INTERRELIGIOUS VIOLENCE, CIVIC PEACE, AND CITIZENSHIP:
CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN MALUKU, EASTERN INDONESIA

(Order No.   )

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the study of interreligious violence, civic peace, and citizenship in the Christian-Muslim conflict zone of Maluku in eastern Indonesia, especially in the region of Ambon. Violent conflict between Christians and Muslims broke out in the region on January 19, 1999, and continued for three years. Against this backdrop, the dissertation investigates factors underlying the interreligious violence as well as those shaping post-conflict peace and citizenship. The project examines the role of religious networks, organizations, and discourses before, during, and after the mayhem. It also explores the dynamics of Maluku’s religious groups, government institutions, and civil society associations in responding to violence and reconciliation.

The research, conducted from February 1, 2010, to March 30, 2011, utilizes ethnographic fieldwork, network and associational analysis, as well as historical and comparative research on the social formation of religious identities and associations in the Maluku region. It also draws
on a questionnaire of one hundred former members of militia groups, both Christians and Muslims.

The dissertation shows, first, that relations between Christians and Muslims in Maluku were not previously pacific but have been marked by competition and violence since European colonial times. Second, in the first phases of the Maluku wars, religious identities and discourses figured prominently in the framing and exacerbation of the strife. Third, synergy between state and society actors has been the key to stopping the mass violence and resolving conflict. The findings contrast with previous analyses that (1) portray pre-war Maluku as a stable area, (2) place singular emphasis on the political economy of the conflict, and (3) neglect the contribution of government in the peacemaking process.

Fourth, while in some parts of Indonesia religious groups eagerly promote the application of Islamic Shari‘a such as in Aceh or of Christian Law such as in Papua, the question of religious law did not figure prominently in Maluku. Fifth, in the aftermath of religious violence, ethnic difference, identification with clan, and regionalism are becoming more pronounced. If not addressed appropriately, these forces could serve as the sources for renewed collective conflict in the years to come.