

ALTAR AND THRONE IN CENTRAL MOLUCCAN SOCIETIES*

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Introduction

The problem of the interpenetration of cultures immediately involves anyone engaged in missionary work -- whether it be of the traditional Christian type or the modern types of technical assistance and political influence. There seem to be at least two dimensions of this problem, the first having received relatively more attention than the second. First there is the mutual interaction on the level of ideas and beliefs between the two cultural systems in contact. Secondly, there is the interaction of the two cultural systems on the sociological level. It can be argued that a considerable amount of the scholarly work done on the first level is of limited value and relevance because it has not taken adequate account of the social-cultural infrastructure. This study attempts to do just this in describing the situation which obtains in contemporary Central Moluccan village societies against the historical background out of which it has developed.

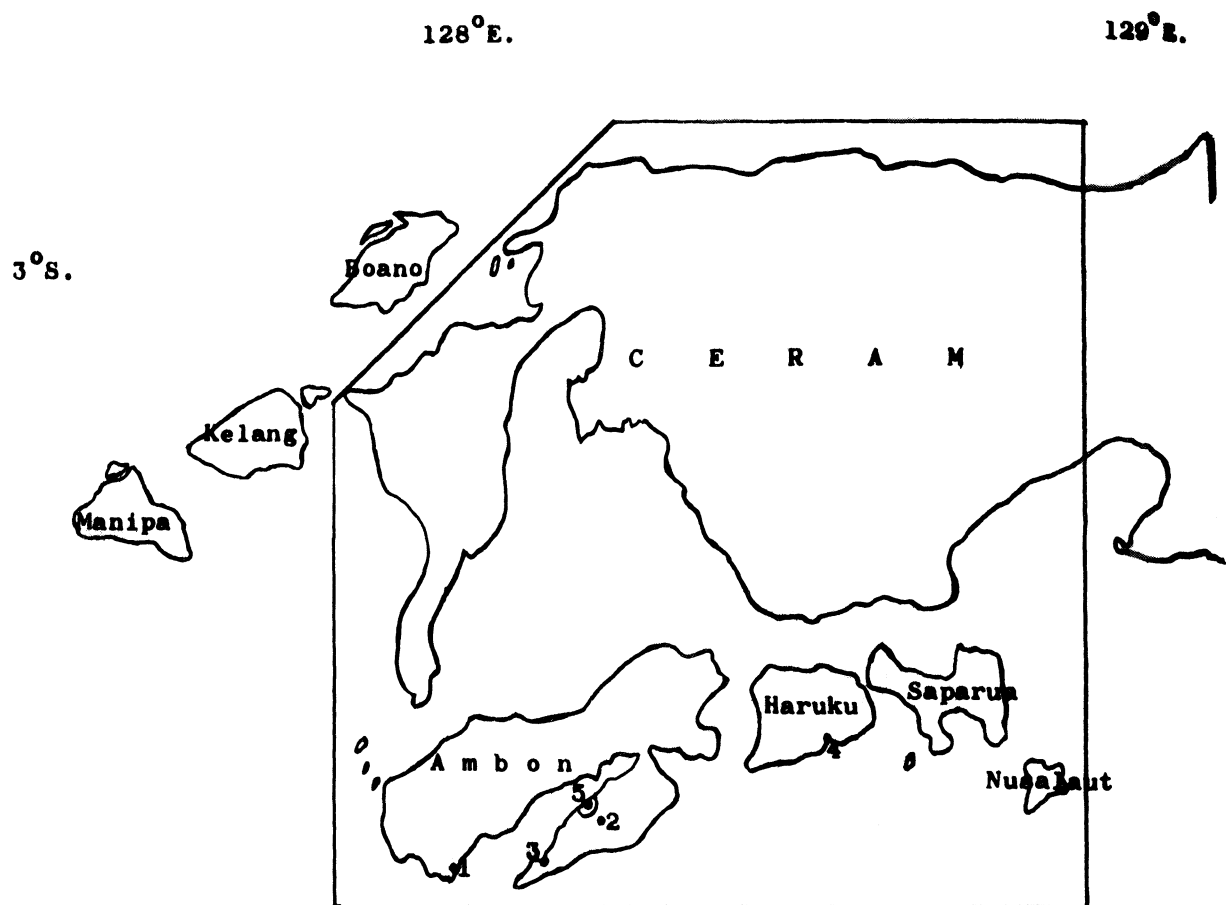
* Editors' Note: This paper presents a synopsis of the main argument of a doctoral dissertation bearing the same title "Altar and Throne in Central Moluccan Societies: a study of the relationship between the institutions of religion and the institutions of local government in a traditional society undergoing rapid social change" submitted to the Faculty of the Department of Religion of the Yale University Graduate School in 1961. Parts of the dissertation have appeared in *Ethnology*, Vol. I, No. 1, Jan. 1962 under the title "Ambonese Kinship Groups", and the Cultural Report Series, No. 10, of the Southeast Asia Studies Program of Yale University in 1962, under the title "A General Description of Ambonese Adat." The dissertation has been made available through University Microfilms.

This study is based primarily on field research undertaken in visits to the Central Moluccas in 1957, 1960 and 1964. The analysis relies largely on data collected in the field, mainly by the interview method. Some reference will be made to material from the literature, but only in a passing and general way. The author, Rev. Frank L. Cooley, has taught sociology and anthropology in the Christian University of Indonesia, Djakarta, 1956-60 and in Satya Watjana Christian University, Salatiga, 1961-65. He is now working with the Council of Churches in Indonesia, Djakarta, especially with the Commission on Study and Research.

The Central Moluccas

From J. Mooij, Geschiedenis der Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indie, (Weltvreden, Landsdrukkerij, 1923)

Scale 1:1,000,000



- 1 = Allang
- 2 = Soija
- 3 = Erie
- 4 = Aboru
- 5 = Ambon City

— = boundary of area studied

Certain definitions are needed at the outset. First, what is meant by the term "Central Moluccan societies"? The village societies studied are found within one of the four regions of the Province of the Moluccas, according to the present administrative division of the Indonesian Republic. The Central Moluccas represents what Dutch scholars call a kultuurkring or culture area. This study encompasses only a segment of this area, namely the western part of the island of Ceram and the islands of Ambon, Saparua, Haruku and Nusa Laut. Within that segment only Christian villages are considered (See map). Thus it is a still more homogeneous culture area than the region as a whole. It has been subjected to more or less common historical, religious and economic-political influences since before the coming of the Westerner.

Central Moluccan villages tend to be homogeneous as regards religion. They are either Protestant Christian, Islamic or Alifuru villages. (Alifuru is the term used locally to indicate that part of the population which has adhered to the indigenous culture, resisting the influences of both Islam and Christianity). Christian and Muslim villages co-exist peacefully side by side in the region, possibly because Moluccan Muslims and Christians are as conscious of their common foundation -- the indigenous culture -- as of their differences in religious faith and practice. Perhaps it is also because they are about equal in numbers, together composing around 94% of the population of the province. In the part of the Central Moluccas delineated above, Protestant villages would comprise half the total, with Muslim villages a close second. The tiny minority of Alifuru villages are in the interior of Ceram. Again, only the situation in Protestant villages will occupy us here.

"Ambonese" is the term generally used to describe the people. Their villages lie for the most part on the shore. In 1960 they had populations with a mean size of slightly over 1100. The inhabitants live almost exclusively from shifting cultivation and fishing, though cloves and nutmegs are very important cash crops. The Ambonese have been subjected to rule by outsiders since the latter part of the 15th century, in the following order: the kingdoms of Ternate and Tidore in the North Moluccas, the Portuguese from 1520 till the end of the 16th century, the Dutch East India Company from 1605 till the end of the 18th century, the British for the first two decades of the 19th century, the Netherlands' Crown until 1941, the Japanese during the Second World War, and finally the Dutch again from 1945-49. Indonesian jurisdiction over this part of the Republic of Indonesia began in January 1950. This succession of outside rulers has meant in turn a succession of social, economic, political and religious influences impinging on the inhabitants of the Central Moluccas.

While "Throne" refers simply to the institutions of government in the village, the term "Altar" denotes the institutions of village religion, that is to say, systems of religious belief

and practice. Two sets of religious institutions must be distinguished, however, in the Ambonese societies considered in this paper. One is obvious, that of Protestant Christianity, which will be the system dealt with here. But there is another, the indigenous religious system, of which only vestiges remain, visible here and there, sometimes within Christianity, sometimes within adat (the system of mores and customary law), and sometimes independently in certain rites or ceremonies performed on the occasion of crises in the family or village. Although it is really no longer a system, it still possesses considerable influence. Nonetheless, an examination of it is beyond the scope of this essay.

Although the sample of villages studied seems wide enough to warrant making assumptions about a common pattern that applies for the area as a whole, the issues of Church and State are discussed here only in the form in which they appear at the village level. Despite this restricted focus, the issues raised do, however, relate to more general problems -- particularly that of the interaction between Christianity and Culture. In a sense the Central Moluccan case treated here represents a miniature of the entire problem, and to deal with it adequately will involve touching on many aspects of the larger problem. On the practical side, since the relationship between the governing authorities of the village congregation and of the village society are all too frequently characterized by tension and conflict, this situation poses administrative problems for both the Church and the Civil State. It affects negatively the work of both the village congregation and the village government. It is a state of affairs which calls for solution. In fact, it was the leadership of the Protestant Church of the Moluccas that suggested this focus for the research, in the hope that the analysis and conclusions might provide help in making a positive approach to the problem.

The Structure and Function of Throne and Altar

It is here suggested that Moluccan societies manifest two contrasting patterns of social organization, that is to say, that the institutional structures found therein may be based on either of two different principles of organization. On the one hand are those institutions, such as village government, the family, and the soa (a subdivision of the village consisting of a collection of families) which are organized on the indigenous principles of kinship and adat. This may be called the traditional pattern of social organization, and it goes back to a time prior to the coming of Western influences. However, there are other institutions, such as the Protestant congregation, the mutual help associations, the consumers' cooperative, etc., which are organized on the basis of the associational principle of common interests and common convictions, in which the element of individual volition is important. This may be called the

emerging pattern of social organization, not with teleological overtones, but simply because it is in the process of developing.

Throne, or the institutions of local government, may be said to be the characteristic institutional area within the traditional or hereditary pattern. Altar, or the institutions of religion, may be said to be the primary form of the emerging or developing pattern. These two contrasting patterns, and the institutional areas which best characterize them, are in competition, if not in conflict, for particular reasons. This being a dominant characteristic of the relationship between Altar and Throne in Central Moluccan societies, it is worth examining the structure and function of each institutional complex.

Throne, or the Institutions of Government

The structure of village society in general needs to be set forth as the context of the institutions of village government. The present structure of village society seems to go back at least to 1645, early in the period of Dutch East India Company rule. There is good evidence for believing that in the process of subjugating the area, the Company administrators destroyed an earlier hierarchical structure consisting of Uli, groupings of villages under a strong ruler, and sought to give autonomous status to each village by making it self-governing, of course under the supervision of the Company. At any rate, this is the pattern which developed and still obtains to a certain degree.

The Moluccan village is a collection of 15 to 25 clan groups called fam or mata rumah, organized on the patrilineal-patrilocal principle. The fam may be divided into two or more sub-lineages, but this occurs only in a minority of cases. The village is composed of several larger groupings called soa which consist of a collection of lineages. The soa is headed by a chief, kepala soa (literally "soa head"), an office which is hereditary in the sense that the chief must be chosen from a specified lineage. The lineages and sub-lineages are broken down into households or nuclear families that are related to one another by blood and marriage ties. This latter creates still another entity, called familie, a type of non-cognatic kin-group which functions in matters of marriage, giving mutual assistance in times of personal crisis, and generally enhancing the cohesion of village society.⁽¹⁾

Relationships between individuals are determined by heredity, by marriage, and by adat (rendered above as the mores and

(1) The reader with special interests here may find more detailed description in Cooley, F. L., "Ambonese Kin Groups", Ethnology, Vol. I, No. 1, Jan. 1962.

customary law). Adat is very basic in Ambonese society.⁽²⁾ It signifies the norms of relationship and behavior which are believed to have been established by the ancestors to guarantee the well-being of the community. Adat requirements are obligatory upon all members of village society. Failure to observe them will result in temporal punishments by the family and village authorities, as well as (it is widely believed), punishments that will be visited by the spirits of the ancestors who have been angered by the violation. In earlier times nearly every sphere of activity was governed by adat, but now only a small part of the original system remains. What has survived is primarily the adat surrounding marriage and the family, having to do with the rights and duties in regard to offspring, particularly in matters of inheritance, of lineage membership and land; adat regulating the election and installation of village officers, especially the ruler and soa chiefs, and other adat considered to be basic to the continued existence of the village as an adat community.

The structure of village government, known locally as Badan Saniri Negeri, under certain circumstances operates in expanded or contracted form as diagrammed and described below:

-	<u>Radja</u>	- Village head or chief
(executive committee)	<u>Saniri Radjapatih</u>	- Chief plus Soa heads
(central committee)	<u>Badan Saniri Negeri</u>	- Above plus other Saniri members
(village assembly)	<u>Saniri Besar/Lengkap</u>	- Above plus heads of households

The Saniri⁽³⁾ is the body which in its original state exercised legislative, executive and judicial functions in village society. In its present form the Badan Saniri Negeri (Village Council) is composed of from eight to fifteen members, depending on the size and structure of the village. At present its legislative and judicial jurisdiction has largely been transferred to higher governmental organs, except for minor matters. The Kepala Saniri (in current nomenclature Kepala Negeri -- literally Village Head), or chief of the village council, is the ruler, bearing the traditional title of radja, patih or orang kaja under the colonial regime. "Bapak Radja", as he is normally called by his

(2) For a fuller description of Ambonese Adat, cf. Cooley, F. L., A General Description of Ambonese Adat, Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, Cultural Report Series, No. 10, 1962.

(3) This term and pattern of government come from the language and practice of the island of Ceram, from which most of the ancestors establishing Central Moluccan villages originally came.

people, is elected by popular vote of the villagers from a slate nominated by the various groupings in the village and approved by the District authorities, who also supervise the election and later install him. The candidates should belong to the lineage or lineages which have the hereditary right and duty to rule the village. While this hereditary principle has been formally abandoned in recent years, it still continues to be generally observed. The village ruler is the ceremonial and functional head of the village community, the chief executive. Also, together with his council, he legislates according to the needs of the village, in keeping with the law of the land, meaning both the adat, or traditional law, and the laws enacted by the higher civil authorities. In former days the radja and Saniri also sat as a judicial body to hear and pronounce judgment on all but the most serious cases, especially those involving adat. But under the Provisional Constitution of 1950 of the Republic of Indonesia this judicial function was withdrawn from the Village Council and vested in the law courts at the district and regional levels of government.

The radja is assisted by the kepala soa, or heads of each soa. Together they comprise what may be called the executive committee of the village government, the Saniri Radjapatih. This is the body which acts on ordinary matters through the kewang (village security officers) and the marinjo (messengers). The Saniri is represented in day-to-day administration by the ruler, assisted by two soa heads who serve as officers of the day. These are called Kepala Soa Djaga Bulan, and rotate once a month. One of them must be in the village at all times to represent the Saniri in attending to any matter which may arise. In practice a large part of the village's concerns are handled by these officers under the direction of the radja. On more important matters the entire Saniri Radjapatih consults and acts. Since the executive function is primary, this is really the key level of village government.

The larger Badan Saniri Negeri is composed of the radja, soa heads, the adat or ceremonial chief, the tuan tanah (literally "lords of the land", lineal descendants of the ancestor who established the village) and other prominent persons either co-opted by the Saniri or, since the middle 1950s, elected by the people, to represent various functional groupings in the village. This is the more representative body which discusses all questions relating to village welfare, makes decisions and issues regulations and instructions to implement those decisions.

Theoretically anyone may attend the meetings of the Saniri, which were held traditionally in the baileu, a building second only to the church in size and importance in the village, being a combination town hall and ceremonial building where all adat concerning the village must be carried out. When matters directly affecting the welfare of the entire village are discussed, the heads of households are summoned to listen and state their

opinions. This is called the Large or Full Saniri (Saniri Besar/Lengkap), and is in reality a village assembly, usually meeting in the baileu. But since many villages no longer have the baileu, it is more common for the Saniri to have a separate meeting place, such as the radja's home, usually considerably larger than the ordinary house, or in a special building for that purpose in important villages.

The functions of village government have already been touched upon. In the most general terms the Saniri is charged with preserving and furthering the security and prosperity of the village community. This means, first and foremost, supervising and guaranteeing the carrying out of all adat, for only so, according to the prevailing weltanschauung, can the welfare of the village be assured. The community is considered to consist not only of those who live in the village at any given moment, but also of all who have lived there at any time. If the adat, established by the ancestors as a guide for the living, is violated, it is believed that the spirits of those who have gone before will be offended and exercise their power to bring catastrophe on the offending individuals, and in some cases on the entire community. The Saniri is thus the living symbol and representative of the ancestors, in whom are vested the ultimate authority with its attendant power. Accordingly, the Saniri must oversee the fulfilling of adat. To assist in this function, the radja will appoint (when the office needs filling), and the Saniri confirm, one or more adat chiefs. These are men who are deeply versed in adat and give direction to individuals or village leaders concerning the requirements of adat and how these must be fulfilled. Ultimately, since he is the ceremonial head of the village, the ruler himself is responsible in matters of adat, but it is the adat chief who customarily takes the lead in performing the adat ceremonies which concern the village.

Another function of the village government is to defend the community against dangers from without and within. The former usually takes the form of encroachments on the village territory, the occupying and exploiting of land belonging to the village as a whole or to particular villagers. The soa head with jurisdiction over land questions (Kepala Soa Tanah) may play a major role here. Dangers from within most often take the form of friction and feuding between clans or families over matters of land, marriage, or status prerogatives. In cases where open conflict breaks out, as it sometimes does, the Village Council must act speedily and with wisdom to restore peace and harmony. Ordinarily however things are not permitted to develop to the point of open conflict. The Saniri will take measures to forestall the explosion by intervening and mediating the differences. Adat frequently provides special procedures for solving disputes.

Still another function of the village government is to provide for the general welfare in matters of public works, discipline amongst the youth, education, sanitation, water supply, etc.

A final, and increasingly important, function of village government is to serve as the local representative of the higher (district and regional) authorities (both civil and military) in matters of taxation, security, etc. To date this function has been a relatively minor one in contrast to the others, but it will surely become heavier as the new structures of government under Guided Democracy are developed. This in turn points up a growing problem.

Only the radja, and the soa heads, when they act as officer of the month, receive remuneration from the District Office, but due to inflation and the elimination of the perquisites given during Dutch rule, it is woefully inadequate to reimburse the officials concerned for their time and efforts. The village clerk and soa messengers (marinjo) have their taxes paid by the village in return for their services. This state of affairs underlines what was said above about the relative autonomy of the villages and the minor character of the ties binding them to higher levels of government. The small remuneration together with the removal of judicial functions have tended to reduce substantially the role and status of village government, as compared with the colonial period, especially of the radja and soa heads. This invariably is mentioned when discussing problems of village government with them. In fact, it has been discussed in official circles as well.

Added to this is the increasing pace of social change, including marked advances in education. These have tended to undermine further the authority of the Village Council, which is based, as we have seen, on tradition and adat, thus bringing into question the pattern of leadership associated with that authority. The younger generation no longer attempts to conceal its dissatisfaction with what it judges to be the inability of the village leadership to understand or sympathize with its desire for greater freedom and responsibility in the face of the unbending expectations of tradition and adat. All of this has meant that the elders of the village, especially the members of the Badan Saniri Negeri, are increasingly being put on the defensive and made steadily more insecure. They are not able to interpret recent developments in any other terms than that of an open challenge to their authority and a rejection of the ways of the ancestors. Thus the stage is set for conflict.

The Structure and Function of Altar, or the Institutions of Religion

Since this paper limits itself primarily to the contemporary scene, it is not necessary to speak in detail about the indigenous religious system which preceded the present one. In fact we know much too little about either the structure of the indigenous religion, or the spread of Christianity in the Moluccas from the time the Portuguese arrived (ca. 1520) to the demise

of the Netherlands' East India Company in 1799. From available information, it may be concluded that the two existed side by side in what appears to have been considerable tension.⁽⁴⁾ During the 19th century and later however, Christianity grew stronger. The Protestant Church became better organized and led; Christian as well as secular instruction improved. The indigenous religion became steadily weaker until only vestiges are now to be found in various structures, as we shall see.

By way of background to a discussion of the structure and functions of Protestant religious institutions, it will be useful to point out some of the circumstances surrounding the introduction and early growth of Christianity in the Moluccas.

Roman Catholic Christianity was the first to come, brought by the Portuguese as early as the 1530's. At that time, as in the Dutch period, Christianity was introduced and propagated by Westerners closely related to, if not in the direct employ of the colonial power. With the advent of the Dutch in 1605 Portuguese power was quickly superceded, and Protestant Christianity replaced the Roman form. The representatives of the Dutch Reformed faith who conducted worship, ministered to the sick, and gave instruction were servants of the Netherlands' East India Company employed to serve the Company's interests. They were relatively few in number and concerned themselves primarily with serving Company personnel and Dutch-speaking Christians. This perhaps left little time or energy for the instruction of Ambonese Christians inherited from the Portuguese, or such new converts as might appear. Such ministry as there was amongst the Ambonese was conducted by poorly trained Ambonese laymen, serving as village schoolteachers or in other forms of Company employ. Systematic instruction of village Christians and the nurturing of congregational life was almost certainly unheard of until well into the 19th century.

Another circumstance to be noted is the fact that conversion to Christianity, nominal as it must have been under such conditions, took place primarily by groups (that is by villages), generally in the 16th or 17th centuries, at a time of widespread instability and change. This was occasioned by the fact that due to the spice trade the region represented a rich prize sought after by at least three parties with political as well as economic ambitions: the two North Moluccan sultanates of Ternate and Tidore, the Portuguese Crown and the Netherlands' East India Company. In the Portuguese the Ambonese saw at first new allies in the struggle against the militant Islamic invaders from Ternate and Tidore; later they welcomed the Dutch as allies against the cruelty and plundering of the Portuguese. (Little

(4) On this point for further detail see a contemporary account in Valentyn, F., Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien, Amsterdam: Gerhard Onder der Linden, 1724, Vol. III, Book I, Ch. 1.

did they anticipate the even greater cruelty they would have to endure under the Dutch.) Thus becoming Christian and then Protestant was a way of casting in their lot with the more powerful foreigners and thereby avoiding submission to Islamization under the rule of the Sultans of Ternate and Tidore. The question may legitimately be raised therefore whether the embracing of Christianity by the Ambonese was perhaps more motivated by political or security than by religious considerations. In this case there would have been no necessity, and certainly no expectation by the Ambonese, of a sharp struggle between the new faith and the indigenous religion and adat.

One final circumstance to be noted in attempting to account for the co-existence of two religious systems in the Central Moluccas up to the beginning of the 19th century, is the fact that the language of Christianity, in both its Roman Catholic and Protestant forms, was Malay rather than the native tongue of the Ambonese. Malay was the language of commerce for the coastal Ambonese but quite foreign to the villagers. It was only through the process of Christianization and colonial rule that the indigenous language was generally wiped out amongst Ambonese Christians, the so-called Ambonese Malay replacing it. This occurred as the result of a policy vigorously pursued by both State and Church under Dutch control. It was by no means completed even as late as 1900. Hence Christianity was propagated and practiced during the first three centuries of its presence in the Moluccas in a language which was native neither to teacher and student, nor to preacher and congregation. While this was taking place, other aspects of the culture, especially indigenous religion and adat, continued to live in the atmosphere of the vernacular language. Thus Christianity in the Central Moluccas, until well into the 19th century was like a kind of graft on the tree of culture, existing together with all the other branches, most notably the indigenous religion and adat, without too much accommodation being required. The fact that the Christian religion lived in a language province different from much of the rest of the culture made difficult, and perhaps to a degree unnecessary, any real confrontation with adat and the indigenous religion.

The structure of Protestant Christianity in the Moluccas can be considered, like the religious institutions in any society, in at least four different dimensions: as a system of beliefs and faith, as a system of conduct or ethical system, as a ritual or ceremonial system, and as a system of organization. We shall attempt this, always bearing in mind the indigenous religion to which it could be contrasted if we possessed an adequate knowledge of it.

Protestant Christianity in the Moluccas, as a system of faith and beliefs, is based on the Bible and the historic creeds of the Church (as these had been understood and interpreted by the Dutch Reformed Church), most particularly the Apostles' Creed, known by the Ambonese as the Twelve Articles of Faith. Thus the

content of the belief system is something imported from Europe, having no natural continuity with the cultural material indigenous to the region. However, not surprisingly, this imported system of beliefs -- Dutch Reformed Christianity still bearing some marks of its Iberian Roman Catholic beginnings -- has been influenced by indigenous categories of belief and thought.⁽⁵⁾ It may be said that a process of domestication (Ambonization) or indigenization has gone on so as to make the diffused culture-complex more acceptable to the basic culture patterns of Moluccan society.⁽⁶⁾

Protestant Christianity as a system of conduct, as a set of ethical norms and principles, is likewise based on a foundation foreign to indigenous Moluccan culture. The Ten Commandments would loom large in the answer of an Ambonese as to how a Christian should behave, as would ritual demands (regular participation in Church activities) and acts of individual piety. Without at all having a puritanical flavor, Moluccan Christianity is a kind of new law which stands for the most part alongside of, though sometimes in contrast to, the traditional imperatives (adat) handed down from the ancestors. The favorite and normative Ambonese characterization of the proper relation between these two systems is to quote Jesus' answer to the Scribes on the question of paying taxes to Caesar, "Render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" (Mk. 12:17). For the Ambonese Christian, the two realms are quite clearly separate, both are equally imperative, and there should be no serious conflict between them.

Thirdly, Protestant Christianity in the Moluccas as a system of rites and worship has come to replace almost completely this dimension of the indigenous religion. Sunday worship, church music, prayer meetings, special festivals of the Church year, the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and the rites of Confir-

(5) For example, a strong tendency towards literalism and ritualism is characteristic of the indigenous religion. The use of Scripture as a source of formulae to be used in healing or in curses is not uncommon. The use of Tété Manis (literally Sweet Grandfather) as the everyday term for referring to God parallels the term Tété Lanité used in the indigenous religion, etc.

(6) To say this, is not to cast aspersion on Protestant Christianity in the Moluccas; it is not to say that the indigenous religion has simply been baptized and given a new name, for this is clearly not the case. It is but to recognize the presence of a process which has gone on, and still goes on in many cultures involving many religions, a process which is inevitable if any cultural integration is to occur, a process whereby the Christian faith may make a positive contribution to any culture.

mation and Marriage are taken with great seriousness and considered obligatory for every Christian. There is even a special costume which is to be worn on all occasions of worship and religious ceremony, as was true in the ceremonies of adat and the indigenous religion. Attitudes and conceptions characteristic of the indigenous religion are still to be found imbedded in the ritual practices of Moluccan Christians.

Finally it is as an organizational system or sociological structure that Moluccan Protestant Christianity contrasts most sharply with the indigenous religion, even though, as in the latter, the congregation is coterminous with the village community. All members of the village belong to the congregation and are served by it.

The minister is ordinarily from another village, though very occasionally he may be a native. He is appointed by the Synod of the Protestant Church of the Moluccas to serve the village congregation. Thus he is not involved in kinship, adat and land relationships with the villagers he serves. He enjoys, together with the village chief (radja), the highest position in village society, with which goes the fullest respect, and even fear, since he is the person who is the agent or representative of the Power rooted in the "Other World" (Dunia Sebrang) which is so important in this. In the eyes of the people his status and role are apprehended, to a considerable degree, in terms consonant with that of the priest of the indigenous religion, the mauwen,⁽⁷⁾ whom he has long since replaced. The village minister was almost always Ambonese, though during the 1865-1935 period of Dutch rule he was not accorded that title, as he assisted Dutch ministers who were placed in centrally located villages to supervise a group of village congregations.

The ruling body of the congregation, usually composed of from eight to fifteen persons, mostly men, is elected by the congregation and installed by the higher church authorities. The Session, or Madjelis as it is called, is headed by the minister and is responsible for all aspects of the congregation's life and activity. The members, elders and deacons, are ordained,

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- (7) The mauwen, in pre-Christian times, was the representative who officiated over the sacred sphere in village life, as the latu, later radja, officiated over the secular sphere. He gave oversight to and took the lead in all functions where there were relations with the "other world" and the beings believed to dwell there who affect the fortunes of men. For further information, consult Valentijn, op. cit., Duyvendak, J. P., Het Kakean-Genootschap van Seran, Almelo, Drukkerij N.V. W. Hilarius, 1926, and Deacon, A. B., "The Kakihan Society of Ceram and New Guinea Initiation Cults", Folklore, v. 36, 1935.

according to Reformed practice, and this gives them a relatively high status in village society. They are at once members of the village community, fully involved in all its relationships and life, yet at the same time they are responsible for the affairs of the congregation, which is based on foundations and possesses concerns that are quite alien to village tradition. In some cases a Saniri member will be elected to membership on the Madjelis.

Each congregation has various organizations which serve particular functional needs. For example, there is a Sunday School to instruct the younger children, a Catechism class giving three years of instruction to the young people preparatory to their confirmation as full members of the congregation. There is a Youth Group to serve those from fifteen to thirty-five years of age, and a Women's Association gives women an opportunity to carry on their own activities in a society otherwise largely dominated by the men.

The congregation is more or less consciously part of the wider Church, having connections with other congregations, with the Presbytery (Classis) at the district level, and with the Synod at the regional level. Through the Synod it is part of the Indonesian Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. It regularly observes these wider ties through participation in joint activities, where this is possible, or by holding special services to emphasize them. Thus the congregation is probably the one group in the village which has regular ties with similar bodies outside the village, district and region. In this respect the Protestant congregation represents a different pattern than the village government. It is not rooted primarily in the indigenous tradition, nor is it limited by hereditary or adat ties.

Protestant Christianity has developed more distinctively, in relation to the Moluccan environment, in the sociological and ritual than in the theological and ethical dimensions. This is perhaps to be explained by the fact that for various reasons it encountered less resistance or competition from the indigenous culture in those areas than in the realms of beliefs and norms of conduct.

In addition to the general functions of religion in any society, which need not be reviewed here, certain specific functions of Protestant Christianity in the Moluccas may be cited.

Observers have often reported that there are noticeable differences between Christian and non-Christian villages in the Central Moluccas. They find the former to be more orderly, more sanitary and generally more stable (though not more vigorous). They also report that Ambonese Christians seem to show great aversion to hiring out to others for work, especially for physical labor. They are better educated and seem to enjoy a higher standard of living. They appear to be relatively independent,

contented and friendly. The public buildings are kept in better condition, as are the residences, village streets, etc. While it would be questionable indeed to attribute these differences solely, directly or even primarily to Christianity, it does seem justifiable to include in the functions of Christianity in the Moluccas the bringing of a certain uplift and stability to village life.

Closely related to this function is another, namely the fact that becoming Christian brought to the Ambonese a new status vis à vis both the Dutch colonial rulers and their non-Christian neighbors. They were considered by the Dutch, and came to consider themselves to be, by virtue of their religion, in a separate and higher class than the non-Christian part of the population. This special status carried certain coveted privileges in the form of educational and employment opportunities in the Dutch commercial, governmental and military establishments, not offered to or taken by the local Muslims. Thus Ambonese Christians became closely associated with the colonial regime, so that they were sometimes called Belanda Hitam, meaning Black Dutchmen. This attitude became so widespread and pronounced that the Ambonese, together with the Minahasans in North Celebes, were referred to as inhabiting "the Twelfth Province of the Netherlands." This special status, and the pride (other Indonesians might say arrogance) which Ambonese felt because of it, was not an unmixed blessing, particularly after nationalism developed and Independence was achieved. But whether it be judged eufunctional or dysfunctional, it remains one of the functions associated with Christianity in Ambonese society, especially prior to 1935, when the Protestant Church of the Moluccas was given its independence by the Queen.

Another way of characterizing the preceding functions, yet going beyond them, would be to point out that Christianity provided the Ambonese with a new way of understanding life and the world. This new dimension, while not separating them from the traditional sphere, did take them out into the larger world and brought them many new experiences. It related them to other people and their ways. It enlarged their horizons and gave them new motivations and ideals, not all of them Christian it might be added. Dutch ministers resided in certain Moluccan villages for many years. Considerable numbers of Ambonese left their villages for new types of work in other regions and even overseas. Sooner or later they brought back new cultural traits to the village. It would not be going too far, perhaps, to suggest that the development of a new pattern of social organization, earlier called the emerging pattern, in which the categories of the individual, volition, conscience, loyalty to something broader than clan and village community loom large, was essentially a function of Christianity in Moluccan society. Again, we do not here impute a particular value judgment to this function, but simply record it.

Having considered the structures and functions of both Throne and Altar in Central Moluccan societies, we are now ready to come to the heart of the problem.

The Relationship between Altar and Throne

This subject involves first, describing what the relationship between the two sets of institutions has been and is, and then the more difficult question as to why the relationship is as it is.

The relationship is frequently one of tension and conflict. Wherever the local congregation (or a minister) has sought to be true to its foundation of Christian Scriptures and tradition, and wherever it has attempted to resist or overcome the kind of domestication or Ambonization referred to above,⁽⁸⁾ tension has developed between the institutions of religion and the institutions of government on the village level. This tension has very frequently erupted into conflict between the leadership of the congregation -- the minister and Session -- and the leadership of the village -- the radja and Saniri. In those villages where there is no noticeable tension or conflict, it is usually the case that either the leadership of the congregation is completely subordinated to the village government (this happens in cases where there is an unusually able village chief and Saniri and a weak minister and Session), or the village government is subordinated to the leadership of the congregation (this happens when the minister and Session are unusually able and strong and the village government is very weak). The former state of affairs has been much more common than the latter, for until ten or fifteen years ago the traditional pattern was much stronger than the emerging pattern. The maximum of conflict is to be expected in situations where both institutional areas are led by able and vigorous men, or where there is weakness on both sides.⁽⁹⁾ The problem of unsatisfactory relationships is apparently a very common one. And it appears to be becoming more serious as the pace of change increases, with the resultant weakening of the traditional social-cultural patterns.

(8) For example, by drawing a clear line between adat requirements and the Gospel, or by seeking to wipe out the vestiges of indigenous religion in the adat and religious practices, etc.

(9) It might be expected that overlapping of power structures through dual membership on Session and Saniri, which sometimes happens, would further complicate the relationship, but in fact, where it occurs, it frequently helps overcome the conflict because if the overlapping member is able and serious he helps keep the relationship open and flexible.

However, it should be pointed out that this is by no means simply a problem of recent origin. As early as 1824 the colonial government issued a regulation (Staatsblad 1824 No. 19a) to define the rights and duties of the village government and the leadership of the congregation in regard to church buildings and grounds. This regulation was amended in 1884, 1924 and again in 1935. The obvious intent of these regulations was to remove the occasion of conflict and its unfortunate results. Nevertheless the tension continued, and has become more general and acute as the status and power of the two institutions has altered due to changing conditions. In fact, the very regulation aimed at ameliorating the situation now aggravates it and stands in the way of improvements.

Currently there seem to be three main occasions of tension and conflict. The first cause of tension, both during the colonial period and after Independence, has been the conflict in power and status between the local minister and the village ruler. These two persons occupy the apex of the status system; both are called "Bapak" by the villagers. Both confront the entire membership of the village, or to put it another way, all the villagers are included in their charge, are seen as their children. The most common way of referring locally to the relationship that ought to exist between the ruler and the minister is to liken the ruler to the husband and the minister to the wife in a family. When the marriage is harmonious, each knowing his or her place and keeping it, all goes well. When it is discordant, the result is more like hell. Now this simile, however ideal in theory, seldom describes the real situation, for the minister is seldom content to be a submissive wife, ruled in an authoritarian way by the village chief. Moreover the villagers call him "Bapak" (Father) just as they do the radja. And a family with two fathers could be expected to be even more subject to conflicts than one with parents of opposite sex. Further, the minister is likely to be better educated than the radja, though this is by no means always the case. He has probably had more experience outside the village. Also he represents the Moluccan Church, that is to say, he has a different kind of backing than the radja, or thinks he does. Each is conscious of his position and anxious to defend it against any encroachments.

The fact that each rules (in a different sense to be sure) over the same villagers, occasions frequent friction. The village head may assign work details to the youth at the hour catechism class is scheduled. Or the minister may initiate a congregational activity without clearing it beforehand with the radja. The radja looks upon all organizations and activities taking place within the village as under his jurisdiction. The minister looks upon the radja and the Saniri as members of his congregation and under the same kind of discipline as other members. Each of them has an organization which he leads, with lieutenants, as it were, under his command. And so the chances for misunderstanding and friction are ever-present.

The second occasion of tension is that by government decree church buildings and property, as we have noted, belong to the village. They are under the jurisdiction of the village government so far as upkeep and ownership are concerned, but the Session controls their use and holds the keys. Yet, as the power of the congregations has increased (both as a result of a growing sense of stewardship on the part of its members since the abrupt financial separation of Church from State in 1950, and of reform within the Church itself since 1956) and as the prestige of the village government has decreased, this ambiguous arrangement concerning church property leads to misunderstanding and conflict in almost every village at one time or another. It has enhanced the idea that the village owns the congregation, that the latter is subordinate to the former, that the minister should bow to the radja. It has limited the growth of a sense of responsibility on the part of the congregation towards fulfilling its own needs and towards those of the village as a whole. Many congregations are willing and able to take over responsibility for the church buildings and grounds, thus lightening the burden of the village government. But the latter views this proposal with apprehension for it appears as though its prerogatives were being further chipped away. The village government is often slow about instituting repairs and renovation of buildings, which annoys the minister and Session. In matters of building new structures or redecorating old ones, the village takes the major role. Clearly the occasions for controversy in such a situation are many, and they almost always materialize.

The third and perhaps most basic occasion of conflict between the leadership of the congregation and the village government concerns matters of customary law or adat. It will be recalled that the village government, more particularly the radja, is responsible for the execution of all adat. It will also be recalled that the congregation rests on a very different foundation from that of the village. Since the members of the congregation are at the same time members of the village, which is an adat community, it is not to be wondered at that this ambivalent situation leads to frequent clashes. The minister, it will be further recalled, is an outsider, neither bound by the adat nor knowing much about it in detail. Since many of the attitudes and conceptions which characterize the indigenous religion now manifest themselves only in relation to adat, it is quite understandable that the minister may at times raise questions about the performance of adat ceremonies. There is hardly a village which is free from such incidents, one result of which is to place the minister, and sometimes his Session, on the opposite sides of a struggle with the village government. The members of the congregation, and sometimes the deacons and elders are caught in the middle. Neither side will back down, for too much is felt to be at stake. The unity of the village is threatened, as many other concerns may become involved in this struggle.

The underlying causes of the phenomenon have already been suggested. Probably the most basic ground of tension and conflict

between Throne and Altar in Central Moluccan societies lies in the ambivalent character of the community itself. It is, on the one hand, a traditional adat community having a continuous history going back to at least 1450 A.D. On the other hand, and at the same time, for over three centuries it has been a Christian community based on the Scriptures and a tradition foreign to the region's indigenous culture. The relationship between these two communities is quite ambiguous. Each accepts the other, and yet they are incompatible in certain respects. The Ambonese are proud that they are Christians, and yet they hold to their adat most tenaciously. That their Christianity should challenge their adat seems to them an incredible notion. They believe that their religion has blessed their adat, as it were. At the same time, however, they are aware that there are contradictions between the demands laid upon them by their ancestors -- adat -- and the imperatives which spring from the Gospel -- Christian norms and patterns of life. Traditionally they have tried to overcome this ambivalence and ambiguity by attempting a functional dichotomy between the realm of Caesar with its demands (adat), and the realm of God with its demands (monotheistic faith and ethics). But this has not removed the tension; hence conflict between Session and Saniri, minister and radja, continues to erupt over adat requirements.

From the side of the indigenous culture there has been a double effort, as it were, to deal with the challenge introduced by Christianity. The first has been the functional dichotomy just mentioned. This policy was strongly encouraged by the colonial government which from the time of the very first treaty with an Ambonese ruler (in 1605) eschewed any intent of interfering with the adat of the Ambonese. The policy of indirect rule which was employed depended for its success upon the continuity of the traditional adat community. Hence so long as the Church was under the ultimate control of the colonial government (i.e. up to 1935) little direct challenge to adat was countenanced. It is interesting to note that although the government of the Republic of Indonesia has supported adat and attempted to use it to achieve social cohesion in the Moluccas, especially between Christian and Muslim villages, it has also instituted changes in the administrative system which have contributed to a weakening of adat in certain respects.

The second attempt was to domesticate Christianity (as illustrated above), to indigenize or "adatize" it in such a way as to guarantee that it would accommodate to the traditional patterns of culture. This effort was furthered by the fact that no systematic program of supervision or instruction was available to the village congregations until the 19th century, and by the fact that the language of Christianity was Malay rather than the vernacular. The fact that this situation continued for at least two centuries (1615-1815) permitted the indigenized form of Christianity (referred to as Agama Ambon) to become firmly rooted and highly resistant to modification in later years.

This goes far towards explaining why there has not occurred, down to the present time, any general, direct, self-conscious confrontation of Christian faith and ethics with adat. It is true that in the past the two have collided innumerable times on specific issues in particular villages for a variety of reasons. It is also true that Christianity has been one of the factors operative in the substantial changes that have taken place in the adat system. But on the whole the Church has accepted the validity of adat and has not felt there was any necessary conflict between it and the Gospel. Only since 1956 has the Protestant Church of the Moluccas come to realize that it must re-examine in a fundamental way its traditional posture towards the world, including its political, economic, social and moral structures. Only if it can succeed in relating the Gospel to all aspects of Moluccan life is there any hope of solution to the many problems it faces, including that of the relation of Throne and Altar. This fundamental re-examination has perhaps been made more possible, and more necessary, by the fact that both traditional church norms of behavior and traditional adat norms are facing severe challenges from other quarters.

This leads to a second general ground of tension and conflict, namely the broad and deep social change which has already taken place, and the steadily accelerating pace of further change. For purposes of considering those factors most significantly involved in these changes, it is useful to analyze it through three historical periods. The first is the period up to the end of the Netherlands' East India Company rule, that is from ca. 1520 to 1800. During this period economic and political influences were the ones most notably felt by Ambonese society and culture. The outward pattern of life was greatly changed as a result of the organization of the spice trade and the shifting of its center from Ternate to Ambon. The Dutch efforts to establish and protect an absolute monopoly on both production and trade of cloves and nutmegs led to much interference in village life. Village government particularly underwent radical change and development. Its functions changed and broadened due to the policy of indirect rule employed by the Dutch. We have already noted that during this period the influence of Christianity was largely limited to the sphere of interaction with the indigenous religion.

The second period, from 1800 to 1941, was the period of colonial government. The spice trade had become relatively less important to Holland and the focus of interest in development was shifted to Java and later Sumatera. During this period in the Moluccas economic and political influences dwindled in relative importance, while Christianity and other social and cultural influences assumed a larger role. This became all the more the case with the abandonment of the forced-culture system and the colonial government's embracing first the "liberal" economic policy and later the (so-called) "ethical" policy in Indonesia. Economic and administrative opportunities for Ambonese were enhanced and contacts with other parts of Indonesia and abroad increased.

The third period saw the Japanese occupation and war (1941-45) which brought much suffering, death and destruction to the Moluccas. Five years later (1950-51) still another period of fighting and destruction visited the Central Moluccas during the "Republic of South Moluccas" rebellion which followed shortly after the transfer of sovereignty. Since 1951, the Central Moluccas has been under the jurisdiction of the Unitary Republic. Independence has brought a host of changes in all fields, despite the fact that the Moluccas is on the edge of the farthest reaches of administrative control. It is during this third period, 1940-1965, and especially after 1950, that the most extensive changes have come. Material destruction, economic deprivation, political instability and chaos, social revolution and re-organization, cultural diffusion and confusion, all these and more have characterized this period. It has been a time in which the youth have come increasingly to the fore. Educational opportunities have grown tremendously. Moluccan Christians have been confronted by more self-conscious and aggressive Moluccan Muslims. Indirect government through the Village Councils by a colonial government has been replaced by direct government by Indonesians, themselves determined to build a new nation. This set of circumstances, here referred to broadly as "rapid social change", has had several specific effects that bear directly on the problem of Altar and Throne.

a) The adat system has further broken up. Only particular parts of it remain. More important still, respect for and reliance on adat has suffered grievously, particularly amongst the younger generation. This development casts the whole problem of Altar and Throne and of the relation of Christian faith and adat in a new light. It is also closely related to a second development.

b) The authority of the village government has been steadily reduced and has changed markedly in nature in recent years, first by the breakdown of adat, and more importantly by the withdrawal in 1950 of the judicial function from the village ruler and his council. Thus losses both in status and function, together with changes in the basis of village government from the traditional adat foundation to a modern secular administrative system, have put the adat rulers on the defensive and heightened their insecurity.

c) Along with these effects, and resulting partly from the departure of the Dutch and the final end of colonial rule in 1949, together with the permanent cutting off of the government's financial subsidy for the Church in 1950, there has come about an inner renewing and reorganization of the Protestant Church of the Moluccas.⁽¹⁰⁾ Within ten years the Church became independent and self-

(10) Cf. F. L. Cooley, "A Church Reformed and Reforming" in the International Review of Missions, Vol. LI, No. 201, Jan. 1962.

sustaining in both leadership and finance, a radical change after 350 years of a colonial policy calculated to keep the Ambonese dependent, though fiercely loyal children. The Church experienced the severest of trials during this period, but it is becoming steadily stronger, more aware of its true foundations, its real resources, and more self-conscious both as to the burden of its historical inheritance and as to its structure and function in society.

d) A final result of these changes has been to place the local congregation and its leadership in sharper contrast with the traditionally organized village and its leadership. This leads to the question whether the basis and pattern of organization of the congregation and its newly developing spirit are not more in keeping with the changing times than that of the village government.

All of these facets of the broad process of social change have a direct bearing on the relation of Altar and Throne.

The third and last ground of tension to be considered lies in the realm of certain questionable views and attitudes that have characterized the Moluccan Church and its leadership, especially in relation to the leadership of the village. The village minister, perhaps recalling the pattern established by the Dutch minister before him, has, to put it bluntly, all too frequently lorded it over the villagers, including the radja and Saniri members, rather than coming to serve them. This unfortunate posture or pattern of leadership has resulted from a number of factors. For one thing the village minister comes from outside, is appointed by the Synod and is responsible to it rather than to anyone in the village. For another, he was, until 1950, a civil servant paid by the government, all of which made it easy for him to assume a role of superiority in the village and towards the village government. Further, this posture of being in authority over all is in keeping with the indigenous notion that religious authority is actually higher, more to be feared and respected, than temporal authority. The minister is the person who holds the keys of the kingdom. This notion, in such sharp contrast to the dominant New Testament servant image, is one of the main reasons why in the Moluccas, as in so many societies, priest and king have so often been in conflict.

Thus one of the central causes of the unhappy relations between Altar and Throne in Central Moluccan societies has been the fact that the Throne (the colonial government throughout most of the past) has controlled the Altar (the Moluccan Church) and the Altar (the leadership of the village congregation) has assumed a ruling posture in relation to the Throne (the village government). Fortunately both renewal in the Church of the Moluccas and revolutionary changes in the society are making possible the elimination of these basic causes of conflict.