

The Evolution of God in the Spice Islands: The Converging and Diverging of Protestant Christianity and Islam in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods¹.

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A Short History of Islam and Christianity in the Moluccas

The Moluccas, once better known as the Spice Islands, attracted foreigners at least since Roman times. They came for cloves and nutmeg, two much demanded spices that brought fabulous prices for seafaring merchants from Asia and Europe. These merchants, in sequence, brought Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity to the islands. Hinduism had little lasting impact but the two other world religions not only came to stay for good but ever since played a crucial role in the fate of Moluccans from their arrival right into the present. However, throughout history, these religions were strongly modified by the traditional way of life following the laws and customs (*adat*) that were laid down in the mystical past by their common ancestors².

The following discussion will be restricted to the Central Moluccas, and, specifically, the islands of Ambon-Lease³, and Seram. The latter is considered the mother island of all “Ambonese”⁴. Although not the most important region of spice production, this region rose to prominence after both the Portuguese and Dutch made Ambon City (Kota Ambon), on the island with the same name, into their administrative capital.

Islam had made already great inroads by the arrival in 1512 of the first Europeans who came to stay, the Catholic Portuguese. For the next two centuries, the Islamic population would be in the forefront of the battles against the unwelcome European colonizers, first the Portuguese, and from the beginning of the 17th century, the Protestant Dutch.⁵

Once the Dutch had consolidated their grasp on the Moluccas after smashing one last major rebellion, the so-called Pattimura uprising⁶, right after the British Interregnum ended in 1817, the Moluccan Moslems became almost invisible in the annals of Moluccan history. From the mid-18th century until the end of the Dutch colonial empire in the East Indies, the Christians

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² For an extended discussion of Ambonese *adat*, consult Bartels 1994:35-102; 296-394 and Cooley 1962b.

³ Ambon-Lease refers to the four smaller main islands of the Ambonese culture area: Ambon, Haruku, Saparua, and Nusalaut, with the latter three making up Lease.

⁴ The people of the Central Moluccas refer traditionally to themselves, and are generally referred to by other Indonesians, as “Ambonese” (*orang Ambon*), named after the island that throughout the colonial period was the political center not only of the Central Moluccas but all of Maluku, Ambon. The Indonesian province Maluku was subdivided in fall of 1999 by the central government under President Habibie. The former *Kabupaten Maluku Utara* (Regency of North Moluccas) was split from the original province and became the independent province Maluku Utara. The central and southern regions remained intact and the name is also still *Propinsi Maluku*. The more logical name of *Maluku Selatan* (South Moluccas) was most likely rejected because of its political connotation, reminding too much on the *Republik Maluku Selatan*, the failed attempt in 1950 to establish an independent Moluccan state whose exile-government is still active in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, where a sizable Moluccan exile community exists, the term “Moluccan” is preferred over “Ambonese”.

⁵ For more details on the arrival of Hinduism, Islam, and early European colonization in the Central Moluccas, see Bartels 1994:159-255. Rumphius 1910, 2000, 2001; Bokemeyer 1888; Knaap 1987.

⁶ In the Pattimura War of 1817, both Christians and Moslems fought side-by-side, in a last, failing effort to rid themselves of the Dutch yoke. For a summary of the war and its relevance in modern Indonesia, see Bartels 1994.

dominated Moluccan history. The demise of the spice trade shifted the economic focus of the Dutch to the rest of what became Indonesia. The Christian Moluccans were given an opportunity to receive a western education and served as administrators and soldiers, colluding with the Dutch to tighten their grip on the far-flung archipelago.

The Moslems experienced a comeback during the Japanese occupation during World War II when they were favored over the Christians by the Japanese. Their slow but steady rise from marginalization to prominence occurred, of course, after Indonesian independence in 1949. Although now members of the largest Moslem nation on earth, their arrears in education were so large that the Christian Ambonese continued to play an important role in education, the professional fields, and the provincial governmental structure. In business, the monopoly of the, mostly Christian, Chinese was slowly undermined by Moslem merchants. However, the latter were mostly immigrants from other regions of Indonesia since the indigenous Moslems, like their Christian brethren, demonstrated little proclivity to excel in trade.

The Indigenization of Islam and Christianity in Colonial Times

Islam in Isolation

Factors leading to Indigenization

Very little is known about early Islam in the Central Moluccas but it can be assumed that in most places it was little more than a thin cultural veneer, just like Hinduism, under which indigenous traditions continued to determine social life. The fact alone that a leader of the Ambonese mini-kingdom of Hitu, *Patih*⁷ Tuban, found it necessary to go to Java to learn more about Islam, points to the probability that the knowledge about this religion was rather vague, based probably mostly on the teachings of traders rather than Islamic scholars. Islam seems to have slumbered for some time in the region and only gained a decisive momentum just before the arrival of the Portuguese when new ideas and information were brought from the newly established Islamic centers in Java, Makassar and elsewhere in the archipelago. The Portuguese had never enough manpower to stop the indigenous population from having outside contacts. Thus, Islamic ideas continued to reach the Moluccas, guaranteeing a continued dynamism and expansion.

The dubious merit of containment of Moluccan Islam belongs to the Dutch who after fifty years of continuous wars finally gained almost complete control in the middle of the 17th Century and thus also largely stopped the influx of new Islam ideas until the 20th Century. During this long period of "stagnation", Central Moluccan Islam became introspective. The processes of syncretization of Islam with *adat* beliefs were set into motion as soon as Islam was first accepted. However, it was during the Dutch period that Islam, cut off from the rest of the Islamic world community, became indigenized and metamorphosed into a truly Ambonese ethnic religion.

⁷ Title of nobility, ranked second below '*Raja*' ('king') and above '*orang kaya*' ('rich man'). Village chiefs used these titles.

Illustration: Islam in Haruku

The indigenization of Islam in isolation can be best illustrated by the example of the *Uli Hatuhaha*⁸, a village federation on the island of Haruku, consisting of five, hierarchically ordered, villages, namely Pelauw, Rohomoni, Hulaliu, Kabau, and Kailolo.⁹ All five villages also claim to be interrelated by genealogical ties. This *uli* is one of the few still functioning to some extent on the *adat* level. It is also a good example of how Islam was integrated into the existing structure. All villages but Hulaliu are Moslem. Nevertheless, it is unique in that its Moslem members continued to recognize Hulaliu as one of its constituent villages after this *negeri* (village) had voluntarily converted to Christianity in 1648, having flirted with Catholicism already in Portuguese times (Rumphius 1910: 275).

When Hulaliu became Christian, it supposedly burnt its mosque but in order to assure the continuance of the common tie, the Moslem villages divided the task of safekeeping the former faith of their Christian brothers. Pelauw dedicated the smaller part of its *baileo*¹⁰ to Hulaliu and kept its *tifa*. Rohomoni erected a miniature mosque in front of Hatuhaha's most holy mosque located there and gives special daily care to it. The *kapata*¹¹ and prayers are kept in Kabau and the holy books in Kailolo. In accordance with a promise made by the ancestors, after the *tifa* is struck 33x for the Friday prayer on the night before, it is repeated again as many times for Hulaliu.

Hulaliu also still has rights and obligations within the *adat* structure of the *uli*. No building or repair of a *baileo* or mosque can be done without prior receiving approval from Hulaliu. The same is true for the performance of religious and *adat* ceremonies. Hulaliu also must help, both financially and by supplying labor, when a mosque or a *baileo* is build or restored, and reversely. Hulaliu must install the all-important first pillar of the *baileo* in Pelauw¹².

After pacification, the Dutch did little to interfere with the internal affairs of the four Moslem villages of Hatuhaha except for a punitive expedition in retaliation for their support of the Pattimura uprising in 1817-1818 when the mosques in Kabau and Kailolo were burnt down and all four village chiefs executed. Until the 20th Century, Hatuhaha could preserve its native brand of Islam in its original state, or if there was any evolution, it occurred strictly within the confines of their own Moslem belief system, isolated, and free of interference, from the rest of the Islamic world¹³.

⁸ An '*uli*' is a traditional village federation found on the Ambon-Lease Islands. The Uli Hatuhaha is called by its inhabitants in *bahasa tanah* (indigenous language), "Amarima Hatuhaha", i.e. "The five villages on the top of rocks". This name refers to their original places of settlement in the mountains of Haruku where they lived until forced to resettle on the coast by the Dutch in the mid-17th century. The diverse *negeri lama* ("old villages," i.e. the original settlements), as well as the location of their first mosque there, are still playing a role in ancestor veneration and thus are surrounded by an aura of sanctity.

⁹ The ranking of the villages is expressed in the titles of their respective village chiefs: Pelauw's village head carries the title *raja* as the paramount ruler of the *uli*. Below him are the rulers of Rohomoni and the Hulaliu titled *patih*, while the lowest ranking Kabau and Kailolo are governed by *orang kaya*. Furthermore, each of the villages is responsible for a specific area of social life: Pelauw is the ultimate authority concerning government, *adat* and religion; Rohomoni is the custodian of Islam; Hulaliu acts as *juru bicara*, i.e. the spokesmen and protocol leader; Kabau is in charge of the economy, and Kailolo must assure the *uli*'s prosperity and safety. According to informants, the *juru bicara* was formerly a representative of the *kakean* (former secret men's society originating in West Seram). Kailolo appears to have also been in charge of war decisions, holding the office of chief *kapitan* (war leader). For a full discussion on Islam in Haruku, see Bartels 1994:172-190.

¹⁰ A *baileo* is the village council house; center of community and *adat* religion.

¹¹ *Kapata*: traditional greeting formulas and shorthand histories; generally, they consist of old songs in which episodes of the past are told.

¹² Hulaliu's involvement lessened after 1910 when increasing Islamic consciousness in parts of Hatuhaha led to fanaticism and religious polarization that will be discussed later.

¹³ The account of indigenized Islam in Haruku is largely based on my field research in 1974-75 when I still found it as described below when only Kailolo and parts of Kabau had embraced more modern ideas of Islam, as it will be described later. Certain aspects have already been described earlier by Kraemer (1927) and Radjawane (1959) and elaborated here to some extent.

Shiite Influences

According to local tradition, Islam was also brought by *wali* from Arabia, Malacca and Gujarat – probably in successive waves. The Gujarat claim finds support in that at least one clan, Tuankota, claims to be of Indian–Arab origin and also through certain Islamic customs that seemingly are of Shiite origin. For example, the month *Muharram* during which the Sunni Moslems in 680 at Kerbala devastatingly defeated the Shiites¹⁴ is still considered an unlucky month for that very reason. Therefore, people embarking on a large undertaking, e.g. the building of a new house, will avoid to start the project during this month. Also, before the *imam*, the Moslem religious leader, marries a couple, the groom has to report to him to undergo a special ordeal. He must bring a bale of white cloth for the official and then bent over a spread out mat to be beaten twelve times, each time with a different rattan stick. This is done in memory of the Twelve *Imam* recognized by Shiites. During the marriage ceremony, the groom and bride are not addressed by their actual first names, as it is usually done in Islam, but temporarily are called, and identified, with Ali and Fatima, the son-in-law and daughter of Mohammed who are next to Mohammed the central figures in Shiitism since Ali is considered the First *Imam* and Fatima, as the daughter of the Prophet, legitimizes the claim that only the offspring of Ali can be caliphs¹⁵.

Furthermore, according to the history of Rohomoni, Islam was brought to this village by a certain Datuk Maulana who is considered so holy that the villagers do not dare to speak his real name being afraid that misfortune would befall them. This saint, originating from the Shiite center of Baghdad has not only great supernatural powers but also is invisible under normal circumstances, i.e. a figure not unlike the disappeared Twelfth *Imam* of the Shiites. Maulana converted the son of the ruler of Rohomoni, called Mahdun, whose descendants, the Sangadji clan, are still the legitimate rulers of Rohomoni. Mahdun is considered a saint and his grave is just as highly revered than those of Maulana.

However, these historic figures are merely seen as prophets in a long line of prophets having come to Hatuhaha. In their long isolation, they created their own theory about the arrival of Islam. Reaching deep back into Islamic history, they believe that Islam was brought to the, in succession, by Ibrahim (Abraham), Isaac and Ishmael whom the Prophet himself considered among his predecessors in the revelation of Islam. Next Mohammed himself visited Hatuhaha to personally announce Allah's will, followed by the other prophets mentioned above.

Reinterpretation of Islamic Teachings: The Five Pillars of Islam

Islamic conceptions and conventions were not simply accepted and allowed to replace traditional beliefs. Rather, they were reinterpreted in terms of the already existing worldview and adopted in such a way that they made sense within the framework of the traditional patterns of

¹⁴ Sunni is the name for the orthodox, mainstream Moslems. The Shiites (from '*shia*'='party') split off after the murder of the fourth caliph Ali had been murdered in Koefa (Iraq) in 661 and Mu'awaya founded the Umayyad dynasty in Damascus (Syria), usurping the caliphates which the Shiites claimed belonged rightfully only to the direct descendants of the Prophet, i.e. the sons of Ali and Fatima. The Shiite succession constitutes the only major schism within the Moslem community. Strongholds of Shiitism developed in the Iraq and Persia (Iran). Islamic rituals are discussed by Grunebaum (1976); Shiitism in Indonesia is the subject of the study by Baroroh Baried (1978).

¹⁵ Ellen (1988:125; 133) reports another seemingly Shiite custom practiced in the villages of Sepa (Seram), Tulehu (Ambon) and other Central Moluccan villages. I have not yet been able to ascertain whether this custom is also known in Hatuhaha. In Sepa, it is called *hadrad* or *hadarat* and performed on Idul Korban (Indonesian: Idul Adha), the Moslem feast of sacrifice. Apparently derived from the Shiite *randah-khani*, a ritual drama which in its original version depicts the tragic lives of the different *imam*, particularly *Imam* Husain's, son of Ali and grandson of the Prophet. In Sepa, the re-enactment is restricted to the funeral procession of Husain in which soberly dressed males link arms and move at a slow pace, swaying and chanting mournfully, urged on by stewards wielding flimsy canes. This ritual drama is also celebrated in other parts of Indonesia but on 10 Muharram, the first Arabic month and anniversary of the death of *Imam* Husain at Kerbala.

thought. Pre-Islamic thought and custom (*adat*) also affected all of the Five Pillars of Islam, i.e.

1. *Syahadat* (Confession of faith)
2. *Salat* (5 obligatory daily prayers)
3. *Puasa* (fast)
4. *Zakat* (religious tax, alms)
5. *Haj* (pilgrimage)

Syahadat. The confession formula "*There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his Prophet*" is fully accepted and led to the demise of all previously worshiped deities whereby, however, Allah inherited some attributes of *Upu Lanite*, the traditional sky god, whom he replaced¹⁶. Contrary to Islamic dogma, man's fate is not seen as utterly in God's hands but the ancestors retained their power within the social sphere, bringing both blessings to the living and meting out punishment for transgressions of *adat*.

Their continued importance is underlined by celebrating the major feast of their commemoration, *Aroha*¹⁷, on Mohammed's Birthday (*Maulud*). *Aroha* apparently has its origin in an old Alifuru ceremony called *mata huwil*, a symbolic human sacrifice (Jansen 1983:113) performed in honor of the ancestors. In Hatuhaha, as well as in all other villages in the Central Moluccas, the celebration has become Islamized by adding a reading of the personal history of the Prophet Mohammed and a certain part of the Koran. Central is still the symbolic communion of a human being in form of various dishes – such as *juadah*¹⁸ and *cucur*¹⁹ and a glass of water that are arranged on a large tray in form of a body. The water stand for blood and the various foods stand for the head, heart, liver, spleen, ribs, spinal, chord, bowels, navel string, etc.

The day before preparations are made and the whole village is cleansed. Each clan performs their own celebration in their *rumah pusaka*, as Moslems call the *rumah tua* – the original ancestral home of the clan. Members of all four generations of the clan are united and the continuity is symbolized by the bringing of the food and of money by the grand- and great-grandchildren. The ancestors are also called to attend and the families of clans related by marriage are also invited. This annual reunion of the whole extended family is to strengthen family ties, which is further symbolically expressed by all women going together to the river to wash rice. Every clan also brought their own aloes wood incense, each having a distinct smell. The mixing of the scents also symbolizes unity while also being an offering to the ancestors.

Offerings are also made on the graves of the ancestors over which miniature houses with *atap* roofs are built. First the family cleans around the grave, repairs its roof and deposits food, flowers and a burning light. They must wear purified clothes and end the ceremony with a common meal by the grave. This is usual done before *Aroha*, or before *Idul Fitri*, the feast ending the fast period. The graves (*koburan*) of important ancestors are more elaborate and the whole clan, or even *soa*, participates in the cleansing ritual. These graves are referred to as *keramat* (sacred). In the most holy graves are those of the bringers of Islam and the traditionalists consider them as the burial places of prophets directly sent by Allah, rejecting any suggestion that Islam was brought from the Near East. These holy graves are fairly large, and are fully walled in. Misfortune will befall anyone behaving improperly in their vicinity. On the other hand, people with good

¹⁶ In Ambonese mythology, *Upu Lanite* ("Lord of Heaven") is the deity who descended from the sky to mate with the goddess *Tapele* ("Earth") creating all life before receding into the sky again. He did never interfere in human affairs but is witness to traditional oaths.

¹⁷ *Aroha* derives from '*roh*'='spirit', referring to the spirits of the ancestors and the spirit of Mohammed. In Hatuhaha, *aroha* is also called '*manian*' or *penrayaan gaharu* (celebration of aloeswood incense burning).

¹⁸ A delicacy made of rice; originally from Sumatra.

¹⁹ A cake made from flour, palm sugar and coconut, fried in oil.

intentions, regardless whether Moslems or Christians, can go there and tap some of the supernatural power it radiates, e.g. for healing purposes. Like to the grave of ancestors, food offerings are also brought to those of the Islamic saints.

Salat. The five daily obligatory prayers so central to Islam have been completely dispensed with in Hatuhaha. The door to the yard surrounding the mosque and the door to the mosque itself are locked all week and opened only on Fridays for the midday prayer. This is also the only time when the *beduk*, the large drum used elsewhere in Indonesia to mark the prayer times, is struck, other than on Islamic holidays when the mosque is also open.

The main mosque of Hatuhaha in Rohomoni has only one door through which people enter and exit. Unlike elsewhere in the Islamic world, the believers do not enter singly through several doors, seat themselves in an orderly semi-cycle, show respect to one another and start praying in unison. Rather, they arrive in clusters seat themselves helter-skelter and just start praying, ignoring other groups and leave again as they please. Since the mosque is considered to symbolize Mother Earth, the single door represents the entrance to her womb into which people enter as sperm and leave as human beings. Since the mosque stand for male-female union, divorce cannot be performed there. If someone would dare to do so, he would be punished not by Allah but by the ancestor spirits. Two ancestors also guard the mosque at all times against devils and evil spirits.

The holidays too lost their pan-Islamic character and became *adat* rituals. As we already saw, *Maulud* is a family feast. Similarly *Idul Fitri* is largely a clan celebration with prayers in the *rumah pusaka* before sacrificing a chicken at the *raja's* house. *Hari Haj Akbar*, the offering feast at the height of the Pilgrimage at Mecca, is used for celebration of village unity. A male goat or sheep is bought with contributions of all villagers. The animal, which must be fully-grown and without blemish, is kept at the *imam tanah* (formerly the *mauweng* or *kakean* priest). At the feast day, about two and a half hours after noon, all villagers bring it in procession from the imam's house to that of the *raja* with the women in front. There, the *raja's* family joins the procession leading to the mosque that is circumambulated several times before it is entered. The animal is carried all the way in a new white *selendang* (stole) like a child. Inside the mosque, it is then butchered and the meat divided (Adatrechtbundels 1922: 63).

The way the ritual is executed, and especially the treatment of the animal, may support the supposition that the animal offer has become, to some extent, a replacement for earlier human sacrifice. This guess is strengthened by the custom of some Moslem villages to bring the animal's skin and head, the latter made up to resemble a human head, to the *batu pemali* (sacred offering stone) near the *baileo* where they were added to the animal heads of previous years -- just like it had been done with human heads in the distant past (Ibid: 63)²⁰

Puasa. The fast period in Islam covers the whole month of *Ramadan*, i.e. 30 days. In Hatuhaha, it has been contracted to only the 3 days immediately preceding *Idul Fitri*. Since, as we just observed, this holiday can be celebrated on the fourth day of the following month, the entire fasting period may occur after *Ramadan* is over. Moreover, even during *puasa*, the regular prayers are ignored and a *terawih*, a voluntary evening prayer added elsewhere during fast, is considered sufficient. Contrary to Islamic custom, the daily fast period lasts not until sunset but is already broken at noon or any time after taking a bath. According to local beliefs, sundown is an ominous

²⁰ This custom, still observed in 1920, seems to have been discontinued. At that time, it also was still customary in some Christian villages in the Hatawanno region of Saparua, e.g. Tuhaha, to sacrifice a goat and hang its head on the main pillar (*tiang tua*) of the *baileo*, school or church whenever a new one was built or an existing one restored. (Adatrechtbundels 1922: 63)

time to break the fast because it is the time when evil spirits enter the village. Incense is burnt during the period to honor the ancestors.

Zakat. The religious tax levied to support the poor was probably deemed unnecessary in the early period of Islam in Hatuhaha and still seems to play a subordinate role today. In a tightly-knit community where family relations and obligations are of utmost importance, traditional *adat* was already required that those less fortunate were taken care off by their family and fellow villagers and no special tax was needed as it was in the urban centers in the Near East or elsewhere.

Haj. Centuries ago any organized travel to faraway Mecca would have been a sheer impossibility. Although the pilgrimage to Mecca is not an absolute requirement of Islam, it is nevertheless desirable to assure a place in paradise at the end of this world. The people of Hatuhaha found here too an ingenious and pragmatic solution by simply recreating the holy places of Mecca on their own home ground.

The *keramat* is located in a ca. 20x20 meter fenced-in square with one entrance. In the center of the enclosure is a square, large black rock (ca. 2x2x2.5 meter), the *ka'bah*, an imitation of the principle Islamic shrine in Mecca. Behind it stands a small mosque, flanked on the right by a water source like Zamzam, the sacred well in Mecca, usually referred to as Air *Sembayang* (Divine Water). On the left is a smaller building, possibly a sacred grave.

On the *Hari Haj Akbar*, the place is heavily guarded and after dark lamps are lit to spot intruders. About an hour after sunset (around 7 p.m.), the believers arrive wearing white clothes. Every one may participate except those who are not yet circumcised. As people arrive, they first go to the sacred well to take some water for purification, and then they proceed to the *ka'bah*, circumambulating it. Then they move on to the mosque to pay homage to the ancestors, and particularly to the *wali* (Moslem saint) which they believe are still alive²¹. Afterwards, they drink *sopi* until they get intoxicated. In this state of drunkenness, they envision that they are crossing the Indian Ocean (*Laut Sekutera*) whose waves are rolling high during the time. Arriving in Mecca, they join the pilgrimage. Upon return, they pray together and then return home. The whole ceremony takes only about two hours. Later, the participants give sermons in the mosque and take on the honorific '*haji*', i.e. the title reserved for someone who has made the actual pilgrimage to Mecca²²

Blending of Adat and Religion: The Life Cycle

While the new religion had to be modified to fit traditional conceptions of the world, traditional *adat* had to be altered to accommodate Islamic conceptions. This is especially pronounced in rituals concerning the life cycle.

Birth. In Haruku, and elsewhere in the Moslem community, traditions surrounding birth remained largely unadulterated but were put into Islamic garb. Usually, at birth, there is no major celebration. The parents and some religious officials merely pray together. Soon afterwards a

²¹ Like the Hidden *Imam* of the Shiites. One informant actually referred to this belief as coming from Persia.

²² When, about two decades ago, the *raja* of Pelauw, the late Bapak Duba Latuconsina, the very head of Hatuhaha Islam went to Mecca for the first time, the traditionalists became very upset and fighting occurred. It was simply inconceivable for them that their sacred leader would not follow his own *adat* but commit treason by celebrating the pilgrimage in Mecca instead of Hatuhaha. At his second journey, resentment was still great but outwardly everything remained calm. However, to prevent a coup, the *raja* appointed the sub-district head (*camat*) of Haruku, a Christian (!) to take care of his official business, rather than being represented by his *wakil* (deputy) as it is custom.

ceremony may be held in which the midwife (*biang*) figures prominently during which a little of the child's hair is cut and buried and the child is given its name. The newborn child is kept inside the house for 6 days. On the sixth day, a small ritual, the so-called *kasih keluar anak* ("bringing the child outside") is performed to which Moslem prayers have been added. At age 2, another *adat* ceremony dressed in prayers is performed, namely the *katiana*, or *kasih turun anak*. In this ceremony a child is for the first time put on the ground outside the house. The relatives from the father's and mother's side gather, make *ketupat*²³ and feed the child with it. The child is punched into the stomach to make the bowels move and empty it of all defilement, which then is ritually disposed of. The navel string that has been kept is also cleaned. Then girls are made to step on dust, while boys are put on the branch of a tree and beaten on the legs with *daun gatal*, i.e. leaves from a certain plant which produces a burning sensation and is supposed to produce strong legs²⁴.

Sunat. Although circumcision (*sunat*) is not an absolute requirement in Islam, for males, it is nevertheless almost universally considered as an indispensable mark of belonging to the Islamic community. Thus, the removal of the foreskin of the penis is also performed among most Moluccan Moslems. However, in Hatuhaha, and some Moslem villages on Seram, a native form of circumcision, the *tikam jarum*, the piercing of the foreskin with a needle rather than surgically removing it, continued to be the preferred form²⁵.

An expert, the *tukang sunat*, performs the circumcision. On the Hitu-peninsula, there is a *tukang sunat* responsible for the entire village whose position is not only hereditary but considered so important that he has a permanent seat in the village council (*saniri*). In Hatuhaha, the position is not hereditary but each clan appoints their own *tukang sunat*. In the local *bahasa tanah*, they are called *masaloa*, just like sponsors of boys initiated into the *kakean* in West Seram. In earlier times, the circumcision was probably performed in the *baileo hutan*²⁶, located in the mountains which formerly seemed to have been the meeting place of the *kakean* whose existence in Hatuhaha is still remembered. The *sunat* is performed on boys 10 years or older. Like the initiates of the *kakean*, they are considered full adults after they underwent the ordeal.

The *sunat* is followed by a ritual of role reversal²⁷ lasting circa 4-7 days, i.e. until the boy's wounds are healed. While in everyday life, young people must always show great respect to their elders and unquestionably obey their commands, a circumcised boy becomes a "*raja*". His family has to wait hand and foot on him to make him comfortable. They are considered his servants and have to fulfill all his wishes, bring him any food he desires and if he wants something that is not available in the house, it must be fetched. He is presented with a beautiful mosquito net (*kelambu*) under which he lies on his bed, never leaving it during the healing process. After his wounds have healed, his relatives who make a lot of noise to announce the occasion bring him to the sea. For sons of the *raja*, gun salutes may be fired. The boy cleans his penis in the sea and then returns home to assume a normal life again²⁸.

Marriage. In the case of marriage, a dual system developed. On one hand, most

²³ *Ketupat* is rice cooked in a fist-sized container plaited of coconut leaves.

²⁴ *Daun gatal* is also used to refresh someone's legs after a long, tiring walk.

²⁵ Today, in conformity with Islamic custom, foreskin removal has replaced *tikam jarum* in Hatuhaha. It seems however still practiced on Seram. In these villages, women are also "circumcised" in that way. The appearance of one drop of blood suffices to consider the operation a success. Formerly, *sunat* was also performed in the Christian village of Latuhalat "to honor the *adat* brought from Seram". Latuhalat was also Moslem for some time.

²⁶ *Baileo hutan* is the former *kakean* house still found in the forests behind some villages.

²⁷ For more information consult Gluckman (1963 and 1970: 109-136) who calls these world-wide known rituals 'rites of reversals'.

²⁸ While the *sunat* has replaced the indigenous initiation rites into adulthood for boys, the first menstruation (*dapat bulan*) still marks the coming of age for girls. Like the boys after circumcision, girls enter the *jojaro-mungare* that is the age grade of eligible bachelors, at first menstruation. Traditionally in Moslem villages, a special ceremony marking the occasion that was, at the

traditional marriage customs were continued; on the other, Islamic customs also had to be followed but generally the two systems were kept separate. Thus a couple was first married according to *adat* which remained unadulterated except for the addition of Moslem prayers. For example, before the bride leaves the parental home and after she arrives at the groom's house, prayers are read by four different mosque officials, addressed to the following:

1. *Allah* (God)
2. *Nabi* (The Prophet)
3. *Malekat* (Angels)
4. *Arwah orang tua-tua* (ancestor spirits)

The traditional marriage forms of *kawin minta* and *kawin lari*²⁹ also were continued. The same also is true for the payment of the bride wealth (*harta kawin*). Afterwards, the *imam* marries the couple according to Islamic law, which, as we have seen took on in Hatuhaha the special form of re-enactment of the marriage of Ali and Fatima.

In terms of choice of marriage partners, the traditional prohibition to marry within one's clan still coexists side-by-side with the preferred marriage pattern of Islam to marry one's parallel cousin, i.e. a man marries the daughter of his father's brother. It appears that formerly, commoner clans observed the clan exogamy rule or even *soa*³⁰ exogamy, as it is still the case in Rohomoni today. The *raja* clan, however, followed Islamic custom for political reasons, since by marrying within the clan, the royal blood and *sakti* remains undiluted, legitimizing its claims to power and thus making it extremely difficult for a potential usurper to ideologically justify his own pretensions in the eyes of the people. It follows, that any intermarriage between members of the royal clan with commoners was strictly forbidden but nowadays this taboo has broken down as has, to some extent, clan exogamy. Polygyny, i.e. the marriage of a man to several wives, was already known in pre-Islamic times but is fairly rare everywhere in the Islamic community of the Central Moluccas.

Death. Burial customs in Hatuhaha generally are the same as those in other Ambonese Moslem villages that, for the most part, follow Islamic traditions. First, religious officials according to instructions of *adat* elders bath the corpse. Next, the body is completely wrapped into a shroud of unbleached cotton (*kain kafan*), followed by praying. The use of coffins, customary among Christians, is considered unnecessary unless the ground is very wet. The body is put laying on its side into the grave, aligned north (head) to south (toes), with the face facing west towards Mecca. Alternately, the body may be put upright into the grave, also facing west³¹. A short prayer on the grave site concludes the burial but often the confession of faith is whispered into the ear of the deceased so he will not forget it and thus prepared at the gates of heaven when he is asked to proof that he is a true Moslem. In accordance with *adat*, the undertakers wear white clothes, symbolic of death, and prepare themselves magically by visiting sacred graves.

same time, a kind of coming-out ceremony, is held. However, in many villages it is no longer performed, including in Hatuhaha.

²⁹ *Kawin minta*: colloquialism for marriage by formal request from the potential groom's family. *Kawin lari*: marriage by elopement, run-away marriage.

³⁰ *Soa*: conglomerate of several, usually unrelated clans which frequently arrived together at the village as a boat community; quarter or ward of a town or village; term is of Ternatan origin.

³¹ West, the direction of the setting sun, seems to be the traditional direction symbolizing death. In some Christian villages, e.g. Nusaniwe, the head must be pointing west, while in Rumahkai the corpse must face Mt. Salahua on Ambon Island, the destination after death.

During traditional burials in Hatuhaha, there is also one man, all dressed in white and his head completely covered, who goes ahead to guard the grave against evil before the corpse arrives. It is further his task to find the road to heaven for the soul of the deceased using magical powers. While on his search, he is not allowed to talk to anyone he may meet. Upon finding the spot where the road to heaven meets the road to the graveyard, he marks the spot with coconut dregs and awaits the arrival of the funeral procession, remaining entirely motionless with his left foot placed on top of the right. Even if ants or mosquitoes should bite him, he must endure without moving. As the corpse passes on the way to the grave, the soul guide shows the deceased's soul the direction of heaven.

The rites of separation are not finished with the burial. Three nights after death, the spirit's ties with his home must be severed and he must be sent to the abode of the death. Further rites to placate him are held 7, 9, 11, 40 and 100 days after death³².

Intertwining of Adat and Religious Structure

The Moslem religious dignitaries are also a combination of truly Islamic and former *adat* officials. On top of the hierarchy is the *raja*, who in imitation of traditional Islamic political thought is both the secular ruler and spiritual head of the community. Not only is it believed that the *raja* has *sakti* which he can use to protect his community but also that a spiritual bond exists between him and his people (*rayat*). To strengthen this bond, the ruler of Hatuhaha must once in his lifetime, preferably soon after his installation, hold the *upacara kasih makan rayat*, a ceremony where he has to feed his entire community, which is responsible for his livelihood as long as he lives – another example of a "ritual of reversal".

The person actually in charge of all religious matters is the *Imam Besar* (Great *Imam*) He is appointed by the *raja* from the clan, which has hereditary rights to the office and usually assisted by a number of other *imam*. He is considered the successor of the *mauweng besar*, the Great priest of the *kakean* and his official title is *kadli* (from '*kadi*' = Moslem judge). Below him rank the *imam* of the other three Moslem villages, called *lebe* (plural: *lebai*), namely the *lebe wakan* (Kailolo), *lebe lessy* (Pelauw) and *lebe wael* (Kabau).

These *imam* head the staff of each mosque, consisting of several *chatib* who deliver the sermons, followed in rank by the *modin* (*muezzin*) of which there are also several and whose task is to call the prayers. Lowest in rank are the *marbut*, the mosque caretakers, in some villages also called *tuagama* like their fellow custodians in charge of churches in Christian villages. In Hatuhaha, they are also called *sara'ah*. Collectively, the religious officials are known as *kasisi*, a term which is probably derived from the Portuguese word '*cacique*' ('headman' or 'bonze'), used by Franciscus Xaverius to describe Moslem religious officials who had come from Mecca. This group often included the *tukang mesjid*, as well as the Islamized *adat* officials, such as the *kepala soa tanah*, included. In some villages, e.g. Zeith, the *kasisi*, including the *adat* functionaries, are also known as *ulul amin*.

Indigenization Elsewhere

The Indigenization of Islam was a region-wide phenomenon. The extent to which this development took place varied from area to area, largely depending on relative isolation. Thus in Seram, it progressed along similar lines as in Haruku while on Hitu it went the least far. The development of Islam was then very uneven and, just like with *adat*, variations in form and

³² Similar rites were still found in many Christian villages.

practice occurred even from village to village. Quite a few villages developed their own idiosyncrasies, based on who brought Islam to them.

Thus, the village of Mamala (Hitu) holds on the lesser Islamic holiday seven days after *Idul Fitri*, a ceremony called *Perang Sapu Lidi*, the "Broom War". It is the day when people visit the sacred graves of the ancestors. The men of the village perform a dance in which they castigate themselves with palm leaf rib brooms which is probably another Shiite custom. Afterwards, special oil prepared with the help of the ancestors is poured on their bleeding wounds making them disappear momentarily. Only girls who have not yet menstruated can prepare this oil, otherwise it would be ineffective.

The oil is then used year around to treat even serious injuries like deep cuts and broken bones said to lead to speedy recovery. The healing is done by their twelve *tukang mesjid*, officials in charge of the mosque. When they meet, they bring the tools used to make the oil and place them on the table. If one of them is dishonest or hides something from the others, the tools will collide with each other without being touched by human hands. Only when the wrong is confessed will they stop. This also happens when someone in their families does something wrong, as for example when children of the *tukang* fall in love with each other which is a serious *adat* transgression since they are considered "brothers and sisters" (*saudara*) and thus forbidden to marry.

Aside from differences in specific customs, all Central Moluccan Islamic villages share certain features of indigenization, most importantly the syncretization of Islamic beliefs with ancestor veneration.

Christianity and Dutch Neglect

Traders, Missionaries, and Clergy

As stated in the beginning, the Portuguese first brought Christianity, in the form of Roman Catholicism, to the Central Moluccas in the 16th century. However, the new religion was even after a century of Portuguese rule seemingly not much more than a thin veneer. After the Dutch replaced them in the 17th century as the colonial masters, they declared all Christian villages, by fiat, to be Calvinist-Protestant, probably without their populations being much aware of this rather dramatic shift in belief systems.

The Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) ruling from 1605–1799 was seemingly much less interested in the spiritual progress and well-being of their new brethren than in using them to defeat their Moslem opponents and enforcing the Spice Monopoly they had imposed on the Ambonese. To be sure, there was some missionary activity but, generally, not much money was spent on ministers who were paid by the Company and totally under its direction and control. Thus, Protestantism remained largely neglected but somewhat miraculously survived as "Christian *adat*,"³³ i.e. it had become just as indigenized as Islam had among the Moslems, following similar processes. It was not until 1815 when the Dutch Missionary Society (*Nederlandse Zendelingsgenootschap* or NZG) tried, with some success, to resuscitate and reform Moluccan Christianity.³⁴ From 1865–1935, the Moluccan Christians were integrated into Protestant Church

³³ For details on this period, consult Enklaar (1963) and Cooley (1962a). For more information about Moluccan Protestant church history, see Müller-Krüger (1966).

³⁴ Most prominent among the missionaries was Joseph Kam who also introduced flute orchestras into churches. Most importantly, he founded a native missionary society that eventually became very active in missionizing in the Maluku Tenggara islands.

of the Indies. All ministers were still European but, for the first time, village congregations were led by Ambonese *Guru Injil* (“Gospel Teachers”), trained in a special school, the *STOVIL* (*School tot Opleiding van Inlandsleeraren*). Church elders assisted them.

It was in this latest phase between 1865–1935 that, among Ambonese Christians, two competing structures evolved. The old *adat* elite, as among the Moslems, continued to control social and political affairs but their right to rule continued only to be based on the ancestors. It was counterbalanced by a Dutch-controlled church organization, vying for the same constituency³⁵. In the villages, this was an opportunity for commoners who had no hereditary rights to *adat* positions to gain rank and prestige. Inevitably, this led to power struggles between religious and *adat* officials.

Such a dual structure never developed among Ambonese Moslems. Since traditional Islam does not encourage a separation between religion and state, the old *adat* elite remained intact, basing their legitimacy no longer solely on the founders of society, the ancestors, but also on Allah, enhancing its power with Islamic symbols and concepts. Some *raja* (village chiefs) even claimed to be direct descendants of Prophet Mohammad.

Symbiosis with the Dutch and Pangkat Serani

Another hallmark was the abolishment of the Spice Monopoly in 1863–64. Prices for cloves and nutmeg had been falling steadily and Dutch economic interests shifted away from the Moluccas to other regions of the Indies. In order to conquer and control these regions, the Dutch recruited among the impoverished Ambonese Christians soldiers and administrators, only too willing to serve. This allowed this tiny minority to rapidly rise in the colonial hierarchy. More economically dependent on the Dutch than ever, the Christians identified themselves more and more with the Dutch, eventually seeing themselves as “Black Dutchmen” (*Belanda Hitam*)³⁶.

The common religion was the strongest point of identification between the Ambonese and the Dutch. The Ambonese saw Christianity as one of the secrets of Dutch power and superiority and the people commonly believed that this power could be transferred through the Holy Communion dispersed by Dutch ministers. Thus, when after 1917, Ambonese pastors were allowed to administer the sacraments, there was great resistance in the community. The host out of a brown hand was considered to lack the magical powers that only the Dutch could tap from God (Tutuarima 1960: 155).

Christianity became one of the central factors in shaping Ambonese cultural identity. The Ambonese were well aware that their being Christians was intimately tied up with their high status in the colonial hierarchy. Their religion not only symbolized their closeness to the Dutch but set them apart and above other Indonesians as civilized among barbarians. They actually spoke of their status as *pangkat Serani*, i.e. rank of Christian, which was conceptualized somewhat below European, but higher than Moslem, Chinese, etc. (Kraemer 1958:14). This rank was attained ideally by receiving instruction in confirmation classes in Dutch language and only the poor were instructed in Malay. Being baptized but not confirmed meant that one merely was considered as a half-Christian (*setengah Kristen*).

³⁵ Dutch control ended in 1935 when they granted the establishment of an independent Moluccan Protestant Church of the Moluccas, ending the oversight of the Dutch Reformed Church.

³⁶ For more details, see Bartels (1977b).

Even after the Protestant Church of the Moluccas was granted autonomy in 1935, it remained under Dutch leadership and was still almost fully subsidized by the colonial government. It turned rapidly into an ethnic church as well and became exclusive. Since Christianity was seen now even more as a special Ambonese privilege, it had to be protected against other ethnic groups who were seen as a potential threat to their status. Thus, Christian Chinese who attempted to worship in the main church of Ambon were, at times, turned away with the argument that this was an Ambonese church--implying that not being Ambonese (or Dutch) was equivalent to not being a true Christian (Kraemer 1958: 20). Indeed, Christianity and being Ambonese became synonymous as it is reflected in the term *Agama Ambon*, Ambonese religion, which was used interchangeably with Christianity.

The same ethnic exclusiveness was also true for Ambonese Moslems who, like the Christians, despised the Butonese, an impoverished but industrious Moslem group from an island off the coast of Sulawesi³⁷. Intermarriage with Butonese was taboo and thus very rare. Mixed marriages with other Moslems were more common but not the rule.

Caesar and God: Syncretism Among Christians

As already touched upon, in the more than 300 years of mostly benign neglect, Protestantism, parallel to Islam, went through processes of indigenization and syncretization³⁸. Not surprisingly, some Catholic beliefs and customs were continued such as the use of holy water and the wearing of the black church clothes. The latter eventually became an identifying mark of being Christian and are still in use today. Calvinistic dogma never had much impact and the generally easy-going and fun-loving Moluccan Protestants, never adopted the more radical aspects of Calvinism, such as predestination and guilt-driven hang-ups about sex, gambling, drinking, and anything else that may be fun.

Among the Moslems, syncretism was primarily set into motion by a conflict of ideas rather than persons. In the Christian community, the reverse was the case. In the endemic power struggle between church and state, the church was usually on the attack, and the *adat* forces were content to prevent excessive infringement on their domain. In order to fend off assaults on *adat* beliefs and practices, the *adat* defenders often resorted to "conversion" of these beliefs and practices into Christian ones.

Symbolic conversion has occurred when traditional ceremonies, such as weddings, are performed in the way prescribed by *adat*, and are supplemented with prayers and reinterpreted in a Christian way, justified by pointing to analogous episodes in the Bible as precedents. Another example is the payment of the bride wealth, which is justified by pointing out similar practices in the Old Testament, such as the story of Abraham sending gifts with a servant to procure a wife for his son Isaac from kinsmen in Mesopotamia.³⁹

Conversion here serves two purposes: First, it clears one's conscience as a Christian,

³⁷Over time, the Butonese had migrated in large numbers to the Central Moluccas where they build their own villages on land owned by Christian and Moslem villages, subsiding not only on fishing and horticulture but profiting from selling their surplus. Hard manual labor was generally looked down upon by Moslem and Christian Ambonese and thus one major cause for considering the Butonese as "inferior".

³⁸For a full discussion of religious syncretism in the Central Moluccas, see Bartels 1978.

³⁹Genesis 24. This particular example has been first reported by Cooley (1962a 208-9). The payment of bride wealth is also an Islamic custom (cf. Gaudetroy-Demombynes 1950: 128-29), and posed no particular problems among Moslems. An example of symbolic conversion among Moslems is the conversion of ancestral graves into *keramat*; that is, graves of Moslem saints.

knowing that one has not transgressed any of God's laws; and secondly, custom is preserved, allowing one to avoid punishment by the ancestors, who in case of non-payment of the bride wealth may either send barrenness, or sickness, even death to the offspring of the couple, if the custom is not followed.

Paradoxically, the usage of quotations from the Scriptures to justify *adat* institutions and beliefs has led to a secularization of *adat* in general. The hereditary *adat* officials defended both custom and their own positions through claims of a separation of "church" and "state." By citing Jesus in the New Testament, "*Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's...*"⁴⁰ they equated the demands of the ancestors to the demands of the worldly powers, enabling them to deny the church any right to interfere in their realm. Even beliefs, which could not be justified in political or social terms, and were clearly "heathen" in character, were clung to in the villages. Even their adherents admitted that these practices were in direct conflict with Christianity, regardless of the denunciations and intimidation that they were subjected to by their ministers.

The performance of the *Tiga Malam* ritual on the third night of the death of a person is a case in point. It is believed that the spirit of the deceased lingers about his former domicile after death, and the ritual is held to make it possible for him to sever his ties with the living and move to the abode of the dead. Sometimes, in attempts to justify this ritual, it is said to be performed in commemoration of Christ's rising from the dead after the third day. The implied comparison between the Son of God and common mortals is, in itself, a heresy hardly acceptable in Christian terms. Yet, neither the Dutch clergy nor their Ambonese successors have had much luck in their efforts to eradicate this "superstition." A breakthrough was achieved after the church stopped opposing the performance of the ritual, and offered an alternative, by encouraging the bereaved to hold a prayer meeting that night under the leadership of the minister, or a church elder, in order to ask God for the salvation of the deceased.

Convergence: Horizontal Integration

There Is But One God: Ambonese Ethnic Religion

Parallel with the simultaneously occurring two processes of "vertical" syncretism, i.e. an increasing parochialization that transformed Islam and Christianity into ethnic religions, a third development occurred, namely a convergence of the two world religions within the Ambonese socio-cultural context.

The common *adat* fundament of Ambonese Islam and Christianity made the two religions appear to be very similar and helped to obscure the actual differences in Ambonese eyes. Largely disinterested in dogma and ideology and relatively unaffected by, or even ignorant of, the historical enmity between Moslems and Christians elsewhere, the Ambonese were unbiased enough to perceive, and stress, the many similarities that exist among the two religions. The emphasis on the similarities led to attempts of harmonization, resulting in a kind of loose "horizontal" syncretism between Islam and Christianity in contradistinction but related to the "vertical" syncretism born out of the efforts to achieve harmony between the traditional beliefs system and respectively Islam and Christianity.

The Ambonese believe that they all originated from a sacred mountain on the island of

⁴⁰Matthew, XXII: 21. This specific quote and other Bible citations are always used by Ambonese Christians in defense of *adat*. The Moslems defend *adat* by citing appropriate quotations from the Koran.

Seram, called Nunusaku. A big fight occurred and the original inhabitants split up and populated the Central Moluccas. After the arrival of the two world religions, the paradise of Moslems and Christians was relocated at Mt. Nunusaku, making it the point of origin for all peoples. *Upu Lanite*, the traditional creator god, was eventually equated with *Allah*, the name used by both groups for the God of the Koran and the God of the Bible. Thus, there was only one God and Islam and Christianity were seen as two alternate but equally valid paths to salvation. As time passed, the Ambonese became to view Islam and Christianity as basically being only variations of the same faith. This belief is expressed in the popular *pantun* (quatrain):

Slam dan Serani
Pegang tangan-tangan ramai-ramai.

It translates roughly as "Moslems and Christians, hand-in-hand, have great fun", or more freely, "As long as Moslems and Christians stick together, life will be most enjoyable".

These beliefs became eventually the basis of Ambonese Moslem-Christian unity and common identity, developing into a kind of invisible ethnic religion that celebrated the uniqueness of Ambonese society, while at the same time allowing both groups to be devout Moslems or Christians. The core of this Ambonese religion, which I called elsewhere *Agama Nunusaku*, or Nunusaku religion (Bartels 1977a: 316)⁴¹, was the pre-Moslem and pre-Christian traditional *adat* belief system based on ancestor veneration which after conversion to Islam or Christianity continued to be an important part of their way of life.

Pela: Vehicle of Nunusaku Religion

Nunusaku religion had no formal organizational structure, no religious leader, no temples of worship, nor were most people really aware of it. The vehicle of *Agama Nunusaku* is the indigenous *pela* village alliance system that, for centuries, was the strongest link of the chain joining Moslems and Christians together. It became a sacred metaphor for Ambonese society and thus the grantor of Ambonese ethnic unity across religious boundaries. Even now it is the only traditional institution demanding regular and regulated contact between the two groups on the village level⁴² and in *pela*, the idea of brotherhood is periodically put to a test. When a Moslem village aided a Christian partner, or *visa versa*, it is also a statement of commitment, not just to one's particular ally, but to the values of Ambonese brotherhood, reverberating across the islands.

Period of Transposition from Indigenization to Universalization

While the processes of indigenization and syncretization still played a dynamic role in Ambonese society, new forces appeared trying to reverse these processes and rid Islam and Christianity of its parochial accretions. In both cases, the initial stimulus came from outside the Moluccas, initially involving Dutch missionaries on the Christian side and Moslem reformers from Java and elsewhere in the Dutch East Indies on the Islamic side. These, and most later movements, were not always synchronous or interrelated in any way. Until the Suharto area, they were inner-directed and not overtly evangelical.

⁴¹ More information on *Agama Nunusaku* and the *pela* alliance system can be found in Bartels 1979 and 1980.

⁴² There are a number of government-sponsored institutions, e.g. community development, which require inter-village contacts but they entail little emotional capital. Inter-village soccer matches often were also between *pela*-partners. Between non-*pela* villages, they may have been more conducive to conflict than to create unity.

Early Christian Reforms

Attempts to purify Protestant Christianity were made as early as the already mentioned period of the Dutch Missionary Society (1815-64) when Joseph Kam and others tried to bring it closer to universal standards. It was essentially a Dutch-driven attempt that certainly gave Christianity a new impetus but it failed in combating, let alone destroying, ancestor worship.

As we already saw, the battle with *adat* proponents continued from 1865 until the end of the colonial period as native preachers were trained and given some responsibility in the pastoral care of the congregation. However, neither the granting of autonomy, nor the greater symbiosis with the Dutch, led to any great changes in what was rapidly becoming an ethnic church.

Muhammadiyah Movement Awakens Ambonese Moslems

The ancestors continued to play a pivotal role in Moslem society and thus were afforded a special place within Islam. Convinced of the rightness of their beliefs most Ambonese Moslems resented the preaching of zealous *Muhammadiyah* scholars from outside the Moluccas who savagely attacked their *adat* as superstitious and in conflict with "pure" Islam. In 1933, their fury about this inference culminated in driving a Javanese Moslem scholar out of the great mosque in Ambon City (Tausikal 1952: 386).

However, the isolation of Ambonese Moslems had finally been broken after the arrival in the Central Moluccas of this pan-Indonesian reform movement founded in 1912. The efforts of these reformers wanting to cleanse Islam of all *adat* beliefs fell not everywhere on deaf ears, thus causing for the first time a polarization between religious and *adat* forces among Moslems in the Central Moluccas. Since then, the *adat* beliefs, which had held their own among Moslems, much longer than among Christians, are quickly being depleted and are often reinterpreted into Islamic terms, following patterns identical to those just described in the discussion of conflicting interests in the Christian community.

In Hatuhaha (Haruku), the *ulama* (Islamic scholars) had initially only success in Kailolo and with a small minority in Kabau. These progressives begun to reject Islamic beliefs as practiced in Hatuhaha after traveling in increasingly larger numbers to Mecca to learn more about "true" Islam, causing ever greater unrest within the community. In the late 1930s, the unrest turned into violence when about 20 percent of the population of Pelauw started to embrace Reform Islam, claiming that only "pure" Islam is the straight way to Allah. In the ensuing battles between the progressives and traditionalists, several people on both sides were killed. When arbitration failed, the Dutch forced the progressives to move to build a separate settlement on a tract of land (*dusun*) called Ory, belonging to the nearby Christian village of Kariuw in 1939 (See also Chauvel 1980)⁴³. This way an uneasy tolerance was created lasting into the 1990s.

Post-Independence Trials and Tribulations

The Japanese occupation of the Moluccas in 1942 forebodes the beginning of a new era in Moslem-Christian relationships. The Japanese clearly preferred the Moslems to the Christian whom they saw as tainted by their close relationship with the Dutch. Moslems experienced, for

⁴³ The people of Ory claim they bought the land, while Kariuw insists that it was merely taken and still belongs to it, having led to long-standing tensions between Ory and Kariuw. During the 'Kerusuhan' in 2000, Kariuw was attacked and totally destroyed.

the first time, a sense of limited, and tentative, empowerment. With all Dutch personnel interned in Japanese camps, the Protestant church was now completely under Ambonese leadership, demonstrating that they were able to run this organization without any Dutch guidance.

From 1946–50 the colonial past was brought ever so shortly to life again. When the Dutch were forced to leave for the last time, the mostly Christian leadership, declared in 1950 the *Republik Maluku Selatan* (South Moluccan Republic or RMS) as an independent state, separating it from the newly established Republic of Indonesia. Essentially a Christian movement, the RMS was also supported by the *adat* elites in quite a few Moslem villages, motivated by a fear of loss of power in a democratic Indonesia. By the end of that year, the capital Ambon was conquered by the Indonesian armed forces and, although guerilla warfare continued on Seram for some years, the RMS ceased to exist and the RMS ideal strongly dominated Moluccan politics among the former KNIL soldiers exiled in The Netherlands⁴⁴.

Modernism Versus Traditionalism

In the post-independence period, Ambonese can be divided in two political groupings, modernists and traditionalists. Modernists were usually urbane, better educated people preferring to live in cities, while traditionalists were either living in villages or part of the *adat* elite, which held office in their village but also preferred the comforts of urban areas. Many modernists were often fervent nationalists willing to bet their future on Indonesia. Traditionalists were not necessarily anti-Indonesia but they still put a strong emphasis on Ambonese ethnicity. These divisions crossing religious boundaries with both Moslem and Christian modernists also favoring religious reforms, while traditionalists on both sides tried to hold on to *adat*. There were no clear-cut boundaries and lots of overlapping.

Nunusaku Religion as Ethnic Bulwark

In the first thirty years or so after independence, Nunusaku religion flourished as probably never before – at least at the village level. Perhaps, at least partially, because of the insecure position of Ambonese in the Javanese dominated new nation, Moslems and Christians seemed to draw closer together, stressing their common roots and history. The *pela* alliance network appeared not only to go through a general revival period but also specifically in alliances involving both Moslem and Christian villages. Relations were friendly and contact frequent despite the fact that the villages are often located on different islands and transportation was fairly primitive. In general, Ambonese Moslems felt still a closer affinity to Ambonese Christians than to fellow Moslems from outside the Moluccas.

There were frequent *pela* renewal ceremonies (*bikin panas pela*) between partner villages and willingness for economic cooperation. Quite a few mosques and churches were built with the aid of the opposite religious partner⁴⁵. At consecration, both Moslems and Christians would pray together either in the new mosque or church. Even a few new *pela* alliances were created as a result of generous aid some previously unrelated village gave at the request of an other needing help with some project. In countless interviews I conducted in the mid-1970s, people of both religious persuasions stressed over and over again that Islam and Christianity are two different but

⁴⁴ In The Netherlands, the RMS ideal appeared to fade in the 1980s and 1990s but received a new, unexpected boost when the 'Kerusuhan' broke out and the blame was put squarely on the Indonesian central government and its Armed Forces. See also, Steijlen 1996. See also Chauvel (1990) for a historical account of Ambonese society from the Late 19th century to the RMS movement.

⁴⁵ Christian exiles in The Netherlands often paid the lion's share of aid given to Moslem *pela* partners.

equal paths to Allah and thus salvation.

Divergence: Pure Christianity and Pan-Islamism

Total Immersion in Christianity

On the provincial level, there was much less harmony. The Christian elite tried to keep their grip on the bureaucracy while ambitious Moslem leaders attempted to wrest this control away from the Christians. For the most part, there seemed to still be mutual respect and the struggle for power was mostly civilized. Although young Moslems had now equal access to schooling, the educational system remained largely in the hands of Christians and teachers were discriminating against Moslem pupils.⁴⁶

The now truly independent Protestant Moluccan Church (*Gereja Protestan Maluku or GPM*)⁴⁷ was led by mostly young and mostly western-educated ministers who were not only ardent nationalists but also zealous Christians. Their two major goals were to cleanse Protestantism of any vestiges of *adat* but use the existing *adat* structure, and particularly *pela*, to convert Ambonese Moslems, thus assuring continued Christian dominance and a much more secure position in the ethnic hodgepodge of Indonesia. Thus, they tried cleverly to exploit the *pela* revival based on *Agama Nunusaku*, while planning all along to destroy it and, with it, ancestor veneration⁴⁸.

They succeeded quite thoroughly in the latter, to the point where even family graves were neglected because to honor one's dead was equated with worshiping false idols. Without the common *adat* foundation, there was no longer any commonality with their Moslem brethren, thus weakening *pela*, the very structure the church had planned to use in contemplated conversion of Moslems. The church leadership was aided in their eradication of *adat* by a western-value oriented youth that wanted to be modern, listened much less to their elders, and viewed ancestors and *adat* as something belonging to the past.

However, the biggest, though unexpected and unintended, help came from an external source, the Suharto government. It issued in 1979 an order (*Undang-Undang* No. 5) which abolished the traditional *adat* system of government in the villages, replacing it with a completely new, pan-Indonesian structure patterned after the Javanese system of village government (Bartels 2003: 138-139). People who had no knowledge and interest in *adat* replaced the old *adat* elite. What the church could not accomplish in centuries, the government achieved in a few years: *adat* almost completely crumbled. The void was taken up by total involvement in church affairs by the laity. Even in Kota Ambon, people are almost every day busy with some church function, spending an inordinate amount of their leisure time for it. Christianity became seemingly even more important than in the *Agama Ambon* era in the late colonial time. More than ever, Christianity was seen as superior. Thus, not surprisingly, the view of Islam and Moslems deteriorated inversely.

⁴⁶ Analyzing the statements of my informants, this discrimination was directed against anyone who was not a Protestant ethnic Ambonese. Pupils from the Tenggara islands, even though Protestants themselves, had identical experiences which negatively shaped their own views of Ambonese Protestants for life, expressed in bitterness. I personally know of several Moslem leaders whose school experiences very much influence their politics vis-a-vis the Christian population.

⁴⁷ The new sovereign central Indonesian government abolished the financial subsidy to the church in 1950, shattering totally the established pattern and forcing the GPM to seek their own funds.

⁴⁸ The systematic attempt to destroy *adat* by the GPM is discussed in Bartels 2003: 136-37.

Universal Moslem Brotherhood

Concurrently with the purification of Christianity among Protestants, similar transformations took place among Moslems. Here too the Islamic leadership emphasized “pure” Islam at the expense of traditional *adat* beliefs. In the urban centers, some of these leaders were from different ethnic groups and had little empathy for Ambonese *adat*. As the older, more traditional, Moluccan Moslem leaders died away, they were replaced with younger people, more open to Islamic purity and pan-Islamic ideas. Islam too became associated with modernity. For young Moslems the future was in the overwhelmingly Islamic Indonesian nation and, eager to be accepted by non-Moluccan Moslems, they embraced Islamic universalism over ethnic parochialism.

In the post-independence period, the concept of universal Islamic brotherhood (*ummat*) was now extended to all Moslems and thus made Ambonese Moslems more receptive to Islamic ideas and less accepting of other religions as the pre-independence Ambonese indigenous Islam was. It made it possible to accept outsiders of the same religion much more readily as it was the case in the Christian community and intermarriage with non-Ambonese Moslems was fairly common. Thus, as *adat* weakened due to increasing Islamic universalism, ideas of Moslem-Christian brotherhood weakened as well.

Shattered Unity: Maluku on Fire

Although there is great evidence that the outbreak of the Moslem-Christian civil strife beginning in Kota Ambon in January 1999 was stirred up by outside forces⁴⁹, the ever-widening alienation between Ambonese Moslems and Christians occurring as part of the above described purification attempts on both sides, made the conditions rife for such a social explosion.

I daresay to state that if the conditions of *Agama Nunusaku*, as they were in the 1970s, were still present, no amount of provocation by outsiders would have succeeded in pitting the two groups against each other. Instead, they may have actually closed ranks as one ethnic group and turned against the agitators, most certainly against the fanatical *Laskar Jihad* fundamentalists that came uninvited from Java to “save” the Ambonese Moslems. Instead, they terrorized the Moslem population as much as the Christians. However, with *adat* nearly destroyed and the respective faiths being central to every aspect of life, it was easy to stir up religious emotions, leading the senseless loss of thousands of lives and the wanton destruction of property worth millions of dollars in a region already economically disadvantaged.

To be sure, there was a long simmering struggle of the political elites for control over the province. There was also dissatisfaction among the general Moslem population about continued holding of many key positions in the bureaucratic structure as well as a creeping suspicion and fear of designs to try again to create a separate Moluccan state under Christian domination. Christians were increasingly irritated about the large influx of Moslems from other parts of Indonesia (*Überfremdung*), an apprehension still shared by Ambonese Moslems in the 1970s. The ever swelling numbers of non-Ambonese Moslems not only skewed the population balance in favor of Moslems, but also added to the already critical urban and rural population pressure and land shortage.

⁴⁹ On this and other views, see Tomagala 2001; Steenbrink 2000; Human Rights Watch 1999; van Klinken 2001; Spyer 2002; Hattu 1999; Kastor 2000; Putuhena 1999. Bräuchler (2003) provides an intriguing analysis as to how the conflict was fought out on the worldwide web

The Moslems eventually had the better field position since they were assured of the moral support of millions of Indonesian Moslems and protected by the military, also supplying superior weapons. However, the forced conversions of conquered Christian villagers, the rape of their women, the destruction of the village of Waai (Ambon Island) to return it to Islam cannot be solely explained as being economically motivated. Neither can the atrocities committed by Christians and their eventual fatalism, leaving their fate entirely to God. Rather, the destruction of *Agama Nunusaku* had not only meant the end of Ambonese ethnic unity but also stripped all humanity of the other believers away in the eyes of their opponents allowing blind hate and unbridled rage. Religious righteousness was not only the means to gain political and economic power but also an end in itself, proving the superiority of the religion of the victors.

Aftermath of *Kerusuhan*: De-emphasizing Religion and Rebirth of *Adat* Awareness?

The unrest had its climax in mid-2000 but continued through 2001 and flared-up sporadically in 2002. The state of emergency was finally lifted in September 2003, marking at least officially the end of the struggle. Most of the common people on both sides seemed to be pretty fed up already in mid-2001 during my visit. There was a widespread yearning for peace. There also was something that could be called, quite unscientifically but accurately, a collective hangover.

Leaders and commoners alike were soul-searching about what went wrong. *Adat* suddenly was rediscovered as a means of interfaith dealings, resulting in a flurry of activities. Conferences of traditional *adat* leaders were held in attempts to bring the two alienated communities back together like the one hosted by the Moslem village of Zeith in January 2003 (Nurbaiti 2003)⁵⁰.

Perhaps more importantly, villages themselves took the initiative to restore broken relationships by using *bikin baik* (literally, “making good”), the traditional *adat* formula for making amends. This includes welcome dances, speeches about common historical ties, and common feasting.

Among the first villages to seek reconciliation (September 2002) were Batumerah (Islam) and Passo (Christian), both located along the inner bay of Ambon island but separated by other, Christian villages. The two villages have a long-standing *pela* relationship that was disrupted by the events of the *Kerusuhan*.

Batumerah is directly adjacent to Kota Ambon and much of the fighting took place at the border with the neighboring, predominantly Christian city ward of Mardika. Since the two places grew together, there had been sporadic fights between bored youth gangs but they had little, or no, religious overtones. During the *Kerusuhan*, the fights turned lethal and when Batumerah invited a youth group from another Christian city ward, Kudamati⁵¹, for peace-making, the latter

⁵⁰ The Habibie administration responded to calls for more regional autonomy by revoking the Undang-Undang No. 55/1974 on regional administration and Undang-Undang No.5/1979 on village administration, replacing them with on combined Law (Undang-Undang) No. 22/1999 on regional administration, supplemented by Law 25/1999 on financial balance between the various levels of administration (Soemardjan 2000:4). This could have far-reaching consequences in that it allows at least a partial restoration of the old *adat* structure in the villages, returning clout to the legitimate *adat* office holders. This, in turn, could be extremely helpful in the restoration of Moslem-Christian relationships.

⁵¹ Kudamati is arguably the most radical Christian ward of Kota Ambon. During the unrest strong RMS sympathies reemerged there. Here the separatist *Front Kedaulatan Maluku* (Maluku Sovereignty Front or FKM) was founded. It was also home to the

were ambushed in a joint Moslem-Christian procession in the Moslem ward of Waihaong and several Christians were killed. Because of Batumerah's close vicinity to Kota Ambon, it became a favored place of settlement for Moslem immigrants from elsewhere. Even many Christians settled there as well. Thus, Batumerah lost its character as an Ambonese Moslem village, becoming a multi-ethnic, and multi-religious suburb of the city instead. It also became a hotbed of Islamic radicalism⁵².

Passo is strategically located at the isthmus where two peninsulas of Ambon island, the predominantly Moslem Leihitu and the mostly Christian Leitimur come together forming a bottleneck for transportation. Because of its location, Passo too was no longer a sleepy Christian village but the residence of many outsiders both Christian and Moslem although the majority of the population is Christian and it has the reputation of being a hub of Christian hardliners. During the unrest, Passo's harbor became the main gateway for Christians to the Christian villages on Seram and the Lease islands. Several attempts by Moslems to conquer Passo failed.

While it may not be surprising that more isolated, mono-ethnic villages outside Ambon island would try to resurrect *adat* in peace-making efforts, it is quite significant that Batumerah and Passo, with their diverse ethnic composition and radical religious backgrounds, not only chose to use *adat* for reconciliation but that they are willing to restore the *pela* alliance pact. Among other acts, in best *pela* tradition, youths from Passo went to Batumerah to cleanse the mosques and, reversely, youths from Batumerah went to Passo to clean the church (Crisis Centre, Report No. 312, 09-01-2002).

Reconciliation makes us once more to return to the *Uli* Hatuhaha on Haruku Island, one of the oldest centers of Ambonese Islam. As we saw earlier, the Hatuhaha Moslems completely wiped out the neighboring Christian village of Kariuw which is not part of the *uli*. However, when people from the *uli* member Hulaliu came to the aid of their Christian brothers from Kariuw, they also came under attack with considerable loss of life and property (GPM, Ambon Berdarah, 12-30-1999). A special *bikin baik* ceremony was held in Hulaliu in the spring of 2002 and the inauguration of a new village chief (*pelantikan raja*) in October 2003 was used to renew ties with Hatuhaha but also with all of Hulaliu's Moslem *pela*, i.e. Laimu (Seram), Tial, Asilulu, and Tulehu (all on Ambon). Both Moslem and Christian dignitaries exhorted the need for brotherhood and swore that the internecine fighting will never occur again. Notably, even the spirits of the ancestors were called upon as witnesses and as guardians (Woriwun 2003).

There is a new crop of Moluccan Christian ministers emerging who are either still studying at universities or already starting to put their mark on the church. They are very articulate and have given traditional values, and their relationship to Christianity, a lot of thought. They have strong convictions about the importance of *adat* in Moluccan society, convictions that became buttressed by their experiences during the *Kerusuhan*. Although, it is still rather opaque in

notorious *Coker* gang of Bertie Loupatty.

⁵² Batumerah already was reputed to be fanatical Islamic in the 1960s and 1970s. Sometimes in the late 1960s or early 1970s, a rock-throwing battle occurred between the students of the Protestant Theological Institute (now *Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku*) and a neighboring Muhammadiyah school in Ambon City. The cause of the incident isn't clear but, it seems, that Moslem-Christian relationships in the city at that time were quite strained because of political infighting at the provincial level. Even then, both sides blamed inflammation by outsiders for the troubles. After the first clashes, the youth of the Moslem village of Batumerah wanted to enter the fight on the side of the Moslem students. When the youths gathered in the village to ready themselves for going to Ambon to join the incident, the *raja* of Batumerah called them to his house and told them that he has nothing against fighting the Christians, if they were willing to attack their Christian *pela* first, the village of Passo. "If you dare to fight your Christian brothers, there, then I will not stand in your way if you go to Ambon." The *raja's* shrewd psychology worked. The young people of the village returned home, and the clashes at the schools soon ceased (Bartels 1977a: 224-225).

precisely what direction they will eventually move, it is clear that they will try to reincorporate at least those core values of *adat* that are closest to the Ambonese ethos, values not only dear to Christians but also to Moslems. I have had no opportunity yet to talk to young Moslem clergy but I cautiously surmise that some of them subscribe to similar thought processes.

A solution satisfactory to all Ambonese is needed. At this point, it appears that the pro-reconciliation forces believe that their best bet is to revive and rejuvenate some of the existing indigenous *adat* structures, and especially *the pela* alliance system. As the first tentative reconciliation attempts demonstrate, much of the old *adat* is still viable today and worth rescuing in order to restore ethnic unity and pride⁵³. There are also signs that some *adat* is being reinvented to better fit contemporary needs, as it occurred among the Ambonese exiles in The Netherlands⁵⁴

If the pro-reconciliation forces succeed, some kind of however loosely structured ideology will emerge, enabling once more Ambonese Moslems and Christians feel as brothers and sisters. This new synthesis may perhaps be a modernized and modified version of “*Agama Nunusaku*.” The opposition of the pan-Indonesian elite has to be overcome. More specifically, it will be crucial to convince the Moslem elite that pan-Islamism does not necessarily have to be contrary to local ethnic accommodation. They must see that peaceful coexistence is the only alternative to assure continued development of the Moslem community in the Central Moluccas, and especially for the future prospect of their youth.

It may work in favor of those working for ethnic unity that the real or perceived horrors of globalization, as it is widely viewed in the Third and Fourth World, may draw people closer together on the local level – a reactionary trend that can be observed worldwide. The current political chaos in Indonesia is also favoring this tendency, as is the vivid, traumatic memory of the horrors of the *Kerusuhan*.

I believe that the Christian community has been sufficiently humbled to strive, in the long run and after emotions have cooled off, not only for co-existence but also for the restoration of close ties with the Moslems. This would be the best guarantee for protection in this overwhelming Islamic country since dreams of Moluccan independence seem, at present, unrealistic and could only succeed if Ambonese Moslems would join and share the dream. On the Islamic side, their nightmarish experience with the *Laskar Jihad* may actually slow down Pan-Islamism in the region.

In conclusion, it appears that the chances for the emergence of some form of intra-ethnic accommodation are quite favorable. The odds for a “new convergence” are considerably less given the advanced state of religious purity and fervor but perhaps they are not insurmountable.

⁵³ For a more detailed discussion, see Bartels (2003).

⁵⁴ For more information on the re-invention of *adat* in Diaspora, see Bartels 1989: 108-113.

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