

## **The Changing Face of the Village in Ambon**

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This research report addresses the changing nature of the village in the Ambon area as a field of study. I discuss critical social changes by focusing on two aspects: the movement of village-based Ambonese to Ambon Town, and the effects of the 1979 Indonesian State Law #5 on Village Government (UU#5/1979 Tentang Pemerintahan Desa), henceforth referred to here as the Village Law. Since its founding as the center of trade and administration, Ambon Town has drawn villagers from across the region. Two key factors are now affecting the movement of villagers to town: school-age villagers seeking to further their education and then staying to seek work as civil servants, and fallen returns from clove production, causing villagers to seek wage labor in industries based in town. Ambonese describe the villages as “empty,” perceiving that the only people left are the very old and the very young; municipal statistics in 1995 showed that about 75% of the town’s population was under age 35. While this migration brings the urban area into the cultural life of Ambonese villagers, the Village Law involves the villages in the cultural politics of the nation-state. The Village Law aims to democratize, modernize, and standardize structures and procedures of village governance across the nation. Ambonese, however, find the Village Law to be “in opposition to adat” and much conflict has followed the provincial government’s adoption of the law in 1985. I look at village leadership as a key issue around which this conflict has cohered. Through these specific issues, I hope to address the larger topics of modernization and social change in the Ambon area and the nature of the village as a field of ethnographic study.

### **The village and the field**

Recent debates in anthropology (Clifford 1997, Gupta & Ferguson 1997, Robbins & Bamford 1997, Breckenridge & Appadurai 1989) have problematized the notion of “the field,” the essential component of the fieldwork on which anthropologists base much of our authority. Critiques of ethnographic depictions of remote and stagnant “others” have inspired

a re-examination of processes of change and the dynamic interrelations between local, national, and global cultures. A growing literature on transnational identities and global relations of exchange and dependency, and on the role of the state, multinational organizations, and the discursive fields of modernization and development in local cultural processes, has provided new approaches to anthropology's traditional objects. In this paper I examine the changing nature of one such object, the village in Ambonese society.<sup>1</sup> I will locate these changes in the context of modernization through two effects: the movement of village-based Ambonese to Ambon Town, and the effects on village government of Indonesian State Law #5 in 1979 (UU#5/1979, Tentang Pemerintahan Desa), henceforth referred to as the Village Law.

In Indonesian social theory and popular discourse, the notion of the village is fundamental to most discussions of culture. In popular discourse the village (*desa*) is generally identified as the source and location of authentic Indonesian cultural practices and formations (*adat*). In scholarly realms, the village—particularly the remote “traditional” village—has generally been prioritized as the natural location for ethnographic studies. These studies are expected to yield monographic descriptions and analyses of the life of a certain people; in this sense culture is naturalized to a particular place, the village locale. As an anthropologist, I am often asked, by both Indonesian and Western scholars and others, which “tribe” I am studying. This association of the study of culture with village-dwelling tribal others is the legacy of a disciplinary interest in seeking out diverse cultural forms, together with the centrality of *desa* and *adat* in Indonesian models for national identity (see, for example, Sawarno Djaksonagoro 1970 [1959]). Most ethnographies of culture in eastern Indonesian societies have prioritized the village as fieldsite (see, for example, the articles in Barraud & Platenkamp 1989 and 1990, and the review of these volumes by Crowder & Horvatich 1992). Yet historically grounded studies, particularly of Malukan society, clearly show the enduring linkages between local culture and larger identities and

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<sup>1</sup>I am following general practice in Maluku, and the precedent set by previous scholars, in using “the Ambonese” to refer to area, people and culture from not only the island of Ambon but also the Lease islands and south coast of western Seram. While there are significant cultural and historical differences between these areas, particularly distinguishing Seram from Ambon and the Leases, in this paper it is the commonalities on which I will be focusing.

processes, whether interregional trade and politics (Andaya 1991, 1993; Ellen 1990, 1993, 1997), Christianity and Islam (Cooley 1962a, Pannell 1990, Benda-Beckman & Benda-Beckman 1988) or the movements of colonialism and nationalism (Chauvel 1990; Knaap 1987, 1991), indicating that culture in Maluku has developed and moved well beyond the confines of the village for centuries. These processes of social change are not only phenomena of the past. I wish to look at urbanization and the Village Law as two examples of how culture in the Ambon area continues to form and operate beyond the boundaries of the village; or, conversely, how the notion of the village can be expanded to include larger domains of culture.

The field in which I have conducted my research in Ambon has involved both a village in coastal Seram, which I will call Tapanama, and the town of Ambon.<sup>2</sup> I have gravitated toward this as much because of my research circumstances as because of my personal and intellectual preferences: I found that the people I chose to work with themselves live in both places and regularly move between them. As I moved with them between town and village, I began to notice that many of the issues about which they became most passionate were also not limited to the village proper, but extended as well into the sphere of town, and moreover into the realm of the nation-state. Indeed Ambon Town links Malukans to the nation-state, serving as a peripheral center, a regional node in the network of sociopolitical relations that is centered on Jakarta (“Pusat”). National programs and policies, as well as television and radio broadcasts, all created in Jakarta, are disseminated to the citizens of the nation in Maluku through Ambon Town, the seat of provincial government.

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<sup>2</sup>I conducted research in 1994–95 under the auspices of the Fulbright Foundation and the Indonesian Science Institute (LIPI Jakarta); my thanks to the staff at AMINEF, and especially Nelly Poulhaupessy, for coordinating this. In Ambon I was sponsored by Pattimura University; I wish to thank Dr. Mus Huliselan, Drs. Jules Pattiselanno and Tonny Pariela at the Center for Malukan Studies for their support and insights. This research was predicated on two months of preliminary research in 1992, funded by the Institute for Intercultural Studies, and a semester as a guest scholar at the Center for Malukan Studies at Pattimura University in 1990, for which opportunity I wish to thank the Center and James T. Collins. In referring to my village fieldsite, as well as to the people with whom I conducted my research, I use pseudonyms in the interest of protecting their privacy.

Ambonese villagers find their lives increasingly tied into the patterns and agendas of the nation-state; Ambon Town acts as the focal point for this dynamic.

Nearly as much of my fieldwork among Tapanamans was conducted in Ambon Town—in the crowded kampungs of Kebun Cengkeh, Batu Merah, and Waihaong—as was conducted in the village itself. This was because many of the people with whom I spoke were either permanent residents of the town or frequent visitors there. At the time of my research, Tapanama was about six hours from Ambon Town by ferry and minibus. The paved road that provides access to the village was laid in 1985; prior to that people got around on outboard motor boats, which took half a day to get to Ambon. Tapanamans said that, before motorboats, it might take a day or two to sail an outrigger from the village to Ambon, and this trip was impossible during the monsoons. The coming of the road and the buses that service it has decreased the travel distance between the village and town. Electricity and televisions have even more dramatically decreased the distance between the village and Jakarta, as people can now take an evening stroll over to one of the households with a TV set to watch the national news.

The road has also made the village much more accessible than before to the agents of the central government. ABRI officers, officials like the bupati and the camat, and civil servants from various bureaus and agencies make frequent appearances. The state seems to be a far more constant presence in Tapanama than has been reported in less accessible parts of the region, such as the interior of East Seram (James Hagen, pers. comm.). This increased presence has also had considerable impact on changing the nature of the village.

### **Urbanization**

Looking over the 17th century, the historian G. J. Knaap has called Ambon Town a “city of migrants” (Knaap 1991), since the majority of its population came from somewhere else. Created by the Dutch as an entrepôt and administrative base, Ambon Town has continued as such in the independent Republic. As the provincial seat, Ambon Town houses the offices of provincial government as well as the branch offices of state bureaus and agencies in the province. Businesses such as banks, shipping companies, and oil, mining, fishing and lumber industries have their regional bases in Ambon Town, as do the armed forces. The state univer-

sity for Maluku province, Universitas Pattimura, is across the bay from town, and there are also several other colleges in the area. These institutions and industries draw migrants not only from all over Maluku but from other parts of Indonesia as well, most notably Butonese and Buginese migrants from South Sulawesi.

The 1994 census shows that approximately three-quarters of the municipal population is under the age of 35 (Kantor Statistik 1994: 75). Although I was unable to locate figures on migration to Ambon Town, the youthfulness of the population seems to be attributable to the high numbers of young people migrating in, usually for schooling and for work, and their children. At the same time, many older Ambonese prefer to live in villages, where they say life is quieter—"not so *ramai*"—so they move "home to the village" (*pulang kampong*) for their retirement. The phrase *pulang kampong* is significant. Ambonese identify themselves and each other by *kampong*, even if they were born and raised in town, or outside the province. Ambonese also highly value kinship relations, and chart themselves in a network of family names and locations. For example, in 1995 almost any Ambonese would know that the governor of Maluku, Gov. Latuconsina, is "from" the village of Pelauw on Haruku. It would be more or less irrelevant where he grew up, since everyone knows almost all Latuconsinas are "from" Pelauw. So some older people might *pulang kampong* to a village where they had never before lived; this was particularly poignant for repatriated Dutch Malukans.<sup>3</sup>

The town's identity is predominantly Christian. Although the people of the Ambon area are more or less evenly divided between Christians and Muslims, Ambon Town, as the seat of Dutch power, historically tended to draw more Christians than Muslims, particularly those who worked in the administration or the KNIL. However, there has always been a Muslim presence in town, as evidenced by the lovely old Mesjid Jame near the center of town, and the old mosque of Batu Merah. Many

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<sup>3</sup>Dutch Malukans, mostly the families of former KNIL soldiers and supporters of the RMS who have lived in Holland since the 1950s, have maintained kinship and village identities from Ambon (see Bartels 1989). A few have begun quietly repatriating to Ambon, to the villages which they are "from"—a move they often describe as *pulang kampong halaman* 'go home to one's home village'. The phrase *pulang kampong halaman* has acquired deep sentimental overtones, as evidenced in Ambonese folksongs, from the historical tendency of Ambonese to migrate abroad.

Muslim Ambonese stated that until very recently the town was still dominated by Christian Ambonese. This, they said, is due to the tendency of the Dutch to favor the Christians as their *anak mas* 'golden children'. Indeed, an older Muslim Ambonese once offered a folk etymology for *Ambon* as an acronym of *Anak Mas Belanda, Orang Nederland* 'Dutch golden child, Dutch person'. This sally drew murmurs of ironic laughter from his fellow villagers. The historian Richard Chauvel notes that Christian Ambonese rose to prominence in Ambonese society due to their privileged access to education (Chauvel 1980). However, independence has broadened educational opportunities in Ambon, and Ambon has now seen many more Muslims in positions of authority. One example of this change cited by Muslim Ambonese was the appointment of Maluku's first Muslim Ambonese governor, Gov. Latuconsina.

Tapanaman migration to Ambon illustrates these changing patterns. According to older Tapanamans, the first permanent migrants from the village to settle in town arrived in the 1950s, and they were only a handful. They earned their livings as shopkeepers and tailors, and a couple as civil servants. The households they established in the Muslim quarters—Waihaong, Batu Merah, Soa Bali—provided hospitality to travelers from the village in town on business; and these households still act as way stations for Tapanamans in town. More recently, since the 1980s, some of these households have provided footholds for Tapanamans moving permanently to Ambon Town. This kind of chain migration is familiar through much of the world. In the case of Tapanamans, the pioneers in town have provided not only food and housing to young migrants (who are almost always relatives), but also the connections that are critical in Ambon to secure jobs, especially within the civil service. One man, Haji Usman, has placed several of his relatives in civil service jobs after taking them into his home as protégés while they were in school. One of these, now himself an established civil servant, has begun to take in his own protégés, mostly his younger siblings and cousins who are attending high school and college in Ambon.

The path of education has increasingly lead many younger Tapanamans to move out of the village. Since there is no high school in the village or anywhere nearby, those who wish to continue their education must migrate out. Some attend school in the large village that serves as the seat of the kecamatan, often living in tiny shacks behind a friend's or relative's house. If they have relatives with whom they can stay in Am-

bon, young people prefer to attend high school there; and of course college means migrating at least to Ambon Town, if not out of Maluku altogether.

This education is intended to lead to jobs, particularly in the civil service. Jobs in the private sector were of secondary interest to almost everyone with whom I spoke, even though they often pay far better. People explained that there were two reasons for this preference. One is that the private sector jobs have absolutely no security, and no benefits. “You could lose your job one day because the boss decides to fire you, for no good reason,” one man told me. Jobs in the civil service, although low-paid and often boring, practically guaranteed lifetime employment with a pension at retirement, with the added benefit of the possibility for supplementary income “under the table” through the low-grade corruption that is endemic to the bureaucracy. But perhaps an equally or more important reason is the élan of wearing a uniform. One man noted that since the time of the Dutch the uniform of the civil service has been a marker of high status in Ambonese society. A young civil servant told me he liked to wear the uniform. It made him feel proud, and he felt the equal of anyone—even a rich man would respect him.

For Muslim Ambonese, access to the civil service is relatively new, following on the improved access to education. From my observations, I would say that in Muslim villages, education and jobs in the civil service are becoming new status markers, displacing the pilgrimage to Mecca as an indicator of wealth and privilege within the village. Where formerly people saved their money to make the haj, now they are saving that money for their children’s education. Where formerly being a haji marked one as a member of the elite, a man or woman of weight and import, this authority is increasingly attributed to the *sarjana* (high school or college graduate) and the *pegawai* (civil servant). This was sharply brought home to me at a prayer meeting (*tahlil*) held in the home in which I stayed in the village. The head of the household, himself a respected elite member of the community, had invited most of the other *orang tua* (respected village elders), many of whom were hajis. He also invited his son Ismael, a civil servant who had just attained a position as section head in his office and was perceived to be on his way up within the bureaucracy. After the *tahlil*, the men had tea, and this was the time when the *orang tua* would usually discuss politics, religion, and history. Yet on this instance all of the older men deferred to the young civil

servant, who led the conversation with reports of his triumphs in the office and gossip about the doings of the provincial government.

Haji Usman, the older civil servant who had sponsored Ismael in town, pointed to Ismael as the village's hope for the future and an indicator of the village's relative status in Ambonese society. "Look," he said, "where is the village going? Other villages have many *sarjana*, and now they are doing well. Who does Tapanama have? Only Ismael. The people of the village have been thoughtless. Look at Pulauw. When the price for cloves was good they made lots of money—we all did—but they used their money to send their children to school, and now they have the governor, the head of the regional parliament<sup>4</sup> ... lots of big men in Ambon Town are from Pulauw. How is Tapanama ever going to advance?" These comments were even more striking coming from Haji Usman, not only a haji himself, but also a civil servant in the bureau of haj affairs in the provincial office of religious affairs. In the Ambon area, the money from the sale of cloves was the primary source of the excess income that allowed people to make the pilgrimage, and Haji Usman was now advocating that it be spent on education.

The clove market itself plays a critical role in Ambonese migration from the village to town. It was commonly acknowledged in the Ambon area that the radical drop in the price of cloves had dramatically altered regional economics. When I had first come to Ambon in 1990 one could sell a kilo of cloves for as much as Rp. 30,000, with the average price being around Rp. 15,000. Since the central government had taken over the market in 1991 and required producers to sell only to the state-run village cooperatives, which bought at a fixed price of around Rp. 6,000 per kilo, the clove trade had languished. "People are reluctant (*malas*) to harvest their cloves," many people said. One man told me, "The grass is growing tall over our trees; it's not worth the effort and the cost of hiring helpers to harvest. It used to be that at this time of year the air was rich with the scent of cloves. Now people are looking to other crops, chocolate or nutmeg. But none of these yields the kind of profit that cloves used to bring in."

A civil servant in the city planning office thought that the clove market used to actually attract people to the villages. "Before, when a

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<sup>4</sup>DPRD Tk. I, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, Tingkat I (Provincial People's Representative Council, Level I).

man retired, say from ABRI, he could buy some land and go back to the village and raise cloves, and soon he would be a rich man. Now there is nothing in the village; everyone is leaving.” Other people said very much the same thing. “The villages are empty,” many people said. “Without cloves there is no way for the young people to make money. There are no young people in the village anymore, only the old people and small children are left.”

Of the families I surveyed in a sample section of Tapanama, nearly every one had children living outside the village. Not all of these migrants were in Ambon Town. Many young men worked at the large timber plant at Waisarisa. Out of a total village population of around 2,000, people estimated that about 80 Tapanamans lived and worked there. Others worked for the timber companies, harvesting trees in the interior and on the north coast of Seram. Some worked on deep-sea fishing boats. Others had joined the military and were posted in other parts of Maluku. Students away attending high school also accounted for many of these missing villagers. Of the 8 children in my village host family, only 2 resided in the village, and these were still in grade school. The others had all gone to school outside the village and remained in Ambon Town. *Sarjana* were expected to live in Ambon, there being little work in the village appropriate to them. Indeed, the young men who did reside in the village were sometimes looked upon as failures, particularly those who had migrated out before and had returned. Outmigration was much the norm for young men. A few women had moved to town to work there as well, but only a few girls were going to high school, and these tended to be from the more privileged families.

Tapanamans lived dispersed throughout the town; there was no single area in which they tended to concentrate. In the newly opened settlement of Kebun Cengkeh, a family of Tapanamans lived next to Muslim migrants from villages on Seram, Saparua, and Ambon, as well as Christians from Kei and from the Ambon area. In a long-established Tapanaman household in the kampung of Waihaong, neighbors from Java and Bacan, as well as from other Muslim villages in the Ambon area, were always to be found visiting, along with whichever Tapanamans from the village happened to be in town. Increasingly young Tapanaman men were taking wives from among these neighbors, and raising children who spoke little or no *bahasa tanah*.

### **The Village Law of 1979**

Another factor effecting fundamental changes in the nature of village life has been the introduction of the Village Law of 1979 (UU#5/1979 Tentang Pemerintahan Desa). The Village Law, intended to standardize the structures and procedures of village government throughout the nation, has caused considerable conflict since it took effect in Maluku in 1985. In other regions, there have also been problems with various aspects of the Village Law. In Sumatra, much of the conflict has centered on the way the law has redefined the village community, conjoining some villages and breaking others into several administrative units (Watson 1987, Kato 1989, Galizia 1996), while in Bali the tension has surrounded the ambiguous role of the *banjar* and *banjar* leader (Warren 1990, Schulte Nordholt 1991). In the Ambon area, however, most of the conflict has focused on the issue of leadership, specifically the position of the village head.

Ambon-area villages have been governed by hereditary leaders, the *raja*, working in consultation with the *saniri negri*, councils usually made up of the heads of the various subdivisions comprising each village. While these officials attend to political and legal matters, spiritual matters are overseen by the *tuan tanah*, literally 'lord of the land', also a hereditary position. The *tuan tanah* mediates between the people of the village and their departed ancestors and other spiritual powers of the land. His role is to guard the sanctity of the village, which in this sense means not only the people and the land, but also the moral force that integrates these. The *tuan tanah* works with the *raja*. In the traditional installation ceremony for a new *raja* (*pelantikan raja*), the *tuan tanah* is the one who anoints the new *raja*. According to one former *raja*, when he was newly installed he went to the *tuan tanah* for instruction in certain powerful incantations and prayers, such as the ones that he as *raja* was obliged to speak over newly opened garden plots in order to ensure the blessings of the spirits.

Religious matters in the village would be overseen by the *pendeta* in Christian villages and the *imam* in Muslim villages. Cooley's study of the relationship between "altar and throne" (religion and government) in Christian villages describes these institutions as distinct and more or less independent of each other. This is because the *pendeta* should be an outsider, not a member of the village itself. *Pendetas* represent the authority of the Malukan Protestant Church to whom they are answerable

and by whom they are appointed. However, the situation is different in Muslim villages. The imam is a member of the local village elite, often from a specific lineage. In Tapanaman accounts, the first raja and imam were brothers, illustrating the older brother/younger brother relationship of authority familiar throughout Maluku.

The Village Law replaces the raja with the *kepala desa* (or *kades*), and replaces the *saniri* with the Village Council (Lembaga Musyawarah Desa, or LMD) and the People's Resilience Council (Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa, or LKMD). The *kades* is an elected official who no longer needs to be from a specific lineage, and does not even need to be "from" the village, but merely to have resided there for at least four years. The Village Council is not elected, and while the law makes recommendations as to its membership, it makes no provisions for the process by which members are selected. So in Ambon the *kades* generally appoints whomever he or she pleases.

The Village Law makes no provisions for spiritual or religious leadership. This omission would appear to allow the *tuan tanah* and imam or pendeta to continue to function as they have been doing. However, as we have seen, in the Ambon area these officials have not been independent of the political leadership, but have been working alongside of and interdependently with the raja (with the exception of the pendeta in Christian villages). By making no formal linkages between the *kades* and the spiritual and religious leadership, the Village Law allows the political leadership of the village to operate completely independent of these, and severely undermines the authority and operative power of the religious and spiritual leadership.

Moreover, since the *kades* personally selects the membership of the Village Council, this body is rendered more or less powerless as a check on the authority of the *kades*. In contrast, the raja would have to gain the consensus of the community as represented by the members of the *saniri*. The *kades* is also required to work in cooperation with the Village Council, but the latter may function as more or less a rubber stamp, since the *kades* selects its members.

In this way, the Village Law replicates at the local level the structures of power at the national level. At each level—the center, province, kabupaten, and kecamatan—power concentrates in the hands of a single official, who formally works in cooperation with a popular representative

body,<sup>5</sup> but in practice answers only to superiors in the chain of command. Moreover, the linkages between administrative units are emphatically vertical; the *kades* reports to and takes his directives from the *camat*, who in turn reports to and receives directives from the *bupati*, who answers to the governor, who answers to the central government offices of the Presidency.

Although the Village Law overtly attempts to democratize, standardize, and regulate village government, it effectively draws the village into the network of power that emanates from Pusat. As the political scientist Mohtar Mas'oeed notes, the authority of the *kades* increasingly derives not from the village population but from the bureaucratic hierarchy of the state, which not only recommends and screens the candidates for *kades*, and then approves the winner, but also commands the loyalty of the *kades* through the financial enticements of the village subsidy, over which the *kades* has discretionary authority (Mas'oeed 1994b). Mas'oeed finds that the Village Law has transformed the *kades* from a representative of the villagers facing the outside world into a representative of the state residing in the village. A quasi civil servant, the *kades* is also required to be a member of the state party, GOLKAR, and is expected to bring in the votes for GOLKAR in each village.

Many Ambonese agreed that the problem with the Village Law is that it is "in opposition to adat" (*bertentangan dengan adat*). This, most said, is because the law does not recognize lineage (*keturunan*) as a critical criterion for village leadership. While some modern-thinking people acknowledged that the old raja system was "feudal" and "undemocratic," and that it would be good (that is, progressive) to choose leaders based on merit rather than family, they saw that the Ambonese people in general were not ready for this. Traditionalists pointed to the benefits of the old system: since the raja's authority was sanctioned by the ancestors, not only through his connections to the *tuan tanah*, but also through his linkages to the otherworldly powers of the previous rajas, the people feared and respected him. His orders were obeyed without question, and so village life was orderly. The *kades* has no such moral authority; he may give orders, but he has only the power of the state behind him. If the

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<sup>5</sup>The DPR (People's Representative Council), at the level of central government, the DPRD Tk. I and DPRD Tk. II (Regional People's Representative Council, Levels I and II), at the provincial and kabupaten levels; no such body operates at the kecamatan level.

people disregard his orders as having no weight, his only recourse is to call on the powers of the state—the armed forces—to enforce his rule. This, people said, means chaos. Indeed in one such village, factions split the community, violence broke out over unresolved disputes, and the local military officer (*babinsa*) began to insert himself as de facto leader, intervening in conflicts and establishing order—in one instance by firing off his pistol during a brawl, while the new *kades* sat ineffectively nearby.

Most villages in the Ambon area tried to reconcile adat and *pemerintah* by electing *kades* who were also from the proper adat lineage, the *keturunan raja*. In a sampling of villages in the Ambon area I found that 27 of the 31 villages had elected *kades* who were from the *keturunan raja*, including all but one of the *kampung adat*, the old villages that were established before the arrival of Europeans. The difficulty of locating both types of leader, raja and *kades*, in one person was compounded by the fact that candidates for *kades* are formally required to have a high school diploma, and informally required to have comfortable ties to the regional authorities. Some villages succeeded in finding a candidate who was not only of the raja's lineage but also a civil servant. In many other villages, though, the raja's lineage was itself contested, having often been split or created anew by the Dutch colonial authorities in their efforts to maintain control over the region (as Ellen 1997 notes in East Seram). In these villages the election for *kades* pitted candidates from rival factions against each other, leading in many cases to deep internal rifts and even violence, and provoking military intervention in several cases. In numerous villages during my research period, members of losing factions were contesting the results in lawsuits against the governor, or the mayor of Ambon Town, in the case of a village within the city limits. However, these lawsuits seemed generally to come to naught. The bupati approved and installed the winner first proclaimed, even when the winning candidate in one case was discovered to be lacking the required high school education.

There were many rumors of corruption and collusion among government officials to explain the approval and installation of these contested winners. In some villages, people claimed that winning candidates had used their influence with the camat to push through election counts that reflected large numbers of abstaining voters, who cast votes for the empty box (*kotak kosong* or *blangko*) or did not vote at all. People said

these high numbers of abstaining votes should have nullified the election and instigated an investigation by the camat's office. In many villages, there were rumors of votes bought and officials paid off. Other people pointed to larger political agendas to explain the installation of contested winners: the general elections were approaching, and the regional authorities wanted the situation in the villages to be orderly and settled long enough in advance to ensure a peaceful voting process—and to ensure that the *kades* was well-established enough to bring in the votes for GOLKAR.

The changes in local government under the Village Law reflect the general trend toward modernization in Indonesia. The Village Law attempts to transform the village from being a “feudal” and “backward” society into a more progressive (*maju*) one. This progressive society entails governmental structures that are rational, legalistic, and bureaucratic. Government also tends toward the secular; although affirming, promoting, and even imposing religion as fundamental to society, the Indonesian state separates government from religion, and from adat. This is understandable, given the variety of religions and forms of adat to be found in the nation. Yet, in village society in Ambon, as in other parts of the nation, government has never been separate from adat.

While government publications speak of the raja as a government figure, and of the *tuan tanah* and adat elders as adat officials, Ambonese also consider the raja to be an adat official. He must know and guard the village's adat; his responsibilities include participating in adat ceremonies. That the raja must be of a specified lineage is not a stricture of written law, but is required by adat. For Ambonese, adat is not merely custom and tradition, as it is often described in Indonesian popular discourse. It is predicated on the past, linking people to their departed ancestors and their history. The raja's lineage, then, is a crucial part of this linkage. Ambonese whose villages had elected a weak leader or one not of the raja's lineage worried that their village would be destroyed (*hancur*), that all would be chaos (*kacau*). In one village, people began to see indications of this in unseasonable floods and excessively destructive wild boars that ruined garden plots. These boars were said to be manifestations of the ancestor spirits who guarded the village and whose destructive forces had been unleashed against the village. In other villages, people saw the breakdown of the social order, the fights and disputes, as

themselves signifying a condition of metaphysical imbalance brought on by inappropriate leadership.

The Village Law further represents a significant shift in the relations between village society and the state in Ambon. Previously Ambonese villages defined themselves primarily in terms of adat and, to a lesser extent, dialect. Ambonese adat would cover matters of bridewealth and marriage; access to land and to forest and marine products; relations to specifically local places such as the former sites of the village (*negri lama*) and gravesites; relations with other villages; and rituals and ceremonies, dances and songs, as well as government structures and procedures. In Muslim villages, certain aspects of religious life would be ascribed to adat as well, such as the separation of women from men in public prayer, and rituals like the *tahlil* prayer meetings. Each village has been understood to have its own specific configurations of adat, so that when someone moves into a village through marriage, she is expected to adopt the adat of the new village. In Tapanama, this expectation extended to a group of Butonese migrants, who were allowed to settle on Tapanaman land on condition they forget their own adat and embrace Tapanaman adat.

Under the Village Law and related ordinances and programs, however, the state defines the community according to much different criteria. Villages are defined in terms of population density and degrees of progress. The state not only determines the criteria for village leadership by establishing the candidacy requirements for *kades*, but also for who can select the leadership. Voting procedures specify that voters must register in advance and be residents of the village. Migrants who have lived away from the village for over a year, such as those who have moved to Ambon Town for schooling or work, are no longer qualified to elect the *kades*. In at least one community, this new restriction was so controversial that the village committee in charge of voting procedures overlooked it and allowed some town dwellers to cast their votes.

### **The village reconsidered**

This paper has focused on two factors changing the nature of the village in the Ambon area. This is not to say that urbanization and the new regulations concerning village government are the only elements effecting change in Ambonese villages. Much more can and needs to be said about the impact of government intervention into the clove market; the

effects of increased access to education and wage labor; the environmental and socioeconomic impact of industrial fishing, timber harvesting and mining; and many other factors. There has already been a great deal of solid historical research into issues such as these in Ambon's past. Studies on such situations in contemporary Ambon would greatly add to our understanding of the complexity of factors affecting the present.

Compared to Java and Bali, relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to issues of social change in Maluku. This imbalance seems difficult to reconcile with the central government's recent emphasis on developing eastern Indonesia. Additionally, given the current move in anthropology to reconsider issues of the field, it seems fruitful to take another look at the village in Indonesia. The long history of contact and mobility in the Ambon area immediately asks the researcher to consider issues of social change, and to question the distinction between the village and "outside" influences. Frank Cooley began this work in the 1960s with his study of the relationship between Ambonese adat and Christianity and modernization (Cooley 1962a), focusing on the most well-known aspect of "the Ambonese village"—Christianity. In this report, I have tried to move past the identity between Ambon and Christianity and look at other factors affecting cultural life. In particular I have tried to show how Ambon Town and the nation-state of Indonesia cannot be separated from the village in terms of key cultural formations. National and urban culture are not incidental to Ambonese village life now any more than they have been in the past (Knaap 1987, Chauvel 1990), but instead appear as critical aspects of life in the village.

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