

Violence and Vengeance: Religious Conflict and Its Aftermath in Eastern Indonesia

Christopher R. Duncan



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Between 1999 and 2000, sectarian fighting fanned across the eastern Indonesian province of North Maluku, leaving thousands dead and hundreds of thousands displaced. What began as local conflicts between migrants and indigenous people over administrative boundaries spiraled into a religious war pitting Muslims against Christians and continues to influence communal relationships more than a decade after the fighting stopped. Christopher R. Duncan spent several years conducting fieldwork in North Maluku, and in *Violence and Vengeance*, he examines how the individuals actually taking part in the fighting understood and experienced the conflict.

Rather than dismiss religion as a facade for the political and economic motivations of the regional elite, Duncan explores how and why participants came to perceive the conflict as one of religious difference. He examines how these perceptions of religious violence altered the conflict, leading to large-scale massacres in houses of worship, forced conversions of entire communities, and other acts of violence that stressed religious identities. Duncan's analysis extends beyond the period of violent conflict and explores how local understandings of the violence have complicated the return of forced migrants, efforts at conflict resolution and reconciliation.

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