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## **Promise, pretence and pragmatism: governance and taxation in colonial Indonesia, 1870-1940**

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## The rise and fall of a coerced labour economy

Labour services and indirect rule in Ambon,  
c. 1600-1920

In 1902, 33 Ambonese *raja* (kings) faced such a dramatic decrease in their personal finances, that they collectively wrote to the Governor General asking him to raise their monthly stipends.<sup>1</sup> Their incomes had consistently shrunk during the preceding decades as a consequence of the gradual collapse of the spice-market, on which their wealth had depended since the establishment of VOC-controlled and monopolized spice production in the mid-sixteenth century. Some of these rulers reportedly even lacked the means to buy the appropriate regal outfits they were entitled to and expected to wear ceremonially, and had to borrow suits for formal occasions from richer colleagues or European officials.<sup>2</sup> Their prestige as rich and powerful local spice-lords crumbled so badly that they started experiencing difficulties in enforcing their ancient, bestowed rights and entitlements to income, land and labour.

Ambon, located in the Central Moluccas (see map 3.1 and 3.2), was once among the most important islands of early-modern Dutch colonialism. Its suitability for the cultivation of cloves, indigenous to the Moluccas, was the principal attraction of Europeans to the Indonesian archipelago and a source of extravagant profits.<sup>3</sup> So how and why did its indigenous rulers, pivotal to Dutch monopolized clove production, end up in such a deplorable state in the twentieth century? And how did the colonial administration and Ambonese society respond?

This chapter scrutinizes the changing role of Ambon's indigenous rulers during the three centuries of Dutch presence on the island. It explores the various socio-political consequences of the transformation of colonial agricultural monopolism and coerced labour to liberalism, free labour and monetary taxation, by centralizing the changing role of appointed 'kings.' It is, in essence, a study of the shifting patterns of indirect rule under the influence of changes in taxation. Ambon provides a unique case study because, as the first region of Indonesia to ever come under Dutch rule, it is where Dutch principles of coerced agricultural labour and indirect rule were practically invented. Moreover, for more than 200 years, monopolized coerced clove production would intertwine with Ambon's socio-political structures and *adat*. It would provide for the political establishment of the colonial state and define the fiscal foundations of Ambon under colonial rule. Therefore, the final abolition of the clove monopoly in the 1860s posed

1 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS, 22-6-1903: 33 *Raja* of Ambon to GG, 16-8-1902, 'rekestanden.'

2 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS, 22-6-1903: Res. Ambon to GG, 7-7-1902.

3 Cloves are the dried flower buds of clove-trees (*Eugenia aromatic*).

pressing questions about the reinvention and reorganization of local society along more modern principles of governance. In the new situation, there was no longer a place for *adat* lords sharing in the fruits of coerced labour. The colony was to be governed by proficient, indigenous officials who were self-funded by taxes disjointed from personal interests. However, the monopoly shaped a strong path-dependency which primed the successive monetary taxes until the 1920s. Additionally, the decay of the spice market in the nineteenth century caused economic hardship that not only impoverished the raja but also structurally impeded the collection of sufficient tax revenue. Consequently, the Dutch were unwilling to invest in new ruling mechanisms or new roles for the pauperized chiefs. This chapter will investigate how the plea of the 33 *raja* was not only symptomatic of the depressing tale of Ambon's declining economic relevance in the nineteenth century, but also of the increasing deliberate, selective blindness of officials towards specific fiscal-political problems.

This chapter is divided in two sections. The first explores the political-fiscal foundations of the VOC's spice-monopoly, to demonstrate how Dutch monopolism impacted and transformed local economy and society into a consolidated, conjoined Ambonese-Dutch system geared towards large scale clove production, especially though elevation of Ambon's indigenous rulers. The second section explores how, and why, specific elements of the monopoly system kept resonating in the income taxes introduced after its dismantling, while other aspects of the tax reforms slowly started to undermine the position of the local chiefs.

### 3.1 THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SPICE MONOPOLY

When the Dutch arrived in the Central Moluccas, they entered a world rife with political interaction and war, infused with political, social and religious dimensions. The majority of the Central Moluccan islands were nominally autonomous, but came increasingly under the domination of external powers. From the sixteenth century onward, clove production on Ambon was largely controlled by the autonomous Ambonese *nagari* (village/village state) of Hitu, the Portuguese, and the Northern Moluccan Sultanate of Ternate (see map 2.1). From the early seventeenth century onward, the power of the Portuguese and Ternate crumbled under aggressive intervention by the Spanish, the Dutch and subsequently, the Sultanate of Makassar on South Sulawesi. Slowly, European trading companies started outcompeting Chinese, Malay, and (East-)Javanese merchants.<sup>4</sup>

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4 G. Xu, "Junks to Mare Clausum: China-Maluku Connections in the Spice Wars, 1607–1622", *Itinerario* 44:1 (2020), 196–225: 197–198; T. Mostert, "Scramble for the Spices: Makassar's Role in European and Asian Competition in the Eastern Archipelago up to 1616" in A. Clulow and T. Mostert (eds.), *The Dutch and English East India Companies. Diplomacy, Trade and Violence in Early Modern Asia* (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 25–54.

Ambon as encountered by the VOC around 1600, was characterized by centuries of collaboration with and resistance towards various foreign powers. While Ternate had governed large parts of the Moluccas, levying services and tributes, and the rivalling Sultanate of Tidore had exercised political influence over East and Northern Seram, many *nagari* on Ambon and Seram (see map 3.3 and 7.1) retained a high level of semi-independence. They retained their respective systems of village-*adat* to determine matters of land allocation and labour, social relations and taxation, without much supervision from higher governing authorities.<sup>5</sup> This would change drastically over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as, in search of full control over the spice trade, the VOC started absorbing local principles and institutions of social organization under a unified system of coerced production, labour and rule. It replaced older forms of *adat*-oriented village-encompassing collaboration, with its own interpretations of these, to fit its capitalist-oriented schemes.

#### *The establishment of the spice monopoly*

Dutch occupation of Ambon in the seventeenth century foreshadowed Dutch monopolistic-capitalist colonization of the entire Indonesian archipelago in subsequent centuries. Essentially, the Dutch acquired their monopoly by violently forcing their various competitors out of the market, signing contracts with local rulers requiring delivery of spices for fixed prices, and ultimately by resorting to military violence when other traders succeeded in circumventing its surveillance.<sup>6</sup> Finally, after expelling the Portuguese in 1605, the Dutch consolidated their supremacy over the Central Moluccan seas and the spice market during the first half of the seventeenth century by exploiting shifting power alliances and internal conflicts (between Ternate and Tidore, the states in South Sulawesi and the Spanish, but also among the many *nagari* on Seram, Ambon and Banda).

5 D. Alwi, *Sejarah Maluku: Banda Naira, Ternate, Tidore dan Ambon* (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 2005), 402-414, 424-435.

6 The VOC initially lacked the adequate means to enforce its contracts or counter local resistance and competition of other merchants based in port-cities around the archipelago, who offered commodities much cheaper than the Dutch could, and in return sold spices for lower prices than the VOC was willing to pay. Particularly brutal was the conquest of the nutmeg-monopoly on Banda in 1609-1621 and subsequent deportation and mass murdering of the indigenous population. See G.J. Knaap, *Kruidnagelen en Christenen: De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie en de Bevolking van Ambon 1656-1696* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2004), 23-25; L.Y. Andaya, *The World of Maluku: Eastern Indonesia in the Early Modern Period* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 41-44, 151-156, 174-175; M.S. Widjojo, *The Revolt of Prince Nuku: Cross-Cultural Alliance-Making in Maluku, c.1780-1810* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 12-15.

This was accomplished by a violent and forceful relocation of people and their villages, and by annihilating clove production everywhere except on Ambon and the Lease islands (the smaller islands east of Ambon, see map 3.2).<sup>7</sup> Harbours were closed to all ships except the VOC's to ensure exclusive access to and full control over clove and nutmeg production and trade. This was enforced by the organization of annual *hongi* expeditions (*hongitochten*), traditional fleets of hundreds of indigenous rowing boats (*kora-kora*), which had been organized by Ternate to emphasize its prestige and power, and were appropriated by the VOC to intimidate local populations, enforce obedience and maintain the monopoly and clove-prices by burning down houses and removing 'illegally' planted trees.<sup>8</sup> The practice of taking down (and replanting) trees enabled the VOC to control availability and demand in order to influence prices on the European market.<sup>9</sup> From 1652 onward, production of cloves was made mandatory on Ambon, and all cloves had to be rendered to the VOC for a fixed price.<sup>10</sup> The VOC forbade the Ternatan Sultan to produce spices on his homeland for which it paid him an annual remuneration, starting a long but strained diplomatic relationship between the Dutch colonial government and Ternate.<sup>11</sup> Once their monopoly was established, the Dutch, building on the structures bequeathed by the *nagari*, Ternate and the Portuguese, begun reorganizing Ambon's society in order to fully gear the labour economy towards forced clove production.

*Below and above the nagari: Ambon's socio-political organization*

The first island ever fully dominated by Dutch colonialism, Ambon offers a unique insight into how the Dutch mapped and used local social organizations to coordinate coerced cultivation and monopolized trade. Upon their arrival in the early seventeenth century, the Dutch encountered a dynamic and fragmented indigenous society. The *nagari*, scattered across the Ambon and the Lease islands, offered little footing for establishing a unified state structure. Relations within and between these *nagari*, which were either Islamic or Christian, were relatively weak and characterized by alliances

7 See Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 55, 83-110; Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 25-34, 37-39; A.B. Lopian, *The Deversified Unity of Maluku-Kie-Raha: Its Historical Development* (S.I.: s.n., 1984), 184; Widjojo, *The Revolt of Prince Nuku*, 19-21.

8 Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 39.

9 Ibid., 299-326. In 1656, the Ambonese were made to plant 120,000 trees, and two years later another 60,000, but in 1667 further planting was forbidden and in 1692 and 1697 trees were cut down. Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, 39.

10 Selling cloves to third parties was harshly punished. Ch. F. Van Fraassen, *Ambon: Van Wingewest tot Werfdepot* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2018), 59.

11 See Widjojo, *The Revolt of Prince Nuku*, 23-25, 39-45, 47-48, 55-60, 69-74, 77-83; Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 210-213, 244-246; H.E. Niemeijer, "De Geveinsde Vrede: Eer, Protocol en Diplomatie in de Machtverhouding tussen de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie en Ternate omstreeks 1750" in G.J. Knaap and G. Teitler (eds.), *De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie: Tussen Oorlog en Diplomatie* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2002), 309-336.

of social support rather than political organization.<sup>12</sup> Ambon had been a society of “racial mixture, multi-ethnicity, geographic dispersion, relative isolation of various communities, insufficient means of communication and transportation, fragmented social and political organization, inter-village conflicts, land shortage, population pressure and several strains of religious creeds.”<sup>13</sup> This prevented the rise of strong, centrally organized, tax-levying state-like entities (contrary to the Northern Moluccas, where Sultans reigned over more centrally consolidated realms), required for the organization of large-scale, structural extraction. Hence, the *nagari* and their functions were transformed drastically under the new reality of Dutch dominance. Let us have a look at how the Dutch attempted to reorganize the *nagari* internally, in order to operate coerced spice production.

*Nagari* were territorially unbound village communities governed by a village council, a *saniri*. Each *nagari* was inhabited by a number of genealogically kinship-related clans called *soa*, originally a Ternaten concept.<sup>14</sup> On Ambon, *soa* became no longer (necessarily) tied by kinship, and developed into interrelated migrant groups of people usually of Ternaten or Seramese origins, unified under and represented in the *saniri* by one chief, the *kepala soa*.<sup>15</sup> *Soa* have been described as “quite accidental conjunctions” of a number of family groups of different origins, with links to similar social groups around the Moluccas, as far away as Timor.<sup>16</sup> These family groups, the *mata rumah* (or *rumah tau*), were exogamous patrilineal clans that could

12 Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 54. Monotheistic religion in the Central Moluccas, as put by F. Cooley, was “like a kind of graft on the tree of culture”, coexisting with numerous elements of other socio-religious practices related to *adat* and spiritual life. The various elements in which institutionalized religion and more ancient social believes guided governance, faith, ethical norms, and ritual and ceremony shaped tensions cannot be explained only in terms of Christian-Islamic rivalry, even though the Dutch obviously had a preference for the Christian *nagari*. It also deserves notice that Ambonese society as known from early modern and modern historical sources emerged under continuance foreign influence. Ternaten, Arabic and European presence left important marks, creating new realities in the *nagari* of law and social organization. Ambon’s social geography should be seen as the result of these encounters. See F.L. Cooley, “Altar and Throne in Central Moluccan Societies”, *Indonesia* 2:2 (1966), 135-156: 137, 145-146, 146-154, and D. Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain: Intervillage Alliances, Religious Syncretism and Ethnic Identity among Ambonese Christians and Moslems in the Moluccas* (PhD thesis, Cornell University, 1977), 26-27.

13 Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain*, 28-31.

14 On Ternate, *soa* were quarters or neighbourhoods that originated in kinship-based units, to which specific familial clans could be traced back. As Van Fraassen demonstrates, tracing back these clans became increasingly complex over the course of the centuries. Ch. F. van Fraassen, *Ternate, de Molukken en de Indonesische Archipel. Van Soa-Organisatie en Vierdeling: Een Studie van Traditionele Samenleving en Cultuur in Indonesië* (Leiden University, 1987), I, 40-141, 173-264.

15 F.L. Cooley, *Ambonese Adat: A General Description* (New Haven: Yale University, Southeast Asia studies, 1962), 7; F.L. Cooley, “Village Government in the Central Moluccas”, *Indonesia* 1:7 (1969), 139-164: 140, n143.

16 F.A.E. van Wouden, *Types of Social Structure in Eastern Indonesia* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1968), 149-152.



be traced back to a mythical ancestor whose direct descendants held the hereditary privilege of ruling the *soa* together.<sup>17</sup> *Soa* had a dualistic social and religious function; its spiritual and social wellbeing was guaranteed by its proper constellation and the behaviour of its members according to local *adat*. Larger bonds of *soa* constituted so-called *uli* that were formed in groups of five or nine villages or *aman* (members) that had a shared ancestor. Prior to Dutch colonization, these *uli* constituted the organizational foundations of inter-*nagari* relationships, coordinating the administration of peace, order, justice, labour services and tributes across the Central Moluccan Islands.<sup>18</sup> *Uli* were village-federations rather than state-like entities and were never strong enough to, for instance, levy taxes.<sup>19</sup> Among specific *uli* federations continuous rivalry and warfare existed which Ternate and Tidore eagerly politically exploited.<sup>20</sup>

To the Dutch, these sub- and supra-village organizations seemed rather incomprehensible. The *uli* federations were even deemed subversive to colonial political order and actively undermined by the Dutch.<sup>21</sup> Subsequently, another form of socio-economic village partnership known as *pela*, grew in popularity on Ambon.<sup>22</sup> *Pela* alliances, as D. Bartels explains, crossed religious boundaries, based on the idea that “all members in the *pela* relationships are considered to be of one blood”, by ‘exchanging’ (mixing or drinking each other’s) blood to create a bond of brotherhood, “transferring

17 There were about 15-25 *mata rumah* per village. *Mata rumah* is the Malay term for this group, the indigenous term is *rumah tau*. The Dutch derived term ‘fam’ (*familie*) is also used. Whenever this ‘mythical ancestor’ arrived, he was assigned a name commemorating some special event which was associated with his arrival and transferred to a special, sacred stone called *teun* (or *teong*). See Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain*, 22; Cooley, *Ambonese Adat*, 36, 105; Cooley, “Altar and Throne”, 139. Van Hoëvell suggested that specific *mata rumah* delivered the *raja*, *kepala soa*, and other village officials, hence shaping a class division. G.W.W.C. baron van Hoëvell, *Ambon en meer Bepaaldelijk de Oeliasers, Geographisch, Ethnographisch, Politisch en Historisch Geschetst (met eene Kaart der Oeliasers)* (Dordrecht: Blussé en Van Braam, 1875), 46-47, 6.

18 As explained by Bartels, *uli* consisted of three, five, seven and nine constituting parts, the five (*lima*) and nine (*siwa*) being the most common. *Nagari* consisted of social units of two complementary moieties that exchanged partners for marriage. These two parts, plus the unity of these two parts together were imagined as a trinity that constituted the village unit. Two counterparts (thus four elements, or *aman*) and the ‘head’ of the unity formed an *uli lima*. *Uli siwa* had another two pairs of *aman*. *Uli lima* and *uli siwa* ere each other oppositions which started imbuing other divisions. On Ambon, for instance, most of the *uli lima* settled on Hitu and embraced Islam, while the *uli siwa* kept to older traditions and settled on Leitimor. See: D. Bartels, *In de Schaduw van de Berg Nunusaku: Een Cultuur-Historische Verhandeling over de Bevolking van de Midden-Molukken* (Utrecht: Landelijk Steunpunt Edukatie Molukkers, 1994), 163-168. Similar geometric designs of five- and nine-unit elements appeared across Indonesia as a form of polity related to geographical and cosmological influences. See Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action*, 253-256.

19 Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 13-15; Van Fraassen, *Ternate*, I, 44-45 and II, 495-505.

20 Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 13.

21 Ibid., 343; Cooley, “Altar and Throne”, 139.

22 Bartels, *In de Schaduw van de Berg Nunusaku*, 431-432; Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain*, 28-33. See also R. Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists: The Ambonese Islands from Colonialism to Revolt, 1880-1950* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1990), 7.



the idiom of consanguinity to strangers.”<sup>23</sup> Within *pela* networks, involved *nagari* were expected to protect and support each other by coordinating war and peace and assisting each other in times of crisis or in undertaking larger community projects, such as the construction of mosques and village houses (*baileo*).<sup>24</sup> *Nagari* had to shelter visitors from allied *pela* villages to whom food could not be denied. *Pela* networks existed prior to the arrival of Europeans but developed its functions of defence and aid networks only under colonialism.<sup>25</sup> As such the *nagari* on Ambon, even though taking care of their own subsistence household economies, were always organized in larger economic and political bonds of mutualism. Such bonds served as viable alternatives to European political entities and institutions such as states and centralized taxation, to provide security against shared risks and local challenges and circumstances.<sup>26</sup>

Whereas *soa* determined one's rights, obligations and place in society based on ancestral descentance, landholding and usufruct rights were organized through yet another form of social organization, revolving around landholding lineage-groups of patrilineal descent, called *dati*. How and why *dati* formed is not entirely clear.<sup>27</sup> Under colonialism, *dati* groups were transformed into politically and territorially defined labour units for clove production, labour services and taxation. Originally, members of *dati* held usufruct rights to cooperatively exploit specific *dusun*, *sago* palm gardens (*sago* or *sagu* is a starch extracted from the centre of *sago* palm stems which was, and still is an important staple food in the Moluccas and Papua). Many colonial officials considered *sago* a crop easy to cultivate. A hungry Ambonese, they believed, would simply go to his *dusun* to find a ripe *sagu* tree with readily available food.<sup>28</sup> Such food abundance, it was claimed, prevented the rise of large-scale rice cultivation and the accordant labour ethos and state institutions, which to the colonial mind explained the

23 Therefore, intermarriage within networks *pela* was not allowed. Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain*, 29, 34-37, quote p. 37.

24 *Pela* networks were sometimes used on the offensive; when one village would attempt an attack on another village it would try to find allies and establish a *pela*. See *ibid.*, 38-41.

25 According to Bartels, *pela* networks unified Ambon “through the adversities and trials of history [...] and continues to be the generating force of Muslim-Christian solidarity.” *Ibid.*, 325. See also pp. 131-134, 140-145, 162-163, 324.

26 See M. van der Linden, “Mutualism”, in Van Rossum, Hofmeester, and Van der Linden (eds.), *Handbook Global History of Work*, 363-376: 498-501.

27 In the colonial readings of Van Hoëvell and *adat* specialist F.D. Holleman, *dati* were a typical example of Indonesian of ‘pseudo-feudalism’, in which clan chiefs or kings occupied lands and leased these to lesser chiefs and their families, who in return became tributary to the supreme chiefs or kings. See Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 177; F.D. Holleman, *Het Adat-Grondenrecht van Ambon en de Oeliasers* (Delft: Meinema, 1923), 185, 177. Knaap seeks the emergence of *dati* in specific methods of warfare that necessitated mobilization of manpower through higher levels of social organization. Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 178.

28 See for instance Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 52-55. On *dati* rights, see KITLV / Commissie voor het Adatrecht, *Adatrechtbundels: Bezorgd door de Commissie voor het Adatrecht; uitg. door het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* (‘s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1910-1955), Vol. 21, 29; Cooley, “Altar and Throne”, 1.

careless Ambonese attitude to life and the limited potential of local people to engage in more complex forms of political and commercial economic organizations, beyond subsistence.<sup>29</sup> Of course, *sagu* cultivation was more complex, but as this depiction supported the idea that the Ambonese were 'unready' for self-reliant forms of commerce<sup>30</sup>, labour and monetary taxation, it was firmly adhered to, legitimizing coerced labour on clove plantations as the only possible method to discipline Ambonese people into productive, organized subjects.<sup>31</sup>

Land held by the *dati* (*tanah dati*) could not be sold or removed from the *dati*-holding, and in fact, the fruits of *tanah dati* were equally distributed under the supervision of the *kepala dati* or *dati* chief.<sup>32</sup> Simply grabbing what one desired from the *dusun* would have been a violation of *adat*. Taking part in *dati* incurred the obligation to develop and protect it. Like *soa*, *dati* usually comprised various groups that dated back to kinship-related constellations, but *dati* and *soa* existed next to and independently from each other, so members of *dati* were not (necessarily) of the same *soa*, and sometimes even lived in different *nagari*.<sup>33</sup> Taking part in *dati* by paying taxes and performing services was a fundamental and necessary determinant for social participation that directed one's rights to sharing in the fruits of land and labour.<sup>34</sup> For this reason, *dati* structures provided ideal starting points to concentrate sizable groups of Ambonese into territorially defined and taxable units in the spice cultivation system and engrain institutionalized use of coerced labour in traditional Ambonese society. The VOC enforced plantation of clove trees on *dati* lands, and thereby utilized existing structures of duties, based on rights over land, to define liability of coerced clove plantation services. Allocation of *dusun* was increasingly used as reward or compensation for performance of services and payment of taxes.<sup>35</sup> For instance, under the VOC *dati* were expected to deliver one man to take part in the *hong*i expedition, who in return would be awarded with land. The VOC drafted

29 There was some small-scale, unorganized dry rice cultivation on Ambon. See for a description: Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 54, 60-62. Absence of large scale rice-cultivation has been explained as characteristic of the absence of state formation, in especially high-land areas of Southeast Asia, see for instance Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 5-6, 41-42, 75-76, 84-85.

30 As for instance claimed by Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 75.

31 Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 159; F. and K von Benda-Beckmann, *Where Structures Merge: State and 'Off-State' Involvement in Rural Social Security on Ambon* (S.l.: s.n., 1989), 4.

32 In case of neglectation of land or in the event a whole *dati* went extinct, the use rights of *tanah dati* would return to the village administration to be redistributed over the remaining *dati*, see *Adatrechtbundel* 21, 28-30, 33; Cooley, "Altar and Throne", 57-58; Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 207-208; Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 178-183, 192-193, 194-197, 189-190, 202-205, 216-218.

33 Van Wouden, *Types of Social Structure*, 76, 148.

34 Van Vollenhoven, *Het Adatrecht*, 400.

35 For this reason, Valentijn interpreted the *dati* landholding system as a system of taxation and corvée. Knaap follows Valentijn in this conception. See Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 178-185; Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 276.

'*dati* registers' that divided the people into 'troops' to create an overview of forced cultivation services called '*kerja trop*' that people had to perform, and the number of clove trees they had to maintain.<sup>36</sup> In 1814 and 1823, these *dati*-registers were consolidated by law to ensure no new *dati* were established.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the VOC prohibited villagers from leaving or living outside their *nagari*.<sup>38</sup> Under this kind of 'ground slavery' people were allowed to leave the *nagari* only for performance of labour in service of the VOC. The *kepala dati* were made fully responsible for supplying all cloves produced in the *dusun* to the village chiefs, the *kepala nagari*, and the VOC.<sup>39</sup>

This way, for the first and not the last time, the Dutch broke down local societal structures, and selected, codified and enlarged the elements it considered useful, while ignoring others, to create a consolidated peasantry system on Ambon required to maximize extraction at minimal costs. The *dati* became the crucial working groups for fulfilling labour demands, the *dati* lands were the taxable objects, the *kepala dati* the responsible clove suppliers or taxable persons, the *nagari* the manageable territorial units, and the *kepala nagari* the crucial class of territorially bound, profit sharing puppet kings.<sup>40</sup> Their changing role symbolized the Dutch invention of indirect rule in Indonesia. How this came about, and what sorts of entitlements, profit shares and taxes they were made entitled to, deserves closer attention, as these would provide the foundation of the post-monopoly tax system in the later nineteenth century.

#### *Village governance, taxes, services and entitlements*

Generally, the core duty of Ambonese chiefs was observance and continuation of local *adat*, as established by the ancestors to preserve and secure the prosperity of the village community. In the case that *adat* was violated, it was believed that the ancestors' spirits would be offended and act accordingly,

36 Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 277.

37 *Adatrechtbundel* 21, Ambon, n17, 28.

38 Some people constructed sheds outside the *nagari* in the *dusun* to escape the VOC's surveillance. P. Bleeker, *Reis door de Minahassa en den Molukschen Archipel: Gedaan in de Maanden September en Oktober 1855 in het Gevolg van den Gouverneur Generaal Mr. A.J. Duymaer van Twist* (2 vols., Batavia: Lange & Co, 1856), I: 146-147, 158-159; Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 218-219. On Buru, people also alternated between sheds and village houses which troubled the Dutch colonial administration to subjugate the population to its colonization schemes. As Buru was of little economic interest, it was never subjected to the same relocation policies as Ambon and Seram. See: B. Dix Grimes, "Mapping Buru: The Politics of Territory and Settlement on an Eastern Indonesian Island", in T. Reuter (ed.), *Sharing the Earth, Dividing the Land: Land and Territory in the Austronesian World* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), 135-156: 139-140.

39 In case of unsolvable conflict, the *saniri* would determine this. Cooley, "Altar and Throne", 59.

40 Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 212; Cooley, "Altar and Throne", 86.

venting anger upon the community.<sup>41</sup> *Saniri* were headed by *kepala nagari*<sup>42</sup> with an inheritable title of '*orangkaya*' or the higher '*raja*', and occasionally the lower '*patih*.'<sup>43</sup> They were ultimately responsible for proper adherence to *adat* (including matters of labour and taxation) and presided over the village courts. Their role changed drastically under colonialism. The Dutch appointed them as political territorial chiefs of the *nagari*, responsible for supervising clove production and maintaining public order, and treated them as 'Regents.' Every month the *kepala nagari* would appoint one of the *kepala soa* to assist in the general supervision of the *nagari* as '*kepala soa bulan*' (officer of the month).<sup>44</sup> Together, the various *kepala* became the principle instruments of the company, in exerting influence over society and maintaining coerced clove production.<sup>45</sup> *Kepala nagari* were originally selected by the population from the *kepala soa* during special ceremonies over which the VOC gained increasing influence.<sup>46</sup> By the nineteenth century, these ceremonies took place under supervision of *controleurs*. G.W.W.C. baron van Höevell (*controleur* on Ambon in 1870-1875 and Resident of Ambon in 1891-1896) described the election ceremonies as "irksome scenes" in which many persons aspired and competed for the village-chief title, although they had little chance of obtaining it. Specific families, with allegedly direct links to the original founders of the village, inherited the right to provide candidates for the election to positions of leadership.<sup>47</sup> Though occasionally, succession of village chieftainship was a cause of conflict among throne-pretenders – especially in those villages where the VOC had removed chiefs or relocated clans, in general, changes in rule were not seen as disruptions of village life but led to further reinterpretations of *adat*.<sup>48</sup>

The key to successful indirect rule was to provide local leaders with

41 Cooley, "Village Government", 158; Cooley, "Altar and Throne", 142.

42 In colonial terminology usually referred to as *regents* or *raja*, which, in strict sense, they were not.

43 According to Cooley, within the village there was no significant difference in status among these titles until colonialism. Cooley, "Village Government", 144. As many other parts of Indonesia, the Central Moluccas experienced influence from the thirteenth century onward of the Hindu-Javanic empires (especially Majapahit) in the organization of the aristocracy, hence the Javanese-Malay character of these titles. Under colonialism, ranks and titles were signified by the adequate regalia annex heirlooms as concrete symbols of authority of which the most important were sticks with either silver (for *orangkaya*) or golden (for *raja*) tips engraved with the Dutch national coat of arms.

44 Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 23. In fact, there were two kinds of *kepala soa*: one, the *kepala soa ate*, was the one installed by the district government and wielded executive power, the other, *kepala soa tanah*, had particular functions addressing matters of land or *adat*, but were not installed or recognized by the district government. See Cooley, "Altar and Throne", 148, 152.

45 Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 73.

46 Ibid., 76.

47 Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 19-23, quote p. 21. *Kepala* had to come from the appropriate clan as the supernatural powers (*sakti*) they supposedly disposed over was believed to be inheritable in male line.

48 Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 61; Bartels, *In de Schaduww van de Berg Nunusaku*, 137-138.

entitlements to profits from the monopoly. On Ambon, this happened in three ways. Firstly, *kepala nagari* received 'geschenk gaji' (salary gifts), annual gifts in commodities (usually linen, at a value of 20 guilders) from the government, presented during the festivities held at the end of *hong*i tours.<sup>49</sup> Secondly, they received *uang hasil* ('yield money') a sum of fifteen guilders per *barah* cloves (of 550 Amsterdam pound, ca. 270 kg), paid annually by the VOC-government. 60% of *uang hasil* was allocated to the *kepala nagari*, 30% to the (various) *kepala soa* and 10% to their assistants, the *marinyo*.<sup>50</sup> Thirdly, chiefs were entitled to levy a tax on the population, at a rate of 4% of the value of their harvested cloves, called *uang pitis*.<sup>51</sup>

Apart from these entitlements, the VOC awarded *kepala nagari* various special privileges, such as free board and lodging or the right to bear *payung* (umbrella's) and other signs of dignity.<sup>52</sup> Most importantly, they became entitled to levy labour services, which was not customary on Ambon, but enabled by the imposition of *dati* registers. *Kepala nagari* were entitled to the use of unpaid so-called 'kwarto services' of one to five of their subjects per month, levied from every *dati* unit.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, *kepala nagari* had the right to shares in yields and personal services of five fishermen and hunters for food supplies, and to some personal services for construction and maintenance of their property.<sup>54</sup> Essentially, these were the earliest forms of registered and legalized unpaid corvée labour in service of local chiefs in the Dutch colonial empire.

49 According to Cooley, these comprised of several boxes of red powder for traditional *cakalele* dance, mirrors and beds, 77 yards of white cloth, 60 yards of unbleached cotton stuff, seven bolts of 30 yards each of denim, and twelve yard bolts of red cloth, used in ceremonial costumes. See: Cooley, "Village Government", 145.

50 *Uang hasil* was also known as *uang barah* or *barot*. Stbl. 1824 n19a; Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 24-25. See also Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 327-328. *Marinyo* were originally the spokespersons of the *kapitan*, the commanders of war, and transformed into the elected assistant of *soa* chiefs and served as adjutant or 'general errand-boy' of the *kepala soa* during the month when this particular *kepala soa* would be *kepala soa bulan*.

51 The indigenous members of the *landraad* (called *orang kaya kamera*) also shared in these incomes to some extent, and received 'mantelgeld' (cloth money), to buy appropriate attire for council meetings. Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 51.

52 Cooley, "Village Government", 140, 149-151; Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 208-209. This happened across the Central Moluccas. On Buru, for instance, in 1681 the titles of *sengaji* and *patih* were abolished by the VOC and replaced with *orang kaya* to delineate overlap in religious and political functions and create a unified system of controllable village offices. Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 47.

53 Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 27. *Kwarto* derives from quartier or *kwartier*, the Dutch word for billet or quarters. Knaap distinguishes 'court services' for the VOC, referring to annual *hong*i rowing and other monthly services, and *nagari* services for the village, such as construction and maintenance of *balai*, churches and mosques. Every *dati* had to deliver one person. Knaap assesses that about 12% of the villagers was liable to perform services. Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 181.

54 If a *kepala nagari*'s house was built using such services, it would become common property of the *nagari* right after he passed away. Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 26-27. The *njora*, the regents' wives, also had rights to domestic services from a number of girls from the *nagari*. See *Adatrechtbundel* 21, 50-51; Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 349.

The VOC also started levying (paid) services for maintenance of its fortresses, warehouses and roads, delivery of wood for construction works and shipbuilding and assistance in docking ships and transporting mail.<sup>55</sup> The burden these so-called '*nagari* services' imposed upon villages depended on their location. The closer villages were located to fortresses or roads, the more likely its inhabitants would have to perform services.<sup>56</sup> G. Knaap calculates that on Ambon about 6.6% of the labour potential of *dati* was consumed by *corvée* in the service of the VOC<sup>57</sup>, but this excludes the performance of *kerja trop*, *kwarto* services and *hong*i expeditions. The latter should also be seen as mandatory labour, as alternative *corvée* services were levied when *hong*i expeditions were cancelled.<sup>58</sup>

Much more successfully than former powers, the VOC built a comprehensive system of governance and domination on Ambon. It subjected the Ambonese to forms of control, taxation, military conscription, mandatory cultivation and *corvée* labour to an extent that had not been experienced by them before, and centuries before other parts of Indonesia underwent such transformations. Their chiefs were remodelled from democratically elected representatives into entitled 'feudal' lords. The Dutch had distilled an authoritarian, hierarchical state structure out of what used to be a rather egalitarian and representative form of political organization. Because peace, order, village life and land and labour redistribution came to be managed by the VOC, various functions of the local ruling elite and the *adat* institutions they represented became socio-politically obsolete and increasingly ceremonial in their function. The transformative power the VOC's exploitative regime had caused indigenous principles of landownership, governance and labour and profit redistribution to intertwine with the fundamentals of the local colonial state. Because *adat* was never codified, it easily absorbed and reinterpreted the new Dutch influences into its existing forms.<sup>59</sup> As a result, the complex of local knowledge, political organization, social relations and economic production was reoriented, from serving the social-spiritual security of communities, towards the end of spice production in service of the export economy. By appropriating *adat* institutions through local elites the Dutch interwove what they saw as unproductive, disorganized and entangled village communities into its capitalist state-machinery, thereby rewiring the social fabric of Ambonese society. Hence,

55 Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 250. For a full overview of services, see Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 347-348.

56 Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 181-183; Bleeker, *Reis door de Minahassa*, I: 93-94.

57 Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 184.

58 *Ibid.*, 192-195. Every village had to man one *kora-kora*. As most villages had too small of a population to do so, the *uli* fulfilled this role causing competition among village chiefs who gained in prestige by commanding the boat. *Hong*i took about a month, and overall were experienced as intensive and burdensome. The phenomenon slowly disappeared during the seventeenth century, but the last *hong*i occurred only in 1821. Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 74-75.

59 Cooley, "Altar and Throne", 57; Von Benda-Beckmann and Von Benda-Beckmann, "Property, Politics, and Conflict", 589.



the deconstruction of the spice-monopoly from the second half of the nineteenth century onward, required the full reinvention of village society and the rethinking of the role of people and chiefs.

### 3.2 REINVENTING RULE

The monopoly was not abolished overnight, and outlived the VOC that founded it for almost 70 years. This section discusses how the strong fusion of Dutch colonial exploitation and Ambonese socio-political reality constantly impeded liberal attempts to reform.

#### *Decline and reform*

The VOC's decline at the end of the eighteenth century led to the collapse of the Dutch spice monopoly. Ambon fell into British hands in 1796, and clove seeds slipped past Dutch surveillance and arrived, via French Eastern Africa, Mauritius and British Zanzibar, in Brazil and Cayenne. After the monopoly was breached, in practical terms it only served Ambon's socio-economic organization; economically it made little sense anymore. The British occupation of Ambon, between 1796-1803 and 1810-1817, evoked scepticism among the Ambonese population towards Dutch supremacy. The return of the Dutch in 1817 was met with great distrust and organized resistance was initiated on Saparua by an Ambonese soldier, Pattimura (1783-1817), who refused to accept Dutch supremacy. He was defeated within half a year and executed.<sup>60</sup> In the 1820s, Governor-General Van der Capellen paid a visit to Ambon and Banda to see with his own eyes how market fluctuations impacted the spice trade.<sup>61</sup> He proposed abolishing the monopoly, but the poor state of government finances at the time led to King Willem I withholding his approval.<sup>62</sup> The *hongi* tours were abolished, and in the 1820s many unpopular restrictions on boat building, trading and fishing were lifted, but the monopoly continued.<sup>63</sup> Attempts to start the cultivation of other crops failed, and colonial interest in Ambon shifted to missionary activities and army-recruitment.<sup>64</sup>

Meanwhile, even though as an army-officer dispatched to Ambon, Van Den Bosch had argued to abolish labour services on Ambon in 1803, the principles of his cultivation system later on fed the popular colonial mantra that indigenous peoples across Indonesia were not industrious,

60 Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 79-132.

61 NA MinKol 1850-1900 1389, Vb. 9-10-1863 n8, herein: Vb.; Anonymous, "De Hervorming der Molukken", *TvNI* 2:1 (1868), 120-139, 180-199: 123.

62 Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 145-152.

63 P. Bleeker, *Reis door de Minahassa*, I: 140-141, 146; Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 146-147.

64 De Graaf, *De Geschiedenis van Ambon en de Zuid-Molukken*, 190-191. See also Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 190-191 and Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists*, 22-23, 25-38, 39-70.



not commercially minded and 'unready' for the laissez-faire politics of free trade, and colonial economic focus shifted to forced cultivation.<sup>65</sup> Van Hoëvell, for instance, claimed the Ambonese would sell their cloves too cheaply, and would be out-witted and unable to compete with 'devious' Chinese and Arab merchants.<sup>66</sup> Hence, the Dutch upheld that the monopoly would keep yielding greater profits than monetary taxes potentially could. Liberation of the monopoly was considered rather inopportune as the colony was in a state of fiscal crisis, added to by the recent wars on Ambon and Java; in fact, the era of colonial policies of monopolism and coerced labour had only just commenced.<sup>67</sup> Abolishing the spice monopoly would contradict the contemporary colonial economic thinking that would imbue policies for the coming decades. This way, the spice monopoly survived 40 years past its financial expiry date.

In the 1850s, growing criticism of the Cultivation System in Java incited the call for reform of the Moluccan spice monopoly as well. One contemporary author referred to it as "one of the saddest pages in the history of the colony."<sup>68</sup> In Java, as the tenability of the system waned, descriptions of socio-economic decline, exploitation and popular suffering were aligned with pleas for liberalization of the entire colonial economy. And as in Java, the principle impulse for the abolishing of the system was not moral outrage but rather economic decline. As a result of the breach of the monopoly during the British invasion, clove prices started fluctuating. This caused a declining interest in clove cultivation among the Ambonese.<sup>69</sup> When prices and profits dropped below local production values, many Ambonese refused to participate in the Dutch production scheme any longer and left the *nagari* to "wander off."<sup>70</sup> As we shall see in subsequent chapters, such 'unauthorized' migration was often a first sign of non-compliance, resulting from the economic recession. In 1828, a prohibition forbidding villagers to leave the *nagari* was imposed, to be replaced in 1870, by the introduction of a pass system designed to retain some level of control over migration.<sup>71</sup> The system started collapsing even further, when *kepala* were no longer able to cover the costs of hiring extra hands for harvesting cloves in the short, intensive harvesting season.<sup>72</sup> A rapid plunge in clove prices in the 1850s delivered the final deathblow to the spice monopoly which by then could

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65 Sens, *De Kolonieman*, 71.

66 Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 65-70.

67 Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 170-171, 202; De Graaf, *De Geschiedenis van Ambon en de Zuid-Molukken*, 242; Anonymous, "De Hervorming der Molukken", 124.

68 Anonymous, "De Hervorming der Molukken", 120.

69 Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 59-60, 71.

70 Anonymous, "De Hervorming der Molukken", 124-125.

71 Stbl. 1870 n91; Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 295.

72 Harvesting cloves is a short, intensive process as cloves need to be picked during the limited timeframe of a few days when the buds are large enough but have not yet started to flower. See Anonymous, "De Hervorming der Molukken", 136; Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 250.

no longer cover the costs of governance. It was finally abrogated in 1864, not to improve the living standards of the local population but because it was no longer advantageous to the colonial economy.<sup>73</sup> In 1868, the government stopped buying cloves for a guaranteed fixed price.<sup>74</sup>

This was an important watershed in the history of colonized Ambon. For centuries, the Dutch had acquired knowledge about Ambonese society only in the service of coerced clove production. Thus, abolishing the monopoly immediately crippled what had underpinned Dutch authority and social politics: indirect rule, collusion and royal entitlements serving an interwoven, monopolized coerced labour economy. For decades, this had caused the Dutch unwillingness to reform. Path-dependent on these institutions and unwilling to invest in Ambon's collapsing economy, they continued what had worked for 200 years, even though it became increasingly clear the monopoly was a dead end. When it was finally abolished, officials on the ground found themselves ill-prepared to provide new answers to old questions of fiscal organization and governance. Initially, Dutch liberals hoped that end of the spice monopoly would lead to a production decrease, which in theory would incite a price increase, motivating the Ambonese to independently restart clove cultivation and sell on the free market, enabling the levying of monetary taxes.<sup>75</sup> But coerced labour was not that easily eradicated. Economic decline and the abolition of slavery in the Indies in 1860 prompted many chiefs to significantly increase the use of (unpaid) services and strengthen their grip on land and labour.<sup>76</sup> Whatever reforms the Dutch were going to implement needed to include a rethink about the role of these chiefs.

#### *Nagari tax: locating the taxpayer*

Coerced plantation was manageable because it collectively 'taxed' people through designated working groups, the *dati*, under the supervision of the *dati* chiefs. Technically, the result was that officials only had to deal with the *dati* chiefs, to manage the system. When the monopoly was abolished, the monetary 'nagari tax' that the Dutch authorities introduced in 1865 sought to tax *en bloc* as well.<sup>77</sup> The contemporary Governor of the Moluccas, H.M. Andrée Wiltens (1862-1864), suggested levying the tax on every 'household' (*huisgezin*), a unit he defined as a "man and wife and their children in one

73 NA MinKol 1850-1900 1366, Vb. 11-8-1863 n22, herein: Nota GG, 30-7-1863; See also Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 291-297; Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 390-391; quoted also in Chauvel, *Nationals, Soldiers and Separatists*, 22.

74 Anonymous, "De Hervorming der Molukken", 138. The price was 24 cents.

75 NA MinKol 1850-1900, 1389, Vb. 9-10-1863 n8, herein: Vb.; NA MinKol 1850-1900 1366, Vb. 11-8-1863 n22, herein: Nota GG, 30-7-1863.

76 Bleeker, *Reis door de Minahassa*, I: 150-155.

77 Stbl. 1864 n169. The tax was designed after a similar levy introduced in North Sulawesi where it replaced the local coffee monopoly

house.”<sup>78</sup> In Dutch colonial vocabulary, the term *huisgezin* was also used to indicate the *dati*<sup>79</sup> (which made little sense as *dati* were non-kinship related landholding groups), while in Ambonese terms it could only compare to the *mata rumah*. In Batavia, officials figured that since the *dusun*, from which villagers harvested most of their personal income, were owned by the *dati*, the *kepala dati* had to be appointed as taxable persons, and the *dati* lands as taxable objects. However, the *kepala dati* were not landholding chiefs, but representatives to the outside world. These officials obviously followed the framework provided by the spice Cultivation System to determine taxability. This created much confusion among both indigenous officials and the local population, requiring the further intermediation of the *kepala*.<sup>80</sup> The *kepala dati* were made liable to pay one guilder annually for every person in their ‘household’, increased gradually to 5 guilders in 1868.<sup>81</sup> Because the ratio between size and production level of *dusun* and the number of *dati* members differed per *dati*, the tax burden fell heavier on *dati* with smaller amounts of land. It would have been fairer to classify *dati* according to land and population size, and tax accordingly, as suggested by Van Hoëvell.<sup>82</sup> But this would require a full survey of all *dati* as well as a population census, for which the impoverished local government did not have the financial or administrative means. Batavia seemed unwilling to invest and preferred to rely on old indigenous elites: the *kepala soa* and *kepala nagari* were exempted, and held personally responsible for collecting the tax from the *kepala dati*. In practice tax collection was delegated to the *marinyo*.<sup>83</sup> Thus, the *nagari* tax practically brought little change and kept following the principles and practices of the spice monopoly system.

Table 3.1. Assessments in the Nagari Tax, 1865-1866.<sup>84</sup>

Year	Number of families assessed	Tax Rate in guilders	Total Revenue of the Nagari Tax
1865	8.163	2	f 16.326
1866	7.969	3	f 23.907

78 NA MinKol 1850-1900 1626, Vb. 8-7-1865 n17, herein: GovMol to GG, 28-5-1864: Bijlage A.

79 For instance, in a government regulation of 1824, see Stbl. 1824 no. 19a. See also: NA MinKol 1850-1900 1626, Vb. 8-7-1865 n17, herein: RvI 15-7-1864 and Dir. ‘s Lands Middelen en Domeinen to GG, 27-9-1864.

80 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: Besl. 26-8-1864 n32: GovMol to GG, 30-5-1864.

81 Stbl. 1863 n169; NA MinKol 1850-1900 1389, Vb. 9-10-1863 n8, herein: RvI 30-1-1863 and GG to MinKol, 18-4-1863. In the haste to impose the tax and abolish the spice monopoly, the tax was implemented while its “methods of collection were [to be] further regulated later” (Stbl 1863 n169 art.4). For elderly and disabled persons, the *kepala* received a guilder discount. Due to communication problems the tax was not introduced in 1864, but in 1865, and thus started at f2 per year, see Anonymous, “De Hervorming der Molukken”, 139; Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 296-297.

82 Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 42-46.

83 See Stbl. 1865 n42, art. 4-10.

84 NA MinKol 1850-1900 1806, Vb. 17-9-1866 no. 65, herein: Dir. Lands Middelen en Domeinen to GG, 15-6-1866.

Revenue from the *nagari* tax increased slowly, but only because, as the number of assessed families declined (see table 3.1), the tax rate was gradually increased. Even so, it still remained insufficient to cover the costs of governance. To make up for this, successive Governors suggested imposing alternative monopolies on cacao and coffee under the forced labour scheme, to which the liberal Governor-General L.A.J.W. Sloet van de Beele (in office 1861-1866), could not agree.<sup>85</sup> Instead of investing in proper administrative mechanisms and tax infrastructure, officials in Batavia repeatedly urged more administrative efficiency and stuck to a strategy of diminishing coerced labour to enhance free commerce and, hopefully, to increase tax revenue.<sup>86</sup> This ignored the fact that the local colonial administration fully relied on the structures it attempted to abolish.

### *Rethinking entitlements, identity and equality*

The root of the problem was the position of the gathered *kepala*. The spice-monopoly had guaranteed them shares in their populations' wealth, land and labour power through tributes, gifts and services under jurisdiction of the colonial state. In 1824, to guarantee their financial stability, ensure their loyalty and prevent political turmoil, they were promised retainment of these entitlements until alternative sources of income were established.<sup>87</sup> But the post-1864 system prioritised issues other than the wellbeing of chiefs. The *uang hasil* and *uang pitis* were abolished.<sup>88</sup> Instead of these remunerations, chiefs were awarded compensation paid in accordance with newly constructed class divisions depending on the number of people they ruled: the lowest ranking 'regents' (of which there were 2) would receive 40 guilders per year, the fourth to the second class of 'regents' (of which there were 15) between 50 and 100 guilders per year, while 'first class regents' (of which there were 27) would receive 100 guilder per year. These compensations were budgeted at a total sum of 74,760, surpassing total revenue of the *nagari* tax (see table 3.1). Contemplating the low population density under many of these rulers, the *Raad van Indië* advised categorizing most rulers below an annual salary of 50 guilders.<sup>89</sup> The *kepala nagari* were made

85 NA MinKol 1850-1900 1398, Vb. 30-10-1863 n31, herein: Vb., GovMol to GG, 28-4-1863 and RvI 10-7-1863; NA MinKol 1850-1900 1389, Vb. 9-10-1863 n8, herein: Vb., GovMol to GG, 28-4-1863 and RvI 10-7-1863; De Graaf, *De Geschiedenis van Ambon en de Zuid-Molukken*, 190-191. The number of trees was 513.000 in 1775 and 380.000 in 1780, see: Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists*, 22-23, 25-38, 39-70. See also Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 264-267.

86 KV 1866, 25; NA MinKol 1850-1900 2292, Vb. 26-1-1870 n8, herein: GovMol to GG, 24-4-1866.

87 RR 1824, art. 97 n19a, in NA MinKol 1850-1900 1389, Vb. 9-10-1863 n8, herein: Vb.

88 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: Besl. 26-8-1864 n32: GovMol to GG, 30-5-1864; Besl. 15-3-1865 n7, GovMol to GG, 27-12-1864.

89 Stbl. 1864n169; NA MinKol 185-1900 1389 Vb. 9-10-1863n8, herein: Vb., RvI to GG, 30-1-1863.

entitled to eight percent of the collectors wage in the *nagari* tax, but contrary to elsewhere in Indonesia, they had to share this (with the *kepala soa*), as had been the case with *uang hasil*.<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, their informal incomes declined steadily, as their subjects were no longer obliged to work in the *kepala's dusun* or support their households. Various paid and unpaid services were prohibited. In 1869, all *nagari* services, except the *kwarto* services and services for emergency aid and repairs, were abolished.<sup>91</sup> The burdensome and extortive *kerja trop*, that in practice had survived the abolition of the monopoly, was finally prohibited in 1881.<sup>92</sup> Thus, the *kepala nagari* had lost most of their direct shares in their people's labour power.<sup>93</sup>

As a result, the *kepala nagari* faced a huge decrease in welfare which worsened when, after a temporary recovery in 1874-1890, clove prices plunged again in the 1890s, never to fully recover.<sup>94</sup> Residents G.J. van der Tuuk (1879-1880) and J.G.F. Riedel (1880-1883), proposed boosting tax revenue by introducing individual head taxes in the Central Moluccas from both 'indigenous' and 'non-indigenous *inlanders*'.<sup>95</sup> This individual head tax was adopted in 1891, to replace the *nagari* tax. It divided all men, of 16 years and older, into nine classes of welfare and paying up to 25 guilders per year.<sup>96</sup> Accordingly, a new corvée regulation was adopted in 1892 that stipulated personal liability to corvée performance, rather than the collective liability of the *dati*.<sup>97</sup> This unlocked the labour power of immigrant 'foreign *inlanders*', who did not take part in Ambon's traditional *soa* and *dati*-structure and were therefore not eligible to perform services (instead they performed their own *kampung* services).<sup>98</sup> In order to curtail use of corvée and increase payment of monetary tax, the maximum amount of leviable services allowable was set at 30 days per year, following the

90 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS 22-6-1903: 'Nota betr. request der regenten van Ambon gehouden verzoek bij wijze van tractement een geldelijke tegemoetkoming te verlenen, Controleur J. van Lier.'

91 Stbl. 1869n91; Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 347-349.

92 Ibid., 453-454.

93 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS 22-6-1903: Nota v. Toelichting Res. Ambon, 18-1-1881; Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists*, 11.

94 In 1928 the Indies imported ten times more cloves from Zanzibar than was produced in the Moluccas. See *ibid.*, 22.

95 NA MinKol OV 4359, Vb. 12-4-1890 n29, herein: Vb., GG to MinKol, 28-1-1890. This tax would exempt Seram and Buru as these islands were, contrary to the many smaller Kei, Damar and Tanimbar islands (see map 3.1), not fully under Dutch control.

96 Stbl. 1891 n45. In reality, few were capable of paying more than 5 guilders per year.

97 The regulation was announced by Van Hoëvell in a pamphlet spread out over Ambon in the "typical Ambonese speaking language" urging young people to "listen to their *nagari* chiefs, and not "let their ears hang to the malicious [...] and perform services [...]." NA MinKol MvO 1222: F.J.P. Sachse; met nota naar aanleiding der "Memorie van de onderafdeling Amahai" door G.L. Tichelman, gezaghebber, 1920.

98 ANRI AS GB Besl. 75, herein: MGS, 19-12-1891: Res. Ambon to DirBB, 30-9-1891, Besl. 3-3-1892: DirBB to GG, 14-1-1892.

instructions of the Government Regulation of 1854 (see Chapter 3).<sup>99</sup> This evoked protest from Resident J. van Oldenborgh (1896-1900), who claimed that this curtailed him in his ability to levy unexpected 'extra services', for instance, in case of disaster or unforeseen infrastructural projects.<sup>100</sup> A somewhat far-fetched concern, as in 1894 only about 10% of the maximum allowed amount of services had been actually levied.<sup>101</sup>

The real problem was that Ambon had always been a pluralistic society where different people enjoyed different rights. Those within the traditional *nagari* structure had carried the brunt of the government's burden, but other inhabitants, such as migrants (classified as 'non-indigenous *inlanders*'), were relatively untaxed. That way, the *kepala nagari* only drew income from a select amount of 'indigenous *inlanders*' that participated in the *dati* structure, and that had continued informing the tax system to its core. For other subjects, different regulations applied. For instance, a special category of people on Ambon, the '*inlandse burgers*' ('indigenous citizens', descendants of '*inlanders*' who had served the Company or mestizos and *mardijkers*, descendants of formerly enslaved people), were fully exempted from all corvée services and taxes as they could also not partake in the *dati* system and own land, for which reason they lacked the legal criteria to be deemed liable to perform services. Instead, they served in the *schutterij* (citizen militia).<sup>102</sup> They were 'governed' by their own 'quarter masters' to whom they paid their contributions.<sup>103</sup> Privileged and elevated above the 'indigenous *inlanders*', they were considered too proud to work on plantations and only fulfilled their obligations to society by developing industry and serving their own communities.<sup>104</sup> So making "*burgers* maintain roads, side by side with common *inlanders*", as a consequence of curtailing the *burgers*' exemptions as proposed in 1879, was considered a radical breach with the

99 ANRI AS GB Besl. 75, herein: MGS, 19-12-1891: Res. Ambon to DirBB, 26-9-1889, DirBB to Res. Ambon, 14-8-1890, DirBB to GG, 3-11-1891.

100 NA MinKol 1850-1900 5183, Vb. 21-7-1897 n56, herein: Vb., DirBB to Res. Ambon, 25-7-1896, Res. Ambon to DirBB, 29-12-1896; Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 38.

101 KV 1895 bijlage R, p4. The maximum amount of services to be levied that year was set at 275,724; the actual amount levied 28,760. On Ambon few men performed more than two days in corvée per month, far less than indigenous people elsewhere in the archipelago as there was simply less infrastructure on Ambon to maintain.

102 ANRI AS GB Besl. 75, herein: MGS, 19-12-1891: Res. Ambon to DirBB, 18-12-1890; Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 66-67. See also: C. Bakhuizen van den Brink, "De Inlandsche Burgers in de Molukken", *BKI* 70:1 (1915), 595. See also *Adatrechtsbundel* 21, 36-37.

103 *Adatrechtsbundel* 21, 53.

104 Formally all individuals were personally liable to perform corvée according to the 1892 regulation, including *inlandse burgers* and all other '*inlanders*.' However, the *inlandse burgers* who lived in the capital towns on Ambon, Saparua and Hila (which was practically all of them) were exempted and through this bureaucratic trick no *burgers* had to perform corvée while on paper the *burgers* and 'regular *inlanders*' were one step closer to fiscal equality. Stbl 1892 n67, art. 3-5.



past which problematized specific privileges across the archipelago.<sup>105</sup> Social differences and privileges were ubiquitous throughout the colony, but did not fit well with the colonial mission to unify and equalize the tax system, as discussed in the previous chapter. If the government was going to abide by its own agenda, it had little choice but to curtail such privileges and align various forms of taxation.

Thus, in 1892 a new ordinance stipulated registration of all *burgers* and the villages where they lived for the performance of local services. *Burgers* who no longer paid their militia contributions automatically lost their status as *burger* and would be degraded to the status of '*negorijman*' (*nagari* inhabitant or villager; 'indigenous *inlander*').<sup>106</sup> Taxation became a social denominator for how people were governed, registered and what status they enjoyed, but not always without objection. In 1910 for instance, a new law had empowered the Governor General to determine taxability and exemption of taxes on the *nagari* level in case of emergency<sup>107</sup>, which he used to update Ambon's social structures. In 1911 he decided that the *burgers* of *nagari* Loki on Huamual (Seram) were no longer to pay contributions to the militia-treasury, but would be subjected to head taxes like the other '*inlanders*' and replace the militias with a government-funded police force.<sup>108</sup> The *burgers* of Loki appealed to the Ministry of Colonies against the intended exemption from paying militia tax in their *nagari*, as this implied an immediate charge on their status as free *burgers*, and a fiscal-political inclusion into the general population. In their letter, they wrote that "abolition of payment to the militia treasury and levying of head taxes would derogate their rights and duties as free *burgers*." As "loyal and humble servants of the government", they experienced the abolition of militia treasuries as a "humiliating, unfair, unmotivated and undeserved ignominy", and promised the Minister that they, and many of their fellow *burgers*, would certainly abandon their village.<sup>109</sup> In a pragmatic consideration, the Minister understood that the *burgers* were willing to pay tax, as long as this would not influence their rights to citizenship and agreed to maintain the militia contributions as long as these would be allocated to the local treasury. For similar reasons, the Ambonese *burgers* were exempted from the 1914 'Company Tax'.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, the government had seemingly unified and equalized tax policy without compromising revenue or the entitlements of *kepala* and specific

105 Also, because the transportation services had been abolished in 1869, and reintroducing services was not allowed under article 57. ANRI AS GB Besl. 75, herein: MGS, 19-12-1891: Res. Ambon to DirBB, 18-12-1890.

106 Stbl. 1892 n 82 [art. 4]; Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 563-564.

107 Stbl. 1910 n15.

108 NA MinKol MvO 311 (Quarles de Quarles, 1908); NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 2712, Vb. 9-3-1925 n2, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 28-2-1924.

109 NA MinKol OV 812, Vb. 31-3-1911 n9, herein: 'Inlandse Burgers Arnold Ferdinandus, Zacharias Pesulima, Jozias Marissa and Habel Rieuwpassa' to MinKol, 1-2-1911.

110 Stbl. 1914 n132.



social groups. Tax liability, formerly only dependent on *dati* participation, seemed elegantly expanded by individualizing taxpayers to fund the *raja*. In reality, the tax system remained deeply primed by preceding instruments emanating from the monopoly system, and governed by middlemen who experienced increasing poverty and increasingly relied on continuing the practice of forced labour. By 1918, all *nagari* services had been abolished (except for those levied in the city of Ambon), but *kwarto* remained in use.<sup>111</sup>

### *Elite displacement*

By the start of the twentieth century, almost all *kepala nagari* were in a condition of severe financial crisis. A report by *controleur* E.J. van Lier of Ambon (1901-1904), emphasized how wearing “European clothing” and “having achieved a relatively high level of civilization”, the ‘*Raja*’ had arrived at a state of development where they needed adequate salaries instead of compensation and collectors wages to save them from poverty.<sup>112</sup> They frequently received Europeans in their houses, “as, in lack of *pasanggrahan* [travelers lodges] on the island, their houses functioned as a stop-over place”, for which they refused compensation out of pride.<sup>113</sup> In 1894, f60,000 was collected in the head tax which guaranteed f4,800 of a collectors wage, to be distributed among 34 *nagari* chiefs and their *kepala soa* and *marinyo*. Even combined with incomes from gifts (f2,500) and an additional f7,700 guilders in other compensations, this ‘lawful income’ was insufficient.<sup>114</sup> Hence, many *kepala* resorted to acquiring ‘unlawful income’, by embezzling tax money and other ‘malpractices.’ The dissatisfied *Raja* of Pelauw on Haruku, for instance, forced his subjects to sell their cloves to him at prices considerably below the market value to his own benefit and illegitimately demanded formally abolished forms of services. For political reasons the Dutch had no choice but to keep supporting him.<sup>115</sup> On Ambon, the collected *kepala* of the *nagari* Soya, Nusaniwe, Seilale, Rumah Tiga and Waai around the Ambon Bay (see map 3.3) were caught embezzling tax money, had to stand trial and were convicted by the regional Council for Justice, in Makassar. Many other *kepala nagari* were reported to have made excessive use of *kwarto* services.<sup>116</sup> Forced to keep up the appearance of the powerful

111 NA MinKol 1901-1953 Mailr. 126, 1919 n2105, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 30-8-1919, p. 42.

112 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS 22-6-1903: ‘Nota [...] Controleur J. van Lier; Van Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 28.

113 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS, 22-6-1903: Res. Ambon to GG, 7-7-1902, ‘Nota [...] Controleur J. van Lier.’

114 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS 20-1-1896: Res. Ambon to GG, 1-10-1895.

115 Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists*, 89-93, 93-94; Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 558-562. The prevailing authority crisis in Pelauw was infused with political involvement of nationalist movements, and only resolved in the 1920s by appointing new *raja* and promoting the old one to a higher position in the administration.

116 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS 22-6-1903: ‘Nota [...] Controleur J. van Lier.’

prestigious lords they had once been under the monopoly, but without being offered support or suitable alternatives to previous entitlements, the raja were destitute and driven to criminal behaviour. In this way, colonial reformist policy forced the government to prosecute the indirect rulers it still relied on and “the serpent of change started eating its own tail.”<sup>117</sup> The problem was so obvious, that Van Lier did not even bother ascribing it to inherent patterns of corrupted, oriental misrule, as officials generally did, but rather to its actual cause; the overall decline in economic circumstances.<sup>118</sup>

In the mid-1890s, Van Hoëvell proposed a simple but far-reaching solution. He suggested reducing the number of *kepala nagari* by awarding the more powerful ‘Regents’ authority over multiple *nagari* or by awaiting the natural death of *raja*, then merging *nagari* together, thereby reducing the costs of administration.<sup>119</sup> Van Hoëvell considered Moluccan rule to have become seriously diffused. The island of Saparua, for instance, had a population of around 9,000 people who were ruled by no less than sixteen *kepala nagari*. And on Ambon, a population of around 40,000 was governed by more than 30 *kepala*. Some *kepala* had less than ten ‘working men’ at their disposal to perform services and pay taxes.<sup>120</sup> The *raja* of ‘large’ *nagari* like Allang (1528 inhabitants out of which 323 were liable for service), had access to a much larger tax base than those of smaller *nagari* like as Nusaniwe (153 inhabitants; 39 liable) or Rumah Tiga (only 68 inhabitants; 12 liable). This had consequences for the (fixed) compensations that *kepala nagari* were paid since 1864 in replacement of the abolished *uang hasil* and *pitis*, and resulted in variables, in the average tax payment per capita (see table 3.2).<sup>121</sup> In fact the *Mardijker* community on Ambon reported only 2 taxable inhabitants, resulting in, theoretically, a chiefly wage of less than a guilder per year. Obviously such small *nagari* were untenable. Such rulers were completely reliant on state benefits and ‘illegally levied services’, and forcefully attempted to retain the few remaining villagers within their *nagari*.<sup>122</sup> Van Hoëvell argued that since *kepala nagari* competed with each other over influence and resources, based on land and labour, the logical consequence of population growth and welfare decrease was further impoverishment and unrest among the *nagari* and their chiefs. Diminishing the governing elite, he claimed, would immediately help in decreasing the burden of taxes and *kwarto* services.<sup>123</sup>

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117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

119 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS 20-1-1896: Res. Ambon v to GG, 1-10-1895.

120 Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 29.

121 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, MGS 22-6-1903: ‘Nota [...] Controleur J. van Lier’, ‘Nota Controleur Morrees.’

122 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, MGS 22-6-1903: ‘Nota [...] Controleur J. van Lier, Nota Controleur Morrees: Controleur J. van Lier, bijlage B.’

123 Hoëvell, *Ambon*, 30.

Table 3.2. Comparison of Hasil- and Pitis compensations in 1903.<sup>124</sup>

Nagari	Number of inhabitants	Compensation in guilders per year			Total (in guilders)	Average tax payment per capita (in guilders)
		<i>Kepala Naragri</i>	<i>Kepala Soa</i>	<i>Marinyo</i>		
Allang	1528	296.20	92.12	30.68	419	0.27
Laha	330	11.80	4.20	x	16	0.05
Tulehu	1824	103.80	32.40	10.80	147	0.06
Mardika	2	0.65	0.35	x	1	0.33

However, merging *nagari* inevitably entailed violation of the local succession rights of specific *soa*, traditionally entitled to deliver *kepala nagari*. Director of the Interior Administration P.C. Arends (in office 1895-1903), feared that that such violation of the continuation of *nagari* lineages would cause social upheaval and potential conflict among ruling houses.<sup>125</sup> Problematically, throughout the centuries the Dutch had themselves elevated many *kepala nagari* to higher ranks, thereby, more deeply engraining collective traditions of rule. The uncoded and much more flexible *adat* stipulations had been transformed along the way, creating new ruling myths and traditions, to which twentieth-century *kepala* eagerly adhered. Revoking these entitlements, as Arends affirmed, would seriously cripple the Dutch, as well as the *raja*, in the credibility of their authority. The only solution to this problem was breaking with the past, and downgrading the Ambonese lords as 'regents' being on par with the *bupati* of Java, to village or *kampung* chiefs, which is indeed what they really were.<sup>126</sup> And ultimately, this is what the supreme government decided, thereby sealing the fate of Ambon, its *raja*, and its inevitable decline in importance.

Set in this context, the 33 *rajas* (see the beginning of this chapter) wrote their petition as a final attempt to safeguard what remained of their power and privilege. Their diminished prestige, following on from their financial distress, obstructed their power to tax, levy services or induce their inhabitants to work on clove plantations, circularly adding to their decreasing

124 Source: ANRI AS MGS 4263, herein: MGS 22-6-1903: 'Nota [...] Controleur J. van Lier.'

125 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS 20-1-1896: RvI 16-12-1895: DirBB to GG, 11-12-1895; for relocation problems during VOC reign, see: Knaap, *Kruidnagelen*, 61-62.

126 Indeed, in Java the titles of *raja* and *patih* were reserved for court officials, while village rulers bore lower titles (see the next chapter). The Ambonese *raja* were also not be equalized to the *nagari* heads on West Sumatra (see chapter 6) according to the *Raad*, as even though they ruled over populations of comparable size (about 1,000 subjects on average), they had a different role and ruling tradition with different responsibilities and duties. ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS 20-1-1896: RvI 16-12-1895: DirBB to GG, 11-12-1895.

income.<sup>127</sup> *Controleur* J.S.A. Morrees (1900-1901) interpreted this as 'royal indifference' towards economic development<sup>128</sup>, but Resident Van Assen endorsed the *raja's* plea, and suggested awarding the Ambonese 'regents' fixed salaries to enhance their position and to transform *kwarto* services into a 2.50 guilders compensation.<sup>129</sup> He recognized the difficulties of unifying *nagari*, although he also signalled "the happy fact" that on four occasions *raja's* had started to rule over more than one *nagari* as a consequence of local reform policies.<sup>130</sup> Following Van Hoëvell, Van Assen suggested slowly awaiting the natural decline of ruling dynasties and rather than replacing them, merging *nagari* together under fewer chiefs, each ruling at least 200 persons.<sup>131</sup> He expected internal rivalry would diminish and eagerness and discipline to rule would increase.<sup>132</sup> Van Lier designed a scheme to award compensation of 60-100 guilders (see appendix 4) to *nagari* chiefs, merging some *nagari* together, and cunningly only submitting the plan after the more conservative Director Arends was succeeded by the more liberal D.F.W. van Rees (in office 1903-1906), who convinced Minister Idenburg to award the Ambonese *kepala*, fixed salaries.<sup>133</sup> Idenburg agreed only on condition that these salaries were funded from the local treasuries by local tax revenues. This deserves emphasis, not only because it shows how Ambon became increasingly fiscally deprioritized, but also how important it was to the central government to ensure local populations paid for their 'own' administrations. Using local tax revenue to pay salaries to local elites methodically obliged people to contribute to their local administration and reminded them of the fact that, despite Dutch supremacy, they were still governed by their own *adat* chiefs. This became a sound tool to communicate the imperial agenda and combine 'traditional governance' with 'modern public finance.' Taxes were more easily legitimized if used to fund local rulers.

Unfortunately, on Ambon the method seemed to have arrived too late. Not only were the salaries reported too low, as many *kepala nagari* had to fund the *kepala soa* from their own incomes, and their diminished authority affected their ability to fulfil their responsibilities in terms of policing and levying taxes. As a result, arrears in head tax payment showed a

127 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS 22-6-1903: '33 regenten aan GG, 16-8-1902', 'rekestanden.'

128 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS 22-6-1903: 'Nota Controleur Morrees.'

129 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS 22-6-1903: Res. Ambon to GG, 7-7-1902.

130 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS 22-6-1903: Res. Ambon to GG, 7-7-1902.

131 A similar suggestion was made by C.J. Hasselman to resolute the problem of overuse of *desa* services in Java (see Chapter 4, section 3.5).

132 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: MGS 22-6-1903: Res. Ambon to GG, 7-7-1902.

133 ANRI AS GB MGS 4263, herein: Besl. 26-3-1904n25: Voorstel Res. Ambon [...] 16-12-1902, DirBB to GG, 25-11-1903, MGS 22-6-1903: RvI 9-5-1903, MGS 17-3-1905: MinKol to GG, 27-12-1904.

sudden increase.<sup>134</sup> Resident A.J. baron Quarles de Quarles responded by imposing heavy fines on late or non-payment of taxes, especially upon the 'foreign *inlanders*', who "lead a wandering existence" as an anti-migration measure.<sup>135</sup> This had a positive effect on fighting arrears (see table 3.3) as Quarles de Quarles proudly noticed. Meanwhile, the problem of poverty among the *raja* of Ambon received less attention as the government started focusing on expansion of its authority elsewhere in the Moluccas (see Chapter 7).<sup>136</sup> It briefly returned in 1918, when the brand new Regent Federation (*Regentenbond*) alarmed that persistent poverty on Ambon was playing havoc with the reputation of the *kepala nagari*, reducing the respect people had for the *raja* office and the *adat* institute it represented, into its absolute nadir. By that point, the political and material privileges no longer outweighed the administrative and moral burden of the office of *kepala nagari*.<sup>137</sup> Hence, enthusiasm to fulfil the office further decreased.

In 1919, the Regent Federation filed a motion in the *Volksraad* to award the *raja* an extra monthly allowance of 20, 30, 40 or 50 guilders depending on the number of inhabitants they governed (500, 1000, 2000 or 3000).<sup>138</sup> This motion was adopted, but simultaneously the *hasil* and *pitis* compensations were abolished and the remaining *kwarto* service replaced with a 5 guilder stipend per working men (which most Ambonese were unable to pay).<sup>139</sup> This way, the government seemingly eradicated the final remains of the spice monopoly.

134 ANRI AS Besl. 4-11-1906 n28, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 23-7-1906.

135 ANRI AS Besl. 4-11-1906 n28, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 23-7-1906. The ordinance of Stbl. 1906 n463 specifically ordered that in case half of the annual assessment of the head tax was not paid by the first of June, the entire amount would be claimable immediately.

136 NA MinKol MvO 311 (De Quarles, 1908), in Van Fraassen, *Bronnen Betreffende de Midden-Molukken*, 139-140.

137 NA MinKol 1901-1953 Mailr. 126, 1919 n2105, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 30-8-1919; NA MinKol 1901-1953 Mailr. 125, 1919 n1945, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 12-7-1919.

138 NA MinKol 1901-1953 Mailr. 125, 1919 n1945, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 12-7-1919. According to Cooley, later on the *raja* would also receive a 200-guilder bonus for each man from their villages they provided for the colonial army, while the man's family received 250 guilders. Cooley, "Village Government", 146. I was unable to trace archival evidence supporting this claim.

139 Ibid., 145; Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists*, 11; NA MinKol 1901-1953 Mailr. 165, 1921 n1931, herein: 'Regentenbond' to GG, 2-12-1920; See also MvO 315: C.C. Ouwerling, Amboina, 1930, 42.

Table 3.3. Head tax arrears on Ambon, 1902-1906, 1911-1913.<sup>140</sup>

Year	Assessment in guilders	Arrears in guilders	In percentage
1902	61,979	1,253	2.02%
1903	58,747	1,208	2.05%
1904	58,397	1,539	2.64%
1905	61,382	4,231	6.89%
1906 (assessed)	68,598	7,295	10.63%

Year	Assessment in guilders	Arrears in guilders	In percentage
1911	141,454	1,080	0.76%
1912	187,385	3,087	1.65%
1913	219,120	6,183	2.82%

In reality, the government had only contributed to the erosion of local authority and the local willingness to pay, thereby undermining the effectiveness of its bureaucratic state. In 1919, a report on agriculture on Ambon showed that combined with the policies of forced village resettlement and migration, improper compensation of chiefs had structurally hollowed out Ambon's *adat* institutions, while excessive illegal use of coerced labour increased distrust and dissatisfaction.<sup>141</sup> The *hasil* and *pitis* compensations and *kwarto* services were closely linked to the *dati* system, which was still important to Ambon's social organization. As the *raja* of Hitu warned, the final abolition of these compensations and services brought Ambon's social coordination to the brink of collapse.<sup>142</sup> The half-hearted attempts of the government to invent new roles for the *kepala nagari*, *soa* and *dati* had left most of them stranded somewhere between being popular rulers supported by traditional entitlements and salaried (but underpaid) government employees.<sup>143</sup> Post-monopoly Ambon no longer required nor accommodated the authoritarian *raja* as shaped under VOC rule. Instead, it needed local puppets to keep up the pretence of bureaucracy and maintain local order. However, as Ambon increasingly disappeared off the economic maps of state orientation, the economic base of the chiefs' supremacy became so affected by the insufficiency of their salaries that they were no longer able to keep up the necessary appearance of wealthy, capable great *adat* leaders.<sup>144</sup> In 1923, the colonial government decided to refurbish the supposed

140 ANRI AS Besl. 1906 4-11 n28, herein: besl. 23-7-1906; NA MinKol MvO 314: W.D. van Drunen Littel, Amboina, 1918, herein: Bijlage 130A.

141 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 2122, Vb. 5-5-1920 n88, herein: 'Rapport Kopenis over zijn onderzoek naar de landbouw in het gewest Ambon [...]', 1-11-1919, p. 78-79.

142 Holleman, *Het Adat-Grondeurecht van Ambon en de Oeliasers*, 116; Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists*, 11.

143 See Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists*, 13-14.

144 *Ibid.*, 97-98.

'democratic, consultative nature' of the precolonial *nagari*. They hoped to regenerate popular support by reinstating the *saniri* and by awarding these the status of '*gemeenteraad*' (municipal council), which were gradually erected all over the archipelago. But the communist uprisings of 1926-1927 put an end to such experiments in democratization, and the municipal councils were abolished. Subsequently, the government tried to restore the *raja* as autocrats. But the *Raja* of Hitu was right: irreparable tears and cracks had emerged in Ambon society, between the *nagari*, *burgers*, the *raja* and the state.<sup>145</sup> Emerging nationalist movements such as *Sarekat Ambon* and *Insulinde* jumped into this gap, further impairing the position of the *raja* who stood little chance against them. These movements successfully utilized and vocalized popular grievances against taxation and corvée to incite political uprising and disobedience towards both the *raja* and the government that the *raja* unenthusiastically represented.<sup>146</sup> The *nagari* were no longer the old *adat* units they once were; under the influence of wavering colonial ideologies, that traversed *adat* realities but offered no final solution to issues of financial drawback, the orderly world of taxes and self-funding *raja* imagined by colonial officials could not, and did not materialize. The government, parsimonious and deliberately blind to the problems on an island it no longer fiscally prioritized, refused to formulate a durable alternative to former schemes of monopolism, entitlements and forced labour, rendering its societies open to alternative forms and forces of organization.

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145 A particular divide emerged between ordinary villagers and *raja*. Some villagers (primarily Christians) had found access to careers in the colonial army, expanding government and commercial bureaucracies through the Dutch colonial education system and language. This enabled them to gain higher social positions (the better opportunities laying outside the Moluccas), while others sought refuge in connection with other dominated ethnicities against Dutch suppression. Especially soldiering (Ambon became prime supplier of soldiers for the imperial expansion wars) "offered the best hope for improved levels of material welfare and educational opportunities for children to obtain positions in bureaucracy", infusing the imagination among Christian Ambonese of a political establishment with the Netherlands and a yearning for European education. Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists*, 49-52, 68 (quote), 86, 97. Van Fraassen emphasizes how Ambon's relations with the outside world were reinvented under influence of army recruitment, see Van Fraassen, *Ambon*, 353.

146 Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists*, 116-119.





Map 3.3. Nagari on Ambon (as mentioned in this chapter).

## CONCLUSION

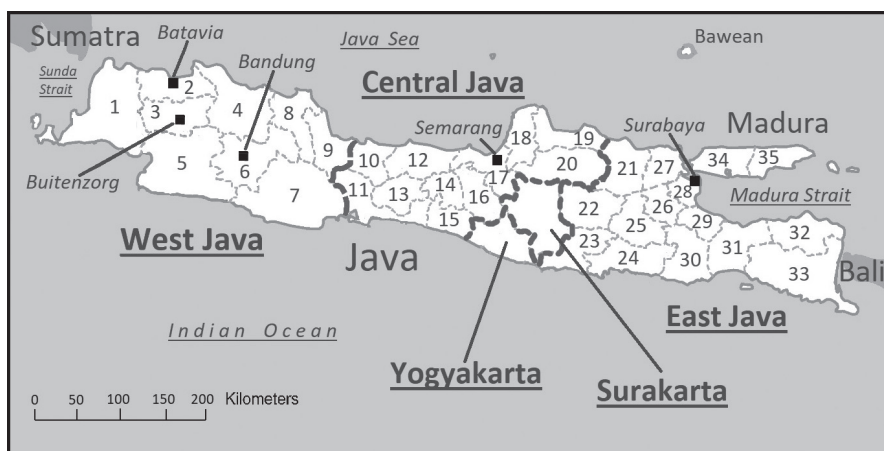
On Ambon in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, the behaviour of the colonial state was quite contradictory to the terms it set for itself, as discussed in the previous chapters. The intended bureaucratic, information-hungry tax state that developed proper fiscal instrumentation to fund a salaried European-indigenous administration, support indigenous welfare and stimulate productivity was never realised. Instead, colonial officials ignored the problems of economic decline that impaired the chiefs in exerting their authority. Under the influence of the requirements of the VOC, Ambon's socio-political and fiscal institutions evolved, transformed and started shaping Ambonese society in entirely new ways. The VOC had cherry-picked and enhanced specific *adat* underpinnings, in particular the role of the *kepala*. When the Dutch finally abolished the agricultural colonial-capitalist monopolism and its coerced labour principles, this required a full rewriting and restructuring of Ambon's socio-political fabric, including a reinvention of the role of chiefs and the functioning of the state itself. In theory, the replacement of *uang hasil* and *pitis* and *kerja trop* and *kwarto* services with taxes, taxes that funded supposedly disconnected 'chiefly' salaries, demonstrated an expansion of bureaucracy directed at a more modern tax state. In reality, the Dutch kept relying on the same old, state-sponsored classes of indirect rulers, thereby continuing the political roots of the monopoly system. Drastically curtailing the power and prestige the *kepala nagari* had come to enjoy required an enormous administrative investment and might have caused political unrest, which was deemed too great a risk, for an island in a state of ineluctable economic decline. There was a refusal to invest in the island on the basis that every regional administration was supposed to be self-funded through locally levied taxes. Thus, the Dutch ignored the rapid impoverishment of the local ruling classes, on which they relied but that increasingly lost in authority, in order to keep up the appearance of a functional administration at minimal cost. Rather than seeking structural expansion of governance and knowledge accumulation to maximize control, justice, extraction and social improvement, officials pursued minimisation of political challenge, engagement and costs. The monopoly primed the tax system until at least the 1920s, and the encompassing promise of fairer taxation in a bureaucratic tax state, curtailment of coerced labour and proper and just administration never materialized for the Ambonese. By that time the majority of the Ambonese population had already moved on and redefined its relations with the colonial state independently and beyond the interference of the *raja*.



Map 4.1. Java's administrative division around ca. 1885.

Residencies:

- |             |               |               |              |              |              |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Banten   | 4. Cirebon    | 7. Kedu       | 10. Semarang | 13. Kediri   | 16. Pasuruan |
| 2. Batavia  | 5. Pekalongan | 8. Yogyakarta | 11. Rembang  | 14. Surabaya | 17. Besuki   |
| 3. Priangan | 6. Banyumas   | 9. Surakarta  | 12. Madiun   | 15. Madura   |              |



Map 4.2. Java's administrative division around ca. 1930.

Residencies:

- |                     |                    |                |                 |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Banten           | 10. Tegal          | 19. Rembang    | 28. Surabaya    |
| 2. Batavia          | 11. South Banyumas | 20. Blora      | 29. Pasuruan    |
| 3. Buitenzorg       | 12. Pekalongan     | 21. Bojonegoro | 30. Malang      |
| 4. Karawang         | 13. North Banyumas | 22. Madiun     | 31. Probolinggo |
| 5. West Priangan    | 14. Wonosobo       | 23. Ponorogo   | 32. Bondowoso   |
| 6. Central Priangan | 15. North Kedu     | 24. Blitar     | 33. Jember      |
| 7. East Priangan    | 16. South Kedu     | 25. Kediri     | 34. West Madura |
| 8. Indramayu        | 17. Semarang       | 26. Mojokerto  | 35. East Madura |
| 9. Cirebon          | 18. Kudus          | 27. Gresik     |                 |