di Ambon-Uliase”. 

97
By the second decade of the twentieth century, rivalries between the KNIL soldiers and the raja gained momentum as each raja was offered a financial incentive or payment for every military enlistment from a member of his village. Many Ambonese did not view favourably the raja’s financial gain from payments made by the government as a result of their cooperation with the Dutch authorities. Criticism of the raja was considerable as controversy over the position of the KNIL soldiers ensued in the early years of the twentieth century. The pervading attitude at the time towards the raja was exemplified by J. Teeuwen, a representative of the nominated the Indies Nationalist Party (Insulinde / Nationaal-Indische Partij -NIP), who argued in 1918:

The raja get their hands greased with f 50 for every Christian and heathen youth...and thus promote the recruitment out of self-interest, and this works against the interests of the people.

These grievances provided impetus for new status claims by the KNIL soldiers who overtly challenged the legitimacy of the raja as a rightful leader of the Ambonese community. Traditional issues which were dealt with purely within village boundaries by existing structures of resolution were suddenly forced beyond the village periphery. Retired KNIL soldiers who returned to the village expected to play a role in the affairs of the village based on their assumed superiority to the raja as a result of their more worldly experience. Conflict, therefore, occurred when the KNIL soldiers were forthright with their grievances and demands, whilst the raja and the adat elite were not always willing to concede to the demands and ambitions of these soldiers.

On retirement, the reassimilation of the veterans into negeri society was often a difficult one. The soldiers were admired for their services to the KNIL and the protection they offered their compatriots throughout the archipelago. However, once in the negeri they tended to be treated in the same way as their fellow-villagers. The established status system in the negeri was adat-based, and most of the soldiers

74 Van Kaam, South Moluccans, p.28-9.
75 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.55.
came from the ordinary people rather than from families in the adat hierarchy, least of all the raja families.76

The rivalry between the KNIL soldiers and the raja who was traditionally the most respected and most feared in the Ambonese village hierarchy, remained a source of visible antagonism within the local community until the early nationalist movement in the 1920s. Even ordinary Ambonese became disconcerted with the perceptible disruptions to authority structures. They coined the nickname ‘laskaar compania’, or slave to the Company or the government, to refer to the KNIL soldier and protested that the raja was supplying the equivalent of ‘slaves’ to the Dutch in exchange for money and a premium.77

This trend towards disputes, rivalries and protest became the basis for inflaming widespread discontent within the Ambonese community. Gradually, as disputes and rival challenges increased during the twentieth century, the pervading discontent was channelled through the introduction of new nationalist structures articulated by educated elites who became politically active in Ambon. The following discussion will, therefore, shift away from an examination of the factors of disruption towards a focus on how these disputes acquired a new nationalist dimension.

3.4 Constructions of Identity: Loyalist versus Nationalist

The process between elite level involvement in Indonesian nationalism, and the intra-Ambon disputes and disruptions was linked by the desire of villagers to find a new channel to air their grievances, and for the elites to find a new channel to mobilise support. From this perspective, these disputes provided the basis for the initial split within the ranks of educated elites, which gradually emerged in the twentieth century in the form of clashes between loyalists and nationalists. Urban educated elites or

76 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.51.
77 Van Kaam, South Molucaans, p.27
intellectuals, who became politically active in Ambon in the early 1900s, began to establish new political movements for Indonesian decolonisation and, at the same time, new ideas of Ambonese identity. It is argued here that these new constructions represent an important stage towards later constructions of Ambonese nationalist rights claims.

This section will show how discontent amongst the Ambonese was channelled through the introduction of new nationalist visions which in general terms can be categorised as those loyal to the Dutch government and those that advocated anti-colonialism in the context of a ‘unitary Indonesian nation’. During this stage, there were also indications of a burgeoning cultural, religious and political awareness, and a preliminary sense of Ambonese identity. However these initial visions of nationalist identity did not work due to ‘structural ambivalence’ in that Ambonese loyalties remained ambiguously divided. Subsequent political disruptions during 1945-49 and the return of intellectual Ambonese from Java, initiated another process of identity construction engendering a modified construction of the ‘us’ and ‘them’.

At the core of these developments, there were those Ambonese who favoured the Dutch and gravitated towards Ambonese nationalism directed against Indoensian nationalism, while others were more inclined to be anti-Dutch and pro-Indonesian. The origin of these specific nationalisms can be easily explained purely in instrumentalist self interest terms. However a constructivist approach can supplement the idea of self interest calculations with the point that those individuals whose careers and lives were most closely linked to the Dutch presence found a sense of security and identity in the idea of a Dutch-related national community; while those who had been most disrupted by colonial rule, sought security-refuge in the construction of ideas which demonised the Dutch and imagined a virtuous Indonesian us directed against Dutch rule.
In the initial wake of nationalist fervour, political alignments in Ambon indicated that there was a distinct 2-way factional split between those who could be broadly described as ‘loyalist’ and those who were regarded as ‘nationalist’ communities. The loyalists were generally those who had been supported by the Dutch administration, that is, mainly the Christian Ambonese, the traditional elite and some educated Ambonese given their reliance on Dutch education and employment. As will be shown in this section, the degree to which the loyalists wished to maintain their relationship with the Dutch often varied in emphasis and included those who espoused an Ambonese nationalism under Dutch leadership. The nationalists generally included the Muslim community and a growing number of urban educated Ambonese who were tending to adopt an ‘Indonesian’ perspective, that is, they emphasised anti-colonialism and the need to integrate within a unitary Indonesian nation.  

The educated elite from this latter group began to articulate new interpretations of Ambonese identity. One of Ambon’s principal educated nationalist leaders was A. J. Patty who established the *Sarekat Ambon* (Ambon Association) in 1920. This party became one of Ambon’s major nationalist parties and sought to promote a ‘unity of the people’. It voiced popular concerns from the Ambonese community and was particularly vocal regarding their objections to government financial contributions being used as a payment to the *raja* and the discretionary power of the government to reject popularly chosen candidates by village members. As Christie describes,

Although this was primarily an educational and welfare organization, it definitely formed part of the new ‘cultural revolution’ that was beginning to sweep through the Indies, challenging not only the grip of local adat and the status of the traditional regents, but also, eventually the legitimacy of the Dutch rule itself.

---

79 *Sarekat Ambon* was founded in 1920 by A. J. Patty, a Christian Ambonese. The organisation’s membership was open to all Ambonese, both Christians and Muslims, soldiers and civilians. Chauvel, *Nationalists*, p.101.  
Sarekat Ambon was careful from the beginning to reflect Ambonese interests despite remaining convinced that Ambon’s future was within an independent Indonesia where Ambonese society would have to be radically transformed. Under E.U. Pupella’s new leadership in the 1930s, they believed in particular that in order to create a bond amongst both Muslims and Christians in Ambon, Christians would have to direct their focus on economic development at home rather than their preferences for government and the military service.

From a very early stage, there were indications of a burgeoning cultural, religious and political awareness amongst political parties in Ambonese society during the disruptive colonial period. As early as 1908, under the leadership of J.P. Risakotta, the Vereniging Wilhelmina was established for the so called ‘children of Ambon’ (anak-anak Ambon) with a view to bringing members of the KNIL more closely together; in 1909 ‘Ambon’s Bond’ was founded by an association of Ambonese public servants; and in 1924 Sou Maluka Ambon was also established, both aiming at ‘advocating and furthering the material and spiritual interests of the population of the Moluccas in every sphere’. Thus in every endeavour Sarekat Ambon focused on Ambonese interests by advocating the promotion of the material and spiritual interests of the Ambonese and the need for a parliamentary form of government for the people.

‘Nationalism’ did not initially bring with it a sense of cohesion, certainty, and identity which might resolve existing disruptions in the community. Indeed it seems to have added a new level of uncertainty. Nationalist political parties encountered difficulties in Ambon during their campaign activities, particularly in the 1920s to the 1930s.

---

82 Pupella was born in Ambon in 1910. He later joined the political party Sarekat Ambon and attended a teachers training college in Yogyakarta, Central Java in 1933. Chauvel, Regional Dynamics, p.242.

83 Chauvel, Regional Dynamics, p.242.


85 Manusama, South Moluccas, p.53.
Inherent within Ambonese society was a ‘structural ambivalence’ in that Ambonese loyalties remained ambiguously divided. For those who had benefited from the colonial system, such as the Ambonese burgerij, the KNIL, and the raja, to accept the nationalist position would mean relinquishing their social status and life of relative privilege. As Ellen describes, here was a people ‘whose interests became subsequently linked so closely with those of the colonial power’, but who were also keen to improve their fortune. The problem thus arose when,

The means advocated to promote Ambonese interests implied criticism of past or present Dutch policy or challenged the prevailing feeling of ‘loyalty’ to the crown.

On the other hand, there were those in Ambon who were opposed to colonial rule and felt that a common ‘Indonesian’ identity needed to be shaped. Muslims in Ambon who felt excluded from the privileged relationship with the Dutch did not identify themselves with the colonial power. The Dutch promotion of Christianity and the elimination of the Muslim elite as independent political actors meant that the Muslim community was relegated to a position subordinate to the local Christians. At the same time, educated Ambonese, both Christian and Muslim, became aware that a common identity, either as a citizen of an Indonesian Republic or not, needed to be forged if anti-colonial political parties were to succeed.

Organisations such as Moluks Politie克 Verbond (MPV) which was founded in 1929, sought to reach a compromise in this situation by aiming for the emancipation of the Moluccas within a future federal constitutional structure for the whole of the East-Indies archipelago. According to its constitution, the MPV aimed at self-government based upon the possibilities of development in the Moluccas. At the same time it

86 Ellen, Indonesia Circle, 1983, p.11.
87 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.83.
88 Christie, Modern History, p.112.
presented a provision within its constitution with regard to its relations to The Netherlands:

The MPV will support every loyal aspiration for self-government of all these population groups with a view to attaining to a federative union of the autonomous parts of the Netherlands East Indies.\(^{89}\)

Factional splits among the Ambonese presented a rather ambiguous picture of political activity in Ambon. On the one hand there was a deep-felt commitment to the colonial system, which had provided many Ambonese with a secure and privileged position. On the other hand there were ambitions for greater improvement in Ambonese political activity and economic welfare, which was resonated in many of the socio-cultural associations developed in the early 1910s and 1920s. *Sarekat Ambon* endeavoured to a certain degree to promote a strong nationalist movement but it, as Chauvel indicates:

never resolved the dilemma of wanting to pursue its nationalist ideals at the same time as feeling the need to appear ‘loyal’ and non-revolutionary in the eyes of their fellow-Ambonese and gain the approval of the government.\(^{90}\)

The articulations of these nationalist ideas by the Ambonese educated elite served as legitimisations in local disputes. In other words, the Indonesian nationalist movement was an avenue by which the Ambonese intellectuals sought to find accord with the other Ambonese. Complaints against the *raja*, as discussed previously in this chapter, provided a basis for the emergence of political parties in which the educated elite could become directly involved in village disputes that originally were the responsibility of the traditional authority structures.

\(^{89}\) Manusama, *South Moluccas*, p.53. This was the first time one of the indigenous populations within the Dutch East Indies formulated and expressed the desire for a federal constitutive structure for the archipelago.

\(^{90}\) Chauvel, *Nationalists*, p.84.
In this way, widespread support in Ambon for some Indonesian nationalist parties was a result of disillusionment towards the changing position of the raja and the overall changing village environment. Many Ambonese who had long found fault with the raja’s claim to authority discovered a new avenue through the nationalistic movement to not only air their grievances concerning village leadership but to contest the raja’s position. The fragile position of the raja in Ambon in maintaining a strong centralised focus of power which had developed under the colonial regime, was directly challenged by the educated elite and their political parties who gained considerable support, especially during the post-war period from 1945. In Pelauw, on the island of Haruku in southern Seram, and in Hutumuri in Ambon, members of the local population became affiliated with one of the mainstream Indonesian nationalist groups, Insulinde, which challenged the raja as legitimate leaders of the people. Residents of Pelauw, for example, complained in a letter stating,

That already for some years we have opposed our raja because we assert that we are not supposed to follow the wishes of a raja who has opposed adat and because of that had brought the curse of the ancestors upon himself.

Owing to pervading uncertainties of how the Ambonese should articulate their sense of identity in a changing atmosphere of nationalist sentiment, much of the organisational development in Ambonese politics in the 1910s-1930s was subsequently debated in terms of ‘loyalty’ and ‘disloyalty’. In the wake of the Japanese occupation of Indonesia in 1942, Ambon was still characterised by a confusing choice of nationalist visions which in general terms either envisioned integration within a united Indonesia or maintaining colonial links with the Dutch.

91 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.103. However for the initial years of the nationalistic movement in Ambon, the Dutch responded quite strongly in their defence of the raja and attempted in various measures to consolidate the position of the raja and the administration against the threat from a movement vouching for independence from the Dutch.
92 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.88-97.
93 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.93.
Ambon, therefore, entered the Second World War with unanswered questions of cultural and national identity. The division of loyalties allowed the educated nationalists to lift their profile through the expansion of their autonomous organisational experience in the political arena. Their channelling of popular expressions of discontent in Ambon through new nationalist structures and ideas exacerbated the increasing tensions and factional splits within the Ambonese community. These contesting alignments came to a head with the rise of Ambonese ethnonationalism and the formation of the Republic of the South Moluccas in 1950.

3.5 The Construction of an Ambonese Identity

The construction of an ethnic identity was an indigenous initiative and had principle support and leadership from the Ambonese intellectuals and the raja, all of whom had been confronted by profound social, economic and political change. The construction of Ambonese identity and the commitment to self-determination sought to transcend internal splits and alignments and reward elites with political authority. Support for a Moluccan state was, therefore, not necessarily pro-Dutch or anti-Indonesian but it was a means by which Ambonese elites could mobilise a support base by showing that they were not indifferent to the problems facing their homeland. For many civilian Ambonese who experienced the frightening economic and social changes to their traditional society and the overall lack of political and authoritative certainty, the Republic of the South Moluccas (RMS) provided a resolution to the existing feelings of dislocation.

From 1945-1949 there was widespread division amongst elites as to how to respond to the Dutch proposal for federalism. After the capitulation of the Japanese and the declaration of the Indonesian Republic in 1945, a proposal for a Commonwealth was put forward by the Dutch in an attempt to reach a settlement with the Indonesian Republic. The proposal suggested the incorporation of the Republic as a unit in a
wider federal state. An agreement was reached in 1947 – the Linggajati Agreement –
to form a federal ‘United States of Indonesia’ which would consist of the Republic of
Indonesia, Borneo and the ‘Great East’. It was also agreed that a new political entity
the ‘State of Eastern Indonesia’ (NIT) would be created as a component state of
federal Indonesia.\textsuperscript{94} Within this framework, the newly formed region of the South
Moluccas would join this new state as a subordinate administrative unit.

In response to the proposal for a federation, new constructions of Ambonese identity
were supported and led by Ambonese who had been educated outside Maluku.
Significantly, these individuals began to emerge as a more discernible group in local
politics. Two of these were J. A. Manusama\textsuperscript{95} and CH. R. S. Soumokil\textsuperscript{96}, both key
figures in the RMS movement of 1950. Manusama and Soumokil claimed to be
sympathetic to an independent Indonesia but at the same time harboured ambitions for
a prominent role in their plans for the emancipation and reform of their own society.

These new Ambonese elite were acutely aware that the declaration of the Indonesian
Republic had brought little encouragement from within Ambon\textsuperscript{97} despite their
personal sympathy for the national cause. Throughout Ambon, there was a heightened
concern as individuals became more politically aware of the immediate importance of
Indonesia’s proclamation to their future. Linked to this was the increasing fear among

\textsuperscript{94} May, Pacific Viewpoint, 1990, pp.115-6.
\textsuperscript{95} Alvarez Manusama was an intellectual and an Ambonese émigré, born, raised and educated in
colonial Indonesia. He returned to Ambon and worked as a school teacher after graduating as an
engineer in Bandung. He began to actively become involved in politics with various positions with the
NIT and DMS. In 1948 he founded the Democratic Movement of the South Moluccas which sought an
autonomous and democratic south Moluccas in an independent federal Indonesia.
\textsuperscript{96} Dr. Chr. R.S. Soumokil was born on 13 October 1905 in Java. He was educated at European schools
in Surabaya and Semarang before completing his secondary education in Holland and studying law in
Leiden. He obtained his doctorate in 1934. He returned to Java where, during the war, he worked in a
legal office. He was interned in Burma and Siam by the Japanese, which was crucial in developing his
special relationship with Ambonese soldiers. In 1946 he worked in a military court for war criminals
before moving to Makassar where he became Minister of Justice and a patron of, and adviser to,
several Ambonese organisations. See also Chauvel, Nationalists, pp.315-92.
\textsuperscript{97} Chauvel, Regional Dynamics, p.244.
the Ambonese of their probable dominance by Java\textsuperscript{98}, which was as much an expression of current political pressures as the disruption in Ambon and the disunity regarding Ambon’s relations with the outside world. With increasing political tensions throughout Indonesia that often exploded into serious violence\textsuperscript{99}, aspiring Ambonese leaders constructed a desire for autonomy by offering the option for a separate status outside Indonesia while also encouraging participation within the Dutch colony.

As explained in the previous section on political developments in Ambon, Muslims and Christians expressed different political orientations based on whether they had been supported by the Dutch administration - Christian Ambonese, the traditional elite and some educated Ambonese supported political affiliation with the Dutch government, while those within the Muslim community supported integration within a unitary Indonesian nation as a protest vote against perceived Dutch colonial bias. The subsequent impact of the Japanese occupation, the later collapse of the federal proposal, and outbreak of political violence were crucial influencing factors towards generating the reorientation of these political alliances away from support for an Indonesian nationalism as well as support for the Dutch, towards allegiance to nationalist alternatives which espoused expressions of a distinct Ambonese identity. The precise impact of these factors is discussed in the following.

The impact of Japanese rule was a key disruptive factor to the proposal for a federal entity. Disagreement amongst Ambonese elites and the masses as to how to respond to the proposal was influenced by the issue of Ambon’s relationship, not so much

\textsuperscript{98} Prior to 1950, there is no record of significant Javanese migration to Ambon. During VOC times, Kota Ambon’s Asian migrant population consisted primarily of freed slaves of usually Makassarese, Butonese, Buginese and Balinese origin. There were also considerable numbers of Chinese migrants as a result of VOC policy to attract Chinese settlers to the colonial centre and who ended up dominating the private sector. In 1905, the Dutch colonial government began its ‘colonisation’ policy to shift Javanese families to the less populated Outer islands but this never included the Moluccas. Likewise, Indonesia’s transmigration program did not commence until 1950.

\textsuperscript{99} Christie, Modern History, p.114.
with the Dutch as with their relationship with Java. The three and a half years of Japanese occupation of eastern Indonesia did much to change perceptions of the Indonesian Republic and its Javanese administration. Three main factors were involved. First, whilst nationalist leaders and the majority of the raja either retained their positions or were elevated to positions of authority within the Japanese administrative structure, their experience was not altogether appreciated. The Japanese remained suspicious of pro-Dutch loyalties and thus many Christians suffered discrimination by the occupying force:

During the Japanese occupation, many Christians suffered. Not less than 60 Protestant ministers were decapitated because they were considered to be Dutch accomplices. The Moluccan Protestant Church (GPM) experienced severe difficulties. Spies acted violently and arbitrarily especially in the beginning of the Japanese occupation. Every person they accused of being a Dutch servant would certainly suffer an unfortunate fate. It was not only certain Christians who would suffer as a result, but also community authority figures.¹⁰⁰

Second, Ambonese relations with Java became strained as their people suffered comparatively worse than those in Java, on account of their loyalty to the Dutch. For administrative purposes, the Japanese had divided the former Dutch East Indies into three areas: Java, Sumatra and the remaining territory. These areas remained in administrative isolation from each other, meaning that mutual contact between areas was extremely difficult.¹⁰¹ Relations, therefore, became strained with many of those Christian Ambonese suffering under Japanese rule remaining distrustful of Java and their relationship with the occupying force. Such was its impact for these people that,


In view of the experience acquired in the years of the Japanese occupation they [Ambonese] had no faith in an Indonesian regime for the East-Indian Archipelago. 102

Third, the transition from Japanese occupation to the proclamation of Indonesia’s Independence on 17 August 1945 was deeply regretted by Muslims in Ambon who were treated most favourably by the Japanese. The Muslim elite in Ambon were particularly favoured by the Japanese in stark contrast to the authority and power imparted to Ambonese Christians by the Dutch. Japanese support of Muslim activities, for example, gave the Ambonese Muslims the impetus to establish in 1943 Djamijah Islamiyah Ceram, the ‘first supra-village organization for Moslems in the Ambonese islands.’ 103

Due to factors discussed above there was a movement away from Indonesian nationalism amongst the Ambonese towards political expressions which supported a separation from the Indonesian Republic. Divergent positions on the federal proposal constituted elements of disruption and insecurity as the Ambonese community began to be characterised by political disunity through the promotion of various versions of ‘Indonesia’ by different parties. With the Dutch proposal for a federal state, there were those Ambonese who responded by disregarding the ‘Javanese’ Republic and directed their attention to the Dutch. During this 1945-50 period, some educated nationalists and members of the Muslim community emerged into the forefront of the public political arena to offer their support for the federal proposal. The Indonesian Freedom Party (PIM), established on 17 August 1946, led by former Sarekat Ambon leader, E.U. Pupella, and supported by several Muslim leaders 104, acquiesced to the federal structure and thus, at the same time, to groups who still relied on their colonial connections.

102 Manusama, South Moluccas, p.58.
103 Chauvel, Regional Dynamics, pp.184-5.
104 There appears to have been widespread support for the PIM from the Muslim community with the Muslim raja of Tulehu conceding that 90% of youths in Ambon came from his own village. Even Pupella in 1946 indicated that he felt confident of his political support with strong support from the Muslims in Ambon. See Chauvel, Nationalists, p.222.
Under Pupella’s undemonstrative and pragmatic leadership, PIM pursued a cooperative pro-federal policy carefully calculated to promote the Indonesia cause in an arena under uncontested Dutch control and in which influential groups still clung to their colonial links.\textsuperscript{105}

Pupella’s political position was counterposed by pro-Dutch loyalists such as the \textit{raja}, the soldiers, and Christian groups who posed an alternate depiction of Ambonese identity. While the Dutch proposal was attractive for the loyalists who wished to be separated from what was perceived as a Java-centric government, there was still a certain amount of disillusionment,

They had expected the Republic to be dealt with by the Dutch in much the same way as Aceh and Lombok had been – with the help of Ambonese soldiers. What became incomprehensible to the rajas, soldiers and veterans was that the Dutch government itself should be working toward a supposedly independent Indonesia. Dutch insistence on the inclusion of Ambon in federal Indonesia amounted to a rejection of their loyalty. A pillar of their worldview had collapsed.\textsuperscript{106}

Instead, they formed the Federation of Five Associations (GSS) in 1946 which expressed a preference for a continuation of Dutch administration in the South Moluccas but with the possibility that the future administration could be placed in the hands of the Ambonese. Another conservative group, the Association of the Great East (PTB), had similar goals in its promotion for the separation of Ambon, Manado, and Timor from Indonesia in order to form together a separate entity within the Dutch colony.\textsuperscript{107}

The Moluccan Commonwealth idea was proposed by three Java-educated Ambonese who returned home to Ambon. R.J. Maetekohy\textsuperscript{108}, M.P. Harmusial and J.S. Patty

\textsuperscript{105} Chauvel, \textit{Regional Dynamics}, p.247.  
\textsuperscript{106} Chauvel, \textit{Regional Dynamics}, pp.249-50.  
\textsuperscript{107} May, \textit{Pacific Viewpoint}, 1990, p.31.  
\textsuperscript{108} R.J. Metekohy was an Ambonese civil servant and a spokesperson for the GSS. He was appointed a member of the first NIT cabinet in 1947. He failed to retain his cabinet position in January 1949 and later reverted back to his separatist tendencies in his support for the Moluccas separation from the Dutch kingdom.
envisioned that the Moluccas would form a completely autonomous area within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and remain on a provisional status within Indonesia. Implicit with this idea was a clear distrust of other Indonesians and a desire for a degree of autonomy. The proposal was looked upon favourably by Ambonese loyalists such as the raja who were still keen to retain relations with the Dutch and limit as much as possible their relations with Indonesia. The idea of a Moluccan Commonwealth did not succeed, however, owing to its rejection by the Sultan of Ternate who envisioned a broader federal unit that encompassed the whole of East Indonesia instead.109 Significantly, it was also not compatible with the Dutch vision of a state structure that encompassed the eastern archipelago.

As a way of imparting a degree of unity and, thus, partially resolving existing insecurities, Manusama began to cooperate both with the PIM and the conservative sections of society. He claimed to be sympathetic to an independent Indonesia but also campaigned for a greater voice for the Ambonese. He supported Pupella in his visions for the economic development of their islands while also campaigning for Ambonese political voice in the South Moluccan Council (DMS). Manusama publicly announced the need to take into account the ‘interests of the South Moluccas’ and thus founded the Democratic Movement of the South Moluccas (GDMS) in February 1948, which sought an autonomous and democratic South Moluccas but one that was ultimately within an independent Indonesia.110

The GDMS did not succeed as a unifying movement demonstrated by their failure to gain support in the 1946, 1948 and the 1949 elections for the parliament in Makassar.111 The unanticipated collapse of the federalism proposal in 1949 and the fears and insecurities produced by its disintegration, led to divisions at elite level. Factionalism existed between those who remained committed to an independent

110 Chauvel, Ambon, pp.251-52.
111 Chauvel, Nationalists, pp.222-96.
Indonesia and Manusama’s conditional support of a federal Indonesia. The Ambonese raja who were supportive of the GDMS became disillusioned with the Dutch for their withdrawal from the popular proposal of a federal system.\footnote{The federal policy collapsed as the Indonesian Republic was not prepared to accept any degree of Dutch sovereignty, and the Dutch eventually used military force instead to take over the rest of the Republic.}

Similarly, the unifying vision of the PIM could not provide the basis for Ambonese solidarity owing to factionalism and internal disputes within the party leadership. Pupella’s pursuit of a cooperative pro-federal policy, in which he could both support the Indonesia cause and allow others to maintain their colonial links, conflicted with the party’s co-leader, Reawaru, who wanted open support for the Republic. In a similar fashion, the relationship between the PTB and the conservative rajas of Ambon, who dominated the GSS, was uneasy despite the similarity of their goals. Traditionally distrustful of Ambonese politicians from Java, whether nationalist or loyalist, the raja never supported attempts by the Jakarta-based association to mobilise support in Ambon itself, preferring to remain in control of their own home ground. Furthermore, the attitude of the KNIL soldiers, who formed the primary support base of the PTB, was such that they still retained their principle characteristics of isolation and exclusiveness.

These elite splits and the disruptions within the wider Ambonese society previously examined in this chapter produced the political alignments and violent clashes of 1949. With the prospective departure of the Dutch which left an authority vacuum, there ensued mayhem on the streets with violent clashes between members of the different political parties. Reawaru, who assumed leadership of the PIM in Pupella’s temporary absence in The Hague, instigated provocative military marches by PIM youth groups which prompted many of the local KNIL soldiers to react concerned for their safety and future employment. Indeed, frequent clashes erupted throughout the islands. The situation was exacerbated in January 1950 with the arrival in Ambon of
Indonesian elite special forces who clashed with the youth groups resulting in heavy casualties.\textsuperscript{113}

In such an atmosphere of complete disorder and instability there was a concurrent shift amongst the Ambonese away from supporting integration into the Indonesian Republic towards an ingrained cultivation of fear by both the pro-Indonesian intellectuals and the conservative Dutch loyalists. The frenzy that emerged after the collapse of the NIT brought into focus what the Ambonese began to perceive as a ‘Javanese threat’ to the security of their immediate community. Thus,

\begin{quote}
The Dutch were no longer the problem; now the State of East Indonesia felt it was fighting for its very survival against pressure, both internally and from Java, for a unitary state.\textsuperscript{114}
\end{quote}

The most significant role left to nationalism in Ambon was through the unifying ideology of all those opposed to ‘Javanese domination’ and in favour of resolving contemporary disruptions. In this way, both the PIM and the loyalist groups could inscribe within the South Moluccan Republic their own aspirations. Support for a united south Moluccan community that was free from any political relations with the federal state of East Indonesia and the Indonesian Republic was voiced, particularly from the loyalists such as the \textit{raja} and members of the KNIL, but also from members of the nationalists such as Pupella.

The RMS was eventually declared on April 24, 1950 and its government ruled Ambon until December of that same year when the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) occupied the town of Ambon and effectively defeated RMS forces. During the brief governance of the RMS, Manusama and Soumokil sought to rise above the tensions and splits and offer a new vision of harmony to the Ambonese. When the Dutch nationalist vision

\textsuperscript{113} Chauvel, \textit{Regional Dynamics}, p.254-7.  
\textsuperscript{114} Chauvel, \textit{Regional Dynamics}, p.256.
had collapsed, and the Indonesian nationalist ideology failed to offer a simple resolution to the matter of a possible ‘transition’, they declared the RMS on 24 April 1950 (See Appendix 6) as a vision to whom all could subscribe.

Using the name of the Republic of the South Moluccas, the Ambonese political elites effectively used the political and administrative term coined by the Dutch to refer collectively to the cultural area of Ambon and surrounding islands including the coastal areas of southern and western Seram. In effect the name of the RMS gave it political clout as a fully-fledged separatist movement intent on establishing itself as an autonomous political entity, but at the same time allowing the RMS to refer to a cultural area which offered an underlying basis for a common ‘Ambonese’ cultural ethnic identity.

Using ethnic symbols of solidarity, combined with added anti-Javanese sentiment, the RMS, in effect, allowed people to locate their sense of mutuality and origin. Based on ethnic symbols of solidarity of ethnicity, religion, language and territory, the ideological framework of the RMS allowed both displaced traditional elites and Ambonese individuals to unite collectively around these myths and symbols of ethno-regional nationalism.

3.6 A New Construction of Ambonese Identity

The discussion thus far has centred on the dislocations of authority structure, elite rivalries, party factionalism, and popular protest which constituted a culmination of the diverse disruptions into a 1949-1950 crisis of identity in Ambon. The RMS idea offered practical protection for those needing Dutch patronage and fearing Javanese domination. More importantly, it offered a sense of security to a dislocated Ambonese society by not only harnessing existing fears of Javanese domination and thus using
the depiction of a hated Javanese ‘Other’, but also offering a clear and simple diagnosis and prescription of complex disruptions.

The RMS was able to offer the simple idea that independence from Java would solve all problems and provide the emotional and physical security which an Indonesian Republic could not. At the time of the RMS proclamation, Manusama and Soumokil were both able to develop support in a widespread atmosphere which was described at the time as being one of dread and confusion. This important element in identity construction included the ideas of the symbol of the Proclamation, and the aggression of the TNI attack in order to validate and dramatise the nationalist diagnosis.

The proclamation of the RMS was significant in endorsing the RMS nationalist cause through two distinct symbolic representations of Ambonese identity. By looking to its forebears’ struggle against colonialism for inspiration, an RMS flag was presented to the Ambonese, which sought to replicate the colours and design thought to have been used by the anti-colonial hero, Pattimura. In a similar act, Pattimura’s nationalist struggle became the symbolic inspiration for the declaration of an RMS national day on the 15th May, which was the day the Pattimura revolt of 1817 began on the island of Saparua. In this way, the employment of a nationalist language linked ideas of cultural identity with a reinterpretation of Pattimura’s struggle as a symbol of moral superiority and political unity.

Furthermore, the proclamation came to represent a nationalist promise of security and authority which could not otherwise have been perceived possible under a Java-

---

116 Pattimura or Thomas Matulesia led a revolt against the Dutch in 1817 on the island of Saparua which later spread to the island of Nusa Laut, the south coast of Seram and also to Hitu in Ambon. The revolt lost against the superior weaponry of the Dutch and Pattimura was executed on 16 December 1817. Other armed revolts occurred in the Moluccas against Dutch rule in 1858, 1860, 1864 but never on the same scale as 1817. For further information see Ben Van Kaam, *The South Moluccas: Background to the Train Hijackings*, C.Hurst & Company: London, 1980, pp.5-25. Also, M. Sapija, *Sedjarah Perdjuangan Pattimura: Pahlawan Indonesia*, Djambatan: Jakarta, 1957.
dominated Republic. Soumokil, in particular, was convinced that a South Moluccan Republic was the only way they could feel safe, that is, in a state which was ‘absolutely independent of Indonesia.’\textsuperscript{117} This sentiment was echoed by a general pervasive feeling of apprehension in Ambon towards the Indonesian Republic. Two senior Dutch civil servants gave the following impression of the proclamation of the RMS at the time:

\begin{quote}
The fear of Javanese domination which is felt in many circles, partly also among the Amboinese Muslims, has made all this possible and has won the government the support of the majority of the people.\textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}

For the Amboinese who were undergoing the strains of disruption, the depiction of the Indonesian Republic as a threatening force served to reinforce the legitimacy of the nationalist movement. This was then dramatically validated by the subsequent blockade and invasion by the Indonesian armed forces in July 1950. Whilst the TNI troops effectively crushed RMS forces within two months, the effect of the initial blockade was to consolidate support for the RMS and its nationalist cause.\textsuperscript{119}

The exclusivist aspects of Amboinese nationalism can thus be traced to the clear ideological dichotomy which defined the Amboinese ‘us’ in opposition to the Indonesian/Javanese ‘them’. As the following section will examine, the RMS ideology used the ethnocultural symbols of common ancestry, territorial homeland, language and religion, which, in effect, allowed people to locate their sense of mutuality and origin. Once constructed in this way, these visions of Amboinese and Indonesian identity offered a simple diagnosis of the complex pattern of interactions which were changing Amboinese society in disorientating ways.

\textsuperscript{117} Soumokil had already been detested by Indonesian nationalists for his earlier, albeit unsuccessful, campaign to proclaim East Indonesia as an independent state from the Indonesian Republic. His involvement in the Azis military coup in Makassar to prevent Indonesian troops from landing was especially resented by unitarist groups. A personal version of these events was written by Soumokil in 1950. See Chr. Soumokil, \textit{Rondom de affaire Kapitein Andi Abdul Aziz}, The Hague, 1950.

\textsuperscript{118} Van Kaam, \textit{Moluccans}, pp.120-1.

3.6.1 Common Ancestry and Territorial Homeland

As aforementioned, by articulating ideas of common ethnic ancestry, the RMS sought to overcome its image as a Christian movement. The RMS developed ideas of a common ethnic South Moluccan ancestry and territorial homeland in seeking to distance an Ambonese identity from an identity associated with institutions of the Dutch East Indies.¹²⁰

Many Ambonese will refer to the negri lama which literally means ‘original village’ and refers to the place of first settlement prior to European contact. The negri or the village is based on genealogical inherited territory associated with the mata rumah raja or the ‘original’ or ruling lineage.¹²¹ In fact, many villages remember a negri lama where ancestral memorial stones are located.¹²² These have been located in various areas of north and west of Ambon from where it is believed that the ancestors or original inhabitants of most central Moluccan villages migrated.¹²³ General consensus is that most of the original inhabitants came from Seram.

In an Ambonese tradition, the word Nusa has been adopted to refer to specific islands within the region. Nusa meaning ‘island’ has been associated with the Sanskrit word nesos, also meaning island.¹²⁴ For example, Nusa Apono for Ambon, Nusa Ina for Seram, and Nusa Laut for the smaller islands that lie east of the island of Saparua. Seram has always been given particular emphasis as the island believed to the homeland of the Ambonese ancestors, hence Nusa Ina which literally means Mother Island. In folktales Seram has been epitomised as the ‘mother’ who looks after her

¹²⁰ Chauvel, Nationalists, pp. 111, 144.
¹²³ Cooley, Allang, p.130.
¹²⁴ The word ‘nusa’ has also been found in the old Indonesian epic story of Nagarakertagama where the word ‘Nusantara’, which in modern circumstances has been used to refer to those islands outside of the island of Java, was used instead to refer to ‘foreign land’. There have also been history writers who have translated the word to simply mean ‘other islands’. In Malayan history the word ‘nusa’ also can be found used similarly as ‘Nusatamara’ to refer to a place of origin. See Sapija, Perjuangan Pattimura, pp.7-8.
‘children’, the smaller islands within the Ambonese cultural area. This analogy has also been reflected in popular Ambonese songs that are often sung at local primary schools:

```
Beautiful Island Homeland
You are the store of bread
Amongst hundreds and thousands
Of your community of children
Homeland, Mother Island
The Land of my Mother, Father and family
That is what I love.125
```

The Ambonese also possess a tenacious belief in being able to trace their ancestry through clan names. ‘Wattimena’, for example, is a name common to other clans located in Seram and Saparua, and thus assumed to be their place or origin.126 The Ambonese ability to trace their descent to a common ancestor often inscribed the name of the first person who was the first of their clan to arrive in their present locality from another place on a memorial stone which became a centre piece of the village.127

There is also the persistent belief in the Nunusaku myth of the legendary mountain in West Seram, which traditionally has been regarded as the origin of all Ambonese and sacredly as the source and destiny of life.128 Dieter Bartels argues that the myth has been accepted throughout the central Moluccas and over centuries has been subjected to the processes of semantic accretion.129 As a result of synchronising foreign elements of Christianity and Islam, the myth has thus come to represent an important preserver of identity for both Muslims and Christians.

126 Lapian, Sejarah Sosial, p.12.
127 Bartels, Invisible Mountain, p.22.
129 Bartels, Invisible Mountain, p.315.
In their approach to existing religious divisions in the community, the RMS leaders utilised this knowledge of the Ambonese to trace a common homeland and territory. During the brief existence of RMS government, it was acknowledged that there were particular difficulties in obtaining the support of the Muslim community, as the RMS was initially perceived as mainly a Christian-led movement. In attempting to alleviate these difficulties of gaining a wider support base, the RMS leadership attempted to create a sense of solidarity by referring to a common place of origin.

Alex Nanlohy of the DMS executive and later a member of the RMS government, referred to the ‘defence of the homeland’, particularly in regard to the prospect of Indonesian troops landing on the Ambonese islands after the newly formed Indonesian Republic intended to transfer some of its troops to Eastern Indonesia. The idea of a core territorial homeland was in this way used to try and bring Christians and Muslims together as Ambonese. Similarly, both Muslims and Christians were referred to as ‘brothers’ deriving ancestral heritage from the same place of origin. It was highlighted that the similarity of clan names by both Ambonese Christians and Muslims proved to denote common origin; ‘the relationship between Islam and Christianity is like that of brothers...both have the same family names’.

It has been acknowledged that the RMS leaders, during their brief period of governance of the Ambonese islands in 1950, stressed the cultural uniqueness of the Moluccan Republic at the time. During the surge of Indonesian nationalism and the activities of many Ambonese nationalists there was little fervent enthusiasm for the incorporation of an all-encompassing Indonesian Republic. Many were already anxious about their future and disillusioned with the increasing disengagement of the Dutch from supporting the Ambonese when the Republic of Indonesia worked to

---

130 Chauvel, Nationalists, pp.347-348.
131 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.371.
dismantle the proposed federal structure. In the months preceding the proclamation of the RMS, both Manusama and Alex Nanlohy of the RMS government spoke enthusiastically of an Ambonese identity depicted against a Javanese ‘other’. Manusama was known to have seen the RMS as an alternative to integration into Indonesia rather than a first priority, and was active during RMS rule in compromising with many of the pro-Indonesia nationalists. However, Manusama also expressed doubts regarding the viability of an independent Indonesia based on its large ethnic diversity. His speeches at meetings held in the months prior to the declaration of the RMS attracted large numbers of the local population and were often pervaded by references to a distinct Ambonese or South Moluccan nationalistic zeal.

I do not start my speech with the catch-cry Merdeka because I do not feel it is necessary to shout from here this foreign catch-cry, which in fact is not used by Ambonese who possess the genuine feeling of the Ambonese nationalism.

Alex Nanlohy was less conciliatory in his aspirations for the establishment of a separate Moluccan republic. Instead, he was bent on developing an adat based Ambonese nationalism that was anti-Dutch as much as anti-Javanese. He indicated the heterogenous nature of Ambonese culture, with both east and west affiliations and the subsequent need for the Ambonese to go back to their ethnic roots and look again at their own adat. There seemed, however, to be little consensus as to how adat would play a role in an independent government. Others subscribed to the definition of their Amboneseness as the ‘return to adat’, but in a more extreme manner by returning to early traditional practices of headhunting and the taking of adat oaths. Some even

133 Christie, Modern History, p.118.  
134 Alex Nanlohy was an émigré and member of the South Moluccan Council executive.  
135 Chauvel, Nationalists, pp.367-9.  
136 Chauvel, Ambon, p.251.  
137 Manusama quoted in Chauvel, Nationalists, p.350.  
138 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.367.  
139 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.369.
expressed ethnic uniqueness by claiming that they were not racially Indonesians at all, but rather Melanesians.140

Political organisations such as Sarekat Ambon were seen by several prominent Ambonese leaders as important in promoting group solidarity through their promotion of an Ambonese identity.141 For example, Dr. Apituley, a representative in the Volksraad (People’s Council), defended the Sarekat Ambon indicating that it kept in mind ‘the exuberant character of the Ambonese’.142 Despite the organisation’s argument for Ambon’s inclusion in an independent Indonesia, Latuharhary, leader of the Sarekat Ambon, often spoke in strictly Ambonese terms by referring to aspects of Ambonese ethnic heritage and character. For example, Latuharhary in 1945 rallied local support for the newly formed Republic of Indonesia by appealing to the Ambonese to demonstrate respect to their ancestors (Tetek-Nenek-Mojang).143 In other speeches, he provided versions of Ambonese historical experience, especially with reference to the Pattimura revolt of 1817. Latuharhary spoke fervently of Pattimura’s mass revolt during early Dutch occupation as having been instigated by their ‘Moluccan ancestors [who] were not wild animals who killed their enemies only to drink their blood’.144

References to a common ancestry were not exclusive to nationalistic speeches prior to the declaration of the RMS. For many Ambonese, there were those who traced the origin of their ancestors to the island of Seram, an area also inhabited by indigenous tribes predominantly located in the more mountainous areas of Seram and known as

141 Educational opportunities overseas and professional placements elsewhere in Indonesia brought many Ambonese together and influenced an emerging tendency within Ambonese political leadership to stress cultural differences rather than similarities to distinguish an Ambonese or South Moluccan culture to that imposed by the colonialists.
142 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.135.
143 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.199.
144 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.145.
The Alifuru, or Alifuro, known to have practised headhunting and were able to preserve much of their traditional belief system up to the first few decades of the twentieth century until they were pacified by the Dutch. The war-like and antagonistic character of Alifuru people was well known by the Ambonese and they were evidently a source of conflict with other neighbouring villages. In 1820, for example, a letter was written on behalf of all the village heads in Central Ambon to the Dutch Governor at the time. The letter was essentially a request for permission to establish a *pela* relationship with another village. It argued that the villages needed to establish this relationship, not only for the barter or exchange of goods and services, but for mutual assistance in the defence against ‘wicked Alifuru’.

During Dutch occupation, the Ambonese viewed the Alifuru as a primitive and uncultured people. Subsequently, over time, the term Alifuru became a derogatory term referring to a people of an uncouth, uncultured and uncivilised character.

In a reinvention of the term, Latuharhary, in his speech, referred to the Alifuru as a unifying concept of common ancestry and ethnic roots. In effect, Latuharhary changed the connotations of the Alifuru, or indigenous peoples of their ancestors, as epitomising something more honorific. Traditionally, the Ambonese have maintained a belief in their ancestors as a source of power and as a confirmation of their adat or cultural roots, and it has been argued that a ‘relapse’ into these traditional patterns.

---


146 The traditional system of *pela* refers to ceremonial bonds of friendship and mutual obligation established between two or more villages often encompassing both Christian and Muslim villages in a single alliance. It is conceived of as an enduring and inviolable brotherhood; an alliance that has to be renewed regularly through important ceremonies and solemn oaths. Generally those villages in a pela relationship are obligated to assist one another in times of crisis and in undertaking community projects such as the building of a church or mosque. For a detailed explanation of *pela* see Bartels 1978. Also Cooley, *Village Government*, pp.139-163.

was such a feature during the time of the RMS. Besides *Sarekat Ambon*, other political organisations, such as the Indonesian Independence Party (PIM) or Association of the Great East (PTB), were convinced that Ambon’s future was within an independent Indonesia. Those who advocated the right to remain in the Netherlands East Indies Kingdom promoted solidarity among the Ambonese through the concepts of common ethnic origin and history.

### 3.6.2 Language

Although there existed nine indigenous languages spread throughout the Ambonese islands, Malay was used to promote the unified mobilisation of Ambon. As a result of European influences since the seventeenth century, the Malay dialect has become the dominant *lingua franca* throughout the Moluccan region. The use of Malay came into prominence when the Dutch used classical Malay instead of Dutch as the language of instruction in Ambon. As of 1950, most inhabitants of Ambon city spoke a mixture of Dutch and Malay. With the ousting of the Dutch and the formation of the Indonesian Republic, Malay has become the lingua franca of the region and for most inhabitants their mother tongue.

From a linguistic perspective, cultural syncretisation and creolisation has meant that many indigenous languages were displaced. Factors such as early internal migration

---

149 PIM or *Partai Indonesia Merdeka* was established in August 1946 by E.U. Pupella and became the major pro-Indonesia party on Ambon. All of PIM’s leaders were Republicans whose ultimate objective was the realisation of the 1945 proclamation of Indonesian independence. However by post-war Pupella was openly supportive of the Dutch federal system arguing it was a means by which Ambonese could unite politically. PIM’s campaign organisation (United Front for South Moluccan Council), formed in time for the elections to the DMS, proved to be extremely popular by winning the majority of seats.
150 PTB or *Persatoean Timoer Besar* was established in April 1946 with separatist objectives for Ambon, Manado and Timor. Generally it aimed to promote the interests of these islands and ensure their right of self-determination by remaining within the Kingdom of The Netherlands.
patterns in the central Moluccas, which have seen migrants reconcile their language with the language of their new area, has also contributed to the extinction of indigenous languages. As a result of this, early revolts against the colonial powers utilised Malay in order to mobilise general support from the population who would have adopted Malay. Considering the variety of indigenous dialects and languages of the central Moluccas, it would also seem appropriate, in a practical sense, to have utilised Malay as a symbol of group solidarity, disregarding any negative connotations of being intrinsically linked to the colonial powers.

In order to linguistically encompass the peoples of the region more so than any other language, the RMS used Malay as its medium of communication. Both the RMS nationalistic government and political parties prior to the formation of the RMS used Malay, which at the time would have already developed as the predominant language throughout the central Moluccas, especially in Ambon city and particularly for the Dutch educated Ambonese including the RMS leaders.

3.6.3 Religion

Religion was not one of the main unifying bases for the RMS, and that the focus was, therefore, put on the unifying role of ethnicity and of anti-Javanese sentiments. Within a Christian-Muslim division in Ambon’s community, the RMS sought ways to gain support beyond its Christian core. By the 1950s, Christian-Muslim relations in Ambon were particularly strained primarily as a result of colonial policy which favoured Ambonese Christians over their Muslim compatriots, and likewise the favourable treatment of Muslims by the Japanese. The already strained relations suffered further during the nationalist period as a result of the various debates concerning Dutch loyalty and the consequential splits within political parties.

154 Taber, Atlas Bahasa, pp.x-xi.
Political parties in Ambon were cautious in denoting themselves as either Christian or Muslim-led parties, for fear of alienating a large proportion of a potential support base. During the Indonesian nationalistic movement in Ambon after the war, political organisations were reluctant to draw correlations between religion and political persuasion. *Sarekat Islam*, with its clear identification of those of Islamic denomination, generated a considerable following throughout Java during the early Indonesian nationalistic period, in its blatant rejection of the Dutch government and its policies.¹⁵⁵ In Ambon it appears to have failed to achieve a comparable following, quite possibly as result of its decision to align its organisation with a group of Indonesian and radical Dutch representatives under the name of *Radicale Concentratie*, thereby associating Islam with rather radical connotations.

Many political parties perceived the situation in such a way that they could not use religion as a unifying symbol, especially if they wanted to incorporate themselves within the Indonesian Republic. Amongst organisations such as PIM and Parindra¹⁵⁶ there was an anticipated need to go beyond religion in order to seek a bond between the Ambonese.¹⁵⁷ As a result, leadership of parties often conspicuously comprised both members of the Christian and Muslim communities, and this diversity was often a crucial feature in attracting supporters from diverse sections of the community. Despite a reluctance to specifically draw upon religion as aforementioned, organisations were nevertheless vocal regarding their intentions to gain support from marginal sectors of the community. As Pupella stated in 1946 in reference to the support for the PIM, ‘I feel strong in the struggle for independence, because behind me stand the Moslem community’.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ A branch of Parindra was established in Ambon in 1939 by the Dutch educated and nationalist Senarjo. Its nationalist objectives were supported by leaders of *Sarekat Islam*.
The clear problem for the RMS movement was that it was consistently portrayed as a Christian-based and Christian-led movement. It was argued by Chauvel that the evolution of the RMS and its propagation by its civilian leaders was an attempt to maintain Christian dominance in Ambonese society.\textsuperscript{159} Indeed, most of the RMS ministers were Christians, and the movement itself attracted a large following from the KNIL soldiers who had long established themselves as a group with close affiliations to the Dutch and Christianity. It also appears that the RMS held support from local Christian churches, some of which later expressed their implicit solidarity for the realisation of an independent South Moluccan Republic\textsuperscript{160}, although many attempted to remain neutral at the expense of much spiritual tension.\textsuperscript{161}

Despite clear support for the RMS and its leaders from prominent Ambonese Muslims, most notably the raja of the village of Tulegu, Ibrahim Ohorella, there appeared to be reservations from the general Muslim community. While it has been difficult to assess the extent of support for the RMS from the Ambonese community, the Muslim community in general appears to have possessed suspicions of the intentions of the RMS government. W. A. Lokollo, a member of the DMS, was particularly critical of the way in which the RMS leaders sought to establish the RMS which, he argued, had been the result of intimidation instigated by R. S. Soumokil and the soldiers (‘berets’).\textsuperscript{162} Lokollo also commented on the RMS proclamation indicating that ‘the majority of Muslims did not agree, but were not brave enough to express their feelings’.\textsuperscript{163}

While it is not easy to assess the extent of support from the Muslim community, it is recognised that Manusama, Soumokil and members of the RMS government at the time, had observed the explicit associations of the RMS with Christianity and the

\textsuperscript{159} Chauvel, \textit{Regional Dynamics}, 1985, p.260.
\textsuperscript{160} Van der Hoek, \textit{Cakalele}, pp.69-70.
\textsuperscript{161} Chauvel, \textit{Nationalists}, p.361.
\textsuperscript{162} Chauvel, \textit{Nationalists}, p.359.
\textsuperscript{163} Lokollo quoted in Chauvel, \textit{Nationalists}, p.361.
subsequent reservations emanating from the Amboinese community. As an independence movement seeking to establish a separate state from the newly formed Republic of Indonesia and the Dutch colonial federation, the RMS had to unequivocally distance Amboinese or South Moluccan cultural identity from that of anything Indonesian or Dutch. The use of a Christian Amboinese idiom would thus not be appropriate. Explicit use of Christianity as a unifying symbol of group solidarity would clearly alienate the non-Christian or Muslim sector of Amboinese society. Despite the dominance of Christians in its leadership, the RMS employed ‘ethnicity’ rather than religion as its mobilising ideology. The cultural uniqueness of the South Moluccans was, therefore, given specific emphasis. Manusama, Soumokil, Nanlohy and other members of the RMS government and DMS executive avoided any implicit identification of the RMS with Christianity, and instead, consistently spoke of the RMS as representing the interests of the ‘South Moluccan’ or ‘Ambonese’ people. In this way, the RMS attempted to create an inclusive grouping beyond local myths of origin, in order to incorporate and mobilise a type of ‘pan-ethnic’ community. Manusama particularly engaged in speeches where he overtly used these encompassing terms, implying also that as ‘brothers’, all members of the South Moluccan or Amboinese community were unambiguously linked as kin.

The RMS is neither Islamic or Christian, because in the Moluccas the relationship between Islam and Christianity is like that of brothers, not only the pela relationship, both communities have the same family names and share the same adat-istiadat and culture.

165 The obvious difficulty being that there was a close relationship between Christianity and Amboinese adat as both had co-existed for centuries and as result had become intertwined with each other.
167 See Chauvel, *Nationalists*, p. 363. Southern islands wanted to separate from RMS due to the movement being perceived as solely an ‘Ambonese’ movement.
3.7 Conclusion

The RMS had some measure of success in providing a sense of security and unity which overcame the disruptions and rivalries of the late 1940s. Manuhutu and Wairisal described the Ambonese response to the proclamation as enthusiastic as ‘people danced and shouted’ while ‘Soumokil was naturally pleased that his plan had worked’. Generally, it appears that the proclamation was recognised by the Ambonese with heightened popular feeling especially at the time of the TNI attack on Ambon in September 1950. The RMS was particularly welcomed by the Ambonese KNIL soldiers, church leaders, and other officials within the Dutch administration.

Despite this, success was mainly in unifying the diverse Christian factions and groups, but there was only limited success in mobilising Muslims. A primary reason for this is the fact that the RMS could not avoid its specific Christian character with Soumokil occasionally appealing to what he perceived as a ‘Christian Ambonese society’ and the fact that all RMS ministers except one were Christian. Political divisions among the Muslim villages also meant that the RMS enjoyed some support from conservative Muslim raja and PTB supporters, but relatively little support from others.

In the few months that the RMS government commanded authority in Ambon, it served as a functioning government with a President and cabinet, with representation abroad, and with a temporary parliamentary body. On September 4, 1950 a tentative Constitution was established stipulating the RMS to be ‘a sovereign

---

169 Van Kaam, South Moluccas, p.114.
170 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.371.
171 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.361.
172 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.370.
173 Ibrahim Ohorella was raja of Tulehu in Ambon and was the only Muslim representative in the RMS government. He was politically active within the PTB and assisted Manusama in the days preceding the RMS proclamation.
174 Chauvel, Nationalists, p.370.
independent state based on democratic principles’ and that its territory encompassed the South Moluccas as defined when under the State of East Indonesia.\textsuperscript{176}

During RMS control of the Ambonese islands from April to December 1950, intensive negotiations were made between the Dutch and Indonesian governments in order to find a non-violent resolution to the matter.\textsuperscript{177} The RMS government appeared to take no initiative in these negotiations for a peaceful settlement and instead sought international support from the Netherlands, the United States and Australia.\textsuperscript{178} In September of that year the Indonesian armed forces launched an attack and finally occupied the island after three months of fighting with RMS supporters. Many of the RMS leaders retreated into the mountains and jungles of Seram to maintain some sporadic resistance for the next decade or so but most resistance was extinguished with the capture and sentencing of several members of the RMS government.\textsuperscript{179}

An RMS government-in-exile was subsequently established in The Netherlands in 1953 but it did not exert concerted efforts to pursue the RMS cause in Indonesia with its sporadic violence actions in The Netherlands condemned by the international community. For decades afterwards, it was wracked by factional movements and achieved very limited international recognition, with the Indonesian government perceiving the RMS issue officially as a problem for the Netherlands rather than for Indonesia.

Post 1950, in the context of uprooting traditional social structure and the emergence of new governmental tensions, the RMS event became the raw material for the subsequent constructions of Ambonese identity – demonised as the Other by the

\textsuperscript{176} Van Der Kroef, \textit{World Justice}, 1961, p.188.
\textsuperscript{177} This included the Leimena and Van Hoogstraten-Schotborgh missions.
\textsuperscript{178} Chauvel, \textit{Regional}, 1985, p.259.
\textsuperscript{179} In 1953, Manuhutu and other RMS ministers were captured and sentenced to jail. Soumokil was captured in 1964 and sentenced to death two years later. Manusama escaped to the Netherlands in 1953 were he succeeded Soumokil as president of the RMS government-in-exile. R. J. May, ‘Ethnic Separatism in Southeast Asia’, \textit{Pacific Viewpoint}, vol.31, no.2, October 1990, pp.32-3.
Islamic *Laskar Jihad*, and reconstructed as the Us by the separatist Moluccan Sovereignty Front. The following chapter will offer an illustration of the extent of rapid changes to existing Ambonese authority structures and social hierarchy by a centralising Indonesian State during the 1980s and 1990s.
CHAPTER 4
SOCIAL DISRUPTION AND ITS IMPACT IN AMBON:
1950-2000

4.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to examine the link between the impact of social change on communal and traditional structures that took place in Ambon between 1950 and 2000, and the ideologisation of Ambonese nationalism in 2000. It will seek to show how in the context of specific pre-conditions, dislocations of authority structures and disruptions of communal cohesion combined to generate nationalism as one particular response. Disruption in Ambon is referred to here as occurring at various levels and therefore this is not a case of disruption to an undisturbed situation.

This chapter will explore how State interventions in Ambon involved disruptions to the social structure and the authority structure where intrusive state tactics provoked dislocated elites and disrupted communities to rebel through ethnic nationalist rebellion. However prior to this, changes or disruptions during colonization had already produced changes at the community level so as to disrupt the cohesion of community or its authority structure. In this context, the RMS had developed traditional myths of communal identity, and its ways of defining relationships with others subsequently disrupted traditional notions of identity.

Further to this, there were also the subsequent disruptions of the conflicts themselves which included the interventions of the Indonesian military to suppress the RMS and the ensuing violence which managed to breed new insecurities and subsequently influenced the way in which the Ambonese engaged in a process of transacting and

---

Limited material exists on the impact of Soekarno’s policies on Central Maluku and specifically on Ambon. As a result this section will deal mainly with Maluku as a region.
redefining identity. In this way, post-colonial disruptions did not of themselves generate nationalisms in response, but merely generated the insecurities and dislocations to which nationalism was one possible response.

The following key propositions will be made: first, under the authority of President Soekarno and later President Soeharto, profound changes to the orientation of central authority and regional autonomy in Maluku resulted in the loss of authority for both Ambonese educated and traditional elites thereby disrupting village communities. Second, that rapid migration and the exacerbation of existing poverty levels created workplace tensions and economic discrepancies between different migrant groups and between migrants and the indigenous Ambonese community. Third, that structural inadequacies relating to decentralisation led to it having an impact on generating greater personalisation of power and corruption and thence the further erosion of the legitimate authority of both traditional and educated elites over Ambonese society. Fourth, that these disruptions introduced new levels of insecurity and uncertainty for ordinary Ambonese, resulting in the adoption of new nationalist ideologies.

4.2 Disruption of Authority Structures in the Old Order

During the period of Parliamentary Democracy (1950-1957) under President Soekarno, new power groups and displaced elites faced legitimacy problems in their quest for authority in Ambon. President Soekarno’s active pursuit of centralising administrative and political control of all regions throughout Indonesia meant that firstly, new centralised government institutions were established which ensured that power and authority were gradually shifted away from traditional village government. Second, the development of a new civil administration meant that many positions in local government were occupied by many of the Dutch-educated Ambonese who were thus elevated to new levels of influence and authority.
The South Moluccas existed as a separate colony of the Netherlands until 1949, when they were ceded to the newly independent Republic of Indonesia which was transformed from its federal state into a unitary form. As shown previously, after the declaration of a unitary republic in 1950, the South Moluccas attempted to secede with the declaration of the Republic of the South Moluccas (RMS). From 1950 until 1957, with the abolition of the RMS by Indonesian armed forces, Maluku was simply an administrative centre within the Indonesian Republic. It was not until 1957 that the first provincial unit (swatantra) of Maluku was formed with Ambon City becoming the capital of Maluku province.2

Ever since the demise of the RMS, Indonesia’s governance saw the centralisation of both political and administrative power. The lack of concession to any regional feelings of autonomy seemed to represent the determination of the Soekarno government in maintaining centralised control over the peripheral regions in the archipelago. In fact, President Soekarno indicated great resolve to achieve this with his increasingly tougher stance which led to the decision in 1957 to force a takeover of all Dutch enterprises in Indonesia, and the decision to force a resilient battle against the Dutch in bids to control West Irian.3

The fundamental issue here was the geographical, economic and cultural dichotomy between Java and the Outer Islands, including the province of Maluku in Eastern Indonesia, and how this generated regional resentment against a perceived Javanese-dominated government, especially from local elites in pursuit of their own elite interests. The win of the Java-based Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) party in the

3 Stephen V. Harris and Colin Brown, *Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Australia: the Irian Jaya problem of 1984*, Australia-Asia Papers No.29, Centre of the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, Griffith University, February 1985, pp.3-6. Indonesia argued that Dutch occupation of West Papua was illegal and that de jure sovereignty rested with them. After various campaigns by Soekarno to asset their claim over the territory, an agreement was reached by the Dutch and the Indonesian governments stipulating that West Papua be administered by the United Nations from 1962-1983 when it would be then turned over to Indonesia providing that, before 1969, an “Act of Free Choice” would be held in which the West Papuans could determine whether or not they wished to remain part of Indonesia.
1955 elections did not help relations between the two regions of Java and the Outer Islands. With the PNI cooperating closely with Soekarno, the polarisation between Java and the peripheral regions of Indonesia mounted and the subject of regional autonomy became a matter of continuous political debate. Indeed, the debate was fraught with anti-Javanese sentiment and it was on this basis that it was argued by local elites that at least regional heads should be locally acknowledged heads of authority:

The proponents of regional autonomy argued that in choosing the ‘right’ person for the head of the region, the government should consider the ‘acceptability’ of the person. For people in the Outer Islands, this usually meant that person should be not only a native son but also acceptable to the dominant party of the region.⁴

Soekarno and his PNI-led government were reluctant to concede to these regional demands for a greater distribution of administrative powers to local centres. Instead Maluku and other regions became subject to various new concessions and administrative and governmental arrangements. Under Soekarno, the object was to form suitable units of administration and governance that would take over the powers formerly exercised by Dutch Residents.⁵ Arrangements were thus made to create areas and units that would not only alleviate regional discontent but arguably also provide an efficient territorial administration.

As part of new decentralisation measures, Soekarno effectively marginalised the village raja through the creation of new provincial structures such as the new provincial representative council (DPRD) and the provincial executive council (DPD). These councils were part of Soekarno’s three-tiered system with provincial, regional and village levels of government. In Law 1/57 it was laid out that the provincial or regional government would be composed of the DPRD and the DPD, the two basic institutions that were designed for the purpose of providing avenues through which

⁴ Amal, Central Government, p.5.
⁵ Legge, Central Authority, pp.70-3.
local people could express their opinions and aspirations. Members of both councils were predominantly civil servants and other groups, such as small traders and teachers, who were beginning to assume responsibility for the administration of local services.\(^6\)

Membership of councils consequently reflected an obvious absence of traditional representatives from village authority, which inevitably left little scope for the exercise of genuine initiative by the traditional elite. Some level of authority was provided for the DPD to intervene in village affairs which thereby ousted the *raja* in his traditional role in this field. In the division of duties by DPD members, it was likely that one of these individuals could be entrusted in handling the ‘portfolio’ of village affairs.\(^7\) Referred to as ‘general government’, village affairs were left ultimately in the hands of the Chairman of the DPD, who issued instruction in these matters on behalf of the central government.

While Law 1 of 1957 attempted to alleviate the dominance of power vested in the Chairman’s office by making it responsible to the representative council, in general traditional systems of authority were eclipsed by the responsibilities of the Chairman who took on a very centralised role. Hence Soekarno’s insistence that the office of the DPD Chairman was not to be entirely elective and was to be filled by an appointment made by a specified authority representing the central government.\(^8\)

Social control was becoming more complex and diffused as the DPD acquired greater control of village government. In the central Moluccas there was a distinct passivity evident in the local *raja* who were at a loss when faced with these circumstances:

> Little imagination is applied toward meeting new conditions with new techniques of leadership, and there appears little evidence of foresight or initiative being used in solving needs and problems. Affairs are usually

\(^6\) Legge, *Central Authority*, pp.131-153.  
\(^7\) Legge, *Central Authority*, p.165-6.  
\(^8\) Legge, *Central Authority*, p.31. In special circumstances, different arrangements prevailed whereby the *kepala daerah* was to be appointed by the President from the traditional ruling family of the area. Normally then the *kepala daerah* would be the traditional ruler. However, at the time this only applied to the city of Yogyakarta in central Java which was deemed a ‘special region’.
allowed to continue until circumstances force action to be taken. The observer’s general impression is that the people, leaders as well as led, have a basically passive attitude. The village tends to await instructions from the district level. Villagers wait for leadership from the village council, and if it is not forthcoming, they do nothing.9

A new elite of Ambonese civil servants emerged who occupied positions within the DPRD and DPD. As the raja became displaced from their traditional position of authority, the new scope and weight of local authority shifted onto this new civil administration and its various officers.

In this respect, the diminishing weight of village authority and the rise of new elites were signified by the exodus of village members to assume administrative positions in the towns. Civilian Ambonese were compelled to gravitate to towns and cities in their community to occupy positions in government and other spheres where substantial status and remuneration could be achieved. As local government assumed wider powers, the need increased for adequately trained administrators and technical staff.10 Prospects of greater economic and political influence propelled many Moluccans to migrate to towns in order to occupy these positions in the new government administration.

Traditional authority began to be challenged by these intellectual Ambonese who came to dominate many official positions in local government. In contrast to the experience of other regions in Indonesia, Ambon’s colonial experience was exemplified by extensive access to Western educational opportunities as a result of widespread conversions to Christianity which allowed them to enter Christian institutions of higher learning. As a result, not only were the schools in Ambon better but also their standard of literacy was of a higher standard than the rest of Indonesia.11 In this respect, during the colonial period, the Ambonese were then more likely to

---

occupy dominant positions in the lower echelons of the colonial bureaucracy.\footnote{As a result of Dutch operated professional training institutions the Ambonese were found in many public offices such as central administrator, public prosecutors, court executioners, and bureaucrats. Many Ambonese students also became government physicians and professionally trained engineers with the establishment of colleges of engineering in 1921 and medicine in 1927. See Richard Z. Leirissa, ‘Social Development in Ambon during the 19th Century: Ambonese Burger’, \textit{Cakalele}, Vol.6, 1995, pp.1-11.} As a result, the Indonesian Republic found it easy to access the existing pool of Ambonese technical and bureaucratic staff already trained under Dutch administration, to occupy administrator positions at the local level in Ambon.

The combined impact of the disruptions brought about by the creation of new provincial structures which marginalised the \textit{raja} and the rise of the new elite within public administration left traditional elites faced with the problem of rebuilding their authority and legitimacy within their local community. At the same time, as new leaders within their community, educated civil servants were challenged with the task of establishing their credibility amongst the local people.

4.3 Disruptions of Authority Structures in the New Order

The disruptions of the Old Order policies were exacerbated by the impact in Ambon of New Order policies. In the same way as the Soekarno regime, processes of disruption in the New Order fundamentally led to the marginalisation of Ambonese elites, both traditional and educated. This in turn led these elites to feeling alienated and insecure, and in search of alternative sources of authority. Furthermore, the weakening of Ambonese elites posed problems for people in the villages who lacked access to Ambonese patrons and leaders, thence feeling insecure and in need of new sources of security.

When Soeharto assumed the presidential office in Indonesia in 1967, the Ambonese community found itself subject to various aspects of disruption which combined to
generate further situations of conflict and rivalry. These will be identified in this section, firstly, as the displacement of traditional authority figures as a result of the implementation of new regional policies. Second, disruptions in Ambon took the form of the displacement of skilled Ambonese already occupying positions in local government by newly appointed government elites resulting from Soeharto’s tightening of control of the regions.

The New Order regime’s centralisation of state authority and new development plans restructured village government so that the authority of the raja was usurped by new village elites. The New Order government promoted the advantages of these changes by expressing that the new Repelita or Five-Year Development programs would bring Maluku out of a ‘backward’ age and would be of immense benefit to the local population.13 During the early years of the New Order government when the state began to implement the first of its Five-Year Development programs, the state opted for a strong central government structure in which the delegation of power to local government would not be encouraged.14 Subsequently, the existing system of local government throughout the regions became more centralised and was restructured accordingly with specific functions, duties and powers (See Appendix 7).

The raja was seen by central government as an impediment to this development and it, therefore, formulated ways in which the raja’s authority could be marginalised. It was the perception of state elites that a government that was strong in every way, while remaining the centrepiece of a bureaucratic polity, needed to neutralise prevailing local systems of government. In the Government Explanatory Notes of the 1979 Law, it was suggested that existing communal systems could manifest as an obstacle to community development:

---

13 It was also said to have represented a way in which to prevent the emergence of subversive elements, such as the RMS, which have in the past prevented any real desire for essential change to emerge. Leirissa, Maluku, 1995, pp.208-9, 216.
The objective and the aim of the 1979/No 5 Law is for the homogenisation and strengthening of village government. Homogenisation is considered necessary because the consequences of the colonial government legacy have resulted in incompatible village governments. Decision-makers in the New Order have regarded this situation as being unable to provide the impetus for the village community to achieve dynamic growth. As a result, villages and their governments, whose shape and form are varied and individualistic, are sometimes perceived as an obstacle to the intensive construction and control in improving community standards of living.\(^{15}\)

The position of *raja* was accordingly superseded as a result of new legislation which prescribed changes in village government and administration. Within the existing levels of district and village government established under Soekarno, the New Order government enacted the Village Law, which was passed in 1979, and dictated new changes in village government and administration for Indonesia’s approximately 63,000 villages at the time.\(^{16}\) It was proposed that changes would take place in terms of 1) the government structure itself; 2) elections of the village government apparatus; 3) the responsibilities and role of non-formal leaders; and 4) political and non-political organisations.

These changes, firstly, entailed superficially retaining the positions of *raja* and other village hierarchy, while allocating functionary power and authority to a new revamped village council (*saniri*) consisting predominantly of non-traditional leaders rather than traditional *adat* functionaries.\(^{17}\) Second, the system of selection of the *raja* or village head moved from one based on hereditary lines to the merit-based election of a candidate, to be approved by the village council and ultimately by the regent.


(bupati) on behalf of the provincial governor.\textsuperscript{18} Third, non-formal leaders were expected to function within the existing structure of conflict resolution,\textsuperscript{19} to control and resolve issues of conflict that relate to local tradition.

The contraction of raja power and influence in Ambonese society and the disillusionment of civilian Ambonese can be related to these changes. The system of selection of the raja or village head, for example, caused unprecedented complexities for the raja in many Ambonese villages. In Seram and on the island of Ambon, the election of the village head from one based on hereditary lines to a new territorially based system of village heads meant that the raja had to openly compete for support. The raja was suddenly challenged by new opposition groups seeking to gain political legitimacy and power in the village environment. Many raja faced strong opposition from migrant groups within the community, such as the Bugis or Makassarese from Southeast Sulawesi, who positioned themselves as candidates for village heads and appealed to different migrant groups for support.

Changes to traditional structures of conflict resolution marginalised the raja by shifting authority to new village authority figures such as the newly elected village head. At the same time, civilian Ambonese became disillusioned as the new village head did not wield the same degree of authority as the raja. It thus became difficult for these new authority figures to resolve disputes.\textsuperscript{20} As one Ambonese stated, ‘The village head no longer seemed to function anymore. If there was a conflict, the raja was no longer obeyed because of the change in system’.\textsuperscript{21} This was exemplified in 1983 when the 1979 Village Law was initially implemented in Huaulu in Seram. The position of raja and the village council were in principle supposed to retain their

\textsuperscript{18} Depdikbud, \textit{Sejarah Pengaruh Pelita}, p.117.
\textsuperscript{19} My translation. “Para Tua-Tua adat tetap melakukan peranan dan fungsinya dalam memelihara dan mengatur soal-soal adat baik dalam upacara-upacara adat maupun dalam menyelesaikan masalah-masalah yang timbul yang berhubungan dengan tradisi dan kepercayaan setempat” in Depdikbud, \textit{Sejarah Pengaruh Pelita}, p.119.
\textsuperscript{21} Interview with informant. My translation of “Kepala desa sonde berperan lagi. Kalau ada perselisihan, raja sonde dipatuh karena perubahan sistem”.

141
functions as the pillars of village conflict resolution and authorities in *adat*. However, the new village head and its associated village institutions were renamed, and there existed no specific requirements for the village head to be knowledgeable of local *adat*.\(^{22}\)

In the same way, the marginalisation of the *raja* through the consolidation of new institutions of village authority left many people suspicious and apathetic, as they were no longer able to recognise these figures or institutions as a legitimate source of authority and power.\(^{23}\) For example, the island of Buru off the West coast of Ambon in Central Maluku experienced unexpected upheavals in their villages after the implementation of the 1979 Village Law between 1986 and 1988. During that period, 58 settlements (*kampung*) were amalgamated into 27 villages, with one of those *kampung* designated as the governing village (*desa induk*). Owing to many of these *kampung* having their own sense of origin and historical identity, most were not prepared to accept a new dominant village as the chief authority over their village affairs.

In a further series of reforms for a more streamlined and centralised bureaucracy, non-Ambonese elites recruited by the Indonesian government exerted effective control over civil administration in Ambon. Beginning in 1969, Soeharto’s government reorganised the armed services, which gave precedence to military personnel in civil service positions over locally employed staff. Military penetration of the bureaucracy at local levels effectively dislocated existing civil servants, which in Ambon’s case were predominately from within the local Ambonese community. The dominant position of the army was formalised in a new organisation called the Functional Service Board (*Dewan Kekaryaan*), which assigned military personnel to tasks within the civilian structure. Officers were placed in all levels of local administration from


\(^{23}\) HRW [online], Ambon, 1999 Report.
cabinet ministers, heads of government agencies and provincial governors, to local district heads and even civilian positions at village level.\textsuperscript{24}

Ambonese civil servants were subsequently consigned to positions of minor prestige and influence as, Ulf Sundhaussen points out, Soeharto transformed the Indonesian military into a centre of real power by making them more or less ‘in charge of every aspect of public life in Indonesia’\textsuperscript{25} Apart from being well entrenched in positions within central administration and the top strata of the diplomatic and consular corp, military increasingly usurped the upper echelons of authority at village, district and provincial levels. The idea of central government was that, by appointing these people, it would provide the opportunity for no ‘undesirable’ to gain prominence. At the Moluccan provincial level, military men were designated in the parliaments and the first two governors of Maluku appointed by Soeharto, J. Latuharhary and G.J. Latumahina, were from outside the Amboinese islands\textsuperscript{26} and had military backgrounds. In addition, by 1969, the number of military mayors and district heads throughout Indonesia reached 147 of a total of 271.\textsuperscript{27}

With many skilled Amboinese already occupying positions in local government because of their valued administrative and technical experience, Soeharto’s expansion of military intervention in the bureaucracy was a direct challenge to the Amboinese holding positions within the civil service. These challenges continued in 1997 with the replacement of Akib Laluconsina by Saleh Laluconsina\textsuperscript{28} as Governor of Maluku. He

\textsuperscript{24} Amal, \textit{Central Government}, p.135. During his first decade in power, Soeharto ensured that army generals increased their share of provincial governorships from 10 out of 25 (40\%) to 21 out of 27 (78\%). This trend was echoed at district level and by the 1970’s colonels and lieutenant-colonels received almost three-quarters of all the total bupati and mayoral appointments. Michael S. Malley, ‘New Rules, Old Structures and the Limits of Decentralisation’, in E. Aspinall and G. Fealy (eds) \textit{Local Power and Politics in Indonesia: Decentralisation & Democratization}, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies: Singapore, 2003, p.107.


\textsuperscript{26} J. Latuharhary was from the island of Haruku and G. J. Latumahina from Nusalaut island.

\textsuperscript{27} After the 1971 elections, the proportion of military personnel at district level reached approximately two-thirds. See Harold Crouch, \textit{The Army and Politics in Indonesia}, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1978, p.244.

\textsuperscript{28} Both governors were from the village of Pelauw on Haruku island.
Soeharto’s restructuring of local government, therefore, disrupted Ambonese society in a number of ways. First, the marginalisation of the traditional elites occurred in the context of the uprooting of the traditional village structure and the rapid emergence of new tensions between the new village heads and the raja. Second, new village authority structures left many people suspicious and apathetic as demonstrated in the Buru example above. Third, the authority of new indigenous elites within the public service was challenged by military personnel who were favoured by the central government and occupied positions in local government and administration.

4.4 The Disruptive Impact of Migration and the Financial Crisis

The transmigration program, spontaneous migration and the Asian Financial crisis also had a disruptive impact upon both the migrants themselves and upon the local community. Rapid migration in Ambon generated competition within the workforce and economic disparities both between migrants and the indigenous community and amongst the migrants themselves. The exacerbation of existing poverty levels during the economic crisis served to increase these tensions and discrepancies amongst both these groups.

Within this framework, an instrumentalist approach would attribute the rise of conflict to a channelling of violence to the actual source of economic tension. However, from a

---

29 While there has been organised migration from Java, which refers to the Indonesian government’s transmigration program and the recruitment of contract labour, there is a need to distinguish other forms of migration. Apart from this controlled movement of people, there is also ‘spontaneous’ or ‘free’ transmigration, which is referred here to those who are not arranged or financed by the transmigration program. For a slightly different interpretation of these terms, see Soedigo Hardjosudarmo (Kebidjaksanaan Transmigrasi dalam Rangka Pembangunan Majarakat Desa di Indonesia, Bhratara:Djakarta, 1965) who refers to ‘spontaneous’ migrants as those approved by the Transmigration Service who simply pay their passage to the settlement area and receive the same facilities as other transmigrants.
constructivist perspective, such diverse grievances involve the development of new insecurities and uncertainties from individuals within the community to which nationalism is one such possible response. As aforementioned in this thesis, in such circumstances, nationalism will emerge as long as other factors are in place including the active search of dislocated elites for re-legitimization, the resuscitation of myths of territorial homeland by these dislocated elites, and the employment of a demonized “Other” which counterposes the vision of harmonious and virtuous “Us”.

It was the population pressures on Java and increased competition in the job market during the 1970s that saw the rapid increase of middle-class migrants to Ambon and the emergence of a business-savvy group on the island. The island of Ambon has in fact been exposed to a continuous period of ‘spontaneous migration’. Migrants from Sulawesi and Java had been coming to trade in Ambon since the sixteenth century.\(^30\) However, it was during the 1970s that people from the Outer Islands recognised that the population in Maluku had better access to agricultural land than people in Java and there were opportunities for opening new land for agricultural development.\(^31\)

The influx of migrants to the Ambonese islands dramatically increased when the New Order Indonesian government implemented a transmigration program (transmigrasi) as a means by which the population-related problems of Java could be solved.\(^32\) As with many areas of Indonesia, the placement of transmigrants in central Maluku received much attention, not least because of the sociological problems it raised in the settlement areas.\(^33\) The program expanded dramatically under the two Five-Year


\(^{32}\) Organised inter-island migration was a phenomenon in Soekarno’s era of government although the initial objectives of transmigration were more to do with allocating needed labour to areas of development. This changed to new government decrees, which promoted the idea that transmigration would assist with ‘security and national unity’. See Geoffrey McNicoll, ‘Internal Migration in Indonesia: Descriptive Notes’, *Indonesia*, no.5-6, 1968, p.65.

Development Plans between 1974-1984 where, at the completion of that period, approximately 2.3 million people had been resettled. According to official figures, the province of Maluku received almost 100,000 transmigrants with central Maluku taking over half of this total, as the following table indicates:

**Table 3: Transmigration into Maluku between 1969-1999**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of:</th>
<th>South Maluku</th>
<th>Central Maluku</th>
<th>North Maluku / Ternate</th>
<th>Central Halmahera</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969-1974</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,592</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-1979</td>
<td>Households</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-1984</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-1989</td>
<td>Households</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5,426</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>7,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-1994</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>22,697</td>
<td>2,628</td>
<td>7,391</td>
<td>32,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1999</td>
<td>Households</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>1,875</td>
<td>1,681</td>
<td>1,886</td>
<td>5,654</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of:</th>
<th>South Maluku</th>
<th>Central Maluku</th>
<th>North Maluku / Ternate</th>
<th>Central Halmahera</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989-1994</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>7,456</td>
<td>6,237</td>
<td>7,384</td>
<td>21,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1999</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,854</td>
<td>8,060</td>
<td>3,990</td>
<td>25,904</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Households: 212
Total People: 830

Source: Regional Office of the Ministry of Transmigration and Forest Settlers, Province of Moluccas
Tensions developed as the Ambonese saw migrant workers, who were Javanese or Butonese, Bugis or Makassarese from South Sulawesi, as their economic rivals for scarce jobs. A case study of a transmigration community in West Seram over a period of three years, between 1992 and 1994, concluded that while local leaders benefited from relations with transmigrants and from economic and infrastructural developments, increased inequalities emerged both within the transmigration community and between the transmigration community and its neighbours.\(^{34}\)

Successful transmigrants were able to exploit access to land and trading opportunities which were not available to other migrants and local villagers. Migrants from Southeast Sulawesi have not only been successful in developing social and economic networks in Ambon City and other major urban areas around Eastern Indonesia, but also in rural areas where they have been successful in developing land for cash crops.\(^{35}\) Butonese immigrants, for example, were provided with land for temporary housing and for vegetable gardens.\(^{36}\)

Owing to increasing land shortages, additional issues such as government compensation, land rights and land ownership became a source of tension. It became common, for example, for the Butonese to engage in share-planting agreements in Ambon. However, conflicts emerged between the Butonese and the indigenous Ambonese when the Butonese started claiming economic rewards from their cultivation of permanent crops such as clove and nutmeg trees.\(^{37}\) Although many

---


\(^{35}\) For a useful source on voluntary migration of the Buginese, Makasarese, and Butonese in eastern Indonesia, see George J. Aditjondro, *Datang dengan Kapal, Tidur di Pasar, Buang Air di Kali, Pulang Naik Pesawat*, Yayasan Pengembangan Masyarakat Irian Jaya: Jayapura, 1986.


\(^{37}\) According to Ambonese adat, they were not allowed to cultivate permanent crops although this prohibition was eventually abolished in the 1960s. See von Benda-Beckmann and Taale, *Remaking Maluku*, p.54.
Bugis families, for example, gained access to this land on the basis of being empty ‘state land’ (tanah negara), claims have been made by the indigenous communities on Ambon expressing resentment towards these foreigners and disputing the basis of such ownership.\footnote{In order to gain access to land, many Bugis migrants have used ‘officialising strategies’ by obtaining land certificates authorising their occupation. See Acciaioli, Masyarakat Indonesia, pp.258-9.}

As Ambon’s economy grew during the Repelita programs of the late 1970s and 1980s, migrants from Java began to occupy positions in white collar jobs in professional, managerial, clerical and administrative offices.\footnote{See Soewartoyo, Indonesian Quarterly, pp.316-18, for statistics in migrant occupations in eastern Indonesia.} The ethnic Bugis and other migrants from Sulawesi, who had traditionally settled along the coast in self-contained communities, also began to settle in the city of Ambon, displacing other traders, taking over the transportation sector, and in the view of some indigenous Ambonese, ‘creating slum areas and contributing to urban crime’.\footnote{HWR [online], Ambon, 1999 Report. This is not to mention that during the 1980s and 1990s in Ambon, migrants, particularly the Bugis, also began to make themselves felt politically, with tightly organised Bugis associations.}

The tensions generated by migration were aggravated further by the negative effects of the 1997-8 Asian Financial Crisis\footnote{The crisis developed following the devaluation of the Thai currency. Foreign investors reacted adversely to the state of foreign exchange reserves in Thailand and South Korea and rapidly unloaded Asian currencies and assets. The economic consequences reverberated throughout the region and the ‘Asian crisis’ hit Indonesia more quickly than many analysts had expected. Many were surprised later at the subsequent damage to Indonesia’s economy and sought to explain the reasons for the emergence of the crisis. Moves were made initially in response to the impending economic crisis in 1997 with attempts to attract new foreign investment but were unsuccessful and the IMF was called on to intervene.} on the Moluccan economy which served to develop economic disparities between the rural village Ambonese and the middle urban bourgeoisie in Ambon. In pre-crisis conditions, outer provinces such as Maluku had high incidences of chronic poverty and contained a large percentage of groups, both urban and rural, who were deemed as vulnerable to further poverty, that is, greater than fifty percent chance of falling into poverty in the near future.\footnote{Asep Suryahadi and Sudarno Sumarto, ‘The Chronic Poor, The Transient Poor, and the Vulnerable in Indonesia Before and After the Crisis’, Working Paper, SMERU Research Institute: Jakarta, May 2001, p.13-7.} Further clarification is offered by Table 4 and Table 5 below.
Table 4: Changing Poverty Rates in Indonesia in 1996 and Changes 1996-99

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Poverty Incidence (%) February 1996</th>
<th>Percentage Point Change Feb 1996 – Feb 1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Sulawesi</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>23.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riau</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>7.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>64.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bali</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>10.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Nusa Tenggara</td>
<td>20.60</td>
<td>39.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aceh</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>8.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sumatra</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Sumatra</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>11.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Kalimantan</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sulawesi</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>18.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Kalimantan</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>25.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Nusa Tenggara</td>
<td>21.70</td>
<td>56.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengkulu</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>12.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yogyakarta</td>
<td>13.10</td>
<td>20.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Java</td>
<td>12.28</td>
<td>25.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Kalimantan</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>9.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Sulawesi</td>
<td>11.61</td>
<td>27.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Sulawesi</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>16.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jambi</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>8.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Java</td>
<td>9.40</td>
<td>23.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maluku</strong></td>
<td>10.47</td>
<td>41.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Java</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>14.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sumatra</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>11.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Kalimantan</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>12.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lampung</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>19.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>20.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Poverty Incidence and Contribution to Poor in Indonesia by Occupational Sector, February 1996 and February 1999 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>February 1996</th>
<th></th>
<th>February 1999</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poverty Incidence</td>
<td>Contribution to total poor</td>
<td>Poverty Incidence</td>
<td>Contribution to total poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>26.29</td>
<td>68.54</td>
<td>39.69</td>
<td>58.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade, hotel and restaurant</td>
<td>7.96</td>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>17.63</td>
<td>11.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing industry</td>
<td>10.69</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>22.92</td>
<td>7.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil/social/ private services</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>13.13</td>
<td>7.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport / communication</td>
<td>8.85</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>24.02</td>
<td>5.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>14.04</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>28.97</td>
<td>5.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving transfer</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>15.57</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and quarrying</td>
<td>15.34</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>29.81</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>13.29</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance/insurance/leasing</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, gas, and water</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>14.48</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Sorted by contribution to total poor in February 1999


As Table 4 indicates, the rural sector in Maluku had one of the highest incidences of poverty during the economic crisis with more than 18 percentage points increase from pre-existing poverty levels. This is dramatically higher than the impact on the Moluccan urban economy with only 8.17 percentage point change from February 1996. Table 5 also indicates that the agriculture sector consistently had the highest overall incidence of poverty with 26% of those in agriculture being poor. This incidence of poverty increased from 26% to 39% after the crisis, that is, a 13% point rise in poverty or 50% increase from 1996 pre-crisis conditions. The trade, manufacturing, transport and civil service industries were similarly affected but the incidence of poverty in these areas was comparatively lower.

As both Table 4 and Table 5 indicate, those working in urban Ambon City, such as migrant petty traders and middle-class businessmen, certainly bore the devastating effects of the collapse of the rupiah which saw the subsequent price escalation in
goods and services and the closing of businesses especially with short-term debts. At the same time, however, it is shown that the negative impact was particularly felt within the agricultural sector, a key component of the Moluccan economy, which has always been relatively poorer than the modern sectors based mainly in Java. With already pre-existing high poverty rates and a weak rural economy, it was the indigenous Ambonese in rural Ambon who experienced a state of serious social and economic adversity.

The relationship between the rural village Ambonese and the middle urban bourgeoisie in Ambon had, therefore, developed into an unequal one as a result of these economic disparities. Importantly, it highlighted the weak economic status of the indigenous Ambonese compared with their urban counterparts who fared comparatively better. The contraction of the Moluccan economy combined with the effects of El Nino had the severest effects for the rural based indigenous Ambonese. Many poverty-stricken rural subdistricts in Maluku reported that things were ‘worse’ than before the crisis with specific threats to living standards and the provision of

43 Despite positive signs from macroeconomic indicators during the early to mid 1990s, it has been shown that there were already indicators of disconcerting trends in the Indonesian economy. High costs resulting from corruption and negative growth rates affected the competitiveness and sustainability of several key export industries. Two other vital economic conditions have been deemed to be crucial to the sudden depreciation in the rupiah, namely the escalation of foreign debt and private sector debt and the emergence of private banks whose tendency to issue non-economic loans, exacerbated the crisis. See Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia’s Search for Stability*, Allen & Unwin: Sydney, 1999, 211-12. Also Donald K. Emmerson, ‘Exit and Aftermath: The Crisis of 1997-98’, in D. Emmerson (ed) *Indonesia Beyond Suharto: Polity, Economy, Society, Transition*, M.E.Sharpe: New York, 1999, pp.295-343.

44 Agriculture is a key component of the economy in Maluku with principal food crops including cassava, taro, yams and sweet potatoes. Maluku has also always been included as one of the poorer provinces, which are predominantly concentrated in the eastern part of the archipelago. All of these provinces have tended to show huge disparities in regional incomes compared with, for example, the economies of Jakarta, West Java and South Sulawesi. It has been suggested that provinces in eastern Indonesia, such as Maluku, have been disadvantaged due to the fact that they have ‘...a limited natural resource base, all are distant from major commercial centres, and none has a per capita GDP more than 40 per cent of the national (non-oil) average’. Hill, *Indonesian Economy*, pp. 230-1; Encyclopedia [online], ‘Moluccas’. Accessed 10 January 2001.

45 At the time of the crisis there was an ‘El Nino’ drought which occurred in many areas of eastern Indonesia beginning in early 1997 and continuing through most of 1998. The incidence of the drought in the eastern provinces caused serious food shortages and displaced hundreds of people in search of food. Maluku was also affected by the forest fires of Sumatra and Kalimantan which created a haze that spread to nearby areas of the central and northern Philippines and Papua New Guinea, and which led to the deaths of people from smoke inhalation. See Jenny Grant, ‘Drought Forces Tribes To Go In Search For Food’, *South China Morning Post*, 11 November 1997 [online]. Available from Dow Jones Interactive (Database), accessed 10 May 2001; George Aditjondro, ‘Smoke Signals Send A Warning’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 January 1997 [online]. Available from Dow Jones Interactive (Database), accessed 10 May 2001.
social services such as education and health. While the living standards of the Ambonese were eroded as a result, the middle-class bourgeoisie in Ambon City maintained a comparatively smaller incidence of poverty.

4.5 The Disruptive Impact of the 1999 Decentralisation Measures

Structural inadequacies relating to decentralisation led to it having an impact in generating greater personalisation of power and corruption - the self interested use of decentralisation resources by competing elites - and thence the further erosion of the legitimate authority of both traditional and educated elites over Ambonese society. From a more general perspective of the Moluccan region, it is proposed firstly, that changes in lower levels of government in the Moluccas made them more susceptible to capture by elite interests, secondly, that power and resources were significantly shifted away from traditional and incumbent elites to the Local Legislative Assembly (DPRD) and newly elected heads, and thirdly, that new electoral laws were fraught with early complications that directly threatened to increase the scope for corruption and collusion and threaten the legitimacy of existing heads of authority in Moluccan and Ambonese society.

A study on corruption, published by the Partnership for Governance Reform based in Indonesia, suggested that the 1999 legislation saw some newly elected district chiefs expect ‘huge returns . . . from their positions’. Indeed, the new decentralisation policy provided a wide scope of reforms that saw greater political, administrative and fiscal powers allocated to local elites within the 300 Indonesian district governments. As the new reforms eliminated the national government’s legal authority to intervene

47 Limitations on specific data regarding decentralisation in Ambon has required that this section of the thesis refer to the Moluccan region in general.
in the process of choosing and nominating new governors, *bupati* and *wali kota* (mayor), this effectively removed obstacles to local elites’ political ambitions and subsequently saw power and privileges shift significantly to some individuals and away from others.\(^{49}\)

Whilst the decentralisation policy was widely regarded as increasing the scope for public participation in government and making local officials accountable to the people they serve, it nevertheless meant that local governments were more likely to be dominated by individuals seeking to enhance their own control and power within regional government. Michael Malley argues that a lack of national oversight in the election of local members of government freed legislators to collude with candidates by not only enabling local politicians to choose their executive but also providing them with the means to implement and pay for the policies which they established.\(^{50}\)

He argues further that,

> The new regional government law transferred the national government’s local administrative offices (*kanwil*) and staff to the district and municipal governments, simultaneously enhancing their capacity and eliminating the principal means through which Jakarta had implemented centrally determined policies and kept tabs on local affairs.\(^{51}\)

As a result, allegations of vote buying were rampant at almost every election of governor, *bupati* and *wali kota*. In Ambon, there were widespread protests concerning the election of Herman Adiran Koedoeboen as *bupati*, and Labertus Nuhuyanan as his deputy, because it was feared that local elites were more susceptible to capturing their own interests rather than being held accountable by the general public.\(^{52}\) In recognising how weak local governments were to personal vested interests, it was


\(^{50}\) Malley, *Local Power*, pp.102-16.


argued by some Indonesians that, the way the new decentralisation system was organised, it would appear that it would simply provide elites in the higher echelons of regional government greater opportunity to manage resources and wield greater power. Moreover this would thereby add to the disintegration of existing structures and lead to a system of dishonesty and deceit.

If you pull the red thread from this deception, the primary concern is its [regional autonomy] absorption, not its basic principles. What the government and parliament are doing through the autonomy program is simply regarded as giving more power to the regional government without inviting responsibility and accountability...Autonomy like this is suspect of only spreading the virus of corruption, collusion, and nepotism from the centre to the regions.

Fundamental shifts in power to these new elites in regional government occurred in the context of one of the fundamental reforms that accompanied the new legislation which stipulated conditions for the election of regional heads. Essentially the law provided greater powers to the DPRD as the ‘voice of the community’. According to the new policy, the DPRD now possessed the right to elect the regional head, to request accountability or to dismiss the regional head, and to submit revenue and expenditure proposals for the region. Whilst this signified greater political and administrative autonomy than ever before for newly appointed regional heads of government, it also clearly meant that the authority of incumbent elites such as village heads, regents and mayors would be dramatically curbed. As Table 6 below indicates, traditional powers held solely by these individuals would now be divided and reallocated mostly to the new discretionary powers of the DPRD.

54 Tempo, ‘Otonomi atau Sentronomi?’, 7 Januari 2001, pp.16-7. My translation of “Bila ditarik benang merah di antara kilah tersebut, penyebab utamanya adalah kerisauan terhadap penerapannya, bukan ide dasarnya. Apa yang sekarang dilakukan pemerintah dan parlemen melalui program otonomi dianggap cuma memberikan wewenang lebih kepada pemerintah daerah tanpa mengikutsertakan pertanggungjawaban dan akuntabilitasnya...Otonomi seperti ini dicurigai hanya akan menyebarkan virus korupsi, kolusi, dan nepotisme dari pusat ke daerah-daerah”.
Table 6: Regional Autonomy Laws of 1974 and 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGIONAL AUTONOMY, NOW AND BEFORE</th>
<th>Elite functions and appointments</th>
<th>Before (Based on Regional Government Law No.5/1974)</th>
<th>Now (Based on RUU Law on Regional Government)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability of the Governor</td>
<td></td>
<td>Addressed to the Minister for Internal Affairs and the DPRD.</td>
<td>Addressed to the DPRD, which also has the power to dismiss the Governor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The election of the position of Governor</td>
<td></td>
<td>The DPRD selected 5 candidates to submit to the Minister for Internal Affairs who in turn submitted the candidate list to the President. 3 candidates are short-listed for the position of governor. It has happened where the final name chosen was not listed in the first place.</td>
<td>The DPRD has the authority to select a candidate for the position of governor. If the central government approves, the candidate officially assumes the position of governor. If the candidate is not approved, elections for a new candidate by the DPRD are repeated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The election for the position of Mayor/Regent</td>
<td></td>
<td>The local DPRD selects 5 candidates, the names of whom are submitted to the governor and the President who then shortlist it to 3 official candidates.</td>
<td>The local DPRD has the full authority to select its mayor/regent without requesting approval from the central government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisites for the position of Deputy Governor</td>
<td></td>
<td>A civil servant appointed by the President.</td>
<td>Not necessary to be a civil servant, and is appointed by the DPRD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisites for the position of Mayor/Regent</td>
<td></td>
<td>A civil servant, appointed by the Minister for Internal Affairs.</td>
<td>Not necessary to be a civil servant, and is appointed by the local DPRD.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Specific requirements in these radical reforms, which endowed regional politicians with enormous structural power, raised suspicions that these new elites would likely be held captive to local moneyed interests. For example, queries were raised regarding incongruities in the 1999 package from Law 1974 No.5 in terms of candidature for regional executive offices. The previous 1974 Law required that the candidates have government experience, which gave individuals with a bureaucratic or armed forces background an advantage. The new law omitted such a requirement, requiring instead
that candidates were to have lived in the country for at least a year. The criteria could potentially mean the selection of regional leaders who were more locally rooted. But questions arose concerning the empowerment of these elected new leaders, whether they would strongly represent regional interests or whether their bargaining power would be inhibited by central government intervention. This concern was expressed by one Ambonese who said that, ‘The possibility that the wealth of the region will be drawn in by the interests of local elite, is considerably high’.

Pranab Bardhan, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley, says it is not inevitable that dispersed political power spawns increased corruption. But he argues that corruption ‘becomes quite high when decentralization takes place in an anarchic way’ and when mechanisms to contain it, such as local democracy, are not yet in place. The regions in Indonesia were in various states of readiness and many of the ‘preconditions’ for decentralisation had not been met. This was complicated by the characteristic feature of legal uncertainty which historically has remained a prominent feature of Indonesia legislation. Nicole Niessen indicates that, while self-evident provisions tend to be carefully clarified in the legal regulations, other provisions in need of explanation are simply disposed of as ‘self-explanatory’ (cukup jelas).

Certainly, complications in the implementation of the 1999 decentralisation policies caused considerable confusion in Maluku and other areas in Indonesia. Firstly outside Maluku, in early 1999, after the announcement of the new laws on regional government and the liberalisation of electoral laws, the situation in East Java

---


57 Interview with informants. My translation of “Kemungkinan kekayaan daerah akan dihisap oleh kepentingan elite lokal akan cukup tinggi”.


demonstrated these difficulties. In this case, five *bupati* were to complete their terms in office in May and June of that year. According to the new electoral laws, in order that the local people’s assembly may prepare for the elections of a new *bupati*, the existing *bupati* must formally withdraw from his position six months prior to the completion of his term in office. This meant that the electoral process for the regency head had to be immediately announced. Problems arose on the 23 December when Minister Syarwan Hamid sent a radiogram to all provincial governors, ordering that they cancel all elections for *bupati* or *wali kota*. The order was received with strong protests from local community representatives who questioned the extent to which the community would have an actual voice in selecting candidates for *bupati* or *wali kota*, and additionally, what would happen if the situation occurred where the selection of *bupati* or *wali kota* was rejected by members of the new DPRD from the 1999 Elections.61

The aforementioned case in East Java caused consternation amongst incumbent elites who were concerned with being able to guarantee their position of authority amongst new competing political candidates. As Mentik Budiwiyono, a member of the DPRD of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) indicated, confusing regulations meant that, ‘everything does not yet have any clear guarantee’.62 Like Budiwiyono’s sentiment, there was a lot of scepticism as to whether the implementation of Law 1999 No.22 would provide equitable distribution and community participation. Corruption amongst competing elites was pointed out to have occurred in other countries where greater regional autonomy was granted. Countries such as Brazil, for example, experienced a dramatic monetary crisis as a result of regional government banks frantically borrowing large sums of money when autonomy was introduced.63 Another example closer to the region was the case in Kalimantan where a *bupati*, after

---

61 The situation was eventually resolved with Minister Syarwan allowing for the screening and selection of candidates for the positions of *bupati* and *wali kota*. The terms of office of some regent heads were also extended in order to resolve the vacuum in regional government. Mardiyah Chamim (and others), ‘Runtuhnya Kekuasaan Raja Kecil’, *Tempo*, 22 February 1999, pp.22-3.

62 Chamim (and others), *Tempo*, pp.22-3.

assuming his new position, issued hundreds of forest industry rights (*hutan pengusahaan hak*).\(^{64}\) Similarly, other regencies who had participated earlier in the ‘Autonomous Regions Pilot Project’\(^{65}\) used public funds to build luxurious offices and government houses for the *bupati*.\(^{66}\)

Secondly, there was a great deal anxiety throughout Maluku regarding decentralisation and the potential trend of ‘collusion’ among the executive and legislative bodies, in order to ‘enrich themselves’. In specific, there was much confusion regarding the decision-making process for regional heads and who was actually benefiting from decentralisation. As the elections of new regional heads commenced in the wake of the June 1999 general election, there were those Ambonese who were not so well disposed to the actual implementation of the Decentralisation Act for fears of the corrupting power of these elections. There was a pervading concern that the structural inadequacies in the decentralisation laws meant a flawed electoral system which empowered only a few.

The implementation of autonomy is only talk. Most people have little doubt that the real motive is to re-centralize power. Who indeed does not agree with self-government. We simply want it as a step to empower our economy and improve the welfare of the Moluccan people.\(^{67}\)

---

\(^{64}\) This apparently has been a contentious issue where the Department of Forestry was re-established and whose powers were delegated to the regions. The change from state to public issuing of forestry industry rights has been criticised and the whole department has been described as the most ‘useless’ within the system of regional autonomy. See Andi A. Mallarangeng, ‘Otonomi Daerah: Pemerintah Tak Bisa Tidur’, *Tempo*, 7 January 2001, pp.50-1.

\(^{65}\) Trevor Buisin, argues that Law 22 was based on lessons learnt from the failure of the Autonomous Regions Pilot Project. Regulation 8/1995 launched the project where activities in 19 sectors were to be transferred to the regencies and municipalities. The initiative eventually failed because it was under-resourced; the central government allocated greater responsibilities to the regions but not the accompanied funding that needed to go with them. See Trevor Buisin, ‘A Century of Decentralisation’, *Inside Indonesia* [online], No.63, July-September 2000. Accessed 29 May 2002.


These new power holders in the region, referred to locally as ‘little kings’\textsuperscript{68}, epitomise how the structural inadequacies in the decentralisation laws meant a greater personalisation of power by competing elites. By increasing the scope for public participation, new regional elites were no longer civil servants accountable to the central government but were answerable to the people. However, as discussed above, rather than accountability to the general public, decentralisation measures provided, instead, disproportionate power to members of the DPRD which promoted corrupting influences. At the same time, the transfer of political power to these local units of government effectively eroded the authority traditionally wielded by incumbent Ambonese elites. Individuals such as the village raja and local educated elites, including the mayor and subdistrict head, forfeited a good proportion of their power and thus sharply reduced their legitimate authority over Ambonese society.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has offered an analysis of the various sources of disruption in Ambon and the various impacts of these disruptions on the Ambonese elites and masses. In this chapter, there have been five factors examined: the disruption of traditional elites, the lack of authority of Ambonese educated elites, the disruptive impact of economic crisis, the tensions relating to migration, and the uncertainties generated by decentralisation.

These disruptions introduced new levels of insecurity and uncertainty for both elites and ordinary Ambonese. Traditional leaders were being marginalised by the introduction of new state-sponsored institutions filled by the generation of educated elites. While the status and career positions of these elites were being disrupted by centralisation reforms and the Reformasi period with unprecedented competition for decentralisation resources. The ordinary Ambonese found their lives and communities

increasingly disrupted, not only by the rapid changes in their local authority structures and by the political chaos arising from government decentralisation attempts of the regions, but also from the economic uncertainty arising from rapid migration and the exacerbation of existing poverty levels which created workplace tensions and economic discrepancies between different migrant groups and between migrants and the indigenous Ambonese community. The resulting crisis of social cohesion and moral certainty meant the adoption of a new nationalist ideology that could serve to offer a simple resolution to the complexities of an evidently rapidly changing social, economic and political environment.

The next chapter will seek to discover how nationalism became one response to the various levels of disruption in Ambon as a way to appeal to a society influenced by socio-economic complexity and as a result have become less cohesive, and to resolve the insecurities engendered by rapid change. In this sense, it will seek to examine how the formation of the Moluccan Sovereignty Front (FKM) in Ambon managed to become the major beneficiary of the nationalist formula for the control of Ambonese society and to what extent it appealed to the Ambonese as an alternative source of authoritative legitimacy.
CHAPTER 5

THE FKM
AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN AMBONESE IDENTITY

5.1 Introduction

The following two chapters will examine the process of ideological formation during the conflict in Ambon between 1999 and 2002. Two conflicting ideologies which developed in response to each other, the ethnocultural nationalism of the FKM and the ethnonationalist construction of the Laskar Jihad, will be examined as each having a degree of support from the Ambonese. It is argued in this thesis that these two counterposed constructions of Ambonese identity show the incompatibility of the ideological visions adhered to by the contending sides. This view of the dispute in Ambon means that the explanation of current confrontation does not necessarily lie with an explanation of objective causal factors but rather in the clash of competing ideologies involving myths of the past.

The two counterposed ideological constructions of the FKM and the Laskar Jihad were adopted in Ambon as ideological formulas which appeared to demonstrate a resolution to the particular insecurities of individuals. Both nationalisms generated appeal from the Ambonese community as opposed to Indonesian nationalism or other regional nationalisms based on three fundamental factors: first, the brutal actions of the Indonesian military, the inability of the State to contain the ensuing violence, and the disruptive nature of the modernizing influence of State interventions, disillusioned people with the capacities of the Indonesian nation-state to offer security and moral certainty; secondly, the assertion of ethnic myths of common ancestry and myths of a homeland community drew appeal in asserting the uniqueness and permanence of the national community, and united by ethnocultural sameness; and thirdly, the assertion
of a demonized ‘Other’ which offered a specific identification of the contextual problem in Ambon either as a Christian secessionist enemy or a ‘corrupted state’ and its Muslim agents. Clearly, not all regions of Indonesia experienced this kind of riot and nationalist confrontation even though there was widespread disillusionment and disruption throughout the archipelago. The conflict in Ambon was uniquely generated by both the social riot element of tension between migrants and the indigenous population, in addition to separatist myth which could be deployed by the two contending sides.

The selection of a ‘Moluccan’ Sovereignty movement was a strategic political move by local elites to externally disassociate itself from connotations of a specific South Moluccan secessionist movement such as the RMS and its surrogate the RMS-in-exile which drew little sympathy both nationally and internationally for its failure in 1950, its subsequent internal fissions and violent demonstrations in The Netherlands. However, internally the FKM deliberately rejuvenated a language of ethnic authenticity from the 1950 RMS movement, thereby reviving a distinct Ambonese identity which culturally encompassed the old Dutch administrative boundaries of South Maluku comprising Ambon, Seram and its surrounding islands. In this way, those who responded to the nationalist calls of the FKM easily shifted between the two ideas of a South Moluccan and Ambonese community.

The following discussion seeks to explain the process of Ambonese nationalism as four stages of ideological construction. First was the scapegoating of migrants, second was the construction of non-separatist religious conflict which threatened to split the Ambonese community, third was the construction of a racial conflict, and fourth was the incorporation of ideas of minority rights and international legality as a way in which to appropriate claims for the right of self-government. In this way, there was an articulation of earlier ideas of Ambonese identity and history dating back to the RMS movement 50 years earlier, while the ideological basis for identity also involved a
reorientation of ideas of identity and history in order to mobilise a new pan-religious Ambonese race towards the renewed goal of political independence from the Republic of Indonesia.

The following is an interpretative summary of the conflict in Ambon in 1999. The conflict began on 19 January, 1999 when a fight erupted on the island of Ambon between a Christian public minibus driver and a Muslim youth, and which quickly developed into a regional war, polarised between Christians and Muslims. Accounts of the incident vary according to different sources, with some blaming the Christian driver of the minibus of wounding his Muslim attacker with a knife, while others recount that the driver was attacked and had to flee. Nevertheless, news of the incident soon began to spread and groups began rampaging and inflicting destruction to other areas in Ambon outside the immediate city of Ambon.

In the weeks that followed, the violence escalated further when news spread that churches and mosques had been deliberately burned down, which foreshadowed widespread destruction to the communities of Batu Gantung, Waringin, Benteng Karang, Passo, Nania, Wailete, Kamiri, Hative Besar and others. News of the violence in the City spread rapidly and caused other communities to violently attack others, the most common pattern being that Christians tended to target Muslim migrants predominately from Southeast Sulawesi by burning their shops and homes whilst sparing the Chinese who were mainly Christian. In comparison, Muslims attacked well-known Christian areas of residency.

By early February, much of the central part of the city of Ambon and many neighbourhoods in other parts of Ambon island were razed to the ground. Soon after a short lull in the violence, the conflict developed in the neighbouring islands of Seram, Saparua, Manipa, Haruka, and Sanana. A spate of attacks each seemingly wanting retribution from the other evolved where Christians armed with sharp weapons
attacked Muslims who they initially invited for a peace initiative in Kairatu on Seram, while the following day Muslim Ambonese and Butonese burnt Christian houses in Waitasu village. Similarly, on Saparua Christians burned down a Muslim dormitory which led to the mobilisation of Christian and Muslim communities where at least 23 people were killed in a fight between Muslim villagers of Pelauw and Christians from the neighboring hamlet of Kariu. The latter incident of February 14 caused much controversy with the deaths being attributed to gunshot wounds inflicted by local security from both the army and police who were attempting to stop the rioting. Both Christians and Muslims made accusations that security forces possessed ulterior motives and were thus deliberately taking sides under the guise of restoring order.

Violence in the surrounding islands appeared to perpetuate the violence in Ambon City with isolated incidents continuing to erupt on a sporadic basis and causing alarm and panic in the community. On February 23 rioting mobs attacked local Butonese residents, while armed conflict broke out between the Christian village of Waai and the predominantly Muslim villages of Tulehu and Liang. Mobs also attacked a few houses including that of the head of the Al Fatah Mosque Foundation, Abdullah Soulissa. By early March, Ambon City was subject to a civil war with violent clashes between Christians from Ahuru village and Muslim Rinjani village. During the violence, local police intervened and opened fire against the rioters where at least 13 people were killed and nine others wounded. This incident provoked an unprecedented reaction from Muslims outside the immediate area of Maluku because of rumours that the initial attack had taken place in a mosque, subsequently causing mass protests in Jakarta among Muslims outraged at what was perceived as unprovoked attacks against Muslims. Similarly an attack close to Ambon Silo church on March 6 outraged Christians.

By this time, the violence was escalating at an alarming rate with local residents barricading themselves in order to protect themselves and their families. In an attempt
to restore peace and order in the region, Indonesian military and police forces from Java and Sulawesi were deployed in Ambon and elsewhere throughout the Moluccas. In particular, KOSTRAD (Army Strategic Reserve Command) forces were sent from Makassar in Sulawesi to Ambon on 23 January, 1999 to contain the conflict. Soon afterwards in June 2000, militant Islamic forces called the *Laskar Jihad* arrived in the area, which prompted a marked increase in violence and unrest throughout Ambon and which caused many individuals to accuse the *Laskar Jihad* of provoking the enduring conflict. Such was the extent of violence that a state of civil emergency was declared in the Moluccas by the then Indonesian President, Abdurrahman Wahid, on 27 June, 2000. As the violence showed no signs of abating, the Governor of Maluku, Saleh Latuconsina, appealed for an extension of the existing emergency status which, as a result, was extended until 27 December of that same year.

At this point, Ambon was experiencing the cost of the conflict, which was devastating both in terms of the loss of life and also in terms of the social and economic impact to the region. Public services collapsed when many officials left and decided not to return to Ambon and basic services such as health and education ceased to function. All industrial enterprise operating in Maluku was abandoned causing unemployment levels to reach 45.49 percent. Negative economic growth caused the economic output of the province to plunge from 7.33% in 1998 to minus 7.76% and the percentage of the population living below the poverty line rose to 38.01% from only 10.36% in 1998.\(^2\)

With no signs of the violence abating in the face of devastating social and economic crisis and at least 700 deaths, with one report indicating ‘thousands’ of deaths, the Moluccan Sovereignty Front (FKM) was declared on 18 December, 2000 in Ambon City. With Alex Manuputty sworn in as the FKM’s Chairman of the Executive

---

1 Formerly known as Ujung Pandang.

Branch, and with networks extended by representatives appointed for Jakarta and New York, the FKM declared the right to dissolve existing state structures, pointing to Indonesia’s constitution, which says, ‘Sovereignty is in the hands of the people’ (See Appendix 8). They demanded that Jakarta restore the sovereignty of the South Moluccas, arguing that Indonesia illegally annexed the islands in the early 1950s when it defeated the RMS. At the same time, Chairman of the FKM, Alex Manuputty, overtly stated that the FKM was not seeking independence and that the organisation was not synonymous with the RMS movement. Instead, the chief aim of the FKM was in ‘restoring the dignity of the Maluku people, which had been lost in the two years of conflict and with the authorities lacking the capacity to resolve it’.

Within this framework of a series of events, this chapter will develop the following key propositions. First, that particular disrupted elites articulated a series of ideological constructions which provided new bases for their authority in the community. Second, that these ideologies sought to reconstruct the dispute away from a split within Ambon and towards a unified Ambon counterposed to Java. Third, that the resonance of this ideology with members of the Ambonese community reflects the embedding of absolutist mindsets.

5.2 The Scapegoating of Migrants

As professionals within civil institutions and as members of Ambon’s village community, Alex Manuputty, Agus Wattimena, Hengky Manuhutu, Semy

3 Hamin Sialana, an Ambonese Muslim, was designated Vice Chairman of the FKM but was based in America. Luis Risakotta was appointed Head of the FKM branch in Jakarta.
5 Alexander Hermanus Manuputty was the son of a Christian family in Ambon’s rural community of Kudamati located in the hills just outside Ambon City. He studied Human Anatomy at Hassanuddin University in Makassar, Sulawesi, and graduated with a medical doctor’s degree in 1978. After graduation he worked successively in Halmahera in North Maluku and then in 1983 in the regional hospital in Ambon. Manuputty lived with his wife and four children in Kuda Mati in the Ambonese sub-district of Nusaniwe, and by 1990, his work in the fields of demography and family planning earnt him an honorary doctorate. It was in 1998 that Manuputty first moved out of the medical field and established a non-government organisation known as Nunusaku, which was orientated towards human
Walleruny, and W. Tamaelasapal, all emerged as leaders of a contemporary nationalist movement in Ambon. These individuals were all members of Ambon’s village communities and their construction of Ambonese nationalism was motivated by a concern for their families and communities which had suffered from the disruptions which were examined in the previous chapter. From this perspective, it was the combined pressure of the centralising expansion of the Indonesian state, the experience of rapid migration, and the effects of the economic crisis which, during the New Order period of governance, led displaced individuals to construct new myths of Ambonese identity.

The FKM thus emerged from these aspiring elites who sought a need to reinterpret existing myths of identity in order to respond to a society subject to new social and political disruptions. In this way, the FKM’s leaders formulated a construction of enemy and identity that was able to give a sense of direction to community unrest. Through a simple ideological formula of the good ‘us’ versus the bad ‘them’, they constructed a new vision of an idealised Ambonese identity counterposed to a demonised Indonesian/Javanese identity.

The FKM elites responded to the disruptions and disillusionment in Ambonese society by identifying the Indonesian government as the cause of the dispute and rights issues and community services. In 2000, he went briefly to Jakarta to conduct some legal studies until his return to Ambon on 15 June of that year and his subsequent establishment of the FKM.

Agus Wattimena, an Ambonese Christian whose family was from a Christian village outside Ambon City, was a local school teacher. He joined the FKM as a Grass Roots Representative after failure to gain support for his short-lived *Laskar Kristus* or Army of Christ whose followers claimed to be warriors defending the faith as God's soldiers. As early as March 1999 the militant *Laskar Kristus* was led by Wattimena in a crusade-like mission against what they deemed as the ‘evil oppressors’. Despite his claim of a ‘popular army’ consisting of approximately 20,000 members, there had been widespread controversy regarding support for this movement on the basis that Wattimena recruited units of young children to serve as front-line Christian soldiers. Some adolescent Ambonese Christians expressed fervent enthusiasm for militant action but many Christian leaders and members of the Moluccan churches wished to focus instead on local efforts to restore peace and condemned the militant action.

Hengky Manuhutu, originally from Ambon’s rural community, was a lawyer within the Ambonese public service.

Semy Walleruny was a lawyer with Ambon’s Maranatha Christian Centre.

W. Tamaelasapal was a traditional authority figure in Ambon’s village community.
scapegoating enemies who could be blamed. In its initial declaration on 18 December, 2000 the FKM elites portrayed the relationship between the Moluccans and Indonesia as a crusade to uphold the dignity of the Ambonese in the face of an oppressive Indonesian regime controlled by tyrannical political elites.

Indonesia has carried out overt strategies to undermine the economic, social and cultural bases of Moluccan society. For example, the land becomes part of a strategy for economic erosion of the Moluccans and a vehicle for their ethnic dilution and oppression, Indonesia confiscates the lands of the Moluccans and turns over to transmigrant people...Moluccans may soon become a minority in their own land...A Government whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.\(^{10}\)

The construction of Indonesian inferiority counterposed to Moluccan virtue acted as an ideological preconception which generated subsequent reactions to the Indonesian state. In Ambon, words such as ‘Javanisation’ were strongly voiced against migrants as migration was perceived as a deliberate state strategy to marginalise the populations of Eastern Indonesia.\(^ {11}\) Given the socio-economic circumstances that ensued as discussed in the previous chapter, the resentment of the Ambonese to the migrants was clearly pointed out as part of wider ‘Javanese’ conspiracy:

The problem is that that the Javanese and the BBM [Buginese, Butonese, Makassarese] have of course not come out of nowhere. Through policies mentioned, the Javanese government has put us to one side because we are considered as second-class citizens.\(^ {12}\)

Perceptions of a Javanese conspiracy were also alleged against state sponsored institutions such as the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI). Accusations were made of the perceived inability of the state to guarantee peace and stability within their region and the perceived involvement of TNI and local security forces in the conflict. With the


\(^{11}\) Interview with informants I, J, Q, A.

\(^{12}\) Interview with informant J with parentheses inserted for clarification. My translation of “Persoalannya Jawa, BBM itu memang tidak datang dari ruang hampaa. Melalui kebijakan tersebut pemerintah Jawa menyingkinkan kita karena dianggap sebagai warga negara kelas dua”.

168
intervention of Islamic Laskar Jihad forces in Ambon in May-June 2000, there were strong indications that both the military and the local police were colluding with the Laskar Jihad, with some members of the Laskar Jihad even admitting to receiving training from TNI forces.\textsuperscript{13} Certainly, it was widely believed by many of the Ambonese that the military were deliberately collaborating with the Laskar Jihad in the conflict.

There are two groups in the military: pro-dual function and anti-dual function. When Soeharto’s position was unstable, the role of the military was threatened, and so they provoked the violence in order to justify their military role.\textsuperscript{14}

### 5.3 A Non-Separatist Religious Construction

Fundamentally, with Manuputty’s arrest in December 2000 by Indonesian authorities, accused of having illegal intentions to subvert the Indonesian state, the ideology of the FKM was swiftly articulated in religious terms. Following Manuputty’s arrest, the FKM pointed to an undeserved bias within existing state authority structures against the Ambonese Christian community. Agus Watimena articulated in his words the grievances of the Christian community:

There is the impression that the State hates us (the Moluccans) but what have we done wrong to offend the State? The FKM came to the forefront to pressure the State to respond quickly to the crisis in Maluku. I am very sure that the Head of the Provincial Police is only one player; above him there are many more influential players. So it is best if outsiders, who do not have any interest here in Maluku, are told...


\textsuperscript{14} Interview with informant P. My translation of "Ada dua kelompok di militer: pro-dwifungsi and antidwifungsi. Pas posisi Soeharto goyang-goyang, fungsi militer diancam, jadi bikin rusuh untuk memberikan alas an”. Dual function or *dwifungsi* is a doctrine formed by the army once Soekarno was removed from power in 1966. It essentially provided the theoretical backing for the military to expand its influence throughout the government apparatus, including reserved allocations of seats in parliament and in the upper echelons of the civil service. During the New Order, military officers held key positions in government from ambassadors and mayors to senior positions in state-owned enterprises, government ministries and in the cabinet.
to get out and not make the Christians feel as if they are stepchildren in their own country.\textsuperscript{15}

After the intervention of the \textit{Laskar Jihad} and accusations of partiality amongst both TNI and local security forces the FKM began to identify a Muslim threat against a victimised Christian community who were perceived as experiencing increasing pressures imposed by Islamic forces:

The fundamentalist Moslems would like to see Indonesia become an Islamic state...Islamisation by force or face execution by the Jihad vigilantes are levelled upon the Christian population. They must face the prospect of forced circumcision just like a bunch of animals seen being castrated by their owner. They Syari’a or Moslem law became the law in these occupied lands.\textsuperscript{16}

Many Ambonese Christians began to complain against the Indonesian government and its intent on ‘Islamicisation’ as a means to ‘fossilize the Moluccan people’.\textsuperscript{17} The fact that the Abdurrahman government did not prevent Muslim troops from the \textit{Laskar Jihad} travelling to Maluku in June 2000 was seen by Ambonese Christians as an indication that Islamic hardliners in the government were willing to let the conflict run in order to further their own political agendas.\textsuperscript{18} Other Ambonese accused the Indonesian military of participating in a campaign designed to force the Islamisation or ‘greening’ of the Moluccas. The perception that military personnel were seen ‘changing into the white uniform of the \textit{Laskar Jihad}’ became the main basis for these accusations.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} Human Rights Watch (HRW) [online], Ambon, 1999 Report. Accessed 20 October 1999.
\textsuperscript{19} Interview with informant K. My translation of “TNI mengganti seragamnya dengan seragam putih Laskar Jihad.”
The military were perceived to be directly involved in carrying out forced conversions to Islam in Christian communities throughout the Ambonese islands. There were widespread claims that people had been slaughtered for refusing to convert to Islam. It was reported, for example, that in Seram on Kasiui Island, four Christian hamlets were razed by Muslim attackers from the surrounding islands. The forced Islamicisation of Christians in Kasiui Island had been continuing for weeks with thousands of villagers having to flee to the forests to escape while scores were arrested and slaughtered if they refused to be forcibly converted to Islam.20

So far, the FKM had portrayed the relationship between the Ambonese and the state as a Christian crusade in the face of Islamicisation by the Indonesian State and its ‘traitorous’ agents such as the security apparatus and the Laskar Jihad. This diagnosis of the conflict as Christian versus Muslim received the bulk of its support from Ambonese Christians. Moreover, as conflict developed, the religious representation of the FKM threatened to further entrench the split between the indigenous Christian and Muslim Ambonese communities through their depiction of an overall Muslim conspiracy, thereby potentially hindering FKM efforts to galvanise support from the overall Ambonese community. The intensity of this split gained momentum as Muslim activists accused the FKM of having links with the failed RMS movement of the 1950s, which was perceived by many Ambonese as a purely Christian-led movement.

As long as Ambonese identity was defined in religious terms, support for the FKM was in danger of being restricted to the Christian community. With allegations that the RMS was synonymous with the FKM, the FKM attempted to ameliorate the potential political disunity between the two indigenous religious communities. At the outset, the FKM elites denied any affiliation with the 1950s separatist movement and depicted their newly formed Moluccan Sovereignty Front rather as a liberal contender

20 Interview with informants K, L, O.
for social justice and equal rights for all Moluccans. Manuputty and Wattimena specifically refuted that the RMS had any connection with their organisation and stated that the RMS was ‘a thing of the past’, with no Christians today wanting to align themselves to a separatist movement, let alone a Christian one. Manuputty maintained that the FKM was simply a ‘moral force’ (gerakan moral) in attempting to maintain the integrity of the Ambonese, especially on issues concerning the biased involvement of local armed forces in the conflict.\(^{21}\) They claimed that they were only concerned with maintaining the once peaceful coexistence that was sustained on the island but have been made into scapegoats of the whole conflict.

The publicity surrounding Manuputty’s arrest in December 2000 and trial in 2001 was particularly seen by the FKM as adversely highlighting its association with the RMS and aggravating religious divisions in its support base. To somewhat ease these tensions, Semy Wileruny, FKM’s Head of the Judicial Branch, adamantly denied FKM’s alleged connection with the RMS. He argued that the RMS was a closed case and that the allegations of the re-emergence of the RMS through the FKM were false manipulations of events by certain individuals. Hence,

\[
\text{If there is a sour note I should emphasise that my parents were awarded an Indonesian medal of honour for their role against the RMS. So why would I join the FKM? Of course to portray the reality that the RMS struggle for independence has all this time been covered up. There are in fact various architects to this conflict. In essence, this state no longer follows its constitutional principles.}^{22}\]

It was becoming clear that the FKM and its relationship with the Christian-led RMS movement were alienating the indigenous Ambonese Muslims. There was widespread anger from local Muslims who staged regular protests against what they perceived as

a predominant Christian movement deliberately provoking the violence in the region. The FKM’s attempt to disassociate their position from the RMS was subject to setbacks with hundreds of Ambonese Christians flying RMS flags on the island in celebration of the anniversary of declaration of the RMS on 25 April, 2001. In the following weeks, there was an upsurge in unprecedented bombings, killings and tortures of civilians after a relative period of calm for four months on the island. Christian communities were particularly targeted, with fifty explosions and indiscriminate stabbings and slashings of inhabitants recorded throughout the city.\(^{23}\)

As anxieties in Ambon escalated with increased violent activity, the FKM sought to provide a unifying basis of political support by appealing to the fears and values of the local Muslims who were perceived to lack close ties to the core constituencies of the FKM elite.\(^{24}\) In the lead up to the Indonesian presidential elections in 2001 and the intervention of the Joint Battalion (\textit{Batalyon Gabungan}) into the Moluccas, Wattimena released a public statement that the FKM was not a ‘Christian’ movement. His comments were in response to a statement released by the parliamentary faction of the Defenders of a Unified State (\textit{F-Penegak}) at the Moluccan Provincial Assembly (DPRD Maluku). He said that Moluccan Muslims and Christians were both unjustly portrayed as militant dissidents, an accusation which, despite its irreverence, only served to heighten FKM’s true cause as defenders of both the Moluccan Muslims and Moluccan Christians.\(^{25}\) The FKM distinguished between those Muslims of the \textit{Laskar Jihad} who were intent to do away with Indonesia’s secular form of government, in comparison to those Moluccan Muslims who were against the concept of an Islamic State and were allegedly forced to fight their Christian counterparts.\(^{26}\)

\(^{24}\) Despite the Front’s identification with a Christian-led movement, it has been alleged there are also Muslims in the FKM’s leadership. See McCall, \textit{South China Morning Post} [online].
\(^{26}\) Siwalima, ‘Thamrin Ely’, [online].
With intense furore surrounding the issue of the RMS, this shift in emphasis became the first rallying cry to unite both indigenous Christians and Muslims. Many Christian Ambonese responded with fervent enthusiasm through their portrayal of the RMS as a secular rather than a Christian-based movement. It was said, for example, that the declaration of the RMS in 1950 was a move lead by R.S. Soumokil, the first president of the RMS, as a result of personal disillusionment. Rather than being seen as the ‘mastermind’ of the RMS plot, Soumokil was depicted as a figure with little political experience, whose political career as the then Minister for Justice in the Federal State of East Indonesia (NIT) was wrought with controversy and debate.

Basically the proclamation was the peak of acute disappointment for Soumokil because he could not attain a meaningful position in the State of East Indonesia, which at that time was based in Makassar.  

The claim by many of the Christian Ambonese who were interviewed was that after the demise of the NIT, Soumokil was more or less ‘forced’ to proclaim the RMS on the 25 April, 1950 to save the precarious position of the KNIL soldiers who were in an awkward position of choosing whether or not to join the Indonesian Republican Army. The perception was that the RMS was not solely a Christian manifestation; members of both the Christian and Muslim communities were united in support for a separate Moluccan state. Contrary to the widespread belief of a Christian led movement, the RMS forces formed by Soumokil and his new government, comprised both Muslim and Christian Moluccans; ‘The RMS is not owned or is not a product of just the Christian community, but also the Muslim community’. 

It has thus so far been discussed that the dispute went through two main stages of development, first as part of their constructed ideology the FKM identified the

---

27 Interview with informant. My translation of “Proklamsinya itu pada hakekatnya merupakan puncak kekecewaan luar biasa Soumokil, karena tidak mendapat kedudukan yang berarti dalam Negara Indonesia Timur (NIT) yang waktu itu berkedudukan di Makassar”.

28 Interview with informant J. My translation of “RMS bukan milik atau produk warga Kristen saja, melainkan juga warga Islam”.

174
Indonesian government as causing the dispute in which migrants were scapegoated as enemies who could be blamed. Second, the FKM identified the dispute in religious terms as a virtuous Christian community opposed to a state-endorsed conspiracy to Islamicise the Moluccas through a ‘corrupted’ military and the *Laskar Jihad*.

In time, this construction of two opposing religious sides began to be seen as demarcating rather than unifying divisions between indigenous Christians and Muslims especially as connections were made with the 1950s RMS movement. FKM leaders denied its Christian character let alone its affiliation with the RMS but, as the following section will show, the FKM elites made further shifts in ideological formation in order to maximise their political support.

### 5.4 A Racial Construction

A shift in ideological formation from a non-separatist religious construction to a separatist racial conflict arose as a result of the emergence of new political and conflict circumstances. First, Megawati Soekarnoputri assumed presidential power in July 2001. Her election as President provoked little enthusiasm from many Ambonese, and prompted fears as to what was to become of their situation if no resolution was reached to stop the persistent killings. Megawati’s conspicuous lack of interest in the situation in the Moluccas during her Vice-Presidency was already well-known and a key source of resentment from both Muslim and Christian parties in Ambon. According to one source it, ‘reflected the attitude that it was out of the hands of the central government and that it could only be settled by the Ambonese themselves’. Despite the fact that she was personally charged with bringing an end to the conflict during her term as Vice-President, Megawati displayed a clear disregard of her responsibility for the ending of the conflict. Second, the sharp

---

29 Interview with informants X, D, O.
30 Interview with informant O. My translation of “Ini adalah cermin dari sikap lepas tangan pemerintah pusat, hanya bisa diselesaikan oleh orang Ambon sendiri”.
escalation of violence during 2001 in Ambon fuelled local fears and insecurities as Laskar Jihad forces seemed to double in numbers and inflict massive casualties. As a result, the incidence of violence throughout the Ambonese islands reached horrific proportions with further clashes between members of the Ambonese community and Muslim militia causing hundreds of casualties. Explosions occurred in many villages causing numerous deaths. Ambonese homes were also being regularly attacked by unknown assailants.\footnote{This is an interpretative summary of various sources.}

In the early stages of their formation in December 2000, the FKM were reluctant to state that they were separatists. Embracing nationalism was evidently not a public stance the FKM wished to adopt as traditionally there were clear implications for those resisting state integration. However, avoiding a separatist identity became problematic as accusations were made that the RMS had links with the FKM. In this way, there were not only clear implications of the FKM as a Christian-led movement, but that the FKM was also a subversive movement against the state. The association was aggravated as further correlations were made between the FKM and the three renowned separatist movements in Indonesia, the Free Papua Organisation (OPM), the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the RMS-in-exile movement.

The relationship of the separatist RMS with the FKM became intensified when Muslims in Jakarta indicated that the three renowned separatist movements in Indonesia, the OPM, GAM and the RMS-in-exile movement, agreed to an alliance towards their respective struggles for independence.\footnote{\textit{Kondor} [online], ‘No GAM-RMS Alliance’, September 2000. Accessed 8 February 2001.} However, soon after, in September of 2000, the alleged alliance made between Hasan Tiro of GAM and Otto Matulessy of the RMS-in-exile in The Netherlands, was denied in a press release issued by the Aceh Islamic Republic (RIA).\footnote{In 1953, the leader of the Islamic Party, Daud Beureueh, declared Aceh as an independent Islamic Republic (RIA) in order to free the Acehnese from Indonesia's 'political betrayal'. The standoff was} The RIA accused GAM of ‘narrow ultra
nationalism’, indicating that the republican movement in Aceh would not support the RMS who had been accused of provoking violence against Muslims in Maluku.\(^{34}\) The President of the RMS-in-exile, Tutuhatunewa and his cabinet, including Matulessy as his Minister for Foreign Affairs, had already expressed sentiments in 1995 to consolidate the sympathies of other ethnic loyalties in unison in order to protest against the Indonesian State\(^ {35}\), but their appeal to the FKM was not rewarded with public claims of support.

In defence of the FKM, Semy Waileruny carefully stated that the organisation’s call for independence was not a separatist claim but a ‘call for truth’.\(^ {36}\) It was emphasised that the ‘truth’ was in fact a bid for greater equality and fairness between communities, especially after several Moluccan leaders had already publicly declared their disillusionment with the powers of the Indonesian government to guarantee the rights of its people.\(^ {37}\)

Even while in detention during 2001, Manuputty was also careful to avoid demanding ‘independence’ and to call the FKM a ‘separatist movement’. When Manuputty was placed under house arrest in January 2001 as part of an investigation in what was seen as a dissident movement, Agus Wattimena spoke to \textit{Siwalima}, a local daily

\(^{34}\) Kondor [online], ‘No GAM-RMS’.


newspaper, on several occasions and reiterated that the FKM was not a separatist movement intent on the formation of its own state, but rather a movement aiming to restore law and order in the Moluccas and to recover the dignity of the Moluccans. Both he and Manuputty denied any affiliation with the RMS or any resemblance with other separatist movements, such as GAM in Aceh and the OPM in West Papua.

With a strengthening of the appeal of the Laskar Jihad among Muslim militia in 2001 and widespread demands from the Ambonese for a cessation of violence owing to the perceived incapacities of the state, the FKM shifted its ideological framework of identity to a racial construction of Ambonese identity. By portraying a community united by its ethnocultural sameness, the FKM attempted to unite individuals of religious affiliation into a community forged together by imagery of a biological family. The Ambonese community was therefore depicted as having indigenous racial homogeneity that connected them directly to the ancestors of the indigenous Ambonese from the island of Seram, irrespective of their religious denomination.

The myth of common ancestry employed by the FKM came to function as the demarcation of a community with a unique racial core. In this way, FKM leaders such as Wattimena used the concept of the ‘Alifuru Nation’ to refer to an authentic community of common ancestry, denoted by common traditional culture and history, where the ‘nation’ was a reflection of a people’s common will. This construction of the Ambonese as a unified ‘Alifuru’ race also provided new connotations to the traditional term of ‘Alifuru’. The concept of Alifuru originally referred to the Seramese mountain tribes who were seen as the prototypical inhabitant of the Moluccan State. It was once regarded by the Ambonese as having negative

---

39 Siwalima [online], ‘Thamrin Ely’.
40 The concept was popular with the exiled Moluccans in The Netherlands. Other exiled Moluccan migrants often concealed or adapted any divergent cultural attributes to the Alifuru concept in their
connotations for a primitive people, a traditional belief previously propagated among the Ambonese and made popular by local myths and folktales. The FKM adopted and redefined the term to unite the ethnolinguistically diverse people into a positive symbol of Moluccan ancestry and culture.

The leaders of the FKM consciously linked this sense of ‘Alifuru’ community with one that disregarded religious differences so as to mobilise indigenous Ambonese Muslims into a trans-religious ethnic community. In an interview with Siwalima, the local Ambonese newspaper, Agus Wattimena of the FKM defended indigenous Ambonese Muslims whom he said were an integral part of the Ambonese ‘Alifuru’ community, irrespective of their religious affiliation. He pointed to Thamrin Ely, a prominent Muslim State official, as an example of how the Ambonese Muslim community had been victimised by a ‘ruthless’ Indonesian state. He accused the state of intent to marginalise the Ambonese race through forceful Muslim recruitment into military forces opposed to the Ambonese. He indicated that Thamrin Ely’s exploitation of local Ambonese Muslims by having them engage in the conflict was victimising the community and was a deliberate act of treachery against the Ambonese race.

I am bold to say that Thamrin Ely has enticed Muslims to become involved in the conflict, without observing the common suffering that both Muslims and Christians are experiencing in Maluku. Then he has also requested the Indonesian armed forces and police to eliminate the RMS identified with the FKM. Even more astounding is when Thamrin Ely requested the Indonesian armed forces and police to eliminate the Alifuru Nation. So Thamrin Ely is of what nationality? He forgets that allegiance to the cause of the RMS. For further explanatory notes on the concept of Alifuru see Bartels, Invisible Mountain, pp.6-7; Paramita R.Abdurachman, ‘Moluccan Responses to the First Intrusions of the West’, in Haryati Soebadio and Carine A. du Marchie Sarvaas (eds), Dynamics of Indonesian History, North-Holland Publishing Company: Amsterdam, 1978, p.167.  

that sort of request can evoke the emotions of all Moluccans. If Ely regards himself as not an Alifuru, it means he is not a Moluccan.\textsuperscript{32}

Here, the myth of common ancestry was also used by the FKM to not only demarcate a unique community based on one ancestral heritage, but also in its consequent opposition to a demonised ‘other’. As shown above, the ‘Alifuru’ race was simultaneously constructed in its superiority against the state and its national institutions such as the armed forces and police units. Throughout 2001, the FKM continued to claim these distinctions of ‘us’ and ‘them’ communities but through racial distinctions of Moluccan and non-Moluccan communities. In other words, communities were demarcated based on whether they could or could not claim to be of \textit{Alifuru} blood or \textit{Alifuru} ancestry. After further unrest in Ambon and its surrounding islands in mid-2001, there were demonstrations conducted by indigenous Ambonese with banners saying, ‘All non-\textit{Alifuru} people to be ousted from the Moluccas’.\textsuperscript{43} Also, with the prolonged detention of Dr. Alex Manuputty, there were further demonstrations with an appeal being made to the Police Chief Commander stating, amongst others, the call for all \textit{Laskar Jihad} forces and all non–\textit{Alifuru}/Moluccans to leave Maluku.\textsuperscript{44}

The myth of common ancestry was supplemented with the idea of a racial community being ‘God’s chosen people’ and the idea of a community bound to a ‘holy war’. Both ideas within FKM ideology provided almost supernatural nuances to the conflict as a way of capturing the imagination of the society. Based on highly emotional symbols of religious identification with a Supreme Being or a God, FKM language


\textsuperscript{43} Amboina Crisis Centre, The Situation in the Ambon/Moluccas – Report No.168, Available email: ComAmq@Ambon.wasantara.net.id, sent 21 May 2001.

\textsuperscript{44} Amboina Crisis Centre, Report No.168.
referred to symbols of autochthony and purity. Wattimena’s representation of the
nation employed a potent model that portrayed the natural community as the
homeland of the Moluccans forefathers whose collective immortality had outfaced
destruction.

God gave this country to the Moluccan people. What does the name
“Alif” actually mean? Number One or the First Person. Let’s examine
that: the Laskar Jihad with its advanced weapon strength clearly has not
been able to eliminate Maluku.45

In this respect, it appeared that the FKM vision of identity inculcated a type of pre-
conceived destiny or a pre-determined war. Indeed, many Ambonese demonstrated a
belief in a historical continuity so as to portray their community in largely mythical
terms. Proclaiming similarities to the Old Testament, there were those Ambonese who
attempted to re-enact mythological representations of these wars. For example, small
horns were blown to signal the commencement of a war or before an imminent attack,
and local priests sprinkled those involved in the fighting with ‘holy water’ to protect
them from harm.46 It was asserted that these symbolic gestures established
correlations between biblical stories of war and the conflict in the Moluccas, where it
was said, in both cases, that the conflict was centrally concerned with defending the
homeland and territory as bequeathed by God. It was described for example,

Those about to go to war were given holy water for their safety.
Swords were swapped with paper trumpets, which were blown
enthusiastically in one tone, like in the old times in Israel.47

45 Siwalima [online], ‘Thamrin Ely’.
46 Interview with informants K, Q.
47 Interview with informant Q. My translation of “Yang mau berperang dikasih air suci supaya selamat.
Parang diganti trumpet kertas yang ditiup semarak tanpa nada seperti zaman dulu di Israel”.

181
5.5 A Claim to Human Rights, Self-Determination and Democracy

The fourth main shift of ideological formation occurred in the adoption of modern discourse of minority, human rights and international legality. It was the coming together of two ideas, separatism and race, which here provided the basis for notions of a nation with nationalist rights. The FKM claim to a ‘new nation’ would more likely succeed to an external audience if it embraced another manner of argument, by combining the language of traditional authenticity with the contemporary language of minority status and human rights. The suggestion is that the global language of ‘rights’ and ‘democracy’ implied firstly, a greater degree of empowerment and security for the individual and, secondly, the opportunity to gain international support for the assertion of its own sense of separate collective identity and demands for sovereignty.

From its initial formation in 2000, the FKM always depicted itself as an oppressed minority who saw the betrayal of the Indonesian State in its imperialistic incorporation of the Moluccas since the 1950s. Since that time, it was declared by the FKM leaders that the Moluccans had always been subject to ‘ethnic dilution and oppression’ where ‘Indonesia has carried out overt strategies to undermine the economic, social and cultural bases of Moluccan society’. In other words, state sponsored projects of directed change and national development were accused of deliberately marginalising further the Moluccans as a minority group. It promoted ethnic exclusion rather than inclusion with its failed economic policies that have left ‘Moluccan youth [who] are increasingly unemployed with no life prospects and education’, and its political centralisation, which has left ‘the police and the courts basically impotent or unwilling to solve this war’. It was also recognised that the Indonesian State was bent on propagating another culture by the state’s confiscation.

49 INDONESIA-DOCS [online], ‘Front Kedaulatan Maluku’.
of indigenous land, turning it over to transmigrants, and deliberately wanting to diminish the Moluccan population in Indonesia by ‘forced sterilisation’ through various family planning programs in the region.\textsuperscript{50}

The FKM pushed ideas of self-determination to argue that, under international law, the Republic of Indonesia had never held sovereignty over Maluku or most of the other regions that it controls. These appeals were made even when Indonesian authorities arrested Alex Manuputty and Semy Walleruny in December 2002 and put on trial in Jakarta for allegedly fuelling violence in the Moluccas.\textsuperscript{51} Clearly, it was imperative for the FKM to articulate its calls within international principles of human rights and self-determination in order to justify its calls for sovereignty within the international arena. However, calls for support and assistance from the United Nations and other international parties, including Australia, received little response at the time.\textsuperscript{52}

One of the core constructions of the FKM was the depiction of the RMS as a separatist movement as a basis for establishing their own legal case against the Indonesian government. The FKM declared the right to say that the RMS before them truly existed as a separatist movement based on a valid international legal basis of self-determination. Manuputty stated that the RMS was in fact a legal government that

\textsuperscript{50} INDONESIA-DOCS [online], ‘Front Kedaulatan Maluku’.
\textsuperscript{51} The Ambon District Court also sent fourteen other members of the FKM to jail in October 2002 for raising four separatist flags on 25 April of that year.
\textsuperscript{52} At the time, the Australian Deputy Ambassador to Indonesia, Leslie Rowe, publicly declared that Australia did not support the separatist movement in the Moluccas. See Jawa Pos, ‘Australia Tidak Dukung Gerakan Separatis RMS di Maluku’, 17 November 2000. Available at Dunia Islam [online]. Accessed 8 February 2001.
once sat in the United Nations and was illegally brought down. From a purely legal perspective, it was highlighted that there was a clear transgression of rights against the FKM, similar to that which happened to the RMS 50 years earlier. Moses Tuanakota of the FKM thus challenged the Indonesian State to bring the RMS issue to the UN, indicating that ‘the two sides should allow the International Court of Justice decide whether the South Maluku Republic is legitimate’.54

Moreover, the legality of the 1950s RMS as an independence movement was linked with the registration of the RMS in the Unrepresented Nations and People’s Organisation (UNPO).55 It was pointed out by the FKM that comments by international legal authorities, within the UNPO and other legal institutions, had tended to uphold the RMS position. It was argued that the newly formed Republic of Indonesia had deliberately rejected the emphatic and repeated appeals of the Ambonese population to apply for the provision in the transfer of sovereignty agreement between Indonesia and The Netherlands, which guaranteed the right to self-determination to every separate state in the federal Indonesian Republic at the

53 Azis Tunny, ‘FKM Defies Maluku Authorities’, *The Jakarta Post*, 12 April 2003 [online]. Available from Factiva (Journal Database), accessed 16 April 2003. The UNPO has a close working relationship with the United Nations and is considered to be a vital component of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples. Together with members of the Moluccan Human Rights Organisation in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, the UNPO has exerted much pressure on the Indonesian Government, even prior to the conflict in Ambon, to fulfill demands for independence not only from the Moluccas but elsewhere throughout the archipelago: ‘UNPO is convinced that true democratic change cannot take place without recognising and respecting the rights of the peoples colonised or ruled by Indonesia. Aware of the distinct legal and political situation of each UNPO Member people currently under Indonesian rule, thus UNPO calls on the government of Indonesia, in particular the new leaders of the country, but also the leaders of the opposition movements, to recognise the rights of the peoples of Aceh, East Timor, South Moluccas and West Papua to democracy and self-determination and to open a dialogue with the leaders of those peoples to develop effective ways to implement those rights.’ UNPO [online], ‘Statement Concerning Indonesia’, The Hague, 26 May 1998. Accessed 16 April 2003.
54 Tunny, *The Jakarta Post* [online].
55 UNPO is an international organisation created to represent nations and peoples around the world who are not represented as such in the world’s principal international organisations such as the United Nations. Founded in 1991, UNPO today consists of over 50 members who represent over 100 million persons. While having close ties with the RMS government-in-exile, based in The Netherlands, which has pursued campaigns for recognition in the past, the UNPO has continually expressed their ‘profound concern’ about the crisis in Ambon and the human rights abuses in the region. Whilst not specifically citing the FKM separatist movement, it has nevertheless actively lobbied NGOs and international organisations about contemporary calls for self-determination in the south Moluccas.
time.\textsuperscript{56} It was further pointed out that the subsequent Indonesian invasion of the Ambonese islands on 13 July 1950, to eliminate the RMS separatist movement was an expression of the ‘repression of human rights and wholesale decimation of Malukan lands and resources’.\textsuperscript{57}

In conclusion, linked with ideas of racial purity, the FKM construction of the RMS as a separatist movement whose legacy provided the basis for FKM demands for sovereignty was, on one hand, an articulation of earlier ideas of Ambonese identity and history dating back to the RMS movement 50 years earlier. On the other hand, the FKM’s ideological basis for identity involved a reorientation of ideas of identity and history in order to mobilise a new pan-religious Ambonese race towards the renewed goal of political independence from the Republic of Indonesia.

5.6 Support for the FKM

The resultant Ambonese movement is a reflection of the embedding of absolutist ideological mindsets amongst the local Ambonese where they have retreated into the identity construction perpetuated by the FKM. The commitment to self-determination wielded strong support in Ambonese society even while both Manuputty and Waileruny were jailed in Ambon City, after being arrested in Ambon on 17 April, 2002 and then sentenced to three years jail by the North Jakarta District Court in January 2003. Both Christian and Muslim village heads admitted to a large village commitment to separatism. Julianus Mual of Aboru village indicated that a large


\textsuperscript{57} Parker, Humanitarian Law, p.5.
number of residents of his village sympathised with the RMS separatist movement because ‘their lives had not been touched by developmental activities...so they have been disappointed’.\(^{58}\) Thus, despite the fact that Indonesian authorities conceded that the violence in Ambon and throughout the Moluccas had abated, widespread separatist activity in Ambon meant that the civil emergency status of the region was maintained until 15 September 2003.

The FKM’s absolutist ideological constructions of a virtuous Ambonese versus a tyrannical Indonesian state succeeded in maintaining strong support throughout Ambon. In 2003, evidence for continued support was shown by the assembly of hundreds of Ambonese choosing to celebrate the anniversary of the late RMS movement on the 25 April, 2003. RMS flags were flown throughout Ambon and on the neighbouring island of Buru. When security forces conducted a sweep of the islands, dozens of alleged supporters of the FKM were arrested while attempting to celebrate the 53rd anniversary of the RMS. Local military and police units also raided homes and allegedly seizing RMS flags and documents.\(^{59}\) Many of those arrested admitted that they had received orders from the FKM and its leader Alex Manuputty.\(^{60}\) Similarly, on the 58th anniversary of Indonesia’s independence on 17 August, 2003 RMS supporters in Ambon raised their flags, which were duly confiscated by local authorities. In conjunction with the raising of the RMS flags, many separatist supporters, including FKM Secretary General Mosses Tuana Kotta, were extremely vocal in continuing to condemn the Indonesian government for rejecting the position of the FKM’s ‘fight for justice’.

Let the security authorities take repressive actions on us, but we will continue our moral movement and peace struggle. The more repressive


the security authorities become, the more that international support will pour in for us.\textsuperscript{61}

While the actions of Indonesian authorities during 2003-04 have clearly indicated that there is a resolute decision by the government to take affirmative action against separatist groups\textsuperscript{62}, it is evident that the absolutist ideological framework of the FKM maintains a firm hold in the mindset of the Ambonese. In Ambon, court trials of suspected RMS/FKM supporters who were detained by local authorities were witnessed and cheered on by the Ambonese. Literally hundreds of Ambonese came to see the trial of John Rea and nine others who had declared that they were ‘citizens of the RMS state’ and that ‘the RMS is a legitimate state that stands in opposition to the Indonesian Republic’.\textsuperscript{63} In propagating their claim to the court judge, their appeals were joined by cries for freedom by hundreds of onlookers who came to give their encouragement and show their support.

5.7 Conclusion

It is argued in this thesis that the persistence of Ambonese separatism is illuminated by the constructivist view, which depicting it as an ideology which offered a diagnosis to changing complexities in Ambonese society. The FKM nationalist formula, therefore, used the psychological and political appeal of myths of common ancestry to enable the strengthening of ideas of national consciousness and individual loyalty. The identity and the moral needs of the individual were linked with the definition of new concepts of authenticity based on myths of homogeneity, the absolutist


\textsuperscript{62} This includes President Megawati Soekarnoputri imposing martial law on the province of Aceh on 19 May 2003 after the collapse of a ceasefire agreement in December 2002. Government forces numbering more than 40,000 said in October 2003 that they had killed more than 900 suspected GAM members and that a further 900 GAM members had been arrested.


187
constructions of ‘us’ and ‘them’ communities, and issues of minority rights linked with the international legality of the RMS as a separatist movement.

The other competing ideology that has developed to counterpose the FKM’s allegiance to an ethnic Moluccan homeland has been based on allegiance to an Islamic-based ethnonationalist vision of common residence. This competing nationalist formula also offered a sense of community within an era of social and political turbulence but at the same time crucially sought to enhance its radical Islamic constituency. This process, where nationalist myths have appealed to both those in search of positions of authority and masses in search of security, will be illustrated in the following chapter. It is argued that it is this counterposition of two different nationalist formulas which has largely inhibited the effectiveness of any compromise solutions to the conflict in the Moluccas and thus served to entrench and deepen the conflict.
CHAPTER 6

THE LASKAR JIHAD
AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF ETHNONATIONALISM

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the process of ideological formation of the Laskar Jihad between 2000 and 2002. During this period there were two stages of ideological formation, first as an ethnoreligious construction which was conducive to the mobilisation of Indonesian Muslims and second, as an overtly ethnonationalist construction which sought to develop the radical Islamic constituency of the Laskar Jihad and gain authority over them.

Ja’far Umar Thalib established the Laskar Jihad in January 2000. He is a Javanese born in Malang in East Java and is of Arab-Madurese descent. Following his formal education for Religious Teachers in Malang, 1981, Thalib continued his studies at Persis pesantren in Bangil, East Java. However due to personal theological differences in opinion, Thalib decided to move to Jakarta.¹ In 1983, he undertook studies at LIPIA, an institute devoted to the study of Islam and the Middle East which is funded by the Saudi Arabian government. As a student at LIPIA, Thalib became a prominent activist and a leader of a student organisation called al-Irsyad which rejected the ideology of the Pancasila. He briefly studied there for 3 years dropping out due to differences of opinion with his teachers, and subsequently moved to Lahore in Pakistan where he quickly became familiar and impressed with Salafism.²

Thalib joined the fighting in Afghanistan in 1989 and intensified his studies of the Salafy movement at various Islamic schools devoted to this movement. Returning to Indonesia, prior to the formation of the *Laskar Jihad*, Thalib headed the Sunni Communication Forum (FKAWJ) based in Yogyakarta in Central Java, which organised Islamic religious study groups and commemorated religious events in its branches throughout Indonesia.\(^3\)

Thalib established the *Laskar Jihad* at a vulnerable time of political transition in Indonesian politics. The elections of June 1999 revealed a substantial lack of support for the Islamic parties and instead an emphatic endorsement of pluralist parties opposed to conservative Islam.\(^4\) In this respect, the prospect of a transition to a democratic system may have threatened conservative Muslim groups throughout Indonesia but it also raised expectations that a transition might lead towards an Indonesia in which the wishes of the Islamic majority would be better represented.\(^5\)

It has been argued in chapter 3 of this thesis that nationalism and the subscription to nationalist sentiment is not simply engendered by a series of socio-economic circumstances which affect communal harmony and cohesion. Instead, nationalism is one possible response which is more likely to occur if a set of pre-conditions are in place. Thus, the *Laskar Jihad* did not galvanise support in Ambon simply on the basis of long-term processes of disruption. The decision to combat Christian adversaries under the nationalist banner of the *Laskar Jihad* relates to a series of both internal and

---


\(^5\) Several observers have noted there was a general enthusiasm in Indonesia for the democratisation process. The Asia Foundation/The United States-Indonesia Society (USINDO) Joint Conference Report, ‘Islam in Modern Indonesia’, Washington, D.C., 7 February 2002.
external disruptions which have lead to stresses and insecurities that have perpetuated a process of the reconstruction of identity within the community. This means that in this case, significant and unique interactions between Muslims and Christians in Ambon which brought about underlying insecurities or uncertainties of the ‘Us’ lead not only to Ambonese Muslim receptivity to an outsider’s depictions of the ‘Us’ but also lead to a reconstruction of the ‘Us’ as a distinct community of unique heritage and one that commanded virtuous strength against an evil Other.

Thus the change from riot to nationalist conflict was specifically facilitated by the access to these earlier myths of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and the confrontation of two ideological nationalisms in which each responded to each other’s changing ideological depictions of themselves and their enemy. As 6.2 will show, just prior to the emergence of the Laskar Jihad, people in Ambon were constructing the conflict and their enemies on the basis of the nascent dynamics of the conflict at the time including socio-economic grievances of perceived bias in the public service against Muslims and higher unemployment among certain sections of the Muslim community. This left a significant role to the Laskar Jihad to galvanise local Muslims through a unifying ideology based on a systematic ideological depiction of a Christian conspiracy against Indonesian/Islamic autonomy. Once constructed in this way, Ambonese experiences and myths of identity were filtered through this nationalist vision of Indonesian/Muslim identity, one that was based instead on a belief of common brotherhood, homeland and ancestry. This constructed vision promoted the confrontationalism of 2000 and generated the exclusivist construction of Muslim identity on Ambon.

On this basis, this chapter will develop the following key propositions. First, that perceptions of the conflict in Ambon prior to the formation of the Laskar Jihad were inchoate and diverse. Second, that Ja’far Umar Thalib of the Laskar Jihad articulated a series of ideological constructions which provided a shift in focus away from the
inchoate views of Muslims to a depiction of the dispute as Christian secessionism versus the claim that conservative Islam constituted the core of the Indonesian nation. Third, that the resonance of this ideology with the migrant Muslim community in Ambon reflects the embedding of absolutist ideological mindsets.

6.2 Pre-Laskar Jihad Perceptions

The ideology of the *Laskar Jihad* responded to the confusion and uncertainty within Ambon and to the public sentiments of Indonesian Muslims who were outside Ambon. The process of ideological formation reflects the way in which Thalib, through the *Laskar Jihad*, attempted to find common ground with Muslims in Ambon and throughout Indonesia. Thalib sought to do this by changing the perceptions of Muslims in Ambon to one which perceived the conflict as a Christian conspiracy, and encouraging existing sentiments outside Ambon of a religious riot. The following discussion of pre-*Laskar Jihad* perceptions, divided into two sub-sections ‘Muslims in Ambon’ and ‘Muslims outside Ambon’, will therefore argue that diverse explanations of the conflict by both indigenous Ambonese Muslims and Muslim migrants and the perceptions of non-Ambonese Indonesian Muslims came to be dominated by an overt Christian-Muslim construction which offered a simple formula of the Indonesian state and of the solution to the confusion in Ambon.

The subscription of Muslims in Ambon to the *Laskar Jihad’s* construction of nationalism involved a polarisation between Muslims on the island; firstly by those who subscribed to the articulation of conflict explained on the basis of a pan-Islamic/Indonesian identity claiming Ambon as part of its national territory versus a Christian secessionist movement claiming solely the South Moluccas as its legitimate political and cultural homeland; and secondly by Muslims in Ambon who articulated the conflict in Muslim versus Christian terms on the basis of simple Christian arrogance. These Muslims experienced certain incompatibilities with Thalib’s
resolution for a pitted war against alleged Christian separatists in Ambon. As will be shown in this chapter, that despite this polarisation and, in this sense, somewhat fragmented support from Muslims in Ambon, the *Laskar Jihad’s* nationalist ideology still commanded appeal particularly from members of the migrant Muslim community who began to respond by articulating historical grievances of state favouritism and ‘unfair’ economic and social disparities. At the same time, the *Laskar Jihad’s* pronunciation of security and deferential treatment towards Muslims hindered the political alienation of at least some members of the Muslim community in Ambon.

6.2.1 **Muslims in Ambon**

Prior to the *Laskar Jihad*, the conflict in Ambon was initially perceived by Muslims in Ambon in diverse ways. Shortly after the eruption of violence, one of the perceptions of the conflict was of a religious war between Christians and Muslims. This was no doubt provoked by the short-lived *Laskar Kristus* (Army of Christ) movement during March 1999 which was led by Agus Wattimena in a crusade-like mission against their ‘Christian opponents’. However, with migrants, mainly from Southeast Sulawesi and Java, being predominantly Muslim and many indigenous Ambonese professing Christianity, there was also a common identification of the conflict as one based on race.

During the immediate weeks following the eruption of violence, kiosks owned by local migrant Buginese and Butonese were razed, Buginese-owned market stalls were

---

6 The *Laskar Kristus* or Army of Christ claimed to be warriors defending the faith as God's soldiers. Despite Wattimena’s claim of a ‘popular army’ consisting of approximately 20,000 members, there had been widespread controversy regarding support for this movement on the basis that Wattimena recruited units of young children to serve as front-line Christian soldiers. Some adolescent Ambonese Christians expressed fervent enthusiasm for militant action but many Christian leaders and members of the Moluccan churches wished to focus instead on local efforts to restore peace and condemned the militant action.

7 Muslims allegedly handed out white armbands and headbands to other Muslims to identify each other and those Christians wearing red head cloths. During the conflict, the two sides were thus referred to as the “whites” (*kelompok putih*) and the “reds” (*kelompok merah* or *pihak merah*).
destroyed, and houses owned by migrant groups were burnt to the ground.\textsuperscript{8} Interviews with some local inhabitants at the time of the violence often referred to these attacks as Christian provocation on Muslims, while many others referred to alleged provocateurs of these incidents as ‘Tenggara’, literally meaning ‘Southeast’ which referred to the predominantly Christian indigenous Ambonese race from the south-eastern Moluccas.\textsuperscript{9}

The Bugis were principally highlighted in the conflict ever since two Bugis youths were implicated in the initial incident of violence. The Bugis, the Butonese and the Makassarese (BBM), all migrants from Southeast Sulawesi, were thereafter often reported as being the targets of violence, which prompted many Ambonese to depict the conflict in Ambon as an ‘ethnic cleansing of transmigrants’.\textsuperscript{10}

This resulted in Muslim immigrants in Ambon expressing their sense of confusion in the beginning, where it appeared at times that BBM were targeted while the Javanese and Chinese were left alone.\textsuperscript{11} It was indicated that at other times there were conflicting public calls of ‘\textit{Allah Akbar}’ (‘God is Great’) and ‘\textit{Basmi Islam}’! (‘Exterminate Islam!’)\textsuperscript{12} Other Ambonese even indicated that there were further demarcations of communities with differentiations being made between Christian groups, where it was alleged that Protestants were the agitators of the violence while those of Catholic denomination remained neutral.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{8} In West Kalimantan the 1998/9 violent confrontations between transmigrant Madurese and the indigenous Dayaks and Malays often saw the invocation of the abbreviation BBM or Bugis Buton Makassar. This abbreviation refers to three of the major ethnic groups in Sulawesi who have had long-held traditions of inter-island trading and are well known to settle outside their homeland territories of South and Southeast Sulawesi. However it most often has derogatory connotations relating to a people who have allegedly usurped the rights and privileges from those they have traded with and settled among. The increasing usage of this at least as a characterisation of violent confrontations between these ethnic groups and indigenous communities has been particularly salient in the context of Ambon. See Acciaioli, \textit{Masyarakat Indonesia}, pp.239-68.


\textsuperscript{11} Interview with informants A, B, C.

\textsuperscript{12} Interview with informants A, B, C.

\textsuperscript{13} Interview with informant A.
Local explanations of the conflict also tended to point to a wider political conspiracy or, at the very least, an intervening third party. There were allegations by Ambonese Muslims that Soeharto and members of his past regime had engineered the violence which fuelled fresh fears and anxieties of a larger network that could have possibly been responsible for other recent outbreaks of communal conflict throughout the Indonesian archipelago. It was known, for example, that less than two weeks after the investigation into the Ambon incident by the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (KONTRAS), investigative results allegedly pointed to ‘the activities of several non-local political interests’.\(^\text{14}\)

As the conflict in Ambon continued during 1999-2000, the problem was that the ‘unknown’ threat became more acute and pervasive. Anxieties in Ambon continued to be generated by the rising concerns over the immediate security of the community with no substantial outcomes to arrests and increasing reports of military discrimination. Many Ambonese publicly indicated their concern early in February 1999 over various reported incidents regarding the unusual treatment by the armed forces, whose objective should have to been to secure the situation and guarantee the safety of both sides in the conflict; ‘They carried out a lot of stupid acts and were also slow in their action in Ambon, just like in previous riots in Java’.\(^\text{15}\)

Subsequently, some Ambonese continued to make third-party allegations accusing disgruntled officers loyal to disgraced former Indonesian Armed Forces commander Lieutenant, General Prabowo, of instigating spates of violence in Indonesia which were reflected by members of the armed forces siding with local groups during the conflict.\(^\text{16}\) The view was publicly endorsed by Abdurrahman Wahid, the head of the


\(^{16}\) [Amboina Crisis Centre](http://www.ambasandamboina.org) – email 19/10/1999.
Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)\textsuperscript{17}, who indirectly suggested that it was a premeditated conflict in Ambon by laying the blame for the riots on certain rogue gang members with close connections to the military and political elite.\textsuperscript{18}

By the end of 1999, Ambon was at the same time also experiencing the cost of the conflict, which was devastating both in terms of the loss of lives and also in terms of the social and economic impact to the region. Negative economic growth had a devastating impact on the local economy with escalating unemployment levels and high rates of poverty. Public services had also collapsed and basic services such as health and education no longer continued to function as personnel decided to flee the area rather than remain on the island.

\textbf{6.2.2 Muslims outside Ambon}

Prior to the \textit{Laskar Jihad}, Muslims outside Ambon explained the dispute in Muslim versus Christian terms as a result of the failure of the State to protect Muslims in Ambon during the unrest. Indonesian Muslims’ outrage at the government’s failure and perceived incapacity to protect members was exacerbated by the perception that the state’s security apparatus seemed to be just as complacent.\textsuperscript{19} Comments by General Wiranto, the then Minister of Defence and Security, maintained that the TNI was under a lot of pressure, indicating that ‘recent incidents show that our nation’s brotherhood is highly threatened and under a serious test’.\textsuperscript{20} However, the TNI’s obvious difficulty in managing this threat only seemed to suggest the inability of state authority structures to restore communitarian harmony to contemporary social disruptions.

\begin{flushright} \textsuperscript{17} The Nahdlatul Ulama (Revival of the Religious Scholars) is a major Muslim political party in Indonesia. It is well known to be an avant-garde political force compared with some of Indonesia’s more radical Muslim parties. \\
\textsuperscript{18} McBeth, \textit{Far Eastern Economic Review}, p.30. \\
\textsuperscript{19} Tom McCawley, ‘Muslims demand holy war on Ambon’, \textit{The Australian}, 8-9 January 2000, p.11. \\
\textsuperscript{20} Indonesian Department of Foreign Affairs (Deplu) [online], ‘Wiranto Calls Meeting on Violence’, 25 January 1999. Available from accessed 16 May 2000. \end{flushright}
With no end to the violence despite the intervention of Indonesian Armed Forces into the Moluccas in March 1999, there were increasing perceptions by Indonesian Muslims of a failure by the state to protect the Muslim community. There was renewed anger from protesters and Muslim organisations at the perception that the state was unwilling to protect the Islamic community. Despite the fact that interim Indonesian President, B.J.Habibie, during his brief term in office in 1998-1999, sacked the Ambon police chief for failing to halt the violence and ordered more soldiers deployed, Muslims throughout Indonesia intensified their protests over the central government’s failure to exert tougher control over the conflict. One analyst of the situation in Ambon indicated that, ‘the Ambon problem is significant nationally because it is fuelling a sense of disrespect for the political leadership and stirring up the religious divide’. 21

The response of Indonesian Muslims to these perceptions led to a demonstration of thousands of Muslims organised by the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) who were a strong ally of the FKW AJ. 22 Muslims who marched in protest in Jakarta in March 1999 publicly threatened to mount a jihad or holy war. 23 Protestors expressed worry at the increase in Christian violence perpetrated against Muslims. In response, various conservative Muslim organisations throughout Indonesia attempted to mobilise jihad volunteers during March 1999. Muslim leaders indicated that there existed a fundamental basis in Islamic ideology to defend the greater Muslim community. K.H. Abdurra syid Abdullah, Chairman of KISDI stated,

I think that, anywhere, if Muslims are slaughtered, murdered or oppressed, Muslims must defend themselves; and fellow brother

22 Schulze, World Affairs, 2002, [online].
23 Jihad is often referred to as ‘holy war’ where a war is undertaken for a just cause and for the defence of Islam. Thalib uses this meaning of jihad although jihad has a second meaning. The word jihad derives from jahadan meaning exertion of striving. Thus jihad also refers to those endeavours made at any particular time for the preaching and propagation of Islam and the moral and spiritual correction and guidance of humankind. For more information on this see Glenn D.Paige, Chaiwat Satha-Anand and Sarah Gilliat (eds), Islam and Non-Violence, Center for Global Nonviolence Planning Project, Institute for Peace, University of Hawaii: Honolulu, 1993.
Muslims must come to their aid. If we let this slaughter, murder and oppression occur, our Islam is not genuine. Regarding the Ambon case, we are obliged to launch a holy war.24

Vocal complaints from Muslims of perceived favouritism of the state towards Christians were reflected by many conservative Muslims outside the Moluccas who had expressed for a long time their deep-rooted resentment of Christian dominance in the government bureaucracy and their control of various media and think-tank organisations.25 After the eruption of violence in Ambon, these complaints were emphatically made by conservative Muslims such as Husain Umair, Chairman of the Muslim Committee for World Solidarity, who, in 1999 aired publicly a long held complaint that, ‘Christian officers in the armed forces are christianising Indonesia’.26

6.3 An Ethnoreligious Construction

In early 2000, Thalib’s ideological construction was a religious construction which sought to resonate with Muslims in Ambon and throughout Indonesia by firstly, changing the perceptions of Muslims in Ambon so as to view the riots as arising from a Christian conspiracy, and responding to existing sentiments outside Ambon of a religious riot. In portraying a contemporary threat as coming from Christian antagonists, Thalib endeavoured to exert a level of compulsion strong enough to gain the support of both the Ambonese and wider Indonesian Islamic community who would grant political support to his objectives. In June 2000, Thalib explained the riot in Ambon in Muslim versus Christian terms as the outcome of state discrimination against Muslims. He accused Abdurrahman Wahid of partiality to Christians as the violence continued in Ambon and throughout the Moluccas.27 He pointed out that there was a clear failure of state elites to maintain order which thereby legitimised his actions to send his own paramilitants into Ambon,

26 Tom McCawley, ‘Muslims demand holy war on Ambon’, The Australian, 8-9 January 2000, p.11.
Clearly the Abdurrahman Wahid government is unable or unwilling to protect the Islamic community. If the state can’t protect us, then we must do it ourselves.  

In 1999, Thalib was keen to indicate that the outcome of his meeting with the newly elected President Wahid was an indication that the Indonesian government was intent on defending the Christian community. According to Thalib, Wahid’s opposition to his plan to send thousands of Laskar Jihad volunteers to Maluku only served to confirm suspicions that the state had always possessed a discriminatory stance towards Muslims. As Thalib stated,

> In meeting with Gus Dur (Abdurrahman Wahid) our aim was to get him to hear directly from our own mouths. So that his ears would hear directly the ultimatums that we presented. I told him, ‘Before you became President to the time you became President, you have sided with the Christians.’ Possibly my words angered him. No one has said that to him directly.

Thalib frequently drew attention to these accusations of state discrimination and illegitimacy in various public speeches he made in 2000. In early April 2000, Thalib conducted a religious sermon in Jakarta organised by the FKA WJ which was entitled ‘Jihad: A Final Effort to End the Moluccan Christian Uprising’. Amongst the speakers were some prominent Indonesian Muslim leaders, including Brigadier General Rustam Kastor. Kastor heavily criticised the Indonesian security apparatus for their inability to secure the area from further violence, while Thalib criticised the Wahid government for becoming a ‘horseman for the West in their aggression towards Islam’. Thalib’s subsequent cry for the Muslim community to unite was met

---

31 Rustam Kastor is a retired armed services officer who resides in Ambon. He is a well-known for having been a high ranking officer in the Indonesian Armed Forces and taking part in Trikora (*Tri Komando Rakyat*), a strategy formed pre-1963 for the mobilisation for the country in order to wrest West New Guinea from the Dutch.
with vocal support from members of the Muslim Ambonese Youth group in Jakarta and the FPI.\textsuperscript{33}

Thalib cited the perceived one-sidedness of the state towards a Christian religious minority in Indonesia as a clear justification to declare a \textit{jihad} and send \textit{Laskar Jihad} volunteers to Maluku. In other words, it was believed that the transgression of majority rights of the Muslims in Indonesia and contemporary inequalities disproved the government’s claim to credibility. For Thalib and his allies, it was a reason to create a more effective regime and take control over issues that concerned the ‘national interest’, where state structures had evidently failed. For Indonesian Muslims in general and Muslims in Ambon particularly, who were experiencing frustration with contemporary disruptions, it was a solution, as Thalib indicated, for ‘peace, stability, safety, welfare’ and a resolution to widespread disillusionment with Wahid’s government.\textsuperscript{34}

As evidenced by interviews with local Muslims conducted by the author, Thalib’s depiction of a threat to Muslims by an Indonesian State that was pro-Christian resonated with Muslims in Ambon. Complaints from local Muslims began with alleged discrimination against Muslims in Ambon in the occupation of high positions in local government and the private sector.\textsuperscript{35} It was argued by members of the Ambonese Muslim community that when the Muslims in Ambon began to educate themselves and occupy these types of prominent positions, the Christians deliberately endeavoured to occupy and dominate positions in local government and in higher educational institutions.

Muslims began to study and become degree holders, children of district heads, and others. We were discriminated against if we wanted to go on

\textsuperscript{34} Thalib specified particular individuals as discriminating against the Muslim community including Benny Doro, who has been accused of being a military leader for Christian groups (\textit{Panglima Perang Kelompok Kristen}).
to further education and in the office. Muslims in the office were
rivalled against the Christians who wanted to take over. Christians
started to occupy positions in government and education. We feel that
we have not been fairly treated.\textsuperscript{36}

It was alleged that this discrimination existed ever since the demise of the RMS
movement in 1950 by Indonesian troops when Christian proponents of the RMS
‘changed their tactics’ (\textit{merubah pola}) and were bent on firmly establishing a
Christian foothold in the workplace and regional government.\textsuperscript{37} For the complainants,
this meant a completely disproportionate number of Christians in Ambon who now
occupy local jobs and have access to power.\textsuperscript{38}

This was partly attributed to perceived discriminatory state policies, particularly
during the New Order period of government, which allowed the Christian minority in
Indonesia to accumulate high levels of political and economic influence. It was
asserted that this resulted with the Christians taking advantage of the existing system
so as to discriminate against any Muslim wishing to enter the educational system or
the public service.\textsuperscript{39} Subsequent calls by Muslims for equity in the workplace, less
discrimination by the state, and greater employment and educational opportunities,
brought with it increased tension in the Ambonese community.

Muslims in Ambon were also accusing the military of actively perpetuating the
conflict or simply shooting at only the Muslims if they were involved in a clash.
Christians were accused of using automatic weapons, which, it was said, could only
have come from the military.\textsuperscript{40} Anonymous snipers were at one stage accused of

\textsuperscript{36} Interview with informant A. My translation of “Orang Islam mulai belajar jadi dokterandus, anak
bupati dan sebagainya. Kami digenjet bila mau sekolah tinggi dan di kantor. Orang Islam di kantor
mulai ada saingan masyarakat Kristen mau jajah. Kristen mulai duduk kursi di pemerintah dan
pendidikan, kami sudah merasa diperlakukan tidak adil”.
\textsuperscript{37} Interview with informant W.
\textsuperscript{38} Interview with informants S, T.
\textsuperscript{39} Interview with informants S, T.
\textsuperscript{40} Interview with informants C, V, W.
being military personnel\textsuperscript{41}, while various other incidents were pointed out to indicate a rather blatant partiality of the state security apparatus, as one Ambonese indicated:

Just have a look at the assault on the Brimob boarding house in Tantui in Ambon. In the assault, clearly there were armed forces and police involved. Also in Kolam village and Batumerah, several members of the armed forces became involved in the conflict. They even were the ones leading the masses.\textsuperscript{42}

Local Muslims in Ambon also talked of brutal repression by Christians. During the period 1994 to late 1998, and prior to the 1999 outbreak of violence on the island, many pointed out serious cases of antagonism by Christians who were accused of being increasingly imbued with the idea of political and economic dominance.\textsuperscript{43} At this time, there was already widespread recognition that tensions between Christians and Muslims had intensified throughout Indonesia, with frequent spates of violent conflict between the two religious communities. There were several clashes and violent incidents between the indigenous Catholics in East Timor and Muslim migrants, for example, which resulted in the burning of several markets and mosques in 1995.\textsuperscript{44} It was said by Muslim informants that Christians similarly exacerbated religious divisions in Ambon in 1994, when Christians perpetrated attacks on Muslim groups during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.\textsuperscript{45} In 1998, the Christians were also accused of scapegoating the local Muslim community when one of the major Christian churches was burnt. Hence,

In Ambon it had been peaceful until 1994 when there were frequent altercations between Muslims and Christians. Christians began to cause disturbances during the Muslim fasting month. The Christians were drunk and became increasingly engaged in conflict. In 1998 things got


\textsuperscript{42}Interview with informant V. My translation of “Tengok saja peristiwa penyerangan asrama Brimob di Tantui di Ambon. Dalam penyerangan jelas ada TNI dan Polri terlibat. Juga di Kampung Kolam dan Batumerah, sejumlah aparat TNI ikut terlibat dalam aksi penyerangan. Bahkan merekalah yang memimpin massa”.

\textsuperscript{43}Interview with informants A, C, S, T, U.

\textsuperscript{44}Liddle, \textit{Government Policies}, p.300.

\textsuperscript{45}Interview with informants A and C.
worse when it was alleged that Petra Church had been burnt. The Christians had deliberately made an issue out of it.\textsuperscript{46}

For indigenous Ambonese Muslims who were long-term residents on the island, there were concerns that there was a breakdown in community cohesion as a result of the Christian’s lack of commitment to Ambonese culture which traditionally dictated social relationships and local customs. The burning of the church in 1998 by alleged Christian assailants was, therefore, perceived as a breach of respect for the traditional alliance system of \textit{pela}. For these Muslims, sources of religious tension in the region portrayed the Christians lack of commitment to \textit{pela}. It was often stated that this breakdown in commitment was exemplified by the fact that the locally burnt church had been built by both Muslims and Christians from villages pledged to this \textit{pela} tradition. It was said for example,

\begin{quotation}
Before it had been peaceful, never has there been a conflict like this. Beforehand there was \textit{pela}, Christians and Muslims were regarded equal. Even the church that was burnt was built by Muslims.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quotation}

In this way, Thalib’s ethnoreligious construction resonated with Ambonese Muslim society whose lives had been subject to strains in their relationship with the Christians. While in the same process, Thalib could position himself as a standard bearer of Islam against a depicted Christian-led threat hostile to Islam and Indonesian Muslims in particular.


\textsuperscript{47} Interview with informant A. My translation of “Sebelumnya rukun, belum pernah ada konflik seperti ini. Pela dulu ada, Kristen dan Islam dianggap sama. Gereja yang dibakar malah dibangun oleh orang Islam”.

203
6.4 An Ethnonationalist Construction

Thalib now elaborated his initial ideas of the threat to Muslims posed by a pro-Christian Indonesian state, by articulating a view of the Indonesian state as built on an Islamic core under threat from Christian separatists. Thalib seemed to recognise that with unprecedented attention on militant Islamic groups after September 11 the initial rhetoric of a struggle based on faith needed to be changed. Thalib subsequently depicted the Christian enemy as a separatist movement subversive to the state which meant that the movement would be deemed illegal. It was one of the only ways to openly bid for the backing of the army, who normally strictly oppose conflicts based on SARA and would thus under no circumstances be justified in participating in such a conflict. Hence Thalib’s statement,

President George W. Bush last Saturday indicated that he was prepared to launch a crusade against terrorism. And if we are talking terrorism, according to the ex Director of the Coordinating Body for State Intelligence (BAKIN), Dr. A.C. Manullang, terrorist groups are not predominantly Islamic groups. He stated that there are five terrorist organisations in Indonesia. These groups, it is said have ties with the South Moluccan Republican movement (RMS).

48 The events of September 11, 2001 prompted many strategists from the Bush administration to source out possible suspects in the ‘war against terrorism’. Considerable coverage has been subsequently devoted to the Laskar Jihad in Indonesia. Paul Wolfwitz, US Deputy Secretary of Defence, in an interview on 7 January 2002, warned of those ungoverned regions which had become ‘havens for terrorists’, with specific reference to Maluku and central Sulawesi which was an obvious reference to the Laskar Jihad. The conspicuous militant activity of the Laskar Jihad and particularly Thalib’s rousing speeches endorsing a jihad or holy war led many to suspect that Thalib held links with Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network. In Indonesia’s weak political position, it was feared that such terrorist networks could potentially take advantage of the state’s vulnerability. However Thalib always denied any links with Osama Bin Laden, the al-Qaeda network and any other suspected terrorist organisations. In January 2002, he illuminated that, ‘Ideologically we (Laskar Jihad) are opposite to al-Qaeda. We are in confrontation with al-Qaeda. We are from the Ahlusunnah Wal Jammah sect, they are from Khawaarij. Their principle is reactionary always against the government and even regard Muslims from outside their sect as infidels. We are against that principle even since I met Osama bin Laden. We are still against him and al-Qaeda’, See Channelnewsasia, ‘Indonesia’s militant groups deny links with Osama and Al Qaeda network’, 30 January 2002 [online]. Available from Factiva (Journal Database), accessed 22 July 2002.

With the RMS figuring prominently in Muslim denouncements of the violence, Thalib promoted the ‘Christian threat’ as a threat to both Indonesian Muslims and the Indonesian community as a whole. Deemed as a separatist terror, it served to legitimise a jihad targeting a Christian community on political grounds rather than purely religious ones. Thalib and his conservative Muslim allies, such as Ahmad Sumargono of KISDI and Eggi Sudjana of the Muslim Workers’ Brotherhood Union, therefore, translated the moral right of the Muslim community to launch a holy war into a public rights claim of their community.\(^{50}\) Thalib indicated that it was for the nation’s benefit to send Muslims to Ambon, as the RMS could potentially threaten the disintegration of the nation by encouraging other separatist acts: ‘If Maluku breaks away like East Timor, it is a problem for all of Indonesia. This will affect other places such as Irian Jaya, Sulawesi and Flores’.\(^{51}\)

This shift in ideological construction was a way in which Thalib harnessed existing fears both in Ambon and throughout Indonesia, of a separatist threat. The separatist RMS had in fact featured as an issue of contention when, in 1999, Indonesian Muslims, including those in Ambon, questioned the fact that the violence erupted on the feast day marking the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and the 49th anniversary of the official signing of the RMS movement.\(^{52}\) Many Muslims were of the conviction that this was no coincidence and claims were made that the RMS was responsible for the violence. These suspicions were substantiated or were given justification on the grounds that the RMS flag was allegedly sighted in various places on the island of Ambon and that shouts of ‘Long Live the RMS!’ (‘Hidup RMS!’) were also heard.\(^{53}\) It was also significant for many that the exiled president of the

\(^{50}\) As a unionist and past ally of Prabowo, Soeharto’s son-in-law, Sudjana was accused of worsening the situation and taking advantage of the Ambon riots to win votes in the upcoming election during that time. See McBeth, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, p.30.


\(^{53}\) Interview with informants S, T.
RMS in The Netherlands, Dr. Frans Tutuhatunewa, publicly acknowledged responsibility for the flying of the RMS flags.\textsuperscript{54}

Where in previous years the focus had generally been on a call for \emph{jihad} based on a religious struggle of the Muslim \emph{ummat}, Thalib and his allies gravitated towards the articulation of a national struggle by Indonesian Muslims where Islam represented the core of the nation. Hence Thalib’s well-known rallying call:

\begin{quote}
We remind the Muslim community especially as the community who founded this United Indonesian Republic State, that we are the primary vanguard for the defence of this State and that we wish only for protection in order to continue our faith purely and consequently.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

In this process, Thalib began to unfold a comprehensive explanation of history, detailing the development of a Christian conspiracy in Indonesia as an elucidation for those confused with conflict circumstances. Inherent within various speeches, including a speech entitled \emph{‘Jihad: The Final Solution to End the Christian Separatist Violence’}, Thalib unravelled a story of a separatist conspiracy in Indonesia dating back to the proclamation of Indonesian independence on the 17\textsuperscript{th} August 1945.\textsuperscript{56} He

\textsuperscript{54} Tutuhatunewa’s failure to create a clear distinction between the outbreak of communal conflict in Ambon and the execution of his ‘RMS struggle’ arguably provided leeway for developing suspicions. He denied, however, that members of his cause deliberately instigated the violence in Ambon. See Dwitri Waluyo, Mochtar Touwe, and A.R.Sosrosuwignyo, ‘Ambon Menangis’s, \textit{Gatra}, Special Report, 30 January 1999, p.60.


\textsuperscript{56} It is acknowledged that many conservative Islamic groups in Indonesia already possessed well-known ideological templates of Christian conspiracies to destroy Islam and undermine the Indonesian nation. It is the argument that the RMS was incorporated into this template in order to make sense of contemporary disruptions including the conflict in Ambon. For an illumination of the strong symbol of ‘otherness’ as an example of Islamic rhetoric of discontent, see Bernard Lewis, \textit{The Political Language of Islam}, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, p.65, and Katherine C.Kolstad, \textit{Enemy Others and Violence in Jakarta: An Islamic Rhetoric of Discontent, in Toward a New Paradigm: Recent Developments in Indonesian Islamic Thought}, Mark R. Woodward (ed), Arizona State University, 1996. For recent examples of this concept of Islamic rhetoric of discontent in New Order Indonesia, see Kathleen Turner, \textit{The Rising Crescent Tide: Javanese Islamic and Christian Churches in Conflict in New Order Indonesia}, Honours Thesis, Faculty of Asian Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra, 1997.
suggested that certain patrons who made justified attempts to establish an Indonesian Republic were ultimately thwarted by Christian groups from Eastern Indonesia, who instigated separatist movements and allegedly masterminded other separatist groups during this period in places such as Manado and West Papua. Hence,

All these revolts, which aimed to separate from the Indonesian Republic, were commanded by the Catholic and Protestant churches. They were then destroyed by the Indonesian armed forces but this was only on the face of it since the Christians have stuck firmly to their principles. This was of course proven by their renewed separatist claim dating back to the time of the weak Indonesian government during the Old Order government.\(^57\)

At the same time, Thalib indicated that corrupt patrons facilitated the growth of reactive separatist movements through governmental policies that transgressed the rights of the majority Muslim group. He indicated that the birth of the Indonesian Republic was automatically opposed by counter Christian elements whose basic principles were to 1) Christianise the whole of Indonesia as the second Christian nation in Southeast Asia after the Philippines, and 2) if the first fails, to separate themselves from the Indonesian State.\(^58\) In effect, Thalib explained that the exclusivist and radical aspects of the Christians derived from this ingrained ideological disposition, which can be traced throughout Indonesian history.

On this basis, Thalib argued that the RMS movement was not an isolated movement. He asserted that it emerged in unison with the Catholic and Protestant churches throughout Indonesia and was motivated under the auspices of corrupt authority structures. State patrons during the Old Order and New Order periods were propounded, in varying degrees, to have failed to achieve credibility as agents of


\(^58\) Abdurrohim, Mewaspadai, p.8.
equity and social justice because they ‘were not brave enough to take affirmative action against separatist movements’. The fact that these governments permitted separatist movements, such as the RMS, to flourish, was an act against a unified territory based on historical sovereignty and the process of state unification. In Thalib’s depiction of state patronage of Christian counter movements in the Old and New Order periods, including post-New Order under former Indonesian President Wahid, he argued that there had always been a clear weakening of state legitimacy in its inability to offer security to its citizens.

Why does the Muslim community always become a target? Because it is only the Muslim community who always is the forerunner in ensuring that the United Indonesian Republic remains standing in the regions and throughout Indonesia itself. So that if there are rebellions by Christians then the Muslims are the first to face these disasters until Muslims are forced to place a cross at the front of their houses in order to protect themselves from the cruelty and insolence for the Christian youth. The Muslim community no longer feels safe even though they live and stay in their own country, even feeling foreign in their homeland.

Thalib consolidated this argument by echoing Muslim allegations of subversive elements within the ranks of the Indonesian state security forces. General suspicions by the Indonesian community, both in and outside Ambon, that certain members within the armed forces sided with opposing sides in Ambon, had already disseminated doubts regarding the erosion of central authority and the failure of the armed forces. It was recalled that, in previous times on the island,

---

59 Abdurrohim, Mewaspadai, p.9. My translation of “tidak berani secara tegas mengambil tindakan menangani gerakan-gerakan pemberontakan”.
60 The separation of East Timor was a highly contentious issue for the Laskar Jihad declaring it a betrayal against the citizens of the nation-state and proof of Christian separatist aspirations.
When there were problems in 1994-5, the military would go in, take the troublemakers out by the truckload and give them a course in discipline. This time it didn’t happen.\(^{62}\)

Despite the evident failure of the TNI to act promptly and resolve existing disputes, Thalib still accredited the army as a public institution of integrity that had, however, been a product of separatist corruption. Disillusionment with the capabilities of the state and its institutions, he argued, did not necessarily mean a total decline in those capacities. By and large, the TNI itself was still perceived by the *Laskar Jihad* as a credible component of the state security apparatus. The attack by members of the division of elite armed forces (*Kopassus*) on a Muslim polyclinic in Ambon on 14 June 2001, for example, was seen not only as an attack against the Muslim community but also against TNI state forces. Fracturing or factionalism within military ranks was associated with the RMS, who Thalib accused of using international connections to supply separatist soldiers with modern weapons.\(^{63}\)

Intrinsically, the idea portrayed by the *Laskar Jihad* was that the interests of the individual and community were concurrent with those of the state, in that they both principally adhered to the concept of national unity and depended upon institutional structures to ensure stability and equality. The principles of social justice and political stability were therefore principles which demanded subsequent loyalty of its citizens to the ‘strong state’ or, in other words, loyalty to an agent of equitable development and social harmony, a state that could ensure the prospect of justice in the community. It was stated by the *Laskar Jihad* that,

To put an end to the conflict in the Moluccas, the Government must detain and bring to justice the provocateurs that hide behind the conflict. Look what they did in the Poso case. The champion of the conflict, Fabianus Tibo, was caught and brought to justice publicly, witnessed by many.\(^{64}\)

\(^{62}\) Comment made by Marcus Mietzner. Taken from McBeth, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, p.29.


While there evidently was a belief in the capacities of the Indonesian State to ensure the implementation of justice in the community demonstrable in the government’s acting upon the arrest of Fabianus Tibo in the Poso incident, the *Laskar Jihad* found that these proven capacities were less successful in the Moluccas. In some sense of being morally progressive, the *Laskar Jihad* instead indicated that the failure of the state to ensure social justice obligated the ‘loyal community’ to inherit the role of the state in the implementation of justice and stability in the Moluccas. In other words, the Muslim community, who claimed to defend the Indonesian State against nationalist insurgents, were called upon to fulfil certain moral obligations associated with this loyalty to the State and its institutions. Thalib stated that, ‘Of course, if justice has to be done in the Moluccas, the Muslims themselves must do it. In what way? There is no other way than *jihad fisabililah* [the way of/to God]!’

With Thalib and the *Laskar Jihad* under severe scrutiny after September 11, Thalib subsequently sought to emphasise the ‘us’, or the Muslim community’s shared nationality and citizenship, and sought to promote his militant endeavour as one based on national interest. In a ‘Declaration of War’ broadcast on Radio SPMM (Voice of the Maluku Muslim Struggle) on 1-3 May 2002, Thalib articulated a sense of nationalist affiliation based on the attachment to a public Indonesian culture:

> We have done all this in the name of exercising our duty and obligation as citizens of the Republic of Indonesia to defend it. Moreover, we have done all this in the name of exercising our religious obligations, namely defending the integrity of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia.

Additionally, as well as envisioning the community as progressively evolving through the fulfilment of common commitments and responsibilities, Thalib chose to reinforce

---

65 Fabianus Tibo, a Christian and a retired armed services officer, and thirteen of his friends were accused of inciting violence in Poso, Sulawesi in April-May 2000 where conflict erupted between the local Christian and Muslim communities.

66 "Translation of excerpts from the Laskar Jihad leaders concerning the Malino II Peace Agreement", *Ambon Information Website* [online].

the sense of community with overt symbolism rooted in history. In other words, Thalib’s drew upon a sense of evolutionary development by promoting myths from the past and employing a language of common ancestry to refer not to the community itself but rather to the homeland which they inhabited. The character of the ‘us’ was therefore depicted as a community whose ‘forbears have toiled and spilled their blood’ and who came together in the front of Indonesian nationalism. This idea of common loyalty to the territory also implied the acquisition of ethical obligations, which were identified with the ideas of historical inheritance and a common destiny to undertake the tasks of their forebears. Hence, ‘This has been the teaching of the forefathers of our nation when they opposed the Dutch Christians’.

Thalib continued to justify his position through the reinforcement of Indonesia’s weak political position against a separatist threat. A day before the 57th anniversary of the declaration of the RMS on 24 April 2002, Thalib reiterated the prevalence of a separatist threat in Indonesia, pitched against a community loyal to the Indonesian state. Thalib held a prayer gathering attended by thousands of Moluccan Muslims, at the local Ambonese Al Fatah Mosque in which he declared war on any RMS and FKM activists and their supporters. At the time there was much nervousness and anticipation from the local Ambonese, including local security forces, concerning the FKM’s confirmed wish to observe the anniversary of the RMS. While Hayim Muzadi, chairman of Indonesia’s Islamic organisation, the Nahdlatul Ulama, appealed to Muslims in Ambon not to be provoked into violent action by opposing forces, security forces both locally and nationally echoed Thalib’s spoken urgency to defend the nation against those who threatened the unity of the state. The military commander in Maluku, Commander Brigadier General Mustoposo, indicated strongly that,

69 ‘Translation of excerpts from the Laskar Jihad leaders concerning the Malino II Peace Agreement’, Ambon Information Website [online].
The existence of the FKM and RMS is very dangerous to the concept of the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia. Therefore the security agencies must take stern action against the RMS flag hoisters.  

Also, Chris Shaetapy of the Indonesian political party PDIP and Sueb Ekaputra, a legislator of the Indonesian military, advocated the desirability of arresting the masterminds behind the RMS separatist cause in the Moluccas, reiterating that it threatened the unity of the Indonesian State. RMS flags were allegedly flown in Ambon and also on Haruku, Seram and Saparua, initiating a large protest by Muslims on the island of Ambon. Indeed, despite the arrest of Alex Manuputty and Semmy Waileruny of the FKM on April 17th, angered calls by local Muslims for authorities and security personnel to act firmly against RMS supporters were still unleashed.

With the raising of the RMS flags throughout the Moluccas, many Ambonese articulated fears of the existence of a definite separatist movement in Ambon. There were those Ambonese who expressed a high level of fear and apprehension prior to the 52nd anniversary of the proclamation of the RMS on 25 April 2002. Witnesses claimed for example that, ‘frightened residents fled their homes as security forces tightened their grip ahead of the anniversary’. Furthermore, that ‘many residents in Kudamati district have fled their homes on fears on violence’. This was despite the fact that others in Ambon claimed that the RMS movement was confined to The Netherlands and that there was no underlying RMS in exile movement in Ambon and Maluku in general.

---

75 Interview with informants J, I.
As evidenced by interviews conducted by the author with Muslims, Thalib’s construction of a separatist threat resonated with Muslims in Ambon. Certainly, many migrant Muslims in Ambon were adamant about the existence of a separatist threat or at least ‘a non-Islamic group supported by a separatist group who were importing weapons’. It was said that a Moluccan separatist movement was a transparent case of Christian separatist conspiracy since, they alleged, geographically a south Moluccan republic was a ridiculous concept in the first place when Ambon was not strictly located in the south Moluccan region. It was argued that the RMS was an invented acronym designed as a ‘cover-up’ to veil its genuine intention of establishing a Christian State in Maluku. The RMS acronym, they said, actually represented Republik Maluku Serani (Christian Moluccan Republic) and not Republik Maluku Selatan (Republic of the South Moluccas).

Other Muslim respondents depicted a detailed narrative of a Christian separatist infiltration into Ambonese society beginning in 1950. Shortly after the demise of the RMS in 1950, it was said that proponents of the separatist group re-emerged to infiltrate Ambon city by deliberately occupying positions in local government and in higher educational institutions. Citing their collaboration with the RMS-in-exile government in The Netherlands, it was alleged that the Christian separatists in Ambon received weapons directly from the RMS overseas in preparation for a take-over of the island with the collapse of Soeharto’s regime in May 1998. What ensued were frequent attacks on Muslims in Ambon throughout 1998 prior to the eruption of major violence in January 1999. It was described:

On the 13 December 1998, the RMS attacked Muslims looting our possessions and burning our houses and mosques. The attack was conducted in the middle of the night using rifles, machetes, spears and bows and arrows. They yelled out ‘Kill Muslims’ and ‘Long live the RMS!’ Then on 19 January 1999, we were in the middle of our fasting month, when the RMS from every corner of Ambon staged a sudden

---

76 Interview with informant T. My translation of ‘Kelompok bukan Islam didukung oleh kelompok separatis dengan memasuk persenjataan.’
77 Interview with informants T, C.
attack. At Karang Panjang and Gunung Nona, the Christian masses flew the RMS flag.\textsuperscript{78}

The perception was exacerbated by the local Muslim radio station, the SPMM, which operated on behalf of FKAWJ based in Yogyakarta in Central Java, which accused the Moluccan Protestant Church and the separatist FKM of being responsible for joint action in the ceremonial raising of the RMS flag.\textsuperscript{79} The radio station drew little distinction between the two groups and in effect constructed a broad specious sense of identity by establishing further accusations that the United Nations Mission in Ambon was also an integral component of the ‘separatist conspiracy’, based on the observation that the UN flag was hoisted together with the RMS flag at the UN Bureau in Ambon.

Other local Muslims also lashed out at the RMS and FKM who had claimed that in certain villages of Ambon, Ambonese Christians were the original inhabitants. They argued that in fact the ancestors of these villages were Muslims who converted to Christianity. They said that Christians in Ambon could not claim that this was their homeland because Christians were originally migrants from other islands, proof of which could be found by their foreign family names: ‘De Fretes, de Quelu, van Houten, Barons, all of these clearly are not Moluccan names’.\textsuperscript{80} FKM claims to a community or family of common ancestry were argued therefore to contain fundamental flaws. An area known as Poka Rumah Tiga in Ambon came under particular contention in this respect as Christians in the area denounced Muslim


residents as ‘migrants’ (penduduk liar) and therefore should be ousted from the village. Local Muslims refuted this accusation indicating,

The ancestor of Rumah Tiga was a Muslim woman who converted to Christianity and moved to Rumah Tiga. This woman started the generation of inhabitants, which only numbered a few at the time. Other than that, Rumah Tiga residents are migrants from various areas outside of Rumah Tiga. A similar assessment was also expressed by Moluccan historian Drs. Noer Tawaenella. According to him, Rumah Tiga still has kinship ties with Wakal and Hitu. This can be seen in the old literature like that which was written by Safar Rijali, a writer of Moluccan history. 81

Thalib’s ideological framework changed as a result of new developments in 2002 with renewed endeavours for reconciliation on the island. The signing of the Malino Peace Agreement was conducted between rival Christian and Muslim factions from Maluku in search of a resolution to the civil war affecting the province (See Appendix 9). The agreement stipulated the establishment of two commissions – for security and for social and economic affairs – to monitor the truce in the Moluccan region. 82 It also provided for the disarming and banning of militias and the establishment of joint security patrols.

Thalib chose to reinforce the Laskar Jihad’s involvement in the conflict in Ambon based on the existence of a secessionist movement. Thalib, therefore, denounced the Malino Peace Agreement (See Appendix 10) citing a conspiracy of separatists against


82 See Associated Press Newswires, ‘Warring Christian and Muslim groups from Maluku sign peace deal’, 12 February 2002 [online]. Available from Dow Jones Interactive, Publications Library, accessed 13 February 2002. Due to a lack of acceptance of the Malino Peace Agreement by various factions within the community including the Laskar Jihad who continued to operate in Ambon, the truce was deemed ineffective after only two months from the date of its signing. Further arson attacks and bombings continued on the island including a bomb explosion in Ambon on April 3, 2002, which killed seven people.
the Indonesian government and its citizens. He denied that the Muslim delegates at
the Malino negotiations represented the people of the province and suggested that the
separatist threat maintained its existence irrespective of any mediation talks for
conflict resolution. A statement issued by Thalib highlighted a continued albeit
greater struggle of the Muslim community against national insurgents. For Thalib, the
manifestation of the Malino Agreement enlarged the perception of a threatening
entity. It was alleged that through the use of false euphemisms within the stipulations
of the agreement, the separatist movement sought to falsely portray themselves as
advocates of societal unity. It was contended that,

Since the first slaughter of Muslims on January 19, 1999, we have
always been stuffed with “reconciliation”. It is like somebody that
has been beaten up and while still recovering from the impact, has to
agree to the dictum “peace”, wrapped in the word “reconciliation”. However how apparently this “reconciliation” is just a camouflage of
the rotten intentions of the Christian revolutionaries. To the Muslims
in the Moluccas, reconciliation means: voluntarily giving up their
lives. Many times there have been acts of reconciliation, but each
time it is torn up by the Christians. Reconciliation has thus become a
stigma. Surely, for the Muslims any reconciliation is hard. Anticipating any act of justice and truth, and while the slaughterers
are still freely roaming about, the word “peace” is hardly acceptable.
Before the inflicted injuries have healed, treachery upon treachery is
taking place. How strange it is that all parties can effectuate
reconciliation. As if by this reconciliation, everlasting peace will be
accomplished. They lay the roof for protection, but are forgetting the
foundation and the pillars. As if everybody wants to close his eyes,
not caring about the carnage on that Idul Fitri day. They do not care
about the presence of the separatist FKM movement, covering up the
rottenness of the church and those provocateurs that hide behind the
“World of God” 83

Even when Thalib was detained on 4 May 2002, accused by state authorities of
defaming President Megawati and her Vice-President, Hamzah Haz, defaming the
regional government and also for inciting further conflict in the area, Thalib continued
to justify the violence in Ambon, indicating that Muslims were defending Indonesia

83 “Translation of excerpts from the Laskar Jihad leaders concerning the Malino II Peace Agreement”,
Ambon Information Website [online].
where the security apparatus and authority structures had clearly failed. He was also
publicly supported by a large base of Muslim organisations, students and prominent
conservative Muslim activists, who either rallied or spoke publicly for his release. The
Laskar Jihad had in fact been actively supported by conservative Indonesian Muslim
groups such as KISDI and FPI who publicly endorsed Thalib’s activities including
rallies and demonstrations.84

6.5 Support for the Laskar Jihad

The purpose of this section is to show that this is a case of limited ideological
mobilisation. All Muslims did not fully lapse into absolutist ideologies. Some degree
of interactive normality continued to exist in Ambon, so that ties to an Ambonese
community of Muslims and Christians, migrants and indigenous, were not completely
broken. As explained in Chapter 2, the disruptions in Ambon impacted to different
degrees on different sections of the society, so that there were consequent variations
in the extent of the ideologisations which occurred.

Thalib’s campaign attempted to harness the fears and confusion of Muslims through
the articulation of conflict explained in Muslim versus Christian terms and which later
shifted to a separatist Christian threat. It has been shown that there were those
indigenous Muslims in Ambon who articulated the conflict in Muslim versus
Christian terms on the basis of simple Christian arrogance. These Muslims
experienced certain incompatibilities with Thalib’s resolution for a pitted war against
alleged Christian separatists in Ambon. The fact that Thalib was a non-Ambonese
may have been one reason, but the more obvious being, firstly, the clear repercussions
of violent confrontation in terms of disunity, insecurity and death, and secondly, the

84 Many of these groups have long been active particularly on university campuses and Islamic schools
in promoting campaigns against pluralism and Western political values. Davis, Contemporary
Southeast Asia, pp.19-20.
loss of faith in Thalib’s and the *Laskar Jihad*’s ability to fulfil their various promises of security and social justice as the conflict prevailed.

At the same time, the prospect of security and decreased discrimination against Muslims served to inhibit the political alienation of at least some members of the Muslim community in Ambon. Thalib’s ideology appealed to members of the migrant Muslim community who, as shown in this chapter, began to respond by articulating historical grievances of state favouritism towards Christians leading to ‘unfair’ economic and social disparities, and workplace discrimination that prejudiced local Muslims. The RMS also figured prominently in their denouncements of the violence as Thalib shifted his ideological construction into one that translated the conflict into an overt Christian separatist threat.

Despite the fragmentation of Muslim support in Ambon for Thalib and his paramilitants, the importance of continued various support for the ideals of the *Laskar Jihad* is a reflection of the trend towards ideological absolutism. Members of the Muslim community in Ambon continued to express simple ideological and moral clarities even with the removal of the *Laskar Jihad* and its elites from Ambon, who were officially disbanded in October 2002. In April 2003, hundreds of Ambonese Muslims protested about the existence of separatist Christian threat on the island supported by the Moluccan chapters of national Islamic groups such as the Indonesian Ulemas Council (MUI) and STAIN. Chairman of STAIN, HM Atamimi, stressed that there was to be no compromise with the RMS and that ‘the RMS has to be toppled to its roots so that the Moluccan Earth can be peaceful in real terms’.

---

85 Following the Bali bombings on 12 October, 2002, the *Laskar Jihad* was disbanded in low-key circumstances on 15 October 2002. Chairman of the South Sulawesi chapter of the FKASWJ indicated that the *Laskar Jihad* ‘were worried by the possibility of becoming involved in matters that deviated from religious values and they were worried that they would neglect the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah*’s missionary endeavour’. See Kompas, “Indonesia: Laskar Jihad member admits ‘mistakes’, reasons for dissolution”, 16 October 2002. Thalib was still on trial in Jakarta at this time accused of inciting the violence in Ambon He was later acquitted on 30 January 2003 of charges of inciting violence in Ambon and throughout Maluku.

These perceptions have remained internalised on the island with local Muslims continuing to accuse the RMS of provoking the instability in Ambon and have subsequently lashed out at Christian communities. Throughout 2003-04, there was continued violent fighting between Muslim and Christian communities on the island of Seram. While in Ambon, Ambonese members of the Islam Defenders Front of Maluku (FPIM) have been warning the Muslim community of the separatist movement, even calling for a *jihad* against any Christian secessionist group.\(^7\)

### 6.6 Conclusion

With persistent accusations of a Christian conspiracy and calls for regime change, Thalib’s ideological framework reflected a visible change of the inchoate views of members of the Muslim community in Ambon and provided them with a new focus. Thalib’s construction of a separatist Christian threat acted as an ideological preconception which generated subsequent reactions to, and perceptions of, Christians and the Indonesian State. In this way, in an atmosphere of mounting confusion and apprehension, Thalib manipulated the issue of the RMS and New Order policy to diagnose contemporary dislocations as the transgression of Muslim rights. The ethnonationalism espoused by Thalib of the *Laskar Jihad*, therefore, offered a political movement to restore these rights and provide a basis for national identity.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

7.1 A Contribution to Ethnic Studies

It has been frequently suggested that ethnic nationalism and ethnic separatism are radical responses by minority groups who feel they have been marginalised from the society in which they live. In the literature on ethnic separatist claims in Indonesia, there has been a tendency to distinguish participants as ‘dissidents’ who direct their violence against a regime whom the participants claim as being biased towards a majority group, for example, Benedict Anderson’s analysis of ethnic separatism in Aceh and West Papua.\footnote{Benedict R O’G Anderson, ‘Indonesian Nationalism Today and in the Future, Indonesia, Issue 67, April 1999, pp.1-12.} Anderson perceives the independence movements of Aceh and West Papua as simply reactions to the oppressive mentality, policies, and practices of the Indonesian government, and it is on this basis, he argues, that Aceh and West Papua should be accorded genuine and full autonomy.

The astounding greed of the rulers in Jakarta, and of their provincial minions and errand boys, as well as the replacement of local-son civilian rule by the military originating very often from Java, increasingly seemed to say to the Acehnese: “We don't need you; what we need are your natural resources. How wonderful it would be if Aceh were emptied of the Acehnese.” Here was the origin of the atrocities which the newspapers have recently laid bare. Irian's story is in many ways comparable. The OPM (Organisasi Papua Merdeka, Organization for a Free Papua) arose not before the Orde Baru—which I will from now on call the Orde Kropos (Dry-Rot Order)—came into being, but afterward. And its language remains the Indonesian language. But the menaces and manipulations orchestrated by Ali Murtopo and his accomplices to give the appearance that all Irianese were obedient servants of the Dry-Rot Order quickly showed the local people that, in the eyes of the Center, Irian mattered, not the people who lived there. In all their real diversity, they were lumped together as a primitive population named after the province. Once again Jakarta was understood to be saying: “What a pity there are Irianese in Irian.” The people of Irian were never seriously
invited into the common project, so it is only natural that they quickly began to feel that they were being colonized.²

In many accounts, it is assumed that the behaviour of these ‘dissidents’ are explainable in instrumentalist terms, that is as the politics of material self-interest. This is evident in the interpretation of the Riau rebellion as those pressing for economic rewards with decentralised access to new government revenues and local resource tax income. It has been reported that the new decentralisation laws entitled the provincial and district governments to 15% of central government revenues from oil, 30% from gas and 80% from forests. This meant that, in 2001, the combined budget of Riau's provincial and district governments multiplied six-fold to about six trillion rupiah ($583 million). Subsequently, it was seen that aspirations for separatism diminished as local expectations were high in the light of new development and investment promises from Governor Saleh Djasit and Caltex’s managing director, Robert Galbraith.³

The purpose of this thesis has been to critically examine the case of ethnic nationalism in Ambon in the light of the proposition that the politics of interest may be overtaken by the ideologisation of ethnic nationalism. Ethnic elites and their followers may gauge their nationalist decisions on the advantages of power and resources and readily accept decentralisation prospects on the basis of economic reward. However, disillusionment with the state and a rejection of its patronage as a perceived form of Javanese imperialism suggests a new kind of political behaviour. Some ethnic nationalists instead begin to perceive secession as enhancing their prospects of economic prosperity and equality and subsequently develop ideological constructions of ethnicity. From this perspective, the development of exaggerated forms of the ‘us’ and the ‘other’ tend to dominate nationalist politics rather than instrumental concerns of material welfare.

The resultant constructivist response which has been adopted in this thesis represents in part a reply to the gap in the literature on ethnicity and nationalism in Indonesia which explains ethnic nationalism simply as a bargaining tool for the pursuit of material and power advantage. It has been suggested in this thesis that the development from self-interested pragmatism towards the ideologisation of ethnic consciousness is most likely to occur when communities are disrupted and dislocated as a result of, for example, economic fluctuations and state interventions. The case of ethnic nationalism in Ambon has therefore sought to show that individuals and groups pursued goals based on moral and ideological considerations. In this way, constructivism was able to illuminate how the Ambonese engaged in constructions of the moral identities both of themselves and the targeted ‘Other’.

The argument of this thesis has rested in part on the shift from ethnic riot to the reversion of the Ambonese to ideological formulas based on myths of historical continuity and the imperative to eliminate the threatening ‘other’. This shift from ethnic riot to an ideological nationalism can be best understood as an extension of Donald Horowitz’s\(^4\) analysis of the nature and causes of the ethnic riot. While Horowitz’s examination of the major elements in riot behaviour and riot dynamics falls in part within the constructivist argument, this thesis has extended upon his analysis by offering an explanation of why the ethnic riot can change into a nationalist movement.

It has been shown in this thesis that the change from riot to nationalist movement has been based on the presence of three distinct elements: when disruptions are particularly severe, when societies have access to earlier myths of a particular type, and finally when there are subsequent disruptions of the conflict itself. Indeed, the conflict became characterised by a sense of interplay between two contending nationalisms in which both engaged in a series of redefining nationalist identity on the

---

basis of certain external social and external disruptions, thus prompting the change from riot to one of nationalist contention.

The advent of violence, according to Horowitz, perhaps indicates some facilitative conditions present in the social and political environment. What may be described as ‘background conditions’, as opposed to precipitating events, can potentially have powerful inhibiting or causal influence on acts of aggression. Riots, he argues, are facilitated when ‘ethnic politics is dangerously in flux’ such as periods of transition in authority relations or fluctuations in ethnic or regional policy issues. The resultant feelings of uncertainty and impunity are thus likely to create a favourable context for violence because

they undermine previously stable expectations and, by rendering group prospects uncertain, make the need for violence seem exigent when an appropriate precipitant occurs, or else they lend moral sanction to violence or remove the fear that ordinarily prevents violence.

The argument implied here is that societies which have become subject to these conditions engendering dangerous uncertainties and abrupt turn around in fortunes would be the communities most likely to experience ethnic rioting. It is from this perspective that constructivism similarly argues that the ideologisation of identity is promoted by the stress and trauma experienced by disruptions caused by rapid social change, migration and forceful interventions by the state. This is true of Ambon where Ambonese society has been subject to rapid social change, coercive state policies and the negative impacts of economic globalisation.

However, the transition from riot to absolutist ethnonationalist ideology in Ambon suggests that disruptions were exceptionally acute on the island so as to promote this ideologisation of identity as also seen in Aceh and West Papua. This is opposed to elsewhere in Indonesia where disruptions of local communities and authority
structures were less intense and therefore ethnonationalist ideologies did not materialise. As demonstrated in this thesis, Ambon experienced profound changes to village communities through state reorientation of authority structures, the exacerbation of existing poverty levels, and increased competition in the workplace. Compounded by the onset of widespread violence and death and complacency of the state and its security forces, circumstances were so traumatic that dislocated individuals became amenable to ideological formulas offering security and anomie. Ambonese nationalist identity emerged at this point to offer a simple diagnosis of events and a sense of emotional security to traumatised individuals.

Ethnic nationalism in Ambon has relied heavily on being able to access familiar myths of the past in order to appeal to dislocated individuals. In this respect, the constructivist argument is useful in focusing attention on myths of territorial certainty and common ancestry and the ideologisation of identity between a virtuous ‘Us’ and a demonised ‘Other’. In the case of the latter, Horowitz examines the specific act of demonising a segment of society in order to direct attention directly to a perceived threat. Horowitz provides a portrayal of this trend as an example of ‘cumulative aggression’, the conjunction of displaced and direct aggression.

It may be preferable to consider the possibility to cumulative aggression, attacks produced by the conjunction of different sets of frustrations or grievances but directed at fewer than all of the frustrating groups. If a target group simultaneously received direct and displaced aggression, then it is easier to understand the intensity of certain violent outbursts, which otherwise seems inexplicable. Some initiators of violence may well be fighting what amount to wars on two fronts, but all their fire may be trained on one target.5

According to Horowitz, the Burmese riot of 1938 showed how the Indians became a scapegoat for anti-British feeling and yet ‘antipathy toward the Indians had roots outside the sphere of Anglo-Burman relations, and the specific choice of Indian

---

5 Horowitz, Deadly Ethnic Riot, p.138.
Muslims cannot be explained in terms of any special association they had with the British.\textsuperscript{6} Thus the likelihood and magnitude of violence directed towards the Indians as a perceived threat was increased by the presence of frustrations and perceptions within the community which had gradually accumulated over time.

From this perspective, the nationalist elites in Ambon responded to the disruptions and disillusionment in Ambonese society by identifying the Indonesian government as the cause of the dispute and scapegoating enemies who could be blamed. Thus words such as ‘Javanisation’ were strongly voiced against migrants in Ambon as migration was perceived as a deliberate state strategy to marginalise the populations of Eastern Indonesia. Given the socio-economic disparities between migrants and the indigenous population and the presence of grievances against Javanese occupation of civil administrative jobs, nationalist elites accessed these existing issues of contention and accused the migrants of being part of a wider ‘Javanese’ conspiracy. Ambonese nationalism thus emerged to resonate with a society already imbued with resentment towards a Javanese ‘other’ which was portrayed as the contamination of an ‘inferior’ migrant population.

The politics of nationalism in Ambon has also been significantly characterised by ideological myths invented in 1950 as the events of the RMS became the raw material for the subsequent constructions of Ambonese identity. By using the ethnocultural symbols of common ancestry, territorial homeland, language and religion, FKM elites not only articulated and promoted these pre-existing identities but reconstructed them in order to mobilise a new pan-Ambonese community. Thus, visions of an idealised Ambonese identity can be traced back to past myths of an ‘Alifuru’ nation of common ancestry but with a new goal of political independence based on the legal and moral principles of the RMS.

Further to this, the development of a contending ideological construction from the *Laskar Jihad* provided an important basis for nationalist elites in Ambon to promote ideological constructions of ethnic identity. The changing politics of Ambonese nationalism from the construction of a non-separatist religious conflict to the construction of a racial conflict was heavily influenced by the tensions generated by the intervention of *Laskar Jihad* forces. The traumatic and brutal actions of such an external force allowed ethnic elites to offer a simple diagnosis of a complex pattern of interactions which were affecting Ambonese society in terrifying ways. Both the FKM and Ja’far Umar Thalib’s *Laskar Jihad* subsequently engaged in the contestation of the moral identity of the ‘Us’ and the ‘Other’ thereby modifying the reactive basis of an Ambonese ethnic riot into an internally-generated self-confidence focused on cultural revival and political autonomy.

### 7.2 The Process Which Links Disruption to Ideologisation

In order to analyse the transition from ethnic riot to ethnic nationalism, this thesis has focused on the process which links disruptions to ideologisation. It has been suggested in this thesis that social disruptions cause a shift from self-interested pragmatism towards political behaviour based on moralistic ethnonationalist ideologies. From this perspective, this thesis has sought to examine how ethnic and national identities were constructed during the conflict in Ambon in the course of social interactions on the island. The first insight of this approach has been that disruptions in Ambon caused insecure elites to seek new legitimisations in ideologies and caused disrupted masses to be responsive to these ideologies. The second insight has been that ethnic ideologies appealed to the masses because they offered security and moral authority within an idealised past.

It has been explained in this thesis that disruptions are not related manifestations of appropriations by external interests where outsider’s constructions of identity provoke
insider’s definitions of themselves. In this context, the emergence of Ambonese nationalism relates to a series of both internal and external disruptions which lead to stresses and insecurities that perpetuate a process of the reconstruction of identity within the community. This means that significant interactions between insiders and outsiders which bring about underlying insecurities or uncertainties of the ‘Us’ lead not only to a receptivity to an outsider’s depictions of the ‘Us’ but also lead to a reconstruction of the ‘Us’ as a distinct community of unique heritage and one that commands virtuous strength against an immoral and evil Other.

Within the literature on nationalism, Anthony Smith’s ‘ethnosymbolism’ is useful in indicating that the appeal of nationalism derives from its adoption of ethnic myths, symbols and memories which generate a kind of ‘nostalgia’ for a superior way of life.\(^7\). The nationalist appeal, he argues, derives from the ethno-historical, religious and territorial heritages of an ethnic group which invoke presumed kinship and residency ties. However, there exists no full explanation of why claims to common descent and historical continuity are politicised by these activists and why they appeal to communities. If, as Smith indicates, these types of nationalist myths fulfil ‘intimate, internal functions for individuals in communities’, then there needs to be an explanation of how and why this occurs. Moreover, if some ethnic nationalist ideologies are formed on the basis of state failures in fulfilling developmental promises\(^8\), there also needs to be further specification of the process whereby nationalist myths appeal to elites during such forms of societal disruption.

This thesis specifies and illustrates the role of disruptions to show how individuals who feel disempowered in the face of disruptive social forces are more likely to be acquiescent to ideological formulas. It is suggested in this thesis that the weakening of communities by economic forces or political interventions firstly disrupts authority

---

\(^7\) Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, p.183.

structures thereby displacing elites who lose their authority and power and secondly, disrupts social cohesion by making individuals confused and insecure in the face of the complexities of modernity. In this way, elites seek to construct nationalist formulas in order to re-establish and re-legitimise their authority, while nationalist myths provide a sense of community for individuals seeking refuge in nationalist visions promising harmony and security.

It has been shown that the disruption of traditional authority structures in Ambon as a result of Dutch political and economic interventions and the subsequent centralising movements of the Indonesian state during the Old and New Order periods resulted in the dislocation of the traditional *raja* and local bureaucrats. This meant that they were no longer able to wield the same power and authority over their community due to a weakening of their leadership roles. In these circumstances, these individuals could no longer appeal as responsive and legitimate patrons to the Ambonese community and thus ethnic nationalism became a new ideological base in which to re-establish legitimate authority.

At the same time, ordinary village Ambonese found their lives and communities increasingly disrupted not only by the rapid changes in the traditional authority structures of their society but also by the social, political and economic chaos arising from rapid migration into the region, the exacerbation of existing poverty levels, and disparities between the developmental promises of state elites and their performance. Visions of nationalist harmony immediately appealed to the Ambonese through its offering of new myths of community beyond the traditional arena of the village. In this way, the nationalist ideology of the Ambonese endowed individuals with a sense of immemorial continuity embodied within an idealised past based on symbolism of ancestors, forefathers, homeland and national character.

It is implicit within the thesis that disruption is the important catalyst by which individuals begin to seek a sense of security through identification with the
community. The emotional power of nationalism has therefore been explained as the anxieties generated by profound social changes which make individuals more amenable to an ideology offering resolution to these feelings of isolation and fear. Hence, the construction of national categories emerges as an example of how individuals seek refuge from the complex ambiguities of modern life within myths of permanence and myths of sameness.

Once it is understood that nationalism is based on these ideological myths constructed by displaced elites and appealing to societies which have been disrupted, then it becomes feasible to understand the changes in ethnic and national consciousness of the Ambonese. In this way, these conceptualisations of nationalism not only illuminate the contemporary dispute of secessionism in Ambon but also assist in reflecting on how these concepts may be developed.

7.3 A Case of Counterposed Nationalisms which Developed in Response to Each Other

It has been suggested in this thesis that the emotional power of nationalism may be explained as arising from the claim of nationalism that it can offer individuals identity, security and authority through symbolic associations with the family and home. While the assertion of myths of common ancestry and myths of a homeland community strengthen the psychological appeal of nationalism, there are potential tensions which can threaten to undermine the appeal of nationalism. As demonstrated in this thesis, nationalism can manifest itself in situations of conflict and rivalry which threaten to generate new insecurities and uncertainties. The tensions of nationalist politics in Ambon have therefore been clashes between two ideologies which were counterposed and developed in response to each other. More specifically, these tensions emerged because of the collision between two competing kinship and homeland visions, each marginalising or demonising the other.
The politics of nationalist confrontation in Ambon has been characterised by a sense of interplay between the two nationalist visions as each responded to each other’s changing ideological depictions of themselves and their enemy. The FKM’s employment of a religious language which depicted an Ambonese Christian identity counterposed to a ‘corrupted’ state and its Muslim agents, was developed in response to Ja’far Umar Thalib and his military assault on Ambon in June 2000. Thalib had portrayed the relationship between the Ambonese and Indonesian State in religious terms – as a crusade to uphold Indonesian/Muslim values in the face of a ‘traitorous’ Christian-led movement hostile to Islam and Indonesian Muslims.

With the public affront of the FKM, Thalib’s religious symbolism gave way to a more overt anti-Christian symbolism in which he promoted the ‘Christian threat’ as a threat to both Indonesian Muslims and the Indonesian community as a whole. The national community was therefore defined as all Indonesian citizens where Islam represented the core of the Indonesian people. This was ideologically contrasted with the FKM who were portrayed as ‘political conspirators’ and were made synonymous with the separatist RMS movement of the 1950s. Thalib’s portrayal of the Christian ‘other’ was therefore reconstructed in ethnonationalist terms as the threat of political secessionism.

The construction of the FKM as a Christian separatist movement which the State was obliged to condemn, generated the shift to a focus on the symbolism of race. As noted previously, the FKM’s ideology had been built around the symbol of religion which defined the Ambonese being in opposition to Islam and the perceived Islamisation of a ‘corrupt’ state. The call for Christian Ambonese had limited utility in unifying all Ambonese. As Thalib unfolded a history of ‘Christian conspiracy’, the marker of Ambonese identity shifted to a specific racial construction. Using myths of common ancestry of an ‘Alifuru’ race and a common homeland based on migration from the
island of Seram, the FKM portrayed a community united by its ethnocultural sameness and forged together by perceived biological kinship ties.

While Thalib continued his portrayal of the ‘seccessionist’ enemy through associations with the RMS, Ambonese nationalist identity shifted focus from a racial construction to a claim that the historical authenticity of Ambon granted a right to sovereign statehood. The FKM depicted that national community as part of a global community of ‘oppressed minorities’ with minority rights who were undergoing repression from the state and its counterparts such as the Laskar Jihad. This kind of politics which constructed ethnic identity by combining the language of traditional authenticity at least had the potential to challenge Thalib’s conceptualisation of the rights of the Indonesian state to repress human political organisation.

As these two nationalist visions developed in response to each other’s ideological constructions, the tensions of nationalist politics emerged because of the clash between two counterposed visions employing competing symbols and myths of kinship and homeland. The nationalist claim is that the community is united by common kinship and both visions of community in Ambon portrayed themselves in this way through the language and imagery of family and home. At the same time, this thesis has shown that this claim is also denoted by two different types of nationalist myths which developed in Ambon; one that offered a sense of cultural sameness in its claim to common ancestry and one which offered a sense of permanency in a territory of common residence but with a core Islamic constituency. Both visions of community therefore offered two different types of membership whereby entry into one depended upon similarities of a common language and culture whereby the other referred to all Indonesian citizens who were perceived as forming the Islamic majority.
The myth of common ancestry was employed by the Moluccan Sovereignty Front (FKM) to denote a community distinguished by contemporary similarities of traditional Ambonese culture. The Ambonese community was therefore depicted as having indigenous racial homogeneity that connected them directly to the ancestors of the indigenous Ambonese from the island of Seram. In this way, the FKM adopted and redefined the concept of the ‘Alifuru Nation’ from the traditionally negative association of a backward people to one that instead denoted positive pride in the contemporary cultural evidence of common kinship.

Whereas the FKM stressed the imagery of a biological family and ancestral kin, the nationalism of the Ja’far Umar Thalib and the Laskar Jihad articulated a sense of nationalist affiliation based on the attachment to a public Indonesian culture and a core Islamic constituency. Thalib effectively drew upon a sense of evolutionary development by promoting myths from the past and employing a language of common ancestry to refer not to the community itself but rather to the homeland which they inhabited. This idea of common loyalty to the homeland implied the acquisition of ethical obligations which were identified with the ideas of historical inheritance and a common destiny to undertake the tasks of their forebears.

Both competing visions demarcated the other as the external enemy threatening societal unity and whose removal was imperative. Ja’far Umar Thalib of the Laskar Jihad articulated a series of ideological constructions of the dispute as Christian secessionism propelled by the FKM and its Ambonese supporters. Whereas the FKM denounced the Indonesian State and its national institutions of which the Laskar Jihad claimed to act on their behalf. As a result of this, Ambonese ethnocultural nationalism of the FKM came to be seen as ethnic/religious domination, and the ethnonationalism of the Laskar Jihad came to be perceived as the centralising invasion of political autonomy.
The structural basis of the conflict thus became embedded in the two constructed ideologies of the FKM and the *Laskar Jihad* which involved these incompatible nationalist myths of community and destiny. As these constructions developed during the course of social and ideological interactions, the Ambonese engaged in a process of transacting and redefining identity. The suggestion is that these recent constructions have inhibited further flexibility in identity construction causing the Ambonese to reach a threshold in identity consciousness. While the conflict has abated somewhat, remnants of these constructions have remained embedded in Ambon as this thesis has demonstrated suggesting that this ‘sedimentation’ has been a way in which individuals deal with the insecurities caused by disruption. Similar processes have been discerned elsewhere with the ideological mindsets continued after the ‘formal’ ending of the disputes so as to inhibit real long term peace. This has been demonstrated by nationalist confrontation in Northern Ireland and Bosnia, for example, where there are clear adherences to adversative ethnocultural ideologies.

7.4 A Contribution to Indonesian studies of Post-Soeharto Conflict and Violence

This thesis offers insights which relate to Indonesia’s national integration problems in the post-Soeharto era through the examination of nationalist confrontation in Ambon. The events in Ambon represent a typical trajectory of Indonesian regional development and how the different political and economic relations between Jakarta and its periphery were defined from the colonial period to the present. It has been suggested that it was the disruptive impact of state interventions and economic forces on Ambonese society which engendered feelings of fear and insecurity and thence facilitated the rise of an ethnic nationalist vision. The politics of nationalist contention in Ambon has in this way become the politics of ideological confrontation which has been inherently resistant to compromise.
The core of the thesis’ argument is that those societies who experience severe disruption to their local community and authority structures will be those societies who will most likely be the recipient of political behaviour characterised by perceptions of a Java-centric vision counterposed to ethnic minority claims of self-determination. Underlying this perception has been the Indonesian regime’s highly embedded centralised system which ‘reached down to every village’ and which fostered increasing impressions of colonialist-like repression and ethnocentralist favouritism. The dominant theme in Indonesian nationalist ideology has been the depiction of Indonesian history as that of a nation built around an ethnic Javanese core, and that the geographical and cultural diversity of Indonesia thereby necessitated the political centralisation by the Jakarta-based government. Outer Indonesia found that Jakarta exerted exploitative measures which generated a lack of regional economic development and cooperation between the centre and the periphery especially in resource-rich areas such as Aceh and West Papua.

It is clear that economic and political marginalisation of the Indonesian peripheries was not enough to produce nationalist rebellion in all regions. Where ethnonationalist ideologies have taken most hold in Indonesia, such as Ambon, Aceh, and West Papua, the impact of disruptions from Indonesian state intervention and exploitation have been the most severe and intense. In particular, especially in terms of Aceh and Ambon, the disruption has also been the disruption of the conflict itself. The brutal actions of the Indonesian military in Aceh and the disruptive nature of outside interventions in Ambon assisted in promoting this ideologisation of ethnic identity and the widespread appeal of the mythical kinship community as a surrogate.

The argument that disruption leads to ideologisation is being argued against the ideas that it might independently be ethnic heterogeneity (primordialist) or over-centralisation of power and resources (instrumentalist), which has caused Indonesian disunity. While there is sometimes the suggestion that ethnic communities in Indonesia may identify with the genetic family for some purposes in particular situations, it is clear that ethnic and national identities which depict themselves in the primordialist language of historical continuity might nevertheless also involve calculations of interest advantage. The most widespread argument is to suggest that nationalism develops as elites appeal not only to instinct but to community interests. Therefore nationalist politics is explained as rational responses to various catalysts such as political factionalism and failed government policies whereby demands for ethnic autonomy become a strategy to press for greater economic parity with the central government. From an instrumentalist perspective, such depictions of Indonesian political behaviour are useful in illuminating how nationalists can articulate and mobilise their ethnic identity in support of claims for resources and power in response to the erosion of the economic capabilities of the Indonesian state.

Using this approach, it could be said that Ambonese ethnonationalists made the decision to demand independence as a way in which to promote their interests which had been most threatened by economic change and Indonesian political oppression. On this basis, the offer by the Indonesian state for greater power and resources would have appealed to Ambonese elites seeking to defend their economic status and indigenous Ambonese workers seeking at least in part to defend their interests against migrant workers. However, disillusionment with the failure of the Indonesian state to offer genuine concessionary measures invited a rejection of this offer accompanied by the misgivings of any attempt by a perceived Java-biased government to pacify their separatist demands.
The trend in Ambon towards this type of political behaviour, with perceptions of a Java-centric vision counterposed to ethnic minority claims of self-determination, has invited an alternative form of analysis. The inference is that there is a shift from the politics of competing interests to the politics of absolutist confrontation as ethnic elites adopt stereotyped perceptions of the state as immoral. The case of Ambon is able to demonstrate the tendency of local elites to mobilise popular support by adopting anti-Indonesian and anti-Javanese rhetoric as an ideological construction of the repressive ‘Other.’ The Ambonese demand for secession which continues to this day has thus been characterised by a nationalist ideology which has focused on Jakarta as the source of all disruption and which finds resonance with individuals as a result of the disruptive impact of globalisation and authoritarian rule. The implication here is that that a diminishing of disruptive activities may strengthen compromise solutions towards regional integration within a ‘modernised’ Indonesia. However, the ingrained nature of these ideological constructions of the ‘us’ and the ‘other’, make it a challenging task for Bambang Susilo Yudhoyono, Indonesia’s new President elect.


Ajawaila, Jacob W., ‘Orang Ambon dan Perubahan Kebudayaan’, (The Ambonese and Cultural Change), Antropologi Indonesia, no.61, 2000, pp.16-25.


Ariyanto, Yus, ‘Maaf, Agama Kami Nomor Satu’, (Sorry, Our Religion is Number One), Forum Keadilan, no.14, 9 July 2000, pp.20-1.


Cahyono, Rahmat H. (and others), ‘Di Mana Batas Jihad’, (Where the Jihad Ends),


Davis, Gloria (ed), *What is Modern Indonesian Culture?*, Papers presented to the Conference on Indonesian Studies July 29-August 1, 1976, Center for International Studies, Ohio University, Southeast Asia Series No.52, 1979.


Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (Depdikbud), (Department of Education and Culture), *Cerita Rakyat: mite dan legende daerah Maluku*, (Community Stories: myths and legends of Maluku), Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Kebudayaan Daerah, (Regional Culture Registration and Inventory Project), Jakarta, 1979/1980.

Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (Depdikbud), (Department of Education and Culture), *Geographi Budaya Daerah Maluku*, (Geographical Culture of the
Region of Maluku), Proyek Penelitian dan Pencatatan Kebudayaan Daerah, (Regional Culture Registration and Research Project), Jakarta, 1978.


*FKAWJ*, ‘Pasukan Bayaran Yon-Gab 90% Beragama Kristen’, (Salaried Yon-Gab Troops are 90% Christian), Maluku Pekan Ini, (Maluku This Week), Newsletter, Edition 15 –21 June 2001, Malang, pp.1-2.


Forum Keadilan, ‘Ustad Ja’far Umar Tholib: Insya Allah Kami Mulai Berperang’, (Ustad Ja’far Umar Tholib: If God Permits We Will Go To War), no.2, 16 April 2000, p.77.


Jemaat Indonesia, ‘RMS Bukan Hanya Kristen’, (RMS is not only a Christian movement), no.117. 9 July-15 July 2001, p.6.


Labetubun, Olop and Sahupala, Munira, ‘Besok, Gubernur Lantik Bupati Maluku Tenggara’ (Tomorrow, the Governor Inaugurates the Regent of Southeast Maluku), Maluku Media Centre [online], 9 October 2003. Accessed 9 October 2003.


Leirissa, Richard Z., Maluku dalam Perjuangan Nasional Indonesia, (Maluku in Indonesia’s National Struggle), Lembaga Sejarah, (History Institute), Fakultas Sastra, (Faculty of Arts), Universitas Indonesia (University of Indonesia), 1975.


McCall, Chris, ‘A Rare Breed of Rebel’, *Sunday Review*, Focus, 21 October 2001, p.3


*South China Morning Post*, ‘Christian activist claimed that 46 people has been slaughtered on island’, 1 December 2000 [online]. Available from Factiva (Journal Database). Accessed 30 September 2002,


Turner, Kathleen, ‘Utopian Visions and Kinship Divisions: Ideological perceptions of ethnic conflict in Ambon’, *Harvard Asia Quarterly* [online], vol.6, no.3, Summer 2002.


Williams, Louise, ‘Military Takes Over as Islanders Face Siege’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, World: Asia, 13 March 1999, p.21


