

GUARDING THE INVISIBLE MOUNTAIN: INTERVILLAGE ALLIANCES, RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM AND ETHNIC IDENTITY AMONG AMBONESE CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS IN THE MOLUCCAS.

(Summary)

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This study is a result of anthropological field work among the Ambonese in the Central Moluccas (Eastern Indonesia). Ambonese society is about evenly divided into Moslems and Calvinist Protestants who reside in mono-religious villages. Racial mixture, ethnic diversity, geographical dispersion, relative isolation of villages, insufficient means of communication and transportation, fragmented political organization, intervillage conflicts related to land shortage and population pressure and, above all, religious division are all factors working against social cohesion and integration. In the almost complete absence of alternative integrative mechanisms such as marriage alliances (which exist but are extremely weak), *pela*, an intervillage alliance system, links Moslems and Christians by providing the basis for a strong ethnic unity and common identity.

Pela bonds are based on an idiom of kinship, that is, alliance partners, who have exchanged a mutually binding oath and have drunk one another's blood at the conclusion of a pact, are considered brothers, and intermarriage between members of allied villages is considered incestuous. Other main ideas underlying *pela* are (a) mutual assistance in times of crisis, (b) helping the partner with large community projects and (c) giving shelter and food to visiting individuals.

The evolution of *pela* is traced from pre-European times through the present in order to understand this alliance system in its historical context and its adaptability to a changing social-cultural environment. Beginning with a discussion of the origins of *pela* as an institution related to head-hunting, an ethnohistorical reconstruction of *pela* alliances is made utilizing Ambonese oral traditions. This ethnohistorical account begins in the period before Islamization, and continues through Moslem expansion and into early European colonization, drawing also on reports of contemporary observers. During the period of European conquest *pela* alliances played an important role in the ethnogenesis of Ambonese society as it exists today.

With the decline of the spice trade after 1800, *pela* became transformed into a system of economic assistance pacts. While the form of *pela* alliances changed only slightly, their scope of applicability continued to broaden to meet new crises and social conditions throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Types of contemporary *pela* alliances, their relationship to everyday life, their ritual aspects and conflicts between *pela* partners are described. Finally the role of *pela* in present-day Ambonese ethnic identity and Moslem-Christian relations is discussed.