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**Decentralization & Ethnic Regionalism in Indonesia:  
The Case of Minahasa**

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For my Mom, Dad, Erin, Carrie, and Chad who  
make anything possible. And for Maya who was  
with me every second I was writing.

## **Abstract:**

The fall of Suharto in 1998 has been the catalyst of immeasurable change for the nation of Indonesia. This research has focused on one particular aspect of change since that time: the effect of new decentralization legislature on the mobilization of ethnic identity in Indonesia, with particular attention given to the Minahasa region of North Sulawesi. Although the autonomy laws (UU22/99 & UU25/99) were meant to devolve power from the central government to the regencies, it has been observed that power is currently being devolved to elite members of majority ethnic groups that occupy the regencies. While Suharto had previously held the expression of ethnic identity in check by allowing only “cultural” trappings of ethnicity to be utilized as forms of expression, his removal from government has freed ethnic groups to organize and express themselves for more political purposes. In a process that has been called “Ethnification of the Nation,”<sup>1</sup> ethnic groups seem to be organizing themselves into political units with regional boundaries empowered by the new autonomy laws. The leaders of these evolving political units often use ethnic symbols and selective renderings of history to gain popular support and to solidify ethnic boundaries of exclusion and inclusion. This inevitably leads to a discussion of the relationship between “local” and “global” power negotiations that I believe have been the catalyst for laws such as UU22 and UU25 and the empowerment of ethnic groups at the expense of the nation. Problems associated with the decentralization process have made the future of these plans uncertain, but the idea of autonomy has had an important impact on how Minahasans and other ethnic groups within the nation understand their future position as minority religious/ethnic groups with relation to the central government.

This thesis will begin by outlining modern concepts of “decentralization” and its associated policies as they have been implemented in many other former colonies around the world. Attention will more specifically focus on decentralization in Indonesia with particular reference to the history of the policy in Minahasa. Decentralization policy and the idea of a Federal Indonesia were popular ideas in Minahasa even before Indonesia had gained its independence from the Dutch and these ideas continue to be popular today. In a later section, I will examine the recent re-invigoration of “Minahasan” as a political force that has blossomed since Suharto’s exit from the Indonesian government. Arguing from a platform embedded with symbols of Minahasan ethnicity, Minahasa’s leaders are currently in the process of solidifying the boundaries of political and economic membership in the regency. All of this has taken place as a local response to the national decentralization process and what is perceived to be the growing influence of Islam on the central government back in Jakarta. Finally, I will conclude with a general discussion of the prospects and future of decentralization and peace in Minahasa. While the wider implications of the current effort to decentralize Indonesia’s administrative and power structures remain to be seen, it may be concluded that already the autonomy laws are changing the socio-political organization of many areas, including Minahasa.

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<sup>1</sup> **Jacobsen, Michael** (2000) “Indonesia on the Threshold. Towards the Ethnification of the Nation? *IJAS Newsletter Online*, No.22. Leiden, The Netherlands: 3.

## Acknowledgments

As with all research of this nature, it is impossible to list here each of the individuals that assisted in the achievement of my final thesis. However, I would like to acknowledge a few of the people that were instrumental in advising me and providing me with opportunities that made this project possible. In Manado: The help and advice of the entire Kojongian/Timbuleng family was fundamental to my research. They extended an unbelievable amount of patience and humor towards my endless questions and “evolving” Indonesian language. They were truly my best source of information on Minahasan culture and Rully even provided hand-drawn maps for me to use as I traveled around Minahasa. At UNSRAT, I could always depend on Professor Fendy Parengkuan for information on almost any topic pertaining to Minahasa, and without him, I would have never been able to unravel the Kongres Minahasa Raya. He was also helpful in introducing me to several key sources and contacts. Dr. Bert A. Supit made me understand the possibilities and goals that might be reached with the formation of a new Minahasan province. Eddy Mambu provided friendly and insightful discussions on the dual nature of a “Minahasan” and “Indonesian” identity, as well as his opinions pertaining to regional autonomy. My tutor in Indonesian, Banni, helped me with the transcription of KMR II video tapes (much of the material is in local dialects). Also useful were the contacts I made while frequenting the “News Café” in Manado, which was frequented by local journalists such as Christy Manarisip and Freddy Roeroe. Fellow graduate students, Anna, Shannon, and Dan (Rusak) provided companionship and insightful discussions (as well as many adventures) throughout my stay in Manado. At the University of Leiden, Dr. Suryadi made comments on my ideas concerning regional autonomy and provided some helpful newspaper sources. Also in The Netherlands, David Henley (KITLV) provided comments and suggestions on the preliminary ideas for this current thesis. It should also be said that without Henley’s seminal research on regionalism in Minahasa, this paper would have substantially more inadequacies. At The University of Hawaii, special thanks to Dan Hale for trusting me with his video equipment! And of course I must also thank Barbara Andaya, Krisna Suryanata, Jon Goss, and Steve O’Harrow for the advice, opportunity and support they have provided me throughout the duration of this research.

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## **I. Introduction to Research**

“Consciously or not, we often make a disproportionate use of ethnic or local symbols ... I am very concerned when people use ethnic pride, 'local people' or even religious symbols to support regional autonomy.”- President Megawati Sukarnoputri<sup>1</sup>

### **1. Background:**

In July 2001, the Indonesian President, Abdurahman Wahid, traveled to the tip of North Sulawesi to give the opening address at *Kongres Minahasa Raya Dua* (KMR II). This would be Wahid's second visit to the Minahasa region in as many years and as with his first appearance, the occasion was marked by all of the fanfare, banners, crowds and security befitting the nation's leader. Security forces could be seen lining the main road into Tomohon two days before the scheduled speech, lending an air of expectancy to the usually quiet atmosphere of this mountain town. Crowds began to assemble along the dusty streets four hours before the sirens and countless black vehicles marking the president's arrival made their appearance. Hoping to catch a glimpse of Indonesia's fourth president, I had waited most of the day chatting with people, roaming the street, and taking pictures. Despite the symbolic importance attached to this visit, many of those in the crowd had reason to wonder about the near future of Wahid's political life and his fate was the topic of many conversations.

The summer of 2001 was a time of uncertainty in Minahasa. The proverbial political pot was once again being stirred in Jakarta and no one could be sure that Wahid would withstand the mounting pressures aimed at forcing him from office. Even as he gave his speech at the KMR II in Tomohon on July 17th, the president was fighting an almost certainly lost battle for his presidency back in the nation's capitol. A few weeks later, his defeat was made final and Vice President Megawati became the leader of the world's fourth most populous nation. The political uncertainty that marked much of my time in North Sulawesi made the socio-political climate of the area an irresistible target for research. Minahasans pride themselves on being one of the only traditional democratic societies in Indonesia<sup>2</sup>, and as in every democracy, the number of conflicting ideas and agendas concerning the future of Minahasa seemed to me, limitless. I was determined to attend the *kongres* being held that

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<sup>1</sup> Translation provided in “Javanese Colonialism: Autonomy Tests Megawati,” *Asia Times Online* 16 Nov. 2002 <<http://www.atimes.com>>. The quote was translated from Megawati's speech at a coordinating meeting on national development on October 29, 2001 as reported by the *Antara News Agency*.

<sup>2</sup> Although this has been debated, the fact that Minahasans believe this themselves is most relevant at present.

day, feeling sure that I would learn a great deal about the political and social aspirations of the people living in Minahasa.

The stated goals of the meetings were simple. After the president gave his speech and returned to Manado, the *kongres* would serve as a forum of open discussion for Minahasans. Issues pertaining to development, education, traditional law, religion, culture were all listed as formal topics for discussion.<sup>3</sup> By the end of the day, the KMR leaders would again formulate a declaration of Minahasa's commitment to the nation of Indonesia.<sup>4</sup> Organizers explicitly stated that the purpose of this meeting would *not* be to discuss the creation of a new province of Minahasa, but rather to expand on the mission of the first *kongres*.<sup>5</sup> Despite the formal agenda, the podium was dominated by calls for a new province and expressing fear that the so-called *Piagam Jakarta* or "Jakarta Charter" would be added to the original Indonesian constitution (UUD45) by Islamic politicians back in Jakarta. Several people spoke persuasively of breaking Minahasa from Indonesia altogether in order to become an independent nation.<sup>6</sup> Informal pamphlets and papers were circulated amongst the crowd that included detailed information proposing new management strategies for the region or future province, why Minahasa should be ruled by traditional, democratic laws, and even the argument that Minahasa should align itself with the rest of eastern Indonesia.

The fountainhead of most of the current socio-political debate in Minahasa are the so-called 'regional autonomy' laws (Regional Autonomy Law 22/1999 & the Revenue Sharing Law 25/1999) that were hastily drawn up by President BJ Habibie in 1998-1999 and formally implemented by Gus Dur in January 2001. Generally speaking, the laws were meant to give more rights and revenues to regional governments in an attempt to quell the various separatist movements on the outer islands that have erupted with new flare since the fall of Suharto in 1998. It was further hoped that by devolving power and revenues to the regencies, the central government would decrease the financial burden related to the over-extended bureaucracy needed to run the far-flung island nation. Initially (and perhaps even more importantly in a

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<sup>3</sup> "Kongres Minahasa Raya," Manado: Kunci Berkat. A formal list of topics for discussion can be found in this brochure which was distributed to all participants of the second *Kongres Minahasa Raya*, held at Bukit Inspirasi in Tomohon, Indonesia 17 July, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> The first *Kongres Minahasa Raya* was held August 5, 2000. The original *kongres* was convened for the purpose of promoting the "Declaration of Inspiration", a document which declares Minahasan autonomy from the nation of Indonesia should Islamic Law (under the auspices of the 'Piagam Jakarta') be included into a reformed Indonesian constitution. The second *kongres* reiterated this idea, but was intended to include more debate on local social and political issues including education, development, and social problems.

<sup>5</sup> "Provinsi Minahasa Bukan Target KMR II," *Manado Post* 22 June, 2001:1.

<sup>6</sup> "Wacana Minahasa Merdeka Dominasi KMR II," *Manado Post* 18 July, 2001:1.

time of severe economic crisis) the international community and related donor agencies both praised and supported a policy of decentralization.<sup>7</sup> Magazines such as *Time-Asia* gushed articles full of praise for the Indonesian government's move towards surrendering rights to 'local' communities. Even the environmentalist camp sounded upbeat and was busily drawing up tentative plans for action. Regional governments around the archipelago began forming committees, holding meetings (Like *Kongres Minahasa Raya*) to plan future strategy, formulate the tentative restructuring of local governments and to exert new-found powers almost immediately. But as quickly as they were implemented, serious problems began to emerge with the autonomy laws.

While decentralization was embraced enthusiastically by the regions, cracks began to appear in the central government's desire to inject the regions with more political and financial independence. The Wahid administration had barely implemented the new decentralization package when the decision was made to downgrade the position of the Regional Autonomy Ministry, a move that led the minister, Ryaas Rasyid, to resign in disgust. Problems with the legislation itself began to draw criticism from international donors. Apparently, the laws were full of contradictions and loopholes that have created a general state of confusion about autonomy and decentralization in Indonesia. One such problem has been manifested by the inability of regions to fund themselves or the local projects which are being demanded by regional populations. As part of UU25/1999, regional provinces are to receive 80 percent of the revenues collected from forestry, mining (excluding oil and gas) and fisheries in their respective regencies. This has meant that while there is more potential for growth in the richer provinces, the ability of the central government to subsidize the poor provinces has been decreased as regional contributions to the state coffers also decline.

It has been asserted that autonomy will financially benefit only four provinces: Riau, East Kalimantan, Irian Jaya and Aceh. The rest (Including North Sulawesi), have budgets based on at least 80 percent of central government grants.<sup>8</sup> "Across the country, local governments have been turned loose with a whole host of new responsibilities but often lack the revenues or expertise to meet popular expectations".<sup>9</sup> Several high profile cases that

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<sup>7</sup> See the World Bank website on "Decentralization" with specific reference to Indonesia at <<http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/index.htm>>.

<sup>8</sup> *Asia Times Online*, Nov. 16, 2001 <<http://www.atimes.com>>. See also **Raphael Lengesa Nombo**, "Regional Autonomy Program in Indonesia: What Issues Complicate Its Implementation?" *The Indonesian Quarterly* Vol. XXVIII/2000, No.3: 285-294.

<sup>9</sup> **Warren Caragata**, "Autonomy's Losers," *Asiaweek Online* Vol.27, No. 19. 18 May 2001.

reflect the outcome of this problem have come from North Sulawesi itself and include the threat of multi-national companies pulling out of Indonesia due to a lack of coherent authority or regulation.<sup>10</sup> Local governments seem to be scrounging everywhere for funds. New taxes, levies, and tollbooths now plague Indonesians and foreign investors alike. In East Java, Magetan regency proposed taxable identity cards for cows while in West Java, “The local government managed to combine the certainties of death and taxes into a levy on cemeteries”.<sup>11</sup> This is quickly becoming an alarming problem for investors, educators, environmentalists, politicians and regular citizens as taxes rise and benefits plummet.

Adding fuel to these problems, the Minister of Manpower and Transmigration, Jacob Nuwa Wea has lamented that regional autonomy has increased the occurrences of ethnic discrimination in the workplace. Apparently several regencies have issued new guidelines which discriminate against minority ethnic and religious groups within these provinces and regencies. “The guidelines also favor ‘indigenous people applicants’ over job-seekers coming from other regencies, regardless of their education and professional qualifications.”<sup>12</sup> Goodpaster and Ray have found that “some provincial governments such as...West Kalimantan have already issued instructions to their public works and other departments tendering projects to prioritize local firms”.<sup>13</sup> This sort of ethnic discrimination is part of a larger effort that aims to concentrate the support of “local” (ie non-migrant) populations behind “local” elite leadership. Popular, communal and cohesive support of local leadership is necessary if regional demands are to be taken seriously by central authorities.

Recognizing the problems inherent within the regional autonomy legislation, Megawati began to pull back on the reigns of decentralization immediately after winning the presidency.<sup>14</sup> She seemed especially concerned with those territories well endowed with

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<sup>10</sup> Examples of this can be seen in West Sumatra, Kalimantan and Papua but I am referring specifically to the case of PT Newmont Minahasa Raya where a local administration demanded substantial taxes from the company for dirt removal and the construction of roads “as part of a voluntary community development scheme”. The case was watched closely by would-be investors, and used by The Economist online (“Devolve, but do it right” 6 July, 2000 <<http://www.economist.com>>) as an example of the way decentralization was causing apprehension amongst the investing community. The case is regarded in a similar way by **Gary Goodpaster & David Ray**, “Trade and Citizenship Barriers and Decentralization” The Indonesian Quarterly, Vol. XXVIII, No.3(2001): 266-281; 68.

<sup>11</sup> **Warren Caragata**, “Autonomy’s Losers” Asiaweek Vol. 27, No.19. 18 May, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> **Ken Ntalarana**, “Indonesia dragged down by vested interests.” Asia Times Online 6 Nov. 2001. See also **Panca Nugraha**, “Regions accused of Ethnic Discrimination in the Workplace.” The Jakarta Post Online. 24 Oct. 2001.

<sup>13</sup> **Goodpaster & Ray** 275.

<sup>14</sup> While there may be serious problems with the laws, the former regional autonomy minister Ryaas Rasyid asserts that the problems that have evolved have been caused by the government’s failure to fully implement

natural resources, “as they may believe they would be better off outside of Indonesia”.<sup>15</sup> A fierce nationalist, she had never fully supported the path of decentralization, and the problems that were beginning to rise as a result of the hasty implementation of the laws helped to strengthen her arguments against them. The IMF indirectly helped her cause by forbidding regional administrations from seeking foreign loans for development.<sup>16</sup> The ADB, concerned with loan repayment and accountability, asserted that UU25 should be drafted in such a way that the central government be held directly responsible for the repayment of any “sub-national” loans, effectively placing central authority above that of local autonomy.<sup>17</sup> As regional governments and workers attempted to halt the state privatization plan that had been encouraged by the IMF in several sectors, even more pressure from the international community to “re-think” autonomy was exerted.<sup>18</sup> Despite this pressure from donor agencies and multi national corporations, the *idea* of ‘Autonomy’ and decentralized government in Indonesia has spread throughout the region and is unlikely to simply fade away.

Megawati has been met with staunch resistance from regional leaders as her administration brought forward plans to restructure autonomy laws.<sup>19</sup> They have consistently argued that Jakarta is simply unwilling to relinquish its power to the regions and that her administration is moving back towards a centralized style of leadership. But even more importantly, beneath the gloomy economic forecasts, elite political maneuvering, environmentalist concerns, and search for revenues, the *idea* of “autonomy” within the Republic of Indonesia has had a forceful impact on localized identities throughout the country. Most relevant to this current discussion, ethnic groups have begun to reassert their

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UU22 and UU25. Rasyid argues against those calling for revisions. See for example “Plan to revise regional autonomy law criticized,” The Jakarta Post Online 18 Oct. 2001 <<http://www.thejakartapost.com>>.

<sup>15</sup> “Unity in Danger, Mega Warns,” The Jakarta Post Online 31 Oct. 2001 <<http://www.thejakartapost.com>>.

<sup>16</sup> Some observers see this prohibition as a sign that the IMF is anxious not to lose control or influence over the Indonesian government. See AsiaTimes Online 16 Nov. 2001 <<http://www.atimes.com>>.

<sup>17</sup> “Intervention by the representatives of the Asian Development Bank on Structural Reforms”. Taken from the Indonesia country office web page for the Asian Development Bank <<http://wbIn0018.worldbank.org>>.

<sup>18</sup> For example, at the time of writing, State owned Semen Gresik was in the process of being sold to a Mexican buyer as the state attempted to privatize some of its holdings. However, local workers and politicians held up the deal arguing that the companies should be controlled by local administrations under UU25/99. A similar scenario occurred when the state attempted to sell 51 percent of its stake in Bank Central Asia (BCA). The proposal met with mass employee protests, a pattern that has been dubbed “mob politics” by analysts. See “Employees protest planned sale of BCA,” The Jakarta Post Online 2 Feb. 2002

<<http://www.thejakartapost.com>>. For a more general discussion concerning Megawati’s failure to implement donor agency proposals, see “Donor Fatigue” Far Eastern Economic Review Online 29 Nov. 2001. For an alternative view on the position of donor agencies in the country, see “IMF’s Prolonged Role in Indonesia Questioned” The Jakarta Post Online 15 Oct. 2001. <<http://www.thejakartapost.com>>

identities into sub-national groupings that are marked by specified boundaries, and possess unique 'traditional' cultures. New provinces and regencies are being carved out of almost every section of the nation, argued into existence under the compelling banner of cultural uniqueness, history and ethnic identity. Indonesians are pursuing "ethnic interpretations" of "region" within decentralization legislation aimed at decentralizing power and financial responsibility to "local" regional governments.

One example of this type of political maneuvering is evident in the case of Cirebon regency's recent push for province-hood. As *The Jakarta Post* reported in October of 2001, "Prince Arief of the Cirebon sultanate reiterated that Cirebon was culturally and historically different to Sundanese West Java.... 'The Culture of Cirebon is very different to Sundanese culture. It would be better for Karawang, Indramayu, Cirebon, Kuningan, Majalengka and Ciamia to become sole provinces,' he said."<sup>20</sup> The development and political support of these proposed provinces has clearly been publicly rationalized here because of their perceived unique cultures and histories, with social and territorial boundaries of each group becoming more specific and easily recognized from neighboring areas. This rationalization is interesting when we consider that no such claims were being demonstrated in the rural areas of West Java some forty years ago when Andrea Palmer conducted her fieldwork in villages near Cirebon.<sup>21</sup> In her report, Palmer noted that her hosts often spoke a mixture of both Javanese and Sundanese and that clear ethnic or cultural distinctions did not exist. She stated that at the time of research, the Sundanese had not developed into strong corporate units, they lacked any clear-cut ethnic identity, nor did they possess their own governments. "The territory which the Sundanese inhabit has a center, Priangan, but no clear boundaries."<sup>22</sup> In light of Palmer's research and Prince Arief's subsequent claims made over 42 years later, it seems clear that a great deal has changed within the discourse of identity politicking in West Java. While Palmer found a West Java society without strong traditional social or territorial boundaries of exclusion, the present Prince of Cirebon has gained a popular audience over his

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<sup>19</sup> For example, see "Regents tell govt. to Delay Revision of Autonomy Laws" *The Jakarta Post Online* 25 Oct. 2001. <<http://www.thejakartapost.com>>; "Autonomy Laws revision slammed" *The Jakarta Post Online* 29 Oct. 2001; and "Opposition grows against Autonomy Law Review" *The Jakarta Post Online* 26 Feb. 2002.

<sup>20</sup> **Nana Rukmana**, "PDIP supports formation of Cirebon Province" *The Jakarta Post Online* 30 Oct. 2001. <<http://www.thejakartapost.com>>. Also, **Nana Rukmana**, "Calls Mount for Cirebon Province" *The Jakarta Post Online* 8 Aug. 2002.

<sup>21</sup> **Andrea Wilcox Palmer**, "The Sundanese Village" In G. William Skinner (ed.), *Local, Ethnic and National Loyalties in Village Indonesia: A Symposium*. Yale University Cultural Report Series: Southeast Asia Studies (1959): 42-51.

<sup>22</sup> **Palmer** 45.

belief that West Java should be carved into smaller political units based on clear distinctions in culture, ethnicity and history. As Cirebon's leadership obtains popular support by playing up the area's ethnic distinctiveness, it should also be made clear that matters of economy underlie these ethnic politics. The denial of development funds for a new Cirebon airport and harbor have been cited as specific examples of Cirebon's developmental neglect.

Decentralization has become intrinsically bound with ethnic identity politics in Indonesia. Since 1998 (a period supposedly marked as one of increased decentralization and democratization) the nation has seen a rise in ethnically motivated violence, conflict and discrimination.<sup>23</sup> It may be generally concluded that an ongoing economic crisis and the destabilized nature of Indonesia's government have contributed a great deal to these problems. But many have also argued that decentralization legislature has opened up new spaces/ institutions which encourage elite politicians to struggle and compete over decreasing sources of power and money. "Across the whole of Indonesia... there is a sense that the future is up for grabs, and that a decisive time for setting power relationships in the new century has arrived. Under such circumstances, intense conflict is to be expected."<sup>24</sup> The question then becomes one of mobilizing support from the Indonesian people themselves in order to justify claims to increased political and financial autonomy being made on their behalf. In other words, regional politicians must appeal to their "local" constituents for legitimization, which in turn, strengthens the leader's own demands for greater autonomy from the state. These leaders have often formulated their appeals in terms of ethnic symbolism, which allows them to mobilize entire populations based on ethnic communalism. With regard to these conclusions, David Brown has written that in Indonesia and other 'Neo-Patrimonial' states:

The focus is therefore on "ethnic entrepreneurial" behavior of political elites who seek access to state power, and who manipulate ethnicity to that end by employing it as an ideological weapon or by acting as communal patrons. There is no assumption that these communal patrons are 'selfish' in giving priority to their own personal interests over the goals of the communal group they claim to represent. Indeed, what is distinctive about such politics is the extent to which the interests and values of the clientele and of their patrons becomes

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<sup>23</sup> This general conclusion has been argued by several authors. For the best sampling, please see the abstracts of papers presented at the workshop on "Governance, Identity and Conflict: Assessing the impact on Democratisation, Decentralization and Regional Autonomy on Stability in Post-Suharto Indonesia," held at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen, 31 Aug.- Sept. 2, 2001.

<sup>24</sup> **Robert Cribb**, "Democracy as a Tool of Legitimacy and Stability," Taken from paper abstract presented at the workshop on "Governance, Identity and Conflict: Assessing the Impact on Democratisation, Decentralization and Regional Autonomy on Stability in Post-Suharto Indonesia" held at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen, 31 Aug.- 2 Sept. 2001.

inextricably intertwined. It is the ability of the leader to define and articulate the myths and symbols of a community, and thus to interpret its identity to the wider society, that generates his influence and power in the community.<sup>25</sup>

The ideological power of ethnic identity has proven itself to be an effective weapon for minority, even majority groups to gain access to power or to legitimize power held by the state. In his well-known book *Two Dimensional Man* published in 1974, Abner Cohen wrote that:

...there are situations in contemporary Africa and the USA for example in which many culture groups- tribes or ethnic groups- not only retain but also exaggerate their traditional culture. To the casual observer this seems to be a manifestation of social conservatism and reaction, but a careful analysis shows that the old symbols are rearranged to serve new purposes under new political conditions. In ethnicity, old symbols and ideologies become strategies for the articulation of new interest groupings that struggle for employment, housing, funds and other new benefits.<sup>26</sup>

More recently, Thomas Hylland Eriksen has written that “although identity politics tends to be dressed in traditional garb, beneath the surface it is a product of modernity. The strong emotions associated with a tradition, a culture or a religion can never be mobilized unless people feel that it is under siege....secondly, modernization and globalization actualize differences and trigger conflict”.<sup>27</sup> In fact, sub-national groups based on ethnicity have gained important political leverage against the state in the past few decades as “globalization” has been countered with the equally pervasive phenomenon of “localization” and ethnic groups continue to maintain the sympathetic ear of international donor agencies, NGO’s and rights activists. “A consequence of (localization) is that it, among other things, generates and promotes a sub-national multiculturalism that is sanctioned by the international society, for example through the Universal Human Rights Bill.”<sup>28</sup>

It has therefore become possible to argue that ‘Globalized’ notions of ethnic groups, indigenous people and their rights have been forcibly morphed into the current decentralization processes, creating what Michael Jacobsen has called “Ethnification of the Nation”.<sup>29</sup> In other words, people that perceive of themselves and who are able to articulate a

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<sup>25</sup> **David Brown**, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*. (London & New York: Routledge, 1994) 113.

<sup>26</sup> **Abner Cohen**, *Two Dimensional Man: Essays on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul: 1974) 39.

<sup>27</sup> **Thomas Hylland Eriksen**, “Globalization and Identity,” *UN Chronicle* Autumn, 1999.

<sup>28</sup> **Michael Jacobsen**, “Globalization and Ethnic Identity in Indonesia,” *IIAS Newsletter Online*. No.14, Leiden, the Netherlands, 1998 <<http://www.iias.nl>>

<sup>29</sup> **Jacobsen**, “Indonesia on the Threshold” 3.

unique ethnic identity organized by traditional forms of government, are then able to solidify their boundaries on Indonesia's physical landscape under the new autonomy laws which allow revenues and power to be distributed to 'local' governments of specific regencies and provinces. However, unlike boundaries utilized by states to govern areas of space such as regencies, ethnicity often has a fluid quality that transcends boundaries conceived on state maps. Conversely, not all people within any given area will be included or be made part of such ethnically conceived regional governments. There may also be disagreement among the members of a specific ethnic group as to where the boundaries of ethnicity lay or who may be involved in the formulation of these newly emerging 'local' governments that seem to be based on ethnic identification.

In the end, we have been left with the ironic and uncomfortable reality that the current state of decentralization legislature in Indonesia may be helping to increase ethnic discrimination and conflict while decreasing the financial capacities of regional administrations and at the same time, curbing the ability of the state to go ahead with IMF demands such as the privatisation of state owned enterprises.<sup>30</sup> How might a policy intended to alleviate Indonesia's political, social and economic woes become part of the increasing problem? There are numerous ways to answer this question. One compelling theory might be that there are at least two contrasting ideas as to exactly *who* or which groups and institutions should be granted "decentralization" or "autonomy". Although this will be given greater attention in following chapters, it appears that while greater autonomy for "local" people is the focus of outside observers, the "ethnic" group has been recognized as a more powerful uniting force by local leaders who have begun to mobilize ethnic communalism in preparation of decentralization. As an example, conspicuously absent from the World Bank's official web site for decentralization in Indonesia are words associated with ethnicity or its apparent ability to "highjack" laws such as UU22 and UU25. Instead, the World Bank and its associated donors continue to focus on "local" as their unit of decentralized government strategies.<sup>31</sup> The ambiguous identity of these "local" groups has been interpreted by the Indonesian government to mean "regency" or *kabupaten* on paper. While the "regency" defined as an area on a map may be the *official* receptor for increased autonomy, ethnic majority groups

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<sup>30</sup> Although I make this statement, I do not mean to imply in anyway that I either support or refute IMF strategy with regard to Indonesia here. That is a topic for another research problem.

<sup>31</sup> Again, see the World Bank decentralization web site at  
<<http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/index.htm>>

claiming unique history and culture associated with the space identified as “the regency” have become the real vessels of autonomy and its associated rights and obligations. In other words, while policy formulators speak generically of economic distribution, local people’s participation, local development needs and rights, and regional administration, “local people” themselves articulate their rights in terms of collective ethnicity and history and their rights based on such identities. This politicizing of ethnicity has not occurred accidentally, and local leaders often seem acutely aware of the potential power of ethnicity as a bargaining tool between themselves and the state. As one local Minahasan intellectual has written:

Belum diketahui dengan pasti berapa banyak lagi daerah lainnya yang sekerang sedang mengambil ancang-ancang untuk dijadikan provinsi. Ironinya bahwa hampir semua provinsi baru yang sudah resmi dan sedang menyiapkan diri, semuanya berlatar belakang etnis.<sup>32</sup> [It is not known for certain how many more areas are making preparations to become provinces. The irony is that nearly all of the new and officially recognized provinces that have been created by the people themselves have been supported/backed by ethnicity.]

## 2. The Case of Minahasa

The Minahasa regency, and its associated cities of Manado and Bitung present an interesting and unique case study with relation to this current discussion. There are several factors that distinguish it from the rest of Indonesia with reference to decentralization and increased autonomy. More specifically, Minahasan ethnic regionalism is not a “new” phenomenon such as it is in Cirebon, Riau, Central Kalimantan or most other regions and provinces including those located in Papua or even North Sumatera.<sup>33</sup> “Minahasa” may in fact represent one of the oldest regionally and ethnically conceived groups in Indonesia, initially formulated during the regions intensive occupation by Dutch colonizers and missionaries, surviving through Indonesia’s fight for independence and tumultuous nation-building process.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, unlike the majority of regencies located on the “outer

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<sup>32</sup> **Bert A. Supit**, “Provinsi Minahasa: Suatu Wacana Pemberdayaan Daerah dan Rakyat Melalui Reformasi Struktur Pemerintahan Daerah Menuju Indonesia Baru”. 10 June 2001. This 23 page booklet was prepared for general distribution at the *Kongres Minahasa Raya* II and was obtained for this research on 17 July, 2001 in Tomohon at the meeting

<sup>33</sup> For discussion concerning Malay identity in Riau, see **Will Derks**, “Malay Identity Work” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde* 153 (1997): 699-716. On the recent political use of ethnicity in Central Kalimantan, see **Gerry Van Klinken**, “Ethnic Fascism in Borneo: Old Elites in Central Kalimantan Discover New and Dangerous Strategies” *Inside Indonesia Online* (June-July 2000). For similar information dealing with New Guinea (both Indonesian Papua and Papua New Guinea) see **Ralph R Premdas**, “Ethnicity and Nation Building: The Papua New Guinea Case”. McGill University CDAS Discussion Paper No. 50 (1987).

<sup>34</sup> **David E.F. Henley**, Nationalism and Regionalism in a Colonial Context: Minahasa in the Dutch East Indies. (Leiden; KITLV Press, 1996).

islands” of Indonesia that are calling for, and being rewarded with provincial status, Minahasa is not an area considered rich in natural resources. It possesses an economy that has always been dominated by agricultural produce such as cloves, copra, and at one time, coffee and rice. Further, Minahasans have long been deemed as a fully “westernized” society that has been stripped of most of its “traditional” heritage. Although the idea that *any* culture is timeless, bound, unchanging and “traditional” is now considered outdated, even recent studies of the area tend to propagate the idea that Minahasan culture is somehow less traditional or even less *real* when compared to other Indonesian societies. While describing the Minahasans in his comprehensive guide to ethnic groups in Southeast Asia, Frank Lebar concluded that “Dutch influence in the Minahasa districts has, however, been profound, resulting in virtually complete Christianization, the growth of a sizable Eurasian population, and the disappearance of indigenous cultures”.<sup>35</sup> Writing on the state of Minahasan culture in 1994, Helmut Buchholt conceded that...

Culturally, however, all efforts to reactivate faked or real aspects of “traditional Minahasan life” in contemporary Minahasa (like *Maengket*, *Cakallele*, or traditional religious ceremonies) will fail and have only symbolic meanings. In fact, “Minahasan Culture” contains no or only a few traditional elements. But even the influence of 300 years of Dutch colonial power will increasingly disappear under the cover of centralistic and bureaucratic “Indonesian Culture”. What is left? Maybe the Minahasan consciousness of once having been an outstanding ethnic group in a specific period of time.<sup>36</sup>

In light of these perceptions and opinions, Minahasans do not generally attract much attention from a central government worried about the potential affects of decentralization on the integrity of the nation. At present, Jakarta seems more interested in the manner and form autonomy is brokered out to provinces rich in specific natural resources such as timber or oil. In fact, Megawati has simply brushed aside or even ignored the idea that Minahasa will ever become a province of its own.<sup>37</sup> Simply stated, the low grumble for increased autonomy that stems from local elites in Minahasa is not taken as seriously as similar demands being made

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<sup>35</sup> **Frank M. Lebar** (ed.), *Ethnic Groups of Insular Southeast Asia: Volume 1: Indonesia, Andaman Islands, and Madagascar*. (New Haven: Human Relations Files Press, 1972): 126.

<sup>36</sup> **Helmut Buchholt**, “The Impact of the Christian Mission on the Processes of Social Differentiation” In Scheffold, Reimar (ed.) *Minahasa Past and Present: Tradition and Transition in an Outer Island Region of Indonesia*. (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1994): 26.

<sup>37</sup> On October 6th, 2001 *The Jakarta Post* reported that Megawati was planning to travel to Manado to open the “North Sulawesi People’s Congress”. Spokesmen for the Congress indicated that there would be no discussions -pertaining to the desire of “certain parties” to create a new province of Minahasa. The congress was not attended by Megawati nor was there any reference made to this event ever transpiring in the local Manado papers.

by the leadership in more wealthy regions. Aside from gold mining, Minahasa lacks the important natural resources which many ethnic groups in Indonesia use to make demands upon the state.<sup>38</sup> Minahasa has also failed to grab the interests of international NGOs or development programs which tend to funnel their funding towards issues pertaining to forestry management, “indigenous” or “tribal” people’s knowledge and rights.<sup>39</sup> Ethnic groups that have capitalized on such attention have been able to use their connections with these international allies as important bargaining tools with which to gain increasing independence from the central government.<sup>40</sup> It has already been noted that Minahasans are considered somewhat of a modernized culture group, as the area and its people are perceived to have been completely westernized through Minahasa’s long association and emulation of western cultures.<sup>41</sup> As a “westernized” society, they cannot effectively argue from the position of the “ecologically wise native” or the disappearing indigenous minority. Contrary to the more pervasive and frequently presented tools of negotiation (namely, natural resources or “indigenous” culture) used by ethnic minorities in Indonesia, Minahasan leaders have

<sup>38</sup> While gold mining does offer some added revenue possibilities for Minahasa, there have been increasing numbers of stories in local newspapers pertaining to gold mining and mercury poisoning in the area. Further, disputes between PT Newmont Minahasa Raya (the mining company which currently holds the rights to mine the area) and local administration have made international headlines. These stories generally portray the area as a questionable place to make large investments, as well as an example of why decentralization legislation will have a negative impact on investment interest. Again, see “Devolve, But Do It Right” *The Economist Online* 7 June, 2000. For a specific case study pertaining to this matter, see **Ehito Kimura**, “Pertambangan Emas di Sulawesi Utara Sebagai Contoh Otonomi Daerah: Keuangan, Kapasitas, KKN” Mandao, Indonesia 2001. Paper presented as part of a seminar concerning North Sulawesi sponsored by COTIM. (Based on Fieldwork conducted from June to August 2001). Personal source of unpublished material.

<sup>39</sup> For example, the ‘indigenous’ people who occupy the Palu region of Central Sulawesi have been able to tap into considerable funding provided by international NGOs. A heavy discourse revolving around “indigenous people’s rights”, “ancient tribal ecological wisdom” and environmental conservation have allowed the Palu region to receive promises of 26.8 million from the World Bank and 32 million from the ADB. See “The Nature Conservancy project at Lore Lindu National Park in Sulawesi” at <http://www.tnc.org/asiapacific/facts/lore.htm> as well as “WB Central Sulawesi Agricultural Development Project Loan #4011-IND” at <http://www.worldbank.org/gender/opera/4011in.htm> as well as “ADB Central Sulawesi Integrated Area Development and Conservation” at <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Profiles/LOAN/29336013.ASP>

<sup>40</sup> **Peter van Tuijl & Ben Witjes**, “Popular Participation in Indonesia’s Development Process” In Jan-Paul Dirkse, Frans Husken & Mario Rutten (eds.) *Development and Social Welfare: Indonesia’s Experiences Under the New Order*. (Leiden, KITLV Press, 1993):195-217; 208-212. **Tania Murray Li**, “Locating Indigenous Environmental Knowledge in Indonesia,” in Roy Ellen, Peter Parkes and Alan Bicker (eds). *Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and its Transformations: Critical Anthropological Perspectives*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000): 149-175. Li gives a telling example of this type of political use of “indigenous” identity from Central Sulawesi, how it works and scenarios that prevent it from working in other areas.

<sup>41</sup> This broad generalization holds little truth in reality. See **M.J.C. Schouten**, *Leadership and Social Mobility in a Southeast Asian Society: Minahasa, 1677-1983*. (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998). Also **Wil Lundstrom-Burghoorn**, *Minahasa Civilization: A Tradition of Change*. Goteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis. [Gothenburg Studies in Social Anthropology2.] (1981).

instead re-focused older political uses and symbols of ethnicity to obtain new objectives. The most frequently presented symbols of Minahasan culture (and subsequent justification of Minahasa's eventual provincial status) have been the democratic nature of traditional and modern Minahasan culture, the possession of one of the most highly educated groups in Indonesia, a modern western-like world outlook, adaptability and pragmatism, the ability to accept and live with all people regardless of ethnicity or religion, and a solid Christian identity. As will be discussed later, the role of the Church throughout Minahasa's history cannot be over-stated and the incorporation of Christianity into Minahasan identity has been complete.

The downfall of Suharto and the increasingly democratic nature of Indonesia has ignited a resurgent interest in discovering exactly what *Minahasan* is among Minahasans themselves. This is not to say that Minahasans suffer from an identity crisis, but as I have already suggested, the regional autonomy laws have galvanized local Minahasan leaders into strategizing mode and part of this strategy is aimed at strengthening the concept of *Minahasa*. Local intellectuals hold formal and informal sessions to hammer out plans for governing the regency. Others argue that a new province should be established, especially in light of the fact that Gorontalo was recently removed from the province of North Sulawesi to become a province of its own. A smaller group is demanding independence from Indonesia as a whole. While the political aspirations of these groups may differ, they have all actively employed the symbols and history of ethnic solidarity among Minahasans to reinforce a common identity. Newspapers, chat rooms, message boards, banners, and everyday discussions are woven through with symbols of a shared past, present and future for Minahasans. Although the present re-invigoration of ethnic identity seems evident, the immediate cause of the recent upsurge is less obvious to the casual observer. Without an economy wound tightly to manufacturing, textiles, natural resources or the like, Minahasa has weathered the economic crisis comparatively well, without extreme fluctuations in financial losses or gains. There have been no mass migrations to the area which might instigate competition between newcomers and locals. And yet, if the social theorists are right, identity politics and ethnic identity always entail competition over scarce resources. What then are the "resources" at stake here? Again, I would maintain that increased decentralization and democratization have contributed to the sense that the future is indeed up for grabs in Indonesia, leading local

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leadership to mobilize into positions for negotiation with the state. In this sense, I agree with Eriksen that “resources should be interpreted in the widest sense possible” and might range from economic resources, recognition, symbolic power, political power or almost any other variable.<sup>42</sup> Following this line of reasoning, Minahasans have expressed that they feel threatened by an increasingly Islamic Jakarta and they resent their position as a backwater that is greatly ignored by the central government. The idea of decentralized government, even federalism has always been popular in the area and they see the current process as their chance to finally attain this goal and to become more prosperous. As this paper will discuss later, these are old aspirations and fears that have resurfaced to spur on the invigoration of “Minahasa”.

As Minahasans begin to reassert themselves and prepare for more autonomy from Jakarta, many observers have predicted that trouble will almost certainly sprout between Christian Minahasans and Muslim migrants. These predictions are not totally without reason. At the time of this writing, Minahasans were acutely aware of the fighting between Muslims and Christians in North as well as south Maluku. Thousands of refugees from the Maluku provinces have fled to Minahasa and the presence of these migrants has been a constant reminder of what can happen when relations between religious/ethnic groups go wrong.<sup>43</sup> Central Sulawesi has also emerged as a problematic area. Church burning, killing, looting and murder were common stories reported from the Poso region of Sulawesi at the time of my research. These tragedies, coupled with stories coming out of from Jakarta that the *Jakarta Charter*<sup>44</sup> is being considered as part of a constitutional amendment process, have held the attention of all Minahasans.<sup>45</sup> Still, there have been no reports of real tension or conflict within Minahasa itself. Despite the social upheavals taking place around it, Minahasa has remained peaceful.

Michael Jacobsen has argued that “By still having the greatest access to education and still being able to dominate the provincial political and administrative apparatus compared to

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<sup>42</sup> **Thomas Hylland Eriksen**, “UN Chronicle, Autumn”. This paper is posted (among others) on the Web at <http://www.sv.uio.no/~geirthe/Background.html>

<sup>43</sup> *Antara* reported on August 8, 2001 that the North Sulawesi city of Bitung alone was supporting a population of 15,000 refugees from North Maluku and Ambon. Estimates of the total number of refugees fleeing to Manado by July 2001 range between 10 and 20 thousand. See **Alhadar Smith** (2000) “The Forgotten war in North Maluku” in *Inside Indonesia Online* No. 63 July-September. < <http://www.insideindonesia.org>>

<sup>44</sup> The Jakarta Charter (*Piagam Jakarta*) was originally meant to be included in the Indonesian Constitution but was pulled out in the final draft. Its inclusion would mean that Indonesians would be subject to Islamic Law.

the Muslim, the Minahasans are having an advantageous position in the *kabupaten* (regency). This means that they can direct the various development programmes into a direction that reinforces their position as a majority group in the Kabupaten.”<sup>46</sup> It seems that Minahasans do not feel economically or politically threatened by Muslims or other migrants living among them and have had no reason to feel pressured into action. While this may be true, migrants (including long-time residents) are pointedly absent from the meetings, discussions, and debates concerning the future of Minahasa that have been occurring since Suharto left the political stage. Literature, pamphlets and articles concerning plans for autonomy are written expressly for and by Minahasans. Muslim migrants are not the only ones being left out. I was able to witness first hand at the Kongres Minahasa Raya II the expulsion of one of the speakers after he revealed that he was originally from West Sumatra. “He is not from Minahasa, he has no right to criticize”, was the response one informant gave me when I asked why the young man had been escorted out of the building. On another occasion, I asked a well-known, highly educated Minahasan if he thought it would be dangerous to base the regional government of Minahasa on the wishes and desires of a specific ethnic group. He stated simply, “That is the way things are done in Indonesia. You must understand that ethnicity is important to us.” Minahasans take pride in being highly educated, democratic, peaceful and tolerant. They freely intermarry with other ethnic groups and have lived with Muslims for centuries in relative peace. Despite all of this, I have found there to be strong elements of socio-political inclusion and exclusion among the people of Minahasa and these elements will likely become more apparent and entrenched as decentralization progresses, the number of migrants increases or is *perceived* to increase, and the government in Jakarta becomes more oriented towards the Islamic community.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> As I began writing these notes, the effect of “September 11th” was just beginning to show its affect in the relationships between Minahasans and their Muslim neighbors. I have learned from correspondence that things have become a bit alarmist in Minahasa. I’m not sure yet where this will lead the area in term of ethnic relations.

<sup>46</sup> **Michael Jacobsen**, “Nationalism and Particularism in Present-day Southeast Asia”. Paper presented at the KITLV International Workshop on Southeast Asian Studies No.14 held in Leiden (13 Oct.-16 Oct.1999): 19.

<sup>47</sup> At the time of this writing, the calls for Islamic Law had somewhat subsided, at least officially. However, there have been signs that the government is willing to make special concessions for Indonesia’s Muslim population. For example, on November 29, 2001, *The Jakarta Post* reported that the new, controversial law pertaining to ‘*zakat*’ had been passed. This law provides tax incentives to companies and individuals that make donations in the form of *zakat* to alleviate poverty. These donations are traditionally required from Muslims all over the world but this new law can be seen as an attempt to nationalize the funds. Other religious groups do not receive the same tax incentive.

### 3. The Aim and Scope of This Research:

Throughout my investigation, I have had to struggle to keep the rhetoric of ethnicity and religion from corrupting a more complete view of the actual causes of current issues facing Minahasa. Although my informants often spoke of ethnicity and religion in their discussions, issues of power and economy were lurking just below the surface of what was being expressed. Political and economic discrepancies often find expression in ethnic or religious conflicts. What generally emerges is the old resentment between the center (Jakarta) and a periphery (Minahasa). This does not mean that ethnic identity and religion are not “real” issues or that they are not important avenues of inquiry. They may even be the cause of such discrepancies. In fact, all of these issues seem linked and are impossible to separate from each other. However, ethnicity is fast gaining currency as a very real avenue for obtaining power and legitimacy in Indonesia. The current trend to mobilize and empower ethnic identities in order to legitimize claims made by local governments has only increased since the implementation of UU22 and UU25.

The main purpose of the following chapters will be to make some sense of Indonesia’s own process of “Ethnification of the Nation” with particular reference to the area of Minahasa. The thrust of this argument will continue to be that UU22 and UU25 have begun to open new arenas in which “local” leaders may officially engage the state in power negotiations that were simply not possible before 1998. Further, local elites and intellectuals have been able to successfully garner the support of their “local” constituents in these negotiations by appealing to a sense of ethnic communalism. The “threat” of an increasingly Islamic Indonesia and the feeling that Minahasa continues to be a backwater region in the eyes of Jakarta are actually old concerns and fears of Minahasans that have gained new currency as decentralization progresses.<sup>48</sup> These same factors have served as the impetus for “Minahasa’s” renewal or reinvigoration. An important underlying theme to this work will be to examine the nature of Minahasa’s relative state of peace and stability even as Minahasans begin to re-assert their identity. In other words, how has it been possible for Minahasa to remain stable while many observers have predicted that it will eventually fall to communal unrest, or outright violence such as has been the case with Maluku and Poso? I will begin by

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<sup>48</sup> In an issue cover-dated January 31, 2002, the Far Eastern Economic Review reported that in a pole conducted by Tempo Magazine, 58 percent of respondents said that they would support any effort to include Islamic Law into the Indonesian Constitution. **Dini Djalal** “Missed Opportunities” Far Eastern Economic Review Online . (31 Jan. 2002).

outlining modern concepts of “decentralization” and its associated policies as they have been implemented in many other former colonies around the world. Attention will more specifically focus on decentralization in Indonesia with particular reference to the history of the policy in Minahasa. This particular section will show that decentralization policy and the idea of a Federal Indonesia were popular ideas in Minahasa even before Indonesia had gained its independence from the Dutch. In a later section, I will delve more deeply into the current attempt to empower Minahasa politically in an effort to gain more autonomy from Indonesia’s central government. Finally, I will conclude with a general discussion of the prospects and future of decentralization and peace in Minahasa.

The goal of this research has been to examine one problem of implementing decentralization in Indonesia that has been given very little detailed or academic analysis. There have been countless papers, books, conferences, and technical reports concerning government structural reforms and future economic strategies under new decentralization legislation, and yet very little has been written about what appears to be the “hijacking” of decentralization by ethnic communalism in Indonesia. It seems that any attention to “the ethnic question” has been reserved almost exclusively for those regions that have already experienced lengthy periods of ethnic unrest and/or that are located squarely in provinces rich in natural resources such as Aceh, Papua and parts of Kalimantan. As further sections will show, Minahasa serves as a compelling case study here for several reasons, not the least of which is its long association with the idea of decentralized governance and even federalism. Further, the area has remained peaceful and relatively prosperous for decades despite (or perhaps because of) its largely Christian population and multi ethnic character. While Minahasa has not garnered much attention from the Megawati administration or from international NGOs for reasons already mentioned, a historical analysis of the northern tip of Sulawesi might suggest that this region is precisely the place where serious demands for decentralization could take place. After all, the Permesta rebellion (1957-1960), was not a rebellion for autonomy from the Indonesian state, but rather a struggle for more regional autonomy within the state: decentralization.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> **Barbara S. Harvey**, *Permesta: Half a Rebellion* (Ithica, New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project. [Southeast Asia Program Monograph Series 54.] 1977). Although this rebellion initially included parts of Sumatra and south Sulawesi, Harvey writes that after 1958, Permesta was almost exclusively fought in the Minahasa region.

#### 4. Methods:

Research for this thesis was conducted in three separate phases, the first being library work in the Spring of 2000 at the University of Hawaii- Manoa. It was in Hawaii that all of the initial background information on Minahasa was gathered. It should be noted that at this preliminary stage of research, my main inquiries were focused on Minahasan culture, history and economy in a very general sense. My interests in decentralization and identity came only after living in the Manado for several weeks, when it became apparent that these were the topics dominating local newspapers and many conversations I was privy to.

The second phase of work was conducted during the summer of 2000 while taking part in language courses at UNSRAT in Manado.<sup>50</sup> The information I was able to gather from interviews while living in Minahasa usually came to me from at least three sources: a.) Informal conversations, b.) Formal interviews, documented on either cassettes or 8mm film when appropriate, c.) Local newspapers or unpublished brochures and academic papers. For various reasons, the more informal conversations were often the most candid and informative, while the formal meetings that I managed to arrange were less so. This was most likely due to the fact that casual conversations, being less “arranged”, were more likely to foster a less inhibiting atmosphere. I often found that in my more formal conversations pertaining to Minahasan identity and/or decentralization, the informant would attempt to gauge my own opinions about decentralization before giving their own responses. Daily newspapers such as the *Manado Post* or the *Posko Manado* were instrumental in helping me to contextualize the information obtained from interviews, as well as to understand Minahasa’s response to decentralization legislature on a more national level. I was also able to gather some very valuable unpublished material relating to decentralization and the recent attempt to “invigorate” Minahasa as a cohesive unit simply by asking around various departments at UNSRAT. A few “chance” meetings on campus and at the *Kongres Minahasa Raya* led to a handful of crucial informants and written material that influenced my own research tremendously.

Following my fieldwork in Manado, I was given the opportunity to conduct library research at the KITLV in Leiden, The Netherlands.<sup>51</sup> This third stage of research allowed me

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<sup>50</sup> My stay in Manado was funded by Fulbright through the COTIM program, the main purpose of which was language study.

<sup>51</sup> Research and language study at Leiden University (2001-2002) was made possible through the sponsorship of the Asian Studies Department at the University of Hawaii and a FLAS (Foreign Language Area Studies) fellowship.

to elaborate on the history of decentralization in Indonesia, Minahasa and at least to some extent, The Netherlands. The year I spent in Holland was valuable in many other ways, and I came away from the experience with a much greater understanding of the impact of colonization on both Indonesia and The Netherlands. While most of my time in Leiden was spent compiling sources from the library, and participating in Indonesian language courses, it was also at this stage of my research that I began to rely more heavily on internet sources such as newspapers, online magazines, message boards and e-mail correspondence. I soon discovered several web-sites dedicated to Minahasa and autonomy, and these sites often provided opinions and ideas that I had never encountered during fieldwork.<sup>52</sup> The use of these sources however, has provided some interesting problems that will more than likely become issues that all academic researchers will need to face as our reliance on the internet as a source of information continues to grow. For example, should a message posted on a discussion board be considered a reliable source of information? Is it possible to substantiate such material? Can we ever be certain exactly *who* is behind such postings and are these individuals representative in any way of society as a whole? Should the researcher have some obligation to obtain permission to use this type of material? Will citing a specific discussion board eventually draw unwanted attention to what is essentially a private conversation? To solve this ethical dilemma, I have decided to allow the substantial body of information obtained from these sites to guide my research inquiries, rather than to employ it directly into the thesis. I should note that the opinions and ideas posted on such sites are considerably more extreme than anything I encountered while living in Minahasa itself.

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<sup>52</sup> A partial list of valuable web sources is included at the end of the Bibliography for this thesis.

## **II. Autonomy and Decentralization: A Brief Look**

“The fact that decentralised decision making ensures the well-being of all of those who are likely to be affected by such decisions is now well known.”<sup>53</sup>

“...in Indonesia, the period of decentralization and democratisation has been marked with tremendous increase in violent conflicts.”<sup>54</sup>

The effort to “decentralize” political and economic power from Jakarta (the “center” of Indonesia) to the provincial or regionally based governments of the “outer” islands of the nation has been going on for at least a century. Trevor Buising has argued that “Few states have had as long an experience of decentralisation as has Indonesia.”<sup>55</sup> However, even after 100 years of legislation and debate, it can generally be concluded that the various efforts to decentralize Indonesia’s power structures have produced very little substantial change or progress. In 1999, Indonesia still remained widely recognized as a nation with one of the most centralized tax systems in the world<sup>56</sup> and in 2002, regional calls for more decentralized governance have shown little sign of subsiding. This chapter will attempt to place the concept of decentralization within a wider context by first examining the idea itself. A second concern of this section will be to examine the history of decentralization within Indonesia. Later, the focus of discussion will shift more specifically towards the region of Minahasa and its long standing support of the ideas associated with decentralized and even federalist visions of the Indonesian state.

An examination of decentralization in the Indonesian context should highlight the major controversies, accomplishments and problems that the process has seemingly generated over the years. The main theme will continue to be centered around the idea that decentralization has become intrinsically bound with ethnic identity politics in Indonesia, and that new decentralization legislature has opened up new spaces/ institutions which encourage

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<sup>53</sup> **Abdul Aziz, & David D. Arnold**, “Introduction,” in **Abdul Aziz, & David D. Arnold (eds)**. *Decentralized Governance in Asian Countries*. (New Delhi/ Thousand Oaks/ London: Sage Publications, 1996): 13-33;13.

<sup>54</sup> **Timo Kivimaki**, “Indonesian Conflicts, A Macro-Perspective” Taken from paper abstract presented at the workshop on “Governance, Identity and Conflict: Assessing the impact on Democratisation, Decentralization and Regional Autonomy on Stability in Post-Suharto Indonesia” held at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen, 31 August –2 September 2001.

<sup>55</sup> **Trevor Buising**, “A Century of Decentralisation: Easy to Say, Difficult to Do,” *Inside Indonesia Online* No. 63, July- Sept. 2000.< <http://www.insideindonesia.org>>

<sup>56</sup> **Christopher Silver; Iwan J. Aziz, & Schroeder**, “Intergovernmental Transfers and Decentralization in Indonesia” *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* Vol. 37, No.3 (2001): 345-362;345.

elite politicians to struggle and compete over decreasing sources of power and money. Within the context of this struggle, “ethnicity” has gained substantial ground as a legitimate tool with which regional politicians are able to make demands upon the state and gain popular support for their efforts.

### 1. The Concept and Realities of Decentralization Policy

A quick review of the literature that has been dedicated to decentralization policy over the past few years assures inquiring minds of at least two absolute outcomes of policy implementation: a.) A more stable government, economy and society in former centralized states, and b.) A decreasing stability in the government, economy and society in former centralized states.<sup>57</sup> In fact the reader of such material may be left feeling strongly that a.) decentralization policy should be implemented immediately, while at the same time understanding that such implementation could lead to the dissolution of several modern states or that b.) decentralization should not be implemented, but that not implementing such policies could lead to the dissolution of several modern states. This is a confusing discourse that more often than not leads to the prevailing theme and official line taken by the ADB that suggests: Yes, decentralization seems to be a good and necessary idea in principle, but perhaps many nations are not quite ready for the immediate implementation of such policies.<sup>58</sup> To better understand the problems and positives associated with decentralization, a general account of, and rationale for, decentralized governance will now be explored.

Simply stated, decentralization has been envisioned by its proponents as a way to devolve power and democracy from centralized government structures to localized governments within existing states. In this context, democratization and decentralization are inextricably linked with one another. It is assumed that “all those whose interests are affected by decisions ought to take part in the decision-making process” and that “When everybody

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<sup>57</sup> The literature with regard to these issues is indeed substantial. For a sample of information from the pro-decentralization camp, see **Riant D. Nugroho**, *Otonomi Daerah: Desentralisasi Tanpa Revolusi*. Jakarta: PT ELEX Media Komputindo, 2001).; **Aziz & Arnold**; as well as the World Bank’s web page on decentralization at < <http://www1.Worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/index.htm>.> For opposition to decentralization, see articles such as **Tri Ratnawati**, “Memikirkan Kembali Keinginan Merivisi Kebijakan Otonomi Daerah” *Kompas* 26 Feb. 2002.

<sup>58</sup> In this case, I am referring especially to Indonesia once again. See “Intervention by the representatives of the Asian Development Bank on Structural Reforms”. Taken from the Indonesia country office web page for the ADB: <<http://wbIn0018.worldbank.org>>. For related expressions of apprehension concerning decentralization in Indonesia, refer to “Indonesia Should Phase in Regional Autonomy, Specialists Say”. A press release from the World Bank Country Office/Jakarta. (21 March 1999).

takes part in the decision-making process, self interest is supposed to guide them to arrive at decisions that are consistent with everybody's good."<sup>59</sup> Scholars and public policy advocates also suggest that systems of centralized governance (generally deemed to be "authoritarian") are unable to respond adequately to the needs or demands of citizens. This may be especially true if entire sub-regions or sections of society are left grossly under-represented in the centralized structure. Without some type of representation or mechanism by which political input may be given voice, such a government is more likely to incite sporadic and even violent political expressions or cleavages between groups within society. Aziz and Arnold further argue that without representation or voice, there is little room for people's participation or even the implementation of decisions made by the center because people are not inspired or motivated to extend their cooperation.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, a decentralized government promises representation for groups from all regions, villages and hamlets of the nation. Such a government would allow the articulation of "local" demands and people's participation would be ensured. Ideally, access to the decision making processes of the nation should not be restricted by an individuals association with specific groups or ideologies. Generally speaking then, decentralization is touted as a necessary step in curbing violent political movements and social unrest in former authoritarian nations by increasing basic attributes of democracy.

The idea of "autonomy" for regions or groups is also an integral part of the decentralization issue. Modern decentralization proponents adhere to the idea that a single administrative region, complete with specific boundaries that are recognizable on state maps, should in fact be the receptor for increased power and responsibilities that were once the domain of the central government alone. Greater autonomy for a region should be taken to mean that more trust is to be placed in the hands of local authorities and the people who select these authorities, creating a situation where political/economic capacity and decisions are brought closer to the people. In an ideal scenario, regional authorities should be given the power to make their own decisions, largely independent of pressure from the central government while still operating within the national context. For this type of autonomy to become a reality then, it is required that "local institutions enjoy both political and financial

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<sup>59</sup> **Aziz & Arnold: 14.** For a similar discussion from a slightly different perspective, see **Mark Turner**, "Central-Local Relations: Themes and Issues". In Mark Turner (ed.), Central-Local Relations in Asia-Pacific: Convergence or Divergence? (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1999): 1-18.

<sup>60</sup> **Aziz & Arnold: 14.**

autonomy” and that “The existence of decentralized governments should not be at the mercy of the higher level governments, nor should they be over-dependent on higher level governments for their financial needs. They should be able to generate their own resources and to carry out development activities of their own.”<sup>61</sup> Obviously then, a successful transition towards decentralized government requires that local governments also be given the authority to develop and use their available resources in order to meet the financial demands of their respective regions. The devolution of financial responsibilities to local, autonomous governments is seen as a major part of decentralized government. Perhaps equally important to the establishment of fiscally and politically autonomous “local” government bodies is the ability of these governments to prove themselves to be “downwardly accountable” to those people whom they claim to represent in order to maintain legitimacy.<sup>62</sup>

Most of the reports, papers and books that have been written on decentralization tend to give the impression that the concept has evolved as a reaction to the presence of authoritarian regimes in several of the world’s so-called “developing countries”.<sup>63</sup> From this angle, globalized notions of democracy and capitalism have triggered public demands for democratically based governments in countries that have formerly been ruled by dictators. Further, in an effort to develop and enter the world’s market economy system, many of these countries are becoming increasingly convinced that there are also economic rationales for decentralization and even the privatization of state holdings.<sup>64</sup> More often than not, decentralization is portrayed as a “win-win solution” for everyone affected by its objectives, and as one report from the World Bank press release has noted “Although politics are the driving force behind decentralization in most countries, decentralization may be one of those instances where good politics and good economics may serve the same end.”<sup>65</sup>

While better economic and administrative systems are at the heart of formal decentralization objectives, for many nations decentralization policies have also been adopted in an effort to quell ethnic, religious and regional demands for autonomy or even

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<sup>61</sup> **Aziz & Arnold** :16

<sup>62</sup>For a more detailed discussion pertaining to decentralization policy and accountability, see **Arun Agrawal & Jesse C. Ribot**, “Accountability in Decentralization: A Framework with South Asian and West African Cases,” *The Journal of Developing Areas* 33 (4) (1999): 473-

<sup>63</sup> <http://www1.Worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/rationale.htm>. : **Aziz & Arnold**: 17-20.

<sup>64</sup> I should note here that decentralization and privatization are generally prescribed by international donor agencies such as the IMF, and that nations which have considerable debts to these organizations generally have little choice but to conform to these prescriptions. Therefore, while it may be true that several countries have freely chosen to lean more heavily towards decentralized economies, it might also be said that outside pressure has also “convinced” nations to decentralize and privatize.

independence. Examples of this can be seen in countries as diverse as the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, China, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.<sup>66</sup> It has generally been argued that the failure of highly centralized governmental systems to reach their beneficiaries, or to include society as a whole in the political decision-making processes, has led to discontent or even separatist sentiments in these states that have (at different times) threatened to dismantle them. Again, decentralization is proscribed as the most obvious step towards easing tensions between separatists, regionalists and the state... as a sort of “magic bullet”<sup>67</sup> that will solve problems concerning economic, administrative, and political problems, while at the same time bringing democracy and stability to society as a whole.

For many countries, the transformation from colonialism to independence and finally towards decentralized democracy has often proven to be a problematic and cumbersome project. In the particular cases of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Bangladesh, the centralized political/economic structures inherited from Dutch, American and British colonial administrations were carried over into the institutional structures of each of these countries once independence had been established. Since independence, each country has attempted to incorporate at least some sort of decentralized policy into its administrative systems, and as would be expected, each has met with varying degrees of success. However, despite its “magic bullet” status, critical points of debate concerning the actual *implementation* process of more decentralized government are taking place. For starters, *when* should the full implementation of decentralization take place and how quickly might a nation be expected to

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<sup>65</sup> <http://www1.Worlbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/rationale.htm>

<sup>66</sup> For a discussion on decentralization in Papua New Guinea see: **Ralph R Premdas**, “Ethnicity and Nation Building: The Papua New Guinea Case”. McGill University CDAS Discussion Paper No. 50. (1987). As well as **R.J. May**, “Decentralization in Papua New Guinea: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back” in Mark Turner (ed). *Central-Local Relations in Asia-Pacific: Convergence or Divergence?* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1999): 123-148. For the Philippines: **Alex B. Brillantes**, “Local Governance and Decentralization: The Philippine Experience”. in Abdul Aziz & David D. Arnold (eds). *Decentralized Governance in Asian Countries*. (New Delhi/ Thousand Oaks/ London: Sage Publications, 1996): 197-211. As well as **Mark Turner**, “Philippines: From Centralism to Localism” In Mark Turner (ed.) *Central-Local Relations in Asia-Pacific: Convergence or Divergence?* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1999): 97-122. More details on Bangladesh are given in **Mohammad Mohabbat Khan**, “Local Self Government System in Rural Bangladesh” in Abdul Aziz & David D. Arnold (eds). *Decentralized Governance in Asian Countries*. New Delhi/ Thousand Oaks/ London: Sage Publications, 1996): 42-62. **David Hulme & Noore Alam Siddiquee**, “Decentralization in Bangladesh: Promises, Performances, and Politics”. in Mark Turner (ed.). *Central-Local Relations in Asia-Pacific: Convergence or Divergence?* London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1999): 19-47.

<sup>67</sup> I borrow the term “magic bullet” as used in this context from **Robert Cribb**, “Development Policy in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century” in **Jan-Paul Dirkse, Frans Husken & Mario Rutten (eds.)** *Development and Social Welfare: Indonesia’s Experiences under the New Order* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1993): 225-245. Cribb refers to the various development strategies that have been aimed at former colonies such as Indonesia as “magic bullets”. Decentralization in this context can be understood to represent an all-encompassing development ideology that is aimed at solving all of a nations political, economic and social woes.

become “decentralized”? *Who*, or more precisely, *which* groups should be the receptors of increasing power and responsibilities? *How much* political power should be devolved, or can be devolved without compromising the integrity of the nation? *How* will this transformation take place? These have been the relentlessly unanswered questions that have doggedly followed decentralized policy planning for several decades.

The question of “when” decentralization should take place, or how quickly policies may be implemented has almost always been a contested issue. Generally speaking, it is possible to trace the history of decentralized governance back to the colonial period of many modern nations.<sup>68</sup> Throughout the colonial period, laws aimed at formulating more decentralized government structures were often passed and implemented only after decades of debate. For Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India, the so-called “Ripon Resolution” of 1882 clearly outlined what would later become a series of “piecemeal” efforts spanning several years to create decentralized administrative control over the vast British holdings.<sup>69</sup> Similar scenarios were created by the Dutch with regard to Indonesia. By 1901, administrative problems coupled with the official indoctrination of the “Ethical Policy” eventually lead to the implementation of the first autonomy law in the Dutch East Indies (1903).<sup>70</sup> The Dutch would find themselves re-working decentralization laws up until Indonesia’s independence. Given the difficulties experienced by colonial administrations in their efforts to decentralize administrative policies, it should come as no surprise that 100 years later, independent governments are experiencing many of the same difficulties as those faced by their colonial predecessors. Colonial decentralization policies were largely implemented for administrative purposes and very rarely did this type of policy turn any substantial economic or political power over to local governments of indigenous composition. In this earlier colonial form, decentralization served as a veneer which barely hid the very centralized structures of control lying just beneath it. Post-colonial governments, in turn, had a tendency to display the administrative and structural systems that they had become familiar with during the colonial

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<sup>68</sup> For an encompassing discussion spanning the relationship between ethnic identity and the development of several modern states, see **Clifford Geertz**, “The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States” In Clifford Geertz (ed.) Old Societies and New States: The Quest For Modernity in Asia and Africa. (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963): 105-157.

<sup>69</sup> **Khan** :46.

<sup>70</sup> **W. Middendorp**, “The Administration of the Outer Provinces of the Netherlands Indies”. In B. Schrieke (ed.) The Effect of Western Influence on Native Civilisations in the Malay Archipelago. (Royal Batavia Society of Arts and Sciences. Batavia, Java. G. Kolff & Co., 1929): 34-70: 65. For more information concerning the “Ethical Policy” see: **Willem Otterspeer**, “The Ethical Imperative” in Willem Otterspeer (ed.) Leiden Oriental

period. Understandably then, these colonial administrative changes through decentralization took far less time or energy to activate compared with a more modern vision of decentralization which aims at changing actual power allocation and socio-political behavior of entire nations. As testimony to these difficulties through time, the same questions concerning decentralization and national integrity have lingered into the present.

Recent attempts to pass decentralization legislation have often been left to languish in indecisive committee meetings and poorly designed legislative packages that are only partially implemented. Although everyone seems convinced that at least some degree of decentralization should take place, there is an equally pervasive feeling that local governments are not ready for the substantial administrative, economic and social responsibilities implicit within decentralization and autonomy.<sup>71</sup> Many of decentralization's detractors claim that if too much power is devolved too quickly into incapable hands, at best a nation may be destabilized and at worst, it could crumble altogether. From this centralist viewpoint, centralized government is the only way in which the benefits of national development planning may be distributed efficiently and fairly among various groups within the society. Not surprisingly, this opposition to decentralization usually stems from people in powerful positions located within the central government.<sup>72</sup> In contrast to this view, (and also not surprisingly) local community leaders hold that local governments will quickly adapt to these responsibilities and that central governments are using this "centralist" line of reasoning as an excuse not to implement full decentralization and devolution of power.

Not to be left out of the argument, many NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) in several countries have offered to assist local governments in the transformation process that will ease local politicians from their roles as representatives of the central government towards becoming representatives of their local constituents. NGOs conceive themselves as "capacity" builders, or organizations that may teach local governments how to better handle local administrative, economic and social responsibilities. Proponents of NGO involvement believe that "The association of non-government organizations and people's organizations with decentralized government units, which is most likely to happen at the grassroots level,

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Connections 1850-1940. Studies in the History of Leiden University; Volume 5. ( Leiden; E.J. Brill, 1989): 204-229.

<sup>71</sup> "Devolve, But Do it Right" *The Economist Online* 6 July, 2000. <<http://www.economist.com>>. For related concerns specific to the Philippines see **Brillantes** :205.

<sup>72</sup> **Raphael Lengesa Nombo**, "Regional Autonomy Program in Indonesia: What Issues Complicate Its Implementation?" *The Indonesian Quarterly* Vol. XXVIII/2000, No. 3: 285-294:286.

would help mobilize resources, especially voluntary labour, for development and would facilitate monitoring of the implementation process.”<sup>73</sup> Using the Philippine example here, NGOs operating in several sectors have actually been given official seats in local development councils, boards of health, school boards and the local peace and order councils as part of the central governments effort to devolve power to local governments.<sup>74</sup>

Yet even the assistance and strong presence of NGOs in decentralization implementation has been questioned, for NGOs generally identify closely with donor agencies or interest groups which may or may not have the same agenda as a specific local community. Some scholars question the validity of infusing local governments with non-governmental organizations and argue that “policy makers, donor agencies, scientists and many others expect NGOs to temporally perceive the functions of ordinary social organizations. This leads even some NGOs to pretend that they are an alternative to such organizations. This is a serious misunderstanding as NGOs are neither accountable to nor dependent upon their beneficiaries, they cannot possibly truly represent their target groups.”<sup>75</sup> In some areas, NGO attempts to strengthen local people’s participation and local government capacities have actually enhanced friction between different groups in the same society. This generally happens when the needs and rights of a specific group are targeted over the demands of another living in the same administrative region.<sup>76</sup> Even in the Philippines, where NGOs seem to have secured themselves within formal local government structures, it must be consented that “To a certain extent, there are NGOs that have been organized by defeated politicians who see NGOs as a ‘back door’ to local power politics”.<sup>77</sup>

Related to NGO involvement and central to the fundamental themes of this paper are questions related to exactly *who* should be identified as the receptors of increased autonomy,

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<sup>73</sup> **Aziz & Arnold** :14

<sup>74</sup> This official placement of NGOs on local governmental boards was placed into decentralization law entitled “The Local Government Code of 1991”. According to one part of this regulation, 25% of members of local development councils should be drawn from local NGOs. See **Brillantes** : 202-201 as well as **Turner** : 110-111. NGOs have proven to be very important to decentralization (such as it is) for Bangladesh as well, see **Hulme & Siddiquee** : 37-40.

<sup>75</sup> **Peter van Tuijl & Ben Witjes**, “Popular Participation in Indonesia’s Development Process” in **Jan-Paul Dirkse, Frans Husken & Mario Rutten** (eds.), *Development and Social Welfare: Indonesia’s Experiences Under the New Order*. (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1993): 195-217 :203-217. **Wardah Hafidz**, “Poverties Beyond Economics” in **Jan-Paul Dirkse, Frans Husken & Mario Rutten** (eds.), *Development and Social Welfare: Indonesia’s Experiences Under the New Order*. Leiden: KITLV Press, 1993): 219-222:222.

<sup>76</sup> For a well documented example of such a situation, see **Greg Acciaioli**, “Grounds of Conflict, Idioms of Harmony: Custom, Religion, and Nationalism in the Violence Avoidance at the Lindu Plain, Central Sulawesi” *Indonesia* 72 (October 2001).

<sup>77</sup> **Brillantes**: 207.

or which groups might best be targeted as the vessels of decentralization and increasing democratization. Although this subject will be addressed with greater detail later, official recommendations often conclude that specific *areas* of space as defined on state maps are the appropriate location for increased autonomy. This implies that every citizen within the borders of a specific area, region, province, city, town etc. should be represented by the local government and that the local government will in turn, be held accountable by these same constituents. While this may be the official line, the reality is that elite members of social groups, often based on ethnicity or religion, have begun to “highjack” the decentralization process by laying claim to the rights and obligations reserved for defined areas.<sup>78</sup> While the “regency”, “province”, “county” or similarly delineated area defined on a map may be the *official* receptor for increased autonomy, ethnic majority groups claiming unique history and culture associated with the space identified as “the regency” or “ province” have often become the real vessels of autonomy and its associated rights and obligations. In other words, while policy formulators speak generically of economic distribution, local people’s participation, local development needs and rights, and regional administration, “local people” themselves articulate their rights in terms of collective ethnicity and history and their rights based on such identities.

In keeping with the general theme of this current study, it is useful to recognize the links between ethnic groups, NGOs, power, state governments and decentralization. Recognition of these links make it possible to understand the ways in which ethnicity has been inserted almost completely within the process of decentralization. More specifically, these relationships have had a significant impact on deciding *who* should become the recipients or vessels of increased autonomy within more decentralized government structures.

The increasingly powerful role of “ethnic politics” or the “ethnic group” within state structures is usually traced to the recovery period that immediately followed the end of World War II. The political advantage of belonging to such designated groups is perceived to have occurred as a reaction to overwhelming development, modernization and nation-building strategies that were being implemented at this formative time.<sup>79</sup> This empowerment or re-

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<sup>78</sup>**Turner** :11 makes a brief reference to this phenomenon. He argues that a primary concern for decentralization planners continues to be the ability for local elite leadership to “capture” the benefits of decentralization for their own purposes.

<sup>79</sup> For an especially informed discussion, see **Arturo Escobar**, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995). Also, **Thomas H. Eriksen**, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. (London: Pluto Press, 1993): 128-150.

invigoration of ethnicity as a political device becomes especially acute when majority groups (often represented by the nation-state) wish to control resources (economic, ecological, or human) in the territories once considered the property of specific minority groups.<sup>80</sup> At this point then, attempts are made by these minority groups to empower themselves against state demands on what they perceive to be *local* resources as opposed to *national* resources. As Eriksen has pointed out, local protests in this type of situation “are not necessarily directed against modernisation, but against what they see as attempts to violate their territorial rights and their rights to define their own way of life.”<sup>81</sup> Any number of resources are thusly placed directly between opposing views pertaining to ownership rights. At the end of World War II, invasive nation building strategies coupled with modernisation efforts enabled ethnicity to become a defense mechanism or source of stability in a fast changing, modernizing world.

In a pattern that has continued to be expressed up until the present, “local” groups have found that ethnicity can often be used to successfully garner international as well as national support for greater access to political power and the recognition of local rights and resources from central state governments. As modernisation and even globalization have progressed, so have the political implications of ethnic identity. Increasingly, the “ethnic” group has become the location of development funding and political power in relation to the state. “The ethnic dimension emerged as a salient prism through which most development efforts (are) interpreted and directed. In some instances, the ethnic factor became a formidable force in defining national issues and allocating scarce resources”.<sup>82</sup> It seems that the ebb and flow of development and globalization discourse throughout the past few decades has allowed minority ethnic groups to obtain mass appeal as the unfortunate victims of unbridled colonization, development and finally globalization. As a result of this characterization of ethnic groups as victims, literally thousands of national and international NGOs have risen to “protect” the universal human rights of these “traditional” cultures and the environments in which they are found. A “politics of tradition” has been the outcome of these relationships in which we see the regional reinvention and reinvigoration of ethnic symbols of solidarity become more public. An example of the outcome of this sort of “ethnic politicking” can be seen in the Philippine “Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act (IPRA). Under this act, “lands, inland waters, coastal areas, and natural resources therein, held under a claim

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<sup>80</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* 129.

<sup>81</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* 129.

<sup>82</sup> Premdas : 1

of ownership, occupied or possessed by (indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples), themselves or through their ancestors, communally or individually since time immemorial”.<sup>83</sup> This particular law aims to formally allocate resources based on historical and modern understandings of the ethnic community and the community’s articulated claims to their “ancestral” lands.

With specific reference to decentralization policies then, it appears that local groups, with the backing of powerful international human rights agendas, have successfully been able to utilize ethnicity in order to make claims on “traditional” landscapes that have become the site of increased autonomy and decentralized government. Ethnic groups have enlisted the support of international NGOs that are often imbued with “indigenous peoples rights”, “universal human rights”, or sub-national multiculturalism ideologies to exert political influence on central governments that have been reluctant to implement *real* decentralization/democratization on their own. In other words, people that perceive of themselves and who are able to articulate a unique ethnic identities, are then able to solidify their boundaries on a country’s physical landscape under autonomy laws which allow revenues and power to be distributed to ‘local’ governments of specific regencies and provinces. Their political power to do so stems greatly from NGO and international human rights organizations whose main purpose is to secure the cultural and financial autonomy of these groups as part of the “universal human rights” agenda.

As this phenomenon has progressed over time, one of the biggest problems to emerge along with “human rights” agendas has been that the human rights struggle is “often claimed by religious or ethnic groups rather than by the whole society”.<sup>84</sup> In some cases, the rights of one ethnic group have overcome the rights of, for example, migrant populations or groups of different ethnic compositions living in the same regional community. In many places, the advantages or opportunities of some ethnic groups have been greater than those of others, “so that very often the emerging cleavages have been on ethnic lines. As a result of this intensified struggle, many ethnic groups mobilize their forces and search for ways in which they can organize themselves more effectively. In the processes of this mobilisation a new

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<sup>83</sup> **Andre’ Gerard G. Ballesteros**, “Ancestral Domain Recognition and Community-Based Forest Management: Two Sides of Different Coins”. In: Krisnawati Suryanata, Glen Dolcemasclo, Robert Fisher, & Jefferson Fox (eds.) Enabling Policy Frameworks for Successful Community- Based Resource Management. ( Proceedings from the Ninth Workshop on Community-Based Management of Forestlands. Honolulu, 5 Feb –2 March, 2001). Co-Sponsored by the East West Center and Regional Community Forestry Training Center (Thailand). 6-23: 8.

emphasis is placed on parts of their traditional culture...”.<sup>85</sup> This (theoretically) leads to the “re-invigoration” or the increase in public displays of ethnic solidarity and group exclusiveness. More often than not, public expressions of ethnic or traditional identity are encouraged by local elites who stand to gain the most from decentralization and the devolution of power to these groups.<sup>86</sup> Further, and perhaps representing the final outcome to ethnic political maneuvering, is the fact that economic and political interests allied with an emerging ethno-centrism can lead to rampant hostility and political-economic fragmentation in state structures, or the complete fragmentation of the state itself.

It was pointed out at the beginning of this discussion that simply stated, decentralization has been envisioned by its proponents as a way to devolve power and democracy from centralized government structures to localized governments within existing states. Several “developing” countries have made various attempts to embrace more decentralized government structures, and yet even after decades of debate and legislation, most of these attempts have been left to languish in unfulfilled promises and unimplemented laws. In an effort to force the issue of decentralization, local groups have begun to demand autonomy and decentralized government structures with the support of NGOs and international human rights ideologies. In order to obtain such support, these local groups have expressed their rights over resources and increased autonomy in the form of ethnic identification and traditional claims on traditional areas of space. In the process of “empowering” ethnic identities, the boundaries between different ethnic groups have become increasingly solidified with elements of exclusive behavior that often border on ethno-centrism. What initially might appear as a process aimed at the devolution of power and democracy to local people, has in actuality been “highjacked” by ethnic groups interested in making claims on “traditional” resources while increasing their political leverage on the central government. It may also be fair to conclude that the re-invigoration of ethnic identity in this context has been encouraged by local elites and politicians who often stand to gain the most from policies which advocate increasing local autonomy.

This discussion has thus far treated the subject of decentralization and autonomy in rather broad terms. In order to better understand the development of decentralization policy

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<sup>84</sup> **M. Hadi Soesastro**, “A Democratizing Indonesia: The Role of International Institutions and NGOs” *The Indonesian Quarterly* Vol. XXVIII/2000, No. 3 :254-266:256

<sup>85</sup> **Abner Cohen**, *Two Dimensional Man: Essays on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974): 96

<sup>86</sup> **Cohen**: 77-80

as well as its relationship to ethnic politics, the specific history of the idea within a particular context will now be explored. Although Indonesia will serve as the location for our current discussion on the history of decentralization policies, I do not wish to imply that Indonesia represents the only such example that may have been used here. However, Indonesia's extensive exposure to decentralization efforts, as well as its ongoing struggle to decentralize without being torn completely apart by ethnic and regional factionalism make it a particularly relevant example. As Goodpaster and Ray have stated, "As Indonesia is an archipelagic state and as its islands, regions and places within regions, are territorially associated with particular ethnic groups, it has a high potential for...separatist, divisive and potentially volatile local politics".<sup>87</sup> At the same time, an equally pervasive sense of Indonesian nationalism tends to modify or at least "soften" the potentially divisive affects of ethnic politics. The state itself must find a way to balance between these two identities (national and ethnic) while attempting to decentralize and (occasionally) devolve increasing power to local governments. Within this historical analysis of decentralization in Indonesia, all of the major controversies, accomplishments, setbacks and problems associated with decentralization should become more apparent.

## 2. A Century of Decentralization Policy in Indonesia

"The weal and woe of the whole country was disposed of, even down to the smallest details, by one man in the centre Batavia-Buitenzorg. It was only in the villages and in the native communities in the Outer Provinces that any traces of democracy and decentralization could be found." -Dr. J.J. Schrieke in 1923 as quoted by W. Middendorp in 1929<sup>88</sup>

Much of the more recent research material on decentralization policy in Indonesia has focused almost exclusively on policy efforts that have been made since the time of Indonesia's independence (1945).<sup>89</sup> In actuality, at least some effort to "devolve" administrative capabilities from Jakarta to provincial or regional governments has been going

<sup>87</sup> **Gary Goodpaster & David Ray**, "Trade and Citizenship Barriers and Decentralization" The Indonesian Quarterly, Vol. XXVIII/2000, No.3 :266-281: 269.

<sup>88</sup> **Middendorp**: 65. J.J. Schrieke served as the Director of the East Indian Department of Justice who advocated a union of the Netherlands and the Indies as a European-Asiatic state with political and economic unity. See **Amry Vandenbosch**, The Dutch East Indies: Its Government, Problems and Politics.( Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1944): 71.

<sup>89</sup> Although the Republic of Indonesia was proclaimed on the 17th of August, 1945, "official" recognition of Indonesia did not occur until after a bloody revolution was ended in 1949. For a concise discussion on decentralization policy that briefly looks at the connection between Dutch and post-colonial policies, see **Ichshlasul Amal**, "The Dilemmas of Decentralisation and Democratization" in: **David Bourcier & John Legge**

on for at least 100 years. Despite the country's long association with the decentralization debate, little has happened in the nation's history that might suggest true commitment to political and economic decentralization and democratization. A closer examination of this history reveals that "decentralized" government in Indonesia has been aimed largely at tackling *administrative* difficulties associated with running such a far-flung island nation, and not towards the actual *devolution of power* from the "center" towards the regions. As a result, "decentralization" has failed to even partially satisfy local demands for greater political participation and economic autonomy. These failures have sometimes been the catalyst for social unrest and even outright rebellion.<sup>90</sup>

This discussion will now turn towards the particular form that decentralization has taken in an Indonesian context. The fact that "decentralization" in Indonesia has always been a contested point between Indonesia's *center* and its *periphery* for political and economic power will be made evident. It has already been suggested that decentralized policies, at least to some degree, were first introduced to the administrative apparatus of the Netherlands Indies in 1903. To understand why Dutch colonial authorities began to implement more decentralized administrative systems, it is first necessary to discuss the general attitudes and ideologies that were flourishing in The Netherlands at that formative time.

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(eds.) *Democracy in Indonesia: 1950s and 1990s*, (Victoria: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1994): 204-213.

<sup>90</sup> Although there are many, the most relative example of this comes from North Sulawesi itself: The Permesta Rebellion of the late 1950s was fought in the name of greater regional autonomy. For a more general discussion of this phenomenon, see **Gerald S. Maryanov**, "Decentralization In Indonesia as a Political Problem". (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1958). [Southeast Asia Program Interim Report Series.]: 25.

a. Dutch Decentralization: 1901-1949

“De decentralisatie is wel eens bij haar invoering in Indie genoemd: ‘de sprong in de vrijheid.’”<sup>91</sup>

As it was implemented, Decentralization was called, “The spring into freedom”.

The first attempt to decentralize and expand the Dutch colonial administrative system coincided almost exactly with the official implementation of the “Ethical Policy” in 1901 by Queen Wilhemina in The Netherlands. Born out of contemporary ideas associated with Liberalism and Democracy that were becoming increasingly popular in Europe, the Ethical Policy set the stage for expanded activity and colonial presence in the “outer” islands of the region. Massive Dutch acquisition efforts came to a halt, while more attention was given to the general welfare of the population and the incorporation of this population into more streamlined production plans. At least initially, there were three major strands of the Ethical agenda: the education of colonized populations, increased development and social welfare by direct intervention in the economy, and the legal and protective administration of indigenous cultures and societies.<sup>92</sup> Underlying these more official agendas (and a central point to this current discussion) was that “decentralisation was a main aim of Ethical supporters: decentralisation from The Hague to Batavia, from Batavia to the regions, from the Dutch to the Indonesians”.<sup>93</sup>

Supporters of the Ethical Policy further argued that as decentralization progressed, the Indies should be made more open for private investments. With a more liberalized economy, proponents of this plan maintained that revenues would be increased and the general welfare of the people themselves would be elevated once state monopolies were softened.<sup>94</sup> The Ethical view held that “The population was suffering because of greed, abuse of power and capriciousness of its own, incompetent leaders. Large profits could be made by freeing the forces of the market and by cultivating export crops with the help of free labour- which would

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<sup>91</sup> **A.B. Cohen Stuart**, “Hedendaagsch Decentralisatie-werk in Nederlandsch-Indie”. (Leiding, 1931):203-230:203.

<sup>92</sup> **Cribb** *Development Policy in the Early 20th Century*: 227-228. See also **Von J. Thomas Lindblad**, “Colonial Rule and Economic Development: A Review of the Recent Historiography on Indonesia.” in **Lothar Baar**, (ed) [*Wirtschafts Geschichte: Die Nederlands und Ostasien*, 1995] 9-22: 15.

<sup>93</sup> **Ricklefs** : 203.

<sup>94</sup> **Ge H.A. Prince**, “Dutch Economic Policy in Colonial Indonesia 1900-1942: Some Key Topics” in **Lothar Baar**, (ed) [*Wirtschafts Geschichte: Die Nederlands und Ostasien*, 1995] 23-44.

benefit the natives as well as private entrepreneurs and the state treasury”.<sup>95</sup> Literature from the mid 1800s such as Douwes Dekker’s “*Max Havelaar*” (1860) and Karle F. Holle’s account of the benefits of privatized plantations (1868), helped popularize the idea of more liberalized colonial economies, while at the same time, representing the state’s Forced Cultivation System (*Cultuurstelsel*) as a cruel and barbaric form of state colonial exploitation.<sup>96</sup> As part of the result of these increasingly popular “liberal” agendas, the Agrarian Law of 1870 elevated land ownership rights of Javanese over that of the Dutch, while opening the area up to private enterprise.<sup>97</sup> There was also some effort at this point to reimburse the Javanese people for the system of forced labor that they had endured through decades past. Initially, this “debt of honor” (*eereschuld*) was defined as a monetary one and a substantial amount of money was spent to relieve this “debt” between 1867 and 1878.<sup>98</sup> Eventually the financial nature of the debt was increasingly replaced with the sense that the Netherlands owed a “moral debt” to its subjects which might be partially fulfilled by bringing greater modernity to the archipelago.<sup>99</sup>

While the prevailing ideologies which gave rise to the Ethical Policy in 1901 obviously had roots in the last few decades of the 19th century, the “moral” aspects of the *official* Ethical Policy are popularly traced back to Conrad Theodor van Deventer, who has been credited with introducing the idea of “moral obligation” and a more “ethical” development of the Indies to policy makers back in the Netherlands. Van Deventer had served in the Indies at various judicial posts between 1880 and 1897 and upon his return to the Netherlands, he occupied himself with the task of drafting proposals for a new colonial development program. This new program emphasized welfare, *decentralization* of administrative authority and the employment of more Indonesians in high government positions.<sup>100</sup> Central to van Deventer’s justification for new policy implementation was that

<sup>95</sup> **Thommy Svensson**, *The Impossibility of Liberalism and Democracy in Indonesia (1840-1940)*. Nordic Institute of Asian Studies. NIAS Reports, No. 13 (Copenhagen: 1984) 11.

<sup>96</sup> Douwes Dekker published his work under the pseudonym **Multatuli** (1860) *Max Havelaar- of de koffieveilingen der Nederlandsche Handel- Maatschappij*. Amsterdam. For Holle’s work, see **K.F. Holle**, “Verslag betreffende de thee-onderneming Waspada onder ultimo Juni 1868”, *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie*, 3 ser. 2:2 (1868). For a further discussion of Holle’s contribution, see **Svensson** :9-15.

<sup>97</sup> **Ricklefs**: 161

<sup>98</sup> **Cribb** *Development Policy in the Early 20th Century* :226-227.

<sup>99</sup> For a lengthy discussion pertaining to the theoretical and ideological arguments supporting decentralization from a decidedly “moral” angle, see **Stuart**: 203-230.

<sup>100</sup> **Ricklefs**: 151-162. For more information on Conrad Theodor van Deventer, see <<http://www.Britannica.com/seo/c/conrad-theodor-van-deventer/>>

the Dutch indeed owed the Indonesians a “debt of honor” which had been incurred during the Forced Cultivation System, but that this debt extended far beyond financial connotations.

Despite what may have in fact been very “moral” and ethical purposes behind the Ethical Policy in 1901, scholars have subsequently regarded the “ethical” imperative as simply another way in which the colonial administration justified the extraction of ever increasing sources of income from the colony. As policy implementation wore on, “what were initially idealistic expressions of humanitarian zeal springing from a belief in moral and cultural superiority, were quickly submerged in principles of administrative efficiency and financial profit”.<sup>101</sup> The colonial power’s sudden interest in the affairs of the natives has frequently been attributed to the recognition of indigenous populations as a potential source of cheap labor and, increasingly, a market for manufactured products.<sup>102</sup> It is also speculated that by educating an indigenous elite class (as advocated by the Ethical Policy), the Dutch were simply turning more administrative duties and costs over to a class of indigenous elites that would remain faithful and indeed “thankful” to the Dutch for providing them with such opportunity and guidance.<sup>103</sup> Although historians continue to debate the issue of “moral” versus “financial” underpinnings of the policy, it may be at least partially correct to conclude that the “Ethical Policy” was not in fact a totally *ethical* policy. It represented, at least in part, a colonial exploitation agenda aimed at the extraction of natural resources and the increase of plantation production. “The humanitarians justified what the businessmen expected to be profitable, and the Ethical Policy was born.”<sup>104</sup>

The Ethical Policy would especially change the relationship between The Netherlands and its holdings on the “outer islands” of the archipelago. Up until this point, the areas outside of Java (and to some extent parts of Sumatra) had been treated with sporadic interest and as a result, little investment had been made by way of education or economic improvement of the people’s welfare in these areas.<sup>105</sup> “Benefits” such as these were usually reserved for the island of Java or else introduced to the outer regions by missionaries and

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<sup>101</sup> Cote: 104.

<sup>102</sup> Ricklefs : 151.

<sup>103</sup> Middendorp :65.

<sup>104</sup> Ricklefs : 193.

<sup>105</sup> While it may be true that much of the population on the “outer islands” of Dutch holdings were not the object of intense development efforts (as was the case in Java), it should also be mentioned here that this general rule did not apply to the region of Minahasa. In fact, an early version of the Forced Cultivation System (*Kultuurstelsel*) that had such a strong affect on Java (1830), was actually implemented in Minahasa as well (1847). For reference to the Dutch system of “indirect rule” of the outer islands see Amal: 214-215 as well as

religious organizations. This state of affairs between Batavia and the “outer” portions of the Dutch East Indies changed drastically in the years of “direct intervention” in local affairs as increased private investment in the outer regions was made possible by more liberal and “ethical” agendas. Suddenly there was a need to extend administrative abilities, maintain order and establish law, obtain labor for newly established plantations, and provide security for these holdings.<sup>106</sup>

Whatever the real motivations behind the Ethical Policy, it remains a fact that from 1901 forward, several attempts to formulate decentralized governing strategies for the East Indies were made. In 1903, the first official decentralization law was enacted in order to (theoretically) allow provinces and “parts of provinces” to possess their own councils and finances.<sup>107</sup> In order to facilitate this administrative restructuring, 32 municipal councils were formed, and of these councils, 13 were located on the outer islands (Padang, Fort de Kock, Sawahloento, Palembang, Macasser, Medan, Tebingtinggi, Bindjai, Tandjoengbalai, Pematang Siantar, Menado, Bandjermassin and Ambonia).<sup>108</sup> By 1921, at least 15 more councils had been established, including a special council with “less European influence” for Minahasa (1919).<sup>109</sup> Despite this considerable attempt at restructuring the highly centralized administration system of the Indies, the reality of law 1903/326 was that it instigated very little change towards the devolution of actual power. One Indonesian scholar has succinctly referred to this early period of decentralization as “Desentralisasi ala Belanda”, whereby administrative functions were indeed “decentralized” to several outer regions, but power or political participation was not extended to local people themselves.<sup>110</sup>

While the 1903 decentralization law is generally regarded as an administrative restructuring device, if it is considered in its correct context as part of “ethical” and “moral” ideology stemming from Europe, we can better understand its true implications. From this view, decentralized administrative capabilities allowed the Dutch to extend a more “hands on” approach to the government of the outer islands. By doing so, a program of increased education, development and social welfare could be more easily distributed to greater

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**Nicole Niessen**, *Municipal Government in Indonesia: Policy, Law, and the Practice of Decentralization and Urban Spatial Planning* (Leiden: CNWS Publications Vol. 7, 1999): 44-53.

<sup>106</sup> For a related discussion and relevant bibliographic information, see also **Lindblad** : 14-18.

<sup>107</sup> **Middendorp**:65. Also **Vandenbosch**:128-129; **Niessen** :46-48.

<sup>108</sup> **Middendorp**:65.

<sup>109</sup> **Middendorp**:65 and **Stuart** : 224.

<sup>110</sup> **Riant Nugroho Dwidjowijoto**, *Otonomi Daerah: Desentralisasi Tanpa Revolusi*. (Jakarta: PT ELEX Media Komputindo, 2000) 54.

numbers of people. At a political and ideological level, this more intensive approach was justified by and “coincided with the right to interfere in indigenous societies on humanitarian grounds- a claim ultimately grounded in the conviction of the superiority of western technological culture”.<sup>111</sup> Relatedly, the Protestant missionary Kruyt had proclaimed, “Our vocation was to give the natives the opportunity to (achieve) a high standard of living.”<sup>112</sup> The effort to “modernize”, “decentralize”, and extend administration to outer island communities was therefore justified by an “ethical” ideology while being supported by a colonial administration interested in the incorporation of natives into designed production schemes. Again it should be said that decentralization, as it was envisioned at this stage, had more to do with the distribution of the colonial “moral” modernization program and financial gain than it did with devolution of power or political participation for the indigenous population..

In 1922, the Administrative Reformation Law (*Wet op de Bestuurs hervorming*) was initiated in order to solve some of the shortcomings inherent within the 1903 law. At this stage we can see that the Dutch were beginning to run into some of the same problems that subsequent Indonesian governments would continually be forced to deal with. *Who* were to be the official receptors of greater administrative autonomy from the center of power at Batavia? How would the archipelago be partitioned in order to be effectively managed? How much (if any) power could be entrusted to outer administrations? In an attempt to answer these questions, a stream of new laws were passed that reflect the Dutch administration’s indecision or inability to give these questions appropriate answers.

In general, there seems to have been a recognition of the need to create more local administrative functions of government, coupled with a reluctance to actually devolve decision making power to these local councils. With what Ricklefs has called “The most obvious gesture towards decentralization and increasing popular involvement in government”, the Dutch formally created the “People’s Council” (*Volksraad*) in 1918. The council however was dominated by European members until 1927 and even then, the electorate was appointed and could not be described as representative.<sup>113</sup> Decentralization legislation created in 1922 and 1925 continued to focus on partitioning the islands into more manageable pieces, but

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<sup>111</sup> Cote: 90.

<sup>112</sup> As quoted from Cote :95.

<sup>113</sup> Ricklefs: 204.

again, power was held at the center.<sup>114</sup> The inhabitants of the regions continued to play the role of passive recipients while exerting little influence on the government councils claiming to represent them. Membership to these regional councils was appointive rather than elective and generally dominated by European elites.<sup>115</sup> There were also problems with the process by which “official” councils or regencies were recognized. In 1929, at least one Dutch commentator lamented the fact that the recognition of self governments had been carried out in an unequal manner without a coherent set of criteria for the justification of new council status.<sup>116</sup> Some of the new self governments were created from former kingdoms, while other “kingdoms” were denied this privilege. Several groups were granted councils based upon their cultural/“ethnic” or even racial groupings or in some cases, village unions.<sup>117</sup> The selection process at times seemed almost random in both timing and justification, with neither population or level of organization playing prominent roles.

Throughout the process of decentralization, one particular “strand” of the Dutch Ethical Policy would have a far-reaching affect on the way groups and communities organized themselves on the future map of Indonesia’s political landscape. In what I have labeled the “Ethnic” Policy, the Dutch effectively began to perceive ethnic communities (especially on the outer-islands) as the appropriate recipients or locations of decentralized “self-government” status.<sup>118</sup> By the 1930s, one of the most important strategies for the government of the outer regions was “the acceptance of existing native institutions and the effort to build upon them.... (involving) the recognition, restoration, and the strengthening of indigenous customary law communes and larger ethnical groups”.<sup>119</sup> In many areas of the archipelago, the subject of pacification, modernization and “Christianization” now became the “ethnic community” rather than the individual or society as a whole.<sup>120</sup> Thus imagined, ethnic communities based upon “traditional” forms of law (*adat*) were conceptualized as

<sup>114</sup> Vandenbosch :129-133. Niessen :48-53.

<sup>115</sup> Vandenbosch :130-131; Maryanov :10.

<sup>116</sup> B.J. Haga, “Influence of the Western Administration on the Native Community in the Outer Provinces”. in B. Schrieke (ed.) *The Effect of Western Influence on Native Civilisations in the Malay Archipelago*. Royal Batavia Society of Arts and Sciences. (Batavia, Java: G. Kolff & Co., 1929) 171-203.

<sup>117</sup> Maryanov :10; Middendorp: 34-70:66.

<sup>118</sup> Again, I do not mean to imply that these “self governments” were actually based upon popular participation or democratic principles. The fact remains that decentralized administrative arms of the Dutch system in “local” or regional areas remained mainly as extensions of the central government based in Batavia.

<sup>119</sup> Vandenbosch: 139. See also A.D.A. de Kat. Angelino, *Colonial Policy*.(Vol.I) (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1931): 439.

<sup>120</sup> For examples of this on the island of Sulawesi in particular, see Albert Schrauwers, *Colonial Reformation in the Highlands of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, 1892-1995*. (Toronto, Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press, 1999) 172.

homogenous groups representing romanticized visions of traditional indigenous culture. “Indigenous” rulers were recognized as the representatives of local communities, and it was with these rulers that the Dutch made treaties and contracts pertaining to laws, taxes, obligations and rights.<sup>121</sup> These populations were then formally identified with particular territories and “mapped” onto physical landscapes which became known as ethnic territories of administration.<sup>122</sup> Despite these “ethical” attempts to define “ethnic” groups as the location of decentralized government on the outer islands, there continued to be little political participation for these groups in representative councils. Scholars have also questioned the “traditional” nature of *adat* law: “....Western law institutions or juridical injunctions appear to have been included in the law of the native populations in such a manner that the *adat* law would not have arrived at that stage by independent development...as we have seen, it is fiction to speak of the law of the native group.”<sup>123</sup> In the end, this “ethnic” policy should be seen as an attempt to connect ethnically defined groups to particular areas of space for administrative purposes. These groups would be at least partially governed according to “traditional laws” infused with western ideals. Ethnic community boundaries were strengthened and solidified upon defined areas of land.

To summarize the situation concerning Dutch experiments with decentralization and the Ethical Policy up to this point, these two aspects of colonial rule have often been described as dismal failures that never achieved their stated goals. As Ricklefs has described the problem:

“...there was a general distinction between proclaimed principles and actual performance. Welfare was proclaimed...but results were few. The semi-democratic village was to be the basis of all, but in fact it was only treated as a passive and malleable tool in the hands of officials who wished to direct its development. The populace was to be associated with its rulers, but only as grateful and cooperative followers of a conservative elite... The nation’s wealth was used for the interests of foreign enterprises and indigenous industries were not

<sup>121</sup> Niessen :44-45. Beyond creating separate contracts with the leadership of individual indigenous ethnic groups, there were also separate judicial systems for Europeans, Chinese and “natives” which further served to amplify perceived differences between these various groups. See **Christine Drake**, *National Integration in Indonesia: Patterns and Policies*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989): 25-31.

<sup>122</sup> One of the first officially recognized ethnic-commune governments was created in 1938 in the Minangkabau region of Sumatra (Vandenbosch; 1944:140). For the most detailed information on “Mapping” Minahasan ethnicity, see **Henley** *Nationalism and Regionalism in a Colonial Context: Minahasa in the Dutch East Indies*: 31-43. And **David, E.F. Henley**, “Minahasa Mapped: Illustrated Notes on the Cartography and History in Minahasa, 1512-1942” in: **Reimar Schefold** (ed.) *Minahasa Past and Present: Tradition and Transition in an Outer Island Region of Indonesia*. (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1995) 32-57

<sup>123</sup> **B. Ter Haar**, “Western Influence on the Law for the Native Population”. in **B. Schrieke**, (ed.) *The Effect of Western Influence on Native Civilisations in the Malay Archipelago*. (Royal Batavia Society of Arts and Sciences. Batavia, Java. G. Kolff & Co., 1929): 158-169: 165.

developed...Token concessions of political authority were made to legitimise an authoritarian government.”<sup>124</sup>

Still, others argue that while the Ethical Policy and decentralization never fully reached their potentials in a “moral” or “ethical” sense, perhaps they did function successfully in their more political and economic agendas. “To conclude as an earlier generation of historians has done, that the ethical policy failed to achieve its stated aims is to mistake the rhetoric of the ethici (i.e.; those who espoused the ideas of new idealistic European Nationalism) for the practice of new imperialism.”<sup>125</sup> From this perspective then, the Ethical Policy and the attempt to decentralize economic and political operations should not be judged with an “ethical yard stick” but rather accepted as an attempt to increase colonial exploitation mechanisms. In this light, Dutch decentralization policies were at least partially successful. But whatever the conclusions that may be drawn here, it is apparent that the various strands of the Ethical Policy would recur throughout Indonesian history and become important contributing elements of subsequent Indonesian governments.

#### b. Independence and “Guided Democracy”:

The Dutch were still trying to work out their problems with decentralization in Indonesia when World War II brought the colony under Japanese control (1942-1945), effectively ending Dutch domination of the area forever. By the time the Dutch had returned to reclaim their colony after the war, they discovered that an independent Indonesian nation had been proclaimed in their absence. A Proclamation of Independence (17 August, 1945) had been signed by two men that were to become Indonesia’s first leaders, President Sukarno (1945-67) and Vice President Hatta (1945-56). Despite the proclamation, Indonesia was not officially recognized as an independent state until after a bloody revolutionary war with the Netherlands (1945-1949). Important to this current focus on decentralization policy is the fact that throughout the period of revolution that followed the end of World War II, the Dutch continued to negotiate with Indonesia’s Republican leadership for a federalist organization of the archipelago.<sup>126</sup> Federalism may be partially linked with colonial decentralization policies,

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<sup>124</sup> Ricklefs: 205.

<sup>125</sup> Cote’: 104. For a similar view of the Ethical Policy within the context of Indonesian nationalist development, see Ruth McVey, “Building Behemoth: Indonesian Constructions of the Nation-State”. In Daniel S. Lev & Ruth McVey (eds), Making Indonesia. Ithaca, Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1996 [Studies on Southeast Asia No.20] 11-25: 13.

<sup>126</sup> Ricklefs: 275.

but at this point, the Dutch had more in mind than just more effective administration of their colony.

As it gradually became apparent that international opinion favored an Independent Indonesia (free from colonial rule) the Dutch came to understand that their efforts to recapture Indonesia would not succeed and that ultimately, this same international pressure would force them to withdraw from the islands completely.<sup>127</sup> Yet, until the very end, the former colonialists held tenaciously to several positions in the islands while attempting to influence the affairs and future of the Indonesian state. Unable or unwilling to release their grip on the colony, they continued to negotiate in earnest for the formation of a federal republic.

Republican leadership (based in Java) opposed Dutch proposals for a federal Indonesia, instead emphasizing the unity and independence of all *Indonesians* under a single state. Federalism was portrayed as a Dutch attempt to destabilize or defuse increasing nationalist sentiment and commitment to Independence.<sup>128</sup> At the same time that the Republicans were gaining popularity in Java, the Dutch were finding support in several of the outer islands (especially in Eastern Indonesia) for their federalist approach: "The Dutch argument was based on a claim of protection for smaller groups, local settlement of local problems, and stressing the diversity of cultures and peoples in Indonesia, local determination of local government through federated states."<sup>129</sup> In essence then, federalism represented a form of decentralized government coupled with regional autonomy. This naturally appealed to areas found outside of Java, and especially to largely minority Christian populations located in Eastern Indonesia. All of these groups were aware that political power was increasingly becoming concentrated on the island of Java and that the Javanese themselves were adding a decidedly "Javanese" flavor to the national formation process. To further complicate matters, many smaller groups of Eastern Indonesia (especially the Ambonese and Minahasans) regarded the Republicans as representatives of Muslim and even communist interests.<sup>130</sup> In fact, "anti-republic" sentiments were also formulated by the Darul Islam Movement which

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<sup>127</sup> **Ricklefs**: 277,283.

<sup>128</sup> **Harsja W. Bachtar**, "The Indonesian Nation: Some Problems of Integration and Disintegration". Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1974. [Southeast Asian Perspectives 2]15; **Harvey**: 7. Also, **Audrey R. Kahin**, "Regionalism and Decentralisation" in **David Bourcier & John Legge** (eds.) *Democracy in Indonesia: 1950s and 1990s*, (Victoria: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1994): 204-213;205. **McVey**: 17-19; **Drake** : 35.

<sup>129</sup> **Maryanov**:12.

<sup>130</sup> **Ricklefs**: 285, and in Java 306.

aimed at the instillation of an Islamic State structure in Indonesia. Several attempts had been made to infuse the state with *Syariat* or Islamic law, and this development was watched closely by Indonesian Christians as well as those who held a more secular vision for Indonesia.<sup>131</sup> Already the stage was being set for conflict between Java and the “outer” islands of the archipelago.

Decentralization and government structure continued to occupy Indonesian *and* Dutch policy makers through the war. Even as independence was declared, the republicans enacted laws establishing the outlines of administrative autonomy for provinces, residencies, and cities (UU No.1/1945).<sup>132</sup> Countering this effort, in 1946 the Dutch created several “states” as part of their efforts to go ahead with a federal administrative structure. This move was directed largely at creating an alternative to the “Republic” of Indonesia taking root in Java’s center. A total of fifteen federal units were created as part of this Dutch plan, a majority of which were located on the outer islands. In 1948, one year before the formal recognition of Indonesian Independence, the “basic law on regional government” (UU No. 22/1948) was drawn up by the Republican government of Indonesia.<sup>133</sup> This particular law was never even partially implemented due to fresh fighting and Dutch police actions on the Republican capital of Yogyakarta that same year. By November 1949 however, the revolution was over and the Netherlands formally handed power and sovereignty over to the federal republic of the United States of Indonesia (R.U.S.I.). The federal structure of Indonesia would last barely a year before being transformed into a unitary system (under a parliamentary democracy) as imagined by the republican leadership.

Several issues had given way to the demise of federalism after independence, the most prominent argument being that “the administrative incoherence of the federal arrangement clashed with the need for efficient central control in the immediate post-colonial period, and also because the federal arrangement was fatally compromised by association with Dutch

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<sup>131</sup>For Example, The *Darul Islam* (Domain of Islam) movement’s main goal was to promote the idea of an Islamic State in Indonesia. In 1948, the movement declared this purpose and proceeded to spread from West Java to several other islands. When independence came, Darul Islam continued to challenge the central authority of the young republican government. “Ultimately, the effect of the (Darul Islam) revolt was to increase the secular imaginations of Indonesia’s national leadership, and especially the military’s distrust of militant Islam.” For further reference, see **McVey**: 18-19; **John Esposito**, *Islam in Asia: Religion, Politics, and Society*. (New York, Oxford University Press, 1987) 206-229; **Drake**: 43-44. For an example of early criticism against Islamic Law and associated political parties of the time, see **Ratulangie, G.S.S.J.** *Serikat Islam*. (Baarn: Hollandia, 1913).

<sup>132</sup> **Dwidjowijoto**: 58. A total of eight provinces were created at this point, each province was to be headed by an appointed governor. See **Niessen** :60-61, for more contextual information.

<sup>133</sup> **Maryanov**: 13.

rule.”<sup>134</sup> More specifically, “federalism” was linked closely with colonialism and colonialist agendas, something that did not combine well with the prevailing nationalist mood of the country. Moreover, elite competition and factional bickering (usually stemming from regional sources) was slowing the processes of change, recovery, and stability that were desperately needed in post-revolutionary Indonesia. Sukarno feared that federalism would give too much power to regional leaders, a few of which were actually threatening to break from the republic altogether.<sup>135</sup> Despite Sukarno’s decision to move away from federalism, acceptance of a unitary republic occurred only after it was agreed that some form of decentralization and autonomy would be written into law for localized government structures under republican leadership.<sup>136</sup> Besides this, Vice President Hatta remained a staunch supporter of regionally based government and continued to argue on behalf of its great and potential benefits within the unified state.<sup>137</sup>

Placed into historical context then, it appears that policies associated with decentralization had survived from their official implementation in 1903, through the period of Japanese occupation, revolution, and into the structures of an independent Indonesian state. At least two elements contributed to this continuum: 1.) The fact that most members of the new Indonesian leadership and elite classes had been inundated with Dutch political and social ideologies through the extensive educational system initiated during the “Ethical” period. 2.) The immediate need to present Indonesia as a viable nation-state (complete with intact administrative and political institutions) to the international community.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, the basic administrative structures and nomenclature (central, provincial, residency, regency, district, village) used to operate the old Dutch colony were maintained.<sup>139</sup> Still, these early and formative years of Indonesia’s history are considered to be the most flexible and idealistic with reference to decentralization. Immediately after the declaration of Independence (1945) until about 1949, it was still possible to speak of greater regional autonomy and

<sup>134</sup> **David Brown**, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*. (London & New York: Routledge, 1994):124. Also, **Kahin**: 205.

<sup>135</sup> The most immediate and provoking of these regional threats may have been the South Moluccas rebellion of 1950.

<sup>136</sup> **Brown**: 122-125; **Maryanov**: 12-13.

<sup>137</sup> **Kahin**: 204. **Jamie Mackie**, “Inevitable or Unavoidable? Interpretations of the Collapse of Parliamentary Democracy” in **David Bourcier & John Legge (eds.)** *Democracy in Indonesia: 1950s and 1990s*, (Victoria: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1994).26-38: 31.

<sup>138</sup> **McVey** :15-16.

<sup>139</sup> **Rolf Gerritsen & Saut Situmorang**, “Beyond Integration? The Need to Decentralize Central-Regional/ Local Relations in Indonesia” in **Mark Turner (ed.)** *Central-Local Relations in Asia-Pacific: Convergence or Divergence?* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1999): 48-70: 51.

decentralization as a possibility or even a probability in an independent Indonesia. Writing about decentralization discourse before 1950, Maryanov has said “One looks in vain for any statement containing suggestions of opposition to the principle of decentralized organization for the unitary state. Debates take place over the methods, means, and place of development...but whatever the differences, the general principle of ‘autonomy for the regions’ has been accepted as axiomatic”.<sup>140</sup> Despite the positive outlook, the regional rebellions that flourished throughout the 1950s would lead Sukarno to discard decentralization and regional autonomy completely.

At least three main factors contributed to Sukarno’s growing mistrust of regional government structures and decentralization, while at the same time creating the impetus for increasingly strong demands for decentralization from the regions that occasionally led to rebellion: 1.) Factional, elite competition for power within the parliamentary system. 2.) The tendency for army officers to create regionally based power bases and 3.) Increasing demands from the outer regions for greater autonomy that often bordered on separatism. While these three factors may seem rather mutually exclusive at first glance, in actuality they are all inter-related. From 1949 to 1957, the structure of Indonesia’s parliamentary system was such that it allowed elite members of four competing political parties to “share” power within the central government.<sup>141</sup> Closer examination of these parties reveals that each one had cultivated their power bases in specific *regions* in order to strengthen claims to power from the center. At this point it may also be said that “regionalism” was becoming more of an “ethnic” or religious issue as well. Ruth McVey has noted that the continuation of elite power rivalries had forced political parties to rely increasingly on ethnic or religious appeals in order to attract followers, thus exacerbating regional and central government issues.<sup>142</sup> It had become increasingly obvious that political support and party membership had been attached to regional issues and identity cleavages. “Ethnic and regional sentiments became increasingly obvious, encouraged by the regional distinctions revealed in the 1955 elections.”<sup>143</sup> Serving to further exacerbate the “regional” situation, as the results of this election were made final, it became clear to leaders from the outer islands that they had virtually no political power in Indonesia’s new government structure and that they had been

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<sup>140</sup> Maryanov: 16.

<sup>141</sup> These political parties being the Reformist Islamic Party (Masjumi), the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI), the Communist Party (PKI), the and the traditional Muslim party (Nahdatul Ulama).

<sup>142</sup> McVey: 20.

<sup>143</sup> Ricklefs :306.

effectively removed from the political decision making processes going on at the center. David Brown has argued that such elite factional rivalries based on regionalist sentiments “led to increasingly weak coalition cabinets”...and also to “regional insurrections, as some of the communal patrons perceived that they were losing out in the competition for state power and sought to exert power by threatening to mobilize regional rebellion” against the center.<sup>144</sup>

The second major factor which played significantly into Sukarno’s mistrust of decentralization had a great deal to do with the army. More specifically, several powerful army officers stationed in the outer islands were becoming closely connected to the economies of these areas in an effort to obtain incomes large enough to finance their units and personal holdings. The political relationship between Sukarno and the army at this point can be best described as strained, and the president had reasons to fear the various officers that were blatantly engaged in smuggling operations, regional politicking, and general defiance of central authority. Finally, both the regional army officers and regionally based politicians were able to capitalize on the growing dissatisfaction of regional populations themselves as these groups observed the economic and political situations in their respective regions become steadily worse. As was the case in colonial times, Java (and the Javanese) had remained the center of power, while the outer islands maintained their positions as the producers of most of Indonesia’s revenue.<sup>145</sup> They argued with justification that little was being done to improve the outer regions of the country, and yet it was the outer regions that were providing the nation with almost all of its actual income. With the support of the regional populations and politicians then, the army was able to engage in blatant disregard of central authority.

“If Jakarta was unwilling-or unable- to carry out development projects in the regions, there were regional leaders who were prepared to do so themselves. Military officers in several regions had demonstrated since 1954 the possibilities of obtaining local revenues through sponsorship of (illegal) barter trade. Their civilian counterparts argued for provincial autonomy as a means of putting both revenue and development planning under local control.<sup>146</sup>

As the situation progressed, more accusations were aimed at the central government for its rather obvious neglect of the regions as well as its failure to make progress with autonomy laws that had been created before the dismantling of the federal state structure. Regions accused the Javanese of replacing “Dutch Colonialism” with “Javanese Colonialism”

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<sup>144</sup> **Brown:** 124. Brown leans heavily here on the analysis provided in Ruth McVey’s works.

<sup>145</sup> **Kahin:** 206.

<sup>146</sup> **Harvey:** 7.

and asserted that “Imperial colonialism from Jogja has arisen”.<sup>147</sup> In what would be Sukarno’s final attempt to appease regional demands, UU1/ 1957 was passed after lengthy negotiations back in Java. This law shows that the central government was at least partially interested in reaching some sort of compromise with regional demands at this point. Many new *kabupaten* (districts) were created in order to fulfill “the demand for greater autonomy from many ethnic groups in the outer islands” and “Many small ethnic groups such as the Gayos, the Niase, the Torajanese, the Tolakis and the Sangirese, were guaranteed their own *kabupaten*”.<sup>148</sup> Despite the passage of the law and the many concessions made towards regional and ethnic demands for increased decentralization, by 1958 several of the regional movements that had been developing in Sumatra and Sulawesi combined to form an outright revolt.<sup>149</sup> What is probably most ironic about this revolt (Permesta) is that the stated aims of the revolutionaries were unrelated to the idea of regional emancipation from the state of Indonesia, they simply wanted the progress of regional autonomy *within* the state. In essence, the demands that were being made were not entirely different from the promises of decentralization that had already been established by law.<sup>150</sup>

Despite the stated demands of Permesta’s leaders, the rebellion actually gave Sukarno the excuse he needed to completely decimate regional autonomy plans or a more decentralized government structure.<sup>151</sup> Barbara Harvey has asserted that “The rebellion had begun partly as a protest against Sukarno’s vision of a ‘guided democracy’, but the effect of the rebellion was to strengthen precisely those trends its leaders had hoped to forestall...The high point of the central government concessions to demands for regional autonomy had been reached prior to the outbreak of the rebellion, with the proclamation in January 1957 of Law One on local government which provided for the election of regional assemblies and regional heads.”<sup>152</sup> From this point on, decentralization was no longer an issue of debate. By the end of Permesta, Sukarno had formally replaced constitutional democracy with presidential rule under the 1945 constitution.

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<sup>147</sup> Maryanov: 41.

<sup>148</sup> Magenda: 226.

<sup>149</sup> I am referring specifically here to the Permesta revolt, but more attention will be given to this topic in reference to North Sulawesi later in this discussion.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. 53.

<sup>151</sup> All decentralized policies were rendered inoperative by Presidential Decree No. 6 of 1959. The decree allowed Sukarno to replace constitutional democracy under the 1950 provisional constitution with presidential rule under the 1945 constitution.

<sup>152</sup> Harvey :48.

Scholarship on this period of Indonesian history has generally concluded that a combination of political factionalism, defiance from the armed forces, economic stagnation and “regionalist” sentiments all combined to force Sukarno’s hand against regional autonomy, decentralization and even parliamentary democracy. The role of “ethnicity” in regional political development at this time is often portrayed as a rather insufficient explanation of more complex issues relating to ineffective power allocation from the center. This summation is undoubtedly true, and yet it may also be true that even at this stage, local leaders found that the use of ethnic symbols greatly enhanced their ability to garner support from “locals” themselves.<sup>153</sup> As the struggle for independence from the Dutch finally came to an end, “ethnic and regional differences that had been submerged to some extent in the common struggle for independence soon reappeared to challenge the concept of national unity. Indeed, it has been claimed that the very success of the Indonesian revolution against the Dutch not only strengthened national political consciousness, but above all awakened regional pride based on ancient ethnic particularisms”.<sup>154</sup> It is equally important to stress here that while ethnicity did serve as a binding factor in several instances, any complaints from these regional groups were usually expressed by speakers claiming to represent “the region” and directed against the “center” of Java.<sup>155</sup> More attention will be given to this period of decentralization history with regard to Minahasa later in this discussion.

### c. Suharto and The New Order:

Decentralization would be revived, at least in name, by Indonesia’s second president in the 1970s. Although official laws pertaining to regional autonomy and decentralization continued to be passed throughout the “New Order” period, in actuality decentralization policy during this time would fail to reach the more progressive and promising levels it had attained before the Permesta rebellions in Sumatra and Sulawesi. There are several reasons for this, but perhaps the most fundamental and immediately obvious reason is that Suharto had very little intention of ever devolving power to local administrative governments or local people themselves. The main aim of Suharto’s decentralization policy-“unlike political decentralization which is designed to reflect the unique characteristics, problems and needs of different regions and localities- (was) to contain the forces of localism and enforce uniformity

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<sup>153</sup> **Amal** :219. Also **Magenda** :223-228:227.

<sup>154</sup> **Drake**: 45.

<sup>155</sup> **Maryanov**: 38.

in decision making across the country.”<sup>156</sup> Economic and political power continued, once again, to be dominated by elite civilian and army politicians with strong connections to nations capital. In fact, this period of Indonesia’s history is remarkable in the fact that “decentralization” legislature actually assisted the government in becoming more highly “centralized” as far as power and economic capability were concerned.<sup>157</sup>

The New Order government’s revulsion towards the idea of decentralization/ regional autonomy was at least partially or perhaps even directly related to the particular form of nationalism that had emerged in Indonesia after the revolution. Even before independence, and especially during Sukarno’s administration, it had become apparent that regionalism and the territoriality of the state would remain primary issues of concern in any nation building processes. The sheer size of the territory inherited from the Dutch, coupled with the fact that Indonesia was made up of hundreds of distinct ethnic groups, made ethnic or regionally organized political groups appear to be the direct enemies of national stability. As was the case with his predecessor, one of the challenges that faced Suharto from the very beginning of his rule would be to create a national identity and loyalty that would unite *all* Indonesians across ethnic, regional, or even religious lines. This nation-building project would need to revive the sense of a distinctly *Indonesian* identity that had largely been galvanized into existence by republican leadership during the struggle for independence. After 1959, ethnic regionalism was not to be tolerated, and regional autonomy was seen as part of a potentially harmful and destabilizing threat to the territorial and social integrity of the nation. As Will Derks summed up the situation in 1997, “To keep the country together the state needs Indonesians, not members of hundreds of different ethnic groups for whom the main focus of loyalty is their own local or regional culture”.<sup>158</sup> As a result of this general attitude, “local” governments were almost completely lacking in administrative or economic discretionary abilities and became increasingly dependent on central authority.

The effort to forge national identities and modern nation-states from former colonial territories in the decades that followed World War II was not limited to the Indonesian archipelago. Newly independent countries were created across the globe, several of which were in the general vicinity of Southeast Asia. Indonesia’s immediate neighbor (and

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<sup>156</sup> **Amal** :221.

<sup>157</sup> **Gerritsen & Situmorang**: 48-70. The authors maintain that the “New Order” decentralization program resembled the highly concentrated and centralized authority of the Dutch colonial period.

<sup>158</sup> **Will Derks**, “Malay Identity Work” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde* 153 (1997): 699-716: 702.

sometimes foe), Malaysia was also in the formative stages of nation-hood at about the same time, and much as Indonesia, Malaysia had experienced a lengthy period of “decentralized” government as well.<sup>159</sup> However, the roots of Malaysian national identity were very different from Indonesia’s own. In an interesting comparative analysis, Lian Kwen Fee has shown that while Malaysian nationalism (developing in the same period) was “exclusivist” and confined to a particular ethnic group, Indonesian nationalism was necessarily “inclusivist”.<sup>160</sup> In other words, the diversity of Indonesian society and wide spread support for Dutch expulsion from the area by a majority of these groups, had made it desirable to develop a united and encompassing brand of nationalism that never became part of Malaysia’s own nation building process. “Indonesian nationalism was necessarily inclusive. It arose among a heterogeneous population living in a unitary territory forcibly administered by a colonial power. The boundaries of the territory and the form of the administration became the focal points in the discussions about the new nation and ethnicity was sacrificed in the interest of creating an encompassing national identity. Indonesian nationalism was a territorial form of nationalism while Malay nationalism was ethnic nationalism.”<sup>161</sup>

Indonesia’s extensive history with decentralization policies, its particular form of nationalism, coupled with the regional rebellions that took place in the period immediately following independence (and continuing into Sukarno’s time in office) undoubtedly factored into Suharto’s move towards a more centralized government. The Permesta rebellion or even the Maluku rebellion, for example, gave Indonesia’s leadership the lasting impression that “When religious, linguistic and local communities participated in national politics specifically to defend or promote their own communal interests by seeking access to state resources, such participation served to strengthen and politicize their communal affiliations.”<sup>162</sup> This connection between ethnicity, communalism and regionalism eventually led the government to ban political uses of ethnic identity or organization while at the same time, attempting to submerge the population within the envelope of an encompassing *Indonesian* identity. Only the “cultural” trappings of specific ethnic identities were permitted to be publicly displayed

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<sup>159</sup> For a detailed overview of decentralization policy and its history in Malaysia, see **Yeo Kim Wah**, (1982) *The Politics of Decentralization: Colonial Controversy in Malaya 1920-1929*. (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>160</sup> **Lian Kwan Fee**, “The Construction of Malay Identity across Nations: Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia.” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde* 157 (4) (2001) :861-879:871.

and celebrated under the national motto of “Unity in Diversity”. Regionally representative dances, songs, stories, monuments and museums were encouraged, while the display or promotion of the politically motivated aspirations of these groups was absolutely forbidden. It is not surprising to discover that in the decade following Suharto’s rise to power, Indonesians witnessed a remarkable surge in government spending on the restoration, preservation and creation of Indonesian “national” monuments and museums,<sup>163</sup> while regionally or ethnically based insurrections were brutally put down.<sup>164</sup>

Despite the government’s negative attitude towards decentralization and regionalism, at least some concessions towards more decentralized administrative functions were passed into law during Suharto’s authoritarian rule. The most notable of these attempts was Law 5/1974. In its historical context, Law 5 is generally regarded as a promising piece of legislation that, yet again, was never fully implemented. It was created in a time when modern “development” had come to replace the “ethical” agendas of the colonial period. Both ideologies served as the justification for centralized government with enhanced administrative capabilities. “The New Order also revived the late Indies concept of the state as possessor of the keys to modernity....New Order ideologues emphasized the state’s command of technology and economic science. With this expertise officials would lead the population on the path to Development.”<sup>165</sup> In effect, Law 5 simply provided a more “streamlined” administrative structure which allowed development funds to be more effectively distributed. The law has even been described as the first of several by which the central government actually “laid the groundwork for tightening central control over regional administrations”.<sup>166</sup>

As with past efforts to formulate decentralized government in Indonesia, Law 5 did not provide for the devolution of power/authority from the center to the regional governments

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<sup>161</sup> **Fee:** 871; For a related discussion, see **Anthony Miller**, “Ideological Work in Constructing the Malay Majority” in **Dru Gladney**, (ed) Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States. (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 1998): 151-169.

<sup>162</sup> **Brown:** 132.

<sup>163</sup> For example, literally millions of dollars were spent in the 1970’s and 1980’s on restoration projects associated with monuments such as Borobudur and Prambanan in Java. “Taman Mini”, otherwise known as “Beautiful Indonesia” was also constructed during this period (1971). For an excellent discussion about “Taman Mini” and representations of “Indonesian” culture see **John Pemberton**, On the Subject of Java. (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994) 148-158. For a general discussion on the role of museums and monuments as part of Indonesia’s “nation building project” see **Benedict Anderson**, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and Spread of Nationalism. (London: Verso Publishing, 1993). [2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.]

<sup>164</sup> The best known examples of the Indonesian government’s crack down on regionalist sentiment continue to be East Timor, Aceh, and Irian Jaya (Now referred to as “Papua”). See **Ricklefs** :388 for a more encompassing discussion.

<sup>165</sup> **McVey:** 23.

or to local people themselves. "Development money, for instance, was distributed through a process which theoretically gave local areas more responsibility but then in practice denied it to them. Each area submitted its proposed list of projects, but the amount of money each received depended on how many of its projects won approval in Jakarta. Mr. Suharto's friends duly made sure the Jakarta decisions served their interests, and local officials shaped their proposals to fit in with the system."<sup>167</sup> In fact, it was during the New Order period that regionally based governments became almost completely dependent upon central government grants and loans for development and basic functions. In most areas outside of Java, local governments are estimated to have become dependant on the central government for 80 percent of their total revenues.<sup>168</sup> Law 5 did not provide opportunities for regions to increase their own revenues and only minor sources were left for regional development initiatives.<sup>169</sup> Further, local administrative positions were appointed by the provincial governors, who were in turn, the representatives of the central government.

The level of regional dependence on central government funding has been well documented and discussed. It has also been shown that along with this increasing level of dependency, there emerged a discourse concerning the capability of local people or leadership to handle increased autonomy from the central government. It was argued that local governments lacked either the expertise or even the desire to manage the social and economic affairs of their respective districts, and that devolving power into these incapable hands would lead to the collapse of the entire state system. For these reasons, it was concluded that true devolution of power could not take place within the Indonesian state. Contrary to the resulting image of regional incapability, others have seen this type of reasoning as a ploy to draw attention from the fact that Suharto was simply unwilling to devolve power away from central authority. "This view (of regional incompetence) was advanced by New Order government ministries that did not want to relinquish control of development funds to the regions, and was based largely on anecdotal evidence rather than on any systematic appraisal of local performance."<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Kahin : 209

<sup>167</sup> "Devolve, But Do it Right" *The Economist Online* (6 July, 2001). < <http://www.economist.com>>  
For similar arguments, see **Michael Morfit**, "Strengthening the Capacities of Local Government: Policies and Constraints". In: MacAndrews, Colin (ed.) Central Government and Local Development in Indonesia (Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1986): 56-76: 58; and **Amal** :216-220.

<sup>168</sup> **Silver, Aziz & Schroeder**: 345-362:356; and **Kahin** : 209.

<sup>169</sup> **Nombo**: 288.

<sup>170</sup> **Silver, Aziz & Schroeder** :346.

Again, it appears that policy had evolved very little through New Order legislation on decentralized government. There had been no devolution of power involved with administrative decentralization, and in fact, more control was exerted over local governments from the center than had been possible before. The old tensions between “outer” Indonesia and “central” Indonesia seemingly flourished from the colonial period up through Suharto’s authoritarian rule. Java was still perceived to be the center of economic and political action, while “outer” regions felt that they exerted very little political clout or financial independence. It is interesting to note however, that during Suharto’s extended presidency, more development money (rather than less) was allocated towards the “outer” regions of the country when compared with money spent in Java. Silver, Aziz and Schroeder have shown that by 1994/1995, “virtually all provinces in Eastern Indonesia received a greater amount than the average per-capita for the whole country” and that “In effect, the substantially larger number of poor villages on Java were effectively screened out, and most aid went to the needy off-Java Islands”.<sup>171</sup> Although the authors of this report use their findings in order to conclude that the existence of a ‘Java bias’ in the New Order financial transfer system is not substantiated by the data, they also reveal that funding packages for Javanese based development projects allowed local leadership a great deal more discretion and control over development fund usage. In other words, while “outer” regions received more funding based on per capita statistics, this funding was almost completely targeted at specific projects approved by central authorities. Local Javanese administrators enjoyed more flexibility with the funding they received. Although more research should be done with regard to this issue, it might be fair to assume in light of this data, the charges of a ‘Java bias’ stemming from regional politicians may have had more to do with discretion and control over funds rather than actual government spending.<sup>172</sup> Regional heads of outer-island areas had very little say in what or where money should be spent, while their Javanese counterparts exerted at least some control on this matter. Again, the issue seems to have been one of discretionary powers

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<sup>171</sup> Silver, Aziz & Schroeder :351.

<sup>172</sup> It should be noted that while discretion and control over development funds undoubtedly factor large in accusations of a “Java Bias”, the authors of this report do not acknowledge the percentage of revenues provided by the “outer islands” for the Indonesian state in their calculations. For more information pertaining to government development grants with “strings attached”, see Niessen :87. Anne Booth gives a detailed account of the effort to decentralize Indonesia’s fiscal policy during the New Order in Anne Booth, “Efforts to Decentralize Fiscal Policy: Problems of Taxable Capacity, Tax Effort and Revenue Sharing”. in Colin MacAndrews, (ed.) Central Government and Local Development in Indonesia. (Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1986):77-100.

being denied to one group while being entrusted in another, rather than one of pure economics.

By the end of Suharto's New Order in 1998, decentralization legislature had actually served to increase regional dependency on central systems of government and finance. This move towards a more centralized structure was justified by the argument that local governments were incapable, even unwilling to handle increased responsibilities associated with the devolution of power from the center. Political uses of ethnic or regional identities were strictly forbidden, and only the cultural trappings of such identities were allowed to be publicly displayed. This, as suggested above, was at least partially due to the particular form of "inclusivist" nationalism that had been forged from Indonesia's revolutionary struggle and subsequent nation building project. Regional leaders were appointed by Jakarta (rather than elected by local constituents), despite increasing calls for the ability of these regions to elect "native sons".<sup>173</sup> This discussion will now turn towards the status of decentralization in the period of "*Reformasi*", or the years which directly followed the demise of Suharto's New Order regime.

#### d. Decentralization After Suharto<sup>174</sup>

"Pelaksanaan otonomi daerah dibayangi menajamnya kesadaran primordialisme"<sup>175</sup>  
(The implementation of regional autonomy has been shadowed by an intensification of primordial (ethnic) awareness.)

As he relinquished control of Indonesia's political stage in 1998, Suharto left a power vacuum in Indonesia from which the country has yet to fully recover. Evidence of the tumultuous nature of the *Reformasi* period thus far is illustrated best by the fact that between 1998 and 2001, three presidents were chosen to lead Indonesia, only one of these having been formally elected through democratic processes, and non of which has yet lasted a full term in office.<sup>176</sup> It is relevant to note here that even through Indonesia's recent struggle to overcome

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<sup>173</sup> **Magenda** :226-225; **Amal** :219.

<sup>174</sup> Much of the information gathered for this section has necessarily been drawn from recent newspaper or magazine articles. While more academic analysis of decentralization in Indonesia is beginning to be published at this point, much of this type of analysis has been primarily focused on economic or fiscal decentralization, with little information on the "ethnic" side of the 1999 autonomy laws. I suspect that more attention will be given to the issue as decentralization progresses.

<sup>175</sup> Former Minister of Regional Autonomy, Ryas Rasyid on 10 April, 2001 as quoted by **Dwidjowijoto** : 191.

<sup>176</sup> B.J. Habibie was chosen by Suharto himself to become Indonesia's third president. Indonesia's fourth president, Abdurrahman Wahid was formally elected by the MPR, even though Megawati Sukarnoputri's PDIP party had won the most votes in the DPR elections. Finally, the MPR convened a special assembly in July, 2001 in which Wahid was removed as president and Megawati came to power.

severe economic and political crises, decentralization and regional autonomy have resurfaced to dominate national and international debates concerning Indonesia's future. Reflecting ideals and aspirations reminiscent of the 1940s and 1950s, regionalism is again asserting itself in a manner that was simply not possible during Suharto's long dictatorship. Again, new laws have been passed that seem to support increased decentralization of the government structure, and once more these laws are being implemented with various degrees of success and failure. It may be logical to conclude that the most recent Indonesian decentralization process represents part of an ongoing national evolution concerning issues that were actively suppressed and generally ignored during Sukarno's Guided Democracy and Suharto's New Order, but that were never actually dealt with in a decisive manner.

In an effort aimed at encouraging foreign investment and softening regionalist political sentiments that had found new freedom after Suharto's departure, President B.J. Habibie began to draw up yet another set of decentralization laws in 1999. By January 2001, these laws (UU22/99 & UU25/99) were implemented by President Abdurrahman Wahid amid fears that the regional governments remained ill-prepared to handle the associated responsibilities of regional autonomy. Once again there seemed to be a consensus that decentralization was necessary, and yet the old questions of *who*, *how much*, and *when* continued to mar decentralization implementation. Nevertheless, the new laws were passed, marking the beginning of yet another round of attempts to decentralize Indonesia's government structure and the anniversary of nearly 100 years of decentralization legislature.

What is most immediately striking about the decentralization laws that were officially implemented in 2001 is the fact that for the first time in Indonesia's history, it *appears* as if both economic and political discretionary ability have been combined into a program of true devolution of power to the regional governments. Together these two laws represent an outline for the transfer of responsibilities associated with human and financial resources from the central government to the regions.<sup>177</sup> Law 22 on Regional Governance states that all fields of government, except those relating to international politics, defense, the judiciary, fiscal issues and religion, are to come under the authority of local autonomous areas. These "autonomous areas" are defined as "a legally recognized unit of society with defined geographical limits which has the authority to meet the needs of the local community within

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<sup>177</sup> For the complete rendition of Indonesia's 1999 Regional Autonomy Laws, see *Undang Undang Otonomi Daerah 1999* ( Penerbit Citra Umbara Bandung, 2000).

the framework of the Indonesian Republic”.<sup>178</sup> Regional heads at both the provincial and district levels are to be selected by local assemblies, although the governor is still selected in conjunction with decisions made in Jakarta. Despite the governors appointment, regionally elected officials no longer need to be approved by central government representatives as had previously been the case. Most importantly, these “District heads (*bupati*) no longer act as representatives of the centre. The role of local parliaments has been greatly increased, with the responsibility for drawing up local regulations and budgets based on what their local electorates want.”<sup>179</sup>

Law 25/99 is the economic counterpart to Law 22. The primary goal of this law is to substantially alter the nature of the relationship between central and regional governments in terms of actual spending and revenue allocation. As part of Law 25, local administrations will receive 80 percent of the revenues collected from forestry, mining (excluding oil and gas) and fisheries in their respective regions. This step will ideally help to create more financially independent regions by decreasing regional reliance on central government development grants. Coupled with Law 22, this particular decentralization package was meant to place considerably more responsibility and discretion in the hands of regional governments that (theoretically) would be elected by and held accountable to their respective electorate councils.

As was suggested in the introduction of this paper, a variety of problems (imagined or real) have emerged along with the implementation of the most recent autonomy laws. Even before Wahid was forced from office, his administration’s desire to fully implement regional autonomy legislature was apparently slipping. The main concern continued to be whether or not regional governments were adequately prepared for the responsibility of autonomy, or that perhaps Indonesian society as a whole had been disengaged from political processes for so long that it would be unable to hold regional governments accountable to it. If there was a lack of accountability, detractors of this legislation argued that “regional fiefdoms” might be created whereby power becomes concentrated in the hands of local elites that may act only in their self interests. In other words, the opportunity for corruption on a local level would increase exponentially. “The end result may well be that the country dissolves into a gaggle of

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<sup>178</sup> “Indonesian Local Autonomy Legislation” Down To Earth (Online Publication, March, 2000).

<<http://www.gn.apc.org> > Although not a direct translation, this particular document gives a rather detailed summary of Law 22/99 and Law 25/99.

<sup>179</sup> “What is Regional Autonomy?” Down To Earth (Online Newsletter No.46, August 2000).

<<http://www.gn.apc.org>.>

mini states ruled by little princes warring among themselves over ever smaller pieces of shrinking economic pie.”<sup>180</sup> In order to keep these fears from damaging decentralization efforts, a slew of NGOs and research centers became involved with the debate as well. The Institute for Reform and the Informal Sector (IRIS), for example, initiated conferences and national dialogs on fiscal decentralization issues, offered parliamentary advisory assistance during the transition, and held workshops on “anti corruption” in economic policy procedures.<sup>181</sup> Still, the presence of national and international NGOs has done little to ease the fears of Indonesia’s most prominent donors or staunch nationalists.

Indonesia had become almost completely dependent on international donor agencies in the development-obsessed years of Suharto’s rule, and especially after the economic crises that struck much of Southeast Asia in 1997. As a result of this dependency, these same donors have come to virtually dictate the economic regulations that Indonesia must adhere to in order to maintain donor approval, loan rescheduling, and additional funding. Any regulations that pertain to the nation’s economic stability undoubtedly pique the interest of such agencies, and none of the major ones were very much impressed with Indonesia’s decentralization legislature. For example, “The international Monetary Fund, as leader of Indonesia’s economic ‘rescue’ programme, is extremely uneasy about the process and is reported to have blocked the transfer of \$400 million in loans due in part to concerns over possible financial chaos. The Fund pressed Indonesia to issue a regulation preventing regional governments from borrowing from foreign sources, fearing they may otherwise “embark on a borrowing binge”.<sup>182</sup> According to these stipulations, any loans requested by regional governments would first need the approval and guarantee from Jakarta before international donors would be inclined to release funds for regional development initiatives. In an equally invasive move, private investors began to require that central *and* regional

<sup>180</sup> Warren Caragata, “Autonomy’s Losers” *Asiaweek*, Vol.27, No. 19 (18 May, 2001).

<sup>181</sup> IRIS is a self proclaimed “internationally recognized source of research and advisory expertise for addressing economic growth and governance issues in transition and developing countries” based in the United States. For more information on IRIS and its projects in Indonesia, see <<http://www.iris.umd.edu>> Several countries from around the world also promised support with Indonesia’s transition. For example, The US Department of State planned to spend \$125 million in the fiscal year 2000 in order to strengthen Indonesia’s “nascent democratic institutions, the judicial system, civil society, and the institutions of the national and local parliaments”. For more discussion see Dana R. Dillon, “Indonesia and Separatism: Finding a Federalist Solution”. Executive Memorandum in the online newsletter for *The Heritage Foundation*, No. 670 (19 April, 2000). <<http://www.heritage.org/library>>

<sup>182</sup> “Confusion and Delay: Regional Autonomy” *Down To Earth* Online Newsletter No. 48, (February, 2001). <<http://www.gn.apc.org>> See also “Intervention by the representatives of the Asian Development Bank on Structural Reforms”. Taken from the Indonesia country office web page for the ADB: <<http://wbIn0018.worldbank.org>>

administrations jointly sign business agreements because of the prevailing sentiment that regional governments may not be held accountable for these deals in the long run.<sup>183</sup> Further, and only months after Law 22 and 25 were passed, the Indonesian Investment Coordinating Board (BKPN) announced its intention to “re-centralize” investment licensing outright by revoking the ability of regions to grant investment licenses themselves.<sup>184</sup> These developments have the ability to effectively render Law 25 meaningless on several levels. The fact that large scale regional development projects will need the approval of Jakarta before garnering major funding or investment creates a situation whereby “autonomous” regions are once again at the mercy of central government agendas for approval.

While decentralization was embraced enthusiastically by the regions, the central government began in to retract from its more liberal position on autonomy legislation as international pressure to “revise” UU22 and UU25 continued to mount and as Megawati became Indonesia’s 5th president (July 2001). In a manner reminiscent of her father’s own nationalist rhetoric, Megawati openly criticized the decentralization laws and linked regional autonomy with federalism, saying that both concepts had the potential to endanger national unity.<sup>185</sup> The president was often quoted by the media as she relayed doomsday projections for the nation if ethnic and regionalist sentiments were encouraged or allowed to progress in line with decentralization legislation. For example, the Jakarta Post quoted her saying that “If we are not careful in managing those (ethnic) sentiments then we may find ourselves caught up in a situation that runs against the spirit of national unity and cohesion”, she elaborated on this by using the Balkan situation as an example of what may happen to Indonesia if “excessive ethnic pride” was not curbed.<sup>186</sup> The specter of Dutch colonial policy and federalism have also made comebacks in recent discussions pertaining to state structure. Megawati and her cabinet members have insisted that Law 22 and Law 25 had been implemented *specifically* in order to avoid “the de facto establishment” of a federal state in Indonesia and that discussions concerning federalism ran counter to national interests.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> “Hamzah wades into Autonomy Law Debates” *The Jakarta Post Online* (21 Feb, 2001).

<sup>184</sup> “BKPM seeks to centralize investment licensing” *The Jakarta Post Online* (22 Oct, 2001).

<sup>185</sup> “Javanese Colonialism: Autonomy Tests Megawati” *Asia Times Online* <<http://www.atimes.com>> (16 Nov, 2001).

<sup>186</sup> “Unity in Danger Mega Warns” *The Jakarta Post Online* (Oct 30, 2001).

<sup>187</sup> “Revision of autonomy is meant to prevent Federalism” *The Jakarta Post Online* (6 Feb, 2002). See also **Guerin**, and for a good encompassing view of the arguments see “Kontroversi Seputar Revisi Undang-Undang No.22/1999” *Kompas Online* (26 Feb, 2002).

Considering the historical pattern of decentralization legislature in Indonesia, it should come as no surprise to find that yet again, decentralization and regional autonomy are not being fully implemented. Once again, regional autonomy has become a point of serious contention between the “center” and the “regions”. The scenario should by now seem familiar: decentralization and regional autonomy have been promised in the form of formal laws and regulations, only to be scrapped before they are completely implemented. The ensuing confusion that has been instigated by the central government’s hesitancy to either implement or completely retract regional autonomy has opened up new areas of debate between central and regional governments that were not available during Suharto’s long dictatorship.<sup>188</sup> Still, “autonomy” seems to have gained a foothold in Indonesia’s “*reformasi*” period and the issue is unlikely to become disengaged from the political scene in the near (or distant) future.

In reaction to the rather speedy implementation of Law 22 and 25, as well as the subsequent effort to “revise” or pull back on autonomy legislation by the Megawati administration, regional governments and community leaders have been galvanized into action.<sup>189</sup> In an attempt to hold on to what had already been promised by decentralization regulations in 2001, regional leaders began to successfully organize local people in order to maintain or lay claims on regional resources and rights. By forming, or re-formulating a sense of strong communalism and identity among their constituents, these same leaders have been able to threaten more active mobilization of these identities against the state if, or when their autonomy becomes threatened. Organization and political mobilization of “local” or regional groups has been carried out in at least two specific ways: 1.) By arousing renewed nationalist feelings against a central government perceived to be dominated by international agendas. 2.) By appealing to local, ethnic and religious sentiments against a central government understood to be dominated by Java and in some cases, Islamic political leanings.

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<sup>188</sup> This “hesitancy” is reflected by the fact that by February 2002, “only 40 of the more than 110 government regulations needed to implement autonomy” had been issued. “Opposition grows against Autonomy law review” *The Jakarta Post Online* (6 Feb, 2002).

<sup>189</sup> In the Fall of 2001 and Spring 2002, heated debates between those who opposed autonomy law revisions and those who supported them were often reported in the national and international media. For a sampling, see “Plan to revise regional autonomy law criticized” *The Jakarta Post Online* (18 Oct, 2001); “Regents tell govt to delay revision of autonomy laws” *The Jakarta Post Online* (25 Oct, 2001); “Autonomy laws revision slammed” *The Jakarta Post Online* (29 Oct, 2001). And in Indonesian, “Memikirkan Kembali Keinginan Merevisi Kebijakan Otonomi Daerah” *Kompas* (26 Feb, 2002); “Mewaspadai Rencana Revisi Undang-Undang Otonomi Daerah” *Kompas* (26 Feb, 2002).

Evidence of this type of political maneuvering has been rampant and easily identifiable since Suharto was ousted from power. In general, feelings of nationalist pride and identity are “whipped up” when the resources claimed by local politicians and leaders have been threatened by the central government and its efforts to implement changes recommended by international donor agencies. Some of the most recent clashes between central and regional authorities have erupted as a result of Indonesia’s effort to privatize state assets. The privatization of state holdings has long been recommended by Indonesia’s main donors, and is considered an important step in the decentralization process.<sup>190</sup> More importantly, privatization would theoretically allow the state to capitalize on Rp800 trillion (US\$79.4 billion) in state assets and to attract “inward” investment.<sup>191</sup> However, newly empowered regional authorities have argued that state assets should (under new decentralization legislature) come under the control of regional administrations. In order to gain support for their claims against the state, these same regional leaders have urged their “regional” constituents to speak out against the selling of state enterprises to “foreigners”, thus capitalizing on nationalist sentiments that are sometimes supported by important politicians at the center. In one such protest, the employees of Bank Central Asia (BCA) carried posters and signs with slogans such as “Don’t let BCA fall into foreign hands” and “We’re victims of privatization”, “Where will BCA privatization proceeds go?”.<sup>192</sup> In a related incident, local politicians and officials associated with the cement maker PT Semen Gresik were able to rally enough support from local community members in three cities to convince the central government that the company should be kept under state control. Their lobby effort was so successful that after a meeting with the company’s union officials, Amien Rais (Speaker for the MPR) stated that in general, “the privatization of government assets was not in the interest of the nation”.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Most notably, The Consultative Group on Indonesia, which includes the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and Japan (among others) threatened to withhold \$1.3 billion in aid to Indonesia if privatization did not progress. For a more detailed discussion on this problem, see “Donor Fatigue” Far Eastern Economic Review Online (29 Nov. 2001); For a general discussion on the link between decentralization and privatization, see **Turner 6-8.**

<sup>191</sup> “Decentralization: Indonesia’s privatization nightmare” Asia Times Online (23 Feb, 2002).

<sup>192</sup> “Employees protest planned sale of BCA” The Jakarta Post Online (9 Feb, 2002).

<sup>193</sup> “Decentralization: Indonesia’s privatization nightmare” Asia Times Online (23 Feb, 2002). Also, “Kasus Semen Padang Contoh Peliknya Pelaksanaan” Kompas Online (20 Nov, 2001); and “Whipping up Xenophobia” The Jakarta Post Online (12 Nov, 2001). *Asia Times* reported that the PT Semen Gresik deal would have been worth US\$550 million if the government had been able to sell 51 percent of its stake in the company to a Mexican buyer.

While the privatization backlash is sometimes portrayed as proof that local communities are becoming more active in an increasingly decentralized and democratic Indonesia, others see the nationalist backlash towards privatization as the carefully constructed tool of corrupt politicians who have much to lose if privatization progresses. From this angle, local leaders and prominent politicians are portrayed as the remnants of a centralized system who are unwilling to relinquish their personal control over regional enterprises, or who are anxious to increase their stakes in these holdings as decentralization progresses. As far as the Semen Gresik case is concerned, “While losing round 1 in the Semen Gresik privatization program may be a warning over the increasing level of sentiment against foreign control of local assets, most political analysts see it also as proof that ...the resistance had been manipulated by the politicians and corrupt officials who treat Semen Gresik and its subsidiaries as their personal cash cows.”<sup>194</sup> The Jakarta Post was even more explicit when it reported that “The government must have been fully aware that the motivation behind those opposing the privatization of Semen Gresik obviously had nothing to do with the interests of local people. If it had, the local politicians would have demanded a stronger commitment by Semen Gresik to local community development and to other programs of public interest, such as better environmental protection.”<sup>195</sup> Yet it must also be acknowledged that this conclusion may only represent a partial truth. The fact also remains that under the new autonomy legislation, local governments must find alternative sources of funding to compensate them for the loss of development money that was once provided to the regions by the central government. Seen in this light, privatization may be represented as a process by which *regional* “cash cows” are legitimately at stake as well.

More relevant in the context of this current discussion is the fact that regional leaders have also been successful in mobilizing *ethnic* and *religious* identities in order to capitalize on increasing opportunities for autonomy from the state. New provincial status has been awarded to those groups that have most successfully demonstrated their solidarity as a cohesive group, and unsurprisingly, ethnicity is often used as the cohesive “glue” that binds these groups together. The most widely publicized examples of this type of “ethnic” identity politicking have a tendency to be focused upon areas where ethnic/ religious conflicts have erupted into violence or in provinces where oil and gas represent substantial revenue sources for the state. In turn, it has been precisely these areas that have been successful in obtaining “special”

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<sup>194</sup> “Decentralization: Indonesia’s privatization nightmare” *Asia Times Online* (23 Feb, 2002).

concessions from Jakarta as decentralization has progressed. For example, the strife-torn region of Aceh was awarded the distinction of being the only province in the country where religion no longer falls under central authority as dictated by Law 22/99.<sup>196</sup> In fact, Aceh has become the only province in which “*Syariat*” or Islamic Law has come to replace existing national social laws. This allowance was made in hopes that at least some of the Acehnese secessionists would be appeased, and that regionalist sentiments in the area would be softened.

“Special” autonomy was also granted to Papua (formerly called Irian Jaya) on January 1, 2002.<sup>197</sup> In the Papua case, “special autonomy” (*Otonomi Khusus*) has meant that the province will be allowed to retain 70 percent of the royalties generated from oil and gas, while for most other provinces, oil and gas remain under the jurisdiction of the central government. In short, this means that \$700 million (an increase of 100 percent) will be placed directly into the hands of Papua’s leadership under special autonomy.<sup>198</sup> As with the Aceh case, Papua was granted special status as part of the government’s ongoing effort to quell violent separatist movements in the region that have been active since the 1960s. Despite the area’s special autonomy status, ethnic tensions in Papua have continued to fester as elite leaders reportedly “take advantage of Papuan anti-Indonesian emotions in order to get themselves more gifts from the centre, for their personal use.”<sup>199</sup> The entire situation may be at least partly described as an elitist game between central authority and Papuan leadership that is expressed in terms of ethnic politicking. This “ethnic politicking” capitalizes on economic envy as well as a sense that new migrants to the province are there to “colonize” the land and the Papuan people. It has also been asserted that the “ethnic” symbol has become so strong in Papua that “Important leaders of a real democracy movement in Papua have been overlooked because they refuse to use primordial sentiments” in their popular mobilization efforts.<sup>200</sup> Despite the special concessions described above, separatist leaders from both the Papua and

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<sup>195</sup> “Whipping up Xenophobia” *The Jakarta Post Online* (11 Dec, 2001).

<sup>196</sup> “Wapres: NAD Satu-Satunya Daerah Jalankan Syariat Islam” *Kompas Online* (9 Nov, 2001).

<sup>197</sup> This event was much publicised in Indonesia. For examples see “Mendagri: Otonomi Khusus Papua Tetap Dilaksanakan 1 Januari 2002” *Kompas Online* (21 Dec, 2001); and “Indonesia Oks Irian Jaya Bill” *Associated Press Online* (23 Oct, 2001).

<sup>198</sup> For most other regions, Law 25 stipulates that regions will keep 30 percent of gas royalties and 15 percent of oil royalties accrued from their respective regencies, while the rest is earmarked for national use. See “Special Autonomy for Papua” *The Jakarta Post* (26 Oct, 2001).

<sup>199</sup> Stanley, “But is it Democratic?” *Inside Indonesia Online* 67 (Jul-Sept, 2001).

<sup>200</sup> Stanley. For an interesting and similar scenario stemming from Papua New Guinea, see **Ralph R. Premdas**, “Ethnicity and Nation Building: The Papua New Guinea Case”. McGill University CDAS Discussion Paper No. 50 (1987).

Aceh provinces have rejected special autonomy status and continue to mobilize groups in the name of ethnic separatism, while the government continues military operations against these provincial movements.<sup>201</sup>

While the intense dramas of Papua and Aceh have been the most immediately accessible through press releases and reports, the leaders of smaller or less obvious provinces and regencies have also been quick to act on decentralization legislation. The most apparent or problematic issue surfacing in these areas is the misuse of regional government authority in order to obtain taxes and tolls from “outsiders” (people and goods from outside of each respective regency or province). It has already been mentioned that the very nature of Law 25/99 has forced regional governments to “scramble” for funds that were once provided to them from the center, and that this is especially true of areas that are lacking in substantial natural resources. Local leaders in these situations are discovering that ethnic identity may serve as a powerful uniting force with which considerable popular support can be harnessed and maintained in order to make demands on the center, or to implement regulations that penalize those perceived to be “outsiders”. Heavy taxation on goods or members of the population from outside the regency or province are politically safe under the new regional autonomy laws because districts, mayors and assemblies are not accountable to these outsiders, nor do they represent them.<sup>202</sup> Goodpaster and Ray have labeled these taxes as “internal trade barriers” and argue that barriers such as this, coupled with local discrimination against citizens “operate to destroy the integrity of a nation”.<sup>203</sup> The authors further note that as Indonesia’s regions are territorially associated with particular ethnic groups, this “regional” situation is woven through with ethnic identity politicking and that these factors may eventually contribute to lend an overall destabilizing effect on the state. “Economic interests allied with ethno-centrism can, if not held in check or disciplined for larger goals, lead to rampant hostility and economic and political fragmentation.”<sup>204</sup>

As part of this ethnic politicking, regional and provincial leaders are also demanding that positions within their administrations be given to local indigenous people or “native

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<sup>201</sup> The leadership of Papua’s pro independence movement signed a declaration to reject the proposed “special” autonomy status on October 21, 2001. For a well- rounded discussion of the problems surrounding “special” autonomy in both provinces see “Can Special Autonomy Work?” Tapol Bulletin Online 164-5. Also **Tan Sri Zainal Sulong**, “The Regional Impact and Role of the Region in Indonesia’s Transformation” The Indonesian Quarterly, Vol.XXVIII/2000, No.1: 75-80, especially p.77-78.

<sup>202</sup> “Devolve, but do it Right” Far Eastern Economic Review Online (6 July, 2000).

<sup>203</sup> **Goodpaster & Ray** 267. It should be noted that Goodpaster is himself the head of the Partnership of Economic Growth, which supervises several American aid operations in Indonesia.

sons”.<sup>205</sup> This is an older demand, first appearing as part of the decentralization debate during the colonial period. It is part of an argument that maintains that “local” people themselves are the best positioned to understand and act upon the needs and problems of “local” communities. However, “local” in this particular context has been interpreted through an “ethnic” lens, which by nature divides populations into members and non-members of a single administrative unit based on ethnic affiliations. The placement of “indigenous” people into economic and politically superior positions within regencies and provinces is only serving to further solidify ethnic boundaries between groups living in these areas and to exacerbate ethnic or religious tensions. In several regencies, only local or “indigenous” people may be employed in more prosperous enterprises, while fees are often imposed on workers from other regencies.<sup>206</sup> In areas where outright violence has erupted between “indigenous” or “non-indigenous” groups, it is common for local leaders (with the support of their “indigenous” constituents) to demand that “migrants” return to their regions of origin.<sup>207</sup> While their claims seem to be justified by UU22 and UU25, central authorities maintain that the laws have been mis-interpreted by the regencies who are using the resources within their territorial boundaries for the benefit of “indigenous” populations while the needs of migrants or minority groups go largely ignored.<sup>208</sup>

In light of the current trend which interprets regional autonomy through a decidedly “ethnic lens”, coupled with the government’s own misgivings about regional autonomy legislature, it is more than a little strange that the central government has continued to grant special privileges or even new provincial status according to ethnic or religious demands.<sup>209</sup> While on the one hand Megawati portrays regionalism as a potentially dangerous divisive and destabilizing force, on the other her administration has awarded staunch regionalist/ethnic movements with provincial status or special rights. Following on the successful path of others, more and more regional governments are also attempting to present themselves as the representatives of “indigenous” groups which deserve to be governed by their own local leadership and administrative control over their own “traditional” lands. Ethnic groups and the leaders who claim to represent them have begun to reassert their identities into sub-national

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<sup>204</sup> Goodpaster & Ray 269.

<sup>205</sup> “Regional autonomy beginning of the end for Indonesia?” *The Jakarta Post Online* (27 Nov, 2001).

<sup>206</sup> This was taken from a quote given by Minister of Manpower and Transmigration, Jacob Nuwa Wea to the “Regions accused of Ethnic Discrimination in the Workplace” *Jakarta Post Online* (24 Oct, 2001).

<sup>207</sup> “Indonesia Dragged Down by Vested Interests” *Asia Times Online* (6 Nov, 2001).

<sup>208</sup> “Indonesia dragged down by vested interests” *Asia Times Online* (6 Nov, 2001).

groupings that are marked by specified boundaries, and possess unique 'traditional' cultures. New provinces and regencies are being carved out of almost every section of the nation, argued into existence under the compelling banner of cultural uniqueness, history and ethnic identity. Again, Indonesians are pursuing "ethnic interpretations" of "region" within decentralization legislation aimed at decentralizing power and financial responsibility to "local" regional governments. The unwillingness of the government to fully implement decentralization/ regional autonomy, and the inability to completely scrap decentralization has led to confusion and inconsistencies. It is within the space provided by these inconsistencies that regional leadership has found new opportunities in which they may negotiate with the state for increased access to resources and power, while garnering support from "local" constituencies by invigorating ethnic communalism.

### 3. Remarks:

"Above the local level, the villager is hard put to find leaders who genuinely identify themselves with the values of the rural population. Barriers of class, occupation, and urbanism, then, tend to inhibit the extension of the villagers' loyalties to intermediate "regional" levels except when these are perceived as the focus of ethnic or national loyalties."<sup>210</sup>

Described in its most simple form, decentralization of Indonesia's government should provide increased autonomy and power for regional administrations within the existing state. This, at least in theory, would bring increased economic and political stability along with the basic tenants of democracy to the most local levels of the administrative system. The examination of decentralization history in Indonesia has been meant to show that until quite recently, "decentralized" government in the country has been aimed largely at solving administrative functions, and not towards the actual devolution of power from the center towards the regions. As a result, "decentralization" has failed to even partially satisfy local demands for greater political participation and economic autonomy. The failure to fully implement decentralized policies have sometimes been the catalyst for social unrest and even outright rebellion. In fact, the unresolved questions that have clung tenaciously to

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<sup>209</sup> In February 2002, 22 new regencies were established in eight of Indonesia's provinces.

decentralization (who, when, how much), have marred the process from its colonial beginnings through to the present.

Conjured from the prevailing spirit of liberalism and the economic needs of the Dutch colonials, the first attempt to decentralize Indonesia was part of an all encompassing “Ethical Policy” (1901). While there was undoubtedly a “moral” and ethical agenda behind much of the Dutch effort to modernize their colony, there were equally pervasive *economic* reasons behind it. As the colonial government opened its holdings to private investment, the need to incorporate the resources and labor force of the outer islands into designed production schemes became obvious. Administrative decentralization allowed these regions to become more directly controlled by the center, while aspects of “modernization” such as education and infrastructure development were more easily deployed. Of particular concern to this discussion is the fact that Dutch decentralization policy encouraged the development of the “ethnic map”. By this it is meant that indigenous populations (especially on the outer islands) became formally identified with particular territories and “mapped” onto physical landscapes which became known as ethnic territories of administration. Thus imagined, ethnic communities became recognized as the appropriate recipients of territorial and administrative decentralization. Ethnic communities became “officially” distinguishable from other communities with concrete physical boundaries and increasingly solidified social boundaries. In what was to become their final attempt to hold Indonesia under colonial rule, the Dutch tried to capitalize on a growing rift between the “center” and the “outer” portion of Indonesia by establishing a federal system on the outer islands. This federal system became popular with minority ethnic groups who believed that the Javanese had taken over the nationalist movement and that only Javanese interests would be served after independence. At this point in Indonesia’s history, the pattern of Javanese political dominance and minority resentment had already been determined.

Federalism was completely abolished during the first years of the Sukarno administration. However, in the years of parliamentary democracy that followed, there was at least some effort to decentralize and even devolve power to regional administrations. Despite the popularity of decentralization at this early stage, a series of events effectively rendered

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<sup>210</sup> **G. William Skinner**, “The Nature of Loyalties in Rural Indonesia” in **G. William Skinner** (ed.) Local, Ethnic and National Loyalties in Village Indonesia: A Symposium. (Yale University Cultural Report Series: Southeast Asia Studies, 1959): 1-11; 5.

decentralization inoperative after the 1950s. Historians have concluded that a combination of political factionalism, defiance from the armed forces, economic stagnation and “regionalist” sentiments all combined to force Sukarno’s opinion against regional autonomy, decentralization and even parliamentary democracy. The role of ethnicity in regional political development at this time became increasingly important. Local leadership found that the use of ethnic symbols allowed them to obtain support from local people which, up until the 1960s, continued to allow them to make demands upon the state.

Decentralization would have little to do with increased levels of democracy or local people’s participation during Suharto’s authoritarian rule. In fact, this period is remarkable in the fact that decentralization policies actually served to increase the dependence of regions upon the state. As part of an aggressive nation building project which sought to instill the population with an inclusive *Indonesian* identity, the political use of ethnicity was suppressed and regionalist sentiments were sometimes violently put down. Under the influence of this political atmosphere, decentralization was a mere administrative tool with which the central government was able to more effectively manage the development and modernization of the nation. Local people and those who supposedly represented them were almost completely disengaged from the political process going on at the center. The rift between Jakarta and the regions continued to fester.

The most recent attempt to decentralize Indonesia’s governmental and economic structures must be described and contextualized in light of the nation’s past. It may even be possible to draw connections between modern human rights agendas and the Dutch Ethical policy as contributing factors behind demands for regional autonomy and decentralization in the past as well as the present. At the very least, it must be recognized that the privatization of state holdings, the recognition of the ethnic group as the location of increased autonomy, and international recommendations for decentralization have been prescriptions for an improved Indonesia for over 100 years.<sup>211</sup> The current “re-invigoration” of ethnic politics can then be understood as the continuation and exacerbation of unfinished issues which have been woven throughout the fabric of Indonesian history. Ethnic identity has been evoked throughout this history to provide local leadership with an effective way to enhance group solidarity and ethnic communalism against central authority. Coupled with economic and political ethnocentrism, current decentralization policy in Indonesia may be instigating an

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<sup>211</sup> Refer to page 32 and 35 in this document for privatization and the Ethical policy during the colonial period.

“ethnification of the nation” as described by Michael Jacobsen. The remaining sections of this paper will attempt to look more specifically at this phenomenon by examining a single regency within the Indonesian state structure: Minahasa.

### **III. Decentralization and the Mobilization of *Minahasan***

As already suggested at the beginning of this paper, the area of Minahasa has had an extensive history with the ideas/policies related to both federalism and decentralization. This section will first explore the parameters of Minahasan identity and the development of Minahasa as an ethnic community. This brief analysis will be followed by a description of the historical significance of decentralization in Minahasa, and the lasting impression that such policies have had on the region through time. I will attempt to show that the current popularity of decentralized government in Minahasa might be better understood as a continuation of socio-political processes that began in Minahasa's colonial past, stemming largely from the area's long and favorable association with Dutch decentralization policies before independence, the historical promotion and endorsement of federalism by successive Minahasan leaders, and the Permesta rebellion of the late 1950s which (for the most part) was fought in support of regional autonomy in what was perceived to be an increasingly "Javanese" Indonesia. One of the main purposes of this discussion will be to eventually illustrate the manner and form by which modern local Minahasan leaders and intellectuals have begun to "dust off" or utilize older symbols from these historical reference points in order to voice objection to calls for *syariah*, obtain support for the progression of new decentralization laws (UU22 & UU25), and possibly the establishment of a new Minahasan province.

Related to the historical relationship between Minahasa and decentralization, and equally important in this examination of decentralization on a more local level, is the role of ethnic identity and modern identity politics in the Minahasa region. It has already been shown that new decentralization legislature in Indonesia has begun to open new arenas of debate between "local" leaders and members of the central government. Local elites and intellectuals have been able to successfully garner the support of their local constituents in these autonomy negotiations by appealing to a sense of ethnic communalism and a shared sense of destiny within their respective regencies and provinces. For Minahasans, this has meant a resurgent interest in discovering exactly what *Minahasa* means within the wider context of an encompassing *Indonesian* identity. For this reason, the following pages will necessarily include a brief account of the development of Minahasa as an ethnically conceived

community. I hope to at least partially substantiate the claim that both the development of a distinctly Minahasan identity as well as the creation of Minahasa as an administrative unity had a great deal to do with Dutch missionary and governmental/administrative objectives for the area. From these related (indeed, inter-related) historical processes we may easily trace modern perceptions of “Minahasa” and the popularity of modern decentralization efforts in the area.

Throughout the period of time in which this research took place, it was nearly impossible to read a local newspaper, or walk down a major road in cities and towns such as Manado and Tomohon without noticing recently stylized symbolic displays of Minahasan identity, and the effort that was apparently being made to solidify the meaning of *Minahasa*. Usually, these symbolic displays were tucked neatly into conversations, meetings, newspaper articles or other publications dealing with UU22/UU25 and the issue of greater autonomy from the nation’s capitol. Just how successful this process or “reinvigoration” of Minahasan identity has been in re-defining the relationship between Manado and Jakarta remains to be seen. It is also unclear as to how this resurgent interest in defining *Minahasa* will affect social relationships between “indigenous” Minahasans and those groups perceived to be migrants to the area. However, I have found there to be strong elements of socio-political inclusion and exclusion among the people of Minahasa, and these elements could potentially become more apparent or entrenched as decentralization progresses, the number of migrants to the area increases or is *perceived* to increase, and the government in Jakarta becomes more oriented towards the Islamic community.<sup>212</sup> These elements of social exclusiveness may or may not crystallize into more substantial political and/or economic exclusiveness in the province, and it is for these reasons that many observers have designated this northern tip of Sulawesi as the possible location of future ethnic or religious unrest.<sup>213</sup> As the final section of this paper will underline, the “threat” of an increasingly Islamic Indonesia and the feeling that Minahasa continues to be a backwater region in the eyes of Jakarta are actually old

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<sup>212</sup> As recently as July 2002, Vice President Hamzah Haz was still being quoted in national newspapers as an advocate for the inclusion of *shyariah* into the Indonesian constitution.

<sup>213</sup> For example, Michael Jacobsen asserts that “After the breakdown of civil order in Ambon, the Moluccas, Indonesia, where Christians and Muslims are fighting a deadly battle about socio-political supremacy, many observers have turned their attention towards Minahasa in North Sulawesi province where similar pre-conditions for violent clashes exist.” **Michael Jacobsen**, “Nationalism and Particularism in Present-day Southeast Asia”. Paper presented at the KITLV International Workshop on Southeast Asian Studies No.14 held in Leiden from the 13 to 16 of December, 1999.

concerns and fears that have gained new currency as recent efforts to decentralize Indonesia's economic and political structures has progressed.

Despite these rather dim projections for the future, the people of Minahasa have managed to temper ethnic communalism with an equally pervasive *national* sense of identity. In the end, it is probably correct to assume that the majority of Minahasans identify just as strongly with being *Indonesian* as they do with being *Minahasan*, and that the two levels of identity are not mutually exclusive. Following this line of reasoning, it is important to acknowledge that the official calls for greater regional autonomy from Jakarta, or those arguments that favor a new province of Minahasa are unrelated to separatist sentiments that have festered in other parts of the nation. While a few informants for this research felt that a separatism might become a viable option for the area in the future, an overwhelming majority expressed the opinion that Minahasans would only attempt to break away from Indonesia when or if Indonesia became an Islamic state (at this point, still an unlikely scenario). While local leaders speak of a collective Minahasan future, they seem equally aware of the fragility of their position as a Christian minority group located on the outskirts of a nation that is home to the world's largest Muslim population. With this in mind, it is easy to understand why the current effort to "reinvigorate" Minahasan identity does not explicitly exclude other inhabitants of the regency from political participation, but may be doing so *implicitly*. The fact remains that migrant groups (generally understood to be Muslims) are, at least for the most part, missing from the provincial/autonomy debates altogether. Instead of focusing on inter-group relationships within the province as the source of contestation, leaders have quite wisely given their attention to the relationship between Jakarta and the region while at the same time relying on Minahasan collective identity to gain support for their position. By focusing on the central government as the primary source of regional problems, while at the same time seeming to ignore more alarmist crusades against migrant and Muslim population living in the area, it appears as if church leaders, politicians and university professors have managed to balance the reinvigoration of "Minahasa" with calls for greater regional autonomy without causing social friction between the diversity of people living in North Sulawesi. However, this strategy could easily change if Minahasans were ever to lose their standing as

the majority ethnic group in the regency, or their position as the most politically powerful group in the province.<sup>214</sup>

By using Minahasa as the location of this brief case study, my aim has been to encourage a better understanding of the decentralization process in Indonesia while providing at least one example of the way in which ethnic identity has been incorporated into modern decentralization efforts in the Indonesian context. By focusing on an area that is not (or not yet) inclined towards separatism, interethnic disputes over resources, or violence between communities, I hope to have placed the controversy of Indonesia's decentralization efforts into a more "neutralized" context that is less inclined towards media sensationalism, international attention, and central government intervention into local affairs. Again, while Jakarta may indeed consider the northern tip of Sulawesi as a "backwater" region with few natural resources, and while Minahasa remains largely ignored by an international community of NGOs interested in the protection of "indigenous people", history reminds us that Minahasans are capable of rebellion in the name of regional autonomy. The future of a stable, prosperous, and more autonomous Minahasa depends largely upon the ability of Minahasa's leadership to maintain balance between Christianity and Islam, migrant groups and Minahasans, regional vs. central government objectives. This balance must continue even as a distinctly "Minahasan" sense of identity is invigorated and encouraged in order to capitalize on recent decentralization legislature.

### 1. Minahasa Defined:

"The inhabitants of Minahasa (as this part of Celebes is called) differ much from those of all the rest of the island, and in fact from any other people of the archipelago. They are of light brown or yellow tint, often approaching the fairness of a European... In mental and moral characteristics they are also highly peculiar. They are remarkably quiet and gentle in disposition, submissive to the authority of those they consider their superiors, and easily induced to learn and adopt the habits of civilized people. They are clever mechanics, and seem capable of acquiring a considerable amount of intellectual education."  
-Alfred Russel Wallace<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Although there seems to be a conscious effort being made to refrain from creating tension between Minahasans and migrant groups, I must also acknowledge here that Minahasans have nearly complete control over the government of North Sulawesi. This advantageous position allows Minahasans to feel relatively unthreatened by migrants to the area and probably accounts for at least part of the ability of local leadership to focus on Jakarta, rather than local Muslims as a source of potential problems in the Province.

<sup>215</sup> **Alfred Russel Wallace**, *The Malay Archipelago: The Land of the Orang-Utang and the Bird of Paradise*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1962): 185-186. Reprint of the first work published in 1869 by Macmillan and Company, London.

By the time the great evolutionary biologist/explorer Alfred Russel Wallace wrote the above description of “Minahasan” peoples in 1859, the inhabitants of the northern- most tip of Sulawesi had already been “officially” subjugated by the Dutch East India Company (1679), the British (1810) and colonial Netherlands East Indies (1817) for a period spanning over 180 years.<sup>216</sup> Considering this extensive and intensive occupation period, it should come as no surprise that Wallace and his fellow 19<sup>th</sup> century travelers found the culture of Minahasa to be imbued with so many “western” traits and features. Successive decades of missionary education and Dutch administrative policies regarding rice, clove and coffee production had worked to help define and re-define Minahasa as a territorial unit of the Dutch administrative system, complete with a distinct cultural identity and name for the area’s occupants. This culture was (and continues to be) perceived to be one of the most completely westernized communities in the archipelago. Yet it must be recognized that simply equating “Minahasa” with western cultural characteristics is obviously an incomplete understanding of Minahasa and it leaves us to wonder what the area and its inhabitants were like before becoming so closely associated with European influences. In other words, *who* are the Minahasans?

The present day Minahasan homeland is located in the northern most tip of the island of Sulawesi. The regency (*kabupaten*) of Minahasa itself is part of a larger administrative provincial unit known as “Sulut” or Sulawesi Utara (North Sulawesi). The province is bordered by the Philippines to the north, the Province of North Maluku to the east, Gorontalo Province in the south and the Sulawesi Sea to the west. The provincial unit of North Sulawesi is further divided into three regencies and two city (*kota*) administrative units: *kabupaten* Bolaang Mongondow (area 8.359,04 km<sup>2</sup> population 429, 475), *kabupaten* Minahasa (area 4.188,94km<sup>2</sup> population 769.296), *kabupaten* Sangihe Talaud (area 2.263,93 population 261.521), *kota* Manado ( area 157,25 km<sup>2</sup> population 372.887), and *kota* Bitung (area 304,00 km<sup>2</sup> population 140.270).<sup>217</sup> Minahasa regency is divided even further into some 30 sub-districts (*kecamatan*), as well as 492 villages, and it is at this sub-district or village level that

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<sup>216</sup>Formal contracts were signed between the chiefs of Minahasa and the VOC in 1679, although actual contact with Spanish, Dutch, even Portuguese traders had been established prior to 1679. See **M.J.C. Schouten**, *Leadership and Social Mobility in a Southeast Asian Society: Minahasa, 1677-1983*. (Leiden, The Netherlands: KITLV Press, 1998): 41, 50. For a distinctly “Minahasan” perspective of this event and contract, see **H.M. Taulu**, *Sejarah Minahasa: Kontrak 10 Januari 1679*. (1978) Available at the Library at the University Sam Ratualangie, Manado- Indonesia. Personal Copy.

<sup>217</sup> These population and area numbers were taken from the North Sulawesi governmental web pages at <<http://www.sulut.go.id/english/location.html>> and are representative of statistical data from the year 2002.

most of what is considered “grassroots” or community participation in local politics takes place. The land itself is extremely rugged, with smoldering volcanic peaks dominating the views in almost every direction. This chain of highly active volcanoes and favorable climate conditions has long made North Sulawesi famous for its ideal agricultural soils and the production of cloves, coffee, copra, rice and other produce. Even in more recent times, the economy of Minahasa has depended largely on clove production and the global demand for the fragrant spice. Village roads and city streets alike are often covered with blankets of cloves that have been set out to dry in the hot tropical sun, leaving the air sharpened with their overwhelming scent. More recently, gold mining and tourism have been targeted as potential sources of income for the area but neither of these markets has been able to create fundamental changes in local economies.

The development of Minahasa as an ethnically conceived community or people comes, for the most part, from two different perspectives that often complement, but sometimes refute each other. These divergent views may be said to have emerged from a “primordial” view of ethnicity on the one hand, and a more “academic” understanding of the concept of ethnicity on the other. Social scientists, politicians, NGOs, and local people themselves must often face this duality in meaning when attempting to define and categorize groups based on ethnicity. More often than not, the attempt to categorize people in such a manner leads to inconsistencies and conflicting opinions about who is or is not a member of a specific group. Eriksen has argued that “Ethnic categorization can be analyzed as an attempt to create order in and make sense of, a bewildering chaos of different ‘kinds’ of people... This kind of map creates its own problems because the territory it describes is more complex than itself. Both natives and anthropologists therefore run into paradoxes and contradictions when they try to apply a stylized ethnic taxonomy consistently.”<sup>218</sup> Despite widely recognized problems with “ethnic” labels, ethnicity continues to serve as a legitimate way to categorize, mobilize and define groups of people all over the world. True to the inherent problems of ethnic categorization, the meaning of “Minahasan” can also be contested on several different levels and continues to change through time.

The “primordial” vision of Minahasan ethnicity suggests that Minahasans have always represented a recognizable cultural group, occupying a distinct area of land before the arrival of Europeans. At the base of this vision is what Abner Cohen has called “A Mythology of

Decent” which helps to unite Minahasans as an imagined community even today.<sup>219</sup>

According to Minahasan folklore, all Minahasans are able to trace their lineage back to the celestial figures of Toar and his mother Lumimuut.<sup>220</sup> It is from these two mythological beings that all Minahasans are said to be descendents. According to legend, Toar and Lumimuut were (despite their close familial relationship) quite a prolific couple and within a few generations of their initial union, the entire area of Minahasa was populated thanks to their fecundity. After an undisclosed amount of time, Lumimuut called her children for a meeting at *Batu Pinawetengan* (the meaning of which is “stone where the division took place”).<sup>221</sup> According to the 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary N. Graafland, it was said that Lumimuut divided the territory of Minahasa into four regions in which her family would live.<sup>222</sup> Four houses were erected to represent each of the Minahasan sub-groups: the Tombulu occupied the North West, Tonsea the North East, Totuma-atas (Tondano) the South East and finally the Tontemboan the South West.

Confusingly, the meeting instigated by Lumimuut is often missing from stories about *Batu Pinawetengan*. Another version holds that it was the leaders of *three* original groups (previously divided by Lumimuut) that held the meeting at Batu Pinawetengan. Apparently there had been a great deal of conflict between the people of the three groups and the meeting was held to discuss possible solutions. It was at this symbolic meeting that the “Pinawetengan u-nuwu” (dividing of the language) was made official and the land was divided among the three major linguistic groups. Later, the people now known as “Tondano” established residence around the lake which bears their name making four groups in total.<sup>223</sup> Today, these four groups represent the “original” descendants of Toar and Lumimuut and are distinguished from one another based upon linguistic and some cultural differences. Despite these differences, all four groups are considered to be part of an inter-related cultural group

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<sup>218</sup> **Thomas H. Eriksen**, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. (London: Pluto Press, 1993): 66.

<sup>219</sup> **Cohen** 69-71. I am also making reference here to Benedict Anderson’s famous “Imagined Communities”.

<sup>220</sup> See Appendix A for a brief account of this legend. For more versions, see **Bert Supit**, *Minahasa: Dari Amanat Watu Pinawetengan Sampai Gelora Minawanua*. (Jakarta: Sinar Agape Press, 1986): 19-25. **Aneke Sumarauw Pangkarego**, *Cerita Rakyat Dari Minahasa*. (Jakarta: Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia, 1993): 1-4. **N. Graafland**, *Minahasa: Negri, Rakyat, dan Budaya*. Trans. Lucy R. Montolalu (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1991): 85. (Dari Judul Asli/ translated from the original: *De Minahasa: Haar Verleden en haar tegenwoordige toestand*. Rotterdam: M. Wyt & Zonen, 1869)

<sup>221</sup> The stone draws many visitors and is easily accessed, located about 45 km from Manado near Tomposo.

<sup>222</sup> **Graafland** 87. Graafland makes reference to eight distinct sub-groups of Minahasa, basing his opinion largely on linguistic evidence.

<sup>223</sup> See also **Jouke S. Wigboldus**, “A History of Minahasa c.1615-1680” *Archipel* 34 (1987): 64.

that has become known as “Minahasan”. David Henley has written that the “division had involved differentiation in religion as well as language. At Tu’ur in Tana’ (generally thought to be Batu Pinawetengan) the newly formed Totemboan, Tombulu and Tonsea groups were each assigned slightly different rules for the practice of their rituals or *Poso*. The differences were understood as complimentary and necessary in a cosmic sense.”<sup>224</sup>

From this point on, the legends and configuration of ethnic identity from the “primordial” vision of Minahasa become more contested. In addition to the four “original” ethnic groups that are considered “Minahasan” today, there are also several ‘new’ groups to the region that have been included as part of the extended “Minahasan” family. This is partially justified by the fact that many of these groups have had a long presence in the area and have intermarried with the original inhabitants (the bilateral kinship systems of this area promote such kinship ties<sup>225</sup>). The number of these groups that are considered “Minahasan” today varies depending on the informant or history consulted, once again revealing the evolving nature of ethnic terms and labels. In my own interviews and subsequent research I found that “Minahasa” represents the inclusion of between seven to nine sub-groupings into a single cultural unit. Several informants and many written sources state that Minahasa emerged before the arrival of the Spanish or any colonial presence. In this version of history, the leaders of seven ethnic groups residing in the Minahasa area came together in an effort to fight the Sultan in neighboring Bolaang Mongondow who is known to have raided and fought with these groups. The people that became part of “Minahasa” in this version of history were the Tombulu, Tonsea, Toulour (Tondano), Tontemboan, Tonsawang, Ponosakan and Ratahan.

The inclusion of the Bantik and Babontehu ethnic groups into the “Minahasan” family is presently a topic for debate among local historians and intellectuals in Minahasa. Most Minahasans that I came into contact with did not consider these two groups as Minahasan. I found that the Bantik group is, generally speaking, more accepted than the Babontehu and I am still not positive about the foundation for this opinion. The inclusion of these two groups would bring the total number of sub-groups that fall within the bounds of Minahasan identity to nine, but again, most informants consider the total number of Minahasan sub-categorizations to be seven. Although this research was unable to unravel any concrete reasoning for the exclusion or inclusion of the Bantik or Babontehu sub-groups, the following paragraphs will help to illustrate the malleable nature of ethnic identity and the fact that who

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<sup>224</sup> Henley (1992) 87.

exactly is or is not considered Minahasan is subject to changing attitudes or opinions. These attitudes pertain to much more than the often described dichotomy between Muslim migrant groups and Christians.

The Bantik population is generally centered in the area of Manado city. Most “Minahasan” groups were, or are, considered to be based in the inland areas of the region. The Bantik, Ratahan, and Ponosaken groups arrived in the area of Minahasa from Bolaang Mongondow region. However, the later two groups have generally been accepted into “Minahasa” while the Bantik are not always considered as such. Why? This was explained to me in a variety of unconvincing ways. For example, one informant told me that the Bantiks had an economy based on the sea, while Minahasans derived their living from the land. Others simply stated that they were migrants into Minahasa (which I hope I have illustrated did not matter for the other ethnic groups that migrated to the area). The issue of skin color was also brought up, with informants pointing to the fact that the Bantik had darker skin when compared to that of a *real* Minahasan. Although I was never able to substantiate this, one informant spoke of a rock in Bolong that has been inscribed with the names of the ethnic groups that belong to that regency, the “Bantik” are apparently included as part of this Bolong group and therefore, cannot be considered Minahasan. The most likely scenario is probably connected to the fact that “the Bantik people are said to be a remnant of mercenary troops, former slaves of Mongondow who came in with the monarch of Bolaang to fight the older Minahasans”.<sup>226</sup> Further, even after the dividing line between Minahasa and Bolaang Mongondow was established by the Dutch for administrative purposes (1694), the Bantik continued to be somewhat loyal to the Sultan of Bolaang, even paying tribute to him. Taking this view of history, it is easy to discern a more probable cause for “Minahasans” to shun this particular group, at least in the past. Despite their history, the Bantik round out the number of sub-ethnic groups in Minahasa to eight. Most academic publications include them as Minahasans, but I did not find this common among the majority of my own informants.

The Babontehu pose yet another interesting possible addition to “Minahasa”. Only two of my informants professed a belief that this group was, or at least should be considered Minahasan. Again, I refer to historical sources to explain their positions. Wigaboldus has written that the Babontehu were famous for their ability as fierce pirates. They were based primarily on the island of Manado Tua, an island just off the coast of Manado. For a short

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<sup>225</sup> Lundstrom-Burghoorn 75.

time, these people apparently controlled much of North Sulawesi and were powerful enough to demand taxes from Bolaang Mongondow. However, this prosperity and position of power eventually dwindled, and the group fell under the control of Bolaang. By the first half of the 17th century, the last of the inhabitants of Manado Tua moved to the Manado area, mixing with the local population there. They were some of the first Minahasans to be converted to Christianity. Still, none of this seems particularly remarkable compared to other migrant groups to the area that are considered Minahasan.

Many people related that the Babontehu were “too new” to Minahasa and that they could possibly be Minahasan if enough time had elapsed. Most informants simply and directly asserted that the Babontehu were not Minahasan. Again, it is possible that historical circumstances have contributed to the exclusion of this group from being considered “Minahasan”. It appears that first, the Babontehu helped the Spanish to settle in Minahasa, an event that sparked several violent conflicts in the area. Secondly, Wigaboldus writes that the VOC initially mistook the Babontehu prince of Manado as the king of Minahasa. This placed him against the more inland Minahasan chiefs that were eventually able to convince the VOC of their mistake.

There are many ways of looking at the issue of inclusion and exclusion as they pertain to the Bantik and Babontehu. I am inclined to point to the history of these two groups as reason for their current exclusion from “Minahasan”. However, the fact that my sources did not always conjure historical references in this case must be recognized. Several times, an informant would point to the fact that Minahasans generally possess a lighter skin color when compared to later migrants to the area. Many Dutch colonials or other western travelers such as Alfred Russel Wallace also made this observation, perhaps instigating a division among people based on what were perceived to be racial characteristics.<sup>227</sup> These two groups were simply NOT Minahasan from the perspective of most people I was able to speak with, and despite my attempt to link history with modern opinion, this link was not always explicit. In other words, I imagine that attitudes concerning these two migrant groups stem from the past, but what exists today may simply be a residual feeling without clear definition. Perhaps it is

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<sup>226</sup> Wigaboldus 64.

<sup>227</sup> As an example, see Peter Nas’s reference to Hamerster’s observation that Minahasans indeed “excelled in the fairness of their skin”. Peter Nas, “Miniature of Manado: Images of a Peripheral Settlement” in Reimar Schefold, (ed.) *Minahasa Past and Present: Tradition and Transition in an Outer Island Region of Indonesia*. (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1995) 58-71.

more instructive to examine the reasons and conditions given for these groups to be *included* into the Minahasan family.

I met Dr. S\* at the KMR II meeting on July 17, 2001 and was able to meet with him a few times after our initial conversation. He is the head of a local NGO that aims to educate the people of Minahasa on political issues. I will refrain from describing his political views in detail here as he will come up again in the following section. For my current purposes, I will elaborate on his opinion that both the Bantik and the Bobontehu groups should be included under the umbrella identity of “Minahasa”. Dr. S. argues that although these two groups were not one of the original Minahasans as I have described above, they should be included as such for political reasons. He believes it is unwise to alienate these groups in a time of political re-configuration. He has been criticized for this view by those that take a more puritan view of Minahasan ethnicity. Although he was one of my more open-minded sources of information on this matter, he stopped short of endorsing the idea that a new province or regional government of Minahasa should not be based on the will of Minahasans, the dominant ethnic group. In other words, he did not see a major problem with establishing a provincial government based upon the laws, politics, religion, or voice of a dominant ethnic group. However, like most Minahasans he does not envision a future Minahasa that prevents other ethnic groups or religions from existing in the regency or province. The only other person I interviewed with similar opinions concerning the inclusion of the Bantiks and Bobontehu was the son of a *losmen* owner in Tomohon. This person’s justification for his views reflect a selective rendering of history that maintains that these two groups (Bantik and Bobontehu) were originally from Minahasa but that they moved away for an undisclosed amount of time. They had finally managed to migrate back to their homeland and based on this, they should also be considered Minahasan.<sup>228</sup>

The opinions represented by these two informants may represent a minority, or they could represent a larger population, but based on my limited time in the area, it is possible that I was unable to obtain a full-spectrum of ideas pertaining to “Minahasan”. In my own opinion, their ideas reflect the ongoing process of identity formulation in Minahasa, and that the lines between “Minahasan” and “Non Minahasan” continue, as they have in the past, to be negotiable, formulated and reformulated. From these two people, it is possible to see that

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\* The name of my informant has been omitted for ethical reasons, due to the possible sensitivity of my topic.

<sup>228</sup> This version of history is briefly mentioned by David Henley (1992):56. Apparently the account comes from a single reference dating from 1916.

either for political reasons, or through a changing rendition of “traditional” history, “Minahasa” or those able to participate equally in a future political organization could possibly continue to grow and encompass even more migrant groups as it has in the past. As one Minahasan was recorded as saying; “It is of little importance to inquire about our precise genealogical links, in the end we are all related by Lumimuut, the founding ancestress of the Minahasan people.”<sup>229</sup> Related to this, Eriksen has written that “..if a shared ethnic identity presupposes a notion of shared ancestry, how many generations should one feel compelled to go back in order to find a starting point for one’s ethnic identity? There is no objective answer to that question: the answer is conditional on the social context.”<sup>230</sup> Despite this conjecture, the implementation of UU22/99 and UU25/99 has instigated a movement that attempts to solidify ethnic boundaries of exclusion and inclusion. The rather malleable nature of Minahasan ethnicity may be changing. As I have previously stated, the new autonomy laws were meant to devolve power from the central government to the regencies, but it appears that power is currently being devolved to majority ethnic groups that dominate these newly empowered “local” governments.

One particular cleavage in Minahasan identity that appears to be growing in intensity is the one that has historically existed between Christians and Muslims in the area. This may (or may not) have an important effect on migrant groups or even the Ponosakan Minahasans who have traditionally been linked with Islam. While Christian Minahasans dominate the province and have co-existed with Muslims for over a century without major incident, the current global and national fascination with terrorism, specifically Islamic- fundamentalist terrorism has altered this relationship considerably. One need only read through current issues of local Minahasan papers to determine that Christian Minahasans feel vulnerable in their position as minorities on the national level, and yet this fear is subsumed by the fact that they are in control of their immediate region. In this context, we may better understand the push for increased regional autonomy as a way to consolidate political, economic and social power in an ever-changing national climate.

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<sup>229</sup> Lundstrom-Burghoorn 178.

## 2. History of Administration and Decentralization in Minahasa:

“More common than sharp ethnic boundaries are patterns of continuous variation on familiar themes. Therefore, when tribal or ethnic boundaries are clearly marked, they can usually be traced to specific histories of confrontation and engagement”<sup>231</sup>

While the “primordial” version of Minahasan ethnicity defines “Minahasan” as a group of people who may ultimately trace their lineages to the mythical characters of Toar and Lumimuut, history shows that it was probably a combination of western influences and administrative styles that helped to solidify both the social and geographical boundaries between “Minahasans” and “others”. This is not to say that a distinct Minahasan community would not have evolved along the same lines without western influence, and indeed it has been shown elsewhere that cultural and linguistic links between the major Minahasan sub-groups helped to give initial form to “Minahasa”.<sup>232</sup> However, in order to identify the processes that made Minahasa a solidified social, political, ethnic, and geographic phenomenon, a closer examination of the regions historical relationship with The Netherlands must be undertaken.

Historians have shown that the territory of “Minahasa” as it is defined on modern maps can be traced back to an agreement brokered by the VOC and agreed upon by the “chiefs of Manado” and the neighboring Bolaang king in 1694. A more stringent contract was signed by the VOC and Bolaang in 1756 that would forever establish the boundary between the kingdom of Bolaang Mongondow and the *Landstreek van Manado* (what would later become known as *Minahasa*). “The boundary which they created ultimately came to separate two distinct countries where formerly there had been amorphous fluidity.”<sup>233</sup> Thus, “Minahasa” became a bounded territory, recognizable on VOC maps and subject to the company’s control. The line dividing these two territories was seen as a necessary step in undermining the influence and power of the Bolaang king to the south while at the same time helping to consolidate VOC territorial rights and the obedience of those inhabiting the area.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* 69.

<sup>231</sup> Tania Murray Li, “Articulating Indigenous Identity in Indonesia: Resource Politics and the Tribal Slot” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42(1) (2000) 157.

<sup>232</sup> For information on the relationships between various groups that occupied North Sulawesi before colonial contact, refer to Henley (1996) 23-31.

<sup>233</sup> Henley (1996) 33-34.

<sup>234</sup> Henley, (1996) 32-33. Apparently, several groups under VOC jurisdiction continued to pay tribute to Bolaang. Henley asserts that it was only after the Dutch and loyal native soldiers forcibly dealt with these communities that the boundary was truly enforced.

Once the territory of VOC rule had been distinguished from neighboring areas, the need to establish lucrative trade operations became of the utmost concern for the company. While the physical conditions of North Sulawesi were ideal for agricultural production of almost every variety, the prevailing social atmosphere was prone to violent conflict and rivalries amongst the major extended village communities (*walak*) and linguistic/ “ethnic” groups. Schouten has written that “It is evident from the many wars that inter-*walak* relations were characterized by hostility rather than by unity”.<sup>235</sup> Frequent disputes in the area only served to hinder the production and distribution of goods from the inland areas to the VOC trade posts. The relationships between the various groups had never been harmonious, but an apparent growing availability of firearms and the intensification of a prosperous slave trade during the 1780s and 1790s helped to invigorate the already present rivalries and hostilities.<sup>236</sup> For these reasons, the Dutch would soon find themselves playing the role of intermediary between local factions.<sup>237</sup> As part of this role, the company organized meetings among the various *walak* chiefs that allowed the Dutch to “guide” the resolution of internal arguments among the various council members, as well as provide suggestive operational/production strategies to these same chiefs. It is from the earliest account of one of these meetings that the word “Minahasa” (derived from *mina-esa*, meaning to ‘become one’) is used for the first time in Dutch written accounts. “When the word Minahasa first appears in Dutch records in 1789, it refers not to a territory, nor even to its population as a whole, but to the *landraad* or council of chiefs convened to receive Dutch instructions and resolve internal disputes. Not until 1822 is there any hard evidence that the term is being used in a geographic or ethnic sense.”<sup>238</sup>

Despite its growing role and influence over the Minahasan population, it should also be noted that for the most part, the VOC left the mode and organization of agricultural production fairly untouched.<sup>239</sup> While it was understood that at least some intervention was necessary to maintain a prosperous and relatively peaceful flow of goods to the main seaports, there was apparently little need to directly intervene in traditional agricultural endeavors.

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<sup>235</sup> Schouten 50

<sup>236</sup> Schouten 49-50

<sup>237</sup> For a comprehensive discussion pertaining to the judiciary, or mediatory role of the Dutch in Minahasan society during the colonial period, see David E.F. Henley, “Jealousy and Justice: The indigenous roots of colonial rule in northern Sulawesi” Paper for the KITLVworkshop ‘Violence in Indonesia’ (Leiden, The Netherlands; 13-15 December 2000).

<sup>238</sup> Henley (1996) 36 & 40; See also Schouten 50.

<sup>239</sup> Helmut Buchholt, “The Impact of the Christian Mission on the Processes of Social Differentiation” in Schefold, Reimar (ed.) *Minahasa Past and Present: Tradition and Transition in an Outer Island Region of Indonesia*. (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1994)12-26: 13.

This attitude would change drastically when the Dutch government took control over the area in 1817, subjecting the population to a system of more intensive control which was administered through the village chiefs. From this point on, the Dutch colonial government would play an integral part of the region's cultural, economic, political, and social transformation. Schouten has even argued that "No other part of the archipelago was ever subjected to such heavy measures applied simultaneously on all fronts (political, social, economic and cultural)".<sup>240</sup>

Coupled with the colonial government's intensified interference into the affairs of the region's population was the establishment of formal missionary schools in both Manado and Tondano between 1822 and 1826 (although more informal missionary activity in the area had been pursued since the late 1600s).<sup>241</sup> These missionary schools were among the first attempts at mass education in Indonesia, giving the population of Minahasa a considerable advantage at obtaining colonial government jobs in the civil service and military. While Christian missionaries infiltrated nearly every district and village, the Dutch government made traditional religious practices nearly impossible to follow by outlawing important ritual feasts and social gatherings. The religious and social "vacuum" created by these policies made it easier for the missionaries to instill Christianity and western education into Minahasan society.<sup>242</sup>

Several attempts have been made to adequately explain the rapid and complete transformation of Minahasan society into a group that has become synonymous with Christianity. Indeed an explanation is needed if we are to understand the statistical data for the number of Minahasans that were successfully converted in the mid-1800s. According to these numbers, there were 11,000 Christian Minahasans out of an estimated population of 93,000 in 1847. But as Henley has noted, "by 1880 some 80,000 Minahasans-more than three quarters of the population – were baptized".<sup>243</sup> Probably the most persuasive explanation of this rapid conversion rate suggests that at least two cultural characteristics may have contributed a great deal to the process. The first of these characteristics is the "admiration" for strength and powerful people in traditional Minahasan society:

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<sup>240</sup> Schouten 54.

<sup>241</sup> Kroeskamp 109.

<sup>242</sup> Buchholt 15.

<sup>243</sup> Henley (1996) 53.

Traditional culture and religion, for instance, involved an admiration for strength and power-hence, in part, the ritual significance of headhunting. The Dutch were incontrovertibly strong and powerful, so it was natural to conclude that their religion must be particularly efficacious. Precolonial religion was also very concerned with social prestige. This was reflected in the dual function of *foso* as feasts of merit as well as religious ceremonies. Once it had been established that the Dutch- largely because of their power- were prestigious, then the imitation of their religious practices also became a matter of prestige.<sup>244</sup>

Henley also suggests that the “endemic” rivalries that existed in pre-colonial Minahasa helped the missionary cause. Apparently there are at least a few examples of an entire village converting almost overnight simply because it was discovered that a neighboring village had already done so.<sup>245</sup> Both western education and religion became associated with higher status among members of Minahasan society, making the attainment of both a highly popular endeavor. Dutch style clothing, language, household furnishings and mannerisms had become important markers of prestige and identification by the 1850s, and it was these “westernized” attributes that would help shape Minahasan identity into the next century.<sup>246</sup> By 1860, a few decades after the arrival of the Netherlands Missionary Society (Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap NZG), 57 percent of the Minahasan population had been converted to Christianity.<sup>247</sup> At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dutch language had surpassed Malay as the language of the educated elite and many of those employed as civil servants. Buchholt suggests that Minahasan identity became more closely tied with “the Dutch” as the church itself became employed officially by the Dutch colonial system and missionaries themselves became “semi-government officials”<sup>248</sup>

The increasing demand for coffee in Europe would also have a profound effect on Minahasa, ushering in a forced coffee cultivation system (between 1822-1899) that would precede the infamous *Cultuurstelsel* system in Java (implemented in 1830). It was coffee that eventually elevated Minahasa’s territorial value over that of many other Dutch holdings, and despite its statistically sparse population and small geographic area, Minahasa “was considered well into the nineteenth century to be the ‘most important region in the Dutch possessions’ east of Java”.<sup>249</sup> With this elevation in status came the intensification of Dutch policies regarding traditional agricultural practices and economic transactions. The entire

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<sup>244</sup> Henley (1996) 53.

<sup>245</sup> Henley (1996) 53-54.

<sup>246</sup> Buchholt 21.

<sup>247</sup> Schouten 108.

<sup>248</sup> Buchholt 2.

economic and social fabric of Minahasan society was uprooted as its population was forced to produce coffee for the lucrative Dutch monopoly. Corvee labor (*Heerendiensten*) was also utilized in order to develop the region's infrastructure and the payment of poll taxes became required by law.<sup>250</sup> Because of Minahasa's increasing importance to the Dutch, the region's administrative apparatus also continued to grow.

By 1824, the residency of Manado had been formally established (which included Minahasa, Gorontalo, Kwandang, Sangit, Talaud and Bolaang Mongondow) and fell under the direct jurisdiction of the Governor of the Moluccas. The region would remain under the influence of the Moluccan Governor until 1864, when it became an independent residency. At this point, the administrative bureaucracy of Minahasa was expanded, and the *walak* leaders themselves became incorporated into the colonial state system as administrators of 25 distinct geographic territories known as districts.<sup>251</sup> These district heads (*hukum besar*) were appointed by the Dutch government, supposedly based upon their affiliation with ancient ruling families. Serving directly under the *hukum besar* was the *hukum kedua*. "The two heads received their remuneration in kind, sometimes in cash, and further in the form of feudal services to be performed by the population, also referred to as guard duties."<sup>252</sup> Below the level of the *hukum besar* and *hukum kedua*, was the *hukum tua*. The *hukum tua* operated at the village level and was directly selected by the village population. This position consisted largely of maintaining order, organizing forced labor operations, and trying cases of minor offences.

With the official declaration of the "Ethical Policy" in 1901, several changes were made to the administrative and educational implementation of Dutch policy throughout the archipelago. While a substantial western-style educational system had been incorporated into Minahasan society since the early to mid-1800s, the Ethical Policy would lead to the more extensive establishment of schools in other parts of the Dutch East Indies as well. Secondary and specialty schools for natives were created in Java, especially around the area of Batavia. The government would no longer rely on the Christian missions alone to provide education to the masses, but began to take a more "hands on" approach to the issue as part of one of the Ethical Policy "strands". Despite the effort to spread or more evenly distribute educational

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<sup>249</sup> Schouten 55.

<sup>250</sup> Buchholt 13.

<sup>251</sup> Henley (1996) 39; Kroeskamp 101.

<sup>252</sup> Kroeskamp 101.

opportunities for increasing numbers of natives, Minahasans would retain their position as the most highly educated population in the Indies at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with 40 percent of its population considered “literate” (compared with Java-Madura at 5.5 percent, Sumatra 10.7 percent, Jakarta 12.2 percent and Surabaya 12 percent).<sup>253</sup> By 1906, 60 percent of the administrative budget for the Residency of Manado (including Minahasa) had been allocated for educational programs while 93 government schools and 186 Christian schools had been established to serve a total population of about 200,000.<sup>254</sup> Due to their substantial educational opportunities, as well as their apparently close association with the Dutch, Minahasans were often given advantageous positions in the colonial administration as civil servants or as favored members of the Royal Army of the Netherlands East Indies (Koninklijk Nederlandsch Indisch Leger, KNIL).

Throughout the early 1900s, Minahasans would continue to become more closely associated with the Dutch colonial government and its administration. Minahasans, along with the Ambonese, were sent to various areas and islands as missionaries, officials, and soldiers in order to promote Christianity and western education. As they traveled and dispersed widely among the islands, Minahasans became increasingly aware of their distinctly “Minahasan” identity. Dutch policy provided Minahasan soldiers and administrative bureaucrats with special status and rights which served to further isolate Minahasans from other ethnic groups they came into contact with. An example of such obvious privilege can be seen in the way soldiers from Minahasa were allowed to live separately from soldiers of other ethnic affiliations. In fact, Minahasan soldiers were often provided with special barracks that separated them from other ethnic groups. “Other than being part of the colonial system, there was no reason at all at the time for them to integrate socially or culturally with those ethnic groups.”<sup>255</sup>

Along with this increasingly obvious association with the colonial government came the special administrative status of Minahasa. In 1919, the Dutch “created a political organization in Minahasa to provide the people with an instrument for democracy”.<sup>256</sup> The “*Minahasa Raad*” or Minahasa Council, was made up of 36 members that were democratically selected to debate matters such as taxes and development needs in the area.

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<sup>253</sup> Buchholt 17.

<sup>254</sup> Buchholt 17.

<sup>255</sup> Leirissa 108.

<sup>256</sup> Leirissa 109.

As Richard Leirissa has pointed out, this organization was unique at this point in Indonesian history and may be considered the first official democratic organization to be incorporated into the Dutch East Indies government. As was suggested earlier in this discussion, the *Volksraad* (1918), or people's council based in Java, was also designed to help "decentralize" and democratize several administrative functions in the Indies, but its members were chosen by the Dutch government and only 15 members were actually natives. More relevant to the issue of decentralization is the fact that the *Minahasa Raad* "based their goals on the Decentralization law of 1903, with self determination as the political aim. This was regarded as the most effective way to preserve the Minahasan identity molded by its history".<sup>257</sup> While writing on the state of decentralization policy in 1931, Cohen was able to remark that nearly every "local" administrative government in the Indies still required a Dutch majority membership, the one exception being Minahasa because of the area's "western orientation".<sup>258</sup> This special status and early exposure to democratic administration processes left Minahasa with a political heritage of colonial democracy, rather than indigenous feudalism.<sup>259</sup>

Minahasa's decidedly privileged association with the Dutch would continue to benefit the Minahasan people well into the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, with the first stirrings of truly *Indonesian* nationalist movements, Minahasans would often find themselves caught between their "Native" and distinctly "Dutch" affiliations. With the foundation of such nationalist organizations such as *Budi Otomo* (Noble Endeavor) (1908) and the Islamic *Muhammadiyah* (1912), there was an increasing pressure for all natives of the Indies to re-examine their loyalties and ultimately, their identity as a people. Especially popular at this time was the Muslim organization *Sarekat Islam* (Islamic Federation) (1912), which eventually developed into Indonesia's first mass movement with a membership well over 1 million by 1920.<sup>260</sup> Reflecting the increasing interest in political and social movements of the time, "*Perserikatan Minahasa*" (Minahasa Federation) was established in Magelang in 1909. At least initially, the *Perserikatan Minahasa* provided Minahasan officials and soldiers (based in Java) with political and social organization. Participation soon spread to include Minahasan students and by 1915, there were branches in Minahasa as well.<sup>261</sup> It was a "moderate" association that did not seek to question or challenge Dutch colonial presence in

<sup>257</sup> Leirissa 109.

<sup>258</sup> Cohen 224. The actual phrase used by Cohen was "Westersch georienteerde bevolking".

<sup>259</sup> Harvey 21.

<sup>260</sup> Eposito 206-207.

<sup>261</sup> Henley (1996) 99.

the archipelago, but instead promised to seek greater equality and privileged status for Minahasans within the existing colonial system. At about the same time, other political associations were developing among a variety of ethnic groups such as the Ambonese (*Sarekat Ambon*), the West Javanese (*Pasundan*), and the Madurese (*Sarekat Madura*), and yet *Perserikatan Minahasa* had obtained enough members by 1917 to be considered the second largest native association in the Indies.<sup>262</sup>

As a more nationalist and anti-colonial discourse gained in popularity throughout Indonesia, *Perserikatan Minahasa* eventually gave way to the tremendously popular “*Persatuan Minahasa*” (Minahasan Union) (1927). Both of these Minahasan organizations drew their strength from a specifically “Minahasan” society, and each relied on issues pertaining to the welfare of an especially “Minahasan” population. However, *Perserikatan Minahasa* had been occupied with the social and economic position of Minahasans in a colonial government context, while proponents of *Persatuan Minahasa* seemed to understand that Dutch superiority over the archipelago was becoming tenuous at best. *Persatuan Minahasa* “tried to find a place for Minahasans in the new solidarity of Indonesians”.<sup>263</sup> Minahasans had begun to realize that their days of privileged association with the Dutch were nearing an end, and *Persatuan Minahasa* was a political expression of this ensuing insecurity. Still, the founding leadership of *Persatuan Minahasa* also seemed unwilling to completely break away from their Dutch associations.

One of the first and most outspoken leaders of *Persatuan Minahasa* was G.S.S.J. Ratulangie (1890-1949).<sup>264</sup> Although he received his education in Mathematics and Natural Sciences back in The Netherlands, he is fondly remembered by modern Minahasans as one of the most important leaders and activists of Indonesia’s formative years. Ratulangie is respected and honored by Minahasans for several reasons, but perhaps he is most famous for urging Minahasa into the embrace of the Indonesian nation and away from an increasingly problematic Dutch affiliation. Ratulangie is often quoted or conjured up in modern discussions concerning decentralization in Indonesia among Minahasans and his attitudes concerning the process seem to have finally prevailed decades after his death. A strong

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<sup>262</sup> Henley (1996) 99.

<sup>263</sup> Leirissa 110; See also Schouten 194-195. Schouten explains that the *Persatuan Minahasa* movement initially began as an organization that was in favor of an independent church of Minahasa, free of Dutch government control. Later the organization was expanded to include more encompassing political aims such as the promotion of a federal republic of Indonesia.

<sup>264</sup> Schouten 194-195. Ratulangie was actually one of the formulators of *Persatuan Minahasa*.

proponent of decentralization and even federalism, Ratulangie repeatedly argued that if independence from the Dutch were ever realized, a decentralized Indonesian government would be necessary in order to maintain the Indonesian nation. “In Ratulangie’s view, regional autonomy was simply a precondition for Indonesian unity.”<sup>265</sup> Further, he envisioned localized governments based on cultural or ethnic groupings. Unsurprisingly, Minahasans were witness to several public attempts to define, redefine and solidify the meaning of Minahasan culture during this time.<sup>266</sup>

David Henley has published a very clear account of Ratulangie’s political views and I refer to Henley’s translations of the leader’s words here. Henley asserts that at least initially, Ratulangie regarded an Indonesian government based on nationalist ideology as illegitimate or at least problematic. In a formative time for Indonesia, Ratulangie believed that Indonesia was ill-prepared for independence and he remained unconvinced (at least from Minahasa’s perspective) that complete independence from the Dutch was necessary or even desirable. In 1928, Ratulangie announced that the *Persatuan Minahasa* political party would not become part of Sukarno’s *Permufakatan Perhimpunan-Perhimpunan Politik Kebangsaan Indonesia-PPPKI* (Consultative Union of Indonesian Nationalist Political Organizations):

“One reason for the central committee’s refusal to join is that the PPPKI is based on *kebangsaan* in name only. In reality its unity does not reflect the rights of *each bangsa* in Indonesia. The Sarekat Islam party and the PNI in particular, although they claim to act on the basis of *kebangsaan*, do not represent specific *bangsa* in the sense just explained.”<sup>267</sup>

“Regarding the form which independence should take, it is first of all necessary to acknowledge the diversity of *bangsa* present here, to establish what they have in common and also in what ways their cultures differ. In the speaker’s view the peoples of Indonesia can be divided into territorial units, each with its own rights as a *bangsa*. Any political federation must take this as its starting point....”<sup>268</sup>

<sup>265</sup> Henley (1996)132.

<sup>266</sup> Henley (1996)133. For a specific example of this attempt to “invigorate” the meaning of “Minahasan”, see G.S.S.J. Ratulangie, “Het Minahassisch ideaal”, *Voordrachten en Mededeelingen (van de) Indische Vereeniging* Vol. 9 & 10: 31-45. (Delft, The Netherlands, 1914). Ratulangie attempts to make the case that Minahasan identity is very much associated with Christian religion and western education. This particular paper was written as part of a larger argument that suggests that Minahasans have a moral obligation or duty to spread these western influences throughout the entire island of Sulawesi.

<sup>267</sup> Henley (1992) 225. For an elaboration on Ratulangie’s view of Serikat Islam, see G.S.S.J. Ratulangie, “Serikat Islam” *Onze Kolonien Onder Redacties Van R.A. van Sandick* No. 5. Serie 10 (1913). Document available at the KITLV Library, Leiden- The Netherlands.

<sup>268</sup> As translated from *Fikiran*, 23 June 1928 by Henley (1992) 225.

Ratulangie envisioned an independent Indonesia neatly inhabited by groups of people that shared cultural, “traditional” traits that were bound by specific territories of space. Ratulangie seems to have recognized at an early stage the power inherent within the concept of each ‘bangsa’ existing within an encompassing “Indonesia”.<sup>269</sup>

While the Ethical Policy would initiate a gradual erosion of special rights and privileges for Minahasans, the historically close relationship between the Dutch and Minahasans would not be severed quickly or easily. Even as nationalist sentiments spread throughout the archipelago, Minahasans seemed unwilling to abandon the Dutch colonial system under which they might maintain their position as “favored sons” or individuality as Minahasans. As independence from the Dutch was declared in 1945 on Java, a popular movement called Twarpo- “Twaalfde Provincie” was being formed in Minahasa (est. March 1946).<sup>270</sup> Twarpo’s main political goal was the eventual inclusion of Minahasa as the twelfth province of the Dutch state. At the very least, leaders such as Ratulangie (who eventually came to terms with the probable status of Indonesia as an independent state) continued to champion the idea of a federal Indonesia, complete with a decentralized form of government which would recognize the rights of each “*bangsa*” within the nation. Federalism and decentralization policies provided a way in which the tension between ethnic and Indonesian nationalisms could be resolved, providing the recognition of the ethnic group within the context of the nation. “*Persatuan Minahasa*, of course, did have a clear vision of how the Indonesian state would be constructed: as a federation of regional *bangsa*. Federalism was the only practical way to allay Minahasan fears of domination by their more numerous neighbors, and the only ideological way to reconcile the old Minahasan nationalism with the new Indonesian one.”<sup>271</sup> As mentioned earlier in this paper, Dutch administrative policies of the time also reflected a tendency towards federalism and administration based on traditional or cultural territorial units. Further, the administration of these regions would involve the “recognition, restoration, and strengthening of indigenous customary law communes and larger ethnical groups”.<sup>272</sup> This more federal vision of Indonesia would remain popular among the outer island populations even as demands for independence from the Dutch grew

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<sup>269</sup> It seems quite clear that the term “bangsa” has gone through significant change since Ratulangie’s time, or at the very least it seems to have shifted. While “suku bangsa” is generally used today to describe “ethnicity” or a smaller group within Indonesia, it seems clear that Ratulangie used “setiap bangsa” or “every nationality” here to refer to each ethnic group within the colony.

<sup>270</sup> “Twaalfde Provincie” is the Dutch equivalent of “Twelfth Province”.

<sup>271</sup> Henley (1996)130-131.

in strength, but federalism would retain its fatal association with colonialism making it difficult to gain a strong following among nationalist leaders.

By 1949, Minahasans were forced to make the choice between joining the revolutionary republicans in an effort to create a unitary state, or siding with the Dutch and their quest to set up an alternative federal Indonesia based in the outer islands. Ironically, the *Minahasaraad* (the very body that had been initiated by the Dutch in an effort to increase democracy in Minahasa) voted for integration with the *Federal* Republic of Indonesia at the end of April, 1949.<sup>273</sup> Although Federalism would be dropped from Indonesia's formal administrative policy in favor of a more centralized government structure, Sukarno was only able to do so after promising regional leaders that decentralization would progress and regional autonomy would be increased.<sup>274</sup> Following closely behind the *Minahasaraad's* decision to side with the Republicans, colonial army units based in Minahasa mutinied against the Dutch and became part of the Republican army in May of 1950. These combined actions saved Minahasa from the fate of the Ambonese Christian soldiers of the Dutch colonial army who eventually fought and lost in a bloody struggle against Republican forces in 1950.<sup>275</sup>

Equally important to the issue of federalism during these formative years in Indonesia's history was the question of religion and its incorporation into the plans for a state ideology. Ratulangie is remembered by Minahasans today as the most important champion of this debate as well. He was a member of the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence that met in Jakarta in August of 1945, and his close proximity to Hatta and Sukarno just days before the actual proclamation of independence allowed him to argue against the now famous "*Piagam Jakarta*" or Jakarta Charter. "Before the proclamation was a fact (August 17, 1945), Ratulangie and his followers stepped forward and negotiated with a number of Indonesian leaders, especially with Hatta, to have a very important clause dropped from the draft constitution. That clause (to become known as the Jakarta Charter) stated that Muslim Indonesians were obliged to carry out Islamic Law, and the condition that the head of

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<sup>272</sup> **Vandenbosch** 139.

<sup>273</sup> Although Minahasa had agreed to become part of the Federal Republic of Indonesia, a unitary form of government would be adopted by Indonesia's leadership in mid-1950. Federalism was completely abandoned.

<sup>274</sup> **Brown** 122-125.

<sup>275</sup> For an interesting commentary on the historical implications of the Ambonese (South Maluku Republic) breakaway movement on modern Maluku socio-political problems, see "The Spice Islands' Legacy of Violence" *Asia Times Online* (15 Feb. 2002).

state must be a Muslim.”<sup>276</sup> In effect, Ratulangie is credited by many Minahasans with having saved Indonesia from becoming an Islamic state.

Despite the exclusion of the Jakarta Charter from the national constitution, the proponents of an Islamic state of Indonesia would resurface in 1949 in order to declare war against the Sukarno-Hatta government and proclaim “dar al-Islam” (Domain of Islam) in three of Indonesia’s provinces.<sup>277</sup> The revolt eventually disintegrated (officially over by 1962), but would remain as a powerful symbol for other Muslim leaders interested in the pursuit of an Islamic Indonesia, as well as a reminder to politicians of the importance of the Muslim majority in national politics. For Minahasans, it was a reminder of their vulnerability as a Christian minority in the new unitary republic, *even* if the president himself supported a secular version of the Indonesian state. Their position as Christians would no longer associate them with the powerful Dutch colonialists, but would instead relegate them to a nearly powerless position, with a homeland located on a distant and “outer” island.<sup>278</sup> Equally distressing for Minahasans was the apparent popularity of Islamic-based political parties (such as the *Masyumi* coalition) that was suspected of harboring fundamental disagreements with Sukarno’s broad religious tolerance and secular attitudes.<sup>279</sup> Without a secular state, Indonesia’s Christian, Hindu or otherwise religiously affiliated societies would become disenfranchised from the ongoing effort to forge an Indonesian nation and identity.

Adding to the general feeling of isolation and vulnerability as a minority ethnic and religious group, Minahasans also began to feel that they were being marginalized by an increasingly Javanese central government and the fledgling government’s “Java-centric” economic policies. This disgruntlement is easy to understand considering the fact that by 1955, Java was contributing only 12 percent to Indonesia’s total exports, while 80 percent of the nation’s foreign earnings were being spent on development projects on Java.<sup>280</sup> These flagrantly biased economic practices came in conjunction with worsening economic conditions for the entire nation as the price of rubber (Indonesia’s number one export) fell by

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<sup>276</sup> Leirissa 111.

<sup>277</sup> These provinces included Aceh, West Java and South Sulawesi. **Ricklefs** 247; **Esposito** 211; **Drake** 43. This movement is also sometimes written as “Darul Islam”.

<sup>278</sup> **Kees Van Dijk**, “From Colony to Independent State: The Changing Fate in Minahasa of a Tiny Muslim Minority Amongst Christians” in **Reimar Schefold** (ed.), *Minahasa Past and Present: Tradition and Transition in an Outer Island Region of Indonesia*. (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1995): 73-106;84.

<sup>279</sup> **Esposito** 213. *Masyumi* is also sometimes referred to as *Masjumi* in the literature. By the time of Indonesia’s 1955 parliamentary elections, *Masyumi* had become the second most popular political part in the country. Although the party did not explicitly call for the instatement of Islamic law in the 1950s, many groups suspected the organization of more fundamentalist ideals and aspirations. See **Ricklefs** 240 & 244.

71 percent in 1952.<sup>281</sup> The central government's monopoly on copra products would become especially problematic in North Sulawesi, and farmers from the area protested the blatant favoritism bestowed upon copra farmers in Java and Sumatra when compared to farmers in Eastern Indonesia.<sup>282</sup> Yet another source of turmoil stemmed from the fact that although decentralization and increased regional autonomy had been promised by Sukarno with the declaration of the unitary republic, the government of Indonesia seemed to be taking the shape of a more centralized structure with a power base in Jakarta.<sup>283</sup> "The criticisms directed against the Foundation (central government monopoly) indicate that the underlying issue was indeed that of control over copra trade and revenue, and the fundamental complaint of the region was that decision making was over-centralized in Jakarta."<sup>284</sup>

In an effort to bypass what was evidently considered an ineffectual and unfair monopoly system, local businessmen, copra farmers and member of the army based in North Sulawesi began to rebel against the central government by creating one of the most prosperous (illegal) barter-trade and smuggling operations in the islands.<sup>285</sup> In reaction to several shipments of copra (of more than 25,000 tons) that had been moved illegally from Bitung harbor between February and April 1956, the central government closed the harbor briefly until Minahasans threatened to revolt. While an outright revolt was evaded by re-opening the harbor, it was not long before a culmination of issues and events stemming from problematic relations between regional and central interests erupted into the Permesta Rebellion (1958-1961).

At the beginning, the rebellion represented the combined efforts of military and civilian leaders from Sumatra, North Sulawesi and South Sulawesi, but as mentioned earlier, the rebellion lasted some three years longer in the northern tip of Sulawesi as support for Permesta declined in the other areas. Initially, both Sukarno and Hatta approved of the goals set out by Permesta's leadership in the Permesta Charter (*Piagam Permesta*) in March 1957.<sup>286</sup> The demands that were presented as part of this charter were as follows: 1.) The implementation of greater regional autonomy, 2.) That more attention be given to regional

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<sup>280</sup> Drake 47.

<sup>281</sup> Ricklefs 245.

<sup>282</sup> Harvey notes that at the time of the Korean War boom on copra, producers in East Indonesia received Rp. 140 per quintal from the central government while producers on Java and Sumatra received Rp. 240 per quintal.

Harvey 35.

<sup>283</sup> Events leading up to Sukarno's move towards centralized government described on pages 42-45 in this paper.

<sup>284</sup> Harvey 35.

<sup>285</sup> Harvey 36-38.

development, 3.) More equitable allocation of revenue, 4.) The authorization of barter trade, 5.) That more money be allocated for internal security problems, 6.) The development of East Indonesia as a territorial defense area. 6.) That both Hatta and Sukarno lead the nation (Hatta was a staunch supporter of regional autonomy, one of the issues of debate between himself and Sukarno) 7.) That the position of the armed forces be changed in accordance with the Jogya charter.<sup>287</sup> Although the Permesta phenomenon is now remembered as one of the most serious threats to have ever tested the unity of Indonesia as a nation, it began as a call for the implementation of decentralization legislature that had already been approved by the Indonesian government. (Interestingly, the economic demands set out by the Permesta movement mirror the modern decentralization law (UU25/1999) which states that 70 percent of a regions revenue will be used by local governments while 30 percent will be allocated for central government use.)<sup>288</sup> Whatever the intentions behind the Permesta demands, regional-central tensions between Jakarta and Manado had become insurmountable by February 1958. At the end of the same month, Manado was bombed by the Indonesian air-force and troops were deployed to the area in June.

Clearly, Permesta should be ultimately understood as a struggle over economic and development resources between the “center” and the “periphery” rather than an independence movement. However, ethnic tensions between the Javanese and “outer” islanders coupled (at least in Minahasa) with fears about the growing influence of communism and Islamic political movements served to exacerbate the situation. Van Dijk has asserted that for Minahasans, “the struggle with the central government took on a religious dimension. Many of the government troops who were sent to Minahasa were Javanese, and most of those soldiers were Muslim. They had to fight rebels the major of whom were Protestants. For the Muslims in Minahasa this was not an easy time.”<sup>289</sup> And although the Permesta rebels in Minahasa had initially been motivated by a desire to change national policies related to the realization of decentralization, their leadership was ultimately able to gain popular support for the Permesta cause only when actual fighting had commenced, and “Minahasa” itself became threatened. As Harvey has stated “Popular support for the rebellion was based more on ethnic and regional sentiment than on any broadly based commitment to abstract principles. Thus,

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<sup>286</sup> Harvey 54.

<sup>287</sup> Harvey 48.

<sup>288</sup> Harvey 41.

<sup>289</sup> Van Dijk 87.

although the Permesta rebellion received sufficient support in Minahasa to sustain nearly three years of guerilla warfare, it did not generate any large scale mobilization of the mass of the population of those areas on the basis of ideological appeals.”<sup>290</sup> In other words, by the end it had become evident that Permesta was a distinctly “Minahasan” affair, fought primarily when Minahasa became the subject of a real military attack. Looking at the Permesta phenomenon from another angle, Helmut Buchholt has interpreted the Permesta rebellion in Minahasa “as an attempt to re-activate Minahasan influence in the post-colonial Java-dominated Indonesian State”.<sup>291</sup> Certainly it can be said that at some point, Permesta became a regional movement imbued with ethnic pride and/or religious affiliations, and as such, the rebellion would serve as a motivating factor behind Sukarno’s abrupt departure from decentralization policies or the implementation of increased regional autonomy.

Decentralization policy would suffer just as greatly in Minahasa as in the rest of Indonesia in the years following Sukarno’s declaration of “Guided Democracy”. As was the case in all of Indonesia’s provinces and regencies, Minahasa would become increasingly dependent on the central government for development funding throughout Suharto’s even more centralized “New Order” regime. Both Sukarno and Suharto were able to successfully implement decentralization legislature that in fact placed more control of the regions directly into the hands of central authorities. Therefore, while the establishment of the Province of North Sulawesi (Sulawesi Utara) was granted permission to move ahead in 1964, the administration of the province would continue to be almost completely controlled by politicians back in Jakarta. North Sulawesi’s leadership, from the provincial to the district levels, would continue to be hand picked by central authorities and little (if any) meaningful political participation was extended to include the people of North Sulawesi.

It should be noted however that as a province, North Sulawesi has been almost completely dominated by Minahasans on a political and economic level and in fact, every governor of the province that has been chosen since the late 1960s has come from the Minahasan ethnic community. In 1994, Buchholt reported that about 80 percent of the personnel in the governor’s office were of Minahasan origin.<sup>292</sup> Further, the economic and political capital of the province, Manado, is just North of Minahasa proper while the most important harbor in North Sulawesi is located on Minahasa’s southern shores (Bitung harbor).

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<sup>290</sup> Harvey 153.

<sup>291</sup> Buchholt 177.

<sup>292</sup> Buchholt 185.

Minahasa's overwhelming position of elevated status and prosperity when compared to the other regencies in North Sulawesi (namely Gorontalo, Bolaang Mongondow, and Sangihe Talaud) has been the source of constant disgruntlement for other regions and ethnic groups in the province. In an interesting twist on the standard "center/periphery" relations between Jakarta and Manado, there exists somewhat of a strain between Manado/Minahasa and the "other" regencies of the province as well. These tensions are also sometimes expressed in ethnic or religious terms because each regency also represents the particular homeland of a specific ethnic group and most of these ethnic groups are associated with Islam.<sup>293</sup> There is also a perception among Minahasans that Muslim groups from neighboring regencies are flooding to Manado in order to take advantage of job opportunities that are not available in their hometowns and villages. This has increased the level of anxiety that Minahasans already feel as a minority Christian population in what is perceived to be an increasingly Muslim Indonesian state.

These regional economic and political discrepancies that currently exist within North Sulawesi have led several of the regencies to consider obtaining provincial status for their respective areas. When increased regional autonomy was promised in 1999 with the implementation of UU22/1999 & UU25/1999, Gorontalo became one of the first regencies to take full advantage of the central government's effort to create more provinces out of the existing state structure. In January 2000, the local representatives of Gorontalo and Boalemo districts announced their decision to separate from the province of North Sulawesi. At the end of the same year, the new province of Gorontalo had been established.<sup>294</sup> Following in Gorontalo's successful footsteps, leaders from both Minahasa and Bolaang Mondondow

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<sup>293</sup> While Minahasans are almost exclusively associated with Christianity, it is also true that regencies such as Gorontalo are dominated by Muslims. A 2000 census of North Sulawesi province shows that while Gorontalo regency possessed 1174 mosques, 96 Protestant Churches and 12 Catholic churches, Minahasa had only 112 mosques, but was home to over 1505 protestant churches as well as 151 Catholic churches. See *Statistik Potensi Desa 2000*. **Badan Pusat Statistik, Jakarta, Indonesia**. It is perhaps a broad generalization to suggest that each regency is considered the "homeland" of a specific ethnic group when in fact so many different groups now occupy these areas. However, popular opinion (as suggested by my interview experiences) tends to support the idea. I was also able to find a web-page on the regency of Minahasa that asserted that "Over the centuries, four ethnic groups, namely Bolaang Mongondow, Gorontalo, Sangihe Talaud and Minahasa, have merged out of the primitive men living on the North region of Sulawesi. The name of the four ethnic groups parallels the name of the four districts of the province. Even though Bahasa Indonesia remains the national language of Indonesia, in fact the ethnic groups in this region still identify themselves with their original tribes and speak languages and dialects in accordance with this cultural background." See "The Minahasa Web Site" at <<http://pages.infinit.net/hirawati/daerah-a.htm>>

<sup>294</sup> **Nathan Camp**, "Persepsi Masyarakat Mengenai Pemisahan Provinsi Gorontalo Dengan Sulawesi Utara". Manado, Indonesia. Paper presented as part of a seminar concerning North Sulawesi sponsored by COTIM. (Based on Fieldwork conducted from June to August 2001): 2.

regencies have also initiated meetings and discussions concerning the new decentralization laws, yet it remains unclear as to whether or not either of these groups will obtain provincial status for their regencies, or even reap significant benefits from the new autonomy laws.<sup>295</sup> Questions also remain as to whether or not the establishment of more provinces will solve the economic and political problems existing in North Sulawesi. Detractors argue that while Minahasa may indeed be able to thrive as an independent province, the significantly poorer regions of Sangihe Talaud and Bolaang Mongondow could face increased impoverishment if they are left to fend for themselves. What does seem clear is that there is an ongoing effort being made (usually by elite members of society) to carve the province into smaller administrative units that appear to be defined by their ethnic and religious associations.

The following section will examine a few of the methods being utilized by Minahasa's leadership in order to gain popular support for the provincial status for Minahasa. As in the past, the symbols of a specifically "Minahasan" ethnic identity are being used as the "glue" that helps give both definition and meaning to these demands for the complete implementation of UU22 and UU25, as well as the possible establishment of a Minahasan province. What has emerged is the visible attempt to reinvigorate Minahasan ethnic identity and the re-working of old identity symbols as part of an effort to capture economic and political power from the center.

### 3. Familiar Patterns/ New Opportunities: Identity & Decentralization in Minahasa

"We have responded resolutely to the demands and call of history: to invigorate the community of Minahasa wherever they are. Energize them in the political, economic and cultural fields. May the almighty guide and bless us and the people of Minahasa".<sup>296</sup>

"...pembentukan 'Provinsi Minahasa' haruslah dipandang sebagai suatu proses alamiah yang logis..."<sup>297</sup>

"...the formation of 'Minahasa Province' must be considered as a natural and logical process..."

<sup>295</sup> For a sampling of opinions pertaining to regional autonomy in Bolaang Mongondow, see "Deklarasi Daerah Istimewa Bolaang Mongondow Raya: Revolusi dari Generasi yang Marah" *The Manado Post Online* (February 2002).

<sup>296</sup> Taken from the web-page for "Lembaga Swadaya Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Minahasa" at [http://www.tumoutou.net/sulutlink/lsm\\_minaesa.htm](http://www.tumoutou.net/sulutlink/lsm_minaesa.htm) (web page copyright date- 2000)

<sup>297</sup> Supit 7.

This current research began as an effort to give meaning and context to observations I was able to make while living in Manado and traveling throughout Minahasa in the summer of 2001. That particular summer, meetings, newspaper articles, casual conversations, banners and internet chat sites were full of references to regional autonomy and the possibility of establishing a new Minahasan province. At the heart of these references were Indonesia's new regional autonomy laws and the political uncertainty surrounding the unstable presidency of Gus Dur. While many remained hopeful that Wahid would remain in office and continue to support regional bids for autonomy, there were also those who recognized that the president's days were numbered and that the new autonomy laws might also be threatened as a result. Would regional autonomy progress? Retract? Or be completely abolished yet again? Should plans for a new province proceed or be scrapped? In answer to the political uncertainty of Indonesia's immediate future and the future of a more autonomous Minahasa, it appears as if local leaders and intellectuals began to instigate a campaign of ethnic regionalism in order to legitimize "Minahasa" and to "shore-up" support for the bid for increased autonomy from the central government.

NGOs with the self-described goal of educating Minahasans about the dynamics between local and national politics were established, while professors and local intellectuals based at the University Sam Ratualangie (UNSRAT) gave lectures and wrote editorials concerning the possibilities for the administrative structure of the new province as well as the shared future of the Minahasan people.<sup>298</sup> The socio-political atmosphere in Manado was imbued with cautious hope and creative new ways of conceptualizing "Minahasa". The *Kongres Minahasa Raya* II held in Tomohon that July brought together a variety of people from all over the province concerned with these same issues and filled with the same hopes and uncertainties. However, the official list of participants at the *kongres* consisted exclusively of *Minahasans*.<sup>299</sup> Further, in a preparatory meeting for the *kongres* held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, community leaders from eight sub-ethnic groups of Minahasan decent prepared

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<sup>298</sup> Two such NGOs are the "Yayasan Suara Nurani" based in Tomohon-headed by Bert A. Supit, as well as the "Lembaga Swadaya Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Minahasa" and the associated "Lembaga Pengkajian Strategi Reformasi Pembangunan", both are backed by V. Sumual, the famous Permesta leader. A sample of editorials which make reference to Minahasan identity and autonomy were written by **Bert A. Supit** (Leader of "Yayasan Suara Nurani"), "Provinsi Minahasa, Wacana Pemberdayaan Daerah" *The Manado Post* (27 July 2001): 14; **Fendy E.W.Parengkuan** (Professor of History and Culture UNSRAT), "Era Baru, Indonesia Baru: Jalan Panjang Menuju Provinsi" *The Manado Post* (1 August 2001); **Ruth Awondatu Wangkai** (From the Theology Department UKIT), "Pluralitas, Identitas, dan Kelainan" *The Manado Post* (10 July, 2001).

statements pertaining to the economic, political, administrative, natural resource and religious potential of the regency as a province.<sup>300</sup> This group was also exclusive in its ethnic make-up, including only members of the Tonsea, Tondano, Tombulu, Tontemboan, Tonsawang, Ponosakan, Pasan and Bantik ethnic groups (a total of eight of the possible nine “Minahasan” peoples). Both the KMR II and this particular planning session began and ended with Christian prayers and neither made particular claims that all *inhabitants* of Minahasa regency were represented. Rather, each session seems to have been organized and attended by Minahasans while migrant members of the region appear to have been excluded or at least not explicitly invited to be participants.

Despite being largely ignored by the dominant Christian Minahasan population, Muslims in Minahasa have voiced little concern over their predicament (at least publicly) and the social climate in the regency has remained peaceful. At least part of the reason for this may be attributed to the Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM), or Protestant Church in Minahasa which wields considerable influence and continually holds meetings on religious tolerance and promotes constructive ways to deal with the threat of what is perceived to be an increasingly Islamic central government.<sup>301</sup> As Van Dijk noted in 1994, the tensions that do exist between migrant groups and Minahasans are generally submerged in the interest of peace.<sup>302</sup> However, there have been increasing reports that members of *Laskar Jihad*<sup>303</sup>, the group responsible for sending people to Maluku Province to “protect” Muslims in that area from Christians, has infiltrated the Minahasa region.<sup>304</sup> This development is often used by

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<sup>299</sup> Kongres Minahasa Raya (Manado: Kunci Berkas, 2001). A formal list of topics for discussion can be found in this brochure which was distributed to all participants of the second *Kongres Minahasa Raya*, held at Bukit Inspirasi in Tomohon, Indonesia 17 July: 4.

<sup>300</sup> Acara Pelantikan/Rapat Kerja: Panitia Deklarasi Propinsi Minahasa June 30, 2001. An informal pamphlet containing names and positions of the coordinating members of the Minahasa community pushing for a new province of Minahasa. A full listing of committees, duties and goals are provided. Obtained from a private source.

<sup>301</sup> The church is heavily involved with almost every imaginable aspect of the political scene in Manado and Minahasa. **M.J.C. Schouten**, “Village Administration in the Minahasa” in **Philip van Ufford**, *Local Leadership and Programme Implementation in Indonesia*. (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1987): 85-105:87. For an example of one such a church sponsored meeting, see “PKB GMIM Kecamatan Piagam Jakarta” The SULUT.LINK web site at <<http://www.sulutlink.com/berita/sulut0618e.htm>>; “Jaga Kerukunan Sulut: Soal Penangkapan Panglima Laskar Jihad” The Manado Post Online 7 May, 2002. For more information about the GMIM, see its parent church’s web site at <<http://www.ems-online.org>>.

<sup>302</sup> **Van Dijk** 87.

<sup>303</sup> Laskar Jihad is the paramilitary division of the Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah (Sunni Communication Forum). It was formed by a group of hard-line Muslim leaders in 1998 to promote true Islamic values”. See **Gary Fealy**, “Inside the Laskar Jihad” Inside Indonesia Online (March/April, 2001)

<sup>304</sup> See for example “Teror Laskar Jihad Diungkap di Manado” Manado Post Online 8 July, 2002; “Sulut Miliki 10 Potensi Konflik” Manado Post Online 12 July, 2002; “Gembong Al Qaeda Ternyata 2 Tahun Tinggal di

more “alarmist” Christians in the area as justification for the preparation of the Minahasan province, as well as the probable establishment of a new Minahasan state- independent from Indonesia should Jakarta become dominated by hard-lined Islamic politicians.<sup>305</sup>

It remains to be seen whether or not modern Minahasa has acquired certain “preconditions” in the course of its history which make it susceptible to increasing regionalism, factionalism, and violence as suggested by Jacobsen in 1999.<sup>306</sup> There do seem to be some important parallels between the pre-Permesta and post-Suharto Minahasa that might lead one to draw similar conclusions. In both periods, a combination of social, economic, political and cultural issues revolving around the problems of nationalism, decentralization, and regional autonomy have led to a general sense of cautious hope and practical uncertainty. As in the case of many other ethnic groups in Indonesia, some Minahasans are attempting to distinguish themselves as a unique cultural unit, worthy of provincial status, and increased levels of autonomy within the encompassing vision of the Indonesian nation. But as I have illustrated, this is a familiar process in Minahasa’s history. It was “Minahasa” that became the recipient of special administrative privileges during the Dutch administration, and “Minahasa” that suffered the consequences of the failed Permesta rebellion in an effort to obtain more autonomy from Jakarta. The central government’s willingness to once again consider the implementation of real autonomy legislation in 1999 compares well with the pre-Permesta possibilities for regional autonomy during the Sukarno/Hatta parliamentary democracy period. In both instances, the very suggestion of central government tolerance towards the ideas associated with regional autonomy worked to ignite a resurgent interest in describing “Minahasa” as a territory and people.

It may also be easy to suggest that a certain disunity between the “center” and the “periphery” still exists between Minahasa and Jakarta, the situation again being exacerbated by what is perceived to be biased economic policy. In the 1950s, the economic issue for Minahasans revolved around the price of copra products, today the farmers and businessmen of Minahasa are crying foul with regard to *cengkeh* (clove) prices.<sup>307</sup> In fact, both the 1950s

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Manado- Sempat Jualan Kue, Bakso, dan Gado-Gado” *The Manado Post Online* 14 January, 2002; “Cegah Laskar Jihad Masuk Sulut” *The Manado Post Online* (4 December, 2001).

<sup>305</sup> While this is not a majority opinion, this option seems to lurk behind many people’s minds. My own interviews substantiate this, but examples can also be found on online chat room devoted to the Minahasan community such as “Diskusi Bebas” linked to *The Manado Post Online*.

<sup>306</sup> Again, see **Jacobsen** “Nationalism and Particularism in Present day Southeast Asia” 1.

<sup>307</sup> On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2002, several delegates from Minahasa were planning a trip to Jakarta in order to demand fairer prices for clove farmers (as reported by **Sammy Supit** in the *Manado Post* 1 July, 2002). There was even a

and late 1990s were periods of economic turmoil for Indonesia, and often it has been the poor performance of the Indonesian economy that has served as the catalyst for social unrest. Interviews conducted for this research suggested that there is still some residual frustration over the fact that Minahasa continues to be regarded as a backwater region, despite having the most highly educated population in the archipelago.<sup>308</sup> Even a resurgent fear of Muslim-based political parties and the power they evidently wield back in Jakarta seems apparent: In July 2002, several Muslim based parties set up a coalition in order to counter a coalition between PDI Perjuangan (Democratic Party of Struggle) and Golkar (Suharto's old party).<sup>309</sup> Several members of the Muslim coalition expressed the desire for the Jakarta Charter to be included into the original constitution, something that Minahasans have historically been opposed to. Smaller, more intolerant/militant organizations, such as the FPI (Islam Defenders Front), Laskar Jihad, and the Indonesian Mujahidin (whose leader, Abu Bakar Basyir is allegedly linked to Osama bin Laden) have also been the cause of alarm for Christian populations all over Indonesia.

In short, there are at least five factors which (as they have in Minahasa's past) are contributing to the current re-invigoration of "Minahasa". These are 1.) A fear of militant Islamic factions that are apparently taking root in the country. 2.) Unfair economic policies which create tension between the "center" and the "periphery". 3.) An unstable Indonesian economic and political atmosphere. 4.) The possibility of obtaining greater regional autonomy from the center, something that has not been possible since the "pre-Permesta" Indonesia. 5.) A highly motivated and somewhat organized intellectual elite group of Minahasans who are devoted to the idea of a more independent Minahasa. As they have in the past, all of these factors have combined to create a certain amount of uncertainty in Minahasa. Within the space of this uncertainty, Minahasa's leadership has once again been motivated to bring Minahasans together as a cohesive group. This discussion will now turn towards describing the people, organizations and the methods they utilize in the attempt to define and invigorate "Minahasan" in this pursuit.

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"Petisi Harga Cengkeh" posted on the online edition of the *Manado Post* which demanded that prices be raised from Rp.24.000/kg to Rp.50.000/kg. The petition was addressed to Megawati as well as the governor of Sulut, and circulated widely on message boards provided by the *Manado Post Online*.

<sup>308</sup> Education and literacy would remain high priorities for Minahasans, evidenced by the fact that by 1980, the province of North Sulawesi had obtained a 91 percent literacy rate (the highest in Indonesia) while the national average remained at 71 percent. See **Drake** 75.

<sup>309</sup> **Muhammad Nafik**, "Muslim politicians meet to counter nationalist alliance" *The Jakarta Post Online* (17 July, 2002).

a.) The Form and Future Administrative Status of Minahasa: A Brief Sketch:

As outlined in an earlier section of this paper, Minahasa is officially a regency (*kabupaten*) of the Province of Northern Sulawesi. It shares this distinction with two other regencies: Sangihe Talaud and Bolaang Mongondow. Gorontalo was also considered a regency of North Sulawesi up until a year ago when it became an independent province. The cities (*Kotamadya*) of Bitung and Manado are also part of North Sulawesi but are governed directly by a mayor (Walikota) rather than a regent (*Bupati*). North Sulawesi is headed by Governor Drs.A.J. Sondakh while the Minahasa regional government is run by Drs. Dolfie Tanor. Below the district level are the *kecamatan*, or sub-district administrations and the *kelurahan*, which loosely translates to village administrations. Minahasa has over 30 sub-districts, each one containing several village administrations.

There are many different, yet not necessarily conflicting views, about the future of regional administrative status for Minahasa. All of these strategies have roots in the newly implemented autonomy laws, complex ideas concerning ethnic identity, economy, religion, national and global realities. I have narrowed the most common of these views down to three prospective governing strategies or concepts that were being debated in the summer of my research. For the purposes of this study, I have labeled and divided the groups as 1.) Minahasa Raya 2.) Propinsi Minahasa and 3.) Minahasa Merdeka.

Proponents of “Minahasa Raya” are the most moderate interpreters of the regional autonomy legislation. Their aim is to work with the central government in order to assure successful implementation of existing autonomy laws. They are very adamant in insisting that they are not interested in creating an independent Minahasan province, nor are they interested in aligning themselves with elements of society that are not completely loyal to the Indonesian Nation. Interestingly, this group tends to be most popular with top government officials as well as the very poor members of Minahasan society.<sup>310</sup> I believe that Minahasa Raya draws these very different groups for somewhat similar reasons: an appreciation of stability. Together, they may represent the elements of society who have the least to gain and perhaps the most to lose if problems arise between the central government and the province. The poorer members of Minahasan society have yet to be convinced that their economic

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<sup>310</sup> I base this conclusion on statements made by local officials and “Masyarakat Kecil” as recorded by several newspaper clippings from the *Manado Post* as well as some interviews. For an example of one newspaper source, see “Masyarakat Kecil Bicara Soal Minahasa Merdeka” *Manado Post* 19 July, 2001: 3.

plight will be any different if Minahasa becomes a new province. It may be further argued that much of the very poor population in Minahasa are new migrants to the area, and as such, feel a general apathy for support of a new province that seems to be based on the desires of the dominant ethnic group. They have expressed a fear that such a movement could eventually pose problems if it is imposed too quickly without proper transitional steps. As Minahasans dominate the political scene and financial purse strings of the province of North Sulawesi back in Manado, from a governmental perspective, there is not much of an advantage or incentive in creating a new province of Minahasa.

Minahasa Raya is best represented by people such as the governor of North Sulawesi, Drs. A.J. Sondakh or the Mayor of Minahasa, Drs. Dolfie Tanor. The Kongres Minahasa Raya itself was to be a public forum for debate within the boundaries of current regional autonomy laws and was endorsed as such by president Gus Dur. However, even the strongest supporters of Minahasa Raya ideology change their opinions when the issue of *Piagam Jakarta* enters into the formula of debate. At this point, people tend to lean towards one of the following forms of political arrangement.

2.) *Propinsi Minahasa*<sup>311</sup> Local community leaders, university scholars, and many students tend to argue that Minahasa should become its own province in order to capitalize on UU22/99 and UU25/99. This was by far the most interesting idea for exploration with regard to my research. Supporters of this idea seem to be operating from a purely ideological level. That is, although there is no real proof that a province of Minahasa might operate more efficiently than a regency of Minahasa under autonomy laws, it is the *idea* that Minahasa is unique and particular from a cultural, historical, political and religious perspective that drives this movement. They often play upon the idea that Jakarta (the center) has not allowed Minahasa (a periphery) to develop to its full potential. This group publishes heavily in the features section of local newspapers such as the *Manado Post*. They make heavy usage of ethnic symbols of unity and argue that Minahasans should be allowed to govern their land under traditional democratic laws. This group is generally well educated and internally well connected. Many of the older proponents of “Propinsi Minahasa” are from Tondano or have known each other since they were children. Formal meetings of this group are carefully planned and widely attended by local intellectuals. At one such meeting held in June 2001,

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<sup>311</sup> See Appendix c for an example of how a new province based in the ideals of Minahasan society alone has been conceptualized.

over 114 such individuals met to discuss the creation of a new province and the reason such an entity was legitimate.<sup>312</sup>

This group is interesting in that there seems to be some internal argument as to who should or should not be considered Minahasan. Many argue that there are 7 sub-ethnic groups of Minahasa. Others go as high as 8 or 9. Migrants from the Muslim community are not considered “Minahasan”. The main point here is that already, this influential group of thinkers and scholars have begun to plan a future for Minahasa that continues to keep non-Minahasan inhabitants out of this “democratic” process, at least implicitly. This group understands that they represent a brand of “elite politics” that does not directly stem from the needs and desires of the Minahasan people. Rather they see themselves as those in a privileged position that have a responsibility to “socialize” or educate fellow Minahasans.

Nostalgia for Minahasa’s pre-colonial, and sometimes even its colonial past is often at the heart of the *Propinsi Minahasa* agenda. Its supporters often write about modern Minahasans and their “duty” to remember and honor the past by respecting traditional laws and social norms. As an example, I often found references to the infamous beauty of Minahasa’s women and how these women had become associated with prostitution in Indonesia. While this generalization is not easily applied to Minahasan women as a whole, it is interesting that these references are often coupled with the idea that a return to Minahasa’s moral and social traditions might eradicate the problem. Indeed, it may be correct to assume that Minahasan women (also well known to be comparatively strong-willed and equal to their male counter-parts in “traditional” Minahasan society) have come to symbolize what has been corrupted or “ruined” through Minahasa’s modernization process. Still, it must be recognized that while symbols and nostalgia for a more “pure” and dignified Minahasa are used to obtain popular support for Minahasan autonomy, it must be remembered that more regional autonomy would ultimately mean more economic and political independence from Jakarta and that this has been a goal of most Minahasans for decades.

3.) The third group that I was able to distinguish from the rest will be called “Minahasa Merdeka”.<sup>313</sup> This group is represented almost exclusively by vocal students and fearful, even alarmist Christians. Their main argument is that a new province will not be

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<sup>312</sup> Acara Pelantikan/Rapat Kerja: Panitia Deklarasi Propinsi Minahasa (2001).

<sup>313</sup> In July of 2002, a petition that neatly describes the vision of “Minahasa Merdeka” was circulated on the message boards of several Minahasan online newspapers including SULUT.Link and The Manado Post Online. The petition was posted on “Forum Diskusi Bebas” <<http://members.boardhost.com/mponline>> by “Rakyat Jelata” on July 3, 2002.

enough to save Minahasa in the face of the growing influence of Islam in Jakarta. They keep their eyes focused almost obsessively on the horrible events that continue to plague Maluku and the Poso region of Central Sulawesi. They believe that it is only a matter of time before terrorists from Java travel to Minahasa to end the peace that has existed between Muslims and Christians for centuries. In fact, such rumors were floating around the internet at the time of this write up. According to rumors, as well as some substantiated reports, Islamic fundamentalists are moving from Poso to Minahasa with help from local Muslims.<sup>314</sup> Sulut.link published one article that claims to substantiate these rumors and even asserts that many Muslim families already established in the area have been observed to be hosting “new” Muslim youths, usually men. These individuals operate from a convincing platform of fear but are not as organized as proponents of “Propinsi Minahasa”. They seem to represent a minority opinion, nonetheless, the power of their message should not be ignored and it seems to lurk in the back of almost everyone’s mind.

On a hopeful note, I have never heard any Minahasan (even one from this camp) say that Muslims should not be living in Minahasa or that they should be forced to leave. This fear of Islam seems to be more closely associated with an abstract force stemming from Jakarta rather than real people living down the street or even in the next regency. Up until quite recently, it has been my experience that Minahasans are open minded about religion and are proud to be so. I spoke with many more moderately inclined people that believed that the members of the younger generation who spoke of “merdeka” were simply not appreciative of what would be lost if Minahasa chose to break from Indonesia. “Indonesia” is as sacred here as anywhere else in the archipelago and nationalist ideology is still strong in Minahasa. I am inclined to believe that while a separate Minahasa will never exist outside of Indonesia, a growing fear of Muslims may work against the general stability of Minahasa if one portion of the population continues to keep the other from power, economic progress and full citizenship of the regency.

4.) I will also briefly mention here that there is a fourth possible configuration that was discussed frequently while I was in Minahasa. This fourth option is somewhat far-fetched in my opinion but it was also part of various conversations I had during my stay in the area. I

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<sup>314</sup> Although there were many articles published in The Manado Post which claimed to have reliable information regarding the movement of Laskar Jihad into the Minahasa area, there have been no instances of violence between Christians and Muslims thus far. For reference, two such articles are “Gembong Al Qaeda Ternyata 2 Tahun Tinggal di Manado- Sempat Jualan Kue, Bakso, dan Gado-Gado” The Manado Post Online 14 Jan, 2002; “Cegah Laskar Jihad Masuk Sulut” The Manado Post Online 4 December, 2001.

have borrowed the term “Iramasuka” from several magazine articles and newspaper clippings published out of Indonesia.<sup>315</sup> The term is meant to represent a group of politicians that claim to represent the people of eastern Indonesia, other wise known as Irian Jaya (now Papua), Maluku, Sulawesi and Kalimantan. Although these politicians have been criticized for representing local elites from their respective areas, the ideas they promote have struck a popular chord with many in Minahasa. The main thrust of their argument is that these outer provinces have long been neglected by the central government in Jakarta. By joining forces, it is presumed that this political and geographic ‘block’ would be in a better position to make demands on the central government. This concept is sometimes taken a step further by Minahasans that believe eastern Indonesia (which is theoretically populated by most of Indonesia’s minority Christian population) should come together to create a new country independent of Sumatra and Java. In my view, this represents the wildest of all possible scenarios and I’m not sure it is taken very seriously. Still, it is spoken about quite frequently and was also brought out for debate among those present at the KMRIL. It might be possible to trace the original plans for a greater Eastern Indonesia to the Dutch who first envisioned such a demographic and geographic reality.<sup>316</sup>

I have tried to isolate 4 separate ways that Minahasans seem to imagine their political future as an ethnic group under the regional autonomy laws. The labels I have used are not necessarily labels that are meant to represent the names of actual political organizations that exist. They are simply names that I have used in this research to define what I have perceived to be the main currents or themes being discussed in the summer of 2001. Many people straddle the lines of division I have created and for some, their opinions and ideas are dependent upon the future actions of politicians in Jakarta. For example, those who lean towards the idea of “Minahasa Raya” contend that a more Islamic Jakarta might cause them to support “Minahasa Merdeka”. There were many times that a person would suggest a united eastern Indonesia or free Minahasa in the same sentence. The outcome of these political, ethnic, religious, economic debates remain unclear.

#### b.) People and Organizations:

Abner Cohen views ethnicity as a concept that is evoked in order to solidify political boundaries and functions as a means to demand rights from the state, and this has been an

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<sup>315</sup> See for example “Securing representation for Eastern Indonesia” The Jakarta Post 9 July, 2001:5

obvious thread throughout the arguments presented in this research. There can be little doubt that “Minahasa” is currently being solidified and politicized in such a way as to demand power from the central government in Jakarta under the auspices of new autonomy regulations. But as Brown has noted, “People, not regions act politically. Thus we need to ask who formulates identity symbols, who provides the ‘definition of the situation’ and who mobilizes a group on the basis of this identity.... In examining the emergence, maintenance and transformation of ethnic and regional identity symbols, attention must be focused on leadership groups who define the symbols”.<sup>317</sup> In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to describe a few of the people and organizations engaged in this very process.<sup>318</sup>

Fendy Parengkuan is a professor of history and culture at Sam Ratulangi University. He is a strong proponent of a new Minahasa Province within the context of the Indonesian Nation, and has several students working under him who share the same views. Fendy is a very active member of a committee that has organized itself into “Panitia Deklarasi Propinsi Minahasa” or “Committee for the declaration of a new Minahasa Province”. His official place on this committee is one he shares with 11 other members and together they represent “kelompok kerja sejarah/adat budaya dan masyarakat” (Working group on history, traditional law and society) as well as the “kelompok kerja bidang agama” (Working group in the field of religion). The members of Panitia Propensi Minahasa are probably some of the most organized and vocal political voices in the Minahasa region although I would hesitate to describe it as a formal political body. Its members include a wide variety of Minahasans, from clove farmers, regular citizens, to doctors and professors. Many of these members publish regularly in the column section of the *Manado Post* and several maintain their own online message boards or web pages. However, the group officially recognizes only 8 Minahasan sub-ethnic groups within the context of committee meetings and within its papers or pamphlets: these are Tonsea, Tondano, Tombulu, Tontemboan, Tonsawang, Ponosakan, Pasan and Bantik. The Bobentehu, Muslim migrants, Sangirese workers, Javanese, etc. are simply not a part of this committee’s discussions or debates. While this group appears to be somewhat exclusive in its ethnic orientation, I was unable to find any evidence that non-

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<sup>316</sup> See Henley (1992) 271.

<sup>317</sup> Brown 135-136.

<sup>318</sup> My descriptions are unfortunately limited to the opinions and experiences of a few people in Minahasa. I admit that a more complete picture with more research is needed.

Minahasans were explicitly excluded from participation. Yet it does appear that these groups were implicitly denied access to the groups meetings.

Parengkuan argues that from a historical standpoint, Minahasa is culturally, religiously and even linguistically separate from any other group in Indonesia. All of his writings refer to a shared past, present and future for the descendants of Lumimuut and Toar. His published articles are full of generalized descriptions that embody “Minahasa”, such as its tradition of democracy, the equality that exists between men and women, and Minahasa’s love affair with all things Dutch.<sup>319</sup> He asserts that now is the time for Minahasans to consider:

Siapakah orang Minahasa itu (Tou Minahasa); manakah batas-batas akurat yang sejak zaman nenek moyang disebut sebagai tanah air Minahasa (tanaraki’); apakah orang Minahasa yang sekerang perlu memberikan isyarat atau sinyal yang jelas bahwa hukum adat Minahasa (kanaramen) masih ada dan harus dihormati oleh siapapun yang berdiam di tanah Toar-Lumimuut ini; sejauh manakah sumber-sumber daya alam, ekonomi, politik, sosial budaya di tanah Minahasa ini dikuasai dan atau dikontrol oleh orang Minahasa sebagai tuan di rumah sendiri; masihkah orang-orang Minahasa perantauan dan keturunannya mengakui dan menyadari keminahasaannya, dan dengan demikian, mempunyai komitmen yang jelas, kewajiban, tugas dan tanggung jawab sosial, ekonomi, politik, kultural terhadap masa depan apapun bagi tanah dan orang Minahasa secara keseluruhan.<sup>320</sup>

(Who are the people of Minahasa; where is the accurate division of the Minahasa homeland; What signs and symbols do Minahasans now need to send out in order to make it clear that traditional Minahasan laws still exist and that they must be respected by whomever resides in this land of Toar and Lumimuut; as far as our natural resources, economy, politics and culture in Minahasa are concerned, they must be dominated or controlled by the Minahasa people the same as God in his own house; Minahasans must recognize and be aware of their Minahasan identity and thus have a clear commitment and obligation to have responsible solutions for society, culture and politics in the future for the land and people of Minahasa)

Like many of his contemporaries in other parts of Indonesia, Fendy clearly uses a select rendition of history, and perceived kinship relations to solidify the definition of ethnicity and the duties (in this case) Minahasans have to their ‘tanah air’. He evokes local terms to express their Indonesian language equivalent. As a respected Professor of history and culture at UNSRAT and a well-known member of his community, Fendy is in a very good position to ‘educate’ Minahasan about their past and therefore to draw lines of distinction between Minahasans and non-Minahasans in his lectures and writings.

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<sup>319</sup> E.F. Fendy Parengkuan, “Pokok pokok Pikiran Pembentukan Propinsi Minahasa” (Tondano, Indonesia; 28 June, 2001). Personal source. Also “Jalan Panjang Menuju Provinsi dan Kemandirian” *Manado Post* 31 July, 2001; “Kebulatan Tekad” (Personal Copy) (Manado, June 30, 2001); “Dari Keresidenan ke Propinsi: Sulawesi Utara Sebagai Objek Pengkajian Kesejarahan” (Personal Copy) (Tondano- 20 June, 2001).

<sup>320</sup> E.F. Fendy Parengkuan, “Jalan Panjang Menuju Provinsi dan Kemandirian”.

A close friend of Parengkuan, Bert A. Supit is also a contributing member of the Panitia Propinsi Minahasa. His particular roles in this format include “Koordinator panitia pengarah” and “anggota dewan pembina”. As I mentioned in the “Minahasa” section of this discussion, Supit runs his own local NGO based in Tomohon. The stated aims or goals of this NGO are to educate the public about politics in Minahasa. He is also an avid supporter of a “Propinsi Minahasa” but he seems to tackle this issue from a broader perspective, one that includes the effect of globalization on local identities around the world. His symbols of choice are most noticeably the figure of Sam Ratulangie, and the struggle between Jakarta and the periphery regions. His main platform is exactly in line with that of Sam Ratulangie, and in his “Provinsi Minahasa: Suatu Wacana Pemberdayaan Daerah Dan Rakyat Melalui Reformasi Struktur Pemerintahan Daerah Menuju Indonesia Baru”, he quotes the distinguished hero repeatedly and admits that his ideas stem from those of Ratulangie. Simply stated, Supit maintains that “Globalization” has empowered local communities to take charge of their own destiny. He has further observed that local governments that are based on ethnicity have had the most success at obtaining more power and respect from state and international governments. They are the natural way things have progressed. Supit champions the idea of creating a new province out of each culturally distinct regency that currently make up the Province of North Sulawesi.

Supit authored at least two of the pamphlets and one chart<sup>321</sup> describing the structure and function of the proposed Minahasa Province that I was able to obtain at the KMR II. While he also draws from symbols of “Minahasa” in these writings, his own research encompasses a more ‘global’ agenda and refers often to Sam Ratulangie’s thoughts on the governing of Indonesia. Generally speaking, he argues that “Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou” (Ratulangie’s own words) or “all people should live together with mutual help”, while at the same time committing to the idea that Minahasa should be run by and for Minahasans. Supit was one of the most prolific contributors to the *Manado Post* while I was in Manado.

Whether they are solidifying the boundaries that mark Minahasan identity based on history or kinship, or whether they are placing Minahasa within a national and global framework, these men, their associated organizations, and others like them are working for a more independent Minahasa. They interact with the public through newspapers, speeches, pamphlets, forums, the inter-net and meetings such as KMR II. On the surface, these systems

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<sup>321</sup> Appendix c.

of communication, debate, and public forum seem, as Minahasans claim they are, very democratic. However, a great many people who are not “Minahasan” have been left out of these democratic processes. While it is in principle very easy to support the rights of a minority ethnic group in Indonesia, it is more difficult to predict a peaceful future in any area that encompasses one group which denies political power or voice to other peoples based on ethnicity.

In one of the more interesting turn of events in this post-Suharto political era in Minahasa, H.N. (Ventje) Sumual has re-surfaced as an important voice and leader for Minahasans. Sumual was one of the original signers of the Permesta Charter as well as the head of the military government of the movement once its headquarters had been moved to Minahasa. From 1958 to 1961 he led Permesta rebels in North Sulawesi and North Maluku against Indonesian forces.<sup>322</sup> He is now the President of “Lembaga Swadaya Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Minahasa” which dedicates itself to the promotion of cultural, economic and political changes that might make Indonesia (and the world) a better place. Issues pertaining to the environment, human rights and development are among the issues listed as important topics for the group, and the organization’s web page cites the Asian Development Bank as one of its collaborators.<sup>323</sup> Sumual’s office is also involved with the promotion of a new “Deklarasi Perjuangan Permesta” which is supported by the ambiguous organization “Korps Permesta”<sup>324</sup> that in turn claims to adhere to “The right to self determination”.<sup>325</sup> According to one article in the Manado Post, Korps Permesta claims to have over 70,000 members scattered throughout the province.<sup>326</sup> In organizational web pages, Sumual is listed as an “ex-freedom fighter”, despite being jailed by the government for a number of years and being discharged from the military as a result of his actions during Permesta. Related to the popularity of Sumual as a modern leader is the fact that the “Permesta” phenomenon has once again emerged as a unifying symbol of Minahasan solidarity and it is often made reference to. The original Permesta Charter is circulated frequently on the inter-net (one such posting at the Manado Post Online was made as recently as July 22, 2002) and there is even a web page dedicated to the rebellion itself. The new generation of Minahasan students that actively promotes the ideals of autonomy for Minahasa is even referred to as “generasi muda

<sup>322</sup> For details on Sumuals life, see **Harvey** 159-160.

<sup>323</sup> < [http://tumoutou.net/sulutlink/Isma\\_minaesa.htm](http://tumoutou.net/sulutlink/Isma_minaesa.htm) >

<sup>324</sup> Korps Permesta itself is officially headed by Sammy Supit.

<sup>325</sup> Material provided by the Lembaga Pengkajian Strategi Reformasi Pembangunan website. 2 November, 1999.

Permesta".<sup>327</sup> As I was leaving Manado to return to the United States, I discovered that at least two organizations had been set up in order to "protect" Minahasans from *Laskar Jihad*. These two groups, "Triple 9" and "Brigade Manguni" each derive their names from Permesta: Triple 9 refers to an especially violent, cruel and fierce division of Permesta soldiers that fought during the rebellion, while "Brigade Manguni" was also a specific unit of Permesta soldiers that had been led by an influential Minahasan leader who provided the headquarters for the rebellion's civilian officials after 1959.<sup>328</sup> "Manguni" itself comes from Minahasan folklore which describes the owl "manguni" as a mystical creature that can foretell the future and delivers warnings of danger.

While I have not been able to obtain a great deal of information on "Triple 9", I found that "Brigade Manguni" and its leadership have been quoted repeatedly in local newspapers.<sup>329</sup> The group has apparently appointed several of its members to report any strange activities that might mean that *Laskar Jihad* has become active in Minahasa. Donald Moselman, the "General Coordinator" of the group has been quoted as saying that "Itu hanya isu, masyarakat jangan resah berlebihan. Tetapi tetap harus waspada.... Kami sudah koordinir semua lewat koordinator wilayah yang sudah ditunjuk di masing masing daerah."<sup>330</sup> The exact nature of this group, as well as Brigade 999 appear to be a bit ambiguous to many Minahasans, but most understand the basic premise or reasons behind the establishment of Brigade Manguni and 999. Even when I inquired about these two groups during a casual conversation with a local Minahasan high school student, I was told: "Brigade Manguni and 999 are the counter to Laskar Jihad in Java. It is not a separatist movement, but kind of the 'die hard fans' to defend the right of the Minahasan people to exist as Christians. As far as the existence and its whereabouts, BM will never be revealed to any joe-blow on the street..As long as they never round up and shut down the Laskar Jihad, Indonesian Mujahdin, the Muslim extremists (the bad guys) their counters like BM will always have a ball, anticipating their actions." The leaders of these groups (much like the leaders of the original Permesta and Sam Ratulangie) claim that while they oppose overly

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<sup>326</sup> "RAPIM Korps Pembangunan Permesta (KPPS)" *Manado Post Online* 20 June, 2002.

<sup>327</sup> I was able to find one written source to substantiate my interviews with regard to this nomenclature. See <<http://www.rnw.nl/ranesi/html/Sulawesi.html>>

<sup>328</sup> Harvey 125.

<sup>329</sup> For example, "Brigade Manguni Bangun Pos Keamanan seluruh Warga Diserukan Pererat Tali Persaudaraan" *The Manado Post Online* 2 December, 2001.

<sup>330</sup> "Brigade Manguni Bangun Pos Keamanan seluruh Warga Diserukan Pererat Tali Persaudaraan" *The Manado Post Online* 2 December, 2001.

centralized government, the inclusion of the Jakarta Charter into the Indonesian constitution, and extremist groups, they do not support the establishment of an independent Minahasa (Minahasa Merdeka).<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> “BM Tolak Minahasa Merdeka” Manado Post Online 12 March, 2002.

#### **IV. Concluding Remarks:**

“Ada pula pernyataan-pernyataan yang rada-rada mengkritik sekaligus menggelitik kepada panitia, seperti seharusnya penggunaan nama Kongres Minahasa Raya diubah Kongress Rakyat Minahasa Raya dan gara gara gambar yang dipakai di buku panduan panitia adalah gambar burung garuda, seorang peserta menanyakan kenapa tidak memakai gambar burung Manguni saja sebagai lambang tanah Minahasa? ‘Burung Garuda kan sakit, lehernya patah, kenapa tidak pakai Manguni yang tegak?’”<sup>332</sup>

(There were again comments that were somewhat critical of the congress, one of these being that the name of the meeting should have been “Congress of the Minahasan People” rather than “Congress of Free Minahasa” and that the picture used on the front of the Congress booklet was a picture of the garuda, while members wanted to know why a picture of the Manguni (symbol of Minahasa) was not used instead. “The Garuda you know is sick, it’s neck is broken. Why not use the upright Manguni?” “Ada pula pernyataan-pernyataan yang rada-rada mengkritik sekaligus menggelitik kepada panitia, seperti seharusnya penggunaan nama Kongres Minahasa Raya diubah Kongress Rakyat Minahasa Raya dan gara gara gambar yang dipakai di buku panduan panitia adalah gambar burung garuda, seorang peserta menanyakan kenapa tidak memakai gambar burung Manguni saja sebagai lambang tanah Minahasa? ‘Burung Garuda kan sakit, lehernya patah, kenapa tidak pakai Manguni yang tegak?’”<sup>333</sup>)

This research has been an attempt to give some meaning and context to the political use of Minahasan ethnicity as it is related to decentralization in Indonesia. From its colonial beginnings, the concept of decentralized government has always struck a popular chord with Minahasans and has continued to do so through the decades. At the most fundamental level, the problems associated with modern decentralization efforts are expressed as an economic and ideological power struggle between the central and regional governments of Indonesia. But as I have suggested, this economic “tug-of-war” between the center and periphery easily becomes enmeshed with ethnic, political, and even religious factionalism on national and international levels. The above quote taken from the *Manado Post* in July 2001 perfectly illustrates this fact. In it, we see how easily ethnic regionalism may merge with the decentralization process. The passage seamlessly connects the two by suggesting that the Minahasan symbol (Manguni) should have been represented on the front of the KMR II brochure, and not the Garuda. Thus, a brochure created to outline the purpose of KMR II, which is directly linked to decentralization, becomes the location of an ideological and symbolic struggle between the center and periphery; between Minahasans and “others”.

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<sup>332</sup> “Yang Tercecer Dari Pelaksanaan Kongres Minahasa Raya II” in *The Manado Post* 19 July, 2001:3.

<sup>333</sup> “Yang Tercecer Dari Pelaksanaan Kongres Minahasa Raya II” in *The Manado Post* 19 July, 2001:3.

Any investigation into the nature of socio-political relations in Indonesia must necessarily become a study of balance. That is, balance between the center and periphery, between Islam and other religions, between ethnic groups, between regions. These balancing acts may be conceptualized from a national, regional and even local perspective. With reference to decentralization, there have been two major points in Indonesia's history when the power balance between the center and periphery has been seriously challenged: The first being the Permesta Rebellion in the 1950s and the second occurring just after the fall of Suharto. At both points, the possibility for increased levels of regional autonomy was at an apex. However, it is also true that at both of these times, ethnicity, religion and regionalism became enmeshed with the decentralization process. It has been at this point that the Indonesian government has understandably become wary of decentralization or even democracy. I hope I have at least partially illustrated that the "highjacking" of the decentralization process by specific ethnic groups, although logical for some, may seriously threaten the stability of the Indonesian nation.

It is the position of this paper that decentralization to the regions becomes confused with decentralization to ethnic groups when majority ethnic groups become associated with specific and bounded territories of the nation. This occurs, at least in part, when there is confusion as to *who* should be the recipients of increased autonomy. While international donor agencies may define "local" people as the proper location of autonomy, the national government interprets "local" to mean "regional". However, local people themselves have been able to successfully obtain autonomy by claiming resources and rights as members of specific ethnic groups bounded by recognizable territories. Much of their power to do so may stem from the support of human rights groups and NGOs imbued with the principles of international human rights agendas. I would further argue that this type of ethnic regionalism might possibly serve to destabilize the nation. As Harvey has argued in her seminal work on the Permesta movement, "Regionalism and ethnicity, although overlapping, are not synonymous. An attempt to re-draw boundaries along ethnic lines carries with it the danger of further fragmentation"<sup>334</sup>. In an effort to claim rights promised by new decentralization legislature, it appears as if local Minahasan leaders are in the process of galvanizing Minahasa as an ethnic community which is inextricably tied to the region of Minahasa itself. It may be an inevitable fact that if this process continues, the relatively open nature of Minahasan

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<sup>334</sup> Harvey 152.

society may in fact become more rigid, with elements of exclusive behavior becoming more apparent.

## **Appendix A.**

### **A Brief Account of the Story of Toar and Lumimuut- The Ancestors of the Minahasan People**<sup>335</sup>

In previous times, long ago, there was a nicely shaped rock found on the western beach of Wulur Mahatus mountains. Not many people noticed the rock, because certainly there were not any people around at this time. It was in the dry season one day that the sun shone very brightly, so brightly until the rock began to sweat. As the rock began to sweat, a beautiful goddess was created from the rock. Her name was Karema. She looked up and raised her arms to the sky and prayed “O, Kasuruan opo e wailan wangko.” This means “Oh great God, if you would be so kind as to tell me where I am and where I can find friends to accompany me in this life”. After Karema was finished with her prayer, the beautiful rock split into two, and from it came a beautiful woman. Karema would not be lonely again. Karema said to this woman, “because you were created from a sweating rock, you will be given the name ‘Lumimuut’. Your descendants will live here all along and will multiply until they are as many as particles of sand on this beach. This will happen but you must work hard and sweat before it does.

One day, Karema ordered her beautiful daughter to turn and face the south so that she would become pregnant and give her descendants. Lumimuut did what her mother asked but nothing happened. Because the southern direction did not make her pregnant, Lumimuut then faced the east, the west and finally the north. These actions did not help Lumimuut become pregnant. In order to become pregnant, Lumimuut performed the entire ceremony again. When she faced the west, there was a strong wind. After awhile and after the prayer was finished, the body of Lumimuut began to take on a different shape. Lumimuut was already pregnant. During the pregnancy, Lumimuut was watched over closely by Karema. When the time arrived, Lumimuut gave birth to a boy who was named Toar. Toar was given all of the same knowledge and abilities possessed by Karema. Toar grew up very fast. His body was big and strong. Toar was not afraid of the forest and could not be beaten by the anoa, snake, or babi rusa. When Toar reached maturity, Karema said to Toar and Lumimuut, “Now is the moment for you to see and circle the world. I have prepared two sticks with the same length. The stick for Toar is made from the *tuis* tree and the stick for Lumimuut is made from the *tawaang* tree. Later in your journey, if you meet somebody: either male or female, you must measure each others sticks. If the sticks are the same length, then you are family. But, if the sticks are not the same length, then you may join and have a family together. May it happen that both of you find partners and have many descendants. Your descendents will live separated by mountains and jungles. But there will always be a will to unite.”

Karema’s message became a source of inspiration to Lumimuut and Toar as they traveled. Toar had gone to the North and Lumimuut went to the south. The *tuis* stick that Toar carried grew while Lumimuut’s stick stayed the same length. One night in the moonlight, Toar met Lumimuut. In accordance with Karema’s instructions, they compared their sticks which turned out to be different lengths. Thus, the couple were married under the stars and the moon. The peak of the mountain where the ceremony was held glowed like a golden ball and was therefore named Lolombulan.

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<sup>335</sup> Translated from the Indonesian version provided in **Pangkerego, Aneke Sumarauw** (1993) *Cerita Rakyat Dari Minahasa*. Jakarta: Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia.

After the ceremony they went looking for Karema but they were unable to find her. They lived in the mountains where many bamboo stems grew. There they lived, had children, and their children had children. Generation after generation were born in multiples of nine. Each new generation was blessed by the cry of the wala bird.

## Appendix B.

### In the Field: Some Notes on the Context of this Research

The paper preceding this appendix has been meant to represent and summarize field research conducted in the regency of Minahasa (North Sulawesi, Indonesia) from early June to August 2001 in preparation for the write-up of my MA thesis in Asian Studies at the University of Hawaii- Manoa. During these few months of study, I was also engaged in advanced Indonesian language courses through COTIM (Consortium for teaching Indonesian and Malay) and both the research and formal course work were funded through COTIM by a Fulbright fellowship. The purpose of this appendix is to give the reader a general idea of the circumstances and conditions I experienced while in Minahasa and to place the material into context.

Throughout my stay in North Sulawesi, I was very lucky to live in the home of the Kojongian family in Manado, not far from UNSRAT where my courses were held. The Kojongian family (all 9 of them) gradually became my best source of information, inspiration and were daily reminders of everything I love about Indonesia/ Minahasa and why I have continued to be drawn to the country for the past 7 years<sup>336</sup>. Alex Kojongian (“*Opa*”) and Cantia Kojongian (“*Oma*”)<sup>337</sup> were especially helpful in explaining Minahasan history and culture. We would often sit up together talking until late into the night while the rest of the family slept in the rooms of the two story house below. Alex smoked an endless supply of kretek cigarettes while I asked him questions in my “evolving” Indonesian. At other times, we would wait for an English language movie or television show to come on, usually around 1:00 am. Together, we watched numerous action films, X-Files and Bay Watch Hawaii episodes. Alex never went to bed before 2 am and rarely slept in past 6am when he would rise and take a microlet to his job across town as an accountant at a Suzuki dealership.

Alex (56) is from the small village of Wolaan, near Tomohon. He came to Manado to become a teacher when he was in his early 20’s and it was at the school where he taught that he met his wife. His father was in the army and had been stationed as far as South Sumatra

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<sup>336</sup> My first experience in Indonesia was a 6-month stay in Central Java as an exchange student at Satya Wacana University in Salatiga 1994.

<sup>337</sup> *Oma* (grandmother) and *Opa* (grandfather) are words borrowed from the Dutch and as far as I was able to ascertain, are commonly used in Minahasa. *Papi* and *Mami* are also used frequently but never *nenek* or *kakek* which I found to be more prominent in Java, Indonesian textbooks and dictionaries. Even the use of *Ibu* and *Bapak* is rare in Minahasa. People often became uncomfortable or embarrassed when these terms were used in reference to themselves. This was difficult for me to get used to as my experiences in Java had required me to use the terms daily.

when Alex was growing up. The Kojongian family still living in Wolaan village have extensive land holdings and Alex's 80+ year old Uncle continues to make "Cap Tikus" (literally "Rat Brand"), a locally made beverage made from saguer or palm wine that has been fermented. It is a widely consumed product in Minahasa, especially in the upland areas where it is believed to be a sort of health beverage that helps keep a person warm on chilly nights. It packs quite a punch and is consumed by both women and men in the villages. The Kojongians are Catholic, while most (perhaps as much as 80%) of Minahasa's 720,600<sup>338</sup> occupants are Protestant, and an even smaller percentage are Muslim. This fact led to many interesting discussions about religious tolerance in the past as well as the present. The family claims to have been even more populous or extended before Dutch policies led the Catholic side of the family to clearly separate itself from the Protestant side. The Catholics of this village became known by the name Kojongian while the Protestants are generally recognized by the name Tulung<sup>339</sup>. The differences between the two forms of Christianity seem unimportant to Alex's nuclear family today and evidence of this can be found in the marriage of Alex's youngest daughter to a Protestant. Interestingly, the children of this marriage are being raised as Catholics and Rully (the son-in-law) himself attends Catholic prayer meetings.

Alex's wife, Cantia (58), is from a small village located on the road between Airmadidi and Tatelu. Her father was a Catholic missionary and Cantia herself can still speak fluent Dutch. Until she retired from her position, Cantia taught Dutch language at the same school as Alex. Her mother gave birth to 19 (!) children and still lives in the same village where the children were raised. The family has now scattered around the world and Cantia is always proud to say that her brothers and sisters (and children!) live as far as Jakarta, Bali, The Netherlands, and the United States. Although Cantia's family had not been rich, all of her brothers and sisters finished their education through high school (SMA) and many became teachers, doctors, and missionaries. Several of them married Dutch or American citizens. Alex and Cantia have raised 4 children, 2 of which still live in their parents' home in Manado. One son was killed in Jakarta while the eldest daughter still lives in Jakarta with her own

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<sup>338</sup> North Sulawesi Regional Office of Statistics, Indonesia. The GMIM asserts that 90% of the local population practices some sort of Christianity and only 10% are Muslim. Christians supposedly represent 52% of the total population in North Sulawesi.

<sup>339</sup> Although I could find no information supporting this particular practice, Lundstrom- Burghoorn (1981: 74) does note that the practice of using surnames in Minahasa was introduced by the Dutch in the last century. She also states that as a consequence of some of these policies, the size of houses and the number of the inhabitants of each house was decreased. This would corroborate with the Kojongian-Tulung story.

children. The remaining children, Meity (31) and Oceng (28) are both married and have children of their own.

Meity married Rully Timboeleng and together they have one daughter: Astrid (6) (my sister, shadow and Indonesian tutor!) and one son: Christo (3 ) (my soccer partner). As I mentioned, Rully, Meity, Astrid and Christo all live in the house Meity grew up in.<sup>340</sup> Rully himself comes from a large Protestant family that is centered around the house of his parents near the gate that marks the entrance to UNSRAT. His father had been an influential man at the University before his death around a year ago. Rully's mother also speaks Dutch, some English and can sing a stunning rendition of "Blue Hawaii". The two families are quite close and Meity is treated as a sister among the Timboelengs. Rully's two brothers, mother, a sister in law and a niece and nephew live together in this house while one of his sisters (a language instructor of mine) is married and lives in a house of her own.

Oceng (the youngest of the Kojongian children) married Novi Koilam, who was originally from a village called Mundung near Tombatu. Their son Acel had just been born a month before my arrival in June 2001. As Novi's son was so young while I was there, I saw very little of her compared to the rest of the family. Oceng was also a bit more shy and the couple seemed somewhat dominated by Meity who obviously ran most of the house in a pleasant, rambunctious manner. All 9 members of the family live in a modest 5 bedroom home but I should also note that there was a steady stream of cousins, aunts/uncles, nephews/nieces, brothers and sisters etc. into the house that prompted me to create an extensive kinship chart as one of my more formal research tools, but also as a way to keep track of all of the people I met. Some of these guests would stay a few days, others were there for weeks or even months.

The Kojongian house is typical of many homes in Manado. It began as a one story three bedroom house constructed of cement with a wood and corrugated metal roof. Apparently, as the family began to expand, the second story was added which gave the house an additional 2 bedrooms, a second shared living room and a sun deck or balcony overlooking the small-quiet residential street. The top section is constructed from wood and overhangs the front of the house by about 15 feet, providing a roof for a tiled front porch or open air sitting room below. The porch is used as a sitting area for guests in the afternoons and served me as a pleasant area to study, help Astrid with homework, or lounge lazily after classes eating *pisang*

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<sup>340</sup> For a better grasp on the relationship and residence patterns, of this family, see appendix 3.

*goreng* (fried bananas). The materials as well as the labor for the upper floor addition were provided by the extensive family members living in and around Manado. This is apparently common practice in Minahasa and I have read various ethnographic accounts that demonstrate a similar pattern of home construction<sup>341</sup>.

All of the main sitting areas of the house are dominated by wood furniture with padded velvet cushions. The pieces look nice but are not as comfortable as one might like! Despite the furniture, Alex and Cantia almost always sat on two ceramic jars turned upside down while the rest of the family sat in chairs. A very nice color television dominates the main family room, and a smaller television is used almost exclusively by Alex upstairs where he often sits after the rest of the family has gone to bed. I was amazed to discover that one of the closets on the 2nd floor houses a Sony Play Station and DVD player. There are also two enormous china cabinets which display nicer plates, cups, trinkets and knick-knacks in the same manner of western homes. The front porch of the house is surrounded by a brick wall that is nearly invisible through healthy flowering plants creating a refreshing garden setting that stays cool in the hot afternoon. The outgoing nature of the Kojongian family coupled with the large front porch that stayed pleasant in the hot tropical climate made the house a popular spot for many COTIM participants while we were there and “my” family became rather famous as hosts among the students. The Kojongians were genuinely interested in America and they delighted in asking their various guests questions about religion, politics, economy and culture in the United States.

Almost every room in the house has framed photos of the family as well as large prints of Jesus and especially Mary. My own room contained two wooden religious figurines when I first arrived, but by the time I left, that number had mysteriously increased to 5 and I hoped that these were not left as subtle reminders or suggestions! One of the first questions I had been asked when I arrived concerned my religious background. Hoping to comply with their own religion, which I assumed would be Protestant given the statistical odds, I had proclaimed myself a Methodist (well, I had attended a Methodist church as a child). At that point I had no idea that they were Catholic but it soon became clear that I had alienated myself from an important part of their lives by claiming Protestantism. Although I was invited to attend special “*ibada*” or prayer meetings on occasion, I was never invited to church as it was assumed that I would attend a Protestant church on my own. My regret

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<sup>341</sup> See for example Lundstrom-Burghoorn (1981: 93).

increased when I was left out of the weekly Catholic women's prayer meetings that were held at a different house each week. The importance of these weekly group meetings should not be underestimated and is written about quite extensively with relevance to local identity constructs in Minahasa.<sup>342</sup> Even when I expressed interest in attending church with the family, I was told that I did not need to go to a Catholic church to please them and that it did not bother them if I didn't attend. They would also comment that they had been told by a family who had hosted a student the previous year that it was not common for college students from America to attend church. The matter was therefor somewhat closed. Despite this one element of exclusion, I was otherwise made to feel at home in the midst of this family who taught me more than anyone about the meaning of "Minahasa".

There were other important sources of information that should also be mentioned here. Many people living around Manado, Tomohon and Tondano contributed to this ongoing research. In order to gather information from outside of Manado, I spent nearly every weekend based at the Happy Flower Homestay in Tomohon while traveling around by microlet to various locations. I became very familiar with the elderly couple who owned the Happy Flower and by the end of my stay in Sulawesi, they were providing me with transportation, information and insisting that I call them "Oma" and "Opa". This quiet retreat at the end of a long dirt road at the foot of Mt. Lokong served as a base for countless trips to Tondano and several areas in between. One adventure included a four day search for oral folktales in bahasa Tondano with a linguistics student from Cornell. He had been given this assignment by a rather famous instructor of Indonesian back in Ithaca, and the student was determined to follow through with his project. Inquiring everywhere from markets, villages, houses and streets we were unable to find the appropriate informant. From this experience, we learned that this particular language is not as prominent as some of the books suggest (unfortunately for our aspiring linguistics student) but were able to gather important information for my research instead! That same week we literally stumbled upon the monument of Sam Ratulangi, a National Indonesian hero from Minahasa. Although the monument was closed, a local introduced us to the grounds keeper who let us in and spoke with us for several hours about Minahasan culture, loaned me some unpublished source material and gave me his opinion of the upcoming Kongres Minahasa Raya. I was able to

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<sup>342</sup> See for example: Mai, Ulrich 1992 "Credit, Consensus, and Power: The Local Association as a Modern Institution for Socialization". Working Paper No. 167 Sociology of Development Research Centre. Beilefeld: University of Bielefeld Faculty of Sociology

attend the Kongres Minahasa Raya in Tomohon simply by showing up at Bukit Inspirasi and striking a conversation with a cengki farmer who obtained a pass for me. The event would in turn become the starting point for this current research. At the Kongres I met several people who have become important sources of knowledge concerning politics and culture in Minahasa. In short, much of the information gathered for my research came from unexpected places at almost random intervals.

Back in Manado, this research was supervised by Fendy EW Parengkuan, a Professor of culture and history in Minahasa at UNSRAT. It was through Fendy and Bert A. Supit (a good friend and associate of Fendy) that I was able to obtain copies of almost all of my unpublished source material on Minahasa and the KMR II. It was pure luck that Fendy and I were teamed up as I had no idea that he knew anything about KMR II and he was unaware of the fact that I had a growing interest in it as a topic for my thesis. We had simply been assigned to each other by the COTIM office because we were both interested in the cultural history of North Sulawesi. As our understanding of each other grew, I discovered that Fendy was an organizing member of a group interested in promoting a new “propinsi” Minahasa and he was able to introduce me to a variety of people that were able to clarify the Kongres and what the goals of this group continue to be.

The problem of library research while I was in Minahasa was at least partially mended with prior library work at the University of Hawaii back in Manoa. As I had very little time to prepare myself with background knowledge of North Sulawesi before I left for Manado<sup>343</sup>, I took as many relevant volumes from Hawaii as I could justify carrying with me in my luggage. This helped me to place my observations into historical, political, and cultural context. Although it is unusual for students to enter the field with little knowledge of the people they have come to study, I believe that in this case, it allowed me to perceive the people around me with fresh perspective. I have discovered upon subsequent research at Leiden University that much of the material published on Minahasa is concerned with either denouncing modern Minahasan culture as “unreal”/ “untraditional” and illustrating the complete stamp of Dutch influence or, more recently, insisting on elements of cultural continuation into today. Ignorant of this theoretical tug-of-war, my initial journal entries are ones of simple but insightful observation. It has been rewarding to tie these first observations into subsequent research based on a more thorough understanding of the literature on

Minahasa on a regional, national and even global level, but I am grateful that at least this time, I was able to enter into my topic without preconceived notions about what I would find and what my conclusions should be before actually going to Minahasa, conducting interviews or recording observations. I believe this has helped the honesty and direction of my ideas.

The information I have outlined here is meant to place myself as a research student squarely within a real context and to give the reader some idea of the conditions and limitations surrounding me as I conducted interviews, traveled, lived and worked. Although I spent much of my time trying to wrangle interviews with people, worrying about the general direction of my research, constructing meaningful and viable research questions, reading as much as possible AND building on language skills, I had plenty of opportunity to enjoy Minahasa. Unlike previous trips to Indonesia, I was unable to accumulate small anecdotes of impossible discomfort, near death experiences relating to either buses or bowels, living with chickens, pigs and cows under my bed or even an adventure on a swiftly leaking “sea” vessel.<sup>344</sup> Instead I found that transportation was easy and roads were well maintained. There were no visible signs of people begging in Manado and the city was comparatively clean. The climate and spectacular volcanic peaks that dominate Minahasa are what has made it famous among travelers and are probably the reason Alfred Wallace wrote that it was the most beautiful place in Asia, but the people around this portion of Sulawesi are what make it unique for me. Many writers, both indigenous and foreign, have tried to characterize this uniqueness through the centuries and as my research has shown, it is an ongoing process that is effected both from within Minahasa and from without on a local, regional, national and global level.

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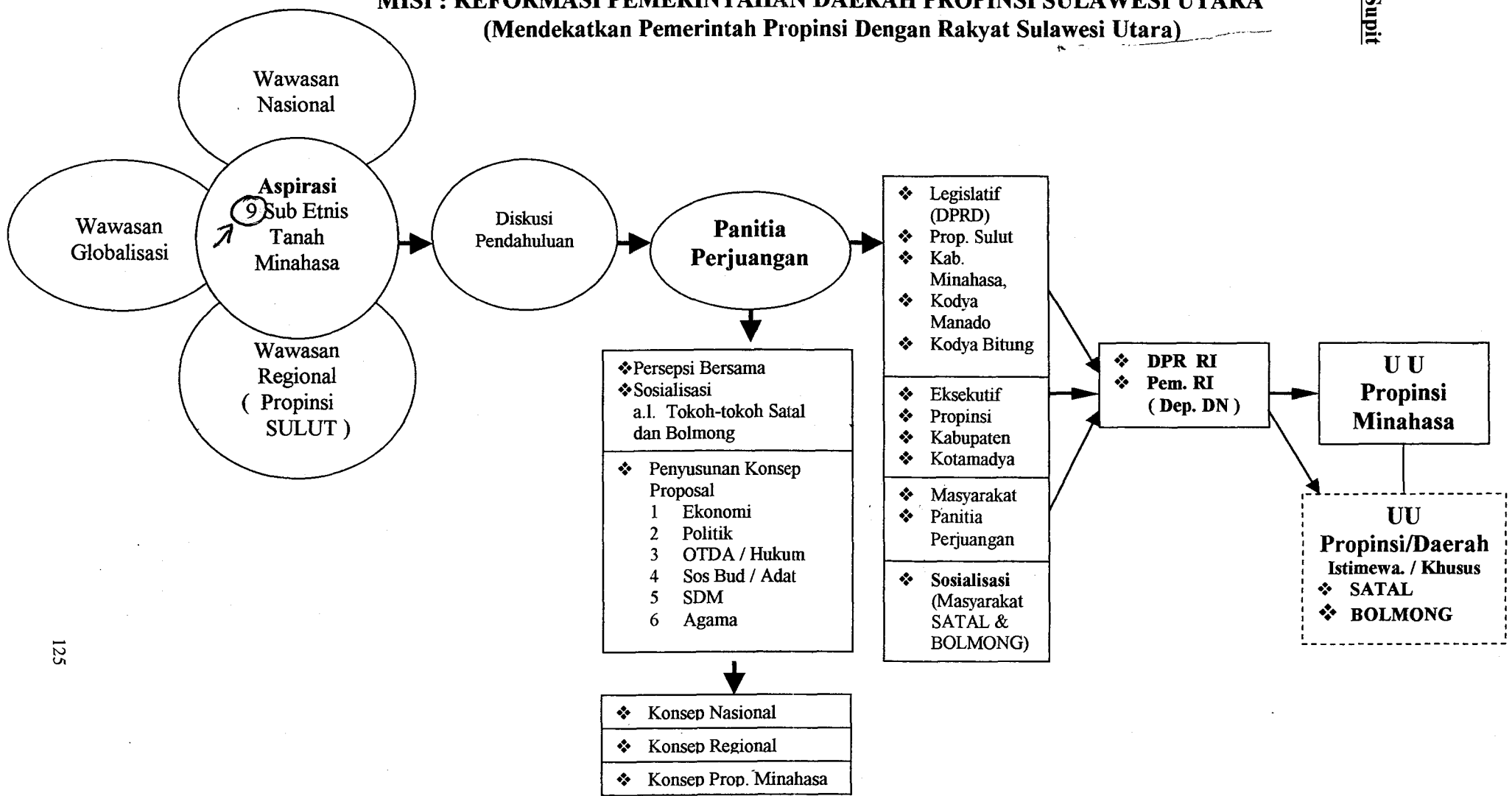
<sup>343</sup> I had previously been working on papers and research proposals for the Palu area in Central Sulawesi. My knowledge of Minahasa was therefore limited before my stay there.

<sup>344</sup> Well, there were some “problems” with a climb up Manado Tua in which 2 hikers were injured and left alone on the mountain for some hours, but I made it up ok. Don’t be fooled, that mountain is bigger and badder than it looks.

By: Bert A. Supit

## PROSES GAGASAN FLOW of IDEAS

**VISI : DEMOKRATISASI DAN KESEJAHTERAAN RAKYAT**  
**MISI : REFORMASI PEMERINTAHAN DAERAH PROPINSI SULAWESI UTARA**  
**(Mendekatkan Pemerintah Propinsi Dengan Rakyat Sulawesi Utara)**



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Supplementary papers, presentations and articles concerning modernity, ethnicity and anthropology. From the Author of "Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives" (see citation above).

### **Conrad Theodor van Deventer**

<http://www.Britannica.com/seo/c/conrad-theodor-van-deventer/>

Bio information for one of the founders of the "Ethical Policy" that was implemented in the Netherlands East Indies. Also provides some information on the Ethical Policy itself.

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Also see:

<http://www.britannica.com/seo/e/ethical-policy/>

### **Minahasa Raya Net**

[http://www.minahasaraya.net/manado\\_main.htm](http://www.minahasaraya.net/manado_main.htm)

This is a fairly new web page, initiated in Fall of 2001. It includes community message boards, cultural, historical resources on Minahasa as well as links to statistical information and personal web pages dedicated to the concept of Minahasa.

### **Sulut Link**

<http://www.sulutlink.com>

Contains local news stories written by local reporters as well as links to other web sites that include information on North Sulawesi (especially Minahasa). Most useful to this research is a link to a frequently used discussion board maintained by the Manado Post. This online paper has a decidedly Christian flavor. The main author for this paper became an important initial source in interviews for this research.

### **Pemerintah Propinsi Sulawesi Utara**

<http://www.sulut.go.id>

Official views on culture, economy, population, infrastructure, prospects and the "indigenous" attitudes towards development within the context of the Indonesian nation.

**Minaesa**

<http://www.minaesa.com>

Provides further links to Minahasa related sites on the internet as well as interesting articles and issues pertaining to the area and its people.

**Permesta on the Web**

<http://www.geocities.com/permesta57/index.htm>

Contains articles on the history of Permesta and the relevance of the Permesta movement on modern Minahasa.

**EMS Online**

<http://www.ems-online.org/engl/partners/indonesia/minahasa.html>

Information pertaining to EMS (Evangelical Church Minahasa, Sulawesi), Or as it is better known: GMIM (Gereja Masehi Injili Minahasa). This church has been a dominating force in Minahasan Christianity and cultural development.

**Tumoutou Net**

<http://tumoutou.net>

Contains dozens of academic articles in both Indonesian and English on subjects such as the environment, development and NGO involvement in Minahasa.