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Campaigning for a new district in West Sumba

Crowd cheerfully welcomes the new district in Sumba

Thousands of people gathered on the plain of Laikaruda in the middle of Sumba on the 31st of January 2003 to celebrate the new district of Central Sumba.¹ Trucks and small buses had gone early in the morning to the villages gathering passengers and spreading the word that a delegation from Jakarta was coming to inaugurate the new district. It would be a feast, with gong music and meals with meat. The honoured guests from Jakarta received traditional gifts, such as beautiful hand woven cloth. Traditional dance performances stressed the local population's commitment and the strong culture and tradition of the area that was to be a district by itself. Banners over the road proclaimed the creation of Central Sumba as an act of pure democracy – *Vox populi, vox dei: Suara rakyat adalah suara Tuhan* (The voice of the people is the voice of God) – and the slogan would locally be interpreted as a sign of (the Christian) God's blessing over the campaign.

The crowd only learned afterwards that this was just one step in a very long process of creating a new district. They had been mobilized to assure the visiting delegation of the Central Parliament in Jakarta that Central Sumba above all rested on the genuine wishes of the people (*aspirasi masyarakat*).

This chapter is about *pemekaran*, the creation of a new district out of old (sometimes called 'redistricting') in West Sumba.² Current proposals aim to split the present district of West Sumba into three: Central Sumba, West Sumba and Southwest Sumba. Throughout Indonesia, the campaigning rhetoric always mentions three main reasons for creating a new district: it brings the government closer to the people, it will be beneficial to economic prosperity, and it is the wish of the people to have their own district. A new

¹ I would like to thank the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden for the affiliated fellowship that enabled me to work on this article.

² See the Introduction to this volume.

district will have its own bureaucracy with a budget to spend according its own priorities, which is one good reason for new candidate bureaucrats to create their own district. Setting up a new district bureaucracy promises a large number of jobs for well-educated but presently underemployed locals.

Pemekaran is a long process, involving campaigning on Sumba, lobbying to the institutions and people who will take the ultimate decisions in Kupang and Jakarta, and lengthy bureaucratic procedures. Although the efforts for *pemekaran* in West Sumba started in 2000, four years later the campaign has not yet been successful.

The case of Sumba presented here is an example of how new laws and institutions created at the national level are taken as opportunities by members of the local elite, who adjust them to local political culture and use them to strengthen their positions or interests.

In some areas of Indonesia, the struggle for a larger share of the benefits from exploitation of the area's natural resources is the main driving force behind *pemekaran*; in other areas persisting religious conflicts or ethnic distinctions make *pemekaran* an obvious opportunity to separate 'us' from 'them'. On Sumba, none of these conditions seem to be present. Then what were the social forces behind the campaign? How would the identity justifying the new district be constructed? Why was there so little opposition? How is this case specific for Sumba? Why has the campaign not been successful, or at least, not yet? Does the case of *pemekaran* on Sumba support the thesis that local aristocracies in the Outer Islands of Indonesia survive all changes in national politics and remain in power locally (Magenda 1989:61-2)? How does this case study contribute to understanding the processes that accompany decentralization?³

This chapter describes the campaigns for two of the three new districts proposed in West Sumba, namely Central Sumba and Southwest Sumba.⁴ Alongside these empirical parts it presents a framework to understand the opportunities that decentralization offers. This starts by stressing that Sumba is a resource poor island and that the state bureaucracy is the most important economic sector, receiving over 90% of its budget from Jakarta. Creating a new district needs actors who engage in political struggle to reach this goal. These people are connected to each other through networks deploying shared histories and cultures. For the purpose of lobbying for their cause – Central Sumba in this case – they create a shared political identity. Two important

³ Jacqueline Vel's forthcoming monograph *Uma politics; Democracy and contemporary political culture on Sumba* will include the sequel in the Sumbanese democratization process: the 2005 direct elections for regional head (*pikalda*), in which some of the main actors in this chapter play a prominent role again.

⁴ The Indonesian names of the proposed districts are: Sumba Tengah, Sumba Barat and Sumba Barat Daya.

elements of this political identity are the boundaries that separate 'us' from 'them', and the stories about those boundaries (Tilly 2003:32). The third section provides an overview of the various ways in which Sumba has been divided administratively in the past, since the currently proposed division uses arguments of historical precedent.

The fourth section answers the question who the local rulers are, and concludes that they are still usually members of the Sumbanese aristocracy, who are well educated and have a successful professional career as well. Campaigning for *pemekaran* is part of competition between factions of the local elite. In this competition, elite factions have to create their own constituency. The fifth section discusses the problematic role of religion and ethnicity on Sumba as ingredients for creating political identity, as labels to distinguish 'us' from 'them'.

Campaigning for a new district requires strong rhetoric and attractive theatre. Being a successful politician on Sumba is largely a matter of being the best orator. The sixth section goes into this phenomenon using examples of the campaign for South Southwest Sumba.

Creating a new district is not a completely local affair. It involves actors, institutions and decisions on all levels, from the grass root up to Jakarta. Studies on these decentralization practices can therefore not be limited to the local context. The practices on Sumba in the campaign for a new district show the importance of networks as vehicles in political campaigns. Religious networks, alumni networks, kinship and marriage alliance networks create – much like political parties do – connections between people who can provide reciprocal services. The seventh section describes three successful Sumbanese men who reside in Jakarta or the provincial capital Kupang and who play a very important role in the attempt to create a new district in their home island. They link the region with the centre.

The economic importance of the state on Sumba

Sumba is an island, about 210 km long and 65 km wide, located southeast of the line Bali – Lombok – Sumbawa – Flores. It is part of the province of East Nusa Tenggara, one of the poorest in Indonesia, where between 1996 and 2000 on average only 0.65% of the Indonesian national gross domestic product was generated.⁵ Sumba is divided into two districts, East Sumba and West Sumba. Both districts are resource poor and the economically most important sector is the state.

⁵ BPS Statistics Indonesia at <http://www.bps.go.id/sector/nra/grdp/table4.shtml>, accessed 5-8-2004.

Table 1. Sumba in figures.⁶

Indicator	West Sumba	East Sumba	Nusa Tenggara Timur	Indonesia
Population 2002 (x 1000)	366	191	3,925	217,100
Per capita income 2002 (in US\$**)	116	191	173	3,200
Surface area (in km ²)	4,051	7,000	49,880	1,919,317
Population density (people/km ²)	90	27	83	116

** For comparative purposes the income figures are given in US\$, using an exchange rate of 1 US\$ = 9,000 rupiah.

The figures clearly show a very small per capita income, but actual poverty of the Sumbanese population is a matter of debate among statisticians and policy-makers (Betke and Ritonga 2004). The macro figures do not include income in kind. The larger part of the population in Sumba has income in kind. Especially food is either a product of one's own cultivation or received through barter trade, which are invisible in the statistics (Vel 1994b:35-8). Despite this addition, Sumba remains a very resource poor island. Cashew nuts, vanilla and cacao are at present the most promising crops for export to other regions. Sandalwood, which used to be the island's major commodity, is officially banned from trade. Informal sources confirm however that illegal logging and trade is finishing off the last sandalwood left on the island, just as in Timor (McWilliam 2001).

The best type of employment with regard to status and monetary income from the Sumbanese perspective, and the common ideal for pupils starting their education, is to be a civil servant. The riots in 1998 in Waikabubak, West Sumba's district capital, were triggered by demonstrations against the district government, which was accused of fraud and nepotism over the results of exams for candidate-civil servants (Vel 2001:154). According to *Sumba Barat dalam angka 2002* (Sumba Barat in figures 2002, see Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Sumba Barat 2003) there are 1,356 official civil servants in West Sumba, and another 3,600 people who work as school teachers or health workers. The total of about 5,000 people who work for the government is 25% of those employed outside agriculture in West Sumba. The only other

⁶ BPS Statistics Indonesia at <http://www.bps.go.id/> and <http://ntt.bps.go.id>, UNDP Human Development Report at <http://hdr.undp.org/statistics>, and World Fact Book of the CIA at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>.

sector in which people on Sumba earn a good (monetary) income is trade. This sector on Sumba is completely dominated by Sumbanese of Chinese ethnic origin. Table 2 depicts the structure of the economy in West Sumba according to official state statistics:

Table 2. West Sumba's Gross Domestic Product 2001 and its division over the major sectors of the district economy.

Indicator, for West Sumba 2001	Billions rupiah	Percentage of District GDP in 2001
Gross Domestic Product (current market prices)	482	100
Government expenditures	78	17
GDP produced in Agriculture, of which:	284	61
a. food crops' contribution to GDP	194	42
b. horticulture	34	7
c. forestry	0.8	0
d. livestock	50	11
e. fishery		1
GDP produced in:		
a. trade	14	9
b. tourism	1	0
c. mining	2	1
d. industry	3.5	2
e. building and construction	7	4
f. banking and finance	6	3
g. transport and communication	8	3

Source: Badan Pusat Statistik Sumba Barat 2003.

By far the largest sector is agriculture. In terms of employment – or daily activities of the population – 87% of the economically active population works in agriculture. This figure includes well-educated people who have not succeeded in finding a job corresponding with their education, who constitute an invisible, yet politically important category. The agricultural sector accounts for 61% of the District Gross Domestic Product, and 42% of the GDP is produced in food agriculture. The latter figure is highly fictive because a large part of food production is subsistence agriculture, which means that just a small part of the harvest is sold, while the bulk of it is kept for consumption or enters the barter economy, where food is exchanged for services (Vel 1994a:71). The government is much more dominant in the district monetary economy than these official figures suggest. Just the government routine expenditure is visible in the GDP accounts, 16% of GDP. The district government is the employer of the official civil servants, *pegawai negeri sipil*,

and of numerous other employees with a minor status. It is also the institution that issues projects in infrastructure. The district government obtains its revenues – 155 billion rupiah in 2001, or 32% of the GDP – for more than 90% from the central government, through the General Allocation Fund (Dana Alokasi Umum, DAU).⁷ A new district would have a new district government with its own share of DAU. The campaigners in West Sumba envisaged great opportunities for themselves and their under-employed relatives.

The past as a source of arguments for pemekaran

In the debate for or against the new district many historical arguments are put forward. What would make Central Sumba a meaningful entity? Administrative practice in the past could provide the answer. The history of administrative boundaries does not reveal what is now considered West Sumba as a natural social or geographical entity. The boundaries involved in the discussion about *pemekaran* were created in the past by state officials, and these boundaries shifted every once in a while.

The most constant type of area in Sumba is the traditional domain. This has always been the area referred to if Sumbanese explain other Sumbanese's identity to a third party: '*orang Lawonda*', '*orang Loli*'. 'Domain' is used in the anthropological literature to refer to traditional regions. Rodney Needham (1987:7) describes the characteristics of a domain on Sumba as follows:

Its integrating force within a domain is the hegemony of a main village and of the leading clan of that village. This clan owed its power to its ancestral spirits (*marapu*) and the unity of the district or domain was manifested in the attendance at sacrifices and ceremonies performed at the main village by the dominant clan.

From the earliest accounts, Sumba is described as an island with permanent internal warfare. It appears there was strong enmity between the domains. The object of warfare was to capture food, horses and people. In the pre-colonial era land could have been the subject matter of internal disputes but not the object of warfare between two domains. The sharp borders drawn on maps of traditional domains are imaginary. A domain is defined by its centre and not by its borders.⁸

Taro Goh (1991) registered 16 domains in West Sumba and another eight in East Sumba. Other sources mention more: Meijering, Jongbloed et al. (1927:8) mention 29, whereas Oemboe Hina Kapita (1976:51-3) gives a more detailed sub-division when he describes the history of administrative divi-

⁷ Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Sumba Barat 2003:252. In 2001 it was 92%.

⁸ This is the mandala form of polity (Anderson 1990).

sions. While living in Lawonda I noticed that people who originate from the domain Umbu Ratu Nggai still make a distinction between at least four domains within that area, which supports the larger number mentioned by Oemboe Hina Kapita.

What is important within the context of finding stories to support the idea of creating a new district is that districts can be made up of several traditional domains. Stories about the connection between these domains serve as an argument why they should be gathered within one administrative area. In the course of history many different larger administrative units were constructed on Sumba. Consequently, domains shifted from one unit to another.

Under colonial rule, which started on Sumba in 1912, the whole island of Sumba was one *afdeeling* (similar to today's district) of the Residency of Timor within the Dutch Indies administration. The colonial administrators considered the many traditional domains on Sumba, and chose one among the aristocrats (*maramba*) of each area to be appointed as king (*raja*) and this person subsequently acted as indirect ruler (*zelfbestuurder*), for the colonial government. Sumba was divided before 1915 into three sub-districts, named *onderafdeelingen* (see Map 4a). These in turn contained smaller sub-units called, in colonial terms, kingdoms or territories (*kerajaan* or *landschappen*). If one *landschap* comprised more than one traditional domain, the colonial government would appoint a raja from one domain with assistant raja from the other domains. Although traditional domains were autonomous, they were linked in various ways. Cooperation in warfare or protection against slave raiders from outside created bonds. Marriage alliance was the most important traditional way of creating ties between members of various domains. Oemboe Hina Kapita describes how the raja of Lewa Kambera in the mid-nineteenth century was in control of the whole area of central and East Sumba, because of marriage alliances with the aristocracy of all the domains in that area (Oemboe Hina Kapita 1976:33). The first administrative units in Sumba correspond with the area of influence of the major raja at that time. In 1915 West Sumba was split in two after Assistant Resident A. Couvreur studied the social structure in Sumba and decided to create Northwest Sumba and Southwest Sumba (see Map 4b). In 1922 the two parts of West Sumba were united again, and what was called Central Sumba in those days merged into East Sumba (see Map 4c).

The Dutch Protestant Christian missionaries also divided the island into several territories for their work. In 1930 they decided to subdivide West Sumba into West Sumba-West and West Sumba-East (Wielenga 1949:189), following the linguistic boundary that divides the area where the East Sumbanese language Kambera is spoken from the area of the West Sumbanese languages (see Map 4d).

a

b

c

d

e

Map 4a. Government administration before 1915, 3 *onderafdeelingen*

Map 4b. Administration 1915-1922, 1 *afdeeling* divided into 4 *onderafdeelingen* (Kapita 1976:620)

Map 4c. Administration 1922-2004, divided into East and West Sumba

Map 4d. Christian mission districts after 1930 (Wielenga 1949): 4 *onderafdeelingen*, West Sumba divided

Map 4e. West Sumba's subdistricts in 2004, with the boundaries of the proposed three new districts (bold black)

The missions area West Sumba-East corresponds most closely to what was intended to become the district of Central Sumba in 2002, except that sub-district Tana Righu is not included in the plans. Wielenga (1949:43) argued that the linguistic boundary separating West Sumba-West from the rest of the island was also the boundary east of which 'the landscape is more mountainous, sparsely populated, where animal husbandry is the main economic activity and which is less accessible for bringing the Gospel'.

After the Second World War Sumba was one of the 16 member states of the federation of Eastern Indonesian States, created by the colonial government to counterbalance the nationalist movement in Indonesia. Sumba was at that time divided into 16 *kerajaan*.

In 1950 the Eastern Indonesian States ceased to exist and became part of the Indonesian Republic. The former federation was divided into several provinces. The province of which Sumba was part became Sunda Kecil, which was renamed Nusa Tenggara in 1954. The province consisted of Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa, Sumba, Flores and Timor. In 1958 Nusa Tenggara was again divided, this time into three: Bali, East Nusa Tenggara and West Nusa Tenggara. Simultaneously Sumba was divided into two districts (*tingkat II*), East Sumba and West Sumba, just as it had been before.

In 1962 the Indonesian government introduced a uniform administration in every part of the nation. West Sumba was called Daswati II Sumba Barat and was subdivided into several sub-districts replacing the former *kerajaan* or *landschappen* (also known as *swapraja*). At first, there were only four sub-districts, of which 'Mau' was exactly what is now proposed as the new district of Central Sumba. Oemboe Hina Kapita (1976:74) writes that 'for some reason or other this division was not making governance easier'. The sub-district's borders were shifted and two sub-districts added, so that Memboro afterwards belonged to another sub-district.

In the New Order period the internal administrative boundaries in West Sumba did not change. In 1999, the six sub-districts of West Sumba were divided into smaller sub-districts, resulting in the present total of 15 sub-districts.

The most recent new administrative division of West Sumba was for the general elections. The general election committee constructed five electoral areas (*wilayah pemilu*), each combining from two to four sub-districts, from which locally registered representatives would be chosen in West Sumba's parliament.

The fourth election area contains sub-districts that belong to three proposed new districts: Laura and Wewewa Utara to Southwest Sumba, Tana Righu to West Sumba and Memboro to Central Sumba.

A conclusion from this overview of Sumbanese administrative history is that boundaries of administrative territories were constantly changing in his-

tory. Therefore the idea of *pemekaran* as part of the decentralization discourse is nothing new. It seems to be just a new name for a practice that has been familiar for nearly a century.

Local rulers and the social forces behind pemekaran

Ancestry is the unifying principle in traditional domains. The ancestral spirits are called Marapu, and this term is also used to indicate the indigenous beliefs and ancestor divination. Spiritual specialists (*ratu*) are the ones who receive knowledge of the ancestors concerning every aspect of life. This knowledge appears in ritual speech, poems of paired sentences, and in rituals. The *ratu* know the procedure for each ritual, have the ability to indicate an auspicious time for each stage, and indicate the objects required to fulfil the ritual.

The *ratu* were not the political leaders of their clans. The nobility, *maramba*, held temporal power within each clan (*kabihu*) (Forth 1981:237), but this leadership was not a hereditary attribute of all noblemen. The leader in charge was someone of noble descent with excellent rhetorical skills (Kruseman 1836, in Hoskins 1993:44), and wealthy enough to be able to organize large feasts.

Traditionally, leaders on Sumba were only leaders within their own domain. This changed with colonial rule, when some of the *maramba* were appointed by the colonial government as raja or assistant raja, placing them into a larger structure and creating a new hierarchy.

From the earliest contacts, Europeans have taken themselves to be confronted with territorial political units under the leadership of rajas. These regions were eventually consolidated by the Dutch colonial government, in 1928, into nineteen independent administrative districts (*landschappen*); but by indigenous criteria the boundaries of these were artificial and disputable, and within them there were in some instances more numerous territorial sub-divisions which had their own traditional claims to separate recognition. (Needham 1987:7.)

In the area that is proposed as Central Sumba the successive raja from Anakalang and Lawonda are the most famous local leaders. They serve as icons of the glorious past and their careers as proof of the superiority of the people of these domains. Some of their descendants are now active leaders in the campaign for Central Sumba, many others are not, while some even oppose the idea of *pemekaran*.

Umbu Tipuk Marisi is the most famous of the raja Lawonda. He was the first grandson of Umbu Siwa Sambawali, the first *maramba* appointed as raja Lawonda, from 1913 until 1932. Umbu Marisi studied at the Academy for

Government Sciences in Batavia (Jakarta). Upon his return to Sumba after the war he became Sumba's highest government official, chairman of the council of raja, in 1949. He delegated governance over his *kerajaan* Umbu Ratu Nggai to his assistant-raja Habil Hudang, who held the position until the system of governance was changed in 1962 (Oemboe Hina Kapita 1976:51). One of Habil Hudang's daughters is now the 'mother' in the lobbying committee for Central Sumba. The chairman of the committee for Central Sumba is linked to Habil Hudang's family through marriage alliance. Umbu Marisi moved to the provincial capital Kupang on nearby Timor Island in 1958 to become deputy governor (Pembantu Kepala Daerah Tingkat I untuk Sumba). His children did not return to Sumba to be active in politics.

The raja Anakalang's rule was restricted to *swapraja* Anakalang, until 1962, when Umbu Remu Samapati was elected to be West Sumba's district head (*bupati*). He delegated his task as raja to his brother in law Umbu Sulung Ibilona. Both Umbu Sulung and Umbu Remu sent their sons for education to Java. Umbu Sulung's eldest son Umbu Djima was district head in West Sumba for ten years, from 1985 until 1995. Afterwards he was a member of the national parliament for Golkar, until 1999. He is not an active supporter of the campaign for Central Sumba.

Umbu Remu's son, Umbu Sappi Pateduk, came back to Sumba in 1990 from Java. He wanted to live in his home area, to be able to combine his government career with his tasks as leader of his clan. He became the head of the district planning board (Badan Perencanaan dan Pembangunan Daerah, Bappeda) in West Sumba. After the 1999 elections it was the first time since 1958 that district heads were to be elected by the district parliament. He was not successful in the last elections, because he was just one among several Golkar candidates from Anakalang, struggling for the support of the same constituency. Support was divided and in the end the PDI-P candidate from further West in Sumba, Th. Langgar, won the position.⁹ Frustration that 'Anakalang has lost power' is among the motives to create Central Sumba district. Umbu Sappi Pateduk was appointed in 2000 as member of the district head's staff (*asisten II*). He is mentioned as the top candidate for district head of Central Sumba, but he does not show official, open commitment to the campaign.

Burhan Magenda (1989:61-62) argued in his study of local aristocracies in the Outer Islands of Indonesia that they survive all changes in national politics and remain in power locally. In the recent literature on decentralization in Indonesia, all cases of *pemekaran* discussed reveal the strong interests of local elites, who act as initiators of the secession process, head the lobby-

⁹ Previously Th. Langgar was district secretary (*sekwilda*) in the district of North Central Timor, had always been a Golkar member but switched in time to PDI-P.

ing committees, and – if successful – occupy the offices of power in the new provinces or districts (Quinn 2003). Yet a more detailed analysis is necessary to reveal which members of the local elite are involved in campaigns for *pemekaran*, and which are not. The ones active in the campaign on Sumba were actually a small group. Closer analysis suggests that the older participants in the campaign were marginal members of the local elite: with sufficient status in traditional terms to be accepted as a leader, but with positions in government or the private sector that did not satisfy them, or put them outside the decision-making circuit. Leading people in the Central Sumba movement include a village head, a reverend suspended from his church office because of a long history of larger and smaller conflicts, and several retired civil servants. These are supported by a large group of well-educated, unemployed youths, who do not want to work in agriculture. These youths see the new district as an opportunity to get the jobs they hoped and studied for. In the short term the campaigning itself provides them with lots of excitement, which is otherwise hard to get in Sumba. They are very vocal and could become more powerful in their capacity to use violence and enforce social exclusion for political opponents.

The case of Central Sumba shows political action by a different group than the ruling local aristocracy, who are silent or absent in the story. That the campaign – at least until January 2005 – has not succeeded could therefore be an indirect argument in favour of the continuity of the ruling local elite.

Burhan Magenda (1989:50-5) distinguishes two types of regional elites: the commercial and landed aristocracies, of which the latter would fit an 'inland state' such as Central Sumba. This typology is very useful, especially in historical studies, because it pays attention to the great importance of material resources as the source of power. During my fieldwork and various visits afterwards I learned that people in Anakalang and Lawonda use a much more elaborate concept of 'local aristocracy'. In this local concept the raja dynasty is just one family of rulers among several. In the same area there are more noble families, and some of these other families are in no way – except in their historical connection to the government – inferior to the family of the raja. One other clan in Anakalang was famous for its ritual specialists, and at present its best known member is Secretary General of the Protestant Christian Church of Sumba. Yet another clan in Anakalang claims superiority as the clan of first residence, therefore they are the 'Lord of the Land' (Mangu Tana). The present chairman of the General Election Committee in East Sumba, who used to be a university lecturer in Java, is a prominent member of this clan. The local aristocracy, therefore, is not a monolithic institution, but it is a diverse group of local elites, who can either act in unison or compete among themselves. They are all connected through marriage alliances.

The Central Sumba story hints at changes in the criteria for local leader-

ship. The definition in the anthropological literature on Sumba emphasizes traditional social rank and thus defines the local elite as those of noble rank, the *maramba*. Magenda, somewhat differently, defines the local elite in an 'inland state' like Sumba as the landed aristocracy, which evokes a rather static and singular definition of local elite, that focuses on internal sources of power and leaves out ties to other parts of Indonesia and influential connections within other spheres of society. On Sumba, land is no longer the most important source of power. The state has become more important than land. Political disputes are about state offices and funds. A district head has the means to employ thousands of relatives and has access to funds for buying support. Local aristocrats can only survive as leaders if they acquire additional qualities: a good education and a professional career, preferably a good position in the bureaucracy.

This argument leads to the necessity of potential leaders to create a strong political identity among their constituency, because kinship and marriage alliance might not be sufficient anymore.

Cultural and religious arguments for creating a new district

Elsewhere in Indonesia, local identity politics are often played out in terms of religion and ethnicity. In Central Sumba this is not easy to do, because the area is rather homogeneous in both those terms. Instead, as we shall see, local leaders conjure up identities out of less tangible materials. To do that, they need to possess highly refined oratorical skills.

Religious affiliation and ethnicity can both provide strong labels for creating political identity. Studies on violence in Indonesia give many examples of how these labels were used in defining the parties in violent battles (Colombijn and Lindblad 2002). Labels can only be helpful as markers of political identity when they provide a name for the shared characteristic of a group in opposition to other, neighbouring groups involved in contentious politics (D. Brown 1994:29).

Religious adherence as it is registered on the official identity card shows that more than 80% of the population of West Sumba adheres to one of the five religions officially recognized in Indonesia. According to the Statistics Office in West Sumba, 52% of the population was Protestant Christian in 2002, 27% Catholic, 3% Muslim and 18% 'other', which in Sumba means that they are open adherents of the traditional Marapu religion. The history of the Protestant Christian Church dates back to 1880 with the arrival of the first Dutch missionaries, and is rather comparable to that of Central Sulawesi, as described by Lorraine Aragon (2000). In both regions ethnic minorities – as seen from the national perspective – were converted, and the

missionaries made major efforts in education and development. A difference between Sulawesi and Sumba however is that in Sumba there is no local Muslim majority, which might have stimulated a distinctive identity for the Christian minority. As a strategy to distinguish oneself from the inhabitants of the neighbouring territory, Protestant Christian identity does not make sense in Sumba. Christianity as a uniting characteristic of modern, educated Sumbanese, who are well connected to the Indonesian state, does make sense. Protestant Christian and later Catholic missions founded schools on Sumba, and the contemporary result is that the educated elite is connected through Christian networks without making a strong distinction between Catholics and Protestants. Catholics are found mostly in the western part of the island. If West Sumba is to be divided into three new districts, Central Sumba will be relatively more Protestant Christian and Southwest Sumba more Catholic. This argument is not used openly in the campaigns.

Ethnicity is a useful concept when Sumba is studied within the larger framework of the Indonesian nation-state. In a similar effort to deal with ethnicity, Aragon (2000:52) speaks of 'the fluid and concentric layering of self-identities'. The further from their homeland, the more ethnic identity is formulated in outsider's terms. But in Sumba it is hard to make external ethnic labels other than 'Sumbanese'. Exceptions to that rule are Muslim immigrants from other islands, and people originating from other islands living permanently on Sumba. For example the Savunese have their own language and in some villages in East Sumba they have their own hamlets, but their ethnic background was in 2004 not (yet) converted into a political identity.

One external definition of ethnicity on Sumba is found in the ethno-linguistic literature. According to an international team of ethno-linguists at the Artha Wacana Christian University in Kupang, who published *A guide to the people and languages of Nusa Tenggara*, there are eight Sumbanese languages, which they associate with eight different ethnic groups (Grimes et al. 1997:67-75). Violence in West Sumba's capital Waikabubak in 1998 took place between *orang* Wejewa and *orang* Lauili. However, these two groups are in the language guide both part of the Wejewa language area, where Lauili is mentioned as a dialect of Wejewa and its speakers consequently are not regarded as a different ethnic group.

Rhetoric and theatre in campaigning for pemekaran

Being a successful politician on Sumba is largely a matter of being the best orator. The style of rhetoric that works best is culturally determined and changes constantly. In 2004, political rhetoric in local election campaigns on Sumba and in the lobby for creating Southwest Sumba – which was in 2003

referred to as Sumba Jaya – was a combination of Christian sanctimonious talk, New Order jargon, quasi-ritual speech, colloquial talk and fashionable television language.

The ‘People’s congress for Sumba Jaya’ on 29 April 2003 was the peak of the campaign for this new district. People from seven sub-districts gathered in Waitabula, West Sumba’s second town after Waikabubak, and Sumba’s Catholic centre. On this day representatives of all seven sub-districts delivered a declaration supporting and urging the foundation of their new district, Sumba Jaya. They offered the signed declaration to the members of the Jakarta Committee for Sumba Jaya with the request to take this ‘will of the people’ (*aspirasi masyarakat*) further upwards in the decision-making process.

At the event no representatives from the decision-making bodies – whether in Waikabubak, Kupang or Jakarta – were present, but the ceremony was carefully orchestrated with these people as the audience in mind. The Sumba Jaya committee made a VCD of the event, serving as a modern and lasting proof of the strength of their social movement. The VCD perfectly captures the political symbols and rhetoric that politicians on Sumba use in contemporary campaigns.

The documentary starts with the arrival on 25 April 2003 of the Jakarta delegation at the (only) airport of West Sumba, Tambolaka, which will be an important asset of the new district. The Jakarta Committee consisted of six members, four middle-aged men and two women, who were all born on Sumba – in the area that they hope will become Sumba Jaya. They pursued their education and careers on Java. The committee included an army officer who is a bodyguard of a recently retired general in Jakarta, a private businessman and two university lecturers. It has good strategic access to people in the Ministry of Domestic Affairs.¹⁰ Upon arrival they wore suit-jackets made of West Sumbanese hand-woven cloth that looked so similar that they were as if dressed in ‘uniforms of the traditional representatives’. The group set out to Waitabula in a convoy of jeeps, preceded by a cavalcade of motorcycles, a reminder of the traditional horse riders’ welcoming escort but also looking like a modern youth gang. The documentary shows that shortly after their arrival the Jakarta Committee, together with the chairman of the local committee for the new district, set up a meeting with representatives from all areas in the new district to explain the strategies and agenda for the People’s Congress. They reminded the audience that this was the 50th meeting in preparation of Sumba Jaya, a landmark, and an additional reason why the Jakarta Committee’s presence was justified.

When the Jakarta delegation entered the field for the event on the 29th, they wore traditional dress combined with modern shirt. Although in a way

¹⁰ The next section gives a short profile of the committee chairman, Markus Dairo Talu.

they were the hosts of the ceremony, they got a seat in front as the guests of honour.

The groups from each of the seven districts arrived in trucks and small buses. Apparently the villagers were asked to come in traditional dress, and each group was preceded by dancers, who danced and shouted as if they were going to war. The official ceremony started with the Indonesian National Anthem. Then a Protestant Christian reverend explained to the audience in the local language that success can only come with the blessing of the Lord, and he said a prayer in Indonesian, in which he asked the Lord for support for the campaign for Sumba Jaya and his blessing on the People's Congress. Representatives of each of the seven sub-districts read their declaration, in Indonesian, after which there were a few minutes for dances and cheers, called *spontanitas*.

The shared summary declaration of pursuit toward the new district of Sumba Jaya was the core of the event. *Pemekaran* is a goal that needs to be established within the framework of the State, and this calls for state-like procedures. A female member of the organizing committee declaimed with the monotonous and theatrical voice of a well-trained Indonesian school teacher. After each part of a sentence she paused and all sub-district representatives and citizens present repeated the words, as if they were saying the Lord's Prayer (Paternoster) in Church.

In line with Joel Kuipers' opening statement in his book *Power in performance*, that on the island of Sumba a vibrant form of ritual speech is required in all ceremonial events (Kuipers 1990:i), the organizing committee of the People Congress in Waitabula invited a specialist in ritual speech to give a performance after the reading of the declaration.

The few Indonesian words incorporated into the couplet-style monologue indicated that the speaker had composed it especially for this occasion, to frame the message of the declaration in the vernacular Wejewa. On the one hand this was rather similar to the complete domestication of traditional culture familiar in the New Order, as it is described by John Bowen (1986) with regard to the appropriation of the concept of traditional self help, *gotong royong*. On the other hand it was also a way to add a type of rhetoric to the ceremony that livens up the audience and increases their commitment. Generally, political leaders rarely win support by rhetorical tactics and strategies that employ reason and rationality. Reason is dull and rarely moves people to action. Instead, according to Frederick Bailey (1983), it is passion that sways people.

The style of ritual speech is that of an 'angry man' (Kuipers 1998:49). Good ritual speech on Sumba is (very) loud, a constant stream of words without hesitation. It is also orderly, as displayed in the paired sentences of ritual speech. The performer at the Waitabula event did not completely succeed in

attracting the attention of all. The audience were people from seven areas in West Sumba and from other areas – like Jakarta – so that many did not understand the words. Usually on Sumba, the audience enjoys ‘traditional’ performance invented especially for the occasion, because the performer mixes in lots of jokes. The Sumba Jaya ‘ritual speech’ was probably too serious.

Most of all the People’s Congress in Waitabula was a display of the grass roots involvement which is formally the primary basis for *pemekaran*. Political leaders prove ‘grass roots involvement’ by getting a large crowd to attend the event. Leaders everywhere in the world use large crowds as the visible sign of support, to strengthen their political power. Kuipers (1998:74-5) calls this feature in the context of Sumbanese political culture ‘the ideology of audience completeness’. Audience completeness confirms the authority of the leader. Conversely, a key image of a leader’s social influence, prestige and status is the capacity to create a ‘complete audience’. The completeness shows in the number of people who attend, in their evaluation of the way they are received at the event – most concretely measured in how many heads of livestock are slaughtered for the meals served to the audience- and in the volume and number of the verbal responses they produce during the leader’s oration.

Campaigning for a new district is partly just rhetoric and theatre, set up by the initiators of the campaign, who need to do this to be acknowledged as leaders. The spectators enjoy it, it provides entertainment, good meals and fun. A people’s congress or any other large gathering on Sumba does not necessarily imply that all the people present know what the event is about, let alone that they come because they support the officially stated cause.

Upward mobility and links with Jakarta

The Jakarta Lobbying Committee for the cause of Southwest Sumba is very important in the campaign for the western district. They organize, they initiate, they provide money, they provide campaigning materials, they lobby at the decision-making institutions in Jakarta and they return to Sumba every once in a while. Who are they and why are they interested in a new district on Sumba? Three examples present at least part of the answer.

Dr Manasse Malo lives in Jakarta, where he is professor of sociology at the University of Indonesia. He was member of the national parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, DPR) until October 2004. He was born on West Sumba (Wejewu) in 1941 as the son of the first Sumbanese reverend of the Protestant Christian Church. He was a bright student and received a church fellowship first to study at the Christian University in Salatiga, Central Java, and to study theology in Jakarta. He was then lucky enough to get the chance,

through international church connections, to study in the United States, and finally he earned his PhD degree at Wisconsin University. His wife is not Sumbanese, but born in Manado.

Manasse Malo has written and spoken widely on decentralization policy in Indonesia (Manasse Malo 1995). In 1998, fired by Reformasi, Manasse Malo was one of the founders of the Partai Demokrasi Kasih Bangsa (PDKB, Love the Nation Democratic Party), a mainly Christian Party, with a constituency predominantly in Eastern Indonesia. He was elected chairman. In the 1999 elections PDKB won three seats out of 35 in the district parliament in West Sumba, and five seats in the national parliament. In 1998, I heard about discussions among the Kupang members of the new party indicating that at that time they were in favour of making Indonesia a federation again.¹¹ Eastern Indonesia would be one of the member states, including even East Timor, and – according to their hopes or dreams – PDKB would become the largest party.

From 1999 up to the recent 2004 election period Manasse Malo was deputy chairman of the national parliament's Sub-Commission on Domestic Affairs and Regional Autonomy, and a member of the parliamentary committee that deals with regional autonomy. Now he is retired. He is a strong supporter of turning Sumba into a province, and the law requires a province to have at least three districts. He is the main source of information and the gatekeeper to all useful contacts in the bureaucracy in Jakarta. Now that he is retired he would not mind returning to Sumba, and be head of one of the new districts, or perhaps even governor of the Province of Sumba, 'if the people ask me to'.¹²

In 1999 Manasse Malo had a discussion with Umbu Dedu Ngara about their ideas on *pemekaran* Sumba. The latter was staff member of the provincial planning board Bappeda Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) in Kupang, and also heading for retirement. His home village is Lawonda in Central Sumba. His family is not the raja's, but certainly noble. The family members of his generation and younger are well-educated, most of them in Java. Umbu Dedu Ngara studied in Salatiga and was a board member of the Gerakan Mahasiswa Kristen Indonesia (GMKI, Indonesian Christian Student Movement), just as Manasse Malo had been.

Umbu Dedu Ngara conveyed the idea to create a new district of Central Sumba to several other provincial officials who originate from central Sumba, and they began together to lobby for it. They put the idea on the agenda at meetings of the Ikatan Keluarga asal Sumba di Kupang (IKAS, Union of Sumbanese residing in Kupang).¹³ In the new decentralized structure the

¹¹ Personal communication with Nico Woly, Kupang, december 1998.

¹² Interview with Manasse Malo, Jakarta, 16-12-2004.

district has budgetary autonomy, and more decision power over many issues has been transferred to the district level, leaving the province with a mostly coordinating – and less powerful and rewarding – role. So the provincial elite had good reasons for moving one step downwards in the administrative hierarchy. Moreover many Sumbanese who have reached the autumn of their careers look forward to returning to Sumba, where they are cared for by their relatives, appreciated because of their status and relative wealth, and where they can die in peace and be buried in accordance with the prescriptions of tradition.

Markus Dairo Talu is not retired yet, since he is just in his early forties. He is an army officer with the modest position of adjutant, but the rewarding task of bodyguard for a major general, who was his master for many years. With his general, Markus served in the Presidential palace for some years. He is also a freelance security specialist, who acted as bodyguard for businessmen on their request, or as their 'debt collector', and as doorman for a fancy discotheque in Jakarta. This identity is not really known in Sumba. On Sumba, whenever Markus returns from Jakarta to his homeland in 2003 and 2004, he was the benefactor for the campaign for Southwest Sumba, and chairman of its Jakarta Lobby Committee. Sumbanese spectators see his love for the homeland and watch his wealth when he distributes T-shirts, caps and money. His life history is an attractive success story for those who do not belong to the aristocracy. Having lost his father, he lived with his mother and siblings in poverty in Wejewa (Waimangura). He was able to attend the Catholic school, and received a scholarship to attend a course on Java. There he met an army officer who became his mentor and introduced him to the army. In Jakarta he owns 4 houses, and provides housing and work for around 50 boys from his home area in Sumba.

What these three main actors in campaigning for the new districts have in common is that they were born on Sumba, received a good education and, with or without a church scholarship, pursued their education in Java. Consequently they had a successful career, after which they wanted to return to their home island, where they enjoy high prestige and status and social security provided by their relatives. They are connected through various modern networks: the political party, student alumni organizations, the Christian Church or the unions of emigrant Sumbanese in cities outside Sumba.

¹³ Interview with Manasse Malo, Jakarta, 16-12-2004.

Campaigning for Central Sumba

After Umbu Dedu Ngara and two fellow provincial officials paid a visit to Waibakul,¹⁴ the capital of Katikutana sub-district (Anakalang), local elite members set up an organization to lobby for the new district, called 'Forum Komunikasi Pembangunan Desa' (Consulting Committee on Village Development), usually called simply 'the Forum'. Agustinus Umbu Sabarua, village head of Anajiaka (bordering the sub-district capital) became head of the forum. Its members consist of invited representatives of youth and women's organizations, village and church leaders, in short 'leaders of every segment of the population'. The Forum's tasks was to obtain: a. proof of the *aspirasi masyarakat* (popular wish), and recommendations from; b. the head of West Sumba; c. the district parliament; d. the provincial governor; and finally e. from the national parliament in Jakarta.

The Forum started by inviting representatives of all kinds of civil society organizations and local leaders around Anakalang for a workshop. The Forum's chairman said that the content of the workshop was to 'socialize regional autonomy', and explained the arguments for creating a new district. The main argument was that a new and smaller district would bring government services closer to the people, implicitly suggesting that those new services would correspond better to the population's needs and would be delivered faster and more efficiently. In this first workshop the participants discussed which other sub-districts could be invited to join in the new district of Central Sumba, since regulations at that time required a minimum of three sub-districts per district. The Forum's chairman phrased the main arguments for inclusion as 'a shared culture', which he specified as linguistic unity, and marriage alliances.

To the west the linguistic border is a real barrier dividing the people that speak Kambera from the people who speak the different west Sumbanese languages. But language is not a good basis for demarcating the eastern border of Central Sumba, since eastwards everyone also speaks (a type of) Kambera.

Marriage alliances on Sumba can be regarded as the cement between the (patrilineal) clans (*kabihu*), stating the rules and extent of social, economic and political solidarity (Keane 1997:51-6). Marriage alliances in Sumba are asymmetric, which means that a long chain of clans are tied to each other through marriage bonds. In this chain the bride-givers have special power over their bride-receivers (Keane 1997:54). All present political leaders in west Sumba have a known identity in terms of marriage alliances, and are

¹⁴ Umbu Dedu Ngara (Bappeda), Umbu Giku (Livestock Service, Dinas Peternakan), Agus Umbu Sulung (Bappeda) from Kupang. Interview with Gany Wulang, Waihibur, 4-2-2003.

interconnected in this sense. All the Sumbanese actors involved in the lobby for Central Sumba are connected by kinship and marriage alliances, including the campaign's most important man in Jakarta, Manasse Malo, whose sister lives in the same village as the chairman of Central Sumba's Forum.

The second step in the process of the 'socialization of regional autonomy' was a workshop to inform and consult the leaders of all four sub-districts, or in the words of the Forum's chairman: 'to see whether they accept the conclusions that we already drew in the first workshop'.¹⁵ The workshops were held in cooperation with NGOs working on democratization in 2001 and 2002.¹⁶ The social work of these development organizations focuses on teaching local government officials and village communities about procedures and rights that the decentralization law has given them. The NGO staff are well aware of the difference between their civil education and the 'political games' of those who primarily seek personal benefit by creating new districts. Yet, local NGO staff are part of local society, and subject to pressure from the local elite.

The third step was a seminar with provincial government officials to assess the feasibility of a new district. The decentralization laws, especially Government Regulation no. 129/2000, specify a set of measurable criteria to decide whether a new district can be created or not. What counts is the availability of both natural and human resources, the number of inhabitants, size of the surface area, economic potential, the presence of civil society institutions and people's political participation, and also the level of infrastructural development and social services.¹⁷ In November 2001, a Sumbanese lecturer at the Satiya Wacana University in Salatiga, Umbu Tagela, wrote:

Law no. 22/1999 and the Government Regulation no. 129/2000, which provide all the rules with regard to the number of inhabitants and the level of economic growth and the way this should be calculated mathematically, surely leaves no option for splitting up Sumba into several new districts. Yet, if the number of inhabitants is decisive, the Sumbanese could easily fulfil the criteria by just putting off the present family planning policy. [But] would not that be an offence against national policy? And if low economic growth is the reason for not allowing a split-up, would that mean that in terms of politics Sumba is expected to be poor for ever? The real reason [for granting permission to new districts] is whether the ones in power have the political will to support the development of Sumba.¹⁸

¹⁵ Interview with Gany Wulang, Waihibur, 4-2-2003.

¹⁶ In the area around Anakalang workshops were organized by Yayasan Wahana Komunikasi Wanita (Waihibur/Waikabubak, Sumba), and Lembaga Bantuan Hukum (Mauwere, Flores).

¹⁷ See Chapter III of Government Regulation no. 129/2000.

¹⁸ *Sabana* 7(10-25 November 2001):5.

In July 2001 the local *Sabana* newspaper opened with headlines reviving the age-old rumour of gold resources in Mount Tanadaru, in the interior of Sumba. The fact that this mountain is situated in Central Sumba made the news favourable to the prospect of the new district. Until this presumed gold reservoir is actually exploited it will do nothing to alter the unfavourable conclusion as regards feasibility of a new district, namely that there is no economic potential for Central Sumba.¹⁹ Only 3% of the government income in West Sumba is derived from local taxes, the rest originates from Jakarta. There is one phrase in Government Regulation no. 129/2000, that can still be of support to the Central Sumba lobby. Chapter III, section 3, which formulates the criteria for the formation of a new district, adds in the final sentence the possibility of 'other considerations that enable the execution of regional autonomy'.²⁰

The fact that with such a bad score on feasibility the case was not closed, leads to the conclusion that *pemekaran* must not be considered merely in terms of the administrative execution of a set of decentralization laws, but should be seen as a political activity. In May 2001, the Forum wrote a petition and a proposal, added a large number of supporters' signatures, and sent it to the district government of West Sumba, the Province, and to the national Parliament (DPR) in Jakarta. Manasse Malo received the petition and stimulated the campaigners to continue their struggle, adding his advice on how to make the campaign more effective. He seemed dedicated to realize *pemekaran* on his home island. Indeed, rumour said, he dreamed of becoming the governor of Sumba, which would need the creation of another district first and afterwards a separate province. One of his pieces of advice in the early stage of lobbying was that the Forum should pay a visit to Jakarta to convince the commission's members personally of Central Sumba's viability. A group of 25 men and three women of the Forum therefore set off to Jakarta. At home the number of cynics was growing, but the delegation itself was wildly enthusiastic.

Ibu John was one of the three women in the party heading for Jakarta.²¹ At 66 years of age she was the mother of the group. She is a daughter of the last raja Umbu Ratu Nggai, Habil Hudang. As a girl she was selected to be educated in the mission's school in Payeti, which was the best education available at the time and a guarantee for membership of the Sumbanese elite. From this group of Protestant Christian youngsters some went for further studies to Salatiga. Ibu John and her husband both studied to be teachers, and after their return they set up the Christian Senior

¹⁹ This was firmly stated in an interview with one of Waikabubak's leading Chinese businessmen.

²⁰ *Pertimbangan lain yang memungkinkan terselenggaranya Otonomi Daerah*. Government Regulation PP 129/2000, Chapter III, section 3, pp. 129-200.

²¹ This section is based on my interview with ibu John (Rambu Moha) in Waikabubak, 20-2-2004.

High School (SMA) in Waikabubak. Many of the current politicians, government officials and members of Central Sumba's Forum are her former pupils, including the present district head. Ibu John has known Manasse Malo since they were young, he is her 'little brother' in the Sumbanese, educated, Protestant Christian elite. More recently, Ibu John and Manasse Malo had been in touch because they were both involved in Malo's political party PDKB. In December 2002 Ibu John attended the congress of this party in Jakarta and spoke about Central Sumba with Manasse Malo. He urged her to join the lobbying party to Jakarta.

They set off on 11 January 2003, first by ferry to Denpasar in Bali. There they went to Rocky Umbu Pekudjawang, a successful tourism businessman born in Anakalang,²² to ask him for transport money to Jakarta. Ibu John related that upon seeing the tourist coach full of uncles, cousins and aunts, he decided to sponsor more than half of the costs of the trip. The party rested in Semarang, Central Java, where they were received by close relatives living there. They got a meal and food to go and an additional contribution of 2 million rupiah.

In Jakarta Ibu John was invited to give a speech to the members of the sub-commission on *pemekaran*. She told them, dressed in traditional Sumbanese style, about the hardship of the people living in this remote area to be named Central Sumba, and how far they were from essential government services, about their genuine wish to develop themselves, of the great potential of the land, and that the will of God was helping them. Touched by this emotional speech, and assured that their ticket would be paid, the commission members promised that their inspection team would pay a visit to Sumba within a short time.

The parliamentary inspection team from Jakarta visited Sumba on 31 January and 1 February 2003. When they landed in the capital of East Sumba, they were very politely received by the district head of East Sumba. He had already made it clear from the start that Central Sumba could never include part of the present East Sumba district, with the formal argument that *pemekaran* means dividing one administrative unit into two, not recombining bits of two districts. It was his interest to make sure that no part of his territory would be claimed by the new district. Subsequently the team was welcomed by thousands of people in Laikaruda, the event with which this chapter started. The Forum had 'motivated' the crowd to come and offer the best of traditional presents. The crowd's presence reassured the Jakarta team of the local people's wish for autonomy, and in traditional terms it stressed the Forum members' leadership and legitimacy to represent the population.

With the lobby straight to Jakarta, Central Sumba's Forum by-passed and therefore offended the district parliament. Thus one obstacle remained, for the final application procedure a recommendation from all levels was required. Whereas the national parliament's team was ready to give its approval, and the governor and parliament at provincial level were ready

²² Rocky Umbu Pekudjawang was also number one on the Golkar list for the national parliament in Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) in the April 2004 elections.

to issue the recommendation, the district parliament and the head of West Sumba were not. In Waikabubak, on 1 February 2004, the offended parliament of West Sumba treated the team very impolitely, without a proper reception, and the district head remained absent, claiming he had been summoned by the governor in Kupang.

In the meantime the West Sumba district government had also received a proposal for *pemekaran* by yet another part of the district. Sumba Jaya would unite seven sub-districts in the western part of West Sumba.²³ This part of West Sumba is the relatively more developed. The capital of Sumba Jaya would be Tambolaka, now known as the location of West Sumba's airport. Sumba Jaya would also include West Sumba's major harbour at Waikelo. The creation of Sumba Jaya would split the ever-feuding domains of Lauili and Wejewa (see Vel 2001), and would imply that very little would be left for the remaining part of the original West Sumba. In February 2003, Central Sumba's Forum was confident that Sumba Jaya's chances were poor, 'since the 15th of October 2002 was the deadline for submitting proposals and they were too late'.²⁴ Sumba Jaya's lobby appeared to be very strong, though, and if the legal criteria for *pemekaran* were to be used to assess feasibility, this proposal would stand a much better chance. The proposal for Sumba Jaya – whose name was changed to Southwest Sumba in late 2003 – increased the feeling of competition in West Sumba, and behind the stage, the hopes of success in Central Sumba began to decline.

A second complicating factor was protest from Wanukaka, where a movement sprang up to refuse participation in the proposed district of Central Sumba. The official arguments were that there is no history of Wanukaka being part of the same administrative unit with Anakalang, Umbu Ratu Nggai and Memboro. Trade relationships with the town of Waikabubak are strong. Waibakul as capital instead of Waikabubak would make the distance to government services for the population of Wanukaka even longer. This new development created tensions between Wanukaka and Central Sumba's proponents. A new sub-ethnic distinction emerged to explain initial support for Central Sumba by some people from Wanukaka: Wanukaka *atas* (upper) versus Wanukaka *bawah* (lower), where Wanukaka *atas* refers to the 10% of the population residing in the mountainous area adjacent to Anakalang, where marriage alliances are many.²⁵

²³ The seven sub-districts are: Kodi, Kodi Bangedo, Wewewa Barat, Wewewa Timur, Wewewa Selatan, Palla (Wewewa Utara) and Laura.

²⁴ Interview with Agustinus Umbu Sabaruwa, chairman of the Forum, 5-2-2003.

²⁵ Interview with Muana Nanga, director of STIE in Waingapu, 18-02-2004.

West Sumba's district head Thimoteus Langgar decided to create a committee to guide the *pemekaran* process for the proposed new districts. He appointed his deputy district head as chairman, and former district head Umbu Djima, from Anakalang, as vice chairman.²⁶ This team invited the Nusa Cendana University from Kupang ('team Undana') to make a feasibility study on the potential for West Sumba to be split into more than one district using the criteria from Government Regulation no. 129/2000 to measure the score of potential new districts. Undana's Team recommended three options for West Sumba. The first option was to split West Sumba into West and Central Sumba, the second to split into West Sumba and Southwest Sumba, and the third was to create all three new districts. Apparently to remain united in one district was no option.

The team formulated positive conclusions, supporting the lobby for creating new districts. However, two economists in Waingapu, Siliwoloe Djoeroemana – born in Anakalang – and Muana Nanga – born in Wanukaka – wrote a very critical review of the feasibility study:

The team did not assess whether West Sumba fulfils the criteria for *pemekaran*, but instead focused on the new districts, parts of the present district. Government Regulation no. 129/2000 states that already existing data should be used, that are compiled by authorized institutions. Instead, the team gathered many new data, or used data from the sub-districts offices. The data themselves show a remarkable bias, positive towards a sufficient score for ability for splitting up the district. Compared to the official statistics published in *Sumba Barat dalam angka 2000* (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Sumba Barat 2001) for example the total length of roads has doubled. Also there seem to be 15,000 post offices and the like in Waikabubak only, which gives the impression the team counted the letters and not the post offices.²⁷

After a number of demonstrations and a road block, organized by youth involved in the campaign and supported by some Forum members in Central Sumba on 22 May 2003, the West Sumba government finally agreed to give its recommendations, opting for three new districts, in what they called a 'win-win solution'. The district parliament added two restrictions before the recommendations would indeed be issued. Southwest Sumba had to reconsider its boundaries with West Sumba in order to make the division of resources, inhabitants and infrastructure more equal. Central Sumba had to reconcile with Wanukaka, to decide which of the latter's sub-districts would be part of the new and the old district.

²⁶ Decree of the district head of West Sumba no. 379/2002, 31-12-2002.

²⁷ My summary of Siliwoloe Djoeroemana and Muana Nanga, 'Catatan kritis atas draft laporan hasil penelitian Tim Undana tentang pemekaran kabupaten Sumba barat', *Suara Sumba* 3-6:6-7.

By February 2004 it appeared to be very hard to publicly criticize or even question the idea of Central Sumba in Anakalang. Those who did – like the critics of the Undana report – were accused of not being loyal to their place of birth, and in fact were threatened with social expulsion. In Sumba there were not yet – as elsewhere in Indonesia – private militias who are sent to make people change their opinion. Less severe, but just as effective, are exclusion from mutual help services, and bad rumours. Being elite on Sumba makes one by definition dependent on the services of many kinsmen and fellow villagers. Those elite members who live in the capital or even outside Sumba still count on their relatives to provide them with space and material for ceremonies like weddings, and eventually to provide them with a proper grave. Rumours that spread bad stories about alleged illness, accusations of being too old to think positively or being too estranged from Sumba to appreciate *aspirasi masyarakat* are effective to reduce authority. Youth play an important role in spreading these rumours. At the seminar on *pemekaran* in Waikabubak youth delegations openly contested the authority of highly educated speakers who were cynical about Central Sumba. The youth groups in Anakalang are strong because of their growing number. The most active members are unemployed, well-educated – with bachelors degrees from Java or Kupang – who do not want to work in agriculture and cannot find suitable employment. They dream about new districts full of new positions in government service.

In February 2004 it appeared as though the lobby for Central Sumba had turned more Christian. The lobbying group that set out to Jakarta comprised one Protestant Christian reverend who said prayers preceding every next step in the process leading to the final positive decision on Central Sumba. Calling the creation of the new district the wish of God (*kehendak Tuhan*)²⁸ makes critics of the *pemekaran* opponents of the Lord. This is another type of threat and a means of social exclusion in a community where being regarded as a good Christian is similar to being respected. More ritual and Christian rhetoric also increased the theatrical value of the campaign, which could have been a deliberate strategy to compensate for the absence of sound, practical arguments.

On 26 February 2004 Manasse Malo was very pleased to receive a delegation of the West Sumba district parliament, the Forum for Central Sumba, and one for Southwest Sumba, as well several Sumbanese from Jakarta who brought the last requirements for the proposal to create new districts in West Sumba.²⁹

Officially these requirements were a number of documents with the recommendations of all the offices involved as well as a description of the process of *pemekaran* written by the district parliament. In practice the

²⁸ Interview with Ibu John (Rambu Moha) in Waikabubak, 21-02-2004.

²⁹ *Sabana* 52(23-28 February 2004):1.

requirements included bribes at all levels. For Central Sumba this was a serious problem. The secretary of the Youth Organization for Central Sumba estimated that up to 23 February 2004 the campaign for Sumba Tengah had spent between 800 and 900 million rupiah on air tickets, food and bribes.³⁰ For Sumba this was an immense amount of money, whereas by Jakarta standards it was 'just cigarette money'.

The result of the meeting in Jakarta was that the proposal to split West Sumba into three – Southwest Sumba, Central Sumba and West Sumba – was officially put on the agenda for the plenary session of the national parliament to decide.

Unfortunately for the activists from Sumba, the campaigning period for the national election started early that March. The Minister of Internal Affairs dismissed all decisions on matters of regional autonomy until after the new parliament was installed, probably October 2004. In Sumba, as everywhere else in Indonesia, political campaigns from March 2004 onwards concerned the elections. Central Sumba's activists shifted their attention from *pemekaran* and concentrated on the elections for the district parliament in April, some of them being candidates themselves.

A second alarming matter was the revision of Law no. 22/1999. The minimal number of sub-districts in a new district was now raised to seven districts, which had to have existed for at least five years. For some time there was hope in Sumba that the decision for *pemekaran* in West Sumba would be taken before the changes in Law no. 22 took effect. However, the law was changed on 10 May by presidential decree. This makes it hard to believe that Central Sumba will ever be realized, although professor Manasse Malo was still optimistic in December 2004.³¹

The campaign for Central Sumba shows that to create a new district involves a long process, and success is not guaranteed. In the same period, since 2000, many other districts were created, which raises the question why it took so long for Sumba. That so many people and institutions have to provide their recommendation or decision, and the fact that they have to be 'motivated' to do so, is one explanation for the tardiness. Once the law on a new district is passed, the legislative bodies (and persons) have done their task and lose this opportunity for extra income. It would be interesting to see figures that relate the amount of expenditure involved in 'the cost of the campaign' – like the 1.5 billion rupiah of Tojo Una-Una (Cohen 2003:50) as compared to the lesser 900 million of Central Sumba – to the speed with

³⁰ Interview with Adri Saba Ora, secretary of Forum Komunikasi Pemuda Peduli Sumba Tengah, 23-2-2004. For comparison: Margot Cohen reports that the campaign to create the district Tojo Una-Una in Central Sulawesi required 1,5 billion rupiah (Cohen 2003).

³¹ Interview with Manasse Malo, Jakarta, 16-12-2004.

which the *pemekaran* process took place. The fact that Central Sumba has not yet succeeded in becoming a district by itself does not contradict the opinion that all government decisions in Indonesia are for sale, but it could be interpreted as a sign that a district has a minimum price, which is too high for poor and small areas like Central Sumba to pay.