

CENTERS AND PERIPHERIES IN MALUKU

LEONARD Y. ANDAYA
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I

Ideas and categories of center and periphery have been a subject of some debate in anthropology, history, the history of religion, urban geography and sociology.¹ The intellectual stimulus underlying these debates can be traced to the seminal ideas of Mircea Eliade. In numerous publications he consistently argued that “primordial sacred history, brought together by the totality of significant myths, is fundamental because it explains, and by the same token justifies, the existence of the world, of man and of society. This is the reason that a mythology is considered at once a true

¹See for example Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969); Armando Ortiz, *The Tewa World: Space, Time, Being, and Becoming in a Pueblo Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Stanley J. Tambiah, “The Galactic Polity: The Structure of Traditional Kingdoms in Southeast Asia.” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, vol. 293 (1977); Johanna Broda, David Carrasco, and Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, *The Great Temple of Tenochtitlan: Center and Periphery in the Aztec World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); among Mircea Eliade’s books some of the relevant ones are: *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965); *Patterns in Comparative Religions* (New York: Meridian Books, 1967); *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978); Roy Rappaport, *Ecology, Meaning and Religion* (Richmond, Calif.: North Atlantic Books, 1979); Paul Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City* (Chicago: Aldine, 1971); Edward Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Mary W. Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal: Art, Trade and Power* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).

history: it relates how things came into being, providing the exemplary model and also the justification of man's activities."²

Inspired by these ideas the sociologist Edward Shils began thinking of the "sacred overtones of centrality." He observed that, while human beings sought proximity to the centers of cosmos and society for their esteem, their diversity precluded complete consensus. This perception formed the basis for his stimulating discussion of the interplay of values and beliefs between center and periphery.³ The Exemplary Center was seen to provide the symbols and value system for the periphery, as well as role model in terms of activities within the realm. Yet it was the very success of the universalizing process which produced tensions between the center and periphery, as more direct attempts at implementation intensified conflicting values.⁴

Both Eliade's and Shils's perceptive observations are relevant in elucidating the developments in Maluku in the early modern period (i.e., the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries). Unlike societies which had elaborate cosmogonic myths which were fortunately preserved in written documents or in oral traditions, such myths were only partially recovered in Maluku. There is no doubt that they would have existed in the past, but their disappearance in the early modern period did not in any way detract from the importance of those mythic elements which survived. Eliade argues persuasively from his extensive knowledge of origin myths that "out of a series of primordial creative events, only some of them are exalted, those in particular which are of consequence for human life ... [T]he coherent series of events which constitute the sacred history is incessantly remembered and extolled, while the previous stage, everything which existed before that sacred history ... fades away."⁵ In view of Eliade's findings, one could argue that the survivals of the cosmogonic myth in Maluku society, which were recited as creations of new worlds, were elements considered significant to the society at the time when they were recorded.

These myths relate the creation of the world of Maluku, with a clearly identifiable exemplary center and the outermost limits at the four cardinal points. All those within these bounds are regarded as part of the

²Eliade, *The Quest*, p. 76.

³Shils, *Center and Periphery*, p. xxxvii.

⁴Ibid., pp. 9, 13.

⁵Eliade, *The Quest*, p. 81.

sacred family through their common origin from a mythical *naga* or serpent. The process of the periphery seeking to link itself to the center can be explained sociologically in terms of the need for recognition and esteem, as well as cosmologically in terms of acquiring “reality.” Only through the repetition of or participation in what is regarded as real in the Eliade sense of sacred reality does the periphery gain “existence” and meaning.⁶ The replication of the center in the periphery is perceived as mutually beneficial. Tribute in symbolic form from the periphery was incorporated into the center, while items associated with the sacral power of the center were redistributed to the periphery. In this way the unity of the group was reaffirmed. There was no attempt to impose the center onto the periphery since both the center and the periphery acknowledged the “reality,” hence the sacred basis, of this arrangement.

Tambiah characterizes such traditional polities as “weak” in the sense that they achieve centripetality through ritual devices and mechanisms rather than through “real exercise of power and control.”⁷ His interpretation contrasts sharply with Eliade’s view of what constitutes reality and power. The former proposes as evidence of a “strong” traditional polity, one that a prince attempts to expand into the periphery “by extending the relations and links of personal dependency, loyalty and fidelity; by enlarging his control over the judicial institutions; by securing military control, by directly levying taxes and dues, and more importantly, through forming an independent army which freed him from his dependence on his vassals; and by enforcing a monopolistic control over trade in luxury goods and weapons, and trade involving money.”⁸ It is precisely these measures which Eliade and Shils, strongly supported by certain historians of pre-Columbian Mesoamerican history, believe contribute to the paradox in center-periphery relations. They argue that such direct intrusions of the center into the periphery result in conflicts over competing traditions of meaning and authority.⁹ What Tambiah regards as evidence of a “strong” traditional polity, these scholars would label as divisive elements, for within the centripetal tendencies of the

⁶Smith, *Map is Not Territory*, p. 93.

⁷Tambiah, “Galactic Polity,” p. 82.

⁸Ibid., p. 84.

⁹This position is convincingly argued with regard to Aztec history by David Carrasco in his *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire: Myths and Prophecies in the Aztec Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 179.

Exemplary Center are the forces of centrifugality. The true strength of the polity, they would argue, is the “reality” of the sacral links between center and periphery.

In two stimulating books, Mary W. Helms has argued that a center and its periphery establish a mutually beneficial relationship based on their differing concerns. For the center, the aim is to assert its centrality through the extension of its political, economic and cultural control over the outside and beyond. The periphery, on the other hand, seeks to demonstrate and empower its own centrality vis-à-vis its outside through the accumulation of potentially charged items from an acknowledged powerful center. Such items range from clothing and skillfully crafted objects to styles, manners, and practices which provide a direct link to and encapsulate the power of the center. The periphery is thus able to create its own centrality in opposition to any centrifugal tendencies within its periphery.¹⁰ The historical evidence from Maluku in the early modern period appears to lend support to Helms’ characterization of center–periphery relations.

Maluku’s “Origin Myths”

There are two myths which represent survivals of Maluku’s cosmogony. They were regarded by Malukans in the early modern period as “true,” in the Eliade sense that they speak of sacred occurrences which are the only “indubitable reality,”¹¹ but also “true” in the Malukan sense of *madihutu*. When *madihutu* is used to qualify a word, it implies that the particular thing being qualified is original and hence genuine. The telling of a “true tale,” such as narrating a group’s history in a ritual context, is said to transform the relationship between the teller and the audience. The latter no longer exercises any questioning or skepticism but instead receives the words of the narrator as “true.” The term for “to tell the history” is *fato*, meaning to ‘place into order, or give order’, and is the same word from which the title of the traditional leader, the *bobato* (‘that which

¹⁰Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal*, pp. 198–200; Mary W. Helms, *Ulysses’ Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge and Geographic Distance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 196.

¹¹Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), p. 40.

gives order'), derives.¹² The telling of "true tales" or "history" appears to be linked to the conception of creation or the establishing of order out of a primeval chaos or confusion. These tales are thus told and received as "true" in the sense that they deal with the original/genuine stories of the beginnings of the group.

The first cosmogonic myth was retained in the barest of outlines. In a 1682 report by the Dutch governor of Ternate, R. Padtbrugge, the following epithets were said to be commonly known among the Malukans:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Loloda, Ngara ma-beno | (Loloda, Wall of the Gate) |
| Jailolo, Jiko ma-kolano | (Jailolo, Ruler of the Bay) |
| Tidore, Kië ma-kolano | (Tidore, Ruler of the Mountain) |
| Ternate, Kolano ma-luku | (Ternate, Ruler of Maluku) |
| Bacan, Kolano ma-dehe | (Bacan, Ruler of the Far End) ¹³ |

It is possible to recognize a "true" tale surviving in an incomplete form in these epithets. In creation myths, there is often a description of a time when there was frequent intercourse among those inhabiting the three different spheres of life—the Upperworld, the Earth, and the Lowerworld. The Upperworld is depicted as being separated from the Earth by a wall. It is through the gate in the wall that access is gained. Loloda's title, "Wall of the Gate" is probably a reference to the Gate dividing the Upperworld and the Earth within the world of Maluku. Similarly, in creation myths the gate to the nether regions is often referred to as the "farthest end," the "exit." Bacan was therefore regarded as the "exit," or the gateway to the Lowerworld. In this cosmological scheme, Loloda represents the Upperworld and Bacan the Lowerworld, hence forming an upper-lower dualism. In the middle is the Earth occupied by the remaining three kingdoms, with Jailolo being identified with the sea and Tidore the land, forming a bay/sea-mountain/land dualism. Ternate occupies the center linking both dualisms into a whole. Its epithet, "Ruler of Maluku," refers to its pivotal position in the universe known as "Maluku." In the late seventeenth century, however, the Dutch noted that though the ruler of Tidore was the "Kië ma-kolano" ("Lord of the

¹²James Norm Baker, "Descent and Community in Tidore" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1988), pp. 52, 119–120, 334–335, 338–339.

¹³Colonial Archives of the Dutch East India Company in the Algemeen Rijksarchief in The Hague, henceforth referred to as VOC. VOC 1376, R. Padtbrugge, "Memorie van Overgave," 31 August 1682, fols. 262v–263r.

Mountain”) his more common title was “Kaicili’ (Lord) Maluku,” a form of address which he shared with the ruler of Ternate. What the Dutch were observing was the operation of the Ternate–Tidore dualism, without a doubt the most significant of the dualisms in Maluku in this period. Both were referred to as lords of Maluku and as lords of the mountain, with each being seen as forming complementary halves of the society and representing the center of the Malukan world.

A second origin myth was recorded by a Portuguese governor of Ternate, Antonio Galvão, between 1536 and 1539. He commented that the local inhabitants had no tradition of written chronicles or histories, but preserved their past in “aphorisms, songs, and rhyming ballads, of which they are very fond.” The tale, the inhabitants told Galvão, was true, as were all their “poetic fables.” In this “true tale” the setting is the southernmost clove-producing island of Bacan:

Once long ago there were no kings and the people lived in kinship groups (Port., *parentela*) governed by elders. Since “no one was better than the other,” dissension and wars arose, alliances made and broken, and people killed or captured and ransomed. In time some became more powerful than others, captains and governors were created, but there were still no kings. One day a prominent elder of the island, named Bikusagara, went sailing on a kora-kora [a local double-outrigger vessel]. He spied a clump of beautiful rattan growing near a precipice by the sea and sent his men ashore to cut some stalks. When they arrived at the spot, the rattan was nowhere to be seen, and so they returned to the kora-kora. Exasperated, Bikusagara himself went ashore and immediately located the clump of rattan. He ordered his men to cut down some of the stalks, but as soon as they started to hack into the rattan, blood gushed forth from the cuts. Startled by this strange phenomenon, Bikusagara jumped back and noticed nearby four *naga* [serpent] eggs hidden among the rocks. When he approached these eggs he heard a voice ordering him to take the eggs home with him because from them would emerge individuals of great distinction. Mindful of the command Bikusagara carefully placed the eggs in a *totombo* [a rattan box] and brought them home where they were guarded with great care. After some time the eggs brought forth three males and a female. When they grew up one of the men became the king of Bacan, the second the king of the Papuas, the third the king of Butung and Banggai, and the woman became the wife of the king of Loloda. From these original four descended all the kings of these islands, “and ever since they have paid great honor to Bikusagara and to the rocky

precipice, and they consider them a very holy thing, consecrated to the gods.”¹⁴

The theme where a person of unusual spiritual skills reveals the presence of the god in a material object is widespread in monsoon Asia. He or she becomes responsible for restoring the severed links between the Upperworld and the Earth. The special gift from the gods enables this rare individual to assume a position of importance in the community as a religious and later a secular leader.¹⁵ Bikusagara’s special quality is evident in his “revelation” of the sacred rattan. The image of the rattan, or in other Indonesian tales the bamboo, is usually associated with the spiritual forces of the land that provide the progenitors of a ruling dynasty.¹⁶ The discovery of the *naga* eggs in the rocky precipice by the sea combines all the elements of the Underworld so prominent in this tale. The *naga* is an ancient mythic element found in India and Southeast Asia associated with snake-spirits and centered around sacred sites. The rocks, too, form

¹⁴Hubert Jacobs, ed. & trans., *A Treatise on the Moluccas* (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1970), p. 83. There is a striking similarity between this tale and that found in the Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*. In the latter there is a king named Sagara who has two wives but remains childless. Through his devotion to Shiva his wives become pregnant, with one giving birth to a son and the other to some type of gourd. The king is about to cast away the gourd when a voice stops him and instructs him to take it home and to preserve it with care. In time, from each seed of the gourd comes forth a son. (The tale is from the Vana Parva, Section CVII, quoted in Donald A. Mackenzie, *Myths from Melanesia and Indonesia* [London: Gresham Publishing, 1930], p. 357.) The inspiration for the Maluku tale may have come from India, with the Buddhist Pali title of a monk, “Bhikku” attached to the name Sagara. However, the focus on the four and the sacred rattan are clearly of indigenous (Austronesian) origin.

¹⁵The story of the severing of communications between humans and the gods occurring because of some “ritual” fault is a well-known mythical theme. Eliade, *Images*, pp. 40-41. An example closer to Maluku comes from South Sulawesi in the Bugis epic, *I La Galigo*. The rainbow linking the Upperworld and Earth is withdrawn, and generations suffer turmoil and disorder before the gods send someone to govern the earth once again. As in Maluku a special individual “finds” these new godrulers who restore order. Leonard Y. Andaya, “Kingship-Adat Rivalry and the Role of Islam in South Sulawesi,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15, no. 1 (March 1984): 22-25.

¹⁶For examples of this theme, see J. J. Ras, *Hikajat Bandjar* (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), chap. 4.

a familiar feature in Southeast Asian belief, being regarded as partial manifestations of the earth deity.¹⁷ Through the recitation of these sacred elements, this tale was regarded as “true” and as legitimizing the boundaries of the Malukan world and the peoples who belonged to it. By the first half of the sixteenth century, new political alignments and power centers were already coming into existence which no longer reflected the central importance of these areas. Yet the tale continued to be recounted precisely because it dealt with sacred activities creating exemplary models for the group within the wider Maluku world.

The cosmogonic myth retained in the form of remembered epithets of five settlements clearly represents a view of the creation of an entire world or universe in Maluku. Within this world, the center or Earth is clearly identified with north Maluku, with Ternate and Tidore occupying the epicenter. The periphery is delineated in the second myth, which lists the four areas located at each cardinal point with a common origin from the sacred *naga*.

Dualism features prominently in both myths, and even today use of dual (paired) words and phrases in ritual speech and song occur in Tidore.¹⁸ The existence of dualisms in north Maluku accord with the presence in many east Indonesian cultures of systems of complementary dual classifications. These social and cosmological dualisms consist of asymmetric relationships among ordered pairs, such that “wife-giver” may be seen as superior to “wife-taker,” “elder” as superior to “younger,” and so forth. It has been suggested that the dualistic perception of the world in this area may be due to the pervasive parallelisms found in many of the languages of eastern Indonesia.¹⁹ In north Maluku during the period under study it was believed that the survival and prosperity of the society depended on the proper functioning of these dualisms.

The most significant dualism was that between Ternate and Tidore located at the epicenter of the world defined as Maluku. Both the sultans

¹⁷Paul Mus, *India Seen from the East: Indian and Indigenous Cults in Champa*, trans. by Chandler & Mabbett (Melbourne: Monash Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1975), pp. 13–14.

¹⁸Baker, “Descent,” p. 15.

¹⁹James J. Fox, “Introduction,” in Fox, ed., *To Speak in Pairs: Essays on the Ritual Languages of Eastern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 26.

of Ternate and Tidore claimed the title “Lord of Maluku,” with Tidore in the ritual role as wife-giver to Ternate.²⁰ They represented opposing and complementary tendencies which were considered necessary for the survival and prosperity of the community. The Europeans were clearly puzzled by the relationship. Despite the sworn enmity between these two kingdoms, they continued to advise each other against any European activity which could threaten the other’s well-being.²¹ In the mid-sixteenth century the practice of intermarriage between the royal houses of Ternate and Tidore were so well established that the Portuguese assumed that “the king of Ternate has to marry a daughter of the king of Tidore.”²² Even in the midst of war, intercourse between the people of the two kingdoms continued. The dualism of Ternate and Tidore within the tradition of the “four” kingdoms was regarded as essential for the survival of the group. Sultan Syaifuddin of Tidore (1657–87), well regarded as an expert on Malukan traditions, frequently reminded the Malukans and the Dutch that, as long as the two pillars—Ternate and Tidore—remained, all was well with Maluku.

The dualism between Ternate and Tidore remained a feature of the center, with Ternate expanding northward and westward, while Tidore went southward and eastward. The myths thus identified and legitimized the exemplary center, as well as provided a blueprint for its expansion to

²⁰The role of Tidore as wife-giver to Ternate may reflect Tidore’s ritual superiority to Ternate. Even to this day, Tidore is the home of the *sowohi*, the sacred leader of the indigenous religion and of customary law (*adat*). He resides in a special Fola Sowohi (house of *adat*). People from all parts of Maluku still come to consult him on various matters, often to do with local spirits or the efficacy of traditional remedies for both physical and psychological ills. In the past, he was associated with the ruler’s sacred regalia. During the time of the sultanate, it was the *sowohi* who was entrusted with the task of cutting the hair of the ruler’s crown (a crown of hair that grew mysteriously as a sign of the ruler’s spiritual potency). The task of trimming the hair was thus a dangerous task that could only be done by an individual possessed of great spiritual power. Now that there is no longer a Tidore sultan, the hair on the crown no longer grows. Personal communication from Abdul Wahab Togubu, head of the Cultural Section in the Office of Education and Culture, Soasio, Tidore, 24 December 1987.

²¹Hubert Jacobs, “New Sources for the History of Portuguese Maluku 1575–1605, Letters of the Captains,” series one, *Aufsätze zur Portugiesischen Kulturgeschichte* (Munster, 1980), letter 5, p. 236.

²²Jacobs, *A Treatise*, p. 115.

the periphery. The re-creation of the center in the periphery through transferral of ideology, titulature, and dress occurred peacefully, as both saw the mutual benefits in the arrangement. Only when the center began to interfere directly in the functioning of the periphery did the arrangement fail, leading to a rebellion and the restoration of proprieties. Both Ternate and Tidore provide examples of this process, but this essay will only examine the relationship between Tidore and its periphery.

Tidore and Its Periphery

The Gamrange, consisting of Maba, Patani, and Weda in southeast Halmahera, and the Papuan islands of the Raja Ampat were the most important territories belonging to Tidore's periphery and were regarded as "the true breadbaskets of the Tidore kings."²³ However, it was not food that these areas provided, but a rich tribute of ambergris, tortoiseshell, birds of paradise, slaves, and spices. As the Europeans, but especially the Dutch, made the trade in these items more difficult for Tidore, it began to rely more and more on its outlying Papuan and Halmahera subjects to find other outlets for these valuable products. It was Tidore's ability to obtain these tribute goods and to sell them in these far-off settlements free from European interference that helped to preserve Tidore's independence till well into the eighteenth century.²⁴

Dutch expeditions of the early eighteenth century were first to describe the Papuan islanders in any great detail. They were said to be of "medium" height, black, with kinky hair which they grew long. Both men and women went about naked except for a cover over their genitalia. They wore strings of objects, such as corals and pieces of pipe, around their necks and arms as decorations. According to the Dutch, they were "simple and artless, but cruel, rapacious, and murderous." Their weapons were the bow and arrow, shield and sword, and the spear. They frequented the coastlines with their small but very fast rowboats and were very good seamen. No one could sail into these waters with safety if not accompanied by a Tidorese. The Dutch believed that they worshipped all manner of land and sea plants, as well as idols of humans, beasts, and fish which they themselves made and to whom they presented

²³VOC 1675, Secret Missive Ternate to Batavia, 20 September 1703, fol. 178.

²⁴Leonard Y. Andaya, "Local Trade Networks in Maluku in the 16th, 17th, and 18th Centuries," *Cakalele* 2 (1991): 71–96.

offerings. Each household was said to have its own special deities. The heads of the coastal villages were mostly descendants of settlers who had come from Tidore and East Seram (a term used by the Dutch for the eastern end of Seram and the offshore islands, including the Goram and the Seram Laut archipelagoes). In contrast to the true natives of the region, they had long straight hair and dressed like the Tidorese. Outwardly they were Muslims, but in the ritual dance they shed their Islamicness and demonstrated a strong empathy for local beliefs. It was even said that they paid greater heed to the local deities than to the Muslim God, though they were careful to mask this preference in the presence of the Tidorese.²⁵

These eighteenth-century Dutch observers were the first Europeans to describe in some detail the inhabitants of the Gamrange and the Papuan islands. While they understood that the Papuan islands and the Gamrange acknowledged Tidore as their center, they could not have known how intricate and old their relationship actually was. A historical reconstruction based on linguistic evidence provides a time frame between 15,000 and 10,000 years ago when the first Papuan speakers settled in the eastern Indonesian islands. The languages spoken in Halmahera and Morotai, which are classified as belonging to the West Papuan Phylum, are said to have stemmed from this period. It is suggested that around 3000 B.C. there was a second expansion by another Papuan group who spoke a Trans-New Guinea Phylum language and settled on the north coast of New Guinea. They migrated west of New Guinea to areas that were already inhabited by Austronesian speakers, and also came to replace the earlier West Papuan languages in Timor, Alor, and Pantar. Other evidence indicates, however, that the Austronesian speakers may have arrived somewhat later, perhaps about 2500 B.C., after the second Papuan migration.²⁶ At an unspecified but more recent past, there were further movements of Papuan populations from the Biak areas of the Schouten and Padaido Islands to east Halmahera and the Raja Ampat islands. According to one tradition, this was the time of the Biak culture

²⁵VOC 1727, Description of Maluku, Pieter Rooselaar, 11 June 1706, fols. 915–921.

²⁶Bellwood, *Prehistory of the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago* (Sydney: Academic Press, 1985), pp. 120–121, 128.

hero Gurabesi who came to serve the Sultan Tidore against Ternate.²⁷ Some Tidore court documents state that Gurabesi appeared during the reign of Sultan Mansur, the tenth ruler of Tidore, who ruled sometime in the second half of the fifteenth century.²⁸ However, another court source indicates that the events occurred under Mansur's successor, Sultan Jamaluddin (1495?–1572?).²⁹

In Maluku, the Austronesian-speakers came into contact with the numerous and well-established Papuan-speaking³⁰ communities, leading to the mutual borrowing of words and concepts and the blurring of distinctions at the very edges. Today in north Maluku the people of Ternate, Tidore, half of Makian, and northern Halmahera speak Papuan languages; whereas the other half of Makian, Bacan, and most of south Halmahera, except for pockets in the southwest, speak an Austronesian language. Despite possessing different languages, the two cultures have become so intermingled over the centuries through social and economic interaction that they share a number of common elements. The closeness of the ties between the Papuan groups and the other Malukan peoples is evident in Malukan traditions. The Gamrange in southeast Halmahera are Austronesian-speaking communities who in the past were accorded special esteem by the Papuan islanders. When the Austronesian-speaking Papuans of Biak arrived in these islands, they found an earlier Papuan group known as the Sawai, who had first settled in the Gamrange and later in the Papuan islands. The Papuans therefore came to regard the Sawai as the original settlers and possessing greater prestige than the

²⁷F. Ch. Kamma, *Koreri, Messianic Movements in the Biak-Numfor Culture Area* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), p. 8.

²⁸“Ringkasan kisah perjalanan ke Irian Barat dalam tempu 7 bulan 77 hari” (typescript, Department of Education and Culture, Soasio, Tidore), p. 3; “Susunan pemerintahan sultan dan pemerintahan umum pada daerah kesultanan Tidore,” quoted from the *Buku Sejarah Jou Barakati and the Silsilah Keturunan Sultan* (typescript, Department of Education and Culture, Soasio, Tidore), p. 1.

²⁹Kamma, *Koreri*, p. 215.

³⁰The term “Papuan language” itself is imprecise, and linguists prefer to use the term “non-Austronesian language” instead. In this book the term “Papuan” is retained to highlight an acknowledged cultural distinction between groups.

latecomers.³¹ It enabled the Gamrange to play a leadership role in the affairs of the Raja Ampat. Their sengajis were delegated the responsibility of collecting tribute for the Tidore ruler, and they were often at the head of Papuan fleets which the Sultan Tidore summoned against his enemies. So valued was this position of head of the Papuans that in 1728 the Sengaji Patani petitioned the Sultan Tidore to be reinstated as the Administrator or Tribute-Collector of the Papuan Islands.³²

The Sultan Tidore's relationship with the Gamrange and the Papuans of the Raja Ampat is explained in another tradition from the Tidore court. Before the arrival of Islam, Ternate and Tidore were constantly at war with one another. The ruler of Tidore, Sultan Mansur, thus summoned the Sengaji Patani Sahmardan to ask him whether there was any in his village or in neighboring areas who was brave, strong, and able to assist him against the Ternatens. Sahmardan promised to seek such a person, and so he travelled through the islands and reached Waigeu. At a place called Kabu he met the Kapita Waigeu named Gurabesi. When Gurabesi was informed of the search and the prospects of the individual receiving from the Tidore ruler special clothes to mark the occasion of his new official position, he asked permission to hold the clothes for a few moments. He took the clothes, kissed them, and raised them above his head as a sign of respect for the Sultan Tidore. Gurabesi then summoned his men and travelled to the Tidore court where they were greeted by the ruler and hosted to a feast in their honor. Gurabesi offered his services to the ruler and was rewarded with a suit of clothes. In battle Gurabesi distinguished himself, and he was given the ruler's daughter, Boki Taebah, for his wife. They later returned to Waigeu to live.

After ten years had passed, the ruler of Tidore began to wonder what had become of his child. At the time, he was dissatisfied with the small size of his kingdom and the few subjects that he possessed. These two factors encouraged him to undertake an expedition to the east. He went to Patani, Gebe, and to the Raja Ampat islands. At Waigeu he again met Gurabesi and they, along with the Sengaji Patani and the large following the ruler had gathered at each place, went to the New Guinea mainland.

³¹F. Ch. Kamma, "De verhouding tussen Tidore en de Papoeze eilanden in legende en historie," *Indonesië* 1, no. 1, (July 1947): 366, 368; Kamma, *Koreri*, p. 8.

³²VOC 2099, Report on the transporting of the Patanese to Tidore, 5 August 1728, fol. 970.

Wherever the ruler stopped, he selected individuals to be his officials with titles of sengaji, gimalaha, and so forth. On the return trip, the expedition again stopped at Waigeu, where the ruler made his four male grandchildren the rulers of Waigeu, Salawati, Waigama, and Misool. Another version of this expedition says the kapitans of the southeast Halmahera settlements of Buli, Maba, Bicoli, and Patani were raised by the Tidore ruler to become the rulers of the four Raja Ampat kingdoms.³³ A third version speaks of a conflict among four brothers that led to their being separated. The youngest settled in Waigama, but eventually left and went to Seram. “Until he returns,” so goes the tale, “the unity remains broken because four was the number of the kings who ruled these [Raja Ampat] islands.”³⁴ All the lands that the ruler visited became his vassals. The Sengaji Patani Sahmardan was officially made the utusan, or the ruler’s representative, in Tidore’s periphery. The entire expedition was said to have taken seven months and seventy-seven days.³⁵

The tale explains the prominent position held by the Sengaji Patani in the affairs of the Raja Ampat islands and the Gamrange. Among the kings of the Raja Ampat, the position of Waigeu seems to be highlighted because of the role of the Biak culture hero, Gurabesi. Misool, on the other hand, appears to have had closer relations with Bacan. In the early seventeenth century, it had even agreed to sell products exclusively to Bacan. Bacan’s links with the Raja Ampat may even have predated that of Tidore’s, which would be in keeping with the Bikusagara origin myth emphasizing Bacan’s antiquity. In 1569, the Papuan rulers of the Raja Ampat paid a friendly visit to Bacan, and intermarriages between the royal families were not uncommon.³⁶

Another interesting feature of the tale is the mention of the distribution of official clothing and titles to the various areas visited by the ruler of Tidore. This is a process suggested in the contemporary European sources, and it seems to have been attractive to the Papuan leaders. An explanation of this phenomenon is suggested by F. C. Kamma, who

³³“Hubungan antara Tidore dengan Irian Barat” (typescript, Department of Education and Culture, Soasio, Tidore), pp. 10–11.

³⁴Kamma, “De verhouding,” *Indonesië* 1, no. 2 (July 1947): 541. In this version the unity of the group is stressed.

³⁵“Ringkasan kisah,” pp. 3–9.

³⁶A. Haga, *Nederlandsch Nieuw Guinea en de Papoesche Eilanden: Historische Bijdrage, 1500–1883* (Batavia: W. Bruining, 1884), vol. 1, pp. 21, 25, 27.

described the Papuans' desire to absorb the spiritual powers associated with any object that had contact with the Tidore ruler.³⁷ In the eighteenth century during the annual and sometimes semiannual tribute-gathering expeditions to the Papuan islands, no representative from the Tidore court could forego the formal physical transfer of the letter from the Tidore ruler to the Papuan lords. The document itself was believed to be as potent as the words contained in it, and an important aspect of the ceremony was the physical contact with the letter to obtain the Sultan Tidore's mana. The Tidore sultan's envoy was also regarded as a repository of the sacred royal presence. The Raja Salawati insisted that the sultan's envoy remain on board the boat with him to assure that his subjects continued to give him allegiance. The Raja Salawati, through physical proximity to the sultan's proxy, was believed to be absorbing the ruler's mana. The process was similar to the practice of Papuans bringing tribute to Tidore and crawling on all fours on the court floor to "sweep up" any spiritual traces of the ruler's sacred being. On the return of the tribute mission, equated with the *rak* or head-hunting expedition, an important part of the Papuan homecoming ceremony was the sharing of the booty. The people gathered and solemnly touched the hands of the leaders of the tribute mission in order to share in the sacred power of the Sultan Tidore while it was still "hot."³⁸ What the ceremony celebrated was the acquisition of spiritual powers, either through association with the sultan or through the taking of heads, for the well-being of the community.³⁹

In speaking of the Papuan areas, the Dutch reports of the early eighteenth century made a clear distinction between the coastal population, many of whom seemed to have been Tidorese or East Seram descendants who were Muslim, and the interior Papuan groups who retained belief in their own gods. There were nevertheless local Papuans who had em-

³⁷F. Ch. Kamma, "The Incorporation of Foreign Culture Elements and Complexes by Ritual Enclosure among the Biak-Numforese," in *Symbolic Anthropology in the Netherlands*, ed. by P. E. de Josselin de Jong & Erik Schwimmer ('s-Gravehage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), p. 61.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 75.

³⁹The actions of the Papuans toward the various objects, persons, and titles associated with the center, Tidore, could be interpreted as a way for the Papuans to gain political legitimacy for their own centrality vis-à-vis their periphery. Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal*, p. 198.

braced Islam as part of the total acceptance of the world of their lord, the Sultan Tidore. The chiefs were given Tidore titles of *kolano*, *jojau*, and *kapita laut*, or their local variations. They in turn appointed subordinates in their community to receive other “foreign” titles such as *raja*, *sengaji*, *gimalaha*, or *sowohi*. These new names were regarded to be imbued with the sacred force of the Tidore ruler which could protect and shield those who bore them. As a result it became a practice to transfer these Tidorese names to the various clans (*keret*) to assure them of permanent spiritual protection. It was a general view among the Papuan islanders that the main purpose of the tribute missions to Tidore was to receive titles.⁴⁰ In dress, too, the newly found status was emphasized. While the rest of the population usually wore loincloths, the newly “Tidorized” leaders wore shirts and other items of clothing associated with Tidore.

The adoption of foreign titles and dress did not indicate greater administrative efficiency or control being exercised by the center, but rather an acknowledgment of its spiritual superiority. Any hierarchical distinction implied in the titles in the center was ignored in the periphery. The differences merely helped to distinguish the major chiefs of a particular island or the most important leaders within one community. On Salawati, for example, the *raja* and the *jojau* lived in the same settlement but were of equal status. When the Dutch conducted their business with the *jojau* in the absence of the *raja*, the latter on his return insisted on being treated in the same manner. On Misool, the *raja* and the *kapita laut* lived in separate settlements and had equal powers in their respective communities. Nevertheless, the desire to become “real” required replication of the center. There thus appeared among the Papuan Islanders the *Kalana Fat* (‘Four Rulers’), which mirrored the four sultans in north Maluku but without any of the apparatus associated with courts in the center.

In addition to being the source of new titles, dress, religion, and exemplary activity for the Papuan islanders, Tidore was the chief supplier of foreign goods. Because the Papuans associated these objects with the ruler of Tidore, they believed that possession of such spiritually imbued items would guarantee material wealth, health, and happiness.⁴¹ The Papuan island coastal communities of mixed Austronesian-Papuan back-

⁴⁰Kamma, “Incorporation,” pp. 76–78.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 80.

ground, many of whom had converted to Islam, were the principal beneficiaries of the link with Tidore. By gaining access to iron implements, weapons and cloth from Tidore, items of great value to the interior Papuan groups, the coastal lords were able to exercise considerable influence over the interior Papuans. In ritual matters the coastal inhabitants differed little from their interior brethren. They regarded their links to the local deities as essential and continued to perform the customary ceremonies, despite having embraced Islam. For the Papuans, as with many other Indonesian and Pacific island societies, life consisted of interlocking worlds of relationships, all of which had to be carefully nurtured.

The description of the Muslim Papuans of the early eighteenth century resembles in many details the Portuguese account of the Muslims in the north Malukan states in the early sixteenth century.⁴² Islam in north Maluku then was very much a coastal phenomenon and confined to the circles of the rulers or chiefs. Even among the Muslims there was a strong belief in local spirits and little adherence to religious food taboos. They were the dominant group though numerically smaller than the believers in local gods. Although the Islamization of the Papuan islanders took place some two centuries after the introduction of Islam to north Maluku, the process was very similar. Islam was brought first to the leading members of the community and only later spread to the rest of the populace. This would accord with what is known to have happened in the rest of the archipelago. The Papuan case is especially instructive because it provides an explanation for the merging of political and spiritual motivations for conversion, which was very much in keeping with local perceptions of the proper functioning of relationships in the world. To enter into a beneficial relationship with the center required total commitment, which was demonstrated in the “transformation” of the periphery in name, dress, and spiritual belief.

Papuan traditions contributed to the establishment and maintenance of links with Tidore. According to Biak stories, the west, the land of the souls, was regarded as the origin of power and wealth. The Papuan islanders therefore found little difficulty in accepting as appropriate that their overlord should come from a western area known as Tidore. As with the societies in north Maluku, the Papuans sought explanation of

⁴²Jacobs, *A Treatise*, p. 85; Armando Cortesão, ed. & trans., *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944), vol. 2, p. 213.

present realities within an established cultural framework. Another Biak belief was that the center of mythical power was the source of the flood in the Underworld. Combining these two traditions, the Papuans created a myth in which the source was located in Tidore, while another explained that in times of crisis, the source of eternal bliss moved from the south (or from “below” in local directional terminology) to Tidore.⁴³ In thirty-five of seventy-five Biak myths collected by a Dutch missionary-anthropologist in the early twentieth century, a prominent theme was ceremonial valuables. In addition to the “older” treasures such as shell wristbands, canoes, and utensils, there were also “newer” items of cotton lengths (so valued that they were counted as units of value [*chelopen*]), porcelain, beads, and bronze gongs. Since the manufacture of these items was a mystery to the Papuans, these objects became associated with their source.⁴⁴ Tidore was one of the major suppliers of these items and thus acquired prestige in the eyes of the Papuans. Tidore’s location in the west and its possession of ceremonial objects were comprehensible within Papuan culture as signs revealing a center of power and wealth.⁴⁵

The special relationship between Tidore and the Papuans from the Raja Ampat islands was prefigured in a myth from the center and another from the periphery. In the myth from the center, the Papuas and north Maluku are linked through a common origin from the sacred *naga*. The periphery myth explains how the Papuan hero or *mambri*, establishes familial ties between his people and Tidore. This *mambri*, named Gurabesi, came to be regarded in one of the traditions as the ancestor of the *Kalana Fat* (‘Four Rulers’), of the Raja Ampat kingdoms of Salawati, Waigeu, Misool, and Waigama. Thus in these two myths, plus other traditions among the Papuans stressing the special position of Tidore, both Tidore and the Papuans would have found cultural explanations for their relationship.

The Gamrange and the Papuan islanders proved to be among Tidore’s most important subjects in the periphery. They had a large number of able-bodied men whose expertise on the sea and fierceness in battle were

⁴³Kamma, *Koreri*, p. 95.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁴⁵Helms’s excellent study based on a number of ethnographies makes precisely the same point in describing the desire of “acquisitional polities” (i.e., the periphery) to acquire objects and skills from “superordinate centers.” See Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal*, pp. 198–200.

well-documented. The swift Papuan boats, which proved highly effective in open sea sailing, went as far as the northern coast of New Guinea and to north Sulawesi, trading and raiding in all of these areas. The Papuan islanders were also valuable in establishing Tidore's links with areas further east. Those from Raja Ampat moved easily between the islands and the lands of their ancestors in Biak in north New Guinea, thereby preparing the way for Tidore's expansion into the New Guinea mainland. The Raja Misool had a special relationship with the people in Onin in the southwest coast of New Guinea, while those of East Seram had their own reciprocal arrangements with different Papuan groups on the mainland. These groups were then incorporated into Tidore's periphery through the same process described for the Papuan islanders. There was no question of the center extending an administrative network to link such a vast and inaccessible periphery. The center was content to receive the acknowledgment of its special status and to benefit from the thriving economic network established through trade friendships with its periphery located in Halmahera, the Raja Ampat islands, the coasts of New Guinea, and East Seram.

These peripheral places, in their turn, exercised their own centrality toward their periphery. The Gamrange in southeast Halmahera regarded the Papuan islands of the Raja Ampat as their periphery; the various Raja Ampat kingdoms and the East Seram islands saw the various coastal tribes in the Bird'shead of New Guinea in a similar light; and the coastal Papuans perceived their periphery as the interior tribes of the Bird'shead. The situation was one of multiple centers and peripheries, each following its own ideological agenda. But the ultimate spring of legitimacy lay in the distant and power-filled center in Tidore.

The "Paradox" of Center-Periphery Relations

A major shift occurred in the relationship between Tidore and its periphery toward the end of the eighteenth century. The Dutch East India Company, feeling threatened by the increasing presence of the English in eastern Indonesian waters, demanded that Tidore maintain closer supervision over its territories. Although Tidore had already agreed in the mid-seventeenth century to enforce the Dutch policy of destroying spice trees throughout its lands, it had left the implementation very much to the discretion of the periphery chiefs. In this regard, Tidore had conducted its affairs in the traditional fashion. The changed circumstances of the

late eighteenth century meant that the Dutch no longer were satisfied with assurances from the Tidore court. They now demanded that the center become involved *actively* in the periphery.

There thus began a process that would have fit Tambiah's description of a strong traditional polity. The Tidore court dispatched its own people to the outlying territories to become the agents of the center. In their capacity as the eyes and ears of the ruler, they supported those local leaders who were willing to implement the center's directives. Among the functions of these agents was the implementation of Islamic law in these distant lands where adherence to local indigenous belief was still very strong. They supervised the collection of tribute, bypassing the traditional arrangement by which the leader of Patani served as the intermediary for the Gamrange and the Papuan groups in the submission of goods to the Tidore court. To emphasize the new power of the center, the Tidore court began to intervene militarily in the periphery with the assistance of Dutch troops.

But the most odious of the measures directly introduced by the center, which led directly to the severing of ties, was the forced felling and destruction of spice trees. These extermination campaigns required the organization of whole villages, some to provide provisions to feed these expeditions for weeks and even months, others to offer their boats, wagons, and their own bodies for the transport of food and equipment. But the worst assignment was the actual labor involved in locating and destroying the trees. As the trees in accessible areas were cleared, these expeditions were sent deeper into the malarial interior or high up the cold slopes of the volcanic mountains in search of spice trees. The hardships encountered were compounded by the difficulty in exterminating spice trees. It was not sufficient merely to cut down these large trees, but it was found necessary to dig out the roots and burn everything thoroughly to prevent germination of any fruits left lying on the tree or on the ground.

These new activities could be seen as signs of a strong traditional polity exercising greater control over its periphery. In the case of Tidore and its territories, however, such physically intrusive measures undermined the mutually beneficial relationship that relied more on spiritual and ritual forces to guarantee unity and stability. Subsequent events in Maluku in the late eighteenth century demonstrate the validity of Shils's contention that "where the central institutional system becomes more comprehensive and inclusive so that a larger proportion of the life of the

population comes within its scope, the tension between the center and the periphery, as well as the consensus, tends to increase.”⁴⁶ The growing consensus in Tidore, however, was one imposed by the center onto the periphery. From the perspective of the periphery, as well as from that of many individuals in the center, proper relationships and activities as exemplified and legitimized by the myths had been ignored. Tidore’s reputation as a legitimizing center for the periphery was now being questioned. It was the emerging sense of the decline in relationships that resulted in the rebellion in the late eighteenth century led by the Tidore prince, Nuku. By appealing to Maluku’s cosmogonic myths, Nuku was able to gain extensive support throughout the area in his widely publicized efforts to restore proper relationships in the center and between the center and the periphery.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Shils, *Center and Periphery*, p. 13.

⁴⁷Many of the ideas contained in this paper are discussed in detail in my book, *The World of Maluku: Eastern Indonesia in the Early Modern Period* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993).

