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**ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICT AND RECONCILIATION:  
DYNAMICS OF MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN  
RELATIONSHIPS IN AMBON**

THIS SUB-THESIS IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE MASTER OF ARTS IN ASIAN STUDIES

SOUTHEAST ASIA CENTRE  
FACULTY OF ASIAN STUDIES  
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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March 2003

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is 30543 words in length exclusive of footnotes, bibliography and appendices.

This thesis is the result of my own research. Where I have drawn on the work of other scholars, due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Badrus Sholeh  
25 March 2003

## Abstract

This thesis analyses the Ambon conflict from 1999 to 2002, and discusses the reconciliation process by which the conflict was resolved. It argues that there were two significant factors in the conflict. First, ethno-religious segregation existed in the Ambonese islands from pre-colonial times until the present. Under the New Order regime (1965-1998) a situation of Christian dominance changed to one of Muslim dominance in terms of access to local political power and economic resources. Secondly, a culture of *premanism* existed whereby gangs, thugs and *laskars* with the support of State elements (including security forces) were able to incite ethno-religious conflict. Both 'state *premanism*' and loose informal groups, coming under the category of 'private *premanism*', played a pivotal role in instigating, inflaming and continuing the conflict by provoking both the Muslim and Christian communities to attack each other.

The Coker *preman*, an Ambon-based gang, under leadership of Berty Loupatty and Agus Wattimena (50, d. 2001), had operated in Muslim and Christian regions since the 1980s. They gained the support of elements in the Indonesian Armed Forces who used them to instigate the earlier conflict in December 1998 and the conflict from 19 January 1999 onwards. With the aid of handy-talkies, hand-phones and standard military weapons, the provocateurs successfully forced Ambonese Muslims and Christians into ethno-religious conflict. Christians were provoked to oppose having transmigrant and migrant (Butonese, Buginese, Makassarese, Javanese and Sumatran (called BBM)) Muslims, living with them in the islands. By contrast, both indigenous and migrant Muslims assumed that Christians cooperated with the separatist *Republik Maluku Selatan* (RMS) group, as represented by the *Front Kedaulatan Maluku* (FKM, Moluccan Sovereign Front) with Alex Manuputty as chairperson. Rumours spread that Christians were seeking to conduct Muslim-cleansing in the Moluccas. In March 1999, Javanese Muslims responded by declaring a *Jihad* against the Christians-cum-separatists, to protect Ambonese Muslims from Christian slaughter and to defend the Indonesian nation against the separatist threat. Furthermore, in the name of religion and nationalism, the *Laskar Jihad* took up the banner of *Jihad* in Ambon in January 2000. This *Jihad* movement forced Ambonese Christians to seek a greater

Christian solidarity and to mobilise in the form of the *Laskar Kristus* (Christ Warriors). They also sought international intervention to resolve the conflict.

Mainstream Ambonese Muslims and Christians were eager to forge a reconciliation. They had attempted to do so from the early stages of the conflict in January 1999 up until the Malino II agreement in February 2002. Muslims and Christians proposed the strategy of re-implementating the *Pela Gandong* tradition as a basis for inter-ethnic or inter-religious harmony. Measures to ensure equality of public access to political positions and economic resources for both the Muslim and Christian communities had to be negotiated. This underlined to both communities the importance of structuring a local democracy, by assimilating local tradition and modern values. It also highlighted the necessity for real power and economic-sharing arrangements under professional security forces in the spirit of regional autonomy.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been written without the support of all the people, who have heartened and inspired my study in Canberra and at the Southeast Asia Centre in the Faculty of Asian Studies, ANU. I am indebted to the members of *Kelompok Studi Maluku* of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU, especially Jaap Timmer who first introduced me to the world of the Moluccas and supported me during the difficulties of preparing this thesis. Chris Wilson gave valuable feedback during the early stages of my writing. The Indonesia Study Group, especially John Monfries, the Associate Coordinator of the Islam in Southeast Asia Study Group, all helped to expand my intellectual horizons and to stir my enthusiasm for my study. My Canberra experience was enriched through involvement with the *Nusa Tenggara Association* (NTA), which introduced me to voluntary work and imparted a sense of the importance of a bottom-up approach as an alternative in the development of Eastern Indonesia.

In Canberra, my *Ibu* Prof. Virginia Hooker - my lecturer and Academic coordinator - was consistent in her encouragement and in her reminders of my approaching deadlines. Dr. Greg Fealy, my supervisor, never tired of urging me to reach for greater heights. To both of them I owe a great debt of gratitude. I am also grateful to Dr. Deborah Johnson, who supported me in the final stages of the writing process. To my friend who has inspired my life, research and study, *Adek* Jana H. Uno, I would like to express my sincere thanks and dedicate this thesis.

I must also thank my many colleagues, friends and teachers in the Moluccas, who have generously guided and assisted my journey and research, especially Karel 'Kace' Tuhehay, Muhammad Yunus and Aka, to whom I am particularly indebted. As well, a special thanks goes to the Yayasan Baileo and Lakpesdam-NU, to *Bu* Oni, *Bu* Nus, *Bang* Gani, *Caca* Ida, *Usi* Lina and the Pattimura University staff, especially Tony Pariela whose help was invaluable. Also to the research staff of the Security and Peace Studies Centre, Gadjahmada University, especially *Mas* Lambang Trijono, Muhammad Najib Azca and Eric Hiariej, thank you for your brainstorming and suggestions.

This research and thesis would not have been possible without the continual support and encouragement of my dear parents, brothers and sisters, *Cak Afifuddin* (good luck with your PhD), *Mbak Dewi Rochsantiningsih*, *Cak Lathifulkhuluq*, *Teh Nunung*, Nur Izzati, Ade, Imam Muharror, Leni Iffah, Arif As'adi, Ahmad Fawaiq and Izun Nahdliyah, my sincere thanks to each one. Last but not least, to AusAID who provided a great scholarship to study in Australia and to the *Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri* (STAIN, the State Institute for Islamic Studies) Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, thank you for giving me the precious chance to study. (Please do not copy or reproduce parts of this thesis without my express permission.)

Badrus Sholeh

Canberra, March 2003

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### Orthography

There are some terms used in this thesis, which are different from the place of names in Figures 2 and 3. For example, 'Maluku' (as in Figures 2 and 3) is in this thesis referred to as 'the Moluccas'; the *Pulau* Ambon are referred to as the Ambonese islands. The Ambonese terms for Muslims and Christians (*Acang* and *Obet*, respectively) will not be used. Rather, the terms 'Muslims' and 'Christians' will apply. Similarly, the '*Salami*' and '*Serani*' regions will simply be referred to as the Muslim and Christian regions, respectively.

## Glossary and Abbreviations

- ABRI** *Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia* (Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia); became TNI in 1999.
- AMNM** *Amar Makruf Nahi Mungkar* (Enjoining Right Forbidding Evil), commander-in-chief, Muhammad At-Tamimy.
- BBM** Butonese, Buginese and Makassarese, a term for migrant Muslims in the Moluccas, which also covers Javanese, Sumatrans and other non-indigenous Muslims.
- BIMM** *Badan Imarat Muslim Maluku* (State Body of Moluccan Muslims), chaired by Ustaz Ali Fauzi.
- Coker** *Cowok-Cowok Keren* (Handsome Boys), *Cowok-Cowok Kerempeng* (Thin Boys), *Cowok-Cowok Kristen* (Christian Boys), a gang based in Kudamati, Ambon and supported by the Special Armed Forces (Kopassus) during the conflict in opposing the FKM group.
- DDII** *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (Islamic Propagation Council of Indonesia).
- FKAWJ** *Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah* (the Communication forum for the Followers of the Prophet and His Disciples).
- DPR** *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (People's Representative Council).
- DPR1** *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (Tingkat) I*, a provincial level of the People's Representative Council.
- DPR2** *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (Tingkat) II*, a district level of the People's Representative Council.
- FKM** *Front Kedaulatan Maluku* (Moluccan Sovereign Front).
- FPIM** *Front Pembela Islam Maluku* (Moluccan Islamic Defenders Front), chaired by Husni Puttuhena.
- GPM** *Gereja Protestan Maluku* (Moluccan Protestant Church).
- ICMI** *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals).
- Jihad** Holy War.
- KISDI** *Komite Solidaritas Islam* (Islamic Solidarity Committee).
- KNIL** *Koninklijk Nederlands-Indische Leger* (the Royal Dutch East Indies Army).
- KOMPAK** *Komite Penanggulangan Krisis* (Crisis Solving Committee).
- Laskar Jihad** Holy Warriors, a paramilitary wing of the *Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* (FKAWJ), based in Yogyakarta.
- Laskar Kristus** Christ Warriors, a Christian paramilitary group founded in response to the coming of the *Laskar Jihad* in 2000, led by Agus Wattimena (50 d. 2001).
- LIPI** *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia* (Indonesian Science Institute).
- LIPIA** *Lembaga Ilmu Pendidikan Islam dan Arab* (Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies).
- LSM** *Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat* (Non-government Organisation).
- MMI** *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (Indonesian *Mujahidin* Assembly).
- MPR** *Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat* (People's Consultative Assembly).
- MUI** *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Indonesian *Ulama* Assembly).
- NGO** Non-government Organisation.
- NIT** *Negara Indonesia Timur* (State of Eastern Indonesia).
- NKRI** *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* (The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia).

- PAN** *Partai Amanat Nasional* (National Mandate Party), chaired by Amin Rais, now chairperson of the MPR. In the Moluccas, the chairperson of PAN is Thamrin Ely, who actively initiated reconciliation between Muslims and Christians.
- PBB** *Partai Bulan Bintang* (Crescent Star Party), chaired by Yusril Ihza Mahendra.
- PDI** *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* (Indonesian Democratic Party).
- PDI-P** *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle), chaired by Megawati Soekarnoputri, now President of Indonesia.
- PDKB** *Partai Demokrasi Kasih Bangsa* (Democratic Party for Love of the Nation).
- Pela Gandong** *Pela* (Ind. *Hubungan*, alliance), *Gandong* (Ind. *Sekandung, Kandungan*, One's Mother's Womb). A local tradition of alliance amongst two or more clans, or ethnic and religious communities for preserving harmony and for mutual political and economic advantage.
- PGK** *Partai Golongan Karya* (Golkar Party), used to be the ruling party in the New Order.
- PGI** *Persatuan Gereja Indonesia* (the Indonesian Church Association).
- PK** *Partai Keadilan* (Justice Party), now chaired by Hidayat Nur Wahid.
- PKB** *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (National Awakening Party), now chaired by Alwi Shihab.
- PKNI** *Partai Katolik Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian National Catholic Party).
- PKP** *Partai Kesatuan dan Persatuan* (Unity Party).
- Poros Tengah** (Central Axis), a coalition of Islamic parties in the Indonesian parliament comprising PPP, PAN, PBB, PK, and PNU.
- PPP** *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (The United Development Party), chaired by Hamzah Haz, now Vice-President of Indonesia.
- Reformasi** Reformation, a period after Soeharto's New Order.
- RMS** *Republik Maluku Selatan* (Republic of South Moluccas).
- TNI** *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian Armed Forces).

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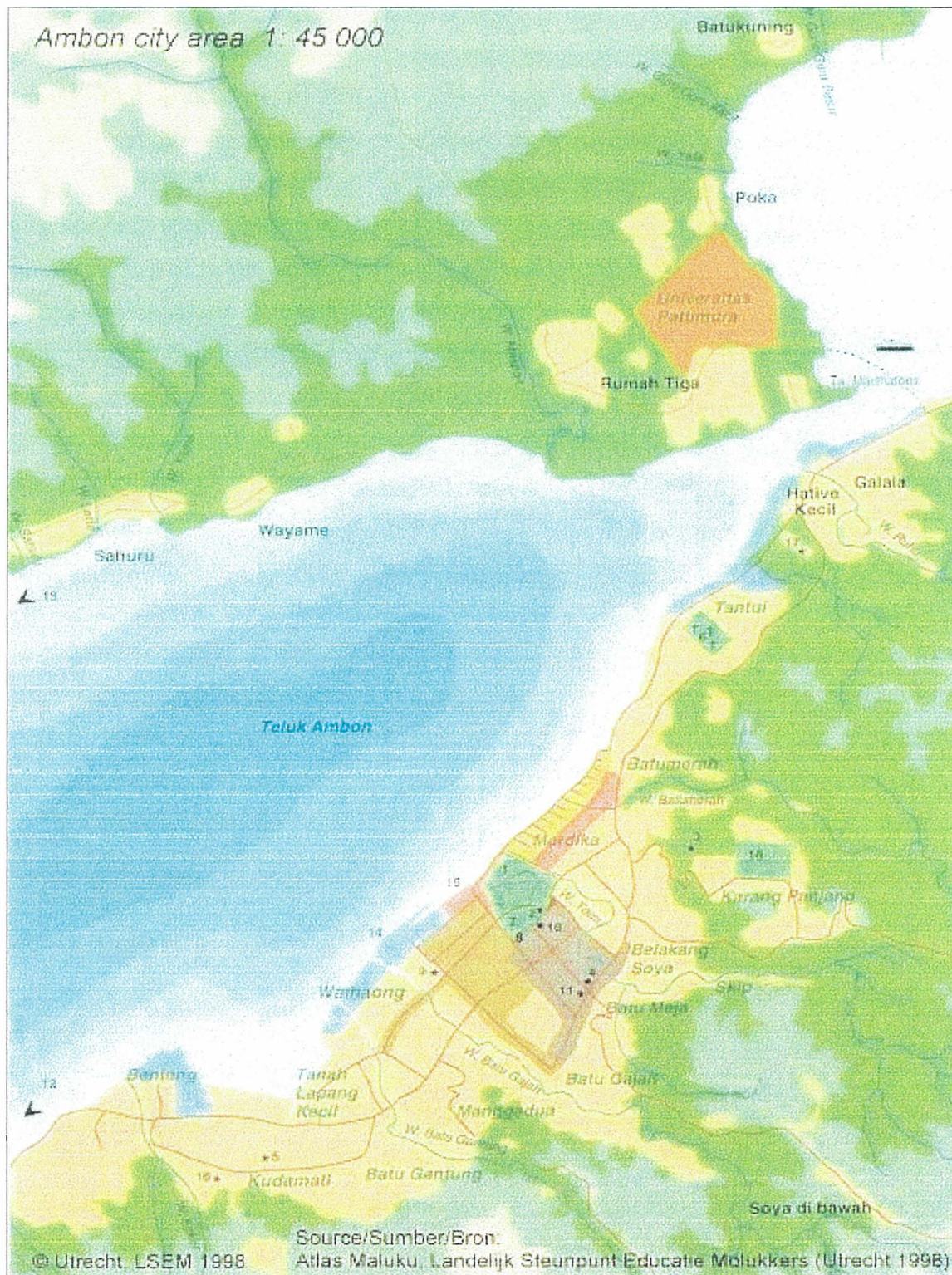
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## Chapter One

### Approaches to the Study of the Ambon Conflict

This thesis will discuss Muslim and Christian conflict in Ambon from 1999 to 2002. The roots of the conflict will be traced from the beginnings of Muslim and Christian interaction in the Ambon islands in the pre-colonial period up to the post-New Order period. Arab traders had a significant role in Islamising the indigenous (previously animist) Ambonese communities in the pre-colonial period. The colonial governments of the Portuguese and the Dutch were to later Christianise some of the same communities. The religious segregation and tensions of today date back to these periods. A sense of religious and ethnic harmony was only symbolically preserved during the New Order period under President Soeharto. Therefore, the ties among religious and ethnic groups were easily broken when Soeharto's regime collapsed in May 1998.

This thesis will argue that the 1999 to 2002 conflict in the Ambonese islands was mainly caused by two factors: the long history of ethno-religious segregation in the islands and the emergence of a culture of thugs, gangs and *laskars*, called *premanism*, which had been utilised by certain elites since the New Order period to support their own vested interests. This thesis will analyse the conflict from both Muslim and Christian perspectives, whilst also allowing the 'voices from the ground' to be heard. The responses of both Muslim and Christian factions to the emergence of *Jihad* (holy war) movements in Java during 1999 and Christians' response to the arrival in Ambon in 2000 of the radicalised *Laskar Jihad* will be surveyed. The views of radical Muslim groups will be ascertained and contrasted with the views of moderate Muslims concerning the conflict in order to fill in the gaps in scholarship to date. The responses to the conflict of Muslims at the national and central government levels will also be surveyed, highlighting the interaction of local and national politics in the post-Soeharto period.

#### 1.1 Background to the Conflict

The Ambonese islands were once described as one of the beauty spots in Indonesia. It was regarded as an example of ethnic and religious harmony to be emulated by Indonesia's



other multi-ethnic and multi-religious populations. The Ambonese islands played an important role in the historical development of Muslim and Christian relations in Indonesia. This has been especially so during the recent ethno-religious conflict. The conflict first erupted in this region and extended outwards to other areas. Its capital, Ambon city, played a central role in the conflict in that most of the groups engaged in the conflict managed their strategies from this location. The Ambonese islands form particular regency in the Central Moluccas. They incorporate 49 villages and border on the Ceram islands in the north, the Lease islands in the east, the Banda Sea in the south and the Buru islands in the west (See Figure 2).

The *Pela* and *Gandong* tradition (later called *Pela Gandong*; *Pela*: Ind. *Hubungan*, alliance; *Gandong*: Ind. *Kandungan*, *Sekandung*, one's mother's womb), is a traditional custom in the Central Moluccas enabling ties between one or more clans, tribes or religions. It was one of the cultural methods used to solve social conflict in the Moluccas. However, this tradition was diluted in the 1990s under the New Order when Ambon became an industrialised city as a result of the New Order policy of 'go east'. Urbanisation and migration to this region grew significantly and impacted on the ratio of, and the relationships between, Muslims and Christians. In addition, in national politics the decline of Soeharto inspired the rise of a sense of regional identity, which resulted in an increasing local resistance to migrant or (outsider) communities. In Ambon, this resistance became evident in anti-migrant incidents occurring during 1998, a few months before the conflict erupted on 19 January 1999. This is popularly regarded as being the date when the conflict first erupted. However, there were already signs of tensions between indigenous Ambonese and migrants during 1998.

The Ambon conflict is a special case when compared to Muslim-Christian conflicts in other parts of Indonesia, such as at Situbondo (1996), Tasikmalaya (1997), Rengasdengklok (1997), Kupang (1998), Western Kalimantan (1999) and Poso (1998-2002). This is because of the long history of Muslim and Christian tensions in the Moluccas dating from the colonial period. Local politics has long been structured around ethno-religious divisions with contestation for political posts taking place on this basis. This had been the case under the Soeharto New Order. Importantly, as a result of the Ambon and other conflicts, the Indonesian armed forces (TNI, *Tentara Nasional*

*Indonesia*) were able to extend their territorial authority beyond Java in regions such as the Moluccas, Papua and Aceh.

## 1.2 Literature Review

Various observers have written about the conflict using a variety of approaches. Hartono Ahmad Jaiz (1999), a reporter with *Media Dakwah* and *Pelita*, published an early book. It was a compilation of articles and reports from the Muslim media including *Ummat*, *Media Dakwah*, *Sabili*, *Aliansi Keadilan*, *Amanat Nasional* and *Abadi*. It also contained a few reports from more neutral media sources and from some Christian sources. Nonetheless, Jaiz's analysis was one-sided describing the conflict from a Muslim perspective. In the same year, Sinansari Ecip (1999), a *Republika* journalist, reported the Ambon conflict using a journalistic approach. Although Ecip drew on both Muslim and Christian sources and the national media, Ecip tended to be pro-Muslim and critical of Christians. Ecip's coverage was also limited in that it only described events up until September 1999.

Brig-Gen (retired) Rustam Kastor (2000), one of the field leaders of Ambonese Muslims during the conflict, also wrote a provocative and one-sided account biased against Christians. Kastor (2000: 36) asserted that the conflict had been intentionally planned by the Christian-cum-separatists fighting for a Republic of South Moluccas (RMS). Kastor claimed that Christians had specifically targeted Muslims and estimated that about 90 per cent of those who had instigated the conflict had been Protestants (most Christians in the Moluccas are Protestants) (Kastor, 2000: 135-136). In fact, both Muslim and Christian communities had been involved in the conflict and both, to some extent, had instigated the violence, attacking each other and defending their own communities from attack. In his second book, published in August 2000 (six months after his first book), Kastor (2000a) defended the role of the *Laskar Jihad* in the conflict in helping local Muslims to defend themselves against the attacks of Christians. A strength of both of Kastor's analyses was use of local Muslim sources. However, Kastor was reluctant to use Christian sources. Erwin H. Al-Jakartaty (2000) also attempted to analyse the conflict by criticising the role of local and central governments in seeking to resolve the conflict. However, Al-Jakartaty only utilized very limited current media sources and a small number of books in order to look at the conflict from a historical perspective, which included discussion of the *Pela*

*Gandong* tradition. Freddy Pattiradjawane and Harnold Abel (2000) gave a descriptive account of the conflict with original colour pictures from the battlefield, especially in Muslim regions. They attempted to detail both Muslim and Christian views of the conflict. However, Pattiradjawane and Abel did not analyse the events nor did they include an adequate bibliography. Thus, with the exception of Ecip's book, publications dealing with the conflict from 1999 to 2000 were mostly intended for immediate publication and had very short preparation period. They offered poor analysis and used biased sources.

On the other hand, in 2001 some more objective research was published. Among the more balanced analyses were an account of research conducted by a team from LIPI (the Indonesian Science Institute) (2001) and a text by Trijono (2001). The LIPI team (2001) analysed the roots of the violence in the Moluccas and North Moluccas. They confirmed that certain elements of the TNI had an interest in maintaining the *status quo* in order to expand their influence as a consequence of the riots (The LIPI Team, 2001: 86-87). However, LIPI research did not refer to local Muslim and Christian sources. Its sources were mostly based on national elite views as reported in the media, and on discussions in Jakarta. Similarly, Trijono (2001) gave a more balanced appraisal of the conflict based on involvement in attempts to resolve the conflict in Ambon. However, Trijono did not utilise the views of radical Muslims. Aditjondro (2001) analysed the Moluccas conflict based on interviews outside the Moluccas, and email and phone contacts with respondents in and outside the Moluccas, in other regions in Indonesia and overseas. Although Aditjondro attempted to give a balanced account, his lack of fieldwork caused him to misinterpret the role of the TNI in the conflict and that of the Muslim and Christian militias. Aditjondro did not consider that ethno-religious segregation in the Moluccas had been the prime cause of the conflict. Rather, he focused on the role of *preman* (or thugs), such as the Coker gangster, Agus Watimena's paramilitary and the *Laskar Jihad*, who were easily able to stir up both communities, as Tomagola (2001) has also pointed out.

Another significant contribution was that by Van Klinken (2001). Using 'a communal contender' approach, Van Klinken suggested that the conflict was not purely the result of ethnic and religious divisions between Muslims and Christians. Rather, he portrayed it as a conflict between elites in local and national politics. In July 2001, a Jakarta-based NGO, TAPAK Ambon, published a book edited by Salampessy and Hussein, two young

Moluccan intellectuals. It was a compilation of human right activists' writings, which had been previously published in the national media along with some long articles, they had written for the book. It was an excellent attempt by indigenous Moluccans living in Jakarta to examine the conflict using social and political analysis. However, they did not consider the involvement of the *Laskar Jihad* and elements in the TNI nor the role of local and national elites, perhaps in deference to certain groups in Ambon and Jakarta.

In contrast to previous studies, this study will examine the linkages between all the various factions in the conflict. It will cover both Muslim and Christian views from both local and national perspectives. How the various factions viewed the conflict will be important not only to understanding the roots of the conflict, but also to appraising the various approaches to reconciliation, which local non-governmental organizations and communities proposed as part of a bottom-up approach to conflict resolution. The analyses of previous observers will be considered. Regional politics during and after the conflict will be surveyed, especially with regard to the attempts by central authority to control regional government.

### **1.3 Method**

This study will use an historical approach in analysing the relationship between Muslims and Christians to shed light on the dynamics of this relationship under the long experience of authoritarian rule up until the granting of local autonomy. The study is based on interviews with participants in the conflict, including people mostly in Ambon, some in Jakarta and Yogyakarta. Many middle-class Moluccans lived in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta where various policies concerning the Ambon conflict and its resolution were discussed. Furthermore, Yogyakarta was significant because the *Laskar Jihad* had its base in this city.

This research will examine the conflict from two perspectives. The first regards ethno-religious segregation as an important factor in shaping of the circumstances of the conflict and in enabling the continuation of conflict based on a politics of ethnicity. The second looks at *premanism* (or a thug culture), which became the instrument used by certain

elements in the State, including the security forces (TNI), to foster violence in the Moluccas.

### **1.3.1 The Politics of Ethnicity**

A politics of ethnicity was exploited by both local and national elites in shaping the inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflict. 'Ethnic conflict' can include religious conflict, but here a distinction will be made. For example, the BBM (Butonese, Buginese and Makassarese) are ethnic groups, which migrated to the Moluccas and from Java and Sumatra who also happen to be predominantly Muslim. Therefore, in this thesis the BBM means Muslim migrants as most Ambonese understand the acronym. From this perspective, Enloe's analysis of the ethnic conflict is helpful. She suggests that:

The more common sorts of ethnically based conflicts will be those that involve competition for the rewards of economic and social development. And since a politically dominant ethnic group can control – through the machinery of the central government – the distribution of economic benefits, economic competition among ethnic groups will likely become political conflict as well (Enloe, in Pauker, Golay & Enloe, 1977: 142).

The local elite gained advantages from the diversity of ethnic groups. During the conflict they mobilised around issues, which discriminated against certain ethnic groups. Religion was also utilised by the local elite to gain support in the lead-up to elections for governor, as well as in competition for public service positions (van Klinken, 2001: 2). Van Klinken interpreted the conflict 'as the result of an interaction between long-term "primordialist" social patterns and a short-term instrumentalisation of those patterns in the context of intra-elite competition at the local level' (2001: 2). At the national level, the elites played the ethnic card to ensure their dominance in central and regional relations. The autonomy of the regional government was contested during and after the conflict.

### **1.3.2 The Politics of Violence and *Premanism***

It has been alleged that the violence in Ambon was masterminded by certain groups at the national level and, to some extent, at the local level, in order that they might retain their

political advantage. Wessel's analysis of the politics of violence during the New Order period is important to understanding the Ambon conflict (Wessel, 2001 in Wessel and Wimhöfer 2001: 64-81). In describing the New Order's violence, Wessel stated:

The inbuilt mechanisms of the strong state included structural violence, which was closely connected over the years with the power of a small elite, with injustice, lack of fundamental human rights, discrimination, poverty, unemployment, economic oppression and the almost total absence of a rule of law. The power elite created and used laws to protect their interests and to enrich themselves (Wessel, 2001: 72).

The pattern of violence in the Ambon conflict was similar to the pattern of violence established under the New Order, which used third parties to instigate and continue the conflict. Aditjondro argues that there was strong evidence that 'the intertwined military and militant Muslim network exploited the simmering ethno-religious tensions in Molucca using gangsters from Java and Ambon to trigger communal violence and ...Muslim militants' (Aditjondro, 2001 in Wessel and Wimhofer: 122; some additional information in Aditjondro, 2001 in Salampessy and Husein). As stated by Aditjondro himself, his analysis was based on library research, email and phone contacts and did not include first-hand experience in the field of conflict (Aditjondro, 2001 in Salampessy and Husein: 135-136). Additional analysis of Ambonese Muslim and Christian views in this thesis will substantiate his claim that the violence was politicised by a Jakarta elite to control power at the local level, and to ensure their political advantage at the national level.

Furthermore, in the case of Ambon, available evidence suggests that it was state-originated violence, which contributed not only to the continuation of the conflict, but also impacted upon the system of law and order in Ambon. Goodpaster (in Lindsey and Dick, 2002) described the consequences of the long period of corruption, which existed during the Ambon conflict. Specifically, Goodpaster points to the role of police and military elements in funding the violence, whilst attempting to gain economic advantage as a consequence of the conflict (2002: 98-99).

Lindsey's analysis of *premanism* is crucial to an understanding of the conflict. He shows how certain elites employed vigilante groups to inflame the conflict and how they gained economic privileges as a result (Lindsey, 2001 in Lloyd and Smith, 2001). Analyses by Aditjondro (2001) and Tomagola (2002) looking at the relations between the central elite

and the *preman-laskar* confirm Lindsey's assessment that both state and privately- funded *premanism* existed.

Lindsey stated that:

Derived from the Dutch for 'free man' and originally used to refer to irregular or demobilised soldiers, the term [*preman*] came to mean bandit and then gangster or, more commonly stand-over man. At times the term has overlapped with the *jago* (literally, 'fighting cock'), the village 'tough' of ancient tradition who in an urban context became a gang boss; the *rampok* bandits; and the *laskyar* (militia or irregular forces) (Lindsey, 2001: 284).

A culture of *premanism* existed during the New Order, when the *premans* were protected by state politicians and the military forces. This according to Lindsey was with the 'dekking (backing) of an arm of the state' (Lindsey, 2001: 290). The conflict in Ambon illustrates how *premanism* has operated in the *Reformasi* period as a continuation of a long tradition shaped by the authoritarian regime of Soeharto.

#### **1.4 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis will be divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the general arguments of the thesis and indicates how it is different from preceding research. Chapter Two describes the context in Ambon before the conflict. It scrutinises ethno- religious segregation and the rivalry between Muslims and Christians in the context of national politics after the decline of the New Order. The third chapter examines the first phase of the conflict. In this chapter, the role of *preman* (thugs, gangster) in the conflict will be discussed in detail focussing on their relationship with the TNI and with local and national elites. Furthermore, the responses of the Muslim majority at the national level will be discussed. The fourth chapter will explore the second phase of the conflict, after the *Laskar Jihad* declared a *Jihad* (holy war) in the Moluccas. This chapter will highlight the response of Ambonese Christians to the *Jihad*. The role of the TNI in deploying the *Laskar Jihad* will be seen as a continuation of *premanism* dating back to 1999 when the conflict first began. The fifth chapter focuses on the resolution of the conflict. The attempts of Muslims and Christians to secure a peace in Ambon will be discussed in order to ascertain the future prospects for local politics. Finally, in the conclusion it is affirmed that the views of both Muslims and Christians concerning the conflict have to be taken into consideration so as to form a basis for reconciliation between the two communities.

Reflections on the concepts of ethno-religious segregation and *premanism* based on the Ambon experience will be presented.

However, to understand contemporary developments, it is first necessary to examine Ambonese history and track the origins of ethnic and religious segregation back to the colonial period. Experiences of violence among Ambonese from the sixteenth century, through the colonial period and up to the twenty-first century, post-New Order period provide a backdrop to the recent conflict. In addition, the resolution of the conflict through application of the traditional *Pela* and *Gandong* cultural forms provide a fascinating window through which to view contemporary Ambon and to understand its tensions and challenges.



## Chapter Two

### Ambonese Muslim and Christian Relations in Historical Context

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will survey the contact between Muslims and Christians in the Ambonese islands from the pre-colonial period to the revolutionary period of the late 1940s (just prior to national independence). Tracing this history will give us an understanding of the dynamics of Muslim and Christian relations under different regimes. This chapter will analyse the transmigration program under the New Order, which changed the composition of the population in the Ambonese islands from a position of Christian dominance in the 1970s to one of Muslim domination in the 1990s. This change had a significant impact on local politics as Muslims gained access to more key roles. This chapter will also examine the origins of the *Pela* tradition and ethnic relationships based on the *Pela* tradition, noting the changes in this culture over time. It will argue that such cultural changes have impacted upon religious harmony in the region. Finally, this chapter will discuss the policies of the New Order regime and their impact on local politics. Generally, this chapter will argue that the long-term segregation of the Muslim and Christian communities shaped the tensions and competition between them. State violence and a culture of *premanism* during the New Order period caused frustrations amongst ordinary people. With the end of the authoritarian New Order regime and a new climate of freedom of expression, there was a growth in radicalism and illegal movements in the name of religion.

#### 2.2 Early Contact Between Muslims and Christians in the Ambonese Islands

By the middle of the fifteenth century, Islam had taken root in the Moluccas through the influence of Muslim traders. The first Islamised regions were Leihitu and Hatuhaha in the kingdoms of Ternate and Tidore, where the local people had both economic and political reasons to cooperate (Leirissa, 1975: 7). The Muslim kingdoms of Ternate and Tidore then Islamised the Ambonese islands from the end of the fifteenth to the middle of the

seventeenth century. Islamisation continued more gradually after the coming of the Portuguese and Dutch (Cooley, 1973: 120).

Cooley (1973) has noted that the coming of Islam resulted in changes in the local culture. In the indigenous marriage system, the required dowry was a human head as a symbol of individual prowess. This was later altered to rings, jewellery and other allowed items under the Islamic law system (Cooley, 1973: 121). Islamisation was to be challenged by the Christianisation of Ambonese communities by the Portuguese during the more than ninety years, from 1512 to 1605. The Portuguese brought Catholicism first to the Northern Moluccas, but encountered a significant challenge from Muslims. They subsequently succeeded in Christianising elites in the Central Moluccas, where there was less resistance. These elites, especially in the central part of the Moluccas on the Ambonese and Lease islands, had not been fully Islamised.

When the Portuguese first arrived in the Moluccas, the Muslim Kings welcomed them and the trade they brought in cloves and other agricultural commodities. However, afterwards, because of differences over economic and religious issues, there were clashes between Moluccan Muslims and the Portuguese and later Dutch-cum-Moluccan Christians (Leirissa, 1975).

Lestaluhu (1988) has detailed these clashes. The first was the Hitu War (1520-1605) between Moluccan Muslims and Portuguese-cum-Moluccan Christians. The Muslim-Christian clashes continued until the coming of the Dutch in 1605. Soon after the Dutch arrival, some 16,000 Ambonese were baptised in the Leitimor and Lease islands in 1605 (Chauvel, 1990: 18). The Dutch were to stay on for more than three hundred years until 1942. The Dutch colonial government brought the Protestant religion, which also had influence in the central part of the Moluccas, especially as Dutch policy favoured Christians in gaining access to education and lower administrative positions in government. Chauvel described the discriminatory policy of the Dutch government toward Muslims as follows:

After some hesitation, and the request from the Christian village leaders from Leitimor in 1607, the VOC [*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, Dutch East India Company] adopted the policy that Christianity was seen as a means to promote the loyalty of the population to the Christian rulers. The VOC also

attempted, with limited success, to curb the process of Islamisation. Together with the destruction of the Ambonese Islamic 'states' and the elimination of the Moslem elite as independent political actors, this meant that the Moslem community was relegated to a subordinate position in colonial society compared with their Christian compatriots (Chauvel, 1990: 20).

As a consequence of the conversions from animism to the monotheistic religions of Islam and Christianity, the indigenous cultures of the Ambonese underwent significant change. Cooley has stated religious institutions changed because of conversion and this influenced other aspects of custom and government (1973: 126). However, Cooley misinterpreted the impact of the new religions of Islam and Christianity on Ambonese, suggesting that the conversions took place because of their limited understanding of Islam and Christianity. The reality was that both religions tended to compete for adherents, who were basically searching to advance their own economic and political interests.

The Dutch colonial government made Ambon town the centre of their administration in the Moluccas. Here the dominant Christian community had privileged access to jobs such as lower officers in the administration and especially as Moluccan soldiers in the Netherlands army in the East Indies. On the other hand, the Dutch destroyed the Muslims' clove trade in Ternate and Leihitu, and did not give Muslims the opportunity to go to Dutch schools. This discriminatory policy impacted on the level of education that Muslims were able to attain. Muslims commonly had a lower level of education than Christians. This was the case over the long period of Dutch rule.

Furthermore, the Japanese colonial government, after successfully defeating the combination of the *Koninklijk Nederlands-Indische Leger* (KNIL, the Royal Dutch East Indies Army) and an Australian battalion on 31 January 1942, promulgated a new policy towards Muslims and Christians, which was contrary to that of the Dutch (Chauvel, 1990: 1974). Muslims regarded the Japanese administration as having similar ideas to their own with respect to the Dutch. Moreover, Muslims gained positions of influence and the freedom to practice their religion, which was very different to the situation under the previous European governments (Chauvel, 1990: 184-185). Muslims did not realise that Japanese policy was intentionally aimed at destroying the power of previous regimes. It seemed to give privileges to Muslims to gain their sympathy and to underline to Christians that the Japanese colonial government had 'liberated' them from European control.

The role of Muslim and Christian organizations in the Japanese period was important in shaping a sense of nationalism and a sense of 'identity' as 'Indonesians' and 'Ambonese'. With a different experience to their counterparts in Java, the independence movements in the Moluccas were moderate and had strong local political interests as their basis. On the other hand, Ambonese Muslims attempted to gain political control on behalf of Moluccans living outside the Moluccas. The Japanese colonial government succeeded to some extent in balancing the Muslim and Christian communities with implications for ethno-religious divisions.

After independence, Moluccan Christians continued to hold top political positions in the *Negara Indonesia Timur* (NIT, State of Eastern Indonesia) up until the time when the Moluccas was given to the republicans in 1949.<sup>1</sup> In 1950, the Republic of South Moluccas (RMS) broke away, attempting to make the Moluccas separate and independent from Indonesia. Finally, the *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* (NKRI, Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia) defeated the RMS. Subsequently, separatists came under pressure as the central government of Indonesia set out to create a more balanced population of Muslims and Christians. The Christian majority in the Moluccas was seen by central government as posing a separatist threat.

Certainly, the RMS separatist movement has had a long historical influence on Muslim and Christian relations. Soekarno's government saw the movement as a threat to national unity. Soekarno began a transmigration program whereby people from the heavily populated Java, Madura, Bali and Lombok regions were moved to the Moluccas and other islands (Hardjono, 1977: 25-26). Soekarno's transmigration policy was projected as supporting national security, as promoting national integration, and as remedying Indonesia's uneven population distribution (Goss, 1992: 87-88). Sainz called this a policy of ' "Javanisation" of the Outer Islands as [a] means to achieve "national unity" against separatist tendencies' (1982: 10). Certainly, this policy served to reduce the emergence of

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<sup>1</sup> The *Front Kedaulatan Maluku* (FKM), which has been associated with *Republik Maluku Selatan* (RMS) ideas of sovereignty, claimed that the United Nations' gift of the Moluccas to the Republic of Indonesia was illegal. They said that it was contrary to the spirit of the Linggarjati (25 March 1947), Renville (17 January 1948) and Van Royen Room (7 May 1949) agreements (<http://www.fkm-europa.nl/?page=808>, accessed on 6 January 2003).

separatist movements in the Moluccas, by assimilating national traditions and by balancing the Christian and Muslim populations, as most transmigrants were Muslims. However, Soekarno also accommodated Christians by placing them in positions of political panel in the local government.

### 2.3 The Dynamic of *Pela* in the Pre-Colonial and Colonial Periods

The population of the Ambonese islands has been segregated since the pre-colonial period. As stated previously, the Muslims of Ternate and Tidore had successfully Islamised the Leihitu peninsula. However, in the Leitimor (later Ambon city) region, the inhabitants were originally animist-Hindus. The Portuguese converted the Leitimor Hindus to Catholicism and the Dutch converted the rest of the Hindus and a small number of Muslims and Catholics to Protestantism. Herein are the early roots of segregation in the Ambonese islands. The Dutch reinforced this segregation with their discriminatory policies against certain groups in the islands.

The impact of segregation was reduced, however, by a treaty arrangement between the different communities that allowed friendships to be formed. This treaty was based on the *Pela* tradition. '*Pela*' means 'brother' or 'trusted friend' and is a word originally from the Hoamoal peninsula (Ceram) and adopted into the Ambonese language. The original meaning of *Pela* was 'to be finished' (Bartels, 1978: 58). *Pela* tradition can be divided into three categories: *Pela Tuni* or *Pela Keras*; *Pela Tempat Sirih*; and, *Pela Gandong*. *Pela Tuni* has two categories: *Pela Tumpah Darah* and *Pela Batu Karang* (Huwae, 1995: 79). The further analysis will focus on the *Pela Gandong* tradition, which was prominent in discussion during reconciliation attempts in 1999-2002. The *Pela Gandong* tradition is an alliance of two or more people related by marriage, in which they agree to help each other based on family ties. For example, the *Pela* among the regions of the Tamilou, Siri-Sori and Hutumuri<sup>2</sup> was originally between three brothers from the village of Hatumeten

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<sup>2</sup> During his fieldwork in Tamilou, Siri-Sori and Hutumuri, Huwae found the following rules mentioned by the inhabitants of the three regions: 'It is forbidden to become angry with a *bongso* [younger brothers or sisters]; it is forbidden to marry a *bongso*; it is forbidden to refuse a request from a *bongso*; it is forbidden to lie to a *bongso*; it is forbidden to make fun of a *bongso*; One must help a *bongso* when (s)he is in trouble; One must help and support a *bongso* in busy and difficult times (weddings, deaths, etc.)' (Huwae, 1995: 81).

on the island of Ceram, who decided to be in alliance after migrating to their new places in the three villages mentioned (Huwae, 1995: 80-81).

Ironically, the oldest and existing *Pela* ceremony was not found in Ceram, but in the mountains of the Leitimur peninsula in Ambon. It was supposed that the Ceramese had adopted the tradition during a time of turbulence between Ambonese communities (Bartels, 1978: 80). The actual origins of *Pela* are blurred and there is a lack of strong historical evidence. According to Bartels, it was the subject of speculation in early European writings and not part of 'native explanations' (1978: 67). Furthermore, Bartels states that:

Ambonese explanations of the origin of *pela* ... range ... from factual speculations to semi-mythical accounts. The first are based on historical factors but their elaboration is hampered by the still insufficient access of Ambonese to written historical records. In respect to the latter, it must be remembered that Ambonese, like other people, are ... curious about past events and their chronology. In such circumstances, history often becomes a justification [for] the present situation and [a] basis for ideology (Bartels, 1978: 72).

The earliest *Pela* tradition was given brief mention in Ridjali's *Hikayat Tanah Hitu*, which Bartels (1978) considers to be the oldest written source discussing this alliance. In 1495, there was an unbreakable tie between the King of Ternate, Zainulabedien, and Pati Tuban, the ruler of Hitu kingdom. They declared by a ceremonial oath that they along with their territories would have an eternal friendship and alliance. This *pela* was merely a promulgation of the *raja* (king) of Hitumessen, which was accepted by the Hitu people (Bartels, 1978: 73). However, during the Dutch period, the Hitu with the support of the Ternate kingdom defended their interests in the face of Dutch pressure. The alliance was pragmatically employed by both rulers to preserve their political and economic interests. Subsequently, differences in policy regarding the Dutch arose between them. Ternate adopted a non-aggression approach toward the Dutch. The Hitu lost their ties with the Ternate kingdom.

The *Pela* was also meant as a treaty between Muslims and Christians. It was probably not originally an inter-religious treaty, but because of the subsequent Christianisation of parts of the Ambonese islands by the Portuguese and Dutch, the treaty became an inter-religious one. This was a crucial development in the *Pela* tradition, especially in the first five or six

decades after the Dutch arrival (1605-1656). Many of the *Pela* alliances entered into between Muslims, non-Muslims and pagans have continued until today (Bartels, 1978: 115).

#### **2.4 The New Order Centralisation of Development and Politics**

During the New Order period, the *Pela Gandong* tradition was merely a symbol of religious harmony in the Ambonese islands. It was promoted in tourism brochures by a national government proud of the harmony between multi-ethnic and multi-religious Indonesians. However, more transmigrants were coming to the Moluccas under the sponsorship of the central government so as to foster development, national unity and national defence and security (Goss, 1992: 88). Many came voluntarily from Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi to the transmigration projects in Ceram, other regions in the Moluccas and to the capital city of Ambon. In the capital, the proportion of Christians in the population changed from 60 per cent in the 1970s to 52 per cent in the 1990s. This was the result not only of a rise in the number of new Butonese, Buginese, Makassarese and Javanese migrants coming to the city, but was also the result of an increase in number of Ambonese Christians emigrating to Java after facing difficulties in finding work and making a living during the 1990s. Of course, non-indigenous Ambonese did not hold to the *Pela* tradition, which continued to influence the thought of young indigenous Ambonese. Transmigration and the growing urbanisation of indigenous Ambonese were important factors in bringing about a change in Ambonese culture during the 1990s.

Ambonese culture was also drastically changed by of the New Order's centralisation of government. The traditional local leadership was remodelled along Javanese lines based around the concept of the *lurah* (head of village). In the longer term, the king and traditional leaders lost privileges and the respect of their communities. According to New Order policy, the only official political ideology was that of Pancasila. Soeharto succeeded in suppressing the power of local political figures, by eliminating the essence of their political identity and the basis for their power.

However, local cultural expressions resurged after the fall of Soeharto. President Habibie's government gave more opportunities for local politics and local political

identities introduced a regional autonomy policy. Unfortunately, the euphoria of regional autonomy was to result in the strengthening of the indigenous community against migrants. Thus, the Ambon conflict can be seen as the product of regional political dynamics in this period of transition in Indonesian politics.

In the city of Ambon, most Muslims live in the coastal areas around Batu Merah. They are migrants from South and Southeast Sulawesi, Java and Sumatra. Muslims also came to live in the middle of Christian areas in Ambon. As has been indicated, during the Colonial and the Soekarno periods Leitimor became a Christian region. However, the structure of the population changed once the New Order introduced its transmigration policy and open up Ambon city for Muslim urban settlement. Furthermore, the central government openly pushed this development as part of its ambitious transmigration policy.

As these socio-political changes were occurring in Ambon, religion became an identity similar to race with respect to competition for local political and government positions and in the context of social policy. Muslims' perception of Christian domination in local government and in shaping public policy from colonial times to the second decade of the New Order government impelled local competition. On the other hand, Christians also perceived an Islamisation of the local bureaucracy to have occurred particularly during the last years of the New Order from 1992-1997.<sup>3</sup> According to Schrieke, 'religious competition,' between Muslim and Christian 'races' became New Order policy in order to ensure the Moluccas remained under the control of the New Order regime (Schrieke in Azra 2002: xi). The central government politicised issues relating to Muslim and Christian interests. Bureaucratic positions became a site of competition between the two communities. The elections for governor amplified political and religious divisions: if a Muslim became governor, then a Protestant had to be the vice-governor or secretary.

In the context of such developments, there was a transfer of economic resources from local indigenous Ambonese to urban Muslims. Suparlan (2001: 8-9) suggested that the 'unnatural' demographic change from Ambonese Christian dominance before the 1980s to

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<sup>3</sup> Concerns were also evident at a national level regarding the tensions that were mounting in Ambon as a result of the changes that were taking place in the 1992-1997 period, particularly as a result of Christians' sense of marginalisation (Djiwandono 1999: 100-106).



migrant Muslim dominance in the 1990s was a cause of the conflict of Ambon. Suparlan used Bruner's model of 'the dominant culture' to explain the Ambonese situation:

BBM people are dominant in the city of Ambon. From a demographic perspective, they are the majority compared to the indigenous Ambonese. Socially, economically and culturally, they dominate the public places and markets where the indigenous Ambonese are merely consumers; and politically both in the local and national arenas they have gained control in fashioning political policy and in determining natural resources distribution in Ambon and the Moluccas (Suparlan, 2001: 8-9; translation mine).

However, contrary to Suparlan's analysis, it was actually the Chinese and only a few middle-class Muslims, who dominated the retail market. The migrant Muslims (BBM) controlled only the traditional markets, which require a low level of labour skills and a limited capital. Middle and high-level investments were still controlled by the Chinese, Jakarta businessmen and foreign investors (Aditjondro, 2001).

## **2.5 The Consequences of New Order Development in Ambon**

The centralization occurring under New Order development in the village of Soya Atas (as outlined in Pariela's (1996) study) is a good illustration of the impact of government development on *adat* (local culture). The Soya Atas village is one of the original villages in the five regions of Soya, a part of the Ambon city region. There are four new settlements at Kayu Putih, Batu Bulan, Karang Panjang Waihoka and Karang Panjang Puleh, where outsiders from a variety of ethnic groups, including Javanese, Butonese (Southeast Sulawesi), Chinese and Southeast Moluccas have lived (Pariela 1996: 108). Except for the Chinese, most outsiders were Muslims, who worked as traders and office workers (government and private), while Soya Atas villagers were mostly Christians. Soya Atas villagers were peasants who cultivated cloves, nutmeg and coconut cash crops as well as cassava, taro and sweet potato for household consumption (Pariela 1996: 108). Government development programs in this village gave advantages to outsiders rather than the indigenous population. Pariela explains that:

Most of the development programs, in fact, were determined and funded by the government. Despite the fact that the Soya Atas people have enjoyed modern transportation and communication as the result of development programs, generally, these facilities seem to be useless especially in relation to pushing forward the economic activities of these people. This is because the facilities do

not themselves have a direct stimulation effect on the productive economic behaviour of the people (Pariela 1996: 117).

The alienation the Soya Atas indigenous community experienced as result of New Order development paralleled that in other parts of Ambon. However, Pariela did not give any reasons as to why the indigenous Soya Atas people seemed to be reluctant to improve their agricultural practices, so as to compete with the Butonese migrants or to become traders like the outsiders. However, there were reasons why they did not do so.

The transfer of land ownership from the indigenous Soya Atas people to the outsiders had an impact on consumption patterns. In making reference to Rostow's theory of consumption (1971) Pariela suggests that 'people had already jumped to the fifth stage of high mass consumption, whereas in fact, they were still living in the second stage 'the pre-conditions for take-off'(1996: 113). Indigenous Soya Atas people were described by Mearns (1996) being as 'lazy'. Mearns' analysis related the city of Ambon, where indigenous Ambonese worked as government officers and the outsiders (migrants) worked in the informal sector. He explained the situation as follows:

Ambonese Christian self-representation during interviews and in conversations often has echoes of colonial myths of the 'lazy native'. Ambonese have said to me on many occasions that they generally prefer to work in offices, and government offices if possible. They have characterised themselves and their youths as lazy and disinclined to do manual labouring... By contrast, in terms of stereotyping, Ambonese Christians and Sulawesi migrants both represent the Butonese and Buginese to be much more inclined to take hard manual work and to be entrepreneurial and careful in the manner of earning their living (Mearns, 1996: 99).

However, both Mearns and Pariela were trapped into a stereotyping of indigenous and migrant (outsider) peoples and lost sight of the main problem of centralisation under the New Order. Soeharto's cronies exploited natural and mining resources and tragically controlled the price of that important agricultural product-Moluccan cloves. Indigenous Ambonese made gains in the peripheral commodity sectors and even in the government sector. However, the strategic political sectors were monitored by Soeharto's administration. Soeharto systematically constructed the segregation and stereotyping of the indigenous and the outsider communities through a policy of economic development, which defined the country according to industrial stages. Additionally, Mearns' argument

assigning Christians as being 'lazy natives' was contrary to the reality in Soya Atas. According to Pariela, Christians were hard-working peasants striving to make a living.

In fact, many Muslims were equally poor and in a similar socio-economic category to Christians. They were also the victims of New Order development policy. Mearn's argument that Muslims had usurped Christians' domination in local politics, especially after Governor Akib Latuconsina's administration, assumed that this first Muslim governor in a Moluccas province had a policy of favouring Muslims. In fact, Latuconsina did not assist ordinary Muslims, but rather aided his clan and cronies (Irwan Patty, an interview in Ambon, 10 August 2002).

The New Order development model in the Moluccas was based on a patrimonial structure, which had a patron-client relationship between the central elite as the patron and the local elite as the client (Leirissa, 2000). Leirissa stated that:

During the New Order, the patrimonial relationship between central and local elites was well preserved, because they gained advantage from the alliance. The national elite channelled material advantages to the local region and, on the other hand, the local elite guaranteed the relationship for their own advantage (Leirissa, 2000: 56).

## **2.6 Ambon in The Post-Soeharto Transition Period**

The changing national politics after the fall of Soeharto and the political pressure on the Indonesian armed forces (TNI) to return to barracks was to impact on the situation in Ambon. The TNI attempted to adapt to the spirit of *reformasi*, which expected the security forces to become more professional and not be involved in politics. They were forced to restructure their organization. However, the rise in number of areas of conflict under *reformasi* and the transitional regimes from Habibie to Megawati has been linked by observers with a renewal of national security policy returning the TNI to a prominent role (Van Dijk, 2001; Haseman, 2002; Bhakti et al, 1999).

The change in the role and structure of the TNI is one factor contributing to the outbreak of the conflict. However, changes in the local culture transiting from a traditional system to modernity also contributed to the continuance of the conflict. For example, within

Christianity and Islam, past religious practice was purified of its animistic elements and replaced by a monotheistic faith, which believes in one God. In the *Makan Patita* [a traditional meal] reconciliation ceremony, animistic practices such as the drinking of blood and praying to stone and wood is called *Jahiliyah* (barbaric, uncivilised) by Muslims (Muhammad At-Tamimy, an interview in Ambon, 4 August 2002) and is regarded as contrary to the Bible among Christians. Old animistic traditions have been displaced in favour of modern beliefs and a rational culture as part of a process accommodating the demands of capitalism in a new Ambonese economy (Bartels 1977: 326). Particularly amongst younger generations, older animistic traditions have been forgotten.

A further factor is the political instability, which occurred after the change in regime from Soeharto to B.J. Habibie. The fall of Soeharto led to wide-ranging reforms in the structure of national politics. The new national elite, which has emerged has a 'reform' approach to national policy and is favourably disposed towards the political accommodation of regional demands for autonomy. The centralisation of the New Order was replaced by a decentralisation accommodating demands that local (*pribumi*) human resources be fully utilised. The resurgence of local government created regional tensions. The filling of some bureaucratic positions by migrant people under the New Order had alienated indigenous Ambonese, who remained in the majority in the local government.

The issue of the Islamisation of the government bureaucracy surfaced as a consequence of the important role played by ICMI in national politics from 1992 to 1997. A perception spread amongst Christians that an Islamisation of the local bureaucracy was occurring, while Muslims claimed that Christians had maintained their dominance. Under the Akib Latuconsina and Saleh Latuconsina governorships, some strategic positions in the government, traditionally in Christian hands, were transferred to Muslim hands, for example, the new head of the Department of Education and Culture was a Muslim.

The impact of the Asian Financial crisis on Ambonese communities was actually not as severe as that experienced by other communities in Java. This was because the price of cloves increased over this period. Furthermore, during the conflict religious, ethnic and political identities interacted to varying degrees. In the early stages of the conflict, the issue of ethnicity dominated local politics. It influenced the political approach not only in

the period of the conflict, but also in the three years after the conflict. The local bureaucracy was in the hands of the 'sons of the soil' (*pribumi*, or indigenous) peoples. They took over the positions in the bureaucracy and the private sector previously held by migrants during the New Order. Therefore, as understood at the popular level, the conflict was the result of competition between indigenous Christian and Muslim urban communities over access to economic, political and social resources (Suparlan, 2001: 2). This competition was inflamed by the rhetoric used at the time.

The term '*kotor*' (dirty) was used of people who work in non-office and non-government jobs. Urban Muslims used this term before the conflict to describe rural Christian peasants. It was, as Mearns (1996) has described, a means of distinguishing Muslims and Christians in their work activities and economic culture. It contests Weber's finding of Protestantism's spirit of Capitalism. In Ambon, Muslims had a Capitalist spirit. It was, as Turner (1974) and Binder (1988) have described, an Islamic ideology and culture that was equivalent to the West's approach to development.

Furthermore, the national tensions in the last decade of the New Order contributed to the tension in Ambon. Christians in Eastern Indonesia responded to the Situbondo and Tasikmalaya riots in 1996 and 1997 interpreting them as exemplifying a discrimination against minority Christian groups, which was condoned by the state. Then there were the riots in the Rengasdengklok, West Java, in 1997 followed by the Ketapang, Jakarta, riots in 1998. All of these riots were directed against Christians, who were assumed to playing a dominant role in the Indonesian economy.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

A long-term segregation of the Muslim and Christians' communities existed in the Ambonese islands even before European settlement. For example, segregation existed between Islamised Ambonese on the Leihitu peninsula and the Leitimor community, who at that time embraced animism. The latter community then converted to Christianity during the Portuguese, and particularly during the Dutch, periods. The discriminatory policy of the Dutch disadvantaged Muslims and favoured Ambonese Christians economically and in terms of educational opportunities, widening the segregation gap. The

higher average level of education of the indigenous Ambonese compared with that of their Muslim counterparts enabled them to hold them political office and positions in the bureaucracy in the post-independence period. It was supposed that the *Pela* tradition was an important instrument, which could be used to harmonise both religious communities. However, the *Pela* tradition was originally not intended to reconcile religions, but was to be merely the basis of an alliance in times of war and a basis for economic cooperation between two or more *negeris*. However, the New Order used it as a symbol of the harmony between Muslims and Christians in the Ambonese islands. Thus, it was a fragile basis upon which to build strong relations. This became apparent with the change in the population structure as a result of the centralisation of government policy, especially during the New Order period, when large numbers of transmigrants came from Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi to the Ambonese islands.

The proportion of Muslims and Christians in the population changed from Christian domination in the 1970s to Muslim domination in the 1990s. This change was not only in terms of the overall population, but also increasingly paralleled the composition of the government bureaucracy in the central Moluccas. In Ambon city, the rise in transmigration and urbanisation marked by the coming of the Butonese, Buginese, Makassarese and Javanese migrants changed a Christian majority situation to one where there was more of a balance between the Muslim and Christian populations. In the last decade of the New Order, the Asian Financial Crisis and difficulties in the local economy impacted on Ambon city, resulting in the outbreak of anti-Christian riots in outside Ambon. This created a resistance in Ambon city amongst Christians against Muslims and against the central government. This resistance grew in the later period of the Soeharto regime and erupted into violence after the Soeharto regime fell.

## Chapter Three

### The Conflict of 1999: *Preman* and Local – National Responses

#### 3.1 Introduction

The Ambon conflict, which in official accounts erupted on 19 January 1999, raised a few questions as to whether the strife was purely a clash between grass-roots Muslims and Christians or whether it was, in fact, a contest between local and national elites, as Van Klinken has argued (2001). The actual causes are, of course, important in determining what the response to the conflict should be. The situation was compounded by the presence of a third group of ‘provocateurs’, who exploited the political tensions existing in the Moluccas from before the conflict. Furthermore, the role of elements in the Indonesian security forces (TNI) in inflaming and sustaining the conflict can be seen as the attempt by national players from Jakarta to gain political and economic advantages as a consequence of the conflict. The alleged former national ruling regime (Soeharto and his cronies) attempted to sustain its political power by creating riots and conflict; and, local elites in Ambon let the conflict go on as it was also to their political advantage to do so (Leirisa, 2000: 56). Further, the 1999 national election was a significant event during the first year of the conflict, with Muslims alleging that the Christian elite had intentionally forced migrant Muslims to take refuge in the outer islands of the Moluccas to the political advantage of the Christians. Some Muslims from the PPP (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, the United Development Party) in the Ambon parliament claimed that the victory of the *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle, PDI-P) in Ambon was an unfair political result. Certainly, the Christians who dominated the PDI-P gained more advantage in local politics with the decline in the number of Muslim voters in the 1999 elections (ICG, 2002: 2; van Klinken, 2001).

This chapter argues that the past and present ethno-religious segregation in Ambon was the main factor utilised by *preman* (thugs) to instigate and continue the conflict. They were able to exploit the tensions in local politics arising from the changing composition of the local population. This chapter will also argue that the local and national elites in order

to gain advantage from the conflict intentionally instigated the violence by supporting militia groups in both the Christian and Muslim communities.

This chapter will be divided into three parts. First, it will examine the development of the conflict from December 1998, when the thugs first came to Ambon, up until December 1999, before the mass rally at which the *Laskar Jihad* (Holy Warriors) declared a *Jihad* (Holy War) in Ambon. In addition, this chapter will explore the relationship between the *preman* thugs) and local politics. Thirdly, it will discuss the provocateurs from the TNI and their possible role in the conflict. In this section, the alleged role of the TNI in supporting the *preman* will be observed from the end of 1998. Fourthly, it will examine the local politics in Ambon and the behaviour of political parties during the 1999 elections. It will examine Muslim allegation that Christians were trying to get Muslims to leave the Moluccas. Discussions with local Muslims and Christians will be analysed to try and substantiate this allegation. Lastly the responses of Muslims and Christians outside the Moluccas is important to understanding the changing nature of the conflict, as emphasis turned from local to national issues as debates over the conflict were aired through the national media. The rise in tensions during the 1999 conflict, described by the national media, caused majority Muslims at the national level to seek to assist in protecting local Muslims from Christian attack in the spirit of *Jihad* (holy war). The resultant *Jihad* movements will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Four. However, first it is necessary to examine the dynamics of events occurring during the first year of the conflict.

### **3.2 The Development of the Conflict**

Triyono (2001) divided the first phase of the conflict into three periods: January – early April 1999; the end of July – October 1999; and, November – December 1999. From April to July 1999, there was a relative period of peace, when local elites played influential roles in keeping the peace during the 1999 election period. Their political interests were best served by controlling the conflict and maintaining peace. After the results of the 1999 elections were announced on July 1999, and the violence resurfaced again.



Triyono (2001), like other Ambonese Muslims (Kastor, 2000), claimed that the conflict had first begun in December 1998 in Dobo, Southeast Moluccas. Opposition to Butonese, Buginese and Makassarese (later called BBM) migrants was already in evidence in this conflict. During December 1998, the *Ramadhan* (fasting) month tensions over migrant BBM escalated. At 4 p.m. on Tuesday, 19 January 1999, the first day of *Iedul Fitr*, a celebration day for Muslims after a month of fasting, two youngsters from Batumerah and Mardika were involved in a fight. However, by 6 p.m., the clash had become a conflict between the two communities of Batumerah and Mardika. By 9 p.m. the conflict extended to Batu Gantung, four kilometres from the location of the first riots. Here a crowd burned a small shop, a car and an elementary school in A.M. Sangaji and Anthony Ribhok streets (*Gatra*, 30 January 1999: 58).

On the next day, 20 January 1999, the conflict became more widespread with fighting taking place between indigenous Ambonese, mostly Christians, and BBM migrants.<sup>1</sup> At 1 a.m. on 20 January, Muslim and Christian groups were seen clashing in A.Y. Patty Street and in the streets separating Muslim and Christian residential areas near the Al Fattah mosque. In the city of Ambon, the markets of Batumerah, Mardika, Supermarket Pelita, Gambus and the food market of Cakbar were burned. On the same day, conflict erupted in Benteng Karang, Pohon Pule, Paso, Nania, Hila, Negeri Lama, Hitu, Wailette, Kamiri and Hative Besar. The most dramatic conflict was at the bridge at Air Besar, where the Christians of Paso and surrounding areas confronted Muslims from Hitu. Although conflict between the two communities was averted, during their return from Air Besar, Hitu Muslims burned houses and buildings from Benteng Karang to Nania (*Gatra*, 30 January 1999: 58; Triyono, 2001: 44). By mid-day, the crowd (of Christians) were seen with the RMS (Republic of South Moluccas) flag, which has a basic colour of red with lines of white at the sides. The RMS flag was flown with two red and yellow gas balloons in the regions of Benteng Atas and Kudamati (*Gatra*, 30 January 1999: 60). After two days, at least four hundred houses were burned and approximately twenty people dead, including children (*Gatra*, 30 January 1999:59).

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<sup>1</sup> In a *Gatra* report, 30 January 1999, the term used was BBMS (Butonese, Buginese, Makassarese and Sumatran). It was supposed that Javanese were not included as BBM, but in fact, many Javanese Muslims were also involved in the conflict.

On the evening of 21 January 1999, the governor of the Moluccas, M. Saleh Latuconsina, Regiment Commander (Danrem) 174 Pattimura, Colonel Hikayat, and Commander of Lantamal (*Landasan Utama Angkatan Laut*) Moluccas-Irian Jaya area of command, Laksamana Muda Franky Kayhatu, met Christians in Tugu Trikora and Muslims at the Al-Fattah mosque to seek reconciliation. After Colonel Hikayat made a statement that he guaranteed security at the Al-Fattah mosque, a nearby crowd suddenly attacked. The governor then declared that a curfew would be imposed (*Gatra*, 30 January 1999). In a few days, the conflict had extended to the Lease islands, Seram, Central Moluccas and Southeast Moluccas. In February 1999, conflict erupted in the islands of Seram, Haruku and Saparua (Triyono, 2001: 45).

In March 1999, Muslims in Java and Makassar began to respond to the conflict, because of the numbers of casualties reported amongst Ambonese Muslims. It was on 1 March 1999, that the bloody Morning Prayer (*subuh berdarah*) incident occurred in Ambon as reported in the national media. The Jakarta media indicated that the Muslims of Ahuru had been slaughtered in the mosque during Morning Prayer (*Ummat*, no. 35, 15 March 1999: 22). Ten days later, 10-11 March 1999, Christians were reported as attacking Muslims in Air Salobar and Benteng Atas. These are two Muslim regions surrounded by a Christian population. Shortly thereafter, property was burned in Ponegoro, Kapahaha, Air Mata Cina and Pohon Pule following a clash between Muslims and Christians around the Silo church. In this clash, both Muslims and Christians had an equal number of casualties, at least twenty Muslims and Christians (Human Rights Watch, 1999). However, the national media reported Christians as attacking Muslims based on biased reports coming from Muslims in outside Ambonese islands. They had even assumed that Muslims were being cleansed from the islands.

Therefore, the Crisis Centre of the *Persatuan Gereja-Gereja Indonesia* (PGI, Indonesian Church Association) in the Moluccas released a statement following the national media reports of what had happened in the Moluccas, indicating that Moluccan Christians:

strongly refuted every attempt to describe the Ambon riots as ‘ethnic cleansing’, as ‘religious cleansing’, or as the ‘slaughtering of certain religious communities’ [Christian attacks against Muslims]. Such descriptions were being spread to incite a new hatred among religious people and give a false image not based on the facts of the Ambon riots (*Ummat*, no. 36, 22 March 1999: 17, translation mine).

During March 1999, Ambonese Muslim leaders also came to Java to seek help from their Muslim brothers. Some of them made claims and one-sided reports in order to find sympathy amongst Muslims outside the Moluccas (see further analysis later in this chapter).

From April to July 1999, local politics brought about a change from conflict to relative peace. Local Ambonese Muslim politicians asked Muslim refugees in Makassar, South Sulawesi and Buton in Southeast Sulawesi to return to Ambon to strengthen the proportion of Muslim constituents in the city of Ambon for the 1999 elections (*Ummat*, no. 41, 26 April 1999: 30). The *Komite Penanggulangan Krisis* (KOMPAK, Committee for Crisis Recovery), coordinated by Tamsil Linrung, held a seminar in Makassar on the importance of Muslim refugees returning to Ambon in order to boost Muslim parties election chances.

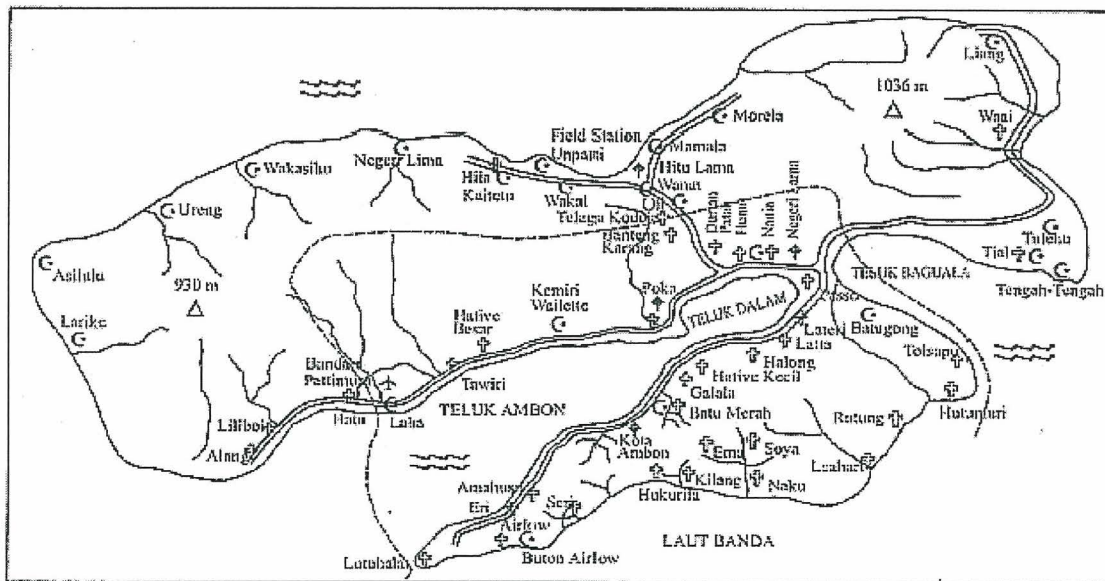


Figure 4. Map Showing Pre-conflict Religious Segregation in the Ambonese Islands<sup>2</sup> (Ecip, 1999: 13).

<sup>2</sup> The symbols of the 'Crescent-star' (C) for Muslims and 'Cross' (+) for Christians indicate where the Ambonese Muslim and Christian communities were located (see also Figure 5: 32). The Pattimura University team created the map in Figure 5 (overleaf) before the Poka-Rumah Tiga conflict broke out on July 2000, which forced both Muslims and Christians into clearly designated areas divided along religious lines. Furthermore, many mixed Muslim and Christian regions, such as Poka and Nania, became segregated

After the elections, conflict erupted again on 23 July 1999, but this time in the Poka Complex, where the middle-class of Ambon live. Most were local government officers, lecturers and students at the Pattimura University, who had not been previously involved in the conflict since January 1999. Although the regions surrounding Poka like Nania, Negeri Lama, Hative Besar and Kawiri had experienced conflict, Poka had escaped it until July 1999 (Triyono, 2001: 47-48). In the Poka conflict, most of the victims were Muslims. This raised tensions in the Ambon city, which led to conflict on 27 July 1999 in the streets of A.Y. Paty, Sultan Babullah, Latuharhari, Pahlawan Revolusi, in the area of Tanah Lapang Kecil, and along the border of Waihaong and Talake. Similarly, in the peripheral regions of Ambon, such as Lateri I and Lateri III, conflict also broke out. On the next day, 28 July 1999, conflict in the villages of Kisar, Pisang, Batugong and Hutumuri forced a total segregation of the population. In mixed population regions continued conflict forced both communities to make a clear border between Muslim and Christian regions (Triyono, 2001: 49). In later conflicts, the patterns leading up to conflict were similar: after the spreading of rumours, tensions rose leading to violence. For example, in October 1999, conflict in the North Moluccas led to tensions, which resulted in conflict in Ambon around Tugu Trikora on 26 December 1999 with the burning of the Silo Church and the An-Nur mosque - two important symbols for Ambonese Christians and Muslims.

*Preman* (thugs) and paramilitary groups, as well as elements in the Indonesian armed forces and police force, have been alleged to have played key roles in instigating and continuing the conflict in 1999. Their relationship with Indonesian politics was a crucial factor.

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Muslim and Christian regions. For example, Poka has been since inhabited by Muslims only and Nania is now a Christian-only region. (For further discussion, see Chapter Four.)

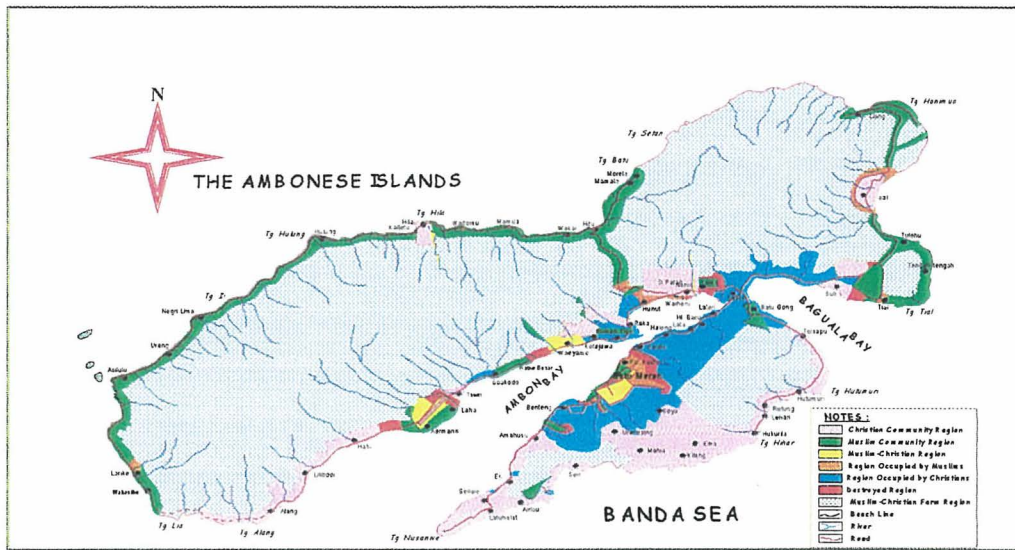


Figure 5. Map of Religious Segregation and Conflict in the Ambonese Islands in 1999 (GPM, 2002).

### 3.3 The *Premans* and Politics

The history of *preman* (thug) activity in Indonesian politics must be considered so as to understand thug behaviour in Ketapang, Jakarta, and their subsequent influence on the Ambon conflict with the possible support of the State (including elements in the Indonesian armed forces). Lindsey (2001) refers to ‘state’ and ‘private’ *premanism* and includes the *Laskar Jihad* as a type of private *premanism*. As stated in Chapter Two the *preman* (thugs, gangsters, *laskar*, paramilitary) were common in city areas during the New Order period. Thus, they had a prior history and did not just suddenly appear during the conflict in Ambon. Local communities and the government described the *preman* as ‘provocateurs’ for the reason that they inflamed the conflict in Ambon by spreading false rumours. Munir defines ‘the provocateur’ in Ambon as ‘someone who spreads false information to the community with the intent of creating conflict ... serving political interests in the wider context’ (Munir, 2000 in Aditjondro & Anggoro: 62). Provocateurs also participated in the conduct of the violence in Ambon.

During the revolutionary period (1945-1949), *preman* were often heroes in the independence struggle. They were also a criminal and political machine during the New

Order period (1965-1998). Cribb (1991) has comprehensively described the role of Jakarta gangs during the revolutionary period when Indonesia was fighting for its independence. They created their own groups and took part in defending Jakarta, along with the republican military, against the Dutch colonial government. Moving to the New Order, *preman* were utilized by the ruling regime to maintain its power by breaking up the opposition. Megawati's PDI, for example, was seen by Soeharto as a potent opposition against his power. In July 1996, Soeharto sent thugs to attack the official PDI office on Diponegoro Street in central Jakarta. In this violence, five people died and over twenty others disappeared (Elson, 2002, in Colombijn and Lindblad eds., 2002: 190).

It was common in Jakarta that the *preman* would guard entertainment centres such as discotheques and casinos. In Ketapang, Petojo, Central Jakarta on 21 November 1998, *preman* of Ambonese origin who were guarding the entertainment centre clashed with the local community of Ketapang. Shortly after the clash, rumours of mosques having been burned by Ambonese spread quickly causing anger in the (mostly Muslim) local community. In fact, a local mosque was attacked by the *preman* and the Muslim community was intimidated and beaten up. Muslims reacted by burning churches and the clash escalated into Muslim and Christian riots, leaving sixteen people dead and more than five hundred injured. Sixteen churches and a mosque were destroyed (Sihbudi & Nurhasim, 2001: 45). Jakarta *preman* were provocateurs in the early stages of the conflict in Ambon, 19-23 January 1999, for example, in the conflict around the Al-Fattah mosque on 20 January 1999. The Jakarta Ambonese *preman* who came to Ambon were led by Milton Pieters. This group brought handy-talkies,<sup>3</sup> while other unidentified people also had hand-phones. They seemed well-organised during the riots (Kontras, 1999: 11).

Before continuing the story of the *preman* deployment by the Jakarta elite to Ambon and other islands in Eastern Indonesia, it is important to assess the possible links between the

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<sup>3</sup> During my fieldwork in Ambon, handy-talkies were easy to find at the cheap price of around seventy thousand Rupiah (around fifteen dollars Australia) per set. During my interview in Galunggung with a local Muslim militia, Alfa (not his real name), a commander of local Muslim militia, along with Ahmad Ibrahim (not his real name)- a Javanese and a member of the *Laskar Jihad*- offered to buy me and my research assistant a new handy-talky. During the conflict Ibrahim had organised an illegal smuggling business dealing in such items in conjunction with elements in the Indonesian armed forces (Ahmad Ibrahim, an interview in Ambon, 29 July 2002). Certainly, some militia members and some elites found ways of gaining an economic advantage during the difficulties of the monetary crisis through involvement in this kind of illegal business.

Ambonese *preman* in Jakarta and Soeharto cronies. The Ambonese *preman* had been behind the riots in Kupang, Nusa Tenggara Timur and previously had been in Ketapang, Jakarta. It has been alleged that they had been utilised by elements in the TNI and by Soeharto cronies to instigate riots and to create instability in various parts of Indonesia. In Ambon, the *preman* from Jakarta got involved with local *preman* (Aditjondro, 2001a, in Salampey and Hussein: 43; Let. Col. Hasanusi, an interview in Ambon, 5 August 2002). The mayor of Jakarta sent hundreds Ambonese *preman* home in order to secure Jakarta, amidst the continuing conflict after the deaths of some Christian Ambonese in the Ketapang riots. However, during their return on the state-owned ship, Dobonsolo, the *preman* planned to take revenge on Muslims in the Moluccas (Muhammad Yunus, shared this information in Ambon, 2 August 2002). The Moluccas government accepted the return of the Ambonese Jakarta-based gangsters to Ambon. However, they did not have adequate security preparations in place. On the other hand, tensions increased in Ambon with the return of the thugs and rumours of their intent to revenge the death of Christians in Ketapang by forcing migrant (Muslims) away from the Moluccas (Hasanusi, an interview in Ambon, 5 August 2002). The Jakarta thugs united with local gangs to operate in both Muslim and Christian regions.

In turning to analyse the relationship between Jakarta and local Ambonese *preman*, there is clear evidence of a link. The local *preman* commander-in-chief, Agus Wattimena (50, d. 2001), organized at least five thousand militant Christians to declare a war against Muslims. Wattimena moulded his militia into a *Laskar Kristus* (Christ Militia Force) against the *Laskar Jihad* in 2000 (a detailed analysis appears in Chapter Four). Wattimena headed a local Christian militia, which was in competition with another *preman* group, commanded by Bertu Loupatty, which was called Coker (*Cowok-Cowok Keren*, Handsome Boys).<sup>4</sup> Wattimena and Loupatty had competed since the 1980s through their Christian-dominated gangster groups (*Tempo*, 19 May 2002: 32). Loupatty had united the local gangs: Van Boomen, Papi Coret and Sex Pistol into one group, called Coker with both Christian and Muslim members. However, after the conflict erupted, Coker members divided into two religious camps, which were active in both Muslim and Christian

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<sup>4</sup> Coker also meant *Cowok-Cowok Kerempeng* (Thin Boys) and *Cowok-Cowok Kristen* (Christian Boys). The latter meaning was from a Muslim perspective, because most the Coker members were Christians. Muslims also assumed that the Coker supported Christians against Muslims. In fact, the Coker's operations disadvantaged both Muslims and Christians.

communities (*Tempo*, 19 May 2002: 32; *Tempo*, 26 May 2002: 25). The Coker represented Jakarta interests in the conflict. Whereas, Wattimena founded his Christian militia to fight against Muslims and was financially supported by some Christian businessmen and priests (*Tempo*, 19 May 2002). Their reasons for supporting such a militia are unclear, but like other middle-class Ambonese, they needed protection for their business assets and a means of forging Christian solidarity.

The Coker gang was allegedly involved in planting some explosive material, for example, in the Paulus church in the Kudamati area (*Tempo*, 17 May 2002). Detective chief of Pattimura military command, Lt. Colonel Irwansyah and a Christian leader, Emang Nikijuluw, said that Loupatty was instrumented by some elements in Kopassus to create violence in both the Muslim and Christian communities (*Tempo*, 17 May 2002). Coker members held in the Brimob detention centre in Jakarta confirmed these allegations.

Right from the early stages of conflict, the *preman* had been involved in playing up certain issues, raising anger in both communities through burning buildings, spreading pamphlets and making phone calls to pass on certain information, which would inflame Muslim or Christian sentiments. Such information stereotyped certain ethnic and religious groups. This pattern of instigating riots and violence had been commonplace since the New Order and especially during the last decade of Soeharto period.<sup>5</sup> Provocateurs<sup>6</sup> were regarded by local people as behaving like *hantu* (ghosts). They were difficult to detect by ordinary people, but their presence can be discerned by looking at the larger pattern of conflict. People might not know who the individual group members were, but they planted bombs, burned buildings and killed people in a systematic manner (Kontras, 1999: 8-9).

There have been two versions describing the role *preman* played in instigating the early conflict. The first was published by the *Gereja Protestan Maluku* (GPM, Moluccan Protestant Church). It alleged that a Christian driver, Jacob Lauhery, popularly called

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<sup>5</sup> For good picture of such violence during the New Order, refer: (Joshua Barker 2001:20-54).

<sup>6</sup> Munir described provocateurs as being in one of four categories. First, the provocateur as the leaders of demonstrations. Second, those who empowered labour movements and other community groups. This type was commonly by stigmatised by Soeharto's New Order. Third is the group, which creates issues and spreads dis-rumours to instigate conflicts. This group can be seen in the Ambon conflict. Fourth, unidentified groups, which agitated around the problems of economic disparity and poverty (Munir 2000: 59; also for an interesting comparison, see Sulisty, 2000: 65).



Yopy, was confronted by Nursalim Bugis (or Mohammad Bugis), a Buginese Muslim thug carrying a machete, who demanded that Yopy give him money. However, Yopy refused to do so. Yopy later invited his Christian Mardika friends to find Nursalim in Batumerah. However, they did not find him. Some fifteen minutes later, there were hundreds people with weapons from Batumerah looking for Yopy. They became frustrated when they did not find him. Thus, they burned the properties of Yopy's neighbours. Batumerah Muslims confirmed that they did not know the groups that supposedly had come from Batumerah. The head of police in Indonesia, Let. Gen. (Pol.) Roesmanhadi, confirmed this version (Triyono 2001: 38-39; Kontras, 1999: 3). It was alleged that Bugis was part of Ambonese Jakarta gangsters inflaming in Ambon (Johanes, an interview in Ambon, 2 August 2002).

The second version as reported by a Muslim Fact Finding Team indicated that Bugis, an assistant driver, had asked Yopy to pay the fare. However, Yopy refused and invited his Mardika friends to confront Bugis's group. Inevitably, a clash between the Muslim and Christian youths ensued (Triyono 2001: 40). However, Kontras and the national media did not mention this version (Kontras, 1999: 3).

What happened in Mardika was actually common in Ambon. Ambonese were confused as to the origin of the Batumerah groups, which inflamed the Mardika Christians to anger after the burning of their houses. On the other hand, Mardika Christians observed the presence of Christian groups, which they could not identify. Both the Muslim and Christian communities thought that the groups were from outside of their villages. Some observers identified the groups as the provocateurs, who had been linked with Jakarta since 1998 (Triyono 2001; Van Klinken 2001; Aditjondro 2000; Munir 2000). There were about 800 thug members who went from Jakarta to Kupang, Makassar, Manado and Ambon. Such groups failed to stir violence in Kupang and were refused access by local authorities in Manado and Makassar. However, the Moluccan government accepted them for the reason they were of Ambonese origin (Colonel H.R. Hasanusi, a police officer and a former chief of MUI Ambon, an interview in Ambon, August 2002).

During the conflict, people made assumptions concerning the involvement of the different groups. For example, who were the first instigators in the conflict? Christians assumed

that those initially burning Christians' houses were Muslims, while Muslims assumed that Christians had initiated the violence.<sup>7</sup> The uncertainty fuelled anti-Christian sentiment of among Muslims and anti-Muslim sentiment among Christians. For example, the issue of the burning of the Al-Fattah mosque in Ambon city inflamed Muslims during the early stages of the conflict, even hundreds of kilometres from Ambon, Leihitu. Muslims came voluntarily in a large group to Ambon to defend Muslims from Christian attack.<sup>8</sup> Ambonese came to recognise the role of the provocateur in inciting the violence. However, the involvement of the Leihitu Muslim communities was closely linked to the long-term anti-Christian sentiment caused by the existing Christian domination in the government bureaucracy. One of reasons Leihitu Muslims were so ready to attack Christians was because of their sense of alienation as a result, for example, of the recruitment of Christians as local government officers and the appointment of largely Christian staff at the Pattimura University.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, provocateurs also played on such sentiments in inciting local Leihitu and Ambonese Muslims against Christians.

### **3.4 The Provocateurs from the TNI**

The Coker gang was a close ally of the Jakarta-based Ambonese gang led by Milton Pieters, who it is alleged had a connection with the Soeharto family. Berty Loupatty, the leader of the Coker gang, also, it seems, had gained the protection of the Special Armed Forces (Kopassus) in Ambon. This was made clear after the capture of Loupatty by police officers. Kopassus subsequently took over the investigation after it clashed in 2002 with police officers over who would 'protect' Loupatty. They appear to have let Loupatty and his Coker members go around in West Papua. Finally, Loupatty and members of his group

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<sup>7</sup> Christian leaders challenged the allegation that Christians had instigated the conflict, while they insisted that the first home burned belonged to Christians (Semi Titaley, an interview in Ambon, August 2002; also similar arguments from other Protestant priests and intellectuals (John Ruhulesin, Pdt. Agus and Tony Pariela, personal communications on different occasions, July-August 2002)); However, some Muslims believed Christians instigated the conflict in order to get them to leave the Moluccas, especially migrant Muslims (Abdurrahman Kew, a MUI member of Ambon, a personal interview in Ambon, August 2002).

<sup>8</sup> The issues were not clear to Leihitu people, however their religious zeal to help Ambonese Muslims outweighed any need for proof of the claims. However, after a while (by the end of 1999), Leihitu people became more careful of blindly accepting the information in pamphlets and phone calls (King of Hitumesen, an interview in Ambon, August 2002).

<sup>9</sup> As Pattimura University is in Poka, Leihitu islands, which is mostly inhabited by Muslims, Muslims complained about this Christian domination. Therefore, the Muslims of Leihitu preferred to send their children to study in Makassar and Java (King of Hitumesen, an interview in Ambon, August 2002).

were arrested in Jakarta in November 2002. Allegations regarding the role of Coker and other third parties in the conflict have subsequently been made.

The conflict aided the armed forces in developing new territory under its influence. They had a plan to open a new territorial structure two months after the Moluccas conflict. In March 1999, General Subagyo, the Army Chief-of-staff, stated that the army's territorial structure would be broadened from ten to seventeen Kodam in responding to the demand for national security, especially in the troubled regions: Aceh, East Kalimantan, Moluccas and Irian Jaya.<sup>10</sup> There was, though, an apparent link observed between the rise in conflict and a decline in government prosecution of Soeharto and New Order cronies. Some of the significant issues included accusations against Wiranto with regard to East Timor human rights violations and the rise in demands from Jakarta politicians to prosecute Suharto cronies, especially during the later stages of Wahid's government.

Instability and tensions existed from November 1998 to January 1999 immediately following the 'sending' of gang members to Ambon after the riots in Ketapang, Jakarta. This is the first theory, which connects the conflict with the Jakarta elite. In the middle of November 1998, the first riots took place in *Kampung Wailette*, the village of Hative Besar, the district of Teluk Ambon Baguala, Ambon city, where 34 houses were destroyed. On 14 January 1999, the similar tensions erupted in Dobo, which left sixteen people dead and many houses burnt. However, during the riots the security forces were hesitant to intervene (Kontras, 1999: 4). It was as a result of these riots and the accumulation of tensions after the burning of churches in Java from 1996-1998, that anti-migrant sentiment grew in Ambon. The independent, Jakarta-based human rights NGO, Kontras (1999: 4) concluded that these riots had been '*dimainkan*' (played) by third groups in coordination with the elements of the security forces to incite the anti-migrant and anti-Muslim sentiment in the lead-up to 19 January 1999, which was the date of *Iedul Fitri* 1999 - a strategic time to stir up tensions. It was the unconfirmed and suspect accounts of early conflict among Ambonese that provided the backdrop to the quarrel between a Christian youth of Mardika and a Muslim youth of Batumerah, causing it to quickly escalate into ethno-religious conflict between Muslims and Christians.

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<sup>10</sup> The new Kodam would impact favourably on the rise of some TNI elite (The editors 1999: 145).

Local community members also attest to witnessing armed forces members from both the police and the military using standard military weapons to kill people from particular groups. Kostrad (the Strategic Command of Armed Forces) seemed to be pro-Christian and the armed forces (TNI) pro-Muslim. This was because many local police members are Christians and, thus, supported the Christians. However, among Muslim police officers, there were also those who actively supported Muslims at times during the conflict, although they were small in number (Johanes, an interview in Ambon, 5 August 2002; Abdulgani Fabanyo, an interview in Ambon, 29 July 2002).

Thus, some observers (Munir 2000; Trijono 2001) argue that the provocateurs included elements from the police and armed forces as well as gang members. The provocateurs were said to have been utilised by the Jakarta elite to create tensions in the Moluccas. Ir. Gen. Firman Gani, former head of Police in the Moluccas from June 2000 to May 2001 and then moved to become head of Police in South Sulawesi, admitted that some of his staff were involved in the conflict. Muslim police officers had apparently supported Ambonese Muslims in attacking Christians, while Christian police officers similarly were said to have supported Ambonese Christians against Muslims. Gani said that such involvement would have been understandable based on a desire to help their family, neighbours and colleagues during the conflict (Gani 2002: 78-79). However, on many occasions they are alleged to have instigated the clash by shooting at the other community and then allowing the charged emotions to cause people to take out their grievances on the other community.<sup>11</sup>

The involvement of TNI elements was analysed by Thamrin Ely, a chief of the National Mandate Party (PAN) of the Moluccas. Ely stated that there were four factors in the conflict: the role of Soeharto and his cronies; the role of the TNI; the analysis of observers; and, the tendency of local Ambonese to respond to the conflict through violence (Suaedy et al. 2000: 24-25). Based on his evidence, Ely stated that during the conflict, the violence and mass killings were systematically organised in the same manner

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<sup>11</sup> For example, in the burning of the Silo church, armed forces and police officers were alleged to have started shooting from the Al-Fattah mosque towards the Silo church, which was guarded by Christian police officers and armed forces staff. Furthermore, Muslims with the alleged support of armed forces members and police officers went and burned the Silo Church (Abdulgani Fabanyo, An interview in Ambon, 18 August 2002).

as the violence under the New Order. For example, local communities could not communicate by phone, mobile phone and fax when the riots broke out in their areas. Thus, information channels were being blocked to prevent the local community quickly informing outsiders of what was taking place (Suaedy et al. 2000).

The roles of thugs and security force elements in inflaming the conflict by spreading false information to ordinary Muslim and Christian communities, blocking communications to and from Ambon and intentionally provoking both groups strongly pointed to connection with outside factors from Jakarta. However, the local elite also played pivotal roles thereby getting political advantage during the conflict. Both Van Klinken (2001) and Tomagola (2002) argued that there were linkages based on vested interests between the security forces, thugs and local and national political elites during the conflict. The interviews conducted as part of this study would seem to support such allegations.

### **3.5 The Role of Local Politics and Political Parties**

In Ambon city, local Muslims alleged a conspiracy between the PDI-P (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*, Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle) and Christians in order to gain political advantage from the conflict in the lead-up to the 1999 elections. Christian leaders and parliamentary members refuted this allegation. On the other hand, they claimed that Muslims had attempted to instigate in the conflict and that the Christians' response was merely to defend their homeland from outsiders' attacks (Semy Titaley, an interview in Ambon, August 2002). They claimed that any political advantage gained by Christians was coincidental, following the return of migrant Muslims to their homes elsewhere. A Christian parliamentary member claimed that the 1999 election result was a positive result allowing indigenous Ambonese to control local politics (Rony, a PDI-P Parliament member, an interview in Ambon, August 2002). Table 1 (p. 40) and Figure 6 (p. 40) describe the total votes won by the ten largest parties in the 1999 elections in Ambon city. The PDI-P, a nationalist party dominated by Christians in Ambon, gained twice the votes of the former New Order party, Golkar. However, Muslim parties like PPP (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, the United Development Party), PK (*Partai Keadilan*, the Justice Party), PBB (*Partai Bulan Bintang*, the Crescent Star Party), PAN (*Partai*

*Amanat Nasional*, the National Mandate Party) and PKB (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*, the National Awakening Party) gained few seats. Although PPP had attempted to form an alliance with PBB, they won three times less votes than the PDI-P, which had an alliance with the PDKB (*Partai Demokrasi Kasih Bangsa*, the Democratic Party for Love of the Nation), a Christian-based party (Figure 6:40). This demonstrates the clear win by Christians in the 1999 elections in Ambon city. However, this did not sit well with central government policy. Under the existing civil emergency, Jakarta retained M. Saleh Latuconsina, as governor. He had been loyal to the ruling central government in the transition from Habibie to Megawati as President. Real power, however, was in the hands of armed forces during the conflict. Thus, some have claimed that the emergency was more military than civil in nature. The dominance of PDI-P in the local parliament allowed national government more sway in local politics after the conflict.

According to some Muslim parliamentary members from Ambon, the voice for freedom and democracy in Muslim regions was not accommodated during the 1999 elections in Ambon. Actually, the appearance of new parties like PBB, PK, PKB and PAN had given Ambonese Muslims people hope of representation and pluralism. However, Muslims finally agreed to channel their vote to the PPP, which had been recognised in the Moluccas since the New Order as the only real alternative choice for Muslim voters. On the other hand, the Protestant and Catholic churches played a prominent role in persuading Christians to allocate their votes to the PDI-P, achieving a successful result placing PDI-P representatives in both local and national parliaments. Muslims had multiple disadvantages during the 1999 elections: the decline in numbers of Muslim voters; the lack of Muslim leadership among the various fractions; and, a lower level of political awareness compared to Christians.<sup>12</sup>

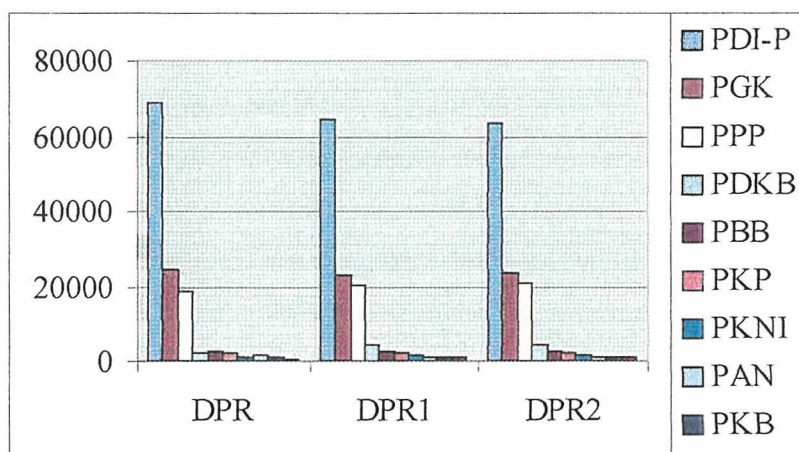
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<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Muslim parliamentary members from the PBB, PPP and Golkar parties in Ambon, August 2002.

Table 1. The 1999 Election Result for Ambon city (BPS of Ambon, 2000)

<i>PARTY</i>	<i>DPR</i>	<i>DPR1</i>	<i>DPR2</i>
<b>PDI-P</b>	68826	64292	63251
<b>PGK</b>	24652	23131	23453
<b>PPP</b>	18696	20493	20546
<b>PDKB</b>	2308	4442	4187
<b>PBB</b>	2438	2496	2448
<b>PKP<sup>13</sup></b>	1955	1944	2100
<b>PKNI<sup>14</sup></b>	1222	1521	1693
<b>PAN</b>	1494	1049	1079
<b>PKB</b>	891	917	937
<b>PDI<sup>15</sup></b>	751	829	868

Figure 6. Bar Chart Showing the 1999 Election Results in Ambon city (BPS of Ambon, 2000)



Based on the 1999 election experience, it can be concluded that local elites influenced Muslim and Christian participation in the elections. Certainly, local Christians expected to gain political advantage. On the other hand, Muslim elites after shocking results of the elections again provoked local Muslims to seek better concessions. Therefore, it was inevitable that Muslim and Christian communities took up the conflict once again from the

<sup>13</sup> *Partai Kesatuan dan Persatuan* (Unitary and Unity Party).

<sup>14</sup> *Partai Katolik Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian National Catholic Party).

<sup>15</sup> *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* (Indonesian Democratic Party).

the end of July 1999 onwards. Furthermore, the national media reported and interpreted the debate among Ambonese and non-Ambonese communities concerning the conflict. Obviously, the Jakarta-based Muslim media gave a biased analysis of the conflict, which led Muslims outside Ambon to declare a *Jihad* in Ambon.

### 3.6 Discussion in the National Media

A month after the conflict began, the views of Muslims and Christians, both in and outside the Moluccas, were being debated in the national media. Discussion centred around whether it was a religious, ethnic or political conflict; what was behind the conflict; and how Ambonese Muslims and Christians had manipulated the conflict. Saleh Latuconsina, the governor of the Moluccas and a Muslim, stated that the conflict in Ambon was between indigenous Ambonese, BBM migrants and the Javanese for the following reasons:

[Firstly], it was the result of a social gap, caused by difficulties in finding jobs. The Butonese, Buginese, Makassarese and Javanese ethnic groups dominated in the economic sector, in which indigenous Ambonese had not been interested in getting involved ... [secondly], there were intellectual actors in the government, who sought certain advantages by systematically poisoning the minds of ordinary people ... In fact, the people had never thought that having either a Muslim or Christian leader was a problem (*Ummat*, no. 35, 15 March 1999: 26, translation mine).

Latuconsina's view was contrary to that of other Muslims, who claimed it was a religious conflict because Christians had initiated the attack on Muslims. Among them was Umar Tuasikal, the chief of the *Himpunan Keluarga Muslim Maluku* (HIKMA, the Association of the Moluccan Muslims) of Jakarta, who argued that 'it was purely a religious conflict, which had been planned by Christians.' (*Media Dakwah*, March 1999: 32) Similarly, *Ustaz* Ali Fauzy, a leading Ambonese figure who became the chief of the *Badan Imarat Muslim Maluku* (BIMM, The State Body of Moluccan Muslims), claimed that the conflict was clearly a religious conflict and was a grand scheme of the Christian-cum-the separatist group, *Republik Maluku Selatan* (RMS, the Republic of South Moluccas) (Ali Fauzy, an interview in Ambon, 27 July 2002). Furthermore, Thamrin Ely, secretary of the task force of the *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI, the United of Indonesian Ulama Council) of the Moluccas, stated that: 'This was an attack by the Christian separatist group on Butonese,



Buginese and Makassarese (BBM) migrants, in an attempt to forcibly segregate Muslims and Christians. The 'BBM' in this conflict came to be short for *Bakar Bunuh Muslim* (Burn and Kill Muslims).' (*Mimbar Ulama*, no. 247, March 1999: 33) Tuasikal, Fauzy and Ely represented local Muslims, who believed that it formed part of an intentional agenda of Christians and the separatist RMS group. Their claims of a separatist scenario were popular among local Muslims. These arguments had little supporting evidence, were based on emotional appeals and were politically tendentious. Local Muslims were frustrated because of their sense of powerlessness with the rise in number of Muslim victims.

On the other hand, Ambonese Christians responded suggesting that the conflict was not a religious conflict, but more a political one. For example, Prof. Nanere, a former rector of Pattimura University, argued: 'Muslims and Christians have lived peacefully for a long time. Nowadays, however, religion has become a political instrument. There were both Jakarta and local Ambonese elites who played a role in the conflict.' (*Ummat*, no. 35, 15 March 1999: 28) Nanere's view was similar to that of Latuconsina in that both suggested that local Muslims and Christians did not wish to have such a conflict. However, they were manipulated by certain groups in Ambon and Jakarta to fight with each other, even though this was contrary to their long held tradition of ethnic and religious harmony in the Moluccas.

Among non-Ambonese Christians and Muslims outside the Moluccas, the conflict was interpreted as a religious and political conflict in which international elements were involved. Former President Soeharto and his cronies were alleged to have intervened with the intention of allowing the security forces to manipulate the conflict. However, this claim has not been substantiated. H. M. Amin Rais, the chairperson of the National Mandate Party (PAN) and the spokesperson for the *Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat* (MPR, People Consultative Assembly), reputedly asked the Foreign Minister of the United States, Madeline Albright, to put pressure on the U.S. to intervene in the conflict (*Ummat*, no. 35, 15 March 1999). According to Amin Rais:

Although the intervention of one State in another's affairs is taboo, that possibility cannot be eliminated especially when issues of human rights are involved. If the security forces, the government and others failed to stop the bloodshed, it would be right to seek 'help' from the *super power*, which is the United States, in order to

quickly bring the violence to an end. I think the conflict may spread to other parts of Indonesia, if an attempt is made to resolve it by unprofessional methods ... Former military members or people who have military skills may be perpetuating the conflict (Rais, an interview, *Ummat*, no. 35, 15 March 1999: 25).

Because of his views, some politicians and intellectuals criticized Rais for his lack of nationalist spirit. Yasril A. Baharuddin, a Commission I member of the *Fraksi Karya Pembangunan* (F-KP, *Golkar* fraction) in the parliament suggested that Rais had utilized the Ambon conflict to conspire with the US to bring about a federal system in Indonesia. After Rais' statement, Emha Ainun Nadjib, like General Wiranto, believed that there was an international element to the conflict (Smith Alhadar, *Ummat*, no. 36, 22 March 1999). Furthermore, according to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif, the President of Muhammadiyah, :

The Ambon conflict had national and international elements. First, it was related to a clash of interests amongst the political elite in Jakarta. The intention was to damage the central government's credibility. Secondly, there are some indications that there were some groups, which intended to change the religious composition of Indonesians. This [he claimed without providing any evidence in support] is certainly part of a neo-imperialist plot. (Ma'arif, *Ummat*, no. 35, 15 March 1999: 28).

On the other hand, non-Ambonese Christians at the national level responded to the conflict by arguing that the conflict was not a religious conflict, but merely a political instrument for local and national elites. It was part of a longer-term decline in the symbolic religious harmony between Ambonese Muslims and Christians. Weinata Sairin, a vice-secretary of the Indonesian Church Association (PGI), stated that:

'It was a religious conflict, moreover a crusade ... it was caused by an accumulation of frustrations and disappointments, which had been kept in for ten years. They could not be expressed, because of the political system and structure at that time.' (Sairin, *Ummat*, no. 35, 15 March 1999: 56) Sairin's comments were a critique of the New Order government, which had failed to preserve religious harmony under its authoritarian and militaristic regime.

Furthermore, Franz Magnis-Suseno, a Christian intellectual from Jakarta, stated that the conflict indicated the formation of a culture of communal violence, reacting to the break-up of the authoritarian Soeharto regime. Soeharto had pressured the voices of the 'truth' for more than thirty years. Now, at last, they could speak the truth as they saw it.

Furthermore, Magnis-Suseno suggested that the pressures under the New Order had made people more curious as to other communities. They had lost their trust in the government, in the judicial system and in rational ways to end what was a regional conflict. Ambonese were the victims of the culture of violence (Magnis-Suseno, *Basis*, March-April 1999: 6). Magnis-Suseno stated that the conflict in Ambon was also the product of a long historical Muslim and Christian relationship (*Basis*, March-April 1999: 7). He claimed that the conflict had its roots in early clashes between Muslims and Christians from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries up until the New Order. In the early period of New Order regime, Soeharto intentionally employed Christians, especially Catholics, and created a policy, which was seen by Muslims as discriminatory. Magnis-Suseno further stated that Christians had felt threatened by Islamisation during the last decade of the New Order (*Basis*, March-April 1999:7).

Magnis-Suseno's historical interpretation was more neutral and realistic, compared to the kind of reporting found in Jakarta-based Muslim magazines, *Khutbah Jum'at* and *Sabili* during March-April 1999. *Khutbah Jum'at*, a magazine published by the association of mosques in Indonesia, claimed that the Ambon conflict was 'a twentieth century *Perang Salib* (crusade)'. It reported that Christians had intentionally forced migrants and indigenous Ambonese Muslims to move away from Ambon (*Khutbah Jum'at*, April 1999: 63). Similarly, *Sabili* claimed that the conflict was an international plan by Christians and Jews to have Muslims cleansed from Ambon (*Sabili*, 24 March 1999: 25-26).

Among the militant Muslim groups on the national stage, the first response was from the *Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunah Wal Jama'ah* (FKAWJ, The Communication Forum for the Followers of the Prophet and His Disciples), which organised an *Apel Siaga Umat Islam* (Muslim Awareness Meeting) in the Sports Stadium at Manahan Solo, 14 February 1999. The FKAWJ claimed that four thousand Muslims attended this function. During the meeting the FKAWJ urged that: 'Muslims must not fall victim to the terrors of Muslims' enemies. They have to develop their understanding of this attack, which was intended to tyrannise a minority. Muslims were compelled to fight against this attempt to destroy the State and national unity.' (*Salafy*, vol. 30 1999) This was the first official response of the FKAWJ to the conflict in Ambon, before mobilizing the *Mujahidin* (holy warriors) in early 2000 (see the following chapter).

In March 1999, the national Muslim magazine, *Ummat*, reported that Christians had attacked Muslim villages with the intent of indiscriminately slaughtering Muslims, whether indigenous or migrant (*Ummat*, No. 35, 15 March 1999: 17). A similar message was reported in Umar Tuasikal's column, published by *Media Dakwah*. He was the chairperson of the Association of Moluccan Muslims in Jakarta. Tuasikal said that: 'What happened during the *Ied al Fitr* (breaking of the *Ramadhan* fast) on 19 January 1999 was purely a "religious war", which had been planned by Christians over a long period. From the Netherlands to Indonesia, Ambonese Christians had been thoroughly preparing.' (*Media Dakwah*, March 1999: 32) *Komite Penanggulangan Krisis* (Crisis Solving Committee), a Muslim relief Jakarta-based organization affiliated with *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (DDII) invited *Kyai* Abdul Aziz, a great *imam* (ritual priest) of the Al Fattah mosque to talk in Jakarta. The *Media Dakwah* published Aziz's speech, in which he claimed that Christians had been preparing the attack since November 1998 when Christians from Hative Besar burned the Muslim village of Waylete. After this Christians sent trucks load of machetes to Ambon (*Media Dakwah*, March 1999: 24; Jaiz, 1999: 86-87). Aziz claimed that Police and Church leaders had supported the Christians in their planned attack on, and burning of Muslims' houses and shops in Ambon. Aziz stated that:

Before burning the *Mardika* markets, they [Christians] arranged for three trucks. One of the trucks was full of Mobile Brigade (Brimob) people, who were there to stop Muslims fighting against them [Christians]. The other two trucks were used to gather Muslims' goods and take them to the churches. The churches of Bethlehem, Silo and Maranata were full of the *barang jarahan* (goods of plunder) (*Media Dakwah*, March 1999: 25; Jaiz, 1999: 89).

Furthermore, Ahmad Sumargono, the chairperson of the *Komite Solidaritas Islam* (KISDI, Islamic Solidarity Committee), who claimed to have obtained the information from the Indonesian intelligence, also alleged that international forces such as the CIA were involved. However, the official intelligence reports refuted such allegations. The TNI commander and Defence Minister, General Wiranto, also stated that 'there were three hands of provocateurs involved in the Ambon conflict: local, national and international provocateurs.' (Jaiz, 1999: 158) Sumargono and Wiranto then supported the call for a *Jihad* to Ambon to support Indonesia against an international conspiracy, which it was alleged was attempting to destabilise the unity of Indonesia.

The request by the local Muslims of Ambon for the support of Muslims at the national level stimulated the call for *Jihad* in Java. In March 1999, about thirty-five thousand Muslims from Jabotabek (Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang and Bekasi) were organized to join a 15km march from the Al Barkah mosque in Tebet to the Al Azhar mosque in central Jakarta. Among them were Ahmad Sumargono, *Kyai* Abdul Rasyid Abdulah Syafi'i and Habib Abu Bakar Al-Habsyi and a team of Ambonese Muslims, who had declared a *Jihad* against Christians (Jaiz, 1999: 182-183). This was the second Muslim gathering in Java in response to the Ambon conflict, after the FKAWJ made their declaration on 14 February 1999.

On the other hand, Christians saw the conflict as an attempt by Muslims to destroy the presence of Christians in Ambon. Christians alleged that the TNI had supported Muslims against Christians. The attack by Muslims on the Protestant Church of Silo was cited in support of these claims. The Protestant Crisis Center related that on 27 July 1999 Muslims from Waihaong to Jalan Baru and Gang Kayu Buah and from the Al Fattah mosque attempted to attack Christians in the neighbourhood of the Church at Silo. TNI and police officers seemed to be there to prevent conflict, but were seen to shoot Christians who then were unable to defend the Silo Church against Muslims' attack (Jacky Manuputty, an email in *Masariku mailinglist*, 21 August 1999; Johanes, an interview in Ambon, 2 August 2002; Abdulgani Fabanyo, an interview in Ambon, 18 August 2002). This analysis was confirmed by Muslim Human Rights Watch who suggested that the TNI and Police officers helped Muslims in attacking the Christians defending the Silo Church, with the purpose of stirring up trouble between the Muslims and Christians (Ike Rulobessy, an interview in Ambon, 18 August 2002).

Among local Ambonese Muslims, Rustam Kastor, retired military Brigadier General of armed forces, was one of leading figures who urged that Muslims should be aware of the preparations that the Christians-cum-separatists had made to ensure the domination of Christians in local politics.<sup>16</sup> In 1999, Kastor began to write a book (published in February

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<sup>16</sup> Kastor has published more than four books about the conflict and up until now Kastor continues to write. His latest book will be published soon and focuses on Muslim views in the lead-up to the 2003 elections for governor.

2000). Kastor's first edition became a 'the best seller' and was republished after just three months. During the conflict, Kastor was an active advocate for Ambonese Muslims at the national level. Kastor urged Muslims to be aware of the hidden purposes of Christians in the conflict:

Let us acknowledge that the organisation behind the conflict has not yet been discovered. The mastermind has not yet been revealed, though the slaughter of Muslims continues. Therefore, is it true that they [Christians] wish to have reconciliation? (Kastor, 2000: 83, translation mine).

Kastor's provocation attracted Muslims in Java and Sulawesi to join and support the *Jihad* against the Christian-cum-separatists. In the national Muslim media, magazines such as the *Ummat*, the report of the Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan*), the Laskar Jihad's *Salafy*, the DDII's *Dewan Dakwah, Sabily, Jum'at* and a daily national newspaper, *Republika*, all extensively reported the pressure Christians were bringing to bear upon minority Muslims in the Moluccas during 1999. Ambonese regarded Kastor's writings as 'the authentic historical account of the conflict by an Ambonese Muslim, who had a direct experience and deep knowledge of it' (Rifki Hamid, not his real name, an interview in Ambon, 9 August 2002).

Hamid was some who held quite different views. He was a Chinese Muslim born in Ambon from a middle-class background. He had been involved in religious and social activity in the Al Fattah hospital, the Al Fattah mosque, the MUI of Ambon and other voluntary organizations. During the conflict, Hamid attempted to support reconciliation between Muslims and Christians through his organizations. He represented the views of many local Muslims, who held quite different views to Kastor. This reflects the diversity of views that existed in Ambon amongst Muslims.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

*Preman* (thug, gangsters, *laskar*), local and national elites, including elements in the Indonesian security forces (TNI), all played key roles in the conflict in the Moluccas. However, the continuation of the conflict during this early phase was greatly influenced

by disputes among policy-makers in the government and debates amongst Muslims and Christians, both at the local and national levels.

The *preman*, as provocateurs, played up the rumours, assumptions and commonly-held beliefs, thereby mobilising people to attack and kill each other. There was a period of temporary peace before the 1999 elections, which raised the expectations of players and victims concerning the future of the Moluccas and the possibility of a change in the central government regime through the democratic process. After the results of the 1999 elections were reported locally and nationally, the Indonesian security forces (TNI and police) were alleged to once again having stirred up the conflict, with various security officers supporting Christians and Muslims in the battlefield. The escalation of the conflict at this stage received coverage in the national media, which attracted Javanese and other non-Ambonese Muslims and a limited number of Christians to join in the conflict. The *Jihad* declaration turned the conflict from a local to a national issue, which was then utilized by certain elites in national politics.

In the second phase (2000-2002) of the conflict *Laskar Jihad* forces were mobilised in Java and shipped to Ambon. Religious identity became more clearly defined. Yet, what factors (political or religious) led to the formation of the *Jihad* movement and how did Ambonese Muslims and Christians respond?

## Chapter Four

### The Call for *Jihad* and Christian Solidarity: The Second Phase of the Ambon Conflict (2000-2002)

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the conflict after the setting up of the Java-based radical Muslim paramilitaries of the *Laskar Jihad* (holy warriors) in response to developments in national politics and assertions that Muslim-cleansing was taking place in the Moluccas. It will argue that religious segregation after a year of conflict became more pronounced, especially after a lot of mixed Muslim and Christian regions in the Moluccas were destroyed in the hostilities (see Figure 7: 58). The conflict forced the respective communities to separate into areas with their own religious identities. The *Laskar Jihad* will be seen as a type of *premanism*, which was maintained by a religious creed. It was part of a trend towards the establishment of Muslim paramilitary during the weakening of New Order structure in the Indonesian transition period (post May 1998). Lindsey's concepts of 'state' and 'private' *premanism* will be utilised in the analysis that follows.

This chapter will be divided into three sections. It first inquires into the *Laskar Jihad*'s background and the reasons it formed. The arrival of the *Laskar Jihad* and their role in the conflict caused Muslims to rise to a position of dominance in the Moluccas. The *Laskar Jihad* left a legacy for local Ambonese in the more radicalised Muslim groups. Additionally, this chapter examines the response of Christians to the influx of the *Laskar Jihad* into the Moluccas. Violence in the name of Islam and Christianity became a feature. Finally, this chapter will trace the responses of indigenous Ambonese Muslims and Christians, national leading figures, government officers and other observers, as the conflict escalated during its second phase.



## 4.2 The Background to the *Jihad* Movement

In a *tabligh akbar* (mass religious meeting) of the *Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* (FKAWJ, the Communication Forum of the *Sunnah* adherents and the Prophet's Community) in Solo, Central Java, on 14 February 1999, about a month after the Ambon conflict broke out, Ja'far Umar Thalib acknowledged that:

Muslims must be alert to the threat from Muslims' foes and the separatists, who tend to tyrannise the Muslim religious minority. Muslims have an obligation to get behind an Islamic government, which is headed by a pious Muslim man. If the *kafir* (infidel) is to lead the government, based on the *fatwa* (guidance) of Syaikh bin Baz [Syaikh Abdulaziz Bin Baz], Muslims will have to battle against him/ her (*Salafy*, no. 30, 1999: 44; translation mine).

Thalib's account was heavily biased against Christians giving a one-sided elucidation of the teachings of *Salafy* Muslim cleric from Arab peninsula, Syaikh Abdulaziz Bin Baz<sup>1</sup> (d. 13 May 1999), a Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Head of the Council of Ulama in Saudi Arabia. For Thalib, Syaikh Abdulaziz was one of the most outstanding figures, not only as a *Salafy* religious teacher, but also as someone with international political connections that would help further Thalib's own agenda in Indonesia. The *Salafy* (or Salafi) represent a reformed Islamic ideology in search of Islamic purification by returning the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The *Salafyst* (reformist) thinkers base their teaching on that of Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani (d. 1896), Abu al-Ala Maududi (1903-1949), and the Muslim Brothers' movement thinker, Hasan al-Banna (1906-1964) (Roy, 1995: 34).

To understand the developments of the *Jihad* movement in Indonesia, it is important to look at Thalib's background and that of the FKAWJ. Thalib was born on 29 December 1961 in an Arab family at Malang, East Java. Thalib's father was an advocate of the al-Irsyad movement, an organization of the *sayyid* community during the colonial period. Graduating from the Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies (LIPIA) Jakarta, a higher institute sponsored by the government of Saudi Arabia, Thalib went to the Maududi Islamic Institute in Pakistan, under the sponsorship of the DDII (*Dewan Dakwah*

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<sup>1</sup> Syaikh (or Sheikh) Abdulaziz Bin Baz had been a leading figure in the Saudi Arabian government for about fifty years. He came to prominence as a judge of the Al-Kharj region in the 1950s and ultimately rose to the highest position among Muslim scholars in Arabia with influence over the Muslim world. He became the Grand Mufti, who was responsible for giving religious decrees on certain issues from family problems to politics until his death in 1999. See the website set up in appreciation of Bin Baz's *fatawa* (religious decrees) and his life: <http://www.ibnbaz.org.sa>, accessed on 20 February 2003.

*Islamiyah Indonesia*, Islamic Propagation Council of Indonesia), a missionary organization established by Muhammad Natsir (d. 1993) in 1967. During his time studying in Pakistan, Thalib was involved with the *mujahidin* of Afghanistan in their *Jihad* against the Soviet Union. Thalib was attached to one of the factions led by an Afghan assistant professor of theology who graduated from Mecca. He was associated with Abdul Rabb Rasul Sayyaf's Saudi-supported organization, the *Ittihad-I Islami* (Islamic Union), Burhanuddin Rabbani's party, the *Jami'at-I Islami* (Islamic Association) and Gulbudin Hekmatyar's group, the *Hizb-I Islami* (Islamic Party) before becoming devoted to the *Jama'at al-Da'wa ila al-Qur'an wa Ahl-i Hadith* (the Association of Propagation toward Qur'an and the Followers of Hadith), a *Salafy* faction led by Saudi cleric, Maulawi Jamilurrahman (d. 1991) (Hasan, 2002: 152; Roy, 1995). From these experiences, Thalib deliberated on the disciplines and principles of *Jihad* in the context of politics<sup>2</sup> in Indonesia.

Thalib returned to Jakarta in 1989 and then taught at the al-Irsyad *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in Salatiga, Central Java. However, Thalib continued to study *Salafy* doctrines in 1991 under an Yemeni cleric, Muqbil ibn Hadi al-Wadi'I, one of the spiritual teachers of today's conservative Islamist *Islah* party and the *Salafi-Wahhabi* movement of Yemen (Hasan, 2002: 153). In Yemen, Thalib also studied the *Salafy* doctrine under some *Salafi-Wahabi* teachers during his *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca): each of them (Muhammad Nasr al-Din al-Albani (d. 1999), Abdulaziz Abdullah bin Baz (1912-1999) and Rabi' ibn Hadi 'Umar al-Madkhali) were prominent figures giving *fatwa* (guidance) in support of the *tabligh akbar* and later the *Jihad* avowal in Indonesia and covering an assortment of issues from politics to war against Christians (Hasan, 2002: 154). Returning from Yemen, Thalib established a *pesantren* and a *Salafy* community called the *Jama'ah Ihya al-Sunnah* (the community to establish the Prophet's teachings) in Kaliurang, Yogyakarta in 1994. He recruited students from secular universities with a teaching of *Manhaj Salafi* (the system of pious ancestors) or *Manhaj Ahl al-Hadith* (the system of the followers of the pious ancestors), in a search for authentic Islamic teachings based on canonical books

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<sup>2</sup> As a *Salafy* propagator, Thalib argued that Muslims should not get involved in politics. However, Thalib's *Jihad* and religious rallies were supported by elements in the Islamic political elite and impacted on national politics. Therefore, this thesis argues that Thalib's *Jihad* movement had non-electoral political motives. Because, under *Salafy* teaching and tradition, Thalib pressured his *Salafy* followers not to join political parties.

written by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah and the disciple of Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad Abu Bakr ibn Qayyim (Hassan, 2002). Thalib's study in Yemen and Saudi Arabia gave him religious legitimacy and a link to financial sources, which were the principle means of support for Thalib's *Jihad* in Indonesia.

Thalib changed the *Ihya al-Sunnah* into the *Forum Komunikasi AhlulSunnah Wal Jama'ah* (FKAWJ) in 1998 and shifted from non-political (*da'wah*, Islamic missionary) activism to political activism. The FKAWJ was a modern organization with an executive board, led by Ayib Safruddin, a graduate of the Psychology Faculty at the University of Muhammadiyah, Surakarta, Central Java, and by secretary, Ma'ruf Bahrun, an engineering graduate from Haluoleo University, Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi. Thalib himself was the chief of the advisory board (supreme religious board), which had authority over the central executive board. The advisory board was comprised of fifty-four Salafi-Wahhabi teachers, who had studied at Middle Eastern universities, such as the King Muhammad Ibn Saud and Medina Islamic Universities (Hasan, 202: 158). The FKAWJ's members were low-income, laid-off Muslims and university students. The FKAWJ then established twelve *pesantrens* throughout Indonesia, each with memberships in the region of around forty thousand people (Hasan, 2002: 158). These later became the core component of the *Laskar Jihad*.

It is important to understand the national circumstances during the year between the formation of the FKAWJ at the *tabligh akbar* in Solo and the declaration of the *Laskar Jihad* at another *tabligh akbar* in January 2000 in Yogyakarta and the *Jihad* rally in Jakarta three months later in April 2000. During this period, the FKAWJ along with other Muslim activists not only had called for a *Jihad* to Ambon, but also professed that it was compulsory for Muslims vote for the only Muslim presidential candidate in the 1999 elections. They no doubt wanted Bachruddin Jusuf Habibie to continue as president after the 1999 elections, rather than Megawati Soekarnoputri or Abdurrahman Wahid, for whom they claimed it was *haram* (forbidden) for Muslims to vote. Megawati as a woman candidate was unacceptable and Wahid was regarded as a *kafir* (infidel). Wahid preferred to support minority groups, rather than majority modernist Muslims. He did not support Islamic political movements, such as the *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (ICMI, the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals).

Thalib argued that:

Habibie was the only candidate who had Islamic views, in contrast with Wahid (PKB) ... and Megawati (PDI-P) who were secular party leaders, who competed to assure *salibis* (Crusaders), Zionists and Chinese conglomerates that they were able to devote themselves to the purpose of stopping the dangers of the Islamic sectarians (*Salafy*, no. 33, 1999: 5; translation mine).

Thalib not only supported Habibie in his presidential candidature with *fatwa* from Wahhabi *Ulama* from the Arabian Peninsula, but also argued that the Ambon conflict had led to a condemnation of the Indonesian military forces and of the government's performance (Hasan, 2002: 164). Therefore, Thalib claimed that it was the right time for Muslims to fight against Christians in the Moluccas and against Wahid's government.

On 30 January 2000, the FKAWJ had their second *tabligh akbar* in Kridosono, Yogyakarta and declared their banner of *Jihad* for the Moluccas. Thalib stated that: 'The *tabligh akbar*'s *Jihad* declaration was a response to the arrogance of President Abdurrahman Wahid in disregarding the cry of Moluccan Muslims who were hurting as a consequence of the horrible crusade.' (Thalib, 2001: 14, translation mine) This was the official declaration of the *Laskar Jihad Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah* (the holy warriors of the *Sunnah* Followers and the Prophet's Community), later called *Laskar Jihad*. The FKAWJ sent a delegation of seven members to the Moluccas on 12 February 2000 to prove the involvement of the Moluccan Protestant Church (GPM) and the Catholic Church of Ambon in the slaughter of Muslims.

The *Laskar Jihad* also invited Indonesian Muslims to join the *Jihad* to the Moluccas. They opened *Jihad* posts in big cities in Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi and sought financial support from individual Muslims in mosques, markets, restaurants, streets and, more significantly, from high profile national figures and conglomerates, who used to be close to Soeharto.<sup>3</sup> During their *Jihad* operation, the *Laskar Jihad* claimed to have received financial support from ordinary people with individual donations coming from Yemen,

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<sup>3</sup> Some speculative analyses conclude that financial support come from elites in the Indonesian military forces, under Commander-in-chief Wiranto, for example from Djaja Suparman and Sudrajat; and, from some parliamentary members and politicians during and after the Wahid government. However, it is still difficult to prove these allegations (Sidney Jones, personal informal talks in Jakarta, end of August 2002 and in Canberra, January 2003).

Saudi Arabia, Europe, the US and Australia (a FKAJW staff member, an interview in Dogelan, Yogyakarta, early September 2002); and, from parties in Libya, the Philippines, Afghanistan and Pakistan (Schulze, 2002: 61). However, there was no transparency as to the identity of these individuals and organisations, who had donated to the *Jihad* or as to the daily activities of the *Laskar Jihad*. Besides the sources of the overseas donations were difficult to track down after the New York 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 attack, when tight restrictions were put in place to prevent support for terrorism in South and Southeast Asia. Still support did come in from a few individual overseas sources (a FKAJW staff member, an interview in Dogelan, Yogyakarta, early September 2002).

The *Laskar Jihad* recruited many unemployed Muslims, mostly from Java, South Sulawesi, Sumatra and Kalimantan, a number of university students, a few university graduates from secular universities, some veterans of the Afghanistan war and a very small percentage from Islamic universities. Recruitment took place not only in the three months, from the January 2000 the declaration of *Jihad* in Yogyakarta to the April 2000 *Jihad* rally in Jakarta. Many had taken the initiative in joining during February and March 1999 after the *Jihad* banner declaration by the FKAJW and various other Muslim organisations. They had a mass rally at the Senayan Stadium on 6 April 2000, attended by about 50 thousand Muslims, including some high profile figures: Amin Rais, the president of the *Partai Amanat Nasional* (PAN, National Mandate Party) and an MPR Spokesperson; Hamzah Haz, the president of the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP, the United Development Party) later Indonesian Vice-President; Yusril Ihza Mahendra, the president of *Partai Bulan Bintang* (PBB); Ahmad Sumargono, the *Komite Solidaritas Islam* (KISDI); other Muslim activists; Moluccan Muslims like *Ustaz* Ali Fauzy and the former commander-in-chief of the Pattimura military command, Brig. Gen. (ret.) Rustam Kastor; and some figures from the Middle East (ICG, 2002: 6). Although the Wahid government opposed by the rally, the elements in the Indonesian security forces supported it. Jakarta police officer, Let. Col Pol. Said Agil, confirmed the involvement of security forces and argued that this rally was therefore better compared to other rallies (*Republika*, 8 April 2000: 6). Certainly, elements in the Indonesian security forces and in the political elite, in particular the *poros tengah* (central axis), who were disappointed with Wahid's government and its policies, supported the rally (*X-Pos*, no. 2/ III, 9-27 January 2000: 5-6).

The *Poros Tengah* caucus was initiated by Amin Rais of PAN and by other Islamic political parties, such as PPP, PBB, *Partai Keadilan* (PK) and *Partai Nahdlatul Ummat* (PNU), the latter which had received only a small number of votes in the 1999 elections. They wanted to unite in order to increase their political bargaining power against the larger PDI-P, Party of *Golongan Karya* (PGK) and PKB. The *Poros Tengah* successfully organized support from parliamentary members for Amburrahman Wahid's candidature as against Megawati Soekarnoputri for the reason that 'Islam' was against having a woman president. They claimed that Wahid was the only candidate able to accommodate the frictions among Indonesians. However, Wahid as president did not accommodate the various Muslim factions. Wahid even forced representatives from the Islamic parties to resign from his cabinet and led a messy government changing those in his cabinet and those in strategic positions in the Indonesian Armed Forces many times (Djiwandono, 2000: 151).

Therefore, the *tabligh akbar* in Jakarta represented various vested interests and challenged the messy government of Wahid. The *Jihad* movements with significant political support from Jakarta elites caused an increase in the confidence of local Ambonese Muslims, while Christians pulled together in the face of worries over the *Jihad*. They responded by seeking national and international intervention in the conflict.

#### **4.3 The Changing Pattern of the Conflict and the Response of the National Security Forces**

In the first phase of the conflict, Christians dominated applying pressure against Muslims. As stated in Chapter Three, during this phase, Muslims sought the support of their Muslim brothers and sisters in Java, Makassar and Buton and succeeded in holding numerous Muslim rallies to declare the importance of having a holy war against Christians. On the other hand, during the second phase Muslims with the support of the *Laskar Jihad* gained control of the conflict putting pressure on Christian regions and regaining Muslim homes, which were abandoned during the first phase.

This phase began early in May 2000, after the *Laskar Jihad* came to Ambon with its first group of 3000 members, who were supplied with standard military weapons.<sup>4</sup> The weapons were sent in a different ship to Ambon and were publicly available for Muslims after its arrival (Muhamad Yunus, an interview in Ambon, 2 August 2002). In the previous month (April 2000) conflict erupted over the issue of the shipping of the *Laskar Jihad* to Ambon. There had been an attempt at reconciliation between the youth of Loupati (Christians) and the youth of Ruhumone (Muslims), but four Christians died after a clash during the peace rally in Waihong. On 30 April 2000, a bomb blew up and houses were burned in Mardika, after a clash between Muslims of Batumerah and Christians of Mardika.

The *Laskar Jihad* shifted the pattern of the conflict as a result of their access to the weapons shipped from Java. Shortly after the arrival of the *Laskar Jihad*, who were welcomed by local Muslims as Muslim heroes (Muhammad Yunus, an informal talk in Batumerah, Ambon, 6 August 2002), the conflict spread more widely. On 16-17 May 2000 in the Batumerah-Mardika area, in front of the *Pos Kota* (city post office) in A.M. Sangaji street, 13 people were killed and 50 people were injured. At the same time, from 16 to 18 May 2000, the conflict also spread to Ahuru and Karang Panjang leaving 17 people dead. On 20 May 2000, 13 people were killed in conflict in Laha. During these conflicts, most of the victims were Christians. Trijono (2001: 61) described this phase of the conflict as a kind of 'city war', with both communities using standard military weapons. Muslims dominated and now Christians were pressured and fled to the mountains and forests. This was the worst period for Christians in the history of the Ambon war (Hendrik, not his real name, a Christian priest, an interview in Ambon, August 2002). At the end of May 2000, the Maranatha Church sought international intervention appealing to the Secretary General of the United Nations to send a peacekeeping force to the Moluccas (Trijono, 2001: 63).

In June 2000, the *Laskar Jihad* inspired local Muslims to continue the fight against Christians. It began on 1 June 2000 in Sekawan Street, Ambon city with shooting between

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<sup>4</sup> Before the *Jihad* paramilitary deployment to Ambon, Ja'far Umar Thalib claimed that about 2000 of the *Jihad* core members got military training in Munjul village, Bogor, West Java under the support of elements

the two communities. The conflict continued in Ambon bay, with motorboats used by Muslims and Christians to shoot and bomb each other. Muslims had a symbolic victory after successfully attacking the Police camp at Tantui on 21 June 2000. Christians founded the *Front Kedaulatan Maluku* (FKM, Moluccan Sovereign Front) on 15 June 2000 and actively promoted Moluccan sovereignty in the months that followed, in response to the pressure coming from Muslims on Christians and the weakness of the government and security officers in protecting Moluccans from human rights violations (Putuhena, 2001: 82).

In addition, at the height of the Ambon conflict, President Wahid announced a Civil Emergency on 27 June 2000 under Law no. 23/Prp/1959. Because of the civil emergency, a military approach was seen as the only way to prevent the escalation of the conflict (Triyono, 2001: 64). The Pattimura commander-in-chief was shifted from Max Tamaela to I Made Yasa. The security forces then attempted to counter Muslim domination of the conflict in Ambon in order to respond to international criticism and pressure. They sent in the Yongab (*Yon Gabungan*, special alliance forces). They were an alliance of the special armed forces, Paskhas (the special air forces), special marine forces and special Police forces. They took up duties on 22 September 2000, and allowed Christians to attack the Muslim region of Iha. In this Christian attack, 55 Iha Muslim families sought refuge. From October 2000 to June 2001, the Yongab attacked *Laskar Jihad* bases in Ambon. Many Muslims were killed under fire from Yongab's military weapons (Syafuddin & Prasetyo, 2002).

The departure of the Yon Gap military forces and police officers, who were used to guard the State University of Pattimura from Muslim attack, tragically left one of the most important of Moluccan resources unguarded. For three days, 3-5 July 2000, Muslims attacked Christians in Poka and Rumah Tiga, and then destroyed the University of Pattimura complex, because Muslims claimed it to be a Christian-dominated university because of its high percentage of Christian teachers and students (KPM, 2001: 24). On 13 July 2000, a military soldier and three people were killed in Ambon bay, Baguala, the district (*Kecamatan*) of Nusaniwe. From 14-16 July 2000, the conflict broke out in

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in the TNI, Afghanistan war graduates and student regiment members (ICG, 2002: 6; *Xpos*, 17-23 April 2000, 4; Fealy, 2001).



Diponegoro, Pohon Pule, Air Mata Cina, Urimessing, Mangga Dua, Trikora, Anthoni Reebok street, Talake, Batu Gantung and Mardika, resulting in mostly Christian casualties. On 26 July 2000, a day before the civil emergency law was released, military officers captured 200 grenades produced by Pindad, a military weapons producer, and found in the state-owned Dobonsolo ship, in Ambon bay, near Gudang Arang (KPM, 2001: 24). The ascendancy of military forces after the civil emergency was declared reduced the conflict, though it still continued on a smaller scale. However, forced religious conversion was used to strike at Indonesian authority at the end of 2000. It began on 23-26 November 2000, after an attack by Muslims on the Christian community of Kesui Island, Eastern Seram, which killed fifty-four people. Some 655 Christians were forced to convert and become Muslims (KPM, 2001: 28).

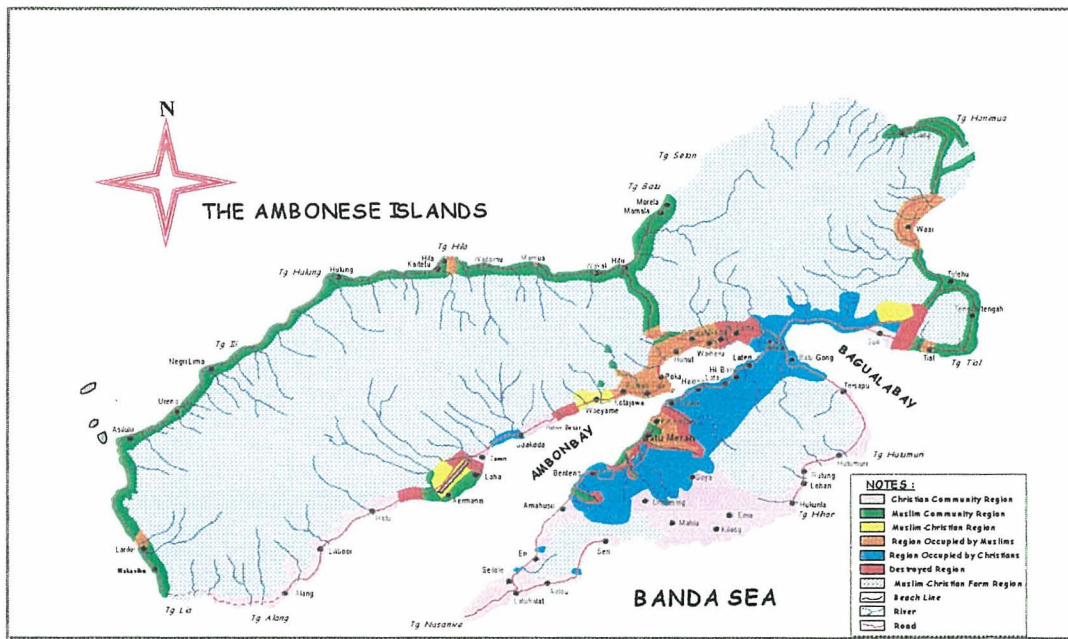


Figure 7. Map Showing the Religious Segregation and Conflict in the Ambonese Islands in late 2000 (GPM, 2002).

A tragic incident took place on 11 December 2001, when eighty Christians died in the bombing of the ship, California. This ship provided local sea transportation from Galala to Benteng. Ambonese Christians responded to this incident by burning the provincial parliament (DPRD) building. In 2002, the conflict began to wane. This was especially

after the Malino II agreement on February 2002 (see Chapter Five) and after the formation of the national investigation team to follow up the legal and political aspects of the Malino II agreement. Neither Muslims nor Christians responded emotionally when there were further incidents. For example, on 28 April 2002 the burning of the Soya village left twelve Christians dead<sup>5</sup>; on 27 July 2002 a bombing in the Mardika market left one Christian dead and fifty injured<sup>6</sup>; and, in September 2002 three young athletes died in the vicinity of the Mardika Court. In these incidents, both Muslims and Christians realised that there were outsider actors involved in trying to prolong the conflict.

#### 4.4 The Impact of the *Laskar Jihad* on Local Muslims

The coming of the *Laskar Jihad* resulted in the division of local Muslims into two groups: local radical groups, which inherited the religious radicalism of the *Laskar Jihad* and the dominant moderate Muslim group, which to some extent was opposed to the mission of the *Laskar Jihad* and tended to cooperate with the government in seeking a peaceful solution. They promoted a reconciliation approach. These factions had an impact on the dynamics of inter-Muslim relationships and on inter-faith and inter-ethnic reconciliation.

The first impact of the coming of the *Laskar Jihad* was a growth in Islamic radicalism among local Ambonese Muslims. There were two main radical organisations in Ambon. One was the FPIM (*Front Pembela Islam Maluku*), chaired by Husni Putuhena. He had published some books criticising the role of the RMS in the conflict giving an historical analysis. The second was the task force of the *Amar Makruf Nahi Mungkar* (AMNM,

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<sup>5</sup> The Soya region is a mountainous region, about three hours walking distance from Ambon city. It was difficult for ordinary people to be involved in an attack on such a region. The victims, who survived this incident came to the conclusion that members of the Special Armed Forces in cooperation with *Laskar Jihad* paramilitary groups were involved in the attack. They listened to the attackers' Javanese accents and observed their obvious military skills (Johanes, an interview in Ambon, 2 August 2002). Before the incident, the *Laskar Jihad* seemed to have been coordinating their own attack agenda in consultation with members of the Special Armed Forces and other security groups, without involving ordinary Ambonese Muslims (Abdulgani Fabanyo, an interview in Ambon, 18 August 2002).

<sup>6</sup> The bomb went off just a few hundred metres away from where I was standing when interviewing Christians near the Citra supermarket. Christians screamed '*Acang...Acang* (Muslims...Muslims!...)'. Christians were alleging that Muslims had planted this bomb. I saw a group of Special Armed Forces personnel save a person (alleged to be Muslim) by using an *Acang* (Muslim) public car. However, Christians then realised that this person was a police intelligence officer, who operated in the Mardika market area (Ambon, a fieldwork note, 28 July 2002).

Enjoining Right Forbidding Evil) under commander-in-chief, Muhammad At-Tamimy. He was of Arab descent and enjoyed public support after Muslims became dominant in the middle of 2000. The FPIM gave intellectual support to radical Muslims through their role at Muslim rallies and in political movements in agitating against the local government and Christians. For example, on 21 April 2002 *Laskar Jihad* and the FPIM trained around 1500 young Ambonese Muslims as part of *Latihan Posko Jihad Gabungan* (Latposgab, the Training for the Alliance of Jihad Posts), in preparation for a planned confrontation with Christians on the anniversary of the RMS on 25 April 2002 (*Buletin Laskar Jihad Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah*, May 2002: 16). On the other hand, the AMNM recruited local Muslims as paramilitary members, who then received paramilitary training from the *Laskar Jihad* and teaching in the doctrines of Islam. Local Muslims also claim to have had lessons in Islamic ways of war. They indicated that: 'the *Laskar Jihad* taught us (local Muslims) how to use an Islamic ethic in the conflict, in killing, burning and terrorising Christians' (Irwan Patty, an interview in Ambon, 10 August 2002). *Ustaz* Dzulqarnain, a leading teacher in the FKAJW, stated that Muslims had a requirement before attacking and killing Christians: it was compulsory to teach Christians and persuade them to convert to Islam and it was forbidden to kill women and children (*Salafy*, no. 36, 2001: 19). Such teaching concerning war changed the nature of local Muslims' religiosity. They gained a confidence and belief that attacking and killing Christians was legalised in Islamic law (Irwan Patty, an interview in Ambon, 10 August 2002).

The moderate groups of Muslims, who had been dominate since the early stages of the conflict, opposed to the doctrines of the *Laskar Jihad*. A counter-movement began with the foundation of the BIMM (*Badan Imarat Muslim Maluku*) in 2001, chaired by Ali Fauzy, an Ambonese Muslim leader who had come to the Jakarta rally in April 2000 with Rustam Kastor to seek Muslim support in Java. The *Laskar Jihad* criticised the BIMM, describing it as 'a product of government design' in the Moluccas. The BIMM wanted to unite Muslim groups in the Moluccas to produce a strong alliance to stop the continuing violence and support reconciliation with Christians. Furthermore, the original religious practices of Ambonese Muslims, who were traditional *Sunni* adherents, were different from the *Salafy* tradition of the *Laskar Jihad* (Ali Fauzy, an interview in Ambon, 27 July 2002).

It seems that local Ambonese Muslims had supported the *Laskar Jihad* just to secure their lives against the perceived threat of the Christians and the separatist RMS. However, after the Bali bombing on 12 October 2002, the *Laskar Jihad* returned to Java. Local Ambonese Muslims found release from their fears and burdens by working towards a reconciliation with their Christian counterparts.

#### **4.5 The Response of Christians**

The response of the Christian community gathered pace from early 2000 onwards and especially after the *Jihad's* arrival in the Moluccas. Early on Muslims perceived the *Jihad* to be against Christians who had attacked Muslims. In addition, a few months after the *Jihad's* arrival, the *Jihad's* focus changed from one against Christians to one against the separatist RMS movement. Muslims assumed that the RMS had support in the wider FKM community. (FKM had raised the RMS's flag during their April anniversary in 2001.) However, in fact, most Christians refused to support FKM's political motives in planning to separate from the republic. They claimed that Alex Manuputti and the FKM were one of the military factions involved in inflaming issues in the Christian and Muslim communities. The issue of separatism was illogical according to Christians. When the FKM was first founded, it did have significant support from Christians, who saw it as a moral movement criticising the ruling government, which had failed to solve the conflict. Christians later warned the central government that they would seek international intervention to solve the ongoing conflict. This was after the pressure by Muslims on the Christian community, especially with the presence of *Jihad* warriors in the battlefield. In August 2000, Alex Manuputti along with Tamrin Tomagola, the Muslim representative in the group,<sup>7</sup> campaigned against human rights violations in the Moluccas appealing to the public in the United States.

During this time, some Christians supported the FKM and Manuputti's human rights campaign. However, after returning from the US, Manuputti's approach became more political, opposing the ruling government by arguing that the Moluccas ought to be

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<sup>7</sup> Radical Moluccan Muslims criticized Tomagola's record as a representative during the campaign. They claimed that Tomagola did not know about what happened in the Moluccas (Irwan Patty, an interview in Ambon, 10 August 2002).

separated from Indonesia, as it was a Moluccan right that had been trampled on with the illegal taking-over of its territories by Soekarno's government in the 1950s (Johanes, a Christian and human right activist, an interview in Ambon, July and August 2002). Manuputty's ideas represented the point of view of other FKM's supporters, who were criticising the central government for exploiting the Moluccas and intentionally ensuring that the conflict continued. A majority of indigenous Moluccan Christians and Muslims supported this critique.<sup>8</sup> However, they had no power to refuse the centralisation of conflict resolution policy and the power of armed forces in the Moluccas, which came about in the region due to the actual demands of the populace.

With the failure of the ruling government in banning *Jihad* warrior activities in the Moluccas and the rise in number of Christian victims during 2000, solidarity among Christians grew. As a consequence, Christian fundamentalism increased and made the conflict more severe in 2000 than in 1999. There were some groups that had an important role in the growth of this fundamentalism, in particular, the Coker and other field leaders, who had played key roles, in defending the Christians against Muslims in 2000. Agus Wattimena, the leader of the Coker (*Cowok-Cowok Kristen*, Christian Boys),<sup>9</sup> a gang based in Kudamati claimed that: 'this is a real religious war and we have to protect ourselves. Sometimes protection means attacking first. We have a plan, and when the time comes, we will wipe them out' (ICG, 2000: 15). Wattimena's call for Christian solidarity was in response to the pressure exerted by the *Jihad* warriors on the Christian community. It served to make the conflict situation more tense.

The *Laskar Kristus* paramilitary group was formed during the early stages of the conflict, but this movement gained significant momentum after the destruction of the Silo church, the oldest church in Ambon, on December 1999. The paramilitaries were led by Agus Wattimena and by Emang Nikijuluw, Semmy Souissa and Melkianus Yusuf Tuhumury after Wattimena's death on 22 March 2001. The Christian groups consisted of 25 small divisions of 100-200 militant members in the city of Ambon and neighbouring islands,

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<sup>8</sup> This is based on my interviews with Muslims and Christians on the issues of centralisation and local autonomy in the Moluccas from July to August 2002.

<sup>9</sup> The Coker was originally a gangster group called *Cowok-Cowok Keren* (Handsome Boys), but after the conflict they renamed it *Cowok-Cowok Kristen*. The change in name was important and was intended to

where some 60 per cent of members were estimated to be between 12 and 25 years old with a few women members also (Schulze, 2002: 63). They used traditional arms such as knives, machetes, poisoned arrows, homemade guns and small numbers of automatic weapons obtained from 'organic' (local tour of duty) police and former East Timor militias in Kupang, West Timor (Schulze, 2002: 63-64).

#### **4.6 Analyses of the Second Phase of the Ambon Conflict**

Discussions of the conflict during this phase covered a variety of topics: the meaning and relevance of the *Jihad* and its political motives, the involvement of the TNI in local Christian and Muslim paramilitaries and the failure of the state and government to protect citizens by letting the mass killings in the Moluccas go on.

In early 2000, debates in Java over the *Jihad* were crucial to how Indonesians responded to the departure of the *Laskar Jihad* for Ambon. On the other hand, Ambonese Christians responded to the arrival of the *Laskar Jihad* with a rise in Christian solidarity and the formation of Christian paramilitary. The formation of the FKM was also part of a Christian response to the increasing Muslim presence and the support given it by radical Muslims in Java; and was also in response to the failure of the State security apparatus to protect Moluccans. However, Ambonese Muslims interpreted the FKM's formation and its views on Moluccan sovereignty as the emergence of a RMS (*Republik Maluku Selatan*) movement with separatist groups seen as a threat to their interests. They in turn were supported by the central government and especially by the Indonesian military forces. The *Laskar Jihad* shifted their focus from a war against Christians to a war against separatist groups, which seemed more nationalistic than being an anti-Christian movement. The *Laskar Jihad* also used this pretext to send their paramilitary members to Poso, Papua and East Kalimantan. Therefore, the analysis of this second phase will be divided into several parts. First, it will examine the debates concerning *Jihad* among Muslims and the critique of it by Christians. Secondly, it discusses the roles of the *Laskar Jihad*, the security forces and national political elites. It argues that the State's failure to protect its citizens was the

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foster Christian solidarity against Muslims during the conflict (a discussion with Christian youths in Ambon, July 2002).

result of the weakness of the government and of frictions between national elites over the way to solve the conflict.

After the mass rally of *Laskar Jihad*'s paramilitary members in Senayan, Jakarta, on 6 April 2000, their training in Bogor from 7-17 April 2000 and the departure of their *Jihad* to Ambon at the end of April, there were debates over the concept of *Jihad* and its interpretation in the Indonesian context. *Ustadz* (religious teacher) Rodji Jaelani, a chairperson of Pagar Nusa, a traditional martial arts organization under the Nahdlatul Ulama of Jakarta, criticised the *Jihad* of the *Laskar Jihad* describing it as a misinterpretation of the meaning of *Jihad*. Jaelani stated that it was more a political movement than religious one, claiming that it was intended to oppose the leadership of President Wahid (Jaelani, *Xpos*, no. 13/III, 17-23 April 2000: 5). Jaelani's critique of the *Jihad*'s political motives was in line with Roy's argument, which suggested that the radical fundamentalists' motives for their movements had worldly rather than religious motives (Roy, 1994). Similarly, Hasyim Muzadi, a chairperson of the Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Muslim organisation in Indonesia, argued that such a *Jihad* was contrary to the Prophet's *Jihad*, who would not have agitated for conflict, but would have sought to mediate between both communities. Dr. Ma'arif Jamu'in supported Muzadi's argument, that *Jihad* movement should attempt to bring peace and a humanitarian awareness, but not to declare war against Christians (*Kompas*, 10 April 2000, <http://www.kompas.com/kompas-cetak/004/10/nasional/nuti06.htm>, accessed on 8 February 2003).

Concerning the *Laskar Jihad*'s political motives, Alhadar (*Republika*, 11 April 2000), a Moluccan Muslim intellectual living in Jakarta, stated that the deployment of the *Jihad* paramilitaries to Ambon was a response of Javanese Muslims, who were disappointed with the government's failure to protect the local Muslims. This was also the reason Muslim politicians gave their support to the *Jihad*, though with an expectation of gaining political advantage. The *Jihad* simply provided a religious basis to legalize and legitimate the political motives of the *Jihad* movements.

Furthermore, Alhadar criticized the statement of President Wahid suggesting that Christians had attacked Moluccan Muslims because of their anger over the domination of

Muslims in strategic government positions during Aqib Latuconsina's period as governor and, to lesser extent, during Saleh Latuconsina's governorship (*Republika*, 11 April 2000). However, Alhadar misinterpreted what had happened in the Moluccas through a lack of in-depth understanding of the actual situation on the ground. Alhadar stated that:

Indonesia will fracture if the majority community discriminated against others. In regard to Moluccan Christians, the international community will pressure Indonesians, if Christians were seen as the victims. It will cause the West to support the separatists, such as happened in Sudan. So, separatist groups will develop in Indonesia (Alhadar, *Republika*, 11 April 2000: 6, translation mine).

The opinion of Alhadar was contrary to the actual situation in the Moluccas. The separatist group represented only a small number of people in the Moluccas, and their role in the current conflict had been exaggerated. Ambonese Christians insisted that observers understand that they had been dedicated to integration with Indonesia ever since the revolutionary period. The issue of separatism, on the contrary, had been utilised by radical Muslims to attack Christians using a nationalist pretext.

By contrast, Tomagola (2001a), a Galela of North Moluccan origin, refuted the claim that political motives were the only reasons for the growth in religious paramilitaries. He suggested that it was a consequence of cultural changes in Ambonese and Indonesian society, which had led to *premanism* under the hand of informal leaders in the post-New Order period. Tomagola argued that the growth in religious paramilitaries was due to the changing roles of the formal and informal leadership in Ambon. After the New Order the role of state officials was weakened. They became *kapitan* (war commanders)<sup>10</sup> and *preman*, who sought to continue the conflict until the death or departure of each and every one of their enemies. The popularity of the *Laskar Jihad* during 2000 was the result of this change in the informal leadership. The rise of paramilitaries was also a natural consequence of the changing role of the security forces, which had been frustrated by the change in regime from Soeharto's New Order to *Reformasi*. Furthermore, Tomagola (2001) suggested that what had motivated the military forces before the civil emergency or military emergency laws were enacted was a cynical view in the forces concerning human rights that was prevalent in the military. Their supposed concern with regard to human

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<sup>10</sup> In traditional *adat*, during times of conflict, there were *kapitan* who led local forces and coordinated with local chiefs in the battlefield.



rights violations was contrary to the reality that seventy per cent of the mass killings had been caused by standard military weapons (Tomagola, 2001: 102).

Tomagola's critique of the involvement of the security forces was similar to that of Aditjondro (2001), who stated that the deployment of *Jihad* to the Moluccas was an attempt to prevent the Moluccas becoming another East Timor, which had gained its independence and separated from Indonesia (2001: 120). However, this analysis was too speculative, because most Muslim and Christian Ambonese preferred to be part of Indonesia. Furthermore, Aditjondro (2001), in analysing the involvement of the Indonesian military forces in the conflict and their support for the *Jihad* groups and Christian militias, suggested that they sought to:

... counter students' opposition to the military's dual function by turning a vertical conflict into a horizontal conflict; ... to defend the archipelago concept or *wawasan nusantara*; ... to defend the territorial structure of the Armed Forces;...and to defend high-ranking officers from humiliation in criminal, human rights and corruption trials (Aditjondro, 2001: 119).

Aditjondro, however, did not consider that there was 'a competition' among military officers to find support, not only from politicians, but also from mainstream groups. Aditjondro's speculations had even less evidence. The official involvement of the armed forces in the conflict was too risky in the context of their wanting to secure their political future in the transition Indonesian state, as Amien Rais has argued, but individual and factional involvement was possible (Gani, 2002). For example, the support of Wiranto factions for the Muslim militia was clearly based on the need to find sympathy amongst Muslim politicians in opposing the ruling Wahid administration. Of course, Wiranto got into trouble in continuing to emphasise ethno-religious identity issues in dealing with the politics of the transition period. Sulistyono (2001) suggested that the military should reform its views concerning democracy and its professional attitudes to bring them in line with popular opinion and to enable them to become part of the new Indonesian reform government.

Local and national responses driving the second phase of the conflict allow us to see the complexity of conflict, with implications for local and national identity and for the future of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relationships in Indonesia in general. The resurgence in local identity after the introduction of the regional autonomy policy must be considered by

the central government as it formulates policy to enhance local access to economic and natural resources under transparent and fair laws and regulations. Therefore, it is argued, future religious (such *Jihad* movement) and ethnic agitation (including by security forces) in Ambon can be avoided with the existence of strong regulation and the application of the local culture of harmony and tolerance.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

The second phase of the conflict shifted the pattern from one of Christian dominance to one of Muslim ascendancy with significant support coming from the *Laskar Jihad* paramilitary in Java. The *Jihad* declared in Jakarta had political nuances, which suggest that it was organised by the central axis (*poros tengah*) to oppose the ruling Wahid government. The coming of the *Laskar Jihad* to Ambon brought Islamic radicalism to the local Ambonese Muslims through the FPIM and the Task force of the AMNM. However, mainstream Ambonese Muslims later in 2001 began to oppose the control of the *Laskar Jihad*. On the other hand, Ambonese Christians responded to the *Jihad* with a rise in Christian solidarity; the mobilisation of Christian paramilitary in the name of Christ (*Laskar Kristus*, Christ's Soldiers), and, with the attempt to push for FKM-style local sovereignty. In this period, the Indonesian military forces initially supported the Muslim factions, but after international pressure and a rise in the number of Christian victims, they shifted to pressuring radical Muslim groups. This was an instance of a State failure to protect Ambonese Muslims and Christians from a security force serving its own interests. It was also the result of an ambiguity in the stance of local and central governments toward dealing with the problem, that was evident from the early period onwards. As Tomagola (2001), Aditjondro (2001) and Alhadar (2000) have suggested, this phase of the conflict was proof of the failure of the State and highlights the importance of rebuilding a neutral and strong government and security situation in support of attempts towards reconciliation.

The ongoing conflict in Ambon raised questions as to why the attempts made toward reconciliation between Muslims and Christians did not succeed. It appears that attempts at reconciliation had been made even from the early stages of the conflict in 1999 and were continued by various government and non-government organizations. However, the

proposed pacts failed to accommodate both communities and, consequently, the conflict went on. I argue that the reconciliation approaches attempted were evolutionary steps for Muslims and Christians taken as part of a longer-term program of moving toward reconciliation. Such moves gained momentum as the conflict seemed to drag on.

## Chapter Five

### Reconciling Muslims and Christians

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will trace attempts to forge a reconciliation between Ambonese Muslims and Christians undertaken since the early period of the conflict. It will analyse the models for reconciliation and the problems faced. It will propose alternative methods for reconciliation, based on the views of both communities. Furthermore, it will consider how the relationship between the government and civil society is vital to the process of reconciliation. It will criticise the highly centralised government policy and structure, which still in place in this Indonesian transition period. This chapter will argue that as Ambon city is a modern and industrial city with a well-educated Muslim and Christian population, it needs a modern mechanism for reconciliation. A reassessment of the *Pela Gandong* tradition, as attempted by some local NGOs, is needed in order to accommodate the demands of a modern community as well as the spirit of local tradition. This may be a way of bridging the gaps between the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Ambonese communities and helping to bring them into a modernity based on familiar local traditions.

#### 5.2 The Attempts to Bring about Reconciliation during the Conflict

There have been attempts at reconciliation since the early stages of the conflict in Ambon. They have some common features: both local and central governments have made on-going attempts to initiate reconciliation with the involvement of both civil and military officers; there has been the grassroots-level involvement of local, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs); there has also been attempts by Ambonese themselves to resolve the situation in their local communities. These features can be divided into two patterns: top-down and bottom-up initiatives - each with their strengths and weaknesses. This chapter will argue that in the case of reconciliation in Ambon, neither the government nor the NGO approach on their own would have been successful. Both are needed, for reasons that will be explained. In both the Ambonese and, more general, Indonesian cultures a patrimonial, top-down approach to leadership and

problem-solving is the norm. On the other hand, grassroots-level organizations have a great potential in helping Ambonese to strengthen their communities and in helping them to resolve the issues in a locally-relevant way according to their own local customs and traditions. Issues of competition over access to resources between government and NGOs, between local and central governments and between the elites, including the military, in various areas will need to be resolved in the longer term.

The first local government initiative toward reconciliation involved the formation of the 'Team Six' (*Tim Enam*). It was formed at the end of January 1999 and was given the task of investigating the January 1999 conflict and seeking ways to resolve the issues arising from it. It comprised both Muslim and Christian representatives: Thamrin Elly, Luthfy Sanaky, John Ruhulesin, M.G. Lailosa, Bruno Rummyaru, and Condratus Ufie (Trijono, 2001: 136). With the escalation of conflict, it was found necessary to expand this group to make it more representative and include local bureaucrats, religious leaders, military leaders, *adat* chiefs and others in the local elite. This new team was given the name *Pusat Rujuk Sosial* (PRS, the Social Reconciliation Centre). In its early stages, the team was able to successfully look after mosques, churches and other places where there was potential for violence. It set about analysing the roots of the conflict, formulating a reconciliation process, creating suburban security patrol posts, consolidating management of *negeri-negeri* (village areas), running seminars and workshops discussing the roots of conflict, and working towards creating peace (Trijono, 2001: 137).

The PRS initiated a reconciliation treaty at the Merdeka Square, Ambon on 12 May 1999. It was signed by religious leaders, heads of the *adat* community, youth leaders and other grassroots Muslims and Christians<sup>1</sup>. There were seven points in the deal:

It was unanimously agreed to be committed a new human relationship in a peaceful atmosphere, which constrained us wholeheartedly to stop every kind of conflict and violence; and to destroy any suspicions, resentment, hate and hostility, by continuously attempting to set aside the things of the past and engage in calm dialogue. [Furthermore, we] appreciate of diversity (*kebinekaan*) of religions,

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<sup>1</sup> The pact was signed by R.R. Hasanusi (MUI chief), Pdt. S.P. Titaley (the chief of *Sinode GPM*, Protestant Church), Mgr. Joseph Tethol (*Uskup Diones Amboina*, Catholic Church), Hussein Tuasikal (*Remaja Masjid*, chief of Mosque Youth), Ferry Nahusona (*Angkatan Muda GPM*, GPM Youth), FR Simon P Matrutry (Catholic Youth), RE Latuconsina (*Latupati* (head) of district (*kecamatan*) of Saparua islands), AL Loilosa (*Latupati* of district Amahai), Corputy (*Latupati* of district Kairatu), Pellu (the king of Hitu Lama), Abdul Aziz Abide (Association of South Sulawesi Families), La Hamsidi (Association of Southeast Sulawesi Family) and Ngurah Nyoman Wiandnyana (Bali Community) (MUI, 2000: 173, Appendix 1).

ethnicities, traditions, *adat* (cultures) and will continue to build relationships and national harmony, which is the essence of the national vision (*wawasan kebangsaan*) (MUI, 2000: 173, translation mine).

This treaty was nonetheless a top-down agreement, which was not understood by the grassroots, who were largely concerned for their safety and that of their communities. The team ceased to exist after the second period of the conflict began in July 1999. It was seen by the grassroots as a government body, which was unable to probe the roots of the conflict because of its top-down approach. The Muslim and Christian communities felt they could not rely on this part.

The next government initiative was the 'Team Twenty-four', which was initially formed to ensure the protection of President Wahid and his Cabinet during their visit to Ambon in December 1999. It began by distributing some thirty thousand pamphlets to communities in both Muslim and Christian regions, dropping them by army helicopter on 7 December 1999. These pamphlets were signed by Abdullah Tuasikal, *Badan Koordinasi Umat Islam Maluku* (the Coordination Body of the Moluccan Muslims), J.J. Polanaya, *Gerakan Peduli Kemanusiaan Maluku* (the Humanity Awareness Movement of the Moluccas) and Agus Ulahaiyanan, *Crisis Centre Keuskupan Amboina* (the Crisis Centre of the Ambon Diocese). They outlined the *Deklarasi Menahan Diri* (Restrain Oneself Declaration), which stated:

Towards the coming holy month of Ramadhan and Idul Fitri 1 Syawal 1420 H., Christmas (25 December 1999) and New Year 2000, people are expected to refrain from activities, which might instigate violence. Therefore, people are not to hold mass gatherings, nor to fabricate irresponsible rumours ... nor to shoot, bomb or other similar activities, which would stir up mass feelings ... and to immediately form security patrol posts (*Indo. Pos Keamanan Masyarakat*) in each neighbourhood [to calm the local population, give them a sense of security and a sense of their participation in ensuring their security] (*Crisis Centre Keuskupan Amboina*, 2002: 9; translation mine).

Of course, the statement was intended to calm the sentiments and emotions of both communities, before the arrival of President Wahid and Vice-President Megawati on 12 December 1999. They were coming to meet the local government staff, the leaders of the TNI and Polri, the *adat* chiefs and religious leaders. Wahid said that only the Moluccans themselves could solve the Moluccan tragedy and the government would only be a facilitator (*Crisis Centre Keuskupan Amboina*, 2002: 9). The peace prevailed until 19

December 1999 when conflict again broke out in *Kampung Java*, Ambon. Four people were killed and eight were seriously injured (*Crisis Centre Keuskupan Amboina*, 2002: 9).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both at a local and national level, also played a pivotal role in reconciliation attempts. The growth in number of NGOs was enormous from under fifty before the conflict to more than four hundred during the conflict (Jefferson Tasik, an interview in Ambon, August 2002). This growth can be seen as a consequence of a growth in civil society activity in Ambon during the conflict. The NGOs saw reconciliation as a long-term process. Two examples of successful NGO outcomes were the Wayame regional self-protection units and the TIRUS (*Tim Relawan Untuk Kemanusiaan*, The Voluntary Teams for Humanity) initiated by 12 NGOs. However, the NGOs were not able to make contact with the radical Muslim and Christian groups, which were involved in mobilising the communities for battle.

The religious and social leaders of the village of Wayame took the initiative in forming the 'Team Twenty of Wayame'. It was founded in February 1999 to protect the region of Wayame from attack and from influences coming from conflict in other regions. The team successfully protected their community (Muslims and Christians) from outside influence. Both the Muslim and Christian communities were assisted by the Wayame team in conducting intensive dialogue, prayers for peace and encouraging respect for each other. From this experience, we can conclude that the Ambon conflict was not purely a religious conflict, but was instigated by outsiders. Tony Pariela, one of Wayame's leading figures, argued that the region of Wayame had been stirred up over a lot of issues and there were isolated attacks on people and property by outsiders, but because of the strong awareness of Wayame inhabitants, conflict between the two communities did not take place (Tony Pariela, an interview in Ambon, 31 July 2002). However, the team continued to function only until May 2000 when outsiders mounted a full attack on Wayame. Thus began the last and third stage of the conflict (Triyono 2001: 144).

In addition, TIRUS was founded by *Yayasan Baileo* (Baileo Foundation) in conjunction with 12 NGOs on 2 February 1999 (Triyono, 2001: 150). It attempted to coordinate local NGOs with the support of national and international funding organisations. It aimed to strengthen local organisations and communities in moving towards reconciliation, in

rebuilding social ties and helping to support the victims of the conflict. These initiatives were effective in working with the grassroots and to a certain extent were effective in dealing with the radical groups and gangs in both regions. The Baileo Foundation founded volunteer networks in both Muslim and Christian communities. It attempted to help people recover psychologically from what had happened, providing counselling for women, children and disabled victims of the conflict in both Muslim and Christian regions in Ambon, Central Moluccas and Southeast Moluccas.

After the failure of local government to bring about reconciliation in 1999, local government officials again tried to facilitate the process of working towards ending the conflict. This team was called *Tim Fasilitator Pemda* (The Regional Government Facilitator team). On 14 January 2000, Governor Saleh Latuconsina released a statement announcing the formation of reconciliation teams among villages all over the Ambonese islands. These teams had the job of implementing a program of reconciliation, which was to function at the village level (Triyono, 2001: 138-139). These local government approaches, however, were ineffective because of a leadership dispute between the civil government and the security and police forces as to who was really in charge during the civil emergency after June 2000. According to the law, the highest policy maker in the local government was the Governor, but, in fact, the security forces had their own agenda, which was sometimes contrary to that of the Governor.

In addition, the central government created a special policy covering conflict areas in the Moluccas, Papua and Aceh. With respect to the Moluccas, President Wahid gave to Vice-President Megawati the task of coordinating the efforts of Coordinating Ministers from the Ministry of Politics and Security, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and Ministry for Social Welfare and Poverty Eradication in initiating a long-term program for reconciliation as from January 2000 (Triyono, 2001: 154-155). One of these reconciliation programs was coordinated by the Department of Religious Affairs and a social reconciliation meeting among Moluccans in Jakarta was scheduled in January 2000 (Triyono, 201: 155). However, this central government initiative, though ambitious, ran into problems because of the difficulty in getting executive members to work with each other. This was the result of frictions between the Vice-President and President and between other leading figures in the central government and because of Megawati appeared reluctant to resolve them.



After the change in the regime, from Wahid to Megawati, the central government continued to pursue steps toward reconciliation. Under President Megawati's leadership, the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare, Jusuf Kalla, played a mediating role at a meeting between opposing Christian and Muslim factions in Malino, South Sulawesi, on 11-12 February 2002. They reached an agreement called the Moluccas agreement of Malino II (Tomagola, 2002). At this meeting, thirty-five Muslim and thirty-five Christian government officers, political leaders, heads of villages, and Muslim and Christian community leaders agreed to sign an 11-point joint declaration. Amongst its points were:

(1) To end all conflict and violence, (2) to abide by due process of law which is to be enforced fairly... (3) to reject and oppose all kinds of separatist movements, including aspirations for a Republic of South Moluccas (RMS) ... (4) the people of the Moluccas have the right to stay and work legally in the Republic of Indonesia nationwide and in the Moluccas, by respecting the local culture and law and order, (5) to ban and disarm illegal armed organizations, groups, or militias, in accordance with the existing law. Outsider parties that disturb the peace in the Moluccas will be expelled from the Moluccas, (6) to establish a national independent investigation team to investigate, for example, the tragic incident on 19 January 1999, and the alleged involvement of the Moluccas Sovereign Front (*Front Kedaulatan Maluku-FKM*), Republic of South Moluccas (*Republik Maluku Selatan-RMS*), Christian Republic of South Moluccas (*Kristen Republik Maluku Selatan-Kristen RMS*), Jihad warriors (*Laskar Jihad*) and Christ Warriors (*Laskar Kristus*)... (Tomagola, 2002: 6).

Radical Muslim groups argued that the Malino II declaration was one-sided, not involving them in the process of reconciliation. They argued that Muslims at the meeting were not representative of Moluccan Muslims and that there were some Christians in the meeting, who they claimed had been involved in the RMS separatism and in planning the mass killing of Moluccan Muslims from the early stages of the conflict (Muhammad At-Tamimy, an interview in Ambon, August 2002). Pariela, the head of Christian delegation at Malino II, stated that they had invited the radical Muslim groups, even though these groups were reluctant to cease fighting. The radical Muslim groups said that they would only join the meeting if all *kapitan* (leaders) of the Muslim security patrol posts (about a hundred people) were involved in the meeting and if they were able to screen members of the Christian delegation to exclude RMS activists. Pariela retorted that this was an irrational approach to take as part of a process of working towards reconciliation (Tony Pariela, an interview in Ambon, 31 July 2002).

The Malino II agreement became the key to further reconciliation steps in Ambon covering the broader issues, not only in dialogue, but also in searching for political and economic solutions acceptable to both communities. However, the process was in the hands of government, without the participation of ordinary people. Therefore, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) came to have a prominent role as a bridge between government and society. The NGOs reached a broad cross-section of people from ordinary people to those who had led in the battlefield. In the Muslim regions, the Moluccan branch of the Lakpesdam NU (*Lembaga Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia Nahdlatul Ulama*, the NU Institute for Human Resources Development), an NGO under the biggest Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama, played a significant role in accommodating the views of grassroots Muslims in reaching a peaceful solution. The Lakpesdam NU made available psychological treatment for young local Muslims, who had been directly involved in the war against Christians, and facilitated dialogue between them and their Christian counterparts. However, the large number of NGOs in Muslim and Christian regions, (more than four hundred in 2001, four times larger than in 1998), could lead to two possible outcomes: a growth in civil society, or fear and rivalry among factions in both communities.

### **5.3 Muslim and Christian Views of the Reconciliation Process**

Local and national Muslims and Christians and Western observers gave various accounts of the conflict and made various suggestions as to how to proceed in the future. The first reconciliation proposal by local government and non-governmental organisations was for the re-implementation of the indigenous Ambonese culture of *Pela Gandong* (see Chapter Two). There were disputes over the existence and effectiveness of indigenous culture as a means of reconciliation for modern Ambonese. The *Team Komunikasi dan Informasi Ummat* (The Communication and Information Team of Muslims) of Ambon (1999) stated that the culture of *Pela Gandong* had been broken down since the conflict had broken out. The Muslim team questioned the viability of this culture in the period leading up to the conflict asserting that there had been a Christianisation of, and Christian dominance in, the economy, in education and in government staff and teaching positions, where corruption, collusion, nepotism were alleged to be rife (1999: 9). Similarly, Putuhena and Tawainella,

from the Defender Front for Islam of the Moluccas (FPIM), claimed that the *Pela Gandong* tradition was merely a Christian instrument to ‘trivialise Islamic theology’ (2001: 13). Furthermore, At-Tamimy, the commander-in-chief of the local radical Muslims of the *Amar Makruf Nahi Mungkar* task force, argued that the indigenous culture of *Pela Gandong* was contrary to the principles of Islamic law, in its very nature for it was originally designed by the colonial government to discriminate against Ambonese Muslims (Muhammad At-Tamimy, an interview in Ambon, 4 August 2002).

However, these arguments of the *Team Komunikasi dan Informasi Ummat* and Putuhena, Tawainella and At-Tamimy were contrary to historical fact. The *Pela Gandong* tradition was founded before the colonial period. It applied among Muslims from different clans and ethnic groups during the alliance of the Hitu and Ternate kingdoms (Bartels, 1973). Such views concerning the *Pela Gandong* tradition had a political motive, which was to avoid the reconciliation process sponsored by mainstream Muslim and Christian groups, who had initiated this process based on the re-implementation of the *Pela Gandong* culture in support of the government's programs for peace. Certainly they gained greater political popularity after arguing and campaigning for these ideas amongst local Muslims, especially non-indigenous Ambonese Muslims. The views of the Muslim Team and the FPIM concerning the *Pela Gandong* tradition were popular among Muslims born in Ambon of Arab, Buginese, Makassarese, Butonese and Javanese descent and among non-Ambonese migrants, who did not have a sense of identification with this *Pela Gandong* tradition, which tied indigenous communities from different families, clans, ethnic groups and religions.

On the other hand, the Muslim King of Batumerah refuted Muslims’ views that the *adat* of *Pela Gandong* was contrary to Islamic culture. He claimed it was an application of Qur’anic verses recommending friendship and relationship with Christians and other non-Muslims (King of Batu Merah, a personal interview in Ambon, August 2002). Likewise, Marasabessy, an indigenous Ambonese and the head of Religious Affairs in Ambon, argued that the implementation of *Pela Gandong* culture is not contrary to Islam, but represents an assimilation of Islamic values with local culture. However, for modern Ambonese, state laws or government regulations are needed enable the implementation of

the traditional culture of Muslims and Christians living in the Ambonese islands (Hasyim Marasabessy, an interview in Ambon, 10 August 2002).

In addition, Lakollo (1999), an Ambonese representative of the PRS, argued that reconciliation would involve not only the re-implementation of *Pela Gandong*, but also a re-evaluation of the economic relationship between the indigenous Ambonese and the transmigrant and migrant communities, which had competed before the conflict. Lakollo suggested to the local government that: 'local government policy in facilitating economic and trade instruments...and business opportunities must ensure equality and justice without discriminating against any group, from the perspectives of ethnicity, religion and race' (1999: 92).

Leirissa (2000) agreed with Lakollo (1999) that *adat* as an instrument of reconciliation was less effective than the segregation of Ambonese society, as intended by provocateurs, as a means of instituting peace. Leirissa suggested that:

A thorough solution depends on changing the pattern of state and society relations between national and local elites. A solution can be achieved if the New Order system of development is discarded. Development projects and the distribution of investment contracts between the local and national governments must not be marred by corruption, collusion and nepotism (2000: 58).

Another problem in achieving reconciliation was the allegation by local Muslims that Christians had been involved in the RMS separatist movement. The *Kelompok Pembela Islam Maluku* (Kopim, the Moluccan Islamic Defenders Group), during their meeting with President Wahid on September 2000, stated that Christians had given a false account of the conflict. For example, Christians had stated that Muslims had initiated the conflict on 19 January 1999. Christians also insisted that the *Laskar Jihad* return to Java. The Muslim Working Group (Indo. *Pokja: Kelompok Kerja*) for reconciliation in the Moluccas, (represented by Ali Fauzy, Husein Toisuta, Rustam Kastor, M. Natsir Rahawarin, Suhaidi Samallo, A.A. Leurima and Hamadi Husein), claimed that 'the *Laskar Jihad* had helped the Moluccan Muslims to defend the Muslim religion and Indonesian nation against the threat posed by the RMS separatist group' (Kopim, 2000: 6).

The reasons given by those Muslim representatives for their support of the role played by the *Laskar Jihad* were contrary to the fact that the *Laskar Jihad* had been reluctant to stop the war. The differences in approach towards reconciliation between the Moluccan Muslims and Christians meant that achieving peace would be a long process. The Muslim group argued:

That Christians had not been ready to reconcile, whilst Muslims had kept up their attempts in a spirit of a good-will to finish the war. Therefore, we offer a basis to end the religious war ... founded on acknowledgment by Christians of their involvement in the slaughter of Muslims on 19 January 1999 as mobilised by the RMS. They asked that the Christian leaders involved in the conflict be prosecuted, including leaders of mass organisations through a political mechanism [involving central government when local political leaders are implicated] (Kopim, 2000: 7-8).

Of course, this was a one-sided argument by radical Muslims without taking into account the views of Christians and other analyses which suggest that the *Laskar Jihad* had provoked local Muslims by continuing their claims of a RMS separatist threat. In fact, the myth of a separatist threat was a strategum of military elites in the Moluccas, of paramilitary forces and of radical Muslims, who indoctrinated local Muslims. The influence of the FKM [representing RMS aspirations] was limited. They only had a small number of Christian followers in the Ambonese islands (Tony Pariela, an interview in Ambon, 31 July 2002).

Most Ambonese Muslims and Christians supported the reconciliation and peace-building attempts. As the *Pusat Rujuk Sosial* (1999) stated, approximately twenty per cent of Muslims and Christians were *perusuh* (instigators of violence) and eighty per cent were *baik-baik* (good people), who supported peace and reconciliation. This rough percentage was a simplification of the social boundaries in the Ambonese islands, which had a higher degree of segregation after three years of conflict. The number of peace-building supporters depended upon the stages in the development of the conflict. When under desperate circumstances, Muslims and Christians would get involved in the conflict. During more peaceful times they would strongly support reconciliation, for example, as they did after the Malino II agreement and the return of the *Laskar Jihad* to Java when circumstances become more peaceful. In the light of the on-going competition in the lead-up to the 2003 elections for governor, the more neutral observations of outsiders should be helpful.

#### 5.4 The Debates Among Non-Ambonese over Reconciliation

Other views were held by non-Ambonese Muslims and Christians, religious leaders, government officers and western observers, who analysed the process of reconciliation after the Ambon conflict. It is important to compare the indigenous Ambonese and outsider views. The debate outside the Moluccas focused on several issues: dialogue between conflicting factions as a method of reconciliation; the application of the *Pela Gandong* tradition as the reconciliation instrument; the role of the government and security forces in the reconciliation process and, the future of democracy in the Ambonese islands and the Moluccas.

In the context of the national debate over the *Pela Gandong* tradition, Azra (MUI, 2000), the rector of the State Institute for Islamic Studies of Jakarta, argued that it was important to restructure the inter-ethnic and inter-religious patterns of relationship as a means towards reconciliation. There was a need for openness, truth and sincere dialogue among conflicting factions, to provide a basis for sharing in the formulation of regional institutions (*Perda*, Ind. *Peraturan Daerah*) (MUI, 2000: xvii). Azra's argument is in line with Suparlan's view of that an ethno-religious approach has to be taken to achieve reconciliation.

Suparlan (2001), stated that what was needed was an application of the Ambonese tradition of *Pela Gandong* for Muslims and Christians, not only symbolically (as attempted by the regional government) but in actuality to forge sacred ties between the conflicting communities. The application of the tradition needed two elements: a neutral mediator and compensation for the houses and properties of both communities that had been destroyed (Suparlan, 2001: 28-29). However, Suparlan's idea of the application of *Pela Gandong* needed more elaboration, as the tradition only represented an alliance between two or a limited number of communities or regions. The original tradition of *Pela Gandong* needed a broader application not only to include indigenous communities of certain clans, but also the various ethnic and other religious communities living in the Ambonese islands.

The *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI, Indonesian Ulama Council) suggested that the Muslim and Christian communities adapt their local values and cultures to the modern demands of economic and political development (MUI, 2000). Undoubtedly, ethnic and religious adaptation in the modern era needs the guidance of local ethnic and religious elites, who will have pivotal roles in accommodating the values of a modern culture into a local ethnic and religious framework. As MUI suggested:

Christian missionaries should guide Moluccan Christians in taking up the spirit of the Protestant ethic, which has been successful in bringing Western society to the point at which its civilisation is today ...Muslim *Ulama* (scholars) should also bring Moluccan Muslims into a harmonious and dynamic pattern of life similar to the period of the Prophet Muhammad, which is today called *masyarakat madani* (civil society). By this approach, the primitive competition that exists in the Moluccas will change into a dynamic and positive competition between Muslims and Christians (2000: 118).

Additionally, MUI (2000) also asserted the importance of regional restructuring to accommodate the demands of Ambonese Muslims and Christians now living in separate areas delineated by clear religious boundaries, but with equal and free access to public facilities. Both communities should have direct and free communication with the presence of a professional security force to maintain public order. Obviously, these views were in contrast with those of indigenous Ambonese communities, which were still eager to live without rigid and clear ethnic and religious borders. Siahainenia (2000) asserted that local Ambonese should have a role in the reconciliation process, as suggested by President Wahid and Vice-President Megawati during their visit to Ambon in December 1999.

However, Siahainenia found that the existing reconciliation process was in appearance only for the reason that to recover from the conflict required more than just the rebuilding of religious buildings, such as churches and mosques. Because 'the conflict had caused the complete loss at a mental or cognitive level of a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood', these bonds would need to be re-established (Siahainenia, 2000: 130-131). The long period of conflict had destroyed the sense of being one family in the Moluccas and it drove people into the situation where they began competing with each other. Furthermore, Suharto (MUI, 2000), a representative of the National Commission on Human Rights (*Komnas HAM*), stated that the process of reconciliation needed suburban communication posts to be set up to facilitate the meeting of Muslims and Christians. Local and central government, the *Komnas HAM* and regional informal leaders (*tetua adat*) could be

effective mediators between both communities in the longer term. Soeharto's final and important recommendation was for the transparent prosecution of the local and national provocateurs under national law (MUI, 2000).

While Budyatna (MUI, 2000) agreed that a win-win solution was possible through dialogue and that existing subcultures must be made the foundation of a national culture, he also emphasised external factors. He suggested that various ethnic, religious and racial groups should not be politicised by the central government as a means to control local regions. He asserted that Moluccans, themselves, must realise that the conflict was primarily the result of external instigation, rather than a consequence of local ethnic and religious divisions (MUI, 2000).

By contrast, Azra emphasised a security approach. He took the position that the security forces should take a strong approach to dealing with violence, especially when handling radical groups in the Muslim and Christian communities (MUI, 2000). This idea was popular amongst security forces members and Jakarta elites. For example, Gani (2002), a Police chief in the Moluccas, found the security approach to be an effective way of preventing further illegal trade in weapons, and further movement of paramilitaries between other islands and Ambon. Gani also argued that civil government should strengthen enforcement law (2002). However, the security approach as part of a reconciliation process ran into difficulties, as many former members of the security forces deserted and joined Muslim and Christian paramilitary organisations resulting in further casualties. Moreover, during certain periods of the conflict army members supported one group and against the other. For example, in December 1999, the security apparatus allowed Muslims to burn the Silo church and even helped them to attack Christians (Abdulghani Fabanyo, an interview in Ambon, 18 August 2002). In addition, the Jakarta-based *TAPAK Ambon* NGO stated that the TNI and police officers had failed to secure the situation and they were reluctant to prosecute TNI and police deserters, who were identified as being involved in the conflict (Salampessy and Husein, 2001).

Furthermore, Van Klinken (2001) suggested that both local and national elites took advantage of the segregation of Ambonese Muslims and Christians to advance their own interests as a result of the conflict. He advocated two methods of reconciliation (a) to



'democratise the state, especially at the local level, thereby depriving war-mongering elites of their legitimacy', and (b) to 'make the state effective for all its citizens especially by providing a sense of security' (Van Klinken, 2001: 25). Van Klinken, however, did not consider that the process of local autonomy was still immature even though the central government still attempted to retain its control in local politics. Budyatna (MUI, 2000) suggested that total regional autonomy needed to be put in place to strengthen local government so that it could solve local problems under local authority using appropriate local political and cultural means.

Democratisation in the local region means the freedom for local authorities to act without central government intervention. Further, Van Klinken (2001) has emphasised the importance of the security forces in maintaining security so that local democracy can function. However, democracy at the local level is really something of a myth. Local Muslims supported Jakarta Ambonese, Freddy Latumahina, a Christian and Golkar parliament member, as a potential candidate for governor. They accused the local Christian Ambonese candidate, Zeth Sahuburua, of being involved in the conflict and supporting the RMS (Kastor, 2002). These myths concerning Zeth Sahuburua and the RMS movement were popular amongst local Muslims and were utilised by Jakarta politicians to retain their control of the Moluccas.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The reconciliation process in the Ambonese islands has had two components. A top-down approach as led by the central and local governments with the limited participation of local communities was the most common approach to reconciliation in the islands. By contrast, the bottom-up approach to reconciliation was based on broader community participation with the input of ordinary people, including those who had been directly involved in the conflict as the *kapitans* (commanders) and members of paramilitaries. However, both approaches to reconciliation had difficulties in reaching out to the radical groups and *premans*, who were active in the battlefield.

The viewpoints of local Ambonese Muslims and Christians, central government officers, non-Ambonese religious leaders and Indonesian and Western intellectuals with respect to reconciliation and the future of Ambon can be summed up in several points. First, the basic instrument to bring about a thorough reconciliation was to be the re-implementation of the local culture of *Pela Gandong*. It was to include transmigrant and migrant Muslims living in the Ambonese islands. The re-implementation of the tradition was to be supported by government laws to make agreements legally binding without losing the sacredness and symbolism of the pact. Secondly, power-sharing is essential for both communities in terms of their access to the economy, politics and public facilities within the context of a broader application of regional autonomy. Finally, the democratisation of regional government without the intervention of central government is needed to return to traditional models of leadership.

A further puzzle, then, is how to relate the pre-colonial history of Ambonese Muslims and Christians to contemporary circumstances. In Ambon today there continues to be competition, segregation as well as an element of harmony between both communities. Ambonese have passed through a particularly violent chapter in their history as they have entered the post-New Order period. What their future will be depends on whether or not they will be able to solve their problems at the local level.

## Chapter Six

### A Reflection on Conflict and Reconciliation in Ambon

This thesis has traced the origin of Muslim and Christian conflict in Ambon between 1999 and 2002. Ethno-religious segregation and the involvement of *premans*, thugs, gangsters and *Laskars* in the Ambon conflict have been identified as key factors, which forced the multi-ethnic and religious communities in the Ambonese islands onto an unexpected collision course. In more recent times in the post-conflict era, Ambonese Muslims and Christians have had to shift from a perception of themselves as a harmonious community to a position of greater transparency in economic and political relations. Certainly, as Van Klinken (2001) has suggested, the future of the reconciliation and local democratisation process will depend on whether a new basis for ethno-religious harmony can be established – one with a clear division but equal sharing between both communities within the framework of regional autonomy.

As a result of the experience of segregation during the colonial period, Muslims have a memory of discrimination against their community. In contrast, during Soeharto's New Order period, religious segregation became ethno-religious segregation as a result of the transmigration policy, which altered the population composition from one of Christian dominance in the colonial period to one of Muslim dominance in the last decade of the New Order. The centralisation of demographic policy as represented by the transmigration program influenced local economic and political competition disadvantaging indigenous Ambonese, compared to the migrant community. Furthermore, the central government intentionally kept control of local politics by spreading rumours of Christian domination of the economy, politics and education, thereby causing anxiety among many Muslim groups.

The inherent problems in Muslim-Christian relations were exacerbated because of the long-term centralisation of New Order development policy, which created a stereotyping of multi-religious and multi-ethnic groups in local and national politics. Pariela's (1996) comparison of skilled Muslim traders and poor Soya Atas Christian peasants during the

last decade of the New Order confirmed the general ethno-religious segregation, that existed between Ambonese Muslims and Christians in terms of the economy, politics and culture. Further, the Soya Atas study depicted the culture of the Ambonese community in Ambon city as ranging from traditional to modern. This was similar to the culture of metropolitan communities in the big cities of Java, where both State and private *premanism* had first taken root (Lindsey, 2001). These two phenomena (ethno-religious segregation and a culture of *premanism*) contributed to the outbreak and the longevity of the Ambon conflict, which was more prolonged than either the Ambonese or Indonesians had anticipated.

The *preman* or thugs, gangsters and *laskar*, during different stages of the conflict were connected with different elements and groups. In the early period, the *Coker* thugs, both the Bertu Loupaty and Agus Watimena (d. 2001) groups, played major roles with the backing elements of the Special Armed Forces (Kopassus). The Ambonese thugs of Jakarta and Ambon incited and inflamed feelings against the Butonese, Buginese, Makassarese, Javanese and Sumatran migrants (generally called the BBM). They were the main players in the first few months of the conflict working to incite and solidify the separate Muslim and Christian communities. These methods were exploited by both Ambonese Muslims and Christians and thereby shifted the conflict from an ethnic to a religious conflict. Furthermore, it appears that deserters from the Indonesian Armed Forces and the police force widened the divisions, by getting involved in the conflict between each of the communities. In late 1999, it was a generally held belief amongst the general populace that the Mobile Brigade (Brimob) supported the local Christians and that the Armed Forces gave support to local Muslims. The deserters as well as elements of the security forces may have been involved also after the arrival of the *Laskar Jihad* by helping to smuggle illegally acquired standard military weapons into both the Muslim and Christian regions.

Furthermore, in 2000 the Ambonese and Javanese Muslim media presented the conflict as one against Christian separatists with Muslims fighting a *Jihad* in Ambon, under the leadership of the *Laskar Jihad*. The aim of the *Jihad* was not only to shield Muslims against the Christian menace, but also to preserve the unity of the Republic of Indonesia from the hazards of separatism.

The *Jihad* movements even found support from Yemeni and Saudi Arabian *Salafy* clerics, who gave religious backing for *Jihad* forces to travel from Java to Ambon, and then on to Poso, Papua, East Kalimantan and Aceh. This was abruptly blocked after international reaction to terrorism following the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 bombing. Nonetheless, the influx of *Jihad* groups into the Moluccas impacted on local Muslims and Christians. The help given by *Jihad* groups to Ambonese Muslims in attacking Christians changed the complexion of the conflict from Christian control in 1999 to Muslim control in 2000. Likewise, their radical religious norms were taken up by some local Muslim groups, in particular the Moluccan Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) led by Husni Putuhena and the Task Force of the *Amar Makruf Nahi Mungkar* led by Muhammad At-Tamimy. Obviously, their impact on Ambonese Muslims weakened after their return to Java in late 2002. Certainly, at first local Muslims felt secure with the arrival of the *Laskar Jihad*, but later local Muslims found that they had some ideological and political differences with them. Indigenous Muslims with their *Sunni* practices and tolerance of non-Muslim practices as a result of a long association with animists, Catholics and Protestants were confronted by a rigid *Salafy* Islamic ideology, which urged religious purification based on the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet.

On the other hand, Ambonese Christians reacted strongly to the arrival of the *Laskar Jihad* resulting in a rise of Christian solidarity. Initially, Christian battlefield leaders founded the *Laskar Kristus* (Christ Warriors) under commander-in-chief, Agus Watimena. Christians experienced the terrors of the *Jihad* paramilitaries with their sudden attacks, suicide bombings and mass killings. This *Jihad* terror prompted Christians to reach out to request international action be taken against human rights violators in the Moluccas. Reconciliation attempts made by Muslims and Christians at their own initiative and led by local and central government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) yielded few results from 1999 to 2002, but began to produce fruit after the conflict waned and especially after the return of the *Jihad* warriors to Java. However, the reconciliation process is being challenged by further competition between the two communities in the lead-up to elections for governor in May 2003 and by a jostling for political position and access to public resources.

Endeavours toward reconciliation were successful in the Wayame region, where its 'Team of Twenty' arising out of the initiative of both the Muslim and Christian communities was able to prove that the bottom-up approach to reconciliation is the most successful strategy. By contrast, the central government, local government and security forces' initiatives toward reconciliation have failed to end the conflict, as they were driven by their respective political interests at both the local and national levels. The top-down reconciliation approach resulted in a decline in the credibility of the government in the eyes of ordinary people. It also underlined the importance of having policies that included the general community and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The central government, especially during the Wahid Presidency, when large numbers of TNI and Police officer deserters opposed the regime, failed to bring about a reconciliation in Ambon. Similarly, the local government, even with the extra-powers it had during the civil emergency, failed to come up with a workable reconciliation process because of vested political interests. Furthermore, the security apparatus became a player in local politics.

NGOs succeeded in accommodating the demands of the grassroots and government in the process of reconciliation and recovery. The emergence of the NGOs in the Ambonese islands during the conflict had the consequence of bringing about a rise in civil society involvement in Ambon. However, they were hampered by negative perceptions as a result of the activities of a number of 'red'-NGOs, which were organised by local government officers taking advantage of central government and international funds, for their short-term programs. They were based on temporary circumstances without seriously projecting for the longer term. Therefore, it is important for the government and local community to restructure existing NGOs and to commit to a recovery from the conflict taking a gradual, evolutionary approach.

The current challenge in local politics as the policy of local autonomy is being implemented is to encourage the participation of the indigenous communities. A consequence of these developments will be that local groups in competition with migrants will need to have some mechanism for allowing sharing of political power and economic opportunities. As Van Klinken (2001) and Budyatna (MUI, 2000) have suggested, a win-win situation is possible among competing factions and is the rational choice for the future

for Ambonese Muslims and Christians. However, this depends on whether such a mechanism can be agreed upon.

Local political reform is useless unless the central government relinquishes its grip on local government, which is based on the belief that it needs to maintain control to ensure that separatist groups in support of Republic of South Moluccas (*Republik Maluku Selatan*) do not arise. The *Front Kedaulatan Maluku* (FKM, the Moluccas Sovereign Front) supporting Moluccan separatism was deliberately demonised by former and active security force members in Ambon and Jakarta to legitimate the deployment of the security apparatus (TNI and police force) in Ambon. President Wahid and later President Megawati failed to deal with security force involvement in the dynamics of the Ambonese conflict and in post-conflict politics.

A major issue will be the political and economic competition between Muslims and Christians, and between local and central governments. Elections for governor in 2003 will indicate the level of competition from these various quarters. Local Muslims exploited the Christian-cum-separatist myth to gain political concessions from central government in the form of power-sharing arrangements and access to economic and political resources.

Ambonese Christians resent Muslims' claims of a Christian-cum-separatist movement and seek the immediate application of regional autonomy, which will allow local control of politics. However, the increased security force involvement in national politics during the Megawati period has been motivated by the desire to restore central authority in order to protect the unity of Indonesia and to control any regional conflict. This is a failure of the post-New Order regime, which is continuing the previous policies of the New Order. In reality, the era of regional autonomy requires a prudent and profound manifestation of central government so as to enable the distribution of local resources under just and fair local governance. Local authorities in Ambon with its variety of religions, ethnicities and political interests must operate on the basis of a transparent, fair and just agreement taking into account sacred and traditional *Pela Gandong* values emphasising harmonious relationship. There must also be a strong desire to implement future policy under the local

authority of a regional government, which is allowed to operate in a secure environment guaranteed by a professional security force not involved in politics.



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