

From the ramparts of Fort Victoria: knowing Indonesia through a distant mirror

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This paper arises from my longstanding attempt to understand Indonesia from an unusual standpoint. Many historians have sought to write regional histories, but explicitly or otherwise, such histories have usually been sympathetic to, or even part of, the Indonesian nationalist enterprise, even when based on colonial sources. Using examples from Ambon and Papua, this paper will argue that regional histories not only provide insights into particular regional societies, but also, by peering over the shoulders of the Papuan and Ambonese elites, facilitate more complex understanding about the making of independent Indonesia and the processes through which peoples throughout the Netherlands Indies came to think of themselves as Indonesians. It will examine the debates among Ambonese and Papuans about whether and in what ways they thought of themselves as Indonesians and whether they wanted their homelands to be part of Indonesia.

Much of the research on the regional histories of Indonesia has been inspired by the work of van JC Leur and John Smail (Smail 1961; van Leur 1955). Historians, both Indonesians and outsiders, have sought to write Indo-centric, Indonesian and autonomous histories, even where the construction of these regional histories has been firmly based on colonial sources. Explicitly or otherwise, these histories were part of the Indonesian nationalist enterprise, in different ways and in varying degrees sympathetic to Indonesian national aspirations. Historians have sought to give substance to national cultures and histories, as an antidote to the Euro-centric constructions of earlier Dutch historians. Yet, regional histories are sometimes an awkward fit in the nationalist

history enterprise. Aceh, Papua, Ambon and other regions with histories of resistance to central control have attracted considerable scholarly attention, probably more than their political and economic importance has warranted.

Exploring regional histories, or at least the ones I have been pre-occupied with in the Ambonese islands and Papua, has been a curious way of knowing Indonesia, looking over the shoulders — to use Smail's expression (Smail, 1961:82) — of people who have often had doubts about Indonesia and whether they wanted to be Indonesian. It has been a way of knowing Indonesia through researching the experience of Papuans and Ambonese who have rarely considered themselves Indonesians as an unquestioning response. This way of knowing Indonesia appears distorted to some. A Dutch friend and colleague chastised me for writing about Indonesia as if I were sitting on the ramparts of Fort Victoria looking out over the bay of Ambon at the rest of the archipelago. Pieter Drooglever was not, I hope, likening my approach to Indonesian history to that of the colonial historians criticised by JC van Leur for observing the Indies 'from the deck of the ship, the ramparts of the fortress, the high gallery of the trading-house' (van Leur 1955:261). He was, I think, suggesting that I endeavoured to understand Indonesia through some distant and distorted regional mirror. Writing the histories of Ambon and Papua has involved exploring anti-national narratives, particularly in the case of Papua, couched in terms of ethnicity and race that affront the ideals of a multi-ethnic and multi-faith Indonesia that have been widely shared and supported by foreign scholars of independent Indonesia.

The regional histories of Ambon and Papua have also been an awkward fit with the Australian national strategic framework of Indonesian studies in Australia. In many ways the successive governments' recognition of the importance of Indonesia — of knowing about Indonesia — has supported and protected Indonesian studies, but it is a 'united Indonesia' that we should be getting to know. Somewhat at a disjuncture with government strategic interest in a united Indonesia has been a view in some sections of public opinion much more supportive of regional and separatist aspirations. The

support of East Timor's long struggle against Indonesian control in a broad cross section of Australian society is the most obvious example. Interest in and sympathy for West Papua has been much more limited, but it was momentarily evident in 2006 after the arrival of 43 asylum seekers from West Papua (Chauvel 2006a; Chauvel 2006b).

Using examples from Ambon and Papua, this paper will argue that regional histories not only provide insights into particular regional societies, but also, by peering over the shoulders of the Papuan and Ambonese elites, facilitate some more complex understandings about the making of independent Indonesia and the processes through which peoples throughout the Netherlands Indies came to think of themselves as Indonesians. It will examine the debates among Ambonese and Papuans about whether and in what ways they thought of themselves as Indonesians and whether they wanted their homelands to be part of Indonesia.

Like many other historians of Indonesia's regions, my work on Maluku and Papua history has been based on archival research and fieldwork. Henk Schulte Nordholt noted that John Smail's advocacy of an autonomous history of Southeast Asia had inspired a generation of historians to research single regions, a focus facilitated by the organisation of the Dutch archives on the basis of administrative regions (Schulte Nordholt 2004:4). John Smail (1961:88–98) suggested that in regional histories the 'facts' of an underlying social structure and culture — of an autonomous history — were more insistent and compelling. Although he recognised that regional histories would produce a patchwork rather than a single national history, Smail argued for the reconstruction of Indonesian history on the basis of regional studies. He was cognisant of the dangers of taking the fact of Indonesia too much for granted after the proclamation of independence, but did not anticipate how regional voices could produce not simply a patchwork but rather anti-national narratives.

The fieldwork has been a very personal and subjective experience. I have had the good fortune of getting to know many of the Ambonese and Papuan politicians who have debated and struggled over the 'Indonesia question' in their own societies. I came to the same conviction as John Smail that these were the people who should be

given the primary focus that their role deserves. Combining archival sources and fieldwork data has enriched the research. Rarely have interviews added new empirical data to the archival record, but they have often provided the interpretive framework. The interviews have taught me how to read the documents. The Ambonese and Papuan voices have provided some counterweight to the richness and quantity of empirical data in the colonial archives, much of it written by Dutch officials and observers. The Ambonese and Papuan voices, collectively, enable an analysis of the development of broader social groups, in the case of my research, the emergence of local political and administrative elites. They also provide insights into how personal experiences of politicians influenced their political ideas and actions. It is these personal experiences that facilitate a more nuanced analysis of how individual judgement, subjective experience and chance circumstances have helped shape political ideals and activities within a social structure of change. For example, the instigator of the Republic of the South Moluccas (RMS), Minister of Defence and later 'President in Exile', JA Manusama's experience as a school teacher in Jakarta during the months immediately after the proclamation of Independence shaped his ideas about what life would be like for Dutch educated and indentified Ambonese in an independent Indonesia. Manusama's experience of threats and intimidation at the hands of pro-independence *pemuda* (youth) was quite unlike that of his political allies and rivals resident in Ambon at this time.¹ Tracing the education, professional careers and political lives of Papuans negotiating a path of opportunity and survival, collaboration and resistance enables an analysis beyond the rhetoric that shapes much of the public discourse of politics in Papua and between 'Jakarta' and 'Papua'.

Examining the formation of Indonesia looking over the shoulders of two regional elites is a particular — some might suggest a peculiar — way of knowing Indonesia. Neither Papuans nor Ambonese have exercised much political or economic influence in national life. Perhaps because of the history of resistance, even the most pro-Republican Ambonese leaders have been tarnished by the separatist brush. It has been in the geographical location of Ambon and Papua on the eastern borders of Indonesia, ethnically distinct from much of the

Indonesian heartland in Java and Sumatra — both societies are on the other side of the Wallace line — that contributes something of what each society brings to the making of Indonesia and the ways of knowing Indonesia along with the regional revolts themselves. Papua, or rather the conflicts surrounding Papua, have influenced how Indonesia has been constructed. Sukarno's successful campaign against the Dutch to restore West Irian to Indonesia necessitated the development of arguments about why Papua should be part of Indonesia and, by implication, what was the character of the Indonesia that Papua should be part of. The Indonesian diplomat, LN Palar, argued at the United Nations during the first General Assembly debate on the West Irian conflict in 1954 that Indonesia was a political concept rather than a cultural or ethnic notion. The 'Irianese', he contended, were merely one of seventeen ethnic groups that made up Indonesia. The 'Irianese' were different from other Indonesians, but no more so than, for example, 'Eskimos' and 'Indians' were different from other Canadians. What was important in nation building was not common ethnic stock but rather a shared history, suffering, and fight against a common adversary. The common Indonesian bond was developed through the shared struggle against Dutch colonialism (Palar 1954). Sukarno made West Irian the focus of a nation building campaign. Sukarno argued that the Indonesian Revolution was not complete as long as the Dutch maintained a colonial outpost in New Guinea. At a time of intense political contestation, the 'return' of West Irian to the Republic was one issue that nearly all politicians and political parties supported. The New York Agreement of 1962, through which The Netherlands agreed to transfer the sovereignty and administration of Papua to Indonesia, was a great diplomatic and military victory as well as a source of national pride about Papua's integration into Indonesia. This sense of national achievement has made the struggle of some Papuans to separate a particular affront to Indonesia as a nation. At the time of the revival of Papuan nationalism following the fall of President Suharto, Sukarno's daughter former President Megawati appealed to the people of Papua that the territory had been entrusted to Indonesia by the sacrifice of heroes in the struggle against the Dutch. She recalled a childhood conversation with her father. When she asked why Sukarno had visited

Papua, so far away, he replied: 'Without Irian Jaya, Indonesia is not complete to become the national territory of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia' (*Tifa Irian* 1999).

Christianity and Islam

Many Ambonese and Papuans reflect on Indonesia and their place in it through the prism of religion. The religious or secular character of the Indonesian State and Indonesian governments' policies on religion are matters of the greatest interest as they influence not only relations with the central government but also interfaith relations in Maluku and Papua.

Maluku and Papua are regions of the archipelago where Islam and Christianity have competed with each other since the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century and where adherents of the two religions live together, often in mixed settlement patterns.² Islam was established in parts of Maluku and the west coast of Papua prior to the establishment of European administrative posts and before the first missionaries began conversions. Many sections of Maluku and Papuan society, however, had not become Muslim and, to generalise, they tended to convert to Christianity as European administration and missionary activities expanded. Religious conversion that began in Maluku in the fifteenth century has continued in the highlands of Papua in recent times. Catholic and Protestant missions were established in the mid-1950s in the densely populated Baliem Valley and there was some Papuan conversion to Islam during the 1970s in the valley (Farhadian, 2005:81).

Religion delineated the colonial experience for Ambonese. Many Christian Ambonese felt a strong bond of a shared religion with the Dutch. Particularly during the last century of colonial rule Christian Ambonese had access to Malay and Dutch language education and an entree into employment with the colonial state as professionals, civil servants and soldiers. In these capacities, Christian Ambonese were employed throughout the Indies. Whereas there had been mission schools in Christian villages since Portuguese times, the first primary schools were opened in Moslem villages in the early 1920s.³ For the most part Moslem Ambonese did not participate in the colonial

enterprise of the last eight decades of Dutch rule. The exceptions were the sons of Moslem Raja families who had the opportunity to study in Dutch language schools and training colleges for government officials. These sons of the Moslem adat elite were the first generation to compete with the Christians for local bureaucratic and political power.

Decolonisation meant many things for Ambonese, but one of them was the change in faith of the key decision makers within government. The shared religion that had helped identify Ambonese with the colonial state disappeared with Indonesian independence. For Moslem Ambonese independence was the first time that their co-religionists held most of the senior positions within government.

On 5 February Papuans celebrate the arrival of the first Christian missionaries, Carl W Ottow and JG Geissler in 1855. The two Germans are thought of as emissaries of God sent to liberate Papuans from the world of the Devil. Their arrival was the work of the Holy Spirit for this land and its inhabitants. Since then, Papuans have understood and accepted change from outside; especially, they have known and accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Bleskadit 2002:3). The year 2000 was the last time Papuans were permitted a public commemoration of 'independence' day on 1 December. In subsequent years, the arrival of the two missionaries has been a major celebration of Papuan identity. The celebration suggests that Christianity is a core element in Papuan identity and the churches key institutions in Papuan society. In his address to the public meeting during the 2006 anniversary, the Rev. Socratez Sofyan Yoman, the head of the Baptist Church in Papua, argued:

From the presence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the land of Papua, through the mediation of the two missionaries [Ottow and Geissler], their commitment and objective can be clearly seen: that is to gather the spirit of the Papuan people to become the flock of the Lord. Because of this, the churches in the land of Papua, as the protector of the community, very appropriately have a commitment and a central role to nurture, guard and protect God's flock from intimidation, detention, abduction, torture, imprisonment, rape and murder together with the stigmatization as separatists, traitors and members of the OPM (Organisasi Papua Merdeka, Free Papua Organisation) (Yoman 2006).

Often missionaries were the first contact Papuan societies had with the world outside. Many Papuan societies were introduced to the 'modern' world by the churches. Missionaries brought education, training, health services and a new understanding of the world Papuans lived in. Government and business followed the churches (Giay 1996:1). The Papuan theologian, Benny Giay, has argued that Papuans have come to regard the churches as 'liberating institutions' and as a 'bearer of new hope for a society shackled by the cold ideology of development that the New Order Government taught' (Giay 2001).

From the earliest years of the Indonesian administration in Papua, there has been a concern amongst Papuans that it was Indonesia's intention to promote Islam in 'Christian' Papua. Sukarno's decision to build a large mosque in predominantly 'Christian' Biak, the Papuan belief that the Indonesian authorities were more supportive of Moslem than Christian organisations and activities and Indonesian suspicion of the influence and activities of foreign missionaries were factors in creating this impression. The conversion of some Dani Christians in the central highlands to Islam in the 1970s has been the source of disquiet reflecting the broader anxieties about mass migration and suspicions about the Indonesian government's intentions to 'Islamise' Papua (Farhadian:81-4).

The demography of Papua has changed dramatically since Papua was 'returned' to Indonesia in 1963. Religion has been an important part of this transformation. At the end of the Dutch period well over 90 per cent of the population of Papua was Christian. According to the 2000 census about 25 per cent of the population was Moslem, most of them settlers from elsewhere in Indonesia. Ethnic and religious identity in Papua do not coincide neatly. There is a small proportion of Papuans, about 6 per cent, but locally significant along the southwest coast, who are Moslems with strong links to the Moslem society of the eastern Ceram and the Ambonese islands. There is also an important Christian minority among the Indonesian settler communities. Ambonese, Manadonese and Keiese were the missionaries and teachers who brought Christian teaching to Papua and many of them remain influential members of the churches in Papua.⁴

Histories of separatism

Politically, sections of both the elites in Ambon and Papua have led independence movements that sought to separate their respective regions from Indonesia. The Republic of the South Moluccas (Republik Maluku Selatan, RMS) was the first attempt to establish an independent state, separate from Indonesia just months after the transfer of sovereignty. Although the Ambonese islands were occupied by the Indonesian armed forces by early 1951, a low level guerrilla struggle was sustained until the capture of 'President' Soumokil in 1963, who along with Manusama had been the principal instigator of the RMS. Manusama led a government in exile until 1993. RMS ideals were revived in Ambon after the intervention the Laskar Jihad from Java in the communal conflict and the inability or unwillingness of the Wahid Government to prevent the intervention, raising in the minds of some Christians the question of their future in Indonesia, just as the collapse of the federal state system had done in 1950.

Following the separation of East Timor in 1999 and the Helsinki Agreement on Aceh in 2005, Papua remains the only region with an active independence movement and where there is a consensus among the many disparate Papuan political groups that the question of Papua's status in Indonesia has not been resolved. Many Papuan nationalists date their independence struggle from the period prior to Papua's integration into Indonesia in 1963. They base their historical arguments for independence on the fact that Papuan leaders of the time did not participate in the negotiations that led to the transfer of Papua's sovereignty to Indonesia.

I argue that Ambon and Papua's incorporation into Indonesia, and resistance of some sections of both societies to incorporation, has changed the character of the Indonesia we observe and study. Ambon and Papua share a history of independence movements, but I argue the dynamics and nature of the debates and struggles among the Ambonese and Papuan elites were distinctly different.

The 'Indonesia question' in Ambon

The question of whether Ambon should be part or not be part of an independent Indonesia dominated Ambonese elite politics from the

1910s to 1950s, culminating in the revolt of the RMS in April 1950. Moreover, as the flag-raising incident in front of the President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs Widodo AS and the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) Chief Syamsir Siregar on National Family Day, 29 June 2007, indicates, the issue of integration into Indonesia still has resonance in sections of Ambonese society (*Antara News* 2007). It was a struggle that found Moslem and Christian Ambonese in both camps (Chauvel 1990).

The 'Indonesia question' for Ambonese was a complex and particular one. Ambonese, especially Christians, were among the first Indonesians to have access to Dutch language education. The Ambones Burger School was established in 1869. Access to western education led to employment opportunities as government officials, professionals and soldiers. Education and colonial service created an Ambonese emigrant community throughout the Indies. By 1930 about 10 per cent of 'Ambonese' lived outside the Maluku. Most of the emigrants were Christians. For Ambonese it was not only the maps and school books that enabled them to imagine the Indies and Indonesia as their national community, but their own life experience and the aspirations for their children's future education and employment were directly associated with Ambon's incorporation in the larger political entity of the Netherlands Indies.

The complexity of the 'Indonesia question' came for Ambonese in that access to education and employment and the social mobility and material welfare that colonial service brought went hand in hand with a strong identification with the Dutch. In the case of many Ambonese colonial soldiers this identification with the Dutch was reflected in the slogan — *Door de eeuwen trouw* (Loyal through the ages). Loyalty was code for dependency. From the economic backwater of Ambon, colonial service was the principal avenue for social mobility and status.

Like other Indonesians, Ambonese established organisations to foster educational opportunities and promote ethnic, cultural and religious values. The Ambonsstudiefond was established in 1909, the year after Budi Utomo and with similar objectives. Sarekat Ambon, established in 1920 by Java-based Ambonese, had close links with

Indonesian nationalist organisations. There was much overlapping membership. Ambonese figures like Dr Leimina, Mr Latuharhary and Dr Sitanala were members of both Ambon-specific organisations and Indonesian nationalist organisations.

The dilemma confronting the Ambonese elite was how could they achieve their objectives of determine their own destiny and become leaders of their own society, ambitions that they shared with other Indonesians, as well as maintain their own cultural, ethnic and religious autonomy and maintain the position of relative privilege they had enjoyed in the colonial regime. By joining other Indonesians in the struggle for independence they could achieve their political objectives. As a small multi-faith ethnic minority, however, from an economic backwater in the eastern archipelago, some of the Ambonese elite were fearful that in an independent Indonesia, inevitably dominated by Indonesians, mostly Muslim, from elsewhere in the archipelago, they would lose their position of relative privilege that their identification with and service to the Dutch had created.

Both before the war and during the Revolution, Ambonese debated this dilemma. Some like, Leimena and Latuharhary in Java and AJ Patty and EU Pupella in Ambon, wanted Ambon to be part of an independent Indonesia. Others sought separation from Indonesia, not as an independent state, but along with Manado and West Timor, as part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The two principal instigators of the RMS, Soumokil and Manusama, were conditional supporters of Indonesian independence. They had found the solution to Ambon's 'Indonesia dilemma' in the Dutch federal system. As senior political figures in the federal State of East Indonesia, they became leaders of their own society at the same time the federal system provided a degree of autonomy for Ambon. It was only after the federal system collapsed in early 1950 that Soumokil and Manusama thought about establishing an independent state in the South Moluccas.

Despite the divergent experience Christians and Moslems had of the colonial system, Manusama and Soumokil mobilised support for the RMS from both Christian and Moslem communities. Reflecting the long debate among Ambonese about their 'Indonesia question' and the

dilemmas that an independent Indonesia posed, Christians and Moslems were found on both sides. Dr Leimena, the Minister of Health in the Hatta Cabinet, headed a delegation to negotiate with the RMS leaders in May 1950. Mr Latuharhary was appointed Governor of Maluku after the Indonesian army occupied Ambon. Among those buried in the national heroes cemetery in Ambon, the resting place for those who died fighting the RMS, were scores of Ambonese, both Christians and Moslems.⁵

Papua

The man who proclaimed the RMS for Soumokil and Manusama and became the first President was Johannes Manuhutu. Like Manusama and Soumokil, Manuhutu was a member of the Dutch-educated Ambonese diaspora. Manuhutu had spent his pre-war career as a government official in Papua.

In the Indonesian arguments with the Dutch about whether Papua should be part of Indonesia at the time of the Round Table Conference and afterwards, it was the contributions of east Indonesians, like Manuhutu, that were used to support the Indonesian case. The Indonesians argued that it was the thousands of Ambonese, Manadonese and Keiseese who had established the administration, spread Christianity and established schools, rather than the Dutch. Indeed, Papuans experienced a curious form of dual colonialism, as much east Indonesian as it was Dutch.⁶ As I have argued elsewhere, it was the resentments of the first generation of Dutch-educated Papuans against, and rivalries with, the east Indonesian servants of the colonial regime that helped generate a pan-Papuan identity and an alternative Papuan nationalism (Chauvel 2005).

If the Ambonese islands were one of the first regions of the archipelago to be brought under Portuguese influence, then Dutch control, then Papua was one of the last. Much of the highlands was barely under Dutch administrative control when the Dutch left Papua in 1962. The first European missionaries landed near Manokwari just a few years before the Ambonse Burger School was established in Ambon, 300 years after the first Portuguese missionary schools in Ambon, nearly half a century before the first Dutch administrative posts.

The implications of this chronological disparity in Ambonese and Papuan experience of the colonial regime are critical. Ambonese were active and privileged participants in the late colonial enterprise as government officials, professionals and soldiers; Papuans were not. The best and the brightest Ambonese has access to the finest education in the Indies, mainly based in Java, and were deployed as servants of the colonial state from Sabang to Merauke. By the time, after the Pacific War, when the Dutch started to train Papuans as officials, nurses, teachers and soldiers, Papua was administratively separated from the rest of Indonesia. The training was conducted in Hollandia/Jayapura, not on Java, as had been the case for Ambonese. The other students were fellow Papuans, not Indonesians from elsewhere in the archipelago. From 1944 to 1962, educational and employment opportunities for Papuans were in Papua, not elsewhere in Indonesia.

In Papua, the graduates of the mission schools and Dutch training colleges, interacted with Indonesians in an essentially 'colonial relationship'. The east Indonesians held the positions as officials, teachers, missionaries and police that the Papuans wanted to have themselves. Papuans resented the often patronising and denigrating manner in which they were treated by Indonesian servants of the colonial state. One official Dutch study of the Papuan political elite argued that the political rejection of Indonesia — like Indonesian claims for Papua — was based on personal experience. Papuans resented the mistreatment and discrimination they had suffered at the hands of Indonesian officials. Many felt they had been treated as animals (*binatang*), as being dumb and not able to speak good Malay (Indonesian) by their Indonesian teachers. Those Papuans who had obtained positions in the administration felt that they were kept in the lower positions by Indonesian officials, who regarded them as incapable of achieving anything else.⁷

In the late 1940s and 1950s, when Papuans started debating whether they wanted Papua to be part of Indonesia or whether they thought of themselves as Indonesians, independent Indonesia already existed. Unlike the Ambonese, Papuans had not participated in its creation. The Papuan 'Indonesia question' developed in the context of the struggle between the Netherlands and Indonesia about who held

sovereignty in Papua. Papuans felt themselves to be object of this struggle, rarely participants in it. An important impulse in the creation of an alternative Papuan nationalism was the desire to determine their own future, rather than permit Indonesia and Holland do that for them. The *Manifest Politik* was the first Papuan assertion of Papua's right to independence. It was formulated by the Komite Nasional, in which most of the leading politicians were represented, in October 1961. The timing was important. The *Manifest Politik* was debated and announced a couple of weeks after Dutch Foreign Minister Joseph Luns presented his plan to the United Nations General Assembly, which sought to 'internationalise' the administration of Papua and deny Indonesia's claim to the sovereignty of Papua. Torey, one of the founders of the Komite Nasional, explained the *Manifest Politik* in the context of Luns' proposal. He said that Luns' proposal had created much misunderstanding in Papua. Some members of the New Guinea Council considered that if all they did was to listen passively to the claims of the Indonesian and Netherlands Governments, they would eventually be forced to support one of the adversaries and their own voice would not be heard at the UN or in the international community. The objective of the *Manifest Politik* was to establish Papua's right with the raising of the flag to demonstrate to the international community that Papuans desire to stand on their own feet and later establish their own nation.⁸

The Dutch promise of the early 1960s for an independent Papuan state was appealing for many of the graduates of the Dutch schools who became the political leaders of the late 1950s and 1960s. They would become the leaders of the independent state, just as their contemporaries would do in neighbouring Papua New Guinea after independence in 1975. They would not only have the positions occupied by the east Indonesians, but also those held by the Dutch.

The Papuan 'Indonesia question' differed from that among the Ambonese elite not only for these historical factors and differences in the structure of the colonial administrations, but also in the balance of pro- and anti-integration figures. It is easy to compile a list of well-known Ambonese advocates of Ambon's integration into Indonesia, both those based in Java and in Ambon itself. Both during the 1950s and early 1960s, however, as well as during the post Suharto revival of

Papuan nationalism, Papuan advocates of integration with Indonesia have been much less conspicuous.

Nevertheless, it important to recognise that there was and is a debate among Papuans. During Indonesia's struggle for independence there were instances where Indonesian nationalist figures were able to mobilise Papuan support for Papua's integration in Indonesia. It is these movements in Hollandia and Serui that give some substance to LN Palar's arguments at the General Assembly in 1954 that Papuans had participated in the struggle against the Dutch.

Soegoro Atmoprasodjo had been a political detainee in the Boven Digul camp before the war. In wartime Australia, Soegoro became a confidant of ChO van der Plas, a senior member of the provisional Indies Government, and JPK van Eechoud, the future Resident of New Guinea. Van Eechoud appointed Soegoro as the head of the Papoeainternaat in Hollandia, the training college of Papuan officials and police. This placed him in an excellent position to influence his students and organise political activities. In December 1945, seemingly in response to the proclamation of independence (and perhaps on instructions from the Republican Government), Soegoro and two other former Digulists, Pendjaitan and Nottan, organised a revolt. In van Eechoud's accounts, the suspected plan was for an attack on Hollandia, when most Europeans were attending a celebration. The Dutch authorities were able to pre-empt any action with the arrest of 250 Javanese. Van Eechoud arrested all the Javanese in the Hollandia area, except for a few he trusted absolutely, ironically including Soegoro. Soegoro was arrested later in February.⁹

From the security of his prison, Soegoro was able to organise two further revolts, in July 1946 and January 1947. The action in July 1946 was significant in that it involved many more Papuans, whereas those involved in December 1945 were mainly Javanese. The Papuans involved were from Soegoro's school, van Eechoud's Papuan Battalion and villages surrounding Hollandia. Soegoro appeared to have access to an extensive network of people from his prison cell. Soegoro's argument with Papuans was along the lines:

The Dutch are at war with the Indonesians in Java and you must think about your own land. You must organise yourselves. You must think

about how many years you have been suppressed. How long do you want it to continue? You must realise that you have a rich land and take action and get responsibility for the country in your own hands. We must get rid of all the Europeans and you must take over the administration. When the Europeans are gone, we can take possession of their houses and other goods. Also among the Indonesians there are some clever people. We can exploit the resources and will mine gold.¹⁰

The third action of 31 December 1946 and 4 January 1947 sought to eliminate the small European community, the Indonesian flag would be raised and the territory be declared part of the Republic. After the successful revolt Soegoro would become the Resident, Martin Indy the administrator and Salmon Tamaela, an Ambonese member of the colonial Royal Netherlands Indies Army (KNIL), the military commander. The support amongst both the Papuan and Indonesian communities Soegoro mobilised for this 'revolt' appeared much more extensive than the earlier two actions. It included Papuan police and soldiers of the Papuan Battalion, Ambonese members of the KNIL and Papuan government officials. Among those arrested for their involvement in the affair were Martin Indey, Corinus Kre and Petrus Wettabossy. All three become prominent leaders of pro-Indonesia groups around Hollandia in the remaining years of the Netherlands administration. Soegoro's influence in his school at Joka, where he had been Director, was crucial. Indey and Wettabossy were both involved in the school. The Dutch recognised that Soegoro and his Papuan supporters had been able to mobilise support among politically unsophisticated villagers around Hollandia. The former detainees from Boven Digul, like Soegoro, brought back by the Dutch and appointed to key positions within the administration, had been very effective in spreading their 'propaganda' among the Papuans. Soegoro was not only successful among unsophisticated villagers, some of the most senior Papuan officials were involved in the 'conspiracy'.¹¹

In June 1946 the Republican Governor of Sulawesi Dr Sam Ratulangi and five of his closest assistants and their families were exiled to the island of Japen, off the north coast of Papua. Serui, the main town on the island, was one of the centres of missionary education in Papua and the site of a teachers college. Prior to the arrival of the

Ratulangi group, there appeared to be no political activity. In December 1946 the Partai Kemerdekaan Indonesia Irian (Indonesian Independence Party Irian, PKII) was established, with Silas Papare as its leader and Ratulangi as the patron. The PKII became the most significant and durable of the pro-Indonesia political groups in Irian. It maintained strong support for integration with Indonesia, long after its founder and patron had departed for Indonesia.

In early 1947 the Dutch authorities observed that the detainees' Papuan support was increasing. Indonesian flags were being flown openly and the Dutch themselves were greeted with '*Merdeka*' (Freedom). JW van Eek, a Controleur on Japen, observed that the detainees were able to use their considerable freedom to spread their ideas successfully amongst the educated sections of the population and awakened their desires for independence. They were able to use the educated as cadre to influence traditional leaders in the villages, who in turn were able to use their authority within the village community. The PKII also had supporters working in local Dutch administration, the police, the post office, the mission and the local health authorities.¹²

Silas Papare was as important a factor in the success of the PKII as Ratulangi. He was a skilled nurse, who developed a considerable reputation both before and during the war. He was an effective mediator between the authorities and his people. Despite his support for the Allied cause during and immediately after the war, he became alienated from Dutch officials because he was not appointed as the Papuan representative to the Malino Conference in 1946. Papare's disenchantment with the Dutch and his reputation amongst his people made him an ideal collaborator with Ratulangi. He acquired the status of a messianic figure. In the 1950s and early 1960s there were great expectations that he would return from Indonesia and solve Serui's problems.¹³

The success of the PKII in Serui cannot be solely attributed to the chance exile of the Ratulangi group or particular experience of Silas Papare. Serui was an unusual society in the Papuan context. It was one of the regions of longest contact with the Dutch and before that with Tidore. As noted earlier, it was a centre of education. With its relatively well educated population, people from Serui found employment

throughout Papua. Serui had an exposure to the outside world and to foreign ideas that distinguished it from most regions of Papua.¹⁴

Soegoro's activities in Hollandia and Ratulangi's in Serui suggest that Indonesian nationalists were able disseminate their ideas among Papuans, both the small group of graduates of the missionary schools and van Eechoud's training schools and amongst less sophisticated villagers. Soegoro did have the capacity to speak to Papuans in terms of their own interests and how these could be advanced within an independent Indonesia. The former detainees from Boven Digul and the Ratulangi group were experienced and skilful politicians, who sought to mobilise Papuan support for the Republican support. They interacted with Papuans in a very different manner to the east Indonesian officials, teachers and missionaries.

Might the history of relations between Papua and Indonesia have been different if there had been more Soegoros and Ratulangis and if the east Indonesian servants of the Dutch administration had not established the pattern of how Indonesian officials and Papuans interacted with each other?

Conclusion

This paper has explored a particular way of knowing Indonesia by peering over the shoulders of political elites in Ambon and Papua. By making regional political elites the focus of research, by following Smail's example by giving regional societies a privileged place in Indonesian history, the paper has linked the knowing of Indonesia with the construction of Indonesia. In rather different ways political leaders in Ambon and Papua have debated and struggled over their respective 'Indonesia questions'. It is not the assertion of this paper that either the Ambonese or Papuan elite have exerted much influence over national affairs; rather, that their internal struggles as well as their relations with the central authorities provide insights into Indonesia's capacity to accommodate the archipelago's cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, foster an Indonesian identity and realise its pluralist and secular nationalist ideals.

Histories of separatism in Ambon and Papua provide the framework of the paper, but one of the objectives of the comparative

analysis has been to suggest that the 'Indonesia question' in Ambon and Papua had remarkably different dynamics, historical contexts and degrees of participation in the making of Indonesia. Many Ambonese were deeply ambivalent about being Indonesian, but there were others among the leading figures in the making of Indonesia. For Papuans, both those in favour of integration and those opposed, Indonesia was a *fait accompli*.

The emphasis in this paper is on the particular. It has not been argued that the Ambonese and Papuan cases were reflective of broader patterns of regional responses to the making of Indonesia. The paper examined how the history of Dutch rule, patterns of religious conversion, administrative structures and education policies of the late colonial period influenced the ways members of the Ambonese and Papuan elites thought about being Indonesian and responded the formation of Indonesian and, in the case of Papua, Indonesia's claim that Papua was part of Indonesia. It suggested that the Ambonese and Papuan elite responses were not uniform and that there was no inevitability about the pattern of political developments in Ambon and Papua.

The issues and pattern of developments which helped shape the debates among the Ambonese elite over the last century and among Papuans more recently still resonate. What sort of nation-state Indonesia is becoming, what sort of political system is evolving and what place do Ambonese and Papuans have in this evolving Indonesia? If anything the interaction between local and national politics has intensified and quickened with improved communications and transportation as well as the twin processes of democratisation and decentralisation in post Suharto Indonesia. Will Indonesia remain a secular state? How will Indonesia's religious and ethnic plurality be accommodated? Political changes at national level influence local ethnic and religious relationships and vice-versa. The communal conflict in Maluku between 1999 and 2002 was a good example of how local conflict provided the opportunity for intervention from radical Muslim groups from outside Maluku, which in turn served to revive a neo-RMS separatist movement that had been largely dormant since the early 1960s. A recent International Crisis Group report drew attention

to rising tensions between Christians and Muslims in Papua and the identification, in the eyes of some, of Christian Papuans as pro-independence and settler Muslims as pro-integration with Indonesia (ICG 2008). The outcomes of the national level struggles will not be greatly influenced by Ambonese and Papuans, but they will be followed closely and how Ambonese, Papuans and many other Indonesians in the more remote parts of the archipelago respond may influence the shape of the political entity(ies) that emerge.

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Notes

1. JA Manusama interview, 17 January 1978. See Manusama 1999:53–60.
2. One of the changes brought about by the communal violence in Ambon between 1999 and 2002 was a much greater degree of segregation in settlement patterns along religious lines.
3. *Memorie van den Gouverneur der Molukken* L.H. W. van Sandick, 1926, V: appendix, Ministerie van Kolonien, mailrapport 2336/26, General State Archives, The Hague.
4. For a detailed discussion of the demographic transformation in Papua since 1963, see McGibbon 2004.
5. This estimate is based on the author's observations, Ambon, October 2008.
6. *Rapport van de Commissie Nieuw-Guinea (Irian) 1950*, 3e Stuk, De Nederlands-Indonesische Unie, The Hague, 1950, pp. 81, 112.
7. *Rapport van de wetenschappelijk ambtenaar G.W. Grootenhuis in NNG, 'Papoea Elite en Politieke Partijen'*, 1961, Ministerie van Kolonien, Dossier 11575, Deel I, pp. 16, 106. Dutch State Archives, The Hague
8. *NGR Handelingen*, 30-10-61, pp 13–18, Dutch State Archives, The Hague.
9. *Onderzoek samenspanning tot opstand in Hollandia*, Commisaris van Politie 1e klasse, Diest Lorgion, Hollandia, Nieuw Guinea 1919 1949, inv. 51, Dutch State Archives, The Hague.

10. Rapport inzake Beraamde opstand te Hollandia van 16 op 17 Juli 1946, compiled by the Militaire Auditie Hollandia, 10 September 1946, Onderzoek samenspanning tot opstand in Hollandia, Algemene Secretarie Batavia Nieuw Guinea 1919 1949, inv. 51, Dutch State Archives, The Hague.
11. Pro Justitia: Vordering, De Officier van Justitie, Hollandia 30 Juni 1948; Letter, Auditeur Militair, mr. A.H.J. Nord, to PG Natavia, 17 Juni 47, 'Derde opstandzaak te Hollandia' Algemene Secretarie Batavia Nieuw Guinea 1919–1949, invent. 54, Dutch State Archives, The Hague
12. Memorie van Overgave van de Onderafdeling Japen van de Controleur J.W. van Eek, 1954, MMK 400, Dutch State Archives, p. 56.
13. Rapport van de wetenschappelijk ambtenaar G.W. Grootenhuis in NNG, 'Papoea Elite en Politieke Partijen', 1961, Ministerie van Kolonien, Dossier 11575, Deel II, pp. 6, 7, 12, 13. Dutch State Archives, The Hague.
14. Rapport van de wetenschappelijk ambtenaar G.W. Grootenhuis in NNG, 'Papoea Elite en Politieke Partijen', 1961, Ministerie van Kolonien, Dossier 11575, Deel II, pp. 3–5. Dutch State Archives, The Hague.

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