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**GIFTS, BELONGING, AND EMERGING REALITIES AMONG “OTHER MOLUCANS”  
DURING THE AFTERMATH OF SECTARIAN CONFLICT**

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
in  
ANTHROPOLOGY

by  
**Hatib Abdul Kadir**  
December 2017

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Tyrus Miller  
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## **Abstract**

### **Gifts, Belonging, and Emerging Realities Among “Other Moluccans”**

#### **During the Aftermath of Sectarian Conflict**

**Hatib Abdul Kadir**

This dissertation is an ethnographic work of the interethnic relationships between Butonese residents of the Moluccas with native Moluccans and ethnic Chinese Moluccans, specifically in the ways the Butonese deal with their identity as an “outsider” (*pendatang*) in the realm of urban marketplaces and exchanges commodities in the rural areas. The common ground of the relationship is based on debt and exchanges commodities. It is the nature of the debt and exchanges that brings the contravenes of the ethnic relationships. On the one hand, the Butonese have grateful feelings for the generosity of the native Moluccans in providing land for them to farm, but on the other hand, the Butonese feel they are exploited when it comes to reciprocity. Likewise, the Butonese need and rely on the roles of the Chinese traders to provide money and goods, but from their exchange experiences, the Butonese realize that ethnic Chinese have economic interests behind their various generousities. These exchanges lie in mutual suspicion, lack of trust, and trickery. This kind of paradox is historically exacerbated by the social context of a post-conflict society that has not accomplished peace and reconciliation in people's everyday interactions, thus the encounters between Butonese farmers with ethnic Chinese in the shops and the encounters between urban

Butonese traders with native Moluccans in the marketplaces do not necessarily represent peace after the conflict, but rather a relationship that is built based on the pragmatic motives of reciprocity and ongoing mutual suspicions.

The main question of this dissertation is how the Butonese, seen as *pendatang* ("outsiders") and *pedagang* (trader) in the Moluccas, are not only in struggle over their citizenship, but are also surviving in the realm of economic exchanges. Practically, this dissertation also questions what kind of reciprocities and contravenes consist in the interethnic reciprocity. Focusing on the ethnic correspondences after the conflict and after the decentralization policies of the late 1990s, this dissertation provides the narrations of the Butonese struggling to realign their position that is seen as "second-class". Efforts to be entangled with and be recognized by the autochthonous Moluccans demonstrate that identity is interchangeable. It can be solidified, but in the other contexts, identity can be very messy and fluid. In the post-decentralization era, Butonese have begun to realize that ethnic identity matters. In south Seram Island, rural democratization followed by state funds has opened each neighborhood, regardless of the status of its residents as natives or migrants, to have their own village administration. Rural Butonese have started to ask for their own sovereign *kampung* (neighborhood) to separate them from the native Moluccan *tuan dusun* (landowner). Meanwhile, urban Butonese traders in Ambon create their sovereign spaces in the marketplaces to block against the domination of failed local Moluccan class traders. All of these cases, both in the urban and rural areas, demonstrate the solidification of ethnic

identity in the post-conflict and decentralization era. Nonetheless, the solidification of ethnicities and religions is always 'violated' by "weird" stories such as sex affairs and casual relations during rural workdays and pig-hunting cooperation in the garden between the Moluccans and the Butonese, or the Christians and the Muslims. Influences such as love, lust, and anxiety against an uncontrollable pest, as well as feelings of regret after the conflict, make the solidification of ethnic and religious consciousness sometimes irrelevant. The solidification of ethnic belonging becomes even more in question when in an attempt to be recognized as a citizen of the Moluccas, the Butonese create stories about their "poetics of place" in their lives before the conflict, their memories of their involvement in the war and their return from being displaced from their own origins in Buton to Moluccas. These narrations demonstrate that the Butonese in the Moluccas have a greater sense of belonging to the Moluccas rather than to their own origins in Buton, Southeast Sulawesi. Nonetheless, although the Butonese have this sense of belonging to the Moluccas, it does not permit them to be easily accepted as 'Moluccan' given their involvement in trade and as tenants for the cash crops that make them inherently seen as "outsiders". Thus, this dissertation describes that identity and ethnic relationship are about enigmatic stories of contravenes such as in the nature of debt, gift exchange



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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

#### **GIFTS, BELONGING, AND EMERGING REALITIES AMONG “OTHER MOLUCCANS” DURING THE AFTERMATH OF SECTARIAN CONFLICT**

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This dissertation is about people who have been largely absent from the grand histories of the Moluccas and from accounts of *adat* (customary law and traditions). My research focuses on the Butonese who are considered “outsiders” and do not belong to the local culture, despite having lived in the islands for more than a hundred years. However, I chose this topic not because the Butonese are absent from studies of the Moluccas, but rather because of the importance of the Butonese as “agents” of the local Moluccans in social economic relationships, and especially in commodity and gift exchanges. The Butonese hold a lower place in the hierarchy of Moluccan social interactions. They are also excluded from the rights afforded through customary laws, rituals, and traditional entertainment. I am interested in exploring how people who are seen as inferior and underprivileged can gain power through economic exchanges and politics. I assume that by actively participating in the systems of economic exchange, this becomes the means of restoring the inconvenience of their political subordination.

The Butonese are the largest migrant group in the Central Moluccas Province, often living on the outskirts of most villages. They are found on almost every island of the Central Moluccas. They mainly choose to reside on Ambon-Lease (that is Ambon, Haruku, Saparua and Nusalaut islands), Banda, Seram, outheast Seram, or Buru islands, or even on Kei Island in the South east Moluccas, as well as elsewhere. The way local people treat them, and differences in landscape and ecology, influence the stories of the Butonese across the archipelagoes of the Moluccas. Roy Ellen points out that in the Banda islands, the Butonese constituted 40 percent

of the total population of 13,530 in 1981. Subair and Rumra note that before the *kerusuhan*<sup>1</sup> in 1999, all migrant traders, including from Buton, Bugis, and Makassar (BBM), comprised about one million people, or 48% of the total population of 2,100,000, in the Moluccas province<sup>2</sup>.

In this dissertation, I argue that despite the Butonese being seen as outsiders and disadvantaged by customary law, they have developed strategies to offset these difficulties, by managing a variety of economic exchanges to their advantage. The Butonese also use other strategies that are compliant with State projects. The outcome of these strategies has been not only to extend their economic networks, but also to gain some sort of a power-base rooted in ethnicity. In the urban situation, the ways Butonese have chosen to be traders becomes a means towards upward social mobility. However, the status of being traders essentializes the Butonese as “outsiders”/“foreigners” linked to semantic associations of the word for trader (*orang dagang*) in Ambonese Malay where it refers to people who sell goods and are mostly from outside the village.

The quest for a better livelihood has led the Butonese to adopt the Moluccas as their 'homeland' rather than Buton Island itself. This sense of 'belonging' to the Moluccas emerged during the *kerusuhan* when Butonese evacuated to Buton felt alienated as refugees even in the islands from which they or their immediate ancestors had migrated. I argue that identity is connected with relations within the moral economy, and the emotional investment Butonese have made in

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<sup>1</sup> For consistency, I use the word *kerusuhan* to refer to the conflict and violence specifically in Ambon and Moluccas Province. I use the word 'conflict' when reflecting on the general communal conflict that occurred in Indonesia as a whole around the same time, that is between 1999 to 2004.

<sup>2</sup> See Roy Ellen. 2003: 246, 250. *On the edge of the Banda zone: past and present in the social organization of a Moluccan trading network*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. See Subair, Syamsul Amal, and Moh. Yamin Rumra. 2008: 123. *Segregasi pemukiman berdasar agama: solusi atau ancaman? : pendekatan sosiologis filosofis atas interaksi sosial antara orang Islam dan orang Kristen pasca konflik 1999-2004 di Kota Ambon*. Yogyakarta: Graha Guru bekerja sama dengan Institut Agama Islam (IAIN) Ambon, Maluku.

establishing a long-term and intergenerational system of patron-client relationships, expressed for example in their intimacy with the local Moluccans acquired through debt exchange and share cropping.

My second argument is that the realm of interethnic and religious background is tinged with many contradictions, tensions, and even competitions. In other words, this dissertation also tries to debunk the long tradition of seeing trade and exchanges as an indicator of harmonious relationship. My arguments about such contradictions are pulled from the best stories and reflections that I collected during my fieldwork and will be discussed in depth in the following chapters. In the urban areas, ethnic claims become strategies to push other ethnicities. People are ready to claim sovereignty and are even ready to push others over ethnicity since commercial exchanges are mixed with all the same terrors as getting power through formal politics. The ethnic Butonese push out the local Moluccans. They are also advantaged by events, such as a conflict, that open their possibility to win the competition in the market once dominated by the Chinese. From the Moluccan's perspective, both ethnic Chinese and Butonese are seen as "*orang dagang*" or outsiders (*pendatang*). These two ethnicities, interestingly, work together through debt exchanges. Most of the Butonese are clients of the Chinese moneylenders and bankers. In my encounters with Butonese urban traders and rural farmers, they see ethnic Chinese as the "patron" that has merit to help in developing their business. Nonetheless, the interethnic relations of ethnic Buton - Chinese are also full of contradictory narratives as I will later describe.

This dissertation uncovered contravenes about ethnic identity through exchanges. Ethnic relations are about competition and cooperation that come together in an urban area, in this case, specifically in the marketplace. Traders recognize that it is people from Kailolo (the native Moluccans) who often charge them security payments (*uang keamanan*), but they are also the same ones who create such insecurities through theft, setting fires, and molestation if traders

and shop owners do not pay the money for security. Thus, the cooperation is built through what is called "*tahu sama tahu*" (we all know), a kind of public secret where people know that they trick each other, but they do not explicitly express it.

In the rural areas, contravenes of economic exchanges are tied through gifting and hospitality. However, the recipients of the gift have a moral obligation to return the so-called favor. Each of the ethnic lines are aware that they are sucked up through economic cheating by other ethnicities, thus they have their own strategies to deal with so much dishonesty. In the realm of belonging, I also found contravenes that are found in the stories of *orang dagang* that I present in Chapter Three on the outsiders. La Kusni's experiences selling in the Southeast Moluccas islands, for example. Although he has lots of customers, he did not feel a sense of belonging with the Christian majority there. He felt disgusted with the food that was served and he felt alienated with the culture. As an outsider, money is not everything; even though the customers were good, these contradictory feelings led him to move to Ambon for good where he could join the Butonese Muslim traders who there, are the majority. From the perspective of local Moluccans, they also have a contradictory view of the *orang dagang* (outsider). On one hand, they need the *orang dagang* because they provide goods and commodities to the villages, but on the other hand, they do not like the nature of debt and in some cases, the stereotypes about the *orang dagang*, such as their greediness and loose ties with the local cultures, prevail.

As has been shown through historical descriptions, the entire history of the Moluccas contains moments of disruptions and violence<sup>3</sup>, followed by recreations of the inter-village alliances, such as *pela*. Then a disruption comes again. Thus, ethnicity in the Moluccas is not based on

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Gerrit J. Knaap. 1992. "Crisis and failure: war and revolt in the Ambon Islands, 1636-1637". *Cakalele*. Vol 3; Gerrit J Knaap, 2003. Headhunting, Carnage and Armed Peace in Amboina, 1500-1700. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* Vol. 46, No. 2, Aspects of Warfare in Premodern Southeast Asia, pp. 165-192.

harmony as in the imagination of Javanese Indonesian politics, where ethnic diversity should transform into one united body (*persatuan dan kesatuan*)<sup>4</sup>. In the Moluccas, instead, the ethnic and religious relationship is much more dialectical. Peace can be reached through tensions, conflict, and vice versa. It is very common for people to say that after the conflict, they had been “*baku masuk*”, or literally “get into each other”. As I describe in Chapter Four, “War Memories and Emerging Realities”, *baku masuk* is the penetration of human beings across the lines of the people who used to be their neighbors, but then became their enemies, during the *kerusuhan*, and now are turning into their clients in various exchanges. The process of people entangled with other people to build a mutual entity runs through ongoing tensions and conflicts. Referring to the theory of correspondence proposed by Tim Ingold<sup>5</sup>, the social relations of Butonese with local Moluccans corresponds in the exchanges of words in a conversation through which they literally answer to one another over time. The subsequent interpenetration of *baku masuk* is hidden in the interior of the joined hands that extend in welcome or greeting to meet the other as I described in rural South Seram where the Muslim Butonese create an interpenetration with Christians in the orchards. The subsequent interpenetration is like a line in polyphonic music; the harmony lies in the tension and resolution.

Referring to human correspondence as described by Ingold, the analogy of *baku masuk* in the field of material relations is closely parallel to what Marcell Mauss had to say about the gift commitment in the field of social relations. The necessity of *baku masuk* between the local Moluccans and the Butonese, as well as the Muslims and the Christians, are drawn through

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<sup>4</sup> See best description of the effort to maintain cultural and political harmony in Java and Indonesian case, Clifford Geertz. *The Religion of Java*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1960, pp 12-14; 58-84; John Pemberton. 1995. *On the subject of "Java"*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press

<sup>5</sup> See further Tim Ingold, “On Human Correspondence”. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)* **23**, 9-27



gifting and exchanges. When the ethnic Chinese give goods to the Butonese, the Butonese thought is with the Chinese, and when the Butonese return the gift, they also give their minds to the Chinese. As with shaking hands or two hands clasping each other, gift exchanges are also an interpenetration. Giving and receiving do not show solidity, but more the fluidity and flow of social relationships. Gift exchanges are never ending. They coil with one another, twist, and hold together. The totality of the contract is a self-perpetuating movement full of enigma; a love/hate relationship.

Butonese farmers know that a gift received from ethnic Chinese traders is poisonous and built based on interests, but nonetheless they receive it, because on some level, it is from there that the social relationship works. People trick each other, but it is a relationship. Thus, in this dissertation, I am not describing that the Butonese and the Moluccans are cheaters, but the nature of the gift exchange, itself, is full of moral enigma and contradictions. Reciprocity comes together with dishonesty. During my fieldwork, I found that the Butonese depend and respect the local Moluccans because they are still bound by sharecropping contracts, as in the case of Aira. However, this does not rule out the possibility that the people in Aira will have lots of suspicion and lack of trust with their Christian patron in Soahuku. As broadly understood by Muslims in the Moluccas, the Butonese in Aira believe that the Christians have a global “hidden agenda” or conspiracy to attack them. Likewise, although the Butonese often receive money and goods from ethnic Chinese traders, this does not make them view the ethnic Chinese traders as generous. The more the Chinese give, the more the receivers are burdened.

Thus, the purpose of this dissertation is to show the problem of ethnic and religious relationships that are mostly built on the basis of “the public secret” of a trick, mutual cheating, and bribery. This heart of this dissertation, therefore, is crucial to answer the questions about the absence of a true reconciliation that can happen in the aftermath of conflict. The ethnographic descriptions of trickery and mutual cheating in the micro cases show the broader political lense

of what happens in the Moluccas. The contravene of the social relationship has been shown as “living in harmony” in the post conflict relationship. As impressed by the government, among the Christians and the Muslims, they are now living in peace and harmony after the conflict, but I found that hospitality is only revealed through the media, billboards, television, and even rituals. However, as I witnessed, people treat peace as a spectacle rather than as a practice, itself. Peace is shown in the public arena, but not practiced in the private sphere. In the realm of exchange, the local Moluccans rent their land to the Butonese, but the Butonese play tricks with the receipts after the harvest of sharecropping. The ethnic Chinese traders cheat the scales when the Butonese farmers sell their commodities and the Butonese answer by messing with their crops by using stones, sea water, and even spikes. However, all of this trickery contravenes with the intimate interaction and can work very well. I even think that the interactions cannot run without these lies and mutual trickeries.

After the conflict, Muslims and Christians are living separately, but they have to pretend that everything goes well and they have to act that conflict resolution has been achieved. However, when we explicitly say in the public sphere that the Moluccans never achieved reconciliation, people will be very upset. Similarly, if we say to the Butonese and ethnic Chinese traders that they each other play trickery, they would be very mad and upset because it ruins the exchange and social relationships.

My interest in the Butonese began when I found out that this ethnic group had mostly been excluded from Moluccan cultural discourse and, even worse, had become the recipients of derogatory remarks that labeled them as backwards, polluted, and uneducated people. However, despite the Butonese being considered as “second class citizens”, the number of Butonese residents in the Moluccas has increased over time. The growth rate in Ambon city is

5.65%/year, due less to a high birthrate than to inward migration<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, many Butonese migrants have started to experience upward mobility. After the *kerusuhan* between 1999 and 2004, various ethnic groups, specifically those designated BBM (meaning “Butonese, Buginese and Makassarese”), returned to Ambon and began to dominate certain sectors of the local economy.

There has already been much research into the communal conflict, or *kerusuhan*, in Ambon from 1999 to 2004 between Muslims and Christians. The conflict led to the deaths of more than 10,000 people and displaced more than 1.4 million. The conflict happened during the transition period between the authoritarian regime of Suharto’s New Order and the democratic era<sup>7</sup>, commonly referred to as “*Reformas*”, the era of reform. My research was conducted more than ten years after the so-called 'Moluccan wars'. However, in my opinion, the end of the war began with the reconstitution of the ethnic and religious relationship between Muslims and Christians, as well as between local people and other large minorities in Ambon: Butonese, Buginese, Makassarese, and ethnic Chinese. In this dissertation, I am examining how “the other Moluccans” - in particular Butonese traders, moneylenders and farmers, together with ethnic Chinese shopkeepers - reconstituted their relationships after the conflict. Many ethnic Chinese are in the same positions as the Butonese. They have deep roots in the Moluccas, but they are not considered as belonging to the local Moluccan culture. My research is also exploring the changes that occurred in the aftermath of the *kerusuhan* and displacement. What kind of social

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<sup>6</sup> The number of migrants in Ambon town in 2010 was 112.715 or 34,03 of the total population of 331.254 people, while in the Central Moluccas the number was 45.548 or 12,59 % (*Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Ambon*, 2011: 32)

<sup>7</sup> See Gerry van Klinken. 2009. *Communal violence and democratization in Indonesia: small town wars*. London: Routledge; John Sidel. 2007. *Riots, pogroms, jihad: religious violence in Indonesia*. Singapore: National University of Singapore; Patricia Spyer. 2002. “Fire without Smoke and Other Phantoms of Ambon's Violence: Media Effects, Agency, and the Work of Imagination *Indonesia* No. 74, pp. 21-36; Sumanto Al Qurtuby. 2016. *Religious Violence and Conciliation in Indonesia Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas*. Abingdon: Taylor and Francis.

relations emerged and how did these “other Moluccans” struggle to rebuild their ethnic and religious relationships in the sphere of commodity exchanges and the politics of gift-giving? In this context I also question how “other Moluccans” utilized the State to secure their existence after the conflict. The result has been a fundamental change in the local politics.

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The sense of being an *orang Ambon/orang Maluku asli* (Native Moluccan) is expressed in various ways. *Orang Ambon* refers to the people who are from Ambon Island and *Orang Maluku* is a broader term that covers the whole province of Moluccas<sup>8</sup>. The sense of being autochthonous (literally meaning “born from the soil”) is the basic meaning of belonging for the native citizens. The possession of *tanah adat* (customary land) becomes one of the most important ways to claim local citizenship. By contrast, migrants have a different kind of belonging. Owning *toko* (shops), *kios* (kiosks) and *gudang* (warehouses) mark the identities of the Butonese and ethnic Chinese as being different from native Moluccans.

In this dissertation, in addition to exploring the relations between Butonese and local ethnic Moluccans, I also address the relations between the Butonese and the ethnic Chinese Moluccans, who are also considered as “other” Moluccans. Although the ethnic Chinese have

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<sup>8</sup> When living in the big cities of Indonesia, people from islands surrounding Ambon Island such as Buru, Banda, and Seram often describe themselves as “*orang Ambon*”, or are described as such. Ambon is seen as the center of government and power. However, people from places in the Northern Moluccas such as Tidore, Ternate, Bacan, and Jailolo prefer the term “*orang Maluku*”. The toponym Maluku appears to have referred in pre-European times to these islands only [See E.G. Andaya, 'World of Maluku'], and ever since the beginning of the sixteenth century when the Portuguese traveler, Antonio Galvão, used the word “Maluku” in reference to Ternate and surrounding islands and not to Ambon, locals have preferred that term. Many young people in Ternate proudly claim that they are “*orang asli Maluku*” and not “*orang Ambon*”. People from the Southeast Moluccas, also, do not want to be called “*orang Ambon*”, but rather prefer *Orang Kei*. One of the main reasons is because the majority of the Kei islanders are Catholic, which distinguishes them from Christian Ambonese, who are mainly Protestant. In addition, people from Ambon have often looked down on Kei people who live on the periphery and far from the center of administration in Ambon.

deep roots in the Moluccan archipelagoes and many have married local people, they are still considered “foreigners”. As I describe in Chapter Four, the number of ethnic Chinese traders increased in the late nineteenth century along with the introduction of the Dutch steam ship service, KPM (Koninklijke Paketvaart-Maatschappij), that sailed to Seram, the Southeast Moluccas, and to Fak Fak in Papua. Instead of acquiring land, most Chinese occupied roles established through money and trade. This has contributed towards their identity, but also gave them authority in the realm of economic activities.

A native Moluccan sense of belonging is also linked to involvement in ritual practices, which at the same time serve to exclude people who are not from the same *adat*<sup>9</sup>. As “other Moluccans”, Butonese do not celebrate through grand rituals and ceremonies as local people do<sup>10</sup>. In the countryside, migrant Butonese are not integrated through *soa* or *mata rumah* (a 'kinship' group consisting of several family clans that select the *raja/* village head)<sup>11</sup>. Neither do Butonese hamlets in the Moluccas have a *baileo* (a traditional ritual house that is also used for meetings), a prominent physical feature of many villages in the Ambon-Lease islands and in the western half of Seram.

The Moluccan kinship system in the Ambon-Lease Islands recognizes descent mostly through the male line and people tend to emphasize male roles in structuring society<sup>12</sup>. A Butonese,

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<sup>9</sup> There have been many studies showing that the revivalism of *adat* tends to sharpen the distinction between insiders and outsiders, as well as creating horizontal conflict that subordinates migrants to second-class citizens. Among these, see Jamie Davidson and David Henley. 2012. *The revival of tradition in Indonesian politics: the deployment of adat from colonialism to indigenism*. London: Routledge; Tania Murray Li. 2007. *The will to improve: governmentality, development, and the practice of politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Here I refer to Emile Durkheim who argues that basic collective emotions and a sense of community belonging are initiated through rituals and ceremonies that keep people together. See 1961: 440-444. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Translated by Joseph W. Swaian. New York: Macmillan.

<sup>11</sup> See Frank Cooley, April, 1969, “Village Government in the Central Moluccas”. Indonesia, Volume 7, 139--164

<sup>12</sup> The Alune ethnic group of Western Seram and ethnic groups from Ambon Lease Islands follow patrilineal rules. On the contrary, the Wemale ethnic group in the southeast part of

Buginese or ethnic Chinese woman whose father is Moluccan can be a part of local *marga* (clan) and, therefore, become fully Moluccan. On the other hand, if only the mother is from the Moluccas, children are not perceived as “true” Moluccans. There have been many interethnic marriages between local people and migrants, but most of my interlocutors, whether traders in Ambon or farmers in South Seram, were mostly married within their own Butonese ethnic group even though they were born in the Moluccas. Given this perspective, it might seem odd that I refer to Butonese and ethnic Chinese Moluccans as “other” Moluccans, but although many of them have married local Moluccans, the natives still perceive them as “foreigners/outsideers”.

Moreover, the use of “other” in the title of this dissertation refers to the people who do not belong to the masculine narratives that are dominant in Moluccan history and discourse. In Chapter Two, for example, my focus is on the Butonese traders who are women and have a different perspective in remembering and coping with the conflict. Men are the active agents in war and trade stories, whereas the roles of women are almost never captured in the history of the 1999 *kerusuhan*<sup>13</sup>. In fact, Butonese women were often the mainstay of the economy at times when husbands and sons were involved in crises and war. My research found that marketplaces are now more feminized since more Butonese women were engaged in the informal economy. Although Butonese women were already heavily involved in market trading, such as through the *papalele* tradition which I illustrate in Chapter Two, I interviewed many new female traders

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West Seram traditionally have matrilineal principles. See further the comparison in Gerrit J Knaap, 1993. “The Saniri Tiga Air (Seram); An account of its ‘discovery’ and interpretation between about 1675 and 1950. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Deel 149, 2de Afl*, pp. 250-273. Michael Prager, “Half-Men, Tricksters and Dismembered Maidens: The Cosmological Transformation of Body and Society in Wemale Mythology” *L’Homme*, No. 174, *Moitiés d’hommes* (Apr. - Jun., 2005), pp. 103-124. Published by: EHES

<sup>13</sup> In fact, there have always been numbers of women featuring in official Moluccan histories against colonialism such as Christina Martha Tiahahu. However, during the *kerusuhan* that began in 1999, the story of women heroes involved in the conflict was almost never heard.

from Buton who eventually became involved in the market after their husbands lost their jobs during the financial crises of 1998 and the ensuing *kerusuhan* of 1999<sup>14</sup>.

### **The Politics of Belonging**

I use the notion of 'belonging' in reference to ethnic and religious affiliation, kinship, geographic origin, allegiances to landowners, and ownership of property *toko* (shops), *kios* (kiosks), and *gudang* (warehouses). My argument in this dissertation is that belonging runs along three axes. *First*, belonging is a political strategy in which being a part of certain identities is assessed based on the risks and opportunities which are situated in a particular time and space. *Second*, I propose the merging of belonging with affect, passion, and experience that goes beyond feelings which, according to Rutherford, are reflected when people embody their pre-subjective sentiments by making practice into gatherings, organizations, and various emergent social orders associated with their identity background<sup>15</sup>. The scope of affect goes beyond the emotive domain. It reaches to the collective memory and communal sense<sup>16</sup>. As I illustrate in Chapter One, solidarity is embodied in exchange practices, but additionally in Chapter Three I also demonstrate that the motivation for belonging is not just to get more political or economic power, but it is also constructed through a fine memory of exchange and reciprocity between Butonese and their *tuan dusun* (landowner). Thus, belonging is not always a strategic way to

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<sup>14</sup> Jeroen Adam also reaches similar conclusions. He argues that it is not a new phenomenon for Muslim women to be traders even though during the *kerusuhan*, displaced Christian women became involved in informal petty trade activities more than displaced Muslim women. See further Jeroen Adam. 2010: 105-110. *Communal violence, forced migration & social change on the island of Ambon, Indonesia*. Ghent: Ghent University.

<sup>15</sup> See Danilyn Rutherford, 2016. "Affect Theory and the Empirical". *Annual Review Anthropology*. 45: 285-300. See also the theories of affect that move away from emotion and bodily experiences to intimate public strategies mediated by crowds and mass mobilization in William Mazzarella. "Affect: What is it Good for?" *Enchantments of Modernity: Empire, Nation, Globalization*, edited by Saurabh Dube, London, Routledge, 2009, pp. 291-309.

<sup>16</sup> Nigel Thrift. 2000. "Afterwords. Environment and Planning D": *Society and Space* 18, 213-55.

gain power resources, but has to do with emotions and solidarity that are more subtle than political or economic reasons. *Third*, material belongings are always unstable objects. *Toko*, kiosks, and warehouses become ambivalent spaces where the place not only becomes the emotive field of making intimate patron-client relations, but also these places become the objects of violation and violence. However, after the ruination of the *kerusuhan*, *toko* and marketplaces also become the central objects in the making of politics and building ethnic sovereignty.

At the level of belonging as a strategy, a person that is inclined to align with a certain ethnic identity can bring economic returns, political advantages, and/or social prestige. During my research on the urban markets, for example, many Butonese traders told me that the banks tend to give credit to people who have ethnic Chinese or Butonese names. The bank inspects the familial networks of the borrower with other traders who are more settled. Ethnic names and ethnic identity, then, realistically, can mobilize people to upgrade into a certain level of rank in the exchange relationship.

The politics of belonging are tied to sociopolitical conditions and collective emotions<sup>17</sup>. I argue that religion and ethnicity cannot be treated as taken-for-granted primordial identities, but rather the extent to which they are emphasized depends on prevailing social conditions. 'Belonging', therefore, is a living identification that is dynamic and tied to temporality according to social and political conditions. Durkheim, in his *Elementary Forms*<sup>18</sup>, points out that human life, in time, has a certain sense of temporal orientation. The temporality of collective consciousness has a vision to develop social solidarity. The capacities of individual to act, at certain points, are

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<sup>17</sup> See Arjun Appadurai. 1998. *Dead certainty: ethnic violence in the era of globalization*. *Public Culture* 10(2):225–247; Arjun Appadurai. 2007. *Fear of small numbers: an essay on the geography of anger*. Durham [u.a.]: Duke Univ. Press.

<sup>18</sup> See Emile Durkheim, 1961: 440-444. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Translated by Joseph W. Swaian. New York: Macmillan.



situated in a similar feeling of resemblances that bring them into a new representation formed by their generic character. The *kerusuhan* provided a moment of temporality where migrants embraced ethnicity as well as Islam. As I describe in Chapter Three, when the communal conflict broke out, the various Butonese identities crystallized into a single identity based on common religion. This was a common pattern for minority communities who sought security in a simpler, more-inclusive identity associated with a much larger group<sup>19</sup>.

I warn against essentializing ethnicity as 'natural' and argue that a sense of belonging is not always fixed into a group's ethnic and religious classification. As I describe in Chapter Three, an intimacy can flourish between Muslims and Christians forged through the violation of prohibitions and social conventions. Through transgression people also find pleasure. For example, I found stories about courtship and sexual relationships between Muslims and Christians that aimed at enjoyment for the moment and would not end in marriage. In another case, cooperative pig hunting between Muslims and Christians connects people who have been segregated since the aftermath of the *kerusuhan*. The temporary character of pleasure and intimacy in the garden or place of work does not only arise from a sense of mutual need, but also from the pleasure of transgressing the rules segregating Muslims and Christians.

Belonging that is forged through the practice of exchanges establishes a series of interrelationships between the giver and the receiver, and also between local people and migrants. The bundle of rights and expectations within exchanges construct identity as a strategy for gaining political economic power, as well as developing feelings of intimacy, pleasure, jealousy and even threatened feelings within the society. Following Mauss, who

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<sup>19</sup> Christopher Duncan examines this in the case of Halmahera, North Moluccas where people tended to set aside their identities and adopt a single identity - religion. Even different Christian denominations joined together in opposition to Muslims. See further, Christopher Duncan. 2013. *Violence and vengeance: religious conflict and its aftermath in eastern Indonesia*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

emphasizes the role of gift exchange at the level of larger social collectivities rather than at an individual level, I believe that exchange practices between Butonese and local Moluccans, and between Christians and Muslims, have created a sense of ethnic and kin obligation to continue reciprocity as an open-ended mutuality.

Nonetheless, as I argue in the next section, trade and exchange, although connecting people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, still generate ambivalent feelings. People see marketplaces, *toko*, and kiosks as the sources of exploitation and inequality. Therefore, these places were often the first to be plundered and burnt when the *kerusuhan* broke out. *Toko*, kiosks, and *gudang* are material artifacts that, during conflict, become “abjected material”<sup>20</sup> or polluted objects that become the target of riot, but in the post-conflict atmosphere, they emerge like a rhizome that grows rapidly after the ruination<sup>21</sup>. Since the *kerusuhan* they have become powerful objects that mark the social upward mobility of “other” Moluccans.

Although the Butonese have been living in the Moluccas for more than three generations and have a greater sense of belonging to the Moluccas rather than to the Buton itself, the Moluccans still see them as an *pendatang* or *orang dagang*. One of the reasons is because they mostly run the shops and perpetuate the money cycle through moneylending. Money and trade are seen as something that comes from outside of Moluccan culture, even though, ironically, the Moluccans, themselves, have a deep history of exchanges which were unfortunately curbed through colonial surveillance.

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<sup>20</sup> See Yael Navaro-Yashin 2009, “Affective spaces, melancholic objects: ruination and the production of anthropological knowledge”. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 15, 1-18.

<sup>21</sup> I use this word from Deleuze and Guattari. Deleuze, G. & F. Guattari, 1988. *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. London: Athlone. I not only found *toko* and kiosks that had resurrected and grown after the ruination of *kerusuhan*, but many of my Muslim interlocutors said that they regretted burning churches because Christians subsequently got a lot of funding from foreign churches to build their churches better and with more solid construction.

### **The Ambivalence of Ethnic Belonging**

During my fieldwork, I often heard people use linked pairs of words such as *pela-gandong* (village alliances), *Salam-Sarani* (Muslim-Christian), *orang asli-orang pendatang* (host society-outsiders), *tuan dusun-anak dusun* (the Moluccan landlord and the Butonese tenant), *etnis Cina-Pribumi* (ethnic Chinese-local native people). These are less 'binary oppositions' in the sense envisaged by Lévi-Strauss, but rather concepts existing in parallel, as James Fox has shown for Eastern Indonesian societies more generally. In everyday utterance, ritual recitation, and public speech, Moluccan people express their world using dyadic verse and, although these concepts are not always symmetrical and balanced but also asymmetric and ambiguous, they are nevertheless complementary and reciprocal.<sup>22</sup>

However, it can be misleading to infer from this that the natives and the migrant communities are always situated in dichotomous relations. Although my research focuses on the "other Moluccan" perspective, I am not necessarily positioning the native society as the antagonist or as the opponent of the migrant. In the Central Moluccas, the relationship between local Moluccans and migrants is not simply black and white. They are not particularly opposed to each other, but complementary. Although each of the cultural elements has contrasting positions and associations, they complement one another. In southwestern Seram, the Butonese are associated with traders, middlemen, peddlers, and loan sharks who come from outside the village, whereas local Moluccans are the customers, landowners, and the host society. Butonese and ethnic Chinese are viewed as the *pendatang* (outsiders) who supposedly consider the *pribumi/orang asli* as more passive, spendthrift, and lazy, while on the contrary, they view themselves as creative, honest, and aggressive in the marketplace, industrious, and

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<sup>22</sup> See James Fox "Introduction" in Fox (edited) 2009: 26-28. *To Speak in Pairs: Essays on the Ritual Languages of Eastern Indonesia*, Cambridge University Press.

stingy. As I demonstrate in Chapter Three, on one hand, Butonese in Aira perceive that their *tuan desa*, Christians in Soahuku, are the source of power. Christians not only provide land for the Butonese in Aira, but are also seen as the source for education, political influence, and as suppliers of arms/weaponry. On the other hand, Christians in Soahuku need the Butonese because they supply manpower to take care of the gardens and provide them with produce. This kind of pairing creates ambiguous positions in which local Moluccans feel threatened, but at the same time, they need to interact with the outsiders to conduct the business of everyday life. The mutual dependency between the two groups leads them to not openly reveal their conflicted feelings. As I describe in Chapter Four, instead of creating an exposed animosity between people of different ethnicities, races, and religions, people tend to cover their feelings of dislike through mutual fraud, lies, and corrupt relations that are often entangled in gift and debt exchanges. Therefore, behind the mutual relations, there is always tension and paradox.

The use of paired concepts in Central Moluccan political culture is also reflected historically in social structure. Paired categories in pre-colonial relations are, in some ways, similar to how present-day Butonese and local Moluccans employ paired contrasts to emphasize difference and complementarity. To build a sense of belonging, the old Sultanates of north Maluku had used tropes rooted in kinship metaphors. Despite continuous warfare between the Ternate and Tidore, the Sultan of Tidore was customarily the wife-giver to the wife-taking Sultan of Ternate. The role of Tidore in providing the wife to the Sultan of Ternate, placed Tidore in a position of symbolic superiority over Ternate. Two other Sultanates, Bacan and Jailolo, were - to extend the kinship trope - seen as the younger brothers who supplied mistresses to the two big Sultanates. Tidore and Ternate also considered their surrounding settlements as their sons<sup>23</sup>. To the East, Gamrange Island, Waigama, Raja Ampat in West Papua, and some regions in

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<sup>23</sup> In kinship studies “moiety” refers to two large complementary and exchanging groups, often unilineal descent groups. In some ways, the sultanates of Ternate and Tidore had the characteristics of moieties.

southeast Halmahera such as Buli, Maba, Bicoli, and Patani, were claimed by Tidore. Besides supplying cloves and sago to the center, some of the peripheral areas such as Raja Ampat and Weda sent tributes to Tidore in the form of a type of tortoiseshell and birds of paradise, whilst Makian Island, Batjan, Jailolo, Talai, Palisua, Sula, Mondona, Obi, Morotai, Halmahera, and East Seram were the vassals that belonged to Ternate<sup>24</sup>. However, despite the symbolic reciprocal relationship between the sultanates and their vassals, there was always sporadic warfare, especially with the arrival of European colonialists. In this sense, these relations were reminiscent of interethnic relations today. The Butonese farmers provide their produce and loyalty to the ethnic Chinese traders and in return they provide service, commodities, and money to the Butonese.

Unlike the European colonialists, the sultanates did not seek economic monopolies and power relations based on conquest. Rather they justified their authority by using the concept of reciprocity. The periphery considered the sultanate to be the symbol of supremacy, prestige, wealth, and happiness. They considered the goods that were supplied from the sultanate to be power transmitters. The relationship between center and periphery was intended to be of mutual benefit. As “the son”, the periphery regions supplied sago, cloves and nutmeg, rice, forest products, slaves, and women as concubines to the Ternatan and Tidoran sultanates. In return, as the center, the sultanate reciprocated for the cloves and sago from the periphery by delivering foreign goods such as cloth, cotton, iron, porcelain, and weapons. With these goods in return, the sultanate also cast the *ruh* (spirit) of their power and divinity at once. The sultanate also gave titles to the chiefs in the periphery such as *raja*, *kolano*, *jojau*, and many other local honoraria with accompanying insignia<sup>25</sup>. In this sense, the lords treated their vassals as partners

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<sup>24</sup> See Leonard Andaya. 1993: 82-89. *The world of Maluku: eastern Indonesia in the early modern period*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

<sup>25</sup> Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 1993: 108-109.

in a complementary relationship involving the exchange of goods and security. Like in a family, the relationship between the center and the periphery was complementary despite the tensions and strife within it. Thus, the power relationship within this “family” was based more on gift exchanges. The European colonizers could not really understand the power system operating in Ternate and Tidore. Western colonizers considered the pair-wise relationship between center and periphery as too weak because they relied mainly on symbolic power.

Gift exchanges continue to bring a sense of political belonging. As with the periphery areas, or the sons, of the sultanate in the North Moluccas, the Butonese have a sense of solidarity with their *tuan desa*, the native Moluccans who provide them with land to cultivate crops. In return, the Butonese have to share the harvest with the local people. The Butonese also have to provide their labor whenever the *raja* (head of the village) needs them for communal work such as when building a *baileo* (council house) or a mosque. Similar to the relationship between the old sultanate and its vassals, the relationship of contemporary native Moluccans with their *anak dusun* (tenants) is tinged with tensions, competition, and conflict. I demonstrate all of these paradoxes of belonging in Chapter Three.

According to the perspective of Rutherford (2003) and Muridan (2009), Andaya’s account of the relationship of center and periphery is too rosy a picture. Rutherford documents more tension and violence in the sultanate relationship with its vassals, and her perspective is from the standpoint of the periphery<sup>26</sup>. Trade and reciprocity were also tinged with elements of political

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<sup>26</sup> At the local level, foreign goods were circulated as bridewealth, in payment of fines and in ceremonial exchange. Goods accumulated from raiding and reciprocity with Tidore were believed to have spiritual power. Rutherford uses the term of “fetishization of the foreign”. Raiding foreign land and plundering foreign goods not only shows the Papuan encounter with outsiders, but also their bravery in voyaging to distant lands. Therefore, those who possessed such a rare and foreign good, such as food and ceramics through trading and raiding were recognized as a reputable member of the society. See Danilyn Rutherford. 2003: 16-18. *Raiding the land of the foreigners: the limits of the nation on an Indonesian frontier*. Princeton, NJ [u.a.]: Princeton Univ. Press; Muridan, Widjojo, Muridan S. 2009: 122-124. *The revolt of prince Nuku: cross-cultural alliance-making in Maluku, c.1780-1810*. Leiden: Brill.

domination. The reciprocity emerged from the stories of Papuan Raja Ampat, as well as Biak's raiding the vessels of the Sultanate of Tidore, plundering foreign goods, and abducting women. To fight raiding became widespread, Tidore then supported the Papuan by providing wives and imported goods. From the Papuan perspective, this support is seen as recognition of their identity. Papuans then perceived Tidore as their ruler to whom tribute must be sent as a return. To the Biak people, their prostrated bodies were not a sign of submission to the Tidore Sultanate lying behind the reciprocity. The Biak did not draw a distinction between violence and the value associated with Tidore. The incorporation was even harsher when the British regimes in 1781 forced Tidore to not only collect taxes from their vassals, but also to draw borders of Tidore's authority. Likewise, in the Central Moluccas, the reciprocity between the Butonese and the Moluccans has been tinged with tensions and conflict from the costs of renting to the displacements during the *kerusuhan* in 1999. What I want to relate through this Sultanate history is the relationality between the more dominant power and its vessels that is built through the perpetuation of conflicts. Raiding and fights became a fundamental reason for building peace and reciprocity. In other words, the parallelism of the social relationship between center and periphery, patron and client, is not built through harmony and peace by aligning all of the different elements of society into one united entity, but rather the more superordinate power gives its land and opportunity to a more subordinate community to have their own sovereignty, which later creates reciprocity and parallel relationships.

Unlike Northern Moluccas polity, Ellen (2003) and Goodman (2006)<sup>27</sup> show the different characteristic of chains of power in the Central Moluccas. The system of exchanges is not based on the royal-tributary relations. Exchange relations are not driven based on center-

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<sup>27</sup> See Roy Ellen, *On the Edge of Banda Zone*, pp 270-277. For a historical reference on the characteristic of exchanges of Central Moluccas see Thomas E Goodman, pp 5-12: 2006, "The Sosolot: An Eighteenth Century East Indonesian. Trade Network". *A dissertation thesis submitted to the Graduate division of the University of Hawaii*.

periphery, but each village in Central Moluccas controls their autonomous groups under the rules of *raja*, also known as *kepala desa* (head of the village). This power does not concentrate into one Sultanate, but it is decentralized through the *rajas* who occupied villages, tiny islands, and coastal settlements; thus, the *rajas* who gave permission and hospitality to migrants and visiting traders. The accelerated movement of Butonese migrants through these areas converts the relationship into more hierarchical societies. Yet, the *raja* does not centralize their power beyond the local level. They only tend to exert control over the mobility of migrants who live in their own areas (*dusun*) and in inspecting exchanges and sharecropping between the Moluccan landlords and the migrants. When *rajas* cannot handle the exchange problems, they usually help by bringing the cases to court.

Franz and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann reported that until the 1980s, migrants had no right to own land, and therefore treated native Moluccans as their patrons to maintain social security. Butonese worked for Moluccan landlords in their gardens in exchange for temporary housing. The number of litigations brought to court usually rose following an increase in clove prices. Likewise, there have been many land disputes regarding the legal properties of tree crops that were cultivated by the Butonese, but on land owned by native Moluccans<sup>28</sup>. The Butonese claimed that they had cultivated and maintained the clove trees, while the native Moluccans argued that the Butonese planted the crops on their land; and when the price of the clove rose sharply, the Butonese had to adjust to pay the higher rent than in the previous contract.

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<sup>28</sup> See the disputes reported between Butonese and Ambonese during the 1980s in Franz and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann. 2007: 153-156, 235-237. *Social Security Between Past and Future. Ambonese Networks of Care and Support*. LIT Verlag Munster. Beckmann.



## Post Conflict interactions

The conflict in the town of Ambon that later spread throughout the Moluccas followed three significant events in modern Indonesian history. First, there was the Asian monetary crises that hit Indonesia in 1997, creating unemployment along with skyrocketing prices of commodities and gasoline. This crisis led to higher unemployment and cut backs in work in every region of Indonesia. The low purchasing power of the Rupiah was exacerbated by the rising price of basic commodities. The second event was the collapse of Soeharto's New Order regime in 1998 that could not handle the crises. The new democratic government under the presidency of Habibie was followed by that of Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) ushered in a new era of democracy. One of Gus Dur's policies was to bring the military back to the barracks and curtail their involvement in civil politics, which had been a mark of the New Order regime. This led to dissatisfaction in the military, which it is claimed initiated conflict in the Moluccas and in other areas<sup>29</sup>. The third event occurred as a result of open democracy, decentralization, and the opening of the free market. At that time, those who had not benefitted from economic development under the New Order regime, or those who were threatened because of a lack of privileges could now express their grievances through political action. Using religion and ethnic sentiment, and encouraged by a vengeful military, the conflict in the Moluccas easily spread out, even to the far periphery of the province.

In contrast to Java, where orthodox Muslims were those mostly described as the figures of subordination by the state<sup>30</sup>, in the Moluccas, Christians faced more fear and anxiety. A rapid

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<sup>29</sup> On the role of the military in exacerbating Christian and Muslim tensions in Ambon see George Junus Aditjondro (2001), "Gun, Pamphlets, and Handy Talkie," in Ingrid Wessel and Georgia Wimhöfer, *Violence in Indonesia*, Hamburg: Abera Publishing House.

<sup>30</sup> Note, for example, the riots that occurred in towns with a strong Islamic identity, such as Tasikmalaya, Situbondo, and Rengasdengklok, prompted by issues of inequality and dissatisfaction with ethnic Chinese domination of the economy, and described in John Sidel.

shift in political patronage in the Moluccas increased the tensions between Muslims and Christians. Moluccan Muslims experienced a steady and gradual upward rise in social mobility after 1950<sup>31</sup>, and literacy in Muslim groups has increased rapidly. Muslims speak the same lingua franca and view the same television programs. They also have the same access to schools and universities and access to work in the bureaucracy. The project of *Islamisasi* (the spreading of Islamic influence through public spaces, schools and the bureaucracy) during the late New Order regime increased anxiety among the Ambonese Christians. The trend of *Islamisasi* coincided with the arrival of a rising number of Butonese Muslim migrants from Sulawesi Island which began to threaten the religious balance in Ambon, and the traditional political and cultural domination of Ambonese Christians. This rapid migration not only increased the diversity of society, but at the same time also escalated tensions with Christians, especially in relation to property, village elections, and trade competition.

The conflict between Muslims and Christians that began in 1999 finally ended in 2004. Throughout this period, it was estimated that the conflict killed a minimum of 10,000 people and displaced more than 1.4 million people.<sup>32</sup> In the post conflict period, the separation of settlement based on religion is more obvious, something that people could not imagine before the conflict. Although the government and many local elites initiated means to end the conflict through rituals and public ceremonies, I can still see much trauma and distrust of each other. My research

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2009. *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

<sup>31</sup> See the analysis arguing that the sectarian conflict is driven by the upward mobility of a Muslim oligarchy in the bureaucracy that replaced the Christian domination of over two decades before the conflict broke out in 1999, Tamril Amal Tomagola, Cornelis Lay, Lies Marantika, Ricky Palijama, Rosa Pentury & Yusup Madubun. 2008. *Format Ulang Birokrasi Kota Ambon* (Eddy O. S. Hiarij, ed.). Makassar: Innawa. See also Gerry van Klinken. 2007. *Communal violence and democratization in Indonesia small town wars*. London: Routledge.

<sup>32</sup> See the account of Butonese migrant refugees in Blair Palmer. 2004. "Migrasi dan identitas: perantau Buton yang kembali ke Buton setelah konflik Maluku 1999-2002". *Antropologi Indonesia : Majalah Antropologi Sosial Dan Budaya Indonesia*. 28 (74): 94-109.

has a similar tone with Duncan who examines the post-conflict society of the North Moluccas. He points out that after the conflict, the North Moluccan people did not really implement reconciliation as suggested by the state and many international NGOs. Duncan notes that the elements of reconciliation are when people progress the work of healing, justice, trust, accountability, and forgiveness freely to discuss and take responsibility for their wrongdoing. In the daily conversation that I found in my fieldwork, people talked freely about the conflict, but only within the same religious communities. Nonetheless, I found that although people do not have a concept of reconciliation on the ground, they can still connect with each other. I follow John Galtung in arguing that people can live in coexistence without reconciliation. People in the Moluccas mutually interact, even without admitting any wrongdoing, and can rebuild positive relationships with those on the other side<sup>33</sup>. My research question is then if people do not reconcile with one another and are accountable for their role in the past conflict, how can people then interact with one another? What factors drive people, both local Moluccans and migrants, to connect with one another?

To answer these questions, I explore post conflict interactions through gift exchanges. I argue that rather than through legal forms of justice, daily interactions embedded in a moral economy of commodity exchange, can be an effective way to reconcile people who were directly or indirectly involved in the conflict. Exchanges of gifts and through debt relations involve people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds. Despite the consequences of being dependent and exploited, the act of indebtedness becomes the potential means for people to interact with one another across ethnic and religious boundaries.

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<sup>33</sup> Christopher Duncan. Coexistence not Reconciliation: From Communal Violence to Non-Violence in North Maluku, Eastern Indonesia. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 2016 Vol. 17, No. 5, pp. 460–474, Johan Galtung. 1969: 183. "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research". *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (1): 167–191.

In post-conflict Moluccas, living in coexistence and cooperation between former enemies is necessary for daily survival. Bloomfield<sup>34</sup> shows that “working relations” play important roles in reuniting people who were previously in the conflict. Consistent with Bloomfield’s argument, my research shows that the reconciliation process is reestablished through reciprocity and renegotiation of space, place, and property. The Moluccan Indonesian word *mancari* (seeking money/livelihood), for example, indicates an activity of exchange that requires people to *baku masuk*, crossing ethnic and religious boundaries. Understanding these exchanges connecting Moluccans and non-Moluccans, Muslims and Christians, has become an urgent matter. By focusing on the details of local everyday life, we can discover how outsiders can build relations of intimacy and co-existence with their neighbors. Such a narrative of belonging and intimacy is important given the current trend to fetishize mass violence, segregation, jealousy, hatred, and bloodshed, which are in danger of overwhelming us.

Through exchanges, justice is more accessible than when sought through official courts and restorative justice actions. Strathern and Stewart demonstrate that the continuing exchange between clans and tribal groups in the highlands of Papua New Guinea constantly remade peace through socio-economic relationships rather than through legal constructions. Similarly, Carolyn Nordstrom shows that trade helped to rebuild a social network and reintegration<sup>35</sup>. Nordstrom, in her ethnographic research in Mozambique, shows that the daily processes of exchange in selling fish across ethnic and linguistic borders have helped to reduce tension in a

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<sup>34</sup> David Bloomfield. 2006: 26-8. On Good Terms: Clarifying Reconciliation. *Berghof Report No. 14*. Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management. Braithwaite, John, Valerie Braithwaite, Michael Cookson, and Leah Dunn.

<sup>35</sup> See Andrew J. & Pamela J. Stewart. 1997. The Problems of Peace-makers in Papua New Guinea: Modalities of Negotiation and Settlement. *Cornell International Law Journal* 30 (3): 681–699; See Carolyn Nordstrom. *The Eye of the Storm: From War to Peace – Examples from Sri Lanka and Mozambique*. In D. P. Fry and K. Björkqvist (eds), *Cultural Variation in Conflict Resolution: Alternatives to Violence*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 91–103.

post conflict society. Through daily activities and exchanges, we can also see that the state is mostly absent as a peace-making institution at this level. There have been many conflicts in Indonesia starting from the massacre of suspected communists in 1965/1966, the invasion of East Timor, and the military suppression and acts of violence against Aceh and Papua where people have initiated reconciliation by themselves in the absence of action at a national level.

Interactions after the conflict continue to grow although without accountable justice and transparency in dismantling the causes and finding the perpetrators of the conflict. Forgiveness is achieved through selective forgetting of the past, but people still remember. However, unlike South Africa, where the post-conflict narration tends to narrow down into a single history and fact, the stories of who initiated the conflict first, who killed who in the Moluccas are varied. Bapa Mucu told me one day in Aira village *"Katong samua ini pelaku, tapi katong samua ini juga korban"* (We are all perpetrators, but we are also victims).

In focusing on gift and debt exchanges, my research is different from the two main approaches previously adopted in understanding post-conflict society. *First*, I differ from the perspective of a 'liberal peace' that argues that adopting democracy and the free market after a conflict becomes an effective way to peace building, such as happened in Cambodia and post-apartheid South Africa<sup>36</sup>. A liberal peace involves peace-keeping and reconciliation on the ground that can both promote democratizing and governing institutions that can become a means for managing ethnic conflict. Similarly, in the case of post-conflict Northern Ireland, the state and Catholic Church supported reunification of the community through democracy and electoral votes by balancing power between opposed communities through constitutional

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<sup>36</sup> On Cambodia see Oliver P Richmond & Jason Franks. 2007. Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia. *Security Dialogue* 38 (1): 27–48. On South Africa see Heinz Klug. 2000. *Constituting Democracy: Law, Globalism and South Africa's Political Reconstruction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

means. The state also provided “bread and butter” by focusing more on subsidizing health and education in the Northern Ireland<sup>37</sup>.

*Second*, the governments of several post conflict societies have used appeals to tradition and customary law as means for achieving accountability for the violence, for example in Timor Leste (East Timor) and Rwanda<sup>38</sup>. In the Moluccas, traditional and religious leaders facilitate public rituals by memorizing a pledge of harmony between villages through *pela gandong* rituals by imagining and memorizing themselves as in unity. [However, this ritual is not supported with the transparency of the causes of the conflict. In other words, many rituals do not include discussions about who started the conflict, who killed who and who should be sent to the court for their criminal acts. There is a sense that realignment after the conflict is possible since people do not feel that they have won anything from the conflict. This perspective is different from the post- conflict period, for example, in Cambodia, or even after the genocide in Indonesia that began in 1965, where one side was clearly victorious. On the contrary, La Rahman, a trader in Pasar Mardika whose situation I discuss in Chapter One, said “*sudah konflik ini katong samua jadi abu*” (after the conflict, we become ash). La Rahman does not feel like either a winner or a loser.

Many scholars and policy-makers focus their attention on customary law as one way to solve problems in post-conflict situations<sup>39</sup>, arguing that symbols and rituals can emotionally and

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<sup>37</sup> Bernadette C Hayes and Ian McAllister. 2015. Specifically chapter 4. *Conflict to peace: politics and society in Northern Ireland over half a century*. Manchester, UK : Manchester University Press, 2015

<sup>38</sup> See the case of Timor Leste in Elizabeth Drexler. 2009. "Addressing the legacies of mass violence and genocide in Indonesia and East Timor". *Genocide : Truth, Memory, and Representation*. 219-246. The case of Rwanda is discussed in Kristin C. Doughty. “Our Goal Is Not to Punish but to Reconcile”: Mediation in Postgenocide Rwanda. *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 116, No. 4, pp. 780–794

<sup>39</sup> For a non-Indonesian example, see the case of Northern Uganda, described in Tom, Patrick. 2006. *The Acholi Traditional Approach to Justice and the War in Northern Uganda*. Boulder, CO: The Beyond Intractability Knowledge Base Project, University of Colorado.

cognitively heal and reintegrate people torn apart by conflict. However, traditional justice continues to exclude migrants who do not share local traditions and pacification discourse. As a consequence of being excluded, I argue, the Butonese have sought to strengthen their power networks through gifts and money, and in economic transactions. Realizing that rituals and ceremonies can significantly contribute towards peace, some Butonese traders have initiated the reinvention of *panas pela* and *makan patita* rituals, as I describe in chapter one. But this reinvention of tradition by migrants also aims to further their dominance in the economic exchanges of the marketplace.

### **The Origins of the Butonese in the Moluccas**

For centuries, Buton was on the periphery of the Moluccan world and metaphorically considered to be “the son” of the Sultanate of Ternate that had spread its influence westward and northward. Until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Buton Sultanate still sent tribute to Ternate and was an ally of Ternate under Sultan Baabullah (1570-1584) in its wars against the Dutch.

The island of Buton is situated on the trade route between Java and the Spice Islands (mainly Ternate, Tidore, Seram, Banda, Buru, and Ambon- Lease). Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Buton has been a hub for eastward trade connections. All boats from Batavia heading east to Ambon would rest in Buton, while people traveling from the east also sailed via Buton and Makassar exchanging commodities. Traders from Keffing, a tiny island off East Seram, for example, sailed to Buton carrying baked and unbaked sago, for which they exchanged rice, clothes, and swivel

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[http://www.beyondintractability.org/case\\_studies/acholi\\_traditional\\_approach.jsp?nid=6792](http://www.beyondintractability.org/case_studies/acholi_traditional_approach.jsp?nid=6792) (29.8.2007). On the Moluccas, see Birgit Brauchler, 2009: 97-118. “Culture and Tradition for Peace: Reconciliation in the Moluccas”. In B. Bräuchler (ed.), *Reconciling Indonesia: Grassroots Agency for Peace*. London/New York: Routledge., On East Timor see Erin Daly & Jeremy Sarkin. 2007: 85-6. *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press. On Aceh, see Avonius, Leena. 2003. *Reforming Adat*. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*. 4 (1): 123–142.

guns<sup>40</sup>. As Buton developed as an important trading hub, local Butonese were drawn into trade with the east, opening possibilities for them to migrate to those areas that had a trade connection<sup>41</sup>.

Scholars of Butonese history estimate that Butonese traders have been coming to Moluccas since the Seventeenth century. They first went to Western Seram because it is geographically closer to Buton rather than to the other islands in Central Moluccas. After the Hitu war (1634-1646) against the spice monopoly of the VOC, the troops of Hitu, under the leadership of Kapitan Telukabessy, ran away to hide in Tukang Besi, an island in the Buton archipelago. Since then, the relationship between people in Western Seram and some of the islands outside the Butonese Sultanate, such as Tukang Besi and Binongko, intensified. The Binongko exchanged their textiles, earthenware pots or jars (crocks), and various kinds of ironware such as machetes, knives, axes, and crowbars<sup>42</sup>. These goods were exchanged for spices, copra, and forest products from the Moluccas.

The wave of Butonese migration to the Central Moluccas was firstly from slave trade. Knaap reveals surprising data that shows that slaves made up a larger proportion of the Central

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<sup>40</sup> See Muridan Widjojo. 2009: 161-62. *The revolt of Prince Nuku: cross-cultural alliance-making in Maluku, c.1780-1810*. Leiden: Brill.

<sup>41</sup> Butonese migration was not only to the Moluccas, but throughout Eastern Indonesia. This migration was led by their innovations in making *perahu lambo*. Southon reports that from 1985 to 1992, there were about 98 ships from Lande, South Buton that sailed to Eastern Indonesia. They brought taro, salt, and wood and sent them to Lande, Samarinda, Buru, Bacan, Ternate, Obi, Bitung, Banggai, Ambon, Seram, Bima, Taliabu, Adinaram, Tanimbar, Dobo, and Kei. See Michael Southon. 1995: IX, 46-7,53. *The navel of the perahu: meaning and values in the maritime trading economy of a Butonese village*. Canberra: Dept. of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.

<sup>42</sup> See Tasrifin Tahara, "Bukan Anak Negeri: Relasi Warga Maluku Keturunan Buton Dengan Adat di Kepulauan Maluku" Paper was presented in "*Konferensi 60 Tahun Antropologi Indonesia: Refleksi Kontribusi Antropologi Untuk Indonesia*, 14-15 September 2017, di Kampus UI Depok.



Moluccan population in the seventeenth century than any other group: 52.3 percent of the total population was comprised of male slaves from Buton, Makassar, and Bali. The Butonese court was the largest exporter of slaves in the eighteenth century. Most of the slaves were sent to Batavia and Ambon. Between 1880 and 1942, many Butonese migrants to Ambon lived in the borderland between two villages<sup>43</sup>.

Jan Pieterzoon Coen, the first governor general of the Dutch East Indies based in Batavia, had recognized the significance of Buton as a traditional slave-exporting island. He visited Buton in 1613 and was less than enthusiastic. The land was quite well populated and the people could mostly make excellent ships from fine wood. However, he remarked that the people were poor and the slaves were cheap. Coen did not see any possibilities for commerce in this poor land except for the slave trade. From 1666 to 1681 the Butonese were a great supplier of slaves, mostly people from the hill areas on the mainland of Buton Island. It was reported that over these years the Butonese exported many slaves to Batavia and Ambon. Malay, Moluccan, and Bandanese traders brought Butonese slaves and sold them in the Moluccas at a cheap price<sup>44</sup>.

In 1638, Malay traders in Makassar were already regularly undertaking the voyage to the Moluccas each year with 25-40 *praus*. They brought products such as woven cloth, porcelain,

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<sup>43</sup> On the historical composition of migrants in Ambon see Gerrit J Knaap. 1991. "A city of migrants: Kota Ambon at the end of the seventeenth century". *Indonesia*, No. 51, April, pp, 105-128; Tony Rudiansjah. *Kekuasaan, sejarah, dan tindakan*, 2009: 223-224. Rajawali Press.

<sup>44</sup> Besides exporting to Ambon, Schoorl notes that almost every year there were slave shipments to Batavia. For example, in 1670, fifteen *praus* left for Buton carrying cloth valued at 3901 RD (Rijksdaalder, a coinage circulated by the VOC during the 17<sup>th</sup> century), 290 RD in cash, 150 RD in opium, iron in iron15 RD, and 125 RD in arrack (liquor). The total value was 4481 RD. Among these fifteen *praus* from Buton were four carrying 135 male and female slaves. The total value of 4481 RD balanced by the 135 slaves was about 33 RD a slave. The ships arrived in Buton with the eastern monsoon and returned using the western monsoon. See further Schoorl, J.W. 1994: 48. "Power, ideology and change in the early state of Buton" in G. J. Schutte (ed.), *State and Trade in the Indonesian Archipelago*. Leiden: KITLV Press.

large numbers of coins, and *padi* (un-husked rice). They stopped in Buton and exchanged these products for slaves, which would have been between 28-33 RD [Rijksdaalder] per slave<sup>45</sup>. At this time, the practices that Jan Pieterzoon Coen had described had yet to disappear. A major factor in the slave trade and in later voluntary migration continued to be dry poor soils in Buton, exacerbated by monkey and wild pig predation that had become a serious problem for farmers. As I describe in Chapter Three, this condition continues to the present day and contributed to La Kumang, a displaced farmer during the *kerusuhan*, not feeling a sense of belonging to his origins in Siompu, a tiny island located in the Southeast Sulawesi.

Many Butonese have moved away from their birthplace because of the condition of the barren and rocky land, which is not suitable to cultivate crops. The poor soil that made agriculture barely viable led the Butonese to seek a living through other occupations: as seafarers, in maritime trade, and shipbuilding. Especially in the small islands that surround the mainland of Buton, such as Siompu, Binongko, Kaledupa and Tomia, people tend to rely on sailing and trading due to the poor quality of the soil which is not fit for arable purposes. The export of labor that reduced the total population in the Butonese homeland in the beginning of the eighteenth century, worried the Sultanate because it reduced the manpower available to protect the territory against the piracy that was becoming the main threat to the polity<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Rijksdaalder was a first Dutch coin issued in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. For more on the exchanges of products for Butonese slaves see Schoorl, J.W. 1994: 17-59. "Power, ideology and change in the early state of Buton"; Hans Gooszen, *A demographic History of Indonesia Archipelago, 1880-1942*. Leiden KITLV 1999: 101; Susanto Zuhdi, *Nasionalisme, Laut dan Sejarah*, 2014: 245. Komunitas Bambu, Jakarta.

<sup>46</sup> See Susanto Zuhdi, G. A. Ohorella, M. Said D, and R. Z. Leirissa 1996: 128 *Kerajaan Tradisional Sulawesi Tenggara: Kesultanan Buton*. Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia.

Most modern Butonese traders in the Moluccas are still from families who originally came from the periphery of Buton, in the Southeast Sulawesi province. These were people living outside the area of the Butonese Sultanate, such as in Gunung Sejuk, Lapan Dewa, Siompu, and Binongko. By contrast, the Wolio people primarily came from the palace area in the heart of Bau-Bau on Buton island itself. Compared to people from outside the palace area, the Wolio were not interested in trade and business. To maintain their superior status, Wolio, an elite who maintained their titles and noble honor, would rather work in the bureaucracy, in education, or in politics<sup>47</sup>. The situation is similar to that described by Suzanne Brenner for Surakarta, a royal town on Java<sup>48</sup>. At the present time, Wolio continue to work in the bureaucracy, education, and politics and view Butonese outside the sultanate court as *papara*, or people who cannot be trusted, because their origins and ancestors are unknown. However, Butonese traders in Ambon proudly claim that even though they are socially lower than Wolio, they are wealthier. The *papara* in Ambon have more money, kiosks, and shops compared to Wolio remaining in Buton. For the *papara*, money provides a basis for establishing a new hierarchy and begets deference, separating them from the old values.

From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Butonese increase their export commodities of copra. They exchanged the commodity with ceramics and plate. Even in the Butonese started to exchange copra with second hand clothing, which called *rombengan*, from States of

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<sup>47</sup> When the Sultanate of Buton ceded its effective power in the 1960s to the Indonesian government, the Wolio tended to get involved in politics rather than in the market. They have never been interested in migrating to Ambon. The Wolio would rather dominate politics in Southeast Sulawesi. Even now, the mayor and regent always come from Wolio families, specifically the aristocratic communities of Walaka and Kaomu situated within the court and in the downtown of Bau-Bau. See the discussion of competition among Butonese political elites in Rudiansjah, Tony Rudyansjah. 2009: 135-6, 255 *Kekuasaan, sejarah, & tindakan: sebuah kajian tentang lanskap budaya*. Jakarta: Rajawali Pers.

<sup>48</sup> Brenner describes the complexity of status relations based on the hierarchy and radical disjuncture between values of the elite *priyayi* (aristocrat) and *saudagar* (large scale merchants). See Suzanne Brenner. 1991. "Competing hierarchies: Javanese merchants and the Priyayi elite in Solo, Central Java". *Indonesia*. [Volume 52](#) (October 1991), 55--84.

Malaysia, Johor, Penang and Sabah<sup>49</sup>.

Among Christian and Muslim Moluccans<sup>50</sup>, the Butonese were the most disadvantaged ethnic group under Dutch colonialism. In contrast to the conditions of the Butonese, local Christian Moluccans had more privileges. Christian Moluccans were strongly represented in the KNIL, the Dutch East Indies army, and enjoyed the fruits of Western education and opportunities to work in the Dutch bureaucracy. By contrast, Ambonese Muslims and Butonese lagged behind. They did not usually join the colonial army; instead they were more actively involved as traders, farmers, pilgrims, and sailors. Compared to the Christians, Ambonese Muslims were poorly served by appurtenances of modern life such as sanitation programs and were poorly represented in occupations such as teachers, soldiers, and clerks. Neither did the Dutch provide Western-style education for the Muslim community. When the Dutch started to prohibit slavery in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Butonese began to work in Moluccan groves as wage labourers, but they still did not have access to either education or the bureaucracy.

After Indonesian independence in 1945, the Butonese still mostly worked as subsistence farmers or rural laborers, in both Christian and Muslim villages. They received land for temporary housing from their Moluccan landlords<sup>51</sup>. Compared to Muslim villages, Butonese

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<sup>49</sup> See Tasrifin Tahara, "Bukan Anak Negeri" , 2016

<sup>50</sup> Two main sources describing the privileges of Christian Moluccans hardly mention ethnic Butonese. See Richard Chauvel, 1990: 35-8, 113. *Nationalists, soldiers and separatists: the Ambonese Islands from colonialism to revolt, 1880-1950*. Leiden: KITLV Press; Marianne Hulsboch, 2014: 106, *Pointy Shoes and Pith Helmets: Dress and Identity Construction in Ambon from 1850 to 1942*. Brill.

<sup>51</sup> Beckmann notes that until the 1990s many Butonese lived in half-timbered houses constructed from sago leaf stalks (*gaba-gaba*) with zinc roofs, while native Moluccans lived in more permanent houses with brick walls. Native Moluccans acted as patrons and treated the migrants, who mostly worked for the Moluccans, as gardeners and fieldhands, as their clients. In exchange they were allowed to live on the land owned by local Moluccans. See Benda-Beckmann, Franz von, and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann. 2007: 117, 129. *Social security between past and future: Ambonese networks of care and support*. Berlin [u.a.]: Lit.

living in Christian villages did not have close relationships with their landlords. Raymond Kennedy, an American Anthropologist who was sent to Ambon after World War II, compared the Butonese who lived in the Christian village of Amahusu with those who lived in the Muslim village of Tulehu. He found that compared with the situation in Tulehu village where they at least had religion in common, praying in the mosques together, and sharing feasts together with other Muslims, in Amahusu, the Butonese did not share anything cultural or religious and the only tie they had to that community was working in Christian gardens. Nevertheless, the Butonese were still disadvantaged by their ethnicity in both villages. They were treated as second-class citizens in the Moluccas because of their slave heritage. In the field I often encountered older traders who remembered their position in the 1960s and 1970s when there were almost no Butonese residents working as doctors, intellectuals, journalists, or lecturers. They were working either in their *kebun* (gardens) or selling in the area surrounding the market. From the 1970s to 1990s, it was a common sight to see the Butonese working as porters and *becak* (pedicab) drivers in the market areas of Ambon.

The older generation of Moluccans called the Butonese “Binongko”, a word that refers to an island in the Tukang Besi group in Southeast Sulawesi. However, the name “Binongko” has become a derogatory term denoting the smell of people who rarely bathe. Even as recently as the 1960s, many Ambonese would not marry the Butonese, allegedly for this reason<sup>52</sup>. However, nowadays conditions have changed a lot. Intermarriages between Butonese and local Moluccans are common, and only marriages between Muslims and Christians are still

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<sup>52</sup> Kennedy reported that in the 1950s people living in Muslim villages such as Tulehu still considered Butonese to be “lower” class and almost no Tulehu people wanted to marry Butonese migrants. When local Moluccans could not find other Moluccans to marry, they sometimes married Butonese out of desperation. This was especially true for Moluccan women because they were not in a position to take the initiative to propose to a man. If there were no Moluccan men asking to marry them, they would end up marrying Butonese men. Raymond Kennedy, 1955. *Field notes on Indonesia: Ambon and Ceram, 1949–1950*, ed. by Harold Conklin. HRAF. (Kennedy, 1955: 60)

strongly prohibited, even more so following the *kerusuhan*<sup>53</sup>.

### **Butonese Under the New Order**

Butonese migrants living in the central Moluccas during the early years of the diaspora faced uncertainty because Moluccan *adat* law<sup>54</sup> gave them little space to improve their economic situation. Moreover, given the political dispensation from the 1980s onward, Butonese were blocked from obtaining positions in the bureaucratic elite, as well as from participating in the local elections for *raja*. Given their status as settlers and immigrants, they also had no rights to land and no autonomous government. The Butonese lived in hamlets that developed on the borders between two larger villages (generally *desa*). These new satellite villages became paired with a larger village that provided land for them. For example in my research in south

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<sup>53</sup> In practice, not only were many people against marriage between different religions, but the state prohibited interfaith marriage through Undang-Undang perkawinan/ Marriage Law number 1, 1974. The Law and the administrative systems made it difficult for people from different religions to process their marriage. However, many older generations of Moluccans, specifically from the Ambon- Lease islands and parts of Seram, shared their stories that interreligious marriage between them were acceptable back in the 1970s and 1980s. Marriage between *pela* (interalliance villages) is even more strongly prohibited than marriage between different religions. Nuaulu people that are seen as “animistic” from the state’s perspective, sometimes converting to Christianity after marrying their Christian neighbors from the villages of Nuelitetu and Hatuheno. Ellen notes that even when Nuaulu people converted to Islam, they have also married Muslims from Sepa and Ruta, two neighboring villages, and more recently they also married with local Butonese, when they have converted to Islam. See further the report of Nuaulu with their neighbor villagers in Roy Ellen. 2014: 254-285. “Pragmatism, Identity and the State: How the Nuaulu of Seram Have Re-Invented Their Beliefs and Practices As ‘religion’”. *Wacana, Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Budaya*, 15 (2).

<sup>54</sup> Adat (customary) law has developed in various ways in different parts of Indonesia, and has been influenced by contact with outside religious forces, for example Islam, which to varying degree can be flexible to absorb adat. It was codified and utilized during the colonial period by the Dutch, but is continually subject to modification and re-invention. It remains important, especially in rural areas. See the discussion in Roy Ellen, 'Social theory, ethnography and the understanding of practical Islam in South-East Asia.' *Islam in South-East Asia*, M.B. Hooker (ed.) 50-91. E.J. Brill: Leiden. Tania Murray Li. 2001: 645-76 “Masyarakat Adat, Difference, and the Limits of Recognition in Indonesia’s Forest Zone”. *Modern Asian Studies* 35: 3. Also see, Franz and Keebet Benda-Beckmann. 2011: 167-195. “Myths and Stereotypes about Adat Law: A Reassessment of Van Vollenhoven in the light of current struggles over adat law in Indonesia”. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 167: 2-3.

Seram, the Butonese settlement of Tanjung (i.e. Yainuelo) was paired with Sepa, which provided land, while Aira was paired with Soahuku.

Most local Moluccans had access to *tanah dati*, or customary land, which passed patrilineally between descent groups (*marga*). The *tanah dati* system did not allow the Butonese to have any land since they were outsiders and did not have *marga* in the customary system<sup>55</sup>. Thus, to deal with their unfavorable position, the Butonese supported the village law reforms of 1979<sup>56</sup> since they had been discriminated against by local *rajas*. This law at least gave them rights to be citizens of the village and to vote for the village head. Prior to the enactment of that law, Butonese did not have the right to elect the *raja* because of their status as “outsiders” (*pendatang*).

Under the New Order regime, Butonese migrants responded positively to government projects and market transformation through land privatization, mechanization of transportation, monetization of products, and expansion of credit in the villages. The state was perceived as a modern institution that could help them achieve the status of legal citizens of the Moluccas. To obtain legitimation as citizens, they joined several organizations initiated by the government. They supported the new administrative system of state villages (*desa*) that replaced the old *negeri* system. Under the New Order, Butonese residents in West Seram joined the LMD (*Lembaga Masyarakat Desa/Village Consultative Council*). This organization replaced the

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<sup>55</sup> See the detailed description of land ownership law in the Central Moluccas in Ziwari Effendi SH. *Hukum Adat Ambon-Lease*, 1987: 140-48. Pradnya Paramita, Jakarta.

<sup>56</sup> The Village Law of 1979 (*UU Tentang Pemerintahan Desa*) sought to standardize the structures and practices of village government across the nation. The law aimed to democratize and to modernize village governance. One of the directives was that the village head must be elected or sent directly from the central government (*pemerintah pusat*). This law was in opposition to customary village tradition (*adat*), in which the village head or *raja* was appointed through the descent system. For a specific case in the Moluccas see Juliet Lee. 1997. "The changing face of the village in Ambon". *Cakalele : Maluku Research Journal*. 8: 59-77; Yando Zakaria, R. 2000. *Abih tandeh: masyarakat desa di bawah rejim Orde Baru*. Pasar Minggu, Jakarta: Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Masyarakat.

previous traditional council called the *Dewan Saniri Negeri*. Likewise, Butonese worked compliantly with state projects improving agricultural technology for vegetable production. The trust in the government was based on an expectation that the state would provide them with legal citizenship status in the Moluccas. As a result, this political accommodation to modern politics has led to the sustained development of their communities.

Until the 1980s, few Butonese migrants in the central Moluccas had access to the bureaucracy and education. To gain respect from native Moluccans and to assert their rights as Indonesian citizens, they used state instruments. Under the New Order regime, the Butonese were totally dependent on the goodwill of the government. Indeed, under the New Order, rural people were depoliticized and under pressure to vote for Golkar (the ruling party of Suharto's New Order). However, by choosing Golkar, the Butonese acted on the expectation that this party would provide development opportunities for their hamlets. Butonese support for Golkar was not only due to fear of the state, but also a strategy to gain favor and, therefore, more autonomy and more rights from their Moluccan co-villagers<sup>57</sup>.

Since the Butonese did not have the right to own land, the younger Butonese have tended to work in occupations that had to do with money rather than land. Compared to local people, migrant traders turned out to be more responsive to economic activity that had to do with actual cash flow. Many Butonese traders marketed cloves because it was a very lucrative commodity. They rented orchards and made a profit, sharing the income with local Moluccans<sup>58</sup>. In south

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<sup>57</sup> See Jacques Bertrand. 1995: 181. *Compliance, resistance, and trust: peasants and the state in Indonesia*. PhD Dissertation, Princeton University

<sup>58</sup> Otto Hospes, who did his research in Tulehu, 25 km northeast of the town of Ambon, reported that Butonese migrants started to make a profit in the pre-harvest agreements. They rented numbers of clove trees using contracts covering a long period of time, more than five years. Otto Hospes. *People That Count: Changing Savings and Credit Practices in Ambon, Indonesia*. Wageningen: publisher not identified, 1996. Thesis Wageningen Agricultural University.



Seram during my fieldwork in the village of Tanjung (Yainuelo), the rapid and spontaneous immigration of Butonese, as well as the opening up of the road- building program - the “Trans Seram Highway” - in the 1990s exposed the lives of local people, integrating them further into the market economy. For example, Butonese farmers leased land from indigenous people, including Nuaulu, on which they cultivated cash crops<sup>59</sup>.

In the 1980s, Butonese started to acquire their own capital base and businesses. In several areas, such as at Tulehu on Ambon island, they owned almost the entire fleet of large wooden rafts (*bagan*) for fishing. These were very important for catching the small fish consumed as a subsistence food, but also as a means of earning small amounts of cash. Since then there has been a great transformation in sea transportation and the Butonese have also started to own fast motorboats that can cover increased mileage. By the beginning of the 1980s, they had begun to overtake Bugis and Makassarese who had dominated middle-range trading niches and sea transport since the seventeenth century. Moreover, many Butonese who had previously worked on ethnic Chinese-owned boats started to have their own vessels. In the 1990s, Butonese also started to control road transportation. They bought minibuses and employed native Moluccans. Butonese, therefore, came to dominate a large part of the modern transport system. By the end of the New Order, the Butonese had become dominant entrepreneurs that could build their network based on support from ethnic Chinese wholesalers and their own communities.

Social mobility is the central concern in the lives of Butonese migrants. After only two generations, they have moved from being cultivators of maize and cassava to traders and

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<sup>59</sup> See the transformation of South Seram and its effect on the Nuaulu, the indigenous people, in Roy Ellen. 2002, “Pengetahuan tentang hutan, transformasi hutan: ketidakpastian politik, sejarah ekologi, dan renegotiasi terhadap alam di Seram Tengah”. In *Proses transformasi daerah pedalaman di Indonesia*, Tania Murray Li (ed.) Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, pp.205-246

merchants. Although local Muslim and Christian Moluccans dominate the top civil service positions at the provincial level, migrant traders can affect the balance of power through their economic leverage. When the *kerusuhan* broke out in 1999, a precipitating issue was jealousy toward BBM (Butonese, Bugis and Makasarese) traders who dominated much of the market in Ambon.

Many people suspected that the reason why the Butonese became targets in the conflict was because both Christians and Muslims were surprised at seeing them improve their economic position so quickly. However, this issue rapidly transformed into a wider conflict between Muslims and Christians. The Butonese still experienced severe problems and many were persecuted and fled. Their houses were destroyed and the majority who had settled in Christian neighborhoods for many generations were violently expelled. Christians deliberately took away their land and the Butonese were prohibited from returning, as I demonstrate in Chapter Three.

### **Emerging Realities after *the Kerusuhan***

At the level of social relationships, the *kerusuhan* was a major “disturbance” a *musibah* (disaster) involving fire and destruction (of buildings and natural resources), and death (from natural causes, limited access to medical care, or stress, as well as homicides) and massacres, as I demonstrate in Chapter Three. *Kerusuhan*, like an ecological disturbance, has led to change and new social configurations.

Following the *kerusuhan*, many new realities emerged in both urban and rural areas. Urban Butonese traders experienced upward mobility. Ethnic Chinese merchants fled, opening opportunities for Butonese, who replaced them in the kiosks and shops around the marketplaces (Chapter One). Marketplaces became increasingly feminized, as more women became involved in transactions (Chapter Two). An unexpected consequence in rural areas

was the increase in wild pig populations in Muslim villages, as Christians fled from shared or neighboring villages (Chapter Three). Butonese began to demand separation from their *tuan desa* (Chapter Three). Ethnic Chinese merchants in the countryside of south Seram started to engage in politics (Chapter Four).

One of the main changes in the urban areas of the central Moluccas has been the social and economic mobility of “other Moluccans”, specifically Butonese migrants. Mobility is not only about how people physically move, migrate, and are displaced from their places of origin, but also about how people access the market and political life that they have not previously experienced. Throughout each chapter, I show that many factors have helped Butonese achieve upward mobility, crucially including the strength of kinship networks within the Butonese community and 'business values' that encourage a willingness to accept loans and make money. Both of these have played important roles in changing status and social identity. I argue that it is not simply that economic factors have undermined traditional social bonds, but that the Butonese ability to handle money and debt has had the potential to reinforce their social autonomy and grow their political authority.

Money has often been shown to be a potential threat to old social hierarchies and transform the structure of society<sup>60</sup>. The purchasing power of money has replaced traditional power based on

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<sup>60</sup> An aspiration for money and individual achievement is by no means absent in rural society, even if it is more usually associated with urban areas. People take advantage of market opportunities by selling cash crops, as well as labor, and lately their land. These 'capitalist relations', as Li calls them, and the high aspiration of the wealthy have created disputes along kinship lines and polarized neighborly interactions. For example, the poor expect that their wealthier neighbors to lend them money, while the wealthier and more powerful often see their poor kin's lack of money as due to bad habits, such as gambling, and lack of initiative to manage money. In other words, poverty is interpreted as a moral failure. See, Tania Li, 2014: 5-9, 148. *Land's End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier*. Duke University Press. Durham. See also another case of rural commercialization and aspiration for cash in Java: Frans Husken 1989. "Cycles of Commercialization and Accumulation in a Central Javanese Village." In *Agrarian Transformations: Local Processes and the State in Southeast Asia*, edited by Gillian Hart, Andrew Turton, and Benjamin White, 303– 31. Berkeley: University of California Press.

non-monetary indices, such as titles, honors, charisma, and *gengsi* (prestige, social status)<sup>61</sup>. I often encountered native Moluccans who continued to survive working in offices or schools as contract workers on a salary of 500 thousand rupiah (50 USD) per month. This salary is much lower than that of a Butonese onion seller in muddy Pasar Mardika who can earn a net income of two million rupiah per month (200 USD). However, selling onions in the muddy market or peddling snacks in the crowded *pelabuhan* (port) is sometimes embarrassing for people who want to maintain their social status and *gengsi*. The ability to handle money has transformed Butonese society in at least three ways. First, Butonese have become more dominant in the marketplaces. Traders can recruit their relatives from SBB (Western Seram), and also many from Buton, as the employees in their *toko* and kiosks. As a consequence, the Butonese in the marketplace is becoming dominant. Their trade network is based on a close-knit community. Second, money builds intimacy between the debtor and the creditor. The skills of handling money have led the ethnic Chinese to give their trust to many successful Butonese traders. Third, on a broader scale, there have been more rich and successful Butonese traders involved in politics after gaining success in business. They are aware that being involved in politics can enhance their dignity in the eyes of the Ambonese. I also encountered several rich Butonese traders who used their money to buy housing materials and build mosques on the Hitu Peninsula of Ambon, and specifically in Seram Bagian Barat where trade is mostly dominated

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<sup>61</sup> Some ethnographic accounts have argued that money also functions to create new kinds of social relationship. Geertz, for example, argues that in the Balinese village of Tabanan, the old feudal class started to engage in the market during the revolutionary era of the 1950s using money to help maintain their high status. Similarly, in Javanese society, money disrupted the hierarchy and unsettled the status and charisma of aristocratic *priyayi*. The aristocrats were threatened by people who had money because money could replace ascribed status positions of the old feudal, non-monetary based system, such as the accumulation of spiritual potency, titles, honor, and dignity. See: Clifford Geertz, Clifford. 1963. *Peddlers and princes; social change and economic modernization in two Indonesian towns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Suzanne Brenner. 1998. *The domestication of desire: women, wealth, and modernity in Java*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

by Butonese. They expect that the voters will vote for their son, husband, or whoever is running for the local election.

To describe the new (and for many, unpredicted) social realities of the aftermath of the *kerusuhan* in the rural areas, I use an ecological analogy: “unintentional design”. Anna Tsing describes how disturbances such as fire, volcanic eruption, and tsunami not only destroy landscapes, but can renew ecologies. Flood and fire are forms of disturbance that create the conditions for new organisms to thrive. We can see this in the traditional swidden system in south Seram where burning destroys the forest but in turn leads not only to an array of productive garden crops, but to subsequent complex fallows that enrich the local resource base and eventually restore the forest. According to Tsing, “Disturbance opens the terrain for transformative encounters, making new landscape assemblages possible”<sup>62</sup>. This term is appropriate to describe what has taken place so far in Ambon and South Seram after the disturbance. The emergence of wild pigs as a problem in South Seram, as I describe in Chapter Three, is one of the unexpected ecological problems that must be faced by Muslims. My research extends the scope of Tsing’s investigation of ecology to the new socio-religious sphere. The resettlement of neighbors based on common religious allegiance affects a change in the ecosystem. Thus, rather than ecological change as creating new social facts, I found that religious conflicts played a role in changing ecology.

### **Dissertation Organization**

I conducted a pilot project in the summer of 2013 spending two months living in Passo, a new Christian district, about 12 km northeast of the town of Ambon. I conducted interviews with migrant traders who had returned to the town after the *kerusuhan*. In the summer of 2014, I lived continuously for two months in the district of Waiheru on the Hitu peninsula of Ambon

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<sup>62</sup> See Anna Tsing, 2015:150. *The mushroom at the end of the world: on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton University Press.

island. I conducted my main fieldwork from September 2015 to August 2016. My previous research in Ambon in 2007 and 2009 also helped me to appreciate the social transformation that occurred after the *kerusuhan*. In addition, my previous research allowed me to make many connections with various interlocutors. In this dissertation, my interlocutors are predominantly male Butonese traders and farmers, and female traders. Several of them are ethnic Chinese traders living in the countryside. However, I also talked to local Muslim entrepreneurs, Christian peddlers, pastors, bureaucrats, politicians, lecturers, *preman* (street children and petty criminals, dockworkers, environmental activists, and local journalists).

I did not follow the tradition of the classic anthropologist who lives in one village for one whole year, but rather moved all the time from one town in Ambon to two villages in South Seram: Aira and Tanjung. I did not select a single community nor did I restrict myself to always staying with one particular group. To compare the living situations of urban and rural Butonese after the *kerusuhan* in the first six-months of my fieldwork in 2015, I stayed in the town of Ambon. I conducted structured and unstructured interviews. I also used the library at the University of Pattimura, the Rumphius Library at the Uskupan Katolik, and the central archive of the Moluccas in *Balai Pelestarian Budaya dan Sejarah*.

In the following five months, I moved to the countryside in South Seram. I lived in the town of Masohi for one month and then I moved to two Butonese villages; one was Aira, a hamlet that belongs to the *tuan desa* of Soahuku. Soahuku is the “patron” village of Aira since it has provided living space, protection and land for the Butonese to work on. During periods of political turbulence, including the Japanese occupation in 1945, the communist massacre from 1965 to 1966, and the sectarian conflict in 1998, *raja* Soahuku gave permission for Butonese from Saparua to move and live in this village. I lived in Aira for two months and for the remaining two months I lived in Tanjung (i.e. Yainuelo) that used to belong to Sepa village. It is now a new administrative village. I picked these two Butonese villages because they represent two

different stories. In Aira, many of the farmers still work on the land owned by Christians in Soahuku. On the contrary, Tanjung is a relatively large, affluent settlement. This village is already independent from their *tuan desa*, Sepa. The government subsidizes Tanjung to the amount of one billion rupiah every year. Many Butonese here already have their own land and some of them have become affluent based on the fishing economy. In these two villages, I lived with Butonese farmers. I not only accompanied them to see their transactions with ethnic Chinese shop owners, but also I went to Christian fields taken care of by these Butonese farmers. We cleared the fields by burning them. We also picked copra and dried it under the sun, as well as observing at first hand several “tricks” which I describe in Chapter Four.

The first two of these four chapters show the sequence of my fieldwork. The first two chapters describe urban Butonese traders in Ambon and the second two chapters are about the Butonese and ethnic Chinese in the countryside of South Seram. In the last month of my research, I traveled to the islands of Ternate and Tidore to get stories about how the migrant people lived there. At the end of the research, I traveled to Buton Island in South Sulawesi to get to know the landscape and to listen to the stories of the Butonese displaced from the Moluccas during the conflict.

In Chapter One, I draw on research conducted in three markets on Ambon island that explores how people experience and use ethnicity. Marketplaces offer a way of belonging for Butonese. The market is not only a center for exchange, but also a place for negotiating and competing for social space. Most of my research subjects were Butonese, ranging from traders who had been involved in the *kerusuhan* and the first generation of young Butonese traders who came to Ambon afterwards. My main interlocutors in this chapter are La Lichin and his two brothers, La Duriman and La Kusni. La Lichin has been involved in trade for a long time and his ability to lobby elites makes him more like a politician. Indeed, he succeeds in combining both professions. To balance my perspective, I also spent time with Fredy, an angry local Christian

trader from Passo, as well as Bapa Hussein, a half Arabic/Moluccan man who often uses fiery language and feels that migrant traders have threatened the local Moluccan's economy. He used to be a rich merchant before all of his properties, including some trucks and his *bioskop* (movie theatre), were destroyed during the *kerusuhan*.

Chapter Two is about the formation of urban-rural interconnections through trade and debt relations in which urban traders are seen as “outsiders”. This chapter shows how, perhaps surprisingly, during the period after the *kerusuhan* the Butonese were able to acquire more property through the opening-up of new opportunities, such as buying *toko* outside of the market. In this chapter, I describe the time I spent hanging out in two *toko besi* (metal shops) and two kiosks owned by a couple of Butonese traders, La Hadji and Wa Rose. I became good friends with La Ridan, La Hadji's son. I participated in his wedding and in his daily activities, helping with his parent's business. I reconnected with two of La Lichin's brothers, La Kusni and La Duriman, who have become important Butonese figures in Pasar Passo. They lived in the same house in Waiheru on the Hitu peninsula. I often came to their house and we talked until late into the night, after which I often found it difficult to get an *oto* (public transport vehicle) back to Ambon town, about 32 kilometers away.

In Chapter Three, I explore two big themes. The first is an unexpected ecological reality. As a result of the *kerusuhan*, the population of wild pigs in Muslim villages grew out of control. However, at the same time, wild pigs became an agent positively connecting Muslims to Christians. The second theme is about belonging and I show how the “old Butonese generation” seems to exhibit more social solidarity with their Christian *tuan desa* ('village masters') than with other Butonese hamlets. However, there is a paradox in that this allegiance is tinged with disgust around fears of pollutant food, suspicions of corruption, jealousy, and many other prejudices. A sense of belonging to the Moluccas brought La Kumang back from Buton, even though he was born there. The pest problems are everywhere - wild pigs exist in both Buton



and South Seram - but the exchange relationships that he has established with the Christians in Soahuku have driven him back to Aira.

In Chapter Four, I examine reciprocity between local ethnic Chinese Moluccans and Butonese farmers, and between Butonese farmers and the employees of ethnic Chinese wholesalers. However, these long-term relationships are intertwined with ambiguous feelings, manipulations, and tricks. I focus on how farmers dry their produce and the transactions that take place in  *toko*  and  *gudang*  because through these activities, each group plays their tricks. I met ethnic Chinese traders and talked to them in their shops. I also communicated with pastors,  *raja*  Soahuku, and members of the  *dewan saniri negeri*  Sepa (village council), NGO activists, and an agricultural field officer.

Overall, I also found that the post-conflict atmosphere in the Moluccas has similarities with the post-communist massacre in 1965, the 1998 anti-ethnic Chinese riots in Jakarta, and some other ethnic conflicts in Kalimantan where the reconciliation has never been achieved in their daily lives. Each of the communities involved, both Muslims and Christians, continue to believe that they were the ones that were initially attacked when the conflict first broke out rather than the ones that initiated the conflict. The perpetrators, the bystanders, and the victims of the conflict maintain their interactions after the  *kerusuhan* . The main ways of remembering the  *kerusuhan*  are by building statues and memorial parks, as well as reviving traditional rituals and ceremonies. Nonetheless, if we see behind their daily conversations, responses to the efforts of building formal reconciliation are very sceptical. Therefore, my research has attempted to catch a common perspective on the ground through the many social/economic interactions between Muslims and Christians, across ethnicities, which I thought would be more honest in expressing emotion and feelings, rather than through what they show in the rituals, ceremonies, or during the public speaking events, on billboards, and even on local television.

In conclusion, and using evidence from the preceding four substantive chapters, I reflect on post-conflict ethnic and religious relationships and senses of belonging around two issues. The first is the situation in Ambon at the time that I left the field and what the future might hold, especially in regard to market exchanges. The second is to reflect on what my interlocutors hope for after experiencing the *kerusuhan* and the new realities of life in post-reformasi Indonesia.

## Chapter Two

### MARKETPLACES AND ETHNIC COMPETITION IN THE POST-CONFLICT SOCIETY

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#### Prelude

For several evenings while the rain poured down on September 2015, I walked to La Rahman's kiosk<sup>63</sup>. I usually stopped by one of his kiosks before going back to my boarding house. We usually went home together as we were going in the same direction living in the Muslim *kampung*, Kebun Cengkeh. La Rahman has three kiosks that he bought over the last eight years. His second son takes care of one kiosk and the second kiosk is rented to another Butonese trader. I headed to one of them that was handled by his wife. With his white shabby t-shirt, La Rahman sat in the middle of the kiosk while helping his wife sell onions and eggs on the covered platform of the table in the front of the kiosk. His kiosk did not look well arranged. Many goods, especially shoes and clothes, were scattered around after customers had ruffled them. The combination of goods on offer seemed very strange: shoes, school uniforms, onions, and eggs at the same time. I mentioned to him about his "random business," but he responded by saying that being a trader means being able to grasp the *musim* (season). He raised his voice as the rain came down increasingly heavy:

*"Ini musim anak masuk sekolah, bulan September, banyak yang butuh sepatu deng seragam, deng pakaian perempuan seng stop....coba ose lihat di Ambon ini, mana ada orang jual baju, cuma katong sa orang Buton. Ini namanya tangkap kesempatan emas ketika katong seng bajual sama deng orang Cina itu artinya seng baku saing dengan dong".* (September is the back-to-school season; people need school uniforms and shoes, and women will never stop dressing up.... look all around Ambon, not one Chinese trader is selling clothes, only us, the

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<sup>63</sup> *Kiosk* refers to a small unit (often a hut) for selling a restricted range of goods, usually less than 20-meters square, while a *toko* has more space and a more complete inventory of goods to sell. Kiosks have more intimacy with their surroundings and, for example, an owner often trusts a neighboring kiosk-holder to take care of their own kiosk whenever they are going out.

Butonese. We call it, “the golden opportunity” when we do not sell the same items with Chinese bussinessmen, it means we do not compete against them). Whenever he sat with me, he always tried to convince me that being a migrant trader means being smart and thorough in seeing an opportunity.

“There have been Ambonese traders who, as inexperienced beginners, have gone *gulung tikar* (bankrupt) and they sub-lease in this pasar (market place), from local people to us. Here is the simple trick....”

La Rahman’s face approached closer to me and I could smell the pungent smell of cigarettes coming from his mouth.

“Never refuse to hear the Ambonese here in the market who complain or *curhat* (confide) in you. Just listen and be empathetic with them because when they do that, they usually need *uang cepat* (quick money for an emergency), and they will sell their kiosks quicker for you. They usually give up when faced with financial difficulties or family problems that disrupt their business. I got my three kiosks from Ambonese using this strategy. But, if you listen to *curhat* problems from Butonese it is different: *seng ada hasil . Orang Cina seng mungkin curhat deng orang Cina, Yahudi seng mungkin sama bacarita deng orang Yahudi. Orang Yahudi seng bisa kas pinjam uang ke orang Yahudi, hanya boleh ke orang lain*” (you would not get anything, Chinese would not get anything if they shared their stories only with other Chinese, and the Jew would not get anything if they only shared their stories with other Jews). The Jew cannot lend to the Jew, only to other people“

La Rahman laughed while his thick black lips flanked a lighted cigarette. He knows that Butonese traders in this market are not Jews and that Butonese would be offended to be equated with Jews, but he used the word “Jew” as an adjective which refers to the people who are smart in business, have a hidden, neat conspiracy, are very secretive in controlling their

influences, and smart in lobbying<sup>64</sup>. All of these stereotypes are seen as a threat to the local Ambonese. Although there are no Jews in Ambon and are only present as a phantom, La Rahman believes Jewishness is invisibly present in the spirit of the traders. The real Jews in Ambon were invisible, but people coincidentally associate Jew with “Chinese” since Ambonese have had much longer interaction with Chinese than they have had with real Jews<sup>65</sup>.

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I studied three *pasar* (market places)<sup>66</sup> in two areas of Ambon; Pasar Mardika, Pasar Batu Merah, and Pasar Passo. Pasar Batu Merah is located in the village of Batu Merah, predominantly inhabited by Muslims, whereas Mardika and Passo are located in an area predominantly inhabited by Christians. I analyzed the marketplaces as a site where migrant

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<sup>64</sup> The word “Jew” in Indonesia is understood to mean a menace. See James T Siegel. 2000. “Kiblat and the Mediatic Jew”. *Indonesia*. (69): 17-20; Jeffrey Hadler. 2004. “Translations of antisemitism: Jews, the Chinese, and violence in colonial and post-colonial Indonesia”. *Indonesia and the Malay World*. 32 (94): 291-313.

<sup>65</sup> During my fieldwork, I encountered many references to principles of accumulating wealth amongst traders. There is, for example, “kali-kali Binongko” (literally, 'Butonese algebra', *kali* meaning multiply and Binongko being a sub-ethnicity of Butonese who mostly dominate in the market). The term *kali-kali binongko* refers to financial literacy in calculating profit and loss. Traders use this phrase to when referring to the self-control required to be thrifty. They have to *puasa mulut* (literally “fast their mouth”), eat simple meals and not buy expensive clothes. This kind of principle makes the Butonese look like another version of “Chinese” who are also seen as thrifty in order to be able to accumulate more wealth.

<sup>66</sup> The word “pasar” is derived from the Persian word “bazar”, which refers to the traditional market. As argued by Geertz, it is a place for exchange and distribution of goods and services which is highly labor intensive and where there is also embedded a set of personal relations which articulate with the wider social and cultural system. Different from department stores (such as Sarinah in central Jakarta), or maybe malls, that represent modernity in contemporary Indonesia, a pasar is usually identified as a place selling low quality goods and fresh goods such as meats, fruits, and vegetables. As an economic institution, a pasar is a place of commercial activity, but can also reflect an entire sociocultural world. Pasar does not only mean the particular area of sheds or platforms that is set apart in the center of the town, but also the whole pattern of small-scale peddling and peasant marketing, while pasar in the narrow geographic sense often spills out into an entire neighborhood of a town. Geertz defines pasar in a broad sense as a place “first, as a patterned flow of economic goods and services; second, as a set of economic mechanisms to sustain and regulate that flow of goods and services, and third as a social and cultural system in which those mechanisms are embedded” Clifford Geertz, 1963: 30-1. *Peddlers and Princes; social change and economic modernization in two Indonesian towns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

traders have started to dominate economy. Pasar Mardika was established in 1987 and built side by side with Pasar Batu Merah. Both Pasar Mardika and Pasar Batumerah are located in the district of Sirimau, next to each other. Another market is Pasar Passo, located 12 kilometers from the town of Ambon and was established in 2012. My findings show that since the end of the period of *kerusuhan* (communal conflict) between Muslims and Christians in 2004, Butonese traders have come to dominate these markets. They own most of the kiosks and shops in these three market places while Butonese traders who are aware of their potential power have also established organizations that engage with the local political scene.

I argue that marketplaces are not only a place for interactions between buyers and sellers, but more than that, the market place has become the public arena of competition in obtaining access to credit, profit, facilitates a communications network, and has become the site for traders to achieve a higher status, as well as a center where different ethnicities and religious group encounter each other, where identities are reinforced and where ethnic competition takes place. Markets are not only a center for transactions between Muslims and Christians, but also a place of ethnic consolidation that leads to spatial and political tensions. Indonesian market entrepreneurs are not a random collection of individuals, but rather they are a group of people with shared interests and are driven by adherence to collective symbols. Traders tend to be linked through the same ethnic background, same style of religiosity, social organization, and political allegiance. They are also related by blood and by marriage, and traders and trading families have often been acquainted with one another for a long time, sometimes several generations<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> As was demonstrated by Geertz for East Java during the years before the establishment of Soeharto's New Order, almost sixty years ago. See Clifford Geertz, 1963: 74-5. Among others, it shows that the trading activity of a shopkeeper has a strong relationship with kinship. Traders use their families to support the expansion of business. Cultivating kinship and affinal relations among migrant traders brings mutual economic benefits. For those related genealogically, the descendants reinforce the trade networks that their parents had built. Marriages between migrant traders not only facilitate a continuous exchange of goods

One night, after closing his kiosk, Shiddiq, a young Butonese trader, brought me along for a night tour of half of the Pasar Mardika. He has many kin and affines <sup>68</sup> on the west side of the pasar. We walked across Pasar Mardika at 9pm when almost all the kiosks were closed. Some of the alleys did not have a light, which made the kiosks very dark. While walking in a muddy alley at the corner of the market, he showed me some tables that were covered by a tarpaulin.

“These are owned by my *sepupu dua kali* (second cousins)<sup>69</sup> from my father’s side. Since they are new traders, they do not yet have access to a kiosk or *los* (platform)so they display their goods on the long covered tabletop”.

He quickened his step and pointed and pointed out several other features. I was following close behind him. As we then turned to go inside the market he showed me some small adjacent kiosks.

“These are owned by my brother-in-law (*kakak ipar*) and the next kiosk is owned by his two younger brothers-in-law. They sell the same items, bags. I have eight siblings of which I am number five. My third brother sells clothes and brothers numbers four and six sell pillows and plastic bags. All of them are traders here and have pitches that are in close proximity to each other”.

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and services, but also create a web of alliances based on ethnic unity and identity. See Roy Ellen,2003. *On the edge of the Banda zone: past and present in the social organization of a Moluccan trading network*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press.

<sup>68</sup> I follow the definition of “kinship” used by Marshall Sahlins - a “mutuality of being”. Mutuality of being is not necessarily about a natural biological connection by blood, but also a cultural symbolic notion of belonging. Butonese kin relations in the market are not only based on genetic family relations, but also on the shared ethnic and regional background in Southeast Sulawesi. See further Marshall Sahlins, *What Kinship Is...And Is Not*. The University of Chicago Press. 2013.

<sup>69</sup> *Sepupu dua kali* means the ego’s grandparents’ cousin, and the grand children of the ego’s grandparents are the ego’s *sepupu dua kali* (second cousins).

My eyes swept toward several kiosks that were divided into smaller units. The owner did it on purpose so that they could accommodate more relatives in business activity.

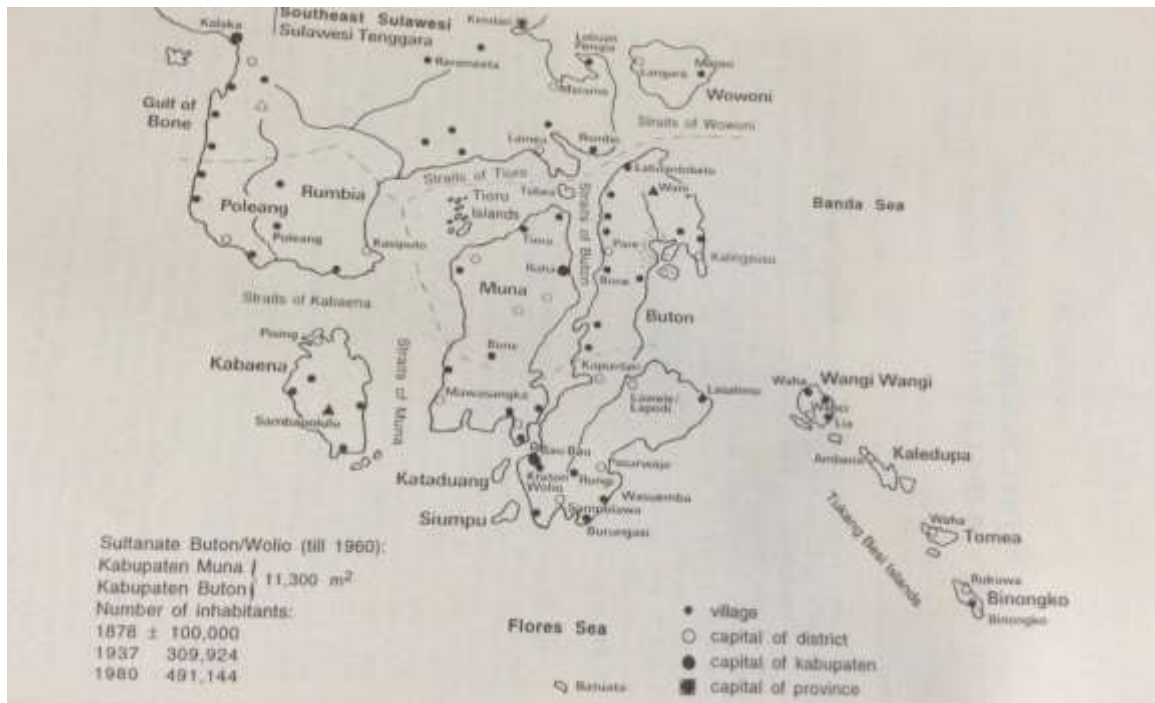
We continued to walk around the outside of the market when he stopped by one tailor who was still open at almost 10pm. Shiddiq had a little chat using one of the Butonese dialects. When we left the tailor, he told me

“...not only are brothers and sisters in law (*kakak, adik ipar*) in the market, all of the neighbors that originate from the same Butonese *kampung* with me, either Cia-Cia or Laporo, they are here, like the tailor that I spoke with”.

Walking with Shiddiq made me think that behind the superficial chaos of the Mardika market, there are the kinship networks of Butonese families that provide social coherence.

The story of Shiddiq demonstrates a pattern of migrant traders who have been living in Ambon for some time helping their relatives who have just arrived from Buton. The elder generation must help them by providing lodging, jobs, and money to start a business. Shiddiq continues this tradition. So far, he has brought about twenty people from two different *kampungs* in Buton to Ambon to start their small-scale businesses. Of these new Butonese peddlers he says, *beta punya anak-anak*, "they are my children." Shiddiq is also the head of the Handea-Ambon association (*Ikatan anak muda Handea Ambon*). Handea is the name of a village in southern Buton that consists of two small *kampung*, Cia-Cia and Laporo. These two *kampungs* send many peddlers to Ambon. Based on the data of *wajib pilih*, or those who are 17 years old and upwards, he calculates that there are about 400 out of 1000 persons from both Laporo and Cia Cia, including the areas of Karya Baru and Gunun Sejuk. His position allows him to organize the younger generation of peddlers to not only continue the tradition of migration to Ambon, but also to make their lives better away from Buton Island.





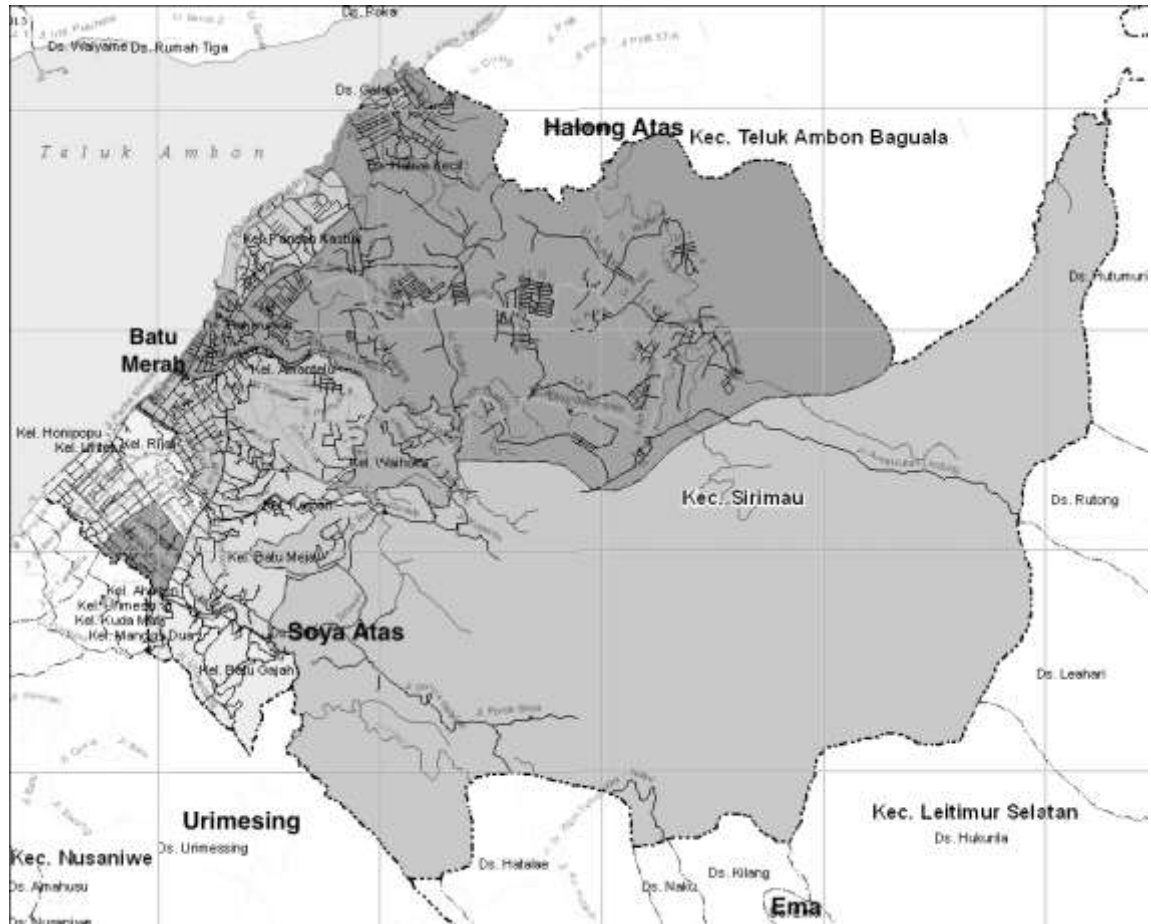
**Figure 2. 1 Buton in Southeast Sulawesi where most migrant traders come from.**  
 (Source, J.W Schoorl, p18, 1994)

### Why Study market places?

I am interested in studying traders and their upward social mobility following the communal conflict in Maluku, as the number of small-scale traders and the number of markets has increased rapidly since 2002. In particular, following the conflict there emerged many markets that were initiated by women. Markets popped up in several areas along the border between Muslim and Christian areas. Markets became places that facilitated exchange between different communities involved in the conflict<sup>70</sup>. On Ambon Island, most Muslims live in coastal areas and supply manufactured goods and salt to the Christians who live in the uplands in villages such as Ema, Soya Atas, Halong Atas, and Hutumuri. In exchange, Christians provided green vegetables and root vegetables to Muslims. Market places the world over mediate very different

<sup>70</sup> Jeroen Adam has identified the emergence of marketplaces during the conflict. See Jeroen Adam 2009. "Communal Violence, Forced Migration and Social Change on the Island of Ambon, Indonesia". *PhD Dissertation at Ghent University, Belgium*

segments of society across divisions, not only between rural and urban society, informal and formal economy, but also between different ethnicities and religious backgrounds. Nonetheless, it is the prevalent ethos of the market itself that facilitates the exchanges of people from various backgrounds and social lives that are otherwise separate<sup>71</sup>.



**Figure 2.2 Christian areas located the upland (Halong, Soya Atas, Urimesing, and Ema) and Batu Merah, the center of Muslim market located in the coastal area.**  
**Source: Bapekot Kota Ambon (Ambon city development planning agency), 2004.**

<sup>71</sup> Referring to Furnivall, he defines this phenomenon as “Plural Society”, in which two or more elements of social order live side by side yet without mingling in one political unit. The contact between the groups is found in the market place, in buying and selling, but there is very little social intercourse. This formulation presumes that what happens in the market is not social interaction but merely economic transactions. See Furnivall, J. S. 1944: 446. *Netherlands India; a study of plural economy*. Cambridge [England]: University Press.

I decided to study market places because people in Ambon believed that inter-communal social relations here were a good guide to the situation in the town of Ambon more generally, whether it was safe to move about or whether there was still tension. Ironically, it was also in the *pasar* that the conflict began, and that that later spread out to the entire town and, thereafter, to the entire Moluccas. Rutherford noted that the town market reflects the situation in the wider society<sup>72</sup>. The market becomes the place that initiates rumors, circulates gossip and jealousy about the Chinese or hatred of a certain religiosity. The uncertainty of rumors has to do with the circulation of money that is concentrated in the market. People consider the market to be a place where money circulates and therefore, generates ambiguous feelings. In the market, identity can be sublimated depending on the object of exchange. The market is a good place for social encounter, but on the other hand, it is seen as the space of capital and communal competition.

I will describe the history of the Mardika marketplace that became the point of origin of the conflict that eventually spread throughout the Moluccas; a marketplace in Ambon that became the center of ethnic competition that can be seen to represent what happened on the broader scale<sup>73</sup>. The Indonesian political structure of patron-clientage does not originate from within

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<sup>72</sup> The Biak people in West Papua consider money as a sign of intimacy when used in bride wealth, but money also simultaneously brings a spirit of alienation. This moment of ambiguity is usually tinged with violence and conflict. The violence, fire, upheavals, rumors, and gossip starting from the market and spreading to the town are like the gas tanks in Biak that were connected by underground piping to the airport and other installations in the town. If the fuel ignited, the entire town would explode. See Danilyn Rutherford. 2001. "Intimacy and Alienation: Money and the Foreign in Biak". *Public Culture*. 13 (2): 299-324.

<sup>73</sup> It is commonly reported that the conflict started with a fight between a Christian driver and a drunken Muslim thug in Pasar Batu Merah. Despite the differing opinions on who first instigated the conflict, the two people from different religious backgrounds and ethnicities involved in the fight in the market actually symbolically represented the broader situation in Ambon before the conflict. The Christians felt threatened by the upward mobility of Muslims in the bureaucratic sectors and the natives were envious of the increasing domination of Bugis and Butonese migrants in the economy. See the story of the conflict in Christopher Duncan (October 2005). "The Other Maluku: Chronologies of Conflict in North Maluku". *Indonesia*. Southeast Asia Program Publications at Cornell University. 80: 53–80. Patricia Spyer (October 2002). "Fire without Smoke and Other Phantoms of Ambon's Violence: Media

local society, but rather derives from the center of the State<sup>74</sup>. As a provincial town since the seventeenth century, Ambon became the center of administration and education that spread the “lingua franca” (both in a linguistic and broader socio-cultural sense) to the periphery, to Seram, Southeast Seram, Kei, Tanimbar, and Aru. Therefore, when the conflict started at the center, it quickly moved to the periphery since people not only had the same “lingua franca”, but also common fears and anxieties.

Following the communal conflict or *kerusuhan*, local people in Ambon saw the market as a public place for improving relationships between Muslims and Christians. For markets to work effectively they need to minimize the social, cultural, and political profiles of traders that might otherwise interfere with free economic transactions. The market is the place where people of any identity can come and perform transactions without any hierarchical socio-political force preventing people from different religions mingling. Economic transactions in the markets are more egalitarian than in other social contexts since the encounters are based on the need to balance the material requirements of seller and buyer. Between sellers and buyers, there tends to be tolerance of religious differences. La Rahman told me *semua agama cari uang dan uang seng kenal agama* (“all religions look for money and money does not recognize religion”). Buyers need commodities while sellers need money, regardless of their religious and ethnic backgrounds.

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Effects, Agency, and the Work of Imagination". *Indonesia*. Southeast Asia Program Publications at Cornell University. **74**: 21–36.

<sup>74</sup> John Sidel describes the pattern of conflict in Indonesia during the 1990s, which circulated from small towns to Jakarta, and finally spread to the outer provinces. In the Moluccas, the pattern of conflict started in Ambon, the capital of the Central Moluccas, and later sporadically moved around the islands. John Sidel, 2006: 7, 178. *Riots, pogroms, jihad: religious violence in Indonesia*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

### **Changes in the Pasar and the Emergence of Ethnic Tension**

When I arrived for my long fieldwork in 2015, Pasar Mardika (The Mardika Market) had not changed significantly over the last ten years. The market had almost no space for new traders. Many of them had spread out from the area. Although hundreds of traders had already moved to another market in Passo, the number of traders in Mardika continued to steadily increase. The situation in Pasar Mardika became even more crowded after the communal conflict. Some of the burned and abandoned buildings in the market still existed. However, there had been many traders who had come back to sell in this market. As in other market places of Indonesia that are housed in multi-leveled buildings, many traders do not want to sell commodities on the third or second level, even though the market authority charges lower dues for traders selling on the second and third levels. They sit, instead on the road, around entrances to the market where they overwhelm people with offers for their goods.

From 1987 to 1990, the Chinese traders of Pasar Mardika were the main group of shopkeepers. Other traders who had large capital were the Minangkabau from Padang, West Sumatera and the Makassarese, from South Sulawesi, while Butonese traders only sold fish and vegetables on the *los*. Some of them also worked as employees of the Chinese shopkeepers. Few of the shopkeepers and kiosk retailers were local Christians or Muslim Ambonese. They mainly rented pitches on the outskirts of the market selling small quantities of vegetables and fruits. The Chinese sold nine basic items (*Sembilan bahan pokok/sembako*), i.e. rice, sugar, fruit, meat, oil and margarine, milk, eggs, kerosene, and salt. Some other shops sold cosmetics and electrical devices. The Chinese also received agricultural produce (*hasil bumi*) such as nutmeg, cloves, and copra from the rural traders. As is common in Indonesia, even though the Chinese have proportionately greater capital and more kiosks and shops, they are not interested in getting involved in any social organizations or political institutions. Although controlling the market commodities, the Chinese do not have any trade association. During the New Order,

the Chinese were very apolitical. They tended to pay more dues and taxes as a consequence of not being involved in any social political organization<sup>75</sup>.

When the conflict heated up in 2001, Pasar Mardika was becoming the base for the Yon Gab (Batillion (Yon) Infantry Gabungan/ 'The Infantry group/gang'), the Christian militia, while Laskar Jihad, the Muslim militia, dominated Pasar Batu Merah. The market remained insecure until it finally burned to the ground in 2002<sup>76</sup>. Muslim traders then moved to the old market at Pasar Batu Merah. The burning of Mardika marked the peak of the war. The conflict was notoriously known to have started in the area between the Christian Pasar Mardika and the Muslim Batu Merah market. Pasar Mardika became the starting point of the conflict before the anger spread out to the entire town. Situated in the border zone between different religious groups, the place was vulnerable to violence. Many snipers were around on the second and third levels of the market.

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<sup>75</sup> The post Suharto-Indonesia government brought new tolerant policies toward ethnic Chinese. This has led to a dramatic change in Chinese identity celebrations, which Setijadi calls "Sinification" See Charlotte Setijadi, March 2016, "Ethnic Chinese in Contemporary Indonesia: Changing Identity Politics and the Paradox of Sinification". Perspective, *ISEAS*, No. 12. In Ambon itself, the Paguyuban Sosial Masyarakat Tionghoa-Maluku (PSMT) that was established after the collapse of Suharto does not bring their political interests to support any particular Chinese politician. The PSMT Maluku led by Wilhelmus Jewerissa mostly celebrates their identity through cultural events, such as *imlek* (Chinese New Year), rather than getting involved in the practice of politics. In Chapter Four, I will describe the significant change of how Chinese traders in South Seram can access the political process through the politics of gifting.

<sup>76</sup> In Indonesia, it is commonly believed that if a market is burned down that there must be something political behind the fire. However, the newspapers and the government always release apolitical news. In this case, they said that most of the fire was due to a short circuit in the electricity. In fact, the news that is often heard is that the market burned for several tricky reasons. The government was going to evict the traders or the traders intentionally burnt their kiosks or shops because they faced bankruptcy. By burning the kiosk, they would get full compensation from insurance. I also found that many traders were more scared of the *kebakaran* (fire) than the *preman* (petty criminals) since they knew that behind the *kebakaran* there is always a political motive or social jealousy.

The outright civil war in Ambon from 1999 to 2004, followed by smaller clashes until 2011, opened possibilities for Muslim migrant traders to gain entry into a new social class and to economically reposition themselves within Ambonese society. Before the monetary crisis in 1998 and conflict dating back to the early 2000s, it was not easy for migrant traders to acquire kiosks or shops in the marketplaces in Ambon town. They mostly worked with the Chinese, but when many Chinese fled the Moluccas to avoid the conflict, they leased the kiosks to the traders with very low-priced contracts. The displacement, the return of migrants, the coming of new and larger investments, the increase of religious and ethnic solidarity, all of these factors and transformations recreated a new social and economic reality that was unknown before the crisis and massacre in Ambon.

Since many ethnic Chinese traders had fled from the market during the conflict and did not come back afterwards, the market spaces were contested between native Moluccans from Kailolo and Butonese. As the Butonese rented the kiosks from ethnic Chinese traders at a cheaper price, they began to change their occupations from *becak* (pedicab) drivers, port laborers, and cart drivers to retailers and small-scale traders. The Butonese were able to acquire kiosks from local traders who had originally obtained them from the government. Some of them were able to buy kiosks. Shiddiq is an example; before he became a trader in 2004 he had worked as a pedicab (*becak*) driver.

By the late 1990s the Butonese community had become the main producers and sellers of vegetables, while the ethnic Chinese and Bugis communities sold factory-made goods in the shops. The migrant Butonese community in Ambon mostly cultivated short-term crops such as groundnuts, eggplant, mustard greens, and cassava. The Butonese also became middlemen buying bulk vegetables in the village and then distributing the produce to Pasar Mardika. Their networking role connecting farmers, middlemen, and small-scale traders allowed them to control the distribution of commodities and to determine prices.

From 2004 onward Butonese traders were buying and renting more kiosks and also became the main distributors of goods around the Ambon-Lease islands. They started selling glassware, cosmetics, clothes, electronic devices, and the nine basic staple items (*sembako*, an abbreviation of *sembilan bahan pokok*). The Butonese also grew networks for shipping commodities from Jakarta, Makassar, and Surabaya, building on their historic role in maritime trade stemming from the nineteenth century<sup>77</sup>. They were able to rely on commodities being sent to their kiosks and shops in the market without having to pick them up directly from the port<sup>78</sup>.

During my fieldwork, I found that several of the Chinese traders that returned to Mardika market after the conflict were those who used to give money and funds to neighbors around the market. Ethnic Chinese traders decided not to sell their kiosks to the Butonese because they were sure that the funds they gave before the conflict were still remembered by the receivers. Kwik, one of the ethnic Chinese traders who has been in this place since 1977, decided to come back to Mardika. He bravely claims:

"I came back to the market after the conflict because I often gave money and funds to the local people regarding all of their spiritual needs. I gave financial donations (*uang sumbangan*) for building mosques in the back of Pasar Batu Merah; that is why my name is famous. You can ask any of the Batu Merah Muslims behind this market; they know me. I gave a lot for many

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<sup>77</sup> On Butonese sea voyages and commodity trade in the 19<sup>th</sup> century see Michael Southon, 1995. *The navel of the perahu: meaning and values in the maritime trading economy of a Butonese village*. Canberra: Dept. of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.

<sup>78</sup> The price of shipping one square meter of goods ranges from Rp, 800, 000 to 1 million *rupiah*, depending on the weight.



rituals and religious events. That is why my name is famous and they, the Moluccans, protected me and did not burn my shops”

In his sixties, Kwik does not look anxious to be back to the market that is now dominated by Muslims. He feels protected by the money that he gave to his neighborhood. Money is also paid to cover the absence of the Chinese in many rituals. Kwik admits that he often sees the rituals of *panas pela*, but he almost never attends them. As a consequence, he gives more money to the local people to fund the rituals. Through money, Kwik delivers his generosity and hospitality to the people around his shops. He is sure that people still remember the money and gifts that he delivered to the community around the market. To survive in the market, Kwik’s stories are similar to those of Huang, an ethnic Chinese trader who has a shop that faces La Rahman’s kiosk, the figure that I described in the beginning of this chapter. Huang married his younger cousin to his former Butonese employee that used to work in his shop. Huang then gave some capital (*kasih uang modal*) to his cousin to open a shop in Dobo, Aru Island. Huang also returned to the Batu Merah market because he is sure that people still remember his generosity. He also gave donations (*uang sumbangan*) for building mosques at the back of Batu Merah market, but his track is even a step further than Kwik’s. He provided money and distributed goods to various traders with different ethnic backgrounds. Surrounded by the toys and children’s clothes that he sells, he rhetorically told me:

“We can have different religion, ethnicity, family clan, and language, but what connects us is through commodity. I, myself, am a Christian, but look, I supply goods to the Arabic shop owner in the front of Amplas (Ambon Plaza). Another one is Bapa Haji Rahmat, a Buginese trader who has often come to take items from here. These commodities connect me with other people, but another important thing is that I give space to local people for selling in front of my shop. They come and go; sometimes Butonese, sometime Saparuan (local people from Saparua)”.

Huang points to the clothes filling his store and to the front of the shops where there are two Butonese peddlers selling fruits and onions on a table. Huang can survive in the market because he not only recruits local people to be his employees, but he also allows Butonese traders and local Moluccan traders to sell in front of his shop. The latter was a great strategy to prevent the shop from being burned down during the conflict. The local people had a sense of belonging to the shop because their space in front of the shop was a part of their livelihood. To Huang, the peddlers who sell in the front of the shop become a fence (*pagar*), which also means a shield to protect the shop owners from looting and riots. In the spiritual realm, Nils Bubandt<sup>79</sup> describes that kind of *pagar* includes protection against black magic and misfortune. Likewise, I witnessed trader's houses that I visited were cultivated with certain kinds of trees in the four directions of their houses. They believe that planting *kelor* trees (*Moringa oleifera*) can protect against witchcraft sent from unknown, jealous persons.

Money and '*pagar*' play significant roles making it safe for the ethnic Chinese traders to return to the Batu Merah market. Putting Butonese or local Moluccas in the front of the market as a *pagar* is very crucial. Moreover, after the conflict, insurance companies did not want to cover the shops because they were vulnerable objects for riots and looting. Huang remembered that before the conflict, it was easy to find insurance to cover the shops, but nowadays, insurance can only cover the shop employees, but not the shop. "That's one of the reasons why many Chinese traders left the market and bought a shop somewhere else" said Huang. He mentioned that his brother's shop moved downtown where it is closer to the Christian areas. Some other cousins moved to Manado, North Sulawesi, to start their businesses there. Rather than leaving his shop, Huang rented his place to a Butonese trader during the conflict.

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<sup>79</sup> See further Nils Bubandt in *Demokrasi, Korupsi, dan Makhluk Halus dalam Politik Indonesia Kontemporer*, Yayasan Obor Indonesia, Jakarta, 2016: 138-39

Different from the Butonese who have stories about surviving during the conflict, the Chinese cannot share much about how they lived during the conflict. Most of the ethnic Chinese are traumatized. They do not want to remember the bitterness of the conflict that led many of them to leave for Manado, Surabaya, Dobo, and Jayapura. Different from Butonese who remembered the conflict as an opportunity (*kesempatan*) as I described in Chapter Three, the ethnic Chinese were more traumatized. The ethnic Chinese have no idea about surviving in both Batu Merah and Mardika market because they simply just left the shops and rented them to Butonese, Bugis, or Padangese traders that were closely related to Muslims. By renting the shops in this way, the Muslims traders would protect them and not burn them down during the wars. Since then, many Butonese traders played as commodity distributors since the Chinese were absent during the conflict.

Paying much more money becomes a sign of discrimination. The ethnic Chinese traders who have returned to sell in both Batu Merah and Mardika markets have it tough because they have to deal with many “social costs” such as recruiting local employees and processing complicated worker insurance, giving money to the mosques around the market, paying security money to Kailolo people, and to the police apparatus, as well. Most of ethnic Chinese traders I encountered complain that they have to pay more money in order to keep selling in the market. They confess that the government apparatus and the market securities treat them differently. The ways they do the *pungutan liar/pungli* (illegal charges) make them different from other traders. As I describe in Chapter Five about Honghui, a Chinese trader in rural Seram who had to pay extra charge to establish his business, the same thing is also happening in the market place. Jianling, a Chinese woman trader in Batu Merah said that her employees can only stand to work with her about six months. As I also describe in Chapter Five about Meifeng’s employees, many of the local and Butonese employees cannot stand to work with an ethnic Chinese boss because of their exploitation and stinginess. Therefore, Jianling has to find another employee almost every six months. She then has to process worker insurance that is

required by the government's rules. Ironically, most of the time, the government bureaucrats complicate the process. To make it easier, she has to pay an additional charge. The problem does not stop there. Jianling also has to pay for "money security" to the local people who are in the market. She told me that she pays certain Kailolo people who have been in the market since the conflict ended. Jianling is not only seen as "*orang dagang*" or outsider, but as a trader, she is also seen as "*orang uang*" (a person with money). Once her husband was threatened that if they did not pay "*uang keamanan*" (security money), her shop would be burned down like during the conflict. With a grim face, she shared the story

"My husband gave a report to the police about the threatening, but the police did not act on anything. If the police do something to Kailolo *preman*, they would think that we have money to bribe the police. So, as an *orang dagang* (trader and outsider) we are all in the wrong positions"

Whenever Jianling shared her bitter story of discrimination, the middle of her face and her nose flushed to show her disappointed feelings. I found these unpleasant stories were also experienced by Butonese and Buginese traders who are seen as successful in the marketplace. They have to pay "money security" to make their businesses run well. Ironically, traders know that in fact, it is the security people, themselves, that create insecurities through thievery and fires if the shop owners do not pay the "money security". As in the case of exchanges based on mutual trickery that I describe in Chapter Five, urban traders in Batu Merah have to pretend they do not know the sources of criminality are coming from the people who are in charge of maintaining the security. Traders have to pretend to not know so that social relationship and exchanges can run as it is.

### ***Penonton di Rumah Sendiri* (Those who watch alone in their own home)**

Local traders are sometimes called *penonton di rumah sendiri*. By contrast to the migrant traders, the small native Moluccan traders have historically operated on a local scale only.

Compared to the Butonese, they did not have significant wholesaler networks outside of the Moluccas. Local traders also had a different ethos of trade. Bapa Hussein, one of the local traders with origins in Tulehu, put it this way:

*Ose lihate, orang Ambon pergi beli pisang, pulang beli pisang goreng. Orang Bugis, orang Buton jual pisang, pulang beli barang laeng, peniti, timba, ember untuk jual balik di desa*

Look, when we local Moluccans sell bananas, we still stop over at another market on our way home to buy fried bananas. By contrast, when migrant traders sell bananas they stop over at another market on their way home and buy other goods, such as plastic bowls and buckets, to sell back in their own village.

This anecdote shows how migrant traders view social factors impinging on the different economic ethos of locals and immigrants. Most local people sell natural products such as fruits and vegetables, but then they buy goods made from the same products that they sell. By contrast, migrants sell different things from what they buy.

The displacement of local Moluccan traders in both Pasar Mardika and Batu Merah after the *kerusuhan* led to increased tension between Butonese and the local people from Kailolo, although this almost never ended up in fighting since the Butonese are skilled in managing it. Butonese always involve local government officials in solving their problems with local traders. One episode occurred in 2005 when local Moluccans<sup>80</sup>, mostly people from Kailolo, organized P3MAM (Persatuan Pedagang Anak Maluku), a trade organization, in Pasar Mardika. Using this organization, the people from Kailolo could exert pressure to get more spaces in the market, but in the eyes of the Butonese, this organization was no more than a gang of thugs (*organisasi preman*) which did not have a clear aim or function. Rather than organizing people to trade appropriately, it simply collected money from those Butonese who rented the kiosks at high and

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<sup>80</sup> People from the Central Moluccas, including from the island of Ambon, Haruku, and Saparua usually call themselves *orang Ambon*, but they also call themselves *orang Maluku* (Moluccan people).

speculative prices. On the Butonese side, in order to get recognition and to consolidate political mobilization afterwards, Butonese organizations in Ambon based on ethnic identity emerged like mushrooms during the rainy season. Several of them were based in Ambon city such as KKBSW *Kerukunan Keluarga besar Sangia Wambulu* (United Big Sangia Wambulu Family), KKST *Kerukunan Sulawesi Tenggara* (United Southeast Sulawesi Family) and a trade based organization led by Shiddiq, the Handea-Ambon association (*Ikatan anak muda Handea Ambon*)

I often met Butonese who wondered how people of the *negeri*, specifically from Kailolo, been able to establish themselves in trade<sup>81</sup>. Shiddiq told me later that Kailolo people had managed to obtain lots of spaces and kiosks in the market, and did not need to move elsewhere. Instead they became the security force for the market. Indeed, I saw people from Kailolo sitting at every corner of the market, wearing white, long-sleeved shirts and round white caps showing their Muslim identity, the same dress code adopted during the *kerusuhan*. They loiter in groups of around five people with their hands full of cash, the proceeds of their regular collection of illegal

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<sup>81</sup> During my fieldwork, I often heard negative stereotypes about Kailolo men specifically coming from female migrant traders. Through their daily interactions, many migrant women would say *katong ini sudah hapal karakter orang Kailolo* ('We already recognize the character of Kailolo people'). These women perpetuated the stereotype that unlike native people from other clans and places on Haruku (such as Pelaw, Rohmony and Kabaw), people from Kailolo were rude and like to fight. One woman told me, "Once a Kailolo man becomes rich, his hobby is *kawin lagi*" (marrying more than one woman). For another migrant trader, "Kailolo are different from the people of Pelaw who are more *halus* (refined) and have lighter skin. The Pelaw tend to prioritize the pursuit of higher education and most clans from Pelaw work in the higher administration. They do not work around the markets and bus stations like the people of Kailolo".

When I was in Masohi, South Seram, I often witnessed violence that mostly involved people from Kailolo. Bapa Jeffry, a figure from Kailolo who came to my boarding house to fix the broken electricity told me, "Last time I got stabbed and had surgery on fifteen wounds due to fighting between people from different kampongs". He showed the scars on his hip. He also told me that young Kailolo men in Masohi like to fight and race motorbikes. Therefore, to dissipate their excessive energy, the local government provided funds of nine million rupiah to build a soccer field. "This is a cost to make peace in the kampong or to divert the violent energy into a new kind of competition. However, still many fights are also started on the soccer field" he said.

dues from the public transportation (*oto*) drivers who pass through the market. The drivers are expected to pay 2000 *rupiah* for one pass.

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In 2007, the government finally rearranged the administration of the kiosks and decided to set an official rental price. Local Moluccans, usually called *orang negeri*<sup>82</sup>, were able to rent kiosks at Pasar Mardika in 2007 from the city government. The *orang Negeri* claimed that they had gotten their kiosks from Chinese traders displaced during the communal conflict. The rent was very cheap at that time. They only had to pay 500,000 rupiah a year. It was Sam Latuconsina, the head of the city planning office (*Ketua Dinas Tata Kota*) who provided kiosks and shops to the local people. Those who were given kiosks mostly came from the same ethnic background as Latuconsina, mostly people from Haruku Island, specifically from Kailolo. The aim was to give local native traders “space and room” to compete with migrant traders who had come to dominate the market. In 2011, Latuconsina was elected vice mayor of Ambon. He was very popular among traders in Pasar Mardika. However, the Kailolo traders were unable to sustain their business. Unlike Butonese and Bugis, the Kailolo traders were less experienced in sales techniques and in handling money and, more importantly, did not know how to build trust with the banks or how to expand their trade networks. As a consequence, many of them then rented

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<sup>82</sup> The island of Haruku, immediately to the east of Ambon, has produced many elite families in Ambon and the Central Moluccas. The island consists of five villages (*negeri*). These five villages symbolize a role in the larger imagined political domain. Thus, Pelaw symbolizes the king, Hulaliu is the secretary, Kabaw deals with economic affairs, Rohomoni is the religious leader, and Kailolo is the warlord. It is widely believed that people from Kailolo are the bravest among all others since they are descendants of the warlords (*panglima perang*). At the present time, the people of Kailolo have introduced this traditional behaviour pattern in to urban areas. Compared to the four other villages, migrants from Kailolo are also mostly found around the Mardika market. Many of them also worked in low status jobs such as motorcycle taxi drivers (*tukang ojek*). As I described at the beginning of this chapter, the people from Kailolo also obtained kiosks in the Mardika market after the conflict, and as a consequence they had to deal with Butonese traders in the market. I have also often heard stories that those Moluccans most often involved in fights in Jakarta are from Kailolo, as well as from Kei in the Southeast Moluccas. They work as “heavies”, such as nightclub security guards and debt collectors.

or sold their kiosks to Butonese, as I described in the beginning of this chapter when introducing La Rahman.

This narrative of a failed attempt to “indigenize” a market is not new. In 1955, Soekarno, the first president of Indonesia, initiated the *Program Benteng* (Fortress Program) to explicitly promote indigenous Indonesian entrepreneurs. In this instance, Soekarno seized all foreign property and assets and redistributed them to indigenous businessmen, or *pengusaha pribumi*. Soekarno was very popular among the people due to his nationalistic policy, but despite his action local entrepreneurs failed to foster their businesses and to handle the properties effectively. In the end, they delegated the business to the Chinese by renting or selling the assets<sup>83</sup>. In comparison with the Chinese in Ambon during the Soekarno period, Butonese have more recently been called “Cina Hitam” or Black Chinese. They successfully took over the assets that had been given to local Moluccans. The Butonese traders quickly dominated the market. They built up credit with the banks that gave them loans, bought more than one kiosk from local Moluccans, and expanded their trade networks across the islands. I will illustrate the story of the “Black Chinese” in Chapter Two and show how many Butonese traders have been inspired by the way Chinese traders run their businesses. Chinese traders have also helped many Butonese traders in developing their businesses.

Bapa Hussein is one of the most prominent native traders opposing migrant domination. I often visited him in his small kiosk outside Ambon Plaza, a mall near the center of Ambon city. His small kiosk exemplifies the marginalization of local traders. He always speaks in a fiery tone whenever talking about his situation. He even has a list of how many local Moluccans are currently working/owning retail businesses in the marketplaces. On one occasion, he took out

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<sup>83</sup> See Thomas Lindblad. 2008. *Bridges to new business: the economic decolonization of Indonesia*. Leiden: KITLV Press.



a little tattered pocket book from a small old drawer. With his head bowed, he carefully read his notes. Then he mentioned that in Amplaz (Ambon Plaza), out of more than 50 sellers on each floor, there are only four native traders on the first floor, 10 on the second floor, and one on the third floor. The remaining traders are of Butonese, Bugis, Makassarese, and Padangese origin. He then extended his observation beyond Amplaz. There were only about 15 native Moluccans who have the official spaces to trade. In the downtown area, on A.Y Patty and Sam Ratulangi streets, there are only 21 Moluccan traders out of hundreds of shops. In Tagalaya Market and Batu Gantong Market, in a predominantly Christian area, only 47 Christian traders operate. Since this observation the government of Ambon has closed Tagalaya Market as there was so little business being conducted. There were only 26 of 40 kiosks and 29 out of 113 *los* operating before this market was finally closed. In both Pasar Mardika and Pasar Batu Merah, two of the biggest markets in Ambon, Bapa Hussein calculated that there were about 236 native traders out of more than 1,000 in Pasar Batu Merah alone<sup>84</sup>. However, most of them were selling on the *los* outside the market building. The native traders selling outside the market are those from Christian settlements such as Kota Saparua, Ema, and Hutumuri. Native Moluccan sell garden fruit produce such as bananas, mangosteens, and durian. Native traders also sell sago and sago cakes that they buy from Saparua Island. In the Pasar Mardika, Bapa Hussein mentioned that there are only two native shopkeepers on the first floor, 11 on the second floor, and only two traders on the third floor.

After telling me all this, he took off his thick glasses and said:

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<sup>84</sup> In 2014, the data from PSMB (Persatuan Sultra Maluku Bersatu), a Butonese organization, shows that there were about 975 Butonese traders from 14 ethnic Butonese sub-groups listed as selling in the Mardika market. The number of traders in Batu Merah market is less than in Mardika; for instance in the same year, there were only 396 traders. Among 975 Butonese listed working only in the Pasar Mardika, in terms of places of origin, 200 traders are from Laporo, 170 traders from Wanci, 150 from Lapandewa, 120 from Wabula, 60 from Wally, 50 from Kaledupa, 50 from Tomia, 50 from Sampulawa, 50 from Mawasangka, 20 from Binongko, and with a few other traders from Muna, Kabaena, Kolowa, and Lombe.

I often published this in the local newspaper, in *Suara Maluku*<sup>85</sup>, to convincingly show the inequality in the Ambon market sector, mostly because local Moluccans are unable to access the market spaces. One day, the Makasarese on behalf of their organization, HKSS (*Himpunan Keluarga Sulawesi Selatan*) came to me after my article had been published. They asked me not to write about the local traders marginalization anymore because it acts as a provocation that can lead to ethnic conflict.

He is satisfied when migrant traders come and complain to him because this means that they know about the anger of local people. Interestingly, *Suara Maluku*, a local Christian newspaper, published almost all of his articles. It is widely known that during the conflict, *Suara Maluku* provided news from Christian perspectives, whereas *Ambon Express* provided Muslim perspectives.

Bapa Hussein categorizes *orang asli* (the native Moluccans) as those who have rights over *petuanan adat* (custom) that exists in the Moluccas. He asserted:

People cannot claim to be Moluccan just because they were born and grew up in the Moluccas. The “emotional relations” of the native Moluccan would not be the same for the migrant. Those *pendatang* (outsiders) automatically will recruit employees from among people with the same background as themselves rather than recruit from us. For me, recruiting people from the same ethnic or religious background is the natural instinct of *manusia* (human beings). It is unavoidable. So, although the migrants may be third or fourth generation, they still cannot be considered as native Moluccans because they have different emotional relations.

To Bapa Hussein, this definition of *orang asli* covers both Muslim and Christian Ambonese, which fits with what I witnessed elsewhere. I often saw women peddlers who took clothes from him. Once he pointed to a young, tiny, curly haired woman picking up some clothes who was being helped by his assistant.

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<sup>85</sup> His publications include “Maluku Perlu Pemimpin yang dapat menciptakan keseimbangan strata sosial”, *Suara Maluku*, Kamis, 30 Agustus 201; “Ketika Selera Wirausaha Masyarakat Maluku Asli Bergelora”. *Harian Pagi Suara Maluku*. Jumat, 5 Oktober 2012; “Kondisi Wirausaha Ambon-Maluku, Ibarat Bom Waktu” *Suara Maluku*, Kamis, 5 18 Oktober, 2012; “Impian, Kiat, Memotivasi Maluku Asli Untuk Berwirausaha” *Suara Maluku*, Selasa 19 November 2013.

Look, she is from Ema (a Christian village in the hills of Ambon). She came to me because it is not easy to find a job and she does not have a place to sell here in the market. So, she sells all the clothes to Ema instead. She just needs to lend me her high school certificate as a guarantee that she would return the loan and would not *bawa lari modal* (cheat). I have already given many opportunities to Christians to open businesses.

Even though Muslims and Christians killed each other during the *kerusuhan* in 1999, marginalization and a feeling of being threatened by the massive domination of migrant traders in the market exchanges unified these native Moluccans from different religious backgrounds.

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The marginalization of native traders from the market spaces has led them to occupy other jobs that are considered “criminal” by migrant traders. The levels of inequality in the market places and bus terminals of Ambon Island encourage a variety of behaviors. *Judi* (gambling), *pencurian* (stealing), *copet* (pick-pocketing), and *penikaman* (stabbing) can all be found in the *pasar*. Theft happens all the time and has spread throughout the entire market. People steal anything that is easy to sell quickly, such as rice, onions, glassware, and hand phones. La Rahman told me the secret:

It is easy to track stolen goods. If somebody is selling onions, rice, or any other commodity to another seller much lower price than the standard price, then these must be stolen goods from another kiosk. Sometimes, all of the thieves are from the night guard security staff. Therefore, although the Butonese have paid protection money, some of them are still getting robbed.

The fear of burglary leads to shop owners paying security fees to poorer native people who work as security workers. This system is similar in the Javanese neighborhood where ethnic Chinese, who are seen as foreigners both because of their race and their wealth, have to pay more to the local security workers. But, most of the time, the culprits are *orang dalam* (insiders) themselves. Many traders told me that it is not difficult to notice the thieves’ faces since they are around every day in the market. They are not going anywhere else except in the market. As with identifying thieves, traders believe that it is easy to recognize a pickpocket. In the middle

of the crowd, traders can still clearly distinguish the difference between real customers and a pickpocket. It is easy to tell since the pickpocket is around almost every day.

In Mardika, the police protect petty criminals in the market from the law, and police are involved in the protection scheme without appearing to be so. Usually, once the suspected person has been caught, they are released after two or three hours. La Rahman shared with me the story about a local villager (*orang negeri*) who got caught stealing, but did not admit it. Finally the two protagonists argued (*baku melawan*) with the police. Oddly, the police did not really have the courage to catch him. Migrants took the view that this *orang negeri* therefore must have the *bekking* of a big man in the town. The term *bekking* or *dekking* (from the English 'backing') refers to the armed forces, police, and/or security guards who provide protection to civilians who, in return, have to make regular protection payments<sup>86</sup>. Given that law enforcement is weak, the best way to punish petty criminals is through *main hakim sendiri* ('taking the law into their own hands'), that is vigilantism. Mob justice is anonymous since violence is conducted by an undifferentiated mass<sup>87</sup>. Thus, over the following days, the pickpocket cannot retaliate against a particular trader. In many cases, pickpockets not only come from Kailolo, but also include people from Buton. The retaliation would be very severe if the mob catches a Butonese pickpocket because of their identity as outsiders conducting crimes outside their territory.

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<sup>86</sup> Joshua Barker "Surveillance and territory in Bandung" in Vicenter L Rafael (ed) *Figures of Criminality in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Colonial Vietnam*, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1999: 122. Joshua Barker, 2001, "State of Fear: Controlling the Criminal contagion in Suharto's New Order", in *Violence and the State in Suhartos's Indonesia*, Benedict R. O'G Anderson (ed). Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, pp. 52-53.

<sup>87</sup> Freek Colombijn interprets lynching as showing how ineffective law enforcement is and that it often disappoints the people at the grass roots level. Culturally, *main hakim sendiri* is a response to the tendency to consider the victims as outsiders and less than human. See further Freek Colombijn, 2002 "Maling-Maling, The Lynching of petty criminals" in *Roots of Violence in Indonesia*, Freek Colombijn and J. Thomas Lindblad (Eds). Leiden: KITLV Press. 2002.

### **Political Lobbying and Contestation**

The Pasar Mardika has also become the place for political contestation. Since the Butonese have come to dominate the field of candidates for political office and attempt to consolidate their votes from these traders by listening to their concerns and advocating the trader's interests. One example is Yusuf Wally, a new Butonese political figure in Ambon in 2014 who garnered 2700 votes<sup>88</sup>. He was affiliated with the PKS (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*), an Islamic party, which he used as his political vehicle. After the conflict, Muslims expressed their religious allegiance through Islamic parties such as PKS. The BBM grouping (Butonese, Buginese, and Makassarese: those identifying as immigrants from Sulawesi) tended to vote for this party. Most of the Butonese politicians were elected to the provincial House of Representatives (DPRD/*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*) in Ambon by using the PKS as their political vehicle. Yusuf Wally and his entourage advocated on behalf of the market traders in Mardika, and he also used his ethnic background to attract most of the Butonese traders in the market to vote for him. As a result of these tactics, he won.

Butonese traders pick their local legislators not only because of their ethnic background, but also tend to vote for ethnic Butonese candidates who belong to PKS. I met La Lichin, an influential trader in Passo who is also a member of PKS. He told me that the PKS machine can work well to achieve a win for Butonese candidates because this party is not only using an appeal to Islamic interests to attract voters, but also because only PKS will listen to and serve the needs of migrant traders. He said that during the 2014 election, PKS candidates canvassed traders in Pasar Mardika and listened to the problems that they experienced. Therefore, many traders tend to prefer PKS to any other Islamic party, such as PPP (*Partai Persatuan*

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<sup>88</sup> However, this number is relatively small compared to the 258,195 total voters for the 2014 local legislative election. See further, <http://kpu-malukuprov.go.id/hasil-pileg-kota-ambon-ditetapkan/> accessed in September, 15, 2015; "Wajah Baru Dominasi DPRD Ambon", [www.siwalima.com](http://www.siwalima.com), accessed in September, 15, 2015. *Harian Pagi Siwalima*.

*Pembangunan*) or PAN (*Partai Amanah Nasional*). The candidates of these two parties almost never visit the market.

While the traders in the two neighboring markets of Batu Merah and Mardika successfully elected Yusuf Walli in 2011, La Lichin was the figure that won the hearts of the Butonese traders in Pasar Passo. Helped by the party, La Lichin was the key actor who struggled to move the old market in Pohon Mangga to the new market in Passo. Building Pasar Passo began in 2012. La Lichin shows that contemporary Butonese do not only control the market, but they also have an ability to lobby the local council regarding the policies in the market. Not only that, but some successful Butonese traders have become candidates for the local council. On one occasion, in his house close to the riverbank, La Lichin shared with me the story:

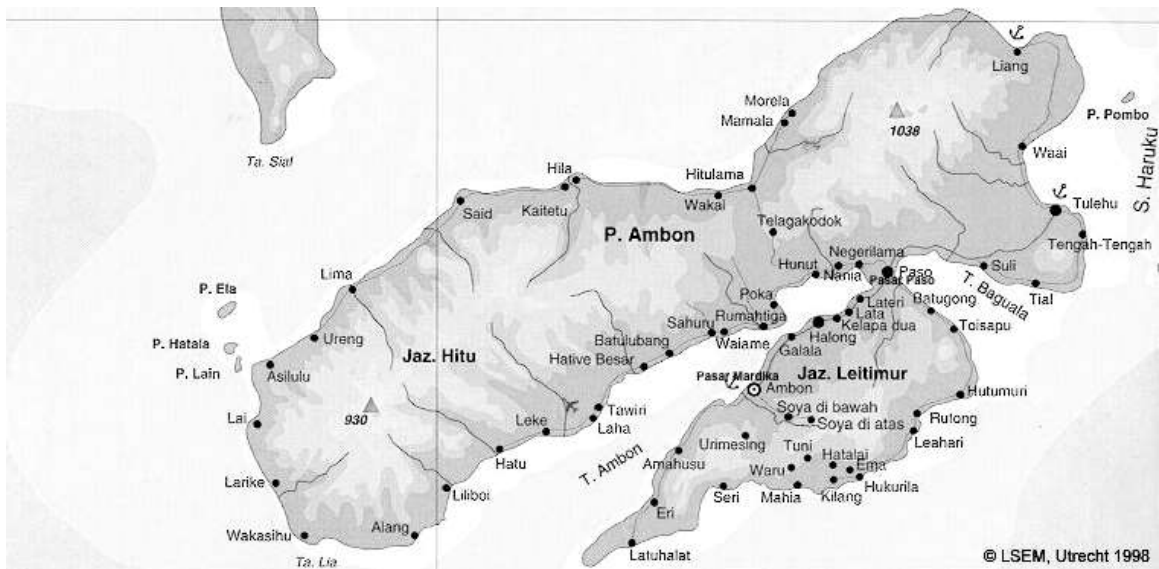
It was in 2005, Surya Dharma, from the Ministry of Cooperation (*Kementrian Koperasi*), visited Pasar Mardika. I approached him to seek funding to restore the market. I told Surya Dharma that our kiosks and goods had been burnt in Pasar Mardika due to the *kerusuhan*. Then I asked for funds to build another market located in Passo. The minister gave a positive response, providing 5,5 billion rupiah from the Ministry of Cooperation. However, by the time these funds had been received by the KOPPASS (*Koperasi Pasar/Market Cooperative*) office, further funds had also been acquired from *DEPERINDAG* (Department of Industry and Trade). The provincial government (*Pemerintah Provinsi*) claimed that they were entitled to handle the funds. The *Pemerintah Provinsi* planned to build a new market place in Sirisori on Saparua Island, but we, the Butonese traders, objected because the market would be too far from the largest concentration of the population on Ambon Island.

The way La Lichin tells the story gives me the impression that indeed he is a good lobbyist and he has a talent to influence people, but I can understand why La Lichin insists against the placement of Pasar in Saparua. As I will describe in Chapter Three, there are six Butonese villages that had also been burned down on Saparua during the conflict and the Butonese were understandably reluctant to return.

The negotiations surrounding the building of the Passo market were thereafter delayed until 2007. The city government of Ambon (*Pemerintah Kota*) finally agreed to build the market in Passo, but they proposed taking over the project from KOPPAS, which was mostly controlled

by Butonese traders. The program for building the market was deadlocked until 2010. Two years later, through persistent lobbying of the local council, Butonese traders finally succeeded in moving to Pasar Passo. Thanks to Lichin's endeavors, he and his other Butonese allies were now well-placed to sell in Pasar Passo. Seeing the political moves of La Lichin is exactly like what La Rahman said in the beginning of this chapter about being a "Jew". The migrant traders could expand their business not only because of their capability in trading management, but also because of their skill in lobbying.

### Butonese Domination in the New Pasar Passo



**Figure 2.3** Map of Ambon Island and the location of Pasar Mardika and Pasar Passo.  
**Source:** Landelijk Steunpunt Educatie Molukkers, Utrecht, 1998.

Passo is located 12 kilometers northeast of the capital of the Central Moluccas Province, Ambon City. The town can be described as part urban and part-rural. Several areas that surround this town are mostly Christian, including villages such as Lateri and Rumah Tiga. The area surrounding the town is not heavily populated, in contrast to Passo itself. The majority of

people in Passo are Protestant Christian. In 2010, Christians were in the majority at 36,812 people while 13,543 were Muslims<sup>89</sup>.

In the summer of 2013, from July to August, I was living in Passo in the former raja's (village head) boarding house<sup>90</sup>. She shared the story of how the conflict broke out in Pasar Pohon Mangga. These populations in Passo played a significant part in the events that followed. Since Muslims dominated the Ambon harbor area, Christians did not have direct access to daily commodities. Economic transactions were conducted secretly and under military protection, hence commodities circulating in the Christian areas became more expensive than in the Muslim markets. This was because Christians had to pay the military for their services. The military acted as middleman and protected interreligious transactions. Another option was that Christian traders could buy their products in Passo. However, this strategy was dangerous because they would have to cross Muslim neighborhoods, not to mention that the commodities were also more expensive. The Christians needed to travel long distances by minibus in order to acquire them. The price of commodities increased by twice as much during the conflict since the price of fuel was very expensive. However, as we see from Figure 3 above, Passo occupies a strategic place in the marketing network of Ambon Island, having an important role since its location is unlike that of any other Christian village, which are mostly located in the hills. The market is not only located in the coastal area, but at the central point on Ambon island where all main roads meet. This allowed Christian traders to obtain commodities effectively from any direction.

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<sup>89</sup> See BPS (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, Kota Ambon, 2011: 41)

<sup>90</sup> Ibu Radja Passo became radja when the *kerusuhan* broke out in 2000. She was also an active participant in the peace and reconciliation processes. She shared her international stories about visiting big cities in Europe, Brussels, and London with some of the Indonesian religious leaders in discussing of the reconciliation of ethno-religious conflict in Ambon.



As described by La Lichin, from 2004 onward, the number of vendors in the three markets of Pasar Batu Merah, Pasar Mardika, and Pasar Pohon Mangga rose rapidly. Many new vendors could not find further spaces to sell within the market. Instead, they placed their commodities on the roadside and thus created traffic jams and congestion all around the market. This is why the Butonese traders began to press for a new market in Passo, although officially this had to be done under the auspices of the relevant government authority. This solution solved the problem in the short term, but gave rise to other long-term problems. The first of these was religious. As I have indicated, Passo is a district that is predominantly Christian and, for the first time, most of the Muslim Butonese traders did not feel secure working there while the Christians took the view that since the market was in Passo, the Christian majority should be responsible for running it rather than the Muslim Butonese traders. In fact, under the KOPPAS (*Koperasi Pasar/Market Cooperative*) system, the Butonese continued to dominate the structure of the market. This led to friction with the local traders who suspiciously perceived that though the Butonese did not work the land, they nevertheless tried to dominate the market. Some Butonese traders were assaulted as they tried to persuade local traders to move to the new market.

One day a Christian trader who is Ibu Radja's neighbor, Freddy, a fifty year old man, said to me that when he moved to Pasar Passo, he struggled to get a proper place. He sells baked sago and various dried cakes that he bought from Saparua Island. Before starting his activity in the pasar, I found him almost every morning reading the local newspaper that is usually provided in the coffee shop nearby Pasar Pohon Mangga. Sitting next to me, he was flipping through the dog-eared newspaper that had been crumpled by so many oily hands. When he turned to the local news in the middle of the paper, his face turned into an unhappy frown. "It's all about corruption and defendents crying and fainting in court when they receive a sentence of many years; why didn't they cry and faint when they handled corrupted money?" he muttered one time with the remnants of sago cake still on the edge of his mouth. But what made him really unhappy was news about the progress of Pasar Passo. Through the local newspaper, he

noticed how Butonese traders were very intelligent lobbyists. There were six, mostly Butonese traders, who met the legislature (*DPRD Komisi 2*) members in Ambon City in 2011. They claimed to represent the trader's aspirations to make Passo Market the center of economic activities. In addition, these traders insisted that the Passo Market should become a hub for public transport throughout the island. This strategy was to attract consumers to spend their money in the market. The lobbyists also asked some wholesalers and distributors to move to Passo so that the traders would not have to go to Ambon to buy wholesale supplies. However, behind those demands, Freddy noticed that both Butonese and Buginese traders were also the dominant occupants of the rented kiosks in the new market. As a local Christian Ambonese trader, Freddy felt that he was at a disadvantage. He felt that migrant traders were pursuing their own narrow interests based on family and ethnic ties in the way they established themselves in the new market.

Muslims remain the dominant traders in Pasar Passo. They are mostly first or second-generation migrants from Sulawesi and are specifically Butonese, Bugis, and Makassarese. Although they run businesses in Passo, Muslim traders do not live in the area. In the evening they go back to their own neighborhoods such as Batu Merah in Ambon City, Waiheru and Kate-Kate to the north and southwest of Passo. Of the 171 kiosks in Pasar Passo, Muslim traders occupy about 120. They tend to sell the same range of commodities, such as religious clothing (*baju koko* and *pakaian jilbab*), cassettes and CDs, cosmetics, and various foods. They also sell items such as shampoo, soap, combs, cotton buds, ketchup, mobile phones, and second hand clothes, which are imported from other Islands such as Sulawesi and Java, and even from abroad. Most commodities are imported by wholesalers in Ambon City, which makes prices in Passo slightly higher. By contrast, Christian traders number only about 50 persons. Like Freddy, most do not have kiosks, but rather sell commodities on the covered platforms (*los*). They sell chilis, coconut, vegetables, chicken, sago, and local Moluccan cakes. Unlike

Muslim traders, Christians tend to live in the places where they are the majority such as in Passo itself, Poka, and Lateri.

As told by La Lichin, Butonese and Buginese traders in Passo also have direct access to the state through relations of debt and credit. They successfully dominate kiosks that are leased by the government. They pay rent for fifteen years of use. To obtain a kiosk, they have to pay 35 million rupiah with 10 percent in advance and pay the rest of the credit for eight years. In other words, they have to pay 200 thousand rupiah per month. The KOPPAS office that rents out the land pays all of the trader's credit for the nine years to the central Department of Cooperatives in Jakarta (a department under the State ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises).<sup>91</sup> Christians, who mostly rent *los*, only have to pay 150,000 rupiah per month. They have no debt or credit relationship with the state since they only pay monthly to the KOPPAS. These different arrangements demonstrate why Butonese merchants feel grateful to the State agency that provides tem loans in the form of kiosk ownership, whereas local traders pay the rent to KOPPAS, which is ironically also dominated by migrant Butonese.

Most of the traders in Pasar Passo are Christians who come from surrounding villages and feel marginalized when dealing with migrant traders. They have to pay KOPPAS rent and KOPPAS is mostly managed by Butonese traders under La Lichin's control. Remembering the displeasure of Freddy in 2013, when I came to my fieldwork in 2014, the jealousy of local traders continued to exist there. I met La Lichin in his kiosk in Pasar Passo and asked his response about the issue of Christian's jealousy. He admits that most of the local Moluccan traders, including local Muslim traders, cannot afford the annual rent for the kiosks, which comes to about 35 million rupiah per year. This is too expensive for local Moluccans, who therefore prefer

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<sup>91</sup> La Lichin does not want *Pemkot* (the city government) to get involved in the funding coming from the Ministry of Cooperatives that provides kiosks for traders. He sees local government as a third party that may attempt to take advantage of the grant for corrupt purposes

to sell outdoors and rent a *los* at 150 thousand rupiah a month. La Lichin realizes that people still see Butonese as *orang dagang* (outsiders) in Ambon. I will develop this issue in the next chapter. To demonstrate his commitment to Moluccan identity, La Lichin attempts to use Moluccans ceremonies as I illustrate below.

### **Reinventing “adat” to neutralize Jealousy**

After the *kerusuhan*, the “cultural turn” to *adat* (common traditions and law, which includes rituals and ceremonies) became a major approach to conflict reconciliation. Through rituals and ceremonies, people imagine and reinvent themselves as unified<sup>92</sup>. To reduce the jealousy and tensions between local Christian Moluccans and migrant traders, La Lichin meets them during religious festivals such as Iedul Fitri and Christmas. They celebrate in the hall of the market. Thus, to celebrate Christmas most of the committee is Muslim, while for Iedul Fitri it is the other way around, with the head of the committee coming from the Christian community.

During this event, traders share *makan patita*, which means eating together at a long table or on the ground covered with banana or coconut leaves. La Lichin said that the aim is to build close friendship and emotional ties, and therefore trust, among the traders. He makes use of the *makan patita* since it is a tradition common to both Christians and Muslim Ambonese. The churches in Ambon often use *makan patita* and La Lichin learned that in 2004, both elite Christians and Muslims used *makan patita* to mediate the reconciliation. *Makan patita* is also organized on important days such as the anniversary of the foundation of a village, church, mosque, or even a town or province. The *makan patita* symbolizes equality between participants, with no one person or group being privileged. The men arrange the table and the

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<sup>92</sup> There have been many studies showing how *adat* has been used as a means of reintegrating people who have been polarized by religion. *Adat* can be reenacted in a contemporary context to help promote social cohesion. The same origins of socio-cosmic beliefs, ancestors and spirits can be enacted to achieve a restoration of social order after the conflict. See the Moluccan example in Bräuchler, Birgit. 2015: 14-26. *The cultural dimension of peace: decentralization and reconciliation in Indonesia*.

women arrange the meals. The meals in a *makan patita* consist of smoked fish, fish with sauce, sago cakes (*sagu lempeng*), sago porridge (*papeda*), boiled cassava (*kasbi*), sweet potato (*ubi jalar, patatas*), yam (*keladi is usually taro, Colocasia esculenta; Ambonese for yam is usually kumbili*), boiled bananas, pickles, and spicy vegetables.

I almost never doubted La Lichin's capability to unite people because he is basically a trader *cum* politician. He had successfully lobbied the local elites to give the Butonese spaces in Passo market. When dealing with native Moluccans, he used the "cultural turn" to negotiate around envy and thereby make Christian traders accept their status. As an "outsider" that has the dangerous potential of being seen as the enemy in Passo, Butonese traders overcome it by offering hospitality through *makan patita*. Nonetheless, *makan patita* seems to contradict the daily lives that I saw during fieldwork. After the *kerusuhan*, I often found that Muslims would never eat and drink at *rumah makan* (restaurants) in Christian areas with the reasoning that the food must be contaminated by pork<sup>93</sup>

The conditions in Passo became more conducive to better community relations. Many Muslim traders from West Sumatra, peddlers from West Java, and artisans from East Java began to live close to the Passo Market. Some of the Javanese traders and artisans occupied dwellings at the back of Passo Mosque, which had just been rebuilt after catching fire during the *kerusuhan*. The Raja of Passo restored *pela*<sup>94</sup> relations with Batu Merah, which helped give

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<sup>93</sup> Referring to the Nuer (South Sudan) blood feud, I we can see how food articulates the difference between friends and enemies. When they share a meal together they must have never hurt one another. Evans-Pritchard illustrates how kinsmen of a killed man are strictly prohibited from eating and/or drinking from the same cup or bowl as the slayer for another year, even generations later, and are also prohibited from eating in the same homestead. Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1940: 154-158. *The Nuer, a description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic people*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>94</sup> *Pela* is a system of dyadic social relation that ties different villages together, often those having different religious backgrounds. One village could have two or three *pela* relations with different villages. This system ties villages through a commitment to support and help each

confidence to Passo as a new emerging market. Ibu Radja Passo informed me that in 2010, a *panas pela* (heating up) revitalization ceremony, last conducted in 1960, was held for Passo and Batu Merah. The former Raja of Batu Merah, Latif Hatala, herself, led the ceremony. In the ceremony, Raja Passo pledged to give protection to the traders from Batu Merah moving to their domain.

Passo and Batu Merah had a long tradition of *pela* relations. The beginning of *Pela* relations between Batu Merah and Passo are claimed to have started in 1506 when the people of Batu Merah returned from paying tribute to the Sultan of Ternate. Halfway back to Batu Merah in their outrigger canoe (*arumbai*), they rescued people from Passo whose canoe and all of the goods almost sunk off a peninsula on Buru Island. The people of Batu Merah shared their food, sago, smoked fish, and coconut with the people of Passo. In gratitude, the Passo people declared themselves as the younger brother of Batu Merah and pledged to form a *pela-gandong* relation<sup>95</sup>.

I also met several older Butonese figures in Batu Merah who informed me that besides the institution of *pela*, Butonese also conduct Ambonese traditional practices such as, *kawin masuk* (Marriages where the groom resides uxorilocally) and *parusa* (land clearing). These customs are advantageous to Butonese traders in enhancing their position in the Passo market. Butonese men living in Batu Merah and married to local Moluccan women have been able to

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other. Bartels [1977] indicates that there are three types of *pela*; the first is hard *pela* (*pela keras*), the second is brotherhood *pela* (*pela gandong*), and the third is betel pepper *pela* (*pela tempat sirih*). *Pela keras* emerges from the reconciliation that comes after war, and like a family, people of these two *pela* villages are not allowed to marry one another. *Pela gandong* is based on a common ancestor, while *pela tempat sirih* emerges from a small misperception and the reconciliation aims to rebuild trade relations. For more detail see Dieter Bartels. 1977. "Guarding the invisible mountain: intervillage alliances, religious syncretism and ethnic identity among Ambonese Christians and Moslems in the Moluccas". PhD Dissertation, Cornell University; Dieter Bartels "Alliances Without Marriage: Exogamy, Economic Exchange, and Symbolic Unity Among Ambonese and Christians and Moslems. Anthropology, III (1-2) 1980

<sup>95</sup> Similar stories are to be found in Bartels (1977) and Brauchler (2013)

obtain rights to clear land and help the wife's family to cultivate crops. Through this arrangement, Butonese can claim to have 'become' Moluccan as they marry and work Moluccan land. Before land pressure in Ambon increased to its present level, *parusa* opened-up the possibility for outsiders to work Moluccan land. For example, the clan (*mata rumah*) Nurlette owned most of the land in Batu Merah and a Butonese who married a Nurlette clan member was able to utilize land in this area. Thus, when the new market in Passo opened, it allowed Butonese living in Batu Merah to expand their business to their *pela* village. In other words, the system of *parusa* allows the Butonese to claim that they have a right to work in the territory of their *pela* village

Despite the facilitating role of *adat*, I still do not set aside lobbying the local councils by traders such as La Lichin as a reason for the Butonese finally gaining more space in the market. Over time, Butonese were able to rent more kiosks and shops, and the domination of traders in various markets in Ambon has created tension with the local traders.

When I returned to Ambon for further fieldwork in 2015, I planned to visit La Lichin in Passo, but I only met La Duriman, his younger brother. He informed me that La Lichin had been elected as a member of the DPR [*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*/Municipal Council] for Buru Island last year. As usual, he was elected through the PKS, an emerging new Islamic party that is strongly supported by the Butonese.

So what happened to the progress of Pasar Passo? “ I asked. “My brother relinquished his position (head of KOPPAS) and handed this role to me”

La Duriman, a gentle soft-spoken man, was straight-faced in responding to his new position. I look at his face, and doubted whether he was capable of dealing with the troubles in the market. I then try to see La Lichin's face on the board that hangs on the wall of the market office. His

face had disappeared and was replaced with La Duriman. It can be seen that those who take care of the market not only come from the same ethnic background, but are also close relatives.

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After the *kerusuhan*, BBM (Buton, Bugis, and Makassar) migrants, who at the beginning were the target of discrimination and prejudice, started to consolidate their positions by creating trade and political organizations based on ethnic background. One of the aims was to erode the precarity they had once experienced as outsiders. By using ethnicity, Butonese traders have been able to participate in mass politics, afford their interests some protection, and achieve power by dominating a highly competitive space in the demographically dense town of Ambon. Owning and renting shops and kiosks in the marketplaces has given them the resources to back up their assertions of ethnic sovereignty<sup>96</sup>, as well as control and achieve authority with respect to spaces gained through competition and many negotiations. By having sovereignty, the marketplace becomes an ethnic space where Butonese have an ability to rule their own people, as well as build ethnic solidarity among themselves. Drawing on the notion of sovereignty among the Native American Seminole of Florida, Rutherford and Catellino use the notion in a practical way rather than as an abstract theoretical concept<sup>97</sup>. Sovereignty is a value that lives in institutions, laws, and even everyday practices. It is a process for collecting power in the community in order to claim a share. Casino capitalism has developed as an 'ethnic-enterprise' amongst many Native American groups, becoming for the Seminole according to Jennifer Catellino "politically distinctive", allowing them to achieve economic sovereignty, earn

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<sup>96</sup> On the idea of 'ethnic commodification' see John and Jean Comaroff's discussion of "identity economy" as a late 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon where the economy tends to construct a collective consciousness of attachment based on ethnic background because it can give an effective voice to a sense of belonging. John and Jean Comaroff. 2009: 8-9. *Ethnicity, Inc.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>97</sup> See Danilyn Rutherford, 2012: 12-14. *Laughing at Leviathan : sovereignty and audience in West Papua*. University of Chicago Press; Jessica Cattellino. 2008. *High stakes: Florida Seminole gaming and sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press.



an income, and provide a social safety net. Rutherford perceives sovereignty as the right to act autonomously in political areas. Modern sovereignty is inherently unstable because to be truly sovereign depends on the proliferation of audiences, acknowledgment from others, and internal conflicts and negotiations.

The Butonese in the Moluccas have absorbed and assimilated autochthonous customs such as *panas pela* and *makan patita* in order to create a sense of unity and belonging, as I illustrate above. They also affiliated to an Islamic political party since they are aware that sometimes religion is more important than ethnicity, specifically when it comes to drawing a boundary with Christians in a larger context. My use of the term 'belonging' refers to bonds of kinship and membership of a marketplace trade group, as well as village solidarity among the members of ethnic and religious groups. In terms of vertical social structure, the Butonese also have a long allegiance to the state given that the state provides their status as citizens by involving them in state-level organizations and political parties.

In the context of ethnic relationships, belonging is a strategy to gain access to economic resources and to enjoy political rights. The positioning of identity and structures within the society are found when people create mutual dependence and particular configurations of debt and credit, pre-harvest arrangements, and exchange of commodities. Collective identity matters given that economic exchange is also driven much by the politics of belonging, whether based on ethnicity, kinship, or neighborhood. Shopkeepers are almost never the same group as their customers and creditors are always “outsiders” because it is almost impossible to make money in the neighborhood except with easy credit. The economy of the marketplace is not autonomously driven by individual desire. Karl Polanyi saw the “embeddedness” of the economy and society tending to restrain the expansion of business<sup>98</sup>, but my research argues

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<sup>98</sup> 'Embeddedness' emphasizes how economic activities are intertwined with non-economic institutions such as family, kinship and religion. See Karl Polanyi. 1968: 126. 'The Economy

that belonging to a family, clan, neighborhood, and ethnic group matters because through these identities people can pursue various rights and interests. In other words, non-market ties allow traders to build stronger consolidations and to solve the problems in the market. Znoj argues that personal ties and ethnicity-based patron-client relations have been a deeply rooted structure of Indonesian society that not only responds to the weakness of the state to build formal contracts in the economy, but also in the regime of global capital<sup>99</sup>. Therefore, rather than involving legal practices, people solve the problems in the market laws through the existing paternalistic structure of society that is embedded in market exchanges, such as credit and subsidies from the wholesalers, debt services from the moneylenders, and loyalties from small traders.

My thesis points out that business that involves families, relatives and neighbors of common origin, and other aspects of non-monetary ties, have played important roles in achieving political recognition and financial benefit. I use the term “embeddedness”, where economy is not secularly separated from ethnic allegiance and religious communality. Therefore, the market place embodies a set of institutions that consist of localized social organizations, social actors, political dynamics of trading communities, family networks, property rights, and trade practices which are not limited to “purely economic forces”. The market becomes the place for Butonese to organize not only their trade activities, but also their social and political interests. Butonese market activity is based upon the ties of nuclear and extended families, neighborhoods, social organizations, and political allegiance. Their effort to cooperate is also driven by the similarity of their ethnic background. The Butonese also expand their internal networks beyond family

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as Instituted Process'. in *Economic Anthropology* E LeClair, H Schneider (eds) New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

<sup>99</sup> On how people solve the problem of debt through loyalties in Rejang, Southwest Sumatera see: Heinzpeter Znoj 1998: 193-222. "Hot money and war debts: transactional regimes in southwestern Sumatra". *Comparative Studies in Society and History : an International Quarterly*. 40 (2).

and kinship. They are involved in politics. Using their ability to lobby the government and the local council, the Butonese can achieve their aims. Access to state funding and an Islamic political party, such as PKS, gives them legitimization in the market.

In the cultural realm, Butonese are advantaged through the openness and fairness of local Moluccas tradition. Thus, they use Moluccan social practices, such as *makan patita*, *parusa*, and *pela* exchanges to mediate their relations with local Christians and Muslims. In the case of La Lichin, for example, these traditions are an effort to bridge envy. The reinvention of the traditions of Butonese traders have value in expressing gratitude toward Moluccans. By participating their traditions, on the one hand, Butonese expect to integrate into the host society; on the other hand, the Moluccans see participation in native tradition as an obligation for outsiders in order to claim a sense of belonging to the place where they are residing. Nonetheless, I found that the market is clearly not a space of peace. The space in the market is continuously contested between ethnic groups and classes. Relations in the markets can create feelings of marginalization from local society. Thus, when local Moluccans cannot compete with Butonese, criminality increases.

Despite these attempts on the part of Butonese to 'ritualise' their attempts to integrate into Moluccan society, both indigenous Ambonese Christians and indigenous Ambonese Muslims still feel marginalized and subordinated in the marketplaces by Butonese traders, and this has driven them to forge alliances against the domination of migrant traders. When in the market, native Muslims argue that they have the same *adat* as Christians, since they have the same *nene moyang* (ancestors). Such a pattern of belonging is not possible where identity is defined bureaucratically or in terms of wider political categories where Christians and Muslims are competing with each other.

The tensions in the marketplace reflect a broader picture of what happens in a post-conflict society. The spirit of allegiance to one ethnic group, place of origin, family or clan, as was performed during the communal conflict, has returned in the contemporary marketplaces. People build their ethnic groupings in the workplace, through bureaucracies, political relations, and even in the marketplace. Traders concretize their belonging by institutionalizing their identities through various ethnic organizations that emerged after the *kerusuhan*. These structures of order, however, not only provide an emotional sense of belonging, but also allow traders to develop their business. The rapid mobility of Butonese in owning properties, kiosks, and shops in the marketplaces reinforces a continuation of jealousy against the outsider/foreigner that has always been embedded, even before the *kerusuhan*. However, instead of being channeled into war, after the *kerusuhan*, people advanced their ethnic and religious interests in other ways; by voting in elections, choice of political party, and building business networks through ethnic organizations.

## Chapter Three

### EMERGING REALITIES AFTER THE *KERUSUHAN*: CONTINUITIES, AND THE AMBIGUOUS ROLE OF THE TRADER

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#### Prelude

During the day, Toko Bintang is very busy serving customers who come from many areas in Ambon. It is common to see customers visiting the shops and sometimes they compare the prices in the *toko* with another *toko*. If the customers buy large-scale goods, the employees in Toko Bintang will send them with trucks parked in the front of the shop. This toko has five employees who were recruited through their extended family members. The owner is La Hadji, a seventy two year old man. I was surprised when I was hanging out in La Hadji's shop and saw, at certain times, two or three Chinese wholesalers sitting in plastic chairs waiting in turn for La Hadji to approve their credit proposals. Ridan, the eldest son of La Hadji, explained to me "*abang seng bisa liat ini sebelum konflik bang, orang Cina Surabaya antri tunggu beta pung bapa*" (you would not see this view before the conflict, brother, Chinese waiting for my dad). I can see in Ridan's face how proud he was, specifically in the moments when the Chinese were lining up at his *toko*.

These Surabaya Chinese sat in the chairs for more than half an hour without complaint. Sometimes it took even longer because La Hadji seemed very busy serving customers behind his glass-walled room. La Hadji seemed indifferent even though several Chinese customers had been waiting for him. However, I can see that he deliberately made the Chinese clients wait for a longer time. His act reminded me of a typical *pegawai negeri* (bureaucrat/civil servant) in Indonesia who sluggishly serves his customers and makes people wait in long lines on purpose. The Surabaya Chinese could not complain about this situation because they knew they were in a position that needed to promote goods, hospitality, and to provide loans to La Hadji. These Chinese merchants tried to talk to some of La Hadji's employees. For the sake of building intimacy, sometimes they attempted to make jokes even though they sounded weak.

The Chinese wholesalers from Surabaya are no longer asking for complicated conditions of the Butonese seeking credit. They sell their groceries without asking for collateral as they had done before. Chinese wholesalers come directly to the shops in Ambon, bringing samples of glassware and plasticware products and glossy catalogues with pictures of the items, such as electronic devices, glassware, kitchen utensils, and various items for metal shops. They are looking for agreements and queuing in the toko for approval from La Hadji about items that he is going to buy. They are coming from different stores in Surabaya, thus they basically compete with one another in persuading La Hadji to add some items to his buying lists. I talked to a couple of the Surabaya Chinese. They said that they deal with a minimum of three shops in Ambon before moving to another town on another island, such as Dobo or Tual. Surabaya Chinese coming directly to Ambon is a recent development, since now Butonese merchants can successfully grow their capital and pay their debt on time.

Ridan said - while staring at the Chinese with a sense of triumph in his face - "*Realitas selalu terbalik abang, dolo sebelum konflik, beta pung bapa yang susah-susah ke Surabaya par beli*" (Reality is often inverted. Before the conflict, it was my dad who used to suffer going to Surabaya to buy wholesale). It was his father who brought a bunch of cash in-hand, but nowadays, the condition is reversed. It is the Surabaya Chinese who visit Ambon.

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This chapter describes the changes and continuities since the *kerusuhan* and the preceding *reformasi* period. The discussion of change focuses on the upward social mobility of Butonese traders who have become shop-owners and middlemen providing goods across the islands. Some stories of the upward mobility of urban Butonese entrepreneurs reflect a linear evolutionary pattern. The first generation of Butonese consisted of mostly farmers working on the Moluccan-owned land; they then became tenants for the pre-harvest arrangements in the villages prior to the next Butonese generation having acquired sufficient capital and contacts to

become moneylenders, middlemen, and shop owners in the late 1990s and after the *kerusuhan*. Butonese migrants have also developed the capacity to finance trade in natural resources (*hasil bumi*) such as cloves, nutmeg, copra, durian, and coconut. Many of them have developed networks with ethnic Chinese shopkeepers and wholesalers as their partners. The rise of the Butonese entrepreneurial class in Ambon and Central Moluccas has been connected with the reorganization of the bazaar economy as I described in the previous chapter. A successful Butonese entrepreneur follows a business acumen in which individual performance is achieved by taking on debt, giving loans to the clients, and living as a minority on isolated islands.

As I described in the introductory chapter, Butonese have been involved in trade in a major way for no more than fifty years. The first and second generations of Butonese in the Moluccas are mostly either working in gardens owned by native Moluccans or working as fishermen. Until recently, ethnic Chinese and Buginese have tended to control the middle and higher levels of trade with local Moluccans since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is reported that the ethnic Chinese were outsiders who brought cash to measure the value of forests and marine products in the Moluccas<sup>100</sup>.

The connections between outside traders and local people are deep-rooted in Moluccan history. In the fifteenth century, before the coming of the Dutch VOC, Chinese and Arabic traders had very important roles in connecting inter-island economic activities. Merchants, as money holders, put their investments in high quality local products such as pepper, cotton cloth,

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<sup>100</sup> See further Roy Ellen. 2003: 5,8 and chapter 6. *On the edge of the Banda zone: past and present in the social organization of a Moluccan trading network*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. Patricia Spyer, 2000: 10-11,16. *The memory of trade: modernity's entanglements on an eastern Indonesian island*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press., J. C. van Leur. 1955. *Indonesian trade and society; essays in Asian social and economic history*. The Hague: W. Van Hoeve.

tobacco, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, copra, sandalwood, musk, and diamonds. On the other hand, local people had a desire for imported goods such as velvet, satin, silk, gold, thread, cloth, porcelain, lacquered copper, medicinal products, liquor, drugs, tin, iron, steel, perfumes, and gums. In Southeast Seram Island, Ellen found that Chinese and Buginese have managed the intense exchange of goods by using fixed exchange rates based on the equivalent quantity of different goods (barter) since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Spyer reported that Chinese have engaged exchanges in Dobo, Southeast Moluccas since the early eighteenth century. They brought knives, clothes, and various kinds of *arak* locally produced alcohol for drinking), which formed the medium of exchange with tobacco and small coins.

In this section I am not arguing that trade is a recent introduction to Ambonese society from outside. Markets and trade are not necessarily something foreign and alien from abroad, but are indigenous to Ambonese society. Indeed villagers have their own local trade and exchange networks, and long-distance high value trade was well established even long before the *hongitochten*<sup>101</sup> led to warfare and fierce competition to suppress the local traders during the seventeenth century. *Hongitochten* was an inspection using rowing fleets initiated by VOC. The aim was to restrict the production of spices from Maluku in order to control the prices of spices in the global commodity. The natives were not permitted to expand their trading expeditions except with the permission of Dutch authority. The Dutch controlled the activities of the trader's community in terms of their financial transactions, shipping on a big scale, and the movement of vessels to reach distant places. This led native trading activity to be less extensive and less wide in scope compared to the Chinese.

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<sup>101</sup> See further the history of *Hongitochten* in in Muridan Widjojo S. 2009: 24-26,34-38. *The revolt of Prince Nuku: cross-cultural alliance-making in Maluku, c.1780-1810*. Leiden: Brill. Leirissa, R.Z., and Reza Tuasikal. 2004: 58. *Ambonku: doeloe, kini, esok*. Ambon: Pemerintah Kota Ambon.



I tend to see the absence of native people in the market as a part of an ingrained historical legacy. Many local (Christian) Moluccans have worked in the bureaucracy since the Dutch colonial era. The elimination of the Moluccan trading class was a gradual process that started in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Muridan reports that the decline in East Seram's vibrant trading role until 1700 was because the VOC forced *orang kaya* and raja- Raja Werinama, Orangkaya Seilor, Raja Kilmuri, and Kelibon to sign a contract in 1776, in which they had to cease their commercial activities with foreign traders. The East Seram traders were also obliged to limit their exchanges with Butonese, Buginese, Makasarese, and Javanese merchants. They even had to obtain passes from the VOC government for trading with their partners from Papua. Even worse, they had to agree to preserve the VOC monopoly of spice production and exchange, notoriously known as *hongji tochten*. In the following centuries, the Dutch replaced the annihilation of native traders with the recruitment of natives to the colonial administration, education, civil service, and the military (KNIL)<sup>102</sup>.

Local Moluccans have a long tradition of peddling goods. The activity is called *papalele*, an operation that is mostly run by women. They sell mainly fruits and vegetables from their gardens. However, unlike the stories of Butonese peddlers who end up having a kiosk, the scale of the *papalele* business tends to remain the same over time. One of the reasons is because the system of trade is based on "debt and gender relations". Within a low-income family there must be a woman who has to yield to trade in order to fund her brothers and sisters' schooling. This woman trader obtains her returns when her brothers and sisters finish their education and get a job<sup>103</sup>.

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<sup>102</sup> See Muridan Widjojo. 2009: 169-172. *The revolt of Prince Nuku cross-cultural alliance-making in Maluku*; Richard Chauvel. 1990. *Nationalists, soldiers and separatists*.

<sup>103</sup> There have been many studies examining *papalele* as an economic system native Maluku. See: Effilina Kissiya. "Papalele, Suatu Tinjauan Historis terhadap Budaya Masyarakat Ambon". *Socia*, vol 11 No 1. Mei 2012. 25-30; Nancy Novitra Sousia. 1999. "Papalele. Ajang hidup berteologi perempuan Ambon. Suatu kajian sosial teologis tentang posisi dan peranan perempuan Papalele di jemaat-jemaat Kristen Pinggiran Ambon". *Tesis Magister Sosiologi*

Unlike many Butonese who have finally managed to expand their business by settling down in one kiosk, the *papalele* traders do not have a space in the marketplace, but rather sell on the ground in front of a shop. The *papalele* are less responsive to changes in technology. They do not use transport to peddle and do not expand their business by borrowing money from the bank. By contrast, I found that many figures of urban Butonese merchants that just started their business in the 1980s-1990s have experienced rapid upward mobility.

Another surprising fact is that after the *kerusuhan* the role of Butonese women changed: not only had they learned how to survive during the crisis, but also became actively involved in *mancari* (money-seeking) activities, mostly based on the acknowledgement of time and season<sup>104</sup>. This may not sound particularly new, since there have been many studies showing the involvement of women in the market exchanges in Southeast Asia. However, in Ambon, the *kerusuhan* became a milestone for Butonese women, enabling them to expand their sovereignty and form their own businesses in the aftermath of the turbulence. Women not only had more physical agility, but also capital mobility. Because of their kin ties, women had better opportunities for seeking upward economic mobility by controlling a larger budget to buy

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*Agama. UKSW*, Salatiga (unpublished); Simon Peter Sugiono. 2009. "Papalele: Ajang hidup berteologi perempuan Ambon".

<sup>104</sup> The words for a livelihood based on trading and selling are *mancari* or *pencarian*. Patricia Spyer who conducted research in Aru Island, Southeast Moluccas points out that trade and livelihood (*pencarian*) coincided with the opportunity to create and acknowledge outsiders and time. During the diving season, the velocity of debt and credit transactions is more rapid than in the off-season. This is because the divers collect more pearl oysters and other sea products (ibid, 126), while the traders consume more and spend money for sumptuous customary (*adat*) feasts. In addition, traders continue to extend credit for large investments such as motorboats. See Patricia Spyer. Spyer, Patricia. 2000: 109, 113-119, 126, 128-30). *The memory of trade: modernity's entanglements on an eastern Indonesian island*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. My research also examines how the Butonese pay attention to the time for selling inter-island and providing loans to local people. In rural exchanges, middlemen and moneylenders facilitate credit and circulate money. When the clove harvest is about to arrive, they responsively offer credit and provide cash for local people to fulfill their basic needs and consumption desires.

wholesale and to recruit more employees from extended families and the expanding inter-island goods supply. In this chapter I also describe how this economy depends on debt connections and how women play dual roles as both creditor and debtor in this chain.

As in broader Malay world culture, women in the Butonese tradition have double roles: managing a household and contributing to economic livelihoods. The ability of women to access the market arises partly because Butonese culture is permissive in allowing them to engage in commerce and to make major economic contributions outside of the domestic domain. When women are involved in the market, they are not in opposition to either Islamic tenets or cultural tradition. Butonese culture also does not put men and women in strict opposition as described by researchers of merchant women in Java. As I have described in the previous chapter, and will further exemplify in this chapter, many male Butonese merchants have the ability to suppress their desire to spend and control money in order to accumulate capital. Men are also relatively indifferent of *gengsi* (prestige) and status when dealing with matters that are commonly identified with the “women’s world” such as selling, peddling, and handling money. By contrast, there are many women who are committed to gambling and cannot stop indulging in the satisfaction of their passions. Gender identities in relation to dealing with money, desire, and market exchanges are very fluid and cannot be assigned to strict gender stereotypes<sup>105</sup>. Therefore, I do not agree with those ethnographic reports that describe a dichotomy between men and women in dealing with money, specifically that women can hold onto money because they can control their *nafsu* (desire) while men cannot and, therefore, men do not engage in the market exchanges. Among the male Butonese, they do not have a prestige system (*gengsi*) or

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<sup>105</sup> See for example Suzanne Brenner. 1995. "Why women rule the roost: rethinking Javanese ideologies of gender and self-control". *Bewitching Women, Pious Men*. 19-50.; Suzanne Brenner. 1998. *The domestication of desire: women, wealth, and modernity in Java*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. Heinzpeter Znoj. 1998. "Hot money and war debts: transactional regimes in southwestern Sumatra". *Comparative Studies in Society and History: an International Quarterly*. 40 (2): 193-222. Hotze Lont. 2000. "More money, more autonomy? women and credit in a Javanese urban community". *Indonesia*. (70): 83-100.

a sort of masculinity that limits the men from holding money or conducting transactions in the marketplaces. As I described in the introduction, the class background of the migrants is not the same as the court class such as Javanese court culture, Sultanate of Buton, or Ambonese bureaucrats. The Butonese trader class comes from the periphery and leads to both males and females switching roles in market exchanges under certain situations, in this case such as conflict.

One continuity despite the *kerusuhan* concerns the identity of *orang dagang* (trader). I surmise that the ambivalent views of local people regarding traders and middlemen are a continuation of the colonial legacy<sup>106</sup>. Throughout history and in many societies, traders have occupied ambivalent positions. On the one hand, they are regarded as generous fellows because they supply goods and money and have facilitated local people's needs for centuries, but on the other hand, they provide the necessities by exploiting them through debt. These two ambivalent roles of traders have created suspicion among local people. Two main causes for the dislike could be because people essentially do not like being in debt and people are also jealous to see "the others" who have different cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds that are economically successful in an area that is not of their own origin.

Compared to Muslim Moluccan traders, the status of being an "outsider" became a benefit for the Butonese at some point. Many Moluccan Muslim traders carry the burden of moral economy because they have the same common culture and religion. Local traders are under moral pressure to help their relatives generously in non-economic ways such as the obligation to help pay for their nephew's schools, to give money for family weddings, funerals, or to pay the

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<sup>106</sup> On the ambivalent function of foreign traders as middlemen under the colonial government, see: Furnivall, J. S. 1944: 8, 380, 397 *Netherlands India; a study of plural economy*. Cambridge [England]: University Press; Furnivall, J. S. 1956: 60, 149, 158. *Colonial policy and practice; a comparative study of Burma and Netherlands India*. New York: New York University Press.

hospital bill for ill relatives. Muslim Moluccan traders also have to cancel transactions with poorer customers who cannot return the debt. In the case of Geser and Gorom Islands, for example, Ellen found that this aspect becomes a major problem for traders of Arabic descent who married local Moluccans to develop their business, which also makes them unable to compete with the ethnic Chinese Moluccan traders<sup>107</sup>. Borrowing the concept of “essentialism strategy” from Leshkowic,<sup>108</sup> I surmise that a female trader’s identity as an “outsider” allows her to be free from local people’s expectations of social obligations. In my case study, Wa Rose is one among many Butonese traders who kept their status as an “outsider” as a productive strategy in order not to be entrapped in a “trader’s dilemma”<sup>109</sup> between the obligation to extend credit and or to remain a part of the community conflict.

Like old wine in a new bottle, the current generation of Butonese has transformed themselves beyond the first generation that consisted of smallholders who occupied and rented land from local Moluccans into the current generation that includes merchants, inter-island traders, middlemen, and moneylenders. They still maintain their identity of “foreigner” in front of the local people. As I noted in the previous chapter, one way in which Butonese redeem their “outsider” identity is through affiliations with state projects and Islamic parties, to which Ambonese Muslims also belong.

### **Exchange Relationship with the ethnic Chinese**

The kerusuhan opened new opportunities for Butonese, in terms of acquiring properties sold by Chinese. Although in general, ethnic Chinese in Ambon still dominate the large-scale businesses (as in other towns of Indonesia), some Butonese have come to control even larger

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<sup>107</sup> See Roy Ellen, *On the edge of Banda Zone*, 2003: 263-266.

<sup>108</sup> See Ann Marie Leshkowic. 2014: 5-10. *Essential Trade. Vietnamese Women in A Changing Marketplace*. University Hawai’I Press. Honolulu.

<sup>109</sup> I use this word from Hans Dieter Evers and H. Schraders, eds. 1994. *The Moral Economy of Trade: Ethnicity and developing markets*. London. Routledge.

businesses than many Chinese. Many of the ethnic Chinese fleeing Ambon or moving to Christian areas made room in the market for competition. This condition opened opportunities for Butonese to take over spaces that used to be owned by the Chinese. For example, they have bought Chinese shops located in the coastal districts such as Batu Merah areas, which known as *daerah Islam*, or Muslim areas. These shops can then be used as collateral when the merchants need a loan from a bank.

The relative position of ethnic Chinese and Butonese in the economy are in a period transition after the *kerusuhan*. However, Butonese traders resilience in struggling during the harsh era has led them to turn the hardships of the situation into dominant positions in the post-conflict economy. Butonese, Bugis, and Chinese are the three ethnic groups in Ambon that dominate ownership of *toko*. In this subsection, I examine the changes that followed the *kerusuhan* as seen through acquisition of a *toko*. For urban enterprises, having a kiosk and *toko* is a dream for almost all traders. Owning a *toko* demonstrates that the owner is already settled and succeeds in struggling against the *masa-masa sulit* (difficult times). In addition, owning a *toko* shows how the trader can cope with high competition against the density and the limited availability of space in Ambon town. *Toko* also become collateral for credit applicants in securing their loans. In economic transactions, performativity is politics; it operates not only through words and portfolios, but also with properties that help to convince a creditor.

With his business growing steadily, La Hadji bought Toko Bintang, a three level shop at the corner of a big street in downtown Ambon. His *toko* is in a very strategic location. The place is close to the port and is located on the corner so that people can easily notice his shop. Seeing this strategic place, at one time BNI (Bank Nasional Indonesia) offered to buy his shop for two billion rupiah, but he refused to sell. The shop used to be owned by a Chinese person who fled to Surabaya because of the conflict. He bought it for 300 million rupiah (30,000 US Dollars). To buy the shop, La Hadji borrowed the money from BCA/Bank Central Asia. He keeps the certificate and uses it as collateral in the bank. The bank provided loans to him as they knew

he had a good portfolio as a new emerging merchant. *Untuk mau maju itu katong harus hubungan baik deng Cina* ("to progress we have to have a good relationship with the Chinese" he had said one time with his calm and soft-spoken tone. What he means by *orang Cina* is not only wholesalers, but also the Chinese bankers who approved his loan applications.

When the ethnic Chinese fled during the *kerusuhan*, they left their shops surrounding Ambon Plaza in Jalan Yos Sudarso, Jalan Sam Ratulangi, and Jalan Latuharhary<sup>110</sup>. They decided to sell their shops in these areas since the place was no longer safe for them and had been taken over by Muslim militia. After the conflict ended, there was a lot of shifting in property ownership. The ethnic Chinese shopkeepers used to dominate the areas around Ambon Plaza, but as a result of the conflict had fled and sold their properties to the Butonese and Bugis merchants. Ridan points to Jalan Yos Sudarso, at the back of Ambon Plaza, he points with his right forefinger from the front of his shop to the farthest point in the corner of the street:

*abang lihat satu jalan ini seng ada lagi orang Cina, cuma satu itu di ujung sana. Samua ini kalo seng orang Bugis orang Buton sekarang bang*  
(Brother, look at this street, there is only one old Chinese shopkeeper left on this street, all of the shops now are owned either by Butonese or Buginese).

La Hadji was the kind of merchant who enjoyed the golden age of the economy under the late New Order regime of the 1990s. He lived in Air Salobar, a very densely populated district in the town of Ambon. He and his wife, Wa Rose, started their business from scratch in the early 1990s. Wa Rose initiated her career as a businessperson in West Seram (Seram Bagian Barat) before she finally moved to Ambon. Many Butonese urban traders in Ambon who have *toko* are second and third generation immigrants. Theirs was the first generations to be born in West

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<sup>110</sup> It was difficult to find specific data on how many Chinese fled during the conflict. In an interview with *Tempo*, a national magazine, three weeks after the first conflict on January 19 broke out, the governor of Moluccas at that time, Saleh Latucosina, revealed that 94 people died and 118 were wounded. The total number of severely damaged (*rusak berat*) and burnt houses was 2,017. Twelve mosques and nineteenth churches burned to the ground (*rata dengan tanah*) and he mentioned that 315 kiosks and shops were damaged, which I assume include the shops owned by ethnic Chinese and Butonese. Saleh also reported that within this one month, more than 25,000 people were evacuated. See further "Di Ambon in Terlalu Banyak Isu". *Tempo*, February 8, 1999.

Seram rather than in Buton, Southeast Sulawesi<sup>111</sup>. When they achieved the success of having a kiosk, they recruited people from their villages.

Ridan, the son of La Hadji, is a third generation Butonese immigrant. He is an example that demonstrates ethnicity as something socially constructed and fluid rather than essentially embedded in the blood. Like others in the younger generation of Butonese who experiences being undermined for being “outsiders” in Ambon, he objects to being called “Butonese”. He says *beta ini orang Ambon, lahir, putus tali pusar, besar di Ambon* ("I am a Moluccan, I was born here and my umbilical cord was buried in Ambon. I grew up here"). Like any other Butonese of the younger generation who was directly involved in the *kerusuhan* and who grew up after it, he does not want to be identified with his parents' ethnicity. Rather, as in the current younger generation of Ambonese, he prefers to be identified as "a Muslim." La Ridan and I became good friends, and I became involved in his daily family life.

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One day Wa Rose was sitting on her big bumpy couch in her wide living room. She was humbly admitting that her wealth is nothing compared to the ethnic Chinese in Ambon who control the price of spices around the Central Moluccas:

*Samua ini orang Cina yang pintar main harga di Ambon ini, ose mau lawan sapa?*  
("It is the Chinese merchants in Ambon who are particularly smart in speculating about clove prices. You cannot compete against them").

As a trader running a business in spices that she buys across the island, Wa Rose said that the ethnic Chinese traders sometimes raise the price of cloves only two days before they send the cargo to Surabaya. Such a sudden last-minute announcement is a strategy to force other

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<sup>111</sup> Brauchler reports that the Butonese population is the second largest group in Honitetu, a subdistrict in West Seram. The host society is about 34%, Butonese 27%, and the rest are other migrants from inside and outside Maluku. See Brauchler, 2015: 167. *The Cultural Dimension of Peace: Decentralization and Reconciliation in Indonesia*. Palgrave.



traders to sell their cloves. When the cargo ship in the port at Ambon is almost full and the Chinese wholesalers are ready to send them to Surabaya, they suddenly announce a higher price for cloves. Wa Rose is then forced to sell her clove stock sooner than she might otherwise wish to because she would ideally like to wait for the price to get even higher:

“Not only is it in Ambon town, I also have to compete with ethnic Chinese traders who use their *kepanjangan tangan* (network of contacts) in the villages”,

she continued with her mixed feeling of ambitions and displeasure that I could see all over her face. She knows the ethnic Chinese strategy. They do not come directly to the villages, but rather ask their *orang-orang kepercayaan*, trusted people, usually local people, to buy the cloves for them. The ethnic Chinese provide the capital to make advance cash payments and wait in town to receive the truckloads of cloves sent from the villages<sup>112</sup>. For example, residents in Telaga, Southwest Seram, usually sell only to the patrons who have lent them money or given them clothes. Farmers are reluctant to sell to strangers, for if caught doing so it would anger the usual buyers because of the breach of trust.

Nonetheless, Butonese feelings against the ethnic Chinese are ambiguous. From the Chinese merchants, the Butonese learned how to conduct business. Ethnic Chinese merchants also trusted Butonese trader's families to initiate their businesses by providing them with initial loans. To find out about the Butonese trade network with the ethnic Chinese, I went to Ridan's

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<sup>112</sup> To protect the local economy, Soekarno, the first president of Indonesia, enacted Keppres (Keputusan Presiden/Presidential Decision) Number 10, 1959, which prohibited Chinese from living in and selling retail goods in villages. This protectionist policy led many Chinese to open metal shops, grocery stores, and restaurants in towns and municipalities. This policy was also known as the *program pribumisasi* or indigenization program', which aimed to protect local entrepreneurs from competition with the Chinese who had more extensive networks and more capital. In the Central Moluccas, most Chinese people live in medium-sized towns such as Masohi and some live in the capitals of the subdistricts, such as Tehoru, Makariki and Amahai. Under Dutch colonialism, Chinese were strangers or outsiders who did not have roots in the host society, were not involved in any local customs in Indonesia, and were prohibited from owning land. They were the people who gained most from free enterprise and had the lives of farmers in their hands. They received profits through both wholesale and retail trade. They were also middlemen and sold native crops to the Europeans and became private moneylenders to their clients. See description in J.S Furnivall. 1944: 47,239. *Netherlands India; a study of plural economy*. Cambridge [England]: University Press.

wedding, which was held in a big Islamic hall located in the central Mosque in downtown Ambon. This was the biggest wedding ceremony of the three that had been held in a row over one week. Unlike the previous weddings that were conducted in a mixed traditional ceremony, comprising Butonese, Buginese (from the bride's side) and Islamic elements, the third wedding was held with more modern nuances.

Ridan invited more people from among his family, friends, and colleagues. The most surprising fact about this third wedding was that it showed just how large La Hadji's business network was. The invited persons were shop owners along the road where his shop was located. Ridan's mother, Wa Rose, invited women traders from Pasar Mardika and Ambon Plaza where her kiosks are located. Among those who were invited, I was interested to see the one ethnic Chinese. It is quite uncommon to see ethnic Chinese guests coming to a Muslim wedding, but this reveals that some of the Butonese merchants have close and trusted relations with Chinese wholesalers and bankers in the town. The ethnic Chinese brought a big bouquet of flowers that they put in the front of the hall. They sat on the front couch next to La Hadji. Before they left, they took pictures on the stage with the whole family of the bridegroom.

La Djami is Ridan's nephew (his mother's brother's son) who is also an employee in La Hadji's metal shop. With him, I sat at the back while arranging folded chairs for the numbers of people who did not get chairs in the middle row. He told me that La Hadji has mastered the trick of making *tamu-tamu* (guests) put an envelope with a large sum of money on the right stage where the bridegroom is standing. He had paid back his credit loans, specifically to Chinese bosses, a couple of days before the wedding. By paying back the loans first, La Hadji expected that his ethnic Chinese patron would come to the wedding and donate large sums of money in the envelope. During the wedding ceremony, the invited guests were obliged to bring money in an envelope. The money was placed either in a big jug in the front of the reception area, in the white big box next to the stage, or given directly to the groom when shaking their hands. To

recover the wedding costs (including the bride price), the groom's family invites as many people that they know as possible. They hope that the more guests come, the more donations the groom's family gets<sup>113</sup>.

La Djami smiled at me as if he had told a dirty secret about his boss. He then went into detail:

“I know before the first wedding party; La Hadji repaid the loans to one Chinese businessman of four million, that's him!”

He pursed his lips pointing to an old, skinny, and pale Chinese woman who sat on the couch on the front row. Over the course of the wedding ceremony, finding one ethnic Chinese merchant who came to Ridan's party was like seeing “one really big fish” on the table. La Djami again pointed with his mouth referring to two ethnic Chinese people who became the center of attention. They were both about sixty years old, but they did not look like a couple. With a muffled voice, he whispered to me:

“Naahhh...they are the Chinese bosses of BCA [Bank Central Asia] that passed some hundred millions in loans to La Hadji and another one is a well-known big wholesaler in Ambon”.

### ***Orang Dagang: Traders and Outsiders***

In many societies in Southeast Asia, traders are members of ethnic or religious minorities. Most

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<sup>113</sup> For the three wedding ceremonies, La Hadji sent about one thousand invitation letters. However, the gifts of money from these three weddings were still lower than the cost of the wedding itself. At the end of wedding, while sitting in La Hadji's metal shop, Ridan told me that from the second and third wedding celebrations he got 21 million rupiah. He did not calculate the total money that he obtained in the first wedding because the wife's family took care of that. He spent almost 100 million rupiah on the wedding. He paid 45 million for the *kawin masuk* (to purchase a woman) or *masuk minta* (in Malay, to enter and to ask) and other funds were spent on a wedding event organizer (10 million rupiah), catering (25 million rupiah), backdrop decoration (16 million rupiah), invitation letters (5 million rupiah) and transportation (2 million rupiah). On the first day of the wedding, during the break, Ridan very quickly glanced in one envelope in his hand. The money inside was only 10 thousand rupiah. He jokingly said, “adoee, can you imagine if I invite two hundred guests, in the next wedding, and they only give me ten thousand rupiah (1\$), which means in total I would only get two million rupiah, I can be bankrupt”. We laughed wryly knowing that for this second wedding, he and his family spent more than twenty million rupiah.

are strangers who do not originally come from the host society. Trade is often associated with the terms “stranger”, “outsider”, or “migrant”. They are less constrained by pre-existing social ties and are less subject to local social norms than members of the host society. This allows them to keep their economic activities separate from other roles, and in some cases has led to accusations of economic exploitation of local people through lending money at high rates of interest or buying their crops at a very low price<sup>114</sup>. Ambonese Malay the term *orang dagang* has two meanings. The first is 'outsider' and second is 'trader'. To begin with, the term *orang dagang* refers to people who do not belong to local traditions and ceremonies. The Ambonese use the term to describe people from outside the Moluccas, such as Javanese, Padangese, or Makassarese who have married into their families. *Orang dagang* is also a derogatory term for outsiders who have different cultural values and ethics<sup>115</sup>. I often heard Ambonese describe *orang dagang* as individualistic, greedy, dirty (*pangkotor*), and lazy. Traders are seen as dirty since they work in the marketplace that is literally filthy and muddy. Marketplaces, metaphorically, are also the places for greedy people who cannot control their desire to get money, i.e. avarice<sup>116</sup>. However, the outsiders are also seen as simple (*sederhana*), specifically in terms of their rituals and ceremonies. One, Ambonese man told me that someone in his

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<sup>114</sup> See: Alice Dewey G. 1962. *Peasant marketing in Java*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe. Hans-Dieter Ever and Heiko Schrader. 1994. *The Moral economy of trade: ethnicity and developing markets*. London: Routledge.

<sup>115</sup> Kenji and Siegel indicate that Butonese in Banda were despised because they did not speak Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian language) and mostly lagged behind in terms of education. Nonetheless, Siegel's argument was only valid in the 1970s. Lately, the Butonese have achieved higher education and most of them can speak Bahasa Indonesia. See further Kenji Tsuchiya and Siegel, James. "Invisible Kitsch or As Tourists in the Age of Des Alwi." *Indonesia* 50 (October 1990): 61-76.

<sup>116</sup> In the Javanese *wong dagang* also refers to traders and outsiders who have different values from the villagers/host society. Jennifer Alexander. 1987. *Trade, traders, and trading in rural Java*. Singapore: Oxford University Press. On the meaning of *wong dagang* as people who have a high aspiration in terms of money see Suzanne Brenner, April. 1998. *The domestication of desire: women, wealth, and modernity in Java*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

family married a Butonese person and they made do with a simple wedding, a cheap wedding ring, and mineral water as the pledges of fidelity. In the Moluccan imagination, however, migrants are also hard workers and tend to be more economically successful than the natives. They unite and help each other when in an alien environment.

Moreover, the definition of *orang dagang* refers to middlemen, merchants, and traders coming from outside the local society who have contributed to stimulating the local economy. Butonese, Buginese, Javanese, and Moluccan Chinese, who are not considered to be local people, develop credit, bring money, and supply prestige goods for local societies. Through the moneylenders, middlemen, and peddlers, local people became part of an economic system in which money was not only the medium of exchange, but also a commodity, the trading of which enabled the consumption of more expensive goods<sup>117</sup>.

Orang dagang also refers to the middlemen. The middlemen do not exchange the products to create more value; they rather increase the service, such as providing information about the prices and supplying the necessities of the goods. Ellen explicitly shows that Butonese play important roles in providing goods to any island. Using their own vessels, Butonese transport goods and agricultural products to islands that do not produce enough for their own needs. For example, they supply timber, sago, and rice to several isolated islands in Southeast Seram that have deficiencies in these produces. Butonese also bring goods from Ambon to the isolated small islands by using cargoes. As middlemen, the Butonese also send thatch from Seram Island to several islands that have no sago trees or an insufficient supply. Thatch from the dried sago leaves is used for house building. Although zinc roofs have replaced thatch in many cases, it does not mean that the Butonese have lost their function as middlemen. They still supply any

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<sup>117</sup> See further Roy Ellen. 2003: 197, 200, 221-222, *On the edge of the Banda zone: past and present in the social organization of a Moluccan trading network*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

kind of material good that does not exist on one island and, as a return; they bring back abundant products from that island to sell in Ambon.

Middlemen can also come from various ethnic backgrounds, not necessarily only Butonese; they could be Javanese, ethnic Chinese, or Buginese. One such example of a middleman that I encountered was Mudipa, a dandy and flashy Buginese Moluccan. Mudipa is a trader and middleman who supplies commodities to villages in South Seram. He is one of several Bugis merchants who competes with larger traders from Surabaya who come during the clove harvesting season. However, his scale of business is greater than that of Wa Rose. He supplies goods to village so that they, in turn, can become entrepreneurs. Like Wa Rose, Mudipa also provides credit and villagers pay it back as copra or cloves. He provides goods to both village shopkeepers and to the farmers provided that they sell their cloves to him and not to the other traders. The farmers tend to keep their cloves for their existing trading patrons as they have been entrapped in debt. After collecting the cloves in the villages, Mudipa and his uncle sell the crops to Chinese wholesalers in Ambon. Mudipa also buys cloves at the same prices as the big dealers in Surabaya.

In 1990, Gudang Garam, one of the biggest *kretek* cigarette companies in Indonesia, expanded its agency to Seram, where it now has three agents. One of the agents trusted Mudipa to *putar uang* (circulate the money). He received one billion and a half rupiah from Gudang Garam, which he used to buy cloves. His role was that of a *pengepul* (middleman), buying and collecting and cloves in the villages and then passing them to the Gudang Garam agent<sup>118</sup>. At the time, the price of cloves had reached 7000 rupiah per kilogram. Mudipa used the one billion and a half rupiah to buy 200 tons of cloves in South Seram. In Laimu, a village where he had

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<sup>118</sup> A decade earlier, from 1973 to 1980, the Gudang Garam agents had supplied 10 million rupiah to a large wholesaler, who had paid it back with two tons of cloves priced at 5000 rupiah per kilogram (Hospes, 1996: 237).

conducted trade in 1990s, the number of household heads was 300-400. Each family harvested between one to two tons of cloves. During the harvest period when the clove price was 7000 rupiah per kilogram, each family could therefore have ten million rupiah in their pocket. He recollected that this boom in the clove price had allowed many people on Seram to send their children to study in Java and Makassar.

After receiving cash from Gudang Garam, Mudipa did not buy cloves directly from the farmer, but rather bought goods in Ambon and then provided loans to farmers in terms of goods. Like Wa Rose, Mudipa makes a profit from the price gap between the time when the goods are supplied (three months in advance of the harvest) and the time when farmers harvest the cloves and deliver them to the trader.

During the 1990s Mudipa was an undergraduate student, about to finish his studies. His uncle helped his business and taught him how to operate in the clove market. Almost all of Mudipa's family are traders (*orang dagang*). His uncle and his cousins have been involved in the clove trade for a long time. Supervised by his uncle, he could develop his cloves business in Laimu. During the semester break, Mudipa traveled to some remote areas in Seram Island and sold clove in advance of the harvest. By trading in the villages he could pay his school fees, which for one semester at that time was 24,000 rupiah. "I was already rich at that time" he said to me with a cheerful and proud smile.

Economic boom periods for cash crops intensify debt relations between villagers and *orang dagang*. The farmers have to supply cloves to their lender when the cash crop harvest arrives, but if they borrow money from a bank, farmers can sell cloves freely to any of the larger traders. Unlike urban merchants and larger shopkeepers who have easier access to credit from banks and from purchasing companies such as Gudang Garam, farmers and village shopkeepers face many difficulties in obtaining loans provided by any legal financial institutions. For this reason

they tend to secure loans through middlemen or any ethnic Chinese shopkeepers, which all of them are seen as *orang dagang*.

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The younger generation of urban Butonese that have transformed into merchants still continue project an identity an *orang dagang* or “outsiders” like La Kusni. I often visited La Kusni’s house since I was a friend of his younger brother, La Duriman. La Kusni is approaching forty. These brothers are the second generation of Butonese in Ambon who have experienced a transition of identity. As with Ridan’s assertions about his identity, on one occasion La Kusni too announced to me:

“I am an Ambonese, but the Ambonese do not consider me an *orang Ambon* (Ambonese). Whereas when we visit Buton, the Butonese regard me as an *orang Ambon* since I was born on Buru Island”.

This is a complaint that I often heard from the younger generation of Butonese in Ambon. La Kusni’s “neither here nor there” identity is like the place where he is living now, on the riverbank that is located on the border between Muslim and Christian villages on the Hitu Peninsula. One evening, as usual, after coming back from Pasar Passo, La Kusni wears a sarong and a shabby white t-shirt with a black *kopiah* (traditional fez). His appearance is typical of the new young traders who look and live in a simple way. He shares his stories of being a peddler in the islands. Before becoming a peddler in Buru, he was working as an employee in a shop ( *toko*) in Tual, the administrative capital of the Kei Islands in the Southeast Moluccas. He worked there for two years and gained a lot of experience even though his pay was low. In 2003, his salary was only 100 thousand rupiah per month. One year later, he finally resigned from the shop and his Chinese boss lent him ten million rupiah to create a small business. Many new emerging Butonese traders that I encountered told me that Chinese Moluccans had played an important role in teaching them how to do business, handle money, and offered tricks on how to provide loans. They usually learn them as employees in Chinese  *toko*.



La Kusni said proudly:

“With the loan from my Chinese boss, I then went to Jakarta, invested eight million on clothes, and used the remaining two million for round-trip transportation. I decided to move back and sold clothes in the village of Buru. I noticed that during the clove harvest on the island, many people bought clothes and other things. In one month alone I could pay back my loan of ten million rupiah to my boss in Tual. I received a net profit of about twelve million rupiah. My boss trusted me and offered to sell me the shop, but I did not want to go back to Tual”.

From his tone and expressions, I can see that he does not really like to live there. Later I will explain why. He continued:

“After repaying the loan to the boss, I allocated two million for the school fees of my younger brothers, La Lichin and La Duriman”.

When he shared this story with me both La Lichin and La Duriman were present with their wives and children. La Lichin was playing with children, while La Duriman was busy helping the wives to prepare dinner for us. I could see how the house was fully alive with the growing size of the families. La Kusni looked satisfied, however, because for him, the more family and brothers he has, the more opportunities there are for him to get support for the business.

La Kusni had 10 million rupiah left for buying wholesale goods in Pasar Tanah Abang, Cipulir, and in Jatinegara market in Jakarta, which he used to purchase a variety of clothes, including outfits for children and clothing for adults. He also bought shoes and sandals. On Buru, he was able to sell these at double the price. From 2004 to 2008, La Kusni was selling around the villages in Buru. He used a motorbike to travel around the island. In 2010, after having gained lots of experience selling on Buru, he moved his sales area to Southwest Moluccas (Maluku Barat Daya/MBD). He went to Kisar, an island on the border with East Timor.

“Although I was there for only three months, I noted that people had good purchasing power, but the cost of living was very high. The price of food and mineral water in Kisar was twice as

expensive as in Ambon. Nonetheless, it was issues related to food that made me unable to stay. The majority of people in Kisar are Christians and I found that most of the food stalls served pork and dog meat. This led me to be more careful, especially when I was visiting my clients in their houses and they served me with food already on the table. Thus, to me, it was better to eat in Javanese restaurants than in the local food stalls. The Javanese were assumed to be Muslim and would not serve any forbidden food”.

The feeling of “disgust” against Christian food happened after the *kerusuhan*. That Muslims do not want to hang out or eat in restaurants in Christian areas is a part of the conflict legacy, in which Muslim worry that Christians food may be made from lard or dog meat. In Kisar, La Kusni had to live carefully as he found that he was not only a member of a religious minority, but also an outsider and a trader. He recalled:

“I became aware of my identity as a minority person surrounded by Christians. I went to the mosque regularly for Sholat Jum’at (Friday prayers). When Muslims flocked to only big mosque in Kisar”.

With a slight and wobbling tone he adds:

*kalo kita masuk masjid untuk sholat Jumat itu, itu kita rasa kita semua bersaudara semua*

(“When I entered the mosque for Friday prayers, I felt that we were united into one brotherhood). I often saw that the mosque is also a place for social activities and sharing common grievances. I found that some Muslim traders who had died were buried around that big mosque. Sometimes the Christians came and also helped to bury them, but still I have a *rasa terasing* (a feeling of being alienated) when I am there.”

Living in Kisar was a harsh experience for La Kusni. He often heard Butonese and Javanese traders being sworn at. If the traders sold goods at prices the locals deemed expensive, the local people remarked abruptly, “You didn’t bring the land here, so please do not sell your goods expensively here in our land”. Several Butonese traders also shared similar stories with me

about their harsh experiences selling in other isolated places, such as Dobo in Southeast Moluccas and Timika in Papua.

“When, usually in the evening, people ask for several items of our *barang-barang* (goods) for free, we cannot refuse, otherwise they would be mad and would ruffle the *barang-barang* on the table”.

These are the kinds of barriers that finally made La Kusni decide to stay only three months in Kisar. He returned to Ambon and in June 2012 married a girl from Kalimantan. The reason that Ambon seems better for him is because this place is more *ramai*, which means busy and crowded, with people and consumers. As indicated in Chapter 2, it is only in Ambon where there are sufficient numbers of Butonese to make ethnicity-based organization viable. Thus, *ramai* also means not being lonely, living surrounded by relatives with feelings of being a “majority”<sup>119</sup>.

In Ambon, La Kusni was finally able to achieve his goal of obtaining a kiosk in Pasar Passo. He and his younger brother, La Lichin, have successfully struggled to dominate the kiosks in this market as I described in Chapter 2. Since acquiring a kiosk, La Kusni feels settled and no longer has the energy to peddle around the islands as he did before. Hearing the story from La Kusni, I empathized with his position. As a man growing up in Blitar, a little town in East Java, I often saw local people, *tukang parkir* (parking attendants) or *tukang becak* (pedicab driver) who 'hang out' (*nongkrong*), waiting for something to happen, on the side of road, asking for money or a cup of rice from the Chinese shop-owners. They usually asked younger people to tell the Chinese that they needed a small amount of money or a cup of rice. They urged “Just ask Nyamarie (the name of the Chinese shop owner), if they do not want to give the cup of rice, tell me I can come to her directly otherwise” This sort of *ancaman pemerasan* (extortion threat) often happened to the Chinese shop owners along the main road in Blitar. The Javanese not only

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<sup>119</sup> *Ramai* is the opposite of *sepi*, which means quiet, lonely and being alienated. See my discussion on the concept of *ramai* in the next chapter.

perceived them as being rich, but Chinese were also seen as foreigners and outsiders, who never wanted to mingle with local people and whose houses were built with a high, thick walls. By contrast, most of the jealous local people were very poor and felt that their poverty was a result of resources being taken by these *orang dagang*, and as a result, they have to redistribute some of the resources.

### **Women and *Orang Dagang* Providing Loans**

In this subsection I go into some detail about the idea of *orang dagang*, as both outsiders and traders, especially in relation to the position of women. I argue that women played significant roles during the *krismon* (monetary crisis) in 1998, during the *kerusuhan* (communal conflict) in the beginning of 2000s, as well as in the years following. I conclude that it is not industrialism and modernity that has allowed women to achieve financial autonomy, but rather periods of war. During such times they have had more autonomy in the handling of money, to lend, to take on loans, to become indebted, and to accumulate capital by expanding their inter-island business<sup>120</sup>.

Butonese women have a totally different perspective when they remember the *kerusuhan* that broke out in 1999. They do not perceive conflict from a standpoint of bravado and bragging, but rather from the standpoint of surviving and maintaining family economies. Many female Butonese traders took advantage of the *kerusuhan*, a time when men abandoned the market in the urban area and the garden in the rural areas. Instead of being involved directly in the war,

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<sup>120</sup> Several works have shown that modernization, indicated by the emergence of the industrial era and rapid urbanization, led women to have more autonomic agency by earning their own wages and handling their own money. See further in Aihwa Ong. 1987. *Spirits of resistance and capitalist discipline: factory women in Malaysia*. Albany: State University of New York Press; Gillian Hart, Andrew Turton, and Benjamin White. 1989. *Agrarian transformations: local processes and the state in Southeast Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Butonese women tied their relationship with the local people through maintaining the home economy and through engaging in small-scale economic activity and debt exchange.

Women were far from being passive victims of the conflict. I encountered many Butonese women traders who tell stories about their husbands who were fired from their jobs because of the *krismon* (monetary crises of 1998) and the ensuing *kerusuhan*. Their husbands used to work as *pelabuhan* (dockworkers), construction workers, fishermen, private servants, and *sopir oto* (drivers). These jobs could not be sustained during the *kerusuhan*. Men were more involved in the war rather than building market exchanges. To survive during the war, women made the decision to be involved in the market. Thus, conflict had increased women's involvement in the informal economy and in petty trading activities. They could then generate income and thus men were no longer the only wage earners in the household economy<sup>121</sup>.

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Wa Rose is the mother of Ridan. She married La Hadji in 1986 and they started a business in Pasar Gotong Royong as street vendors. The market has now been replaced with Ambon Plaza and it used to be the place for Butonese to start their businesses.

In the first business, Wa Rose sold cheap underwear (*obral pakaian dalam*). She took it from a Chinese merchant at Toko Panca Jaya in Ambon. Three years after the marriage, her husband

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<sup>121</sup> Jeroen Adam (2009) shows that women involved in the market during the war increased from 36% to 47%. Before the conflict, the percentage of women without incomes was 44% and during the conflict it slightly decreased to become 35%. Adam found the engagement of Christians in informal petty trade activities during the conflict was remarkably higher than that of the women in the Islamic communities. Before the conflict, Muslim women were significantly engaged in the petty trading activities. See further, Jeroen Adam. 2010. *Communal violence, forced migration & social change on the island of Ambon, Indonesia*. Ghent: Ghent University. However, I argue that this finding is only valid for contemporary times. Several markets founded by Christian women, such as Pasar Tagalaya, were closed because not many consumers visited them. Other Christian markets, such as Pasar Batu Meja and Pasar Belakang Soya, that had almost no Butonese traders, were stuck and did not develop well.

started buying wholesale in Jakarta. In 1989, he started to develop networks with the wholesalers in Jakarta. Since then his business has grown steadily. When Pasar Gotong Royong was demolished and replaced by Ambon Plaza in 1994, La Hadji already had two kiosks. His business grew steadily until the start of the *kerusuhan* in 1999.

“It was messed up” she remembered bitterly. “Two of my kiosks in Pasar Mardika were burnt and I did not get *ganti rugi* (compensation) from the government. In fact, the conflict was even worse from month to month and *bunuh ora lebe banya* (killed many more people). I finally decided to flee to Buton and left all of our properties in Ambon except for two cars that we shipped to Buton. *Beta pung suami* (my husband) thought that we would not return to Ambon due to the continuously deteriorating condition from the conflict, but I insisted moving back to Ambon”.

She said that if they stayed in Buton, they would not be able to continue developing their business. They thought that they could develop their commerce in Buton, but in fact, they were wrong. She could not only not develop her business well, but she also felt alienated from her own parent’s origins. Unlike in Ambon, Buton was not a good place for conducting business. Wa Rose remembered that people were very poor there. Purchasing power was very weak and she knew almost nobody. Once they sold bread, but that was not very lucrative. In 2001, they finally moved back to Ambon. Not only the urban Butonese traders experienced the lack of advantage in conducting business in their place of origin, but many of them that were displaced during the *kerusuhan* also suffered feelings of loss from not being in Ambon. They had a greater sense of belonging and emotional tie to Ambon than to Buton.

Despite the deteriorating conditions Wa Rose experienced during the *kerusuhan*, trade remained very profitable. She bought 100 dozen items of clothing, which sold out within two weeks. Sales were surprisingly lower during the period of normalcy before the conflict, when

she used to buy wholesale clothes of only about 20 dozen. Butonese traders remember that despite the conflict people still needed clothes to wear.

Sitting in one of her kiosks of five by five-square meters in Ambon Plaza, Wa Rose retells her stories vigorously with wide, glaring eyes. Before she continues the stories, she quickly excuses herself:

*Tapi meski pedagang itu paling dapa banyak untung selama kerusuhan, beta cerita ini bu kang berarti beta ingin konflik kombalialie, karna kami juga trauma deng perang meski dapa uang banyak*

(Nonetheless, even though traders were the most advantaged people during the conflict, I do not want the conflict to continue. We also had many traumatic experiences, even though we obtained lots of money during that bad situation).

Wa Rose remembers that the period of conflict offered an opportunity to expand her business across the island. In West Seram, the intensity of war was less compared to what happened in Ambon. However, she can only trade in the villages where Muslims are the majority.

“I could tell that during the conflict there were many gardens full of clove trees ready to harvest, but they were abandoned since people, specifically men, were busily involved in the war. I came to the Muslim villages in Seram Barat during the clove harvest times and brought unsold clothes from Ambon. In Ambon we call these *tai tai barang* (“shitty” goods that were unsold in Ambon) then I dropped the clothing in the village shops. To provide money and goods in the villages, I had to be smart – *nanaku* (a word that means the ability to pay attention and to read both the situation and time) <sup>122</sup>. I use my *nanaku* skills to monitor the progress of the spice crop before

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<sup>122</sup> The word *nanaku* literally means, “to remark” “to observe” or “to notice”. *Nanaku* can be used when remembering recurrent history or phenomena. I talk to people in Ambon about the past. The ways they tell their memories are not using modern dates, months, and year as historians usually do. Thus when recalling recurrent history, they rather remember it by the event. For instance, people do not remember the beginning of the Ambon war on January 19, 1999, but they do remember that the war started before Iedul Fitri. In fact, the Islamic calendar is based on the lunar system, in which the date of Iedul Fitri changes every year. However, people still mark the event in relation to Iedul Fitri, when both Muslims and Christians were attacked.

harvest time. If the harvest season has not arrived in one area, then I use my *nanaku* skills for other villages”.

*Petani itu banyak mau kalo su tiga bulan sebelum panen*  
(Many farmers usually need money during the two to three months before the season begins).

*Nanaku* not only involves the anticipation of a harvest, but also paying attention to the needs of the farmer. Usually before the harvest is ready, the farmers have already developed a lot of consumption needs. Motorbikes, mobile phones, cosmetics, and new clothes are among contemporary priorities. From her stories, Wa Rose reveals her sharp instinct as a trader. She continues:

“At this time astute traders *angkat bicara*, that is start to communicate, with the farmer. The aim of *angkat bicara* is for farmers to express their desires and needs so that traders can provide credit to purchase them”.  
Traders respond to the desires of farmers and fulfill their needs by providing the goods or money in advance.

At 60 years old, Wa Rose still energetically shares stories recalling the golden era of her business. Her thick wrist shakes when telling how she dropped goods from Ambon town to the shops in the villages. Her fake golden bracelets tucked behind her full-length outer *jilbab* (head covering) as though to demonstrate her successful business.

“I targeted about five million rupiah in profit from each shop in the village. It was in 2001 when the conflict was worsening, but by expanding the business to the village, I could afford to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca.”<sup>123</sup>. At that time, my daily gross revenue was at least two million rupiah per week because I can *main harga* (control prices) and nobody bargained with me. But nowadays, to get 500,000 rupiah a day is good.”

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<sup>123</sup> Data from Kantor Departemen Agama (Department of Religion Affairs) Ambon for 1999-2003 show the number of Muslim pilgrimages by district increased steadily after the conflict. Only during the peak of the conflict, in 2000, did the number decrease. In 1999, there were 136 pilgrimages to Mecca. In 2000, the number decreased to 61 pilgrimages while in 2001, the number increased to 178. In 2002 the number increased gradually to 261 pilgrimages and in 2003 the number increased to 236. See further Kandep Agama Kota Ambon/ *Office of Religion Affairs, Ambon*. Kota Ambon dalam angka 2003.



To put this story into perspective, Wa Rose's revenue was just slightly higher than the monthly minimum wage in Ambon City for 2016)<sup>124</sup>

Indeed the stories of the *kerusuhan* from the traders' perspective were different from those of people who were more directly involved in the war. During the *kerusuhan*, traders were advantaged because of the lack of competition. The number of traders was less compared to the period after the conflict. Only a few traders had networks with the wholesalers in big cities such as Jakarta and Surabaya. After the *kerusuhan* competition among traders increased because shops and malls opened everywhere. In the evening, while helping to close her kiosk's roll-down door, Wa Rose said:

*sekarang ini orang Ambon semua sudah pintar dagang. Ini semua hikmah kerusuhan*" (Nowadays, everyone can do business, even local Ambonese. These are all the blessings of the conflict)".

Wa Rose demonstrates that traders, specifically women, have different perspectives when dealing with violence. To cope with the bad memories of the war, loss, and displacement, they remember positive opportunities that they obtained during those harsh times. From the perspective of Wa Rose, the *kerusuhan* for some was not merely a source of damage, but provided new opportunities unexpected before the conflict broke out. For her and people like her who used to struggle during the *kerusuhan*, it was not always bad. Thus, the *kerusuhan* has not only cut off conversations, but has led to an open-ended range of unsettling facts and new emerging realities.

As I demonstrate in chapters two and three, people across the different communities involved

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<sup>124</sup> In 2016, the standard minimum wage in the town of Ambon was 1,775, 000 rupiah per month or equal to 150 USD.

in the *kerusuhan* share horrific stories and a bitter legacy, but at the same time recall good things about the *kerusuhan*. I found that young Butonese and Butonese traders who experienced the *kerusuhan* did not see themselves as passive victims of war, but actively constructed positive stories within the wider narrative. People indubitably do not want to repeat a traumatic experience that separated them from their families and confused their sense of “place” and belonging. When talking about the consequences of the *kerusuhan* with my interlocutor Wa Rose, for instance, she argues that the conflict encouraged a particular kind of conversational discourse, *hikmah dibalik bencana* (blessings in disguise), through which some of the pain of remembrance could be avoided by emphasizing the positive outcomes. She remembers the optimistic things that emerged both during and after the conflict. *Kerusuhan* is, therefore, not only seen as a traumatic experience, but as laying the foundations for the renewal and prosperity of the contemporary Butonese community in the Moluccas.

There have been many studies that depict the harmful effect of the conflict in Ambon. However, the perspectives of those local people who struggled through the wars and precarious times, but still refer to the conflict as a “blessing in disguise”, remain understudied. People refer to the disorder and lawlessness of the *kerusuhan* that led human suffering as *musibah*<sup>125</sup>. The term *musibah* usually refers to natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, and typhoons. However, the concept of *musibah* is not restricted to calamities that come from God, but may be extended to disasters caused by people and the state. Moreover, the many women traders that I met do not see *musibah* from the fatalistic perspective. From their perspectives, they themselves even became the active agents that turned the *musibah* into a factor

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<sup>125</sup> See the elaboration of the word of *musibah* in Craig Thorburn. 2001, “Musibah entitlements, violence and reinventing tradition in the Kei Islands, Southeast Maluku”, Paper submitted for the *Study of Common Property 9<sup>TH</sup> Biennial Conference*. Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

contributing towards their resilient lifestyle. In the case of Wa Rose, since the conflict ended, she has already steadily developed and built her business network.

During Ridan's second wedding ceremony in Wa Rose's house<sup>126</sup>, I noted that some villagers sent sacks of dried cloves to her. They put them on the verandah and then her maid moved them to the warehouse. Wa Rose told me that these villagers had paid their debt. In the midst of her business, preparing food and ordering people to arrange the tarpaulin for the wedding pavilion, she explained:

“Sometimes, a farmer pays off the debt with un-dried or wet cloves (*cengkeh basah*), also called raw cloves (*cengkeh mentah*). The price for wet cloves is lower than that for dried cloves. I can make more profit if the farmers pay the debt with un-dried cloves, though I will then have to dry them under the sun for a few days and store them in sacks, but during these weeks it is almost impossible to do that because I am so overwhelmed with Ridan's wedding”.

I walked to the back of her house while helping her move some sacks of cloves that were dropped from a mini truck onto the verandah; she showed me that she keeps the debt payment in the form of cloves. She pointed me towards the 500 kilograms of cloves in her warehouse that she had kept since 2015. Cloves can be stored for more than one year as long as they are thoroughly sun-dried<sup>127</sup>. I also see that she keeps quantities of two-year old cloves in the same warehouse, but in different sacks. Wa Rose explains to me as if I am going to join her business and invest some money in her business:

“Recently, I sold sacks of three-year old cloves for 145,000 rupiah per kilogram. In fact, three years ago, in 2012, I was buying at only 65,000 rupiah for 400 kilograms. Thus,

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<sup>126</sup> The second wedding ceremony was more spiritual and full of religious speeches and Quranic recitation. It differed from the first wedding, which was conducted in the bride's family house using Buginese tradition, in combining Butonese tradition with Islamic ceremony. As I argue, specifically after the conflict, connecting Butonese ethnicity to Islam became an important way of creating a sense of belonging within the broader Muslim Moluccan community.

<sup>127</sup> The value of cloves lasts longer than money. For local people, besides being a means of paying off debts, storing cloves is a part of social security. Cloves can be sold anytime, for example for paying school fees, restoring houses, or paying hospital costs. Local people also sell the cloves in quantities of one *cupa* (cup or can) or more in order to buy rice.

from the price gap, I basically get a profit of 32 million rupiah. If one kilogram of cloves just rises to 5000 rupiah, you can just multiply it by 100 kilograms, or even 500 kilograms, and that is a significant increase”.

I was mesmerized by the profit that she gets. Before the conflict, the price of the cloves was less than 10,000 rupiah<sup>128</sup>. In addition, as a female trader who also handles household finances, she knows how to “save money”, not only as cash<sup>129</sup>. She stores the cloves so that she can sell when the price rises sharply. Thus, she must keep watching the market for movement in spice prices that can greatly fluctuate, *harga itu kadang serentak naik serentak turun* (the price can rise and drop very quickly”).

From her management of the wedding ceremonies, I can see the determination of Wa Rose in organising family affairs. It was Ridan’s mother who covered the wedding costs. “The spirit of “mental calculation”, of being a business person, comes from his mother,” said Djufri, one of the employees in La Hadji’s metal shop. In the first wedding ceremony, I saw that the employees in the shop only showed up very briefly because they had to go back to keep the *toko* open. “There is almost no holiday in the *toko*” Djufri said hastily. To balance the wedding expenditure, the shop must be open. Djufri who also acted as the wedding photographer, said jokingly “This is a “black Chinese” system, which keeps the employees working even during the wedding party”.

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<sup>128</sup> Long before the *kerusuhan* broke out, the Butonese in Ambon were involved in buying, renting, and selling cloves in the local market. Moneylenders or shopkeepers usually provided credit in terms of money or consumable goods to be repaid in cloves. To calculate the debt, the transactions used a low standard price. Hospes reported that at the end of 1989, the lowest price of cloves in Tulehu, a district on Ambon Island, was about US\$ 2 per kilogram (equal to 2000 rupiah at that time). A clove supplier borrowed 100,000 rupiah cash in advance based on a predicted clove price of 2,000 rupiah per kilogram when the harvest time arrived. On this basis the farmer was expected to pay back his loan with 100 kilograms of cloves, which actually equals 200,000 rupiah. In other words, the farmer was essentially selling cloves at 1000 rupiah per kilogram. See further, Otto Hospes. . 1996. *People that count: changing savings and credit practices in Ambon, Indonesia*. Amsterdam: Thesis Publishers.

<sup>129</sup> I also found that many women in South Seram use dried cloves as currency. They save in the sack for weeks and then sell it little by little, by the *cupa*, whenever they need cash.

According to Buginese tradition, after the first day of the wedding, the groom should stay at least one week in the bride's house. The aim is to familiarize him with the members of his bride's family. However, Ridan negotiated a stay of only four days as he had to go back to the shop.

With a broad grin and high tone, he said:

“My mother has paid so much money for the bride wealth, more than 30 million rupiah. She would beat me up if I stayed in my wife's family house for a long time. I need to go back to my own house and take care of the shop”.

He tried to make it sound like a joke, but people know that it was a serious matter to keep the business running.

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Wa Rose has built-up a series of credit and debt relationships over the last thirteen years, specifically in the two villages of Telaga, in Southwest Seram, and in the villages on the nearby island of Manipa. People in these villages already know her and thus she can provide money easily. She has *nota* (receipts to provide evidence of the transactions) with the names of the individuals indebted to her. Hence, when the harvest seasons come, she merely has to collect the cloves from her clients based on trust and the written record. She offers consumer goods on credit and accepts delayed payment in kilograms of harvested cloves in which the interest for the loan is embedded in the price paid for the product. She usually buys cloves at a lower price per *cupa*, a traditional measure of quantity based on the size of a tin of condensed milk. One kilogram of cloves is roughly equivalent to 20 *cupa*. For example, if the price of one *cupa* of cloves is seven thousand *rupiah*, she buys it for six thousand, one thousand cheaper.

Even though Wa Rose is not a stranger to villagers in southwest Seram, as she has been there for several years, before and during the harvest time, she is still regarded as an outsider. She

is an urban trader who comes to the village to provide money and goods during certain seasons, but she is not a villager herself. Thus, to intensify the social relationships on which successful economic transactions rest. She concentrates on Manipa and Telaga rather than expanding into other areas. She tends to maintain her services with her clients in these two places. She chose only Manipa and Telaga since they are closest to her home in Waiheru on the Hitu Peninsula of Ambon Island. To reach these two places, she only needs to cross the narrow sea strait by ferry, which takes about two hours. With a very relaxed manner she said that she takes the view that:

*Bikin apa, buat masalah kalo katong jual seng kenal orang. Kamong seng bisa datang sendiri ke kampong. Perlu bawa saudara atau kenalan ke kampong*  
'It is too much trouble selling to a stranger, it is too risky. You cannot just arrive (un-announced) in a village, you need a relative or an acquaintance to introduce you to the village.'

Wa Rose has a relative in Telaga with whom she stays while trading there. Her employees take care of the kiosk in Ambon Plaza when she leaves for trading in the villages. It takes three days to sell the clothes and her other employees help her to collect debts during the clove harvesting season.

One day, on the big, long, soft couch in her house, while watching a popular Indian *sinetron* (soap-opera) on her wide flat television, she shares her story:

"By paying in advance, I can buy cloves at half the price during the harvest season. If a farmer borrows one million rupiah from me, then the farmer pays it back with 20 kg of dried cloves in the next harvest, assuming that the price of one kilogram of cloves is 50,000 rupiah. In fact, during the harvest time, the price of cloves is between 100-125 thousand rupiah. Thus, I get twice as much as the money than I loaned three or four months before".

She recounts the numbers of transactions and the profit that she obtains easily and automatically, as if reading from a calculator.

To maintain her superiority over the debtors, Wa Rose does not put “all her eggs in one basket”. She spreads the risk of credit defaults by lending money and goods to many farmers. In other words, she does not focus on lending money to just a few people. She reduces her financial risk by lending a maximum of one million rupiah to any one person. If one person cannot pay the debt she can still break even when other farmers sell cloves for half the market price. The aim is not only to limit the debt, the amount of goods supplied, and to lower the risk, but also to maintain the power the creditor holds over the debtor. She believes that if the debt is too large, the power will be in the hands of the debtor. Therefore, to maintain her clientele, she only provides loans at a maximum of one million rupiah. Wa Rose’s trick reminds me of a middle-aged Ambonese woman. Her name is Haliyah, a school principal in Ambon town who started a business selling bags and jewelry. When I asked why she stopped her business, she said: “business is good, and fun when we get the money, but not when I collected the debt, *itu yang bikin beta pung cukimai naik-naik* (it made my blood pressure rise), and I could not stand it”.

### **The Enigma of Debt**

It takes courage to buy cloves before the trees have flowered. When Wa Rose buys cloves three months in advance, neither she nor the farmer know whether there will be a good yield or not. Even Wa Rose’s husband, La Hadji, who is also a successful trader, does not have the courage to risk providing loans to farmers. The money that she lends can amount to thirty million rupiah. This means that she provides money for at least 30 to 40 people, assuming that the maximum loan is one million rupiah. Some people borrow only 500 thousand rupiah; others only 700 thousand. She said that her policy is *tanggung dan bagi resiko*, that is to share the risk, between herself and the farmer. However, throughout these transactions, both she and the farmers hope that all of the harvest results will be good. If the harvest fails after a farmer has received a loan, then Wa Rose just waits until the next harvest. However, in this case a farmer is expected to pay an extra five kilograms of cloves. For example, Wa Rose should get 20 kilograms of cloves, but if the harvest fails, she will get 25 kilograms from the farmer in the

next harvest. The loan is almost impossible to return when a bad harvest occurs since farmers do not have the cash on hand.

However, what is worrisome about the pre-harvest arrangements and providing credit, is not only the risk of harvest failure, but also the extent that the host society can be trusted. I often found that Butonese traders have low trust in giving loans to the host society. Traders believe that they tend to *foya-foya* (waste the money for useless purposes).

Returning to the story of La Kusni, before he finally settled in Pasar Passo, La Kusni was a peddler selling goods around the island. In 2007, La Kusni could afford to buy a second-hand Honda 'mega-pro' motorbike in Jakarta. At that time, some of the roads on Buru had been surfaced. In the same year, he had thirty million rupiah which he used to buy wholesale clothes in Pasar Tanah Abang, Jakarta, and which he brought to Buru. He admitted that women are trustworthy debtors. He shared his story with me when he was back in Buru:

“I distributed the stock of clothes to about six trusted women. The value of the clothes with each woman was around five million rupiah. Distributing the clothes stock in this way was also an attempt to train the women to work as small entrepreneurs. I then expanded this business network from Buru to South Buru<sup>130</sup>”.

In South Buru, he opened his business based on a *modal kepercayaan* (trust model). He used the same system as he had employed in North Buru. He gave a ten percent bonus on the value of clothes that were sold. He then circulated some items to other villages, as well. He remembered that women's demand for imported goods was so high that if he followed the demand, he needed at least one hundred million rupiah for expanding the capital (*modal*) by buying clothes in Pasar Tanah Abang, Jakarta.

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<sup>130</sup> Buru Selatan (South Buru) is a new *kabupaten* (district) with its administrative centre at Namrole. The *kabupaten* was established in 2008 after separating from Buru. Since decentralization there have been many *pemekaran* (blossoming) of administrative areas in Maluku become new *kabupaten*, *kecamatan* or *desa*. The opening of new *kabupaten* often leads to the growth of new markets and trader migrations.



La Kusni had almost no problems in his business with women. What makes him proud is that some of the women have also started their own businesses. Those in Namrole, South Buru, started to buy clothes in Ambon. He mentioned that his clients in some areas, such as Pela and Ailawa, were mostly women who are now independent traders.

I often visited his small kiosk in Pasar Passo that is located next to his brother's kiosk, La Duriman. I can see that he looked very *luwes* (flexible), getting along fine with the female kiosk owners and customers. It seemed that he gained this experience when he still a peddler. He told me that most of the women were honest (*jujur*) and did not give him a *pusing kepala* (headache), in other words did not cause him any problems in running his business. The only problem was with bad credit arising from their husband's spending money on cigarettes, liquor, or gambling. Loaned money or advances that should have been paid back to La Kusni were allocated for different purposes. Women also diversified their businesses by allocating money made from selling clothes to processing copra: extracting flesh from coconuts, drying and smoking it for copra. The husband's role is to sell the copra in town. Once the husbands have the money, they tended to waste it on useless things (*foya-foya*) such as visiting prostitutes in Namlea. This led to bad credit and the women could not pay back the debt to La Kusni. Sometimes, he responded by giving them another chance. He supplied more clothes in order for the women to be able to pay back the previous loan. So, the relations between La Kusni and his clients is based on trust, but increasingly becomes one of mutual dependency: La Kusni wants to see a return on his loan and the women need the cash income. His first experiences of bad credit have at least taught him to be more careful when giving people a second credit opportunity.

For untrustworthy women who have developed a bad credit rating because of dishonesty, he simply stops providing loans. However, La Kusni admits that it was also partly his fault since he

often left the customer for more than one month and did not really control the progress of the credit. A peddler has to keep moving through a district, and it may take a month to come back to the same village. As a result, debtors have sometimes already misappropriated money that they should have paid back to La Kusni. Had he implemented controls every week, the women would not have been able to allocate money for other purposes, such as paying for sick relatives to receive medical care or giving money to their husbands.

From the opposite perspective, being indebted can create an angry feeling, because the first time, the loan is given as an expression of hospitality, as in the case of the Surabaya Chinese who came to La Hadji's shop, which I described in the beginning of this chapter. But then when a gifted loan turns into a debt, the creditor asks for repayment with gestures of hostility. Fortunately, The Chinese traders have a good relationship with La Hadji as he always meets the promise to pay back the loan on time.

Debt relations have the potential to create networks and to bring about Butonese self-determination in handling finance and controlling markets, and through recognition in terms of trust from Chinese bankers and wholesalers, who act as their patrons. As I describe above, urban Butonese traders perceive that debt provided by a bank or by Chinese wholesalers demonstrates trust and is beneficial. Debt expresses the Butonese traders' ability to activate their networks and gain confidence in their potential as a client. Debt promises the crucial aspect of allegiant relations between lenders and debts, even though it creates patron-client networks. Beyond its material aspect, debt can bring freedom because it makes the debtor able to make real promises in the future. The promises involve returning a loan and making a loyal

relationship. Paying off debt is only one part of keeping promises; it also involves investing in long-term status, reputation, and social worth<sup>131</sup>.

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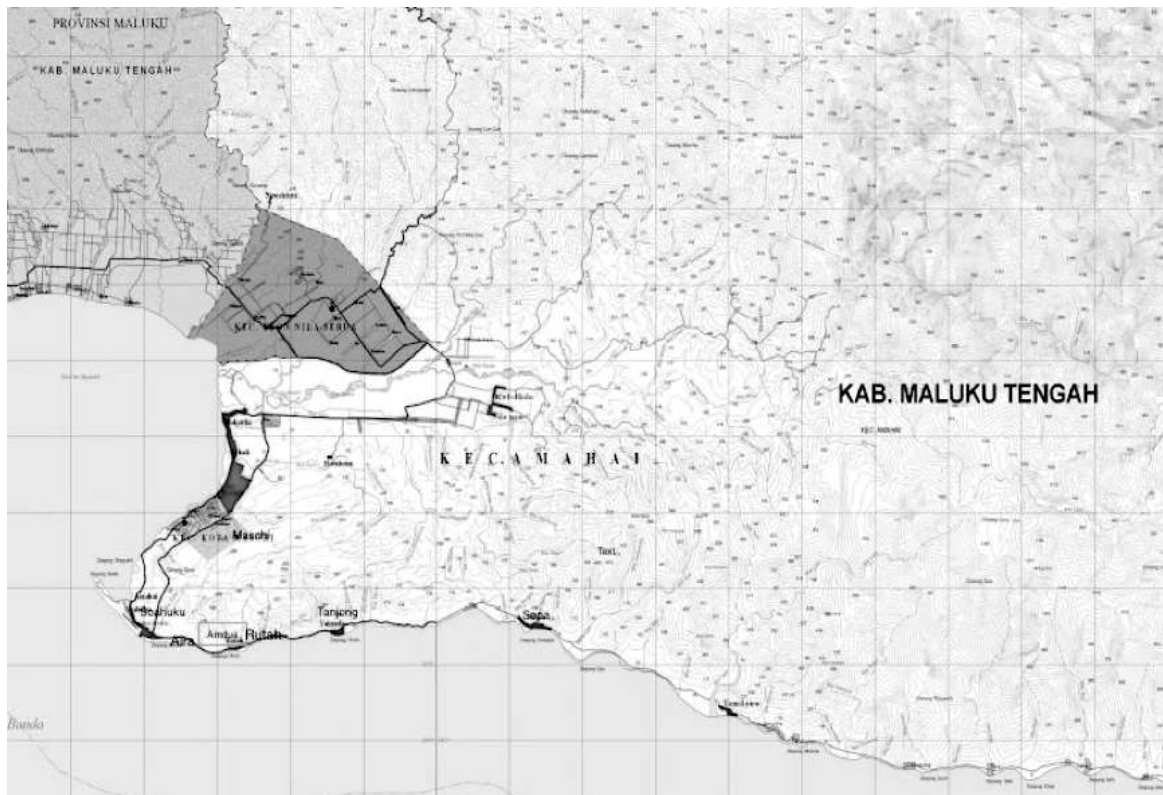
<sup>131</sup> Jane Guyer, "Obligation, binding, debt and responsibility: provocations about temporality from two new sources". 2012: 492. *Social Anthropology*, Special Issue: Debt Issue. Volume 20, Issue 4. See also debt as a promise in David Graeber, *Debt: the first 5,000 years*. 2014: 75-77. Melville House, Brooklyn.

## Chapter Four

### WAR MEMORIES, RUMORS AND BELONGING: MUSLIM BUTONESE AND CHRISTIAN MOLUCCANS IN THE AFTERMATH OF *KERUSUHAN*

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In the rural areas of the central Moluccas, my research has focused on two neighboring villages in the southern part of Seram Island. The first village is Soahuku, a village mostly occupied by Christians, and the second is Aira, a hamlet that is mostly populated by Butonese Muslims. Aira is located about 20 km from the town of Masohi. This Butonese hamlet is located next to two big Christian villages, Soahuku and Amahai. This hamlet is administratively under the Kecamatan (Subdistrict) of Amahai, but the Butonese people live under the *petuanan* (traditional territory) of Soahuku. The relationship between these two villages (Aira and Soahuku) is like mother and child. The Christians of Soahuku, who were the original inhabitants, provided some of their land for the Butonese who came in the late 1940s. The Butonese in Aira call the Christian village of Soahuku *desa induk* ('core', or 'mother' village), while Aira, the Butonese Muslim village, is called *anak dusun* or 'child of the village'. As in the relationship between a mother and a child, there is always tension between the *desa induk* and the *anak dusun*. Some people see this as a reciprocal relationship, but others consider it to be a relationship of inequality because sometimes the *raja* takes advantage of this asymmetric relationship. The Butonese came to the Moluccas to seek a better life. Local Moluccan *rajas* or the heads of the villages provided them with vacant land that was located along the borders of the villages. They were totally dependent on the goodwill of their *raja*.



**Figure 4.1. Map of District of Amahai. Soahuku and Aira are located in the corner left. Resource: Kantor camat Amahai (2015)**

In this chapter, my approach to examine the structure of Moluccan society is different from the Galactic approach; a system of the elementary political structure in Java that is commonly employed elsewhere in Southeast Asia society. The political formations of galactic society are under a center of domination, or so called *mandala*, which means the subordinate peripheries are ruled from the center<sup>132</sup>. However, Fox (1980) and Valeri (1989)<sup>133</sup> show profound differences between the galactic structure and the moiety structure that is employed throughout

<sup>132</sup> See the discussion of galactic society in J.S Tambiah “2013. The galactic polity in Southeast Asia” (reprint). *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3 (3): 503–34

<sup>133</sup> See James.J. Fox (ed.), 1980 “Introduction” in *The flow of life: essays on Eastern Indonesia*, pp.1-18. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Valerio Valeri, 1989, “Reciprocal Centers: The Siwa-Lima System in the Central Moluccas” in Maybury-Lewis, David, and Uri Almagor. *The attraction of opposites: thought and society in the dualistic mode*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Eastern Indonesia and all societies in Central Moluccas. Moiety is identified by dual reciprocity between organizations, kin, or villages. The moiety system can be found in the traditional Moluccas structures, for example Siwa-Lima that refers to the five and nine assemblies of village confederations. The moieties also symbolically mark the dual metaphors such as male and female, black and white, Muslims and Christians, right and left, landward and seaward, and autochthonous and immigrants. Valeri shows that the traditional location of Siwa is inland. As an autochthonous group, they are in contrast to the Lima that are located along the coastal areas and are seen as immigrants (Valeri, 1989: 118). With the arrival of European colonial powers in the sixteenth century, the Siwa moiety was converted to Christianity, whereas the Lima became associated with Islam. We can also see the duality of the relationship in the Pela system (pledge to ally) that forms a bond between two different villages, islands, and religions.

Although the principality of moiety between Siwa-Lima or Pela between villages has been fading out, I attempt to reconstruct the spirit of duality that still can be seen in various forms in people's lives. I develop the moiety system in contemporary relationships. The Moluccans build their basic cultural categories based on dual religion, Salam-Sarani (Muslim-Christians), and dual ethnicity between the native Moluccans and the ethnic migrants from BBM (Buton, Bugis, Makassar). In contemporary politics, this opposition is applied to many levels of social organization, bureaucracy, and territory. For example, after the communal conflict between Muslims and Christians, the candidacy for gubernatorial elections (also called *pilkada gubernur* or *pilgub*), regent (*bupati*) elections, and mayoral elections must be nominated in pairs; Christians and Muslims or cross-ethnic pairs. Based on the opposition of classification in elections, these pairs become an opportunity for people to reassert their identity-belonging and solidarity.

In contemporary lives in rural Seram, a form of the moiety system is still applied. The dual relationship is between the autochthonous Moluccas as the landowner and the migrant

Butonese as the tenant. Although their relationship seems to be complementary, it is also agonistic and conflictive. The exchanges between them are not necessarily peaceful, but rife with mutual suspicion and lacking trust. Butonese farmers are associated as the outsiders, land users, the last comers, and as hard workers that take care of the economy. On the contrary, the autochthonous Moluccans are land providers, the rulers of social order, more superior, and more decisive in politics; thus they have to be respected by the outsiders. The Butonese-Moluccan relationships are identified as two complementary aspects of hierarchical reciprocity and moral order in which the Butonese are inferior and the Moluccans are more superior. Despite their differences, each of the groups conceives its relationship and engages in activities that take place in the realm of agriculture, commodity markets, and government aid. The dualism, therefore, is not simply conceived as a complementary opposite, but together they make a dialectic relationship through gift exchanges and reciprocity.

In this chapter I found that because of the hierarchical reciprocity with their native Moluccan landowners, the Butonese have a moral obligation and sense of belonging to the Moluccans rather than to their ethnic origins. The Butonese elevate the places of the Moluccas as where they belong through narration and in remembrance of previous lives, as well as their fond relationship with the *tuan dusun* (Moluccan landowners) and *raja* (the head village). Borrowing the concept of the “poetics of space” from Stasch (2013)<sup>134</sup>, the displaced Butonese rebuild a new form of settlement and realign their reciprocity with the new *raja* in another village. Through the poetics of space, the Butonese construct their locality and sense of social belonging and it

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<sup>134</sup> Rupert Stasch, 2013 “The poetic of village space when villages are new. Settlements form as history making in Papua, Indonesia”. *American Ethnologist*, Vol 40. No. 3, ppp 555-570.

becomes a concrete way to deal with external forces, such as displacement, because of the conflict. As I describe in this chapter, the displaced Butonese from six *kampungs* in Saparua tend to move to other Butonese kampongs in the Moluccas, such as Aira and Tanjung, rather than move to their place of origin in Buton, Southeast Sulawesi. They moved to the same Butonese *kampung* during the conflict because the same kind of structural society they knew in Saparua that placed Butonese as a tenant and anak dusun also existed on Seram Island.

In this chapter I describe the paradoxical relationship between the Butonese in Aira and their *tuan desa*, Soahuku. First, I argue that, notwithstanding that the Butonese do not belong to a local *adat* group and were evicted from their first home on Saparua Island, they still have a sense of belonging to the Moluccas. The Butonese have been incorporated within the system of exchanges that they have built over the generations with the *tuan desa* of the neighboring village. From the narratives of belonging to those of La Kumang's survival in Buton, for example, I am trying to show how many Butonese feel a sense of belonging to the Moluccas rather than to Buton.

Second, despite the fact that local Moluccans and Butonese protect each other through mother village-child village relationship, and have built-up personal and intimate exchanges, also called *baku masuk* (literally "get into each other"), the groups are still suspicious of each another. They live at a distance and believe the rumors that they think make sense, even though they may not necessarily be true.

Third, the paradox of the sense of belonging to the paired relationship between the Butonese of Aira and their *tuan desa*, Soahuku, is expressed through various memories and emotions associated with the *kerusuhan*, such as feelings of disgust about eating pork, frustration concerning uncontrollable wild pigs, and the suspicions of corruption in the village elites.



Notwithstanding this distrust, Butonese still respect Soahuku as their “lord” *tuan desa* that has, historically, permitted their *orang-tua-tua* (ancestors) to live in Aira.

Before the *kerusuhan* broke out in 1999, Chris Tamaela, the *raja* of Soahuku village was attempting to limit the number of the outsiders arriving in Aira. He argued that if the population increased, the Butonese would face a crisis of overcrowding and this would affect the system of tribute paid by Butonese farmers to Soahuku. This was because land would be used for settlement rather than for gardening. Compared to the *desa* of Sepa, for example, which has many *anak dusun*, Soahuku had only two small *anak dusun*: Pera, which was mostly populated by Christians and Aira, which was mostly Butonese. Soahuku had the smallest area of any *desa* in South Seram, and therefore, land available for gardening was very limited.

However, when the *kerusuhan* broke out, Chris Tamaela changed his policy toward the displaced Butonese, agreeing that many who had been displaced from Saparua and Nusa Laut Island could stay in Aira. One of the reasons for this was that the older Butonese generation had been working on Soahuku land, and social exchanges between Soahuku and Aira had been forged through work relations and land rent. By accepting more Butonese in Aira, more labor would be provided for working gardens owned by the local Christians of Soahuku. It was also suggested by some that Tamaela gave permission for the Butonese to live in their area to please the existing 50 percent of the Muslim population, Soahuku Islam, and who's *marga* (clan) was already represented on the traditional council (*mata rumah soa*), which has a role in selecting and advising the *raja*. Because of his decision, people in Aira share fond memories of Raja Christian Tamaela. The head of the hamlet in Aira, Ahmadi, told me that Tamaela was a very charismatic man. One story I heard from Ahmadi and others suggested that Pak Tamaela had converted to Islam after a period of living in Java and had changed his name to Ibrahim.

Whether or not this story was true, it does show that the people in Aira expected that Tamaela would convert to Islam, and they would be very happy if the story were true<sup>135</sup>.

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Ahmadi told me that Butonese began to settle in Aira in the 1940s. He had followed his father who had established the hamlet at the end of the Pacific War. In the aftermath of the communist genocide in 1966, many more moved to the hamlet from other Butonese hamlets in the Moluccas and some of them also moved directly from Buton Island in Southeast Sulawesi to avoid being suspected as communists in Buton<sup>136</sup>. Despite the rumors of the involvement of the Butonese in the communist party, local Moluccans did not bother to provide land for the Butonese because they could take care of the land along the riverbanks and serve as frontiersmen in any potential conflict between neighboring villages.

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<sup>135</sup> I heard a similar story in Ambonese Muslim communities who often claim that Pattimura or Thomas Matulesy, the national hero of Maluku, became a Muslim, and that his real name is Ahmad Lessy. People believe many stories about popular heroes, such as Michael Jackson converting to Islam and changing his name to Mikaeel, one of the angels (*malaikat*) in the Islamic faith. Muslim youngsters in Ambon also believe that the last Pope converted to their religion surreptitiously. These kinds of rumors and expectations circulated especially rapidly in the Muslim communities after the *kerusuhan*.

<sup>136</sup> La Edi, for example, a neighbor of La Kumang, my host, told me that he first came to Aira in 1968 following his *bapa tengah* (father's brother) who was scared of being suspected as a *simpatisan PKI* (Indonesian communist party sympathizer) in Buton. His *bapa tengah* moved to Aira to follow his *tete* (grand father) who had been in Aira in the district of Amahai in 1942, before the Japanese occupation. I then connected La Edi's story with many oral histories that I heard; reports that suggest that many Butonese moved out from the Buton Islands in 1965. They fled from Buton to the Moluccas in order to avoid being suspected as communists. Many of them were sympathizer of the Bupati (regent) of Buton, Muhamad Kasim, who was killed in 1969 in front of his wife. He was suspected as being a member of PKI. See Yusran Darmawan, 2008, "Ingatan yang Menikam. Orang Buton memaknai tragedi PKI 1969". Tesis Anthropologi, Universitas Indonesia. Another report shows that in the first general election of Indonesia in 1955, the PKI was mostly popular among Butonese villages in Central Moluccas, whereas native Moluccans, specifically the raja, enthusiastically supported the PNI (Indonesian Nationalist Party) and among the Muslims, the Masjumi and PSSI (Indonesian Islamic Union Party) parties, both conservative Muslim parties. See Jacques Bertrand, 1995: 95-6 "Compliance, resistance, and trust: peasants and the state in Indonesia" PhD dissertation, Princeton University.

In conducting fieldwork in Aira, I was much concerned with the relationship between the Butonese and their own *desa induk* that provides land for them. How does reciprocity between the villages come into being despite people having different ethnic and religious backgrounds, specifically after the *kerusuhan*? In attempting to answer these questions, I will describe the enigmatic relationship between Butonese and Christian people. The Butonese were grateful that Christians had provided land for their grandfathers, but when it came to political welfare issues, it was a different story. Another question that arose during my period in Aira was how the Butonese remembered the sectarian conflict with their *tuan dusun* that had provided land for them. People recall that the conflict which occurred in December 1999 derived from the conflict that broke out in Ambon in January of the same.

### **Remembering the displacement**

When the *kerusuhan* spread to Saparua Island in 2000, the Christian majority attacked and burned six Butonese *anak dusun*. The Butonese fled the island on motorboats across the Arafura Sea to South Seram. These Butonese settlements on Saparua are now empty. While most Butonese moved to South Seram, some returned to Buton and never came back to the Moluccas. However, being displaced did not provoke the Butonese to take revenge; many people still recall how the raja of their *desa induk*, their *tuan dusun*, hid and saved them from Christians from other villages who were running *amok*. They noted that the people who attacked them were from outside and with unfamiliar faces.

After the Butonese left Saparua, their old hamlets located in the border zone between two large Christian villages were empty and devoid of life. Only bushes grew on the land while some small cows owned by the Christians grazed during the middle of the day. Most of the houses were 'burned to the ground' (*rata dengan tanah*). Many clove trees had been neglected and had died. One former Butonese resident who now lives in South Seram feels sad when

remembering the trees in Saparua: “the cloves should be harvested during these days, during this September; if we don’t harvest the trees they will not bear fruit for the next harvest.” During the war, the trees were totally overlooked. The Butonese who used to manage the garden were forced out from the land, while the Christians were busy with the conflict and also guarding their villages from the backlash by Muslims.

The Butonese that I met in Aira proudly claimed that it was they who had made the market in Saparua come alive. It was they who had supplied the market with vegetables, long beans, groundnuts, bananas, coconuts, and cassava. They used to walk from their hamlet to the market as early as 3 a.m. and traded until midday. The market was open on Wednesdays and Saturdays when most of the buyers from Haruku and Nusa Laut visited. However, after the Butonese were displaced, the market was less crowded and lively (*ramai*)<sup>137</sup>.

The Christians tried to take over the market but it was not as lively as before. Only the Chinese merchants remained in the Saparua market during the conflict - alluded to by Butonese as *hanya dong dong itu*<sup>138</sup> (the Chinese) since they shared the same religion as the Christians. When the conflict began to subside, some Buginese traders came to Saparua, some selling food and others clothes. Likewise, several Javanese peddlers using motorbikes started to sell plastics and household goods in Pasar Saparua. As with the markets already described for

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<sup>137</sup> The word *ramai* in Indonesian has become one of the indicators of development. Under the New Order regime, the government made the region *ramai* as a sign of modernity where people are crowded and bustle about in their activities. See Viola Schreer. 2016. “Longing For Prosperity in Indonesian Borneo”. PhD Thesis, University of Kent, UK, *Ramai* is also understood as a social buzz in which large crowds of people make noise with intense social interactions between guests and the host, as well as between sellers and buyers. People gather and make liveliness by establishing hospitality and intimacy with heightened sociality. See Catharine Allerton January, 2012. “Making guests, making “liveliness”: The transformative substances and sounds of Manggarai hospitality”. Special Edition, *The Return to Hospitality, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 49-62.

<sup>138</sup> *Dong* (he/she/they) refers to the third persons, often used in Ambonese Malay to refer to others in an unfriendly way.

Ambon, most of the traders do not live near the market, which is located in a Christian village. Rather, they reside in the neighboring Islamic villages of Siri-Sori Islam and Kulur. There have been many requests from various rajas in Saparua asking the Butonese to return to Saparua, but they are still too traumatized to consider it as a serious possibility. The displaced Butonese from Saparua now living in Aira shared their trauma and during the conflict were isolated. They did not get any food supplies or goods from the outside. The surrounding Islamic villages, such as Iha, had been burned down. Many Muslims died when they swam across the ocean in a panic when Christians finally attacked Gunung Panjang, a Butonese hamlet in Saparua. La Gondy, La Kumang's brother shared his story with a very bitter tone

“Before Christians attacked us, in September 2000, I buried my cash that I got from selling my three cows. When I surreptitiously came back during the ceasefire and dug up the money, it had already become ashes. Both my village and a big Muslim village, Iha, had been *rata dengan tanah* (burned to the ground). They were totally like a desert. The Christians did not leave anything standing or living there. All the houses and clove trees were cut, but I still feel grateful because 45 Muslims in Iha and my village died during the attack, but I and my family were safe”

Compared to the various raja in Saparua who failed to protect their own people in the *anak dusun*, the raja of Soahuku attempted to prevent his Christian villagers from attacking Aira, which was mostly populated by Butonese. But this did not mean that there was no tension. The people in Soahuku had a plan to confront their *anak dusun* supported by the church. Before the attack, the rumor in Aira was that the pastor planned to give a speech to the Christian militia. However, the pastor could not move from the altar and could not speak because the raja, Chris Tamaella, had withdrawn the permission he had given to attack the *anak dusun*. Although the Butonese in Aira felt that their *tuan dusun* still had a feeling of affection toward them, the Butonese were still suspicious and guarded their hamlet against a possible raid.

The Butonese realize that they have “outsider” status, which is why they never retaliated against Christian attacks, except in self-defense. People of Aira also wanted to attack Soahuku. They still had a good relationship with their *tuan desa* who provided them with land to work. However,

in 2001, neighboring Muslim villages insisted that they must attack the Christians in Soahuku. The Muslim villages of Rutah, Haruo and Sepa were ready to support the attack. The people of Aira finally agreed with the suggestion so as not to appear cowardly. At the end of the attack, five people from Rutah had died, but only a few people from Aira had been injured. However, in the next few weeks, the people of Soahuku did not take revenge.

During the conflict, people in Aira were very inventive in making homemade weapons. They used arrows with flights made from long draperies and used heads (*mata panah*) made from nails. Another weapon that they used was a three-pronged spear (*trisula*) made from bicycle handles. This spear also had a simple shape so that when it stabbed someone, the spear would not get stuck in the victim's body. The young people were able to make these homemade weapons because of their knowledge as fishermen. They hunted inshore fish (*ikan batu-batu*) in the shallow waters during low tide or in the middle of the night, using homemade spear guns and wooden rifles. Some young people also used bazookas made from the poles supporting electricity cables (*tiang listrik*). It took two men to operate the bazooka. One man was called to shoot the bazooka while another loaded the charge - such as sulphur - and a detonator into the barrel or "mouth" of the bazooka. They put them in a backpack that also contained sharp materials such as nails and shards of glass. The most popular weapon that they improvised was a short gun made from a piece of pipe. The trigger (*pelatuk*) was made from the spring of a sewing machine. Where, then, did they get bullets? People smilingly remembered, "Yes, the soldiers (*kabaresi*) supplied bullets for us". With the passing of time, people were able to make the gun better. They were able to create a more stable gun that resisted vibrations. The tip of the gun was made from thick metal, so it could release a bullet with a straight shot.

The *kabaresi* also trained civilians in a disciplined way. My host in Aira remembered that every morning he had to get up early, as the *kabaresi* would beat people who came late to the checkpoint at the corner of the village. Civilians who came late were asked to do push-ups. The

*kabaresi* also dunked people in the sea to rid them of their “sleepy heads”. Other men had to lift a plastic *jerigen* (container, literally “jerry can”) filled with water while squatting and were asked to imitate the voice of the rooster “*kukuruyuuuk.....*”.

Spyer, who conducted research among Moluccan refugees, does not see the state as the enemy of society in this instance. She showed that different parts of the state apparatus were co-opted into different social entities during the Moluccan conflict. Many troops of the *Kostrad* (Army Strategic Reserve Command) joined the Muslim paramilitaries. On the other hand, the Brimob officers (Mobile Brigade) infiltrated the Christian groups<sup>139</sup>.

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The communal conflict around Soahuku was not a bloody war compared to what happened in Ambon. The people of Aira worried that a sudden attack could come at any time. The fear was not only because the Butonese hamlet had a tiny population, but also because of the stories that had been heard by so many people about the Christians in Soahuku, making them suspicious of their own neighboring village. One old man in Aira shared some stories with me. He told me that Soahuku was a hotbed in the RMS (*Republik Maluku Selatan* – Republic of South Moluccas) rebellion, back in the 1950s. He said, “We were so scared, honestly. The population here was so tiny. During the war from 1999 to 2000, many people here in Aira fled to Buton, West Seram, and Buru, while we only received people who fled from Saparua<sup>140</sup>. On

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<sup>139</sup> See Patricia Spyer. 2002. "Fire without smoke and other phantoms of Ambon's violence". *Indonesia*. (74): 21-36. Spyer also makes a similar point to that made by Siegel who sees that in every transition in Indonesia that is tinged by riot and war, the military always contained it. As in the case in the Moluccas conflict, the military hid their faces, discarded their uniforms and became civilians. Therefore, the actual killers in the conflict were the army and local people who acted with them. See James T Siegel, J. 2005: 179. *Naming the witch*, Stanford University Press. Stanford, California

<sup>140</sup> Palmer estimated that during the conflict, 35% of the total of Butonese population, or about 160 thousand people of Butonese descents living in Ambon, fled to Buton. However, about 80% of them came back to Ambon when the conflict was almost over given that many of them grew up in Ambon and had never been to Buton before. See Blair Palmer. 2004. "Migrasi dan

the other hand, we strongly believed that Soahuku had a very strong military base. They have a small airport where the military can drop weaponry supplies”.

These feelings of fear were supported by the fact that many Butonese farmers found old rifles buried in the ground in the hills behind Soahuku. It was common for the Butonese farmers to find glassware, metal flakes, even spoons and forks while they cleared the gardens. They said that the objects were from Japanese troops who hid there during World War II. The hills at the back of the Aira hamlet also became an escape route for the RMS in the 1950s. When I climbed the hill to follow La Kumang clearing his garden, the story made sense. The landscape was rugged and the forest became thick only after I walked thirty minutes beyond the garden. This place is ideal for hiding in and in which to be a guerilla fighter.

These fears led people in Aira to set up a night watch. They turned off all the lights so that people in neighboring villages would not know about their activities. This happened throughout 2001 and longer. When the people ran out of gasoline and kerosene, they walked from the back of the village to Masohi to buy more supplies to avoid the Christian village.

### **Memories of War**

During my fieldwork in Aira, I stayed in La Kumang’s new house. He bought the house for three and a half million rupiah. The house had already been neglected for some time since the former owner had fled to Buton due to the Moluccan conflict. Using the money that he got from picking cloves and selling copra, La Kumang built a better house from strong, thick bricks. Before the conflict, his house was in the middle of the garden. He showed me the house that resembled an old shack. It took fifteen minutes to walk from his house. There was an unused structure for smoking copra next to his old house. I can imagine that during the war it was very dangerous

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identitas: perantau Buton yang kembali ke Buton setelah konflik Maluku 1999-2002".  
*Antropologi Indonesia: Majalah Antropologi Sosial Dan Budaya Indonesia*. 28 (74): 94-109.



to live in this isolated place, which is separated from nearby neighbors and the crowds. It is understandable that he moved closer to the villages when the conflict broke out.

La Kumang's parents used to live in the hamlet of Gunung Panjang, on Saparua. The hamlet faced east toward Nusa Laut. His parents were the first generation of Butonese to move to Saparua, back in the 1940s. His father was a petty trader who sold coconuts, cassava, and coconut oil in Saparua. He also brought *gandaria* (*Bouea macrophylla* Griffith), mangosteen, and durian to sell in the market in Masohi. When the conflict broke out, all of La Kumang's family fled to Buton. However, he only stayed there for three months, after which he moved back to Aira. Having been born and raised in the Moluccas, he now considers Seram as his home. He recalled that Buton was a harsh environment for farming. When they fled to Bau-Bau on Buton, displaced farmers cultivated green beans, peanuts, and cassava. However, it was not easy to start gardening in a new area. Farmers had to be alert all the time to prevent animals from destroying their gardens. He often saw monkeys pulling at his crops. I was giggling when he told me about the way monkeys dug for cassava. But La Kumang told me the story with a serious face while imitating the way the monkeys stole the crops. One monkey pulled the cassava stalk using both hands, while other monkeys helped to dig the ground. One monkey held its hand behind its back ready to run away after successfully pulling the cassava. "Monkeys in Buton are very clever. They know how to steal cassava", said La Kumang. Once a monkey knows that the garden is not being watched, he will call his fellows to raid it.

At night, La Kumang and other refugee farmers on Buton had to stay awake to protect their gardens from wild pigs. The number of pigs had increased as the local people had been unable to find ways to stop the population from growing. Muslims are not allowed to consume pork, although some Hindu Balinese people in Buton usually consume it. "But, how many Balinese would you need to eat all those pigs? Because there are a lot," La Kumang asked. Many refugee farmers were tired of the situation. To scare away monkeys and wild pigs, farmers used tin cans

that were tied together to make a long chain. The clattering sound of these small cans scared the animals away. The farmers used this technique both during the night and during the day. Farmers also used poison made from dirty oil (*pelumas gemuk*) with added fruit flavors to attract the animals, which they smeared on fences. One monkey kissed and ate it and some died, but over the subsequent days, other monkeys began to recognize the oil as harmful and avoided it.

After three months, La Kumang, tired of all this hassle, and gave up farming. He told me:

*hadoe!....cape sekali... lebih baik katong jaga kerusuhan daripada bertani macam begini.*  
(sigh!... very tired ...it is better to stay awake to guard against the enemy in the conflict, rather than to farm this way).

During the conflict, people mostly guarded the village during the night. They anticipated that the enemy would tend to attack or raid them when they were off their guard. People who are on guard duty during the night could rest during the day. Perhaps surprisingly, guarding against attacks from Christians in the Moluccas was not considered as distressing as watching out for animal predators twenty-four hours a day in gardens on Buton.

When I went to Buton in the last month of my fieldwork, I found that what the farmers had told me about the conditions on the island were true. The soil on the mainland of Buton was barren. People mostly cultivated cashew trees, corn, and cassava as their main products<sup>141</sup>. Rice fields

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<sup>141</sup> As in Buton, I also saw that cassava is the favorite crop for the Butonese farmers in Aira. Likewise, La Kumang also allocates his rented land for cultivating cassava. This crop is best adapted to dry conditions. It can resist long, severe droughts and poor soil. Although cassava contains a high toxicity, Butonese farmers can process it as part of their diet, in a form called *swami*. The processing of bitter cassava has even become part of Butonese identity. Similarly, the people of Kei, Southeast Moluccas can well manage the toxicity of bitter cassava, which has become an important element of food culture across Moluccas. Hermien Sosalisa & Roy Ellen, R. (January 2013). "The Management of Cassava Toxicity and Its Changing Sociocultural Context in the Kei Islands, Eastern Indonesia". *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*, 52, 5, 427-450. See also how cassava has dispersed throughout Moluccas, Roy Ellen, R., H. L. Sosalisa and A. P. Wulandari 2012. "The biocultural history of *Manihot esculenta* in the Moluccan islands of eastern Indonesia: assessing the evidence for the movement and selection of cassava germplasm". *Journal of Ethnobiology* 32(2): 157–184.

were only found in the highlands. By motorbike, it took thirty minutes from the coastal area to find arable land. However, people told me that they had found an effective way of managing wild pigs using electricity cables connected to solar energy units (PLTS , *Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya*). Between two and three wild pigs died every night when they crossed into the garden and stepped on the cable. Thus, if there were people who died as a result of contact with the electric cable, they would most likely have been persons from outside the village.

- **Butonese Relationships with Christians after the War**

I visited South Seram in 2015, more than a decade after the communal conflict ended. In observing the difference between the *desa induk* and the *anak dusun*, I found a gap in the relative development of Soahuku and its Butonese *anak dusun*. In Soahuku, the neighborhood was neatly ordered. The fences, the gardens, the roofs, and lawns were well maintained. Most of the alleys were very well paved. On the contrary, many Butonese houses were still built from wood. The walls were made from the stalks of sago tree (*gaba-gaba*) and the roofs were made from sago-leaf thatch. Some of the neighborhoods were dense. The houses were very close together with no alleys and no yards. Many houses that were newly built also faced random directions. This neighborhood condition is different to Tanjung (Yainuelo)<sup>142</sup>, another Butonese village where I lived in Aira. Many affluent concrete houses have been built because the village is based on economies of fishing and crop-ownership. Moreover, after the conflict, Tanjung separated from their Moluccan *tuan desa*, Sepa, and Tanjung has become an independent administrative village that receives a one-billion rupiah subsidy from the central government.

When I met Raja Soahuku, she told me a different story; “after the conflict, international aid and government funds improved people's lives. Infrastructure and social welfare have progressed

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<sup>142</sup> Yainuelo is given as the official name of the village in 2014. Yainuelo means the village of coconut (*desa kelapa*).

well in Soahuku”. This optimistic perspective, however, was at variance with the local Butonese point of view. So far, as the *raja* put it, Aira was the “step child” of Soahuku. The aid was always prioritized for Soahuku, Aira receiving only *remah-remah* (what was left over). Ahmadi, head of the hamlet of Aira, talked about the possibility of Aira converting from *dusun* (a kind of village sub-unit) to *desa* (village). Once in 2014, he met Ibu Raja of Soahuku to tell her about his plan to *memekarkan* (develop) the hamlet<sup>143</sup>. Ibu Raja was angry and said that she did not want to allow Aira to become a *desa administratif* (administrative village). To establish a *desa administratif*, according to national government policy, there should be at least 200 *kepala keluarga* (head of household). In fact, Aira had met the minimum requirement to become a *desa*, as in 2016 it had 250 *kepala keluarga*. By becoming independent, Aira would separate administratively from the former *desa induk* (core village) of Soahuku. In addition, the people in Aira could also then administer their own aid and funds, which would come directly from the government without having to pass through the Raja of Soahuku. Moreover, currently in Aira the people are very enthusiastic about taking advantage of a government program that provides one billion rupiah for each poor village per year. People hope that this will enable them to fix their infrastructure; build roads, mosques, houses, and bridges. However, the Raja of Soahuku

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<sup>143</sup> The word *pemekaran* literally means blossoming. There is a decentralization law about the formation of a new province, municipality, district, subdistrict or *desa* from a smaller administrative unit. The aim is to provide a fairer distribution of resources, to absorb more government subsidies, and to enforce representative government. In many cases, *pemekaran* has led to a dramatic increase in tension between local elites who hold and stand for the status quo against those who demand a new administrative village and gain from the *pemekaran*. The multiplication of villages often weakens and undermines the traditional authority of *adat* leaders, as it is owned by Ibu Raja Soahuku. See the implications of *pemekaran* of Moluccas archipelago cases. However, a big village that has wide area, like Sepa, tend to form new villages (*desa*) such as Tanjung and Nuane at kilo 12. The goal is more villages obtain money subsidies from the State (Dana Desa) as much as one billion rupiah per year. For more study see, Birgit Brauchler, Indonesia: Decentralisation and Local Power Struggles in Maluku, *International Crisis Group*, Jakarta/Brussels 22 May 2007. John Sidel, 2008 “The Manifold Meanings of Displacement: Explaining Inter-religious violence 1999-2001” pp, 29-59, Cornell University Southeast Asia Program. Todd Ryan Hooe, 2012: 263-271 “Little Kingdoms: Adat and Inequality in the Kei Islands, Eastern Indonesia. PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh. In the case of West Seram, Brauchler shows that the *pemekaran* has helped to foster Butonese participation in regional politics. See Birgit Bräuchler Feb 2017, 1-16: Changing patterns of mobility, citizenship and conflict in Indonesia, *Social Identities*.

has prioritized developing another village - Soahuku Islam (for the community of native Moluccan Muslims who, at present, live in one village together with Soahuku Christians) - that also wants to separate from Soahuku Kristen. Raja Soahuku would be at an advantage, too, if the population in Soahuku village decreased because each poor family would get a greater subsidy. From the debate in the village, I can see that as a *pendatang* (outsider/immigrant), the Butonese in Aira continue to be treated as second-class citizens compared to both the local Christians and Muslims in Soahuku.

The envy of people in Aira shown towards Soahuku was obvious. Butonese people felt blessed in receiving aid, but they were still dissatisfied with the method by which they received it. Many Butonese felt bad about the inequality of well-being between Aira and Soahuku. Almost all of the aid from the government went to Soahuku; Aira only receiving what was left over. I often heard women complain about rice coupons that were randomly dispersed to Aira once every three or four months. One middle-aged woman told me that the quality of rice subsidy that she received was very bad and it was only good enough to feed her chickens. With a sullen face, she said: "*katong ini macam anak tiri sa*" (we are [treated] like step-children). The government also prioritized Soahuku over Aira for a housing subsidy. On one occasion Rifai, a sixty year-old carpenter and the younger brother of Ahmadi, said to me while he was sawing wood at the back of his house:

*kasih bantuan par beta pung ana sa tunggu sampe sapuluh tahun, tapi bangun baileo saja pung cepat minta ampun* (to receive aid for my daughter, we had to wait more than a decade, but when they built the *baileo* [traditional Moluccan custom house], they could do it very quickly).

Rifai was disappointed that ever since 2004 the field officer had been taking pictures of his daughter's old house, but his daughter did not receive real aid until 2015. He remembered this episode with bitterness.

In addition to my own direct observations, I heard stories of Aira Butonese who felt upset because the Raja of Soahuku had treated them unfairly. I can still remember his upset face when we discussed how people in Soahuku used his skills and did not compensate him properly. On one occasion the Raja of Soahuku requested villagers in Aira to help build the *baileo* (custom house for community meetings) by providing wood. Before the event, Rifai cut 20 cubic meters of timber, which he sent to Soahuku. Later on in the day as the *baileo* was erected, Ibu Raja asked for help from Aira Butonese and from Soahuku *pela* partners from Ameth on Nusa Laut. Rifai remembered bitterly:

*katong datang kerja, dong cuma kas makan siang saja, beta pung karingat seng dapat bayar* (we came and worked there, but they only gave us a meal. They did not pay me for my sweat).

I could tell from his face that remembering the story still upset him very much. It is true that *pela* partners would not be expected to receive cash payments, only food with the expectation on a later date after *masohi*, their *pela* can request. However, hearing that the local government also subsidizes Soahuku in the building of the Baileo and given that people often hear about the corruption in the procurement of *bantuan* (aid), local Butonese expect to get money, as well, and they feel it's unfair if there is only food in compensation.

However, Rifai did not blame the *Raja*, he rather pointed to the Raja's advisors and contractors who were in charge of allocating the money to pay him and some other Butonese workers from Aira. He expressed his anger with Johannes, who built the *baileo* and siphoned off much money. With wide angry eyes - as if he was talking directly to him – Rifai said:

*Orang-orang di sekitar raja nih pung putar balik seng bayar katong* (other people around Raja, they who do not pay for my skilled labor).

As he started to calm down, he lowered his tone:

*Belajar dari pengalaman, mungkin lebe bae ke depan beta harus kerja professional* (learning from this experience, maybe next time I will have to work more professionally).

In the future, he will charge people who ask him to cut wood with his timber machine. Normally, when people ordered wood, he charged one million and 500,000 rupiah per cubic meter. But he wisely added:

*Siapa lia beta bai, ah beta juga lia dong bai* (so long as people treat me well I will treat them well too).

He was willing to give a discount as long as people reciprocated with a fair deal. He strongly believed that people who took advantage of his skill with no compensation would “pay for it someday”. In other words, he believes that people who do not exchange with fair reciprocity will get bad luck and fall sick.

In contrast to Rifai’s “glass half empty” perspective on life in Aira, Ahmadi, his elder brother who is also the head of Aira hamlet, perceived the situation in Aira more optimistically. At a public meeting where he and I sat at the rear, near the exit door, he said that the hamlet of Aira had a *kas desa* (village account) of 300 million rupiah. In 2016, this cash would reach about 450 million rupiah. Money was also obtained by taxing *clostor* ( a small place that is usually call for tuna fish packaging and storage), a facility that is located in the corner of the hamlet. “In 2017, hopefully the *kas desa* of our hamlet will have grown to one billion rupiah”, he claimed optimistically. This is because, in 2017, the Indonesian government will be conducting a *pilkada serentak* (a simultaneous direct local election). During this time, many candidates running for the positions of regent or governor will be donating large sums of money to improve their images<sup>144</sup>. Watching him talk about the money and the fund, I remembered Ahmadi’s ability to

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<sup>144</sup> *Pilkada* has been the trademark of democratization after being introduced in 2005. One of the impacts of *pilkada* in the village is the *politik uang* (money politics). The distribution of cash and other gifts to voters is very intense during the political campaign. Since most candidates are wealthy businessmen or incumbents who have huge amounts of money from donors and the state budget, the village head leverages his bargaining positions to gain a sum of money from the candidates by promising that he will steer his constituents to vote for the candidate. See the case from the Moluccas where a candidate in *pilkada* used patronage resources and distribution of money to get support from the voters. Dirk Tomsa July 2009, “Electoral democracy in a divided society: The 2008 gubernatorial election in Maluku, Indonesia”, *South East Asia Research*, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 229-259.

connect local elites with people at the grassroots level and his ability to influence people to vote for certain candidates. He was close to some elite local figures, such as Ibu Raja Soahuku and the current regent of Masohi, Abuwa Tuwasikal, functioning as a political broker for Aira<sup>145</sup>.

### ***Baku Masuk***

Despite their segregation and envy, I still found that relations between Muslims and Christians in Aira were good. *Baku masuk* ('mutual access') was the term people in Aira often used when describing their post-conflict relationship with the Christians. Butonese and Christians were connected through the mundane reciprocity of everyday activity. For example, Rudy used to live in Aira, but because of the conflict, he moved to Namano, a Christian area in the district of Amahai. After the conflict, I often saw him going to La Kumang's house. They talked intimately about many things. Once I saw Rudy take a chicken from the back of the house with La Kumang's permission. La Kumang told me that last Christmas, Rudy had invited him to Namano and he had given him a broken amplifier and loudspeaker. Therefore, when Rudy came to his house, he gave him a chicken in return. Before the conflict, Rudy used to live in Aira. He was advised to move to Namano by the neighbors when the conflict worsened at the end of 2000.

I also often heard stories of Christians who asked Butonese to work on menial jobs. During the work young Butonese men were often involved in *mayare* (flirtation that usually ended in a sexual trise) with Christian girls. La Kumang told me a story about this. When he was smoking copra in Soahuku - a process that could take several days - with La Sabri, his brother's son La

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<sup>145</sup> One of the usual and primary roles of the village head or raja is to maintain the clientelistic bond that connects the political interests of the big power/government with the people. As in the description of a village head in Java, Ahmadi is relatively wealthy among Butonese. He is one of the biggest landowners and the owner of hundreds of clove trees. Village heads like Ahmadi gain their wealth also because they accumulate their network with higher officials in the state apparatus, which gives aid and subsidies through the village head. See the case of village head as political brokerage in Gillian P. Hart, 1986: 199. *Power, labor, and livelihood: Processes of change in rural Java*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.



Sabri did *mayare* with a Christian girl who often passed the place where they smoked copra.

La Kumang told me the details

*Su lama-lama bagini, pas beta ada angka aer dari sumur, beta cari La Juma, astaga, dia su baku injak deng parampuang di belakang rumah kosong tanpa katong karja* (After working for days, I was drawing water from a well and looked for him. He was having standing sex with the girl behind an empty house).

La Kumang told me that for the young Muslim boys to go with Christian girls was not a big scandal as long as it did not end in a serious relationship. La Sabri usually followed La Kumang when he harvested cloves in various locations across several islands and he was reputed to have been involved in many sexual relationships during this work.

Specifically, in the area of sharecropping tree crops, I found Christians and Muslims to have built an ongoing reciprocal relationship, even before the conflict happened. Wa Lija, La Kumang's wife who usually handled her husband's income, told me that if their Christian *tuan dusun* (landowner) in Soahuku needed cash, all he needed to do was just *buang suara* (literally, 'throw the voice') to let her know about their needs<sup>146</sup>. Christian landowners usually came to La Kumang when they needed money. Pieca, a Christian *tuan dusun*, once came to his house. He was about to marry off his daughter and he needed cash for the wedding. Since Pieca rented his land to La Kumang, he often comes to La Kumang *buang suara* a couple of days before to ask for some money in advance of the copra harvest. Pieca came with his wife to La Kumang's

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<sup>146</sup> Women in the Moluccas usually handle the debts and keep the accounts, while husbands looks after the boats or crops. In her ethnography of Barakai people in Aru for example, Spyer demonstrates that *pencarian* (livelihood) has its division of labour based on gender. Men dive for sea produce, because it requires physical strength. The undersea is a men's space where competition and camaraderie are forged among the divers. On the contrary, women work on the land where they exchange the sea products with goods for daily life. Children and women gather sea products, taking care of commodities such as *trepang* (sea cucumbers) and mother of pearl. Spyer has argued that women's entanglements in the larger world outside of Aru are mediated by their fetishization of the things. Women use credit to buy desirable things such as white plates, which they trade for oysters. They mostly handle debt by paying with things. Barter is common since the circulation of money in the island is very limited (See Spyer, 2000: 141, 145, 154. *Memory of Trade, Modern's entanglement on an Eastern Indonesian Island*. Duke University Press. Durham and London)

house by motorbike. He wore cargo pants and his wife brought some goods for the host. I could see their intimacy in their behavior during the conversation. Unlike a formal guest who would usually sit in the living room, Pieca and his wife came directly to La Kumang's kitchen. Wa Lija gave the money and she also gave fish to Pieca's wife. Wa Lija gave cash worth three times as much as the copra harvest, which was equal to a one-year contract for some coconut trees. The arrangement was that in the next copra harvest, La Kumang would not have to share any money with Pieca<sup>147</sup>.

The contract for copra between La Kumang and his Christian *tuan dusun* involves an intimate, but at the same time, distant, relationship. Pieca usually calls La Kumang on occasional events on Saturday night. He came to drink *sopi* (traditional palm liquor) on Pieca's verandah, but since La Kumang's wife does not really like him to come home drunk at midnight, he rarely visits Pieca. However, La Kumang still often goes to Pieca's house when he goes to the town of Masohi for shopping.

La Kumang has four contracts, three with Christians in Soahuku and one with a Chinese trader from Soahuku who is now living in Dobo in the Aru Islands. Another landowner, Petra, asked La Kumang to rent his garden for ten million rupiah. He needed to pay for his son who was going to register for the army. It was very common for parents to spend tens of millions of rupiah in order to get their sons admitted into the army or employed as a civil servant. At that time, La Kumang only had four million rupiah. He undertook to pay the remaining six million rupiah when the copra was harvested.

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<sup>147</sup> There are various contracts for crops between Butonese and Christian *tuan dusun* (landowners). Mostly the Butonese share 50:50 of the yields with the *tuan dusun*, but if a Butonese farmer has more cash, they usually rent the land for between 1 to 10 years. The price of the contract on the land is determined by the number of trees that grow on the land.

In addition, it is also the character of copra that makes the *baku masuk* relations between Butonese and Christians. Unlike cloves, that can only be harvested about once a year or once every two years, because of the severe long dry season, copra can be harvested three or four times within one year. Although the copra price is not as high as the price of cloves, the produce is reliable because it can still be harvested during the long dry season. Farmers who have a smaller amount of money tend to contract Christian land through the system of *bagi hasil* (sharecropping) rather than *sewa* (rent). This sharecropping system makes the *baku masuk* between the Christian *tuan dusun* after the harvest.

During the communal work of building the roof of the mosque on a Sunday morning, La Edi, a Butonese farmer who is also La Kumang's neighbor, played a Butonese trick on his Christian *tuan dusun*. After a farmer sells the copra, he has to share half of the money with his *tuan dusun*. However, the *tuan dusun* does not really know the exact yield of the copra harvest. He just gets a *nota* (receipt) which is signed by an employee of a Chinese trader who receives/buys the copra. Farmers often manipulate *nota* by asking the employee to sign two copies. The first *nota* is for the Chinese Moluccan boss and the second is to be given to the *tuan dusun*. The farmer manipulates the second *nota* by writing that the yields of copra are lighter than the real one that he harvested so that he can get more of the shared money. However, *tuan dusun* often realize that farmers cheat them. When a *tuan dusun* accepts the *nota*, they don't bother checking the receipt carefully. While gritting his teeth, La Edi told me:

*Beda deng dolo-dolog, tuan dusun cek nota benar-benar. Sekarang ini samua su tahu sama tahu, tuan dusun kalau terima nota dari katong itu cuma langsung lipat nota deng buang kepala, dong su tahu katong samua kalakuan*

(It is different from the old times, when *tuan dusun* really checked the *nota*. Now we all know, when the landowner accepts the receipt and they just fold it and do not want to see it anymore that they already know our tricks)

"It's okay to lie because it makes everybody happy," said another farmer responding to La Edi's account. As I will describe in the next Chapter, the intimacy of exchanges and *baku masuk* are built through mutual fraud, manipulations, cheating, and lying. The farmers, the Chinese

employees, the Chinese traders – each of these people have tricks in their pocket and know that they are lying to each other. The fraud is never punished, but answered by another deception because to maintain the exchanges, each person feels that they do not want to openly hurt anybody.

### **Conflict between Butonese *Anak Dusun***

Almost all of the large villages in Ambon and Seram contain separate smaller Butonese hamlets (*anak dusun*). These hamlets have historically served to separate large villages with a high potential for conflict. However, once the Butonese hamlets themselves achieved larger populations, they too provided conditions for conflict with neighboring Butonese hamlets. I read several local newspaper articles about inter-village conflicts involving fights following celebrations, and concerning land border disputes. The conflict is often between neighboring villages, either fights within the same native Islamic villages or with Christian villages. However, during my fieldwork in Aira it became clear that these conflicts were mostly between the Butonese in different hamlets rather than between the Butonese with their *desa induk*.

For example, evening events were held in two villages before the end of the year in 2016. The first event was held in Amdua, another Butonese hamlet that is the *anak dusun* of *desa Rutah*. Amdua is the neighbor of Aira, which is located in the eastern part of the Aira village. Young people from Aira tended to go to this event because it was a *landoke* dance party, a Butonese traditional event in which the host plays very loud music that can be heard across the village. The time of a *landoke* event conflicted with an event that happened at the same time in Soahuku. The people in Soahuku were inaugurating and reinstating the *baileo* (a Moluccan traditional house for public meetings). Although Aira belongs to Soahuku, young people chose not to go to this event, not because the Soahuku people were mostly Christians, but because the event was a formal ceremony. "*Itu acara for orang-orang tua*" (it's an event for old people) said La Kumang. We sat in the living room talking about the letter of invitation received from

Soahuku. Farmers who work for the landowners (*tuan desa*) of Soahuku received invitations for the ceremony. Most of the farmers came, but my host, La Kumang, felt lazy and did not want to attend. He said “*kalo katong kesana dong kasi “kaki pendek”*” (if we go there, they will serve us “short legs”, which euphemistically refers to pig meat. People from Aira were reluctant to attend the party because during the event, there was an expectation of *makan patita* (the tradition of eating together), and some of the meals included pork or were made with pork which Muslims are prohibited from eating.

During that night when I walked around the village, it was empty. People were split. Young people had gone to Amdua for the fun and energetic dance party, whereas the older people had gone to the solemn, quiet, and prayerful ceremony in Soahuku. I did not go to either of these two events, but rather talked with some people who were hanging out on the terrace of La Kumang’s house. We mostly talked about the *masohi* (communal work; building people’s houses) that we would do tomorrow morning.

When I woke up at about 7am in the morning, I heard people already gathering for the communal work close by La Kumang’s house. People seemed to be engaged in interesting but agitated conversation. Soon afterwards I washed my face, drank some tea, and had a rushed breakfast before joining in the work and conversation. Bapa Mucu, a short-tempered middle-aged man with an angry face and high tone of voice swore “*Cukimai dorang?, kenapa katong seng balas*” (screw them, why don’t we get them back?). From the conversation I realized that there had been a fight last night. It was not against the Christians, but between some young people from Aira, who had come to the party last night, and others from Amdua. The fight occurred at the end of the dance party. Four young people from Aira were wounded. They had been beaten with sticks and pelted with rocks.

The conversation continued until we took a break from the work. Some people still continued their work cementing the house, while others sat around and ate lunch. One man came up with an idea “*bagaimana kalo katong pele jalan supaya dong seng bisa pi kota Masohi*” (how about if we close the road so that people from Amdua cannot go to Masohi town). I often heard about this strategy - *pele jalan*. When conflict between two villages occurred, the village closer to the town prevented access to their “enemy neighbors” by blocking the road - *pele jalan*. Other people disagreed and they suggested reconciliation – otherwise the conflict would continue and would finally involve older people. The conversation was not really balanced. Rather there was one person who actively and dramatically shared the chronology of the fight. From the conversations, I realized that fights between people from Amdua and Aira were frequent. Although these two hamlets have the same ethnic background, on Seram they have different *desa induk*; Aira belonging to the Christian village of Soahuku and Amdua belonging to the Muslim village of Rutah. The nephew of my host, who arrived late for the communal work, responded curtly when he found out that the fight was between Aira and Amdua, “*oh sama-sama, carita lama...*” (Same brothers, old story) He thought that the fight was with Christian Soahuku. If that had happened, it would have been an extraordinary story.

People responded sympathetically (*decak kagum*) to the person who shared his involvement in the previous night’s brawl. Some people actually seemed to enjoy listening to the storyteller who got beaten and who blacked out. To the listeners, it was amusing since he was able to survive such a severe beating. The story also received a sympathetic response from the audience when the storyteller suggested that he was *kebal* (immune) to beating by sticks and stones. Such bragging was similar to what I heard when I conducted fieldwork in urban Ambon. When a violent incident took place, people liked to hear stories about someone who could not be “exposed by the bush knife” (*parang seng makan dia*). Hearing this boastful man, Bapa Mucu, a man who had developed a reputation during the *kerusuhan*<sub>1</sub>, raised his voice “Don’t pretend to act like a brave man. If you were really a man, you would not run away during the

*kerusuhan*. But maybe it was because you were all still “*kecil halus* (little soft babies) when the conflict broke out”. The bragging man sat silently. Some people turned their laughter into embarrassed smiles and other people just grumbled while continuing the conversation. Bapa Mucu had turned the youngster’s bragging stories into something embarrassing. Some of the young people who sat around during the break from the communal work felt that the older people were disappointed in them because of the previous night’s brawl. Bapa Mucu used to be the weapon supplier during the *kerusuhan*. Despite his disagreement with the brawl, he felt embarrassed that people in Aira had got beaten by the Amdua people (with a smaller population) originating from the same Butonese village.

Bapa Jani, an elder who attended the ceremony in Soahuku, argued that the fight the previous night had been a mistake on the part of the young people of Aira. As members of an *anak dusun* they should not have turned down an invitation from Soahuku, their *tuan desa*. Amdua is the *anak dusun* of Rutah, which is not part of Soahuku. People of Aira should respect Soahuku. Bapa Jani then expanded his thinking “If Ibu Raja Soahuku knew about this case, she would simply laugh at us because the young people chose to go to another event in Amdua rather than to Soahuku”. I sat listening to this conversation while trying to offer some better suggestions myself. Another elder wisely replied, “We would have been better off going to the Soahuku event because since they had given us an official letter of invitation when the fight broke out, the inviting village would have had to take responsibility”.

I rarely heard of any fights between Aira and Soahuku, except during the *kerusuhan*, but after the *kerusuhan* the fights were no longer about religious issues, but rather youthful brawls because of drunkenness or one village losing in a soccer competition. Some Butonese in Aira maintain good relations with Christians in Soahuku. Muslims often attended Christian events and inaugurations. La Kumang told me that once his friend invited him to attend *Sidi* (protestant Christian confirmation of church membership) He accepted as usual, but paid special attention

to the food. However, my impression is that the relations between Christians and Muslims are very limited, mainly involving invitations to particular events and rituals (such as Sidi and Hari Raya). They tend to stop short of more intimate activities such as drinking together or staying over with their Christian or Muslim acquaintances.

The older generations of Butonese in Aira have a sense of belonging to their Christian *tuan desa* despite being both traumatized by the *kerusuhan* and disgusted by possible pork contamination of food served during public and private events, but as an *anak dusun*, the Butonese still treat the invitation of Raja Soahuku with respect. Many of the farmers who also work and rent land from Christians in Soahuku are automatically tied through the harvest arrangements. By contrast, young people tend to have a party and end up with a fight that is repeated with revenge attacks against one another.

### **Pest Control in Muslim Villages**

A picture of a young male soldier with a Green Beret hangs on the wall in La Hadji's house. The soldier sits with La Hadji and his wife. He smiles a little bit in the picture. I thought that the soldier must be La Haji's son, but I was wrong. La Haji told me proudly, but with a rather sheepish face, that the man was not his son but his *anak piara* (foster son). Since the conflict ended in 2004, there have been many soldiers guarding the borders between Christian and Muslim areas. These soldiers have established intimate relations with the people around them. When the soldiers return home, they keep in touch with people in the village and send goods, clothes, and seeds for planting. People also note that many of the soldiers are also married to local women.

Every year, the detachment of soldiers stationed in Aira is rotated between different units. When I did my fieldwork, a unit from Central Java Province was in charge. They had been there for about a year. At first, it was uncomfortable for me to talk and hang out with these soldiers given



that I had heard stories from many Butonese civilians who had had bad experiences with the soldiers. The civilians were often being disciplined and punished. La Kumang remembered how one soldier had hit him with coconut leaves (*pelepah kelapa*) when he arrived late at the checkpoint during the conflict. The bruises had healed, but the anger remained. However, knowing that I spoke fluent Javanese, La Kumang wanted to prove that I could speak the Javanese language. The first time I talked to the soldier stationed in Aira was during community work in front of the mosque. I could see on his face both amazement and pride that I could converse easily with the soldier in his own language and that he was the person to connect me with them. Some of the troops were very surprised to hear me speak Javanese. One of them said to me "you look like a native Moluccan, but how come you can speak Javanese?"

After serving in Aira for ten months, the central Javanese detachment became bored. There had not been much happening in the village since the sectarian conflict subsided around 2003. However, the reason why the troops returned to be placed along the borders of the villages is because there have been many serious fights between villages such as Hualoy against Sepa and Aira against Amdua that are mostly caused by land and boundary disputes, exacerbated by drunken youths who often provoke fights<sup>148</sup>.

In the afternoon, the troops mostly played volleyball in the dusty, empty field in front of their barracks. The rest of the day was spent playing with their cellphones in the barracks. One soldier, Muhajir, told me that he found spending his time serving in a place that had no war at all very boring. Therefore, he spent his spare time raising chickens. He bought the poultry in Java and borrowed extra cages from people in the village. When the chickens matured he sold

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<sup>148</sup> Many local news stories contain reports about fights between neighboring villages such as "Ini Kronologi Perang Antarkampung di Maluku", *Detik news.com*, Minggu 30 Dec 2012; Cegah konflik, Batalion Infantri 731/Kabaresi jaga desa Maluku, *Antarnews.com*, Jumat, 9 Agustus 2013; "Bentrok Warga Pecah di Pulau Seram, 6 Tewas, *Sindonews.com*, 4 Agustus 2014; "Pangdam Siap Amankan Wilayah Konflik Antar Kampung," *Tribun-Maluku.com*, 21 Februari, 2015

them at the market place in Masohi. Lukman, another soldier, sold cloves to Chinese traders. He kept an eye on the clove harvest season in different villages. Unlike big traders, he only bought cloves by the *cupa* (measured in small condensed milk cans) at the end of each harvest season, and sold them to a local Chinese wholesaler in Soahuku. He told me, "I am going to use this money to buy decent food. You know, the military transport ships to Java take one month from Ambon". This surprised me given that a commercial ship from Ambon to Surabaya only took three days. I jokingly asked, "That's crazy, are you propelling the ship with oars?" He said "No man, it's true. This was a very old military ship imported from Germany and of Second World War vintage. I need to obtain decent food and cook properly during the trip back. The food on the ship is so boring and lacking in nutrition" Muhajir, who sat next to Lukman, abruptly added "that is why I am so disappointed being in the army, the salary and benefits are so low I would rather be a poultry entrepreneur".

Lukman, another Javanese soldier, told me that during certain religious events, such as Christmas and *sidi* (confirmation), people in Soahuku asked for his help in hunting wild pigs. Both in Soahuku and Aira, the population of wild pigs has decreased and moved to the eastern part of the island, which is mostly populated by Muslims. The decrease is due to overhunting by Christians. To hunt pigs, Lukman and the four other soldiers joining him provided rifles, but not the bullets. He said, "if I use army bullets without an explanation to my commander I will get punished. Every bullet fired has to be reported". Therefore, people in Soahuku provided the bullets and also the truck for transporting the pig carcasses. However, he did not question where the Soahuku people got their bullets. I then remembered the rumors in Aira. People strongly believed that during the conflict, Christians in Soahuku obtained their supply of ammunition, rifles, and bombs from their relatives in the Netherlands and they still kept this supply even after the war<sup>149</sup>.

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<sup>149</sup> During my fieldwork, I often heard rumors that the Muslims believe that Christians are stockpiling weapons funded by Moluccans from the Netherlands. Some people believe that

During and after the *kerusuhan*, much of the state apparatus, including the military, resorted to informal and illegal means in its relations with the wider society. Interestingly, not only were the most marginalized and disempowered people involved in illegal activities, but also military personnel were engaged in informal webs of illegal exchange. For many people, this system of illegality was not seen as something exploitative or oppressive, but rather proved to be a practical way of meeting their local needs. Thus, in Soahuku when Christians supplied the bullets and soldiers provided the rifles to pursue pig hunting it was an efficient way of avoiding formal rules and army bureaucracy. The ubiquity of illegal practices in Indonesia more generally shows the blurred boundary between state and society. The blurring of this relationship could have several explanations: that the state is being socially embedded, or that, society is blurring the firm and rational boundary between state and society, predicted in Weberian theory<sup>150</sup>.

Wild pig hunting was most favored recreational activity for soldiers based in Aira. In addition to practicing their shooting skills, it provided opportunities to visit other villages. For Lukman, with

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the weapons are used to arm a new RMS separatist movement. However, this rumor has never been substantiated. I see that the rumors have successfully driven the fear and alertness among the Muslims against their fellow Christians. Rumors become a belief that can affect people's life. On the other hand, Christians also have their own anxieties about "Islamization" in education and in the bureaucracy, fears of a great Muslim conspiracy to marginalize them. Thus, rumors are running from both sides creating a new belief after the conflict and restricting the intimate social relations with one another. In the case of North Moluccas, Bubandt points out that rumors have effectively created a "paranoid politics". It became an instrument to instigate and to enact sectarian conflict. Rumor of conspiracies proliferated through words and letters has become the main form of political communication in Indonesia. In the modern Indonesia history, people are driven by their belief in rumor from the 1965 coup to the Jakarta riots of May 1998. See Nils Bubandt. 2008. "Rumors, pamphlets, and the politics of paranoia in Indonesia". *The Journal of Asian Studies : Review of Eastern and Southern Asia and the Adjacent Pacific Islands*. 67 (3): 789-817.

<sup>150</sup> Max Weber points out that the state uses its force to monopolize violence. According to him, the state has both a monopoly to authorize physical force and has legitimation to adjudicate all of the physical coercion coming from individuals. See Max Weber, 2015: 129, 136, 198. *Weber's Rationalism and Modern Society: new translations on politics, bureaucracy, and social stratification*. Translated and edited by Tony Waters and Dagmar Waters. Basingstoke, Palgrave Books, 2015.

eyes full of memories, it was “ the most exciting way of overcoming our boredom”. He shared his story one day in the military post:

The truck from Soahuku arrived when the sun went down at 6 pm. It took one hour to drive to Tamilouw, a large Muslim village. The hunting itself took only one night. When Lukman arrived in the village, he met with the Raja of Tamilouw to ask permission to enter the village and hunt. Surprisingly, the Raja of Tamilouw was pleased to have these soldiers and even some Christian civilians who came along. He welcomed them because people were tired of the predatory wild pigs. Lukman asked where the pigs were. He thought they must be in the forest, far away from the village. But, the Raja exclaimed loudly, “You do not need to hunt far away in the forest, just wait behind people’s houses. There are so many of them now. They are even close to the village”. What the Raja said proved to be true. Lukman only needed to wait two hours behind one of the houses. He hid in an open-air bathroom, near a well. By the middle of the night, he had easily shot five pigs that came sniffing around the kitchen.

Lukman began sharing his story while sitting and then quickly stood in front of me, and stretching his hands in illustration. “The boar was hu..u..uge...” he exclaimed. He then loaded the pig carcasses onto the truck with his arms. When the truck drove along the blood got everywhere and spilled out onto along the road in the night, but it dried on the asphalt during the day, thus the Muslims did not really complain; also because it was soldiers that hunted the boars, Lukman did not hear complaints from the Muslims. Despite his disgust, the night’s hunting was considered worthwhile. Each of the soldiers received cash payments from the Christians in Soahuku who hired them. Lukman got 250 thousand rupiah for one hunt. This fee was already one-fourth of his monthly salary.

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After the *kerusuhan* many villages mostly dominated by Muslims were unable to solve the wild pig problem. Before the conflict, wild pig infestation was a serious problem on Seram. During the conflict, the flight of minority Christians from predominantly Muslim areas made the population of wild pigs more uncontrollable. The Southeast part of Seram Island was hit most severely. The first time I crossed South Seram, I was very surprised to see wild pigs walking freely in the neighborhoods. In Kian Darat, for example, the eastern tip of East Seram, the pigs even played around the mosques. No one could remove the pigs because Muslims are prohibited (*haram*) from eating and even touching them.

Aira does not have a serious problem with wild pig because their Christian neighbors from Soahuku and Amahai often come to hunt them. By contrast, the population of wild pigs in another Butonese village, Tanjung (Yainuelo), has grown rapidly. Tanjung is located about 10 kilometers from Aira. During the *kerusuhan*, this Butonese village had successfully evicted the neighboring Christian village of Hatuhenu<sup>151</sup> causing them to flee to Waipia further northwest on the Elpaputih Bay. The government then provided 97 hectares of land for the Hatuhenu people in Haruru village, in the bay area north of Masohi.

When the conflict broke out, the Muslim villages of Sepa, Haya, Tanjung, and Rutah forcibly evicted the residents of two small Christian hamlets, Hatuheno and Nuelitetu. Hatuheno is now composed of vacant, uninhabited land; there are only bushes and the ruins of burned walls left. The displaced Muslims who used to live in Iha on Saparua Island moved to Nuelitetu after being attacked in December 2001, and changed the name to Iha, the name of their old village in

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<sup>151</sup> Hatuhenu is a small Christian village that is flanked by two big Islamic villages, Rutah to the west and Sepa to the east. Before the conflict, the population of Hatuhenu was only about 300 people. A new survey from 2012/2013 reports that the population of Hatuhenu living in the new village of Haruru was 550 people. Source RPJM (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah*) Negeri Hatuhenu, 2013-2017.

Saparua<sup>152</sup>. The unexpected consequences came after the conflict. The population of wild pigs, which used to be hunted and consumed by the Christians (and Nuaulu in this area), grew out of control as the new Muslim occupants no longer consumed pork. They become a serious problem. For the Muslims, the pigs were not only pests, but also pollutants and were prohibited to eat (*haram*).

By contrast, for Christians, pig meat was not only delicious, but also symbolized high social status. In the ritual of *sidi*, for example (which commences after learning the catechism), people have a celebratory feast for which they slaughter a pig rather than a cow or goat. They roast the pig and eat it while drinking beer, or *sopi* (traditional palm liquor), which they view as a good combination. However, one *pendeta* (pastor) serving in the congregation of Soahuku grumbled about the tradition of consuming pig meat after *sidi*. “*Makan babi itu bagian dari foya-foya, tapi orang-orang paling kepala batu beta su kasih tahu*” (eating pork is a waste of money, but people are so stubborn they continue to eat it). This disagreement is a part of an old tension between religion (*agama*) and custom (*adat*) in the Moluccas<sup>153</sup>. The *pendeta* in Maluku are mostly

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<sup>152</sup> Referring to the history, the situation was more complex. Iha used to be an independent kingdom located in Saparua Island. Before Perang Iha (War of Iha) against the VOC from 1632 to 1651, Iha had their *tanah dati* (customary territorial land) reaching to Liang, Nuelitetu, Tamilouw, and Luhu. When the Muslims of Iha were evicted from Saparua Island during the *kerusuhan* in 2001, it became the moment for them to reclaim their *tanah dati* inherited from the pre-colonial ancestry that is located in Nuelitetu, a small village next to Sepa in South Seram. Some of Muslims in Iha also moved to their *tanah dati* in Liang, a big village close to Tulehu in Ambon Island. See August Ernst Pattiselanno, “Jejaring Sosial dan Konflik di Masyarakat Pedesaan” (Kasus Di Pulau Saparua Propinsi Maluku). 2008. Thesis Dissertation, *IPB, Institut Pertanian Bogor*. Thus, the *kerusuhan* has opened not simply a primarily religious dispute, but also opened up and revived historical claims concerning pre-colonial identity. Identity politics and revival of *adat* after the conflict were more complex than simply religious dichotomy.

<sup>153</sup> See Frank L Cooley “Altar and Throne in Central Moluccan Societies Indonesia, Volume 2 (October 1966), 135--156. Cornell University Press. After the *kerusuhan*, the revival of *adat* became an integrating force for people who had been divided along religious lines. However, the dynamic clash between *adat* and religion after the *kerusuhan* still happens in daily life, see Birgit Brauchler, 2010. “Integration and exclusion: Islam adat in Central Moluccas”. *Indonesia and the Malay World*. 38 (110): 65-93.

against rituals other than Christian rituals, although they have to deal with the long settled traditions and charismatic Raja in the villages.

When I climbed to La Kumang's garden in the hills behind Soahuku and helped him clear it, he showed me a pig trap (*dedesu*) with a rope hanging in the bushes and connected to the branches of some trees. La Kumang told me that Christians in Soahuku usually hunt pigs around Aira. Instead of working in the garden, Christian villagers prefer to spend their time hunting animals. If a pig is caught in a trap, La Kumang will usually let the people in Soahuku know. He said:

*"banyak katong baku tukar nomer deng dong gara-gara babi ini, par kas tau kalo babi su di tali"* (we exchange phone numbers with the Christian hunters to let them know that a pig is already trapped in the rope).

Muslim farmers don't want to see dead pigs in the garden for any length of time. They know that if a trap wounds a pig, they can still escape and will be more dangerous. Nurudin, one of the Butonese farmers, told me:

"The Christians were so pleased the last time I let them know about the location of a pig. They (the Christians) install traps around the places pigs have been sighted and impatiently hunt them. They hunt with their dogs who help sniff-out the game."

Nurudin tells the story with great excitement. In fact, he had a bad experience with Christians on Saparua who forced him to flee<sup>154</sup>. Compared with Ambon, a town in which people's lives were segregated by religion after the war, in the forests of south Seram, Muslim Butonese farmers and Christian hunters exchange phone numbers and are united against a single adversary: wild pigs.

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<sup>154</sup> During the first phase of the conflict in 1999, Butonese living in Christian villages became the target for attacks. In the case of Saparua Island, for example, the majority Christians burnt almost all of the Butonese kampongs. Most of the Butonese settled in the villages of Tiouw, Paperu, Siri-Sori Amalatu, and Tuhaha and fled to Seram, Ambon, and back to Buton. Many Butonese witnessed Christians in Saparua burning their houses with both kerosene and dried coconut leaves. However, not many Butonese died during the raids in Saparua since the local rajas in had already warned them and advised them to leave before neighboring villagers burnt their houses.

Christian hunters trapped the pigs with nylon rope as thick as a thumb, suggesting the strength of these animals. The nylon is woven into a big net that they coat with sharp wood and wire. They follow an ethical rule not to set a trap near the road and they also have to erect a sign in farming areas around the gardens where they install the trap, so that people will not step into a potentially deadly trap. Zulfikar, a man from Tanjung, told me how “Last time, before the conflict, two people died from being caught in pig traps”. These traps were, however, a bit different from that just described, hunters setting up a spring-loaded arrow hidden in the bushes connected to the trap. Those who stepped on the trap would trigger the arrow pointing directly at them.

In Aira, cows have become a more serious problem than pigs. The Christians in Soahuku own these cows and tend to let them roam through the neighboring gardens of Aira. Some farmers trap the cows, but dare not kill them. La Kumang worryingly told me, “if I kill the cow, who knows whether the owner is the master or the land owner of the garden that I am working on, or whether the owner is a relative of the land owner” He fears that if he makes trouble for Christian cow owners, it would undermine the subsequent relationship.

When I came with La Kumang to the garden, he tied a tiny cow to the corner of the fence. He said to me with an annoyed face:

“People in Soahuku let their cows eat garden produce on purpose. I know it! Once the cows ate my garden and I went to the owner of the cow. The owner compensated me (*kasih ganti rugi*) in the form of two goats. The other day I also went to another cow owner and asked for compensation of 5000 rupiah for each broken cassava plant. I am tired and feel ashamed (*malu hati*) because I have to constantly ask for compensation.”

This time he is totally irritated. I can see this from his restless face. Over the next couple of days, he then shares the story with other people while I accompany him. We attend different events. As we sat near the bay, Pak Ladua suggested to La Kumang that he let the cows eat the cassava so that he has evidence for compensation from the owner of the cow. On another



occasion, he shared the same stories with different people while playing cards in a shelter. Some of the people suggested that it was better to catch the cows and sell them. “Hey Kumang, the price of a cow is now about five million *rupiah*”, said someone seriously concentrating on the cards. He then threw the cards onto the board and yelled as if he had got an idea “yeah Kumang, *jual sajaee* (sell it!)” Another man sitting next to me argued that it would be better to slaughter the cow and eat the meat together. People around him laughed, while La Kumang was thinking very hard about how to solve the cow problem. He seemed to focus both on the cards and on the cow that he still has tied-up in his garden. He swiftly changed his mind, but still with no solution.

“Okay, I will tie the cow first. It has been three days. I am sure that the Christians are busy preparing for Christmas celebrations and, for this reason, are neglecting their animals around my garden”.

What interested me about these conversations was that the Muslim Butonese did not even blame the Christians, but rather talked about the cow. The Butonese are aware that Christians in Soahuku are their “masters” who provide land for them. They are also worried that if they steal or slaughter the cow that would disrupt the stability of exchanges between them with their *tuan dusun*. Another consideration is more ecological than religious. Cultivating cassava is advantageous. It does not need fertilizer and only requires protecting from weed growth and cows. However, cow dung is very useful for composting their crops. The Muslims hate the cows for destroying the cassava, but they need the cow dung to boost fertility of the soil. The situation is similar with respect to wild pigs: the Muslims need the Christians to take care of the pig problem, but on the other hand feel disgust and suspicion around Christian customs regarding polluted animals. Thus, the relations between Soahuku Christians and Aira Muslims in regard to garden management are ambiguous.

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Mama Juany, a Butonese farmer living in Tanjung, has a different attitude to that of La Kumang and has a serious problem with wild pigs. She has four separate gardens and one day she said the following to me:

*Waktu ada dong katong seng perlu pagar, barang itu dong pung makanan. Dong tanam tiang baru dong bikin tali, baru kalo babi lewat dia tagantong, langsung tinggal bunuh saja, keliling hutang-hutang dong taroh, sekarang seng ada lai, mau dibasmi deng apa e?*

When the Christians were still our neighbors, we planted crops with no fence, because the Christians helped us to hunt wild pigs. That is their food. The Christians know how to make a trap, how to tie ropes to make a trap, how to kill the pig crossing the trap, but now the Christians are no longer around I have no idea how to get rid of the pesky pigs.

She thought that I might know how to get rid of the pigs because I had befriended an employee of the Agriculture Department that gives money payments and seeds to the people of Tanjung.

People in Tanjung have little idea how they might eliminate wild pigs effectively. Mama Nipar, the daughter of Mama Juany, full of frustration, told me that she had spent between five and 10 million rupiah building fences. Although the fencing is already strongly constructed, the pigs still break the fences and eat her yams, cassava, and other crops. However, she has now changed the crops that she cultivates. Rather than cultivating tubers or any crops that grow on the ground, Mama Nipar focuses on cocoa and coconut. She tells me that the pigs cannot climb the trees to eat the cocoa since the fruit is attached high up the trunk. She adds that cultivating cocoa is a good strategy given that the price in the market is better than cassava<sup>155</sup>. Therefore, to get their *swami* (the Butonese traditional staple food of grated and steam-cooked bitter

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<sup>155</sup> A similar case is reported for Buano, an island to the west of Seram, where people have changed to crops that cannot be destroyed by wild pigs. They changed to cultivate cocoa, which is also more lucrative. See Hermien L. Soselisa "A Comparison of Traditional and Innovative Subsistence Strategies on Buano during Periods of Socio-environmental Stress, 1980–2003". In, Roy Ellen, ed.. 2013. *Modern Crises And Traditional Strategies: Local Ecological Knowledge in Island Southeast Asia*. New York, NY: Berghahn Books.

cassava) people in Tanjung often buy cassava in Aira where there is more cassava due to more effective control of pigs.

As “a common enemy”, wild pigs have connected Christians and Muslims who have been separated because of the conflict. Muslims desperately need Christians to eliminate the pigs by hunting them, and the Christians need the pigs not only to consume, but also to build their symbolic status in their village. Both Muslims and Christians agree that wild pigs predate upon their *tanaman jangka pendek* (short term crops) such as cucumbers, carrots, and groundnuts. However, wild pigs are not only causing the tension, but have also become the source of cooperation<sup>156</sup>. They both have the same common need to control the pig population, though employ different strategies. Since Tanjung has lost its Christian neighbor, wild pigs have become a more serious problem to them compared to Aira, which has a Christian neighbor, Soahuku. As a consequence, Mama Juany has to build a stronger and higher fence compared to La Kumang in Aira. The ways of controlling wild pigs after the *kerusuhan* demonstrate that despite the segregation between Muslims and Christians, they are dependent on each other. The breakdown of this exchange system could lead to deteriorating of environmental relations, changes in the people’s strategy to cultivate crops, and change in the types of crops that are cultivated.

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<sup>156</sup> Hermien Soselisa, who has conducted research on Buano, has also shown a similar situation. She writes that wild pigs bring a symbiotic relationship between Christians and Muslims where Muslims give Christians permission to trap and hunt pigs around their gardens (since the Muslims are forbidden to touch the pigs, the invitation is given to Christians to take the pigs from the traps). I surmise that the pigs in south Seram were less of a problem for Muslim farmers before the conflict because the Indigenous people, the Nuaulu, also hunt wild pigs. See Roy Ellen. 1996: 622. ‘Individual Strategy and Cultural Regulation in Nuaulu hunting’, in R. Ellen and K. Fukui (eds), *Redefining Nature: Ecology, Culture and Domestication*. Oxford, Washington, DC: Berg, pp. 597–635. The increasing human population and opening up gardens also attracts many wild pigs. Linares first theorized that garden produce and food waste attracts pigs. See Olga Linares, Olga F. 1976. "Garden hunting" in the American tropics. *Human Ecology*. vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 331–349.

## Chapter Five

### TRICKERY AND GIFT-GIVING: EXCHANGE BETWEEN ETHNIC CHINESE, BUTONESE, AND THE STATE IN SOUTH SERAM

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In the south Seram sub-district of Amahai, from the village of Sepa in the east through, Masohi, the capital of the Central Moluccas, to Makariki in the west, four ethnic Chinese businessmen dominate the cash crop business<sup>157</sup>. These are Zhang, a trader in Makariki, Honghui in Amahai, Meifeng in Soahuku, and Widjaya in Masohi. Through their network of shops and warehouses, these four traders buy crops from farmers in and around southern and southwestern Seram, as well as in eastern and central Seram. These ethnic Chinese are the four largest wholesalers dealing in the main crops produced in the region: cloves, nutmeg, cocoa, and copra<sup>158</sup>. They also provide money and goods that maintain debt relationships with farmers. In addition, instead of buying directly from the villages, these traders also pay middlemen to buy crops during the harvest season. In this chapter, I try to explain why farmers are willing to build relationships

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<sup>157</sup> On 31 December 1959, the Trade Minister, Rachmat Muljomiseno, issued a decree banning Chinese residents and enterprises in rural areas. There were about 85,000 Chinese retail businesses and 25,000 shops affected by this edict. This trade ban affected the economic role of Chinese middlemen when trading agricultural crops for imported goods in rural areas. The decree became a *Peraturan President* (Presidential Regulation), PP No 10/1959. Since then, all ethnic Chinese have lived in the towns or in the capitals of the sub-districts (*kecamatan*). However, this decree does not really reach to the periphery of the Moluccas. Several Chinese traders live in the villages of Sepa, Rutah, and Soahuku. The Chinese do not reside in Butonese villages; they rather send local middlemen to buy farmer's crops. Some of the ethnic Chinese in south Seram also buy land that is rented by Butonese farmers. For further background see: Jemma Purdey. 2006: 11-12. *Anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia, 1996-1999*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press in association with Asian Studies Association of Australia; Somers Heidhues, Mary F. 2003: 24, 238-39. *Golddiggers, farmers, and traders in the "Chinese districts" of West Kalimantan, Indonesia*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University; Thomas J Lindblad and Peter Post. 2009:35. *Indonesian economic decolonization in regional and international perspective*. Leiden: KITLV Press.

<sup>158</sup> Farmers also cultivate crops for their own consumption. Corn and cassava are the major crops in southern Seram. For the Butonese, these crops are the second and third most consumed after rice. Farmers also cultivate chili, cucumber, groundnuts, and a kind of mustard greens, but they sell these to middlemen who resell in the market in Masohi.

with traders who they consider to be dishonest, stingy, and cheats, as well. In other words, what is it that lubricates the relationships between Chinese traders and Butonese farmers in particular, despite the lack of trust between them?

The discussion in this chapter focuses on those trading activities that are centralized in shops belonging to ethnic Chinese and migrant traders. Through their activities in the shop, ethnic Chinese not only maintain their business, but also expand their political networks. Many ethnic Chinese traders inherited shops from their parents. Through marriage, ethnic Chinese traders also expand their shop networks through their affines. In other words, an ethnic Chinese trader's marriage can also mean "the marriage of shops". The alliance with another migrant trader helps to open a new shop, as well as to dominate the market on one island<sup>159</sup>.

The domination of ethnic Chinese in trade activities and their widespread shop networks cannot be separated from their long and deep involvement in the trade history of the Moluccas. Chinese contact with Moluccans grew greatly during the colonial period. The interaction is mostly in the form of commerce. Ethnic Chinese traders have appeared to lead market exchanges around the Central Moluccas even since the sixteenth century. In the Moluccas, ethnic Chinese traders were first interested in exchanging Chinese earthenware, porcelain, and metal goods. Chinese traders also bought gastronomic delicacies such as *trepang* (sea cucumber), shark's fins, and bird's nests sent to Makassar, South Sulawesi<sup>160</sup>. In the

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<sup>159</sup> The correlation between intermarriage and trading activity is high. Ethnic intermarriage is sometimes used to save the "shop property", which means they marry to acquire property or marry to keep a shop in a particular place. Ellen found that in 1986, twenty to thirty ethnic Chinese families owned thirty-two shops and eight kiosks in Banda Island. He also found that many Chinese traders in southeast Seram are of mixed parentage and have often married local people for several generations so that many of them have a Moluccas *marga* (family clan). See Roy Ellen, 2003: 252-257. *On the edge of the Banda zone*.

<sup>160</sup> See Roy Ellen, 2003: 103. *On the edge of the Banda zone: past and present in the social organization of a Moluccan trading network*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

nineteenth century, the growth of Chinese commerce took place when the Dutch established a new steamship service serving routes to the Central Moluccas areas, to Ambon, Banda, Geser, and Gorom Island. By 1860, Chinese traders dominated trade networks between Makassar, Banda, and Fak-Fak<sup>161</sup>. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Chinese traders replaced the Bugis and Arab traders that used to dominate exchanges in the Seram trading zone.

The appearance of Chinese in south Seram was partly made possible by the *hongitochten* system that brought Moluccan clove transactions under the Dutch monopoly during the seventeenth century. Instead, the Dutch gave Chinese more space to participate in the trade with private Dutch companies. Since the extirpation of cloves occurred all over Seram to prevent over-supplying the market, native Moluccans sold forest products, bird's nests, and *trepang* that were bought by Chinese traders. In addition, Native Moluccans in southern Seram were not only impoverished by the system of *hongi*, but mostly they were also in debt to the Chinese traders who played the role of creditors<sup>162</sup>. The Chinese could arbitrarily fix the prices for buying and selling that, ironically, still happens nowadays. Ethnic Chinese traders exchanged foodstuffs, textiles, mirrors, porcelain, copperware, and iron that was shipped from Java Island with nutmeg, mace, and cloves that they acquired from Bandanese and

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Heather Sutherland, 2000: 461. "Trepang and wangkang; The China trade of eighteenth-century Makassar c.1720s-1840s" in: *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, no: 3, Leiden, 451-472

<sup>161</sup> The service was run by the *Nederlandsche Handel Maatschappij*, which was established in 1824. The Chinese followed both the Dutch sailing zones and replaced some traditional routes of exchanges between local traders in east Seram and the Papuan coast, known as *sosolot*. The introduction of steamships also inspired ethnic Chinese traders to develop their *Johnson*, boat technology based on motorized vessels which are not only faster, but also have a larger cargo capacity. This new transportation replaced traditional vessels, which mainly depended on the wind, such as *lepa-lepa* (dug-out canoe). See Roy Ellen, 2003: 114, 142-145, 159-60, 172-75.

<sup>162</sup> On the *hongitochten* and smuggling activities around southern Seram and Ambon, see H. R. C. Wright. 1958: 87, *The Moluccan Spice Monopoly, 1770-1824. Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (184).

Seramese<sup>163</sup>. They also went further down to southeast Moluccas to exchange their textiles with forest products from Kei and Aru islands<sup>164</sup>.

Since ethnic Chinese have been living in the Molucas for generations, many of them have married native Moluccans, Butonese, or Buginese traders. The second and third generations onward describe themselves as *peranakan* or *blasteran* (mixed blood) that is formed through the distinctive creole culture in the Moluccas<sup>165</sup>. It is easier for the *peranakan* trader, a

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<sup>163</sup> See John Villiers, 1981, pp. 723-750. "Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century" *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4. ; R.A Donkin. 2003: 168. *Between east and west: the Moluccas and the traffic in spices up to the arrival of Europeans*. Philadelphia (Pa.): American philosophical Society.

<sup>164</sup> Spyer shows that the Bemunese pearl divers in Aru Island, Southeast Moluccas, have had a long interaction with Chinese traders. The divers are entangled with the ethnic Chinese traders through perpetual debt and credit. During the diving season, economic activities are more vibrant. Chinese traders provide goods to the divers and as a return the divers show their loyalty by selling their pearls to the Chinese traders. Spyer shows that the interaction is not merely a debt-credit relationship, but through Chinese traders, divers are introduced to the broader world of information about modern goods. See Patricia Spyer. 2000: 122-130. *The memory of trade: modernity's entanglements on an Eastern Indonesian island*. Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press.

<sup>165</sup> After the collapse of the New Order, through presidential decree no 12, 2014, the government corrected the term for Chinese (*Orang Cina*, Chinese people) to *Tionghoa*. The word Chinese is often derogatory. However, this "political correctness" does not change how the native peoples across Indonesia refer to the Chinese *peranakan*. People in their daily conversation still use *Cina* or *Cino*, which mainly has two connotations. The first refers to the noun; it is common reference to describe the gaze toward the Ethnic Chinese. In other words, Chinese is an index to an ethnic group. Most of my Butonese farmer interlocutors mention "*Cina*" "*bos Cina*" not with hatred or insulting tones, but in reference to the Chinese as an ethnic category. The Second reference is an adjective. *Cina* refers to a stingy person full of avarice. I often hear of stingy Moluccans being called "*dasar Cina!*" (Chinese bitches!) by their friends. This negative word has to do with the native perception that the word "*Cina*" is often conflated with money and trade. *Cina* as a term has been used since the fifteenth century. Southeast Asian languages followed this Indian Ocean pattern of Malay such as Indonesian *Cina*, Thai Chin, Khmer Chen, Burmese Sina, Tagalog Tsina. See Anthony Reid, 2010: 50. *Imperial alchemy: nationalism and political identity in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Benedict Anderson. 2000: 326-329. *The spectre of comparisons: nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the world*. London [u.a.]: Verso.

descendant of a local wife and a foreign trader, to expand trade networks and to exchange desired goods from the native society<sup>166</sup>.

For local Moluccans, neither Butonese nor *Orang Cina* (Chinese) are considered Moluccans in *adat* (customary law) terms, despite both having lived in the Molucas often for many generations.<sup>167</sup> Additionally, for local Moluccans, Butonese are seen as aggressive and industrious in maintaining the land owned by the local Moluccans. Similarly, local Moluccans perceive the Chinese to be very wealthy, but stingy. For the Butonese, Chinese traders are their patrons that not only help them learn how to conduct exchanges, but who also provide them with money. Many Butonese farmers dream of having land and shops like the Chinese. They are the symbol of prosperity and are considered to know how to handle money well.

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In this chapter, I also argue that economic relations between Butonese, Moluccans, and Chinese are underpinned in two ways. Firstly, they are based on a cost-benefit motivation in which the best approach to achieve profit is through cheating and debt bondage. The encounter between farmers, landowners, and traders is based on a mutual calculation of commercial advantage in the marketing of cash crops that is mainly cloves, nutmeg, cocoa, and copra<sup>168</sup>.

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<sup>166</sup> See Leonard Andaya. 1991. "Local Trade Networks in Maluku in the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries". *Cakalele*, 2(2), 71-96

<sup>167</sup> On the exclusion of Butonese see Birgit Brauchler. 2010 Integration and Exclusion: *Islam Adat* in the Central Moluccas. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 38 (110) March 2010: 65-93; 2010 The Revival Dilemma: Reflections on Human Rights, Self-Determination and Legal Pluralism in Eastern Indonesia. *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law* 62: 1-42. Also see Franz von Benda-Beckmann and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann. 2007. *Social Security Between Past and Future: Ambonese Networks of Care and Support*. Münster: LIT.

<sup>168</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, Chinese traders in Central Moluccas, and even in the North Moluccas (Ternate) and Sulawesi (Manado) successfully took over the copra business that used to be controlled by Arab traders. On Seram, Chinese traders have controlled the copra trade with local cultivators, since the copra price boomed in the 1880s. In 1920s, Chinese also became the leading actors in the copra trade in the Kei Islands, Southeast



The strategy of calculating losses and occurs in commercial agriculture and the various types of cheating serve as a kind of “self-regulation” since the state does not control prices of the crops. The transaction is based on the moral values between each person.

Secondly, interactions between members of different religious and ethnic groups are based on various emotive stereotypes of expectation, disappointment, and jealousy that result from the long, deep relationship between these groups. Sometimes inter-ethnic relations are not based on rational economic grounds, but rather on feelings of anger and grief that create mutual suspicion and influence how decisions are made. The cheating, dishonesty and many other illegal activities that I describe in this chapter are legitimated in the eyes of the villagers, who expect fairness in the conduct of their patrons, whether they be Chinese traders, the state, or international NGOs, and who are disappointed when fairness appears to them to be absent. Farmers perceive these patrons as having a surplus and they are expected to provide forms of insurances. From the perspective of the state, Chinese traders should be charitable and sponsor a more decent life for their clients, to help out not only individual farmers, but also their neighbors and kin, and to generously provide for mosques and any community rituals<sup>169</sup>. Cheating is the norm in seeking to achieve fairness. Farmers do not resist the state, or donors and Chinese partners that bring them to the market, but rather they utilize gifts, and aid given by their patrons to get cash, at rates at least slightly more than subsistence amounts, and feel that equity or equal value has been thereby achieved in exchange.

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Moluccas. See Roy Ellen. 1996. Arab traders and land settlers in the Geser-Gorom archipelago. *Indonesia Circle*. No 70, 237-52. William Gervase Clarence-Smith, 1998. “The economic role of the Arab community in Maluku, 1816 to 1940”. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, Vol. 26, No. 74.

<sup>169</sup> On the forms of moral right of expectation that are common among peasants in Southeast Asia see James C Scott. 1976: 5. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press. However, in this case, I am not using the concept of “rebellion”, but rather “cheat” and “fraud” to see how the relationship is held between the traders, employees, and the farmers.

To illustrate the two modes of interaction just described, I have chosen the *toko* (shop)<sup>170</sup> and the *gudang* (warehouse)<sup>171</sup> as important sites of encounter among farmers, employees of the Chinese, and traders. People in the countryside of south Seram mostly do not have a history of borrowing money from the bank or having a bank account, although there have been recent attempts to introduce mobile banks to villages on main roads. Shops and kiosks in south Seram serve the function of the bank. People would rather go to a shop or kiosk to get credit for goods<sup>172</sup>. In the villages, I also found that local people who own kiosks provided credit for *sembako* (the nine basic goods: rice, sugar, vegetables, meat, cooking oil, milk, eggs, kerosene, and salt). Several shops also provided gasoline to fishermen for motor boats used

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<sup>170</sup> Toko is a Hokkien Chinese word in Indonesia, which was then adopted by the Dutch, who also use the diminutive 'tokootje'. In modern Netherlands, 'toko' is used for shops selling Indonesian food and other produce. People in Indonesia call shops selling daily necessities *toko kelontong*, which means grocery store. *Toko* becomes the embodiment of Chinese identity because the place is not only for a transaction, but the Chinese are also living on the second floor. The combination of living and selling at the shop is commonly called *ruko*, an abbreviation of *rumah toko* (shophouse). Since *ruko* is attached to the Chinese identity, *toko* often becomes the object for looting and rioting. *Toko* and *ruko* not only signify the wealth and the stereotypes of stinginess and greed applied to Chinese, but this place also becomes the place where the Chinese abuse and exploit their employees with overwork and low wages. See the description of looting Chinese shops in Jakarta in James T Siegel "Early Thoughts on the Violence of May 13 and 14, 1998 in Jakarta" *Indonesia* 66. p, 85; Abidin Kusno, 2010: 101-124 in the chapter "Glodok on Our Minds: Chinese Culture and the Forgetting of the May Riots", in *The appearances of memory: mnemonic practices of architecture and urban form in Indonesia*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press; Abidin Kusno. *After the New Order: Space, Politics, and Jakarta*. 2013, chapter 2, "The Shophouse and the Chinese (pp. 28-48). University Hawai'i Press.

<sup>171</sup> *Gudang* comes from the English term "go down". Although referring to any warehouse in Indonesian, in this context *gudang* refers to a half submerged storehouse for private belongings and trade commodities (for traders) located on the ground floor of a house, often alongside a shop. The word *gudang* (storehouse) is a common word that can be found across Malabar, on the coast of India, and in Malay. The Portuguese also used the word *gudoes* in Burmese ports, which means a place for merchants to store clothes from Coromandel. See Reid, Anthony. 1995: 7. 72. *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680: The Lands Below the Winds v. 1*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

<sup>172</sup> The closest bank to Aira is BRI (Bank Rakyat Indonesia), which is located in the village of Soahuku, eight kilometers from Aira. I found that farmers are reluctant to put their money in the bank, but several civil employees who have a *gaji bulanan* (monthly salary) tend to put their money in the public bank. From discussions that I often conducted with women, they often surreptitiously use the money from the *dana bantuan* (aid) that should be allocated for agricultural programs, but later they repay it when they harvest the crops.

when fishing tuna. The necessity to buy home construction materials and *sembako* has led to shops assuming the role of banks. Instead of borrowing money from a bank, people tend to directly borrow money from Chinese shopkeepers. In return, they pay the *hutang* (debt) with cloves when the harvest season comes. Some traders can even supply credit within one day. In contrast, borrowing money from public banks, such as BRI (*Bank Rakyat Indonesia*), is more complicated and takes more than one week to arrange. When I joined farmers who were transporting crops to a warehouse, it was as if they were depositing money in a bank because after they had deposited the crops in the warehouse, they got a receipt that could be redeemed for any goods in the shop. The receipt is similar to a check or banknote that can be redeemed for money.

In this chapter I argue that shops and warehouses have become the signifiers of the economic domination of Chinese business. The relationship between the two demonstrates an asymmetrical codependency between Butonese, native Moluccan employees, and Chinese traders through wages, gifts, debt bondage, and political contracts. Although shop-owners are drawn from other ethnic groups as well, historically shops have become the embodiment of Chinese identity in Maluku. Through the activity of managing shops, Chinese identity is produced and it is through shops that local people create their stereotypes about the Chinese. Local people see a shop not only as a location for the supply of commodities, but also as a place where cheating, extortion, and lies are allowed. Therefore, during the second *kerusuhan* (sectarian conflict) that broke out in Ambon in 2002, Muslims not only tried to plunder Chinese goods, but they also burned entire properties including shops and warehouses that had come to signify Chinese wealth<sup>173</sup>. Seeing the shops as a symbol of a certain ethnic domination is

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<sup>173</sup> The Muslims plundered and burnt the shops and supermarkets in the downtown area, including Jalan A.Y Patty, Jalan Yos Sudarso, and Jalan Sam Ratulangi in the second term of conflict in 2002. The Chinese were attacked not only because of their wealth, but also because they were mostly Christians in addition to their ethnicity. However, in the Christian areas, the Chinese shops were not burned down. Bartels had indicated that before the conflict

consistent with my analysis that in an economy short of cash, the general store, whether located in a town or in a village, becomes the outpost of a market economy. Credit provided by traders is essential to making exchange possible. Traders serve as translators between the rural world and the world of urban money because they sell almost everything the farmers need.

### **Dishonest weighing and illegal maneuvers**

One morning in 2011, La Kumang received good news in a text on his small, old cell phone. The price of copra had risen from the usual 6,000 to 9,000 rupiah. The coconut crop in Nusa Tenggara Province, the main producer of copra in Indonesia, had failed due to pest infestation of growing coconut palms<sup>174</sup>. This had caused the price of coconut and copra at the national level to rise. In response, farmers on Seram harvested their copra and sold it to Widjaya, a

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began, Chinese in Ambon had dominated market exchanges. See Dieter Bartels, 2000, "Your God is no longer mine": Moslem-Christians Fratricide in the Central Moluccas (Indonesia) After a Half-Millennium of Tolerant Co-Existence and Ethnic Unity. In: *A State of Emergency: Violence, Society and the State in Eastern Indonesia*. Sandra Pannell, ed., pp. 128-153. Darwin: Northern Territory University Press. Two prominent scholars, Van Klinken and Sidel, describe anti-Chinese riots everywhere in Indonesia that occurred from 1996-2002, but do not mention the Chinese in the Muslim areas of Ambon that were expelled. The scale was not as massive as the anti-Chinese riots in Kalimantan or Java because most Chinese Moluccans had support to be protected by Christian communities. Check Gerry van Klinken. 2009. *Communal violence and democratization in Indonesia: small town wars*. London: Routledge; John T Sidel, John. 2007. *Riots, pogroms, jihad: religious violence in Indonesia*. Singapore: NUS Press. For an analysis that perceives religious belonging as a factor that drove people to get involved in the conflict, see Sumanto Al Qurtuby. 2016. *Religious Violence and Conciliation in Indonesia Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas*. Abingdon: Taylor and Francis. Likewise, in the North Moluccas, during the conflict, people's identity was firmed into two ways, Muslims and Christians, and in order to survive, the Chinese mostly belonged to the Christians. See Christopher R. Duncan, 2013: 40, 89, 96. *Violence and Vengeance. Religious Conflict and Its Aftermath in Eastern Indonesia*. Cornell University Press.

<sup>174</sup> The field officer in the *Departemen Ketahanan Pangan* (Food Security Department) who worked in Aira and Tanjung informed me that the coconut pests, *Sexava nubila* and *Oryctes rhinoceros*, that attacked the NTB (NusaTenggara Barat) palms were similar to the pests on Seram because both NTB and Maluku were east of the Wallace line, a biogeographic boundary that separates the ecozones of Asia and Australia. The pests eat away the coconut leaves first, then spread to the seeds, bark, rinds, and then the fruit. Fruit will dry before it is time and fall to the ground. The pests grew through their larvae, which can rapidly increase on the coconut plantation. To prevent the pest from reproducing, Butonese farmers often burn their gardens and they believe that the smoke will slow the pests that usually flourish in the humidity.

Chinese trader in Masohi and Honghui, a Chinese trader in Amahai. La Kumang remembered farmers texting each other “Hey, let’s go sell the *kopra* soon, now the price is already nine thousand four hundred!”.

The supply of copra from farmers all over Seram made the activities in the Chinese trader’s warehouses very busy. Farmers sold their commodity at the small warehouse next to the shop. The Chinese boss sat in the shop and only sometimes checked the activities in the warehouse. If the Chinese boss does not pay attention to their employees, something bad can sometimes happen.

Meifeng is a Chinese boss in Soahuku village. She is about seventy years old and her husband passed away a couple of years ago. One day she told me about how her employees cheated her and she fired them. Before I met Meifeng, people in Aira had already told me about this case of theft and it had been reported in a local newspaper. Meifeng’s six employees stole six tons of copra from the warehouse at a time when copra was selling at 9,000 rupiah per kilo. In total, Meifeng suffered a loss of 54 million rupiah from this fraud. The employee had organized a group of farmers to cheat her. When a farmer sold copra to Meifeng they had to pick up the sacks in the warehouse. She usually asked how many sacks the farmers needed. If a farmer needed ten sacks<sup>175</sup>, the employees doubled it and told their boss that the farmer needed twenty sacks. When the farmer came back to the store with ten sacks full of copra, the employees picked up the ten empty sacks and filled them with copra from warehouses. The sacks were always marked according to the name of the farmer who sold copra. To give the impression that the farmer also owned the other ten sacks, the employees marked these other ten sacks from the warehouse with the name of the farmer. They added a letter after the name

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<sup>175</sup> One sack of copra is 100 kilograms.

of the farmer, for example, “La Abu A”. After the transaction, the farmer then got a little bonus for their willingness to cooperate with the Chinese trader’s employees.

The employees in the warehouse controlled the receipts for the crops that they received, and then issued receipts corresponding to the real crops. However, the employees also issued illegal counterfeit receipts for crops that did not exist. In fact, by issuing receipts, the employees were basically printing money, which they managed to do without their Chinese boss ever knowing.

The employees were able to engage in this activity because the warehouse was separate from the shop where the Chinese boss worked as the cashier. Meifeng’s employees used the same scam over and over and over again until the loss was estimated to have reached six tons of copra. After being investigated, six employees were caught and they were fired; the one who was not fired had to pay back the loss through deductions from his monthly salary. Meifeng, with her distinctive Chinese Moluccan dialect, told me *Untung bae beta cuma pecat saja, kalo orang lain su kas masuk dalam sel* (“Luckily, I just fired them. If the theft had happened to another boss, they would have been sent to jail”). When such a case happens in Soahuku, Chinese traders do not take their employees to court. Meifeng said that she only brings the case to the police when the perpetrator of the crime is an outsider, not just cheating from the employees. “We have an *ikatan emosional* (emotional tie) with my employees to solve the case with the *cara kekeluargaan*. After all, I know that employees are from poor families”, she said with tempathy that I could see from her aged face. One of the ways to solve the problem is for the employees to return the money or goods that they had bought from the cheater. If the employees find it difficult to cooperate, Meifeng would ask police to help seek closure, but that does not happen. *Cara kekeluargaan* is quite effective in solving disputes and conflict as I described in the previous chapter where people solve their problem of fighting between villages by using the *ikatan emosi* of families, kin, and neighbors instead of involving the police and

courts<sup>176</sup>. Meifeng knows that her employees usually cheat on the weighing, as I will describe below. From her perspective, her employee's cheating on weight is an individual incentive which the employee gets from having interactions with the farmers. However, she did not expect that her own employees would cheat her, too, during the process of weighing in the warehouse.

Consistent with the stereotypes local people have about Indonesian Chinese people, Meifeng was a talkative person with a strong accent and very enthusiastic when she talked about money and material goods. She was trying to make an impression and break the stereotype of the Chinese who are notoriously associated with *pelit* (stinginess) and *mata duwitan* (avarice). She bragged to me about her generosity in paying wages. She paid 70,000 rupiah per day plus *uang makan* (meal) of 15,000 rupiah per day for each of her employees. Some of the employees saved money by holding their daily wage and taking it monthly as a salary, or whenever they needed money. She paid 3,000 rupiah per sack to employees who packaged sacks of crops in the warehouse. She wondered why the employees still cheated her when, in fact, she already paid a decent wage. I found that Meifeng paid a higher wage to her employees than the Butonese traders in Ambon. As I described in Chapter Two, many urban Butonese traders employ their own relatives through the *pesangon* system. Such payments are based more on kinship morality. By recruiting their own families to work as shopkeepers, Butonese traders are deemed loyal to their own kin. In return, the relatives are paid low wages. In contrast, Chinese have to follow the standard of local minimum wage where they reside, given that their employees are mostly native people and not their own relatives.

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<sup>176</sup> *Cara kekeluargaan*, which means "illegal" in the view of the state, is often the most effective way to overcome the problem at the local village level. In daily life, people have their own way to resolve the conflict by calling it *penyelesaian dengan cara kekeluargaan*, which means "ending the problem by using the family way". *Cara kekeluargaan* is often used because people consider the judicial system unreliable. The judicial and bureaucratic systems are very corrupt. The bureaucracy oftentimes even exacerbates the problem. See the case of how people solve the problem through kinship in Benda-Beckmann, Franz von and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann. 2007. *Social Security Between Past and Future. Ambonese Networks of Care and Support*. LIT Verlag Munster. Beckmann.

Butonese farmers perceive that the sense of Chinese generosity and gift-giving is based more on obligation rather than as a voluntary contribution. Because the farmers deliver both crops and labor to the Chinese traders, farmers feel that they deserve to receive generosity from their Chinese employers. Therefore, responding to the case of theft and cheating in the warehouse, villagers argue that the case causes one to ponder on the Chinese employer who has failed to provide the demand for decent payment and is also punished by the local people in the hope that they will become more sincere and mellow in their treatment of local people. Chinese traders should not be bossy, chatty, stingy, and exploitative against their employees and clients<sup>177</sup>. The villagers always have a disconsolate feeling when they transact with Chinese. Even though farmers make more money from their produce and labor, they constantly said that they are being cheated. Chinese are seen as those traders who accumulate more money than other ethnic groups. However, the envy and disappointment from farmers occurs not only because they believe that the Chinese should “socialize their money” or be more generous, but they also have to behave as local people expect, such as not being arrogant. Hence, the Local-Chinese relationship becomes complicated because sometimes, Chinese efforts to be generous are seen as fake.

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<sup>177</sup> This expectation is similar to other cases reported from Indonesia where local people have 'punished' the Chinese. Unlike the Jews when they were attacked and excluded from Germany during the pogroms, riots against the Chinese in Jakarta were about disciplining and punishing them for not sufficiently assimilating (*melakukan asimilasi/pembaوران*) into local society. See more on this subject in James T. Siegel, *Solo in the New Order: Language and Hierarchy in an Indonesian City*, 1986. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; and Siegel, 2001. "Thoughts on the Violence of May 13 and 14, 1998, in Jakarta," in *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*, ed. Benedict Anderson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications. Tsai Yen-ling. 2011. "Spaces of exclusion, walls of intimacy: rethinking "Chinese exclusivity" in Indonesia". *Indonesia*. (92): 125-156.



Subhan, a stocky man with a ponytail, used to work with Honghui, a well-known and wealthy Chinese trader with two large shops in the subdistrict of Amahai. He worked with Honghui. He was recruited through his brother-in-law who also used to work there. Although he no longer works there, Honghui still employs Subhan as a *kaki tangan/pengepul* (middlemen/collector) in Aira. Honghui provides money for him to collect and deliver crops. During the clove harvesting seasons, Honghui usually spends 200 million rupiah on *kaki tangan* in the villages. He relies on establishing a bond of trust with them so that when he hands over the money they will not simply *bawa lari*; that is walk away with it. Honghui tends to give money to people who have worked with him in the shop, such as Subhan. As a *pengepul*, Subhan's task is to buy copra, cloves, and nutmeg from farmers in Aira. He walks around the village and weighs sacks of cloves before they are handed to Honghui<sup>178</sup>.

Many employees working with Honghui, both Butonese and local Moluccans, have been dismissed for manipulating readings when weighing copra, by reducing the weight reading on the warehouse scales. For example, a reading of 100 kilograms of copra was recorded as 95 kilograms, giving the Chinese trader's employee a profit of 5 kilograms for every 100 kilograms weighed. If the price of the copra was 6,000 rupiah per kilogram, then they had already secured 30,000 rupiah. If the farmer sold, say, 500 kilograms of copra, the employee would receive three million rupiah (6 thousand/kilogram times 500 kilograms).

As an *orang dalam* (insider), the employee of a Chinese trader, Subhan knew what kind of cheating could be used to manipulate the *dating* (the weighing scale). One day, he compared the weights used to balance the scale with those he brought from his own house. The weight

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<sup>178</sup> Subhan usually bought the copra at 500 to 1,000 rupiah cheaper compared to the Chinese traders in town. His clients were mostly female farmers who sold crops on a smaller scale, between 10-15 kg. Women sold a small amount of crops when they needed quick cash. Rather than bringing their crops directly to the Chinese in Masohi or Makariki, women tend to sell them to the *pengepul* in their own villages. After collecting all of the crops, Subhan then sells them to Honghui, his Chinese boss in town who provided him with money in advance.

from the warehouse was two kilograms heavier, meaning that the weight of the copra would appear two kilograms lighter. To make the weight in the warehouse heavier, employees would hide two kilograms of tin at the bottom of the weight. The scales in the warehouse had two additional kilograms from 5 kg, 10kg, 20kg, 50 kg, and 100 kg. To manipulate the weight and pay the farmer less, the Chinese trader's employee would attach 2 kg of tin to each scale. Thus, if the real weight were 5 kg, it would become 7 kg, 10kg becomes 12 kg, and so forth. To compound this deceit, the Chinese trader's employees never used the 100 kg weight for sacks of copra. For example, if a farmer brought in a 100 kg sack, they would use five 20 kg weights (each weighing 22 kg in reality) instead of one 100 kg weight. In this way, they would get more profit. Subhan summed it up with a bitter and faint smile, "the more copra a farmer brings, the more they lose".

One day the *petugas* (officer) from the *Departemen Perdagangan* (Trade and Industry Department) in Masohi conducted an inspection of the warehouse after receiving many complaints from farmers about dishonest weighing and the issuing of false receipts. However, the information about the inspection was leaked a couple of days beforehand. The employees were able to change the scale back to normal. Thus, when the officer came to the warehouse, no evidence of deception could be found. Recounting these stories, Subhan looked sideways up at me. He inhaled his unfiltered cigarette and said *Seng ada orang jujur. Kalo katong samua jujur, katong masing-masing su kaya* ("There are no honest people. If all of us were honest, then we would all be rich").

The state government inspections at the warehouse did nothing to diminish farmers' general suspicions about the honesty of Chinese traders. The inspection of the warehouse could not stop any fraudulent activities that might occur in subsequent transactions. The state apparatus did not have the power to regulate trade, but sellers and buyers could figure out how to increase value despite the fraud involved in the exchanges. Instead of expressing their grievances to the

government, farmers solved their problems by using another cheat to counter dishonesty in the warehouse. The farmer-trader exchanges reflect a broader pattern of interaction among Moluccans in which people prefer their own mechanisms to counter perceived dishonesty and to solve conflicts. People do not perceive the state apparatus as having an effective way to solve exchange problems and to discipline the Chinese, so the right to do so devolves to individual people (in this case, the farmers). In the next section I describe how farmers address perceived dishonesty among those working for Chinese traders without resorting to the formal state apparatus of justice.

### **How farmers respond to the perceived dishonesty of middlemen**

Skyrocketing crop prices in the markets of south Seram are usually followed by a spate of fraud and cheating. Farmers believe that the increase in prices only serves to enrich Chinese traders as the latter see it as an opportunity to maximize profit. The swindling in the warehouse described above lead to a deep suspicion among many farmers concerning Chinese traders and their employees. The actions of the Chinese traders who were alleged to be behind the cheating seemed to confirm rural suspicions that all activities in the warehouse were corrupt. Farmers naturally believed they had been swindled every time they sold their crops.

The patron-client reciprocity put the client/farmers in the position where they face difficulties to gain the most benefit from their work. In other words, the reciprocity is based on a subsistence-ethic for farmers<sup>179</sup>. However, to maintain the ethics of reciprocity, but to simultaneously gain a profit, farmers devise many ways of cheating on their patrons. By cheating, a farmer can minimize their losses, but at the same time they can preserve the moral imperative of mutual exchanges. For Butonese farmers, to maintain the norm of reciprocity with their patrons,

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<sup>179</sup> See the subsistence ethic of the farmer and the ethic of reciprocity in James C Scott, 1976: 169-170-76, 202. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press.

Chinese traders are significant because they provide support and assure the basic daily needs of the farmers.

Having worked in the copra sector for many years, farmers can readily estimate the weight of a sack of copra. One farmer told me that he generally estimated 500 to 600 coconuts as converting to 100 kilograms of copra. Farmers can sense when the weight has been manipulated by employees of the Chinese traders. If they do it very quickly - it is assumed - it means employees are cheating. "They are hiding something," Subhan said to me. When using a steelyard scale, an honest employee would push weights along a bar carefully and then measure the weight of a crop very cautiously. They would not push the weights on the steelyard scales too quickly. Mama Juany, another Butonese farmer, told me that some of the employees also lean the sack of the copra against the wall while weighing. This fraud can reduce the weight of the copra.

Despite these stories of deceit, the Butonese of south Seram still sell their crops, year after year, to the same traders. Considering how widespread deception is, and given that employees working for Chinese traders are known to be deceitful, why do Butonese farmers still choose to sell their crops at the same place and what kinds of fraud do the farmers use in response to these practices?

Since the employees cheat them, it turns out that farmers also have some cheating of their own. *Masa dong bisa makan katong, katong seng bisa makan dong, bagaimana ini?* ("How come they can eat us, and we can't eat them back?") La Kumang rhetorically asked me. He believes that Chinese traders are aware of their employees' fraud and that the Chinese trader's employees obtain *penghasilan tambahan* (additional income) at the expense of the farmer instead of the trader. With a cynical tone, he said *Itu karena Cina pelit kasih upah, maka*

*pekerjanya main dating* ("It is because the Chinese are stingy in giving wages, thus they let the employees manipulate the weighing scales").<sup>180</sup>

La Kumang described to me the fraud used to counter manipulation of the weighing process. After *pengasaran* (smoking) the copra, he pours sea water over it. This increases the weight, but surprisingly does not make it appear wet. "The copra quickly absorbs the water, which makes it heavier, but still keeps it dry", he explained. The seawater can increase the weight by fifty percent. For instance, if the total weight of the dried copra is 1,000 kilograms, it would become 1,500 kg after being doused with seawater.

One day I observed a farmer helping La Kumang smoking copra that had become rather dry and reduced its weight. However, La Kumang did not seem upset. He joked *wah bandar rugi besar ini* ("Oh no, I will lose much"). He did not say it seriously as afterwards he fetched four large buckets full of seawater. He poured these over the copra. As copra is oily, when farmers pour sea water on to it, the buyers will not know this because copra naturally looks wet anyway.

There is another more instantaneous way to dry copra without smoking whilst retaining its weight: "Just burn the copra with dried coconut leaves; it will look burned on the outside, but still be raw on the inside and the weight will not be reduced." La Kumang had explained this to me earlier when I accompanied him to sell the copra in Meifeng. However, the use of cheating depends on the behavior of the trader. Some of the traders are honest and generous people and in these cases will not pour seawater over the copra.

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<sup>180</sup> Chinese traders in the Moluccas are similar to the local Chinese from central Java that Siegel describes. The local central Javanese typically consider Chinese traders as only being interested in objects that they can transform into commodities and exchange for a profit in the market. The Chinese are accused of cheating. For example, they substitute eighteen for twenty-four karat gold, and they do not give full measure when they sell vegetables. See further Siegel, James T. 1986: 283-42, 290-91. *Solo in the new order: language and hierarchy in an Indonesian city*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

La Dimu, a farmer from 'Tanjung' (Yainuelo) village, has his own way of cheating. During the *musim kemarau* (dry season), he dries the copra by the shoreline. The pebbles on the beach stick to the copra as it dries. The dried copra will cover the pebbles and sometimes even a large stone. When the copra is packed in the sack, the pebbles are hidden, but increase the weight of the sack. I often visited La Dimu on the seashore at Tanjung. He revealed another trick that farmers in Tanjung use to add weight, which involves filling the bottom and the top of the sack with dried copra, while wet copra is squeezed into the middle.

During the season for cloves and vanilla, farmers also use tricks to add weight to the harvested crop. They insert a nail, the type normally used for plywood, into some of the picked flower buds of the cloves. While drying in the sun, the flower buds of the clove close around the nail. Similarly, farmers insert a piece of long wire into the vanilla pods. But as, La Dimu said “All of these frauds worsen the quality of the crops and I have heard that many Chinese wholesalers in Surabaya complain that the quality of the crops from the Moluccas is sometimes very bad”. From these stories, I gained a different perspective on marketing activity than the one that suggests farmers are simply seen as the victims of fraud by traders. In contrast, these stories are about cheating on both sides, and, in a strange way, restore some agency to farmers who in these ways attempt to control their own economic circumstances. In south Seram, traders, farmers, and Chinese employees each have their own kind of dishonesty. They use these against each other, and are fully aware of the tricks people play on them, as expressed in the Indonesian aphorism *tahu sama tahu* (literally “know together know”, or figuratively “everybody knows”).

Farmers have learned from experience how not to be cheated by Chinese traders. Another farmer, La Rodi, La Kumang's neighbor, told me that during the era of Gus Dur's presidency, from the end of 1999 to the middle of 2001, clove prices increased sharply. One cup (*cupa*) of

cloves reached 7,000 rupiah. La Rodi still remembers that when he sold cloves to Widjaya, a trader in the sub-district of Amahai, the price was 22,000 rupiah per kilo. After the sale he went back home and watched television. He was surprised that the national government announced on the news program that the price of cloves was 40, 000 rupiah in Java. He was furious:

*Beta panggil Kumang, katong dua naik motor trail, deng rasa-rasa mara, katong baku malawan habis deng Cina, dong tipu katong* ("I called Kumang, we went by motorbike with an angry feeling and we alleged the Chinese had cheated us").

La Rodi asked Widjaya to return the cloves. After *baku malawan* (heated arguments), Widjaya finally bought the cloves at the higher price of 30,000 rupiah per kilo.

Learning from such experiences, farmers now try to check commodity prices at the national level so that local Chinese traders cannot fool them. La Kumang has the phone numbers of the four big Chinese traders in south Seram. I often watched him in the morning before going to sell the crops. He had been walking back and forth in the garden next to his house for half an hour holding his phone in his right hand calling different Chinese traders to check the variation of prices. Interestingly, he also has a contact number for Chinese wholesalers in Surabaya to find out the price gap of the crops between the Moluccas and Java. He said:

*telpon ke Cina Surabaya ini perlu, karena supaya katong tahu Cina disini seng main harga* ("Calling a Chinese wholesaler in Surabaya is necessary so that the local Chinese here do not cheat us on the price").

Knowing that transactions often involve suspicion and the likelihood of swindling, I raised the question with farmers as to why they would want to build a relationship with traders on this basis? To this end, I now describe two factors that underpin the connection between Butonese farmers with Chinese traders that are more intense and ambiguous.

The first factor is the absence of state-set rates of exchange for crops between traders and farmers. Since the fall of the New Order regime, the regulations controlling crop prices have been eradicated. The state does not intervene in the price-making process, as farmers have

experienced how bad it was when the government tried to regulate the price back in the 1990s. At the local level, the new system of democracy and the accompanying anarchy of the market presented an opportunity for Chinese traders to more closely control and speculate on the price of crops. The Chinese regulate commercial crops based on the law of supply-demand and the debt bondage between them and the farmers. As I explained in the beginning, Chinese traders have dominated commercial networks since at least the nineteenth century. This *long duree* of domination allowed them to be the patron of farmers. Ellen has indicated that people in East Seram are more concerned with trading access to Chinese rather than symbolic power as delegated from the court of a sultanate as in the North Moluccas<sup>181</sup>. In the 1980s, Chinese traders in Seram dominated boat technology, which allowed them to control the trade network of copra. Even to the present time, the Chinese traders still operate their sovereign business outside state regulations.

The second factor is that since the state no longer intervenes in the price-setting mechanism for crop transactions, gift giving and hospitality, which often lead to debt, play a significant role in bonding farmers with Chinese traders as part of an ongoing relationship. The combination of interest and disinterest that spurs the formation of these relationships leads to bonds and commitment resulting in both cohesion and tension between donors and the recipients, traders and farmers, and traders and their employees. Gift-giving opens an endless sequence of exchanges. Traders pursue an advantage by providing loans, creating and manipulating the price of commodities, and creating debt bondage relations. At the end of this chapter, I argue that the act of this kind of gift giving in the post-conflict situation has provided opportunities for traders to extend their business into the political sphere.

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<sup>181</sup> Ellen, 2003: 122. *On the edge of Banda Zone*.



### **Prejudices against Chinese dishonesty**

During *masohi* (communal work) on a Sunday in November 2015, Romy, a native Moluccan from Kailolo who works for IFAD (The International Fund for Agricultural Development), an international NGO based in Rome, Italy, made an announcement to the people who worked in Masohi. He announced that he had just acquired a bench scale for the farmers that were located in the storage building next to La Kumang's house. Farmers were invited to bring their produce there to check the weight before selling to Chinese traders. Mama Emy, like other female farmers, did not respond enthusiastically. When I talked to her in her kitchen while cooking for the people engaged in the *masohi*, she said that she was not too worried about Chinese dishonesty when weighing the crops. Women farmers, who usually did not have large harvests, tend to sell to middlemen in the village. She said:

*kalau kamong boleh jual copra "ton-ton" ke Cina. Makanya katong ini seng perlu takut deng timbangan* ("Only larger farmers can sell their tonnage of crops to the Chinese, but they are prone to be cheated by them. Therefore we are not afraid of the scales").

The IFAD provides bench scales to farmers so that they can build their own *kelompok koperasi mandiri* (autonomous cooperative groups). The long-term goal of the funding is for farmers to be able to create sovereign transactions, buying and selling crops, free from the monopoly chain of Chinese business. Mama Emy was pessimistic about IFAD provision of bench scales to the farmer groups. She was not sure whether farmers who were affiliated with the cooperative groups created by the IFAD could buy all the village produce. Many farmers not only have limited cash, but they also do not have a bank account. By contrast, she believes that Chinese traders in the town have unlimited money in the bank. If the Chinese need money, they can just apply for loans from a bank to buy the whole crop from a single village.

During the *masohi*, people often talked about their patrons such as government officers and Chinese traders. La Tulus, one of the senior farmers who often became the center of conversation during work breaks; half whispered to several people "Chinese business in the

village is like an octopus. They have money and middlemen who work all at once as spies”. People know what La Tulus means saying a spy is also a middleman; for instance Subhan, who usually provides information to Honghui, his Chinese boss, about farmers who sell their crops to other Chinese. In fact the farmer still has a loan from Honghui.

When we break from the *masohi* and talk about the price of copra, La Tulus complains that the price has not changed since the *kerusuhan*. He suggests that since the Chinese dominated the market after *kerusuhan*, they have manipulated the market price. The Chinese often initially announce a high price for the crop with the aim of stimulating farmers to harvest their produce early, but when they come to sell, the price suddenly drops. La Tulus provocatively suggests that before the *kerusuhan*, it was *Cina Hitam* (black skinned Chinese) who dominated the copra market. It is widely understood that *Cina Hitam* refers to Butonese traders. La Tulus recalls that after the *kerusuhan*, people entered the *Jaman Cina* (Chinese period) in which the “white skinned Chinese” dominated the market distribution of crops. Hearing this conversation, other people who sat aside in the corners of the house nodded feebly in agreement with what La Tulus was saying.

Farmers in Aira know that it was La Jama, a Butonese trader, who used to dominate the trade in south Seram before the *kerusuhan*. Before and during the *kerusuhan*, prices were very good. The price of copra even reached 10,000 rupiah per kilo. However, now people are wondering why living costs are always rising while the price of copra is stuck and even declining. While people are concentrating on what La Tulus is saying, one farmer sitting beside me, La Loje, shares his story. After the *kerusuhan*, the highest price he ever received for copra was 9000 rupiah per kilo. He paid 200 million rupiah to a Christian Soahuku landowner to lease coconut trees between 2009 and 2023. He reached the break-even point when the price of copra was 9,000 rupiah. After that, the price of copra per kilo has been stuck at 6000 rupiah.

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As usual, after the *masohi*, we went to the storage building to test the accuracy of the new bench scales from the NGO. Measuring the weight with our own body was one way to know whether the scales were accurate or not. Three of us - Romy (an NGO officer), La Kumang, and myself - weighed ourselves. I can see La Kumang's face frowning upon discovering that his weight was heavier on the scales in the Chinese warehouse. The look on his face was very unhappy. He became convinced that Chinese traders had put some additional tin under their scales to make them heavier against the weight of the farmer's produce.

Although the scales provided by the NGO were accurate, farmers almost never used them. As in the familiar stories of the failure of development projects<sup>182</sup>, the purpose of IFAD was to provide scales to facilitate farmers forming their own cooperative. A cooperative farmer is expected to buy produce using money obtained from the cooperative. However, the project seldom runs as it is planned because farmers will weigh their produce in a Chinese trader's warehouse. When I lived in Tanjung, I often saw that Mama Juany, who is also the secretary of the farmer group formed by the NGO, took a photograph of her crops on these scales before she transported and sold the produce to the Chinese trader in Makariki. She said that taking a photograph on the NGO scales was only a fraud used when reporting to the funding agency. It shows that their *kelompok koperasi mandiri* is active in selling and buying by taking photographs of her produce on the NGO scales. In fact, Mama Juany said *beta foto itu sebagai formalitas saja* ("I took the photograph only as a formality"). She hoped that by showing the activity of their group, the international NGO would continue to support them in the next funding round.

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<sup>182</sup> See Tania Murray Li . 2007. *The will to improve: governmentality, development, and the practice of politics*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

During my fieldwork, I found it difficult to see how farmers could market their own produce except through the system controlled by the Chinese traders. Bapa Angke, for example, Mama Juany's neighbor, has three *dusun* (groves/orchards). In his first *dusun* are 70 coconut trees, in the second *dusun* are 60 coconut trees, and in the third *dusun* are 30 clove trees. He said that doing business with the Chinese is far better than doing business with the government. Consistent with arguments put forward by other farmers, he says "Only the Chinese can buy any amount of produce and do not reject any quality of produce". In addition, although Chinese traders and their employees are notoriously dishonest, farmers have limited options when selling their produce. If they sell their produce to smaller traders, the price they get will be even lower.

IFAD, the international NGO, along with Indonesian state agencies, believe that aid funding can help rebuild Maluku following the *kerusuhan*. The Indonesian state does this by giving financial assistance to poor villages. However, as I argued earlier, people have mainly basically relied on their own resources and self-governance to reconstitute their lives. They do not feel guilty about violating or 'misusing' the funds provided by the state or an NGO for other purposes and do not feel they have a moral obligation to return aid money not used for the purposes specified. People adopt the view that the state is rich and state funding is always delivered in an impersonal way through unknown channels. By contrast, the reciprocity between Chinese traders and villagers is intimate, based on a personal contract in which the recipient knows the individual who has provided the cash.

### **Gifts, commodities and cold chicken**

In this section I argue that gift-exchange and the debt relationship underpin bonds of interethnic reciprocity that tie Butonese and Chinese together despite the evidence of mutual dishonesty within the relationships. Selling produce to the Chinese usually ends up in debt bondage, meaning a relationship of perpetual debt of a Butonese farmer to a Chinese trader, where the

latter inevitably exercises a controlling interest. Farmers most often meet their needs by asking for goods or money from a Chinese trader in advance. However, not paying their debt is viewed as having broken a personal promise which will make the creditor upset. Thus, business contracts are underpinned by the morality of kinship and personal friendship.

In fabricating exchange with farmers, Chinese traders use commodities as a gift. In four large Chinese shops in south Seram, they provide rice, noodles, cooking oil and margarine, eggs and frozen chicken, and salt. All these commodities are not sold in retail. They are bundled up in a big cardboard box and in a sack for the rice. Unlike in the common supermarket, Chinese traders do not sell these commodities to ordinary people; rather all of these goods are provided in advance as “a gift” for the farmers. Sometimes farmers also exchange their produce directly for these commodities after the transaction in the shop. Chinese traders also provide construction materials such as cement and iron wire that are kept in the *gudang* next to the shop. Seeing the functional variety of these commodities, I did not see the clear distinction between gifts and commodities in the restricted field of exchange; rather Chinese traders tend to move objects between the spheres of gift and commodity exchange<sup>183</sup>. Along with Tsing<sup>184</sup>, Appadurai argues that commodities are “things in a certain situation”, which means the same

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<sup>183</sup> My perspective is different from the argument of Chris Gregory that distinguishes gift and commodity exchanges. To him, gift exchanges are transacted to establish a higher degree of social relationship and the object tends to be personified. On the other hand, commodity exchange is built based on the quantitative equivalence and it has a lower and impersonal sociability. See C.A Gregory, 1982: 41-59. *Gifts and Commodities*. New York: Academic Press.

<sup>184</sup> Tsing refuses the contrast of gift-commodity because anything exchanged is a commodity and could simultaneously be a gift. Tsing believes that exchange relations are mixed and messy because commodities also have a life as a gift. She provides an example of the mushroom hunters that come to the buyers and give some of the mushrooms as a gift. The gift is an essential part of the transaction and it holds together personal experience and sociality. When the mushrooms arrive in Japan, the Japanese consumers treat this commodity as a gift again. The Japanese consumers present commodities as a gift to reaffirm a social relationship. See Anna Tsing. 2013: 25-6. "Sorting out commodities". *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*. 3 (1): 21.

object can play the roles of both a gift and of a commodity, can be commoditized and decommoditized, depending on the context. Appadurai believes that materiality is the value that has influenced human actions. However, Appadurai did not take into account how people make, maintain, and sever the endless social relationships. Instead of merely seeing the object, I am questioning how a subject, a Chinese trader, makes commodities an integral part of creating social ties and contracts of obligation<sup>185</sup>.

As I often accompanied La Kumang to Meifeng, the Chinese trader in Soahuku, I began to understand why he continued to trade with her. Meifeng had her own mini-warehouse full of construction materials located between the shop and the main warehouse. La Kumang told me that Meifeng did not sell these construction materials, but she provided them to farmers on credit. As I described in Chapter Three, La Kumang bought an abandoned Butonese house in Aira whose occupants had fled during the *kerusuhan*. He then repaired the house with the help of Meifeng. She provided him with around three million rupiah worth of material, consisting of cement, concrete blocks, bricks, zinc, and iron. Meifeng trusted La Kumang because he had been selling copra to her since he was about fifteen years old and now he is about forty years old. When he began selling, the price of a kilogram of copra was 150 rupiah (10 US cents) and it had increased gradually to 6,000 and even 9,000 rupiah over the years.

Since the time I first arrived in the hamlet of Aira, La Kumang often complained that his old wooden canoe had begun to leak. He was planning to buy a new canoe made from fiberglass<sup>186</sup>.

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<sup>185</sup> See Arjun Appadurai. 1986: 13. *The Social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press. For a similar view to Appadurai see also John Davis, "An Anthropologist View of Exchange", 1996. *Oxford Development Studies*. Vol 24 no 1.

<sup>186</sup> By having a canoe, a Butonese farmer does not have to buy fish for their daily needs. The farmer usually goes fishing during the night when the tide is low. It is common for Butonese to borrow their neighbor's canoe as long as they reciprocate with a few fish from their catch. However, the mutual borrowing causes the canoe to wear out more quickly.

It took about three million rupiah to make a new one. We finally decided to go to Toko Along, one of the biggest shops in Masohi, owned by Oeng Boen, a man of Chinese descent. We bought some tools for making a fiberglass canoe. We purchased the glue and the fiber, but when it came to the paint, he realized that he did not have enough money. It took about 600 thousand rupiah to buy three different colors of paint. I insisted on covering the rest of the cost, but he persisted in rejecting it. He said that I had already given him enough money during my stay in his house<sup>187</sup>. He felt that money given in advance should not come from me, but from his patron, the Chinese trader who he usually sells produce to. In addition, La Kumang also did not have a close relationship with Oeng Boen, the owner of Toko Along, so was unable to take the goods in advance on credit. We then decided to go to Meifeng, his Chinese patron in the village of Soahuku, where he usually sold his copra and from whom he could borrow money to cover the shortfall required for the canoe. As usual, he promised to pay back his loan with the copra he would sell her during the next harvesting season. Given that he rents several gardens owned by Chinese and Christian Moluccans, he would be in a position to harvest twice a month and pay back the debt to Meifeng.

We rode the motorbike for the ten minute journey back to Soahuku from Masohi. Arriving at Meifeng's shop, I waited a couple of meters away from the cashier and could see La Kumang talking to her while she was sitting by the cash register. The conversation was quite short, less than ten minutes. It seemed that Meifeng had already suspected that as her clients had come to her without produce to sell, then it meant that they would be asking for money or goods on credit. She took some money out from the desk in the front of her seat, counted it and gave La Kumang the rupiah notes bundled up with a rubber band. Meifeng then walked back to the living room followed by La Kumang. She took a half pack of smoked chicken from the refrigerator,

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<sup>187</sup> La Kumang often did not feel comfortable when I gave money or any goods that he thought more than enough. However, he felt pleasure when I gave money and rice that he thought he deserved while I lived there.

brought the chicken through to the shop and weighed it. Before giving the chicken to La Kumang, she wrote a receipt. I was puzzled by this as I had assumed that La Kumang had come to Meifeng only to get a loan, but instead Meifeng gave him a piece of cold chicken from the refrigerator. My curiosity grew after Meifeng put the chicken - which I thought was a gift - on the scales and wrote down the chicken as a part of the "loan" on the *nota* (receipt). I approached them and half jokingly asked *oh pinjam uang dapat bonus ayam juga e?* ("So, if borrow some money you get a chicken too?"). Meifeng put the frozen chicken in a plastic bag, and handed it to me, saying: *ini biasa nyong, kalo ada susah-susah apa tinggal angkat suala saja to, katong ini samuwa sodala* (" This is nothing special, if people need anything, they just 'raise their voice', we are all brothers").

On the way back to Aira, I asked La Kumang why Meifeng not only gave him the money, a classic commodity to create a debt, but also the chicken. He replied:

*Itu biasa, kalau seng ayam, biasa dong kasi gula, mie. Tapi katong memang harus hati-hati, soalnya kalau sering terima pemberian atau hutang banyak, nanti beban buat katong. Itu beta lihat banyak petani kalo dia hutang terlalu banyak, sampai-sampai dong sengaja buang muka, seng berani liat timbangan. Mungkin beban to, barang su pinjam banyak lagi di meifeng. Resikonya kalau seng cek timbangan, bisa mudah kena tipu*" ("That's common, in addition to the chicken, she often gives sugar and noodles, as well. because if we receive too many gifts or too much debt, that would be a burden for us. I saw it with many farmers when they received too much debt. They would not even dare to loo at the scale or they would pretend to avert their gaze. It might be even a greater burden if you have a too much debt, but you are too critical of the weight scale. Whatever the risk, farmers are easily cheated if they check the scale").

Meifeng gave the chicken, but she put it on the scale to check the exact price and then wrote down the gift on the receipt, including the money that she had loaned. The understanding was that La Kumang would then return these gift loans with the future copra harvest. Seeing the cleverness of this device for combining business with moral reasonableness, I could see what



people meant by Chinese as a *tukang perhitungan* (calculating people)<sup>188</sup>. They give you something, but still take account of it in later calculations. Many farmers see Chinese traders as *tukang perhitungan*, a description often associated with the adjective *pelit* (stingy). Through such calculation and cost-benefit interactions, Chinese build their relationship with local Moluccans.

Mauss argues that giving is not only an act of generosity, but also an act of aggression given that the gift giving requires people to receive and to return the gift<sup>189</sup>. However, what Mauss argues should not necessarily be interpreted literally, as this story indicates. When I asked why La Kumang had to receive something even though he did not ask for it, he explained that Meifeng often forgets about such “small gifts” such as sugar, noodles, and smoked chicken. However, if she does remember, he will take advantage of her generosity and suggest that she cancel the debt given that he has sold her hundreds of kilograms of produce. Meifeng sometimes treats it as a bonus. La Kumang often accepts these small gifts and hopes that he will not have to pay them back in the future. In other words, he hopes that Meifeng will forget them, and will only remember the monetary loan. In such cases, farmers also expect that debt should not be paid someday, because debt is essentially a promise, in which people also can forget and it should be forgiven<sup>190</sup>. By swinging between debt as a promise and a hope that a debt could be forgiven, farmers can still cultivate positive emotions towards the Chinese traders.

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<sup>188</sup> *Tukang* is the word for someone who practices a trade and has a particular skill, such as *tukang cukur* (barber), *tukang kayu* (carpenter), *tukang jahit* (tailor), *tukang sepatu* (cobbler). The word *tukang* is also used accusatively for people who have esoteric knowledge, such as *tukang santet* or *tukang sihir* (sorcerer). See Siegel, *Naming the Witch*, 2005: 117, 130-131.

<sup>189</sup> See Marcel Mauss. *The Gift. Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. 1966: 17-18. Cohen&West LTD.

<sup>190</sup> David Graeber defines debt in terms of a moral explanation rather than as an economic statement. He argues that the history of human beings is fully tinged with the perennial struggle over debt forgiveness. See further David Graeber, 2011. *Debt: the first 5,000 years*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Melville House.

Local people see gifts from Chinese traders differently from how they might see gifts from other people. The more the trader gives, they reason, the more they have a business interest in the gift. Thus, a gift is not merely perceived as an act of generosity, but also as the action of *perhitungan* (calculation). Therefore, when La Kumang was given the cold chicken, I did not notice that his face looked especially happy. This was because he knew that it was mandatory to return the loan on time, even though he hoped Meifeng would forget about the chicken. People are not necessarily happy to receive gifts, as I described in Chapter four in the case of Bapa Rifai. People are cynical about accepting financial aid from the government and from international bodies because the distribution of gifts is generally associated with corruption and nepotism, while among recipients the gift of money only creates suspicion and jealousy.

Maintaining the trust of Chinese traders is important in order to obtain loans easily. Although the Chinese are perceived by local Moluccans and Butonese alike as being notoriously stingy, once they have established trust in a person they are very loyal. One farmer in Aira opined: *beta itu su tahu Cina pung urat, kalo katong ambil dong pung hati, dong bae* ("As I already know 'the Chinese vein', if together we 'win their heart' [amuse them] they will treat us well"). Every time La Kumang has an urgent need to pay for something, he simply borrows the money from Meifeng. However, if he does not go on to sell the next harvest to Meifeng, she would be mad. One day, he bought a new motorcycle, a Suzuki 110cc - the same motorcycle I often borrowed during my fieldwork. Knowing that he bought a new motorbike with cash, Meifeng was curious as to his ability to buy it without credit. He suspected that Meifeng was suspicious that he had sold copra to other Chinese traders rather than to her. La Kumang tells the story and impersonates Meifeng's speech with a lisp:

*Kumang e, ose jual kopla par orang lain kaaa, kalo mau motol itu ambil di katong sa macam biasa* ("Hey Kumang, why didn't you just get the money from me, and then you could have paid it back with copra and cloves as usual")

He then complains to me:

*Susahnya kalau katong hutang di Cina, biar dong pasang harga murah katong juga harus jual barang di dong, kalo katong dapa tahu jual di orang lain, dong bisa marah ("If we borrow money from the Chinese, we must return the money by selling produce to them, even though they buy at a lower price.")*

La Kumang explains that if any Chinese trader who has extended credit to a farmer then catches that farmer selling produce to other Chinese traders, they would be 'mad'. Therefore, when La Kumang buys a new motorcycle, or when he does not show up for a period of time, Meifeng is suspicious that he might be selling his produce to other Chinese. This suspicion is followed by a loss of trust. Subhan, the middlemen in Aira, told me that the Chinese know where farmers usually sell their produce because their middlemen in the village are informing their bosses about farmers' trading activity. The character of social ties between La Kumang and Meifeng is based on their differing needs. For La Kumang, he expects Meifeng to protect and to provide him material needs, where he reciprocates it with his labor, produce, and most importantly, his loyalty<sup>191</sup>.

During my fieldwork in the two Butonese hamlets of Aira and Tanjung I heard many conversations about bad credit. Many villagers are unable to return their credit to both the

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<sup>191</sup> Selling produce to Chinese traders is not merely an economic transaction, but more than that, it shows loyalty to a patron who has provided money and "gifts". Spyer, in the case of Aru, Southeast Moluccas, demonstrates that local people maintain their loyalty to the Chinese also because they are tied to the indebtedness of the gift system. Chinese Traders who give loans act as a patron and the pearl divers are the clients who should maintain involvement and ongoing loyalties in face-to-face interactions. Despite that national stereotypes of Chinese traders as "the exploiters of the indigenous people", many parents are willing to send their children to work with Chinese in their stores and expect that someday their children will be somebody important. In reality, many of the employees complain about overwork with Chinese. The loyalty to the Chinese comes simultaneously with the exploitation. See Spyer, 2000: 121-123, 133-134. *Memory of Trade*.

Chinese and to the local elites who provide them with funds. One day, before the local election in 2011, the Bupati (regent) of *Maluku Tengah* (Central Maluku) district, Abua Tuasikal, provided 30 *johnson* (motor boats) to fishermen living along the coastal areas of south Seram. The agreement was that the fishermen had to deposit the money from the catch with him. To begin with the contract ran smoothly. However, as time went by, fishermen no longer deposited the money they made with the Bupati. They reasoned that the stock of fish in the Banda Sea had declined. *Ikan su lari jauh* ("The fish have escaped far away") argued some fishermen<sup>192</sup>. As a result, the Bupati reclaimed all his *johnson*. A similar thing happened to Meifeng. She reclaimed her *johnson* from fishermen in Aira because they did not return her share of the catch regularly. From the giver's perspective, a gift-exchange is a contractual obligation. Gift-exchange not only establishes a social hierarchy between donor and recipient, but failure to return a gift can also end a business relationship. However, based on the people's logic, assistance from the state is not always seen as charity, but an entitlement that the state is obliged, as a rich institution, to deliver to society.

From their experiences with both the government and Chinese traders, people in Aira have learned that there is no such thing as a free gift: at some point they will have to return a gift to its sender, sometimes with interest. Therefore, it is not necessarily true that giving reflects altruism; it may (though not always) be calculated self-interest. The benefits need not always be material, and might include social recognition and feelings of increased self-worth, but a gift

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<sup>192</sup> Many fishermen complained that since the overexploitation of fish in the Banda Sea, they have to fish in the south Moluccas Sea. It took more than 10 hours in total to catch Tuna fish. Almost all of the fishermen are entrapped in debt because they have to pay the operating cost. They have to pay gasoline costs of about 200 liters for just three fishing trips. When they get the catch, the fishermen split the money to pay their debt to the gasoline provider and to the boat owner.

can also burden a recipient with debt. The enigma of the gift can create ambiguous feelings and even hatred among recipients.<sup>193</sup>

Self-interest presented as gift-giving is a common business technique amongst Chinese traders in south Seram (as in business, in general). Local people understand this and have mixed feelings about gifts given by Chinese. The gifts from Chinese traders are interpreted as generosity and sacrifice, but at the same time, it comes with interest. When the *kerusuhan* broke out in the Moluccas, local people ransacked and looted Chinese shops that symbolized places of unequal exchange. People also perceive that the shop is the source of the gift-giving and the place where Chinese traders accrue their wealth. This followed a pattern experienced in other large Indonesian cities in the preceding period. However, people did not simply want the Chinese to leave, because after the conflict they hoped the Chinese shops would be soon re-opened. Complete eviction almost never happened because Chinese traders sell products that are more affordable, with bigger discounts, and have a long history of providing goods for local people's needs.

### **The politics of the gift**

Gifts are meant to show the giver's patronage. The gift operates by assuming that the recipient must eventually reciprocate in kind<sup>194</sup>. In this section I argue that through gifts of goods and

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<sup>193</sup> There have been many discussions arguing that gifts might create a patron-client (asymmetric relationship) between the giver and the receiver, and how the gift giving is simultaneously based on both disinterest and self-interested motivation. See further Jonathan Parry. "The gift, the Indian gift, and the "Indian gift"". *Man*, New Series, Vol 21. No 3 Sept 1986, pp: 453-473. Marshall Sahlins. (1972: 307). *Stone age economics*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton. Maurice Godelier. 1999: 12-13. *The enigma of the gift*. [Chicago]: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>194</sup> Rather than seeing it from the perspective of economic theory, Graeber argues that "the feeling really ought to return the gift" and is more about morality. Standard economic theory cannot explain the motivation. It is quite difficult to measure exact equivalence in the process of interaction, which is linked to the way people exchange words. The making of a counter gift is usually to be either a bit more or a bit less. In many ethnographic cases, if the recipient has not fulfilled their obligation to return the gift, they are seen as a sinner and socially excluded

money, Chinese traders can build their power base across the boundaries of religion and ethnicity without too much difficulty. They can then use gifts as a vehicle to not only extend their business, but also to achieve political influence. Farmers and employees who work with the Chinese know exactly how their patrons tie their clients through gifts, and Chinese traders are well aware of the schemes to counter their business strategies. For example, before *lebaran* (the holiday following the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan), Chinese traders in Makariki and Amahai gave gifts to those farmers who regularly sold them their produce, while the employees received the usual cash 'THR' payment (that is the *Tunjangan Hari Raya*, or Islamic holy day subsidy). However, not all farmers can take the gifts for granted. They know that the gift is part of the Chinese practice of *perhitungan* (calculation). When a Chinese trader "gives something", it means they expect "something else".

One day Subhan and I sat in the front of his house in Aira while drying recently-picked nutmeg and cloves. He explained to me that he would give this produce to his Chinese 'boss' who had already provided him with cash credit to buy produce from the farmers. Talking about the gift, Subhan said *Dong pung permainan alus, seng terasa dong bikin katong budak* ("The Chinese have played a smooth game; we cannot feel that they treat us like slaves"). Once the Chinese traders have given gifts or provided money loans to clients, they are likely to become trapped in an endless cycle of dependence. If farmers already have such debt bondage, then like it or dislike it, they have to supply the crops to the Chinese.

During the *imlek*, (Chinese New Year), Chinese traders in south Seram give small amounts of money in red envelopes that they call *angpao*. Chinese traders believe that in celebrating *imlek*, money should naturally be shared with the broader society. *Imlek* is the moment where sharing

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because the gift was given with the spirit of generosity and hospitality. Thus, gifts have to be returned. It would be inappropriate to simply accept a gift and never bring anything back. Therefore, debt occurs when the balance of reciprocity has not yet been restored. See David Graeber. *Debt*, 2011: 136-7, 154.

food and money is not only simply about the morality, but also pleasure. It is the time when Chinese traders, as outsiders, meet the native's expectation to provide goods and money<sup>195</sup>. However, Chinese generosity is always followed by skepticism amongst the recipients. Farmers believe that when Chinese traders raise the price of crops before *imlek*, it is a customary ritual strategy for dispensing with bad luck. La Dimu, a farmer who has good relations with Franz, a Chinese trader in Makariki, tells me that the Chinese seek to 'cleanse' their money before *imlek*, with the aim of making more money in the future. Farmers notice that before *imlek* one of the ways in which the Chinese "throw away" money is by buying harvested produce at a higher price than usual, but then a few days after *imlek* the price would usually plummet. Farmers suspect that this is a kind of *permainan harga* ('price game'). They believe that the Chinese have the power to play and to mess around with the price by entangling it with their religious beliefs and rituals.

The giving of gifts is not only related to the farming business, but underpins a broader allegiance between farmers and their patrons. I found that middlemen in Aira not only buy produce, but at certain times, specifically before the local election, become campaigners for those Chinese bosses who are running as candidates. An example is Subhan who supported his boss, Honghui, when he ran for the local legislative election campaign in 2009. His boss succeeded in being elected to the local legislative body in Masohi even though he failed to be elected (twice) in 2014. It is rare to find a Chinese candidate running for political office, but after the *kerusuhan* and the opening-up of democratic freedoms, the Chinese in the Moluccas could enthusiastically join in the political process. Chinese traders can be very generous and their gifts facilitate their election in which local middlemen, such as Subhan, are expected to show their loyalty to their bosses in return.

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<sup>195</sup> See the discussion of gifts as a moment of sharing pleasure in David Graeber, *Debt*, 2011: 148-9.

A minimum of 600 votes is required to be elected as a local legislative member in the Central Moluccas. Surprisingly, in the 2009 election, Honghui got about 2,000 votes which meant he had three times the minimum number of votes. During the campaign, he used all of his client networks in the villages to secure votes. He knew that middlemen play significant roles in persuading people to vote. He supplied money to his middlemen in the villages to fulfill the villager's needs. Honghui also used farmers who were in his debt to support his political campaign. Subhan always has a wide smile remembering the story of how he collected votes for his boss. He then pointed out that La Kumang also supported the same political party as him. Together they struggled to convince people by supplying them with *sembako* (the nine basic goods). In 2014, La Kumang changed his patron to Ang Hok, another Chinese trader in Amahai. However, Ang Hok did not win the election. According to La Kumang, "He used the wrong strategy by randomly throwing money around and not rewarding clients directly." Ang Hok then moved to Dobo, in the Aru Islands of Southeast Moluccas, to develop his new business there. He entrusted several of his plantations in Aira to the care of La Kumang and his brothers.

It was not surprising for Moluccans to see Chinese traders involved in politics after the *kerusuhan*. During my fieldwork, I often heard people talk about Oeng Boen, the richest Chinese trader in south Seram, who had become a local legislative member for the Central Moluccas municipality. He had a fancy house facing the sea in Masohi with five floors. He provided a huge room for his employees to stay in on the fifth floor. I often hung out there with some of the Javanese employees who worked in his metal goods shop, Toko Along, the biggest shop in south Seram. My house (when I lived in Tanjung) was located right in front of the main road, and from there I often saw Oeng Boen's trucks travelling eastwards from Masohi to the villages along the south coast carrying materials for building new bridges and roads. Many people believe that Oeng Boen is advantaged by his business since he was elected as a local representative (*anggota DPRD*). La Idu, an important politician in Tanjung tells me that Oeng



Boen always wins the tender for projects from the municipal government. He handles most of the procurement expenditure provided by the government. This not only secures him more economic power, but also more political power. However, Butonese villagers (both in Aira and Tanjung) that receive funding for house materials complain, saying that Oeng Boen's monopoly in project procurement makes the distribution of materials very slow because he is overwhelmed with so many orders. The villagers, therefore, have urged the *Bupati* (regent) not to make Oeng Boen sole procurer of goods, but to involve other Chinese traders, as well. The monopoly of Oeng Boen reinforces the image of the Chinese as greedy people, as well as the idea that they are not satisfied with being wealthy businessmen, but wish to ransack politics and monopolize government projects.

Chinese traders were advantaged by their role in funding many projects after the *kerusuhan*. Their businesses dominated infrastructure procurement such as for bridges, houses, and electricity. The close relationship between the Bupati and Oeng Boen, for example, was widely known about. Every time the Bupati visited the villages, he brought a check and asked villagers what their needs were. He wrote a memo on the check, which he gave to *kepala dusun* (head of the village), who would then pick up the goods from the Chinese-owned shops mentioned by the Bupati on the check. However, there was no 'free gift' in the Bupati's gift. In the next election, the *kepala dusun* is expected to organize the people so that they vote for the Bupati. One night during the celebration of *Maulid* (the birth of the Prophet Muhammad), the Bupati came to the event and sat next to Ahmadi, the village head of Aira, on the couch. They looked very intimate, talking to each other while enjoying a religious performance presented by the people of Aira. The next day, Ahmadi shared a story about the previous night, concerning how the Bupati whispered to him that the *organ tunggal* (electric keyboard) in the performance was not playing well. "The tone of your keyboard sounds very bad. It sounds false and discordant, why not buy a new one – let me buy it for you, as long as your people have "a commitment" to me..." Ahmadi then smiled agreeing to the Bupati's suggestion.

Religious institutions also often solicit Chinese money. At the *Maulid* night event, Subhan and I carried tens of boxes of mineral water for the audience, given by a mineral water company owned by Honghui. The company is located in Waipia, a Christian village, north of Elpaputih Bay near Waraka. I wonder about this and ask Subhan why Muslims should want to drink mineral water that is produced in Waipia<sup>196</sup>. My question is not without a reason. I often see Muslims who do not want to eat or drink in restaurants that are either located in Christian areas or in any restaurants owned by Christians. Subhan, who sits with me during the *Maulid*, shares his story. It was after the *kerusuhan* that Honghui opened his mineral water company in Waipia, and at this time he recruited many Muslim employees, including Subhan himself. However, to ensure that Muslims would be prepared to consume the water, Honghui needed a *halal* certificate from the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI: Indonesian Council of Islamic Religious Leaders), an Islamic non-profit organization based in Ambon. In order to get the legitimating certification so that this product could penetrate Muslim areas, Honghui had to pay more than five million rupiah. The word *halal* is then attached to every box and water bottle. “If he does not have that certificate on this mineral water, we Muslims probably would not want to consume the water” Subhan explained.

Since the *kerusuhan*, the politics of gift giving and gift-receiving has become a widespread vehicle for both fulfilling social obligations and political maneuvering<sup>197</sup>. To legitimize their

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<sup>196</sup> Waipia is known as one of the biggest Christian villages in Seram. Many Christians, such as those from Hatuheno, the eastern neighbors of Tanjung, displaced from their old hamlets during the *kerusuhan*, moved to Waipia. See Chapter 3 on the story of the displaced Christians of Hatuheno.

<sup>197</sup> The relationship between Honghui and the MUI fits Yunxian Yan’s analysis that turns the general logic of gift exchanges in classic anthropological literature upside down by not arguing that givers are superior to the receivers, but the reverse. In Xiajia, a village in northern China, a gift does not increase prestige for the donor. During the Maoist era of radical socialism from 1949 to 1976, to show political allegiance, the followers present gifts to the elite of the political party who visit their villages. The exchange is not always well-balanced because the politician does not have to return the gift. See further Yan Yunxiang,

businesses, it is widely known that Chinese traders have to pay a surcharge to certain government institutions. Honghui makes such a payment to MUI in response to the social and religious changes that have taken place since the *kerusuhan*. Honghui has to give some extra money to neutralize Muslims' feelings of disgust of "Non-Muslim" products. MUI takes advantage of this opportunity by requiring Chinese traders to pay more than local, non-Chinese enterprises. In addition, being "Chinese" in Indonesia has become a justification for local people or institutions to overcharge them. The Chinese commonly pay extra money in a variety of contexts, including when applying for driving licenses, identity cards, and passports. In other words, the MUI demands a higher rate of charge from Chinese traders not only because they perceive the Chinese as having "unlimited money", but also as a form of compensation for their "foreignness"<sup>198</sup>. The gifts (or the bribe) from Honghui demonstrate his obligation as a "Non-Muslim", outsider, and his Chinese status requires he seek permission to gain business acceptance in a Muslim society.

In Indonesia, there is a widespread public perception that MUI is immune from the public demand for transparency and that for this reason it is prone to corruption and bribery. However, when Chinese traders make a gift to MUI, all the privilege and power still go to the receiver. MUI claims to be a religious institution that represents the broader community of Muslims that perceives the Chinese as morally inferior. To make such gifts to MUI does not increase the prestige of the Chinese traders concerned, but such gifts are perceived rather as an obligation

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1996. *The Flow of Gifts. Reciprocity and Social Networks in a Chinese Village*. Stanford, CA : Stanford University Press.

<sup>198</sup> See the analysis of Chinese being treated as *orang asing* (foreign) in Yen-ling Tsai. 2008: 174. "Strangers who are not foreign: intimate exclusion and racialized boundary in urban Indonesia". *PhD Dissertation, Anthropology Dept*, University of California, Santa Cruz. See also Timothy Lindsey, "Reconstituting the Ethnic Chinese in Post-Soeharto Indonesia: Law, Racial Discrimination, and Reform", in *Chinese Indonesians: Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting*, ed. Timothy Lindsey, Helen Pausacker, and Charles A. Choppel (Singapore; Clayton: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; Monash Asia Institute, 2005).

from an “outsider” to obtain legal protection. Thus, Chinese gift-giving in the context of trade principally aims to evade political fear and social insecurity in an era of religious revivalism after the *kerusuhan*.

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Many scholars have noted that under the New Order regime, Indonesian Chinese were economically powerful, but tended to play a political role only behind the scenes<sup>199</sup>. However, during the era of Reformasi and after the *kerusuhan* in the Moluccas, Chinese residents of south Seram started to openly get involved in electoral politics. The opening-up of democratic spaces after the *kerusuhan* throughout Moluccas has made Chinese, Butonese, and other outsiders in the Moluccas aspire to political office. Chinese traders in south Seram are no longer merely focusing on business, but using their money and resources to play a role on the center stage of politics. Similarly, as we saw demonstrated in Chapter 1, with the Butonese traders La Lichin and La Rua, the opening-up of democracy has allowed them to move from the market place into politics.

Unlike James Siegel’s depiction of the Chinese in Java as unwanted figures, the local Moluccan Chinese in 2015 were viewed more positively. The relationship between Chinese traders and native Moluccans and Butonese farmers is based on forms of social dependency and mutual advantage. In this chapter, Subhan and La Kumang represent the commonly expressed ambivalence among local Moluccans toward the Chinese. Subhan, the employee of Honghui, and La Kumang, the farmer client of Meifeng, both conceptualize their relationships with their Chinese bosses in the context of exchanging labor for money and produce. We might describe

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<sup>199</sup> See e.g. Jemma Purdey. 2006. *Anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia, 1996-1999*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press in association with Asian Studies Association of Australia; Leo Suryadinata. 1976. "Indonesian Policies toward the Chinese Minority under the New Order". *Asian Survey*. 16 (8): 770-787. Richard Robison. 1986. *Indonesia: the rise of capital*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

this arrangement as 'asymmetrical intimacy', a relationship in which, on one hand, the Chinese show their benevolence through gift-giving, but on the other hand, are strong controlling patrons to their clients. Gift giving reminds employees of the Chinese and farmers that they are economically subservient, but at the same time also involves them in an intimate personal relationship that connects commerce and their social lives<sup>200</sup>.

After the *kerusuhan*, religion plays a more significant role in bridging intimacy. The relationships between Chinese and Christian Moluccans are more intimate than those between Muslim Moluccans and Chinese traders. With the Christians, the intimacy could be forged through intermarriage and cooperation between shops as shown by Ellen (2003). However, I do not see that religion is the only force that plays a role in lubricating social relationships. Meifeng's second daughter married a Buginese trader and she converted to Islam. To Butonese farmers, a Chinese convert to Islam does not eradicate their essential character, such as being stingy and a *penuh perhitungan* (calculating person).

Using the example of gift-exchange activities, we can unpack the relations of people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds that have been suspected of living in total segregation since the *kerusuhan*. In other words, I believe that intimacy is also more connected through debt and credit relations. Despite the fact that intimacy coincides within unequal relations of power between the debtor and the creditor, a farmer can experience long periods of security because they can borrow money and other living expenses from a Chinese patron.

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<sup>200</sup> Tsai beautifully describes how the Chinese concept of gift giving can forge a daily intimacy with local people who usually guard and serve them, such as the *satpam* (security guard), *tukang parkir* (parking attendant) to *pembantu* (servant, maid, or nanny). But over time, the gifts make these employees dependent. Some Chinese often feel that they're being squeezed like a *sapi perahan* (cash cow). See further Yen-ling Tsai. 2008: 64-5. "Strangers who are not foreign: intimate exclusion and racialized boundary in urban Indonesia". PhD Dissertation, Anthropology Dept, University of California, Santa Cruz.

In the gift of cold chicken, for example, La Kumang was in the ambivalent position between the chicken as a debt that is “forgotten”, but Meifeng put a receipt for it even though she often forgets such things. The relationship between Chinese and Butonese farmers lies in this situation where debt can also become a “small gift” when it becomes a “forgotten gift”. Thus, there seems a fluidity built into the identification of the thing given (cold chicken). But, Meifeng also often lets her gift become an unpaid debt when La Kumang comes to the shop to sell his produce more frequently than usual. For La Kumang, selling produce, such as copra, to Meifeng also shows his gratitude by returning the favor. Chinese traders are their patrons who provide them with money and daily goods, and as a return, the Butonese farmers have to show their loyalty. Farmers know that there is lots of dishonesty in the warehouse, but selling to the same Chinese patron is a part of the commitment to receiving Chinese favors. Thus, the essence of selling produce to the Chinese trader is an obligation to repay them for doing a favor for their client. As I describe in my introductory chapter, the social relationships of Moluccan people are influenced by notions of duality, including those of the patron-client system. Although the relationships are forged through mutual dependency, cheating and fraud lubricate the exchange. However, these dishonesties do not necessarily undermine the stability of the balance achieved through reciprocity between patron and client.

Gift exchanges bring tension between two poles: the reciprocated gift and the un-reciprocated gift. This dynamic suggests that the motives for giving gifts range from people’s desire to maximize individual profit to their longing to strengthen social bonds. The mixture brings ambivalent feelings since the recipient may be puzzled, but sometimes givers are also confused<sup>201</sup>. Gift exchanges not only create a social bond, but also reinforces hierarchical relations. Thus, gifts are enigmatic and can create ambiguous feelings and even hatred among

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<sup>201</sup> See the discussion of these contrary motives in Jonathan Parry. *The gift, the Indian gift and the “Indian gift”*. *Man*, New Series, Vol 21. No 3 Sept 1986, pp: 453-473; Marcel Mauss, 1966. *The gift: forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies*. Cohen & West, London.

recipients. The Butonese misappropriate aid from the government and Chinese because they feel they “deserve” the aid given their precarious conditions, as well as the farmers who cheat Chinese Moluccan traders because they know that there is always an *agenda tersembunyi* (hidden agenda) behind any gift from their boss. I often encountered Butonese farmers in south Seram responding to gifts from ethnic Chinese traders. The farmers were often mystified by how the logic of the 'free' market connected with the generosity of traders. I also found many Butonese farmers who regarded 'gifts' from either the state or from ethnic Chinese traders as nothing more than utilitarian investment. To them, the gift benefits the givers by broadening their political influence<sup>202</sup>.

In the Moluccas, gifts play a crucial role in bonding people across ethnic divisions. One of the main arguments that I advance throughout the substantive chapters of this thesis concerns the relationship between moneylenders and the debtors, and the ambivalence between farmers and traders arising from the fact that the gifts forming the basis of their relationships bring moral confusion<sup>203</sup>. I refer to Maurice Godelier, who asserts:

“By its very nature, gift-giving is an ambivalent practice, which brings together or is capable of bringing together opposing emotions and forces. It can be simultaneously or successfully, an act of generosity or of violence; in the latter case, however, the violence is disguised as a disinterested gesture, since it is committed by means of and in the form of sharing”.

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<sup>202</sup> This argument can also be found in the Derridean account of giving. Derrida believes that generosity in the gift is followed by the conscious calculation of the interest. In other words, he argues that gifting is already economic management before it is a law or morality. By giving, subjects reassert their self-identity and come into being as the agent of permeable *oikos* (economy). See the discussion of Derrida's gift theory in Gerald Moore. 2011: 6-12. *Politics of the gift: exchanges in poststructuralism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

<sup>203</sup> See Maurice Godelier, *The Enigma of Gift*, 1996: 12, The University of Chicago Press.

Gifts and loans elide into one another and come laden with 'interest'. The exchange plays upon interests and disinterests, hospitality and animosity. The giver offers generosity, but the gift later becomes a loan and the receiver is always obligated to return something that is slightly better or much better than what he had received. Like debts, gifts have to be repaid. Gift exchanges have played a significant role for both Butonese and ethnic Chinese traders in accessing politics after the *kerusuhan*. By giving products to their voters, ethnic Chinese traders, who had just stepped into politics, hoped to get a return in the form of votes. Giving aid and helping people build infrastructure are actually investments that look altruistic, but they have implications for long-term politics. Learning from the way they conduct business, traders strongly believe that gift giving involves a moral contract which obligates people to repay the generosity of the givers. The givers have some expectation that they will receive at some future time.

However, the act of gift-giving in the post *kerusuhan* situation does not necessarily bring peace alone, but also suspicion, tension, and sometimes hostility. Theoretically, in the gift exchange, donors might enjoy non-tangible benefits such as social recognition and feelings of increased self-worth. But the recipients are aware that a gift is not necessarily altruistic because it can burden a recipient with debt.

Ethnic Chinese and Butonese traders believe that if wealth is distributed generously, it will be revisited on the givers. Traders are aware that in order to expand their dealings from economy to politics, they have to give more gifts to their constituents. The building materials in ethnic Chinese shops, for example, can be simultaneously commodity and gift. Such things become gifts on certain occasions such as during conflict and political elections, but on normal days



building materials are simply commodities<sup>204</sup>. Thus, to traders, a gift is a part of those interested exchanges that comprise economic cycles.

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<sup>204</sup> On the changing value of goods see: Christopher Gregory. 1982. *Gifts and commodities*. London: Academic Press; Arjun Appadurai, Arjun. 1986. *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing. 2013. "Sorting out commodities: how capitalist value is made through gifts. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*. 3 (1): 21-43.

## Chapter Six

### CONCLUSION

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Through the four preceding substantive chapters, I have compared the contemporary lives of Butonese urban traders and rural farmers on the island of Ambon and in south Seram. The ethnic tensions of urban spaces, specifically in the marketplaces, are noticeable. After the period of ethnic and religious conflict from 1999 to 2004 that I have called here the *kerusuhan*, organizations based on ethnicity, place of origin, and religion have emerged like mushrooms after rain. The market has become a focus for the re-grouping on the basis of ethnicity and kinship rather than reflecting the ethos of individual atomic competition that is usually associated with markets.

In Chapter One, I emphasize belonging and identity and how these sentiments are becoming more institutionalized after the *kerusuhan*. The government promotes equality of all citizens by promoting the sharing of power between both Muslims and Christians. As a part of the peace process after the *kerusuhan*, a set of power sharing arrangements based on ethnicity and religion have become crucial in avoiding the feeling by either side of being subordinated to the other and in preventing a recurrence of the *kerusuhan*. However, soon after the *kerusuhan*, ethnicity and religious identity became institutionalized. One of the aims of institutionalizing emotional feelings of belonging to a certain ethnic group is to stake a claim over urban land, spatial resources generally, and territory in the rural areas. Ethnic and religious discourse imagines bonds of loyalty not only in terms of kinship and origins, but also involves emotions and feelings which make people sacrifice their lives in order to dominate their territory and space from opponents. Bapa Hussein, a key figure in Chapter One, is an excellent example. He is one of the minority native Moluccan traders selling clothes on the corner of Ambon Plaza. "The BBM would not have the same feeling as "us" (*katong*)" he said. *Orang asli* Ambon (native

Ambonese) have a different *hubungan emosi* (emotional relations) , which he said could be called upon to establish trade organization based on religion.

As a consequence of their marginalization in the market since the *kerusuhan*, native Muslim traders have begun to share the same feelings as local Christians. Being *orang Ambon asli* depends on the positions that people occupy and within the situations they find themselves. Unlike the bureaucracy, where Muslims and Christians are sharply polarized and compete politically with each other<sup>205</sup>, local Muslims and Christians are more connected in the marketplaces. This is not only because the shared *adat* is seen as a unifying factor between the two religions, but also they feel tied together as *orang Ambon asli* because of their mutual sense of being displaced by the expansion of migrant traders in controlling the market. Therefore, as traders in the marketplace re-group themselves based on ethnic and religious identities, we can see the sense of belonging as highly situational and processual, always a matter of 'becoming'.

The envy of native Moluccans regarding the perceived success of outsiders remains ingrained, even after the *kerusuhan*. It becomes even sharper when migrant incomers, such as Butonese, enter politics and the bureaucracy. Before the *kerusuhan* these niches were dominated by native Moluccans themselves.

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<sup>205</sup> However, in local elections, Muslims and Christians select candidates to be the running partners from the other religion, so that there is generally a team of one Christian and one Muslim. Even in the case of West Seram, for example, native Muslim Moluccans tend to select a Christian regent in order to block the domination of Butonese who also run for election. West Seram is an interesting case where ethnic sentiment is even stronger than religion. The statistical data from 2010 showed that the number of Muslims in West Seram above 17 years old and who had the right to vote was 99,310, which was slightly higher than the number of Christians at 63,890. However, Muslims contributed to the win of the Christian regent, Jacobis Puttileihat, twice in a row, in the elections of 2006 and 2011. In my interviews, some people said that Jacobus's wife is of Butonese descent and that played a significant role in attracting many Butonese voters to support her husband. See also "Calon Incumbent menang telak di Pemilu Kada Seram Bagian Barat". *Detik News*. Senin 16 Mei 2011.

During these post-*kerusuhan* times, Butonese have experienced a greater sense of belonging as Moluccans through their participation in business in the marketplace. Butonese traders not only fill places that used to be dominated by Chinese, but are also reputed to imitate certain features of the ethnic Chinese character: thriftiness, stinginess, and calculation of every aspect of life down to the last penny. Not only that, but they have also demonstrated an uncanny ability in political lobbying, much like the stereotypical “Jew” and “Black Chinese” illustrated by La Rahman in the opening of Chapter One. La Rahman imagines that economic exchange is correlated to certain ethnic and racial attributes.

In these respects, my research has been a bit like exploring “new wine in an old bottles”. Even though Butonese traders experience upward mobility, they still occupy the *orang pendatang* (“foreigners” and “outsiders”) slot in the ethnic Moluccan social model. The patron-client relationship that has developed between the Butonese and Chinese Moluccas in business has reinforced the conceptual merging of “foreigner” and “trader”. By being labeled as foreigners, both the Butonese and Chinese Moluccans often become targets of “illegal taxation” by native Moluccans. If transparent reciprocity fails, farmers express their subversive emotions through mutual tricks, fraud, and even theft from the traders.

In Chapter Two, I demonstrate that many urban Butonese traders describe Chinese businessmen as their *guru*. Trust and credit from ethnic Chinese wholesalers and bankers has helped their business to progress. Ridan was very proud to show around when ethnic Chinese Moluccan bankers came to his wedding. Like some stage performance, the ethnic Chinese Moluccan businessmen came almost at the end of the wedding celebrations and all eyes were focused on Ridan’s family who were busy to photographing the arrival of the Chinese. We can see a similar pattern in the countryside. Butonese farmers who are connected through debt and credit relations with Chinese businessmen in Soahuku and Amahai tend to have more capital

at their disposal. Ethnic Chinese businessmen provide many opportunities for Butonese traders: they employ them as middlemen in the village, provide them with a stream of goods, or employ them as caretakers of their gardens. Also, like ethnic Chinese businessmen, many Butonese traders own or have owned a *kiosk* or *toko*, which signify attainment of a particular social position. In other words, these properties have become markers of identity and belonging. Even farmers in rural south Seram dream that they will have a *toko* someday to provide financial security when they are retired.

The intersection of ethno-religious relationships is no less complicated in the countryside than in the urban areas. As I describe in Chapter Three, my research found that Muslim Butonese farmers have built long and deep reciprocal ties with both Christian Moluccans and ethnic Chinese Moluccan merchants. In the hamlet of Aira where I lived, it might even be said that there were more tensions between local Butonese and Butonese from other Muslim villages than with their Christian *tuan desa*. In contrast to Butonese living in urban areas, rural Butonese are still prepared to accept native Moluccan customs and rules (both in Muslim and Christian villages), and refrain from displaying their ethnic identity in public groups and ceremonies. They still have to respect their *tuan dusun* who has provided them with land to work, while the Christians need Butonese labor to work their land.

The paradoxical relationship between Butonese and Christians leads people who lived through the *kerusuhan* to increasingly consign the violence to a distant memory. Some recall the conflict - or at least the comradeship it engendered - with pleasure, to avoid the memories of pain. When I participated in the New Year celebrations for 2016 in Aira, fireworks from faraway Ambon and Saparua could be seen and heard, shouting at each other in the sky. People in Aira then answered the fireworks from across the water by shooting their fireworks into the sky. Shooting fireworks seemed to occupy the space between pleasure and violence. The sky changed color from red to orange. People in Aira compared the vibe from these New Year

celebrations to the times during the *kerusuhan* when Christian neighbors would shoot guns into the air to break the silence, and they - the Butonese - would reply by firing their fireworks upward into the empty sky.

In looking at how people remember the violence of the *kerusuhan*, it is instructive to look at it from the perspective of the two films made by Joshua Oppenheimer, *The Act of Violence* and *The Look of Silence*<sup>206</sup> about recollections of an earlier episode in the history of post-Independence Indonesia. The former film is about the perpetrator of violence that obscenely and unashamedly reenacts and boasts about his actions killing communists in 1965. Anwar Congo, the perpetrator of the violence reenacts his killing as if it were action in a Hollywood movie. The violent stories are very dark, but he shares his action with evidence of complex pleasure and dramatizes it with accounts of bravery and bragging. The audience in the film reacted to the massacre with applause and cheering. The perpetrator even bragged about their action. In the latter film, in contrast, the perspective comes from Ardi, the survivor. The laughter is absent and the stories are tinged with trepidation and fear. In my research, I encounter various responses in remembering the *kerusuhan*. People who were involved in the wars and did not lose their relatives or parts of their bodies recall the conflict with pleasure. In a slightly different situation, there are also people, specifically women traders, who are eager to tell of their bitter survival during the *kerusuhan*. They were traumatized, but it does not mean that they do not want to share their stories. Passing hard times and turning a bad situation around is part of their pride in sharing their stories. In contrast, I also found Butonese who did not want to *mengungkit kembali* (retell) the story of the *kerusuhan*. Forgetting the violence is part of their way of coping and restoring normality to their lives. Retelling their bitter stories of the past would be counterproductive in terms of what they are working towards nowadays.

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<sup>206</sup> See Joshua Oppenheimer, *The act of killing*. Koch Media. 2014, DVD; Joshua Oppenheimer, Signe Byrge Sørensen, Lars Skree, and Niels Pagh Andersen. 2016. *The look of silence*. Madman Entertainment

Nonetheless, unlike the total hatred of communists displayed by Anwar Congo, Butonese show ambiguous feelings in their attitudes towards Christians from Soahuku. The Christians are their patrons who provide land for them and there were still many ongoing contracts for copra and cloves at the time the *kerusuhan* erupted. The shared recollection of these events is what we might call 'narrative forms of belonging' for Butonese living in the Moluccans. The narrative stems from the way Butonese remember their relationships with Christians and their belonging to the trees and land that they worked. These are passed down and remembered through stories across generations. Despite being socially disadvantaged before the conflict and displaced during the conflict - living "dis-advantageously" as *anak dusun* - many Butonese farmers preferred to live under such conditions than on the ancestral island of Buton. They preferred to live in Ambon rather than being displaced to Buton during the *kerusuhan*. Butonese displaced from places such as Saparua and those who resettled elsewhere in the central Moluccas, such as in Aira and Tanjung, have not returned to their previous homes. It has now been over a decade since the Butonese villages were attacked, but the fact that they are still living scattered around the Central Moluccas indicates that they have made the Moluccas their home. Nonetheless, Butonese no longer live together with Christians as they once did. They live as neighbors with Christians, and although not "segregated", they might be described as "co-existing". Despite living side-by-side, they are still connected to one another in various physical locations such as gardens, *toko*, and marketplaces and people are also still linked through the many and various relationships and debt exchanges I have described in earlier chapters.

After the *kerusuhan*, the position of Butonese in the countryside remained precarious because they still did not belong to the *adat* and *pela-gandong* alliances that had been used to solve problems between local Muslims and Christians. In the absence of shared *adat*, Butonese in rural areas sort protection and an improvement in their social status through compliance with

state programs for community relations and development. During my fieldwork, I witnessed many changes in the lives of people living in rural areas and there is a prospect, for example, that the official status of Aira as an *anak dusun* will change to “administrative village” which means that the Butonese inhabitants will separate from their Moluccan *tuan desa*, as happened in the village of Tanjong when they became an “administrative village” and separated from their *tuan desa*, Sepa. The Butonese of Tanjong no longer feel like the “stepson” of their *tuan desa* and instead feel like an equal “citizen”, just like native Moluccans. Moreover, through the UU [Undang-Undang/Regulation] Desa (village legislation) authorized in 2014, the government, through the ministry of finance, subsidizes every poor administrative village, including Tanjong, to the tune of one billion rupiah each year. This has further encouraged the community leaders in Aira to plead with the government to upgrade their status, as happened with Tanjong.

In Chapter Three I also demonstrated that we need to consider that non-human objects are also essential social facts that play a role in the exchange relationship. As Mauss asserts, the identity of the giver is embedded in the given object. Therefore, the things given are not passive, inactive, or inanimate objects. Things move, change, and grow as items intertwined in relations with humans. In the context of the present study, non-human things, such as cloves, copra, and wild pigs are all crucially implicated in ways in which all new social arrangements come about. In the case, for example, of wild pigs in south Seram, uncontrolled growth of the pig population brought about by the breakdown in relations between local Christians and Muslims during the *kerusuhan* led to the reconstruction of community relations as a means of solving a practical problem. The inadvertent growth of the wild pig population reminds us of Latour’s phrase “the slight surprise of action”<sup>207</sup> and was undetermined and out of human control. In a short space

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<sup>207</sup> See Bruno Latour, *Pandora’s Hope: essays on the reality of science studies*. 1999: 266-292, in the chapter “The slight surprise of action”. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.



of time wild pigs - to the apparent surprise of humans - moved from being a good meal for Christians to being an uncontrolled pest for Muslim villagers.

Like wild pigs, cloves and copra have their agency. When the price of these commodities is skyrocketing, the underlying relations between Chinese shopkeepers, their employees, and farmers becomes clear. The clove harvesting season intensifies people's social relationships. Butonese moneylenders expand their loans in the countryside. Mutual tricks and various illegalities are also a widespread feature of economic transactions in the countryside. During the *kerusuhan*, cloves had become the "object" of raiding. As with the *toko* that became the target of anti-Chinese riots in many towns in Indonesia during the democratic transition of 1996-2001, clove trees became the signifier for attackers to cut and burn. As remembered by La Kumang, before the *kerusuhan* clove trees in Saparua used to be taken care of by Butonese farmers. Native Christians considered the trees to be "Butonese". The destruction of the trees and the abandonment of the clove harvest during the *kerusuhan* brought some advantages for urban Butonese traders. A consequence of the smaller number of people planting new clove trees was a reduction in the harvest of cloves, such that many Butonese traders were able to take this opportunity to buy cloves and sell them at double the price in Ambon. Likewise, for soldiers on duty in the countryside, harvesting cloves and hunting wild pigs were opportunities for them to obtain additional income and engage in "illegalities" with civilians. Although human beings cultivate the proliferation of trees and raise animals, the increase in the animal population or the growths of trees is often out of their control. Mama Nipar and Mama Juany, the mother and daughter figures in Chapter Three who take care of their five gardens, can get the best seeds for garlic, peanuts, and green beans by just contacting their connections and relatives in Java. But when it comes to how to control pests, they have almost no idea except by changing the type of crops. Instead of spending lots of money building fences to protect the vegetables, they cultivate cacao. *Babi seng bisa naek* ("The pigs are unable to climb them") said Mama Juany who continues to struggle with how to deal with the unexpected increase of

wild pigs after the *kerusuhan*. The non-human things - copra, cloves, and wild pigs - had agency during and after the *kerusuhan* to recreate ties of cooperation across communities, allowing for a re-emergence of upward mobility, and a renewal of hospitality.

In Chapter Four I demonstrated how the giving of gifts and credit are intertwined. As I found in my fieldwork in South Seram, debt has become the basic means of social connection between Butonese and Chinese businessmen, between Muslim traders and Christian peddlers, between Butonese moneylenders and their rural Moluccan clients, and between ethnic Chinese shopkeepers and their employees. Even though it is not particularly effective and is often subject to corruption, the Indonesian state and its agencies also uses “gifts” in the form of project funding in order to connect with sectors of the general public. All these relationships require and contribute towards stable community relations, for as Marcel Mauss pointed out “In order to trade, man must first lay down his spear”<sup>208</sup>. These examples show that gift-exchange requires that active hostilities cease, at least temporarily, and at the same time forcing partners to stay in a contractual relationship. The obligation to return the gift puts moral pressure on people to stay connected with one another even though they may have ambivalent sentiments. Mauss also describes the competitive gift giving described for the institution of potlatch found amongst the coastal peoples of the northwest of the American continent as a kind of “war”<sup>209</sup>. In my field research, a gift creates competition, specifically during rituals and ceremonies, and in political campaigns where each of the candidates competes to give more than the other in order to create indebtedness among the receivers, who are potential voters. Subhan and Ahmadi, the head of the hamlet of Aira, are two of the main actors that feature in the episodes discussed in Chapter Three who often receive gifts from the ethnic Chinese Moluccan traders,

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<sup>208</sup> See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, 1966: 80.

<sup>209</sup> See also Helen Codere. *Fighting with property: a study of Kwakiutl potlatching and warfare 1792-1930*. New York. J.J Augustin, 1950.

as well as from the bupati (regent) of the Central Moluccas. The gifts have obliged them to consolidate their support networks and collect votes for the gift-givers.

In Chapter Four I also illustrated how people despite complying with state programs of assistance, see that the state is weak in its effective implementation of the law, thus leaving a serious problem for society. People realize that even though the government creates laws and defines actions that it regards as 'criminal', those associated with government still have vested interests that are contradictory to the legislation. There is evidence that government officials collude in many illegalities, particularly various forms of bribery. These practices continue because the state apparatus misuses legal official procedures and because the operation of the state apparatus are largely hidden from view. There is no transparency, and practice is usually reinforced by a strong collective code of secretiveness<sup>210</sup>. The government apparatus has, for example, supported illicit forms of raising revenue. Thus, police protect local petty criminals in Pasar Mardika in Ambon, a blind eye is turned to the hunting of wild pigs by soldiers with illegal bullets in Tampilouw in South Seram, information leaks out about investigations into fraud in warehouses owned by ethnic Chinese in Amahai, and "halal" certification is obtained for an ethnic Chinese water company in return for 'extra' payments. These are all examples of the state apparatus taking advantage of its knowledge of local business practices. The state uses ethnic and religious sentiments to claim illegal payments. People realize that the ineffectiveness of the state means that many social problems are never solved because for much of the time, it is agents of the state who are violating the law. Such corruption and nepotism sets a bad example for the rest of society.

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<sup>210</sup> Both the state apparatus and ordinary members of society conceal their involvement because they fear both legal sanctions and social opprobrium. The state acts out to discipline its members, but at the same time the state itself is too weak to prevent illegality. It thus appears as a set of predatory institutions whose intention is to extract benefit from the people. See further Edward Aspinall and Gerry van Klinken. 2011: 1-30. *The State and Illegality in Indonesia*. KITLV Press, Leiden.

The relationship between local Moluccans and “other Moluccans”, as well as the relationship between Butonese and the local government apparatus, operates ambivalently - simultaneously reflecting love and hatred, as well as non-transparently operating a set of rules, which are nuanced and informed by moral evaluations. If we view all this from a Western mindset that reifies the state-Society distinction through a binary legal lens, the foregrounding in bureaucratic procedures, of hospitality, politeness and gift-giving begin to look like potentially corrupt activities.

### **Living in the Post Conflict Era: Tragedy and Hope**

The aim of this dissertation is to capture changes, specifically in the realm of socio-economic exchange and ethno-religious interaction, that have taken place in the post *kersusuhan* era in the Moluccas, that is between 2003 and 2017. The dissertation also attempts to explore new emerging phenomena, both in urban and rural areas of the Moluccas, not found before the *kerusuhan*, and also to demonstrate continuity from the past.

Under the New Order, the state acted like a domineering father, defining almost every aspect of a citizen's identity. Suharto and the regime in central Jakarta defined what it meant to be a respectable woman and a mother, what constituted a good family, how to project sexual morality, enforced the definition of a respectable lecturer, and even described what should be meant by a ‘decent occupation’. State authority under the New Order regime also legislated how to practice religion and defined good and bad people. The state used *agama* (religion) as an index of modernity and an instrument for national unification. *Agama* also became a political issue for religious movements among local ethnic groups who sought state recognition and

support<sup>211</sup>. The state, not God, was sovereign in deciding who had the right to live or die<sup>212</sup>. All this suddenly collapsed with the fall of the New Order regime in 1998, but the authoritarian mentality persists.

In the Moluccas, a new era of a democratic government and administrative decentralization started in 2002. This has given an opportunity for people not only to voice their grievances, but also to reassert their identities. Ethnic and religious identities that had been hidden under the extensive power of the New Order's secular national ideology, or so-called Pancasila, emerged when Suharto was toppled in 1998<sup>213</sup>. Cultural and social identities began to reinforce economic and political competition at sub-district (*kecamatan*), district (*kabupaten*) and even provincial level. Power is now dispersed across multiple sites, but decentralization has not ended corruption, simply displaced, relocated and regionalized it, since capital also flows to the local sources of power<sup>214</sup>. Even though the law may have changed, minds have not. Corruption is no longer the monopoly of central government, but since the new era of democracy and decentralization have brought with it a spirit of equality, people have been encouraged to

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<sup>211</sup> See Rita Smith Kipp and Susan Rodgers eds. 1987. *Indonesian Religions in Transition*. Papers from the Tenth Annual Indonesian Studies Conference held at Ohio University in August, 1982. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Jane Monig Atkinson "Religions in Dialogue: The Construction of an Indonesian Minority Religion, 180-183 in Kipp and Rodgers, 1987.

<sup>212</sup> See James T Siegel. 1998. *A new criminal type in Jakarta: counter-revolution today*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press.

<sup>213</sup> See examples of reconstruction of ethnic and religious identity in the post Suharto era in Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry van Klinken. 2007. *Renegotiating Boundaries. Local Politics in post-Soeharto Indonesia*. KITLV Press. See also Roy Ellen.. "Pragmatism, Identity and the State: How the Nuaulu of Seram Have Re-Invented Their Beliefs and Practices As 'religion'". *Wacana, Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Budaya*, 15 (2). 2014.

<sup>214</sup> Various scholars argue that decentralization creates a "new small Soeharto" or "little kingdoms" at the local level. See Vedi Hadiz 2003: pp. 119-31. 'Power and politics in North Sumatera; The uncompleted Reformasi', in: Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy (eds), *Local power and politics in Indonesia; Decentralization and democratization*. Gerry van Klinken. 2002: 67-105. *Indonesia's new ethnic elites in: Henk Schulte Nordholt and Irwan Abdullah (eds), Indonesia; In search of transition*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.

emulate practices that were characteristic of the New Order. Suharto's shattered sovereignty has been dispersed among the many, including members of marginalized ethnicities, indigenous peoples, ethnic Chinese traders, and Butonese farmers.

After the bloodshed of the *kerusuhan*, *agama* has tended to become a more important marker of identity than ethnicity. Roy Ellen in a recent article suggests that the *kerusuhan* has even helped to reshape the way in which indigenous animist peoples such as Nuaulu view their own ritual practices and beliefs, not simply as *adat*, but as "religion"<sup>215</sup>. Conversion from "animism" to a religion recognized in Pancasila became a means of conferring greater citizenship rights. In my research case, while religion as a whole continued to be divisive, Muslim identity has become increasingly important in unifying migrants (such as Butonese) and natives. For migrant Butonese, Bugis, and Makassarese, being Muslim helped them to claim recognition as citizens so that they could live side by side with other Muslim neighbors.

People who remember the role of the state during critical moments of the *kerusuhan* are even more cynical about its role. By the end of the conflict people had learned that the law was an exceptionally weak tool for resolving community disputes. There had been much slaughter and destruction in which those actors who had instigated or perpetuated violence were not brought to court or publicly punished. The state did not offer an independent forum for truth and accountability about what had happened in a conflict for which they were partly responsible. People realized that it had been the grassroots community that had been willing to end the conflict that was eventually important, even though many people still did not want to talk about peace and conflict resolution. It looked as if the government and local elites were only interested

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<sup>215</sup> See Roy Ellen. 2014: 254-285. "Pragmatism, Identity and the State: How the Nuaulu of Seram Have Re-Invented Their Beliefs and Practices As 'religion'". *Wacana, Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Budaya*, 15 (2).

in making reconciliation into a spectacle rather than seeing it as a pragmatic process<sup>216</sup>. In both North and Central Moluccas, after the conflict, people were reluctant to embrace the notion of *rekonsiliasi* (reconciliation). People did not want to be involved in the public seeking of truth, justice, accountability, forgiveness, or admit to any wrong doing, but rather most of the reconciliation was conducted through ceremonial events led by local elites instead of through the practice of ordinary people in their daily lives.

In fact, during my fieldwork, official representations of conciliatory behavior on the part of local elites were less through actual personal interaction, than through public banners and posters. It was very common to see roadside billboards picturing the giant faces of Christian politicians dressed in white Muslim robes and wearing a *kopyah* (skullcap) greeting Muslims with solicitations of *Selamat Hari Raya, Iedul Fitri* (Happy Eid-al Fitr). Similarly, at other times of the year in the days preceding religious festivals, the giant faces of Muslim politicians were to be seen depicted on billboards in Christian areas with greetings in big letters offering Christians solicitations of *Selamat Natal* (Merry Christmas). Actually, in daily practice, the intimacy is very limited. It only happens in the areas of work: in the gardens, in the marketplace, in shops, and in warehouses. As a replacement for speaking of accountability, the government often talks about the need to forget what happened in the conflict and move beyond remembering the *kerusuhan*.

Towards the end of my fieldwork, I found that many of my Muslim interlocutors had not only become more pious, but at the same time, had distanced themselves from Christians in their daily relationships. The growth of religious prejudice has exacerbated ethnic stereotypes, contrary to the objectives of the state and its recommended codes of practice. The younger

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<sup>216</sup> See Christopher Duncan (October 20, 2016). "Coexistence not Reconciliation: From Communal Violence to Non-Violence in North Maluku, Eastern Indonesia". *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 17, 5, 460-474.

generation of Butonese Muslims has grown up with fewer Christian friends and vice versa, existing in different social niches from their Christian contemporaries. Even national and international news passes through religious filters. Anti-Muslim and anti-Christian conspiracy theories and 'fake news' are rife, each believing that the other is out to get them. Ellen describes what he characterizes as a "balkanization of settlement" (2014:275) in Seram after the conflict, where the polarization between Muslims and Christians has increased; Christian minorities fleeing to the safety of areas where Christians were in the majority and vice versa for Muslims.

Migrants as "other Moluccans" also had the experience of being displaced during the *kerusuhan*. And although afterwards many Butonese became upwardly socially mobile they still live precarious lives. Migrants remain excluded from *adat* at a time when the instrument of customary law is being used to rebuild harmonious relations between communities, as a mechanism of peace and reconciliation through various ceremonies, rituals, and pledges-of-allegiance, such as *siwalima* and *pela-gandong*. Nonetheless, in parts of the Central Moluccas, such as East Seram, there are long-term migrant communities that have been absorbed into the local *adat* system more effectively, such as Bugis in Air Kasar or Hadrami Arabs in Kwamar<sup>217</sup>.

In my case, many Butonese migrants still face the challenge of how they are represented in official and informal processes of integration with local people, especially as they are unable to participate in the enforcement of Moluccan *adat*<sup>218</sup> as a way of ending violence. Even now, migrants still need the state's benevolence. As we have seen, after the *kerusuhan*, the migrants

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<sup>217</sup> See further in Roy Ellen On the Edge of the Banda Zone, 248-9, 254-5.

<sup>218</sup> On the problems of *adat* as a tool of reconciliation see Birgit Bräuchler. 2015. *The cultural dimension of peace: Decentralization and reconciliation in Indonesia*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.



comply with the conditions for receiving state assistance and have welcomed the democratic reforms because they promoted legitimate equality against the discrimination embodied in the hierarchy of *hukum adat* (customary laws) and its revival. Ahmadi, the head of the hamlet of Aira, dreams that one day Aira will be like Tanjong, a prosperous Butonese village based on fisheries, which has been separated from their *tuan dusun*, Sepa. By comparison, Aira, still under the authority of Soahuku, still receives state aid via its *tuan dusun*. When Aira received agricultural aid from IFAD that was directly given from the Department of Food Security without passing through their *tuan dusun*, many Butonese in Aira gladly welcomed the news. Ahmadi one day told me:

*begini boleh, kalau bantuan dari atas langsung, kualitas bagus, seng perlu sortir sortir lewat tuan dusun. Kasihan orang atas sudah ambil semua lalu orang bawah ambil apa?* ("I like this aid better, if the aid comes down directly from the government, the quality is often good, no need to filter first from our patron village. Pity for us if the elites have already taken everything, then what will the poorer take?")

Butonese in Tanjong, are more enthusiastic about state projects at *desa* (village government) level compared with local ethnic Moluccans who still consider the administrative concept of *desa* as a threat to the old system of *negeri* (customary villages)<sup>219</sup>. Implementation of the last program of *satu desa satu milliard* (one billion one desa)<sup>220</sup> has encouraged Butonese participants to watch carefully to ensure transparent management of the fund. Through this fund Butonese feel that they are recognized as official citizens. In the village of Tanjong, Mama Juany is actively involved in each of the meetings about funding transparency. Like many other women, she attends regular meetings every two weeks in the village hall of Tanjong to discuss the allocation of the fund. Their enthusiasm is accompanied by a willingness to check the fairness of local leaders, from the level of *kepala desa* (village head) down to to the *ketua RT*

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<sup>219</sup> See in the report of Jacques Bertrand, 1995: 95-6 "Compliance, resistance, and trust: peasants and the state in Indonesia" PhD dissertation, Princeton University; Juliet Lee, 1997: 56-77. "The Changing of the Village in Ambon". *Cakalele*, Vol 8.

<sup>220</sup> This program is better known as Dana Desa (village fund), which was first introduced in 2014. The program is operated through cooperation between the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Public Works, and the Ministry of Villages.

(head of neighborhood), in their handling the fund, in order to prevent or identify corrupt behaviour that might enrich their own families. In addition, Mama Juany's mother, Mama Nipar, who came to Tanjung in the 1950s, has noticed that since Tanjung became an administrative village in 2004, those of Butonese descent have had more freedom in land transactions, securing rights among their own relatives to live there without first needing the permission from the Radja in Sepa. One day, on her spacious verandah used for drying nutmeg leaves, she proudly announced with a wide smile:

"*Beta rasa cukup* (I feel enough), since [Tanjung] became an independent village I have been able to cultivate a thousand trees and take care of the garden by myself and don't have to share with the *tuan dusun*."

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Despite the hopes and best intentions of liberal progressive politics, the conventions of international law and the pronouncements of international organizations such as the U.N., during the first two decades of the twenty-first century hate crime and violence linked to ethnicity and religion is widespread throughout the globe. We can see this most recently in Myanmar, the Middle East, the United States and Africa, to mention just a few salient examples currently in the news. The basis of identity, group formation and political mobilization is too often due to a common experience of exclusion. In the central Moluccas economic inequality has increased over the last two decades, for example unemployment has skyrocketed among young people<sup>221</sup> and the associated anxiety is expressed through religion. In Ambon, envy of and hostility towards migrants continues. Christians envy Muslims and vice versa, and native Moluccans envy the Butonese while the Butonese themselves are cynical in their dealings with natives. Prejudice is maintained within each group, both Muslims and Christians, in order to emphasize their difference from "the other". People stoke that prejudice as a means of maintaining their identity.

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<sup>221</sup> The number of unemployed in the Moluccas when I was conducting my fieldwork in 2015 was 9.93 percent, even higher than in West Papua (8.08 %) and East Nusa Tenggara (3.83%). "Masalah Besar Pemerintah di 2016" *Ambon Ekspres*. 8 January 2016. See also Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Maluku, 2015: 68-74, *Maluku Dalam Angka*.

Despite the fact that Ambon and the Central Moluccas generally are now more religiously polarized than ever in modern times, one day in 2016, La Rahman, a fiery Butonese trader in Batu Merah market, suggested to me that:

“even though people still harbor the same spirit of polarization, at least, it is better that we define our polarized identity, grievances, anger, and hope through the ballot box and through ethnic organizations that do not involve physical contact and violence, rather than through weapons and bombs as we did”.

Replacing direct physical conflict with more democratic competition suggests that while the past of the *kerusuhan* is not wholly dead and buried, it is decaying, such that one day new roots can grow in different fertile ground.

To explore the empirical evidence on which such assertions of hope and struggle rest we need to examine local exchange networks, and reciprocal linkages across community boundaries, and the often obligatory mutual relations which they implicate. As I argued in introductory chapter, reconciliation in the post *kerusuhan* period came about through daily economic interactions. The necessity to exchange subsistence goods such as vegetables, crops, and fish has made it easier for people to reduce violence and return to normalcy. However, Brauchler<sup>222</sup> surmises that merely relying on economic transactions as solving the problems post conflict will bring only a kind of superficial peace and vindictive feelings, as well. Thus, in order to restore peace, daily economic transactions should come together with the revival of a more encompassing *adat* and recognition of religious interests. The aim is to fulfill the needs for justice and the demands from local people who have been marginalized by the state's programs for development.

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<sup>222</sup> See Brauchler, 2016: 199. *The Cultural Dimension of Peace*. Palgrave Macmillan.

The lesson learned from the conflict in the Moluccas stems from the changing political constellation. Government is now forced to operate and negotiate in a more transparent and democratic manner when dealing with the many interests connecting Christians, Muslims, locals, Chinese and migrants. Brauchler calls this change in the Moluccas a “cultural turn” where government is more open in accommodating the cultural needs of a post conflict society<sup>223</sup>. However, revivalism of Moluccan *adat* risks excluding the cultural capital of certain migrant groups, such as the Butonese, Bugis, and those from Makassar (BBM). Thus, rather than expecting inclusion within local *adat* arrangements Butonese migrants express their sentiments and grievances through modern Islamic political parties, rely on legislation, and an on government projects outside the world of *adat*, as I explained in the beginning of this conclusion chapter.

In the post-conflict society, the government infuses its modern development rhetoric, practices and democratic aspirations. The aim is to provide assurance that there will be no citizens who are left behind by the state’s modernization projects, as well as no return of the conflict. The first of two examples of this from the rural areas is that Butonese villagers can now directly elect their own village head through the ballot. They, who used to be excluded from the decision-making processes of selecting the traditional village head (*radja*), can now select their own *kepala desa* (village head). The second is that post conflict development aid prioritizes funding based on the poverty level of the village rather than on the status of indigeneity. Under the conditions of democratic political participation, the Butonese find a way of mobilizing their collective identity in order to claim the benefits of various governmental programs. In the urban areas, government also legitimizes the equal status of migrant citizenship and their involvement in local politics, as I showed in Chapter 1, where Butonese traders were able to lobby their interests in the marketplaces.

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid, 2016: 179-180

*Kerusuhan* has shaped a government expected to enforce more democratic methods in order to accommodate differing socio-religious identities. However, democracy and decentralization have also prompted each citizen to speak up about their entitlement to equal rights, which in itself has the potential to create further conflict and tension. As a consequence of the open democracy of the post conflict period, there have emerged tensions between villages who struggle over resources and land borders. As I illustrate in Chapter 3, the tense relations between the two Butonese villages of Tanjung and Aira and their dissatisfaction regarding their *tuan desa* shows that democracy has enabled Butonese to speak up about their frustrations. One of the grievances is about lack of transparency in the distribution of governmental subsidies given through their *tuan desa*.

Notwithstanding the many depressing trends in the post conflict society, there are some signs of hope - the vision of a better future - in local people's attitudes and practices, for example in La Kumang's plans [just discussed for a kiosk in Masohi]. Hope is not just about optimism and pretending that everything after the *kerusuhan* will be fine. More tangible evidence for improved prospects can be found in the life-histories of individual Butonese, such as La Kumang. La Kumang has three daughters, the eldest of which was in the fourth grade of elementary school when I was in the field. One day when we were walking through the *kebun* (garden) that he was taking care of, La Kumang shared with me his plan to establish a kiosk in Masohi. He told me that his daughters would not be able to take care of hundreds of coconut and clove trees, given the physical labor involved. He continued:

“Petrus, the Christian landowner from Soahuku, came to the house yesterday and he told me that I needed to extend the rent for the garden to ten years. This might be good because in the long term, the profit from the rented garden could be used to buy space or land to build a kiosk in Masohi that my wife could take care of”

Farmers like La Kumang share many dreams of this kind, but interestingly achieving these dreams in a Moplucan context requires exchanges across ethnic and religious lines. I also

found that many Butonese have their own land regardless of their status as outsiders, land that they had bought from their native Moluccan *tuan dusun*. This makes the various generic claims based in *adat*, that Butonese have no right to own land in the Moluccas, appear obsolete<sup>224</sup>. La Kumang told me that in recent times, many local people were selling their land because they needed cash for a variety of reasons. What happened in the urban marketplaces where local people sold their kiosk was repeated in rural areas where native farmers sold or leased their land to Butonese migrants.

The ethnographic studies by Tania Li of cocoa as a commodity in Laudje, Sulawesi (2015), and by Schreer on rattan management in Kalimantan (2016),<sup>225</sup> show that despite the adverse effects of economic development and uncertainty, farmers still have high aspirations and are responsive to the opportunities of modern life. They hope that by adjusting to the rapid acceleration of change in the political economy, they will be able to improve their socio-economic situation and become more prosperous. In addition, and returning to the observations of Navaro-Yashin (2009) referred to in the introduction, the aspirations to have a garden, trees, kiosk, or *toko* of one's own also entails a desire to be a modern citizen, to feel a sense of improvement, which in turn serves as a basis for a more realistic hope of a better and more stable future. Since the end of the *kerusuhan*, people have (individually and collectively) sought development opportunities through administrative decentralization and the receipt of aid given by the state and international NGOs. As Tsing suggests<sup>226</sup>, improvements through development

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<sup>224</sup> See references to the status of Butonese in relation to land under the New Order era: Otto Hospes. 1996. *People that count: Changing savings and credit practices in Ambon, Indonesia*; Frans Benda-Beckmann. 2007. *Social security between past and future: Ambonese networks of care and support*.

<sup>225</sup> See Tania Murray Li. 2014. *Lands' End. Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier*. Duke University Press. See also in the case of Kalimantan, Viola Schreer. 2016. "Longing For Prosperity in Indonesian Borneo". Dissertation thesis at the School of Anthropology and Conservation. University of Kent.

<sup>226</sup> Anna Tsing, 2005: 269-270. *In the Realm of Diamond Queen*. Princeton University.

are not always about the narration of disappointment and anger, but also about a mission of desire and hope. Therefore, Butonese in the Moluccas maintain their longing for business involvement with ethnic Chinese Moluccans and to participate in the state projects, as a way to escape being “second class” and as an attempt to pursue a more prosperous future. Last, but not least, irrespective of existential realities, is the need for Butonese to nurture the imagination, and the possibility of achieving their dreams and realizing true improvements in their overall quality of life.

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