"LITTLE KINGDOMS": *ADAT* AND INEQUALITY IN THE
KEI ISLANDS, EASTERN INDONESIA

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In the Kei islands, *adat* (custom or tradition) and social hierarchy are inextricably intertwined. This dissertation highlights the entanglements of rank and *adat* through an analysis of the mobilization of "tradition" by the Kei elite during both the New Order and post-Suharto periods. My central argument is that the construction of tradition is intimately tied to the creation and justification of inequality within Kei society. Over the past twenty years, the Kei elite (i.e., the *mel-mel*) have articulated particular visions of *adat* in order to maintain their dominance in the face of local, national and global challenges and uncertainties. The longitudinal approach of this research problematizes the distinction commonly made between the depoliticization of *adat* during the New Order and the *adat* revivalism of the post-Suharto years. Based on ethnographic research from 1994 to 1996, as well as a variety of secondary sources of data from the post-Suharto period, it is argued that *adat* revivalism in the Kei islands emerged in a New Order context in which the *mel-mel* successfully captured the state bureaucracy and its resources. During the New Order, *adat* emerged not only as a powerful symbol of Kei identity, but also as a salient resource in local political life. This is demonstrated through an analysis of constructions of *adat* during state-sponsored rituals and the discourse and practice of Kei *adat* law. This dissertation then examines continuities in the mobilization of

tradition during the post-Suharto period, focusing on *adat* reconciliation rituals, efforts to establish and maintain *adat* territories and communities, the commoditization of *adat* titles, and the rearticulation of *adat* prohibitions (*sasi*). Based on these analyses, it is argued that over the past twenty years, high-ranking individuals, both inside and outside the local government, have appropriated *adat* as the proprietary domain of the Kei aristocracy. As a result, elite articulations of *adat* have contributed to the rigidification of Kei social hierarchy. Thus, while constructions of tradition may amplify distinctions between cultural insiders and outsiders, this study shows that they may also result in the sharpening of divisions and inequalities within *adat* communities.

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PREFACE

Twenty-five years ago at St. Mary's College of Maryland, I was introduced to the field of anthropology by one of the most outstanding professors a student could ever wish for, the late Dr. Michael Coy. His enthusiasm for the field and creativity in teaching helped transform a struggling Math major into a curious and passionate student of human behavior and culture. Without his charisma, dedication, and mentorship, my studies in anthropology would likely have amounted to nothing more than one or two undergraduate courses. Fortunately, with his encouragement, I was able to pursue a graduate degree in Cultural Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh in 1990, where I was extremely fortunate to study under Dr. Richard Scaglion. Rich's passion for the field and commitment and dedication to students was, and continues to be, unrivalled. With his inspiration and support, I was able to complete graduate coursework and conduct research in Eastern Indonesia in the mid-1990s. It is that research which provides the foundation for the current dissertation. Without these two outstanding professors, advisors, and friends, I would not have become the student and person that I am today. Mike and Rich, thank you so much for everything you have given to me over the years. Your friendship and support have meant the world to me.

This dissertation stems from ethnographic research conducted in the Kei islands in the mid-1990s. Due to a number of personal struggles and changes in career paths, the results of that research remained, until this writing, a series of short conference papers, pages of fragmented chapter sections, fieldnotes and interview transcriptions, and a plethora of recurring but gradually fading thoughts and memories. Fortunately, with the encouragement and support of my committee members (Drs. Richard Scaglion, Robert Hayden, Joseph Alter, Andrew Strathern, and Andrew Weintraub), I was readmitted to the Department of Anthropology and began to re-examine these research materials in light of changes that have occurred in the Kei Islands and Indonesia in post-authoritarian times.

My decision to complete this current work after a long hiatus from anthropology was a personal and professional one. Completing this dissertation was only made possible through the love and support of my family. My mother and father, Tom and Mary Hooe, have given me so much over the years and their contribution to this document is immeasurable. I can't put into words how much you mean to me. It is to both of you that I dedicate this dissertation. My brother, Tom, and sister, Jill, have also been extremely important figures in my life and were essential to my personal and professional transformation over the past ten years. Thanks for all of your help and support over the years. And to Cindy Shoemaker, thanks for your love and friendship, for accepting me for who I am, and for putting up with my countless hours in front of the computer screen. I love you and hope now we will have more time to share together.

My development and growth as an anthropologist would not have been possible without the influence and inspiration of numerous graduate student friends and colleagues in the Department of Anthropology at Pitt. While there are many others, I want to acknowledge

Throughout this dissertation, Kei, Indonesian, Moluccan Malay, Dutch, and Latin terms and phrases are italicized. The glossary in Appendix C contains notations regarding the particular language of each term or phrase.

1.0   INTRODUCTION: KEI *ADAT* AND THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF TRADITION

Generally speaking, *adat*, a word derived from Arabic, is used throughout Indonesia to refer to the "customs" or "customary practices" of a group of people (Li 2001:658), or as "a gloss for the allegedly immutable cultural forms that…distinguish one collectivity…from another (Spyer 1996:27-28). At the local level, *adat* has multiple meanings (Li 2007:337). As Tyson (2010:1-2) points out, *adat* is "a fluid, contingent concept encompassing a wide range of customs and traditions unique to each of Indonesia's major ethnic groups...Depending on local variants, *adat* may represent systems of governance based on oral traditions, antecedents and customary law, provide ceremonial protocol for marriages and funerals, houses and harvests, or determine patterns of land usage and entitlement." In the Kei islands of Eastern Indonesia, the subject of this dissertation, *adat* too is a multivalent concept. Kei *adat* constitutes a dynamic phenomenon consisting of a wide array of "traditional" beliefs and practices. Despite the seamless, contested, and contingent nature of *adat*, however, certain facets of Kei "tradition" have been prioritized and privileged in Kei social and political life. This dissertation explores some of the contexts, conditions, and processes that have evoked particular articulations of Kei *adat* over the past twenty years.

The Kei Islanders are well known to scholars of Eastern Indonesia for the strength of their *adat* (Thorburn 2008: 115) as well as the prominence of their system of social hierarchy

(e.g., Geurtjens 1921; Laksono 1990; Hooe 1996, 1999; Adhuri 2006; Thorburn 2008). This dissertation argues that *adat* and social hierarchy are inextricably intertwined in Kei political life. In it, I attempt to highlight the entanglements of rank and *adat* in the Kei Islands by examining the mobilization of "tradition" by the Kei elite over the past twenty years during both the New Order and post-Suharto periods. More specifically, this dissertation explores the role of *adat* revivalism and the deployment of *adat* by high-ranking Keiese (*mel-mel*) in relation to the creation and maintenance of aristocratic dominance in the face of local, national and global challenges and possibilities. In doing so, I argue that the articulation of *adat* is intimately tied to the negotiation and perpetuation of inequality **within** Kei society.

While post-colonial transformations created a context in which Kei social hierarchy became increasingly problematic, high-ranking Keiese were largely successful during the New Order in maintaining their advantage in local politics. The growing presence of the state (i.e., through the Village Law of 1979) and the promulgation of nationalist harmony ideologies (e.g., *Pancasila*, "unity in diversity", etc.) did not result in either the marginalization of Kei elites or the de-politicization of *adat*. The Kei aristocracy successfully utilized, or "captured", the state and its resources and, in doing so, forged a local patrimonial system that privileged individuals of high rank. I argue that it was in this context that *adat* emerged not only as a powerful symbol of Kei identity, but also as a salient resource in local and regional politics. Based upon ethnographic research conducted in the mid-1990s, I examine two strategies used by Kei elites to justify and maintain aristocratic dominance during the New Order: (1) the articulation and mobilization of Kei *adat* as aristocratic culture during state-sponsored rituals, and (2) the discourse and practice of *adat* law in the context of local struggles for power and resources.

Based on these analyses, this dissertation shows that, during the New Order period, elites both inside and outside the local government appropriated *adat* as the proprietary domain of the Kei aristocracy. The effect of these articulations of *adat* was the sharpening of rank-based differences and inequalities within Kei society.

In the post-Suharto years, *adat* has continued to play a significant role in local politics in Kei society. Communal violence based on religious differences enveloped the Kei archipelago in 1999, leading to the temporary "death" of *adat* and undermining rank as the most critical difference in local politics and identity. However, the prominence of the Kei aristocracy coupled with the post-Suharto policies of decentralization and regional autonomy stimulated the rapid reemergence of *adat* as a key resource in local politics. Based upon document research from a variety of secondary sources (e.g., scholarly writings, newspaper articles, blogs, Indonesian government documents), I examine and illuminate continuity and change in the articulation of *adat* during the post-Suharto period through an analysis of (1) the role of *adat* and *adat* leaders in attempts to resolve communal conflict which erupted in 1999; (2) local struggles to establish or maintain *adat* territories and governance in a context of regional autonomy, decentralization, and the process of administrative "blossoming" (i.e., *pemekaran*, or the division of administrative units into a number of smaller units); (3) the commodification of *adat* as illustrated by a controversial 2009 event in which a group of Kei kings (*rat*) bestowed an *adat* title upon a non-Kei businessman; and (4) the growing uses of *adat* prohibitions (*sasi*, or temporary prohibitions on exploitation of certain resources or territories) as a form of popular protest against perceived injustices, and elite attempts to limit such appropriations of *adat* by the Kei masses. These analyses illustrate continuities in elite deployments of *adat*

between the New Order and post-Suharto years, while pointing to new possibilities and alternative visions of *adat* in a time of increasing democratization. I suggest that recent political transformations may be producing greater opportunities for critiquing and resisting dominant articulations of *adat*.

1.1   ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF "TRADITION"

The edited volumes by Keesing and Tonkinson (1982) and Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) were the seminal works that preceded a large body of scholarship demonstrating the ways in which "tradition" can be newly and selectively constructed for contemporary political and social purposes (Otto and Pederson 2005:11). For thirty years, the anthropological study of "tradition" has been dominated by a "constructionist" model (Linnekin 1992; Tonkinson 1993; Richland 2008), based on the idea that social life entails the ongoing reconstruction of tradition (Hanson 1989).[1] Traditions are viewed as contested, plural, changing, and political rather than received, homogeneous, essential and enduring entities (Keesing 1982; Tonkinson 1982; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Linnekin 1983; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Hanson 1989; Linnekin and Poyer, eds. 1990; Jolly and Thomas 1992; Weiner and Glaskin 2006). From a constructionist viewpoint, tradition is "conceptualised as a *resource*, employed (or not employed) strategically by certain (but not all) of a community's members" (Tonkinson 1993:599; emphasis in original). Simply put, the past is constructed in and for the present (Hobsbawm 1983).

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[1] The constructionist approach may be traced to Barth's seminal work on the construction of ethnic identity (Barth 1969).

The titles of several early works used some version of the seemingly oxymoronic phrase, "the invention of tradition", to underscore the political construction of the past in contemporary contexts (e.g., Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds. 1983; Keesing and Tonkinson, eds. 1982; Hanson 1989). The use of the term "invention" raised a number of important but related questions. First, are cultural traditions infinitely susceptible to invention? Second, if traditions are to some extent invented, is there such a thing as an authentic tradition?

In a 1998 lecture, Marshall Sahlins criticized much of the work on the construction of tradition for presenting a view of culture as all too "manipulable" and "negotiable", "strategically adapted to the pragmatic situation" (1999: 403). While some constructionist writings may have viewed the past as an infinite, malleable, plastic resource (e.g., Keesing 1982; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Hanson 1989), most scholars today would probably not subscribe to a strict constructionist line which suggests that cultural traditions can be fabricated out of whole cloth (but see Haley and Wilcoxan 2005) and would instead favor a "contextual constructivist" approach (Kohl 1998:233; cited in Haley and Wilcoxan 2005:433). Such a view holds that the construction of tradition is constrained to some degree by contextual factors, although scholars may not always agree on which contextual factors should be prioritized (cf. Appadurai 1981, Jolly 1992b; Friedman 1992; Keesing 1989, 1994; Turner 1997; Akin 2004).

If one accepts that traditions are to some extent creative and dynamic phenomena, the idea of an authentic tradition may be called into question. Two studies based on research in the Pacific (e.g., Hanson 1989; Keesing 1989) raised questions about the authenticity of cultural traditions and quickly became the focus of heated debates (see Hanson 1991; Trask 1991) over competing visions of reality, where the anthropologist's authority was pitted against those

engaged in constructing their own identities (Friedman 1992). Hanson's (1989) study stressed that all traditions are invented. He attempted to demonstrate that several Maori traditions were invented first by Europeans and then by the Maori themselves. While Hanson did not claim that Maori traditions were inauthentic, he stated that European "distortions" of Maori traditions were accepted by Maoris as authentic to their heritage.[2] Thus, while Hanson adopted a kind of "postmodern line" by stressing the uneventfulness of cultural inventions, he essentially argued that various aspects of Maori tradition are nothing more than the internalization of foreign representations of the Maori (Friedman 1991:851). Keesing's study (1989) attempted to do for the broader Pacific what Hanson did for the Maori: "call attention to the contingent, political nature of contemporary native constructions of culture" (Lindstrom and White 1995). Keesing's essay described the creation and evocation of visions of the past throughout the Pacific and implied a wide gulf between an authentic past and the representations in contemporary ideologies of cultural identity.[3]

Scholarly dichotomies between authentic and inauthentic traditions, whether they are made explicitly (e.g., Hobsbawm 1983; Babadzan 1988) or implicitly (Keesing 1989), are based on modernist arguments that work only in periods of hegemony, where the anthropologist can speak for or write for the "other" (Friedman 2002). Jolly (1992a) astutely noted that such dichotomies are problematic since the notion of a true authentic tradition entails a view of

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[2] Hanson (1989: 898) argued that the analytical task of anthropologists is to understand the process by which invented portions of tradition acquire authenticity.

[3] Keesing, however, did argue that the authentic ancestral cultures of the past were also highly political and contested cultural spheres. He also suggested that "the political myths of the contemporary Pacific that refashion the past to advance the interests of the present are not so different from the political myths of the past" (1989:37).

cultures as unitary essences (cf. Handler and Linnekin 1984; Carrier 1992), consisting of people without history before the West brought social change (Wolf 1982; Lindstrom and White 1991). In addition, these distinctions often equate authenticity with unself-consciousness and self-consciousness with inauthenticity (Jolly 1992a:49).

Due to the ethnographic essentialism that results from this dichotomy, most anthropological studies of tradition in the past twenty years have attempted to avoid the distinction between authentic and inauthentic traditions (e.g., Jolly 1992a; Duncan 2009), as well as the use of the term "invention" (but see Weiner and Glaskin 2006). In a reply to comments on his 1989 article, Hanson (1991:450) argued that "invention when applied to culture and tradition is a systematically misleading expression that should not be perpetuated", although he continued to advocate his overall theoretical approach. Throughout this dissertation, I too avoid using the term "invention" and refrain from discussion as to whether or not Kei *adat* is "authentic".

1.2   PACIFIC MODELS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF TRADITION

A disproportionate amount of anthropological writing about the politics of tradition emerged from the Pacific region (e.g., Keesing and Tonkinson, eds. 1982; Linnekin and Poyer, eds. 1990; Jolly and Thomas, eds. 1992; Carrier, ed. 1992; Lindstrom and White, eds. 1993; Feinberg and Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1995). Lindstrom and White (1995:205) argued that this was no accident but was due to the cultural and political diversity of the region which created a predisposition for "culture talk". In addition, these early writings on the construction of tradition emerged at a

time when anthropology itself was engaged in considerable culture-talk, questioning basic assumptions about what the concept of "culture" (Lindstrom 2008:172).

Regardless, the anthropological study of tradition in the Pacific has contributed greatly to our understanding of the cultural dynamics of tradition. These contributions include (1) the identification of the variety of conditions and contexts that elicit strategic uses and constructions of tradition; (2) the hypothesized reasons for and purposes of constructions of traditions in a wide variety of settings; and (3) the multiplicity of constructions and meanings of traditions across time and space.

Much of the research in the Pacific examined the construction of tradition in opposition to a variety of exogenous forces, such as colonialism, Christianity, post-colonial states, and competing social groups (e.g. Keesing 1982, 1989; Babadzan 1988; Hanson 1989; Jolly 1992b). For example, the 1982 collection of studies on "reinventing traditional culture" in island Melanesia (Keesing and Tonkinson 1982) examined the political uses of *kastom*, roughly translated as traditional knowledge, practices and objects (Lindstrom 1982:320). In the introduction, Keesing and Tonkinson (1982) argued that the reinvention of *kastom* constituted an indigenous response to colonial and post-colonial conditions. Keesing (1982) hypothesized that the reification and externalization of tradition as a political symbol emerged specifically in the context of external domination. Similarly, Weiner (2006) suggested more recently that the emergence of a domain called the "traditional" is made visible only in the context of the modern nation-state. The "invention" of tradition is not "an autogenously generated transformation from within a community…It is a gloss for a particular moment in inter-cultural relations, especially of an asymmetric nature (Weiner and Glaskin 2006:4).

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Hanson's (1989) study was exemplary in demonstrating how the Maori promoted particular visions of tradition for political purposes; namely, to help secure a favorable position in the New Zealand nation. The Maori example also illustrated that tradition can be an important resource or symbol in the construction of cultural identities. Other scholars have demonstrated the uses of tradition in defining cultural identities at both the local and national levels (Keesing 1982; Lindstrom 1982; Hanson 1990; Linnekin 1990; Tonkinson 1993). Lindstrom (1982), for example, illustrated the importance of Vanuatu *kastom* as a political symbol used both in the construction of national unity and as a marker of boundaries between islanders and outsiders. Tradition may, therefore, be a salient resource in drawing lines of social inclusion and exclusion.

Lindstrom's study of Vanuatu *kastom* highlighted the marked differences that may exist in the use and interpretation of tradition at various levels, a point more forcefully made in subsequent studies. For example, the 1992 collection on "The Politics of Tradition in the Pacific" (Jolly and Thomas 1992) related divergent colonial and post-colonial experiences with differences in contemporary meanings of tradition (e.g., Jolly 1992b). Similarly, the collection of articles in Lindstrom and White (1993) emphasized the multiple versions and contradictory and competing readings of *kastom*. Both of these collections underscored the need to look more closely at the complexities of tradition at the local level (Tonkinson 1993).

Little was said in many of the earlier studies (e.g., Keesing and Tonkinson, eds. 1982) of the uses of tradition at the local level "in perpetuating old inequalities and supporting new

ones" (Tonkinson 1993:603).[4]   Later work emphasized the need to examine the competing

discourses of tradition within particular locales and their relationship to emerging patterns of

social, political, and economic inequality (e.g., Jolly and Thomas 1992; Keesing and Tonkinson,

eds. 1993; Lindstrom and White, eds. 1993). As Tonkinson (1993:599) pointed out, "in invoking

the past to gain strategic advantage in the present, [people] are of course not equally situated,

so it is necessary to focus closely on the role, distribution and uses of 'traditional' knowledge,

and in particular on its relationship to political action". This is an especially important task for

the anthropologist since contemporary political discourses about traditions often result in the

subordination or oppression of some members of a community (Keesing 1993:593).

Despite these calls for greater attention to local level processes in the construction of

tradition, "literature for the most part…remained suspended at the level of rhetorical

constructions deployed in national and international arenas" (Lindstrom and White 1995:206).

In addition, most local-level studies from the Pacific examined the construction of tradition vis-

à-vis groups who do not share such tradition (e.g., Lindstrom 1982; Jolly 1994). Insufficient

attention has been given to the relationship between the social construction of tradition and

the asymmetrical relations that exist **within** particular communities. By examining the uses of

tradition in the creation and maintenance of inequality within Kei society, this dissertation

strives to contribute to this needed area of research.

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[4] Tonkinson suggested that this may have been due to the fact that the 1982 collection focused on Melanesia where a "strong leveling ethos" exists (Tonkinson 1993:603).

1.3   THE POLITICS OF TRADITION IN INDONESIA

One of the weaknesses of much of the scholarship on the construction of tradition has been the lack of "interregional cross-referencing and intellectual exchange" (Otto and Pederson 2005:12).[5] Despite the abundance of research on the politics of tradition in the Pacific, these works have rarely been referenced in studies from Indonesia, a region with considerable prehistoric and cultural affinities to the Pacific (but see Adams 1995, 1997; Hooe 1999). While the Indonesian archipelago closely rivals the Pacific region in terms of cultural diversity, it differs significantly in terms of its relatively uniform post-colonial history.

Studies of the politics of tradition in Indonesia over the past twenty-five years have emphasized the influence of national politics and government cultural policy on the expression of tradition and *adat* at the local and regional levels (e.g., Acciaioli 1985; Kipp 1993; Spyer 1996; Adams 2006; Bräuchler 2007; Davidson and Henley, eds. 2007; Duncan 2009). In addition, much of the Indonesian scholarship has highlighted the significant differences between the New Order (1965-1998) and post-Suharto (1998-Present) periods in regards to constructions of tradition.

During the New Order, there was a concerted effort by the Suharto regime to depoliticize cultural differences (Henley and Davidson 2007) and unify the nation through the co-optation and redefinition of *adat* (Duncan 2009). In the context of a state ideology (*Pancasila*) that stressed "unity in diversity" and development (*pembangunan*), New Order

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[5] Another exception was the panel "Inequality, the State, and the Meanings of "Tradition": Cases from Southeast Asia and Melanesia, at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, November 20, 1999.

cultural policy involved a "codification of diversity" (Spyer 1996:26) in which the most "apolitical", "plastic", "narrow" or "showcase" aspects of culture were singled out and promoted as the most salient markers of local identities (e.g., Acciaioli 1985; Kipp 1993; Aragon 1994; Pemberton 1994; Hellman 2003; Henley and Davidson 2007). These objective aspects of tradition were promoted rather than more overtly political elements of *adat* (i.e., land tenure and belief systems) that would conflict with national development agendas. "Regional" (i.e., provincial) culture was promoted with the dual goal of reducing the potential for ethnic and religious conflict while symbolically unifying the nation (Kipp 1993; Aragon1994; Pemberton 1994; Li 2000; Hellman 2003; Bowen 2007; Schulte Nordholt 2008; Duncan 2009).

In this policy context, a number of scholars examined the importance of particular representations of "tradition" (such as art, costume, dance, ritual, theatre, handicrafts, and architecture) in the construction of ethnic and national identities (e.g., Acciaioli 1985, Adams 1988, Volkman 1990, Hatley 1993; Kartomi 1993; Pemberton 1994, Taylor 1994; Sutton 1995; Hellman 2003). Relatively few studies, however, analyzed the strategic uses of "tradition" in **intra**-societal struggles for political, economic, and symbolic resources (but see Adams 1995).

This New Order situation is often starkly contrasted with the post-Suharto years in which a variety of political and economic factors have contributed to the revitalization of *adat* and a "new politics of tradition" (Bubandt 2004; also see Schulte Nordholt 2008; Duncan 2009). After the fall of the Suharto regime, the New Order restrictions on cultural difference were loosened (Bowen 2007). This, combined with the changes brought about through the *Reformasi* ("Reformation") policies of decentralization and regional autonomy, led to the emergence of

adat as the quintessential marker of difference.[6] A large body of research has emerged in the

past twelve years on the revitalization and mobilization of tradition and *adat* in a wide range of

Indonesian contexts (e.g., Li 2001; Sakai 2002; Acciaioli 2002, 2007; Aragon 2007; Davidson and

Henley 2007, Duncan 2009; Tyson 2010). In some areas of Indonesia, a return of local

aristocracies, sultans, and *rajas* is accompanying this revival of *adat* consciousness (Schulte

Nordholt 2008; Van Klinken 149; Bräuchler 2011). In contrast to the New Order period, *adat* is

currently invoked to pursue ends that range from control of resources, exclusion of rivals, to

the protection, empowerment, or mobilization of the unprivileged (Henley and Davidson

2007:4).[7]

      While this New Order/Post-Suharto distinction may be relevant for many parts of

Indonesia, it is problematic when applied to the politics of tradition in the Kei Islands. The

revitalization of *adat* in the Kei Islands, in contrast to many areas of Indonesia, has been an

ongoing process during both New Order and post-Suharto times. Therefore, while government

policies and national-level political contexts clearly influence the construction and uses of

tradition in particular settings, additional variables must be taken into account in to better

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[6] Henley and Davidson (2007) identify a number of factors that contributed to *adat* revivalism in the post-Suharto era: (1) the international influences from indigenist movements and NGOs; (2) reaction to the pressure and oppression of the New Order regime in which cultural differences were depoliticized; (3) the opportunities and exigencies provided by *reformasi*, including a weakened central authority, administrative and fiscal decentralization, and economic slowdown; and (4) the widespread, pan-Indonesian importance of *adat* dating back to the colonial era.

[7] Most research on the revitalization of *adat* in contemporary Indonesia implicitly uses a constructionist model of tradition (e.g., Acciaioli 2002; Biezeveld 2007; Bubandt 2004; Henley and Davidson 2007, 2008). In addition, researchers have found little utility in viewing contemporary discourses of *adat* as "invented traditions" (Duncan 2009; Henley and Davidson 2008; but see Thorburn 2005). While I agree with the Henley and Davidson's rejection of the "invention of tradition" model, their rationale for doing so is the purported continuity between contemporary *adat* claims and past practices (Henley and Davidson 2008:817). Such a view implies the existence of an authentic past and echoes earlier distinctions between authentic and inauthentic traditions.

understand *adat* revivalism in Indonesia. This dissertation argues that attention must be given to relations of inequality **within** particular communities. *Adat* and inequality are inextricably intertwined; one cannot be understood without a thorough evaluation of the other.

1.4   THE "ARTICULATION" OF *ADAT*

The approach to the study of tradition presented in this dissertation borrows from the Pacific models discussed above, in addition to more recent anthropological research that examines constructions of tradition and identity as "articulations" (e.g., Li 2000; Clifford 2001; Green 2009; Duncan 2009). Analyzing the mobilization of *adat* as a process of articulation addresses some of the shortcomings of constructionist approaches by taking into account the agency of politically situated subjects while attending to the cultural, structural, and/or historical contingencies that shape or constrain the articulation of cultural forms (also see Bourdieu 1977; Sahlins 1985; Ortner 1989 for similar theoretical constructs).

The concept of articulation has its roots in critiques of the economic and class reductionism of "classical" Marxism. Rather than reducing social forms to economics and class struggle, articulation draws attention to the ways in which different elements are joined within a social field to form unities in a non-reductionistic way (Slack 1996:116; also see DeLuca 1999). While a number of scholars have theorized the concept of articulation (see Laclau 1977; Laclau

and Mouffe 1985), in this dissertation I draw upon articulation theory as developed by Stuart

Hall (e.g., Hall 1986, 1990).[8] According to Hall, an articulation is:

> the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements,
> under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined,
> absolute and essential for all time…So the so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really
> the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in
> different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness'…Thus, a theory
> of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come,
> under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of
> asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to
> certain political subjects (Hall 1986:53).

In recent years, a number of anthropologists have incorporated Hall's ideas in their

analyses of constructions of identity, tradition, and *adat* (e.g., Li 2000; Clifford 2001; Green

2009; Duncan 2009). Li (2000:151-153,161), for example, utilized Hall's articulation theory in

her study of the formation of indigenous identities in Central Sulawesi and argued the

following:

> A group's self-identification as tribal or indigenous is not natural or inevitable,
> but neither is it simply invented, adopted or imposed. It is rather, a *positioning*
> which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires
> of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and
> struggle…The articulation (expression, enunciation) of collective identities,
> common positions, or shared interests must always be seen as
> provisional…Identities are *always* about becoming, as well as being, but are
> never simply invented…Every articulation is a creative act, yet it is never creation
> ex nihilo, but rather a selection and rearticulation of elements structured
> through previous engagements. It is also, as Hall points out, subject to
> contestation, uncertainty, risk, and the possibility of future rearticulation.

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[8] See Slack (1996) and Jones and Holmes (2011:1-7) for useful discussions of the genealogy of "articulation theory". As these authors points out, Stuart Hall's version of articulation theory is influenced by the work of Marx, Althusser, Gramsci, and Laclau. Also see Fiske (1997) and Grossberg (1997:156-59) for further discussions of Hall's theory of articulation.

In a similar vein, Clifford (2001) argued for a rethinking of the notion of invention of tradition as the politics of articulation (p. 480). "When you understand a cultural or social formation as an articulated ensemble it does not allow you to prefigure it on an organic model…An articulated ensemble is more like a political coalition or, in its ability to conjoin disparate elements, a cyborg…[T]here is no eternal or natural shape to their configuration" (Clifford 2001:478). Given the tumultuous changes experienced by most "indigenous" societies over the past several centuries, "traditions that do persist over time need to be seen as particular combinations of heterogeneous elements, old and new, indigenous and foreign…What emerges is a quite different picture from that of an authentic, ancient tradition (or structure) persisting over the centuries by selectively integrating and rejecting external pressures and temptations" (Clifford 2001:479).

Articulation theory, thus, provides a useful approach for the study of *adat* revivalism in contemporary Indonesia (e.g., Duncan 2009).[9] When viewed as an articulation, it is assumed that *adat "*will always be made, unmade, and remade. Communities can and must reconfigure themselves, drawing selectively on remembered pasts" (Clifford 2001:479). As Duncan notes for the Tobelo of Halmahera, *adat* has always been in flux and a matter of debate in local communities (Duncan 2009). Therefore, articulation theory offers a "nonreductive way to think about cultural transformation and the apparent coming and going of 'traditional' forms"

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[9] In this dissertation, I want to be clear that I am utilizing articulation theory only as developed by Hall (1986, 1990), and elucidated by Li (2000), Clifford (2001), and Duncan (2009), to analyze the construction of *adat* and constructions of *adat*. I use the verb "to articulate" to refer to the mobilization or "enunciation" particular elements of *adat* at particular historical conjunctures by socially situated actors, while I use the noun "articulation" to refer to the process of "articulating" or the momentary product that results from the practice of "articulating". My use of the term "discourse" is synonymous with "articulation" (also see Deluca 1999:335 n.2).

(Clifford 2001:478). It also allows the anthropologist to "circumvent unconstructive debates about 'authenticity'" (Duncan 2009:1099). Furthermore, since articulation suggests discourse or speech (Hall 1986:53; Li 2000; Clifford 2001), attention is drawn to the differential abilities and rights of members of a community to "express" or "enunciate" visions of *adat* on behalf of their community. This is very important point, since a theory of articulation should not only account for the ways in which disparate elements "cohere together within a discourse", but also address "how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects" (Hall 1986:53).

The revitalization of *adat* in Indonesia offers the opportunity to identify the specific conjunctures in which individuals or groups articulate or rearticulate discourses of tradition. The Kei islands, in particular, present a unique case study to identify the antecedents to such articulations, since *adat* revivalism has been occurring for a much longer time in comparison with many Indonesian societies. Tania Li's study (2000) of the articulation of indigenous identities among peoples of Sulawesi provides an excellent starting point for such an endeavor. While acknowledging both the contingent aspects of articulation as well as the significance of human agency, Li contrasted the Lauje and Lindu peoples of Sulawesi and identified the following conditions that enabled the articulation of indigenous identity among the Lindu people (but not the Lauje): (1) competition for resources; (2) existence of a local political structures with the authority to speak on behalf of the community; (3) a capacity to present cultural identity in forms that are intelligible to outsiders; (4) an interest on the part of urban activists in supporting indigenous subjects and documenting indigenous knowledge; and (5) the

heightened interest in a particular place arising from conflict between local and the state or state-sponsored corporations (Li 2000:169).

While each of these factors could be identified in the Kei islands context, in this dissertation I expand upon Li's analysis by identifying specific antecedents which facilitated elite articulations of *adat* that resulted in the sharpening of divisions and inequalities *within* Kei society. I argue that it is insufficient to simply acknowledge that certain individuals or groups are vested with the authority to articulate *adat* for the wider community. Rather, one must examine the contingencies and processes whereby particular individuals or groups emerge with the ability to construct authoritative representations of tradition. In other words, how do individuals or groups "convince or coerce insiders and outsiders, often in power-charged, unequal situations, to accept the autonomy of a 'we.'" (Clifford 2001:479). This is essentially "a question of who has the right to define another person's or population's culture" (Friedman 1992:853; also see Keesing 1987)

In Indonesia, claims to speak for an *adat* community may often lead to disputes over the legitimacy of representation (Bowen 2007:7). Therefore, it is imperative that studies of *adat* in particular locales address the ways in which traditions get defined and by whom. In addition, research must also examine the extent to which those who claim to speak for *adat* communities really represent all members of the community (Henley and Davidson 2007:27). These are especially important scholarly tasks since, as a number of researchers have argued, *adat* revivalism may frequently privilege elites or promote greater inequality within *adat* communities (Henley and Davidson 2007:27, Biezeveld 2007; Van Klinken 2007).

In making these arguments, this dissertation contributes to the literature on the politics of tradition in two significant ways. First, while many studies from both the Pacific region and Indonesia have demonstrated the role of "tradition" in the construction of national or ethnic identities (e.g., Acciaioli 1985; Babadzan 1988; Hanson 1989; Volkman 1990; Jolly 1992b; Kartomi 1993; Pemberton 1994, Taylor 1994) or have examined the mobilization tradition vis-à-vis other social or ethnic groups, or in response to a variety of external forces (e.g., Keesing 1982, 1989; Hanson 1989; Jolly 1994; Acciaioli 2002, 2010; Bubandt 2005; Eindhoven 2007, Erb 2007; Warren 2007), relatively few have analyzed the articulation of tradition in the creation and maintenance of inequality **within** particular *adat* communities (but see Li 2007a; Biezeveld 2007). Through an analysis of representations and mobilizations of *adat* by high-ranking Keiese, this dissertation contributes to our understanding role of tradition in intra-societal struggles for power, resources, and identity.

Second, while most recent studies of the construction of *adat* in Indonesia make a distinction, either explicitly or implicitly, between the "politics of culture" (Kipp 1996) during the New Order and the "new politics of tradition" (Bubandt 2004) in post-Suharto times, the Kei Islands provide a case in which the resurgence and political mobilization of *adat* began well before the post-Suharto period. Thus, the Kei Islands provide an "exemplary case" (Li 2001:663) that provides insight into the conditions for, as well as the impact of, efforts to articulate and revitalize tradition throughout Indonesia.[10]

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[10] In her study of the *masyarakat adat* (*adat* society) movement, Li (2001) advocates attention to "exemplary cases", "a focus on unique and special places where difference takes on such spectacular proportions that all the contending parties can easily recognize and, indeed, affirm it" (p. 663). With regard to *adat*, I argue that the Kei islands constitute one such exemplary case.

1.5   OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation utilizes a theoretical approach that is rooted in constructionist models of tradition while adopting articulation theory's attention to the role of human agency as well as the constraining (or enabling) effects of culture, structure and history. *Adat* is conceptualized as an important resource that is selectively appropriated and constructed, by insiders and outsiders alike, for contemporary social and political purposes. Using the case of the Kei islands, I argue that the articulation of *adat* is a dynamic process that not only reflects asymmetrical power relations, but is also constitutive of such relations. In other words, mobilizations of *adat* in Kei society over the past twenty years cannot be divorced from local configurations of rank and inequality. I suggest that the close relationship between these two phenomena is not mere coincidence, but rather is part of a larger social dynamic in which "tradition" has become a potent resource in the construction and maintenance of inequality within Kei communities. I develop these arguments through an analysis of the articulations and mobilizations of *adat* by high-ranking Keiese (*mel-mel*) in both the New Order and post-Suharto periods. I attempt to demonstrate that members of the Kei elite have constructed particular visions or topographies of *adat* in order to maintain their dominance in the face of local, national and global challenges and uncertainties.

Since every articulation of *adat* must be situated within its particular historical, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts, I provide the reader with relevant contexts of the Kei islands in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 introduces the reader to the geographical, linguistic, prehistoric, colonial, post-colonial, and demographic contexts of the Kei islands, focusing on

aspects of the past and present which bear upon contemporary representations of the past and articulations of *adat*. I also present a portrait of the research settings and outline the methodology that provides the basis for the materials and arguments presented in this dissertation.

Chapter 3 provides more detailed ethnographic and historical data, focusing on Kei rank, political organization, history, and *adat*. I argue that Dutch indirect rule helped to transform Kei diarchy (see Valeri 1991) into a more rigid "caste" system made up of three ascribed ranks. In addition, Dutch indirect rule resulted in the codification of *adat* and the rigidification of *adat* political and territorial boundaries. Colonial rule not only resulted in the empowerment of the *mel-mel* rank, but also contributed to the delineation of *ratschap*, the "little kingdoms" of the archipelago. Chapter 3 also presents Kei conceptions of the past and their relation to Kei *adat* and political organization. Origin histories (*tom*) surrounding *adat* law and the rise of Kei kings and polities are presented to demonstrate that *adat* is claimed as the domain of the Kei aristocracy. In addition, origin histories also claim *adat* political offices as the prerogative of noble families. Despite these claims, however, I attempt to highlight the contested nature of rank, history, and authority within Kei society through a description of the history and structure of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, one of the "little kingdoms" of Kei Besar. The data presented in Chapter 3 is crucial for framing and contextualizing the articulations of *adat* examined in Chapters 4-6.

Chapters 4 and 5 present empirical accounts of mobilizations of Kei *adat* during the New Order based upon my 1990's research. Chapter 4 demonstrates the complex relations that emerged between Kei hierarchy and government bureaucracy during the New Order period. As

a result of Dutch colonialism, the Kei *mel-mel* were advantageously positioned following Indonesian Independence to access state resources that became available with the formation of the District of Southeast Maluku in Tual. High-ranking Keiese successfully captured state institutions and resources and in doing so, were able to maintain their dominance in Kei political life despite the drastic changes that accompanied Suharto's rule. I argue that it was in this context that *adat* revivalism in the Kei islands began to take shape. In Chapter 4, I show how the Kei elite articulated aristocratic visions of *adat* to demonstrate and justify their ascendency in local politics. Through an analysis of village-head installation rituals and state-sponsored *belang* (ceremonial canoe) races, I demonstrate that Kei *adat* was appropriated as the proprietary domain of the Kei aristocracy. Through these ceremonial occasions, members of the Kei elite valorized Kei kings and aristocratic privilege and in doing so legitimized the *mel-mel*'s control of *adat* and state political realms.

Chapter 5 expands upon arguments made in Chapter 4 by examining the discourse and practice of *adat* law during the New Order period. In addition to the prominence of aristocratic culture in elite articulations of *adat*, Kei *adat* law (*Larvul Ngabal*) also became a potent symbol of Kei identity during the New Order. Furthermore, I show that *adat* law constitutes a powerful resource used to bolster aristocratic dominance in Kei society. Chapter 5 demonstrates that while elite discourses of *adat* law stress equality, consensus, and harmony, *adat* legal practice tends to reinforce existing inequalities within Kei society. Using two inter-rank dispute cases from Kei Besar, I show that *adat* law and legal practice were fundamental to the creation and maintenance of *mel-mel* dominance during the New Order.

In Chapter 6, I examine continuity and change in the articulations of *adat* that have occurred since my 1990's ethnographic fieldwork. Focusing on the post-Suharto period, the continued importance of Kei *adat* in local political life is explored. Although inter-religious conflict in 1999 resulted in the temporary "death" of Kei *adat*, Kei kings and *adat* leaders were successful in resurrecting and mobilizing *adat* for reconciliation, prestige, and power. In contrast to other areas of Indonesia in which communal conflict persisted for almost three years, the Kei violence abated after just three months. I argue that this was possible because of the *adat* revivalism and the emergence of a *mel-mel* dominated "political class" that occurred during the New Order period. Conversely, the success of the Kei elite in fostering peace and reconciliation resulted in a renewed focus on Kei kings and the role of *adat* law in maintaining social and political order. Both Kei *adat* and the local aristocracy were bolstered as a result of the 1999 violence.

Chapter 6 also examines articulations of *adat* in relation to policies of decentralization and regional autonomy. It is suggested that, in comparison to other areas of Indonesia, there was significant continuity in the mobilizations of *adat* between the New Order and post-Suharto periods. *Adat* continues to be claimed as the proprietary domain of the Kei elite and this is manifest in attempts to maintain or return to *adat* forms of governance. To illustrate this, I describe attempts by the Keiese to establish *adat* communities as well as local government efforts to enact regulations to establish officially recognized *adat* units at the village level. I also present an Indonesian Constitutional Court case involving a lawsuit by several Kei *adat* leaders over the division of *adat* territories as a result of the creation of a new district government in Tual. Chapter 6 ends with an analysis of a 2009 controversy in which most Kei *rat* bestowed an

adat title upon a non-Kei director of a large Tual-based fishing company. While this case further

demonstrates that *adat* is claimed as the proprietary domain of the Kei aristocracy, the popular

protests which followed the ceremony suggest that the "ownership" of *adat* is hotly contested

in contemporary times. I demonstrate that during these protests, as well as during a number of

additional demonstrations from 2009-2011, the Kei public has appropriated *adat* prohibitions

(*sasi*) as an effective tool in defending rights, making claims, and protesting perceived

injustices. These popular uses of *sasi* pose a threat to the *mel-mel*'s control over articulations of

adat, and have become the center of a proprietary contest embedded in broader struggles for

power and resources.

Chapter 7 concludes this dissertation. It summarizes and expands upon the conclusions

of previous chapters, and explores the relationship between *adat* revivalism, inequality and

democratization in Indonesia. I discuss the paradoxical nature of *adat* revivalism in the Kei

islands in particular and in Indonesia in general, as well as the potential for Kei *adat* to promote

or hinder democratization at the local level.

1.6   "LITTLE KINGDOMS" OF THE KEI ISLANDS

In concluding this introduction, I want to clarify my usage of the term "kingdoms" to refer to

the *adat* polities (*ratschap*) of the Kei islands, "kings" to refer to the leaders (*rat*) of these

domains, and "aristocracy" or "nobility" to refer to Keiese of high-rank (*mel-mel*), including

those who claim rights to leadership positions within the *adat* domains. In addition, a few

comments are also in order regarding the title of this dissertation, "Little Kingdoms", and its relation to the arguments presented within this study.

The leaders of nineteen *adat* domains of the Kei archipelago are referred to in the Kei language as *rat*, a cognate of the proto-Malayo-Polynesian term **datu*[11]. These leaders have been referred to by foreign observers and scholars as "chiefs"[12] (Topatimasang 2005:370; Kaartinen 2008:231), "principal chiefs" (Langen 1888:769), "high chiefs" (Kaartinen 2010:89), and "kings" (see Laksono 1990:95, 2002a, 2002b:111 n. 15; Travis 1992: 21; Hooe 1997; Hann 2001; Topatimasang 2005:370; Adhuri 2006:398; Kaartinen 2009a:232; Satria and Adhuri 2010). Since at least colonial times (see Langen 1888:769), these leaders have also been referred to as *raja*, a Malay term (borrowed from Sanskrit) which may be translated as "king" (Echols and Shadily 1989:445). In addition, the Kei islanders, at least during the New Order and post-Suharto periods covered in this dissertation, frequently refer to or address *rat* as *"Bapa Raja"*[13].

The territories under the authority of a *rat* are sometimes referred to as *lor*[14] (see Rahail 1993, 1996), although, since colonial times, they are much more commonly referred to as *ratschap*. *Ratschap* is a word combining the Kei word *rat* with the Dutch suffix "*–schaap*" meaning "-ship" (Thorburn 2008:126). These *adat* polities have been referred by foreign

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[11] According to Blust (1980:217), **datu* has four components of meaning: "(1) political leader, chief; (2) priest, custodian and administrator of customary law, medical practitioner (hence religious, legal, and medical authority = traditional scholar); (3) aristocrat, noble; and (4) ancestor, grandfather, elder."

[12] As Keating (1998:22) notes, the term "chief" does not always accurately represent the combination of sacred and secular power that characterizes Oceanic chiefs. The same could also be said of many Austronesian speaking peoples of insular Southeast Asia.

[13] *Bapa* or *bapak* literally means "father" in the Indonesian language and used as a form of address for an older man (Echols and Shadily 1989:52).

[14] *Lor* literally means whale but also represents the spirit of *adat* law (see Barraud 1990a).

observers and scholars as "districts" (Langen 1888; Van Wouden 1968), "domains"[15] (Hooe 1999; Adhuri 2006; Satria and Adhuri 2010; Kaartinen 2009), "chiefdoms" (Kaartinen 2010: 178), "royal domains" (Kaartinen 2010: 178) and "kingdoms" (Hooe 1997; Thorburn 2005:12; Satria and Adhuri 2010). The Kei islanders, particularly those of high rank, may also refer to these domains as *kerajaan*, an Indonesian term which may be translated as "kingdom" (Echols and Shadily 1989: 446).

Individuals who claim historical rights to the leadership positions within the *adat* domains of the Kei islands are all *mel-mel*[16], a class of high-ranking individuals. Foreign observers and scholars have translated *mel-mel* as "nobles" or "nobility" (Geurtjens 1921:179; Klerks 1939:287; Adhuri 2006:398), "chiefly class" (Kaartinen 2009a:232), or "aristocracy"[17] (Laksono 1990, 2006; Hooe 1999; Van Klinken 2006). High ranking Keiese often refer to the *mel-mel* as *bangsawan*, an Indonesian word which may be translated as nobility or aristocracy (Echols and Shadily 1998:49).

The wide range of terms and translations described above is partially the result of the complex prehistory and history of the Indonesian archipelago in which a variety of political models (including titles and other vocabularies of rule) spread and intermingled through maritime trade, the influences exerted by precolonial states, kingdoms, and sultanates, and multiple colonizations, migrations, and displacements (see Ellen 1986; Lewis 2006; and Fox

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[15] "Domain" has been used to refer to many of the adat polities of eastern Indonesia (e.g., Fox 1980b; Forth 1981, 2001; Needham 1987; Lewis 1988, 2006; Vischer 1996).
[16] Barraud (1990c:199) translates *mel* as "noble", "great" or "to grow".
[17] Laksono (1990, 2002b) importantly points out that the *mel-mel* were transformed into an "aristocracy" as a result of Dutch colonialism. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

2001).[18] The differences in terminology described above are also influenced by the particular frame of reference and the social, political, and historical contexts of the various agents attempting to represent or translate the phenomenon at hand. Thus, while the above translations may be useful, the exercise of matching words from one language to those in another misses the point that for anthropologists the act of translating "is intimately related to ethnography, to the contextualization of words within the activity and the larger socio-political systems in which the speakers participate" (Duranti 1997:154).

In this dissertation, then, I have decided to utilize the terms "kings", "kingdoms" or "aristocracy" because I believe that , despite the fact that they are imperfect translations, they effectively capture the representations of Kei political life that I describe in the chapters that follow. I want to make it clear that I do not use these terms to suggest that they objectively represent Kei polities, leaders, and rank from an empirically-based comparative standpoint. Indeed, from the perspective of multilinear cultural evolution (see Fagan 1995:28-30), the *adat* polities of the Kei archipelago would perhaps most accurately be described as "chiefdoms" (see Sahlins 1958, 1963; Earle 1987).[19] Rather, in this dissertation, I attempt to show that these "royal" terms reflect to a large degree **elite** discourse and practice in a wide variety of social

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[18] Gibson (2011: 287-88) suggests that the societies of island Southeast Asia be viewed as parts of a larger social system in which everyone was and is well aware of variety of alternative political models. Similarly, in the Pacific region, Scaglion (1996) discusses the spread of chiefly models in Melanesia from Austronesian-speaking populations, while Lindstrom and White (1997:6-10) discuss the discourse of "kings" and "kingship" in some parts of the Pacific.

[19] Similarly, Druce (2009: 26-27) refers to the "complex chiefdoms" of South Sulawesi as "kingdoms" (i.e., Bugis, Makassar, Massenrempilu kingdoms) while acknowledging their "decentralized nature".

and political contexts in the Kei islands.[20] I leave it to the reader to judge the extent to which these terms accurately reflect the ethnographic materials presented herein.

By using these terms "king", "kingdoms", and "aristocracy", it is not my intention to essentialize or reify *mel-mel* constructions of reality or to silence alternative interpretations and meanings, such as those of lower-ranking individuals or Kei women, for example. However, this dissertation is to a large extent based on the words and actions of high-ranking Kei men, and this is admittedly a limitation of the study. It is my hope that future research will explicate alternative constructions and representations of Kei political organization, rank, and *adat*.

Before moving on, I want to make a few comments about the title of this dissertation, "Little Kingdoms", and how it relates to arguments presented in subsequent chapters. This title has two different, but related, meanings. First, as should now be clear, "little kingdoms" refers to the nineteen "traditional" domains of the Kei islands, although the use of the descriptor "little" is by no means meant to diminish the significance of these domains in local politics. I first heard one of the Kei domains referred to as a "little kingdom" by the *rat* of Tabab Yamlim, one of the seven domains of Kei Besar where I conducted much of my research. During a 1994 interview, the *rat* of Tabab Yamlim was describing his pilgrimage to Mecca during the late colonial period and recounted that when he was introduced to others in Saudi Arabia as the "king" of Tabab Yamlim, he was treated with great deference and respect. He laughed while stating, "Here I am the *raja* of this little kingdom (*kerajaan kecil*) and I was treated with the utmost respect." While the domains of the Kei islands (discussed in greater detail in Chapters 2

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[20] For example, as Kaartinen points out, much of the translating of local culture into Moluccan Malay or Indonesian has been done by the Keiese chiefly class (i.e., the *mel-mel*).

and 3 are admittedly small in size and territory from a comparative perspective, the label "kingdoms" draws attention to the political and symbolic significance of *adat* leaders and their domains, as well as the prominence of the Kei aristocracy in local politics.

The second meaning of "Little Kingdoms" derives from characterizations of district governments in post-Suharto Indonesia. As a result of Indonesia's regional autonomy policies, a number of scholars have pointed out that the regional governments in a variety of contexts have become "little kingdoms" ruled by traditional elites through patrimonial politics and a decentralization of corruption (Schulte Nordholt 2003:572; also see Hadiz 2004b:704). Similarly, as I will demonstrate for the Kei Islands, the district government centered in the Kei islands has since New Order times functioned as a "little kingdom" ruled by the Kei aristocracy (*mel-mel*). Therefore, the Kei elite's dominance of both traditional "kingdoms" and the local bureaucratic "kingdom" are interrelated phenomena that have enabled and contributed to the particular articulations of *adat* described throughout this dissertation. These articulations of *adat* have, in turn, helped to justify and legitimate aristocratic dominance in the face of changing currents.

2.0   THE KEI ARCHIPELAGO AND CONTEXTS OF RESEARCH

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the geographical, linguistic, prehistoric, colonial, post-colonial, and demographic contexts of the Kei islands, focusing on aspects of the past and present which bear upon contemporary constructions and mobilizations of *adat*. Descriptions of the ethnographic field sites and research methodology are also provided.

2.1   GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The Kei archipelago (see Figure 1) is located in eastern Indonesia between 5°-6°5' south latitude and 131°50'-135°15' east longitude. Situated along the eastern edge of "Wallacea"[1], the Kei islands consist of 112 uplifted islands, fourteen of which are currently inhabited.[2] Most islands in the Kei archipelago possess fringing coral reefs, although some of the small islands off of the west coast of Kei Kecil possess barrier reefs (Monk et al. 1997:147).

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[1] Wallacea, named after the nineteenth century British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, is the area situated between the Sunda and Sahul continental shelves consisting of the islands from Sulawesi and Lombok in the west to Halmahera and Kei in the east. The islands of Wallacea were never connected to the Asian and Australian continents, and thus the flora and fauna of the region was described by Wallace (1869) as being transitional between the two continental regions.

[2] The Kei islands are a part of the outer Banda arc, which runs counter-clockwise from the islands of Roti and Savu in the west to the Seram Laut Islands in the east. The outer Banda arc is distinguished from the inner Banda arc, which includes the younger oceanic volcanic islands stretching counter-clockwise from Damar in the west to the islands of Banda in the east (see Monk, De Fretes, and Reksodiharjo-Lilley 1997).

Figure 1. Eastern Indonesia (with the Kei Archipelago in red)

According to indigenous classification, the Kei Islands (or *Nuhu Evav*) are divided into two geographical areas: *Nuhu Roa* (or Kei Kecil) and *Nuhu Yuut* (or Kei Besar)[3] (see Figure 2). Kei Kecil (see Figure 3) consists of the two major islands of Dullah and Kei Kecil, as well as several minor island groups including Kur, Tayando, Tanebar Evav, Warbal, Ur and Tam.   Eleven of the approximately 100 islands that comprise Kei Kecil are inhabited. Dullah and Kei Kecil Islands, the largest and most densely populated islands, are separated by approximately 100 meters of water but connected by a bridge. In addition, these islands are sparsely forested as a result of

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[3] In the Kei language, *nuhu* means "land" or "island", *roa* means "sea", and *yuut* means "great". Local legends from southern Kei Besar claim that the island of Kei Besar was the first to emerge from the sea. Geologists agree that Kei Besar is geologically older than Kei Kecil. The islands of Kei Kecil are believed to be raised Quaternary limestone reefs (less than one million years old) while Kei Besar is composed of Tertiary sedimentary limestone (1-25 million years old) (Monk et al. 1997:40).

swidden agriculture (Laksono 1996:159) and the extraction and sale of timber during colonial times (see Langen 1888). The highest elevation of Kei Kecil is approximately 100 meters.
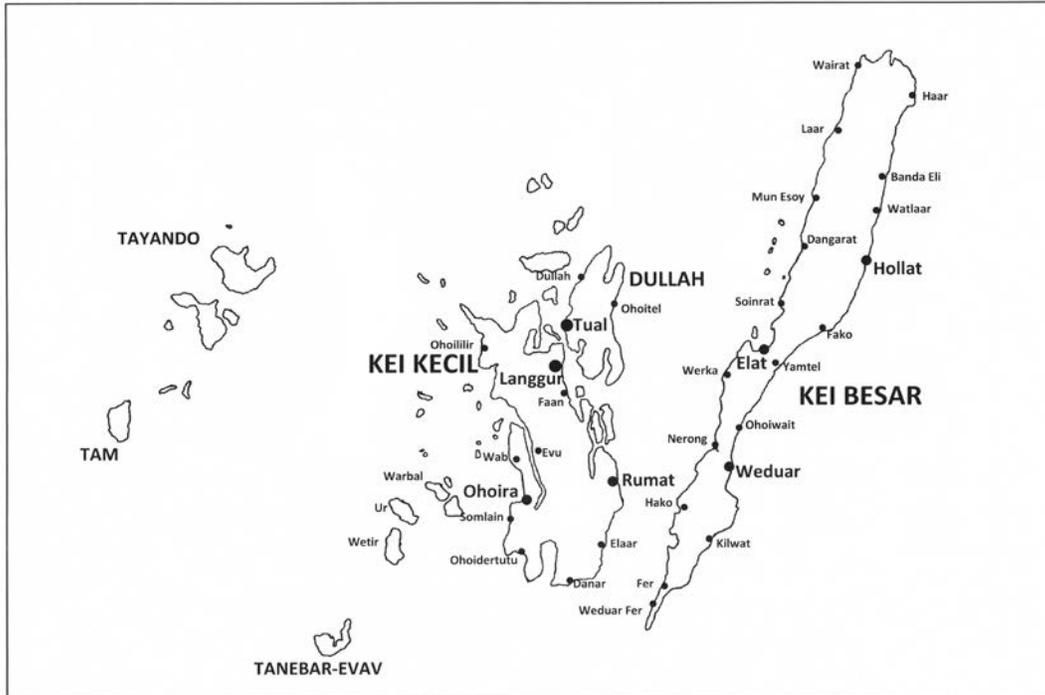
Figure 2. Map of the Kei Archipelago

In contrast to Kei Kecil, Kei Besar is a narrow and mountainous island, stretching some 85 kilometers from southwest to northeast, and reaching elevations over 800 meters. Kei Besar (see Figure 4), being geologically older and more mountainous than Kei Kecil, has more productive soils and is forested to a much greater degree despite the practice of swidden agriculture and timber extraction. Kei Besar is separated from Kei Kecil by a narrow and relatively shallow strait that ranges from 5 to 15 kilometers wide.

Figure 3. The beach at Ohoililir, Kei Kecil Island[4]

The tropical climate of the Kei archipelago is greatly influenced by the seasonal occurrence of monsoon winds originating from the Australian and Asian continents.[5] The western monsoon season (*musim barat*) occurs from October to February with winds blowing from northwest to southeast. The eastern monsoon season (*musim timor*) occurs from March and September with winds gusting from southeast to northwest. The islands receive much less rain during the eastern monsoon than the western monsoon. The greatest amount of rainfall typically occurs during the months of December, January and February (with an average of 17.6 inches per month in 1993), and the least amount during the months of July, August and

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[4] Except where noted, all photographs were taken by the author.

[5] The average high temperature in 1993 was 30.8°C and the average low was 23.6°C (Kantor Statistik, Kabupaten Maluku Tenggara 1993: 9). In 1993, the town of Tual on Dullah Island received 2,090 mm of rain (Kantor Statistik, Kabupaten Maluku Tenggara 1993:9). Rainfall ranges from approximately 1500mm per year in the southern reaches of the archipelago to 3000 mm per year in the northern part of Kei Besar (Monk et al. 1997:72-73).

September (with an average of 0.3 inches per month). These seasonal patterns impact Kei subsistence, trade and travel patterns.

Figure 4. The mountainous terrain of Kei Besar

2.2 LINGUISTIC AND PREHISTORIC CONTEXTS

The Kei language (*Bahasa Evav*) belongs to the Central Malayo-Polynesian branch of the Austronesian language family (Blust 1977, 1993), one of the world's largest language families encompassing most speakers of insular Southeast Asia, the Pacific islands, as well as parts of Taiwan, peninsular and mainland Southeast Asia, and Madagascar. There are two main dialects spoken in the Kei language: Kei Kecil (spoken throughout Kei Kecil and much of Kei Besar) and

Northern Kei Besar (spoken in northern Kei Besar).[6] The Kei language is most closely related to the languages found in the Tanimbar Islands to the west (Lewis ed. 2009). In addition to the Kei language, Ambonese Malay (*Melayu Ambon*) (Lewis ed. 2009) and the Indonesian language (*Bahasa Indonesia*) are spoken throughout the islands.

Figure 5. Man from Weduar Fer, Kei Besar

Archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests that Austronesian speakers (see Figure 5) originated in South China and settled Taiwan and parts of insular Southeast Asia between 4,500-6,000 years ago (Bellwood 2005:134; also see Bellwood 1995, 1997; Tryon 1995). Early Austronesian populations were most likely sedentary villagers who cultivated root and grain

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[6] In addition to the dialects of Kei Besar and Kei Kecil, there are three smaller dialects: Tayando, Tanimbar Kei (Atnebar), and Ta'am (Lewis ed. 2009). In addition, the Banda language is spoken in the villages of Banda Ely and Banda Elat on Kei Besar which were settled by Bandanese in the early the 17th century.

crops, kept domesticated animals (pigs, dogs and fowl), made pottery, and probably had some

knowledge of iron and the loom (Blust 1976). They also possessed an excellent maritime and

sailing technology which enabled their colonization of the Indo-Pacific (Blust 1976; Horridge

1995). Research suggests that status differentiation existed to some degree among

Austronesian-speakers prior to their expansion throughout insular Southeast Asia and the

Pacific, as evidenced by the "lexicon of hierarchy" characteristic of proto-Austronesian, as well

as a statistical association between social hierarchy (e.g., the presence of chiefs) and

contemporary Austronesian-speaking populations (Scaglion 1996; also see Fox 1994, 2009a).

Austronesian-speaking populations were present in parts of eastern Indonesia, including

Maluku, some 3500-4500 years ago (Bellwood 1995, 1997; Spriggs 1998).[7] The settlement of

the Kei islands by Central Malayo-Polynesian (CMP) speakers probably occurred between 2,000-

3,000 years ago (Bellwood 1995; De Jong and Dijk 1995:20).[8] Some evidence for Austronesian

occupation at this time comes from the Dudumahan rock-art site on the coastal raised

limestone cliffs near the village of Ohoidertawun on the island of Kei Kecil (see Ballard 1988).

Kei was likely settled from the west, since it is believed that CMP languages spread south from

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[7] It should be pointed out that there was an earlier late Pleistocene settlement of the Indo-Pacific. By approximately 55,000 years ago, non-Austronesian speaking peoples had reached the land masses of the Australian continental shelf (Sahul), including New Guinea, Aru, Australia, and other Melanesian islands (Spriggs 1998). Evidence suggests that they arrived via water-crossings from Sunda-land and through Wallacea. These water-crossings occurred during the last ice-age of the Pleistocene period, when distances between the islands of the region were a maximum of 70 kilometers (Nile and Clerk 1996:34). It is possible that the Kei Islands were reached by non-Austronesian populations during these early migrations although there is no direct evidence (Spriggs 1998:53). There is evidence for the Pleistocene and early Holocene settlement of some of the islands of eastern Indonesia including Gebe (ca. 30,000 years ago), Halmahera and Seram (ca. 10,000 years ago), and Timor (ca. 13,000 years ago) (Spriggs 1998:54; Monk et al. 1997:467-473).
[8] The Dudumahan rock art site contains many drawings, dominated by anthropomorphic figures but also including figurative signs and boats (Ballard 1988). The drawings are estimated to be about 2,000-2,500 years old (De Jong and Dijk 1995:20).

North Maluku through the Lesser Sundas and, later, eastward through Tanimbar to the Bomberai peninsula of New Guinea (Blust 1993).

The Kei Islands, perhaps since their initial settlement by Austronesian-speakers, were on the periphery of the ancient trade in spices (e.g., cloves, nutmeg, mace), aromatic barks and woods (e.g., sandalwood) and Bird of Paradise plumes, which linked Maluku with Asia, Europe and the Middle East as early as 3500 years ago (Spriggs 1998:59; Swadling 1996)[9]. Evidence for Kei's linkages to these prehistoric trade networks comes in part from the discovery of three Dongson-style kettledrums (originating from Vietnam) in the Kei Islands (Spriggs 1988, 1998; Swadling)[10]. In addition, at the time of European contact, the Kei Islands were part of a regional trading network centered in Banda and extending north to Ternate and Ambon, east to Aru and New Guinea, and West to Java and Malacca (Ellen 1979:67, 1987, 2003).

2.3   THE COLONIAL CONTEXT

The Kei Island's peripheral role in the spice trade was mirrored by the relative lack of European interest in the islands. In 1512, the Portuguese reached the famed Spice Islands (e.g., the Banda Islands), followed by the French, Dutch, and English. When Europeans arrived, the Bandanese

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[9] The beginnings of the spice trade had previously been dated to around 2000 B.P. based on Chinese and Indian sources, as well as the distribution of Dongson bronze kettledrums from north Vietnam and south China as far east as Maluku and New Guinea. However, some have pushed these dates back following the discovery of a clove in the Syrian city of Terqa dating to 3710-3550 B.P. (Spriggs 1998:58-59).
[10] The introduction of bronze and iron metallurgy into Island Southeast Asia began around 500 BC. Dong Son drums were also traded from Vietnam into the Sunda islands, from Sumatra to the southern Moluccas (Bellwood 1995).

were the only group involved in shipping produce to Asia. Kei islanders provided sago, gold, dried parrot plumes and pottery to Banda in exchange for textiles which the Bandanese obtained from the western islands of the archipelago (Ellen 1979:68; Ellen and Glover 1974:363). Dortsman noted in 1646 that the Kei islanders sailed to Banda every year during the eastern monsoon, returning to Kei during the western monsoon (Heeres 1921).

Although the Kei Islands were first reached by the Dutch around 1605 (Riedel 1886), the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) showed little interest in Kei due to the lack of cloves or nutmeg (Thorburn 2008). Langen (1888:769) reported that in 1645 a treaty for the cession of the Kei islands was arranged between local chiefs and the VOC, and after its revision in 1665, the islands fell under the sovereignty of the company.

In their effort to monopolize the spice trade, the VOC, led by Jan Pieterzson Coen, massacred most of the indigenous inhabitants of Banda in 1621 (Hanna 1978). Some Bandanese fled to the island of Kei Besar at this time, forming the villages of Banda Ely and Banda Elat (see Collins & Kaartinen 1998). As a result of the disruption of regional trade networks following the Banda massacre, the Seram Laut traders emerged as the new trade center in eastern Indonesia from 1621-1814 (Ellen 1979). In addition, a number of trade centers developed after 1634 to supply marine products to China, including Sulu, Makassar, Seram Laut Islands, and Dobo. This, in turn, helped fuel Buginese, Makasarese, and Butonese inter-island trade in eastern Indonesia (Ellen 1979).

By the late 18th century, the spice trade declined significantly and the VOC collapsed in 1796. The Dutch established the Government of Maluku (*Gouvernement der Molukken*) at the beginning of the 19th century, which was divided into the Residency of Ternate and the

Residency of Amboina (Ambon), each further subdivided into a number of sub-residencies (*onderafdelingen*) (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan 1977:77). The Kei Islands were part of the Residency of Amboina.

Figure 6. Tual in 1915
Attribution: Tropenmuseum of the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT)

In 1874, the Italian explorer G. Emilio Cerutti wrote to Dutch authorities that although Kei was claimed in the name of the Dutch crown and was visited from time to time by the Resident of Amboina, the islands remained commercially and politically quite autonomous (Ellen 1987:47). Colonial interest and indirect rule increased in the Kei Islands in the late nineteenth century (Thorburn 2008:123). In 1882, a Dutch "station" (*posthouderschap*) was established in the Kei Islands in the village of Dullah (Langen 1888). In the same year, a German entrepreneur, Adolph Langen, established an ironwood sawmill business to supply shipbuilding enterprises in Makassar and Batavia (Thorburn 2008:123). Then in 1889, the Dutch station was

moved to Tual (see Figure 6) and enlarged to become a "district" (*onderafdelingen*) under the leadership of a "district officer" (*controleur*) who had immediate contact with Kei leaders (Laksono 1990).

The *controleur*'s office attempted to promote economic development and local government reform in the Kei archipelago (Thorburn 2008: 125). The "tribal laws of the natives" were upheld by the Netherlands India Government (Langen 1888:769), which ruled indirectly through Kei "chiefs" or "kings" (*rat*) and village heads (*orang kaya*).[11] The Dutch also collaborated with Catholic and Protestant missionaries to achieve these Ethical Policy goals and to counter the influences of Islam, which had been introduced to Kei much earlier (see 2.5 below). Efforts to "rationalize local government in the islands" through a process of territorialization[12] (see Vandergeest and Peluso 1995) resulted not only in alterations to village settlement patterns, but also fundamental changes in local patterns of governance (Thorburn 2008: 125-27; Laksono 1990; Hooe 1999; Kaartinen 2009). These transformations in Kei governance will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 3.

The 60-year experience with Dutch indirect rule came to an end following the Japanese interregnum from 1942-1945.[13] Following the Indonesian declaration of independence in 1945,

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[11] *Rat* is the Kei form of the Malay word *raja,* meaning king. The Malay term "*orang kaya"* means "rich or influential person". The Kei form of *orang kaya* is *orang kay*. Throughout this paper, I use the Malay term "*orang kaya*" and Keiese "*rat*" to refer to Kei village heads and kings, respectively.

[12] McCarthy (2005:64), drawing on the work of Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) defines the "colonial process of territorialization" as "establishing territorial administrations in newly conquered areas by consolidating the population into definite groups under a centralized, hierarchical leadership through whom Colonial rule could be exercised".

[13] Villagers from Weduar Fer stated that almost all the men from Weduar Fer were put into forced labor camps in Langgur (i.e., building an airstrip). Only one villager was reportedly killed. Most people left in the village at this time were women and children. Close to the Japanese posts, villages were deserted as

the Dutch and Ambonese attempted to form an independent Republic of South Maluku (or

RMS). Many Kei islanders opposed the formation of an independent *RMS*, fearing their political

subordination to the Ambonese in such a scheme. In their struggle for political autonomy, a

number of high-ranking Kei individuals sent a petition in 1947 to the Indonesian central

government, arguing that Kei was culturally, politically and economically distinct from Ambon

(Thorburn 2008:128). The Keiese received support from the Indonesian military and in 1952,

the Southeast Maluku district (*Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara) was established for Kei, Aru,

Tanimbar, Babar, and the Southwest Islands, with Tual as the seat of the new government

(Laksono 1990:28).

2.4 NATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTEXTS

For most of the Sukarno years (1950-1965), Kei "settled comfortably into 'backwater' status.

Not much of importance transpired during those years" (Thorburn 2008:128). During Suharto's

New Order rule (1965-1998), the town of Tual was developed to become a standard district

capital (Laksono 1990:30). During the 1980s there was an increase in domestic and foreign

investment accompanied by a construction boom (Thorburn 2008:128). By 1987, there was a

significant increase in the number of administrative institutions, as well as greater involvement

of the Keiese in the government administration (Laksono 1990:30). This trend continued during

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people sought refuge in the mountains. There was reportedly much suffering and hunger during this
period.

the remainder of the New Order and into the post-Suharto period, and will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4.

Descending from the central government in Jakarta, Indonesia's administrative hierarchy consists of provinces (*propinsi*), districts (*kabupaten* or *kota*), sub-districts (*kecamatan*), and villages (*desa* or *kelurahan*). During the New Order period, the town of Tual on Dullah Island was the capital of the District of Southeast Maluku (*Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara). This district comprised eight sub-districts (*kecamatan*) encompassing the island groups (from west to east) of Wetar, Kisar, Leti, Damar, Sermata, Babar, Tanimbar, Kei, and Aru (see Figure 7).
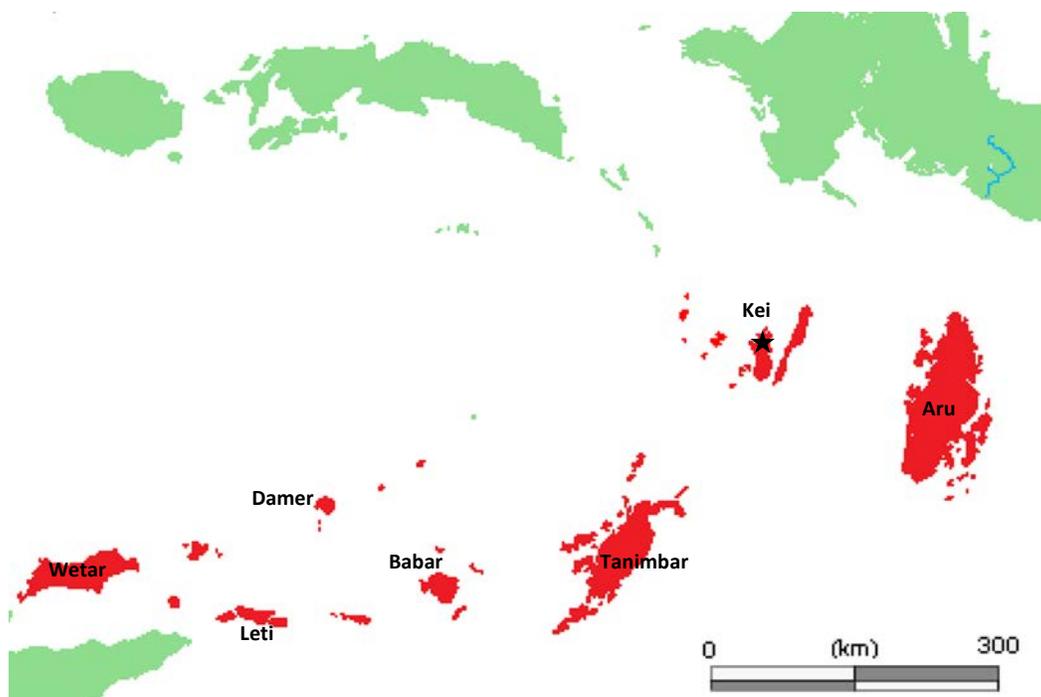
Figure 7. District of Southeast Maluku, 1952-2000 (shown in red)

The Kei Islands were divided into two sub-districts (*kecamatan*), *Kecamatan* Kei Kecil, centered in Langgur, and *Kecamatan* Kei Besar, with its capital in Elat. From 1970 until 1988, there were 221 administrative villages (*desa*) in Kei (110 in Kei Kecil and 111 in Kei Besar). After 1989 and for the remainder of the New Order period, there were 116 administrative villages throughout the Kei archipelago (72 in Kei Kecil and 44 in Kei Besar).
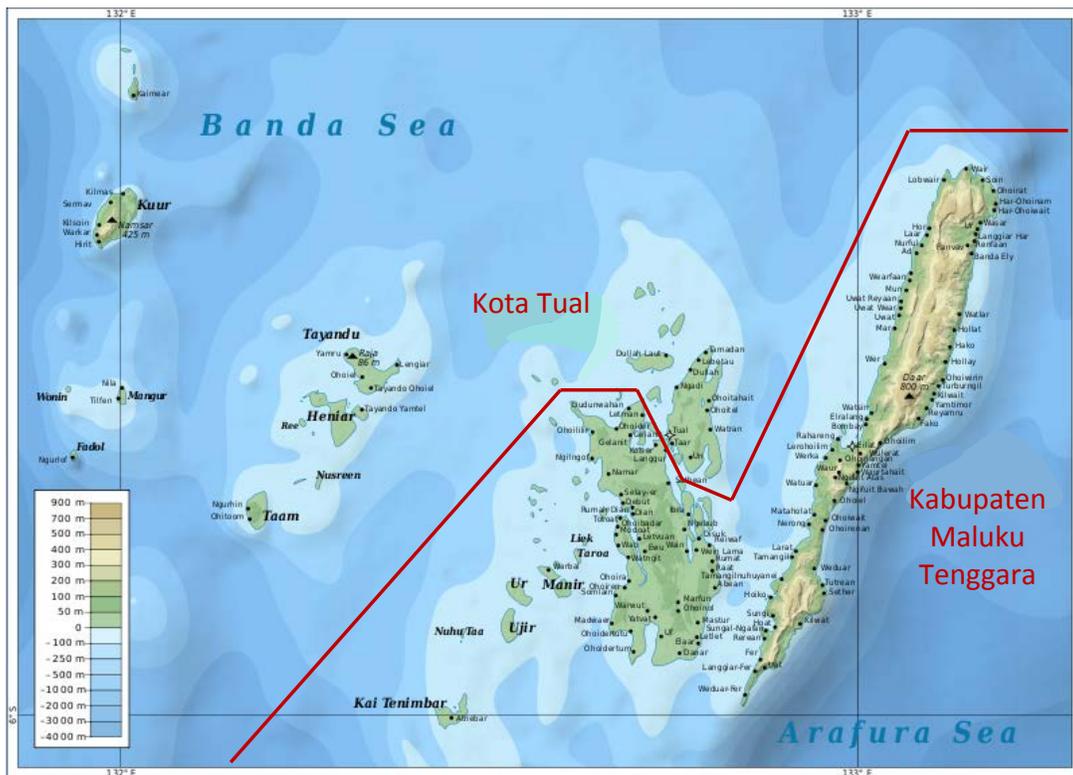
Figure 8. Administrative Districts of the Kei Archipelago since 2007
Attribution: Adapted from Topographic Map of the Kai Islands, available under a
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As a result of administrative decentralization during post-Suharto times (1998-present), the Kei Islands today are divided into two administrative "districts", Southeast Maluku District (*Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara) and the Municipality of Tual (*Kota* Tual) (see Figure 8). The non-

Kei island groups formerly under Tual in the Southeast Maluku district now belong to one of three new districts (*Kabupaten* Maluku Barat Daya, *Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara Barat, and *Kabupaten* Kepulauan Aru). Maluku Tenggara is now centered in Langgur on Kei Kecil Island, and consists of six sub-districts, three from Kei Kecil and three on Kei Besar. *Kota* Tual, with its capital in Tual, is made up of four sub-districts. Therefore, from the New Order period to the present day, the number of administrative sub-districts (*kecamatan*) in the Kei islands increased from two to ten. Despite the increase in sub-districts, the number of administrative villages in the Kei islands has remained at 116 since 1989.

2.5   DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

During my mid-1990s ethnographic research (see 2.7 below) the population of the Kei Islands was 113,202. By 2010, the population had grown to 154,502. While the population of Kei Besar was greater than that of Kei Kecil in the late nineteenth century (see Table 1), the population of Kei Kecil has grown much more rapidly over the past 100 years (see Figure 9). This change in population distribution, and overall growth in the population of Kei Kecil over the years is likely the result of in-migration to the urbanized administrative centers of Langgur and Tual during both the Dutch colonial period in post-independence times (Adhuri 2006:395). In 1984, the town of Tual (and its four administrative villages) had a population of 13,927 (Laksono 1996:157). By 2010, the population of Tual had grown to 33,135 (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Maluku Tenggara 2010b).

Table 1. Population of the Kei Islands, 1882-2010

	1882	1915	1971	1987	1995	2010
Kei Kecil	5,880	15,000	60,616	60,158	73,729	114,776
Kei Besar	11,666	15,000	33,730	38,834	39,473	39,726
Total	17,546	30,000	94,346	98,992	113,202	154,502

Source of Data: Adhuri (2006) and Badan Pusat Statistik Maluku (2010a, 2010b)
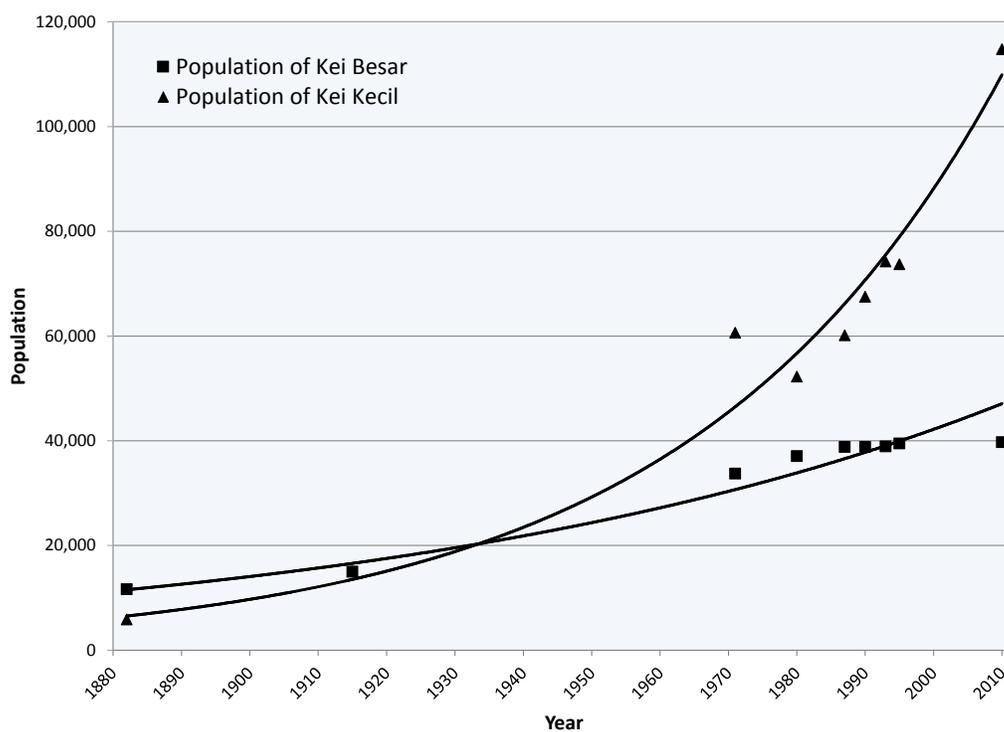
Figure 9. Population growth of Kei Kecil and Kei Besar, 1882-2010
Source of Data: Adhuri (2006) and Badan Pusat Statistik Maluku (2010a, 2010b)

Most Keiese, however, continue to live in village settlements. Although there are only 116 administrative villages in the Kei archipelago, there are approximately 221 discrete village settlements. With a few exceptions, these villages are located along the coastal areas.[14] On the island of Kei Besar, village populations range from 40 to close to 1,000, with an average village size of 360 in 1996, and 358 in 2010. The person-land ratio on Kei Besar in 1996 was 59 per square kilometer, and in 2010 was the same.

The average village size for the islands of Kei Kecil was 666 in 1996 and 1,043 in 2010. The person-land ratios were 59 and 92 for 1996 and 2010, respectively. These numbers are somewhat skewed due to the large population concentrations in the towns of Tual and Langgur on Dullah and Kei Kecil islands, respectively. Most villages of Kei Kecil are, in fact, comparable in size to villages on Kei Besar.

2.6   RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS

The indigenous religion of the Keiese involved the belief in a dualistic supreme deity, the Sun-Moon God (*Duad Ler Vuan*), as well as ancestral spirits (*nit*), non-anthropomorphic local spirits (*mitu*) and evil spirits (*foar*). The primary religious practitioners were the *mitu duan* (master of the local spirits) and the *leb* (priest of the sun-moon god) (see Geurtjens 1921; van Wouden

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[14] As Thorburn (1998:125) notes, in their effort to rationalize local government and promote the development of the islands, the Dutch encouraged the Keiese to abandon settlements in the hills and resettle along the coast. However, based on oral histories of village settlements as well as Dortsman's account from Kei Besar in 1645-46 (Heeres 1921), it appears that many villages were in fact already along the coast.

1968). While elements of the indigenous religion remain important in many village contexts, there is little overt evidence of this in everyday practice due to the spread and influence of world religions among the Keiese.

Although it is unclear when Islam was first introduced to the Kei Islands (Adhuri 2006), there were some Muslims in the islands in the 17th Century. In addition to the Bandanese refugees in the villages of Banda Eli and Efruan, there were also Makasarese traders in Tual and Elat (Thorburn 2008:123). In addition, Adriaan Dortsman noted the presence of Muslim Butonese in the village of Fer on Kei Besar during his offshore stop in 1646 (Heeres 1912). Kei oral histories claim that Islam was first introduced to the village of Dullah (on Dullah island), likely by immigrants from Ternate (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan 1977:59) or traders from other parts of the Indonesian archipelago (Adhuri 2006:395). On Kei Besar, Islam was first introduced to the village of Langgiar Fer, and according to local histories was brought by Abu Rabu from Bukittinggi (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan 1977:59).

The Muslim population of Kei prior to 1864 was small, according to the Resident of Amboina (van Hoëvell 1890; cited in Adhuri 2006:395). By 1887, he estimated that almost a third of the population of the Kei Islands had embraced Islam (see Table 2). Langen reported in 1888 that through the influence of Arabs, several of the principle chiefs (*rat*) of Kei had converted to Islam (1888:771), and that the number of Muslims was greatly increasing every year due to the influence of Arabs and natives (see Figure 10) who return from Mecca as "hadjis" (Langen 1888: 770).

Table 2. Religious Composition of the Kei Islands, 1887-1984

Year	Muslim	Catholic	Protestant	Other	Total
1887	5,893 (29%)	0	0	14,137 (71%)	20,030
1915	12,000 (40%)	8,000 (27%)	3,000 (10%)	7,000 (23%)	30,000
1930	20,000 (39%)	13,000 (26%)	11,000 (22%)	6,000 (12%)	50,665
1984	41,175 (41%)	33,241 (33%)	25,530 (25%)	821 (1%)	100,767

Source of Data: Laksono (1990:26, 122)

Figure 10. Pilgrims from Ambon, Kei, and Banda on their way to Mecca, ca. 1880
Attribution: Tropenmuseum of the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT)

Although Dortsman reported in 1646 meeting a Kei Christian who was baptized in Banda (Heeres 1912), Dutch attempts to encourage Christianity in the Kei islands in the late 17th Century had little success (Riedel 1886:248). In 1887, the Resident of Amboina, Baron van Hoëvell, in addition to the German expatriate businessman Adolph Langen, worried of the growing influence of Islam and the threat it posed to the colonial project, sent letters to the Vicar Apostolic in Batavia requesting a Catholic mission (Grent and Sol 1974:500; Thorburn 2008:123). In 1888, two Catholic missionaries arrived in the town of Tual, but moved the following year to nearby Langgur[15] due to the strong Muslim influence already present in Tual. During a cholera epidemic in Langgur in 1889, a Catholic priest "healed" and baptized a dying two-year old girl. Locals believed the priest had supernatural powers and when the epidemic was over, the village allowed more children to be baptized. Not long thereafter, the entire village converted (Laksono 1990:134). Langgur became center of Catholicism and education in the Kei Islands (see Figure 11). Catholicism spread with the conversion of prominent members of a particular village, followed by baptism celebrations in which surrounding villages attended. This resulted in the subsequent conversion of prominent members of the guest villages (Laksono 1990:136).[16] By 1901, there were 17 Catholic villages (approximately 750 people) on the island of Kei Kecil (Grent and Sol 1974:505).

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[15] Langgur was originally called Ohoingur but was later renamed to honor Adolph Langen (Thorburn 2008:124).
[16] For example, in 1890, the *rat* of Faan and his wife converted to Catholicism with a subsequent party that was attended by surrounding villagers. Many of these guests later converted as well (Laksono 1990:135).

Figure 11. A Dutch School in Langgur, Kei Kecil (Date Unknown)
Attribution: Tropenmuseum of the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT)

Protestant missionaries arrived from Ambon in the early 1900's despite the usual Dutch policy against double missions (Laksono 1990:143). The Protestants focused their efforts to a greater extent on Kei Besar (around this time Catholic missions were also making inroads on the island), and this is reflected in the contemporary distribution of Protestantism and Catholicism of Kei Besar and Kei Kecil, with more Catholics on Kei Kecil and more Protestants on Kei Besar (Laksono 1990:26). By 1915, there were 3,000 Protestants in the islands, and by 1930, the population of Protestants was close to that of the Catholics (see Table 2). One noteworthy village conversion to Protestantism on Kei Besar occurred in 1916 in Ohoingat, a village adjacent to the Catholic village of Bombay. In an effort to avoid being forced to resettle in Bombay and convert to Catholicism, Ohoingat villagers promised the Protestant mission that they would convert to Protestantism if they could remain in their current location. The resulting

conversion of Ohoingat villagers was indicative of the intense rivalry between Protestant and Catholics over converts (Laksono 1990: 144-149). As Grent and Sol (1974:541) note, the political relations between Protestants and Catholics were much worse than those between the Catholics and Muslims. However, both Catholics and Protestants had less than perfect relations with Muslims (Laksono 1990:149).

The Dutch colonial government tended to be discriminatory against Muslims, who were described in a manner typical of Orientalist discourse (Said 1978) as "sly, full of tricks, disloyal, sneaky, quiet and retiring, but cunning and deceitful, mischievous and prideful, and too lazy to work" (van Hoëvell 1890:121, cited in Thorburn 2008:124). Catholic and Protestant missions cooperated and collaborated with the colonial government to promote the goals of the Ethical Policy. By 1919, missionaries had built 78 primary school in Kei (Thorburn 2008:124), introduced western clothing, and trained and employed local teachers (Thorburn 2008:125).

Due to the close association between Dutch colonialism and Christianity, the Japanese, during their three-year occupation of Kei during the Second World War (1942-45), favored the Muslim population over the Christians (Laksono 1990; Thorburn 2008). Many Kei Muslims, who were alienated from the political scene under Dutch colonial rule, welcomed the Japanese (Laksono 1990:151). According to Assistant Resident Van Keeken, the Muslims from Langgiar Fer, upset that the Dutch had killed several prominent villagers who refused to pay taxes, went to Ambon and invited the Japanese to come to the Kei Islands (Grent and Sol 1974:542). The Japanese killed almost all the Dutch Catholic missionaries, including the Bishop, on July 30, 1942, and many Protestants were also killed. During the Japanese interregnum, many Catholic and Protestant churches were destroyed, although many were rebuilt following the surrender

of the Japanese (Laksono 1990:151). However, relations between Muslims and Christians were further strained as a result of Japanese occupation (Laksono 1990:152).

One significant effect of the mass conversions and inter-religious rivalries fueled by Dutch and Japanese rule was an overall increase in the number of villages in the Kei islands. When conversions occurred, villages would often fission along religious lines. As a result, villages or parts of villages became more homogenous in terms of religious composition (Laksono 1990:143, 150). By 1935, there were 30 Catholic, 30 Muslim, and 22 Protestant villages. There were an additional 65 villages with multiple religions present. Of these, 15 were predominantly Catholic, 31 predominantly Muslim, and 19 predominantly Protestant (Laksono 1990:150). This "patchwork pattern" (Thorburn 2008:124-25) of religious distribution has continued until the present day, maintained in part by religious endogamy (see Figures 12 and 13 below).

Figure 12. A Muslim village on Kei Besar

Figure 13. The Protestant church of Weduar Fer, Kei Besar (1994)

2.7   RESEARCH METHODS AND FIELDWORK SITES

This dissertation is based upon ethnographic research conducted in the Kei islands in the mid-1990's, as well as the review and analysis of a variety of secondary sources of data including scholarly works, archival and historical documents, government statistics, legal documents, newspaper articles, and internet blogs and discussion groups. The fieldwork on which this dissertation is based was conducted from May 1994 to May 1996 with support from Fulbright IIE and under the sponsorship of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) in Jakarta, and the Center for Maluku Studies (*Pusat Studi Maluku*) at Universitas Pattimura in Ambon. During that time, I lived in the Kei islands from June 4, 1994 to February 23, 1996, with a few brief visits to Ambon and a trip to Babar. Data gathered during this 1990's fieldwork provides the foundation

for the arguments made in this dissertation with the exception of Chapter 6, which focuses on articulations of *adat* in post-Suharto Indonesia. Thanks to the advances in information technology in the past twenty years, I was able to access a variety of informative and surprisingly rich sources of data via the internet including Indonesian government statistics, legal documents, NGO reports, local newspaper articles, and the voices of the Kei people through blogs, discussion groups and social media. These sources, in addition to scholarly works on the Kei islands and other Indonesian societies, provide the basis for the information and arguments made in Chapter 6.

During the 1990's, ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in multiple sites, including the villages of southern Kei Besar, the town of Tual, and a number of villages throughout Kei Kecil. Roughly half of my fieldwork was conducted on Kei Besar and the other half in Tual and the islands of Kei Kecil. In addition to this fieldwork, document research was conducted in the district capital of Tual, the sub-district capital of Elat, and in the provincial capital of Ambon. While in Tual, I resided with the family of a high-ranking government official from the village of Weduar Fer, my primary place of residence during fieldwork on Kei Besar. Research in Tual focused to a large extent on the relationship between Kei hierarchy and government bureaucracy, as Tual was at the time the seat of the district (*kabupaten*) government. In addition to conducting interviews and engaging in participant-observation, I attended village-head installation rituals in four villages on Kei Kecil and Dullah islands in 1995 and 1996 (Danar, Tetoat, Ngilngof, and Ohoitahit). These rituals, in addition to research into the activities surrounding the 50th anniversary of the Indonesian Independence, were crucial to my understanding of the relationship between Kei *adat* and local politics during the late New Order

period. The Tual-based research also provided me with a greater understanding of the constant flow of Keiese between villages and local, regional, provincial, and national centers in search of education and employment, or to meet the demands of social obligations in an age of increasing dispersal and mobility.

My ethnographic research on Kei Besar was centered on Tabab Yamlim, one of the domains (i.e., "kingdoms" or "chiefdoms") of the island consisting of 21 villages (see Figure 14 and Figure 15). Participant-observation and unstructured and semi-structured interviews provided the foundation of my ethnographic research on Kei Besar. During my time on Kei Besar, I visited all twenty-one villages of Tabab Yamlim and conducted interviews with individuals from eleven villages of the domain. Unstructured and semi-structured interviews focused primarily on: (1) the origin histories (*tom*) of families, villages, and larger socio-political units; (2) perceptions and meanings of rank and Kei social hierarchy; (3) disputes and their management, and (4) the general ethnographic situation of Kei Besar including demography, ecology, subsistence, marriage and social organization, political organization, and religion and ritual life.

My broad focus on the twenty-one villages of Tabab Yamlim as a whole was spawned by the dearth of scholarly attention to the structure and history of the *adat* domains of the Kei islands. Throughout the Kei archipelago, there are 19 such domains or "little kingdoms", seven on the island of Kei Besar and twelve spread throughout the islands of Kei Kecil (see Appendix A).[17] Today, these domains are often referred to as *ratschap*, a term combining the Kei word *rat*

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[17] There is also *Ratschap* Kilmas on Kur Island which would bring the total to 20 *ratschap*, as reported by Rahail (1994). Thorburn (2008:126) reports that there are currently twenty-two *ratschap* and Setitit

(king or chief) with the Dutch suffix "–*schaap*" meaning "-ship" (Thorburn 2008:126). *Ratschap*

was first used by the Dutch to refer the domains of the Kei Islands, which are sometimes

referred to as *lor* in the Kei language (see Rahail 1993, 1996).
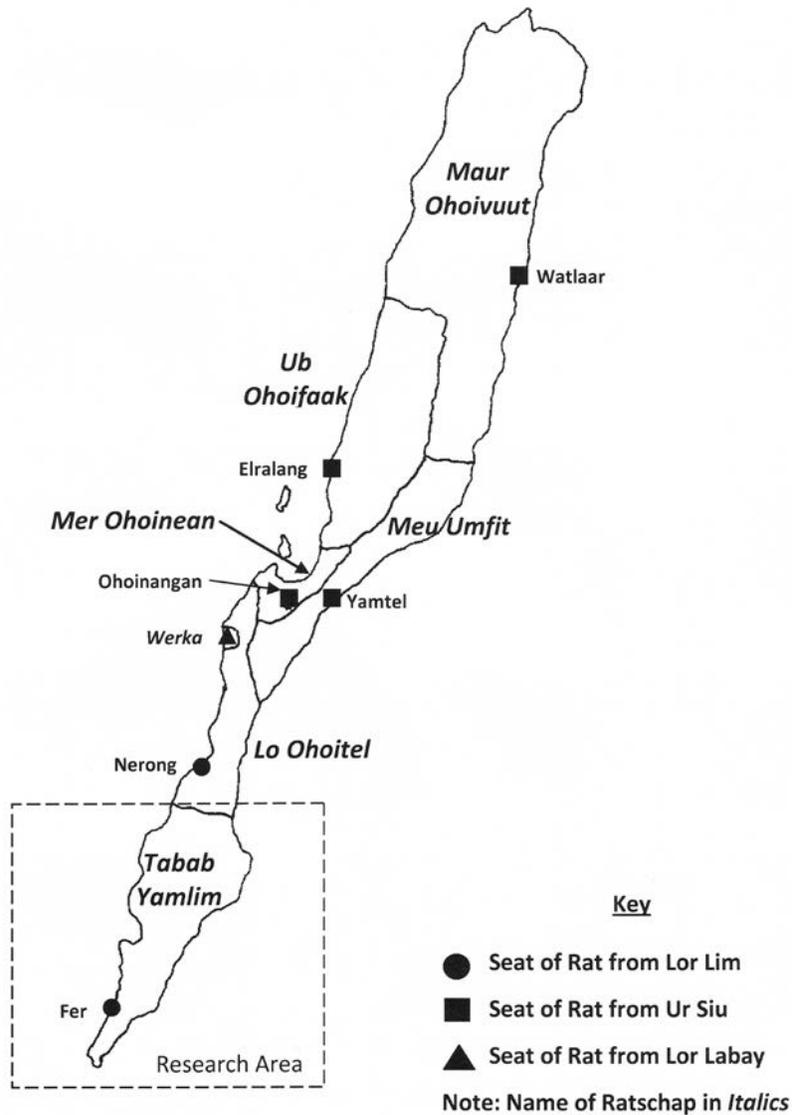
Figure 14. *Ratschap* of Kei Besar

(1980) reports twenty-three. These variations reflect differences in opinion as a result of some colonial
restructuring of the domains in the early 20th Century.
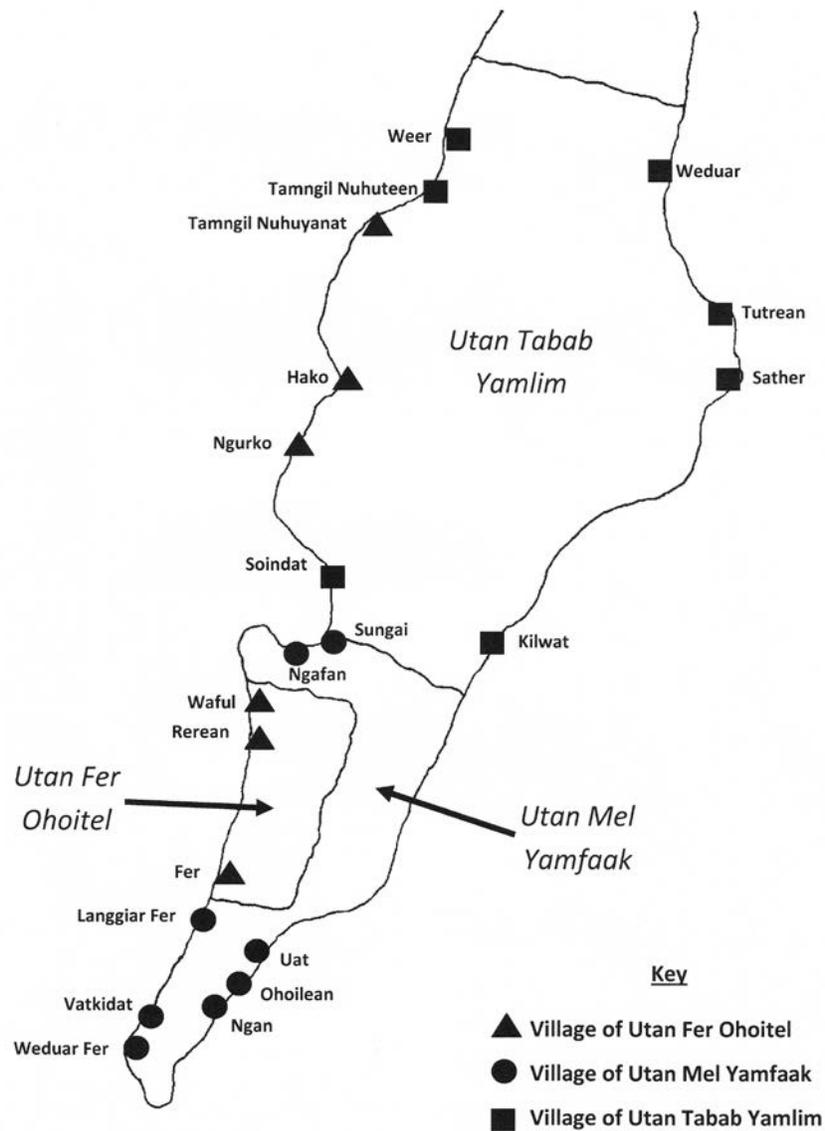
Figure 15. Map of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim

Each *ratschap* is headed by a *rat*. The *ratschap* of the Kei Islands are further organized

into two large confederations or "political moieties" (Valeri 1989) known as *ur siu* (the nine

moiety) and *lor lim* (the five moiety) (van Wouden 1966).[18] The Keiese claim that these non-territorial confederations were mobilized in times of war and distress. Nine *ratschap* belong to the *ur siu* moiety, nine others belong to the *lor lim* moiety, while 2 *ratschap* are politically neutral (or *lor labay*). With the exception of these neutral *ratschap*, each domain consists of a number of villages, ranging from 3 villages (Songli centered in Rumat on Kei Kecil) to 46 villages (Maur Ohoivuut on Kei Besar).

Many of the larger *ratschap* are divided into *utan*, multi-village socio-political units comprised of several historically and territorially related villages (*ohoi*) (see Rahail 1993:9). Leaders from the constituent villages of an *utan* may coordinate with one another when dealing with affairs that concern the entire group such as disputes over land and sea boundaries. Each village (*ohoi*) is led by either an *orang kaya* ("rich man") or a *kepala soa* (hamlet leader), corresponding to *kepala desa* and *kepala dusun*, respectively, under Indonesia's system of village administration. The *kepala soa* (or *kepala dusun*) are politically subordinate to the *orang kaya* (or *kepala desa*) of their "mother" villages.[19]

The *rat* of Tabab Yamlim, the *ratschap* which was the focus of my Kei Besar research, is from the village of Fer. During the 1990's, the 21 villages (*ohoi*) of Tabab Yamlim were grouped into 11 administrative villages (*desa*) and 9 hamlets (*dusun*). *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim also

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[18] The distinction between *ur siu* and *lor lim* in the Kei islands is similar to the *siwa-lima* division found in other parts of Maluku (see Valeri 1989; Cooley 1962).

[19] Kaartinen (1997:17-18) states that during the height of the copra trade immediately before and after the Second World War, hamlets (*soa*) in many cases became the de facto villages and the *kepala soa* played a significant role in controlling the copra trade. Since *soa* heads were often not *mel-mel*, "economic power and social prestige this did not entirely depend on the person's rank as they do today". The *kepala soa* of Uat on Kei Besar, for example, told me about his position during the time that Kaartinen refers and bitterly explained his loss of power after changes in village administration in the post-Independence period.

consists of three *utan*: (1) Fer Ohoitel, (2) Mel Yamfaak, and (3) Tabab Yamlim (see Figure 15).

The total population of Tabab Yamlim in 1993 was approximately 5,505 (see Table 3). With a

land area of approximately 77 square kilometers, the estimated person-land ratio for the

domain in was 71/km². Village populations ranged from 50 to 970, with an average of 262.

The religious composition of Tabab Yamlim in 1993 was approximately 45% Muslim,

53% Protestant, and 2% Catholic. Eighty-one percent of the villages (n=17) were religiously

homogenous while 19% (n=4) of the villages were multi-religious in composition. The villages of

Weduar and Tamngil Nuhuteen were the only two villages in the domain with both Muslims

and Christians. Tutrean and Weduar Fer had both Protestant and Catholics, although the

Catholic population of Weduar Fer consisted of a small segment of a Protestant family that

converted to Catholicism. These four multi-religious villages are spatially divided according to

religion. In the villages with both Muslims and Christians, the Muslim hamlet is located along

the coast while the Protestant hamlets located further inland.

While conducting research on Kei Besar, I resided in the village of Weduar Fer (see

Figure 16), the southernmost village on the west coast of Kei Besar. Weduar Fer is a relatively

small village with a population of 149 in 1994. The village consists of 24 households distributed

among seven clans (*fam*) (see Appendix B, Table 5). The villagers of Weduar Fer originated from

Langgiar Fer and reportedly moved following the conversion of many Langgiar Fer villagers to

Islam sometime in the 19th Century.[20]

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[20] Weduar Fer is identified on several maps from the late nineteenth century (see Planten and Wertheim 1893; Riedel 1886; Langen 1888).

Table 3. Villages of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim

Desa (Admin. Village)	Dusun (Admin. Hamlet)	Religious Composition	Rank Composition	Population (1993)
Fer	--	I	M	143
--	Hako	I	?	190
--	Ngurko	I	M	40
--	Rerean	P	M, R, I	211
Tamngil Nuhuyanat	--	I	M, R, I	197
Langgiar Fer	--	I	M, R, I	272
--	Vatkidat	I	R, I	163
--	Uat	I	R, I	153
--	Ngan	I	R, I	113
--	Ohoilean	I	R, I	108
Weduar Fer	--	P, C	M, R, I	149
Sungai	--	I	M, ?	214
Ngafan	--	I	M, ?	349
Tamngil Nuhuteen	--	I, P	M, ?	309
--	Weer	P	M	50
--	Soindat	P	R, I	196
Weduar	--	P, I	M, R, I	646
Tutrean	--	P, C	M, R, I	473
Sather	--	P	R	970
Kilwat	--	P	R	559
	Key: I = Islamic P = Protestant C = Catholic	M = Mel-Mel R = Ren-Ren I = Iri-ri	**Total**	**5,505**

Weduar Fer is situated on top of a small hill above the white-sand beach less than a kilometer south of the village of Vatkidat (see Figures 16-19 below). Like many villages on Kei Besar (see Planten and Wertheim 1893:12,105), the houses of Weduar Fer are arranged in two parallel rows on a north-south axis (see Figure 16).[21] A narrow (approximately 6 meter-wide) cement-paved plaza separates the two rows of houses into land-side and sea-side sections.[22] The village ritual center, or *woma*, is located along the edge of the village plaza near the middle of the village. At the northern seaside corner of the plaza is the Protestant church, which was built in the late 1980's. Next to it is the underused village meeting hall (*balai desa*), housing little more than a generator, a mechanical cassava grater, and television. Across from the Protestant church is the village volleyball court, and at the northern end of the village is the local elementary school which Weduar Fer shared with the neighboring village of Vatkidat.

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[21] In the Kei islands, the direction south is referred to as "up above" and north as "down below" (also see Barraud 1979:50)

[22] The inhabitants of Weduar Fer are sometimes distinguished based upon this land-side/sea-side dichotomy, for example when allocating tasks during village cooperative labor efforts or during afternoon volleyball matches.
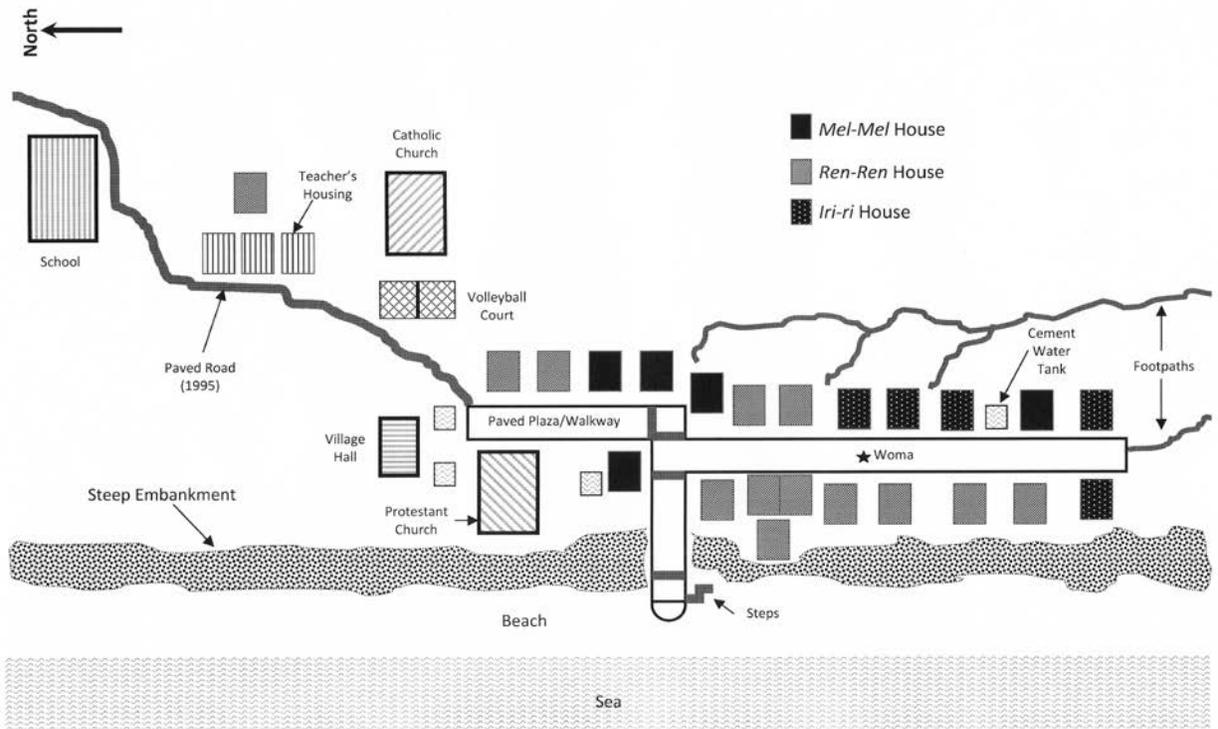
Figure 16. Map of Weduar Fer village (1996)

Figure 17. A view of Weduar Fer from the sea in 1995

Figure 18. The beach at Weduar Fer

Figure 19. A view north from the plaza of Weduar Fer (1994)

2.8   KEI LIVELIHOODS

Kei subsistence in village settings such as Weduar Fer is based primarily on swidden agriculture and fishing (see Laksono 1990; Rahail 1994; Thorburn 1998, 2001; Adhuri 2004). While most households devote the majority of their time to agricultural pursuits, the waters and coral reefs surrounding the Kei islands are abundant and productive, and marine resources contribute substantially to Kei subsistence and livelihoods. Sources of cash income include petty trade, remittances from migrant family members, government projects and salaries, and the sale of topshell (*lola*), tripang (*teripang*), copra (*kopra*) and a number of cash-crops (e.g., peanuts, green beans, coffee, and cloves) (Thorburn 2001:155).

Nineteenth-century accounts suggest that sago (*sagu*) was the staple food of the Keiese (Wallace 1989 [1869]; Langen 1888:774). The naturalist A.R. Wallace, for example, noted during a visit to Kei Besar in 1857, "In all the little swampy inlets and valleys, sago trees abound, and these supply the main subsistence of the natives, who grow no rice, and have scarcely any other cultivated products but cocoa-nuts, plantains and yams" (Wallace 1989[1869]: 321).

Today, however, the staple crop throughout the Kei Islands, with the exception of Tanebar-Evav (see Barraud 1979), is cassava (*Manihot esculenta*) (Kaartinen 2007). Other important crops and food items include bananas (*mu'u*), taro (*manad*), yams (*enmav*), sweet potatoes (*petatas*), coconuts (*kelapa*), corn (*jagung*), peanuts (*kacang tanah*), green beans (*kacang hijau*), red beans (*kacang merah*), wild tuber (*bo'o*), breadfruit (*sukun*), papaya (*pepaya*), and mango (*manga*).

Both "bitter" and "sweet" varieties of cassava are grown throughout the archipelago, the former known as *enbal*[23] and the latter as *kasbi*[24]. *Enbal* must be processed to rid the tuber of poisonous cyanogenic glycosides (see Figure 20, Figure 21, and Figure 22).[25] The resulting cassava flour, *lalun*, is then used to make a variety of bread-like foods (see Figure 23).[26]

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[23] According to many Keiese, *enbal* means "tuber from Bali", suggesting a possible route of diffusion of this New World crop. The time of introduction of cassava is difficult to determine but, along with sweet potatoes and corn, was likely introduced into the Indonesian archipelago by Europeans in the 16th or 17th centuries.

[24] The "sweet" variety of cassava (*kasbi*), contains lower levels of toxins, and may be prepared by boiling (*kasbi rebus*), baking (*kasbi bakar*), or frying (*kasbi goreng*).

[25] The cassava tubers are first peeled and washed. They are grated either by hand and grating tool, or using a fuel-powered motorized grater. The mashed tubers are then placed into an old rice sack and wrapped tightly using rope. The wrapped sack is then placed in a simple plane press for 8-24 hours. The *enbal* is then removed from the sack to dry. It is then sieved to produce flour called *lalun*.

[26] The cassava flour is used to produce the following edible forms: *enbal lempeng*, *enbal bubuhuk*, *enbal goring*, *enbal baubes*, *enbal fatmin*, and *enbal tutupola*. *Enbal lempeng* is made by placing cassava flour in a heated rectangular press, and baking for about 15 minutes. The rectangular wafers are then dried in the sun for 5-10 hours. The result is a thin, hard and dry wafer that is ofen dipped in water or tea before eating. This wafer may stay fresh for several months. *Enbal bubuhuk* is made by mixing cassava flour with grated coconut and cooking in a skillet (without cooking oil) for approximately 15 minutes. The result is a soft, bread-like. *Enbal bubukuk* is often eaten as part of a well-known Keiese meal consisting of grilled fish (*ikan bakar*), cassava leaves (*aroan sir-sir*), and tomato-chili relish (*totoi kamitil*). *Enbal goreng* is made by cooking cassava flour, sometimes with dried coconut, in a hot skillet or wok for approximately 15 minutes without cooking oil. *Enbal goreng* is not formed into any shape and is eaten with other foods in a manner similar to rice. *Enbal baubes* is made by placing cassava flour in a heated waffle press, and cooking for approximately 15 minutes. It may be eaten soft off of the press, or may be sun-dried like *enbal lempeng* and then eaten with the aid of coffee, tea, broth or water. *Enbal fatmin* is made by mixing cassava flour with dried coconut, sugar or salt, and wrapping the mixture in banana leaves and heating in a skillet for approximately 15 minutes. *Enbal tutupola* is made by placing cassava flour inside a bamboo tube and cooking over an open fire for at least 30 minutes. The cooked *enbal* is then removed and cut into 4-5" long pieces.

Figure 20. Grating peeled cassava tubers

Figure 21. Wrapping cassava gratings in rice sacks

Figure 22. Using lever-press to rid toxins from cassava gratings

Figure 23. *Enbal Baubes* (made from cassava flour) drying on roof

Swidden agriculture is conducted on the periphery of villages (*nangan*) as well as in the distant mountain forests (*wuar*) (see Figures 24 and 25 below).[27] Some of the mountain gardens of Weduar Fer are located several hours away by foot. These gardens tend to be more productive than those on the village periphery because of the better soils, longer fallow periods, and higher rainfall levels. There are two growing seasons in the Kei islands which correspond to the eastern and western monsoons.[28] There is much overlap in the agricultural duties of men and women although some division of labor exists. Women tend to do more of the planting, weeding and harvesting, while men engage in the felling of trees, burning and clearing the gardens.[29] Harvest typically occurs three to four months after planting, except for crops such as taro which require longer times (up to 15 months) to mature. Gardens are typically used for 2-4 years before left fallow, although some gardens closer to the village may be planted for longer periods before being left fallow.

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[27] A variety of ecological zones are recognized by the people of Kei Besar. Although there exist local variations throughout the archipelago (cf. Rahail 1994), the people of southern Kei Besar often distinguish among the following six ecological zones: (1) deep sea zone (*birbir*); (2) coral reef zone (*sor*); (3) tidal zone (*met*); (4) village zone (*ohoi*); (5) village periphery zone (*nangan*); and (6) mountain zone (*wuar*).

[28] For the western monsoon season, crops such as corn, taro, and other tubers are often planted (around September to October), while for the eastern monsoon, green or red beans are often alternated with corn. *Enbal* is usually planted at the onset of the eastern monsoon season in February or March.

[29] The Keiese believe that planting should be done during high tide (*air pasang*) or during a full moon, but never during a crescent moon.

Figure 24. Taro garden, Kei Besar

Figure 25. Mountain garden, Kei Besar

In addition to their agricultural pursuits in the forest zone (*wuar*), the Keiese also obtain

a variety of hardwoods (e.g., *kayu besi*, or iron-wood) for construction, boat-building, and, in

the past, for export.[30] Sago is also harvested in the forest zone, and its leaves (*daun rumbia*) are

used for construction projects (e.g., thatch roofing). Coffee and Cloves are also grown by some

villages (e.g. Tutrean) at higher elevations in the forest zone. Christian villagers also engage in

hunting and trapping[31] of wild animals in the forest zone, particularly wild boar (*vav*) and cuscus

(*medar*).[32] On the periphery of villages (*nangan*), permanent family gardens may be found, in

addition to coconut and bamboo groves, and fruit and nut bearing trees (e.g., mango, kanari

nut tree). In the village zone (*ohoi*), a number of domesticated animals are kept including

chickens, goats (particularly in Muslim villages), cats and dogs, and sometimes in Christian

villages, pigs. A variety of fruit-bearing trees and plants (e.g., bananas, coconut palms, papaya,

jackfruit, breadfruit, citrus, soursop, chili peppers) are also planted and harvested in the village

zone.

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[30] Langen (1888:777) wrote that the "principle occupation" of the Keiese was felling and selling timber to the German expatriate's sawmilling company. Forest exploitation continues to focus on sago leaves (*daun rumbia*) and the following hardwoods: *kayu besi* (*intsia bijuga*), *kayu linggua* (*pterocarpus indica*), *kayu kenari* (*cunarium sylo ester*), *kayu lawang* (*pmotia penota*).
[31] Traps are often set on the outskirts of mountain gardens.
[32] Among villagers of Weduar Fer, hunting of wild boar was usually a community effort, often taking place after church services on Sunday. Dogs were used during these hunting expeditions. Women were not permitted to join hunting parties as it is believed that the scent of menstruating women will repel wild boar. Members of the hunt party would form wide semi-circle in the forest. They would sit and wait with their spears while several men and the hunting dogs moved toward them from afar, making noises to rouse pigs and guide them in their direction. The hunters would attempt to spear any pig that happens to pass them. Any pig that is killed was prepared on the outskirts of the village. The boar was placed on an open fire and partially cooked before butchering. The boar was butchered and divided among members of the hunting party. Choice cuts of meat are immediately cooked over the open fire and consumed on site. The villager who speared the pig received the head of the pig. The owner of the dog that aided in the hunt received the tail end. The remainder of the boar was divided amongst the hunters and brought back to the village.

Maritime exploitation, while not the primary focus of most household economies, contributes significantly to Kei subsistence and livelihoods. Three maritime zones are recognized and utilized by villagers from southern Kei Besar. These include the tidal zone (*met or meti*), the coral reef zone (*sor*), and the deep sea (*birbir*). Each of these zones provides Kei islanders with valuable resources that are consumed, traded, or sold on the open market. The exploitation of maritime resources is influenced by seasonal shifts in winds, waves and currents as a result of the eastern and western monsoons. During the eastern monsoon (e.g., May-September), in particular, the east coast of Kei Besar is pounded by waves, making sea transport and fishing dangerous and difficult (Thorburn 1998). During the western monsoon fishing becomes more difficult for the villages on the west coast of Kei Besar. Subsistence efforts are geared more towards agricultural pursuits during months of high seas and winds. In addition, villagers will sometimes purchase fish from villages on the opposite coast or from markets in Elat during seasonal shortages.

The tidal zone, or *meti*, is located between the beach and the coral reefs surrounding Kei Besar. Fish, shellfish, clams, octopus, sea cucumber, and a variety of seaweeds are among the resources extracted from this zone (see Figure 26 and Figure 27). Exploitation of the *meti* peaks in September or October during the annual neap tide (*meti Kei*) (see Figure 28), when entire villages converge on exposed tidal flats and gather a variety of marine resources (Thorburn 1998).

Figure 26. Anchovies caught in the *meti* zone at Weduar Fer

Figure 27. Dividing anchovies among the houses of Weduar Fer

Figure 28. *Meti Kei* along the coast of Kei Besar

The coral reef zone (*sor*) provides an abundance of marine resources for consumption or sale on the open market. Among these resources are coral fish, octopus, crustaceans, shellfish, topshell (*lola)*, and teripang. During high tide, villagers use dugout canoes (*leb-leb*) to go diving for fish and other resources. They utilize diving goggles (*kaca mata molo*), spears, or home-made spear guns (*senapan ikan*). They may also use line and hook to fish from their dugout canoes in the reef zone. Traps (*bubu*) are also used in coral reef zone.[33] During low tide, villagers are able to walk to the reefs from the shore.

Teripang and *lola*, both collected from the coral reef zone, are among the most important income-generating maritime resources in the Kei islands.[34] These resources are usually harvested between January and March. One informant referred to these months as the

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[33] *A bubu* is a trap made from rattan that is placed in coral reef zone and weighted down with rocks. The trap has an entrance that fish enter but cannot exit. The traps are then checked at low tide.

[34] In 1995, the price of 1 kilogram of *lola* was Rp. 8,500. Price of *teripang* depends on the type and size. For large dried *teripang gosok*, 1 kilo was around Rp. 40,000-45,000, *teripang nanas* was Rp. 22,000, *teripang susu* between Rp. 16,5000-17,500, and *teripang Makasar* was Rp. 18,500.

"war season" (*musim perang*) as a result of the conflicts that often arise over the harvest of these commodities. The *lola* shells are used for mother of pearl buttons and the remainder is ground to provide luster to auto paint (Thorburn 1998:61). Although the *lola* snails were previously eaten and the shells discarded, Kei Islanders have been harvesting *lola* for sale to the Asian market since the 1930's. The harvest of lola on the east coast of Kei Besar is controlled and managed through *sasi* (Thorburn 1998:61), which are "spatial and temporal prohibitions on harvesting crops, cutting wood, or gathering other products from the forest, tidal zone (*meti*) or village-controlled sea (*petuanan laut*)…[S]asi serves the very practical functions of making sure that nobody takes what does not belong to them, that fruits ripen before picking, that *trochus* and other reef invertebrates are able to reproduce and grow, that migratory and spawning fish are allowed to accumulate, and that sufficient food or funds can be gathered for communal events or activities" (Thorburn 2001:156-57). According to Thorburn (1998:65-66), *lola* harvests have declined since the 70's as a result of the reduction of live coral cover by 20 to 40 percent in some villages on Kei's Besar's eastern coast[35] due to increased nylon net fishing, blast fishing, potassium cyanide and use of *akar tuba,* a poisonous root used by the Keiese during some fishing activities, such as *wer warat*.

Wer warat ("pulling the line") is a type of communal fishing that is often done in December because of Christmas and New Year's holiday festivities, but may be conducted at other times of the year to provide fish for the guests of Church, mosque or village activities or rituals (see Figure 29). *Wer warat* begins outside of the coral reef and ends inside of the reef

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[35] In 1997, the village of Ohoirenan, just north of Weduar on the east coast of Kei Besar, opened *sasi* and harvested 7,343.5 kilograms of topshell. (Thorburn 1998:67)

zone in the shallow waters of the *meti*. The cord (*tubur*), which means to go down or descend

(since the coconut leaves dangle under water and effectively corral many fish in the cord's

path), is made up of many young coconut leaves that are fastened the night before the fishing

endeavor to the "navel of the cord" (*war fuhar*) to create two sides, the left and the right. The

cord is brought to the sea and pulled to shore in a semi-circular fashion. When a circle is formed

in the *meti* zone, the area is netted off. A poisonous plant, *akar tuba* (*Garcinia dulcis*) is shaken

in the water to stun the fish. Each person jumps in the water and spears or grabs the fish, which

tend to be "drunk" from the poisonous root. This communal fishing activity can include up to

thirty men and boys. It can take about 2 hours to pull the cord inshore about 100 meters.

Figure 29. Communal fishing endeavor (*wer warat*)

Although the *akar tuba* used during *wer warat* results in the death of coral polyps, much

greater damage to the coral reefs in the Kei islands has been due to the live fish trade which

began in the Kei islands in the early 1990's[36]. Fueled by the Asian market and demand for coral

fish such as Grouper and Napoleon Wrasse, the live fish trade was dominated by companies

from Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and China using cyanide fishing techniques which cause

immense damage to the live coral of the islands (Thorburn 2001, 2003). In 1998, approximately

10 tons of live fish per month Kei were being exported (Thorburn 2001:162). After 6 years of

cyanide fishing in the Kei islands, it was estimated that live coral cover at 3 meters was only

about 10% for Kei Kecil, Coral damage was estimated on Kei Besar at less than 20% (p. 164). The

reefs of the east coast of Kei Besar fared better as a result of more strictly enforced *sasi* and

limitations on fishing during the eastern monsoon (p. 164). In 1996, many of the large

companies began leaving the islands as a result of declining yields (p. 163) although smaller-

scale ventures, often working in conjunction with local villages continued (p. 164-165).[37]

When the seas, winds, and currents permit, the men of the Kei islands will fish in the

deep sea (*birbir*). This fishing is done typically with hook and line from a dugout canoe, although

net fishing using motor boats (*jonson*) is becoming more common. Tuna (*cekalang*), swordfish,

sea turtles and other large game fish are caught in Kei waters. Flying fish are also obtained

using nets and their eggs are taken from the waters and are a local delicacy. Fishing tends to be

safer and more productive during the Western monsoon months (October thru February). *Birbir*

fishing during the western monsoon is often done at night while during the eastern monsoon it

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[36] Due to the decline in the productivity of the Philippine reefs (due to cyanide fishing techniques) by the late 1980's, the live fish trade moved into Indonesia and began in Kei around 1991 (Thorburn 2001).

[37] Thorburn (2001:164-65) states that in the late 1990's, three individuals controlled most of live fish trade in Kei. They often provided credit to local fisherman to purchase outboards and build holding pens, accepting payment in the form of live fish. At first they accept all fish, then only certain kinds. The fishermen then face difficulties making payments and are then offered help in form of cyanide. It became increasingly common for businessmen to enter into contracts with entire villages.

is often during the afternoon. Nets may be used during the western monsoon but less so

during the eastern monsoon due to the wind and waves. Deep sea fishing is most difficult

during the month of April during *musim barat* and July and August during *musim timor*. During

these months, fish may be obtained through trade or bought from other villagers, villages, or

from markets in Elat and Tual. In addition, villagers will also salt and smoke fish to counter

shortages during these lean fishing months.

In addition to maritime commodities and cash-crops, other sources of income in the Kei

islands include remittances, village subsidies, government projects, government employment

and wage-labor in private companies. In the early 1900's, there was very little cash in the hands

of the Kei islanders (Laksono 1990:72). Some Keiese worked for the Christian missionaries as

teachers, carpenters and laborers. By the 1930's, the Dutch government and the missions

began sending Keiese to New Guinea, Tanimbar and Aru to assist with missionaries and the

Dutch administration. This helped create a pattern of circular migration and a greater reliance

on remittances in the local economy (Thorburn 2008:125), which continues to some extent

today. The New Order period in the Kei islands witnessed an increase in village subsidies,

government sponsored construction projects, and government jobs. Village subsidies began in

1970 (Adhuri 2004) and each year, administrative villages receive an annual village subsidy (in

1994, it was approximately $5,000 US). In 1994, the Suharto government created a special fund

(*Inpres Desa Tertinggal*, or *IDT*) for "backward" villages (see Pannell 1998). The *IDT* subsidy was

in 1994 was about $10,000 US (20 million rupiah).[38] Government jobs have arguably been the

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[38] In the village of Weduar Fer, the IDT was used to purchase two 25 horsepower engines, one wooden
boat, one fishing net, 15 male chickens, and 250 female chickens.

greatest source of cash and income in the Kei islands in the last 30 years. In the 1980's, Tual

witnessed a construction boom and there was a significant growth in employment through the

district (*kabupaten*) and sub-district (*kecamatan*) governments. As Thorburn notes, government

funds soon rivaled remittances as a major source of cash in the islands (2008:129). It is in this

context that the control of government resources became a primary arena of Kei political life as

adat leaders scrambled to retain and augment their hereditary power and position (Thorburn

2008:129).

2.9   SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the reader to the Kei islands and the contexts of research in which

this dissertation is based, providing a brief description of the geography, ecology, prehistory,

history, demography, political organization and subsistence patterns of the Kei archipelago. I

have attempted to highlight aspects of Kei history and ethnography that bear upon the

materials and arguments presented in subsequent chapters. Several generalizations are

important to bear in mind when analyzing Kei articulations of *adat* over the past twenty years.

First, the Kei islanders have been connected to a wide variety of cultural "others" since

prehistoric times. Therefore, Kei *adat* and culture are best conceptualized as products of

dynamic interactions between the Keiese and other peoples, from prehistoric times, through

the colonial era and into the present day. Second, it is important to recognize the impact of

Dutch colonial rule on Kei social hierarchy, political organization, and religious composition.

These transformations significantly impacted political processes and the articulations of *adat* in

post-Independence times. Finally, given the subsistence-oriented economy of the Kei islands, the impact of the state bureaucracy on the political and economic life of the Kei islanders cannot be overstated. The new sources of wealth, power and prestige provided by the local government were significant factors contributing to *adat* revivalism during the New Order. Before examining the politics of *adat* during the New Order, however, it is necessary to explore in greater detail Kei conceptions of rank, history, and *adat*, and their transformation as a result of Dutch colonialism. Using the example of the domain of Tabab Yamlim in southern Kei Besar, the contested nature of Kei rank, authority, and history is presented in Chapter 3, providing the ethnographic context for the articulations of *adat* analyzed in subsequent chapters.

3.0   RANK, HISTORY, AND *ADAT* IN THE KEI ISLANDS

> Eastern Indonesia is well known for its dualism at every level: symbolically, for the distinction between right and left, male and female, heaven and earth, black and white in a variety of media from house forms to funeral ceremonies; socially for the distinction between wife-takers and wife-givers; politically because of its diarchies, which split inner, ritual, and dignified authority from outer, instrumental, and active authority; linguistically and ritually for its use of parallelism in ritual language (Errington 1987:432).

A "socio-cosmic dualism" (see Van Wouden 1968; Josselin de Jong 1984; Strathern and Stewart 2000; Forth 2001) permeates Kei society and this is manifest in a number of socially significant dichotomies such as sea (*roa*) and land (*nuhu*), male (*brenran*) and female (*vat*), "noble" (*mel-mel*) and "commoner" (*ren-ren*), "village head" (*orang kay*) and "lord of the land" (*tuan tan*), "wife takers (*yan ur*) and "wife givers" (*mang ohoi*), and younger sibling (*rawin*) and elder sibling (*ya'an*). Within a particular social context, one term in each binary pair will usually be deemed superior, encompassing, or having greater moral weight, although there is often much debate and disagreement among various actors. These hierarchical relationships, as well as relations based on precedence (see Fox 1994a), orchestrate Kei socio-political life at the micro-level and intersect in interesting ways with the system of ascribed ranks (i.e., *mel-mel*, *ren-ren* and *iri-ri*).[1] This chapter provides an overview of Kei rank, social and political organization, *adat*,

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[1] Precedence is "a social principle conferring higher status on groups considered the older or oldest components of a social and territorial unity". This is contrasted with hierarchy which is "understood as a relation in which two or more components are differentially related to a social whole" (Forth 2009: 191;

and history, using ethnographic material from *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim. The contested nature of

rank, history, and authority is highlighted to provide a backdrop for the articulations of *adat*

examined in the next three chapters.

3.1   RANK AND DIARCHY IN THE KEI ISLANDS

Kei society is organized into three ascribed and endogamous ranks, often translated as

"nobles", the *mel-mel*, "commoners", the *ren-ren*, and "slaves", the *iri-ri* (Geurtjens 1921;

Klerks 1939).[2] While the three ranks are often referred to as "castes" (*kasta*) by high-ranking

individuals[3], social hierarchy in the Kei islands is best understood as a unique variation and

transformation of the common Austronesian principle of diarchy (e.g., Cunningham 1965; Fox

1980b, 1994b, 2008; Forth 1980; Hoskins 1988; Valeri 1990, 1991, 1994; Lewis 1988, 1996).

Diarchy, or dual sovereignty (Van Wouden 1968), prototypically involves "the contrast between

an autochthonous, popular authority connected with the fertility of the soil, the rhythms of

nature and agricultural production...on the one hand, and an immigrant, noble...authority on

the other" (Valeri 1991:137). These dualistic contrasts are pervasive in many of the "stranger-

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also see Fox 2009, Reuter 2009, Smedal 2009, and Kaartinen 2009 for a discussion of the differences between hierarchy and precedence).

[2] The three categories of rank found in the Kei islands is very similar to that found on Fordata in the Tanimbar islands (see McKinnon 1991:259-276).

[3] Thorburn (2000:1465; 2005:4; 2008:117) refers to the three ranks as "castes", although he acknowledges the role of colonialism in the construction of these differences (also see Laksono 1990, 2002b).

kingships" of the Austronesian world (and beyond), as succinctly summarized by Sahlins (2008: 183-84):

> [T]wo forms of authority and legitimacy coexist in a state of mutual dependence and reciprocal incorporation. The native people and the foreign rulers claim precedence on different bases. For the underlying people it is the founder-principle: the right of first occupancy – in the maximal case, the claim of autochthony. Earth-people by nature, often characterized as 'the owners', their inherent relation to the land gives them unique access to the divine and ancestral sources of its productivity – hence their indispensable 'religious' authority and ritual functions. But the stranger-kings trump these claims of priority in aggressive and transgressive demonstrations of superior might, and thus take over the sovereignty. Typically, then, there is some enduring tension between the foreign-derived royals and the native people. Invidious disagreements about legitimacy and superiority may surface in their partisan renderings of the founding narratives, each claiming a certain superiority over the other.

In the Kei islands, diarchy is manifest in the relationship between the *mel-mel* and *ren-ren* (van Wouden 1968), and these two social categories can only be understood in relation to each other (Barraud 1979:120; Kaartinen 2009). According to Keiese origin narratives (*tom*), the emergence of these two ranks resulted from the union of autochthonous and immigrant groups. At the village (*ohoi*) level, local histories often describe how one or more autochthonous *ren-ren* families invited an immigrant group, the *mel-mel*, to join them in the formation of a new settlement. Because of their supposed worldly knowledge, the immigrant group was offered rights to secular leadership positions (i.e., village head, or *orang kaya*), while the autochthones retained the position of "lord of the land" (*tuan tan*).[4] Furthermore, the

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[4] As one man from the village of Weduar Fer explains, "the *tuan tan* was the first person that settled this area. At that time, there weren't any chiefs or government. The *tuan tan* invited the immigrants to live here and gave them the authority to protect and govern. At that time, the population was small and people desired to live together." Van Wouden (1968:141) presented a somewhat ethnocentric view of Kei "dual sovereignty": "The *ren* are quite clearly the older group, but they are also stupid and have to

origin narratives concerning the formation of domains and the installation of Kei *rat* center on

the arrival of a family of nobles from Bali, the eldest male of which was declared the first "king".

Through a number of marital and material transactions, a number of Kei "big men" (*helaai*)[5]

were installed as *rat* by the Balinese "stranger-king" (see Sahlins 1985, 2008; Andaya 1993; Fox

2008; Nourse 2008; Gibson 2008) and given control over a number of villages. These origin

histories are described in greater detail later in this chapter.

The third social category in the Kei islands, *iri-ri*, consists of a group of debt-servants[6]

who are attached to particular *mel-mel* houses. With regard to the former, it is commonly

explained that, unable to pay a fine for some wrongdoing according to *adat* law, the *iri-ri* were

spared the "death penalty" by *mel-mel* families who agreed to pay the fine for them, and in

doing so, became their masters (*tuan*). Although it is explained that some *iri-ri* are slaves

resulting from conquest or trade, most were *ren-ren* or *mel-mel* individuals who had fallen in

rank because of their misdeeds.[7] *Iri-ri* are not permitted to participate in *adat* negotiations and

deliberations (*duduk adat*). The history of particular *iri-ri* houses is extremely difficult to obtain

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acknowledge the ascendancy of the *mel*. A conception of this kind may well be the foundation of the relationship between *orang kaja* and *tuan tan*".

[5] Although *helaai* may be translated literally as "big man", I am not suggesting that these individuals share the defining characteristics of the New Guinea "Big-man" (see Strathern 1971, 1979; Strathern and Stewart 2000d). Lack of historical evidence prevents any conclusions regarding the role of achievement or ascription in the political careers of Kei *helaai*.

[6] See Slamet-Velsink (1995:161-166) and Strathern and Stewart (2000:13-27) for a general overview of slavery and debt-bondage in a number of Indonesian societies.

[7] One high ranking informant, when explained *mel-mel* who fall in rank: "If a *mel-mel* commits an offense against *adat* law is not able to pay a fine according to the decision of the *adat* council, he is tied up at a certain spot behind the village *adat* hall. Then the *adat* elders are called to see if someone will pay the fine for him. He then becomes a servant of the person who pays the fine. His prestige falls. Even though he is *mel-mel*, he falls in rank. He becomes *iri rahan* (house *iri*), a servant. He may not sit with the *mel-mel* during *adat* negotiations and deliberations. Only *ren-ren* are allowed. *Iri-ri* are not allowed."

as a result of the Keiese avoidance of any public discussion about rank as well as past transgressions once they have been settled.[8]

During my 1990's fieldwork, there existed significant differences in the way *mel-mel* and *ren-ren* individuals conceptualized the differences between the ranks. Most *ren-ren* individuals invoked a diarchic model when depicting their relationship with *mel-mel*, stressing their equal and complementary status as the "elder-brother" autochthonous group in contrast to the "younger-brother" immigrant *mel-mel*.[9] While *mel-mel* individuals invoked diarchic models in particular social contexts, they tended to stress the unequal status of the three orders, often referring to them as castes (*kasta*) or strata (*strata*) (also see Laksono 1990; Adhuri 2006; Thorburn 2008). They also often referred to *iri-ri* as "lower people" (*orang bawah*), slaves (*budak*), or servants (*penyuruh*).

The differences in the way the social order is conceptualized by individuals of different ranks may be due in part to historical transformations in Kei social hierarchy (Laksono 1990; Adhuri 2006; Thorburn 2008). Dutch colonial rule decreased the importance of diarchy as an organizing principle in Kei society. As mentioned earlier, colonial rule in the Kei islands was accomplished through local leaders of *mel-mel* rank, particularly the kings (*rat*) and village

[8] In Indonesia, overt discussions of rank, particularly during the New Order, were very difficult since rank-differences became muted by state ideology (Blackwood 2000; Errington 1990; Volkman 1985; McKinnon 1991). Informants were often very reluctant to speak with outsiders about these issues (see Blackwood 2000).

[9] For example, during structured interviews in which villagers of Weduar Fer were asked to rank order 30 household heads in terms of their prestige, one *ren-ren* individual began by creating two piles side by side, the first including *mel-mel* individuals and the second including members of the *ren-ren* family who hold rights to *tuan tan*.

heads (*orang kaya*) of the islands.[10] At the same time, the Dutch disregarded the position of

tuan tan and in doing so, created an accumulation of power in the hands of the *mel-mel* leaders

(see Van Wouden 1968:140-41; Laksono 1990; Adhuri 2006; Yanuarti et al. 2006:54). By the

1930's, Kei diarchy was effectively transformed into a "caste" system made up of three ascribed

ranks (Thorburn 2008:116-117).

The study of rank in the Kei islands, like other Indonesian societies (e.g., McKinnon

1991), is a difficult endeavor for the anthropologist. McKinnon's (1991:261) discussion of rank

in neighboring Tanimbar aptly applies to the Kei islands during my 1990s research:

> No subject is more delicate than a person's rank. Nor is their one which a person
> is likely to hear more varied statements and contradictory claims [particularly
> between *mel-mel* and *ren-ren* individuals]…Rank is not discussed publicly, and a
> person's rank is never mentioned in his or her presence, except under conditions
> of extreme anger…The delicate nature of the subject, the secrecy and hushed
> tones in which it is veiled, the potential for insult and even violence, make rank a
> particularly difficult matter to investigate and understand…Although guarded
> when talking about the rank of specific persons, people do not hesitate to talk
> about the theory of rank.

The Keiese theory of rank states that one's rank is derived from the rank of his or her

parents. However, through inter-rank marriage or transgressions of *adat* law, individuals may

cross rank boundaries. Inter-rank marriage leads to several permutations of rank. In the past,

when a high-ranking male (i.e., *mel-mel*) married a woman of *ren-ren* or *iri-ri* rank, the woman

automatically became *mel-mel*. However, in contemporary times, the theory of rank states that

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[10] As mentioned earlier, the Kei form of the Malay term *orang kaya* is "*orang kay*", both of which mean "rich or influential person". *Rat* is the Kei form of the Malay word *raja,* which may be translated as king or chief. *Orang kaya* and *raja* are commonly throughout the Malay world, and appear very early in Portuguese, Dutch and English sources of the 16th and 17th centuries. In the Dutch colonial system in the Moluccas, the term "*orang kaya*" became a title that was conferred upon particular noteworthy individuals. It was absorbed into local political systems as an autochthonous title, along with *kapitan* from Portuguese (see Ellen 1986).

the *mel-mel* male must "fall down" to the rank of his wife (Kasihiuw 1994). If a *mel-mel* female

marries a male of *ren-ren* or *iri-ri* rank, a crime considered worse than adultery or incest

(Geurtjens 1921), then the woman falls to the rank of her husband and the male is punished by

hefty fines (see Kasihiuw 1994) or, in the past, with death or exile (Geurtjens 1921). In sum,

although one is born into a particular rank in Kei society, the boundaries between the ranks are

not entirely impermeable.

3.2   RANK AND KEI SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

When two strangers meet in the Kei islands, one of the first questions one of the parties is likely

to ask is "What village are you from ("*O tal ohoi en be*?). A second question, "What clan do you

belong to?" (*fam aka?)*, is likely to follow. By asking these two questions, a person will likely

determine the social location (i.e., rank) of their conversational partner. However, since, as we

shall see, clans are often multi-rank in composition, additional questions regarding agnatic or

affinal kin may be necessary for one to more conclusively determine a person's rank.

Nevertheless, these questions point to both the importance of rank differences in everyday

social interactions, as well as the central role of kinship, social organization, and marriage in the

constitution of rank and social hierarchy in the Kei archipelago. In this section, I present a brief

overview of Kei kinship, social organization and marriage and their relation to the system of

rank described in the preceding section. I focus attention to the following important social

entities in Kei society: *ohoi* (villages), *fam* (clans), and *rahan* (houses).

Villages (*ohoi*) are important social-territorial units in the Kei islands. The formation of a village is symbolized by the *woma*, the ritual center sometimes marked by a stone monument or altar (see Figure 30).[11] A *woma* symbolizes the unity of the village and the fusion of "heterogeneous elements" [i.e., different clans, or *fam*] (Kaartinen 2009:229; also see Geurtjens 1921:179). As was already mentioned, many *ohoi* are purported to have formed following agreements between autochthonous and immigrant groups. In the Kei islands, many of the immigrants (i.e., the *mel-mel*) are said to have originated from places such as Bali, Java, Ternate, Tidore, Kisar, Babar, or simply other parts of the Kei archipelago.

Figure 30. The *woma* at Waer, Kei Besar

Like most villages in the Kei archipelago, most *ohoi* in *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim are multi-rank in composition (see Table 3 above). Some villages, such as Fer, Kilwat, and Sather, may

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[11] As Kaartinen (2010:164) notes, through missionary influence, most of these "stone altars" have been replaced in the Kei islands by churches and mosques.

contain only one rank, usually either *mel-mel* as in the case of Fer or *ren-ren* in the cases of Kilwat and Sather. When a village does contain multiple ranks, this is usually reflected in the spatial organization of the *ohoi.* In the village of Weduar Fer, for example, the houses of the *orang kaya* (*mel-mel*) and the *tuan tan* (*ren-*ren) are adjacent to one another and situated at the northern end of the village, while other *ren-ren* and *iri-ri* houses are located at the southern end of the village, with the *iri-ri* houses being southernmost (see Figure 16 above). In the village of Rerean, the *mel-mel* houses are located on top of a large stone island along the shoreline while the *ren-ren* and *iri-ri* are located further inland and from the island. In other villages, such as Tutrean, there are discrete village sections that are often referred to as *kampong mel* (*mel* hamlet) or *kampong ren* (*ren* hamlet).

All villages in *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim on Kei Besar are made up of a number of named clans, or *fam* (Geurtjens 1921; Klerks 1939; Van Wouden 1968).[12] *Fam* membership is based primarily, although not exclusively, on agnatic ties.[13] Members of a *fam*, including in-marrying women as well as *iri-ri* who are attached to the *fam*, share a common name (Van Wouden 1968).[14] In the Kei Islands, *fam* names are quite often one of two types. The first type of name is formed by adding the suffix –*ubun* (meaning grandchild) to the name of a clan ancestor, as in the following clans of Weduar Fer: Toanubun, Metubun, and Tutubun. These three *fam* names therefore mean "grandchild of Toan", "grandchild of Met", and "grandchild of Tut",

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[12] Based primarily on the work of Geurtjens (1921), Van Wouden (1968:11, 35) identified *fam* as a segment of a patrilineal clan, sub-clan, or patrilineal descent group.

[13] Some exceptions include uxorilocally residing men whose house of origin has not yet paid bride wealth and *iri-ri* who are attached to the *fam* of their "master".

[14] The *iri-ri* of Weduar Fer, however, did not share the same *fam* name of the house to which they were attached.

respectively. A second name type is formed by adding a suffix to the Kei word for house (*rahan*), as in the following clans from Tabab Yamlim: Rahayaan ("house of elder brother") and Rahawarin ("house of younger brother").[15] While there are many *fam* names that do not fit into these two categories, what is common among all *fam* names is that they constitute important aspects of Kei identities, particularly with regard to a person's notoriety and influence beyond the village level.[16]

With regard to rank, some *fam* are comprised of only one rank (usually *mel-mel* or *ren-ren*) while others are multi-rank in composition. Within one *fam*, there may be individuals from all three ranks (*mel-mel*, *ren-ren* and *iri-ri*), individuals from two ranks, as well as individuals of one rank (usually entirely *mel-mel* or entirely *ren-ren*). The multi-rank composition of *fam* may be explained by the permeability of rank boundaries through inter-rank marriage and transgressions of *adat* law.

In the villages of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, one to five *fam* typically predominate in terms of population (see Appendix B), although a number of other *fam*, often those who joined the village more recently, may be represented in small numbers. The various *fam* of a village are differentiated not only according to rank, but also according to seniority and precedence. For

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[15] Van Wouden (1968:35) notes that some *fam* names, such as Rahayaan (house of elder brother) and Rahawarin (house of younger brother) denote rank order.

[16] *Fam* names may change over time for a number of reasons. As clans grow and splinter, junior and senior branches may take on new names. For example, in the village of Weduar, *fam* Hukubun and Somnaikubun are said to have originated from *fam* Rahawarin. There is some evidence that other *fam* have changed their name for political purposes as well. *Fam* Far-Far of Weduar Fer was originally *fam* Raharusun. While members of *fam* Far-Far claim that some members of Raharusun converted to Christianity during the colonial period and changed their name to distinguish themselves from Muslim Raharusun, some informants claimed that the *fam* Far-Far was created in the 1930's as a way to prove the legitimacy of an origin narrative used to justify the *rat* of Fer's rights to political office during Dutch indirect rule. This origin narrative is discussed in section 3.7 below.

example, a *fam* which is descended from an ancestral elder brother is viewed as superordinate to those descended from junior ancestral lines. In addition, the various *fam* of a village constitute an order of precedence "in which relations are recursively arrayed asymmetrically one to another" (Fox 2009:1). As Kaartinen notes, precedence entails "a privileged relationship to a cosmological origin or source in terms of [one's] proximity to the founding clans of the village" (2009:230). *Fam* who are able to trace relations to these founding clans have a level of seniority in village affairs (Koentjaraningrat 1972:114), although the origin narratives of an *ohoi* and the order of precedence of its constituent *fam* are rarely agreed upon by all members of a village.

Fam distribution throughout the domain of Tabab Yamlim shows that while some clans are found only in one village, many clans are spread out in two or more villages (see Appendix B). According to Van Wouden (1968:35), these distribution patterns of *fam* resulted from dispersion following village dissention and conflict, or a lack of resources. These dynamics have certainly contributed the current distribution of *fam* in *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim (see Sections 3.8, 3.9, and 3.10 below). Out of the 116 *fam* found throughout *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, 36 (or 31%) were present in two or more villages of the domain.[17]

Within a particular *fam* are a number of houses, or *rahan*. Throughout eastern Indonesia (and the Austronesian world in general), the house is an important cultural category used to denote a particular type of social entity (Fox 1980a:11-12). In fact, throughout insular Southeast Asia, including the Kei islands, the term "house" is used to denote not only a physical

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[17] Van Wouden (1968: 35) noted that *fam* members who move to different villages remain under the authority of the original *fam* head.

structure but also the social group who resides within it or claims membership in it (Errington 1987:405; Waterson 1990:142). As Waterson (1990:166) points out, by focusing on the "house" as a primary unit of social organization, anthropologists may avoid the temptation to squeeze ethnographic data into the straightjacket of descent, lineage theory, and other typological constructs derived from African models of kinship (see Barnes 1982; Strathern 1982). Based on her work in neighboring Tanimbar, McKinnon argues that a focus on the "house" as a social unit draws attention to the contrastive forms of marriage (i.e., matrilateral and patrilateral, asymmetric and symmetric) and affiliation (i.e., patrilocal or uxorilocal) which exist both within and between houses (e.g., McKinnon 1991).[18] As Smedal (2011:291) notes, a house "contains a multitude of cross-cutting rules, rights, obligations, principles, preferences, inclinations, and possibilities which inform actions pertaining to marriage and descent, often in ways that may surprise the analyst.

In the Kei archipelago, houses, or *rahan*, "are seen as the durable elements of each village. Houses continue their existence even if the social groups they contain may 'die out' and be replaced by others" (Kaartinen 2007a:167). *Rahan* are the primary units of marriage and exchange (see Barraud 1979, 1990c) in the Kei islands.[19] Marriages unite two *rahan* in a *yan ur-*

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[18] While Van Wouden (1968) viewed these variations in marriage and residence as deviations from an ideal type of social structure based on double descent with societies divided into opposing moieties, other scholars have embraced the importance of contrastive forms of marriage and affiliation in the social dynamics of houses. For McKinnon, a house is "the explicit and differential articulation of mutually implicating, contrastive social forms and processes…It is…an integral form governed by processes that have their own internal logic" (McKinnon 1991:282-283).

[19] The Kei islands may indeed be considered a "house society" ("*société á maison*"), a concept introduced by Levi-Strauss (1982, 1987) and applied by a number of scholars to a variety of Indonesian societies (e.g. Barraud 1979; Fox 1987; Errington 1987; Waterson 1990; Boon 1990; McKinnon 1991; Gibson 1995; Reuter 2002; Smedal 2011). As these scholars have demonstrated, a focus on the house as both an indigenous and anthropological construct helps to capture the dynamics of kinship in Indonesia

mang ohoi relationship.[20] The *yan ur* ("children sister") house is the groom's house of origin (i.e., "wife-takers") while the *mang ohoi* ("people of the village") house is the bride's house of origin (i.e. "wife givers") (Barraud 1990c:197). Each house in the Kei islands is related to a number of others, some as their *yan ur* and others as their *mang ohoi* (Barraud 1990c:197). Once formed, a *yan ur-mang ohoi* relationship continues even if no further marriages are contracted between the two groups, and the relationship will continue to involve unceasing exchanges and a variety of other reciprocal duties and obligations (Barraud, de Coppet, Iteanu and Jamous 1994:67).

In addition to rank differences among the houses of the Kei islands, *rahan* are differentiated from one another based on their status as either *yan ur* or *mang ohoi* in a given marriage alliance. *Mang ohoi*, or wife-giving houses, are considered hierarchically superior to *yan ur* houses, who must speak of their *mang ohoi* with respect and honor (Barraud 1994:99). The reason for the ascendancy of wife-givers over wife-takers has to do with the fact that, in the Kei islands, a *mang ohoi* house represent land, origins, and ancestry (Barraud 1990c:200, 208; 1990b). Like eastern Indonesia in general, alliance in the Kei islands "is concerned with the transmission of life…and this 'flow of life' is synonymous with the transmission of a woman's blood" from one house to another (Fox 1980a:12). In the Kei islands, then, *mang ohoi* houses and the women that flow from them to *yan ur* houses, are viewed as a source of life.

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where various forms of descent, marriage, and affiliation often intermingle and coexist within particular societies.
[20] Geurtjens and Van Wouden (1968) incorrectly claimed that *fam*, not houses, are the primary units of marriage exchange in the Kei islands (see Kaartinen 2007:167).

While *yan ur-mang ohoi* relationships most often occur between houses of different *fam*, such alliances may also occur between different houses within a single *fam*. Such a relationship exists between the two *mel-mel* houses of Weduar Fer from *fam* Far-Far. This high-ranking clan is divided into *vat yanan* ("female child") and *brenran yanan* ("male child") houses with the former serving as *mang ohoi* to the latter. As Figure 31 illustrates, these two houses of *fam* Far-Far are related through asymmetric alliance in which women "flow" only from the *vat yanan* to the *brenran yanan*.[21] Given the ascendancy of wife-giving houses in the Kei islands, it should not be surprising that the life-giving *vat yanan* house of *fam* Far-Far holds rights to the position of *orang kay* in the village of Weduar Fer.

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[21] Figure 31 also shows that *fam* Tanlain of Tutrean serves as *mang ohoi* to the *vat yanan* house of *fam* Far-Far.

Numbers: Depict birth order
Asterisks: Woman from *fam* Tanlain, village of Tutrean
Bold Triangle: *Orang Kaya/Kepala Desa* during 1990s fieldwork
Dashed Triangle: Most senior residing representative of Brenran Yanan House during 1990s fieldwork
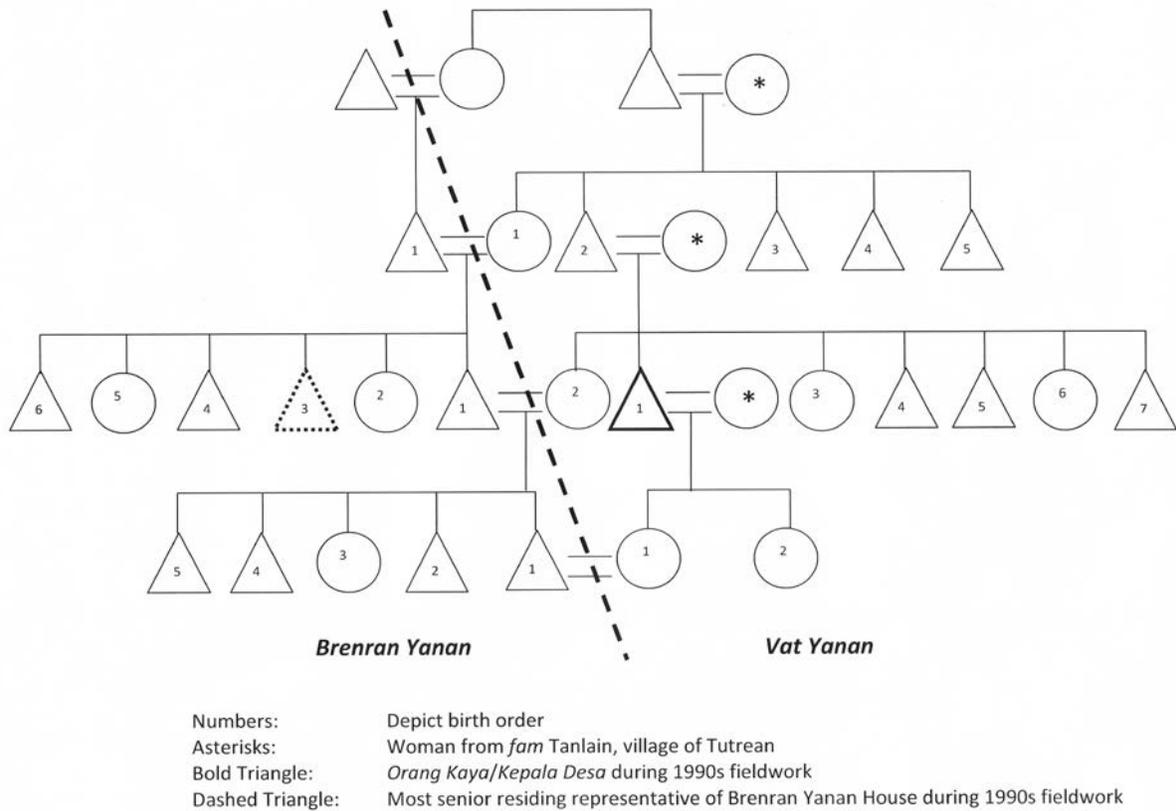
Figure 31. Division of *fam* Far-Far into *brenran yanan* and *vat yanan* houses

According to Van Wouden (1968), asymmetric alliance (or asymmetric connubium) lies at the foundation of social organization in Eastern Indonesia, including the Kei islands. However, while mother's brother's daughter (MBD) marriage is certainly practiced in the Kei islands, it is certainly not the only type of marriage that is given value. After all, in the Kei islands, there is a rule that two brothers may not marry two sisters (Barraud 1990c:197). Therefore, although the eldest son of a house is expected to marry his matrilateral cross-cousin (i.e., asymmetric alliance), younger sons are allowed to marry women with "lesser degrees of consanguinity" (Van Wouden 1968:12). Within a particular house, then, it may be enough for one brother to renew established alliances with a *mang ohoi* house, while younger brothers

make new alliances. Some members of a house may marry more distantly related matrilateral cousins or even patrilateral cousins, such as their father's brother's daughter (FBD) (i.e., non-asymmetric alliance).[22]

Marriages between houses are constituted, in part, through the exchanges of valuables, and in the Kei islands, there is a clear distinction made between types of valuables and goods contributed by the husband's side and those by the wife's side (Barraud 1994:99; Laksono 2002:53-54). Marriage exchanges include the payment of bridewealth (*vilin*) from the groom's family (*yan ur*) to the bride's family (*mango ohoi*).[23] *Vilin* may include "male" items such as Portuguese cannons (*kasber* or *sadsad*), small hand-cannons (*lela*), gongs (*dada*), gold jewelry (*mas*), and cash.[24] The bride's family (*mang ohoi*) presents counter-gifts of "female" items such as plates, cloth, spices, and kitchen items and instruments (Barraud, de Coppet, Iteanu and Jamous 1994:68). Exchanges between allied houses not only occur at marriages, but also at births and funerals (see Figure 32).

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[22] In the Kei islands, marriages based on symmetric exchange are referred to as *fau swilik* (Laksono 1990) or *kawin bula balik*. Van Wouden (1968:12) notes that less prominent members of society may practice FBD marriage in order to evade the great expense entailed by asymmetric forms of marriage (i.e., bride wealth). McKinnon (1991) also demonstrates that certain types of marriage, alliance, and affiliation describe the position of nobles while less prestigious forms define the province of subordinates. In addition, it has been hypothesized that a relationship exists between prescriptive asymmetric connubium and increased social stratification (Hoskins 1993:20; Strathern and Stewart 2000a:36).
[23] In 1906, the Dutch colonial government created a price list for bride wealth, with higher prices for noble brides in contrast to *ren-ren* and *iri-ri* brides, and much higher prices for an abducted woman, or a woman of higher rank (Laksono 1990:51).
[24] For a description of the varieties of bridewealth in the Kei islands, see Riedel (1886:226-27); Geurtjens (1921:289-302); Klerks (1939), Van Wouden (1968), and Barraud (1979, 1990c).

Figure 32. Members of *fam* Far-Far and Tanlain engaged in mortuary exchange

Based on an analysis of 109 marriages from Weduar Fer over three generations, there are several generalizations that can be made regarding marriage and "the flow of life" to and from the houses of Weduar Fer. The first is that in Weduar Fer, intra-village marriages are similar in frequency to inter-village marriages for both men (46% intra-village, 54% inter-village) and women (56% intra-village, 44% inter-village). A second generalization is that men and women of *iri-ri* rank are more likely than their *mel-mel* and *ren-ren* counterparts to marry outside of the village. Sixty-one percent of *iri-ri* men married a woman from another village in contrast to 53% among the *mel-mel* and 47% among the *ren-ren*. Even more significantly, 77% of *iri-ri* women married outside the village in contrast to 48% among the *mel-mel* and 38% among the *ren-ren*.[25]

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[25] The reason for these rank-based differences may be due to the rank endogamy and the limited availability of marriage partners within the village for *iri-ri* individuals.

A third set of generalizations regarding the "flow of life" (see Fox, ed. 1980) to and from the village of Weduar Fer can also be made based on the analysis of marriage data from Weduar Fer. A close look at the marriages of 49 *mel-mel* men from Weduar Fer shows that 30% of marriages were intra-*fam* (although these were inter-*rahan*). Of those marriages that were inter-*fam*, 13% (n=4) were conducted with *mang ohoi* houses from Tutrean on Kei Besar (*fam* Tanlain, Resmol, and Renhoran), 10% (n=3) from Elaar on Kei Kecil (*fam* Faudubun and Madubun), and 10% (n=3) from Rerean on Kei Besar (*fam* Rahayaan). These data show that the *mel-mel* of Weduar Fer have maintained alliances with *mang ohoi* (i.e., "wife-giving") houses from Tutrean, Elaar and Rerean. Regarding the marriages of *mel-mel* women from Weduar Fer, data from the past three generations show that 47% of marriages were intra-*fam*. Of those marriages that were inter-*fam*, 21% (n=4) were conducted with *yan ur* from Elaar on Kei Kecil (*fam* Labetubun and Larubun). These data suggest that the *mel-mel* of Weduar Fer have often served as *mang ohoi* to *yan ur* houses in Elaar. The data on *mel-mel* marriages also suggest that in the past thirty years, high-ranking individuals from Weduar Fer who hold positions in the district government have often contracted marriages with other wealthy and politically connected *mel-mel*.[26]

Marriage data from *ren-ren* and *iri-ri* men and women of Weduar Fer show that only 14% of marriages are intra-*fam*. In addition, among the *ren-ren* of Weduar Fer, 26% of inter-*fam* marriages were conducted with other *ren-ren* houses of Weduar Fer. The data also show that both *ren-ren* and *iri-ri* men of Weduar Fer have maintained alliances with *mang ohoi*

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[26] For example, *mel-mel* women from Weduar Fer have married men from *fam* Ohoibutun, Labetbun, and Retraubun, while *mel-mel* men have married women from *fam* Faudubun, Rahayaan, and Madubun.

houses from Sather and Rerean on Kei Besar and Elaar on Kei Kecil, while both *ren-ren* and *iri-ri*

houses of Weduar Fer have served as *mang ohoi* to *yan ur* houses in Elaar and Rerean.

3.3   *ADAT* POLITIES IN THE KEI ISLANDS

In this section, I present a brief description of the structure of Kei polities. In presenting an

outline of the organization of Kei domains, it is not my intention to essentialize an "*adat*

political order" since it is clear that local-level political relations have been, and continue to be,

realized through dynamic interaction with broader political contexts, models and frameworks.[27]

However, the Keiese themselves have attempted to create a coherent picture of *ratschap* and

village political organization (e.g., Setitit 1980; Rahail 1994, 1996) and, as I will argue in this

dissertation, a concerted effort has been made by the high-ranking Keiese to achieve and

maintain correspondence between *adat* political organization and the territorial and political

administration of colonial and national regimes.

The system of rank discussed above lies at the foundation of *adat* polities in the Kei

islands (Laksono 1990; Hooe 1996, 1999; Adhuri 2006; Thorburn 2008). The domains of Kei,

referred to as *ratschap*, are led by a *rat* with *orang kaya* heading the particular villages (*ohoi*) of

the domain. At the highest level are the 19 kings, or *rat* (see Figure 33). Each village within a

domain is led by an *orang kaya*, a village headman who is subordinate to the *rat*. Processes of

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[27] Many Kei people claim that the islands had links to pre-colonial polities of Java, Bali, Ternate and
Tidore. In addition, the widespread occurrence of the "five" and "nine" political moieties (see Valeri
1989) and certain political titles (see Ellen 1986) throughout Maluku suggests that broader political
influences have played a significant role in the constitution of Kei polities.

village fissioning have also been recurrent throughout Kei history as a result of political, ecological, and religious reasons. In most cases, the new villages are controlled by a *kepala soa* (*soa* head) who is usually the eldest male of one of the original clans of the hamlet. While the *kepala soa* may be an individual of *mel-mel* or *ren-ren* rank, he is politically subordinate to the *orang kaya* or *rat* of the "mother village". Some newly formed villages, however, are led *orang kaya* of *mel-mel* rank.

Figure 33. The *rat* of Fer

Generally speaking, *mel-mel* individuals occupy the political offices of "king" (*rat*) and "village head" (*orang kaya*), while individuals of *ren-ren* rank occupy the position of "lord of the

land" (*tuan tan*)[28], whose duties include, among other things, protecting boundaries of land and sea (see Figure 34). The *tuan tan* is usually a village-level position held by a male from the founding clan of the village who functions as a repository of knowledge about, as well as guardian of, territorial boundaries. The positions of *rat*, *orang kaya*, and *tuan tan* are, ideally, inherited directly from father to eldest son.

Figure 34. The *tuan tan* (left) of Weduar Fer in 1995

The rise of Kei *rat* occurred sometime prior to the colonial period, although it is difficult to ascertain when this may have occurred. This is substantiated by legends recorded by Dutch missionaries beginning in the early 20th century (see Geurtjens 1921a, 1921b; Gielen 1977, n.d.1, n.d.2). Some Keiese claim that the rise of *rat* occurred in the 1500's following the fall of Majapahit. One of the first references to Kei kings and domains comes from 1645, when

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[28] Village leaders (*orang kaya* or *kepala desa*) are of *mel-mel* rank except in villages where there are no high-ranking individuals.

Adriaan Dortsman's ship visited Kei Besar for several days. Dortsman mentioned the existence of four *rajas* on the island at that time, each controlling a number of villages. In 1645, a treaty was arranged between the Dutch East Indies Company and Kei chiefs. After a revision to the treaty some twenty years later, the islands officially fell under the sovereignty of the company (Langen 1888:769).

Based on sources from the colonial period, Van Wouden noted in 1935 that little was known about Kei polities and the function and significance of the *rat*, although he speculated that the district (i.e., domain) was the most important political unit (van Wouden 1968:38, 142). In the late 1880's, Langen reported that the islands were divided into 18 districts (nine in Kei Kecil and nine on Kei Besar), each headed by a "rajah" and consisting of a number of villages with their surrounding land (Langen 1888:769).

In the principle villages of the districts were certain under chiefs (i.e., *orang kaya*), whose duty it was "to bring before the Rajah the wishes of his subjects" (Langen 1888:769). The *orang kaya* were not permitted arbitrary action, but rather important decisions were made with the aid of a village council (*saniri*), consisting of the elders of the various family groups and other interested parties (van Wouden 1968: 36). According to Langen, the positions of *rat* and *orang kaya* were hereditary through the eldest sons of the respective families (1888:770).[29]

In addition to the *orang kaya* and *kepala soa*, van Wouden (1968:36-37) identified four additional village functionaries: (1) *tuan tan*, (2) *mitu duan*, (3) *leb*, and (4) *dir-u ham-wang*. The *tuan tan*, or "lord of the land", is held by a *ren-ren* individual who is a descendant of the

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[29] Langen (1888: 770) reported that if there was no successor, a new chief would be elected by the natives of the district, who need not to be recognized by the Netherlands India Government.

founding clan of a village.[30] According to van Wouden (1968:36-37), this position was purely

titular in some location, but in others had remained important. If anyone wished to clear land

for new planting on village land, they had to inform the *tuan tan*. The *tuan tan* also performed

divination rituals concerning the success of crops, as well as aides in the settlement of disputes

over land (van Wouden 1968:36-7). The third and fourth village functionaries were the *mitu*

duan (the attendant of the local village spirit) and the *leb* (a religious official who administered

oaths and renders supernaturally-inspired judgments). A fifth position was that of the *dir-u*

ham-wang, which was the honorary post of "pilot" (*dir-u*) in the village ceremonial canoe

(*belang*) as well as the village carver of communally hunted large game (*ham-wang*) (van

Wouden 1968:36-7).

3.4   RANK, *ADAT*, AND TERRITORIALIZATION

The colonial process of "territorialization" (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995) involved the

establishment of "territorial administrations in newly conquered areas by consolidating the

population into definite groups under a centralized, hierarchical leadership through whom

colonial rule could be exercised" (McCarthy 2005:64). As in others parts of Indonesia,

territorialization in the Kei archipelago involved colonial attempts to restructure indigenous

forms of organization by identifying *adat* communities, negotiating boundaries between such

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[30] Van Wouden translated this position as "the official owner of all village lands" (1968:36). However, this translation is misleading based on the role of the *tuan tan* as well as the Kei system of land tenure (see Thorburn 2001; Adhuri 2004). I prefer the term "lord of the land" given the functions of the *tuan tan*.

communities, and fixing them on maps (see McCarthy 2005), with the ultimate goal of gaining strategic control of resources desired by the colonial state (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995:388). However, as Peluso (2005:2) argues, "[s]tate territorializations do not just happen; rather state actors must wrestle with contending demands and actions of individuals, communities, and other sub-state groups who want authority, jurisdiction, or control over land and resources and not simply access for use". In the Kei islands, the colonial process of territorialization intersected with local conceptions of rank, *adat*, and territory, resulting in the rearticulation of *adat* communities. In this section, I examine colonial attempts to gain territorial control of the Kei islands and the difficulties they faced as a result of "counter-territorializations" by Keiese political leaders. The impact of these interactions on Kei political organization and social hierarchy are highlighted.

While the Kei islands were claimed by the Dutch crown in 1874, according to the Italian explorer G. Emilio Cerutti, the islands in fact remained commercially and politically quite autonomous (Ellen 1987:47). In 1882 the Dutch colonial government strengthened its claim to the group by placing an official at Dullah (Langen 1888:769). In 1882, a Dutch "station" was established in the Kei Islands in the village of Dullah (Langen 1888). Then in 1889, the station (*posthouderschap*) was moved to Tual and enlarged to become a "district" (*onderafdelingen*), under the leadership of a "district officer" (*controlleur*) who had immediate contact with Kei leaders (Laksono 1990).

As in many other areas of Indonesia, the Dutch administration governed through local elites and constructed a system of indirect rule based on a colonial restructuring of existing forms of organization (McCarthy2005:63-64). From the early days of colonial administration,

the authority of Kei *rat* and *adat* law was recognized by the Dutch (Langen 1888:769). Although

the *rat* did not receive payments, they were often presented with silver mountings for their

walking sticks, engraved with the Dutch coat of arms. If a chief had rendered extraordinarily

praiseworthy service to the colonial regime, he was presented with an ornamented umbrella,

which his servants carried before him to protect him from the sun (Langen 1888:770).

The *controlleur*'s office promoted economic development and the rationalization of

local government (Thorburn 2008:125). Officials discouraged barter and attempted to increase

the circulation of money in the islands. They also introduced a head tax to promote the

marketing of products.[31] In addition, church and government-trained Keiese were provided

employment on other islands which produced remittances as one of the primary sources of

money (Thorburn 2008:125). At the same time, the Dutch attempted to resettle scatted groups

living in the hills into larger villages, and instructed villagers to abandon communal houses and

construct individual family dwellings. Officials attempted create clear boundaries between the

domains of the islands in order to create "a territorial system of government and land control"

(Thorburn 2008:125-126).

This two-pronged process of territorialization was not easily accomplished due to the

"capricious and high-handed antics" of many Kei *rat* (van Hoëvell 1890:102; cited in Thorburn

2008:126), as well as the frequent disputes and conflicts over land and sea boundaries and

resources (see Adatrechbundels 1925a, 1925b). For example, from 1915 to 1926, the

controlleur of Tual attempted to create a map of all village and *ratschap* boundaries. However,

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[31] The duty of collecting the head tax was given by the colonial state to the Kei *rat* and this contributed
to their authority at that time (see Kaartinen 1997:17).

due to the complex and contested nature of *adat* territories, this mapping project was largely a failure (Thorburn 2008:126).[32]

Beginning in 1911, the *controlleur* in Tual attempted to diminish the influence of the conservative and powerful *rat* by promoting and appointing village heads with the title *orang kaya*. The *orang kaya* were presented with letters of appointment giving them territorial and administrative control over village lands. They were also provided with silver-knobbed walking sticks, a privilege once reserved for *rat* (Laksono 1990:108; Thorburn 2008:126). At the same time, the Dutch disregarded the position of *tuan tan*, whose territorial authority declined in many villages.[33] By the 1930's, it became apparent to the Dutch administration that they had created a situation in which they had to contend with over a hundred leaders rather than nineteen *rat*. This, in addition to the frequency of inter-village and inter-*ratschap* disputes, resulted in another colonial attempt to gain territorial control of the islands.

The Dutch decided to intervene at the supra-*ratschap* level, by working with the leaders of the two political moieties (*ur siu* and *lor lim*) of the islands in order to develop *adat* legal entities to facilitate conflict resolution and indirect rule (Thorburn 2008:127). The colonial government established of a council of chiefs called *Groote Raad van Hoofden* to settle disputes and other matters that were once the domain of individual *rat*. With the establishment of the

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[32] Thorburn identifies the following factors that complicated this mapping project: (1) the existence of neutral (*lor labai*) territories, (2) the existence of territories controlled by more than one *ratschap* (called *koensi*, usually lands captured in war), (3) the overlapping and conflicting claims to resources, and (4) the fact that some clans may control or have access rights to resources in more than one *ratschap*. (2008:126).

[33] Admiraal (1939), Klerks (1939) and van Wouden (1968), all writing in the 1930's, reported that although the office of *tuan tan* in some locations was purely titular, in others it retained a prominent role in the territorial organization of villages.

Groote Raad van Hoofden, *orang kaya*, *kepala soa* or other villagers could appeal the decision

of *rat* to a higher authority (Admiraal 1939; Thorburn 2008:127). However, the *saniri* or village

adat councils continued to play an important role in village government (Thorburn 2008:127).

This system remained in place until the outbreak of World War II.

The effects of colonial attempts at territorialization on the polities of the Kei islands

were complex. However, several important changes to Kei governance may be identified. First,

by the end of Dutch colonialism, Kei diarchy was effectively transformed into a "caste" system

made up of three ascribed ranks. Since all Dutch appointees were individuals of *mel-mel* rank,

the relationship between the *mel-mel* and *ren-ren* was transformed from one of "brotherhood"

to one of unequal status (Laksono 1990; Thorburn 2008:127). By empowering *ratschap* and

village leaders (i.e., *rat* and *orang kaya*) while ignoring the position of *tuan tan*, they created an

accumulation of power in the hands of the *mel-mel* leaders (see Van Wouden 1968:140-41;

Laksono 1990:108; Hooe 1996, 1999; Adhuri 2006; Yanuarti et al. 2006:54; Thorburn 2005;

2008). Dutch indirect rule "strengthened the position of chiefly groups over the last one

hundred years and sustained an interpretation of status by which kings and chiefs are all

identified with *mel-mel* who then rule all different levels of community, segmented into

individual domains (*ratschap*), villages, hamlets, and clans" (Kaartinen 2009:232).

3.5   KEI ORIGIN NARRATIVES AND REPRESENTATIONS OF THE PAST

Given the contested nature of Kei social hierarchy and political organization, it is perhaps not

surprising that perceptions of the past may vary from one social unit to the next. Generally

speaking, a person's perception of the past depends upon a number of factors such as their rank, clan affiliation, and village and *utan* membership. The competing versions of history which exist throughout Kei society often become manifest in the context of disputes, when individuals or groups invoke connections to past events to justify rights or make claims to specific resources or political offices.

History and historical authenticity are indeed lively concerns in Kei society. Although well aware of the multiple versions of past that exist throughout their island world, most Keiese believe that a true and authentic version of the past does exist. As an anthropologist studying Kei history (*sejarah*) and culture (*kebudayaan*), I was sometimes offered the task of collecting the "authentic history" (*sejarah yang asli*) of the Kei islands. I was often informed of those who do and do not know authentic history, and was frequently instructed by many Keiese as to whom I should and should not interview. Although I politely declined the impossible task collecting an authentic Kei history, I nonetheless inquired into the meaning of historical authenticity to the Keiese, and simultaneously sought to make sense of the alternate and competing visions of the past.

Fox (2008:201) has argued that "a preoccupation with origins is one of the distinguishing features of Austronesian societies". "The Austronesians were and continue to be predominately mobile and their construction of society reflects a culture of mobility. Thus conceptions of the past, at whatever level they are enunciated, recount the movement and involvement of different ancestors and ancestral groups, resulting in narratives of multiple origins and the amalgamation of these groups in shaping present societies (Fox 2009: 6-7; also see Reuter 2006). The Kei islanders, too, demonstrate this preoccupation with origins.

In the Kei islands, a narrative genre called *tom* (meaning "basis" or "origin") is arguably to most important feature of Keiese epistemology of origins. These "origin narratives"[34] (Adhuri 2008), or "origin histories" (Reuter 2006), "impart and impose order in the Kei social world" (Thorburn 2008:117) by recounting the origins of particular social, political or territorial units as well as the relations among such units. *Tom* describe the formation and origins of domains, villages, clans, alliances, wars, and migrations of people into and around the Kei archipelago (Adhuri 2006:398). Some *tom* narratives recount the union of immigrant and autochthonous populations and, thus, explain the origin Kei diarchy and the relations between *mel-mel* and *ren-ren*. Other *tom* describe the origin of kings (*rat*), domains, villages, or relationships between *fam* of a particular village or domain. Perhaps the most important, or at least the most prominent in aristocratic historiography, are *tom* which trace the origin and spread of Kei *adat* law (*Larvul Ngabal*) and the rise of Kei *rat*.

The entire social and political history of the Kei islands is conveyed through *tom* narratives, which in turn explain and mediate social (and territorial) order and structure (Thorburn 2008). The Keiese believe that historical events described in the *tom* are factual (Adhuri 2006; also see Geurtjens 1924) and that the truth of a particular narrative in the Kei Islands depends upon the presence of "proof" (*tad* or *bukti*). In recounting a village history to me, one informant succinctly put it, "Everything that happens, happens with proof" (*"Semua Yang terjadi, terjadi dengan bukti"*). The most common forms of proof given by Keiese when

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[34] Kaartinen (2009:230) refers to *tom* as "myths of origin". I prefer Adhuri's translation as "narratives of origin" since the Keiese believe that most events described in *tom* are factual (Adhuri 2006: 398).

presenting an origin narrative are heirloom objects, songs (*ngelngel*), landmarks, stones, and even processes of nature (see Kaartinen 2001; Adhuri 2006:405-407; Thorburn 2008:118).

Kei origin narratives, and the songs and artifacts that validate claims made within them, were often used as evidence in the indigenous courts set up by the Dutch in early 20th century (Kaartinen 2001:109). More recently, new forms of evidence or historical proof have emerged in the Kei islands and are sometimes presented along with *tom* to justify claims to political positions or resources. These include symbols of political office, maps, and a variety of written documents including colonial contracts and decisions, letters of appointment, genealogies, and more recently, legal documents and a variety of notarized statements of local history (also see F. and K. von Benda Beckmann 1994; Ellen 1997).

Through *tom* narratives, the Kei past is inscribed in the physical landscape (see Figure 35). This is a common feature of the origin histories many Austronesian-speaking peoples (Reuter 2006:11; Parmentier 1987; Errington 1989; Hoskins 1993, 1998; Ellen 1997; Erb 1997; Fox 1997a, 1997b; Pannell 1997b; Grimes 1997; Roseman 2003).[35] As Reuter (2006:19) notes, "social history tends to be depicted as a temporal sequence of events identified with named locations, which are all part of the pathway of an ancestral journey and can be ranked according to their proximity to the point of origin. This often gives rise to place-based models of human relatedness or 'topogenies'" (also see Fox 1997b). As in Belauan historical consciousness (see Parmentier 1987: 11-15), Keiese objectifications of past events constitute "signs of history"

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[35] This is also very similar to "emplacement", or "physical and social positionality within an area" (Stewart and Strathern 2005:207, also see Stewart and Strathern 2003), in a variety of Papua New Guinea societies. Expressive genres such as songs and stories "fix place-names in emotive experience and build up a soundscape which in turn forms a landscape" (Strathern and Stewart 2005:8, also see Stewart and Strathern 2005).

and "signs in history", since they both function to signify past events (i.e. signs of history), as well as become the focus of contemporary struggles for power and meaning (i.e., "signs in history").

Figure 35. Landmark near Fer related to the origin of *Hukum Ngabal*

Tom are used to explain the distribution of power within and between different ranks or groups, as well as to make claims to particular resources and political positions (see Geurtjens 1924:iii). Kei origin narratives "define relations between different villages, clans, and castes – who is ruling; who is ruled; and who controls what, when and where…These historical narratives are fundamental to setting out the rank, roles and responsibilities of particular clans and families within each village, and who has the right to own, use or pass through land and sea territories – more importantly perhaps, who has the right to determine who may own use or pass." (Thorburn 2008:118). *Tom*, therefore, are the source for legitimizing claims over objects,

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resources, or positions.[36] "As a consequence, when there is a contest of precedence, people engage in crafting, modifying or contesting narratives of origin which, then, makes them able to claim a precedence position in relation to others or particular object(s)" (Adhuri 2006:393). In the context of disputes, individuals attempt to construct truthful representations of past events and *tom* are frequently recited during *adat* hearings to settle territorial or resource disputes (Thorburn 2008:118).

The nature of origin narratives and historical proof in the Kei Islands provide certain constraints on the manipulation of history (see Appadurai 1989). By inscribing history in certain objects or in song, the truth of the events is not called into question since the proof already exists.[37] This does not, however, prevent the contestation of the past. When individuals narrate a particular *tom*, they are claiming that "they should be recognized as representatives of the ancestral characters" who are featured in the narrative. In the Kei islands, it is this linkage between contemporary narrators and the ancestral characters of *tom* that is usually contested by members of an audience. These contestations are made possible, in part, due to the fact that, throughout the Kei islands, the autochthonous founders of some houses are claimed to have "vanished", "disappeared", "died out" or to have become "extinct" (*punah*) (Adhuri 2006:402-3; Kaartinen 2007:167, 2008:210, 2009:240). In many cases, new people have been

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[36] In this sense, Kei *tom* are analogous to the *malu* origin stories of the Duna of Papua New Guinea. According to Strathern and Stewart (2000b:122), *malu* inscribe origins and movement in the landscape and have been used to make claims to resources.

[37] As Geurtjens argued, when individuals recite a narrative to make a claim to a territory, the "other party cannot think of contradicting the previous account: he simply counters the plaintiff's account with his own myth…He does not even think of proving wrong the premises of his opponent…He simply denies his story, not because the improbable events cited in it, but because he will not accept the implications" (Geurtjens 1924:iii; cited in Kaartinen 2001:109).

recruited to fill the house (Kaartinen 2009:240) and the new occupants then adopt the clan name (*fam*) of the original house founders.[38] In addition, the long history of migration population movements throughout the Kei islands, and eastern Indonesia in general, problematizes claims to precedence at the local level and contributes further to the contested nature of history in the Kei islands.

3.6   KEI *ADAT* AND THE ORIGINS OF *LARVUL NGABAL*

The term "*adat*" is from Arabic and is widely used throughout Indonesia (Spyer 1996, Tsing 2009). *Adat*, which is somewhat analogous to Melanesian "kastom" (see Tonkinson 1982; Keesing 1982, 1993), is a term widely used throughout Indonesia to refer to a constellation of concepts, structures, and practices such as tradition, custom, norms for behavior, ritual, and law. In some areas of contemporary Indonesia, *adat* is conceptualized rather broadly as a "gloss for the allegedly immutable cultural forms that are held to distinguish one collectivity…from another". In other cases, *adat* is defined more strictly as "customary law" (Spyer 1996:28). In the Kei islands, *adat* is a term used to refer to all of these things (and even more), but in contemporary times, *adat* as customary law has become paramount in elite representations and discourse.

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[38] Such is the case with fam Matdoan of Langgiar Fer and its splinter villages. It is explained that the original *fam* Matdoan became "extinct". Later immigrants from a small island off the south coast of Kei Kecil settled in Langgiar Fer and occupied the house and adopted the *fam* name of the original members.

During colonial times, both Dutch administrators and Christian missionaries attempted to understand and use *adat* while prohibiting certain aspects of it (Vel 2008: 66). The Dutch sought to rigidify and contain *adat* under a pluralistic framework (McWilliam 2006:54). It was in this context that a legalistic and political interpretation of *adat* (Spyer 1996:28) was established during the late Colonial period (late 19th and early 20th centuries). "The history of the colonial Dutch East Indies was one in which *adat* or customary law and practice came to be recognized and supported as a viable and appropriate system by which the bulk of the population could be effectively and 'ethically' governed" (McWilliams 2006:49-50).[39]

To assist in the creation of a plural legal order in the Netherlands East Indies, van Vollenhoven and his colleagues at Leiden University attempted to codify *adat* law (Dutch, *adatrecht*) throughout the archipelago in the early 20th Century. This work resulted in the identification of 19 primary *adat* law areas (see Ter Haar 1948) and the compilation of case law in the many volumes of *Adatrechbundels* (Duncan 2009; Vel 2008).[40] Although the liberalist goals of van Vollenhoven and his Leiden colleagues were never realized (McWilliam 2006:49), the effects of colonial policy on the meanings and practices of *adat* throughout Indonesia should not be underestimated. In the Kei islands, the Dutch upheld the "tribal laws of the natives" (Langen 1888:769) and promoted *adat* legal entities to maintain order and facilitate Dutch indirect rule (Thorburn 2008:126), setting the stage for the articulations of *adat* in post-Independence times.

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[39] It should be pointed out that the promotion of *adat* law by the Dutch was also a strategy to counter the effects of Islamic law throughout the archipelago (Duncan 2009).
[40] See Adatrechtbundels (1925a, 1925b) for some of the case law compiled from the Kei Islands.

Kei *adat* law is known as *Larvul Ngabal* (*Larvul* means "red blood" and *Ngabal* means "spear from Bali") (see Howes 1987; Rahail 1993). Arguably one of the most elaborate and formal *adat* law codes in Maluku (Thorburn 2008.115), *Larvul Ngabal* is comprised of seven edicts (see Figure 36) that are further divided into three categories of law: (1) *Hukum Nevnev* (edicts 1-4), (2) *Hukum Hanilit* (edicts 5-6) and (3) *Hawear Balwarin* (edict 7) (Rahail 1993; Adhuri 2006; Thorburn 2008). These three categories of law are sometimes translated as "criminal law" (Hukum Nevnev), "family law" (Hukum Hanilit), and "property law" (Hawear Balwarin) (Thorburn 2008:119).

The Seven Edicts of Larvul Ngabal

1. *Uud entauk na atvunad* (Our head rests on the nape of our neck)
2. *Lelad ain fo mahiling* (Our neck is respected, glorified)
3. *Uil nit enwil rumud* (The skin made of soil covers our body)
4. *Lar nakmot na rumud* (Blood is contained in our body)
5. *Rek fo kilmutun* (Marriage should be conducted properly and kept pure)
6. *Morjain fo mahilin* (The woman's place is respected, glorified)
7. *Hira ini fo ini, it did fo it did* (Theirs is theirs, ours is ours)

Source: Adhuri (2006:400)

Figure 36. The seven edicts of *Larvul Ngabal*

Larvul Ngabal provides a basic framework for Kei socio-political order (Thorburn 2008:118). With regard to Kei political organization, *adat* law specifies the ascendancy of the noble rank (*mel-mel*) and maintains the purity of Kei social classification. For example, the first edict above is interpreted by high-ranking Keiese as "proof" of their superior position (i.e., the "head"), as well as the obligation of *ren-ren* and *iri-ri* to obey and glorify the *mel-mel* leaders. In

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addition, edicts five and six support the practice of rank endogamy and the maintenance of

social boundaries (Adhuri 2006:400). Sanctions for violations of Kei *adat* law vary according to

the offense committed and may range from public humiliation, the payment of fines in the

form of gongs, brass cannons or gold, exile, or death by drowning or live burial (Thorburn

2008:119).[41] Inter-rank marriages or sexual relations tend to be severely punished (see

Geurtjens 1921; Kasihiuw 1994). For example, if a man marries a woman of lower rank, he "falls

down" to the lower rank, but if a man dare marry a woman from a higher rank, a crime worse

than incest or adultery, the punishment is death or exile (Geurtjens 1921).

This close relationship between *adat* and social hierarchy in the Kei islands is better

understood after examining the origins of Larvul Ngabal. The introduction and spread of *Larvul*

Ngabal throughout the Kei islands is recounted in numerous origin narratives (*tom*). While

there are countless *tom* related to the emergence of *Larvul Ngabal*, in both oral and written

form (see Geurtjens 1921: 179-83; Gielen 1977; Setitit 1980; Rahail 1993), I will present here

only the general pattern of these narratives, rather than "freeze" in print one particular version.

For the purposes of this dissertation, the most significant aspect of all versions is that *adat* law

was introduced to Kei and spread throughout the archipelago by the ancestors of the chiefly

class and is under the guardianship of local rulers (*rat*) (Geurtjens 1921:179).

When the Kei Islanders remember their golden age of enlightenment they do not mean

the coming of religion, but the creation of *adat* law (Laksono 2002a). Many Kei islanders claim

that before the arrival of *adat* law, they lived in a time of darkness. People did not wear clothes,

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[41] Kei islanders reported that in the past, the death penalty was common although such a penalty is
unheard of in contemporary times.

theft and robbery were widespread, and there were no rules governing sexual relations (Geurtjens 1924:108; Howes 1987:9; Thorburn 2008:122). There were, however, number of important "big men" (*helaai*) throughout the archipelago. It is in this context that the emergence of *Larvul Ngabal* and the rise of Kei kings is said to have occurred.

The creation of *Larvul Ngabal* followed the arrival of a family of nobles from Bali. The male head of this family was named Kasdew, said to be a representative of god (*dewa*). It was Kasdew who is credited with the introduction of "Law" throughout the Kei archipelago (Geurtjens 1921:180-81). He and his wife, Dit Ratngil, settled in a village called Ohoivuur (near present day Letvuan) and had a number of children. Kasdew's sons, Tebtut and Jangra, played significant roles in the spread of *Larvul Ngabal* and the installation of *rat* throughout the Kei islands. Kasdew's daughter, named Dit Sakmas (see Figure 37), was another paramount figure in all versions of the history of Kei *adat*. Each member of this noble Balinese family became important culture heroes of the Kei islands.

Kasdew's eldest son, Tebtut, became the first chief (*rat*) in the Kei islands (in Ohoivuur). At that time, Dit Sakmas, travelled the island on a water buffalo in search of a husband. She met a *helaai* from Wain who wanted to marry her but she declined, instead taking an oath of siblingship with this "big man". Because of the lawlessness of the islands at the time, Dit Sakmas, during her first trip, was accosted and robbed by a group of men, so she returned to Ohoivuur. During a second trip, she set out along the east coast of Kei Kecil on a buffalo adorned with *hawear* (plaited leaves from a young coconut frond) to warn off potential thieves. She met Arnuhu, a "big man" from the village of Danar. Arnuhu wanted to marry Dit Sakmas and he took her to his mother's village of Elaar where they were wed.

Figure 37. Men carrying effigy of Dit Sakmas during installation ritual for the *Rat* of Tetoat

Following their marriage, Dit Sakmas' brother, Tebtut, held a gathering of nine *helaai* from Danar, Ngursoin, Elaar, Mastur, Wain, Marfun, Ohoinol, Yatvav, and Ohoidertutu. During this gathering, an alliance was formed between these nine leaders and *Larvul* law was created. Tebtut sacrificed the water buffalo that was used by Dit Sakmas during her travels, referred to as *kerbau siu* (the "nine buffalo") and divided it among the nine *helaai* as a symbol of their alliance. This distribution of the water buffalo symbolized the creation of the nine-moiety (*ur-siu*) in the Kei archipelago (see Valeri 1989 for an explanation of this moiety system). Tebtut installed Arnuhu as the *rat* of Danar who was given the "*Larvul* staff" as a sign of his office.

The formation of *Ngabal* law followed the creation of *Larvul* law.[42] This occurred after Tebtut's younger brother, Jangra, sailed with 30 Balinese spears (*nganga*) to the village of Ler

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[42] Some *rat* (e.g., those installed following the formation of Ngabal law) claim that Ngabal law preceded Larvul law.

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Ohoilim on Kei Besar. Jangra invited five *helaai* from the villages of Fer, Nerong, Uwat, Tutrean and Langgiar. During this gathering, *Ngabal* law was created. The Balinese spears (*nganga*) were distributed to the five "big men" (*helaai*) as a symbol of the Law (Geurtjens 1921:182). In addition, a whale was captured and divided among the five helaai, symbolizing the creation of the five moiety (*lor lim*) in the Kei islands. The *helaai* of Fer was installed as the *rat* of *lor lim*. Some versions of the *tom* claim that *Rat* Bomav married Jangra's daughter Dit Somar.

One version of the *tom* from southern Kei Besar claims that the alliance was organized by *helaai* Bomav of Fer. Leaders from Nerong, Langgiar, Weduar, Tutrean, and Uwat gathered with Bomav and Jangra in Ler Ohoilim. Balinese spears brought by Jangra were placed at the village ritual center of Fer, *Woma* El Kel Bui. A dragon (*Nang Lor Lim Uut*) was captured and divided among these five leaders. Fer received the head symbolizing its role as seat of the *rat*. Langgiar received the teeth, Tutrean the right hand, Weduar the left hand, Nerong the stomach, and Uwat the tail. The dragon and Balinese spear, thus, became important symbols of *adat* law for the domain of *Rat* Fer (see Figure 38).

The combined events in Danar on Kei Kecil and Ler Ohoilim on Kei Besar resulted in the creation of Kei *adat* law, Larvul Ngabal.[43] In both settings, one of Kasdew's sons created an alliance based on the "Law", installed a new chief, and ordered him to uphold and promulgate *Larvul Ngabal* (Howes 1987:9). The spread of *Larvul Ngabal* and the installation of new chiefs or "kings" throughout the Kei archipelago "was normally effected by the transfer of some

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[43] As Thorburn (2008) notes, some origin narratives claim that the *Larvul Ngabal* originated at the Ler Ohoilim meeting and later spread to the *Ur Siu* groups in Kei Kecil, while others say that the *Ur Siu* group formulated the first four edicts while the remaining three emerged at the *Lor Lim* meeting. In these latter versions, *Larvul Ngabal* was only complete following the union of the two parts.

article associated" with these noble Balinese immigrants (Howes 1987:9). Through a variety of such transactions, nineteen *rat* were eventually installed throughout the Kei islands.

Figure 38. Banner of the *Lor Lim* dragon hanging in *Rat* Fer's home in Tual

The spread of *Larvul Ngabal* throughout the Kei archipelago occurred largely from south to north. In Kei, the south is referred to as "up above" while the north is "down below", with the "up above" being seen as hierarchically superior. The movement of *adat* law from Danar and Fer, both villages that are "up above", to the 17 other *rat* throughout the Kei archipelago, created an order of precedence based on degrees of proximity to the origin of *Larvul Ngabal.* This precedence is enshrined in the origin narratives (*tom*) as well as inscribed in the landscape in named sacred sites that provide proof (*tad*) of the origin and spread of *Larvul Ngabal.*

Generally speaking, the closer a *rat*, and thus their contemporary descendants, to the source of *adat* law, the more authority and power they are able to claim in matters of *adat*.[44] But regardless of a particular *rat*'s place in such a scheme, all Kei *rat*, from both the "nine" and the "five" moieties, became the owners and guardians of Kei *adat* law. The *tom* describing the origins and spread of Kei *adat* law, I would argue, clearly claim *Larvul Ngabal* as a proprietary domain of *mel-mel* leaders. In the Kei islands, at least from a *mel-mel* point of view, knowledge of and expertise in *adat* are claimed to be noble prerogatives.[45]

3.7   THE ORIGIN OF *RAT* BOMAV

According to the origin narratives concerning the creation of *Larvul Ngabal* and the installation of Kei *rat*, the *helaai* of Fer was installed as the first *rat* of Kei Besar. Because of their historical and spatial proximity to the origins of *Larvul Ngabal* and the *rat* of Fer, the *mel-mel* of southern Kei Besar claim that their domain is culturally and politically superior to the domains "down below" on Kei Besar (i.e., to the north). They conceptualize Kei Besar as a dragon (*naga*) with its head (or brain) in southern Kei Besar and represented by *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim. The dragon's stomach is in central Kei Besar and represented by *Ratschap* Lo Ohoitel and its tail is in the north and represented by *Ratschap* Maur Ohoivuut.

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[44] In the 1990's, ceremonies surrounding the installation of *rat* usually included origin narratives or songs linking the particular *rat* to the origins of *adat* law, thereby legitimizing rights to the position.

[45] During my fieldwork, I was often told by high-ranking Keiese that lower ranking people really don't "know" *adat*, and therefore should be excluded as sources of data. Similar relationships between rank and *adat* may be found in other Indonesian societies as well (e.g., McKinnon 1991:105; Rössler and Röttger-Rössler 1996:37).

The claim to higher status in such a conceptualization is reflected in and "proven" by one particular *tom* recounted by villagers from Weduar Fer. The *tom* is about a large eagle living in at the southern end of Kei Besar. Like other Kei *tom*, the narrative includes proof (*tad*) to validate its authenticity and to justify certain rights that are claimed in the narrative. In this story, a large cave-dwelling serpent was creating havoc among the inhabitants of northern Kei Besar. After seeking help from many *rat* of Kei Kecil (including Wain, Rumat, Danar, and Tetoat), the weary inhabitants travelled to southern Kei Besar to ask for help. The people of southern Kei Besar assured them that the eagle which inhabits a cliff-side cave on the southeast coast of the island is capable of defeating the giant serpent. In the words of one man from Weduar Fer:

> ...The eagle flew to northern Kei Besar. Outside the cave of the serpent, he ordered a mosquito to enter the cave and to bite the serpent to see if it was asleep. The serpent was sound asleep, so the eagle called on all of the claw-bearing birds from the area. They entered the cave and grabbed the serpent and carried him all the way to Dobo. In Dobo there is a cape. The Eagle and his bird friends rested there. They placed the serpent down. When the birds picked the serpent up to continue on their journey, his skin was left behind. As a result, that cape is now referred to as Cape of the Serpent (*Tanjung Ular*). After that, the eagle and his associates carried the serpent all the way to the northern part of Kei Besar, where he was laid down to die. The serpent's body later turned into a wavy crystal line...There is still proof. If we pass by the villages of Mun and Ad, there is proof. During low tide, you can see there is a long stone in the shape of a serpent. Because the eagle was able to kill the serpent, there is a connection between northern and southern Kei Besar. If we go there, we can take whatever we want and they can't get mad. When we are there, we must be served and respected. If we have a *belang* race with them, we will certainly be victorious.

The above *tom* conceptualizes the *adat* domain of southern Kei Besar as powerful and superior to the domains "down below" and helps to validate claims to precedence with regard to the origins of Kei *adat* law.

The origin of the *rat* of Fer, the head of the southernmost domain of Kei Besar, is recounted in another well-known *tom* from the area. The first *rat* of Fer, named Bomav, is considered to be the apical ancestor of *fam* Rahayaan (from Fer) which controls rights to the position of *rat* in contemporary times.[46] These rights are justified by the aristocracy of southern Kei Besar through a *tom* that recounts the origins of Bomav and his four siblings:[47]

> According to the stories of our elders, long ago we had three ancestors who lived in the sky (*langit*). There were three males, Bomav, Sedes, and Far-Far, with their two sisters Bukil and Maslan. According to the story, Bomav and his brothers came down from the sky first. The place where they landed was near the current village of Uat. They had two dogs that also came down. Then their sister, Bukil, came down. When a second sister, Maslan, descended, the brothers looked up. That was not polite so Maslan returned to the sky. So there were four of them that came down…three brothers and one sister. They lived, day by day, by hunting and fishing. One of them made palm wine. Then Bukil became pregnant. The brothers were suspicious of each other…that one of them impregnated her. They determined that it wasn't one of them but Bukil had become pregnant after

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[46] The *rat* of Fer in 1996, Abdul Gani Rahayaan, claimed that he was a direct descendent of Bomav and that he was the twelfth *rat* of Fer.

[47] Versions of this *tom* were collected in the late 1800's and early 1900's by Planten (1892), Langen (1902), and Geurtjens (1924). Based on the writings of Langen (1902:52), Planten (1892:280) and Geurtjens (1924:231), Van Wouden (1968:39-40) summarizes these earlier versions: "Langen relates a myth about three brothers, Hian, Tongiil, and Parpara, who lived in the sky with their sisters, Bukil and Meslaang. Parpara, who was always going fishing in the cloud-sea, lost the hook belonging to his eldest brother Hian. The latter was angry and ordered him to find the hook, which he succeeded in doing with the help of a fish. Parpara brought it about that his elder brother tipped over a bowl of palm wine belonging to him and Hian could not pay back the spilled wine. In order to find the palm wine he had to dig a hole in the ground, and in doing so he discovered the earth lying below him. The three brothers went down and called for their sisters to do so too; Meslaang let herself down on the rope, and when the brothers looked up and saw her pudenda they were deeply ashamed and called her to pull the rope back up. Langen adds that the place where the three brothers, their sister and four dogs landed is called Wuat, a mountain on Kei Besar. According to Planten, Bukil was already down when the incident with Meslaang took place. Geurtjens writes that the women were called Dit-il and Meslaang, and that they both turned back when their brothers looked up and laughed at the sight of their pudenda. The brothers descended near Mastur, where the people took them to be good-for nothings who had been chased out of heaven by God. A contest was arranged in order to determine who among them were really such and who were good. The contest (by dragging the bamboos) was won by the sky-people, who then proposed another one, which was to hold back the tide. The earth dwellers strove unavailingly with their paddles. The brothers set to work at the tide turned, and won the contest without difficulty. The earth dwellers now gave them women to marry. Seven sons were born who dispersed to all parts."

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going fishing for *kilbobanring* [a type of fish]. When she came back and was cleaning the fish, the fin contacted her breast and she became pregnant. After her brothers discovered her pregnancy, they decided to cast her out to sea. They made a raft and equipped it with necessities, and sent her off on the east coast of southern Kei Besar. She floated and eventually arrived near Fak-Fak [West Papua]. During her journey, she stopped at a small island called Tuburfin. There, she ate and drank water from bamboo. When the water was gone, she planted the bamboo. That island is not too far from Adi Island [West Papua]. The bamboo that she planted continues to grow to this day [proof for the *tom*]. After that, she continued with her journey to Warbay, a mountain on the northern side of Adi Island. When she was there, she ran into a person from the village of Tota. He brought her to Tota and she married there. Because Bukil had the status of *raja*, the person who married her became *raja*. Bukil and the raja of Tota then had children.

When Bukil was cast to sea, her brothers requested that if she were to arrive somewhere and have a good life, she should send them a sign so they know she is still alive. Bukil's family on Adi Island often fished. One day she spotted a puffer fish (*ikan bibi*) along the shore. She caught the fish and said to the fish, "You must go to Kei and tell my family that I am still alive, and that I am married and have children". Therefore every March until May, those fish always come here [more proof for the *tom*]. Those fish, if other people eat it, they will die, but we here know how to prepare the fish and eat it. The Puffer fish come to the east coast, around the tip of southern Kei Besar to Weduar Fer, then to Rerean, Dufin Island and then back to Irian.

The three siblings lived along the eastern side of southern Kei Besar, but as time went on, they moved. Bomav moved to Fer, whereas Sedes and Far-Far moved to Langgiar. But the descendants of Sedes (*fam* Matdoan) no longer exist today. The original Matdoan do not exist anymore (*punah*). The Matdoan that are here now are all immigrants, and only use the name Matdoan. Bomav, he was the first *raja*. This is the way it has been until now. Bomav was the founding member of *fam* Rahayaan, while Far-Far gave rise to *fam* Raharusun, a portion of whom later changed their name to Far-Far. The *fam* name Rahayaan fits with this. *Rahan* means house and *yaan* means eldest child. So Rahayaan means "the house that was born from the eldest son". According to Kei custom, the eldest son has more authority than younger brothers. If there were no descendants of *fam* Rahayaan to replace the *raja*, *fam* Far-Far would have rights since Matdoan no longer exists.

According to local interpretations, this *tom* establishes that Bomav, Sedes, and Far-Far

were not the autochthonous inhabitants of the area. According to versions of the *tom* reported

by van Wouden (1968:39-40), the autochthonous inhabitants originally "took them to be good-for nothings who had been chased out of heaven by God":

> A contest was arranged in order to determine who among them were really such and who were good. The contest (by dragging the bamboos) was won by the sky-people, who then proposed another one, which was to hold back the tide. The earth dwellers strove unavailingly with their paddles. The brothers set to work at the tide turned, and won the contest without difficulty. The earth dwellers now gave them women to marry. Seven sons were born who dispersed to all parts.

The inhabitants of southern Kei Besar also acknowledge that there were already people living in the area when the "sky people" arrived. The *fam* of Lesomar and Tawain are acknowledged as the autochthonous inhabitants of the area, and these two *fam* control rights to the position of *tuan tan* in Weduar Fer and Rerean, respectively. As one *ren-ren* individual stated, "because the siblings were immigrants, and at that time there was plenty of available land, Bomav, Sedes, and Far-Far were viewed as being knowledgeable and possessing many experiences. Thus, these siblings were made leaders in this area by the autochthonous inhabitants. During a 1994 interview, the *rat* of Fer explained:

> So the three brothers lived near the current school. The siblings divided tasks and roles within society because more and more immigrants would eventually come to the area. Bomav was given the task of king. Sedes eventually vanished [i.e., there are no contemporary descendants]. Then *Ngabal* law arrived from Bali and the *rat* of Fer was installed. Bomav was inaugurated and held the authority of the Law for all of *lor lim*…There is factual proof.

In addition to establishing claims to leadership, the origin narrative about Bomav, Sedes and Far-Far also establishes the territorial boundaries of Bomav's domain (including *Utan* Fer Ohoitel and Mel Yamfaak). Many of the land and sea boundaries are established by events related the three siblings' dogs, named Wakar and Waful. For example, the eastern coastal boundary was created one day when the brothers took the dogs hunting. One of the dogs

chased a lizard from the mountain down to the beach just south of the village of Kilwat. The lizard jumped into the water to escape the dog, and turned to stone. This stone is referred to as *watbuu* ("lizard stone") and can be seen during low tide. The other dog turned to stone on the mountain next to Kilwat and represents an inland boundary.

3.8   THE ORIGIN OF FER OHOITEL

Fer is considered to be one of the original village settlements in the southernmost area of Kei Besar, formed through a union of the autochthonous inhabitants and the three immigrant siblings, Bomav, Sedes, and Far-Far. Fer witnessed village fissioning on multiple occasions since its formation, resulting in a number of new settlements (see Figure 39). The village of Fer gave rise to the following villages of southern Kei Besar: Langgiar Fer, Tamngil Nuhuyanat, Rerean, Hako, and Ngurko. The fissioning of Fer also resulted in the formation of the *utan* alliances of Fer Ohoitel and Mel Yamfaak. As a result of the village fissioning that has occurred over the years, Fer now consists entirely of individuals of *mel-mel* rank.

Langgiar Fer is said to be the first village that split from Fer. According to villagers from Fer and Langgiar Fer, the village of Langgiar Fer split from Fer as a result of the arrival of Islam in Fer.[48] This split likely took place sometime between the late 1600's and the mid-1700's. Dortsman did not mention Langgiar during his visit in the mid-17th century (Heeres 1921), but late-19th Century maps clearly identify the village (Planten and Wertheim 1893; Riedel 1886;

[48] As previously mentioned, Dortsman noted the presence of Butonese Muslims in the village of Fer in 1646 (Heeres 1886).

Langen 1888). Langgiar Fer, in turn, fissioned on multiple occasions, giving rise to a number of

villages and resulting in the *utan* alliance of Mel Yamfaak.
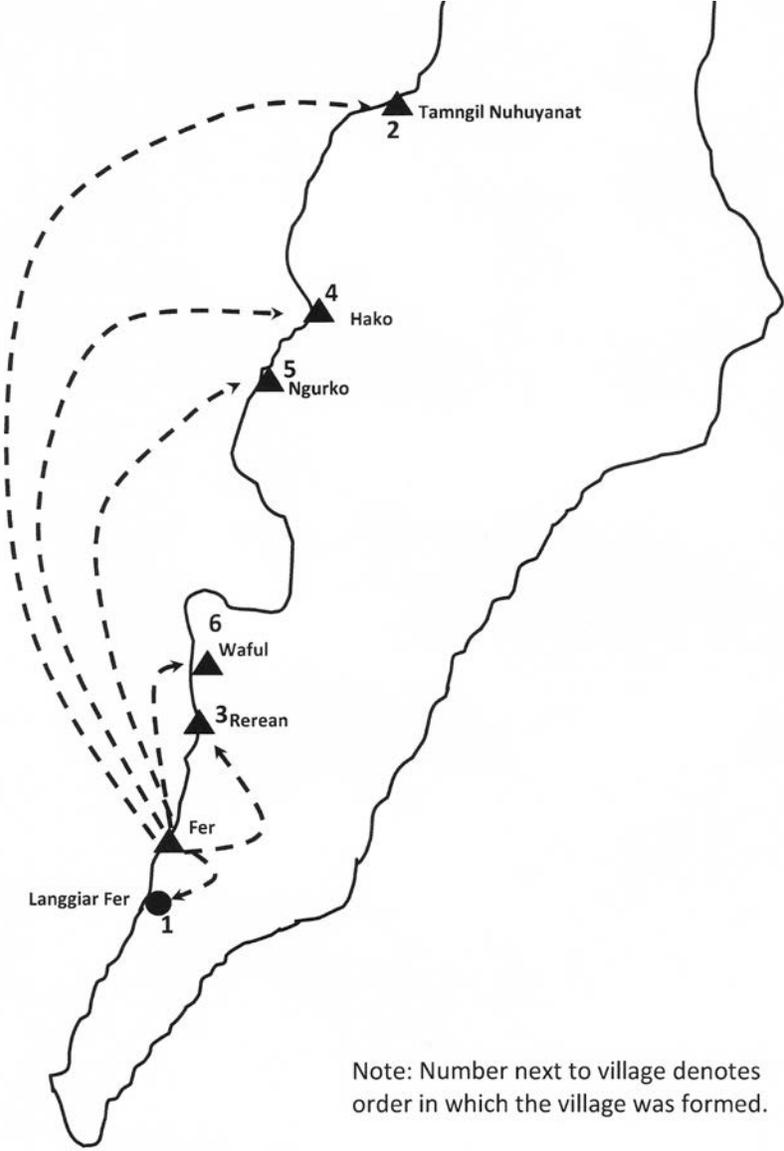
Figure 39. Fissioning of Fer

Rerean[49] (see Figure 40) is another village that split from Fer early on. Many informants claim that it moved after the arrival of Islam to the village of Fer. In 1646, Dortsman identified a village under the *rat* of Wera [Fer] called Werevan (Heeres 1921), and this is likely Rerean. Maps from the late 19th century clearly identify the village of Rerean (Planten and Wertheim 1893; Riedel 1886; Langen 1888).

Figure 40. The village of Rerean

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[49] In 1994, the population of Rerean was 211 and consisted of 20 households divided into 11 *fam*. *Fam* Rahayaan was the most common with 5 households. Rerean is a multi-rank village that includes members of *mel-mel*, *ren-ren*, and *iri-ri*. The inhabitants of Rerean are Protestant, and they likely converted to Christianity in the early 1920's. Lawalata (1969:23) notes in 1926 that Rerean constituted a new congregation. In the 1990's, Rerean was an administrative hamlet (*dusun*) under the village of Fer. In the past, the rights to the position of *kepala soa* were held by members of *fam* Rahayaan. The position of *kepala soa* was held by an individual from *fam* Labetubun from Elaar, Kei Kecil. The individual married into the village is considered a member of Rahayaan. *Fam* Tawain controlled rights to the position of *tuan tan*. As a result of the inter-religious conflict in April 2009, Rerean villagers sought refuge in the east coast villages of Kilwat, Sather, and Tutrean.

Figure 41. The village of Ngurko

The villages of Hako and Ngurko formed more recently. The village of Hako[50] split from

Fer in the 1930's. This move occurred following conflict over the Dutch appointment of the

current *rat* of Fer in the mid-1930s. Informants claim that a member of *fam* Rahakbau, who

held the position of *kapitan* of Fer, had aspirations to become the new *rat*. He was reportedly

shot and killed by the Dutch police during this dispute. As a result, most members of *fam*

Rahakbau were moved from Fer and formed the village of Hako at that time. The small villages

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[50] Hako is a Muslim village with a large *mel-mel* population. It is unclear whether other ranks are also present in the village. The population of Hako in 1994 was 190, divided into three *fam* and 32 households. Twenty-one households are from *fam* Rahakbau. In the 1990s, Hako was administratively subordinate (i.e., a *dusun*) to the village of Fer. The *kepala soa* of Hako, who was also the *kepala dusun* in the Indonesian administration, was from *fam* Rahakbau.

of Ngurko[51] (see Figure 41) and Wafol[52] are the most recent villages to split from Fer. Ngurko

likely formed after the Second World War and Wafol even more recently.

Fer Ohoitel is an *utan* alliance consisting of Fer and its splinter villages. Fer Ohoitel is

translated as the three villages of Fer (*ohoi* = "village", *tel* = "three") and technically refers to

the villages of Fer, Tamngil Nuhuyanat and Rerean. However, *Utan* Fer Ohoitel, because it is an

alliance based on shared village origins, includes Fer and its five splinter villages (Tamngil

Nuhuyanat, Rerean, Hako, Ngurko, and Wafol). The formation of Tamngil Nuhuyanat[53],

according to *Rat* Fer, occurred early in the fissioning of Fer, and prior to the villages of Rerean,

Hako, and Ngurko. Dortsman does not mention the existence of this village in the mid-1600's

(Heeres 1921), but the village does appear on maps from the late 1800's (Planten and

Wertheim 1893; Langen 1888). Some claim that the village formed as a result of disputes over

political positions in Fer, with members of *fam* Seknun and Rumkel leaving Fer as a result.

Others state that the village was formed to guard the boundaries between *Utan* Fer Ohoitel and

Utan Tabab Yamlim.

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[51] In 1994, Ngurko was comprised of six households with a total population of 40. The village was entirely *mel-mel* from *fam* Rahayaan, Raharusun, Ohoifui, and Rahajaan. While some informants claim that the village was formed so that villagers could be closer to their mountain gardens, others state that the move was a result of an intra-village dispute in Fer.

[52] Wafol is a small village on the beach adjacent to Rerean. It included individuals originating from Langgiar Fer. Some claim that Wafol was formed because of a dispute over village headmanship in Fer. In the 1990's, Wafol was an administrative *dusun* under the village of Fer.

[53] Tamngil Nuhuyanat is a Muslim village with a population in 1994 of 197, divided into four *fam* and consisting of 35 households. *Fam* Seknun and Rumkel predominated, with 13 and 15 households, respectively. The village was multi-rank in composition, consisting of *mel-mel*, *ren-ren* and *iri-ri*. *Fam* Seknun, Rumkel, and Rahakbau share rights to the position of *orang kaya*. The *orang kaya/kepala desa* in 1994 was from *fam* Rumkel. Village fissioning occurred in 1994 as a result of a dispute over the position of *kepala desa*. At that time, the government was planning elections for a new *kepala desa*. There were two candidates from *fam* Rumkel, and the village was divided into two factions. After the election many of the family members of the losing faction left the village, many moving to Tual. Some informants claim that as many as 60 villagers left as a result of the election.

3.9   THE ORIGIN OF MEL YAMFAAK

As was previously mentioned, Langgiar Fer[54] was the first village to split from Fer after the arrival of Islam (see Figure 42). It is said that three villagers from Fer (from *fam* Fakaubun, Difinubun, Rahayaan) converted to Islam. At that time, the natives of Fer had not yet adopted Islam. As a result, members from *fam* Fakaubun, Difinubun, Rahayaan requested a separate village adjacent to Fer, called Telan Sevav. Telan Sevav was renamed Namseran, later Ranhanggiar, and then, during Dutch times, Langgiar Fer.[55] Langgiar Fer is said to have been one of the largest villages in Kei Besar.[56] The village began fissioning when a majority of its inhabitants converted to Islam (see Figure 43).

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[54] In 1994, the population of Langgiar Fer was only 272, divided into 66 households and 18 different *fam*. The most common *fam* is Fakaubun with 31 households. The village contains members of all three ranks. Village fissioning is largely responsible for the decrease in population over the years. The following villages in *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim originated from Langgiar Fer: Weduar Fer, Sungai, Ngafan, Uat, Ngan, Ohoilean, Vatkidat. In addition, a number of other settlements in the Kei archipelago (i.e., Watngirit and Karkarit) as well as a village as far as Seram are said to originate from Langgiar. The *fam* that originally held rights to the position of *orang kaya* was Rahanyaan. These rights were later given to Fakaubun and they have held the position for five or six generations. During my 1990s research, the *dusun* of Uat, Ngan, Ohoilean and Vatkidat were under the leadership of the *kepala desa* of Langgiar Fer.
[55] Rahanggiar (*rahan* = house, *nggiar* = white) was the name used after most inhabitants adopted Islam. *Rat* Fer states that Rahanggiar became Langgiar because the Dutch could not pronounce Rahanggiar.
[56] One informant who reportedly participated in a Dutch "census" of the area reported that the population of Langgiar in the 1920's was around 2700.

Figure 42. The village of Langgiar Fer

Weduar Fer[57] was the first village to move from Langgiar Fer, reportedly to avoid conversion to Islam.[58] The original *fam* of the village of Weduar Fer were Far-Far, Rahasomar, Metubun, Toanubun, and Tutubun. Originally, they moved to a place called Ohoiel Laluir, also known as Mekor. They lived there for several decades. The five houses grew and they moved to a place called Ohoibobo, and again to Ohoikovur. Around 1949, the villagers moved to the current location of Weduar Fer, in order to guard village land and sea boundaries with the neighboring village of Vatkidat. *Fam* Far-Far holds rights to the position of *orang kaya* while *fam* Lesomar holds rights to the position of *tuan tan*.

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[57] Weduar Fer in 1993 had a population of 149 divided into 24 households. The majority of the village was Protestant, but there was also a small Catholic population. *Fam* Lesomar had both Protestant and Catholic members.

[58] The villagers of Langgiar Fer who formed Weduar Fer are said to have lived in a place called Somar El, located on a small hill between the villages of Fer and Langgiar Fer.
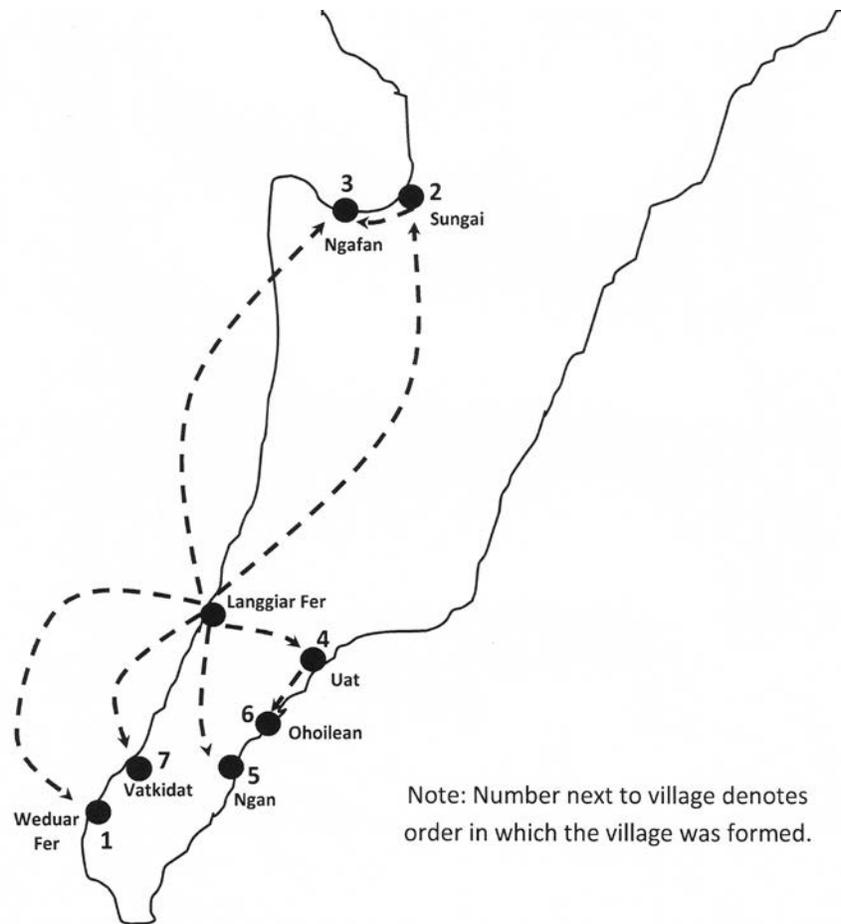
Figure 43. Fissioning of Langgiar Fer

Sungai[59] was the second village to split from Langgiar Fer and, according to oral histories, this probably occurred sometime in the latter half of the 19th Century. The village is identified on maps from the late 1800's see (Planten and Wertheim 1893; Riedel 1886; Langen 1888). The situation which led to this split appears to be an *adat* offence or intra-village

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[59] In 1994, Sungai, a Muslim village, had a population of 214. The rank composition was unclear, although there was a *mel-mel* population. There were 49 households and 6 different *fam* present. *Fam* Difinubun predominated with 38 households. *Rat* Fer claims that he appointed *fam* Difinubun as the *orang kaya* of the village, and a member of this *fam* carried the Balinese spear (*ngabal*) when *Rat* Fer was installed in 1935. *Fam* Difinubun holds the position of *kepala desa* in the Indonesian administration.

dispute, although the specifics are unclear and a matter of much secrecy.[60] Ngafan[61], the village

adjacent to Sungai, was the next village to form (see Figure 44). It includes villagers from

Langgiar Fer (e.g., Rahanyamtel) as well as some from Sungai (e.g., Difinubun). In Ngafan,

Rahanyamtel holds rights to the position of *orang kaya*, and the position of *kepala desa*.

Figure 44. The village of Ngafan

The three adjacent villages of Uat[62] (see Figure 45), Ngan[63], and Ohoilean[64] on the east

coast of Kei Besar were the next three villages to splinter from Langgiar. Again, the formation of

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[60] As one informant stated, the formation of Sungai was "based on things that are not polite to discuss... All of the villages (Sungai, Ngafan, Karkarit, Watngirit, Uat, Ngan, Ohoilean, Vatkidat) moved because of this...Because of their embarrassment and bad feelings, they removed themselves."
[61] In 1994, Ngafan, a Muslim village, had a population of 349. The rank composition was unclear, although there was a *mel-mel* population. There were 56 households and 11 different *fam* present. *Fam* Rahanyamtel and Difinubun were the most common with 17 and 11 households, respectively.
[62] Uat, a Muslim village, had a population of 153 in 1994. The rank composition was unclear, although informants are clear that there is not a *mel-mel* population. There are 28 households and 3 different *fam* present. *Fam* Matdoan predominates with 25 households.

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these villages is surrounded in secrecy although some informants suggest that Uat and Ngan moved after a serious conflict erupted in Langgiar Fer over an inter-rank relationship. Ohoilean is said to have originated from Uat and was formed just after the departure of the Japanese during World War II. The village of Vatkidat formed around 1945. Vatkidat[65] moved in 1945 although a small settlement had existed before this time. Although one or two families are said to have moved to the location of Vatkidat in the 1920's to be close to their gardens, most inhabitants settled in the village in the mid-1940s.

Figure 45. The village of Ngan

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[63] Ngan is a Muslim village with a population of 113 in 1994. The rank composition was unclear, although informants are clear that there is not a *mel-mel* population. There were 18 households and 7 different *fam* present. *Fam* Rahayaan and Difinubun were most common with 7 and 4 households, respectively.
[64] Ohoilean is a Muslim village with a population of 108 in 1994. The rank composition was unclear, although informants are clear that there is not a *mel-mel* population. There were 10 households and 3 different *fam* present. *Fam* Seknun predominated with 25 households.
[65] Ngafan, a Muslim village, had a population of 349 in 1994. The rank composition was unclear, although informants are clear that there is not a *mel-mel* population. There are 31 households and 6 different *fam* present. *Fam* Fakaubun predominated with 20 households.

Langgiar Fer and its seven splinter villages in *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim make up *Utan* Mel Yamfaak.[66] Mel Yamfaak means "the four *mel-mel*"[67] [clans] that formed the basis of the alliance: Fakaubun, Difinubun, Rahanyaan, and Matdoan. Some informants state that Mel Yamfaak refers to the four villages with *mel-mel* leadership: Langgiar Fer, Weduar Fer, Sungai, and Ngafan. Because of the shared origins of Fer Ohoitel and Mel Yamfaak, the two *utan* are said to form an additional alliance called "*Ub* Fer Matdoan".[68] In addition to the 8 villages that comprise Mel Yamfaak, the *orang kaya* of Langgiar as well as the *rat* of Fer claim that Kilwat is also a part of Mel Yamfaak. They base this claim on the following *tom* about Babi Delo (or "Delo Pig") as told by the *rat* of Fer in 1994:

> My great grandfather, *Rat* Sardik, had a village close to Tamngil Nuhuteen. He owned a pig called Babi Delo that was adorned with gold and pendants. Babi Delo was housed near the village of Faramas [current day Soindat], and guarded by someone from *fam* Ohoiner. One day, Babi Delo got away and someone from Kilwat speared him behind the village of Sungai. Kilwat had to pay a hefty fine for this wrongdoing. Kilwat and the villages of *Utan* Tabab Yamlim were unable to pay, so someone from *fam* Matdoan paid the fine…Not just Matdoan but *Ub* Fer Matdoan. As a result of this incident, Kilwat became part of Mel Yamfaak's territory.

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[66] It should be pointed out that Kilwat, although an integral part of *Utan* Tabab Yamlim (discussed in the next section), is also considered to be incorporated within Mel Yamfaak as a result of particular historical events that resulted in close ties between the villages of Langgiar Fer and Kilwat. While some informants from Kilwat trace these ties to an alliance between Kilwat and Langgiar in support of the village of Waur (Kei Besar) in their war with Werka, members of Langgiar Fer and Fer claim that it is based primarily on the incident of Babi Delo discussed below.

[67] *Mel* refers to the *mel-mel* rank, *yam-* is from the Keiese word *yaman*, meaning "father", and *faak* means "four".

[68] *Ub* means "container" in Bahasa Kei.

3.10   THE ORIGIN OF TABAB YAMLIM

While the *utan* of Fer Ohoitel and Mel Yamfaak are based on shared village origins and resulted

through processes of village fissioning, *Utan* Tabab Yamlim constitutes an alliance between

villages with historically distinct origins. Although Tabab Yamlim is the name currently used to

refer to the *ratschap* centered in Fer, it is also the name of an *utan* alliance consisting of the

villages of Tamngil Nuhuteen, Weduar, Tutrean, Sather, and Kilwat. *Tom* narratives collected

from these five villages describe the origins of Tabab Yamlim as follows:

> *Helaai* Tabal sailed from Bali and landed in Tamngil Nuhuteen. There, *helaai*
> Tabal was given power to become leader by the autochthonous inhabitants, Bal
> Rahanar and Ree Ohoiner, who became *tuan tan*. After some time, *helaai* Tabal
> began to miss his homeland. He built a sailboat and prepared all necessities for a
> trip back to Bali. *Helaai* Tabal sailed south from Tamngil Nuhuteen, the wind
> blowing his boat between Kei Kecil and Kei Besar. In front of the Cape of Doan
> (the southern tip of Kei Kecil) was a whale which disrupted his travels. The
> whale, along with the current, caused *helaai* Tabal's boat to sail around the
> southern tip of Kei Besar and up the eastern side of Kei Besar. As *helaai* Tabal
> passed by the village of Kilwat, he asked the villagers for their help in killing the
> whale so that he may continue his journey. Villagers of Kilwat joined *helaai*
> Tabal but because of the water current, they were swept further north and
> unable to kill the whale. They continued to be pushed northward by the current,
> passing in front of the villages of Sather, Tutrean, and Weduar. Villagers from
> Sather, Tutrean, and Weduar were called and joined in the whale hunt. Finally,
> the whale was killed and was dragged to shore at Mastel (just south of Sather).
> The whale was cut and divided among these four villages. Kilwat received the
> stomach, Tutrean received the head, Sather received the tail, and Weduar
> received the *dagu* (chin). The whale that was divided is a symbol of the alliance
> between the 5 villages. After dividing the whale, *helaai* Tabal promised that
> when he returned from his trip, they would gather to divide the land among the
> five settlements. Helaai Tabal, with the help of the two *tuan tan* of Tamngil
> Nuhuteen (Bal Rahanar and Ree Ohoiner) traveled to the villages of Weduar,
> Tutrean, Sather and Kilwat and divided the land among the indigenous

inhabitants.[69] Because of *helaai* Tabal's role in the formation of this *utan* alliance, Tamngil Nuhuteen is seen as the "father". Because land was first given to Weduar, Weduar is seen as the "eldest child", Tutrean as the "second child", Sather as the "youngest child", while Kilwat is the "mother".

It is generally agreed that Tamngil Nuhuteen[70] (see Figure 46) was founded after the arrival of a group of immigrants, although the date of their arrival is difficult to discern. While Dortsman does not make note of the village in 1646 (Heeres 1921), the village does appear on maps from the late 19th century (Planten and Wertheim 1893; Langen 1888). According to the *rat* of Fer, the village of Tamngil Nuhuteen has existed for four generations. The *rat* of Fer also claims that his great-great grandfather, *Rat* Sardik, appointed a man from *fam* Rahanar to become *orang kaya*. According to villagers from Tamngil Nuhuteen, however, the formation of the village followed the arrival of an immigrant from Bali known as *helaai* Tabal ("Big Man from Bali"). *Fam* Rahanar claims descent from *helaai* Tabal.

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[69] According to the *tom*, Limduan, Rafo, and Rahayaan, the *tuan tan* of Weduar, received land bounded on the coast by Hoar Yeuwikil and Watso, and bounded inland by Ngonabal, Ngasfadakyanan, and Watngilyauw. Safik, the *tuan tan* of Tutrean, received land bounded on the coast by Watso and Nurnar, and bounded inland by Watngilyauw. Yamlaai and Yamko of Sather received land bounded on the coast by Nurnar and Watkowar, and bounded inland by Watngilyauw. Wowoa and Rahawarin of Kilwat received land bounded on the coast by Watkowar and Watbou, bounded inland by Watngilyauww and Watngeng. Helaai Tabal and Bal Ree of Tamngil Nuhuteen received land bounded on the coast by Barlin and Hoar Terut, and bounded inland by Ngonabal.

[70] Tamngil Nuhuteen is a multi-rank village consisting of all three ranks. The population in 1994 was 359, consisting of 15 different *fam* divided into 65 households. The village contained both Muslim and Christian populations. *Fam* Rahanar and Ohoitenan predominated, each with 22 households. *Fam* Rahanar held rights to the position of *orang kaya* as well as *kepala desa* in the Indonesian administrative system. A small settlement called Weer is located just to the north of Tamngil Nuhuteen. This hamlet included about five Protestant households from *fam* Ur who moved to the site in the last 10-20 years as a result of intra-village conflict.

Figure 46. The village of Tamngil Nuhuteen

The village of Soindat[71] originated from Tamngil Nuhuteen. Some informants claim that this split was due to intra-village conflict, while others claim the village was formed to guard *Utan* Tabab Yamlim's southern boundary with Fer Ohoitel and Mel Yamfaak. Soindat means "arrival of the boundary" (*soin* = boundary, *dat* = "to arrive"), and was previously referred to as Faramas, the village that guarded *Rat* Fer's pig (*Babi* Delo). Some informants claim that the village of Soindat was formed to guard the southwestern territorial boundary of *Utan* Tabab Yamlim.

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[71] Soindat is a Protestant village with a population in 1994 of 196 was divided into 34 households. *Fam* Ohoiner predominated with 13 households. According to histories, *fam* Ohoiner was the autochthonous clan of Tamngil Nuhuteen with rights to the position of *tuan tan*. The village is primarily *ren-ren* in rank, and may include some *iri-ri*. As a result of inter-religious conflict in April 1999, the villagers of Soindat fled to Christian villages on the east coast of Kei Besar. During the 1990s, Soindat was administratively part of Tamngil Nuhuteen. Fam Ohoiner held rights to *kepala soa/kepala dusun*.

Weduar[72] is a large and old settlement in *Utan* Tabab Yamlim. The village was identified by Dortsman during his visit in 1646 (Heeres 1921). The three original clans of Weduar were Refol, Demduan, and Rahayaan. These *fam* hold rights to the position of *tuan tan*[73], and it is with these individuals that *helaai* Tabal established the boundaries of Weduar with its neighbors. Over time many immigrants moved to Weduar. *Fam* Rahawarin, which holds rights to the position of *orang kaya*, is said to have come from Weduar Fer. *Fam* Rahawarin split along senior and junior lines to become Hukubun and Somnaikubun. Individuals from these two *fam* alternate in terms of rights to the position of *orang kaya* and *kepala desa*. The *orang kaya/kepala desa* in 1994 was from *fam* Somnaikubun.

Figure 47. The Village of Weduar

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[72] Weduar in 1994 had a population of 646 divided into 126 households. The majority of the village was Protestant, but there was also a Muslim hamlet in the village. All three ranks were present. *Fam* Hukubun, Somnaikubun, and Rahayaan predominated with 39, 27, and 26 households, respectively.

[73] According to elders from Weduar, *fam* Rahayaanrin no longer exists in Weduar, moving several centuries ago to Vanwaur (northern Kei Besar). So today there remains two *fam* with rights as *tuan tan*: Refol and Demduan.

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Tutrean[74] is another very old village. Dortsman noted a village of "Toutourean" in 1646 (Heeres 1921). According to some members of *Utan* Tabab Yamlim, the original inhabitants of Tutrean were from *fam* Sarfik, and this *fam* held rights to the position of *tuan tan*. However, high-ranking members of *fam* Refra currently claim this position, an unusual occurrence given that typically *ren-ren* individuals hold rights to this position. "Resmol Rahantel" (the "three houses of Resmol) holds rights to the position of *orang kaya*. These three houses are from *fam* Resmol, Rahantoknam and Rahangkubang. The *kepala desa* appointed in 1995, however, is from *fam* Refra. Many high-ranking members of Tutrean and the *rat* of Fer were opposed to this appointment, claiming that the *fam* only has rights to the position of *tuan tan*.

The history of Sather[75] (see Figure 48) is traced by some of its members to at least the 1400's. Dortsman mentions Sather ("Saterij") during his visit in 1646 (Heeres 1921). The acting (*pejabat*) *kepala desa* of Sather in 1995 described the history of Sather as follows:

> At that time [the 1400's], the population of Kei Besar was very small, thus boundaries between settlements had not yet been delineated. A catastrophic period ensued, characterized by frequent earthquakes, epidemics, warfare, and population movement. It was during this period that two brothers and their associates left the village of Waer on Kei Besar and sailed by Sather in two sailboats. In each boat were three men. The three families of Sather called the men in the two sailboats and invited them to live together in the village of Sather. These men became founders of 6 of the current *fam* of Sather:

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[74] Tutrean had a population of 473 in 1994. The population was primarily Protestant, although a significant Catholic population was also present. The multi-rank population of Tutrean consisted of 17 different *fam* organized into 86 households, with the greatest number of households belonging to *fam* Rahantoknam (22), Resel (13), Tanlain (11) and Refra (10).

[75] Sather is a Protestant village with a population of 970 in 1994. There were 164 households among the 18 different *fam* present. Domaikubun, Dokainubun, Metubun, Dangeubun, and Erubun were the most common *fam* with 33, 24, 23, 22, and 17 households, respectively. The "acting" (*pejabat*) *kepala desa* in 1994 was from *fam* Dokainubun.

Metubun, Dangeubun, Erubun, Domaubun, Dokainubun, and Wacaubun. The sailboats in which they arrived turned to stone on a nearby beach.

Figure 48. The village of Sather

Sather villagers claim that in pre-colonial times, their village was led by an *orang tu*. Under Dutch administration, the village leaders were given the title of *orang kaya*. Villagers of Sather claim that during colonial times, the position of *orang kaya* was given to *fam* Yamlaai. For more than a century, the village of Sather has been engaged in conflict with Tutrean. This conflict will be discussed in depth in the Chapter 5.

Kilwat[76] is the fifth village of *Utan* Tabab Yamlim. It is a large village with a long history. Dortsman made reference to "Queliwatou" during his visit to Kei Besar in 1646 (Herres 1921), and this is most likely the current village of Kilwat. The village consists entirely of individuals of

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[76] Kilwat is a large Protestant village, consisting entirely of *ren-ren* with a population of 559 in 1994. There were 105 households among 26 different *fam*. *Fam* Rahanyaan and Rahayaan were the most common *fam* with 35 and 23 households, respectively.

ren-ren rank. Based on interviews with village leaders, Kilwat was founded by the following six clans: Wowoa, Rahawarin, Selubun, Fidratan, Rahael, and Yamseref. *Fam* Rahanyaan is considered an immigrant clan who was invited by the autochounous inhabitants and given rights to the position of village head. Other clans are also present in the village due to the uxorilocal residence patterns of men from other villages (i.e., *kawin masuk*) (see Appendix B). These include Wansaubun and Waer from Sather, Tutubun from Weduar Fer, Ngutra from Ohoiel, and Ohoiner from Soindat. Kilwat is unique among the villages of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim in that it is the only original village settlement that has never, according to local histories, been ruled or settled by individuals of *mel-mel* rank.[77]

3.11   THE FORMATION OF *RATSCHAP* TABAB YAMLIM

While Tabab Yamlim refers to the alliance of five villages just discussed, it is also the name of the *ratschap* centered in Fer. The reasons for the double usage are complex and contested, but they appear to stem from the interplay of colonial territorialization and local struggles for power and authority. As previously mentioned, *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim consists of 21 villages in southern Kei Besar. Based on oral histories collected in many of the villages of southern Kei Besar, the formation of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim occurred in the 1930's. However, the domain

[77] Some villages of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim consist entirely of lower-ranking individuals, such as Uat, Ngan, Ohoilean, and Vatkidat, but these villages are more recent settlements originating from the multi-rank "mother village" (i.e., Langgiar Fer). Although Sather is another original village settlement consisting entirely of individuals of *ren-ren* rank, local histories purport that it once had a *mel-mel* population which fled to Dullah Island after being defeated in a war with Tutrean.

centered in Fer existed well before Dutch indirect rule of the Kei islands. Adriaan Dortsman visited Kei Besar in 1645 and identified the *raja* of "Wera" (Fer) from southern Kei Besar, who controlled a number of villages including Kilwat, Sather, Tutrean, and Weduar (see Heeres 1921).

In the 1990's the *rat* of Fer (Haji Abdul Gani Rahayaan)[78] was one of the oldest in the Kei archipelago. He was appointed by the Dutch in 1935. Based on oral histories collected throughout *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, the installation of the *rat* of Fer was anything but a smooth transfer of power. Prior to this, the *kapitan* of Fer from *fam* Rahakbau was the "acting" (*pejabat*) or temporary *rat*. This *kapitan* wanted to be appointed the *rat* of Fer. In addition, there were other members of *fam* Rahayaan (from both Fer and Rerean) who claimed rights to the position of *rat* and therefore opposed this appointment. As a result, violent conflict broke out in Fer over the seat of the *rat*, and the Dutch intervened. Reportedly the *kapitan* of Fer was shot by the Dutch police, and members of *fam* Rahakbau left Fer and formed the village of Hako. Some members of *fam* Rahayaan from Fer also departed as a result of the contested seat and formed the village of Ngurko. As one informant stated, "there is one seat, but hundreds who want to sit" ("*kursi hanya satu, yang ingin menduduk ratus*").

Because of this conflict and the death of the *kapitan* of Fer, the Dutch government intervened and gathered leaders from the region to establish who actually should be *rat*. *Fam* Rahayaan claimed rights to the position of *rat* using the origin history of Bomav, Sedes, and Far-Far. It was around this time that members of *fam* Raharusun from Weduar Fer changed their

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[78] The *rat* of Fer was 91 in 1994. He reportedly married 13 times, although only two of his wives were still alive at the time of my 1990's fieldwork (one was reportedly a Buginese woman whom he met in Mecca).

name to Far-Far. According to one Weduar Fer elder, "Raharusun became Far-Far in order to complete the descendants of these Bomav Sedes and Far-Far, so that the current *raja* of Fer could be installed". Thus according to this informant, the change in *fam*-name was done to provide additional "proof" to the origin history that *fam* Rahayaan presented to the Dutch to justify rights to the position of *rat*. In the end, a member of *fam* Rahayaan was installed by the Dutch.

Although the current *rat* of Fer states that he is a direct descendant of Bomav, traced from father to eldest son, members of *fam* Rahayaan who moved to the village of Rerean claim that they are the true direct descendants.[79] Some oral histories collected claim that in the 1930's, the senior Rahayaan house with rights to the position of *rat* did not have a male descendent to fill the position. As a result, a *rat* who did not have a direct line to Bomav filled the position until someone with a direct line was available to replace him.

Not only was the claim to the seat of *rat* highly contested within the village of Fer, oral histories also point to political competition between *Rat* Fer and the *orang kaya* of Tamngil Nuhuteen, who was and continues to be the recognized leader of *Utan* Tabab Yamlim. This *orang kaya*, with the support of most villages of Utan Tabab Yamlim, wanted to be recognized as a *rat* by the Dutch. While Weduar and Sather gave allegiance to the *orang kaya* of Tamngil Nuhuteen, Tutrean and Kilwat gave allegiance to the *rat* of Fer.[80] Villagers from Tamngil

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[79] Members of *mel-mel* from *fam* Rahayaan in Rerean referred to the *rat* as being a member of the Rahayaan Rahawarin (or the "younger brother" house of Rahayaan) and as the elder house of Rahayaan, claim to hold rights to the position of *rat*.

[80] Villagers from Kilwat claimed that it was only their vote (*suara*) during the 1930's that enabled the current rat of Fer to be installed by the Dutch administration. They stated that their support for the rat

Nuhuteen stated that did not want *Utan* Tabab Yamlim to be included in the *ratschap*. They report that the *rat* of Fer claimed that he controls *Utan* Tabab Yamlim and based this claim on the history of Babi Delo, the pig of *Rat* Fer's grandfather killed by a villager of Kilwat (discussed above). In addition to the history of Babi Delo, the *rat* of Fer claims that Tamngil Nuhuteen consists entirely of immigrants and they have been there for only four generations: "My ancestor *Rat* Sardik had a village there. Then Buginese and people from Tayando and Kur gathered there. *Rat* Sardik installed a person from *fam* Rahanar to become *orang kaya* there". The *rat* of Fer also points out that in the village of Weduar, he entrusted power to *fam* Somnaikubun and Hukubun, pointing out that they originate from Weduar Fer.

Despite *Rat* Fer's appointment by the Dutch as well as his claim to authority over the five northern villages of the domain, the encompassment of *Utan* Tabab Yamlim within *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim is still highly contested among many villagers from *Utan* Tabab Yamlim. As one man from southern Kei Besar stated:

> We have this alliance of five villages called Tabab Yamlim. Then there is the *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim. We think about this and to this day but we still do not discuss it. We originally had the name Tabab Yamlim. This name was taken by them. They use the name when the *rat* is in Fer. This is peculiar. If they use the name Tabab Yamlim then the *rat* should be in Tamngil Nuhuteen. If we truthfully say *Raja* Tabab Yamlim, that means we should choose the *raja*.

According to another villager from southern Kei Besar, the Dutch influenced the use of the name Tabab Yamlim to refer to the *ratschap*, despite knowing of its reference to the *utan*:

> *Raja* Fer's domain is referred to as Tabab Yamlim but actually that name is special for the area of Weduar, Tutrean, Sather, Kilwat and Tamngil Nuhuteen. On the other hand, our area here is referred to as Fer Ohoitel Mel Yamfaak.

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of Fer was based on their incorporation into Mel Yamfaak and their relations with Langgiar Fer as a result a number of historical events.

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What is the reason why the *raja* of Fer must use Tabab Yamlim? Because at the time of the formation of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, Weduar, Tutrean, Sather, Kilwat and Tamngil Nuhuteen wanted to have their own *raja*. The Dutch colonial government was effective in using the name Tabab Yamlim in order to tie them [Weduar, Tutrean, Sather, Kilwat and Tamngil Nuhuteen] to the *ratschap* so that they wouldn't want to create their own *raja*...By doing so they would remain under the power of *Raja* Fer.

Following the installation of the *rat* of Fer in 1935, the leadership structure of the *ratschap* was officially established. The *rat* was recognized as the head of the *ratschap* and was assisted by three *kapitan* ("war advisors"), one representing each *utan* and centered in Fer (*fam* Rahakbau for Fer Ohoitel), Tutrean (*fam* Rahantoknam for *Utan* Tabab Yamlim), and Langgiar Fer (*fam* Difinubun for *Utan* Mel Yamfaak). Below the *rat* were the twelve *orang kaya* who were leaders of the primary villages (*ohoi orang kaya*) of the domain.[81] The smaller, more recently formed villages (*dusun*) were led by *kepala soa* who were subordinate to *orang kaya* of their mother villages.

3.12   LAND/SEA TENURE AND *ADAT* TERRITORIES

Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) argued that tradition-bound pre-colonial political systems did not engage in territorial strategies in the same manner as colonial and post-colonial states (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995). In the Kei Islands, notions of territoriality (i.e., indigenous forms of territorialization) are encoded in origin histories, inscribed in the landscape, and reconfigured through past and present events and disputes. Indigenous forms of

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[81] According to *Rat* Fer, the Dutch also bestowed the honorary title of "*pati*" to the *orang kaya* of Langgiar Fer, Tamngil Nuhuteen, Weduar and Tutrean because their villages were "stable and clean".

territorialization create a political geography that links groups of people to particular spaces or territories, the boundaries of which are always subject to renegotiation and contestation.

The formation of *ratschap* occurred at the intersection of colonial territorialization and local conceptions of rank, *adat*, and territory, and also illuminated struggles for power and resources that resulted in the rearticulation of *adat* communities. In order to better understand these dynamics, it is useful to provide an outline of Kei land and sea tenure. Throughout the Kei Islands, *petuanan* refers to the territory of a certain social group and includes both land (*petuanan darat*) and sea (*petuanan laut*) territories. Social groups that may claim ownership over a particular territory include individuals, houses (*rahan*), clans (*fam*), hamlets (*soa*), villages (*ohoi*), *ratschap*, political moiety (*ur siu* or *lor lim*), or even the whole of Kei society (Adhuri 2004:12). While land may be subject to private ownership by individuals or clans, *petuanan laut* is almost always communally owned and managed by village settlements (*ohoi*) (Thorburn 2001:155; Adhuri 2004:9). *Petuanan laut* boundaries are usually straight lines running perpendicular to a village's land boundaries and extending to the blue sea (*birbir*) (Thorburn 2001:155-56).

Two types of rights are attached to *petuanan* in Kei: *hak makan* (usufruct rights, or "right to eat") and *hak milik* (property rights). *Hak makan* entails the right to make use of both the territory and the resources found within the territory, while *hak milik* confers both the "right to eat" and the "right to transfer" the right (*hak makan*) to another party (Thorburn 2001:155; Adhuri 2004:12-13). Typically, the "right to eat" is distributed to all members of a given community while property rights are exclusive rights of particular kin groups (Adhuri 2004:13). *Hak makan* may be transferred to others in two primary ways. First, inter-village

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marriage guarantees some "eating rights" for a groom and his descendants in his bride's village of origin (Thorburn 2008:122). Second, historical or contemporary agreements made between kin groups, villages or *ratschap* may allow certain groups "eating rights" in another's territory (Thorburn 2001:156).

In *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, land and sea boundaries are recounted in origin histories (*tom*). For Fer Ohoitel and Mel Yamfaak, the original boundaries are recounted in the *tom* concerning Bomav, Sedes, and Far-Far, while for *Utan* Tabab Yamlim, it was the history of *helaai* Tabal that established land and sea boundaries. Through these origin narratives, territorial boundaries are inscribed in the landscape in a variety of named landmarks and stones (also see Thorburn 2001:156). While the existence of these named landmarks is rarely a point of contention among different villages, *utan* or *ratschap*, disputes over *adat* territories have been commonplace in southern Kei Besar at least since the Dutch began administering the islands.

As a result of a number of recurring social processes and disputes, territorial boundaries have become complex sites for political contestation and conflicting claims. First, inter-village (often between individuals from different *utan* or *ratschap*) marriages result in the transfer of usufruct rights from a wife's family to the groom and his children, creating a complex patchwork of land-use. Second, the fissioning of the villages of Fer and Langgiar Fer and the dispersal of the inhabitants of these two villages across claimed *utan* boundaries creates a pattern of overlapping village territories. Third, a variety of historical events, disputes (e.g., the *tom* of Babi Delo discussed above), and historical agreements or alliances between individuals and/or groups have resulted in alterations to some of the originally established boundaries. These three processes have resulted in a dynamic and contested grid of territorial relations

which are continuously renegotiated and reinscribed in the landscape through disputes over land and sea boundaries.

3.13   SUMMARY

This chapter described in greater detail the ethnographic context of the Kei islands, focusing on conceptions of rank and history, Kei social and political organization, and the origins of Kei kings and *adat* law. In addition, this chapter presented an outline of the structure of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, an *adat* domain of southern Kei Besar. Throughout this chapter, I have highlighted the impact of colonialism on Kei social hierarchy and *adat* polities. Dutch indirect rule helped to transform Kei diarchy into a system of castes which empowered and privileged individuals of *mel-mel* rank. In addition, Dutch territorialization policies rigidified the boundaries of *adat* polities and reinforced *adat* as the domain of the Kei aristocracy. However, this chapter has also stressed the contested nature of Kei rank, history, and authority, as illustrated through a description of the structure of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim. In fact, as I have argued in this chapter, Kei conceptions of history entail a high degree of debateability which makes the past a salient resource in the competition for political and economic resources. Therefore, the intersection of Kei sensibilities and Dutch colonialism created a context in which constructions and mobilizations of *adat* emerged as salient components of local political life. The next two chapters examine these articulations of *adat* and their role in the creation and maintenance of aristocratic dominance within Kei society during Indonesia's New Order period.

4.0   KEI *ADAT* AS ARISTOCRATIC CULTURE IN NEW ORDER INDONESIA

Indonesian Independence ushered in a host of new changes which on the one hand posed threats to Kei social hierarchy and *adat* communities, while on the other, provided new sources of wealth, power, and prestige. In the first two decades of Indonesian Independence, these changes were rather slow, as the new nation was facing internal problems which inhibited extensive national integration and economic development. With the New Order government of Suharto (1965-1999), however, the legitimacy of *adat* domains and ascriptive hierarchies became increasingly problematic throughout Indonesia (see Errington 1991:16).

During the New Order, a variety of political, economic, and religious forces threatened the legitimacy of ascriptive hierarchies in the Kei islands. As in other Indonesian societies, Kei social hierarchy became increasingly problematic as a result of: (1) the promotion of egalitarian ideologies by the state and various religious groups (see Morfit 1981; Bowen 1986), (2) state-sponsored development and the increasing access to non-traditional forms of wealth and prestige (see Cedderoth 1981; Volkman 1985; King 1989), and (3) attempts to restructure or democratize local political organization (i.e. through the Village Law of 1979) (See Kato 1989; Warren 1991, 1993).   Despite these transformations, high-ranking Keiese were largely successful in maintaining their advantage in local political life. This chapter discusses some of the reasons for the success of the *mel-mel* in maintaining power in the face of post-independence challenges, highlighting some of the ways in which the Kei aristocracy has

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utilized the state bureaucracy and articulated particular visions of *adat* in order to maintain

their political dominance in the face of changing currents.[1]

4.1   LOCAL HIERARCHY AND STATE BUREAUCRACY IN THE KEI ISLANDS

As was previously demonstrated, Dutch indirect rule bolstered the power and authority of high

ranking Keiese (i.e., *mel-mel*) and undermined the authority of the autochthonous *ren-ren*. In

addition, the territorial authority and boundaries of *adat* domains, although largely contested

phenomena, were more clearly drawn through the Dutch formation and recognition of

ratschap. As a result of Dutch colonialism, therefore, the *mel-mel* throughout the Kei islands

were strategically positioned to take hold of new sources of wealth and power that the

Indonesian state had to offer.

Although the *adat* polities (i.e., *ratschap*) and titles (i.e., *rat, orang kaya*) acknowledged

by the Dutch were officially abolished by the Indonesian government, they were semi-officially

retained in both the formal and informal relations between representatives of the Indonesian

government and *adat* leaders (see Ellen 1997). During the New Order, many Kei *rat* were also

civil servants, serving as *kepala desa* in their home villages or holding important positions in the

district government. The *rat* of Dullah, for example, was and continues to be one of the most

powerful men in the Kei islands. For many years this *rat* enjoyed close relations to government

leaders and has served as the local head of the GOLKAR (the government party throughout the

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[1] I would argue that the strategies used by the Kei elite constitute, following Strathern and Stewart (2010:23) an "indigenous cosmopolitanism".

New Order period) faction in the District People's Representative Council (DPRD II) (Thorburn (2003: P. 9, n.14).

In contrast to other areas of Maluku, there was never the rejection of a unified Indonesian state in the Kei Islands (also see Ellen 1997:86). As previously mentioned, the Kei islanders were opposed to the formation of an independent Republic of South Moluccas (RMS), fearing their political subordination to the Ambonese in such a scheme. As a result of their support and loyalty to the new Indonesian nation, the Keiese were granted their desired autonomy, relatively speaking, with the formation in 1952 of the District of Southeast Maluku (*Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara) centered in Tual[2]. I argue that this favorable relation with the new Indonesian nation helped increase the participation of the Keiese, particularly the *mel-mel*, in the newly formed government.

Many *mel-mel* individuals took advantage of the educational system that the Dutch Catholic missionaries had introduced, and continued to do so in post-Independence times.[3] The *mel-mel* of Weduar Fer is illustrative in this regard. When I asked the *kepala desa* in 1995 why so many members of his family had attained good positions in the local government (*kabupaten*), he stated that, knowing education would be crucial to making oneself in the new nation, he pushed his children to achieve high educational levels. Of his 9 children, 3 of them attained college degrees and 5 of them have become civil servants. In addition, a member of his extended family became the first Keiese *bupati* and another was the District Secretary

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[2] The formation of *Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara was finalized on August 12, 1952 with the Government Regulation 35 of 1952 (*Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 35 Tahun 1952 Tertanggal, 12 Agustus 1952*)**.**
[3] Kaartinen (2000:8) notes that elite members of all three religious groups of the Kei islands benefitted from the education provided by the Catholic Church.

(*sekwilda*) for *Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara in the 1990's. Many other men and women from the same *fam* had received college degrees and are currently working in the local government. By contrast, the *ren-ren* and *iri-ri* families of the same village had very few members who had achieved college degrees or held government positions.

The differential access and flow of *mel-mel* villagers to regional centers in search of education and employment is reflected in the residency patterns of the villagers of Weduar Fer. Data obtained in the mid-1990's on the residence patterns of Weduar Fer villagers over the past three generations clearly demonstrates that villagers of *mel-mel* rank were far more likely to reside outside of the village, usually in the district, provincial and national centers (see Table 4).

Table 4. Residency of Weduar Fer villagers

	Mel-Mel	Ren-Ren	Iri-ri
Inside Village	10	111	43
Outside Village	38	33	17
P≤0.00; Chi^2=51.62; Pearson's C=0.41			

During the height of the New Order in the 1980's, the district capital of Tual witnessed a construction boom and further increase in administrative institutions and government jobs (Laksono 1990; Thorburn 2008). The state became ever more important since its budget

finances formed a large part of the domestic economy (see Figure 49). Government positions

offered new sources of income that soon rivaled remittances as major source of cash in the

islands (Thorburn 2008:129). As a result, there was considerable impetus for Keiese to seek

employment in the district and sub-district governments. Given the *mel-mel*'s already

advantageous position in Kei society, however, they were able to obtain the majority of

positions in the local Indonesian administration.

Figure 49. The district government (*kabupaten*) complex on the outskirts of Tual

By the time I conducted research in the 1990's, it was clear that the *mel-mel* controlled

the majority of government positions at the district (*kabupaten*) and sub-district (*kecamatan*)

levels of the Kei Islands (Hooe 1996, 1999) (see Figure 50).[4] If a particular position was not held

by a high-ranking Keiese, it was almost always in the hands of a member of an immigrant ethnic

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[4] Interestingly, the most of the highest officials of the *kabupaten* were Kei islanders originating from the island of Kei Besar (Kaartinen 2000:8), and the people of southern Kei Besar were well aware of this pattern during my 1990s fieldwork.

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group (Adhuri 2006:401). For example, before 1967, the position of the *bupati* was held by individuals from outside the Kei Islands. Between 1967 and 1996, however, 3 of the 5 *bupati* were high-ranking Kei individuals (the other two originating from outside Maluku Tenggara). Furthermore, every *bupati* since 1981, with the exception of several "caretaker" (*pejabat*) *bupati* from 2000-2003, has been a Kei individual of *mel-mel* rank.[5]

Figure 50. Kei civil servants in Tual, 1995

The dominance of the Kei nobility in local politics became increasingly apparent during the New Order with the greater involvement of the Keiese in government administration

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[5] The first Keiese *bupati* was D.C. Far-Far (1967-1975) from the village of Weduar Fer on Kei Besar. The district secretary during his term was also a high-ranking Keiese from Kei Besar, C. Rahanra. Two non-Keiese *bupati* followed D.C. Far-Far during the period 1975-1981, although the district secretary was from Kei (J.L.E. Rahantoknam from Kei Besar). C. Rahanra was *bupati* from 1981-1991, followed by H.A. Rahayaan (from Larat on Kei Besar) from 1991-2000. Several non-Keiese "caretaker" *bupati* (*pejabat*) were appointed from 2000-2003 until elections for a "definitive" *bupati* (*definitif*) were held in 2003. H. Koedoeboen, also from Kei Besar, was the next Keiese *bupati* from 2003-2008. A. Rentanubun from the village of Langgur on Kei Kecil has been the *bupati* since 2008.

(Laksono 1990:30). Local hierarchy and government bureaucracy became inextricably intertwined in the Kei islands (Hooe 1996, 1999; Madubun 1997; Adhuri 2006; Thorburn 2008). As Thorburn (2008:129,139) succinctly summarizes:

> The politics of controlling government resources became a primary arena of politics in Kei – and many *adat* leaders scrambled to retain and augment their hereditary power and position. Particular clans and villages quickly established new 'fiefdoms' within the emerging political structure, which they consolidated through patronage and nepotism. Government offices in Tual served little other purpose than the repositories for cousins, nieces and nephews of the small bloc of individuals fortunate enough to be in the position to influence government appointments and spending…[I]n the Kei Islands, civil service jobs and political offices tend to be concentrated in certain clans and community. They are usually traditional (*adat*) elite [i.e., *mel-mel*].

Therefore, *mel-mel* individuals succeeded not only in obtaining important government positions, but also controlled access to the local bureaucracy and the political and economic resources that emanate from it. In the 1980's, for example, a person of *ren-ren* rank was appointed by the governor of Maluku as the sub-district head (*camat*) of Kei Besar. Due to the resistance and non-compliance of many village leaders of Kei Besar, the *camat* resigned within six months of his appointment (Adhuri 2006:401-402). In addition, in his study of intra-elite dynamics at the District People's Representative Council (*DPRD*) in Southeast Maluku in the 1990's, Madubun (1997; cited in van Klinken 2006:138) also noted the dominance of the *mel-mel* within formal institutions of power and that membership in the Kei aristocracy was the first rule dictating participation in local governance. Patron-client relations rather than Weberian legal-rational relations determined recruitment to positions of power in the local government (van Klinken 2006:138).

During my 1990's research, many of Keiese *of ren-ren* or *iri-ri* rank commented on how difficult it was for them to find government jobs in the Kei Islands. One graduate from

Pattimura University in Ambon stated, "A high ranking person without a college degree would be selected over me because I am *ren-ren*...and I have a college degree!" He explained that many educated but low ranking individuals are forced search for jobs outside of the Kei Islands where their rank matters very little. Marriages patterns among political elites during my ethnographic research suggested some divergence from the longstanding alliances between wife-givers (*mang ohoi*) and wife-takers (*yan ur*) of their village-based kin in favor of marriages with other wealthy, prosperous, and politically powerful *mel-mel*.

4.2   TERRITORIALIZATION AND *ADAT* COMMUNITIES IN THE NEW ORDER

After independence, the Indonesian state continued a process of internal territorialization that began during the colonial period. The new nation faced the challenge of creating a unified administrative authority and, despite adherence to the notion of *adat* in nationalist discourse, attempted to set up a unitary administrative system across the archipelago by abolishing the *adat* territories and the pluralistic legal system promoted by the Dutch (McCarthy 2005:65). "The twin modalities of territorialisation and development promoted by the New Order government represented core policy instruments of the state as it sought to consolidate and expand its administrative reach" (McWilliam 2006:52). "While the Dutch colonial regime sought to rigidify and contain *adat* under a pluralistic framework, the New Order government and its more intrusive programmes of modernization sought to marginalize and de-legitimate its formal expression and scope" (McWilliam 2006:54).

Perhaps one of the most important and thoroughly documented components of the New Order's territorializing imperatives was the enactment of the Village Law of 1979 (see Kato 1989), "which standardized government administration at the local level and provided an effective conduit for the promotion of state ideology and development programs" (McWilliam 2006:52). The Village Law of 1979 (*Undang-Undang No. 5 Tahun 1979 tentang Pemerintahan Desa*), through its restructuring of village political administration, aimed to increase national integration by replacing the diversity of village administration throughout Indonesia with uniformity. Although other laws concerning village government were enacted before 1979, the Village Law of 1979 had a much greater effect on local forms of village government. The 1965 law on village government, for example, was much more sensitive to the *adat* of particular areas and allowed the appointment of village leaders according to local tradition (Kato 1989:93). The 1979 law, on the other hand, is based upon the assumption that the diversity of *adat* throughout Indonesia will inhibit the government's control over local communities. Thus, the law called for the creation of Javanese-based administrative units throughout Indonesia: "*desa*" throughout rural areas and "*kelurahan*" in cities and towns. According to this law, *desa* leaders were to be elected while *kelurahan* leaders are to be appointed by government leaders at higher administrative levels (Kato 1989:93-94).

With the implementation of the Village Law of 1979, new means for selecting village leaders emerged, and sometimes came into conflict with rank-oriented *adat* practices. In some parts of Indonesia, lower-ranking individuals were elected to the position of village head (*kepala desa*) and other administrative positions (see King 1988). In addition to the creation of the salaried position of *kepala desa*, the law also established the position of village secretary

(*sekretaris desa*), who assisted the *kepala desa*, as well as a village deliberation council (*Lembaga Musyawarah Desa* or *LMD*), a consultative and legislative body headed by the *kepala desa*. The *LMD* often competed or intersected with the power of village *adat* councils, and sometimes disrupted rank-based patterns of governance.

Although this law was passed in 1979, its implementation did not begin in earnest until 1983 and its effects were only beginning to be felt throughout the archipelago years after the law's passage (Kato 1989:96). One of the immediate results of this law was the breaking up of *adat* communities and undermining of *adat* leadership, often as a result of *desa* multiplication (*pemekaran desa*). The multiplication of *desa*, which occurred in many areas throughout the archipelago in order to absorb more government subsidies, often weakened traditional rank-based leaders' control over their indigenous domains. As Kato (1989:106) described for Riau, the Village Law and *desa* multiplication tore apart the relationship between *adat* and administration and, thus, undermined the authority of *adat* leaders (also see Warren 1991, 1993). The result was sometimes an increase in village factionalism, competition and conflict between *adat* and newly emerging leaders (see K. von Benda-Beckman 1984; Laksono 1990; Wessels 1990; King 1988; Galizia 1996; Lee 1997; Rössler 2000).

Based on a review of the literature from throughout the Indonesian archipelago, the impact of the Village Law on *adat* communities was varied and uneven (cf. Kato 1989; H. Schulte Nordholt 1991; N. Schulte-Nordholt 1987; Laksono 1990; Warren 1991; Sullivan 1992; Antlöv 1995; Galizia 1996; Ellen 1997; Lee 1997; McWilliam 1999; Bräuchler 2010). Although most researchers have highlighted the disruptive effects of this state territorialization project on *adat* communities, several researchers have argued that its impact on village governance

was minimal (e.g., Ellen 1997 for Seram Laut; Keane 1997 for the Anakalang of Sumba; Hooe 1998 for Kei). For example, in his discussion of the Anakalang of Sumba, Keane (1997: 47-8) argued that despite the Village Law of 1979, "in most cases, *desa* heads remain men whose authority draws on their kinship ties, wealth, ritual knowledge, and skills in exchange...Anakalangese, relative to many other Indonesians, [have] a fair amount of leeway to act in the ancestral name of social groups that the state challenges, the modernists decry, and the church suspects." But why did the Village Law of 1979 have a relatively limited impact in places like Anakalang (Sumba), Seram Laut (Central Maluku), or Kei?

Given the peripheral location of these islands in the Indonesian archipelago, one might be tempted to suggest that geographic isolation was the primary reason for the continuity of *adat* communities in these locales. Ellen (1997:79, 84) made this claim for the Seram Laut islands: "the dimensions of distance and space are germane to an understanding to the degree of political autonomy displayed by different domains and the relations between them... [T]he state encroaches only partially and precariously in places, handicapped by the hazards of distance and topography, inadequate transport and virtual confinement of its regulative institutions to Geser [the seat of the sub-district or *kecamatan*]".

While I agree that geographic and bureaucratic isolation may be factors in understanding the nature of state-*adat* relations in Indonesia, they are inadequate in explaining the continuities in Kei *adat* communities for at least two reasons. First, by viewing the relative autonomy of local communities as functions of geographic isolation, we reify the state as an encroaching mass of domination, extending from its central points and engulfing all of those communities within its reach. This sort of approach depicts local peoples as victims without

agency, and the state as a threat to their "traditional" way of life. Second, while the Kei Islands

are fairly isolated both geographically and bureaucratically, the town of Tual on the island of Kei

Kecil is the center of the regency government of Southeast Maluku. Thus, the presence of the

state in Kei is rather ubiquitous, and is an increasingly important facet of Kei life even for those

living outside this government center. In response to the shortcomings of this "state-centered"

approach, I argue that it is beneficial to approach the state from its peripheries and view local

political life as resulting from the complex interplay of state and *adat* regimes (see McCarthy

2005). By doing so, we may better acknowledge the agency of local peoples in accommodating,

appropriating, and exploiting the state, its bureaucracy and symbols for their own political ends

(Strathern and Stewart 2000c). As Ellen acknowledged for Seram Laut, "individual polities

accept government patronage and interference, not because they feel politically crushed by

it…but because it is a source of existential power they must somehow accommodate, and

which may be a source of benefits (1997:84).

4.3   OVERLAPPING TERRITORIALITIES IN THE KEI ISLANDS

The territorialization project of the New Order government, like most all state

territorializations, was not simply imposed from above. Rather, as Peluso (2005:2) argued, state

actors must wrestle with the competing demands and actions of individuals and groups who

desire or claim jurisdiction and authority over territories and the resources contained within. In

local contexts such as the Kei islands, it is useful to conceptualize state and *adat* institutions as

"competing and mutually adjusting regulatory orders that stand in complex relation to each

other" (McCarthy 2005:59). "Overlapping territorialities" (McCarthy 2005:72) more accurately describes the condition resulting from the mutual accommodation between *adat* and state orders.

Although Thorburn (2008:130) argued that the Indonesian village government template "rested uncomfortably over preexisting grids of power and obligation," my research showed considerable overlap between *adat* and state administrative structures. I argue that political continuity at the village level would not be possible without extensive familial relations between village and government elites. During the New Order in the Kei islands, *adat* leaders and high-ranking bureaucrats alike struggled to adapt the state's territorial grid, as specified in the Village Law of 1979, to the pre-existing *adat* communities that were shaped during the late colonial period. Given the dominance of the *mel-mel* in both *adat* and bureaucratic realms, they were largely successful in maintaining the territorial and political integrity of *adat* communities.

Prior to 1970, village political organization throughout the Kei islands was essentially a continuation of patterns that existed during the late-colonial period. Each village was led by an *orang kaya* or *rat*, with smaller hamlets (*soa*) being politically subordinate to the "mother" villages. Each village also had an *adat* council (*saniri*), consisting of clan leaders and headed by the *orang kaya*, which made decisions and managed disputes affecting the village as a whole. In 1970, the central government began provisioning village subsidies in the Kei islands (Adhuri 2004). In response to these funds, the *camat* of Kei Besar raised the number of villages on Kei Besar from 44 to 111 in order to absorb more village subsidies (see Berhitu 1987). In 1972, the

village of Weduar Fer became officially recognized as an "administrative village".[6] At that time, D.C. Far-Far, a *mel-mel* individual from Weduar Fer, was the *bupati* of Maluku Tenggara. Following a proposal by the *camat* of Kei Besar, the *bupati* of Maluku Tenggara appointed Domingus Far-Far, who had served as *orang kaya* since 1952, as *kepala desa* and made Weduar Fer an administrative *desa* (*desa definitif*).

As a result of the *desa* multiplication that occurred in 1970, many village hamlets (*soa*) became administrative villages (*desa*). The result was increased autonomy for many hamlets and independence from their "mother" villages. This provided the opportunity for many low-ranking hamlets to resist the domination of high ranking village heads. However, the *rat* and/or *orang kaya* with authority over these hamlets according to *adat* frequently intervened in their administration (Yanuarti et al. 2006).

Although the Village Law was passed in 1979, its implementation in the Kei islands did not begin in earnest until the late 1980's. For most of the 1980's, there were 219 administrative villages throughout the Kei archipelago. Since most villages had populations well below the population requirements for a *desa* (1500 or 350 households), an effort was made to consolidate smaller villages into larger *desa*. In 1987, a meeting was convened in Elat on Kei Besar by the district head (*camat*) and attended by a number of Kei *adat* leaders, including the *rat* of Watlaar and the *orang kaya* of Weduar Fer. The *adat* leaders of Kei Besar proposed that *desa* should be established for villages under the authority of a *rat* or *orang kaya*, while villages led by a *kepala soa* should become *dusun* under the *kepala desa* of their "mother village" (*desa*

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[6] This was based on a decision by *Bupati* D.C. Far-Far (*Surat Keputusan Bupati No. DSA 7/6/12/1972*) following the *camat*'s proposal (*Surat Kepala Kecamatan Kei Besar di Elat tanggal 15 Mei 1972 No. DSA 14/RHS/72*)

ibu or *desa induk*). A village as small as Weduar Fer (with a population of only 149 in 1994), since it was ruled by an *orang kaya*, would become a *desa* according to this proposed plan. Given the dominance of the Kei nobility in the local bureaucracy, it is perhaps not surprising that the proposal received support by the district and provincial governments. It was passed into law through the Governor's Decision of 1988/1989[7], which set the total number villages (*desa* or *kelurahan*) for the entire province of Maluku. With this decision, which was finally carried out in 1993, the number of villages in the Kei islands decreased from 219 to 116. On Kei Besar, the number of administrative villages decreased from 111 to 44, back to the total before the *desa* multiplication of 1970.

As a result of these changes, all of the Kei *rat* and *orang kaya* became *kepala desa* under the Indonesian system of administration. When *adat* leaders did not meet legal criteria (i.e., education, age, literacy) they were usually appointed as temporary or acting (*pejabat*) *kepala desa*.[8] Other *adat* functionaries took over took many of the other positions established by the village law (i.e., village secretary or *sekretaris*). Thus, while village leaders became "clients of the state" (Antlöv 1995:ch. 7-8), they retained their *adat* positions and functions in village governance. In addition, the village deliberation council (*LMD*) according to the Village Law was often a mere transformation of the pre-existing *saniri negeri* (village *adat* council) (Yanuarti et al. 2006:66-67). In the village of Weduar Fer, for example, the *LMD* was virtually non-existent except on paper. In addition to monopolizing village government positions, high ranking *adat*

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[7] This decision was: "*Keputusan Gubernur Kepala Daerah Tingkat I Maluku 146/SK/39/89 Tentang Penetapan Jumlah Serta Nama Desa dan Kelurahan di Prompinsi Daerah Tingkat I Maluku Tahun 1988/1989*".
[8] Thorburn (2008:30) points out that many of these temporary appointments lasted for more than the 16-year maximum term for an elected *kepala desa*.

leaders also regained control their hamlets (and thus, many lower-ranking individuals) that were, prior to the Governor's Decision of 1988/1989, independent *desa*. One *kepala soa* of *ren-ren* rank, responding to my question regarding his hamlet's recent loss of political autonomy, stated that the decision was "*permainan politik"*, or "a political game."

Although the Village Law requires that village leaders be elected democratically by the village society, the position of *Kepala Desa* was most commonly "inherited" by certain high-ranking families. During the 1990's, most village heads had not been elected according to the law and most *Kepala Desa* on Kei Besar did not meet the legal requirements of the Village Law of 1979 (Yanuarti et al. 2006:66-67). Most were merely high-ranking individuals who held rights to the position of *orang kaya* or *rat*. In these instances, *adat* leaders (*orang kaya* or *rat*) and *desa* leaders (*kepala desa*) were one in the same, and their authority was doubly institutionalized.

By the mid-1990's, village head lections had become increasingly common in the Kei Islands. Such elections became arenas of stiff competition, factionalism, and conflict.[9] This competition was due in part to the fact that the *kepala desa* is a salaried position that brings

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[9] Between 1994 and 1995, there were disputes in three villages in *ratschap* Tabab Yamlim as a result of village head elections: Tutrean, Tamngil Nuhuyanat, and Tamngil Nuhuteen. The dispute in Tamngil Nuhuyanat resulted in village fissioning. There were two candidates from *fam* Rumkel, and the village was divided into two factions. After the election many of the family members of the losing faction left the village, many moving to Tual. Some informants claim that as many as 60 villagers left as a result of the election. The dispute over the village head of Tutrean occurred in 1995. One of the candidates for the position was from *fam* Refra. Many villagers from Tutrean as well as the *rat* of Tabab Yamlim opposed his nomination claiming that *fam* Refra holds rights to the position of *tuan tan*. They argued that three *fam* (Resmol, Rahantoknam, and Rahangkubang) possess a historically-based right to the seat of *orang kaya/kepala desa*. Thus they argued that the candidate from *fam* Refra does not have the right to be nominated or elected to the position of *orang kaya/kepala desa*. However, this candidate from *fam* Refra was elected as the new *kepala desa* and at his installation, a history was presented which justified his right to the position.

with it access to village subsidies and potentially advantageous patron-client relations with government officials at higher administrative levels. As a result, the *kepala desa* became a highly sought out position in New Order Indonesia (Thorburn 2008:131).[10] Another factor that contributed to heated electoral politics was the increasingly common trend by the district government to sanction only those candidates which met the legal requirements according to the law. While in most cases villages were able to elect *kepala desa* who also held rights to *adat* leadership positions, sometimes these individuals were not nominated as candidates due to their age or education (cf. Lee 1997). But even when *adat* leaders were not nominated for the position of *kepala desa*, the district government's "screening process" usually resulted in the nomination and election of other individuals of *mel-mel* rank. I was told by lower-ranking individuals that the screening process for *kepala desa* by the regional government was essentially a way to "weed out" low-ranking candidates. Even when village elections were held, the *kepala desa* that was elected remained a high-ranking individual. The *mel-mel*'s control over the position of *kepala desa* is manifest in the extravagant royal rituals which accompany the government installation of new village heads (discussed below).

As the preceding discussion demonstrates, the Kei elite were largely successful in adapting the state administrative structure to the pre-existing *adat* domains, and *vice versa*. Thus, despite Indonesian laws to democratize village political organization, local hierarchy and government bureaucracy remained entangled during the New Order. While the Village Law of

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[10] Thorburn (2008:131) points out, based on his research in Kei Kecil, that "some Kepala Desa used their position to grant rights to village marine territories (*petuanan*) to non-local fishing fleets or pearl farms…Also, community resentment grew as the Kepala Desa channeled projects to his own family, neighborhood or clan."

1979 disrupted *adat* governance in other parts of Indonesia (e.g., Kato 1989; Warren 1991), *adat* communities in the Kei archipelago persisted to a considerable extent. Although the Village Law problematized traditional rights to village leadership, the Kei *mel-mel* maintained their village-level dominance to a large degree (also see Kaartinen 2000:7). I argue that *adat* political continuity at the village level was made possible by the Kei's aristocracy's expanded role in the local Indonesian bureaucracy during the New Order. As a result of the extensive familial relations between village and government elites, high-ranking Keiese were able to maintain their dominance in local political life despite the significant social, economic, and political changes that occurred during the New Order.

4.4   KEI ARISTOCRATIC CULTURE IN THE NEW ORDER

As this chapter has illustrated thus far, the Kei islanders have been very "adept at participating in national politics and bureaucracy" (Kaartinen 2000: 6). During the New Order, members of the Kei aristocracy developed into a "political class" (see Vel 2008, 2009), a network of individuals, from high-level executives to *adat* leaders, who controlled the resources of the state, including jobs, funds, decision power and legislation. The formation of a Kei political class occurred in a New Order context in which ascriptive hierarchies became increasingly problematic due to government policies and the promulgation of egalitarian ideologies, as well as the social, political and economic changes that were taking place. In contrast to the political class described by Vel in West Sumba (see Vel 2008, 2009), membership in the political class of the Kei islands was restricted largely by one's rank in the social hierarchy.

While the political class included important government officials and businessmen from immigrant ethnic groups, the majority of Keiese with control of or access to state resources were individuals of *mel-mel* rank (see Figure 51). It is in this New Order context that the revitalization and articulation of "aristocratic" aspects of Kei *adat* emerged.

Figure 51. Members of the Kei political class during 1995 *belang* races

I argue that the revitalization of aristocratic culture in the Kei islands was largely an effort by high-ranking Keiese to buttress their authority during in a context of dramatic socio-political change. However, this revitalization was also likely influenced by New Order cultural policy. First of all, the anti-feudal policies of the Sukarno era (1945-1965) were reversed during the New Order. As Benedict Anderson noted, a common trend in New Order Indonesia was the government's bolstering of many local aristocracies in order to fragment Indonesia's population into small self-contained units (Anderson 1987:77; also see Magenda 1988:352). In addition, as was previously mentioned, New Order cultural policy supported the ceremonial or showcase

aspects of culture and identity in an attempt to promote national unity and de-politicize identity (e.g., Acciaioli 1985; Kipp 1993). It was in this policy context that the articulation of aristocratic culture became possible in places like the Kei Islands. As Kartomi (1993:188) notes for North Maluku, the policy changes of Suharto's New Order government supported the revival of "feudal" culture on Ternate and Tidore. Similarly, the Kei Islands during the New Order also witnessed a resurgence of aristocratic culture in which *adat* rituals and law were defined and articulated as the domain of the *mel-mel*.

For many Kei islanders, especially those of high-rank, the pre-colonial development of "kingdoms" is a great source of pride. Referring to the Kei institution of *rat*, one high-ranking village leader proudly said, "The Kei Islands have had 'high' culture (*kebudayaan tinggi*) for a very long time". While demonstrating strong ethnic sentiments, statements such as this were also bound up in broader struggles for national identity. As Hoskins (1993:309) pointed out, part of the revolutionary struggle in Indonesia involved the creation of visions of glory of pre-colonial empires in order to construct the image of Indonesia as a moral community that preceded and survived Dutch colonial rule (also see Aragon 1994:72). The articulation of Kei aristocratic culture helped establish Kei's place in the Indonesian imagined community (see Anderson 1983). Given Kei's peripheral location in the Indonesian nation, claims to a glorious, precolonial political past take on even greater importance. The Kei Islanders, like other outer island ethnic groups during the New Order (see Atkinson 1987; Hoskins 1987; Tsing 1993; Rodgers 1987-8; Cunningham 1989; Nourse 1994), "engaged in imaginative efforts to redefine local traditions in such a way that the latter can compete forcefully with Javanese and Balinese high culture, and with the national culture itself" (Rodgers 1990:101).

4.5   THE POLITICS OF *ADAT* RITUAL IN THE NEW ORDER

While the articulation of aristocratic culture in the Kei islands may be viewed as a means to forge ethnic identity in a competitive multi-cultural national context, I argue that it was also fundamental to the creation and maintenance of *mel-mel* dominance within Kei society. The celebration of aristocratic culture in the Kei islands was especially apparent during *adat* rituals surrounding the installation of new leaders (*kepala desa*, *orang kaya* or *rat*) as well as the ceremonial canoe (*belang*) races held in celebration of Indonesia's 50th anniversary of Independence. While these rituals "may be intended by the group staging [them] as a display of solidarity, particularly perhaps in relation to outsiders", they were "also a display – perhaps implicit, or perhaps overt and triumphant – of the current state of often changing and contested power relations **within** the group" (Harrison 1992:225; emphasis added). In the following sections, I argue that Kei *adat* rituals do not merely reflect pre-existing relations of inequality, but are also constitutive of such relations.

The relationship between ritual and power has been a topic of considerable interest in the field of anthropology (e.g., Middleton 1960; Gluckman 1965; Turner 1974; Kertzer 1988; Bloch 1987, 1989; Harrison 1992; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993). In insular Southeast Asia, anthropologists have long argued that "ritual and ceremonial displays of power and hierarchy appear integral to the workings of a wide array of political orders" (Atkinson 1989:7), from the kingdoms of Bali (Geertz 1980) and Sulawesi (Errington 1989) to the more egalitarian populations of the Southeast Asian periphery (Atkinson 1989).

Geertz's (1980) interpretive study of the "theatre state" (*negara*) in nineteenth-century

Bali is a classic study of the relationship between ritual and politics. In it, he argued that in the

kingdoms of Bali, "[c]ourt ceremonialism was the driving force of court politics; and mass ritual

was not a device to shore up the state, but rather the state…Power served pomp, not pomp

power (Geertz 1980: 13; also see Geertz 1967). In other words, the Balinese state was for the

most part expressive. It was "a theatre state in which royal rituals…enacted, in the form of

pageant, the main themes of Balinese political thought: the center is exemplary, status is the

ground of power, statecraft is a thespian art" (p. 120). Geertz concluded that "the driving aim of

higher politics was to construct a state by constructing a king. The more consummate the king,

the more exemplary the center. The more exemplary the center, the more actual the realm" (p.

124). Therefore, the central political dynamic of the *negara* was that "the closer one moved

toward imaging power, the more one tended to distance oneself from the machinery

controlling it" (p. 132). According to Geertz, the Balinese elite were "concerned less with

political control than with state rituals and the ceremonial display of status" (Howe 1991:449).

Geertz's argument was based to a large degree on Balinese notions of power (Howe

1991:50), and was likely influenced by Anderson's classic essay on Javanese conceptions of

power (1972).[11] Anderson argued that in both past and present Java, power is culturally

conceived to be a cosmic, generative energy which animates the universe. Based on this

conception of power, Javanese politics is seen to focus not the exercise of power but its

accumulation, and individuals may accumulate this cosmic power through asceticism, ritual and

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[11] Balinese conceptions of power are outlined by Geertz in his section on the "Symbology of Power" in Chapter 4 (1980:98-10). He references Anderson and "the closely related Javanese concept of power" in the notes related to his discussion of Balinese notions of power (1980:223).

ceremony.[12] "Likened to a lamp whose intensity is greatest at the center and diminishes at it radiates outward, a ruler's power dictates the range of his influence…So too does the mandalic shape of traditional kingdoms, the potent centers of which matter whereas the vague borders do not" (Atkinson 1989:9).[13] Anthropologists have described similar conceptions of power in a wide range of Indonesian societies, from egalitarian swidden populations (e.g., Atkinson 1989; Tsing 1993) to more hierarchical chiefdoms (e.g., Volkman 1985) and kingdoms (e.g., Errington 1989). Common to all is the unequal distribution of spiritual powers which is manifest through ritual and ceremony (see Wolters 1982).[14] It should not be surprising then that a wide range of studies have focused on the relationship between expressive forms of behavior and power relations in a variety of Indonesian societies (for example, see Keeler 1987 on Javanese shadow theatre; Beatty 1991 on "feasts of merit" in Nias; Hoskins 1986 on stone-dragging and grave-building rituals among the Kodi; Volkman 1985 on Toraja funerary rituals; Millar 1989 on Bugis weddings; and Atkinson 1989 on Wana poetry and shamanic rituals).

While Geertz's "poetics of power" approach (Howe 1991:451) is useful in explicating the symbolic and expressive sides of politics, its application to the Kei islands case is problematic for

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[12] Keeler's study of Javanese shadow plays (1987) illuminates the Javanese conception of power as outlined by Anderson.

[13] Anderson claims an Indic origin of such conceptions of power (also see Tambiah 1985). Woodward (1989) criticizes Anderson for his underestimation of the influence of Islam, and contends that such conceptions of power and polity are of Islamic origin. Wolters (1982), on the other hand, argues that these political ideas have deep roots in the cultures and history of the region (also see Errington 1989; Atkinson 1989).

[14] Errington (1990:47) importantly points out that many eastern Indonesian societies, such as the Kei islands, "represented potency to themselves as dual, as split into two aspects of nearly (though not quite) equal stature, …[and] that in those societies potency was never fully captured by an entity that could claim symbolic hegemony, as happened in the Indic states…Even so, the center-obsessed Indic states and the more dualistic Eastern Indonesian diarchical structures and symbols of potency were analogous".

two important reasons. First, by giving primacy to indigenous conceptions of power, the poetics of power approach tends to ignore the "mechanics of power" or "the real material basis of that power" (Howe 1991:451; also see Schulte Nordholt 1981, 1991). With regard to the Kei islands, I argue that without the political and economic changes that occurred from the colonial period to the New Order, the *adat* rituals analyzed below would not have taken the shape that they did. It was the *mel-mel*'s ability to capture the state bureaucracy and the economic resources which emanated from it that permitted the staging and display of aristocratic symbols and power that I describe below.

A second criticism of the poetics of power approach, and indeed the interpretive approach to ritual in general, is that it tends to present culture and meanings as coherent and uncontested (Atkinson 1989:12; also see Keesing 1987; Roseberry 1989). As Keesing points out, knowledge and meanings are "differently read, differently construed, by men and women, young and old, experts and nonexperts…We need to ask who *creates* and *defines* cultural meanings, and to what ends" (Keesing 1987:161-62; emphasis in original). This is particularly important in the Kei islands, where colonial and post-colonial transformations created a situation in which individuals of *mel-mel* rank emerged with the ability to create and articulate particular representations of *adat*.

Kei *adat* rituals, rather than simply reflecting Kei conceptions of power, constitute complex arenas in which power and inequality are actively renegotiated (also see Volkman 1985; Atkinson 1989, Millar 1989; Beatty 1991). As Atkinson (1989:7-8) argues, "[b]y hosting or being hosted, by staging, staffing, supplying, or staying away, people array themselves in a manner that - for a moment - articulates patterns of authority and dependence." It becomes

the task of the anthropologist, then, to analyze the ways in which particular individuals, groups, or sectors of society mobilize resources, constituencies, and symbols in order to construct particular views of the world (including the distribution of power and privilege) and "freeze it for a moment in a cosmic frame" (Atkinson 1989:8).

To better understand the ways in which rituals become entangled in struggles for power and inequality, it is useful to conceptualize ritual and symbols as forms of property (Harrison 1992). As many scholars have suggested, an important dimension of social inequality within a particular societies lies in the distribution of property in ideas and cultural forms (Harrison 1992:235; Bourdieu 1984; Coombe 1996; Geismar 2005; Harrison 2006; Dalsgaard 2009; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). Specific individuals or groups may own or claim ownership over rights to organize and perform ritual performances, as well as the symbolism utilized in such rituals. As Harrison (1992:226; emphasis in original) argues, "the total process of preparing and staging an important ritual has an essentially indexical function; it makes the current state of a complex and shifting network of power relations apprehensible, and pronounces it a public *fact*, by a display of the key tokens of strategic political value". "An individual or group having property rights in a political symbol or symbols is defined thereby to be an entity possessing symbolic capital...[and] their possession is a source of legitimacy and may confer specific rights and prerogatives such as the ownership of a territory or the entitlement to a political office" (Harrison 1995:270). In this chapter, I consider *adat* ritual as a proprietary domain of the Kei aristocracy. As the following sections demonstrate, members of the Kei elite articulated, through ritual performances, visions of *adat* that helped to create and legitimate their dominance in local political life.

4.6   VILLAGE HEAD INSTALLATION RITUALS

With the implementation of the Village of Law of 1979, the 1990's witnessed a growing number of village-head installation rituals (*Upacara Pelantikan Kepala Desa*) throughout the Kei islands. When a new *kepala desa* was inaugurated by the district government, a ceremony was planned and performed in the *kepala desa*'s village. In a context in which state territorialization and village elections threatened the rank-based prerogatives of Kei *adat*, these rituals provided occasions for *adat* leaders to reassert their authority in local level politics (also see Kuipers 1998).

Between 1994 and 1996, I attended four village-head installation rituals in the villages of Ohoitahit, Danar, Tetoat and Ngilngof. The villages of Ohoitahit, Danar and Tetoat are seats of three of the Kei *rat* of Kei Kecil: *Rat* Sovmas, *Rat* Famur and *Rat* Yarbadang, respectively. Thus, the rituals held in these villages also included the installation of new *rat* in addition to the inauguration of the *kepala desa*. The ritual in the village of Ngilngof, since it is the seat of an *orang kaya* under *Rat* Manyew of Rumadian, included the installation of an *orang kaya* in addition to the *kepala desa*.

The rituals observed in all four villages consisted of both state and *adat* components, and included the following events, in the order in which they occurred: (1) an elaborate procession accompanied by *adat* songs and dances, (2) the inauguration of the *kepala desa* by the district head (*bupati*), (3) the recitation of origin histories (*tom*) of the *adat* leader and his domain, (4) the installation of the *adat* leader by historically related *rat*, and (5) feasting. These village-head installation rituals were large and pompous events that were attended by

hundreds of official invitees (prominent government officials and *adat* leaders) as well as hundreds more villagers and family members from throughout the Kei archipelago (see Figure 52).

Figure 52. A group of Kei kings at a village head installation ritual

Given the enmeshment of local hierarchy and government bureaucracy during the New Order period, it is perhaps not surprising that these state-sponsored ceremonies included both state and *adat* components. The state component consisted of a rather brief inauguration ceremony. This included a reading of the *bupati*'s decision (based upon election results) and the administering of the oath of office by the *bupati*. Following this formal recognition of the village head as *kepala desa*, the *bupati* then gave a short speech that usually touted and praised the implementation of the Village Law of 1979 and the democratic village elections.

The *adat* ritual components (*acara adat*) took up a disproportionately larger amount of time, and began with elaborate processions. Following the arrival of the *bupati* and his

entourage from Tual (see Figure 53), a multi-sensorial procession took place from the village entrance to the ritual center. Distinguished guests and the village leaders were usually escorted in "portable" ceremonial canoes called *belang* (discussed in more detail below) (see Figure 54). The procession was accompanied and punctuated by the performance of *adat* songs and dances. The songs most often were about the history of *Larvul Ngabal*, the village or the *rat* that was the focus of the ritual, while the dances (*sosoi*) were usually those performed to honor high-ranking leaders (see Figure 55 and Figure 56).

Figure 53. The *bupati* and entourage arrive at a village head installation ritual

Figure 54. Transporting the *orang kaya* of Ngilngof in a *belang* during a village head installation ritual

Figure 55. *Adat* dance at a village head installation ritual in Danar (1995)

Figure 56. *Adat* dance at a village head installation ritual in Danar (1995)

Following the arrival of all guests to the ritual site and the inauguration of the *kepala desa*, the remainder of the event was devoted to the installation of the *adat* leader. This component usually began with the recitation of an origin history (*tom*) which linked the Kei *rat* or *orang kaya* to the creation of *adat* law and the rise of Kei *rat* discussed in Chapter 3. These recitations traced their relations to the Balinese stranger-king and other Kei *rat* and, in so doing, established and justified their rights to the position in which they were being installed. The contested nature of Kei history was reflected in the grumblings, side-bar conversations, and post-ritual comments made by many spectators, although these narratives were never openly questioned or debated.

The recitation of the origin history was followed by the installation of the *rat* or *orang kaya*. This ritual was usually conducted by a *rat* who was historically related to the *adat* leader being installed (see Figures 57 and 58 below). For example, it was *Rat* Baldu of Dullah who

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installed the *rat* of Ohoitahit since, according to the origin history, the *rat* of Dullah was responsible for installing the first *rat* of Ohoitahit (see Figure 58). Other *rat* from the political moiety (*ur siu* or *lor lim*) of the *adat* leader being installed also participated in these rituals and served to legitimate the person's rights to the title he received. The installation of the new *rat* or *orang kaya* was followed by a meal, social-oriented dances (*sosoi sawat*), and social interaction and networking.

Figure 57. The *rat* of Tual installing the *orang kaya* of Ngilngof (1994)

Figure 58. The *rat* of Dullah installing the *rat* of Ohoitahit (1994)

The *adat* ritual components during these village-head installation ceremonies were organized, controlled, and performed under the direction of the high-ranking members of the respective villages. While lower-ranking Keiese served some roles during the rituals (i.e., as dancers or *belang* crew) and may have observed the events from the periphery, the village head-installation rituals were clearly noble prerogatives. These important social events required great coordination and the pooling of resources to accommodate, feed, and entertain the hundreds of important guests who attended. But these rituals were more than mere entertainment, political formalities, or occasions for social interaction. Through the planning, organization, and performance of these rituals, the noble sponsors articulated a vision of *adat* as aristocratic culture that demonstrated and solidified the place of the *mel-mel* in Kei political life. Representations of Kei "high culture" permeated these rituals in the form of *adat* songs

and dances, origin histories about *adat* law and the rise of Kei "kings", as well as the prominent

role played by a number of Kei *rat*. These rituals and the density of aristocratic symbolism

contained therein were clearly claimed as the province of the Kei nobility. Analogous to the

Torajan funerary "feasts of honor" described by Volkman (1985) or the Bugis wedding rituals

"of social location" described by Millar (1989), these rituals provided an arena in which *adat*

and hierarchical relations were momentarily articulated.

4.7   THE POLITICS OF *BELANG* RACES

The Indonesian state's patronage of regional culture performed important integrative and

economic functions for the nation during the New Order (Kipp 1993:105-6; Aragon 1994:73;

Acciaioli 1985; Hatley 1994).   At the local level, however, such patronage often entailed

meanings that were significantly different from those intended by leaders at Indonesia's

political center (see Kaartinen 1997; Weintraub 2004:107-27).[15] In this section, I examine a case

of cultural patronage at the periphery of the Indonesian nation: *belang* races and ceremonies

held in celebration of Indonesia's 50th anniversary of Independence in 1995.[16] *Belang* races

were held for three days (August 14-16, 1995). In addition, a variety of rituals and ceremonies

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[15] In a similar vein, Strathern and Stewart (2000c) examine the localization of the national through the reappropriation of state symbols at the local level in a number of Papua New Guinea contexts. Their argument that the appropriation of symbols "is taking place more effectively downward rather than upward, that is, from the national to the local" (p. 41) is very relevant to the state-society relations in the Kei islands.

[16] I attended the following activities associated with the *belang* races: (1) A ritual in Ibra involving casting a *belang* to sea by *Rat* Kirkes (covered by Indonesian state television and attended by the *bupati* and other officials); (2) Rituals celebrating the arrival of *belang* in Tual for the *ratschap* of Tetoat, Lo Ohoitel, Danar, Meu Umfit, and Tabab Yamlim; (3) the "water festival"; and (4) the *belang* races.

surrounding the arrival of *belang* from throughout the Kei archipelago took place between August 7-10, and a government-sponsored "water festival" (*pesta air*) was held on Saturday, August 12th.

Belang are long and narrow plank boats with upwardly curving stem and stern posts, typically paddled by 30-50 men (see Figure 59). In contrast to other types of sea craft, *belang* in the Kei archipelago are communally owned by one of the three major political units: domain (*ratschap*), multi-village alliance (*utan*), and village (*ohoi*). In the past, each of these political units possessed, at least in theory, its own *belang* with its distinctive *belang*-name. The *belang* were commonly decorated with carved prow-boards and flags bearing certain figures or totems which symbolized the social group. Such carvings and decorations constituted the intellectual property of the respective social units, which often led to disputes "because of real or supposed copying" (Van Wouden 1968:37). Thus *belang* constituted important symbols of political units in Kei society. *Belang* "represent metaphorically a leader and his subordinates" (Geurtjens 1921, cited in Van Wouden 1968:37).

In the past *belang* (see were commonly used for warfare, transportation, ritual events, and for racing. While boat races were held in Ternate as early as the sixteenth century (Galvão 1970:147), the beginning of such events in Kei is difficult to ascertain. Many informants recall that *belang* races were conducted during the early to mid-twentieth century under Dutch colonial rule. However, the details of *belang* races during colonial times remain unclear. With Indonesian Independence, *belang* races ended, at least temporarily. Without government patronage, and because of new forms of sea transportation, the production and use of *belang* came to a virtual halt in post-colonial times.

Figure 59. A *belang* from Kei Besar in 1904
Attribution: Tropenmuseum of the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT)

In 1981, during the height of the New Order, the district government (*kabupaten*) of

Maluku Tenggara began to revitalize this declining tradition. Inter-village *belang* races were

held each October in celebration of Youth Pledge Day (*Hari Sumpah Pemuda*). However, these

races were discontinued in 1989 because of the inter-village violence which often accompanied

the events. Six years later, in 1995, *belang* races were once again revitalized by the district

government, this time in celebration of Indonesia's 50th anniversary. During my research in the

mid 1990's, *belang* were used and constructed solely for government sponsored celebrations

and races.

As a result of the revitalization of *belang* races during the New Order, images of *belang*

were ubiquitous during the mid-1990s. Images of *belang* could be found on recently built

tombstones and on many village and neighborhood entranceways. *Belang* images were also

used to decorate some local government buildings, and parade floats were commonly decorated as *belang*. For example, a procession in 1995 to a newly built Protestant church transported church leaders in a "*belang*-mobile" (see Figure 60). In addition, at many village-head installation ceremonies (discussed above), distinguished individuals were transported to the ceremonial grounds in portable *belang*, whose frames were carried by the crew rather than paddled (see Figure 61). In preparation for Indonesia's 50th anniversary, countless *gapura*, the characteristic archways erected in celebration of Independence Day, were constructed and decorated in the image of the *belang* (see Figure 62), illustrating the centrality of the *belang* activities to the Kei people.

Figure 60. A "*belang* mobile" leading a procession to a new Protestant church (1995)

Figure 61. A "portable" *belang* at a village head installation ritual

Figure 62. *Belang*-decorated village entranceway (1995)

While the patronage of *belang* races in 1995 was not new, one significant aspect of the

races was. The 1995 *belang* races were the first occasion in which the races were held between

the indigenous polities, or *ratschap*, of the archipelago. During the Independence Day

ceremonies in 1995, 16 of the 19 *ratschap* participated in the races. Three types of events made up the Kei *belang* activities. The first involved ceremonies centered on the arrival in Tual of the *rat* and their armada from the various *ratschap* of the archipelago. These ceremonies were organized primarily by members of the various *ratschap*. The second major event was the government-planned water festival (*pesta air*) in the harbor of Tual, involving the display of all racing and decorative *belang*. Such displays were accompanied by traditional dancing and singing on shore, and were filmed and photographed by television and newspaper reporters. The final event, and climax of the *belang* activities, was the three-day inter-*ratschap belang* races, also covered by national and local media.

These *belang* activities are analogous in certain respects to the royal galley processions and boat races of some Southeast Asian states in the "age of commerce" (Reid 1988). Reid (1988:177-80, 191-2) explains the importance of royal galley processions and the royal patronage of boat races as important elements in the pageantry of Southeast Asian "theater states". The Kei Island *belang* ceremonies were similarly bound up in local constructions of power and pomp.

The recognition of the Kei "kings" and "kingdoms" by the district government was a significant aspect of the *belang* events. Through such recognition, the government implicitly promoted the revitalization of aristocratic culture in the service of national and regional identity. While the patronage of inter-*ratschap belang* races may have involved nationalistic motives, there were other political motives as well. Considering the preeminence of the Kei nobility, the *mel-mel*, in the local government, the patronage was clearly tied to the creation and expression of aristocratic power. While *mel-mel* dominated political life during the New

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Order, such dominance became increasingly problematic for reasons mentioned earlier. With this in mind, the government's patronage of inter-*ratschap belang* races may be viewed as a means to create, express, and reinforce *mel-mel* dominance in Kei society.

While the district government provided the contexts for the *belang* activities, these events would not have been possible without the cooperation and efforts of each *ratschap*. Mirroring their ascendancy in contemporary political spheres, the *mel-mel* dominated the planning and organization of the *belang* activities. In cooperation with their *rat*, influential, high-ranking individuals from each *ratschap* organized and financed the construction of *belang*, the formation of *belang* racing teams, and the performance of *belang* ceremonies. Some *ratschap* had business sponsors as well, such as Ibra, Dullah, and Tual. The effort and resources put into these activities illustrate their importance to the sponsors. As Kipp points out, the sponsorship of events that brings Karo society into public view also builds "big man" reputations inside the Karo community (Kipp 1993:186). Similarly, the sponsorship of the *belang* races and associated activities by the local elite became symbolic statements not only about the greatness of their *ratschap*, but also about the status and prestige of the sponsors themselves.

The case of *ratschap* Tabab Yamlim is illustrative in this regard. In order to coordinate the *ratschap*'s *belang* activities, a large organizational body (*Panitia Belang Ratschap Tabab Yamlim*) was formed by the *rat* and high-ranking members of Tabab Yamlim residing in the capital. The organization was headed by a well-known, high-ranking, and wealthy government official, and was divided into a number of committees assigned to particular tasks such as fundraising, *belang* construction, and the collection of *ratschap* history. The composition of the

various committees was predominately Tual dwelling *mel-mel* originating from Tabab Yamlim. In contrast, the participation of low ranking members of the domains was limited primarily to the *ratschap*'s racing teams, symbolizing their subordinate position in contemporary political life.

It was decided that three *belang* would represent Tabab Yamlim in the *belang* races, based upon the three multi-village alliances (*utan*) which comprise the *ratschap*. There was some controversy over the number of *belang* which would represent Tabab Yamlim, as well as the particular social units which would be represented by the *belang*. The controversy was diagnostic of cleavages within Tabab Yamlim as well as the importance of *belang* as symbols legitimating particular socio-political units. The decision that each of the three multi-village alliances which comprise (yet divide) Tabab Yamlim would be represented by a single *belang* illustrates claims to political autonomy on the part of some of the *utan* (i.e., *Utan* Tabab Yamlim)*. Belang* were constructed in the villages of Fer (for *Utan* Fer Ohoitel), Sungai/Ngafan (for *Utan* Mel Yamfaak), and Tamngil Nuhuteen (for *Utan* Tabab Yamlim). Each belang was decorated with decorative blue flags with the symbols of the *ratschap*[17].

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[17] The dragon on the flag represents the *Lor Lim* dragon (*nang lor lim*) and the spear represents a Balinese spear (*ngabal*). Both are symbols of *adat* law and the authority of *Rat* Bomav. The eleven stars represent the eleven primary villages of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim (i.e., villages with *orang kaya*).

Figure 63. Decorative flag made for Tabab Yamlim's *belang*

Fundraising was a primary concern of the organization, because of the substantial cost of building the three *belang*, not to mention housing and feeding the more than 100 members of the racing team for an entire week while in Tual. In order to help fund these activities, collections were taken in each village of the *ratschap*. Donations from villages in which there are no *mel-mel* were significantly smaller than those with a large *mel-mel* population. Donations were also solicited from members of Tabab Yamlim residing in Tual. For example, civil servants in Tual, the majority of which are *mel-mel*, were asked to donate a minimum amount of money based upon their level (*pangkat*) in the local government. Again, high-ranking individuals contributed substantially larger sums of money than those of lower ranks.

The arrival of the *rat* of Tabab Yamlim along with the three *belang* in the Tual harbor was a momentous occasion for the organizers (see Figure 64). In the past, the arrival of guests by *belang* was also a particularly festive occasion. No one could go ashore until the passengers were ceremonially greeted "by certain notables, upon which sirih [betel nut and lime] and a

couple of gifts" were offered (Van Wouden 1968:37).[18] As the *rat* came to shore, he was engulfed in the cheers of the crowd, as several men lifted him on their shoulders for all to see. The *rat* was then given *sirih pinang*[19] as a sign of respect by a high-ranking woman from his domain (see Figure 67). Then the *rat* and the three *belang* pilots (*dir-u*) were honored with paper flower decorations. An *adat* song concerning the *ratschap*'s history was sung by a noble woman from the domain, and *Rat* Tabab Yamlim proudly joined in on the singing (see Figure 68).

The spatial configuration of the crowd during this ceremony reflected the dominance of the *mel-mel* and their symbols of aristocracy. Other than the *bupati* and a few other government officials, most of the spectators at the center of the event were high-ranking members of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, many of which were government officials permanently residing in Tual. Moving outward from the center of activities were some lower-ranking individuals as well as members of other *ratschap*.

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[18] Such ceremonies continued to be performed in the 1990's despite declining use of *belang* in Kei society. During my 1990's fieldwork, guests arriving from other villages by means of new forms of seacraft such as a "*jonson*" (an outboard motorboat) were greeted in a similar fashion.

[19] *Sirih Pinang* is the concoction of areca nut, betel leaves, and lime commonly chewed by elder Kei women. In both past and present, *sirih pinang* is offered to distinguished guests.

Figure 64. The three *belang* of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim

Figure 65. *Rat* Fer arrives at Tual Harbor

Figure 66. High-Ranking women from *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim
awaiting the arrival of *Rat* Fer

Figure 67. *Rat* Fer receiving *sirih pinang*
from a *mel-mel* woman from Tutrean

Figure 68. *Rat* Fer singing *adat* song

In contrast to the ceremonies surrounding the arrival of *belang*, the water festival was primarily a "showcase" project of the local government. In the crowded Tual harbor, the three *belang* of Tabab Yamlim paddled in unison alongside the other racing and decorative *belang* (see Figure 69). At the same time, *adat* dances and songs were performed on shore (see Figure 70). News and television media covered this highly condensed display of Kei *adat*. Two days later the *belang* races began (see Figure 71). Large crowds of spectators gathered around the Tual harbor and behind the open tent covering the *Bupati* and other distinguished guests. The *Bupati* launched the races with a speech which, in addition to nationalistic rhetoric, discussed the importance of the *belang* races in revitalizing local culture.

Figure 69. The water festival at Tual harbor

Figure 70. *Adat* dance during water festival

Figure 71. The *belang* races

Throughout the *belang* races and activities, low-ranking members of *ratschap* Tabab Yamlim showed observably less enthusiasm than their high-ranking counterparts. As a celebration of distinctly aristocratic culture, the *belang* races marginalized lower-ranking groups. While the *belang* races and ceremonies were designed in part to promote ethnic and national identity, the display of aristocratic culture which they entailed actually highlighted the social divisions within Kei society.

As the example of the *belang* races demonstrates, the government patronage of *adat* and culture cannot be divorced from local configurations of rank and power. This is especially true in the Kei Islands, where local hierarchy and state bureaucracy became inextricably intertwined. The meaning and significance of *adat* representations, such as *belang* races and ceremonies, cannot be uncovered without addressing issues of authorship and appropriation. Many scholars have pointed out that the creation and control of symbols, ritual, and "tradition"

is essential to the constitution of asymmetric power relations (e.g. Keesing 1987; Kertzer 1988; Harrison 1991; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Similarly, the patronage, sponsorship, and performance of the Independence Day *belang* activities were fundamental to the construction of *mel-mel* dominance in Kei society during the New Order.

Although *mel-mel* preeminence has become problematic in New Order times, it has nonetheless continued and has even expanded into new political arenas. Responding to these political transformations, the Kei elite once again articulated particular forms of *adat* that privileged the role of Kei kings and kingdoms, creating new symbolic capital in order to solidify their dominant position in Kei society. As in the village-head installation rituals, *belang* races and ceremonies were appropriated as the political and symbolic sphere of the Kei aristocracy. The Kei elite, both inside and outside of the local government, authored, financed, and controlled the *belang* races and ceremonies. This elite authorship was evident in the recognition and high profile of Kei kings and kingdoms, and the numerous representations of aristocratic culture which the *belang* activities entailed. And that was the paradox of these national celebrations. While ostensibly intended to promote national unity on Indonesia's 50th anniversary of Independence, the *belang* races and ceremonies sharpened preexisting divisions in Kei society. The effect, to borrow Rita Kipp's terminology, was the further "dissociation" of Kei identities (see Kipp 1993).

4.8   SUMMARY

This chapter has examined the entanglement of Kei social hierarchy and government bureaucracy during the New Order period. As a result of Dutch colonialism, the *mel-mel* were strategically positioned to capture the resources offered by the new Indonesian nation. In addition, the Kei islander's favorable relation with the new Indonesian government resulted in the creation of a Southeast Maluku District centered in Tual, which helped increase the participation of the Keiese in the state bureaucracy. During the New Order, the state became an increasingly ubiquitous and important facet of Kei society, as it constituted the primary source of employment and funds for the islands. By the 1990's it was clear that the *mel-mel* had gained the majority of positions in the district government. It was during the New Order, I have suggested, that the Kei aristocracy developed into political class which controlled the resources of the state, and it was in this context that *adat* revivalism in the Kei Islands must be situated.

Despite the threats to *adat* communities and territories as a result of the Village Law of 1979, this chapter has shown that the *mel-mel* were largely successful in maintaining the territorial and political integrity of *adat* communities. During the New Order, *adat* leaders and high-ranking bureaucrats alike struggled to adapt the state's territorial grid to the pre-existing *adat* communities of the Kei archipelago. The resulting political continuity at the village level would not have been possible without the Kei's aristocracy's expanded role in the local Indonesian bureaucracy, as well as the extensive familial and patron-client relations between *adat* and government elites. Thus, high-ranking Keiese were able to maintain their dominance

in local political life despite the significant social, economic, and political changes that occurred during the New Order.

It is in this political context that the revitalization of "aristocratic" aspects of Kei *adat* occurred. This chapter has argued that the revival of aristocratic culture in the Kei islands was largely an effort by high-ranking Keiese to buttress their authority during in a context of dramatic socio-political change. While the articulation of aristocratic culture may be viewed as a means to forge ethnic identity in a competitive multi-cultural national context, I have argued that it was fundamental to the creation and maintenance of *mel-mel* dominance within Kei society. As demonstrated by the village head installation rituals and the *belang* races discussed above, high-ranking elites both inside and outside the local government appropriated *adat* as the proprietary domain of the Kei aristocracy. Through the planning and performance of these *adat* rituals, members of the Kei elite articulated visions of *adat* that valorized Kei kings, kingdoms, and *Larvul Ngabal* and, in doing so, sharpened lines of inequality within Kei society. In sum, the New Order articulations of *adat* helped to create and legitimate the *mel-mel*'s ascendancy in Kei political life.

5.0   *ADAT* LAW, HARMONY, AND INEQUALITY IN THE KEI ISLANDS

Although "the New Order government and its more intrusive programmes of modernization sought to marginalize and de-legitimate [*adat*'s] formal expression and scope" (McWilliam 2006:54), Kei *adat* during this period was not merely a matter of ritual and symbolism. The discourse and practice of Kei *adat* law (*Larvul Ngabal*) were also important elements of *adat* revivalism during the New Order. Although *adat* is a term used in the Kei Islands to refer to a constellation of ideas and practices such as tradition, custom, norms for behavior, ritual, and law (and even more), during the New Order *adat* as "customary law" was fundamental to elite representations. As discussed above, the New Order ushered in a variety of social, political, economic, and ideological forces that challenged the legitimacy of ascriptive hierarchies throughout Indonesia, including the Kei Islands. It was in this context that *Larvul Ngabal* emerged as a key symbol of Kei identity.

5.1   *LARVUL NGABAL* AS ETHNIC SYMBOL

Generally speaking, the Kei islanders take great pride in their *adat* law. When they remember their golden age of enlightenment they do not mean the coming of world religions, but the creation of customary law (Laksono 2002a). *Larvul Ngabal* has come to define what it is to be Keiese (Thorburn 2008: 116). However, given that the Kei social order is hierarchically

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organized, it is important to ask how *Larvul Ngabal* emerged as a key symbol of Kei identity and who articulated it as such. I argue that the increasing visibility of *adat* law in Kei society during the New Order, and its potency as an ethnic symbol was not simply a manifestation of primordial sentiments, but rather was due to the efforts of *adat* and bureaucratic elites, the majority of which were Kei individuals of *mel-mel* rank.

The government of *Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara certainly helped to promote *Larvul Ngabal* as an important symbol not only of Kei identity, but also of the district as a whole. These efforts became increasingly apparent during the New Order period as the Kei aristocracy was transformed into a political class which controlled to a large degree the resources of the Indonesian state. Since *Larvul Ngabal* is claimed through origin histories as the domain of the Kei aristocracy, it offered the Kei political class a potent symbol through which it could legitimize its dominance in district politics. One example can be found in the official emblem of the district government which includes the words "Larvul Ngabal" (see Figure 72). This emblem appeared on many district government buildings, documents (and today websites), as well as on every uniform of every district-level civil servant in the Kei islands (as well as other islands of the district of Southeast Maluku). During the new Order period, some non-Kei inhabitants of Maluku Tenggara (i.e., from Aru, Tanimbar, Babar, etc.) resented the use of *Larvul Ngabal* as a symbol of the district, since they claimed *Larvul Ngabal* did not operate outside of the Kei.

Figure 72. "Larvul Ngabal" on district emblem

There were additional efforts to promote of *Larvul Ngabal* as a political symbol in the Kei islands during the 1990's. During that time, the *kabupaten* government, under the leadership of Bupati H.A. Rahayaan (a high-ranking Kei islander originating from Larat on Kei Besar), sponsored the construction of a monument dedicated to Kei *adat* law (*Monumen Larvul Ngabal*), a large civic auditorium (*Gedung Serba Guna Larwul Ngabal*), and also emblazoned the words "Larvul Ngabal" in two-meter letters on a concrete wall at a major intersection in Tual. As Thorburn (2008: 115) notes, Bupati Rahayaan was very fond of Kei *adat* law and once stated "When we speak of law in Kei, we mean first and foremost *Hukum Larwul Ngabal*. After that there is the religious law of the al-Qur'an and the Bible, and thirdly the formal law of the Republic of Indonesia".

In addition to the role of the district government, the ubiquitousness of *Larvul Ngabal* during the New Order was also due to the growing importance of print media in the form of books, pamphlets, locally produced publications, and university theses on Kei *adat* law and history. I became aware of the importance of local writings in Kei society when, one day early in my research, while conducting an interview with the *rat* of Tabab Yamlim and his eldest son (a

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government worker in Tual), the *rat*'s son went to an adjacent room and returned with a small photocopied book following a question about *adat* functionaries. To my surprise, he answered my question partly by reading some excerpts from the text.

Many similar photocopied texts and writings emerged throughout the course of my research and circulated among the inhabitants of Tual and into the villages of Kei Kecil and Kei Besar. Studies of print literacy among particular Indonesian societies have demonstrated the role of local publications such as these in the creation of ethnic identities (see Rodgers 1990, 1991, 1993; Kipp 1993).[1] These studies, however, tend to ignore the importance of print media in the construction of inequality within particular societies. While the production and consumption of texts on Kei history and culture was integral to the articulation of *adat* law and Kei identity during the New Order period, these processes cannot be divorced from the political contexts in which they were situated. In the Kei islands, most of the authors, owners, and consumers of these texts were individuals of *mel-mel* rank. In addition, these works most often focused on topics related to *adat* law and the rise of Kei *rat* and *ratschap* (e.g., Setitit 1980; Resubun 1980; Renyaan 1981; Ohoitimur 1983; Rahail 1993, 1994; 1996; Kasihiuw 1994). The production of local texts, then, is a politically charged activity in which elite views of *adat*, history and culture are articulated and privileged.

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[1] Print literacy has also influence the historical thought of a variety of Indonesian societies. Rodgers (1990) argues that "print literacy seems to be pushing many of the country's 300 ethnic societies away from the mythic worldviews of oral village life...toward more secular, specifically historical modes of understanding" (p. 99). Kipp argues that "books on culture, history, and origins are known to the educated elite, but also to a surprising number of others, providing most of what Karo [Batak] know about their past" (1993:182).

Not surprisingly, these writings presented images of *Larvul Ngabal* as an authentic, enduring, and coherent cultural form that helped maintain a healthy and peaceful functioning of Kei society. Thorburn (2008:122) summarized the analysis by Ohoitimur (1983) as follows:

> [T]he function of punishment is not to deter or avenge, so much as to restore order and balance. If the wayward act of an individual or group upset the 'order if things', there will surely be grave consequences. Hence, acts of theft, slander, desecration or incest put everyone at risk. Fish will not take the hook or will die and putrefy, the earth may tremble or typhoon winds may come to tear forests and villages from the earth. Adherence to the law and the redress of offences assure peace and harmony. The law demands the restoration of balance.

The importance given to *adat* law in maintaining harmonious social relations helps account for its persistence over time, according to many high-ranking Keiese. The title of a 1993 booklet by the *rat* of Maur Ohoivut on Kei Besar, "Larwul Ngabal: Kei Adat Law Enduring Changing Currents" (Rahail 1993; my translation), highlights the fact that Kei *adat* law has survived in the face of changing times. But the "tenacity" (Bowen 1988:275) of Kei *adat* is not simply the result of its inherent nature, but rather is forged by those with a vested interest in maintaining it. As *Rat* Rahail states, his "small book constitutes one effort to preserve [*Larvul Ngabal*]" (Rahail 1993:2; my translation). It is somewhat ironic that in his book on *Larvul Ngabal*, the author did not mention or discuss Kei social hierarchy, but emphasized "that *Larvul Ngabal adat* law **extremely glorifies human rights**" (Rahail 1993:14, my translation, emphasis in original). In addition, when *Rat* Rahail presented at the 1995 IWGIA (International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs) on Kei *adat* law, he did not discuss the embedded inequalities within Kei society, focusing instead on harmony, mutual assistance and consensus (Rahail 1996).

5.2   ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS AND THE REVITALIZATION OF *ADAT* LAW

In addition to the efforts of the Kei political class, the revitalization of *adat* law during the New Order also gained impetus as a result of environmental and territorial conflicts that became increasingly common in the 1980's and 1990's. It is not my intention to explicate in detail the relation between *adat* revivalism and environmental politics, as this issue has been analyzed by other scholars (see Thorburn 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2008; Adhuri 1998; 2004). Rather, I present a brief synopsis of several national and global processes that contributed to local efforts to revitalize *adat* law during the late New Order period. This synopsis illustrates that *adat* law, in addition to its entanglements with Kei social hierarchy, may also be articulated in response to external threats to valued resources.

Two primary factors contributed to environmentalist articulations of *adat* during the late New Order period, or to quote Thorburn (2008:131), "the greening of *adat*". The first was the territorialization strategies of the New Order regime. The second was the fact that the Kei islands, beginning in the early 1990's, "became a major site for the capture and export of Grouper and Napoleon Wrasse" using damaging cyanide fishing techniques (Thorburn 2001:152). Regarding state territorialization strategies, in 1991 the Ministry of Forestry announced the establishment of a 14,218 hectare Nature Reserve in northern Kei Besar.[2] This decision was made unbeknownst to *Rat* Rahail of Watlaar (*Ratschap* Maur Ohoivut[3]) until

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[2] Unless cited otherwise, the information presented in the remainder of this paragraph is a summary of Thorburn (2008:131-132).

[3] *Ratschap* Maur Ohoivut is the largest domain of the Kei islands, encompassing 46 villages and a population of about 14,000 people (Rahail 1994:9-10).

government crews arrived to install concrete markers. Fearing the government was expropriating the majority of the *ratschap*'s territory, *Rat* Rahail travelled to Jakarta to meet with Forestry Ministry officials. Although he argued that proposed nature reserve was *adat* land that was essential to the subsistence of the inhabitants of Muar Ohoivut, he was told that all human exploitation of the territory was forbidden since there were rare endemic birds, reptiles and orchids that needed to be protected. *Rat* Rahail then met with the Minister of Environment, Sarwono Kusumaatmadja, who was more supportive and encouraged the Maur Ohoivut community to develop a community-based natural resource management strategy. *Rat* Rahail was introduced to members of the NGO community in Jakarta and became chairperson of the archipelago-wide indigenous association AMAN (*Asosiasi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara*), as well as an Asia wide association (Laksono 2002a). With the assistance of NGOs, *Rat* Rahail instituted in 1991 an annual *adat* community forum involving leaders of all villages of the *ratschap* called the "Assembly of Muar Ohoivut Leaders" (*Madiwun Uun Matan Muar Ohoivut*, or *MUMMO*) (Rahail 1996:193).[4]

These annual assemblies focused on issues such as *adat* law, land and sea tenure, and conservation, and resulted in the publication of books on Larvul Ngabal (Rahail 1993) and *adat*

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[4] According to Rahail (1996:193), MUMMO I was held October 25-27 in Watlaar with the theme "Arousing Self-Consciousness". This led to work on his first book on Larvul Ngabal (Rahail 1993). MUMMO II held on October 5-8 1992 with themes of self determination and participatory development. This resulted in establishment of a foundation and an invitation to Minister of the Environment to MUMMO III. MUMMO III was on December 20-23 and 26-29, 1993 in Watlaar with a focus on conservation. MUMMO IV was in December 5-7, 1994 and MUMMO V was planned for November 27-29 1995 with a planned assembly of Maur-Ohoiwut women prior to the assembly.

resource management institutions and practices (Rahail 1995).[5] In addition, two foundations were formed in 1993 as a result of these *ratschap* assemblies: Foundation for Maur Ohoivut Development Foundation (*Yayasan Pengembangan Maur Ohoivut*, or *YPMO*) and Foundation ASLI (*Yayasan ASLI*). The former was developed to provide training in human resources and economic development, while the latter to promote education and cultural development (Rahail 1996, also see Thorburn 2008:132-33).[6]

Through these efforts, *Rat* Rahail advanced Kei *adat* law as means to effectively manage and control resources. In addition, his outspoken stance against government's initiatives (Hann 2010) prevented state expropriation of his *adat* territory and guaranteed its continued exploitation (for subsistence purposes) by the inhabitants of Maur Ohoivut. He gained prestige and power within his domain (Thorburn 2001:175) as well as the indigenous rights and NGO communities. Within the broader Kei society, however, *Rat* Rahail was a rather unique figure. In contrast to many *adat* leaders with close ties with the district government, he was one of the few Kei *rat* who, according to Laksono (2002a), had not been co-opted by the New Order government. Throughout the New Order, *Rat* Rahail had always been outside the system and a symbol of opposition to it (Laksono 2002a) and actually accused those in power of "selling *adat*" (Rahail 1996:191). He advocated a separation of state and *adat* and relinquished his

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[5]Rahail's 2005 book is an exposition of Kei property and natural resource management practices and institutions, and provides evidence of the Kei islanders' profound respect for the environment (Thorburn 2008:133).

[6] Around the same time several other NGO foundations were established on Kei Kecil, including Yayasan Nen Mas Il and Yayasan Hivlak (Thorburn 2008:133).

position of *kepala desa* in 1995 to concentrate solely on duties as an *adat* leader.[7] He believed

that *adat* should deal with issues such as land and sea tenure, conflict resolution and law

enforcement, while the state should attend to taxation, infrastructure, paying salaries for

teachers and health workers, and other technical services (Thorburn 2008:132).

In addition to the efforts of *Rat* Rahail, *adat* revivalism during the 1990's was also

influenced by the "invasion" of a number of national and international fishing companies using

cyanide to catch live grouper and Napoleon wrasse (Thorburn 2008:134,). *Hawear* law, the

domain of *Larvul Ngabal* concerned with property rights, witnessed somewhat of a revival in

some parts of the Kei islands in response to cyanide fishing. This revival was manifest in the

increase in use of *hawear*, or *sasi* (i.e., spatial and temporal restrictions on specified resources)

to strengthen claims to maritime territories in order to protect them from cyanide fishing

(Thorburn 2003:11-12).[8] As a result of the confrontations brought about by cyanide fishing, Kei

adat law, institutions, and leaders emerged stronger and more powerful (Thorburn 2001:176).

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[7] *Rat* Rahail once stated that a "ruler in Kei Island is not defined by his wealth or strength or other usual characteristics of a king but only by his personality and lifestyle, setting an example to others" (Hann 2010).

[8] During this same period, there was a sharp increase in the use of *hawear* for other purposes as well, such as preventing development and construction efforts (Thorburn 2008:134). The local revival in *hawear*, or *sasi* law in the 1990's was accompanied by a growth in scholarly interest in *sasi* as a form of indigenous conservation in the Kei islands and elsewhere in Maluku (see Zerner 1994a, 1994b; Pannell 1996a, 1997a; Soselisa 1996, 1998; Ruttan 1998; Thorburn 1998).

5.3   KEI *ADAT* LAW AS "HARMONY IDEOLOGY"

A "harmony ideology" (see Nader 1990, 1991; Rose 1992) has permeated elite discourses of

adat law in the Kei islands (Hooe 1999). While people in a given culture may convey a pervasive

sense of harmony, it is important not to transpose harmony from the realm of ideation to that

of practice (Rose 1992:80). Rather, in ethnographic locales where harmony is a ubiquitous

aspect of local discourse, it is more useful to conceptualize harmony as an ideology that is

articulated in fields of asymmetric power relations (Nader 1989, 1990, 1991). As Nader (1989,

1990, 1991) and Rose (1992) have argued for the Talean Zapotec and Swazi, respectively,

harmony ideologies may be used by colonists, missionaries, or local elites in efforts to pacify or

promote conformity among populations or portions of populations. However, those in

subordinate positions may also use harmony ideologies in counter-hegemonic ways to maintain

autonomy or defend situational interests.

Harmony ideology provides a useful frame through which to view elite articulations of

adat law in the Kei islands. Indeed throughout Indonesia, the term *adat* carries connotations of

"sedate order and consensus" (Henley and Davidson 2008:816). Its main function is said to be

one of preserving societal harmony (Thorburn 2008:121). In addition, as many scholars have

illustrated, "harmony" (*rukun*) and "consensus through deliberation" (*musyawarah mufakat*)

have been identified as paradigmatic features of *adat* law and discourse in a wide variety of

Indonesian contexts (e.g., Lesquillier 1934; Steenhoven 1973; K. von Benda-Beckmann 1985;

Slaats and Portier 1992; Bowen 2000, 2005; Arnscheidt 2009).

The origins of this harmony ideology can be traced to the colonial era. As Henley and Davidson (2008:826; also see Burns 1989) argue, the Orientalist writings of *adat* law scholars stressed the idealism, harmony, and communal aspects of *adat* law which found expression during Sukarno's guided democracy and Suharto's New Order as a means of forging unity and obedience to authority (see Li 2001). Especially under Suharto's New Order, concepts such as "*gotong-royong*" (*mutual assistance*), "*musyawarah dan mufakat*" (consultation and consensus), "*kekeluargaan*" (familyness), and *kerukunan* (harmony) were promulgated and incorporated into the state ideology of *Pancasila* ("Five Principles") (Morfit 1981; Bowen 1986; Hadiz 2004a; Bourgier 2007; Henley and Davidson 2007; Kaartinen 2007b:41).

In the Kei Islands, a harmony ideology characterized elite discourses of *adat*, from leaders in the villages and *ratschap* to those of the *kabupaten* government. Whether presented in written form, in political speeches, or in *adat* councils, elite discourses portray *adat* law as a positive unifying force based upon the virtues of harmony (*kerukunan*), mutual assistance (*maren*, or *gotong-royong*), deliberation (*musyawarah*) and consensus (*mufakat*). In a society otherwise fraught with significant political, religious, and social divisions, many Kei leaders are quick to point out the strengths of *adat* in creating harmony or unity out of diversity. In doing so, it is not uncommon for someone to make reference to the popular Kei proverb: "We are all eggs from one fish and one bird" ("*It besa wuut ainmehe nifun, manut einmehe tilor*"). While harmony ideologies may have been used to counter outside threats to *adat* territories (i.e., the example of *Rat* Rahail above), I argue that during the New Order the harmony ideology propagated through elite representations of *Larvul Ngabal* was fundamental to the hegemony

of the Kei aristocracy. As will become clearer in the next section, these representations tend to mask the inequalities that are constituted through *adat* legal practice.

5.4   CONFLICT AND DISPUTING IN THE KEI ISLANDS

Although elite representations and discourses of *adat* law were often clothed in a rhetoric of harmony and equality, it was in *adat* legal practice that this harmonious façade became somewhat transparent.[9] As this section will demonstrate, *adat* legal practice not only reflects existing patterns of social inequality, it is also constitutive of them.

Despite the pervasive rhetoric of harmony, Kei history "is rife with treachery and warfare (Thorburn 2005:19, 28). There is a saying among Kei men that "we will die for our sisters, we will die for our land, we will die for our leaders" ("*it mat nan lafik renan uran-helat dit, it mat nan lafik ohoinuhu, it mat nan lafik uun yaat*"). This proverb highlights the importance of women's honor, land and sea resources, and leadership positions to Kei men, and also reflects the commonality of disputes over these three issues.[10] Later in this chapter, I

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[9] Similarly, Tsing (1990) demonstrated that, for the Meratus of Kalimantan, the rhetoric of *adat* features gender symmetry. However, men are systematically privileged in *adat* practice (i.e., dispute settlement).
[10] Disputes may arise when a woman's honor is jeopardized, for example as a result of premarital and extramarital sexual relations, elopement, and inter-rank marriage. Such actions are prohibited by *Hukum Hanilit* (*Hanilit* Law) of *Larvul Ngabal*. Through inappropriate sexual conduct, inter-rank marriage, or other related transgressions of *adat* law, individuals may fall in rank. Disputes over political positions have also been common in past and present times. The example of the installation of the *rat* of Tabab Yamlim (discussed in 3.11 above) is illustrative of the frequent competition over leadership positions. These disputes have led to violent conflict, village factionalism and sometimes village fissioning. In addition, the implementation of the Village Law of 1979 resulted in a growing number of conflicts over the position of kepala desa in the 1990's. In *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, disputes over this position occurred in the villages of Tutrean, Tamngil Nuhuyanat, and Tamngil Nuhuteen. These disputes

focus on inter-village disputes over land and sea boundaries within *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim. I argue that these disputes in Kei society are not only diagnostic of the contested nature of power and rank, but also constitute arenas in which power relations are actively negotiated.

Inter-village conflicts over land and sea boundaries and resources have probably been the most common form of disputes throughout the Kei archipelago for over a century. Langen (1888:176) reported that most disputes amongst different villages were related to the boundaries of adjacent properties. In addition Thorburn (2001:156) cites van Hoëvell (1890) who also reported the prominence of inter-village warfare over marine territories since the Dutch officials began recording their observations in the mid-1800's (see Adatrechtbundels 1925a, 1925b).

Such disputes have continued in post-colonial times throughout the Kei islands (see Thorburn 1998, 2000; Hooe 1999; Adhuri 1998b, 2004, 2006; Yanuarti et al. 2006:104,110-112), sometimes leading to violent conflict. In contemporary times, the most common territorial conflicts in Kei relate to the control of near-shore seas and reef resources (Thorburn 2001:156). As discussed in Chapter 3, land and sea boundaries are often contested among individuals or groups from different villages, *utan*, or *ratschap*. The importance of these boundaries is paramount given the nature of Kei subsistence patterns. Sea resources (sea cucumber and top shell), in particular, generate important income for villages and in order to ensure a profitable yearly supply of these resources, their exploitation is usually restricted through the implementation of a *sasi* taboo. Disputes and conflict have commonly occurred over the

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led to increased village factionalism and, in the case of Tamngil Nuhuyanat, village fissioning. For more examples of disputes over leadership positions, see Yanuarti et al. (2006: 103-109).

implementation and lifting of these taboos, which on the east coast of Kei Besar, is usually done for several days between January and March. These months are sometimes referred to as the "war season" (*musim perang*) by individuals from southern Kei Besar.

While Thorburn (2000:1465) claims that disputes over land ownership are quite rare in Kei society, my research on Kei Besar suggests that such disputes, while less frequent conflict over maritime resources, are not uncommon. Within *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, inter-village disputes over land and sea boundaries have been documented for over a century, and according to oral histories, are traced back as far as the 18th Century. Significant disputes over land and sea boundaries and/or resources have occurred between many of the villages of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, including Weduar and Tutrean (ca. 1890), Fer and Tamngil Nuhuteen (ca. 1903), Weduar Fer and Langgiar Fer (ca. 1920's), Langgiar Fer and Uat (1994 and 1995), and Tutrean and Sather (1890-1996).

Disputes over land and sea boundaries in Kei society are not only diagnostic of the contested nature of power and rank, but also constitute arenas in which power relations are actively negotiated. This becomes particularly apparent when disputes involve individuals or groups from different ranks. In the context of inter-rank disputes, the role of *adat* legal practice in the creation and maintenance of *mel-mel* dominance becomes clear.

5.5   RANK AND *ADAT* LEGAL PRACTICE

There are several important ways in which *adat* law is implicated in the construction of social inequality in Kei society. These include (1) the structure and composition of *adat* legal forums,

(2) the rules and practice of "sitting *adat*" ("*duduk adat*"), and (3) the differential outcomes based on the rank of the parties involved. Each of these aspects of Kei legal practice reflects and reinforces social inequalities within Kei society.

Throughout the Kei Islands, a variety of *adat* forums exist to deal with conflict cases and breaches of *adat* law. I refer to these here as *adat* councils, or *saniri*, although these forums vary considerably from case to case in terms of their composition and mode of settlement. As Blackwood (2000) argued for the Minangkabau, rank is an important factor in the composition of *adat* councils in the Kei islands. *Adat* councils may be held at the village, *utan*, *ratschap*, or *supra-ratschap* levels depending on the nature of the conflict and past efforts to settle the dispute. Regardless of the level in which they occur, these legal forums tend to be convened and presided over by individuals of *mel-mel* rank, except in villages without a *mel-mel* population. In a sense, *adat* leaders, and by extension *adat* legal forums, "shop" for disputes (see K. von Benda-Beckmann 1981). By claiming jurisdiction over particular cases, and even better yet, successfully resolving such cases, individuals demonstrate and reinforce their "place" in the local hierarchy.

At the village and *utan* levels, these councils are usually led by *adat* village leaders (*orang kaya* or *rat*) and usually include hamlet heads (*kepala soa*), clan elders (*kepala fam*), and other interested parties. Since *adat* village leaders during the New Order also tended to serve as village heads (*kepala desa*) under Indonesian village administration, the boundary between *adat* (i.e., *saniri*) and state (i.e., Lembaga Musyawarah Desa, or *LMD*) forums was sometimes blurred. This was reflected in a statement by the *kepala desa* of Langgiar Fer in 1994 when

convening an *adat* council: "By *adat* and by government, we [i.e., *mel-mel* leaders] have been given the authority to settle disputes".

Supra-*ratschap adat* councils are sometimes convened to settle disputes between villages or *ratschap*. These councils are convened and presided over by *mel-mel* leaders. As will be recalled, such councils were promoted by the Dutch in the early 20th Century. At that time, they were referred to as "Groote Raad van Hoofden" ("Great Council of Chiefs") and included Kei *rat* and *orang kaya* from throughout the archipelago. During the 1990's, these supra-*ratschap adat* councils were sometimes referred to as "*Persidangan Adat Siu I Faak Lim I Tel*" (Siu I Faak Lim I Tel *Adat* Council) and consisted of the three (*tel*) primary *rat* of the Lor Lim political moiety (Fer, Nerong, and Ibra) and four (*faak*) primary *rat* from the *ur siu* political moiety (Danar, Yamtel, Dullah, Watlaar). These island-wide *adat* councils were often formed at the encouragement of the district and sub-district governments to adjudicate inter-village or inter-*ratschap* disputes (Thorburn 2000:1476n.17).

As can be seen, the structure and composition of most *adat* councils is largely controlled by individuals of *mel-mel* rank. In addition, the actual legal proceedings that occur within such forums tend to privilege individuals of high rank. Although the process that takes place within *adat* councils is usually referred to as "sitting *adat*" (*dok adat*; *dok*=to sit), disputes may be settled through negotiation (i.e., *musyawarah*) and/or adjudication depending on the nature of the case, the relationship between disputants, and the composition of the council. While the stated goal of most *adat* councils is to reach consensus (*mufakat*), this ideal is not always achieved in practice. Generally speaking, supra-*ratschap* councils settle disputes through

adjudication while *adat* councils at the village or *utan* level tend to rely more on negotiation, or a combination of negotiation or adjudication.

The process of "sitting *adat*" highlights the rank-bias of *adat* legal forums and practice. As has already been demonstrated, *adat* is claimed as a prerogative of the Kei aristocracy. During my fieldwork, I was often told by high-ranking Keiese that lower ranking people, particularly the *iri-ri*, really "don't know" *adat*. As a result "sitting *adat*" is really the province of the *mel-mel*, although *ren-ren* individuals may be also participate in cases.[11] As one man from the village of Weduar stated, "*Iri-ri* are not permitted to sit with *mel-mel* during deliberations and consensus-making (*bermusyawarah dan bermufakat*). Only *ren-ren* are allowed". When villagers from Weduar Fer would gather to "sit *adat*", who spoke and when was clearly dictated by their rank and position in the village hierarchy. While *iri-ri* individuals may be present at such meetings, they rarely expressed themselves in any significant way. Rank influences the extent to which a particular person participates in and speaks during legal proceedings, as well as how claims and evidence are evaluated by those who are attempting to settle the dispute.

The rank-bias of *adat* legal practice is perhaps most apparent in the context of inter-rank disputes. Given that *adat* councils are controlled to a large degree by the *mel-mel*, it is perhaps not surprising that the settlement of inter-rank disputes in the forums usually favors those of high rank (Adhuri 1998; Hooe 1999). In this way, *adat* law may be "imposed law" (Kidder 1979) for certain sectors of the population (also see Benda-Beckmann and Taale 1992:83; F. von Benda-Beckmann 1990). The remainder of this chapter examines two inter-rank

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[11] McKinnon describes a similar relationship between rank and *adat* law in the nearby Tanimbar Islands (1991:105).

disputes from *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim to illustrate the inequalities that are constituted through *adat* legal practice. As these two cases demonstrate, dispute processing in *adat* forums clearly privileges high-ranking disputants. However, as the Tutrean-Sather conflict shows, state legal forums may provide low-ranking individuals with the opportunity to challenge the decisions made in *adat* councils. Situated in a context of legal pluralism where local legal sensibilities intersect with national legalities, *adat* legal forums constitute "complex sites" of domination and resistance (Hirsch 1994) in which social hierarchy is actively renegotiated by disputants and third parties alike (see Swartz, Turner, and Tuden 1966; Turner 1974, 1982; Comaroff and Roberts 1980:249; and Bentley 1984; Moore 1987). As Bentley (1984:650) argues, "disputing is a kind of theater of the real in which the actual power order and its conceptualization are brought into conformity with one another".

5.6   THE ROAD CONSTRUCTION CASE

This case from 1994 involved a conflict over rights to land in *Utan* Mel Yamfaak between members of *fam* Matdoan from the village of Uat and its "mother village" of Langgiar Fer. As was discussed in Chapter 3, seven of the villages of *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim originated from Langgiar Fer: Weduar Fer, Sungai, Ngafan, Uat, Ngan, Ohoilean and Vatkidat. These villages together with Langgiar Fer form *Utan* Mel Yamfaak and share "eating rights" to the *utan* territory. Although informants claim that Uat was settled at three different times in the past, the most recent move occurred in 1929 following a problem or dispute in the village of Langgiar, the details of which were a matter of great secrecy and remained unclear to this

researcher. Reportedly, the *rat* of Fer had intervened during that time and moved members of *fam* Matdoan from Langgiar Fer to the current location of Uat.

Uat consisted entirely of lower ranking individuals. There was not a *mel-mel* population in Uat. This small village (*dusun*) of 153 (in 1994) was led by a *kepala soa* (or *kepala dusun*) who was politically subordinate to the *orang kaya/kepala desa* of Langgiar Fer in both the *adat* and Indonesian systems of administration. In contrast, Langgiar Fer was a multi-rank village with a considerable *mel-mel* population. It was led by an *orang kaya* from *fam* Fakaubun who, in 1994, also served as *kepala desa* in the Indonesian administration.

Figure 73. The road under construction between Langgiar Fer and Weduar Fer

In 1994, the district government was funding the construction of paved road between Langgiar Fer and Weduar Fer (see Figure 73). Local villagers participated in the construction of the road, collecting and breaking limestone rocks for paving the new road. Each individual would be paid by the government for each meter of road he or she worked. This arrangement

led to a number of disagreements over rights to particular stretches of the road. Some of these disagreements were based on the location of individual gardens in relation to the road. Some villagers of Weduar Fer, for example, claimed rights to work on some portions of the road for these reasons. However, rights for certain portions of the road were less clear.

This situation led to a small altercation on September 8, 1994 in the village of Langgiar Fer. Several individuals from Uat who had been working on a particular stretch of road were called to Langgiar Fer by the *orang kaya/kepala desa*. When asked who had given them permission to work on the particular section of the road, the villagers of Uat reportedly became belligerent, and claimed that they (*fam* Matdoan) had rights to the position of "lord of the land" (*tuan tan*). In addition, members of *fam* Matdoan from Uat also claim that they are descendants of Sedes, from the origin history of Bomav, Sedes and Far-Far discussed in . However, the *mel-mel* from Langgiar Fer (in addition to Fer and Weduar Fer) claim that the original *fam* Matdoan that descended from Sedes no longer exist, and that the individuals who currently use the *fam* name of Matdoan are more recent immigrants. These different interpretations of history lay at the foundation of the physical altercation that resulted from these events, in which one of the Uat villagers was beaten (*dapat pukul*) by Langgiar Fer villagers.

Several days later on September 11, 1004, an *adat* council was held in the *kepala* desa's house in Langgiar Fer. This council was headed by the *kepala desa* of Langgiar and was attended by the *kepala desa* of Weduar Fer, the *kepala dusun* of Uat, Ngan, Ohoilean, and Vatkidat, as well as approximately 40 individuals from throughout *Utan* Mel Yamfaak. At the opening of the *adat* council, the *kepala desa* of Langgiar Fer discussed the unity of Mel Yamfaak. He stressed

that even though Mel Yamfaak consists of eight villages, it is one large community (*umat besar*) and must remain unified and settle small problems before they become large ones. The *orang kaya/kepala desa* of Langgiar Fer claimed jurisdiction over the dispute when he stated: "We [*mel-mel*], as the leaders of Mel Yamfaak, must resolve these problems (*masalah*)…By *adat* and by government, we have been given the authority to resolve these problems, whether they are disputes (*sengketa*) between families, villages, or domains".

In the council, the *kepala desa* described the events that led to fight on September 8th. He presented Uat's position and countered their claims to the disputed land and the position of *tuan tan*. The *kepala desa* claimed that the land is shared by all members of Mel Yamfaak, based on *hak makan* (or usufruct) rights. He called the three men from Uat to the front of the room, and asked the men if they accepted wrongdoing and agreed that the disputed land was for all of Mel Yamfaak. At first they said "No". However, he had them hold their arms in the air and struck them forcefully on the underside of their arms with a rattan cane. He repeated his question to the men, hitting them several more times until they admitted their wrongdoing and agreed that the land is shared by all of Mel Yamfaak. The *kepala desa* then assigned road-work tasks to members of Langgiar Fer and Uat. Through the rattan cane beatings, public humiliation, and his dual authority as *adat* and government village leader, the *kepala desa* had effectively coerced the men to sign a letter admitting their wrongdoing and agreeing to the decision of the *adat* council.[12]

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[12] Following the *adat* council, the *kepala desa* of Langgiar Fer submitted a report in Tual and on September 14, police arrived in the village of Uat to meet with the Uat villagers who had received the beating. The focus or outcome of this meeting was unknown to this author.

This case clearly demonstrated the rank-bias of *adat* legal forums and practice.[13] Through the processing of this dispute, the *mel-mel* of Langgiar Fer clearly re-established their dominance and authority over the lower-ranking members of Uat. While the *kepala desa*'s discourse during the *adat* council stressed unity and importance of conflict resolution (i.e., restoring harmony), the processing and outcome of the dispute benefited and enhanced those in power. In addition, the case also demonstrated that during inter-rank disputes, *adat* legal forums may privilege the historical claims of high-ranking disputants over those of lower-ranking individuals.[14]

5.7   THE TUTREAN-SATHER CONFLICT

Tutrean and Sather are two villages in *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim (see Figure 15). They also belong to *Utan* Tabab Yamlim which also includes Tamngil Nuhuteen, Weduar, Sather, Kilwat and Soindat. While Tutrean is a multi-rank village with a considerable noble population, Sather consists entirely of "commoners". The population of Tutrean and Sather in 1994 was 473 and

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[13] The settlement of this dispute contrasted significantly with another dispute less than a week later over the construction of the road. This dispute involved individuals from Weduar Fer (*fam* Lesomar) and Langgiar Fer (*fam* Fakaubun) and again involved a contested stretch of the road. Given that both of these villages have *mel-mel* populations and leaders, it may not be surprising that this dispute was handled more amicably and behind the scenes between the leaders of Weduar Fer and Langgiar Fer.

[14] The historical basis of the claims to resources made by the villagers of Uat during this dispute was the basis of another confrontation in December of 1995. At that time, members of *fam* Matdoan harvested topshell (*lola*) from the coastal area (*meti*) just south of Kilwat. They claimed again that they were the *tuan tan* of the area, and that they had rights to the area based on the history of Babi Delo (discussed in Chapter 3). Other villages of *Utan* Mel Yamfaak (i.e., Langgiar Fer, Weduar Fer) were angry with *fam* Matdoan and claimed that the *meti* is shared by all of Mel Yamfaak. As a result, a member of *fam* Matdoan was attacked and beaten by Langgiar Fer villagers in Tual. Individuals from Kilwat, however, claimed that only members of *fam* Matdoan held rights to the disputed meti.

970, respectively. Like the "Road Construction Case", the Tutrean-Sather Conflict (see Yayasan Hualpou 1991; Adhuri 1998, 2005; Hooe 1999) illustrates the rank-biases of *adat* legal forums, as well as the manner in which inequalities are not only reflected through dispute processing, but are also constituted through them.

The Tutrean-Sather conflict involved a dispute over the coastal boundaries between the two villages, located along the southeast coast of Kei Besar (see Figure 74). Simply stated, Tutrean claims a boundary that Sather says enters their territory. However, this long-lasting dispute is about more than the control of marine territories. It is also about the importance of rank and precedence in local political life, as well as the dominance of the *mel-mel* in both state and *adat* systems.

Figure 74. Part of the disputed *meti* between Tutrean and Sather (in distance)

The disputed coastal boundaries between Tutrean and Sather reflect the importance of the tidal zone (*meti*) to the subsistence and livelihood of the Kei islanders, particularly on the east coast of Kei Besar (see Ruttan 1998; Thorburn 1998, 2000; Adhuri 1998, 2005; Purnomo 2003). Not only are fish, shellfish, and seaweed caught and gathered for subsistence purposes, the coastal waters also provide important cash-generating resources, most notably topshell (*lola*, or trochus shell).[15] Since as early as the 1920's, the harvest of *lola* has been controlled through the practice of *sasi lola*, or the spatial and temporal prohibition on harvesting lola usually instituted by entire villages (Thorburn 2008). Taking *lola* when a *sasi* has been instituted is punishable by supernatural sanctions, fines in the form of money, labor or prestige items, a revocation of harvesting rights, or physical punishment (Purnomo 2003). *Sasi lola* is usually "opened" (*buka sasi*) for two to three days every three to five years (usually between January and March) to allow for *lola* to reproduce and grow to a marketable size. The decision to open *sasi lola* is usually made by the village under the leadership of the village head. The opening of *sasi*, the harvesting of *lola* without permission, or harvesting *lola* during a *sasi* period are common triggers for inter-village conflict. It is in this context that the Tutrean-Sather conflict must be situated.

While conflict between these two villages dates back to the colonial period (discussed below), the most serious altercation in the history of the conflict occurred in April of 1988. On April 9, 1988, approximately 20-30 Tutrean villagers in dugout canoes traveled to the *meti* in

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[15] Topshell is used to manufacture mother-of-pearl buttons. The leftovers are ground up and used to provide luster to automobile paints. An Asian market for the shells began in the late 1870's and Japanese buyers began visiting Kei in the 1920's. Before that, the snails were eaten and the shells discarded (Thorburn 1998:61; 2000:1466-67).

front of Sather and began harvesting *lola*. Sather villagers descended to the beach, verbally

protesting while shooting arrows at the Tutrean villagers. As a result of this conflict, Tutrean

soon retaliated and attacked Sather with spears, bow and arrows, machetes, and molotovs.

Reportedly, many Sather men were in their mountain gardens at the time. As a result, seventy-

four houses were burned down in Sather (see Figure 75).

Figure 75. Foundations of burned Sather houses

Despite efforts to settle this dispute in the early 1990's (discussed below), conflict

between these villages continued throughout the 1990's. For example, in October 1995, Sather

had reportedly destroyed approximately 50 clove trees in one of Tutrean's mountain clove

gardens (Tutrean has some of the largest clove plantations in the area). This led to an armed

confrontation on the beach between the two villages that resulted in several people being

struck by arrows. Around the same time, there was an outbreak of cholera in Sather which

Tutrean believed was supernatural revenge for cutting down the clove trees.[16] In addition to this battle in 1995, from March 1996-March 1997, there were four additional clashes between the two villages (Adhuri 2005:95).

The continued conflict between Tutrean and Sather despite efforts to resolve the conflict was due in large part to the rank differences between the two villages (Hooe 1999; Adhuri 2005:302). Claims to political superiority and authority on the part of Tutrean and claims to political autonomy and freedom on the part of Sather were based on competing visions of the past which were recounted in origin myths (*tom*). An understanding of the conflicting *tom* of the two villages is necessary before attempting to make sense of the history of this conflict.

Tutrean and Sather both acknowledge that conflict between the two villages began several hundred years ago. At that time, Sather is said to have had a *mel-mel* population. Following a war between the two villages[17], Sather suffered many casualties and many villagers fled to Dullah island and settled in Ohoitel and other villages of the island, where their descendants live to this day (Laksono 1991:117). Beyond this point, however, the two villages disagree as to the origin and history of the current inhabitants of Sather, as well as Tutrean's claims to Sather's territory a result of the war and other events.

Tutrean villagers claim that as a result of their victory in the war, the land of Sather fell into the hands of Tutrean. They claim that the current population of Sather consists entirely of immigrants who arrived from the village of Waer in northern Kei Besar sometime after the

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[16] One villager stated that it was *Kapitan* Rahantoknam, who was killed by a Sather villager in Tual in 1927 and is buried on top of a cliff at the cape (*tanjung*) in front of Tutrean, who sought revenge.
[17] The acting (*pejabat*) *kepala desa* of Sather claimed in 1995 claimed that the war between Tutrean and Sather took place in the 1700's.

departure of the original inhabitants. The two groups who arrived from Waer were given permission by Tabal Tanlain to settle an area called Ohoi Twu (Adhuri 1998:98). According to Tutrean, these two groups were the foundation of the current inhabitants of Sather. These immigrants were given the task of guarding Tutrean's newly-claimed land. The descendants of the two groups frequently committed wrongdoings according to *adat* law, and people from Tutrean always paid the fines. As a result, according to Tutrean, the villagers of Sather became dependents of the people of Tutrean (*ren sardik war*). From time to time, Sather villagers married with villagers from Kilwat. Tutrean claims that, over time, Sather learned of the names of the original *fam* of Sather and the immigrants began to use these names as their own. This led to their claims to the position of *tuan tan*. The history presented by the village of Tutrean is used to justify their claims to control both the leadership position of Sather as well as rights to determine village boundaries and the use of territory between the villages (Adhuri 2005:302-303).

Sather's version of their village's history is traced to the 1400's, when only three families lived in the area (Yamlaai, Yamko, and Titinubun). Yamlaai and Yamko held rights to the position of the *tuan tan*. Around this time, two brothers and their associates left the village of Waer on Kei Besar and sailed by Sather in two sailboats. In each boat were three men. The villagers of Sather invited them to live together in the village of Sather. These men agreed and became founders of 6 of the current *fam* of Sather: Metubun, Dangeubun, Erubun, Domaubun, Dokainubun, and Wacaubun. According to Sather, the village's territory was determined by *Helaai* Tabal of Tamngil Nuhuteen (discussed in Chapter 3). According to the *tom* of *Utan* Tabab Yamlim, Helaai Tabal granted Yamlaai and Yamko, the two *tuan tan* of Sather, land bounded on

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the coast by Nurnar (midway between Tutrean and Sather) and Watkowar (south of Sather towards Kilwat), and bounded inland by Watngilyauw (a mountain peak). Based on their origin history, Sather claims rights to self-governance as well as rights to their territory as determined by *Helaai* Tabal. In addition, they reject all arguments regarding the superiority of *mel-mel* from Tutrean in arranging and controlling Sather political life and territory (Adhuri 2005:303).

The competing histories just discussed became entangled in colonial attempts at indirect rule and territorialization in the early 20th Century. In 1917, the Dutch government appointed the *kapitan* of Tutrean, Lakes Rahantoknam, as the *orang kaya* of Sather. According to some Sather villagers, this decision, which was supported by the *rat* of Fer, was a strategy of Tutrean to gain control of Sather territory.[18] The rank differences between the two villages, according to Sather informants, fueled this attempted domination. Before the new *orang kaya* had succeeded in redrawing the land and sea boundaries between the two villages, Lakes Rahantoknam was killed in Tual by the "war leader" ("*panglima perang*") of Sather in 1927. After his death, Lakes' son Boti became the *orang kaya* of Sather although he continued to reside in Tutrean. His control lasted until 1939 when he was dismissed from the position following a Dutch decision (discussed below).

Following the murder of Lakes Rahantoknam, the maritime boundaries between Tutrean and Sather became a growing source of conflict between the two villages. A number of attempts were made by the Dutch government to resolve this dispute. In 1936, the Dutch government intervened and issued a summary decision (*resume*) clarifying the boundaries

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[18] Sather claimed that Tutrean's territory in *Utan* Tabab Yamlim, because they were represented by only one *tuan tan*, was small and thus, they attempted to find a way to control Sather's territory.

between the two villages. Sather did not accept this decision. As a result, the Dutch government, in collaboration with *adat* leaders, issued a second decision in 1939 which not only identified the coastal areas controlled by each village, but also specified a disputed zone from which resources had to be divided.[19] In addition, the *resume* stated that if Sather did not accept the decision, they would not be allowed to self-govern (Adhuri 1998:100-101). This decision was also rejected by Sather, who claimed that the decision was unfair and biased, since it was made by the Dutch upon consultation with *adat* leaders, all of whom were *mel-mel* (Adhuri 2005:303).

After these failed colonial attempts at resolution, village leadership reverted back to the people of Sather. The disputed *meti* and village boundaries remained contentious issues during post-Independence times. While small altercations were common during most years, there were larger confrontations in 1953, 1963 and 1988, each resulting in the destruction of Sather houses. Following the 1988 attack described earlier, efforts were again made to settle the conflict. In 1990, a supra-*ratschap adat* council (*Persidangan Adat Siu I Faak Lim I Tel*) led by *Rat* Bomav of Fer was convened with the encouragement of the Bupati of Maluku Tenggara.[20] In addition to *the rat* of Fer, this *adat* council included three *rat* from *Lor Lim* (*Rat* Ihbes of Nerong, *Rat* Kirkes of Ibra, *Rat* Songli from Rumat) and four *rat* from *Ur Siu* (*Rat* Baldu of Dullah, *Rat* Famur of Danar, *Rat* Ket El of Yamtel, *Rat* Buhir Barvav of Watlaar). The *kapitan* of Dullah

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[19] According to this decision, the disputed *meti* (*meti taat*) was that between Sarwain and Nurnar. The *meti* from Sarwain to Watkoar was identified as belonging to Sather while from Watso to border with Weduar was owned by Tutrean. Exploitation of the *meti taat* was to be controlled by *Rat* Fer in conjunction with Dutch officials from Tual and Elat. Based on their relative populations, Tutrean was to receive 57.75% of the share of any resources obtained while Sather would receive 42.25% (Adhuri 1998b:100).

[20] The *bupati* at this time was Dr. Ch. Rahanra, a *mel-mel* individual originally from Kei Besar.

served as the Secretary (*sekretaris*) of the *adat* council. It should be pointed out here that the village of Fer, and the family of the *rat* in particular, have had long-standing alliances with the nobility of Tutrean.

On January 7, 1990, the district government sent letter to Sather informing them that they were required to attend the *adat* council. Sather refused to attend and police and army personnel went to Sather on January 21, 1990 and escorted the *pejabat Kepala Desa* and village staff (Sadrak Yamlaai, Aminadap Erubun, Willem Dokainubun, Noke Erubun, Yusep Dokainubun) to Elat for the *adat* council which was held from January 21-27. During the *adat* council, both parties presented the histories (*tom*), discussed above, justifying their rights to the contested territory. During the proceedings, Tutrean claimed that in addition to the disputed meti, the descendants of Lakes Rahantoknam held rights to additional meti that was given by Sather following the murder of Lakes Rahantoknam. Sather disputed this claim.

Given the "aristocratic" composition of the *adat* council and the commoner rank of the people of Sather, it is not surprising that Tutrean's historical claims were favored over those of Sather. When *Rat* Baldu of Dullah asked the village head of Sather about the Sather people who lived on Dullah Island, he responded cynically "that they moved in the 1400's because they were embarrassed as *mel-mel* and left behind their elder brother (i.e., ren-ren) in Sather." The *adat* council granted Tutrean rights to all of their claimed territories.[21]

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[21] The *adat* council made the following three decisions: (1) Tutrean has rights to the coastal territory from Watso (their border with Weduar) to Tanjung Sarwain, (2) Descendants of Lakes Rahantoknam together with Sather control the territory from Tanjung Lestar to Watkowar (border with Kilwat), and (3) Descendants of Lakes Rahantoknam control the territory between Tanjung Sarwain and Tanjung Lesar.

The Indonesian district government sanctioned the decision of the *adat* council. The *bupati* sent his own decision (*Surat Keputusan Bupati Kepala Daerah Tingkat II Maluku Tenggara Nomor: 116/KDS/1990*) to the parties involved in the dispute, which stated that: (1) disputes over traditional territorial rights should be settled by traditional forums; (2) he sanctioned the decision of the "*adat* deliberation council" in Elat; (3) all parties should carry out the decision of the council; and (4) if mistakes in the decision are determined at a later date then the decision may be changed. The fact that the local government encouraged the formation of the *adat* council, ensured participation by all parties through police and military involvement, and sanctioned the decision of the *adat* council illustrates the intimate relationship between *adat* and government elites in contemporary Kei society.

Not surprisingly, the people of Sather disagreed with the council's decision. They felt that they were forced to follow the *adat* council, that the decision was unfair and not made according to law, and that the *rat* of Fer did not have jurisdiction over the case.[22] They ultimately failed to accept the decision of the *adat* council, and in July of 1992, conflict erupted once again between the villages. As a result, the district government head informed Sather that their only recourse was to file a law suit in the state court (*Pengadilan Negeri*), and that they had until 31 October 1993 to do so. If they failed to file suit, then the decision of the *adat* council would be upheld.

As a result, Sather filed lawsuit against both the village of Tutrean and the *rat* of Fer. The historical evidence offered by Sather involved (1) the division of land among the 5 villages of

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[22] They claimed that the *orang kaya* of Tamngil Nuhuteen, as a descendent of Tabal Rahanar, should have settled the case.

Tabab Yamlim by Helaai Tabal, and (2) a Dutch *resume* which delimited boundaries between the villages of Tutrean and Sather. The claim against *Rat* Bomav of Tabab Yamlim involved the fact that Sather villagers were forced to follow the *adat* council, the decision was unfair and not made according to law, and that the *rat* did not have jurisdiction to decide the case. Sather claimed that *ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, in which the *rat* of Fer is the leader, was a Dutch creation. They also claimed that the formation of *Utan* Tabab Yamlim preceded the formation of *ratschap* Tabab Yamlim. Thus, Sather claimed that the division of land amongst the five villages (Tamngil Nuhuteen, Weduar, Tutrean, Sather, and Kilwat) occurred prior to the *rat* of Fer's involvement in the area and he, therefore, should not have jurisdiction over the case. The lawsuit also asked the court to draw the correct boundaries between the villages, to cancel the decision of the *adat* council, to uphold the Dutch *resume* as correct, to punish the defendants of Tutrean, and to force a payment of Rp. 500,000,000 for their losses.

In addition to Sather's lawsuit, on February 7, 1993, an "intervention lawsuit" was filed by two male-members of *fam* Rahantoknam, both government workers in Tual. This law suit was brought against Sather, Tutrean, and *Rat* Fer, and claimed that the plaintiffs, as the rightful heirs to Lakes Rahantoknam, held rights to parts of the disputed *meti*. They also disputed the decision made by the *adat* council, and requested damages be paid by Tutrean and Sather for their exploitation of the contested *meti* over the years.

The case was heard in the district civil court in Tual beginning on November 2, 1993. Members of the defense presented historical evidence which countered the claims made by Sather. The testimony of the *kepala desa* of Langgiar Fer is illustrative. He presented the *rat* of Fer as the most knowledgeable *adat* leader and that Sather, as immigrants, are not

knowledgeable about the history and ancestry of the people of Sather, Tabab Yamlim, or *adat* government. He supported the jurisdiction of *Rat* Fer in this case and claimed that Sather's disrespect of *Rat* Fer and the decision of the *adat* council constituted a serious *adat* offense (*pelangaran adat*). He also attempted to demonstrate the legal status of *hukum adat* in the Indonesian nation, and that the Bupati has the right to approve all decisions.

A decision was finally reached on April 19, 1995. The state court decision was that Sather held rights from Tanjung Ohoimel to their boundary with Kilwat. However, financial compensation for the destruction of their village by Tutrean was not granted. The decision of the intervention granted the descendants of Lakes Rahantoknam rights to the territory from Sarwain to Mastel, but their financial claim was not granted. Although Sather was not in agreement with the court's decision, it was an improvement over the decision of the *adat* council. Tutrean was even more disappointed with the decision. As a result, violence broke out again several times beginning in October 1995. Clashes continued as well for the next several years (Adhuri 1998).

In his 1995 book, *Rat* Rahail of Watlaar wrote that: "...the dispute over property rights between the villages of Sather and Tutrean in the southeastern part of Kei Besar continues to this day because they have chosen to use formal legal methods to settle the dispute" (Rahail 1994:43, my translation). This statement ignores the fact that rank-differences were a defining factor in the various attempts to resolve the conflict. The transformation of Tutrean-Sather conflict demonstrates that while *adat* law may reinforce the dominance of the Kei nobility, state legal institutions may be used by subordinate peoples to contest or improve their inferior status (see F. von Benda Beckman 1990; F. von Benda-Beckmann and Taale 1992; Nader 1990).

As this extended case illustrates, inter-rank disputes constitute arenas in which asymmetric power relations are actively renegotiated. Although the people of Sather ultimately refused to accept the *adat* council's decision, this case clearly demonstrated the inequalities constituted through Kei *adat* legal practice. As in other areas of Indonesia, *adat* law in the Kei islands may indeed be a "jurisprudence of oppression" for certain segments of the population (F. von Benda-Beckmann 1990). But whether as a symbol or in practice, *adat law* in the Kei Islands is clearly a potent resource in the creation and justification of aristocratic dominance.

5.8   SUMMARY

This chapter has expanded upon arguments made in Chapter 4 by examining the entanglements of rank and *adat* law in the Kei islands during the New Order. Since *Larvul Ngabal* is claimed as the domain of the *mel-mel*, it offered the Kei political class a potent symbol through which it could legitimize its dominance in district politics. While the revival of *Larvul Ngabal* during the New Order may have been tied to broader struggles for identity or resources, this chapter has stressed the embedded inequalities that are constituted through Kei *adat* law. I have argued that while elite discourses of *adat* law stress equality, consensus, and harmony, *adat* legal practice tends to enhance or reinforce existing inequalities within Kei society. Through an analysis of two inter-rank dispute cases from southern Kei Besar, this chapter has highlighted the rank-biases of Kei *adat* law. Like the aristocratic rituals analyzed in Chapter 4, the dispute cases presented in this chapter provide additional evidence that the articulation Kei *adat* during the New Order period was fundamental to *mel-mel* dominance in

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local politics. As the empirical materials from the New Order presented in Chapters 4 and 5 make clear, Kei *adat* and social hierarchy were mutually constitutive phenomena. The following chapter examines continuity and change in elite articulations of *adat* between the New Order and post-Suharto periods.

6.0   KEI *ADAT* AND LOCAL POLITICS IN POST-SUHARTO INDONESIA

Beginning in 1997, much of Indonesia entered into a state of "total crisis" (*krisis total*, or *kristal*), a national emergency with three components: climatic, financial, and political crises (Kuipers 2009:229). Under mounting pressure from student demonstrators in Jakarta, Suharto stepped down after thirty-two years in power, handing authority over to B.J. Habibie. A transitional period ensued, commonly referred to as *era reformasi* (reformation era), with its emphasis on political reform and struggles against corruption, collusion and nepotism (*korupsi, kolusi, dan nepotisme*, or *KKN*) (Kuipers 2009: 231). By the end of 1998, hundreds of protests and demonstrations were taking place each month in every province of Indonesia (Ali 2001 cited in Kuipers 2009:230). In July of 1998, demonstrations against the government of the *kabupaten* government of Maluku Tenggara took place in the town of Tual, calling for the resignation of the *bupati* as a result of supposed government corruption.[1]

This liminal period (see Turner 1966, 1974; Hayden 2000) of the Indonesian state was also accompanied by unprecedented mass violence in Aceh, Kalimantan, Central Sulawesi and Maluku (Davidson 2008:4; also see Coppel 2006; Sidel 2006; Schulte Nordholt 2008; van Klinken 2007a; Bertrand 2008). In Maluku, communal conflict between Christians and Muslims erupted

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[1] Most demonstrators, according to one non-Kei informant, were from the villages of various parts of Kei Kecil who were reacting to the supposed corruption of the local government. I was told at that time that the *bupati*, *sekwilda*, and members of the DPRD would likely be replaced. I was not able to obtain information on the rank composition of the demonstrators, and whether or not, given the *mel-mel*'s dominance in the local government, the demonstrations represented a growing anti-aristocratic sentiment among lower ranking Keiese.

in early 1999. On January 19, 1999, on the Islamic holy day of Idul Fitri, a fight between an Ambonese Christian bus driver and a Buginese Muslim passenger in the town of Ambon became a trigger for a long-lasting bloody conflict that quickly spread outward from the city and to other islands in Maluku, including Seram, Saparua, Haruku, Halmahera, Ternate, Tidore, and Kei (see Goss 2000; van Klinken 2001, 2007; Bubandt 2000, 2004; Acciaioli 2001; Laksono 2002a; Thorburn 2005, 2008; Bräuchler 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Adam 2009, 2010; Duncan 2009). The Ambon conflict (see Figure 76) persisted for more than three years. The violent conflicts of Maluku resulted in thousands of deaths, the displacement of hundreds of thousands (Bräuchler2009:873), and the "*Ambonisasi*" (Ambonization), or "religious Balkanisation" of the region (Bubandt 2000:14-15).

Figure 76. Ambon enveloped by smoke (Summer 1999)

6.1   COMMUNAL CONFLICT AND THE "DEATH" OF KEI *ADAT*

In the weeks and months following the outbreak of violence in Ambon, news and rumors of the horrific events in Ambon spread to the Kei islands through news media and the arrival of ethnic Kei residents and university students from Ambon. However, "the generally-held view was that the unifying creed of *Hukum Larwul Ngabal* far outweighed any religious divisiveness in the Kei community. Kei community leaders – in particular the politically-connected *Rajas* [*rat*] of Tual and Dullah – organized a series of *adat* rituals to defuse tensions and assure the public that harmony should and would prevail" (Thorburn 2008:135). A few days before the violence erupted in the Kei islands, *Rat* Rahail of Watlaar, while attending a national convention of *adat* leaders in Jakarta, said of the violence that was occurring in Ambon: "It cannot happen in Kei, our family ties and *adat* traditions are far too important to us than any religious differences" (Thorburn 2005:20).

However, a little over two months after the outbreak of violence in Ambon, conflict between Christians and Muslims erupted in the town of Tual on March 30, 1999, the day after a Christian youth had written anti-Muslim slogans on walls in the district capital (Thorburn 2005, 2008; International Crisis Group 2007).[2] Within days the violence spread to the west and south coasts of Kei Kecil Island, to the northeast parts of Dullah Island, as well as to Kei Besar

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[2] These included "Mohammad was Jesus' servant", "Islam is filthy", and "Grimy mosques" (Thorburn 2008:135). The youth claimed that he had done this in response to graffiti that described Jesus as having lice in his hair (International Crisis Group 2007:4).

(International Crisis Group 2007:5; Thorburn 2008: 135). When the fighting ended almost three months later, there were approximately 200 dead, 30,000-48,000 internally displaced persons, and over 4,000 homes, government offices, markets and places of worship destroyed or damaged (International Crisis Group 2007:5; Thorburn 2008:136-37.)

Some of the most brutal violence occurred in the villages of Larat and Weduar Fer on Kei Besar, the villages of the Muslim *bupati* (H.A. Rahayaan) and the Protestant *sekwilda* (District Secretary) (P. Far-Far), respectively. On April 2, 2009, the village of Larat was attacked by Christian villages from the south while the men of Larat were gathered at the mosque for Friday prayers.[3] This attack resulted in over thirty deaths and the destruction of hundreds of houses and the village mosque. Many Larat villagers fled to Tual and Elat following the attack. The next day, members of a number of Muslim villages in *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, with assistance from groups from Dullah Island, retaliated and attacked the (mostly) Protestant village of Weduar Fer on Kei Besar.[4] This resulted in 37 deaths (out of a population of around 150), the burning of two churches, and the destruction of all homes in the village. Weduar Fer villagers fled to Kilwat and Sather.

Another significant attack occurred from April 3-4, 1999 in the village of Elaar Lamagorang on Kei Kecil, one of the "birthplaces" of *Larvul Ngabal*. This Protestant village was attacked by groups of men from twelve neighboring Muslim villages on Kei Kecil (including

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[3] Although the International Crisis Group (2007) and Thorburn (2008) report that villagers from Weduar Fer led the attack on Larat, I was informed that the villages of Weduar, Kilwat, Ohoirenan, and Sather were involved in the attacks. To this day, it is unclear to me whether or not villagers from Weduar Fer participated in the attack.

[4] It was reported to me that villagers from Langgiar Fer, Fer, Sungai, Ngafan, Uat, Ngan, Ohoilean, and Vatkidat participated in the attack. International Crisis Group (2007:5) reported that Muslims from Dullah Island also participated in this attack.

Danar) in addition to Langgiar Fer and Vatkidat on Kei Besar. Seventy-two houses were burned and thirty-six people were killed. "For the Kei community, this attack was particularly heinous because a shrine commemorating the promulgation of *Hukum Larwul Ngabal* was also desecrated in the attack" (Thorburn 2008:136).

After the violence erupted in the Kei islands, many Keiese, both Christian and Muslim, claimed that the violence had "killed" Kei *adat*. The violence was viewed as a return of the lawlessness and disorder that, according to the Keiese, prevailed prior to the emergence of *Larvul Ngabal* (Thorburn 2008:137). Within a week after the outbreak of violence, the government head of Maluku Tenggara, himself a high-ranking Keiese, claimed that "The traditional culture of Maluku Tenggara, '*Larvul Ngabal*', which until now has been held in high esteem, has been completely crushed to the point that it cannot be used again to muffle conflict" (Suara Merdeka On-Line 1999).[5] Indeed, the spread of communal conflict shocked many familiar with Kei society (see Thorburn 2005). As one Christian minister in Ambon commented, "It is difficult to comprehend that mass religious conflict (or horizontal conflict) could happen in Kei Kecil and Kei Besar because of the existence of the strong social boundaries [i.e., social hierarchy] among the Keiese."[6]

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[5] This is my translation of the Indonesian: "*Budaya adat masyarakat Maluku Tenggara 'Larvul Ngabal' yang selama ini dijunjung tinggi telah diluluhlantakkan sehingga tidak bisa dimanfaatkan lagi untuk meredam pertikaian*".
[6] This is my translation of the Indonesian: "*Sukar membayangkan bahwa konflik masa dengan warna agama (atau konflik horisontal) terjadi di Kei Kecil dan atau Kei Besar, karena adanya garis hubungan sosial yang sangat tebal antar sesama warga Kei.*"

6.2   CONFLICT, RELIGION, AND LOCAL POLITICS IN THE KEI ISLANDS

In the Kei islands, communal conflict commenced along religious lines rather than "'traditional' lines of enmity" (Thorburn 2008:138). While the ethnic composition of Kei is relatively homogenous, the social, political, and geographic divisions among religious groups which began during the colonial period grew increasingly sharp during the New Order (Laksono 1990, 2002a). "New Order religious policies had strengthened religious identity at the expense of cross-religious *adat* ties" (Duncan 2009:1088). This, in addition to religious endogamy and the fissioning of villages along religious lines during the colonial period, may have contributed to the inter-religious conflict in the Kei islands.[7]

Religious differences temporarily replaced rank as the most critical difference within Kei society. During the conflict, the Kei aristocracy and political class became divided along religious lines while people of different rank united along religious ones. Old allies attacked one another while long-standing adversaries fought together against their new enemies. In *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim, for example, the Christian villages of Tutrean and Sather, which for the past century were staunch rivals, joined forces against neighboring Muslims during the recent violence. In

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[7] Regarding the Muslim-Croat bloodshed that commenced following her late-1980s dissertation research, Bringa (1995:xviii) acknowledged that her "anthropological training had not prepared [her] to deal with the very rapid and total disintegration of the community". She also noted that the "[w]ar made sense neither to the anthropologist nor to the people who taught her about their way of life." Similarly, although I attempt in this section to provide some explanations for the conflict that erupted in the Kei islands, I must admit that I could never have predicted such events based on my ethnographic research. Although prejudices and suspicions certainly surfaced from time to time between Muslims and Christians, relations between the two groups in the Kei islands, and Maluku in general, were often touted as being models for inter-religious harmony.

addition, the Christian villages of Rerean and Weduar Fer were attacked by other villages from the same *utan* or *ratschap* (also see Thorburn 2008:139).

While the Kei conflict broke out along religious lines, the patterns which emerged from the three months of fighting suggest that it was related to the political uncertainties and competition that emerged during this liminal period of the Indonesian state. As Thorburn (2008:135-139) points out, the most striking pattern was that the villages most involved in the conflict (as both aggressors and victims) were those with a disproportionately high number of civil servants and government officials (e.g., the villages of Larat, Weduar Fer, Ohoiwait, Elaar Lamagorang, Dullah, Larat, and Ohoitel). While I agree with Thorburn's observation, I disagree with his explanation for this pattern (see Thorburn 2005, 2008).

Thorburn argues that the conflict was related to "political and economic grievances and perceptions [among the Keiese] that various local leaders and groups were abusing power and position in ways that disrupted the 'natural' harmony of Kei society" (Thorburn 2008:115). In an earlier article (Thorburn 2005:25-26), Thorburn argued that a decline in social capital during the New Order was the greatest contributing factor to the outbreak of violence in 1999 (Thorburn 2005: 25-26). This decline in social capital in Kei included:

> …conflicts within and between villages arising from the implementation of Village Government Law Number 5 of 1979; the poor performance and questionable behavior of the Southeast Maluku *Kabupaten* government, and consequent public contempt for their government leaders; heavy-handed attempts by some local government leaders to manipulate Kei *adat* law and structures for government and/or political means; opportunistic attempts by certain Raja [*rat*] to use their positions for personal, political or unseemly commercial advantage; the demise of customary conflict resolution practices and institutions without any viable replacement having been provided by the government; the increased violence associated with the cyanide fishing industry; and the general breakdown of law and order that characterized the declining

years of the New Order government throughout the country (Thorburn 2005:25:26).

As a result of this social dysfunction, Thorburn argues, "Kei was a tinderbox ready to ignite, and it took only few small sparks to set off the conflagration in April 1999" (2005:26). "Explicitly or not, consciously or not, it appears that [those involved in the conflict] were 'acting out' a generalized rage over the abuse of power and privilege that had been festering in Kei for years, perhaps decades" (Thorburn 2008:139).

Thorburn's explanation of the violence mirrors that of the Kei people: that the violence resulted from the death of some authentic *adat* that had existed in the past. It also presumes that the conflict was a cathartic mass revolt against the injustices and ills of the New Order period. But who, in fact, was acting out some generalized outrage over the collusion and corruption of Kei politicians during the New Order period? If any segment of Kei society was disenfranchised during the Suharto period, it was the *ren-ren* and *iri-ri*. I find it implausible that the violence that occurred during the three months in 1999 was perpetrated solely by these groups in response to the abuses of the Kei political class. It is more likely that the patterns of conflict were related to intra-elite competition that had developed within the Kei political class prior to the outbreak of the violence (see International Crisis Group 2007:5).

While a variety of explanations for the Maluku violence have been offered by the people of Maluku and scholars alike (see Aspinall 2008; Bubandt 2000, 2004; van Klinken 2001, 2007a; Bertrand 2008; Schulte Nordholt 2008), I find the work by van Klinken (2001, 2006, 2007a) useful for contextualizing the 1999 conflict in the Kei islands. Van Klinken (2001, 2006, 2007a) has detailed the numerous ways in which state-society relations created the conditions for violent confrontation in various regions of Indonesia. Based on his analysis of communal

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violence in Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Maluku , van Klinken (2007a) argued that regional

violence erupted in the context of a "liminized" state (see Hayden 2000) in which the power of

the central government had temporarily collapsed (or at least was significantly weakened),

ushering in a new era of *reformasi*. Decentralization and democratization were at the nation's

doorstep although the terms and conditions of these processes remained unclear. This caused

fear and uncertainty among the political elites but also new opportunities for political

maneuvering and economic gain. According to van Klinken, it was in the regional or provincial

towns where communal violence erupted, areas that during the New Order depended to a

large degree on state investment and government employment. Regional elites, who had

benefited greatly from the central government's sources of economic and political power, were

faced with uncertainty as they were no longer protected by their government patrons in

Jakarta. In their efforts to gain power in this liminized state, local elites mobilized their

constituencies in order to retain or gain control of local flows of money and to dominate the

changing political field in post-Suharto Indonesia.

While acknowledging the limitations of "instrumentalist" explanations of the violence

(see Bubandt 2000), I would nonetheless argue, pace van Klinken (2007a), that the communal

conflict in the Kei islands was, in part, a political struggle among members of the Kei political

class who, in the context of a liminal state, attempted to retain or gain political and economic

power. The complex web of patron-client relations that developed within the Kei political class

provided the basis for political mobilization and, I would argue, the patterns of conflict

described by Thorburn (2008) and discussed above. During the conflict, the political class

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fragmented as quickly as Kei *adat* had "died". The fact that these two processes occurred concomitantly highlights the complex relations between rank and *adat* in Kei society.

During this liminal period, Kei society experimented with alternative forms of difference (i.e. religion as opposed to *adat*). As Turner (1969:167) has argued, "if liminality is regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action, it can be seen as potentially a period of scrutinization of the central values and axioms of the culture in which it occurs." Liminal periods, as Turner demonstrated so well, are sources of creativity, potentiality, but also danger (also see Douglas 1966). During the liminality of the Kei conflict, new models of reality and territoriality were scripted through local discourse, performed through bloody confrontations, and mapped onto the landscape through the destruction of villages and flows of people in response to the violence. The already "checkerboard 'theographic' map of Kei witnessed a "sharpening and hardening of boundaries" (Thorburn 2008:137). This experimental moment, or "social drama" (Turner 1974), had the potential to result in a significant disruption of Kei's rank-based political order. But like most liminal periods, the reclassification of reality that emerged during the Kei violence was not permanently institutionalized within Kei society. While the memories of the violence serve as a stark reminder for what Kei society can become, the conflict was relatively short-lived (in comparison to Ambon) and *adat* was quickly resurrected from its ashes.

6.3   *ADAT* AND RECONCILIATION IN THE KEI ISLANDS

In the weeks and months after the fighting erupted, several *adat* leaders, most notably the *rat* of Maur Ohoivuut (Kei Besar) and Songli (Kei Kecil), were successful in appealing for calm and restraint in their domains. Both of their *ratschap* were virtually untouched by the violence during the three months of conflict (Thorburn 2005:28) and these two *rat* also played crucial roles in "brokering the peace and leading early reconciliation efforts" (Thorburn 2008: 139). For example, when the conflict broke out, *Rat* Rahail of Maur Ohoivuut immediately sent letters to the leaders of the villages in his *ratschap*, stating that there is no basis, according to *adat*, to participate in the conflict. In the letter, he wrote: "according to *adat*, we can only engage in war in two circumstances: if the honor of our women is violated, or if others encroach on our territory. These situations are not part of the current conflict. Therefore we cannot fight one another because there is no reason or excuse to fight" (Kleden 2001). [8]

Although an *adat* solution was somewhat delayed and uneven, *adat* leaders did play a significant role in the resolution of the conflict, often at a very private level. On a number of occasions, groups of *adat* functionaries (i.e., *rat*, *orang kaya*) joined religious and government leaders in excursions around the islands in an attempt to end the violence (Thorburn 2005:28-29). [9] A more organized *adat* solution to the Kei conflict emerged after the violence ended.

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[8] This is my translation of: "*Menurut adat kita, orang baru berperang kalau dua hal dilanggar: kalau kehormatan kita punya perempuan dilanggar dan kalau tanah kita diambil orang. Sekarang dua perkara itu tidak ada. Jadi kita tidak bisa perang, karena tidak ada sebab dan alasan untuk perang.*"
[9] The termination of violence was attributed by Thorburn (2008:136) to numerous efforts including (1) a Catholic procession of clergy and lay leaders carrying an effigy of Virgin Mary; (2) a local radio station playing traditional music with dispassionate accounts of arson and murder; (3) NGOs from Christian

However, the role of *adat* in the relatively quick end to the violence should not be understated. The strong influence of *adat* leaders and *adat* law in the Kei islands prior to the conflict contributed to the success of *adat*, in the end, in terminating the violence and facilitating reconciliation (Laksono 2002a; International Crisis Group 2007). It was "the Kei people's belief in, and dependence on, their 'noble' past that helped quell the conflict" that erupted along religious lines (Thorburn 2005:28).

Fighting ended rather abruptly in June of 1999 and was followed almost immediately by national and international relief efforts.[10] At the same time, local efforts at maintaining peace and fostering reconciliation became more coordinated and widespread. *Adat* was articulated by those leading peace, reconciliation and reconstruction efforts as the most salient cultural resource to be resurrected for such purposes. Many Kei people believed and argued that the solution to the violence hinged on returning a golden age of harmony and glory, an age governed by *adat* law (Thorburn 2008:137). This may not be surprising given that a harmony ideology has for a very long time permeated discourses and conceptions of *Larvul Ngabal*.

Since the conflict ended in June of 1999, local efforts to cultivate *adat* for reconciliation have included official reconciliation ceremonies and the creation of monuments in affected villages, ceremonies for the opening of rebuilt churches, mosques and schools, and less formal gatherings as people gather to reaffirm social relationships. "These events often feature *adat*

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communities delivering supplies to Muslim refugees; and (4) petitions organized by particular *rat* professing non-belligerence.

[10] These relief efforts included: (1) Ministry of Public Works projects involving the construction of public housing and facilities; (2) a UNDP Kei Islands Peace Building Programme (funded through a $1 million grant from Dutch government); and (3) Christian and Muslim organizations from Jakarta and abroad sending money and supplies to the islands (Thorburn 2008:137).

songs and dances and the recitation of origin histories (Thorburn 2008:140). The inhabitants of villages that were almost completely destroyed, such as Larat, Weduar Fer and Elaar Lamagorang, have returned and been rebuilt. When displaced villagers would return to their village, they would usually do so in the presence of Kei Christian and Muslim leaders and often military or police officers. These events were accompanied by *adat* ceremonies as well (International Crisis Group 2007:5). In October 2004, a reconciliation ceremony was held in Elaar Lamagorang and attended by district government officials and *adat* leaders from throughout Kei. A monument was erected during this ceremony to commemorate this reconciliation (Thorburn 2008:140).

In an effort to promote peace and reconciliation throughout Maluku, the provincial government (centered in Ambon), in conjunction with the two NGOs (the Go-East Institute and Crisis Center Amboina) held a large gathering in Langgur (Kei Kecil) from March 15-18, 2000 attended by over 1,500 *adat*, government, and religious leaders from throughout Maluku, as well as academics, students, and NGOs. Kei was selected as the location for this event because of the strength of Kei *adat* as well as the fact that the conflict there ended after only three months, much shorter than the conflicts in other parts of Maluku (Laksono 2002a). The title of this seminar, "National Dialogue on Revitalizing Local Culture for Rehabilitation and Development in the Moluccas toward a New Indonesia"[11] (Bräuchler 2009:877), highlights the efforts to revitalize *adat* throughout Maluku for the purposes of peace and reconciliation.

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[11] This is a translation of "*Pemberdayaan Nilai-Nilai Budaya Lokal untuk Rehabilitasi dan Pengembangan Masyarakat Maluku Menuju Indonesia Baru*".

At this large gathering, several Kei speakers discussed the Kei proverb, "*ken sa vaak*" ("we are all wrong, we are all correct"), as a means to move past finger-pointing and claims of wrongdoing (Kleden 2001; Silubun 2004). Attempts were initiated at this meeting, and have continued since, to distance the heinous acts of violence from human agency. Although during the conflict people referred to the violence as *kerusuhan* (unrest), today the hostilities are referred to as *musibah*, a term usually used to describe natural disasters such as epidemics, earthquakes, or typhoons (Thorburn 2008:137). The *musibah* is blamed on the temporary disregard for Kei *adat* which resulted in a return of lawlessness and disorder that prevailed prior to the promulgation of *Larvul Ngabal* (Thorburn 2008:137).

The National Dialogue resulted in a number of recommendations, referred to as *Pesan Langgur* ("Langgur Recommendations") and *Rekomendasi Umum Dialog Nasional Langgur* ("General Recommendations of the National Dialogue of Langgur").[12] These recommendations included the continued revival of local *adat* and *adat* law to help regulate community life, and the hope that *adat* functionaries (*rat*, *raja* or *sultan*) throughout Maluku would continue to hold onto their leadership positions. Interestingly, regarding *adat* social structure, it was recommended that the system of social stratification (i.e., *mel-mel*, *ren-ren*, *iri-ri*) be used in creative ways to cultivate its continued importance in social life.[13] This recommendation

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[12] "*Pesan Langgur*" and "*Rekomendasi Umum Dialog Nasional Langgur*" were issued by the Committee of the Seminar for National Dialogue on Revitalising Local Culture for Rehabilitation and Development in the Moluccas toward a New Indonesia (*Penitia Seminar Pemberdayaan Nilai-Nilai Budaya Lokal untuk Rehabilitasi dan Pengembangan Masyarakat Maluku Menuju Indonesia Baru*) on March 18, 2001.

[13] The sixth general recommendation states: "*Sejauh menyangkut struktur sosial Masyarakat Maluku, tiga lapis strata sosial dalam tradisi Maluku, yaitu Mel, Ren, dan Iri dapat dimanfaatkan secara kreatif untuk mendorong berfungsinya kembali pranata-pranata sosial yang ada dalam tradisi Maluku.*"

illustrates, I argue, the significant role of the Kei aristocracy in the Langgur seminar and reconciliation efforts.

While there was not any tangible outcomes or follow-up to the Langgur seminar (Bräuchler 2009:877), this meeting was an important event in Kei efforts at reconciliation (Yanuarti et al., 2006). It also provided a platform for reasserting the authority of Kei *adat* leaders (International Crisis Group 2007:5). The fact that this event was held in Langgur was also clear statement about the power of *adat* in the Kei Islands and the ability of Kei *adat* leaders, in contrast to many of their counterparts in other parts of Maluku, to influence the duration and outcomes of the communal conflict.

Many authors have demonstrated that, as a result of the communal violence and the failure of the Indonesian state to prevent the violence or ensure the safety of its citizens, a variety of ethnic groups attempted to revitalize *adat* in order to maintain order and foster reconciliation (e.g., Acciaioli 2001; Laksono 2002a; Adam 2009, 2010; Bräuchler 2009a, 2009b; Duncan 2009). However, in contrast to the Kei Islands, *adat* reconciliation was not very successful in terminating violence or in creating long-term peace in other areas of Indonesia (Henley and Davidson 2007; Acciaioli 2001; Bräuchler 2009a, 2009b; Duncan 2009). What factors account for these differences?

Acciaioli (2001:103), in his study of attempts to revitalize *adat* for peace among the people of Lindu, Central Sulawesi, argued that violence avoidance is facilitated when people share the same cultural background, including *adat*, or if one group's *adat* is recognized as a framework for conflict resolution that transcends the interests of all parties. Duncan (2009), in his study of *adat* and reconciliation in Halmahera, argued that, for the Tobelo, the purported

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"strength" of *adat* in a particular area was directly related to conflict avoidance. "In the one part of Tobelo [Kakara Island] where *adat* was still considered particularly strong, Muslims and Christians had avoided conflict" (Duncan 2009:1088). Henley and Davidson (2007:18) suggested that the revival of *adat* might promote peace building "where a traditional polity once encompassed, and to some extent claimed the loyalty of, more than one ethnic or religious group".

While the above authors identify aspects of the Kei context (i.e., the relative cultural homogeneity, the prominence of Kei *adat*, and an overarching political structure) that facilitated reconciliation through *adat* means, they fail in isolation to account for the myriad factors that allowed particular individuals or groups to articulate *adat* as an effective peace-making strategy. The reasons for the relative success of the Kei Islands in limiting the duration of communal conflict as well as promoting long-lasting peace and reconciliation cannot be isolated without an understanding of the complex relations that developed between Kei *adat* and social hierarchy since colonial times. The prominent position of the Kei *mel-mel* and their dominance within the district government bureaucracy facilitated the resurrection of *Larvul Ngabal* and elite articulations of *adat* as a means to social harmony and reconciliation. The influence of Kei *rat* in the peace-making and reconciliation process undoubtedly influenced the convening of "traditional chiefs" from all over Maluku in Ambon in November 2006 in an effort to "maintain peace among Maluku's different communities" (Tunny 2006). This two day meeting resulted in the formation of the Maluku *Latupati* Council (*Majelis Latupati*) made up of the 627 *adat* chiefs of Maluku. In 2011, the *rat* of Fer and Dullah were both board members (*dewan pengurus*) of this council of chiefs.

This renewed focus on *adat* leaders in Maluku bodes well for the continued prominence

Kei *rat* in local political life. In fact, since the reconciliation efforts began in 1999, Kei *adat*

leaders have played a more prominent role in managing local conflict.[14] During a speech at the

installation ritual of *Rat* Songli of Rumat, the current Bupati of Maluku Tenggara, A.

Rentanubun (a high-ranking individual from Langgur who reportedly has great respect for

Larvul Ngabal), claimed that Kei *rat*, as leaders of the *adat* community, have the responsibility

to maintain *adat* law, settle *adat* disputes and problems, and strengthen Kei culture and

traditions (Info Maluku Tenggara 2010).

6.4   DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL POLITICS

Decentralization and regional autonomy in post-Suharto Indonesia resulted in the biggest

administrative reorganization in the history of the Indonesian state (Henley and Davidson

2008). In May of 1999, amidst the violence that enveloped Kei and the other islands of Maluku,

President Habibie passed the Regional Autonomy Laws No. 22 and 25 of 1999, which provided a

framework for political and fiscal decentralization to lower administrative levels. These laws

were passed, in part, to counteract the potential separatist tendencies of the provinces

(Duncan 2007:717; International Crisis Group 2007:2). Law No. 22 was in many ways a "divide-

and-rule" strategy (Schulte Nordholt and Van Klinken 2007:13) that transferred political control

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[14] One example was a 2011 *adat* "peace" ritual conducted by *Rat* Baldu following a conflict between two villages of his *ratschap*. For a photograph, go to: http:/tenggararaya.blogspot.com/2011/04/golkar-konsisten-perjuangkan.html.

to the districts (*kabupaten*) and municipalities (*kotamadya*) across the country (Duncan 2007:717-18; Schulte Nordholt and Van Klinken 2007:13). It was designed to bring the government closer to the people, create greater transparency, and allow for stronger local participation in government (Duncan 2007:719; Schulte Nordholt and Van 2007:13). Whereas Law No. 22 facilitated the devolution of power, Law No. 25 resulted in the decentralization of government subsidies. While the central government retained its grip on the main sources of revenue in the regions, it redistributed 25% of these revenues to the district governments through general block grants (*dana alokasi umum*) (Schulte Nordholt and Van Klinken 2007:13-14; International Crisis Group 2007:2; Duncan 2007:718).[15] Thus, through the Regional Autonomy Laws, a fundamental reorganization of power relations occurred at the district level throughout the Indonesian archipelago.

Decentralization also affected governance at the village level. Regional Autonomy Law No. 22 of 1999 contains a section on village government which replaced the Village Law of 1979 (see Antlöv 2003; Kagami 2005). Under this law, village government consists of a village head (and administration staff) along with a locally elected village representative council (*Badan Perwaklian Desa*, or *BPD*). In contrast to the Village Law of 1979, the village is no longer under the authority of the sub-district and is an autonomous level of government (Antlöv 2003:199). In addition, the village is now a legal entity rather than a territorial entity and, as such, has the right to raise funds and is empowered to enact village regulations or budgets (Antlöv 2003:199; McWilliam 2006:55). In addition, Law No. 22 allows villages and village heads to be called by

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[15] For most districts these funds constitute 80% of all revenue (International Crisis Group 2007:2).

any "traditional" name and provides space for village governance to be based on local customs (Antlöv 2003: 1999).

Like the Village Law of 1979, the village head continues to be an elected position under the new law. However, while the former law located the position within the district government system of ranking, the village head is now appointed by the village representative council (which consists of 5-13 elected members depending on village size) and confirmed by the district head. Furthermore the village representative council, in addition to having the power to draft legislation and to approve the village budget, has the authority to monitor village government and to take steps to remove the village head (Antlöv 2003:199; Kagami 2005:56; McWilliam 2006:55). "This change in balance of power between the village head and the village council reflects the antagonistic mood of the early Reformation Era toward the centralized New Order regime" (Kagami 2005:56).

Decentralization in Indonesia at the turn of the century resulted from the confluence of neo-liberal ideas and Indonesian *reformasi* (Schulte Nordholt and Van Klinken 2007:12). Decentralization and regional autonomy purportedly would result in less state, more democracy, free markets, economic growth, and higher standards of living. Despite professional optimism for the decentralization process (i.e., by NGOs, Ford Foundation, World Bank), a realistic pessimism soon grew among scholars of Indonesia. In the first decade since the Regional Autonomy Laws were passed, local elites in the district governments and parliaments appear to be the primary beneficiaries of decentralization (Booth 2011:51; also see Hadiz 2010). As Schulte Nordholt and van Klinken (2007:18) demonstrated, decentralization "does not necessarily result in democratization, good governance and the strengthening of civil society at

the regional level. Instead we often witness a decentralization of corruption, collusion and political violence that once belonged to the centralized regime of the New Order, and is now molded into the existing patrimonial patterns at the regional level...Various people call these new autonomous regions 'little kingdoms'." Erb, Beni, and Anggal (2005:162) similarly warned of the potential of administrative districts (*kabupaten*) becoming "New Order state[s], writ small".

Another remarkable and unplanned consequence of decentralization was *pemekaran* ("flowering", "blossoming"), the subdivision of existing provinces or districts to create new administrative units. In Indonesia, *pemekaran* has been a process driven largely "from below" in order to increase bureaucratic jobs and gain access to funds from the central government (Schulte Nordholt and Van Klinken 2007:12; International Crisis Group 2007:2). In addition to the general block grant (discussed above), a special block grant (*dana alokasi khusus*) is also provided to new districts to finance the construction of new government buildings, providing additional incentives for *pemekaran* (International Crisis Group 2007:2). As Aspinall succinctly puts it, "[a] new district provides new seats in a new legislature, a new district budget, new opportunities to appoint family or friends to civil-service positions, and lucrative construction contracts to build new government buildings" (2010:27).

Given the potential financial and political incentives for *pemekaran*, local elites in a variety of Indonesian contexts have mobilized ethnic sentiments in order to achieve their goals of new districts (see Aragon 2007, Eindhoven 2007; Vel 2007, 2008; Roth 2007; Eilenberg 2009). The rush for *pemekaran* has resulted in "administrative involution" (Schulte Nordholt and Van Klinken 2007:19) whereby administrative territories are subdivided into ever-smaller units. The

result has been a significant increase in the number of provinces, districts, and sub-districts throughout Indonesia.[16] For example, from 1998 to 2004, the number provinces increased from 27 to 33 and districts and municipalities increased almost 50% to 440 (Schulte Nordholt and Van Klinken 2007:19). By 2009, there were 495 districts and municipalities (Booth 2011:32).

A 2007 Ministry of Home Affairs evaluation on the then newly autonomous regions in 2005 found that 80 percent of the local governments created through *pemekaran* were failing to do a good job and the central government imposed a moratorium on further pemekaran (Sitomorang 2010). In order to address the apparent money politics, corruption, and the excessive power of district parliaments that resulted from the Regional Autonomy Laws and *pemekaran*, the laws were replaced during Megawati Sukarnoputri's presidency by Law No. 32 and Law No. 33 of 2004 on regional government and the fiscal balance between central and regional governments, respectively. Law No. 33 did not alter the balance of power between center and regions in any significant way. However, Law No. 32 curtailed the powers given to district heads and district parliaments. District heads and mayors, previously elected (and dismissed) by district parliamentarians, were now directly elected by voters (Schulte Nordholt and Klinken 2007:14-15; Van Klinken and Barker 2009:4).[17]

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[16] According to the Regional Autonomy Laws of 1999, a district needed to have at least 3 subdistricts before *pemekaran* could take place. Criteria were tightened in 2004 in an amendment to the law in an effort to slow the process down. Law 32 of 2004 also introduced minimum "age" of a district before further division (province must be 10, districts 7, and subdistricts 5), and the minimum number of subdistricts in a district or districts in a province raised from 3 to 5 (International Crisis Group 2007:3).

[17] The central government retained the right to unilaterally suspend district heads for corruption or if they threatened local security in any way (Schulte Nordholt 2007:14-15).

6.5   REGIONAL AUTONOMY AND KEI *ADAT* COMMUNITIES

The Regional Autonomy Laws contributed significantly to the revival of *adat* throughout Indonesia (Henley and Davidson 2007, 2008), a process that Aspinall and Fealy (2001) called the "rise of the local" and Bubandt (2004) the "new politics of tradition". While this new politics of tradition expands on New Order objectifications of culture, decentralization changed the parameters for imagining and "politicking" tradition (Bubandt 2004:14). In the post-Suharto state, *adat* has been linked with activism, protest, empowerment, violence, and struggles for political and economic resources (e.g., Li 2000, 2001; Bubandt 2004; Henley and Davidson 2007, 2008).

Since the passage of the Regional Autonomy Laws, there has been a concerted effort among a number of Indonesian societies to revitalize *adat* forms of territorial administration and governance (e.g., Li 2000, 2001; McCarthy 2005; Warren 2005; F. and K. Von Benda-Beckmann 2007, Marut 2006; Thorburn 2006; Afiff and Lowe 2007;Warren 2007; Pedersen 2007; Gayatri 2009). These efforts were made possible by the Regional Autonomy Laws of 1999 and 2004 which allow for the institutional reform of village governance based on *adat* practices and which encourage regional governments to develop regulations to support *adat* forms of governance (Thorburn 2006:4). In addition, a 2001 Supreme Parliament (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*, or *MPR*) decree requires laws and policies on natural resource management to be revised in accordance with principles that respect and protect rights of *adat* law communities (McCarthy 2005:58).

Given the increased autonomy and power given to district and village governments, the Regional Autonomy Laws provided impetus for the growth of a politicized "*masyarakat adat*" (*adat* society) movement, known as the "Alliance of *Adat* Societies of the Indonesian Archipelago" (*Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara*, or *AMAN*) (see Li 2000, 2001; Acciaioli 2001, 2002; Avonius 2003; Henley and Davidson 2007). Inspired by the international indigenous people's movement, *AMAN* held its first conference in Jakarta in 1999, at which time it declared, "We will not recognize the Nation, if the Nation does not recognize us" (Li 2001:645). This congress was largely successful in placing the problems of *masyarakat adat* on the political agenda in post-Suharto Indonesia (Li 2001:645). The Chairperson of this first congress in Jakarta was none other than *Rat* Rahail from *Ratschap* Maur Ohoivuut on Kei Besar (Topatimasang 2005:386).

Rat Rahail returned to Kei from this inaugural AMAN congress while the islands were in the midst of communal violence. Thus, efforts to return to *adat* forms of governance in the Kei islands were clearly influenced by the *masyarakat adat* movement as well as the struggles for peace and reconciliation discussed above. Despite the relatively strong correspondence between *adat* political organization and the Indonesian system of village administration that had developed during the New Order (see Chapter 4), there were nonetheless attempts to articulate *adat* forms of territorial administration. One local NGO, *Yayasan* Hivlak, spearheaded an early attempt in February of 2000 to specify the structure of *adat* political organization and land tenure (*petuanan*) (Yanuarti et al. 2006:89-92). According to the Yayasan Hivlak plan, the position of *rat* was defined not only as the head of his *ratschap*, but also the head of the village (*ohoi*) in which he resided. Under the *rat* was the *orang kaya*. The *kapitan* (war leader) and *pati*

(an honorary title given by the Dutch to *orang kaya*) were village-level positions also recognized by this plan. The *soa*, or hamlet head, was also recognized although the *soa* head was politically subordinate to the *orang kaya* (Yanuarti et al. 2006:89-92). The Hivlak plan did not result in any formal recognition of *adat* administrative units, and official efforts towards such ends were slow and contentious. According to the Regional Autonomy Laws of 1999 and 2004, an *adat* community must be recognized by a regulation enacted by a regional parliament (*Peraturan Daerah*, or *Perda*).

As a result of delays at the provincial and district levels in the formal recognition of *adat* government structures (Marut 2006:3), the village of Debut on the west coast of Kei Kecil independently enacted and implemented their own *adat* village political organization through the formation of a *saniri* (*adat* council) and a detailed village charter (Marut 2006; Yanuarti et al. 2006:70). These efforts, which began in 2000, were carried out under the leadership of the *orang kaya* of Debut, Alosius Jamlean, who has close ties to the Maluku NGO community. The *saniri* passed a number of village regulations (*Peraturan Desa*, or *Perdes*) concerning issues such as natural resource management, village revenues, and procedures for governance. The *kabupaten* government, however, refused to accept Debut's new charter and village regulations on the basis that the appropriate *kabupaten* regulations on village government had not yet been issued (Marut 2006:2; Topatimasang 2007:387). Debut continued with their efforts to assert their legal authority, however, and ultimately decided to generate their own revenues rather than depend on government subsidies. Village revenues increased significantly from 6 million rupiah in 1999, to 94 million in 2000, and 126 million in 2002 (Topatimasang 2007:388). In 2003, Debut informed the district government that they did not want the

government subsidies. As a result of Debut's success, other villages on the west coast of Kei

Kecil (e.g., Ngilngof and Evu) attempted to replicate the "Debut model". In addition, the United

Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recommended, following a review of Debut's

accomplishments, that the Debut model be applied in 400 villages throughout Maluku (Marut

1996:2; Topatimasang 2007:388).

Government efforts to develop a system of *adat* governance began to take shape in the

mid-2000s. The Province of Maluku's 2003-2008 Strategic Plan (*Rencana Strategis*, or *RENSTRA*)

encouraged the revitalization of *adat* and promoted anthropological research on the *adat* of

the regions, with the goal of using such knowledge to prepare regulations for the incorporation

of *adat* in local political organization (Thorburn 2006:4; Bräuchler 2009:877-78). In 2005, the

provincial government of Maluku produced Regulation No. 14 of 2005[18] on reviving the village

structure of the *adat* communities of Maluku (Yanuarti et al. 2006:85), a revival process known

as "*kembali ke negeri*", or "return to the *negeri* (*adat* village)". This "umbrella" regulation

("*perda payung*") sets the general guidelines for local governments, but leaves the details to

the districts (F. and K. Von Benda-Beckmann 2007a:226-27; Bräuchler 2010:14).

While the district (*kabupaten*) of Maluku Tengah and *Kota* Ambon passed *kembali ke*

negeri regulations in 2006 and 2008, respectively, similar legislation took longer to materialize

in the Kei Islands.[19] Beginning in 2005, concrete steps were taken by the district government of

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[18] *Peraturan Daerah (Perda) No. 14 tahun 2005 tentang Penetapan Kembali Negeri Sebagai Kesatuan Masyarakat Hukum Adat.*

[19] For Central Maluku, see *Perda Kabupaten Maluku Tengah No.1 Tahun 2006 tentang Negeri* and *Perda Kabupaten Maluku Tengah No.2 Tahun 2006 Tentang Tata Cara Pencalonan dan Pelantikan Kepala Pemerintah Negeri.* For Kota Ambon, see *Peraturan Daerah Kota Ambon No. 3 Tahun 2008 Tentang Negeri di Kota Ambon.*

Maluku Tenggara to draft regulations to "return to the *ohoi*/*ratschap*" ("*kembali ke ohoi*/*ratschap*") (Yanuarti et al. 2006:85). In December 2005, and again in April 2006, the government of Maluku Tenggara held planning sessions for district regulations concerning *ratschap* and *ohoi* government.[20]   These meetings were held, appropriately enough, at the *Larvul Ngabal* Civic Auditorium (*Gedung Serbaguna Larvul Ngabal*) and were attended by district government officials, *adat* functionaries (primarily *rat* and *orang kaya*), and academics from Pattimura University in Ambon (Yanuarti et al. 2006:71).

The composition of these planning seminars demonstrated the continued dominance of the Kei political class in post-Suharto times. During these events, the Kei aristocracy from both within the Indonesian bureaucracy and from the *adat* domains of the islands (with the input of scholars from the university in Ambon) attempted to articulate a relatively fixed system of *adat* governance. Discussion centered on *ratschap*, the *ohoi* beneath them, and the political moieties (*ur siu* and *lor lim*) that connect the numerous *ratschap* of the archipelago. The role and status of the *rat*, *orang kaya*, and *kepala soa* in *adat* government were also topics of great deliberation.   Interestingly, but not surprising, Yanuarti et al. (2006) did not report any discussion of the *tuan tan*, an *adat* position controlled by individuals of *ren-ren* rank.

This attempted reification of *adat* was fraught with heated debate and disagreement, illustrating the hazards of representation even amongst the Kei elite. The debate over *adat* government at the seminars (as well as the potential for conflict from hastily drafted *perda*) helped to stall the official "return to *ohoi*/*ratschap*" in the Kei islands. It is perhaps somewhat surprising that the Kei islands have been relatively late in passing such *perda* in comparison

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[20] These were called "*Uji Publik Ranperda* (*Rancangan Peraturan Daerah*)".

with other areas of Indonesia (e.g., Bakker, 2007; F. and K. Von Benda-Beckmann 2007a, 2007b; Pedersen 2007; Tyson 2010). The difficulties in creating a coherent and agreed upon system of *adat* governance during these seminars was due in part to the fluidity of *adat* institutions and practices, the contested nature of *ohoi* and *ratschap* origin histories, rights to *adat* political offices and territorial boundaries, and the influences of colonial and post-colonial rule on Kei political life (see Yanuarti et al. 2006). In addition, as Tryatmoko (2010) suggests, the close relationship between village governance and Kei "caste" has hampered efforts at creating village institutions according to law.

The delay in enacting a *perda*, however, had little impact on the actual power of *adat* leaders within their villages and *ratschap*. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, the *mel-mel* were very successful in maintaining the territorial and political integrity of *adat* communities during the New Order. While the Kei elite continued to work towards the official recognition of *adat* communities, the "return to *ohoi/ratschap*" had, in practice, occurred well before the process of decentralization commenced. However, in 2009, the district government finally enacted a *perda ohoi* (see Koran Vox Populi Maluku Tenggara dan Kota Tual 2011b; Kabupaten Maluku Tenggara 2012a).[21] Although I was unable to obtain detailed information on this district government regulation, it apparently recognizes *ratschap* and *ohoi* as the primary units of Kei political organization and distinguishes between "*Ohoi Orangkai*" and "*Ohoi Soa*", corresponding to villages led by *orang kaya* and *kepala soa*, respectively. Since the *perda* was enacted, administrative villages throughout the Kei archipelago are now referred to as *ohoi*

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[21] The *perda* is referred to as District Regulation 3 of 2009 concerning *Ratschap* and *Ohoi* (Peraturan Daerah 03 tahun 2009 tentang Ratskap dan Ohoi).

rather than *desa*. However, *ohoi soa*, formerly the *dusun* of the New Order period, remain politically subordinate to the *ohoi orangkai* to which they are related.

The implementation of the *perda* at the village level has apparently been fraught with problems and met with some resistance (see Ambon Ekspres 2011). As a result, the head of Maluku Tenggara's district parliament reported that the *perda* may need to be revised to address these issues and to ensure successful implementation (Koran Vox Populi Maluku Tenggara dan Kota Tual 2011b). Despite the problems with implementation, however, it appears, in the short term at least, that the *perda* will further solidify the power and prominence of the Kei *mel-mel* in village governance. By February 21, 2012, eight *ohoi* heads (*kepala ohoi*, or *orang kay*) had been officially installed according to the district regulation. In addition, the events surrounding the installation of the new *kepala ohoi* appear to be very similar to the village head installation rituals of the New Order period described in Chapter 4. For example, the installation of the *kepala ohoi* of Kolser on Kei Kecil included the transportation of prominent guests to the ritual center (*woma*) in *belang*, an *adat* prayer to summon ancestral spirits, and an *adat* ceremony presided over by *Rat* Yab Faan of *Ratschap* Ohoilim Tahit (Kabupaten Maluku Tenggara 2012b).[22] This suggests that *adat* at the village level continues to remain in the hands of the Kei aristocracy.

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[22] Also see Kabupaten Maluku Tenggara (2012a, 2012c) for brief descriptions of two other recent village head installation rituals.

6.6   *PEMEKARAN* AND *ADAT* TERRITORIES IN THE KEI ISLANDS

The Kei islands welcomed regional autonomy, in part, because it allowed for greater political

independence from Ambon, the provincial capital of Maluku (International Crisis Group

2007:4). In fact, since late 1990's, discussions among the Kei elite about dividing Maluku

Tenggara and creating a municipality (*kota*) in Tual were linked to aspirations for a new

province separate from Ambon. As a result, the *pemekaran*, or subdivision, of *Kabupaten*

Maluku Tenggara quickly followed in the footsteps of the Regional Autonomy Laws of 1999.[23]

The motivation for the *pemekaran* of Southeast Maluku (i.e., the establishment new districts

and sub-districts), in addition to aspirations for greater independence from Ambon, was

"money and power" through access to government funds and employment (International Crisis

Group 2007:3).

Before a district (*kabupaten*) could split, however, it had to have at least three sub-

districts (*kecamatan*). This criterion enabled the district of Maluku Tenggara, centered in Tual

and encompassing the islands from Wetar in the west to Aru in the East, to split in 2000, giving

rise to *Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara Barat, consisting of the islands west of Kei (Yanuarti et al.

2006:69).[24] In 2001, the sub-district of Kei Besar (centered in Elat) underwent pemekaran, and

two additional sub-districts centered in the villages of Hollat (Northern Kei Besar Sub-District or

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[23] I should point out, however, that discussion of regional autonomy and *pemekaran* in the Kei Islands began as early as 1995, when I was first informed that Kei Besar would soon be divided into 3 *kecamatan* centered in Elat, Weduar, and Hollat. I was also told that there would be new *kecamatan* in in the Kur and Tayando Islands as well. These predictions came to fruition following the formation of these *kecamatan* in 2001 and 2004, respectively.
[24] *Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara Barat later split in 2008, giving rise to *Kabupaten* Maluku Barat Daya, which includes the islands west of Tanimbar.

Kecamatan Kei Besar Utara) and Weduar (Southern Kei Besar Sub-District or *Kecamatan* Kei Besar Selatan) were created. It should be noted that both Hollat and Weduar are both villages with significant numbers of *mel-mel* individuals in the district government, particularly from *fam* Betaubun (Hollat), and Somnaikubun and Hukubun (Weduar). The increase in sub-districts on Kei Besar, allowed for a further division of the district of Maluku Tenggara in 2003 with the formation of the Aru Islands District (*Kabupaten* Kepulauan Aru) (Yanuarti et al. 2006:69). Following this division, *Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara consisted solely of the Kei Islands.

Efforts then focused on the creation of a municipality (*kota*) centered in Tual. While efforts by many Kei elite from Dullah Island in creating a municipality in Tual began in 1999, political disagreements within the district government prevented any significant steps toward this goal until 2003. On June 12, 2003, a letter recommending the formation of *Kota* Tual was sent by the *rat* of Tual and Dullah, as the "highest *adat* leaders of Maluku Tenggara", to President Megawati Sukarnoputri, the national parliament, relevant ministries, and the governor of Maluku (International Crisis Group 2007:7).[25] Although the *pemekara*n of *Kecamatan* Kei Kecil in 2004 resulted in the formation of four new sub-districts (*Kecamatan* Tayando-Tam, Kecamatan Dullah Utara, *Kecamatan* Kei Kecil Timur, and *Kecamatan* Kei Kecil Barat), efforts to create a municipality in Tual were stalled by intense political debate among politicians in the district government as well as *adat* leaders from throughout the archipelago.[26]

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[25] *Pimpinan Tertinggi Pemangku Adat Pata Siwa Pata Lima Maluku Tenggara, Surat Rekomendasi Nomor: 02/RK/PTPA-PSL/2003* (International Crisis Group 2007:7 n.32).
[26] This occurred just as Law No. 32 of 2004 tightened the criteria for new districts or municipalities by raising the minimum number of sub-districts from 3 to 5.

These debates intensified following the installation of a new *bupati* in 2004, H. Koedoeboen, a native of Kei Besar who opposed the *pemekaran* of Tual. Disagreements centered around the proposed boundaries of *Kota* Tual and *Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara, as well as the economic, social, and political impact of *pemekaran* on the proposed municipality and the remaining "rump" district (International Crisis Group 2007:7). Koedoeboen, citing letters against *pemekaran* by *adat* leaders from Kei Besar, the Kur islands, the village of Taar on Dullah Island, and Langgur on Kei Kecil Island, expressed concern about the viability of *pemekaran* and recommended that issues surrounding administrative boundaries be addressed (International Crisis Group 2007:7).

The administrative boundaries of the proposed Tual municipality were the primary focus of the *pemekaran* debate for two primary reasons. First, according to the Regional Autonomy Laws, districts receive a percentage of revenues generated by the exploitation of natural resources, and are also permitted to implement new taxes and fees to raise revenues (Duncan 2007:718-19). In addition, the creation of a new *kabupaten* or *kota* may also result in a significant increase in construction and development projects which provide the district with additional access to state funds (International Crisis Group 2007:8-9). Thus, the territorial boundaries of a district or municipality are clearly related to the access and control of revenue, resources and employment opportunities.

Secondly, the debate over administrative boundaries was also related to the impact of proposed boundaries on *adat* territories. As was demonstrated in Chapter 4, due to the concerted efforts by the Kei aristocracy, *adat* and state administrative structures in the Kei islands during the New Order were largely "overlapping territorialities". In other words, the Kei

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elite had successfully adapted the imposed *desa* administrative structure to *adat* community

organization with relatively minimal disruption to *adat* governance. The proposed *pemekaran*

of *Kota* Tual, however, created a new threat to the integrity of *adat* territories, at least for

those who opposed the process. The administrative boundaries could potentially cut across

adat territories which would jeopardize the continuity of *adat* territories and governance in the

Kei islands. For example, three villages (Langgur, Kolser, Faan) that claimed to have provided

land in the 1950's for the development of Tual as a district capital argued that *pemekaran* could

potentially alienate them from this communally owned land. In addition, members of *fam*

Renyaan from Taar claim ownership of some land (*tanah Sather*) which is part of Tual, and

demanded compensation if *pemekaran* took place (International Crisis Group 2007:9).[27]

  During the *pemekaran* debate, three options regarding the boundaries of *Kota* Tual

were proposed (International Crisis Group 2007:8).[28] The first option was to split Dullah Island

(with the town of Tual on it) from the rest of Kabupaten Maluku Tenggara. This option was not

very attractive to *pemekaran* supporters who wanted to include as much territory as possible.

The second option was for Tual to encompass all islands of the archipelago except Kei Besar.

This option, while attractive for the pro-*pemekaran* faction, was opposed by the inhabitants of

Kei Besar, who argued that Kei Besar would suffer economically since it contributed less than

1% of Maluku Tenggara's income. A third option was proposed by the governor of Maluku in

2007 whereby Tual would consist of Dullah, Kur, and Tayando islands, while Maluku Tenggara

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[27] *Fam* Renyaan of Taar originated from the village of Sather on Kei Besar and migrated to Dullah Island
following the war with Tutrean several centuries ago.
[28] The remainder of this paragraph is a summarization of information presented by International Crisis
Group (2007:8).

would be left with Kei Besar, Kei Kecil, and some islands off of Kei Kecil. Despite opposition to the *pemekaran* of Maluku Tenggara, this third option was passed into law in July of 2007 (Law No. 31 of 2007).[29] Langgur on Kei Kecil Island officially became the new capital of *Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara in 2009.

Opposition to the *pemekaran* of Maluku Tenggara did not end with the establishment of *Kota* Tual in 2007. In December 2007, a case was filed with the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia (Mahkamah Konstitusi Republik Indonesia) to review Law No. 31 of 2007 concerning the establishment of *Kota* Tual by the *rat* of Fer (Abdul Hamid Rahayaan), the *rat* of Dullah (Gasim Renuat), and the *rat* of Nerong (Abdul Gani Refra).[30] These three petitioners claimed to be acting on behalf of and representing the *Lor Lim adat* law community (*Rat* Fer), the *ratschap* of Utan Tel Varat (*Rat* Dullah), and the *ratschap* of Lo Ohoitel (*Rat* Nerong). The basis for the petition was that the creation of *Kota* Tual violated the constitutional rights of the Kei *adat* law community since it resulted in the division of *adat* territories.

The *rat* of Fer claimed to be the head of the *Lor Lim* political moiety which includes seven *ratschap* throughout the Kei islands. Two of these, the *ratschap* of Tual and Tetoat, consist of territories that cross the administrative boundaries between *Kota* Tual and Maluku Tenggara. *Rat* Fer petitioned that the *ratschap* of Tual comprises four villages (*desa*) and 3

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[29] *Undang-Undang No. 31 Tahun 2007 tanggal 10 Juli 2007 Tentang Pemekaran Kota Tual*.
[30] Information on this case was gathered from the following court documents: Mahkamah Konsititusi Republik Indonesia Putusan Nomor 31/PUU-V/2007; Mahkamah Konsititusi Republik Indonesia Risalah Sidang Perkara Nomor 31/PUU-V/2007, Acara Pemeriksaan Perbaikan Permohonan (II); Mahkamah Konsititusi Republik Indonesia Risalah Sidang Perkara Nomor 31/PUU-V/2007, Acara Pengucapan Putusan (IV); Mahkamah Konsititusi Republik Indonesia Risalah Sidang Perkara Nomor 31/PUU-V/2007, Acara Mendengar Keterangan Pemerintah, DPR-RI, DPD-RI Serta Saksi dan Ahli dari Pemohon dan Pemerintah (IV).

hamlets (*dusun*). Two of these villages (Tual and Taar) and the three dusun (Pulau Ut, Fair, and Mangon) are located within the boundaries of *Kota* Tual while the villages of Ohoidertavun and Ohoililir are located within the boundaries of *Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara. Likewise, *Ratschap* Yarbadang, centered in Tetoat, consists of 9 *desa* and 6 *dusun*. The villages of Tayando Yamru, Tayando Yamtel, and Tayando Ohoiel are located within *Kota* Tual, whereas Tetoat, Letvuan, Wab, Waurvut, Evu, Dian Pulau, and the *dusun* of Dian Darat, Ngursit, Madwat, Ohoibadar, Wab Watngil and Arso are located within *Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara. The second petitioner, Gasim Renuat, claimed to be the *rat* of *Ratschap* Dullah, which consists of 9 desa and 2 dusun. He claimed that although the *desa* of Dullah, Dullah Laut, Tamedan, Labetawi, Ngadi, Fiditan, and Tayando Langgiar are within the boundaries of *Kota* Tual, Warbal, Letman, and the dusun of Sidniohoi and Dudunwahan are within the territory of *Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara. The third petitioner, *Rat* Ihbes of Nerong claimed that the boundary of Tual entered part of the maritime territory of *Ratschap* Lo Ohoitel, located in the Nerong Strait between Kei Besar and Dullah Island. Based on these claims, the three petitioners argued that the formation of *Kota* Tual violated the rights of Kei *adat* society by dividing the territories of four *ratschap* centered in Tual, Tetoat, Nerong, and Dullah.

The Constitutional Court also heard the testimony of the Governor of Maluku, the *bupati* of Maluku Tenggara, the provincial and district parliaments (*DPRD*), witnesses for the petitioners (an expert witness, the *rat* of Wain, and the *kapitan* of Tutrean), and expert witnesses from the various levels of government. Expert witnesses from the Province of Maluku argued that the claim that the creation of Kota Tual would lead to the break-up of *adat* communities or the formation of new *adat* communities was unfounded. In addition, one

witness argued that, while *rat* have authority within their own *ratschap*, they cannot interfere with the internal workings of another *rat*'s territory.

Two expert witnesses for the district parliament (*DPRD*) included H.N. Renuat and H. Muhammad Tamher, the *rat* of Dullah and Tual, respectively. These two *adat* leaders, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, were strong supporters of the *pemekaran* of Maluku Tenggara who sent a letter of recommendation for *pemekaran* to President Megawati, parliament, and others in 2003. In addition, the *rat* of Tual was a relative of the head of the district parliament, M.M. Tamher, who lead the *pemekaran* campaign and eventually became the mayor of *Kota* Ambon. The testimony of these two *adat* leaders reflected their pro-*pemekaran* stance, pointing out the benefits of the creation of *Kota* Tual to the people of the municipality and Tual's continued respect for *adat*. H.N. Renuat testified that the second petitioner, Gasim Renuat, who was his brother, was only the acting village head of Dullah, and that he was the "true" *rat* of Dullah[31]. In addition, H. Muhammad Tamher rejected the petitioners' claims that they were acting on behalf of the *adat* community of Kota Tual.

In mid-June 2008, the Constitutional Court rendered its decision in the case. It declared that the testimony given by the *rat* of Dullah and the Governor of Maluku was the truthful testimony and ruled that the three-self-proclaimed representatives of the *adat* communities lacked the legal standing to bring the petition before the court. They were unable to prove that they had a legitimate capacity to represent the *adat* law communities on whose behalf they

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[31] It appears that Gasim Renuat was selected to become the next *rat* of Dullah. This did not become official until he was installed as a definitive village head and *rat*. While I am not sure when this installation ritual took place, Gasim Renuat is recognized today as the *rat* of Dullah (see Maluku Tenggara Raya Online 2011).

claimed to be acting. In addition, the court ruled that the petitioners were unable to prove that their constitutional rights were impinged upon as a result of Law Number 31 of 2007.

As a result of the ruling, Tual became a municipality and the territories of *Ratschap* Tual, Dullah, Tetoat, and Nerong were parceled across *kabupaten/kota* boundaries. The effects of these divergent territorialities on the authority and power of *adat* leaders may be small in the grand scheme of things. However, the *Kota* Tual case demonstrated the continued effort by some *adat* leaders to maintain a high degree of correspondence between *adat* and state territorialities. Perhaps even more importantly, the economic stakes involved in the *pemekaran* of Maluku Tenggara pitted some Kei *adat* leaders against others. The *rat* of Tual and Dullah clearly had much to gain from the creation of *Kota* Tual, while the leaders of Kei Besar and Kei Kecil faced potential losses in revenue and the benefits of patron-client relations with the Tual elite. In this context, a discourse concerning *adat* communities and territories was articulated in legalistic terms. The three self-proclaimed *rat* engaged in "lawfare", the use of legal means for political and economic ends (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009:53), in their effort to protect the sovereignty of *adat* territories as well as their right to control them. Despite the court's decision, the sovereignty of *adat* communities continues to be a significant focus of Kei elites in both the district of Maluku Tenggara and in the municipality of Tual. However, the *pemekaran* or division of Maluku Tenggara and, in a sense, Kei society as a whole, will likely have a significant impact on the structure of the Kei political class, and potentially future articulations

of *adat*.[32] For now, at least, the Kei aristocracy shows continued unity across these administrative boundaries, as illustrated in the case described below.

6.7   "SELLING" *ADAT* TITLES, OR THE "COMMODITIZATION" OF TRADITION

In 1996, a Taiwanese-Indonesian-owned fishing company (PT Ting Sheen Bandasejahtera) began operating in the Kei islands. The Indonesian shareholders included Tommy Winata[33] (of the Artha Graha Group) and Bambang Suharto, the son of the Indonesian president at the time. This fishing company, centered on the island of Dullah, invested US$200 million to catch 2.5 million tons of fish per year in the Banda Sea (Aditjondro 2000). In 2005, the name of the company was changed to PT. Maritim Timur Jaya (MTJ). It continues to operate in the Kei islands today, providing the islands with significant sources of revenue and job opportunities.

In 2009, while MTJ was under the directorship of David Tjioe, the *rat* of the Kei islands (with the exception of those of Watlaar, Danar, and Wain) formed an alliance with the fishing company. On October 17, the *rat* of the Kei islands met with Tjioe in the house of *Rat* Tuvle in Tual. During this meeting, a 15-point agreement was reached between the *adat* leaders and MTJ (see Info Terkini Maluku Tenggara dan Kota Tual 2009a). These points included: (1) MTJ building of an *adat* "house" (*Rahan Maduvun Adat*) for the *rat* of Lor Lim and Ur Siu in the town

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[32] Aspinall (2011:305-7) argues that administrative decentralization, *pemekaran*, and electoral politics has resulted in the fragmentatation of ethnic identities in contemporary Indonesia. While it is too early to tell, the division of the Kei islands (and the Kei political class) into two distinct entities may lead to a fragmentation of Kei ethnicity.

[33] Tommy Winata had close ties to the Suharto and the Indonesian military and was a significant financier of Indonesian generals and the *Pemuda Pancasila* (Kingsbury 2003:204).

of Tual, (2) the responsibility of Kei *rat* to settle of disputes between MTJ and the public (i.e., over construction projects), (3) MTJ will receive and purchase maritime resources from the inhabitants of Kei, (4) MTJ will equitably and evenly utilize the workforce of each *ratschap*, (5) MTJ will assist with the rehabilitation of churches and mosques throughout Kei, (6) Kei *rat* will be the primary go-between in MTJ's efforts to expand their operations throughout the *ratschap*, and (7) the *rat* of Kei will guarantee the safety and security of MTJ operations within the *ratschap.*

One of the final and most contentious points in this agreement was that the *rat* of *Ur Siu* and *Lor Lim* would give David Tjioe the *adat* title, "*Dir U Ham Wang*". *Dir U Ham Wang* is a village *adat* title roughly translated as "he who stands in front", and is a title of utmost respect and reserved for the foremost leaders of the Kei islands.[34] Following the meeting between the Kei *rat* and Tjioe, an inauguration ritual (*upacara pengukuhan adat*) took place at Lodar El field in Tual, in which David Tjioe was installed as *Dir U Ham Wang* (Info Terkini Maluku Tenggara dan Kota Tual 2009b).[35] In addition to the Kei *rat* from throughout the archipelago, this ritual was also attended by Indonesian military and police leaders, the Assistant Mayor of *Kota* Tual, and members of the parliament of *Kota* Tual.[36] A procession from *Rat* Tuvle's house to Lodar El was accompanied by war dances (*cakalele*). The inauguration began with a reading of a synopsis of the title "*Dir U Ham Wang*" and its relation to *Larvul Ngabal*. *Rat* Tuvle (of Tual) began the ritual and then *Rat* Bomav of Fer, representing *Lor Lim*, inaugurated David Tjioe as

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[34] The *dir u* is the name of the *adat* functionary who sits at the front of *belang* (i.e., "belang pilot").

[35] Information on this ritual presented in the remainder of this paragraph was gathered from Info Terkini Maluku Tenggara dan Kota Tual (2009b).

[36] The *rat* of Danar, Watlaar and Wain refused to support this ritual and did not participate in the ritual or agreement.

Dir U Ham Wang. *Rat* Baldu of Dullah then presented Tjioe with *adat* heirlooms including a bracelet (*gelang adat*) and hat (*topi adat*). This ritual was followed by a reading of the document detailing the agreement made by the *rat* and David Tjioe.[37]

Bestowing *adat* titles on influential outsiders was not new to the Kei islands. In 1995, for example, the title of *Dir U Ham Wang* was conferred upon Harmoko, the national Golkar party chairman and Information Minister at the time. During Harmoko's visit to the Kei islands, an inauguration ceremony was conducted and presided over by *Rat* Tuvle from Tual and *Rat* Baldu from Dullah. The *bupati* of Maluku Tenggara at the time also participated in the ceremony in which Harmoko was given the title of *Dir U Ham Wang* and presented with an *adat* bracelet (*Mas "A"*) (see Departemen Agama Kabupaten Maluku Tenggara 1995). When asked for a justification for the *adat* ceremony, the *rat* of Tual stated that the ceremony was held not only because of Harmoko's role as Golkar party chairman, but also due to the fact that history has shown that Kei system of social stratification arose as a result of authority being given to immigrants (*Mel Intalroa*) (Departemen Agama Kabupaten Maluku Tenggara 1995:13). Another example of the bestowing of *adat* titles to important "immigrants" occurred in 2001, when then Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri visited the islands in the aftermath of the communal conflict of 1999 to help promote reconciliation and the rule of law. At that time, Megawati was given the honorary title of *"Dit Sakmas"*, named after the culture heroine from Bali who was integral to the creation and spread of Larvul Ngabal (Rahawarin 2009).[38]

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[37] For photographs of this event, go to the Koran Vox Populi website: http://mediakeionline.blogspot.com/2009/11/direktur-utama-pt.html.

[38] Rahawarin (2009) reported that the "Dit Sakmas" ritual was brief and entailed little more than the presentation of the title along with a flower garland.

The conferring of the title of *Dir U Ham Wang* to David Tjioe, however, was received by the Kei public in a significantly different manner than these earlier ceremonies. It led to mass protests by Keiese in the town of Tual as well as in other cities and provinces. On the day of the inauguration ceremony, groups of students and youth in the town of Tual organized demonstrations against the actions of the Kei *rat* (Ambon Ekspres 2009).[39] During the ritual, the demonstrators marched towards Lodar El where the ritual was being held. Since they lacked permission to demonstrate, they were stopped by police and turned away from the ceremony. The demonstrators then gathered at the main mosque of Tual, where tens of armed Mobile Brigade (*Brimob*) officers were positioned. A physical confrontation ensued, and one demonstrator was injured. The demonstrators then moved towards Watdek Bridge which connects Tual to Langgur on the island of Kei Kecil. Many additional Keiese joined the demonstrators on Watdek Bridge, resulting in a human blockade preventing anyone from crossing. The number of demonstrators was said to be in the hundreds. In addition to the human blockade, crossing the bridge was also prohibited by the demonstrators using *sasi* (or *hawear*), an *adat* prohibition marked by young coconut fronds that were spread out across the bridge.[40]

The demonstrations in Tual soon gained the attention of Kei students in other parts of Indonesia. In Ambon, members of the student group *Forum Komunikasi Anak Adat Kei*

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[39] The groups demonstrating included *Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam and Barisan Intelektual Muda* (Ambon Ekspres 2009). Information in the remainder of this section was obtained from Ambon Ekspres (2009), Kompas (2009), Touwe (2009a, 2009b), Info Terkini Maluku Tenggara dan Kota Tual (2009c), and berita2.com (2009).
[40] For a photograph of the *sasi* of Watdek Bridge, go to the Koran Vox Populi site: http://mediakeionline.blogspot.com/2009/11/suasana-sasi-hawear-istilah-adat-kei-di.html

(Communication Forum for the Children of Kei *Adat*) held demonstrations in front of a police station in the Sirimau sib-district. The demonstrators in Tual and in Ambon accused the Kei *rat* of damaging the sacredness of *adat*, and "selling" or "pawning" (*menggadaikan*) *adat* in return for material and monetary gains. As one of the coordinators of the Tual demonstration stated, "The Kei *rat* have disregarded *Larvul Ngabal* and *adat* has been bought with money!"[41] They also argued that the agreement between the *rat* and Tjioe would only to protect the monopoly of MTJ in the region and would not benefit the inhabitants of Kei. The demonstrators demanded that the *adat* title and heirlooms presented to David Tjioe be returned, and that the agreement between the Kei *rat* and MTJ be nullified. Some demonstrators requested that David Tjioe and MTJ leave the Kei islands.

The *sasi* of Watdek Bridge lasted for three days and significantly disrupted transportation (including access to the airport on Kei Kecil Island), commerce, and the functioning of the governments of Maluku Tenggara and *Kota* Tual. After listening to the demands of the demonstrators, the *bupati* of Maluku Tenggara and the assistant mayor of *Kota* Tual mediated a settlement between the demonstrators, David Tjioe, and the group of Kei *rat*. On October 19th, a tearful David Tjioe returned the *adat* clothing, hat and bracelet to the *bupati* of Maluku. In addition, the *rat* agreed to "take back" the title bestowed upon Tjioe in a ceremony at a later date. Following this, the *bupati* and assistant mayor took these *adat* items to the demonstrators as proof of their successful mediation. At 10:00 pm, the *sasi* of Watdek

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[41] This is my translation of "*Para Raja telah menginjak-injak adat Larvul Ngabal dan adat telah dibeli dengan uang*" (berita2.com 2009).

Bridge was "opened" (*buka sasi*) and the young coconut fronds that were spread out across the bridge were removed.

The case described above highlights two important and related processes in the articulation of *adat* in post-Suharto times: the commodification of *adat* and proprietary disputes related to *adat*. The commodification of *adat* was facilitated by the Kei kings' "ethno-preneurialism", a sort of group self-commodification involving "the managing and marketing of cultural products and practices" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009:51). While such ethno-preneurialism has the "tendency to deepen prevailing lines of inequality", the commodification of *adat* titles by the Kei *rat* discussed here provided the conditions for "insurgent possibility", enabling "new forms of self-realization, sentiment, entitlement, enrichment (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009:139). In response to this commodification of *adat*, the Kei students and others involved in the demonstrations appropriated *adat* law in the form of *sasi*. No longer was *adat* solely the jurisdiction of the Kei aristocracy. In the case of the *sasi* of Watdek Bridge, *adat* clearly was reappropriated by Kei masses and served as a potent symbol and means of resistance. The mobilization of *sasi* to provide legal and moral authority to popular protests has become a significant feature of articulations of Kei *adat* in the past several years.

6.8   *SASI* AND POPULAR PROTEST IN THE KEI ISLANDS

Sasi (or *hawear*) in Kei islands "refers to system of beliefs, rules, and rituals pertaining to temporal prohibitions on using a particular resource or territory" (Satria and Adhuri 2010:43). The origins of Kei *sasi* law is traced to the *tom* of Dit Sakmas, the daughter of the Balinese

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"stranger king", who during he travels around Kei Kecil in search for a husband adorned her buffalo with young coconut fronds to protect her possessions from bandits and thieves (see Thorburn 1998:122). When *sasi* is applied (*tutup*) to a particular resource, no usage whatsoever is permitted until the *sasi* is lifted (*dibuka*) (Satria and Adhuri 2010:43-44). *Sasi* prohibitions are typically applied to resources such as topshell (*lola*), coconut palms, sago palm groves, fruit or nut-bearing trees, sacred land (*tanah sakti*), forest areas, and intertidal zones (*meti*) (Rahail 1993; Thorburn 2000). These prohibitions may be applied by villages, individuals, and even churches or mosques (Rahail 1993).

In the 1990's *sasi* in Maluku became an internationally-celebrated indigenous people's conservation technique (Thorburn 1998:58). Although the history of *sasi* in Maluku and the Kei islands is extremely complex (see Bubandt 2005; Zerner 1994a, 1994b; Benda-Beckmann, Benda-Beckmann, and Brouwer 1995; Thorburn 2000), it is clear that in the mid- to late-1990's there was a revitalization of *sasi* in the Kei islands as a result of the invasion of the islands by international fishing companies utilizing destructive methods (i.e., using cyanide to capture live fish) (Thorburn 2000, 2001, 2003, 2008). During this time, there was an increase in the use of *sasi* by individuals and communities to protect *adat* territories from such fisherman, as well as from government construction and development projects. These uses of *sasi* worried many local government officials, as well as *adat* leaders, who believed that *Larvul Ngabal* was being misconstrued and "polluted" by such actions (Thorburn 2008:134).

While *sasi* became increasingly politicized during the late New Order period, I argue that the "newly emergent culture of protest" (Kuipers 2009:233) in post-Suharto Indonesia has contributed to an unprecedented popular appropriation of *sasi* by a wider segment of Kei

society in collective "expressions of feelings" (*unjuk rasa*), or "demonstrations", against perceived injustices and violations of individual and group rights. In this new political context, *sasi* has emerged as a potent tool of popular protest. The potency of *sasi* in this regard is due in part to its roots in Kei *adat* law and the perceived consequences one faces as a result of disregard for a *sasi* prohibition. Today, the penalties for *sasi* violations include supernatural sanctions (i.e., illness, disease, misfortune, or death) and hefty fines in the form of *adat* valuables (gongs, brass cannons from the colonial era, bracelets) or money (see Thorburn 2000:1465). As a result of these sanctions, the Kei islanders, generally speaking, strictly obey *sasi* prohibitions. When disagreements arise over the application or lifting of a *sasi*, these issues are usually addressed by the parties involved prior to accessing or exploiting the prohibited resource or territory. Failure to do so may result in violent conflict, as the Tutrean-Sather conflict discussed in Chapter 5 attests. The severity of sanctions combined with the potential for violent conflict as a result of *sasi* violations contributes to the potency of this form of *adat* as a tool not only for defending territories and claims to resources, but also as a method of popular protest. The application of the *sasi* of Watdek Bridge by those opposing the "selling" of *adat* titles, discussed above, was exemplary in this regard.

The use of *sasi* as a form of protest did not begin with the Watdek Bridge case, however. Rather, it was the Kei kings who first used *sasi* in this manner. One such instance occurred in 2003 following a decree by the home affairs ministry to appoint H. Koedoeboen as the new *bupati* of Maluku Tenggara following a tie in the 2001 election (see International Crisis Group

2007:6).[42] His opponent, M. M. Tamher was the head of the district parliament and strong supporter of the *pemekaran* of Maluku Tenggara. Koedoeboen, on the other hand, opposed the *pemekaran* of the district and creation of *Kota* Tual. As a result, there was intense rivalry between the political camps of Koedoeboen and Tamher, and the appointment of the new *bupati* was hotly contested.

On September 16, 2003, fifteen days after the appointment of Koedoeboen, the *rat* of Tual, who is a family member of Tamher as well as a *pemekaran* supporter, ordered that *sasi* be placed around the *bupati*'s office and elsewhere in Tual including Watdek Bridge, the airport, and harbor in protest of the appointment of Koedoeboen. The *rat* of Tual and his supporters (mostly Tual residents) argued that the *sasi* would only be lifted if the central government declared the election invalid. The local military commander warned that the placement of *sasi* by Tamher's political camp caused resentment and risked sparking a new wave of Tual violence, and on September 19th, a Mobile Brigade (*Brimob*) unit was deployed from Ambon. Koedoeboen was eventually inaugurated on October 8th by the Governor of Maluku at a district office building on the outskirts of Tual, and the *sasi* was finally lifted at an *adat* ceremony on October 20th, following more than a month of significant disruption to commerce, education and transportation.

Although the *rat* of Tual was accused of exploiting *adat* for his own political purposes, this use of *sasi* as a form of protest grew ever more common in the Kei islands. In September 2005, *rat* from throughout the Kei archipelago threatened to institute *sasi* prohibitions against

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[42] The remaining information presented here on the use of *sasi* by the *rat* of Tual following the appointment of Koedoeboen as *bupati* is summarized from International Crisis Group (2007:5-6).

the fishing company PT Ting Sheen Bandasejahtera after 430 local employees were terminated

(see Holle 2005).[43] At that time, the company was under the directorship of Chandra Sondakh.

Rat Dullah claimed that since he became director, local workers were being terminated on a

daily basis without any reason given. At a press conference, *Rat* Dullah stated that although the

company has had a positive effect on Maluku Tenggara, the termination of local employees was

a "slap-in-the-face to Kei culture". The *rat* of the Kei islands issued a statement on September 3

2005 requesting that Chandra Sondakh be removed from his position, and if he was not, the Kei

kings would institute a *sasi* of the company for an indefinite period of time. They also requested

that if the company continued to operate in the Kei islands, it must have faith in the quality of

the local work force. The *rat* did not apply the *sasi* to the company. Later the same year, the

name of PT. Ting Sheen Bandasejahtera was changed to PT. Maritim Timur Jaya and in June

2006, David Tjioe was appointed director of the company.

These uses of *sasi*, or threats to use *sasi*, by Kei *rat* constituted novel articulations of

adat law to protest the actions of the government and private companies, as well as to protect

and defend group and community interests. These mobilizations of *sasi* soon became

rearticulated by the Kei public, as illustrated above by the Watdek Bridge *sasi*. In the past

several years, the use of *sasi* as a form of protest has become very common among a wide

variety of groups, including, villages, village segments, Tual city dwellers, and even commoner

(*ren-ren*) families. As the following examples demonstrate, the use of *sasi* has become a

"complex site" of hegemony and resistance in the Kei islands, one in which proprietary rights to

adat are invoked and challenged.

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[43] The remaining information presented in this paragraph is a summary of Holle (2005).

Since the 2009 Watdek Bridge events, the "closing" and "opening" of *sasi* has become an increasingly common method of defending *adat* rights and territories and demanding justice and equality. On November 22, 2009, inhabitants of the village of Labetawi on the northern coast of Dullah island applied *sasi* to Difur Beach, a popular tourist location for both Kei islanders and visitors to the islands (Rakyat Tenggara Online 2009).[44] The villagers who instituted the *sasi* claimed that the "acting" village head (*pejabat*) was not transparent in his management of the tourist spot. One villager, a former member of the village development organization, stated that the village head used Difur Beach for his own personal gain. The former acting village head stated that the *sasi* would be opened once the tourist location became the asset of entire village and is managed transparently. The *camat* of the sub-district of Dullah Utara, Umi Fadirubun, met with the disgruntled villagers of Labetawi to help achieve a solution so that the *sasi* could be opened as quickly as possible. She also was attempting to curtail potential conflict as the village prepared for village head elections.

A little over a month later, on January 5, 2010, approximately 20 villagers from Semawi, a village on the east coast of Kei Kecil placed *sasi* at the site of a road construction project they claimed passed through their *adat* territory. One month later, the *sasi* prohibition still had not been lifted (Maluku Tenggara Raya Online 2010a).

On February 22, 2010, hundreds of Tual inhabitants placed *sasi* in the street in front of the police headquarters to protest their handling of a clash between groups from Taar and Tual the day before. The protesters initially attempted to apply the *sasi* inside the police

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[44] Information on the *sasi* of Difur Beach was gathered entirely from Rakyat Tenggara Online (2009).

headquarters but were repelled by Mobil Brigade forces following a violent confrontation in which three motorcycles were damaged (Samanery 2010).

Then on May 15, members of three *fam* (Renyaan, Renmeua, and Maturbong) from the village of Kolser on Kei Kecil, armed with weapons, placed *sasi* over 25 hectare of *adat* land sold by certain members of *fam* Maturbong to the district government. They demanded that the villagers who sold the land return the money and new negotiations take place between Kolser villagers and *Kabupaten* Maluku Tenggara (Heluth 2010).[45]

On December 31, 2010, villagers from Ibra on Kei Kecil applied *sasi* to the construction site of a new international airport because they had not yet received full compensation for the *adat* land used for the project. With eleven young coconut fronds marking the prohibited territory, the villagers of Ibra were prepared to boycott the construction of the airport until their rights were recognized (Sksuaradaulat 2011).[46]

One of the more fascinating instances of "*sasi* protest" occurred on December 30, 2010 in Langgur, the new district capital of Maluku Tenggara. This application of *sasi* occurred the day after the district government announced the results of the test for civil service candidates (*pegawai negeri sipil*, or *CPNS*). Members of *fam* Rettob, one of the autochthonous *ren-ren* families of Langgur who hold rights to the position of *tuan tan*, coordinated the application of *sasi* at most district government offices to protest of the results of the civil service exam. The coordinator of this *sasi* protest, Eby Rettob, claimed that the test results represented a failure

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[45] For a photograph of the *sasi* of Kolser *adat* land, go to the Koran Vox Populi site: http://tenggararaya.blogspot.com/2010/05/keluarga-ohoitimur-tuding-penyidik.html.
[46] For a photograph of the Ibra *sasi* of airport land, go to the Suara Daulat blog: http://sksuaradaulat.wordpress.com/2011/01/12/sasi-juga-terpancang-di-proyek-lapter-ibra-proyek-pembangunan-bandar-udara-terancam-gagal/.

of the district government to "accommodate the *adat* children of *fam* Rettob (Jempot 2011).

Other inhabitants of Langgur from *fam* Rumnangun, Savsavubun, Narwadan, Renwarin, Lefaan,

Sedubun, and Dumatubun were similarly angered by the test results and supported the *sasi* of

the Maluku Tenggara offices (Samanery 2011a). The protesters demanded an explanation from

the *bupati* regarding the unfair test results before the *sasi* would be "opened". The *sasi* of the

kabupaten offices immediately paralyzed most government activities. However, on the morning

of December 31st, the *sasi* were removed by a government official without the appropriate

rituals, angering members of *fam* Rettob and other Langgur residents (Jempot 2011). As a

result, at least 50 Langgur residents from the *fam* mentioned above stormed the district

parliament office, demanding to speak to the *bupati* and parliament members. When their

demand was denied, the residents went "amuck" and destroyed tables, chairs, and other

furniture in the main meeting room of the office (Jempot 2011; Samanery 2011b). When

contacted by Media Indonesia later that day, the *bupati* stated that the protest had been

settled positively. He also requested that the problem not be covered by the media (Jempol

2011).

This example of *sasi* protest is exemplary of the rearticulation of *adat* law and its

relation to the negotiation of rank and inequality in Post-Suharto times. Given that the *mel-mel*

have dominated and controlled positions in the district government (see Chapter 4), the use of

sasi by individuals of lower ranks provides an effective means with which to contest their

subordinate position in local politics, and challenge the hegemony of the Kei aristocracy and

political class. The rearticulation of *sasi* as a tool of popular protest provides a degree of

legitimacy and moral authority to the claims and demands made by a wide range of groups. As

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the above examples of popular protest illustrate, *sasi* is not solely the prerogative of the *mel-mel*. It belongs to all Kei people, and in contemporary times, may be mobilized by Kei *rat* and commoners alike in pursuit of economic, political, and social causes.

The appropriation of *adat* by the Kei public, as illustrated by these contemporary rearticulations of *sasi*, is not championed by all within Kei society however. Members of the Kei political class are growing increasingly uneasy with these uses of *adat*, and a proprietary contest regarding *sasi* is taking shape. In response to these new uses of *sasi*, the parliament of *Kota* Tual sent a letter at the end of October 2010 to all *rat* of the Kei islands requesting that they submit rules for the systems of *sasi* that operate within the villages of their *ratschap*. The Tual parliament requested that the *rat* submit this information by mid-November 2010 with the goal of using it at a planning session for government regulations (*Rancangan Peraturan Daerah*, or *Ranperda*) regarding *sasi*. The head of the Tual parliament stated that "recently the inhabitants of Kota Tual and Maluku Tenggara place *sasi* as they please, at private companies and government offices, without any clear reason and just because they are not happy with a certain policy" (LKBN Antara Maluku 2010). Although he praised *sasi* as an important tool of environmental conservation, he stated that *sasi* today has strayed from its intended function. With a "*perda sasi*" (*peraturan daerah*, or government regulation regarding *sasi*), he hopes that *sasi* will return to its true function in Kei society. He also pointed out that a *perda* would also facilitate greater investment in the municipality by foreign companies (LKBN Antara Maluku 2010). The mayor of Tual, H.H. Tamher agrees with the plan, stating that "using *sasi* as a political tool is disrespectful and does not help to preserve the institution. As a result, a government regulation is needed." Tamher added that "with a *perda sasi*, any violation of *sasi*

regulations would result in sanctions because implementing *sasi* in a manner not in accordance with *adat* would be a criminal act" (Maluku Tenggara Raya 2010b).

Kota Tual's plan for a *perda sasi* reportedly has support from a number of groups and planning sessions are scheduled to occur sometime in 2011 (Maluku Tenggara Raya 2010b). However some Kei people worry about the government's control of *sasi* and the potential impact on the rights of ordinary citizens.[47] At this time, it is unclear whether all of the Kei *rat* will support a *perda sasi*, although it is unfathomable to think that the regulation would be enacted without their support. It is also unclear whether the district of Maluku Tenggara will pursue similar regulations, although some are calling on the district parliament to discuss this possibility (see Koran Vox Populi Maluku Tenggara dan Kota Tual 2011a). What is clear is that *sasi* law has become the center of a proprietary contest that is embedded in broader struggles for power, resources and equality. Whether or not the Kei political class is able to reclaim *sasi* as a noble prerogative remains to be seen. As this dissertation has demonstrated, however, the results of this current "battle" can only be understood in the context of broader patterns of inequality within Kei society. As these *sasi* cases illustrate, it is clear that *adat* and social hierarchy remain inextricably intertwined in Kei society.

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[47] See, for example, the comments at Maluku Tenggara Raya Online (2010b).

6.9   SUMMARY

This chapter explored the continuity and change in elite articulations of *adat* during the post-Suharto period. While communal violence, decentralization, regional autonomy, and *pemekaran* have changed the contexts and parameters within which *adat* is constructed and mobilized, this chapter has highlighted the continuity in Kei articulations from the New Order to the present day. I have argued that the primary basis for continuity between the two periods is that *adat* has and continues to be controlled and articulated by the Kei elite. Therefore, in contrast to other areas of Indonesia, the concept of "revivalism" is less appropriate for characterizing articulations of *adat* in post-New Order times. Rather, Kei elite have continued to mobilize *adat* in ways that empower and valorize Kei kings are the aristocracy, maintain the integrity of *adat* territories and governance, and benefit those who belong to the Kei political class.

Although the demise of the New Order regime and the communal conflict that erupted in the Kei islands in 1999 resulted in the temporary death of *adat*, the powerful Kei elite both inside and outside the government bureaucracy were relatively successful in establishing peace and fostering reconciliation. The efforts to mobilize *adat* for peace and reconciliation were successful in the Kei islands, I argue, because of the strong relations between *adat* and social hierarchy that had developed during the New Order. Despite the threats that the violence posed to Kei *adat*, the communal conflict resulted in a renewed focus on *adat* which further strengthened the role of Kei kings and *adat* leaders as agents of peace and order.

As in other areas of Indonesia, decentralization and regional autonomy provided impetus for articulations of Kei *adat* in post-Suharto times. In contrast to the Village Law of 1979, the Regional Autonomy Laws have allowed for the establishment of *adat* forms of governance and territoriality at the local level. While the prominence of the *mel-mel* in Kei political life allowed the Kei aristocracy to maintain a relatively high degree of correspondence between *adat* and bureaucratic forms of governance, the new laws provide even greater recognition of *adat* structures. This, in addition to the political autonomy afforded to districts and villages by the new laws, has spurred numerous attempts to create officially recognized *adat* communities in the Kei islands. The efforts to draft and enact a district regulation regarding *adat* village government (*perda ohoi*) illustrate the continued dominance of the *mel-mel* in defining and articulating visions of Kei *adat*. The Constitutional Court case, furthermore, provided an additional example of the Kei elite's attempts to maintain the integrity of *adat* domains and the authority of *adat* leaders vis-à-vis the Indonesian state bureaucracy.

This chapter ended with another case illustrating the prominence and unity of the Kei kings, as well as new threats to their control over articulations of *adat*. The 2009 ritual in which the Kei kings bestowed an *adat* title on a non-Kei businessman in exchange for political and economic favors had the potential to further empower the Kei aristocracy. However, the popular protests that followed this event provide a glimpse into the hazards of *adat* politics and suggest that the "ownership" of *adat* is hotly contested in contemporary times. Through an analysis of a number of demonstrations from 2009-2011, this chapter has shown that the Kei public has appropriated *adat* prohibitions (*sasi*) as an effective tool in defending rights, making claims, and protesting perceived injustices. These popular uses of *sasi* pose a threat to the *mel-*

mel's "ownership" of *adat* and have become the center of an ongoing proprietary contest. These novel uses of *sasi* suggest new possibilities in the articulation of *adat* in an era of reform and democratization. Regardless of what the future holds, the cases described and analyzed in this chapter point to the continued centrality of Kei *adat* in local politics.

7.0   CONCLUSION: *ADAT*, INEQUALITY, AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN INDONESIA

Through an analysis of articulations of Kei *adat* over the past twenty years, this dissertation has argued that the construction of tradition cannot be divorced from local patterns of rank and inequality. *Adat* in the Kei islands, as in most Indonesian societies, is a complex, multivalent and contested phenomenon that is continuously readapted and rearticulated in response to changing social and political conditions. It may refer to a wide array of social phenomena, from broad conceptions of Kei "customs" and "culture" to more specific behaviors and practices such as marriage exchanges, rituals surrounding the installation of a new king, the settlement of inter-village disputes, or the management of natural resources through *sasi* prohibitions. By detailing the myriad constructions of *adat* from the New Order period to the post-Suharto era, this dissertation has shown that at any given moment, particular elements or facets of *adat* become privileged, prioritized, and articulated in response to local, national and global processes. Particular attention has been devoted to examining the contexts in which particular individuals or groups become empowered to define and articulate *adat* on behalf of the wider community, and the relationship between these constructions of tradition and the creation and legitimation of inequality within Kei society.

7.1   KEI *ADAT* AND THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF TRADITION

The approach to Kei *adat* presented in this dissertation builds upon and offers a corrective to the constructionist model of tradition, as reflected in the large body of work on the discourse and uses of tradition amongst a variety of Pacific Island societies (e.g., Keesing 1982; Tonkinson 1982; Linnekin 1983; Hanson 1989; Linnekin and Poyer, eds. 1990; Jolly and Thomas, eds. 1992; Carrier, ed. 1992; Lindstrom and White, eds. 1993). For constructionists, "tradition and culture are constantly in the process of renegotiation and redefinition, such that invention is a normal and inevitable part of the perpetuation and use of all culture and tradition" (Hanson 1997:196). From a constructionist perspective, tradition "is fluid because it always reflects the needs of an ever-changing present…[It] is a process through which the past and aspects of social life said to be derived from the past are valorized in the present…Insofar as tradition is always changing, the distinction between genuine and inauthentic traditions is spurious" (Turner 1997:354).

While a number of constructionist scholars became embroiled in debates over the authenticity or inauthenticity of particular representations of tradition (e.g., Hanson 1989; Keesing 1989), most anthropological studies of tradition in the past twenty years have been more concerned with the strategic uses of tradition by particular actors or groups rather than with evaluating the truths they are claiming (Richland 2008:158). Research conducted in a wide variety of Pacific Island settings has helped to elucidate the various contexts and conditions in which constructions of tradition occur, and has highlighted the multiplicity of functions, representations and interpretations of tradition that may occur across time and space.

Although many scholars have examined the uses of "tradition" in the making of ethnic or national identities or in local struggles against a variety of exogenous forces (such as colonialism, Christianity, and post-colonial states) (e.g. Keesing 1982; Lindstrom 1982; Acciaioli 1985, 2002; Hanson 1989; Linnekin 1990; Tonkinson 1993; Taylor 1994), relatively few studies have examined the relationship between constructions of tradition and the creation, maintenance and justification of inequality ***within*** particular communities (but see Lawson 1996). This is somewhat surprising since many anthropological studies of "tradition" have been conducted amongst Austronesian-speaking peoples (e.g., Lindstrom 1982; Linnekin 1983; Hanson 1989; Jolly 1992b), where rank, status differences, and a "lexicon of hierarchy" (Scaglion 1996) often play an important role in social and political life.

As Turner (1997:357) notes, "the literature on the invention of tradition…often glosses over the network of social relations and institutions within which tradition and identity are constructed and asserted" (also see Norton 1994). An important goal of this study has been to correct this shortcoming of the constructionist approach by analyzing the role of tradition in the creation, maintenance, and negotiation of inequality within Kei society. While acknowledging that constructions of tradition are always influenced and shaped by broader social, political, and economic contexts, I have argued that sociological conditions such rank and status differences within particular "traditional" communities are too often downplayed in anthropological studies of tradition (but see Norton 1994). Since the construction of tradition is an inherently political act (Turner 1997:346), it must be examined in dynamic relation to the multiple relationships of inequality in which such constructions are embedded.

To accomplish this task with regard to Kei *adat*, I have borrowed from articulation theory as developed by Hall (1986, 1990) and elucidated by Li (2000), Clifford (2001), and Duncan (2009). Articulation theory focuses attention on the ways in which disparate elements of Kei *adat* "become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects" (Hall 1986:53). By viewing Kei *adat* as an articulation, one is able to "move beyond a monolithic and static notion of what qualifies as…*adat*" and avoid "unconstructive debates about 'authenticity'" (Duncan 2009:1099). Articulation theory also draws our attention to the processes whereby individuals or groups emerge at particular historical moments with the ability to articulate particular visions of *adat* on behalf of the broader community. Furthermore, "every articulation is a creative act, yet it is never creation ex nihilo, but rather a selection and rearticulation of elements structured through previous engagements. It is, as Hall points out, subject to contestation, uncertainty, risk, and the possibility of future rearticulation" (Li 2000:169).

In response to a variety of local, national, and global changes, some aspects of *adat* become suppressed or disappear, whereas others are "accentuated and selectively recombined" (Tyson 2009:211). Situated within fields of asymmetric power relations at local, national and global levels, individuals or groups invoke the past and articulate particular visions of *adat* for a wide variety of contemporary purposes. This dissertation has theorized *adat* as a relatively flexible normative order that continuously gets readapted and reshaped in response to changing political, economic, and social conditions. Therefore, the analysis of any articulation of *adat* must be situated within particular historical, social and political contexts characterized

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by power asymmetries and competing systems of meaning. As this dissertation has demonstrated, *adat* and inequality are intertwined in complex ways in the Kei islands.

7.2 *ADAT* AND INEQUALITY IN THE KEI ISLANDS

As discussed in the introduction, the New Order's promotion of the apolitical "showcase" aspects of *adat* is often contrasted with the "new politics of tradition" (Bubandt 2004) of the post-Suharto years. However, this distinction is problematic when applied to the case of the Kei islands, where mobilizations of *adat* by the Kei elite have been a fundamental aspect of local politics for quite some time. While Indonesian cultural policy does differ in dramatic ways between the two periods, the New Order/post-Suharto distinction is problematic when applied to the Kei islands for three primary reasons. First, since "*adat* revivalism" has been a central feature of local politics for at least the past twenty years, this distinction tends to mask the continuities in *adat* articulations from the New Order era to post-Suharto times. As K. and F. von Benda-Beckmann (2008:17) suggest, "the reactivation of *adat* is not as new as some analysts seem to imply". Secondly, the New Order/post-Suharto distinction privileges the role of government policies and national-level politics in managing expressions of tradition, and draws attention away from local contextual factors that contribute to articulations of *adat* in particular locales at a given historical moment. I will return to this issue in the next section of this conclusion, where I attempt to draw out some of the contextual factors that help to explain the tenacity and persistence of *adat* revivalism in the Kei islands. Third, in privileging the national political and policy contexts in which *adat* is situated, the analytical distinction

between the two periods downplays the agency of the Kei people in defining and constructing *adat* for contemporary purposes. While acknowledging the importance of broader national and global contexts in constraining or promoting particular constructions of *adat*, the agency of actors at the local level must also be taken into account. As Li (2000:173) points out, "by paying attention to the process of articulation it is possible to appreciate opportunities as well as constraints, and the exercise of agency in these encounters".

Through an analysis of elite articulations of *adat* in during the New Order and post-Suharto periods, this dissertation has demonstrated the ways in which particular visions of tradition become privileged at particular historical conjunctures, and the relationship between these articulations and local struggles for power and resources. Kei discourses and representations of *adat* have focused largely on aristocratic culture, the centrality of *Larvul Ngabal*, and the management and control of *adat* communities and territories. To some extent, these facets of Kei *adat* have become prominent in elite articulations as a result of Dutch colonialism, post-colonial transformations, and processes of globalization. However, as I have stressed throughout this dissertation, these representations and mobilizations of Kei *adat* must also be analyzed in relation to local configurations of rank, power, and inequality.

In arguing that *adat* is intimately tied to the creation and perpetuation of inequality within Kei society, I am not suggesting that Kei constructions of tradition are not influenced by broader social, political, and economic contexts. I firmly agree that local constructions of tradition, objectifications of culture, or other forms of self-representation are constituted in opposition to external "others" (Thomas 1992). After all, the term *adat*, itself, is borrowed from Arabic (see Abaza 2009) and, as discussed in Chapter 3, the origin of Kei *adat* law is attributed

by the Keiese themselves to the arrival of a Balinese "stranger king" and his family. Furthermore, given the migrations and mobility of Austronesian speaking peoples of the region and the involvement of the Kei islanders in ancient networks of trade and Dutch colonial rule, it would be unfathomable to regard Kei *adat* as a cultural form that developed in isolation from cultural others. Despite these realities, however, tradition is not simply constructed in opposition to others; It is also "constructed, asserted, and discussed in the context of ongoing social relations" (Turner 1997:358). As a result, the articulation and revival of tradition not only has the potential to sharpen distinctions between "cultural insiders and outsiders" (Bourchier 2007:124), it may also result in the sharpening of divisions and inequalities within *adat* communities. As Lawson (1996:12) argues, "the powerful symbolic force of a reified notion of tradition can be used, not just as a an instrument of psychological liberation in the post-colonial context…, but also as a means of subordinating the interests of ordinary people to those who occupy positions of high office by virtue of a traditional status system".

Adat revivalism in the Kei islands, which gained momentum during the New Order, was in part facilitated by Dutch colonialism. As discussed in Chapter 3, Dutch indirect rule and the colonial projects of territorialization and *adat* codification privileged *mel-mel* leaders at the expense of the autochthonous *ren-ren* and rigidified *adat* territorial boundaries. Although *adat* domains under the leadership of *rat* existed well before the colonial administration of the islands, the "little kingdoms" of Kei, referred to as *ratschap*, were formally recognized by the colonial authorities. Since the Dutch recognized or appointed individuals almost exclusively of high rank, the relationship between the *mel-mel* and *ren-ren* was transformed from one of

"brotherhood" to one of unequal status (Laksono 1990; Thorburn 2008:127). Kei diarchy was transformed into a "caste" system made up of three ascribed ranks.

As a result of these colonial transformations, members of the *mel-mel* rank were strategically positioned to capture the new sources of wealth and power that accompanied Indonesian Independence. The Kei islanders opposed the formation of an independent Republic of South Moluccas and supported the new Indonesian nation. A number of prominent members of the Kei community petitioned the Indonesian government and military for the creation of a district centered in the Kei islands. The favorable relation between the Kei elite and the Indonesian state resulted in the formation in 1952 of the District of Southeast Maluku with its capital in Tual. The state soon became the primary source of cash, employment, and power and a focal point of the local economy. The *mel-mel*, given their advantageous position in the colonial system, obtained the majority of government positions in the islands.

By the 1980's most state institutions had been captured by the Kei elite and the *mel-mel* of the islands had essentially developed into a "political class" (see Vel 2008, 2009), a patrimonial network of bureaucratic and *adat* elites who controlled the access to and the flow of state resources. In addition, despite state attempts at homogenizing village political organization throughout the nation (i.e., through the Village Law of 1979), *adat* leaders in the Kei islands were largely successful in maintaining their control over the administration of their respective villages. Kei *rat* and *orang kaya*, both positions held by the *mel-mel* individuals in the *adat* political system, maintained control over the position of village head (*kepala desa*) in the Indonesian system of village governance.

It was in this patrimonial and caste-based political context that a revival of Kei tradition began to take shape. The Kei elite articulated particular visions of *adat* to justify and solidify their prominence in Kei society. The three elements of Kei tradition that became prominent in elite articulations—aristocratic symbols and ritual, Larvul Ngabal *adat* law, and the integrity and sovereignty of *adat* communities and territories—were linked in clear and specific ways to Kei social hierarchy. The origin histories of Larvul Ngabal, for example, not only recount the development of Kei *adat* law but also the origin and spread of Kei chiefs, or "kings" (*rat*) as they are often referred. The history and content of Kei *adat* law, based on elite articulations, provides the basis for Kei political organization, specifies the ascendancy of "noble" rank (*mel-mel*), and maintains the purity of Kei social hierarchy by prohibiting and punishing inter-rank marriages. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, elites both inside and outside the local government appropriated *adat* as the domain of the Kei aristocracy. The examples of the village head installation rituals and *belang* races highlighted the *mel-mel*'s control and authorship of *adat* rituals at state-sponsored events. Through the planning and performance of these aristocratic rituals, the Kei elite mobilized facets of *adat* that celebrated and valorized Kei kings and the *adat* law (*Larvul Ngabal*) that they were entrusted to promulgate. These aristocratic articulations of *adat* helped to legitimate the *mel-mel*'s ascendancy in local political life, not only in terms of *adat* political organization but also with regard to the local Indonesian bureaucracy. The effect was the sharpening of rank-based differences and inequalities within Kei society.

The entanglement of rank and *adat* in the Kei islands was also demonstrated in Chapter 5 through the analysis of the discourse and practice of *adat* law. Kei *adat* law, known as *Larvul*

Ngabal, became paramount in Kei articulations of tradition during the New Order. Elite representations and discourses often portrayed *adat* law as a source of harmony and equality. The harmony ideology that permeated elite discourses of *adat* law, however, obscured the inequalities that were embedded in and constituted through *adat* legal practice. The two dispute cases presented in Chapter 5 clearly illustrated the rank-biases of *adat* law. Not only were the *adat* forums dominated by high-ranking leaders, but the decisions that emerged from the *adat* councils in the two cases clearly favored high-ranking litigants. While deliberation and consensus were touted as integral elements of Kei *adat* law, they played very little role in the two inter-rank disputes presented. The Tutrean-Sather case, however, demonstrated that state legal forums may provide lower-ranking individuals an arena in which they may contest their subordinate position or the power of *adat* authorities. But regardless, whether as symbol or in practice, *adat law* in the Kei Islands was fundamental to the construction and justification of aristocratic dominance during the New Order.

The fall of the Suharto regime in the midst of a "total crisis" resulted in a "liminized state" accompanied by unprecedented mass violence in a number of regions including Aceh, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Maluku. Although the 1999 communal violence in the Kei islands resulted in the temporary "death" of *adat*, Kei kings and *adat* leaders, with support from the district government, were largely successful in curbing violence and facilitating reconciliation. In contrast to the 3-year long conflict in Ambon, the communal conflict in the Kei islands lasted less than three months. I argue that the relative success of reconciliation efforts in Kei was made possible by the prominent role of Kei *rat* during the New Order, as well as the close relationship between government bureaucracy and Kei social hierarchy. Given the relative

cultural homogeneity of the Kei islands and the unity of Kei *adat* and bureaucratic leaders that had developed during the New Order, attempts to mobilize *adat* in the name of peace and reconciliation were more successful in Kei than in many other parts of Indonesia. In retrospect, the 1999 violence resulted in a renewed focus on Kei "kings" and the power of *adat* in creating and maintaining order. Although Kei *adat* may have "died" for three months, it reemerged even stronger while still clearly intertwined with rank and aristocratic privilege.

In the midst of the violence that enveloped Kei and other islands, the Habibie government passed the Regional Autonomy Laws of 1999 which resulted in processes of decentralization, administrative "blossoming" (*pemekaran*), and democratization. These political transformations led to a "new politics of tradition" in many parts of Indonesia whereby *adat* has been linked to struggles for political and economic resources. Although a "new politics of tradition" does indeed characterize the mobilizations of *adat* in a variety of Indonesian contexts, it is less applicable to the Kei islands where greater continuities exist in the politics uses of *adat* from New Order to post-Suharto times. The primary basis of continuity in Kei articulations is that *adat* is claimed, defined, and represented as a noble prerogative and proprietary domain. This is so partly because of the potency of *adat* as a resource in the construction and legitimation of *mel-mel* dominance in local politics. The prominence of the *mel-mel* in Kei society is not only reflected in their control of most positions within the government bureaucracy, but also through the significant roles played by high-ranking *adat* leaders (i.e., *rat* and *orang kaya*) in village and district politics.

In Chapter 6, struggles to re-establish and/or maintain *adat* governance and territories during post-Suharto times were spearheaded by the Kei elite and supported by the district

government. Although attempts to "return to *ohoi*" were stalled by competing visions of history, territory, and rights to political office, the enactment of a *perda ohoi* eventually came to fruition, although not without controversy and the need for revision. Since the Kei aristocracy has dominated the debate over what this regulation entails and the shape that is given to *adat* territories, in all probability its revision and finalization will further solidify an aristocratic vision of village governance and will add legal backing to the hegemony of the *mel-mel* in village-level *adat* politics. The Constitutional Court case concerning the *pemekaran* of Maluku Tenggara, also examined in Chapter 6, provided another example of the attempt to maintain the integrity of *adat* territories. With the formation of the municipality of *Kota* Tual, the territories of several *ratschap* were divided between the municipality of *Kota* Tual and the district of Maluku Tenggara. As a result, the *rat* of Fer, Nerong, and Dullah filed a lawsuit with the Constitutional Court of Indonesia. While there were significant economic stakes involved in the division of Maluku Tenggara, the *Kota* Tual case demonstrated the continued attempt, albeit a failed one, by *adat* leaders to maintain a high degree of correspondence between *adat* and state territorialities. Such correspondence allows for the sustained intermingling of local hierarchy and government bureaucracy in Kei political life.

The continued prominence Kei *rat* as powerful figures within Kei politics in post-Suharto times, and their concerted efforts to expand their power was illustrated by the 2009 ritual in which the Kei kings bestowed the title of *Dir U Ham Wang* upon David Tjioe following a political and economic alliance between most Kei *rat* and the large fishing company operating in the islands. These events had the potential to further empower the *rat* in the Kei political order, although their "ethno-preneurialism" entailed significant risks and damaged their popular

support. The mass protests that followed the ritual and the use of *sasi* prohibitions by the demonstrators represented a newly emerging articulation of *adat* law.

Since this event, *sasi* has continued to be used by the Kei populace to defend rights, protest perceived injustices, and to challenge the decisions of *adat* and government leaders. These popular appropriations of *adat* have threatened the hegemony of the Kei aristocracy and their monopoly over representations of *adat*. This threat has resulted in an attempt by the Tual government to criminalize popular uses of *sasi* through the enactment of a *perda sasi*. These post-Suharto examples illustrate the recognition of Kei *adat* and the attempts to regulate its expression by the local government through *perda*, or district regulations. But if Dutch attempts to codify *adat* offer any lessons, it is that translating and transferring *adat* to paper will likely be met with great debate, contestation, and potentially conflict. In addition, such attempts may prove to have little effect on the actual practice of *adat* at the local level. After all, Kei *adat* is a dynamic phenomenon that is given shape and reified, at least temporarily, through the efforts of Kei actors who operate within particular historical conjunctures.

7.3   ANTECEDENTS OF *ADAT* REVIVALISM IN THE KEI ISLANDS

Throughout this dissertation, I have stressed the importance of identifying the processes by which particular individuals, groups, or sectors of society emerge with the ability to create efficacious representations of *adat*. Such an analysis involves identifying the contextual factors that lead to the privileging of certain voices over others. The opportunity to articulate *adat* does not necessarily mean the ability to articulate it effectively (Green 2009:164). In fact, there

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are a number of examples in which the revitalization of *adat* and/or aristocracy did not succeed in achieving the desired ends for those behind such efforts (see Vel 2007; Roth 2007; Bakker 2009; Smith 2009). Rather, as the Kei example illustrates, the articulation and mobilization of *adat* to successfully achieve desired political, economic, and social outcomes depends to a large extent on the power and position of those responsible for such articulations. Conversely, each successful articulation of *adat* enhances the power of those who claim to "speak" on behalf of Kei society, resulting in a sharpening of the lines of inequality that permeate the Kei social order.

At this point, it is possible to identify some of the conjunctures, antecedents, and conditions that enabled the elite articulations of *adat* over the past twenty years that constitute *adat* revivalism in the Kei islands. In doing so, my goal is to reiterate some of the specific conditions which led to Kei *adat* revivalism during the New Order, as well as highlight some of the potential factors and processes that have made the revival of *adat* possible and desirable in many, but certainly not all, local contexts in post-Suharto Indonesia. I draw upon insights gained from Li's discussion of the "conditions for articulation" in her comparison of the Lauje and Lindu people of Sulawesi (2000:169) as discussed in the introduction. However, in contrast to Li, I focus on articulations of *adat* rather than articulations of indigeneity, although these conceptions and processes may often be related in contemporary Indonesia. In addition, I expand upon her analysis by identifying some of the conditions which facilitated Kei articulations of *adat* that resulted in the sharpening of divisions and inequalities **within** Kei society.

I argue that the following five conditions were paramount to *adat* revivalism and the elite articulations of Kei tradition described in this dissertation: (1) the competition for resources in the context of rigidly drawn *intra*-group boundaries; (2) close proximity to state bureaucracy as well as the significance of state institutions to the local economy; (3) a situation of relative cultural homogeneity in which other ethnic groups do not pose a significant threat to local resources; (4) the presence of a group with the authority to speak on behalf of the local community; and (5) a supra-village political structure that unifies the *adat* community.

As Li (2000) demonstrated for the people of Lindu, the "competition for resources" was an important condition for the articulation of indigenous identities. Similarly, resource competition was fundamental to the articulation of *adat* in the Kei islands although, in contrast to Li's Lindu example, it occurred in a context of rigidly drawn *intra*-group boundaries. The relation between *adat* and resource competition is perhaps not surprising given that tradition is frequently mobilized in contemporary Indonesia in efforts to make claims to resources and territories (Henley and Davidson 2007:4). However, the Kei case demonstrates the importance of conceptualizing "resources" more broadly than land and sea territories to include sources of wealth, power and prestige that derive from national, religious, or transnational entities. While Kei articulations of *adat* were clearly influenced by competition over land and sea resources, it is unlikely that struggles over these resources alone would have resulted in the mobilization of *adat* during the New Order in the manner described in this dissertation. Rather, it was the spoils of the state that became the primary focus of resource competition and stimulated mobilizations of *adat* in the Kei archipelago.

It follows, then, that the second condition for *adat* revivalism was the prominence of the state in terms of both its administrative proximity to the Kei islands as well as its role in the local economy. Since Kei became home of the capital of the Southeast Maluku District following Indonesian Independence, to state bureaucracy emerged as an integral part of Kei political and economic life. While other island groups were incorporated into the Southeast Maluku District (i.e., Aru, Tanimbar, Babar, Wetar, Damer, etc.) during the New Order, there is no evidence that these islands witnessed *adat* revivalism in a manner comparable to the Kei islands (see McKinnon 1991 on Tanimbar; Spyer 1996, 2000 on Aru; Pannell 1990, 1996b, 1997b on Damer; Van Dijk and De Jonge 1987 on Babar). I suggest this was in part due to the ubiquitousness of the state in the Kei islands, particularly since New Order times. With the development of Tual as the district capital, the state became the primary source of income, cash, and employment in the islands.

But with whom were the Kei islanders competing over resources of the state? The Kei islands, after all, are relatively homogeneous in terms of ethnic composition. As I have suggested, it was Kei social hierarchy, rather than ethnicity or religion differences, which provided the primary set of differences through which resource competition occurred. Since rank-differences formed the basis of local politics, articulations of *adat* became entangled with struggles for power and resources **within** Kei society, rather than between the Kei people and ethnic others. Therefore, the third condition for the elite articulations of *adat* described in this dissertation was a context of relative cultural homogeneity in which other ethnic groups did not pose a significant threat to local sources of wealth, power, and prestige. Based on the Kei case, I would expect that articulations of *adat* in contexts of ethnic homogeneity would have a greater

potential to create and maintain inequalities within the local community, while in areas of ethnic heterogeneity or where ethnic others are politically or economically powerful, *adat* is more likely to be mobilized to exclude "outsiders" (see Henley and Davidson 2007, 2008).

The fourth important factor contributing to *adat* revivalism in the Kei islands was "the existence of a local political structure…mandated to speak on behalf of the group" (Li 2000:169). During the New Order, the *mel-mel* clearly emerged as a "political class" with the power and authority to articulate visions of *adat* on behalf of the broader community. However, as I have stressed throughout this dissertation, it is important to identify the processes by which particular individuals or groups emerge with the ability to represent and construct Kei tradition. While the *mel-mel*'s authority is claimed to be a noble prerogative traced to the origins of Kei *adat*, I suggest that their "mandate to speak on behalf of the group" derives more from external sources of power (i.e. Dutch colonialism and the Indonesian state) than emerging "from the people" (i.e., Kei society as a whole). Colonial and post-colonial transformations significantly contributed to the *mel-mel*'s ability to authorize and mobilize *adat* in the ways that have enhanced and legitimated their prominence in local politics.

The Dutch not only empowered *adat* leaders of *mel-mel* rank, they also helped to unify the *adat* domains of the Kei aristocracy through the formation of archipelago-wide politico-legal entities based on the political moiety system (*ur siu* and *lor lim*). This leads to the fifth condition for *adat* revivalism in the Kei islands: the presence of a supra-village political structure that unifies the *adat* community. Although Kei society is fragmented into nineteen "little kingdoms", the "kings" of the islands are integrated and unified into a single socio-political structure based on *adat* law. In this dissertation, the unity of the Kei *rat* and *ratschap*

was illustrated in the origin histories of Larvul Ngabal (see Chapter 3), the village head installation rituals and *belang* races (see Chapter 4), the supra-ratschap *adat* council (*Siu I Faak Lim I Tel*) used in the Tutrean-Sather case (see Chapter 5), as well as the bestowing of the *adat* title upon David Tjioe (see Chapter 6). This political integration of the "little kingdoms" of Kei, coupled with the ethnic homogeneity of the archipelago, provided the cultural and structural bases for the formation of the Kei political class which emerged in the New Order following the *mel-mel*'s capture of state institutions and resources. As a result, the *kabupaten* government, in essence, became a "little kingdom" within the Indonesian state that was ruled largely by individuals of *mel-mel* rank.

Based on the Kei case, then, these five antecedents enabled the elite articulations of *adat* described in this paper. Although acknowledging "the contingent aspects of articulation and the significance of human agency" (Li 2000:169), the antecedents to *adat* revivalism just described may also be fundamental to the politics of *adat* in other Indonesian societies. I would hypothesize that in Indonesian contexts characterized by most of the above conditions, there is a greater likelihood that articulations of *adat* will become entangled with the creation and legitimation of inequality within the *adat* community. Future research could test the validity of this hypothesis by examining the importance of these five conditions in influencing articulations of *adat* in other settings. Additional research may also lead to the identification of additional factors, conditions and conjunctures that enable particular articulations of *adat*. However, regardless of what future research shows, the Kei islands case demonstrates that the articulation of *adat* has been fundamental to the creation, maintenance, and justification of

aristocratic dominance during the New Order period as well as in post-Suharto times. Relations of inequality within Kei society are inextricably intertwined with elite articulations of *adat*.

7.4   DEMOCRATIZATION AND *ADAT* REVIVALISM IN INDONESIA

I would like to end this dissertation by exploring the relationship between *adat* revivalism and democratization in Indonesia in general and the Kei islands in particular. Many scholars have demonstrated that the revitalization of *adat* in post-Suharto Indonesia has occurred concomitantly with the democratization process (Henley and Davidson 2007, 2008; Schulte Nordholt 2008; Bräuchler 2010). In fact, the concurrent resurgence of "traditional" leaders and "customary law", part of a broader process of "traditionalization" (Stewart and Strathern 2007:19), has been a common feature of democratization in a wide variety of postcolonies, including many African (see Ntsebeza 2005; Oomen 2005; Logan 2009; Koelble and LiPuma 2011) and Pacific Island states (see Feinberg and Watson-Gegeo 1996; Lawson 1996; White and Lindstrom 1997; Bolton 1999). In a recent article, K. and F. von Benda-Beckmann (2008:18) recommend that scholars examine the revitalization of *adat* in its dynamic interdependence with processes of democratization. While such an endeavor is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I nonetheless want to highlight some of these dynamics. Given the relationship between inequality and *adat* in the Kei islands demonstrated through this study, the question arises as to whether *adat* revivalism will inhibit the democratization process or whether it may contribute to good governance at the local level. Similar questions have been addressed by scholars working in a number African and Pacific island nations, although research has not lead

to any consensus over the matter. But before addressing these complex relations, it is useful to present a brief sketch of democratization in Indonesia.

Amidst the diversity of views of the democratization process in Indonesia, Mietzner and Aspinall identify three prevailing schools of thought among scholars of Indonesian politics: one pessimistic, one optimistic and a third "middle of the road" position (2010:1-2). The middle position (e.g., Davidson 2009; Aspinall 2010) encompasses the others by acknowledging the democratic progress made since the fall of Suharto while pointing out the structural problems and barriers to democratic consolidation, most notably corruption, patrimonialism, and weak law enforcement (Mietzner and Aspinall 2010:2). Democratization in Indonesia over the past thirteen years has included free and fair elections, a greater separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers, the liberation of the press, greater freedom of assembly, and the curbing of the political and economic functions of the military (Webber 2006:396-97; Davidson 2009:293-94). The fact that Indonesia has become a democracy following the thirty years of authoritarian rule is significant achievement (Hadiz 2008). Despite these gains, however, there have been significant shortcomings and scholars have identified a number of structural barriers to democratization, most notably (and most relevant to the Kei case) elite capture, patrimonialism and corruption (see Malley 2003; Schulte Nordholt 2003; Robison and Hadiz, 2004; Hadiz 2005, 2008, 2010; Webber 2006; Sulistiyanto and Erb 2009).

Decentralization and regional autonomy, while touted by champions of neo-liberalism as a means of diffusing power and promoting democracy at the local level, have, paradoxically, often reinforced the power of the old New Order regional elites (Schulte Nordholt 2003; Hadiz 2008). The New Order elite's capture of state institutions in the Post-Suharto era (see Malley

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2003; Schulte Nordholt 2003; Robison and Hadiz, 2004; Hadiz 2005; 2008; 2010; Webber 2006)

has resulted in a politics that is "strangely familiar": "the types of social interests that have

come to preside over Indonesia's democratic institutions remain largely those that were

nurtured during the New Order" (Hadiz 2008). Hadiz (2010:180) summarizes regional politics in

post-Suharto times as follows:

> Dominant local elites have an abiding interest to resist neo-liberal, good
> governance reforms, even when they simultaneously have a stake in
> engagement with some of the aspects of economic globalisation and
> marketisation—if only to broaden rent-seeking opportunities with the expansion
> of markets…The evidence thus far suggests that the appropriation of state
> power by its officials to further their predatory interests will continue to be the
> main theme of Indonesian political economy albeit in an environment that is
> more democratised and more localized.

This political continuity between the New Order and post-Suharto periods is also exemplified in

patrimonial political patterns, which have their origin in precolonial times (Anderson 1972;

Schulte Nordholt 2003; Barker and Klinken 2009; Webber 2009). Decentralization has offered

local elites "the opportunity to expand and maintain networks of patron-client ties…which

results in intense competition for strategic positions in the regional administration in order

acquire exclusive access to central funds and regional resources" (Schulte Nordholt 2003:579).

In addition to elite capture and patrimonialism, the democratization process has also

been accompanied by a decentralization of corruption and collusion "that once belonged to the

centralized regime of the New Order but is now moulded in existing patrimonial patterns at the

regional level (Schulte Nordholt 2003:572). For example, from 2003-2006, 967 local and

provincial parliamentarians and 8.06% of local executive heads were named suspects in

corruption cases (Hadiz 2010:175). While these anti-corruption campaigns emerging from the

center may be viewed as a "useful tool of checking the power of ambitious local political

actors...[They are] not only about establishing transparent governance but are part of the political dynamics of establishing the parameters of local power. In other words, they are at least partly about the reassertion of the power of the centre over the local" (Hadiz 2010:176).

While these barriers to democratization are very real and entrenched within the fabric of Indonesian society, there is much cause for hope. Mietzner and Aspinall (2010:15-16) remind us of the difficulty of making generalizations about democratization given the heterogeneity of political outcomes throughout Indonesia: while some districts may remain "firmly in the grip of oligarchic cliques, others have seen reformist leaders emerge and run local government in relatively transparent and accountable ways" (see von Luebke 2009). In addition, as Aspinall (2010:32) importantly points out, the positive and negative aspects of the democratization process in Indonesia are interconnected since it was the accommodation of spoilers and established elites that produced a relatively smooth transition to democracy:

> The success of Indonesia's democracy and its poor quality are two sides of the same coin. It was precisely by achieving a low-quality outcome that Indonesian democratization proceeded so smoothly. Key elites and potentially disruptive political forces such as the military were not starved out of Indonesia's new democracy. Instead, they were all given a piece of the democracy pie, reducing their incentive to resist and challenge the system from the outside. The price of this approach was that the potential spoilers were empowered to undermine the quality of Indonesian democracy from within and, more important, that patronage and corruption became means by which they—and everybody else who counted—were brought into the system.

Sulistiyanto and Erb (2009:29), in their introduction to a recent collection of studies on district elections (*pilkada*), suggest that these two sides of democratization are part of the balancing act of any peaceful transition to democracy. While elections may "reinforce a patrimonial democracy in which leaders use elections to strengthen their power, in exchange for which followers hope to get access to state resources (Schulte Nordholt 2008), many remain

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hopeful that the direct election of district heads is another step towards deepening democracy (Sulistiyanto and Erb 2009; Buehler 2009; Schiller 2009; Webber 2009). In addition to direct elections, the growing political involvement of *pemuda adat* ("*adat* youth") in local communities may provide further impetus for democratization. In his recent study of *adat* revivalism in Sulawesi, Tyson (2010:5) suggests that the "powers of village elites and customary leaders (*pemangku adat*) in many parts of South Sulawesi are being arrogated by *pemuda adat*, the youth groups advocating for political change". As a result of the efforts of *pemuda adat*, "traditional authorities are being exposed to widespread criticism, district governments are often besieged by local protestors, the corporate sector is in retreat, no longer insulated from local negotiations and protected by their supposed natural allies in the security apparatus and government executive (Tyson 2010:157). As these examples suggest, "a system of collusion, nepotism and neo-traditional moral hierarchy vies in complex ways with the ideas of individual autonomy and freedom" (Sulistiyanto and Erb 2009:8).

Situated within these broader contexts of democratization, the Kei islands clearly offer a case in which elite capture, patrimonialism, and corruption have plagued the practice of local politics. The *mel-mel*'s capture of state institutions and resources and the patrimonial politics based on Kei rank and social hierarchy resulted in the formation of a "little kingdom" (i.e., the Southeast Maluku District) ruled by the Kei elite. Within this little kingdom, corruption, collusion, and nepotism became prominent features of the patrimonial political order. Over the past decade, many corruption cases have been filed against district government politicians, from former district heads to members of parliament. But if patrimonialism, corruption, and elite capture are significant barriers to democratization in the Kei islands, then was role does

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adat play in the process? After all, as I have shown in this dissertation, *adat* has for many years been an important resource mobilized by the Kei elite in creating and maintaining their power in the face of changing political currents. For at least the past twenty years, *adat* has been articulated as the proprietary domain of the Kei aristocracy, and has been mobilized by *adat* and bureaucratic elites alike to justify and solidify rights to political office and economic resources.

Like the process of democratization, *adat* revivalism too is Janus-faced. "In its ambiguous and protean character, by turns progressive and reactionary, emancipating and authoritarian, idealistic and manipulative, *adat* revivalism in some way epitomizes the paradoxes of the post-New Order era" (Henley and Davidson 2007: 18). Bräuchler (2010:8-9) summarizes the ambiguities and paradoxes of *adat* revivalism as follows:

> On the one hand, [*adat* revivalism]…enables the restrengthening or rediscovery of local traditions, identities, political structures…and traditional local mechanisms of integration and conflict resolution that might both foster peace and democracy. [Adat revivalism] allows for important steps towards a more just access to resources, thus setting an end to the central government's exclusive exploitation of local resources. But on the other, the revival of *adat* also fosters conflict and exclusion and, in some places, legitimises the reemergence of authoritarian local elites...In many cases, the *putra daerah* ["sons of the regions"] are seen as motors for the reestablishment of feudal structures...and hierarchies, the exclusion of non-*adat* people, the instigation of local conflicts, the undermining of a national Indonesian identity, and the exploitation of natural resources. The traditional leaders, whose revival and reinstallation are now legalized on certain levels, are often not democratically chosen, and genealogy is put before meritocracy, which is, at least at first sight, against any principle of individual equality.

Despite the positive aspects of *adat* revivalism, therefore, attempts to make *adat* an enduring basis for political organization is problematic due to dangers of ethnic conflict, the possibility of enhancing and legitimizing inequality, and the denial of individual rights and

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freedoms (Henley and Davidson 2007:40). This is due, in part, to the return of feudal power

structures and local aristocracies which have occurred concomitantly with *adat* revivalism in

many regions of Indonesia (Kagami 2005:69; van Klinken 2007b; Schulte Nordholt 2008:6-7;

Bräuchler 2010). One example was the formation of the *Forum Komunikasi Kraton-Kraton*

Indonesia ("Communication Forum of Indonesian Palaces) by a group of recently revived *rajas*

and sultans in order to represent their interests at the national level (see Van Klinken 2007b;

Schulte Nordholt 2008). Similarly, a Maluku-wide forum (*Majelis Latupati*) integrating all of the

"traditional chiefs" of the province was formed in 2006 in an attempt to create an "overarching

structure" to assist with reconciliation efforts and other matters (Bräuchler 2010:21, 2011).

Given the growing importance of regional aristocracies, Henley and Davidson (2007:27) argue

that "the prevalence and hierarchy and inequality in the past which *adat* revivalists idealize

must be borne in mind when it comes to assessing the likely consequences of their endeavors

today...To the extent that *adat* revivalism reinforces political hierarchy, it also tends to promote

inequality within the '*adat* community'" (also see Hooe 1996, 1999; Li 2007; Biezeveld 2007;

Schulte Nordholt 2008). Similarly, as I have argued in this dissertation, the articulation of Kei

adat is fundamental to the creation and maintenance of aristocratic dominance in local politics.

"What remains unclear is how *adat* and old aristocracies fit into a modern democracy"

(Schulte Nordholt 2008:8). Based on research in Bali, Kagami (2005:69) suggests that to "realize

true autonomy and democracy at the local community level, there is a need to grapple with the

inveterate habit of hierarchical social relationships that are maintained under the names of

local traditions." Pedersen (2007:209), on the other hand, does not see much evidence of

disempowered people blindly following "feudal" leaders. Regarding the possibility of a Balinese

district becoming a "New Order state writ small", Pedersen expresses some optimism that

"people can, and do, temper excesses of power (2007:210). However, like democratization, the

revival of *adat* and local aristocracies are not uniform and monolithic processes that simply

happen to people. Rather, there is a diversity of experiences throughout Indonesia based upon

a variety of historical, political, economic, and socio-cultural conditions. I agree with Bräuchler's

(2009: 884-885) suggestion:

> While some might argue that the revival process gives expression to the social capital of the people, others might interpret it as an elitist construction. There is no easy solution to that… [T]here are plenty of cases in the more general return-to-*adat* movement in Indonesia, where *adat* was misused by individuals to gain access to resources and individual power. Nevertheless, one cannot lump everything together…Only through an in-depth analysis of each individual case…taking into account all levels of actors (and passive recipients) and of their sociocultural context, can we try to make a judgment.

In any ethnographic case, then, the interrelations between *adat* revivalism and

democratization must be evaluated by first identifying who initiates efforts to revitalize

traditions and the extent to which they represent all members of the community (Henley and

Davidson 2007:27; Bowen 2007:7; Schulte Nordholt 2008:6; Bräuchler 2009:884). In this

dissertation, I have argued that members of the Kei elite have articulated and mobilized

particular visions of *adat* to maintain their dominance in local politics.

While I have linked *adat* revivalism to inequality, aristocratic dominance, and

patrimonial politics within Kei society, I would not argue that Kei *adat* is somehow antithetical

to democratization at the local level. Given the dynamic and flexible nature of Kei *adat*, it is

certainly amenable to a politics of inclusion in which its articulation and revival accommodate a

diversity of voices, viewpoints, and opinions. For this reason, I agree with Bräuchler (2010:22)

who argues that:

…it is crucial to preserve the flexibility of *adat* in order to adapt it to changing political, social and economic circumstances and to accommodate all those people living in such territories…Revitalisation…should be seen as a process of taking up traditional principles and developing them to the people's needs and current circumstances. Most important is that all interest groups in a village or another social, political, or cultural unit are involved in the underlying negotiation process.

In conclusion, I would argue that one cannot evaluate whether democratization has failed in the Kei islands based solely on the prominence of *adat* and the aristocracy in local political life. Debate and discussion should not focus on whether Kei *adat* and aristocracy should continue to play a role in local politics, but rather *how* they will be further integrated into the political sphere in a way that acknowledges the diversity of Kei voices and promotes a deepening of democracy. If *adat* revivalism or the promotion of *adat* governance takes place in the absence of dialogue and deliberation among all parties involved, then inequality, marginalization, and conflict are likely outcomes (see Bräuchler 2010:18). But if the Kei islanders, as a whole, agree to the empowerment of the Kei *rat*, the return to *adat* governance, or the enactment of a *perda sasi*, for example, and these decisions are based on open dialogue among the diverse sectors of Kei society (i.e., men, women, *mel-mel*, *ren-ren*, *iri-ri*, Catholic Protestant, Muslim, government employees, village inhabitants, etc.), then can we say that democratization has failed in the Kei islands? After all, the procedures of egalitarian decision-making and government by public discussion are the foundation of democratic practice (Graeber 2007:355).

Whether a form of "deliberative democracy" (see Benhabib 1996; Young 1996) based on inclusiveness, political equality, and accountability emerges at the conjunctures of *adat* and state governance in the Kei Islands remains to be seen. If *adat* remains the proprietary domain

of the Kei aristocracy and its articulation is restricted and controlled by a political class dominated by the *mel-mel*, then the democratization process will likely be delayed. But rather than reify a dichotomy between neoliberal democratic institutions based on good governance and feudalistic *adat* governance that privileges entrenched elites, I believe it is possible for the Kei people to create hybridized political institutions in which tradition and democracy coexist. In the Balinese princedom of Sideman, for example, forms of grassroots democracy exist amidst an otherwise very hierarchical society (Pedersen 2007:205). In addition, research among a variety of African and Pacific Island nations has demonstrated the hybridization of political institutions and the coexistence of chieftainship and democracy (e.g., White and Lindstrom, eds. 1997; Tcherkézoff 1998; Williams 2004; Logan 2009).

In creating such hybrid forms, whether initiated by the Kei people themselves or through the social engineering of NGOs or regional governments, it may be useful to adopt the "dialogic relativism" advocated by Graeber (2007:298-99) or the "dialogical morality" discussed by Brown (2008:369-70). According to Graeber, dialogic relativism entails a "mutual recognition of, and respect for, difference found on the recognition of an even more fundamental similarity (hence, equality) that makes such recognition possible. It could only rest on a commitment to carry on the conversation in a way that never pushes aside uncomfortable questions—such as, for instance, who gets to speak, and who has to do the heavy lifting?—but that also proceeds from the assumption that no single tradition has a monopoly on insight on such issues" (2007:298-90). It is my hope that the arguments made in this dissertation will be accepted as one small contribution to the ongoing dialogue about the meaning, significance, and future of Kei *adat*.

RATSCHAP OF THE KEI ISLANDS

1. Tabab Yamlim

Title of *Rat*:	Bomav
Village of *Rat*:	Fer
Fam of *Rat*:	Rahayaan
Religion of *Rat*:	Muslim
Location:	Kei Besar
Political Moiety:	Lor Lim
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Fer, Langgiar Fer, Tamangil Nuhuten, Tamangil Nuhuyanat, Sungai, Ngafan, Weduar Fer, Kilwat, Sather, Tutrean, Weduar, Hako, Ngurko, Soindat, Wafol, Rerean, Ohoilean, Vatkidat, Uat, Ngan.

2. Lo Ohoitel

Title of *Rat*:	Ihbes
Village of *Rat*:	Nerong
Fam of *Rat*:	Refra
Religion of *Rat*:	Muslim
Location:	Kei Besar
Political Moiety:	Lor Lim
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Larat, Ohoiwait, Nerong, Ler Ohoilim, Ohoirenan, Mataholat, Wetuwar, Harangur, Udar, Daftel, Karkarit.

3. Ub Ohoifak

Title of *Rat*:	Elralang
Village of *Rat*:	Elralang

Fam of *Rat*:	?
Religion of *Rat*:	?
Location:	Kei Besar
Political Moiety:	Lor Lim
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Elralang, Bombay, Wakol, Ngurdu, Soinrat, Watsin, Sirbante, Ngat, Wearmaf, Maar, Weer Ohoinam, Weer Ohoiker, Weer Frawan, Fa'a, Dangarat, Ohoituf, Hangur, Ngurwalek, Uwat, Uwat Wear, Uwat Reyaan

4. Songli

Title of *Rat*:	Songli
Village of *Rat*:	Rumat
Fam of *Rat*:	Setitit
Religion of *Rat*:	Christian
Location:	Kei Kecil Island
Political Moiety:	Lor Lim
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Rat, Revav, Rumat

5. Kirkes

Title of *Rat*:	Kirkes
Village of *Rat*:	Ibra
Fam of *Rat*:	Renwarin
Religion of *Rat*:	Muslim
Location:	Kei Kecil Island
Political Moiety:	Lor Lim
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Ibra, Ngabub, Sathean

6. Ohoilim Tahit

Title of *Rat*:	Yab
Village of *Rat*:	Faan
Fam of *Rat*:	Renwarin
Religion of *Rat*:	Christian
Location:	Kei Kecil Island
Political Moiety:	Lor Lim
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Faan, Langgur, Kolser, Kelanit , Loon, Ohoililir

7. Manyew

Title of *Rat*:	Manyew
Village of *Rat*:	Manyew
Fam of *Rat*:	Rumadian

Religion of *Rat*:	?
Location:	Kei Kecil Island
Political Moiety:	Lor Lim
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Rumadian, Ohoiluk, Ngayub, Namar, Ngilngof, Debut

8. Tuvle

Title of *Rat*:	Tuvle
Village of *Rat*:	Tual
Fam of *Rat*:	Tamherwarin
Religion of *Rat*:	Muslim
Location:	Dullah Island
Political Moiety:	Lor Lim
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Tual, Taar, Ohoidertavun, Ohoililir, Mangon Lama, Mangon Baru, Pulau Ut

9. Yarbadang

Title of *Rat*:	Yarbadang
Village of *Rat*:	Tetoat
Fam of *Rat*:	Renhoran
Religion of *Rat*:	Muslim
Location:	Kei Kecil Island
Political Moiety:	Lor Lim
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Tetoat, Dian, Dian Darat, Letvuan, Evu, Tayando Yamru, Tayando Ohoiel, Tayando Yamtel, Wab, Watngil, Matwat, Wirin, Ngursit, Ohoibadar

10. Famur Danar

Title of *Rat*:	Famur
Village of *Rat*:	Danar
Fam of *Rat*:	Hanubun
Religion of *Rat*:	Muslim
Location:	Kei Kecil Island
Political Moiety:	Ur Siu
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Danar, Lumefar, Ohoiseb, Ngursoin, Ohoider, Sare, Uv, Mar, Yatvav, Ohoidertom

11. Sakmas Wain

Title of *Rat*:	Sakmas
Village of *Rat*:	Wain
Fam of *Rat*:	Leisubun

Religion of *Rat*:	Christian
Location:	Kei Kecil Island
Political Moiety:	Ur Siu
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Wain, Mastur, Elaar Let, Abean, Ohoinol, Elaar Lumagoran, Tenbuk, Danvet, Garara, Ohoilus, Mastur Baru, Ngurvul, Watngon, Yafawun, Iso, Wain Baru, Disuk, DSamawi, Marfun

12. Utan Tel Varat

Title of *Rat*:	Baldu Wahadat
Village of *Rat*:	Dullah
Fam of *Rat*:	Renuat
Religion of *Rat*:	Muslim
Location:	Dullah Island
Political Moiety:	Ur Siu
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Dullah, Warbal, Dullah Laut, Letman, Ngadi, Labetawi, Tamedan, Fiditan, Tayando Langgiar, Sidniohoi, Dudunwahan.

13. Utan Tel Timur

Title of *Rat*:	Sovmas
Village of *Rat*:	Ohoitahit
Fam of *Rat*:	Rengifuryaan
Religion of *Rat*:	Muslim
Location:	Dullah Island
Political Moiety:	Ur Siu
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Ohoitahit, Ohoitel, Watran, Lair Kamor

14. Mer Ohoinean

Title of *Rat*:	Ket El
Village of *Rat*:	Ohoinangan
Fam of *Rat*:	Rusbal
Religion of *Rat*:	Christian
Location:	Kei Besar
Political Moiety:	Ur Siu
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Ohoinangan, Rahareng, Elat, Rahareng Atas, Wulurat, Fangamas

15. Meu Umfit

Title of *Rat*:	Elkel

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Village of *Rat*:	Yamtel
Fam of *Rat*:	?
Religion of *Rat*:	Christian
Location:	Kei Besar
Political Moiety:	Ur Siu
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Yamtel, Waurtahit, Fako, Reyamru, Ngifut, Waur, Ohoiel, Depur, Ngabheng, Ohoiwang, Ngifut Atas

16. Maur Ohoivut

Title of *Rat*:	Bohirir Borvav
Village of *Rat*:	Watlaar
Fam of *Rat*:	Rahail
Religion of *Rat*:	Christian
Location:	Kei Besar
Political Moiety:	Ur Siu
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Mun Ohoitadiun, Mun Ohoiir, Mun Wear Fan, Mun Esoy, Mun Kahar, Mun Ngurditwain, Ad Wearaut, Ohoiraut, Haar Ohoimel, Langgiar Haar, Renfan, Banda Eli, Watlaar, Ohoifau, Kilwair, Adngurvul, Ohoi wab, Laar, Hoor Kristen, Hoor Muslim, Wairat, Wair, Soin, Haar Protestan, Haar Katolik, Haar Ohoiwait, Wasar, Ur, Ohoimajang Protestan, Ohoimajang Muslim, Renfan Muslim, Renfan Kristen, Fan Waf, Banda Eli Suku 80, Banda Eli Suku 30, Banda Efruan, Ohoifaruan, Holat, Hako, Hollay, Ohoiwiring, Tuburngil, Yamtimur

17. Mantilur

Title of *Rat*:	Mantilur
Village of *Rat*:	Somlain
Fam of *Rat*:	Ngamel
Religion of *Rat*:	Christian
Location:	Kei Kecil Island
Political Moiety:	Ur Siu
Villages of *Ratschap*:	Somlain, Ohoira, Ohoiren, Tanimbar-Kei, Ur

18. Magrib

Title of *Rat*:	Magrib
Village of *Rat*:	Matwair
Fam of *Rat*:	?
Religion of *Rat*:	Christian
Location:	Kei Kecil Island

Political Moiety: Lor Labay
Villages of *Ratschap*:   Matwair

19. Werka

Title of *Rat*:   Werka
Village of *Rat*:   Werka
Fam of *Rat*:   ?
Religion of *Rat*:   Christian
Location: Kei Besar
Political Moiety: Lor Labay
Villages of *Ratschap*:   Werka

FAM DISTRIBUTION IN *RATSCHAP* TABAB YAMLIM

Table 5. *Fam* Distribution in *Ratschap* Tabab Yamlim
Source of Data: Kantor Camat Kei Besar, Kantor BKKBN Kecamatan Kei Besar (1994)

Village	*Fam*	Number of Households
Fer	Rahayaan	11
	Rahawarin	7
	Sarluf	4
	Silaratubun	3
	Ohoifui	2
	Rahakbau	2
	Raharusun	2
	Far-Far	1
Tamngil Nuhuyanat	Rumkel	15
	Seknun	13
	Rahakbau	6
	Hamid	1
Hako	Rahakbau	21
	Silaratubun	10
	Seknun	1
Ngurko	Ohoifui	2
	Rahajaan	2
	Raharusun	1
	Rahayaan	1

Table 5 (continued)

Village	*Fam*	Number of Households
Rerean	Rahayaan	5
	Tawain	3
	Ohoifui	2
	Rahawarin	2
	Remas	2
	Far-Far	1
	Ohoiwir	1
	Toanubun	1
	Yahanadan	1
	Labetubun	1
	Yawadan	1
Langgiar Fer	Fakaubun	31
	Seknun	6
	Difinubun	5
	Matdoan	4
	Bugis	2
	Rahajaan	2
	Rahakbau	2
	Rahanyaan	2
	Rahanyamtel	2
	Raharusun	2
	Asatri	1
	Hamid	1
	Ngabalin	1
	Rahawarin	1
	Rahayaan	1
	Rumahtiga	1
	Samsamal	1
	Uar	1
Vatkidat	Fakaubun	20
	Raharusun	4
	Seknun	3
	Difinubun	2
	Matdoan	1
	Tharob	1

Table 5 (Continued)

Village	*Fam*	Number of Households
Ngan	Rahayaan	7
	Difinubun	4
	Rahanyaan	3
	Raharusun	1
	Rahanyamtel	1
	Rahajaan	1
	Seknun	1
Ohoilean	Seknun	10
	Difinubun	1
	Matdoan	1
Uat	Matdoan	25
	Balubun	1
	Ubrusun	1
	Rahayaan	1
Weduar Fer	Toanubun	10
	Metubun	5
	Far-Far	3
	Lesomar	3
	Tutubun	2
	Rahasomar	1
	Ubra	1
Ngafan	Rahanyamtel	17
	Difinubun	11
	Matdoan	9
	Fakaubun	5
	Rahayaan	5
	Bugis	4
	Alkatiri	1
	Ilele	1
	Maturan	1
	Metuduan	1
	Rahanwati	1

Table 5 (Continued)

Village	*Fam*	Number of Households
Sungai	Difinubun	38
	Rahanyamtel	4
	Bugis	2
	Matdoan	2
	Seknun	2
	Rahanjaan	1
Tamngil Nuhuteen	Ohoitenan	22
	Rahanar	22
	Ur	5
	Difinubun	2
	Refra	2
	Silaratubun	2
	Ubra	2
	Hukubun	1
	Notanubun	1
	Raharawat	1
	Rahawarin	1
	Somnaikubun	1
	Tamher	1
	Toatubun	1
	Yamlay	1
Soindat	Ohoiner	13
	Madmur	7
	Rahantale	6
	Metubun	1
	Rahail	1
	Rahanar	1
	Rahangmetan	1
	Rahanjaan	1
	Rahantalis	1
	Somnaikubun	1
	Weneheubun	1

Table 5 (continued)

Village	*Fam*	Number of Households
Weduar	Hukubun	39
	Somnaikubun	27
	Rahayaan	26
	Rumthe	8
	Rumatora	5
	Kudubun	2
	Rahakbau	2
	Betaubun	1
	Elfuar	1
	Far-Far	1
	Fatlolona	1
	Habki	1
	Hitarye	1
	Mapanawang	1
	Natro	1
	Ngebeth	1
	Notanubun	1
	Ohoiner	1
	Rahalus	1
	Rahanar	1
	Ruban	1
	Ubro	1
	Wankar	1
	Welerubun	1
Tutrean	Rahantoknam	22
	Resel	13
	Tanlain	11
	Refra	10
	Rahakbau	8
	Resmol	7
	Rahankubang	3
	Rahangirit	2
	Rumatora	2
	Fabamase	1
	Kainkainan	1

Table 5 (continued)

Village	*Fam*	Number of Households
Tutrean (continued)	Rahabeath	1
	Rahayaan	1
	Renhoran	1
	Suratratan	1
	Ubro	1
	Uwanubun	1
Sather	Domakubun	33
	Dokainubun	24
	Metubun	23
	Dangeubun	22
	Erubun	17
	Wansaubun	11
	Yamlay	11
	Rahasomar	5
	Tengubun	4
	Waer	4
	Rahangmetan	2
	Yamko	2
	Elwuar	1
	Jamlary	1
	Rahayaan	1
	Rumatora	1
	Toarubun	1
	Wantaar	1
Kilwat	Rahanyaan	35
	Rahayaan	23
	Waer	8
	Rahael	5
	Selubun	4
	Yamseref	4
	Fidratan	3
	Rahawarin	3
	Wansaubun	3
	Babaubun	1
	El	1
	Elkel	1

Table 5 (continued)

Village	*Fam*	Number of Households
Kilwat	Erubun	1
(continued)	Hurulean	1
	Matly	1
	Netubun	1
	Ngutra	1
	Ohoiner	1
	Ohoiwirin	1
	Rahaket	1
	Rahanra	1
	Releubun	1
	Somnaikubun	1
	Titalay	1
	Tutubun	1
	Yamlay	1

GLOSSARY

All terms are Kei words except those marked with an "I", which are Indonesian, "M", which are Moluccan Malay, "L" for Latin, or a "D", which are Dutch.

adat	tradition, custom, customary law
adatrecht (D)	adat law
adatrechtbundels (D)	adat case law
akar tuba (I)	poisonous root used for fishing; *Garcinia dulcis*
AMAN (I)	acronym for Alliance of Adat Societies of the Indonesian Archipelago (Asosiasi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara)
Babi Delo (I)	"Delo Pig"; a pig owned by *Rat* Sardik, former king of Ratschap Tabab Yamlim
Badan Perwakilan Desa (BPD) (I)	elected Village Representative Board
Bahasa Evav	Kei language
Bahasa Indonesia (I)	Indonesian language
balai desa (I)	village meeting hall
bapa (M)	father; term of address to older man
belang	ceremonial or war canoe
birbir	deep sea zone
bo'o	wild tuber
brenran	male
Brimob	Mobile Police Brigade
bubu	fish traps
budak (I)	slave
buka sasi (I)	"opening" or "lifting" a sasi prohibition
bukti (I)	proof
bupati (I)	district head
cakalele	war dance

camat (I)	sub-district head
cekalang (I)	tuna
controleur (D)	Dutch district officer
dada	gongs used in exchanges
dana alokasi khusus (I)	special block grant
dana alokasi umum (I)	general block grant
dapat pukul (I)	to be beaten up or hit
dat	to come, arrive
daun rumbia (I)	sago leaves
desa (I)	administrative village
desa definitive (I)	"official" administrative village
desa ibu (I)	"mother" village
desa induk (I)	"mother" village
dewa	god
dir u ham wang	ceremonial canoe "pilot", the village carver of communally hunted game; an honorary title meaning "he who stands in front"
Dit Sakmas	the daughter of Kasdew, the Balinese male credited with introducing *adat* law to the Kei islands; Dit Sakmas is an important culture hero and is prominent in oral histories of Larvul Ngabal
DPRD (I)	acronym for District People's Representative Council (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah), or district parliament
duduk *adat* (I)	"to sit" *adat*; *adat* negotiations, deliberations
dusun (I)	administrative hamlet
Duad Ler Vuan	Sun-Moon God
enbal	"bitter" variety of cassava
enmav	yams
faak	four
fam	named clan; family
fau swilik	symmetric exchange
Fer Ohoitel	a multi-village alliance (utan) consisting of the villages of Fer, Rerean, Hako, Ngurko, and Tamngil Nuhuyanat
foar	evil spirits
gapura (I)	archway
Garcinia dulcis (L)	A poisonous root used for fishing
gelang adat (I)	adat bracelet
gotong-royong (I)	mutual assistance
Gouvernement der Molukken (D)	Government of the Moluccas
Groote Raad van Hoofden (D)	great council of chiefs
hak makan (I)	use or usufruct rights

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hak milik (I)	property rights, right to transfer
Hari Sumpah Pemuda (I)	Youth Pledge Day
hawear	the domain of *Kei adat* law concerned with property rights
Hawear Balwarin	Kei property law
helaai	big man, influential person, leader
hokum adat (I)	adat law
Hukum Hanilit	Kei "family" law
Hukum Nevnev	Kei "criminal" law
Ikan bibi (I)	puffer fish
Inpres Desa Tertinggal (IDT)	Government funds for "backward" villages in 1994.
iri-ri	slave or slave rank
jagung (I)	corn
jonson	motor boat
kabupaten (I)	district
Kabupaten Maluku Tenggara (I)	Southeast Maluku District
kaca mata molo (M)	diving goggles
kacang hijau (I)	green beans
kacang merah (I)	red beans
kacang tanah (I)	peanuts
kampong mel (M)	mel-mel section of village
kampong ren (M)	ren-ren section of village
kapitan	war advisor; leadership position subordinate to the rat
kasber	Portuguese cannon used in exchanges
kasbi	"sweet" variety of cassava
Kasdew	male head of the Balinese family credited with introducing *adat* law to the Kei islands
kasta	caste
kawin bula balik (M)	symmetric exchange
kayu besi (I)	ironwood
kebudayaan (I)	culture
kebudayaan tinggi (I)	high culture
kecamatan (I)	sub-district
kelapa (I)	coconut
kelurahan (I)	administrative ward or neighborhood
kembali ke negeri (I)	return to the negeri
kembali ke ohoi (I)	return to the ohoi
kembali ke ohoi/ratschap (I)	return to the ohoi/ratschap
ken sa vaak	"we are all wrong, we are all correct"
kepala desa (I)	administrative village head
kepala dusun (I)	administrative hamlet leader
kepala fam	clan elder
kepala soa (M)	hamlet leader

kerajaan kecil (I)	little kingdom
kerbau siu	the "nine" buffalo
kerukunan (I)	harmony
kerusuhan (I)	unrest
kilbobanring	kind of fish
kolusi (I)	collusion
kontroleur (D)	colonial government position
kopra (I)	copra
korupsi (I)	corruption
kota (I)	city, town, administrative municipality
kotamadya (I)	administrative municipality
Kota Tual (I)	Municipality of Tual
krisis total, or kristal (I)	total crisis
lalun	cassava flour
langit (I)	sky
Larvul Ngabal	name of Kei *adat* law, literally, "red blood, Balinese spear"
leb	priest of the Sun-Moon God
lela	small hand-cannon used in exchanges
LMD (I)	acronym for village deliberation council (Lembaga Musyawarah Desa)
lola	topshell, *Trochus niloticus*
lor	a whale; adat domain
lor labay	politically neutral ratschap
lor lim	the "five" moiety
Mahkamah Konstitusi Republik Indonesia (I)	Indonesian Constitutional Court
Majelis Latupati (I)	Maluku Latupati Council
Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (I)	Supreme Parliament
manad	taro
mang ohoi	wife-giving group
manga (I)	mango
Manihot esculenta (L)	cassava
maren	mutual assistance
mas	gold jewelry used in exchanges
masalah (I)	a problem
masyarakat *adat* (I)	*adat* society
medar	cuscus
Melayu Ambon	Ambonese Malay language
Mel intalroa	immigrant mel-mel
mel-mel	noble or noble rank
Mel Yamfaak	multi-village alliance (utan) consisting of the villages of Langgiar Fer, Weduar Fer, Sungai, Ngafan, Uat, Ngan, Ohoilean, and Vatkidat

menggadaikan (I)	pawning
meti	tidal zone
meti Kei	annual neap tide (September to October)
mitu	spirits
mitu duan	master of the local spirits
monumen (I)	monument
MTJ (I)	Maritim Timur Jaya, a large fishing company operating in the Kei islands
mufakat (I)	consensus, to reach consensus
musibah (I)	natural disaster or epidemic
musim barat (I)	western monsoon season (October to February)
musim perang (I)	war season
musim timor (I)	eastern monsoon season (March to September)
musyawarah (I)	deliberate, deliberation
mu'u	bananas
naga (I)	dragon, serpent
nangan	village periphery zone
nepotisme (I)	nepotism
New Order	period of Suharto rule (1965-1998)
nganga	spear
ngelngel	ritual songs
nuhu	land, island
Nuhu Evav	Kei Islands
Nuhu Roa	Kei Kecil Islands
Nuhu Yuut	Kei Besar Island
ohoi	village
Ohoi Orangkai	an Orang Kay Village
Ohoi Soa	a Soa Village
onderafdelingen (D)	Dutch colonial district
orang bawah (I)	"lower-ranking person"
orang kay	"rich person", village head
orang kaya (M)	"rich person", village head
orang tu	elder, respected person
Pancasila (I)	five pillars, the Indonesian state principles
pangkat (I)	rank or level in civil service
panglima perang (I)	war leader
pemekaran (I)	"blossoming" or "flowering", the division or multiplication of administrative units
pengadilan negeri	state court
papaya (I)	pepaya
pegawai negeri sipil (I)	civil servant
pejabat (I)	temporary, acting or caretaker leader
pelangaran adat (I)	adat offense
pemangku adat (I)	adat leaders

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pembangunan (I)	development
pemuda adat (I)	adat youth
penyuruh (I)	servant
peraturan daerah (I)	district regulation
perda (I)	acronym for district regulation (Peraturan Daerah)
Perda Ohoi (I)	village government regulation
perda payung (I)	umbrella regulation
perda sasi (I)	sasi regulation
Pesan Langgur (I)	the Langgur recommendations
pesta air (I)	water festival
petatas	sweet potatoes
petuanan (I)	territory, system of land and sea tenure
petuanan laut (I)	marine territory
pilkada	acronym for district head elections
posthouderschap (D)	Dutch colonial station
propinsi (I)	province
punah (I)	extinct
Pusat Studi Maluku (I)	Centre for Maluku Studies, Pattimura University
rahan	house
Rahan Madavun Adat	Adat House
raja (I)	king, chief
rancangan peraturan daerah (I)	planning session for a government regulation
rat	king, chief; leader of adat domain
ratschap	kingdom or chiefdom; *adat* domain under the leadership of a rat; administrative unit under Dutch colonial rule
reformasi (I)	reform, also the period following the demise of the New Order regime
rencana strategis (I)	strategic plan
ren-ren	commoner, commoner rank, autochthonous inhabitants
ren sardik war	free slaves
RMS (I)	acronym for Republic of South Moluccas (Republik Maluku Selatan)
Roa	sea
sadsad	Small Portuguese cannon used in exchanges
sagu	sago
saniri	*adat* council
saniri negeri	village adat council
sasi (M)	a taboo; a system of spatial and temporal restrictions on resources or territories usually marked by young coconut fronds
sejarah(I)	history
sejarah yang asli (I)	authentic history

Sekretaris Desa (I)	village secretary
Sekwilda (I)	acronym for district secretary (Sekretaris Wilayah Daerah)
senapan ikan (I)	spear fishing gun
sengketa (I)	a dispute
siding *adat* (I)	*adat* legal hearings
sirih pinang (M)	areca nut, betel leaves, and lime concoction
soa	hamlet
soin	boundary
sor	coral reef zone
sosoi	adat dance
sosoi sawat	type of adat dance
sukun	breadfruit
Tabab Yamlim	name of the domain (ratschap) under the leadership of Rat Bomav of Fer and encompassing 21 villages; also the name of the multi-village (utan) consisting of the villages of Tamngil Nuhuteen, Weduar, Tutrean, Sather, Kilwat and Soindat
tad	proof
tanah sakti (I)	sacred land
Tebtut	eldest son of Kasdew, the Balinese patriarch credited with introducing *adat* law to the Kei islands
tel	three
teripang	tripang
tom	origin narrative
topi adat (I)	adat hat
Trochus (L)	genus of sea snails
Trochus niloticus	topshell, a type of sea snail
tuan tan	lord of the land
tubur	cord
tutup (I)	close, closed
ub	jug, container
umat besar	large community
unjuk rasa (I)	expression of feelings, demonstration
Upacara Pelantikan Kepala Desa (I)	Village Head Installation Ritual
upacara pengukuhan adat (I)	adat inauguration ritual
ur siu	the "nine" moiety
utan	multi-village socio-political unit
vat	female
vav	wild boar
war fuhar	navel of the cord
watbuu	"lizard" stone

wer warat	"pulling the line", a type of communal fishing
woma	village ritual center
wuar	mountain forest zone
yaan	eldest child
yanan	child
yan ur	wife-taking group
yayasan	foundation or NGO

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