

## NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION IN JAKARTA

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In Jakarta, the Capital Territory of Indonesia (*Daerah Khusus Ibu Kota*, DCI), a system of neighborhood organization exists by regulation and is actively encouraged in its functioning by the Capital Territory government. This neighborhood system is called Rukun Tetangga/Rukun Warga (hereafter RT/RW). Very briefly, the Capital Territory is divided into units of approximately forty households each. This smallest unit, the RT, selects one of its own members as a chairman through a process of discussion in a neighborhood meeting until unanimous agreement (*mufakat*) is reached.

A second level of organization, the RW, exists above the RT. The RW is made up of several RTs. Its chairman and other officers are selected by the RT chairmen whose neighborhoods fall within the RW.

These units of community organization are designed to serve functions in two subsystems, the neighborhood and the territorial administration. The twofold nature of the functions of the RT/RW system can be seen in the official description of the duties, rights and responsibilities of the officers of the RT.<sup>1</sup>

1. a) To aid in carrying out the instructions and policies of the head of the local governmental district.  
b) To carry out the decisions of RT and RW meetings.
2. To give advice, reprimands, and reminders both oral and written to members who violate or neglect the decisions of the RT.
3. To be responsible for the duties and responsibilities including the management of finance to the council of members and the officers of the RT as well as the head of the local government district.

Thus, these neighborhood leaders, who get no salaries or civil service status, have responsibilities not only to the neighbors who select them but also to the territorial administrator in whose district they reside. They are specifically charged with aiding him in his duties as well as serving in the position of executive for the RT. The neighborhood chairman is thus, at least according to regulation, in a dual-role position on the boundary between two subsystems, the neighborhood and the territorial administration.

This article is intended to describe the roles of neighborhood leaders as those roles are understood by the citizens of Jakarta. Here we are looking at the behavioral reality of the RT/RW system as it is

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1. "Surat Keputusan Gubernur / KDH DCI Djakarta no. Ib3 / 2 / 14 / 1966 Tentang Peraturan Dasar Rukun Tetangga dan Rukun Warga DCI Djakarta," in Pedoman Pembinaan Wilayah dan P.M.D.C. DCI Djakarta (Jakarta: DCI, 1968), n.p.

perceived and used by the different classes of Jakarta. Class is not the *only* significant variable for distinguishing various roles of RT and RW chairmen, but it is the best one.

The following discussion is divided into two major parts. The first is concerned with the nature of the citizen neighborhood-chairman relationship. The second is concerned with the functioning of the RT/RW system in relation to the territorial administration.

### The Citizen and his RT Chairman

In order to define the types of relationships that exist between RT chairmen and their neighbor-constituents, it is necessary to understand both attitudinal patterns to be found in various classes of citizens and social structural patterns of the relationships. In order to gain both types of information, a survey was carried out in 1969 in which 548 household heads were asked about their perceptions of the roles of RT and RW chairmen and how the system worked for them.<sup>2</sup> In addition basic socio-economic data were collected about each respondent as well as his RT and RW chairmen.

From this latter data an important aspect of the role of RT chairman can be seen, for in many ways the RT chairman is not easily distinguishable from other household heads in his neighborhood. The structure of the dyadic relationship is generally symmetrical.

In terms of age the RT chairmen of Jakarta tend to be very similar to household heads who selected them. There seems to be no tendency to seek out someone who might be regarded as an "elder" of the neighborhood and thus deserving of some special respect. Instead the RT chairmen in our sample were fairly typical of their neighborhoods on the age dimension. If any distinction can be made it is that there are proportionally fewer RT chairmen over sixty years than there are citizens over sixty.

Age is an important element in determining relative social status in Jakarta. Generally, other elements of status being equal (class, education) an older person will be deferred to by a younger person. In order to speak Indonesian, one must indicate something of one's status in relationship to the other. Age confers at least a certain amount of respect. The fact that RT chairmen are not very different in age from their constituents is thus significant. It is easier to communicate with someone similar to one's self in status than to cross wide status gaps. The lack of age differentiation points to leadership of the "first-among-equals" type. Age, at least, is not a social barrier between chairman and constituent.

Among the three largest ethnic groups of Jakarta, social relationships between unequals create a situation for the subordinate to feel and behave in a fashion termed *malu*. *Malu* is variously translated into

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2. The sample was selected through the following procedure: Fourteen of Jakarta's 221 kelurahan (the smallest administrative territory) were selected with a quota sample to get an appropriate mix of urban and rural areas and of different classes. Within each of these kelurahan four RTs were chosen randomly. Within those RTs a random selection of one-quarter of the household heads was made and these make up our 548 respondents. In addition, their RT chairmen, RW chairmen, and lurah (the lowest territorial administrator) were interviewed.

English as embarrassed, shy, respectful, humble, or deferential. An individual of inferior status feels malu with the superior person and is likely to adopt a posture and a manner of speaking and acting in a humble way. Americans speak of a subordinate who goes to his superior "with hat in hand." A Javanese (and the behavior varies for other Indonesian ethnic groups) is likely to develop a posture of leaning forward with slightly bent knees and very little eye contact. In such a social relationship it is impolite to disagree with the superior, so there is a great deal of affirmative nodding. In speaking, the inferior uses deferential terms of address and the most polite language he knows. To ask a favor of a superior requires that one be *berani*, literally brave or valiant, but in this situation daring, at least. It is also impolite to speak loudly or to eat too avidly in the presence of a superior (thus, one usage of the phrase *jangan malu, makan kenyang*: don't be malu, eat until you are full). The feelings and behavior associated with malu and inherent in asymmetrical social relationships can create real barriers to communication.

Class is just as important as a source of social status which influences the quality of the relationship between an RT chairman and the citizens he serves. Again, a person of lower class must be malu with a person of higher class. Not to adopt the behavior of malu when one is in an appropriate situation is to be rude.

Age and class together make up a large part of the hierarchy of social status. On the class<sup>3</sup> dimension once again, social symmetry is the rule rather than the exception. The following table illustrates the relationship.

Judged Class of RT Chairman Compared to that of Citizen

Class of his Chairman	Class of Citizen			
	Upper	Middle	Lower	Very Low
Upper	22.9% (8)	10.5% (14)	1.1% (3)	-
Middle	77.1 (27)+	63.2 (84)+	23.8 (76)	11.9% (12)
Lower	-	24.8 (33)	59.5 (157)+	65.3 (66)+
Very Low	-	1.5 (2)	10.6 (28)	22.8 (23)

+ = median case.

No upper class person has an RT chairman who is less than middle class. No very low class person has an RT chairman who is above middle class. For the middle class the most frequently occurring RT chairman is middle class. For the lower class the most common RT chairman is also lower class. It is the two extremes which differ. For the upper class 77 percent of the RT chairmen are middle class. For the very low class 77 percent of the RT chairmen are above them. Thus, the usual case is a case of relative symmetry between the RT chairman and his neighbor constituent. A pauper does not have to get up courage to approach a prince in order to get help from his RT chairman. He may

3. The method of determining class was based on several dimensions. The interviewer judged the class of the respondent after observing his style of life (type of walls, floors and roof; presence of electricity; type of furnishings), after asking about his education, and after observing his behavior (posture, use of languages, etc.).

indeed need only face another pauper. At any rate he need not feel too malu with his RT chairman in terms of economic class when they are likely to be equals or near equals. This is as true in rural areas where all respondents fall into the two lower categories as in the more urban neighborhoods.

These results no doubt also reflect the class homogeneity of neighborhoods. However, even when a relatively wealthy man lives among poor people, he is not likely to become RT chairman. Why is this? Two responses are:

If Pak R— (a wealthy neighbor) were to become chairman, I would not ask his advice. He is too important to be bothered with my problems. I would feel malu and would never ask him.

He (a wealthy man) would not be a good chairman because he does not understand our (i.e., poor people) needs. And nobody could explain them to him because he is an important person (*orang besar*) and we are only little (unimportant) people (*orang kecil*).

The symmetry of class is an important element in the role of RT chairman. It makes him accessible to all his constituents, or at least to most of them. Even though it means that the chairman cannot become a patron in the sense of providing any economic support, it makes him much more approachable for providing other kinds of services. What he has to offer is skills, advice, moral support, even leadership, but not money or jobs. Individuals may have others to whom they can turn for economic help and with whom they are involved in a pattern of reciprocal obligation. But even socio-economic variables indicate the RT chairman is unlikely to fulfill that kind of role.

Even though education is a class related variable, the relationship between citizen and chairman is not so symmetrical on this dimension. There seems to be a certain minimum level of education which is desirable in an RT chairman even in those neighborhoods where educational levels are very low. Thus in areas where the average education is three years or less, the RT chairman is still likely to have an education equivalent to four to six years. In better educated neighborhoods the RT chairman tends to reflect the educational level of his neighbors.

Thus a certain minimum level of education is regarded as desirable even though in some neighborhoods an RT chairman with four to six years of education is atypical. Apparently the skills an education provides (primarily literacy) are highly desirable in an RT chairman. But literacy is useless if the man is unapproachable, so age and class symmetry together with educational symmetry modified by a certain minimum amount of schooling may provide the best of both worlds from the point of view of the citizen.

If the RT chairman is similar to the citizens he serves, the same cannot be said for the RW chairman. As a group, RW chairmen are somewhat older than RT chairmen. They also tend to be of a higher class than the RT chairman and somewhat better educated.

The difference between the two positions can be explained in terms of the methods of selection. The RT chairman is chosen by his neighbors through a unanimous consent procedure. While one might expect the heterogeneity of the urban environment would prevent the evolution of

any consensus, in fact the nature of the RT is such that consensus does seem to emerge with a fair amount of regularity. It is a small unit and of course not all household heads participate, so the number of those who need to concur may in fact be rather small.<sup>4</sup> The RT itself is also small in territory so that people generally know something about each other. Neighborhoods tend to be fairly homogeneous in economic terms, though there may be quite a bit of heterogeneity in terms of ethnicity. The higher rate of mobility in many urban areas together with the heterogeneity of ethnicity may also account for the observation that social cleavages are not as deep and lasting as those in some rural areas.<sup>5</sup> There is very little *organized* politics *within* the RT even though individuals may be active in parties or interest groups at higher levels. The stakes in the elections are also rather low: nobody gets rich because he is RT chairman.

For all these reasons a consensus does usually develop as to who is appropriate for the RT chairmanship. A household head may decide with which of the several persons being discussed he will feel most comfortable and least malu. Generally, no one actively seeks the office and there is seldom any "campaigning" except for what is said in the meeting. Usually there are only two or three persons who are even considered at the meetings.

This process, then, produces an RT chairman who is not unusual in his neighborhood in status terms but, especially in poor areas, may have reading and writing skills which are slightly above average.

The selection of the RW chairman takes place under very different circumstances. He is selected by the RT chairmen within the RW. It is quite likely that most of these men do not know each other personally and do not know the same people. The result is that consensus can only develop about someone who is a local notable, someone that everyone has heard about. This means that the RW chairman is likely to be wealthier or of considerably higher status since he must be well known in the much larger unit. But this is also the kind of situation where a leader's opinion can be very important: if one does not know the individual it is easy to defer to a higher-up. In the selection of the RW chairmen the lurah frequently plays a big role in suggesting candidates. Since the RW chairman's job involves dealing with the lurah, many RT chairmen feel that someone who "gets along with" the lurah is a good choice. Others feel a higher status person is more likely to stand up to the lurah than someone of lower status because he need not be so malu.

The results of these two widely differing election situations are the two different types of individuals selected for RT and RW chairmanships. The man (or woman) selected as RT chairman must fulfill the requirements of office as locally perceived. So far we have only considered who is selected and how he is selected. Now let us consider the role as it is perceived by the citizens.

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4. In five elections observed for this study, the numbers present ranged from ten to twenty-five.
  5. See, for instance, a description of an election in Clifford Geertz, The Social History of an Indonesian Town (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1965), pp. 153-201.

### Citizen Perceptions of the Role of RT Chairmen

The RT/RW system is well known throughout the Capital Territory. Even though Jakarta's citizen occasionally may not remember the words the letters stand for, virtually all are aware of the existence of the system. While most of them say they regard it as important (88 percent regard the system as either important or very important), there is somewhat of a bias toward the "important" answer for Indonesians. Therefore, it is really only meaningful to look at the distribution within the population on the question of importance. Generally speaking, the higher the class of an individual, the less likely he is to regard the RT/RW system as important. Within the two lower classes it is a very rare individual who evaluates the system as less than important.<sup>6</sup>

Having said that for most of the mass public the system is highly salient, it is necessary to go on to ask "salient for what?" Different people may see the same position as important and yet perceive it as filling quite different roles. For some the role of RT chairman may be seen as quite explicit, while for others it may be seen as a very diffuse, all-encompassing role. Whether the role is viewed by the citizen as having a single function or a wide range of functions clearly has important implications for administration. If the state can develop a linkage with a network of local leaders with multi-faceted roles who are involved in "whole-person" relationships with their neighbors, the potentialities for establishing control by the state over the population and potentialities for mobilization are no doubt increased.

In Jakarta, at least, the citizen-RT chairman relationship does seem to be more often than not a "whole-person" relationship, and the role of the RT chairman is usually perceived as very broad, encompassing all sorts of duties not mentioned in the formal regulations. Asked to explain *why* they regarded the RT/RW system as important, most people referred only to the RT chairman and described his role in very broad (but not evasive) terms:

There just has to be one (an RT leader) because when anything goes wrong he can make it okay (*beres*). It might be said he is multi-purposed (*serba-guna*). If anything needs to be done, he sees to it.

Because it *is* important. If there are fights between neighbors or a death or if you need advice--if anything happens it is Pak RT who handles it.

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6. Another rough indicator of the salience of the role for various groups is the extent to which citizens know the names of their RT chairmen. The following table illustrates the class differences. Knowledge of the name of the RT chairman, the lurah, and the governor make interesting contrasts.

Knowledge of Names by Class of Respondent

	RT	RW	Lurah	Governor
Upper	56.8%	32.4%	27.0%	100.0%
Middle	80.9	50.4	34.8	95.7
Low	90.2	65.5	45.1	82.6
Very Low	89.2	60.8	28.4	42.2

The upper class people of Jakarta are more likely to view the role as very specific and limited in function than are lower class people.

The types of activity an RT chairman may take on in a lower class neighborhood are many and varied. Frequently he may be called upon to give advice on a wide range of subjects. He may serve as mediator in a dispute between neighbors or as a preventor of disharmony. An example of the latter can be seen in the case of a malodorous latrine which caused great discomfort to a near neighbor. The neighbor did not want to speak directly to the offending household head, for fear of creating disharmony. Instead he spoke to the RT chairman who carried the complaint to the offender as the neighborhood's opinion. The problem was solved very quickly without any open conflict between neighbors. RT chairmen may even intervene in family disputes and oversee the morality of neighborhoods. It is apparently not unusual for the lower class RT chairman to admonish a man for beating his wife too much or even to watch the behavior of a local wife while her husband is out of town.

This very broad definition of the role is unacceptable to most upper class people and to their chairmen as well. The upper and middle classes expect an RT chairman to fill in the appropriate forms for governmental transactions, or to contact the nearest neighbors when there is a death in the RT, or to organize special security precautions in the wealthiest areas. But the limits of the role are much more narrowly defined, and the RT chairmen themselves in these neighborhoods resist efforts to draw them into disputes between neighbors or within families. One RT chairwoman in an exclusive neighborhood expressed the following attitude:

From time to time someone will come to me about some quarrel between neighbors. Last week Mrs. — came about all the old cars parked in her neighbor's yard. She is right that they are ugly, but it is not my job to get involved (*campur tangan*) in this matter. I try to carry out the duties of RT chairman, but these disputes between neighbors are private matters.

Even though the definitions of the role of RT chairmen do differ according to the class of the neighborhood, one fact seems to be true across class lines: the role of RT chairman is first and foremost a service role. The RT chairman is someone who *does* things, who takes care of things, who organizes things. The services he performs may be different in different kinds of communities because the needs of those communities differ. But he is in the final analysis not providing just moral leadership but is more of a man of action, a doer of tasks. The general symmetry of social status between the chairman and his neighbors makes him approachable when some need arises, and in some neighborhoods the kinds of problems he may be expected to handle are almost limitless.

#### Neighborhood Organization and The Territorial Administration

As positions with officially prescribed functions in both the community and the administration, the RT and RW chairmanships might be expected to provide some sort of linkage between the citizen and the lowest territorial administrator, the lurah. In considering the extent to which these roles do provide such linkage, it is necessary to break down the process into several parts:

- 1) The RT/RW system might serve as a transmitter of information from government to the community.
- 2) The RT/RW system might serve as a transmitter of information from the community to the government.
- 3) The RT/RW system might serve as a facilitator of transactions between citizen and government.

1) The RT as a transmitter of government information. The RT/RW is not of course the only source of information about government available to the citizens of Jakarta. Newspapers, magazines, radio, and television also provide news about government activities. These mass-media news sources are, however, spread very unevenly through the population of Jakarta. The wealthy read more newspapers and magazines than the poor, and they read them more often. Only the very rich usually have access to television. Even the radio is more commonly a source of news for the wealthy, though the cheap transistor radio has made a great impact on Jakarta's population.<sup>7</sup>

The RT/RW system has a potential for communicating government news fairly evenly throughout the population. It exists in both rich and poor areas, in both urban and rural kelurahan.<sup>8</sup> If the government wanted to communicate a piece of information to the upper class, it might do so fairly effectively by using the mass media only. But to communicate with the poor as well, some effort to utilize the RT/RW system would be appropriate. This is clearly part of the thinking of the Capital Territory administrators responsible for the RT/RW system.

Generally speaking, the transmittal of government information by the RT chairman can be accomplished by either active or passive means. Thus in some situations a RT chairman may go out and tell people about some event or some new regulation, while other kinds of information may be passed on to his constituents only when they ask him for it. The latter, more passive mode on information transmission is probably the more common one. Instances where it is desirable to have everyone hear about something are relatively more rare.

Thus in Jakarta we find that a very common pattern especially among the urban lower classes is to go to the RT chairman with any questions one may have about government. Generally, the RT chairman can be expected to provide information about what does and does not fall under the jurisdiction of the lurah, and in that sense he transmits information to his constituents with a particular need about government; from the point of view of administration, he channels people, for instance, to the correct office.

This does not imply that the RT chairmen are experts in any sense, though greater experience may provide them with greater knowledge, and

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7. Of urban higher class respondents, 80.9 percent heard news on the radio. Within the urban lower class, 71.3 percent reported hearing the news on the radio. Among rural people, 55.6 percent heard the news on the radio.

8. Hereafter this article will no longer consider the rural sector of society. The RT/RW system is rather different in rural areas and produces complexities difficult to deal with in a brief article.



through meetings and circulars they may be informed of certain procedures. Frequently, they can give some guidance to citizens who want information about government procedures.

Pak H— heard from his son-in-law that for Rp 1,000 a truck could be hired from the government to vacuum the waste from the latrine. He did not know how to arrange it, so he went to ask Pak RT. Pak RT remembered that nearly one year earlier, Pak Lurah had mentioned such a service and that it had to be arranged at City Hall, that Pak Lurah could not arrange it. So Pak H— did not bother to go to the kelurahan, but went to City Hall where he was directed to yet another office which gave him the information he wanted.

In this case there was very little reason for such information to be made known to everyone in the neighborhood. It was a fairly poor neighborhood where most people would not consider spending Rp. 1,000 (\$2.50) for such a service. Still, the information was passed on to the chairmen and when anybody asked about it, the information could be passed on by the man most likely to be asked, the RT chairman. Thus, the lurah's office did not have to handle questions about this problem.

The passive mode of information transmittal is very common. A somewhat less frequent mode is the active transmittal by an RT chairman to his constituents of information that the government wants the citizenry to know. To measure the extent to which the RT chairman is effective in this function one is dependent upon particular instances which are not easily comparable. One must find a case about which to ask which is recent enough so as to be likely to be remembered. And, of course, it is difficult to gauge how hard the government actually tried to get the message across. (Was it a maximum-effort, medium-effort, or minimal-effort campaign? In comparison to what?) At the time of the general survey for this study only one case seemed to be recent enough to allow inclusion in the schedule. This involved information about a new regulation on the use of firecrackers in the Capital Territory during the *Lebaran* (end of the fasting month) celebrations.

Every year in Jakarta many people are injured or even killed by fireworks in the week surrounding Lebaran. Therefore, for Lebaran in December of 1969, it was decided that fireworks should be somewhat limited by government regulation. The governor proclaimed that fireworks would be allowed only on a few days.

In order for such a regulation to have any effect, it is of course necessary for people to hear about it. In this case, the government made a middle-range effort to get the information to the people. The radio, TV, and newspapers carried the news and in addition RT chairmen were supposed to tell their constituents. The RT chairman was given part of the responsibility of policing the regulation.

In the general survey, we asked the following question:

"And how do you usually hear about a new regulation? For example: for the fasting month that has just been passed, there was a new regulation, that fireworks were forbidden except on several fixed days. Did you hear about that regulation? From whom?"

The results were as follows:

	Urban Higher Class	Urban Lower Class
Respondent didn't hear about regulation	3.9%	17.3%
Respondent heard from officer of RT	24.2	34.5
Respondent heard from non-RT source <i>only</i> (radio, TV, newspaper, etc.)	71.9	48.2

Urban higher class people were very well informed, but were far more likely to have heard of the new regulation from the mass media than were the lower class people. Of those who did hear about the regulation, 41 percent of the lower class heard about it from an officer of the RT, while only 25 percent of the upper class people had the same source.

In general, then, it seems that the active transmission of government information to the citizens by the RT chairman is more effectively carried out for poor people than for the rich. The wealthier classes, however, still tend to be better informed because of all the other channels available to them.

2) The RT as a transmitter of information to the government. The mass media may be important means for reaching the citizens, especially the higher class ones, but the mass media generally allow only one-way communication: there is very little opportunity to answer back, to ask for a clarification, or to express a different opinion. The RT chairman, however, seems to be in an ideal position for gathering local opinions to pass on to the administrators. He is at least formally in a dual-role position, equally responsible to his neighbors and the lurah.

The behavioral reality, however, differs somewhat from the formal description of the role, at least in the eyes of many of Jakarta's citizens. Generally speaking, he is perceived as being the neighborhood's man, though upper class people are more likely to say that his roles in both subsystems are equally important. Lower class people are more likely to think of their RT chairman as someone who is on *their* side, not the lurah's side. When asked if the RT chairman should be appointed by the lurah and given a salary, a fair amount of resistance to the idea appeared because of this feeling that the RT chairman belonged to the neighborhood.

If he were salaried and appointed, he would only carry out decisions (of government) or maybe he would not pay much attention to suggestions from the people.

It would be bad if he was appointed and salaried, because if he is appointed and salaried by the government, it is certain that the RT chairman is not going to be on the side of the members (of the RT).

It would be bad if he was appointed and salaried, because the RT chairman could be influenced by those above him, that is, the lurah.

If he is appointed, the result will be that he is more tied to the lurah and distant from the people.

If he is appointed and salaried, the RT chairman will become arbitrary because he will feel there is no spiritual tie (*ikatan bathin*) with his neighborhood.

If he is given a salary, the family character (of the RT) will be lost. The RT chairman will work only on the basis of instructions.

There was also a feeling that the lurah did not understand the neighborhood and might appoint someone inappropriate.

It would be bad if he were appointed, because the government doesn't know the situation of the people here, so that it is not definite that such a chairman would be suited to the wishes of the people.

It would be good if he were given a wage because it is proper that a person who works be paid. But it would not be good if he was appointed, because it is not certain that he would be in accord with the wishes of the people. The lurah would not necessarily know if the person appointed was evil, because the lurah is far away from this RT.

If he were appointed it would be bad, because the local people don't know his way of leadership. Maybe he would lean toward a particular group.

It seems then that there is a resistance to the change because the RT chairman is regarded as the neighborhood's man. Many people perceive a conflict between their interests and the interests of the lurah. Many feel that the lurah is a very distant figure who knows nothing of their needs. (Indeed he does not usually live in the kelurahan where he works but only comes during office hours.) Many feel that being salaried and/or being appointed will change things from the way they are now--the RT chairman is now an advocate of the neighborhood. He is perceived as representing them to a government official whose interests are not always the same as their own.

This seems to be true even though most people probably seldom express their interests, concerns, or suggestions to their RT chairman. When the RT chairmen were asked if they ever received any proposals or suggestions from members of the RT, many of them said they never did.

RT Chairman	Type of Neighborhood of RT Chairmen	
	Urban Higher Class	Urban Lower Class
Receive proposals	57.7% (15)	72.2% (13)
None received	42.3 (11)	27.8 (5)

Even though it is probably very seldom that an RT chairman carries a proposal from an individual to the government, he is expected to represent the interests of the RT in discussions with the RW chairman or lurah. It is assumed that because he is of the community, his own interests do not conflict with those of his neighbors and that if, for instance, the lurah proposed that every household pay Rp. 50 for some

project useless to the average citizen, the RT chairman will oppose it without having to ask the opinions of his neighbors first. In this sense, an individual's interests are expressed to the bureaucracy by the RT chairman not by virtue of any specific communication from the citizen but by virtue of his membership in an assumed community of interests. If an individual has needs markedly different from those of his neighbors and thus of the RT chairman (who, we saw, is likely to be very similar to his constituents), then on this dimension of the transmittal of information to the bureaucracy he is likely to be less represented by the RT chairman than are the more ordinary members of the RT. Thus if he has an automobile and no other member of the RT has one, his opinion that the RT road ought to be paved with funds collected from the RT members is not likely to be the opinion expressed as the RT's opinion by the chairman to the RW chairman or lurah. In order to get his opinion heard he will probably need to search for a different channel of communication. As an advocate of the community interest, then, the RT chairman is perceived as being a spokesman for the average member of the community.

3) The RT as a facilitator of transactions with the government. So far only the transmittal of information has been discussed. What of the individual who has some business to transact at the kelurahan office? For the individual who needs something from the lurah the RT chairman frequently plays a role as facilitator of the transactions. In the first place in 1969 more and more lurah were requiring a "letter of explanation" from the RT chairman before an individual could conduct any business at the kelurahan office.<sup>9</sup> Thus it became increasingly difficult for an individual to circumvent the RT/RW system.

From the point of view of the government this new rule was desirable for two reasons: first, it prevented people from coming to the kelurahan office whose business could not be handled there; and secondly, it provided an updated check on who a person was and where he lived. This latter element must be regarded as an internal security function to a certain extent.<sup>10</sup> An individual, to arrange anything with the government, must carry with him a letter from his RT chairman establishing that he is indeed a registered member of the RT. Thus, for instance, if he has in fact moved to another city but does not want--for some reason--to register as a citizen there, the RT chairman may not give him a letter to the lurah saying he is still living in the RT even though his identity card will so indicate.

Since there are so many kinds of licenses or letters that an individual might need at some point from the lurah, it is not surprising that nearly all RT chairmen mention that the most frequent tasks they handle for the members of the RT relate to the attainment of various types of licenses, certificates, or letters from the government. Birth

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9. See, for instance, a report of an address given to an RT election meeting by the lurah's representative. "If you have business concerning any certificates whatsoever at the kelurahan, please don't just show up . . . , first you must ask for a letter of introduction from the RT chairman. . . ." "Djangan Njelonong Sadja, Hargailah Fungsi RT," Pos Indonesia, February 2, 1970.

10. See, for instance, the request by Brigadier General Gatot Suwagijo of the Civil Defense Forces for greater vigilance on the part of RT and RW chairmen concerning newcomers who might have been involved in Gestapu elsewhere. "Seorang Pamen Pushansip ditahan," Pedoman, August 13, 1969.

and death certificates, travel permits to leave the Capital Territory, moving permits, celebration permits, certificates of good behavior, certificates of noninvolvement in the coup attempt of September 30, 1965, identity cards--these are the tasks that take most of the time of RT chairmen even though they are not generally regarded by his constituents as his most important duties.

And these are, of course, only the routine needs of his constituents. Not all transactions are of this routine nature. There are many other kinds of situations in which an individual might like to have the support and aid of his lurah for which specific administrative procedures do not necessarily exist. For example, if a policeman or an army officer is demanding protection money from a local business, a businessman might want his lurah to intervene on his behalf fearing that his own complaint to a higher official might be ignored or even cause more trouble. Any number of other possibilities exist which do not involve routine needs and which might, therefore, not really involve the RT chairman at all.

In such a nonroutine situation, however, most people say they would go to their RT chairman first. Within the urban upper class, 77 percent of the people would go to the RT chairman first, while 87.4 percent of the lower class people would do so. The high percentages of those who would go to their RT chairman first indicate the strength of the role for all the citizens of Jakarta.

There is a difference of quality nonetheless between the classes. A member of the higher class frequently goes to his RT chairman because that is the correct formal procedure. He is not seeking personal support so much as formal correctness, for when he faces the lurah he is not likely to feel socially inferior. A lurah, after all, is near the bottom of the administration. His salary is only enough to place him in a class roughly near the top of the urban lower classes. (If he is corrupt, of course, his standard of living may be better than that.) Educationally he is likely to have completed the sixth grade and perhaps some supplemental courses. For a member of the higher classes, then, he is not a formidable figure, even though in the particular case he may have power to make a decision important to a wealthy individual. Socially, though, the member of the higher classes does not feel malu before a lurah. A visit to the RT chairman thus does not serve the function of providing social or psychological support for a visit to the kelurahan office.

In the case of the poor citizen, however, the social relationship between an individual and the lurah is much more likely to be asymmetrical. The lurah is, from the viewpoint of a poor man, occupying a relatively high status position. He wears a uniform, has a nice office, works with his mind not his hands, and is frequently better off than the poor people who need his help. He must be respected; the poor individual must act humble in his presence: to do otherwise might incur the wrath of the lurah since in every relationship one must determine who is superior and who is inferior and then act accordingly. A poor person goes to his RT chairman to be sure he is correct in going to the lurah at all and to be sure that the meeting with the lurah will go as smoothly as possible. Frequently, he may try to get his RT chairman to go to the lurah for him or at least to accompany him.

If you can get Pak RT to come along to the lurah's office, it is much better. Pak Lurah will mostly ask questions of Pak RT, and I won't have to speak much.

Pak RT could not come along when I went to see Pak Lurah about a certain matter, but he wrote a letter saying I was a good person so I would not feel so nervous.

Thus, a visit to the RT chairman before a visit to the lurah may provide a kind of psychological support function as well as the more formal procedural function for poor people. The richer people because of their generally higher social status do not need this kind of support. Even though the behavior patterns may be similar, it is not unrealistic to argue that the motives behind the behavior are rather different for these two classes because of the kinds of social relationship they may have with their lurah.

The RT chairman spends much of his time facilitating transactions between the citizen and the bureaucracy. And in this sense he serves as a rational-legal (in the Weberian sense) bureaucratic functionary, filling out the forms necessary before a citizen can obtain some permit. But the difference between the RT chairman and the lurah can be seen in the matter of payment. Actually for certain kinds of forms the RT chairman is authorized to ask for a nominal set fee for his services (to cover the costs of paper, ink, etc.). Yet many RT chairmen say they never ask for any money, and 47.9 percent of the urban higher class and 45.5 percent of the lower class say they would expect to pay nothing for a routine matter. Generally, if there is some payment for the RT chairman's services, it is given after the business has been transacted without the RT chairman's asking. Frequently, a citizen will pass it through a handshake upon leaving either without comment or by mumbling something about "cigarette money." Usually Pak RT has no chance to look at it and ask for his letter or form back if it is not enough.

In the case of the lurah, however, the exchange of money is more straightforward. Generally, the lurah (or in more cases his assistant) will ask for a specific amount (sometimes this is the official amount, sometimes it is more) in exchange for his services. There is no allusion to "cigarette money." Generally, people *expect* to pay the lurah more often (and more money) than they expect to pay nothing at the lurah's office. The RT chairman-citizen relationship tends to be far more personal than that between a citizen and his lurah. Even though the RT chairman facilitates bureaucratic transactions, he is not *just* a bureaucrat in the urban areas of the Capital Territory.

### The RT, the RW, and the Lurah

A general overview of the functioning of the RT/RW system in urban Jakarta suggests that the real gaps in the system do not lie so much between the citizen and his neighborhood organization as between the RT and the lurah. The ties between the RT chairman and the RW chairman are generally fairly weak: there is very little communication between them. They tend to meet seldom, and the RT chairmen usually feel that the contact that does take place does not allow for a significant exchange of opinion (due in part to the asymmetry of their social relationship). RT chairmen also very seldom meet with the lurah and frequently feel that he is not interested in their opinions. Only to a slightly lesser extent do the RW chairmen feel ignored by the lurah.

What explains this fairly wide gap between community organization and the lurah of Jakarta? An important part of the answer lies in the

perceptions of the self-interests of the community leaders and the administrator. In Jakarta a fairly strong pattern of conflicting interests emerges: the lurah has one set of goals based on his own interests while the community leaders have quite a different set.

The RT chairman generally regards himself as the "neighborhood's man" rather than the "lurah's man" or even the equal representative of both. His own perception of his job emphasizes the neighborhood aspect over governmental duties. And his neighbors generally agree with his assessment of the role. The whole environment ties him strongly to the community, not the government. He is socially more dependent on his neighbors than on his lurah: were he to be cut off somehow from his neighbors, the results would be serious; to be cut off from the lurah would not create a grave situation for him personally. Thus, he does (or at least tries to) fill the role of the virtual representative of the average citizen of his neighborhood. He is like the others, and he identifies with his neighbors, not the lurah.

The RW chairman's perceptions of his position are somewhat different. The RW is a much larger unit and thus more likely to be heterogeneous socially and economically. The RW chairman himself, we saw earlier, is a well-known person who tends to be above average in lifestyle and social status. He does not really regard himself as one of the ordinary people very often. And the ordinary people do not see him as their man in most cases. He is a notable and, especially in poor neighborhoods, unapproachable. Nevertheless, RW chairmen frequently perceive a conflict of interest between themselves and the lurah, much as the RT chairmen do.

Pak Lurah calls us to his office for a meeting and tells us that it is time to try to become a *swadaya*<sup>11</sup> kelurahan. He has several projects he wants us to carry out in our RWs. There is no money for the projects; they are to be carried out on a self-help basis. He does not consider whether we need these projects but only how they can be achieved. Pak Lurah thinks he can become a *camat* (a higher official) if all these are carried out.

Pak Lurah wanted us to upgrade the kelurahan road through voluntary collective work (*kerja bhakti*), and to build a mosque in the RWs that do not yet have one. It is true that the road needs to be fixed, but in my RW we do not really need a mosque. There is one very near which is adequate. Pak Lurah must think that RW mosques will open the door to heaven for him (ed.: sarcastic). I tell the RT chairmen and if they want to build a mosque they can. I do not push them on this. But I do try to get them to repair the road.

Very clearly this kind of picking and choosing as to what shall be implemented is a public administrator's nightmare. In Jakarta it is probably a fairly common occurrence because of the problem of a perceived conflict of interest between the government and particular neighborhoods.

The problem of conflicting interests seems to be most active in situations involving kelurahan development. A lurah has routine admin-

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11. Every kelurahan is judged by the Capital Territory administration to be in one of three levels of development. Swadaya is the second level. A fuller explanation follows.

istrative tasks which are not a part of development activities, but generally lurah regard those as irrelevant to their advancement. If he is adequate in those tasks, he is doing well enough, for there is not much opportunity to be noticed for brilliant routine work.

The field of kelurahan development, on the other hand, does allow a lurah to outshine other lurah and thus perhaps get a promotion or other reward for work well done. A lurah's opportunity to gain recognition for excellence is closely tied to his efforts in projects of the Lembaga Kerja Pembangunan Masyarakat Desa (the Working Committee for Village Society Development, hereafter LKPMDC). This organization is designed to bring the offices of the RW into a structure to carry out the plans for kelurahan development. The LKPMDC is merely the lowest structure in the organization called Village Society Development of the Capital Territory (PMDC). The LKPMDC is led by the lurah, and its membership is made up of the officers of the RWs in the kelurahan. According to regulations, the functions of the LKPMDC are the following:<sup>12</sup>

- a. to carry out projects,
- b. to gather data on the situation in the district,
- c. to receive and formulate the opinions and suggestions of the people.

The introduction of "opinions and suggestions of the people" seems to indicate some concern with local opinion. Yet the structure of the total organization does not in fact seem to allow much leeway for local preferences. There are three levels of organization above the kelurahan with responsibilities which seem to preclude a real input for, say, RW officers.

At the province level the governor heads the PMD program and, aided by a technical staff, he plans, evaluates, and oversees the PMD. At the level of the kecamatan, the camat is a coordinator.<sup>13</sup> The lurah, at the bottom, seems left only to carry out the projects sent down from above. (See chart opposite.)

Presumably, the opinions collected and introduced by the RW officers could be important if the planning at the top was very general in scope. However, this is not really the case. The lurah finds that there are certain projects that must be carried out if his kelurahan is to be judged a good one. The lurah, in turn (reasonably) assumes that the better the judgment of his kelurahan, the better the impression he makes on his superiors.

In relation to LKPMDC programs, kelurahan are judged by members of the governor's staff to be of three different levels: the lowest level is called *siaga*, the middle level *swadaya*, and the highest level *swasembada*.<sup>14</sup> Every kelurahan office bears a sign indicating the level it has achieved.

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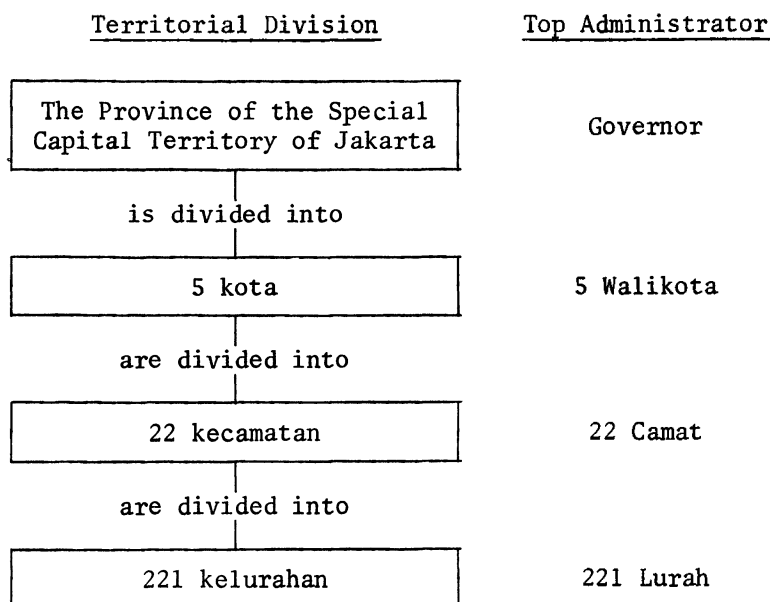
12. "Hasil Panel Discussion PMD DCI Djakarta Tanggal 22 Mei, 1967, s/d. 24 Mei, 1967," in Pedoman Pembinaan, n.p.

13. Ibid.

14. "Lampiran, Surat Keputusan Gub/KDH DCI no. IB3/1/12/1968 (13 Feb., 1968)," in ibid.



Organizational Chart of Territorial Administration  
in the Capital Territory of Jakarta



Each kelurahan is then divided into RWs, and RWs are subdivided into RTs. RWs and RTs are not governmental units in the sense that they are not staffed by employees of the government. Rather they are units of community organization.

Judgments of the level a particular kelurahan has achieved are based on very specific criteria: A swadaya kelurahan, for instance, must have subposts of the civil defense force in each RW, must have succeeded in improving many of its religious schools, must have an organization for upgrading sport activities in the kelurahan, and so forth. Altogether in 1969 there were thirty-three of these criteria.<sup>15</sup>

A lurah reading the list of criteria need only think about which criteria have not yet been met in his own kelurahan for the next rank to decide what projects need to be carried out. Lurah tend to decide what activities to undertake on the basis of what the "higher-ups" say he needs rather than on the basis of what the local population feels a need for.

The lurah of — (an urban, predominantly lower class kelurahan) told me that the LKPMDC had decided to build an RW library in each of the RWs and that the buildings were to be built by voluntary collective labor of the local people. I asked who proposed the RW library idea, and he said that it was a part of the development plan of the city and therefore he wanted to see it carried out in —. I asked how the members of the LKPMDC felt about the plan. He said some of them understood the need for RW libraries but others did not. Some felt that the RTs they represented might not be socially conscious (*kurang sadar*) enough to understand the importance of the

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15. Some modification of these requirements has since been made. The principle remains unchanged however.

project. I asked about the method of decision making in the LKPMDC meeting. He said that each RW would allow the RT chairmen to vote on where the library was to be located. Apparently the objections by some RW chairmen were not enough to persuade the lurah to abandon the project.

From the point of view of the provincial government it is desirable to have an overall plan to improve the territory and to do so in a balanced way. It is important to motivate low-level administrators to carry out specific programs by setting up definite standards for judging the performance of a lurah and his LKPMDC. Otherwise, good plans might get "lost in the shuffle" on the way down the command structure. The effect is to create a motivation for the lurah to carry out the specific projects of the government. Someday when all kelurahan are swasembada the territory will have a very evenly developed system. But in terms of creating a sense of common interest between the citizens of Jakarta and the administrators, the lack of significant local input in planning may be reinforcing the feelings of a conflict of interest already evident among Jakarta's citizens.