

URBAN DIASPORA AND THE QUESTION OF COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

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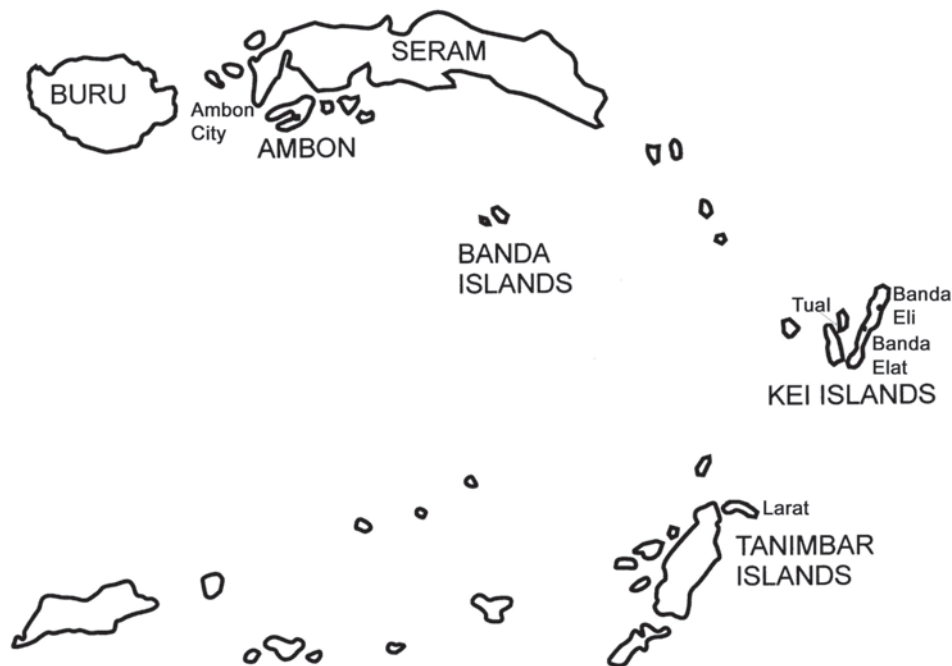
The Bandanese are a community with a distinct language and tradition which point to their origin in Banda, an early base of Dutch colonization in Indonesia. Presently focused in two villages in the Kei Islands, the community has been transforming into a regional, urban diaspora since the 1960s. Field research from March until August 2009 focused on the question of how this community distributes itself regionally and to what extent its ethnic relations are informed by its previous history of travel, migration and displacement. The study reveals that urbanized Bandanese occupy political and economic niches marked by a privileged access to fishing and trade, the backbones of the provincial economy. At the same time, their shared ancestry with local land-owning groups legitimizes their presence in new locations. Differential access to maritime wealth and land give new meaning to the classification of immigrant and autochthonous people, ubiquitous in each island society of Maluku, in which the Bandanese are placed in a mediating position.

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Keywords: diaspora, migrations, Indonesia, Maluku Islands

*Introduction*¹

Since the 1960s Banda Eli and Banda Elat, two Muslim villages in the Eastern Indonesian islands of Kei, have been the source of extensive labor migration and urban settlement. Their seasonal and permanent residents, together with long-term emigrants, perceive themselves as a cultural and historical entity defined by a language, genealogical knowledge, and a tradition of shared origin in a yet earlier, past homeland—the pre-colonial islands of Banda. Some five thousand people presently maintain some competence and interest in the language, Islamic offices, and ancestral traditions which define them as a diasporic community. The latest wave of urban resettlement began in 1999 when communal violence, a result of the insecurity and power-play which accompanied the change of the national government, caused many urban people to lose their homes. In a pattern found in several stages of its past history, the community began to expand to new locations in which they were able to claim a former relationship of shared ancestry or mutual aid. Such uses of the past make it interesting to ask whether the sense of cultural continuity among the Banda diaspora is itself revitalized in response to disruptive historical events. How do successive exiles from different homelands reproduce the notions and categories of homeland itself? Which of the constituting, internal differences of the community become salient in new environments? Are these differences able to accommodate ethnic classifications of a larger



Map of Maluku Islands

scale, or diluted in the process? Such questions oriented my recent fieldwork, from March until August 2009, in the city of Ambon and the surrounding areas in Maluku.

My doctoral fieldwork in 1994–1996 was focused on Banda Eli, one of the villages which refugees from Banda established in the Kei Islands in the early seventeenth century. The expansion of my earlier study to urbanized speakers of Bandanese during the revisit of this field area was motivated by three considerations. The first is the role of the displaced people from Banda in resisting Dutch colonialism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries throughout Central Maluku. Their presence on the eastern coast of Seram Island and their prominence in inter-island trade is well established in historical sources. Their descendants' ability to maintain a self-aware memory of this past is remarkable and merits further concern alongside the documentary evidence of the early colonial situation. A second issue emerges from recent historical scholarship which has begun to emphasize regional social and political systems rather than localized societies or groups as the most useful ground of analysis. It makes more sense to ask what significance the Bandanese people's historical and cultural self-awareness has in the context of regional and urban networks than to study it as an isolated, local tradition. Third, I was interested in knowing how social boundaries and classifications in Ambon had been transformed by the ethnic and communal conflict of Maluku one decade ago. A lot of recent research has focused on the mobilization of ethnic and cultural classifications in violent situations and peacemaking.

The present study contributes to this discussion with a long-term perspective on ethnic categories and the discourses and practices in which they are reproduced.

Historical background

Aside from my own dissertation (Kaartinen 2001), the Banda community has not previously been the main subject of an in-depth anthropological study. Elfie Stejskel (1988), as well as Ellen and Glover (1974), point out Banda Eli—one of the two Bandanese speaking villages in the Kei Islands—as the source of pottery with a distinct style. Pottery is significant as one of the main objects of trade which went on between the Bandanese in Kei and related communities in Central Maluku throughout the colonial period. The founding of this village by people exiled from the Banda Islands in 1621 is suggested by van Hoëvell's report from a visit to Kei in 1888 (van Hoëvell 1890), while a contemporary monograph of the VOC conquest of Banda by van der Chijs (1886) indicates that the exiled Bandanese first settled on the eastern coast of Seram. More recent historiography has focused on the islands of eastern Seram as the center of a far-reaching trade network which continued to operate through centuries of colonial rule (Knaap 1987; Ellen 2003; Goodman 2006).

The argument which emerges from this literature is that the Bandanese as a historical and cultural category is an ongoing product of a regional system of trade and interlocal relations. In seeking to understand the meaning of this category, it has therefore been natural to follow up my previous, village-based ethnography with a survey of Bandanese-speakers in Central Maluku. While the focus of the present research is on the formation of a diasporic community through relatively recent population movements, it emphasizes ethnic and cultural awareness as an outcome of regional relations, often informed by similar categories as the interaction between people, places and political entities in the distant past.

As Rogers Brubaker (2004) argues, ethnicity is not constituted by the boundaries and identities of social groups but by the categories in terms of which people make sense of social and historical situations. Thus, in Ambon and elsewhere in Maluku, land rights and histories of settlement are often discussed in terms of a distinction between autochthonous, original people and immigrants. An argument explored in this research is that the ancestry of Bandanese people in Central and Southeast Maluku puts them between these categories. While this research is focused on the people of Banda Eli, it makes reference to people from Banda Elat (a related, Banda-speaking village in Kei), to people who have migrated to Ambon from Sulawesi, and to various groups which affirm an ancestry in Central Maluku.

Objectives, materials and methods

The purpose of the research has been to examine:

- where people who have migrated out from the villages of Banda Eli and Elat in Kei currently live in Ambon and other urban locations
- what reasons they give for their migration and what patterns emerge from their stories about living in new locations

- what modes of livelihood have motivated and sustained the migrations
- how land for new settlements has been acquired
- what practices sustain a shared sense of community and culture
- how the Banda community has responded to communal conflict and political transformation

The research has involved six months of fieldwork based in Ambon, capital of the newly reformed province of Maluku. In addition, three visits have been made to the city of Tual in the Kei Islands, one brief visit to Dobo in the Aru Islands, and one visit to Waisarisa, a coastal settlement in Western Seram. All of these places are significant targets for urban migration which began on a larger scale in the 1960s. People of Banda Elat have been settling permanently in Ambon since the 1950s and have developed a permanent niche in the local economy by working in the Ambon harbor. Starting in the early 1970s, increasing numbers of people from Banda Eli—the more peripheral of the two villages—signed up for contract work in other sites in Maluku and began to found their own, small neighborhoods in Ambon city. Industrial and harbor work available in Waisarisa (Seram) and Dobo (Aru) attracted permanent settlers to these coastal cities as well. A fourth phase in the formation of the diaspora is marked by the communal conflict of 1999 and the subsequent decline of the Bandanese community in Waisarisa. Settlements in the Christian areas in Ambon were abandoned in favor of new Bandanese neighborhoods. At the same time, three new Bandanese neighborhoods emerged in the city of Tual.

The principal method of documenting the locations and density of Bandanese settlement has been mapping based on aerial photographs, available from Google Earth, and listing the number of households in each area of interest. Patterns and periods of residence have been studied by interviews conducted on household visits. In addition to present settlements, the study has involved the reconstruction of newly abandoned neighborhoods by interviewing several former residents.

Biographic information has been collected by interviewing persons with a long history of urban residence and labor migration. Together with the household survey, life histories provide the basis for describing the social history of the diaspora which began as early as the 1950s. It is also significant for documenting past patterns of residence and inter-ethnic relations in the context of work.

In addition to community members, interviews have also been conducted with officials and community leaders. An interview with Muhammed Sugin, head of the harbor cooperative in Ambon, was helpful for understanding the close relationship between the Banda community and three ethnic groups with a long history of migrating throughout the archipelago. Owing to their mobility and prominence in the migrant job market, these groups are often lumped together as BBM, short for Bugis (the dominant ethnic group of South Sulawesi), Buton (of Southeast Sulawesi), and Madura (the large island on the north-east coast of Java).

A different perspective on the ethnic and social position of the Bandanese emerged in interviews with community leaders called *raja*, of Amahusu and Batu Merah in Ambon, and the rajas of Dullah and Banda Eli in the Kei Islands. Prof. (emer.) Jon Pattikaihattu of Unpatti was another source of useful information about the significance of narratives related to land and settlement in Ambon. In addition, the research involved interviews with the

village head and *kepala urusan* in Fiditan, Tual, and with the heads of residential areas (RT) relevant for the research.

Aside from interviews, the research has involved participation in various communal and public activities. In the urban context, weddings, funerals, and other family rituals are the principal events at which the community is assembled on the larger scale. Observing such meetings has been the source of important information about community structure and the movement of persons between different locations. In addition to public events related to the Banda community, I took part in the seminar on *Educational Perspectives on Historical Consciousness and National Integration*, arranged by the Faculty of Pedagogy of the Pattimura University of Ambon on May 20th 2009.

The methodology followed in this research is often given the shorthand name 'participant observation'. Participating in events, in addition to talking to people about them, means that research does not merely produce a static image of society as it exists at a certain moment, but reveals cycles and events which constitute social time. Careful reconstruction of the observed events can then result in case histories analyzed under what is known as the 'extended case method' with the purpose of revealing the social categories which underlie the participants' responses to a given situation. With this procedure in mind, the present research seeks to avoid describing the patterns of communal and personal life as mechanistic responses to the external situation in which people live. Instead, the study aims to show what points in the social and historical process invest people's decisions and actions with value. Aside from structural description and analysis, this research aims at uncovering those moments of people's life worth remembering and recounting, using them as the key to the significance of categories of community over the longer-term.

The distribution and structure of Banda diaspora

There are currently six major concentrations of Banda Eli settlement in the Ambon City. With one exception all of them lie in Muslim neighborhoods, some of which have expanded considerably after the ethnic conflict of 1999. When people from Banda Eli and Banda Elat first began to move to the city, most of them settled in mixed neighborhoods near downtown. These have become exclusively Christian areas. Some families continue to have land certificates to their old house-sites, now used by squatters and farmers pending their sale to new owners.

The only major pre-conflict settlement which people of Banda Eli still hold in Ambon is Batu Merah, a hillside area in the northern part of the city area. Batu Merah had no vacant land before the conflict and has therefore not received any new settlers. Remarkably, however, all new Banda settlements in Ambon have been established on previously vacant land in the hills located within the traditional domain of the *Raja* of Batu Merah. In terms of sheer numbers, the most important new settlement is the area known as KBMT, short for *Keluarga Besar Maluku Tenggara*, 'large family of Southeast Maluku'. Built on former garden land, this neighborhood consists of a dense but orderly cluster of houses and a mosque. More diffuse residential clusters of Banda people are found in other Muslim neighborhoods close by.

In Tual, the regency capital of Southeast Maluku in Kei, the earliest migrants from Banda Eli and Banda Elat settled close to each other near the main street. In addition to this residential cluster, recent migrants now occupy three completely new neighborhoods, originally founded to house Muslim refugees from more remote parts of the regency. Their rapid growth in the last few years reflects an emerging pattern in which many households split or shift residence between the village and the nearest town. The main motivation of this semi-urban life is easier access to the job market and schools. At the same time, newly urbanized households continue to produce food on farms which lie one or two kilometers away towards the center of the island. During the Eastern winds the home village, a whole day's travel away, is practically empty but on such events as the national elections or the Islamic fast it affirms itself as the main site of community life.

In addition to construction land, Banda settlements in Tual as well as Ambon rely on broader land and resource rights, obtained as a special favor from the traditional leaders of local land-owning groups. In several cases I have been able to document, such rights have been granted because of ancestral kinship and wartime alliance, and in some cases in the contexts of more recent relations of mutual help. Fiditan, a village which was annexed to the newly formed city of Tual in 2008, is also part of the traditional chiefly domain of Dullah, governed by a *raja* whose domain covers six separate villages. Before founding their new settlement in this village, people of Banda Eli formally approached the *Raja* of Dullah with customary gifts and appealed to him with a story about a war, fought approximately four hundred years ago, which was decided in Dullah's favor with Bandanese help. In another settlement near Tual, land was acquired by appealing to long-standing kinship between common people from Banda Eli and the Keiese land-owning family. People from each of the two new settlements use garden land which lies between their homes, and probably come in more frequent contact with each other in the context of farming than in the urban environment.

I should emphasize that the Banda Eli community does not consist of an internally homogeneous group of people. In addition to differences of rank, the village is divided in several sections, each with a mosque, ancestral traditions, and outside allies of its own. Consequently each section of the village is able to produce persons who embody shared, ancestral prestige and belonging, and are able to act as the central figures of the community in new localities. Many of the urban neighborhoods have grown around such focal persons who first acquired land in a new location. Much of the old Banda Complex in Tual still consists of people from the center section of the home village, while Fiditan is chiefly populated by people from the northern section or Futwalu. Most Ambonese residents from Wakatran, the far southern end of Banda Eli, still live together in a small group of houses in the tight, southeastern corner of Galunggung. People of Efruan, the large commoner hamlet south of Banda Eli, prefer the area of Siwalima Pantai in Dobo. Intense family solidarity flourishes in households of up to twenty people as bachelors wait to get married before they build their own house. In Waisarisa, a sleepy, defunct factory town on the coast of Seram, the remaining thirteen Banda Eli families live as they would in their old village, tending gardens and fishing from a common boat.

One major observation of this study is that two generations of urban living has failed to have an atomizing effect on the Banda Eli community. My informants were able to tell me precisely the location, occupation, and marital relations of each member of their community

across the whole city, and in the context of family events and Muslim holidays it is consistently regarded as a large family. While it is true that members of the community are divided by a wide range of occupational and socioeconomic divisions, harbormen and university students continue to live in the same households. The practice of women of placing their children in each other's care for several years is one factor which countervails the individuating effects of dispersed residential patterns.

Patterns of migration and settlement.

The life-historical interviews reveal fairly uniform patterns in labor migration and urban settlement. In the late 1960s, people of Banda Eli gave up the trade voyages to Central Maluku and the New Guinea coast in favor of large-scale migrant work, which provided a new, more profitable way of engaging the external economy. Most of the elderly men interviewed for this research said that their first travels to Central Maluku took place in the context of contract work, usually with a forestry company operating in Taliabu, Seram, or Buru. Initially they signed up for such work in large groups, but as soon as some members of the community had been recruited as coolies in the Ambon harbor, the harbor community became a labor pool from which companies picked up personnel for short-term jobs elsewhere. Unmarried young men would spend a year or longer earning money and then return to their relatives living in the village, before spending another period in the urban job market. While many people of Banda Eli were permanent residents in Ambon by the 1970s, most Banda Eli people who lived in Ambon in this period were students or graduates with a government job. Typically migrant workers would come to live with, or next door, to such persons who thus represented the focal points of an emerging urban neighborhood, often occupied by people of both Banda-speaking villages in Kei.

People traveling to Ambon and further for migrant work generally stayed away from home for at least a year, and few of them were married. Those who chose to stay in Ambon would get married and bring their wife along. Migrant work which took place closer to home, in Dobo and Tual, generally lasted from a few months to half a year and made possible a pattern of 'visiting husbands' whose wives and children stayed in the village. This pattern was quite common during my earlier research in 1994–1996, but it has largely ceased after the conflict of 1999 in favor of more permanent settlement in Dobo and Tual.

Permanent urban settlement among the people of Banda Eli became more common with the opening of the plywood factory in Waisarisa, Seram, in 1981. By that time, many people were making serious efforts to build a house in Ambon where construction land was extremely short. In one case, people of Banda Eli reclaimed a substantial amount of land in the village of Wainitu, south of downtown Ambon. Reclaiming began in 1976 after the *Raja* of Amahusu had given his permission to the builders to use marine sand, the use of which he had forbidden to other constructors. The new neighborhood was called Talake, an acronym for 'Little Square of Land', and began to resemble a village of its own when the new mosque was finished in 1998, a mere year before the settlement was destroyed in the conflict. Some people whose principal household and family were located here worked

at Waisarisa, Seram, replicating the pattern of short-term migrant work which was common in the village of Banda Eli in the same period.

The case of Talake illustrates the importance of key personalities—civil servants, teachers, and *mandors* or harbor foremen—as the founders of new settlements. For years, houses built in this location provided a home for unmarried men who were staying in the city on a more temporary basis. In doing so, house-owners were acting on kinship obligations, while people traveling between the city and Banda Eli maintained contact and communication between the urban settlement and the village in an age before long-distance phone connections. In spite of plenty of mixing between Banda Eli people and those from Banda Elat, Banda Neira, Geser, Bugis, and Buton, new settlements have until this day preserved some of their kin-based character. A large part of the reason is the preference among Banda Eli people to marry within their own community. Consequently the core groups of many settlements consist of a group of siblings and their in-married relatives, in a similar pattern to that also found in the village.

In the latest phase of rural-urban migration, it has become common for people who maintain residence in the village to construct another house in the nearby city of Tual, with better access to the labor market and education. This pattern of double residency is made possible by improved communications and the availability of new construction land in the villages of Fiditan, Mangun and Dumar and the BTN (Kompleks BTN, from Bank Tabungan Negara, ‘National Savings Bank Housing Complex’) area.

An important external factor affecting these patterns of settlement is the shortage of land in urban areas. The growing towns of Ambon and Tual are short of level ground suitable for construction, and in Dobo—the main port city of the Aru Islands east of Kei—the shortage of land is even more dramatic. While wealthier people are able to buy land from former occupants with a land title, the rapid expansion of the Banda Eli community in a new location has often relied on territory under traditional dominion or *adat*. The process of acquiring such land tends to strengthen the awareness of the shared ancestry of Banda Eli people by stressing ancestral kinship and alliance with the local *rajas* and landholding groups as the basis of their legitimate presence in the new location. As we have already seen, this method of acquiring land rights has been successfully used in founding new settlements in Tual as well as Ambon. It has the effect of concentrating the community in limited areas, characterized by similar political and spiritual leadership as also found in the village of origin.

I have also suggested that the ability of Banda Eli people to acquire land for new settlements is not based on their ethnic unity or influence as a corporate group but on the relationships of clans and ancestral groups to people in other places. By virtue of these ancestral histories they are able to frame themselves as insiders, even if their livelihood and affinities to non-Moluccans (particularly people of Sulawesi) also mark them as outsiders.

Interethnic relations

The position of Banda people in the ethnic structures of Ambon can be summarized in three classifications. The first is related to typical occupations. Many people of Banda Eli and Elat originally arrived at Ambon as harbormen, an important occupation in an economy

oriented towards maritime traffic and the export of fish. From the 1960s on, harbor work has been the most visible sign of their connection to maritime wealth and to a specific niche in the local economy which immigrants from Buton and Makassar began to carve for themselves as early as the eighteenth century. In addition to harbor work, people of Banda Eli and Elat are also affiliated to Buginese and Butonese immigrants by co-residing with them, notably in Batu Merah, and through frequent intermarriage between the two communities.

Another classification, already mentioned in the context of settlement and land rights, lies in the notion that the founders of Banda Eli and Elat originate from Banda in Central Maluku. This makes them heirs to one of the four kingdoms (based in Ambon, Seram, Saparua and Banda) which constituted the pre-colonial polity of Central Maluku, as against the four Northern Maluku sultanates. Increasing interest in this past among local literati is likely to reflect the recent division of Maluku and Ternate into separate provinces. Already in the 1990s, however, I found frequent reference to Boiratan, the mythical ancestress of various groups in Ambon, Buru, Seram and the Lease Islands. As the sister of the first kings of Banda, this figure also defines people of Banda origin as the relatives of ruling families throughout Central Maluku.

A third classification refers to the people of Banda Eli and Elat as Muslims. This is not merely a generic religious identity, relevant in opposition to the Christian population of Maluku. People of Banda Eli especially affirm the long history of their Islamic conversion and learning. One might say that their identity as Muslims is partly grounded in the historical position of their community in Maluku. In one sign of this, practically all Banda Eli settlements are centered on a mosque of their own, and even in many mixed settlements we find a Banda Eli person serving as the *imam*.

The ethnic position of Banda Eli people cannot be described simply as a reflection of their socioeconomic status and elective affinity to particular social others. In one sense, their connection with maritime wealth suggests their status as outsiders, comparable to immigrants from Buton and Bugis. In another sense, their Central Maluku origin places them relatively high in the Creole hierarchy of Ambon City. In certain contexts they occupy a mediating position between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', for instance when immigrants from Sulawesi need to approach Ambonese people about land rights or ceremonial issues. In the context of relations within a local, urban settlement it often does not make sense to describe them as an ethnic group but rather as a kin-based community. The concept of ethnicity is most helpful as a description of situations in which inter-group relations have to be enacted in characteristic ways. This is the case in the Ambon harbor, one stage for the display of solidarities between people of Banda and Sulawesi origin, and perhaps also in the coastal settlements of Dobo. A more complex presentation of self is the norm in those settings where people live next door to senior kinsmen, marriage allies and various urban relatives.

A constructionist view of ethnic identity (e.g. Comaroff 1987) makes it attractive to interpret different aspects of ethnicity as 'layers' or 'residues' left by the socioeconomic and power structure of different historical periods. My interviews in the Ambon harbor gave a fascinating picture of how Bugis and Butonese harbor foremen called *mandor* raised and appointed their 'students' from Banda Elat as their successors, paving the way for the recruitment of more harbor workers from Banda Eli. The relationship between these groups was transformed at different stages of the harbor cooperative's history, as conscientious

organizers tried to avoid nepotism by favoring recent arrivals from the two rural villages in Kei. A constructionist theory of ethnicity would suggest that the growing affinity between the groups would result in their assimilation into a single ethnicity, corresponding to a class position at a certain stage in time. My observations of Banda Eli, however, suggest that this model is too simplistic. Instead of seeking a permanent position in the harbor community, most Banda Eli workers have moved on, either by studying in lieu of work, or by moving to Waisarisa and other places where harbor work has sustained a distinct Banda Eli community. My interviews with harbor foremen suggest that men from Banda Eli are valued as harbor workers because they exhibit a combination of character, social skills, and physical prowess which is generally valued in the harbor community. In contrast to Buginese, Butonese and Madurese workers with whom they share some of this repertoire, however, people from Banda Eli and Elat do not practice it as an adaptive strategy in the broader urban context. To the former groups—complete outsiders in Ambon City—a place in the harbor community represents certain benefits and recognition among the original Ambonese. The Banda people, on the other hand, are widely recognized to originate from Central Maluku and have less need to affirm an identity grounded in a single occupation. Jobs in the harbor and fish-market appeal to them because of their connection to maritime wealth—the backbone of Maluku economy—but many move on to other career opportunities and residential choices, leaving the harbor behind.

The argument suggested by this research gives more emphasis to culturally specific classifications in terms of which people interpret their position in the urban setting. One ubiquitous classification in Maluku societies is one between local or autochthonous people and foreign immigrants. This classification permits outside immigrants to be incorporated in the local community through their commitment to reciprocal obligations of spiritual and political protection, or what people in Kei often call ‘unwritten law’ of the land. While this arrangement undermines the unity of the immigrants as a corporate group (as is particularly clear from our observations in Tual), it provides them with a legitimate social presence, grounded in perceptions of the local community’s long-term history. This seems to have been the main advantage of people from Banda Eli and Elat, as against the people of Sulawesi, in the aftermath of the communal conflict of a decade ago. In spite of their privileged access to ‘maritime wealth’, they managed to reclaim their place in Ambon society when new neighborhoods were founded from 2004 onwards.

Conclusion

While the community studied here has undergone several dislocations and political upheavals in its earlier history, the new, urban settlements in which it is currently relocating itself offer another significant window onto its reproductive, social and political life. The community’s distribution to new sites is also topical because it is partly an outcome of the recent communal conflict in Maluku. While I have not focused on the history of conflict as such, the observations made in the course of this fieldwork suggest that its underlying social dynamics are in fact more complex. Whereas the conflict has often been explained as one between outsiders, with better access to new wealth, and insiders with a previous claim to land and natural resources, we have found that certain communities fall between the

two categories, and sometimes find themselves in a position to mediate between them. Understanding conflict and peace is therefore not merely a question of resource distribution but also about the constitution of local society.

This research is meant to serve a number of interrelated methodological and theoretical interests. Instead of limiting the study to a single location, I seek to look at Banda Eli as a distributed community (Siikala 2001) which exists as a part of a regional social system. A good look at Ambon society has been extremely helpful for making sense of the constant preoccupation with departures, arrivals and traveling which I noticed during my earlier, village-based fieldwork. A related theoretical interest of research has been to follow different, overlapping social processes and their structuring notions of time. In writing up this research, I will attempt to reconstruct significant social events which have taken place during or adjacent to the research period, and reflect on their relationship to the longer-term memories and histories of social transformation. I am interested in developing this approach because my previous fieldwork, done a considerable time ago, puts me in a position to compare and connect the temporal horizons of different generations and places.

Another broader question which emerges from the material of this fieldwork is whether and how Banda Eli can be considered a 'community'. John Kelly's and Martha Kaplan's (2001) discussion about ethnic Indians in Fiji defines the community by its historically contingent need to represent itself. Community representation, they argue, is not a constant fact of 'identity' but takes different forms from one situation to another. I take seriously the idea that Banda people's migrations and dislocations over four centuries have been a stage for reproducing certain social forms and types of consciousness—elements of historical and cultural continuity. At the same time, their representation as a community emerges from specific conjunctions between reproductive practices, ethnic relations, colonial history and national modernity. While harbor work and ancestral land claims are equally salient features of the Banda community in Ambon, each points towards different social and temporal horizons and never exhausts the shared existence of people involved in them.

NOTES

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