

THE CONCEPT OF PELA AND ITS SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE IN  
THE COMMUNITY OF MOLUCCAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE  
NETHERLANDS

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1. Introduction

The data discussed in this article were obtained in the course of legal anthropological research which is being carried out in a Moluccan (Indonesian) community in the Netherlands. As the fieldwork, which started in March 1983, is at the time of writing (March 1985) still in full swing, the presentation is subject to the reservations usual for an interim report.

The estimated number of Moluccans now in the Netherlands is 35,000. The group consists of ex-soldiers of the Dutch colonial army who moved to this country in the aftermath of the decolonization of Indonesia in 1951, and their families and offspring. These immigrants live in distinct neighborhoods (Dutch: wijken, singular wijk) of Dutch towns and villages. There are dozens of these wijken, with from 200 to 3,000 inhabitants, spread all over the country. The present research consists primarily of participatory observation in one community living in such a wijk in a small town in the south of the Netherlands. The research is, however, not limited to this community. All Moluccans, wherever they live in Holland, are members of 'descent groups', that is, networks of persons with a common origin in a specific village in Indonesia. Hence, the wijk can be used not only as a research site, but also as a base for exploring the other socio-juridically relevant social formations of the Moluccan community in the Netherlands.

The research concerns various aspects of the internal law of this community. Special attention is being paid to the adaptation of indigenous Moluccan law, after its transplantation from Indonesia to the Netherlands, to the geographical and socio-juridical conditions of the new environment. The research may thus be considered as an attempt to explore hitherto unknown juridical substrata of Dutch society. Following authors like Moore (1973), Galanter (1981) and Griffiths (1979), who have concerned themselves with the phenomenon of 'legal pluralism', we may consider

this society (like any other society) to consist of a "multitude of partially self-regulatory spheres and sectors, organized along spatial, transactional or ethnic-familial lines... (Galanter 1981:19). My research is intended to contribute to the knowledge of the law of one such self-regulatory sphere, in this case an ethnic community in the Netherlands, and at the same time to the study of the phenomenon of legal pluralism in general.

The concept to which special attention is drawn in this article is called *pela*.<sup>(1)</sup> Cooley, who did research in the nineteen-fifties among Moluccans in Indonesia, defines *pela* as "an institutionalized bond of friendship or brotherhood between all native residents of two or more villages, which was established by the ancestors under particular circumstances and carries specific duties for the parties thus bound together" (1962:71). The most compulsory duty referred to in this definition involves exogamy: persons living in villages which are mutually engaged in a *pela* alliance are, generally speaking,<sup>(2)</sup> not allowed to intermarry. The complex of rules and practices regarding *pela*, together with that of marriage and dispute-management, represents the largest and most important part of the indigenous legal system maintained by the Moluccan community in the Netherlands.

The organization of the remainder of this article is as follows: Paragraph 4 is the core of the article and it deals with *pela* as practiced in the contemporary Moluccan community in the Netherlands. After a short introductory discussion (paragraph 4.1) on the reception of the institution of *pela* in general in the Netherlands, special attention is paid to the exogamy obligation attached to *pela* alliances. In paragraph 4.2 the system of abstract rules resulting from this obligation is described. Subsequently, in paragraph 4.3, the social importance of these rules is discussed: to what extent do members of the Moluccan community orient themselves toward the abstract rules in their social activities, and to what extent do they use and manipulate these rules in concrete cases in daily life and in conflict situations?<sup>(3)</sup>

Paragraphs 2 and 3 provide the background information necessary for an adequate description of the institution of *pela*. These paragraphs consist largely of sketches of the basic features of the socio-political structure of the Moluccan community in Indonesia (paragraph 2) and in the Netherlands (paragraph 3). Particular attention is paid to the main patterns of group formation. We will see that these communities basically consist of subgroups or networks, each of which possesses specific mechanisms and procedures to regulate, with a certain autonomy, its internal affairs. These social units, which can be considered as the fundamental social locus of the law of the communities concerned, are in Moore's terminology (1973:720) "semi-autonomous social

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fields". Paragraph 2 also contains a description of the main features of the concept of *pela* held by members of the Moluccan communities in Indonesia.

Paragraph 5 provides a comparison between the *pela* laws and social practices in Indonesia and those in the Netherlands. This comparison will result, among other things, in the observation that within the Moluccan community in the Netherlands there is a tendency to interpret the *pela* intermarriage taboo in a relatively strict, 'traditional' way. We shall attempt to explain this tendency with reference to the specific socio-political organization of this community.

2. Moluccan Socio-Political Organization and *Pela* in Indonesia

The majority of the Moluccan immigrants in the Netherlands originate from an archipelago in the east of Indonesia, the islands of Ceram, Ambon, Saparua, Haruku and Nusalaut. These are small islands, separated by narrow straits. The inhabitants of these islands, generally called South- or Central-Moluccans or Amboinese, have agriculture and fishing as their primary means of subsistence. Half of the population is Islamic, the other half is Protestant.

The following sketch of Moluccan socio-political structure is based on data from two publications by Cooley (1962a, esp. pp. 29-49, and 1962b, esp. pp. 1-6). Cooley is an anthropologist who did research in various village communities in Indonesia in the nineteen-fifties. His research dealt mainly with the relationship between the institutions of religion and of local government.

Moluccan society is basically composed of village communities ruled by a council (*Saniri Negeri*) with a head (*Radja*) who is nearly always a member of a ruling clan. The community members are united by their common commitment to '*adat*'. This term refers to the whole of customary usages which has been handed down from the ancestors, in particular from the founder of the village in question. These usages concern matters such as marriage, adoption, administration of land, ceremonies and *pela*. This crediting of the village's *adat* to its founder entails that the whole local normative system is conceived of as unique. A comparison between the various *adat* systems, however, reveals that there are no significant differences between them. The ancestors are considered as invisible members of the community and as supervisors of *adat*. *Adat* is further maintained by village institutions, in particular by the council.

Within the village community several social subdivisions can be discerned, of which matamurah is the most important. By this a patrilineal, exogamous kingroup is meant, consisting of all persons who trace their descent to a common ancestor. Members of these generally residential patrilans bear the same surnames. In any given village there are only a small number of surnames (5 to 20). Households (rumah tangga), consisting of parents, children, and sometimes some elder family-members, who all live in one house, are the smallest units of a clan.

Within the Moluccan socio-political system a patrilineal trait prevails; a bilateral principle is, however, also present. This is reflected in another social category, the familie. This (originally Dutch) term refers not to a descent group but to a bilateral ego-oriented kin-group resulting from marriage ties. The group consists of members of four clans: those of ego's father, of his/her mother, of his/her mother's mother, and of his/her father's mother. The familie is an exogamous group, just as is the matamurah.

It is clear on the basis of the data presented by Cooley that the village communities function as the fundamental social locus of law within the larger Moluccan society. These communities have their own functionaries - in particular village-heads and village-council - to generate and maintain their own legal order conceived of as adat. We will see hereafter that these communities also possess specific procedures to handle conflicts in the field of pela. Nowadays the village communities are not fully autonomous; they are administrative units and as such incorporated in the larger administrative and judicial system of the Indonesian state. They are therefore most adequately described as semi-autonomous social fields.

The following description of pela and of the social significance of this institution in the village communities is taken from Bartels. His monograph, "Guarding the Invisible Mountain: Intervillage Alliances, Religious Syncretism, and Ethnic Identity among Ambonese Christians and Moslems in the Moluccans" (1978) is entirely devoted to various aspects of pela (unless otherwise mentioned, the following summary is based on pages 29-31 of this book).

Almost all Central Moluccan villages are engaged in at least one pela relationship. The majority of pela relationships in fact involve two villages, but there is no restriction on the number of participating villages. Some villages participate in more than a half-dozen pela relationships. Pela transcends religious boundaries and Islamic and Christian villages may be united in a pela relationship. Pela villages are not necessarily situated in each

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other's vicinity; on the contrary, many pela relationships include villages situated on different islands. A pela relationship results from an alliance between the villages concerned. A large proportion of the pela pacts were probably concluded in the period of European (Portuguese and Dutch) penetration, 1520-1675 (p. 67). But in later periods, too, right down to the present, new alliances have been concluded. A pela alliance entails mutual assistance. In former times this chiefly concerned help in wartime; nowadays pela is chiefly associated with economic cooperation. A concomitant of a pela alliance is a ban on intermarriage. Infringement of the pela rules, especially the marriage taboo, is supposed to lead to inexorable punishments imposed by the ancestors (disease and death of the offender and his children); in some villages the Christian God is believed to punish violations. The village council also imposes punishment on the offender (public derision and expulsion from the community).

According to Bartels, pela is one of the key concepts of the Moluccan culture. As he observes, pela is "the ritual center or vehicle of an Ambonese ethnic religion which transcends both Islam and Christianity and operates on the basis of a common Ambonese identity" (p. 31). Its practical social significance seems to be less prominent. The most important activity is aid given by a village when its pela village is engaged in a large (public) building enterprise, but the interval between request and help may be many decades or even longer (p. 219). In the years in between, authorities pay infrequent visits on the occasion of big festivities. Due to the geographic distance between most pela villages, the intermarriage taboo does not seem to produce many problems: villagers usually find their partners within or close to their village of residence.

3. History and Social Organization of the Moluccan Community in the Netherlands

The Moluccan immigrants who arrived in the Netherlands in 1951 did not come directly from the Moluccas; as military men, whether or not accompanied by their families, they had been encamped in various parts of the Indonesian archipelago. At the moment of their arrival a relatively large number were in the age-group 20 to 30 (Van Amersfoort 1971:127). This group, nowadays between 55 and 65, will be called, in accordance with the general terminology used by Dutch authorities and by Moluccans themselves, the first generation. The group of children and grandchildren of these ex-soldiers are called the second and the third generation respectively.

The immigrants' stay in the Netherlands was only meant to be temporary. They hoped to be able to return soon to found, together with the Moluccans who had stayed behind (who meanwhile, however, had obtained Indonesian nationality), an independent Moluccan Republic (the so-called R.M.S. or South Moluccan Republic). This is still the official political ideal of the majority of the immigrants. So far the group has been able to keep its own culture, language, Protestant religion and, as we will see, parts of its law. The immigrants are also connected to Dutch society by many, frequently cordial relations. Members of the first generation participated in the Dutch labor-process (mainly as metal-workers). Most of them are now retired and living on an old-age pension. Their children and grandchildren have passed through Dutch schools. At home they speak their own Indonesian/Malayan - "Moluccan" - language and outside the home they speak Moluccan or Dutch. The unemployment rate among these younger Moluccans is at present extraordinarily high. In the community where my research is being conducted it is over 30%.

We have seen above that village communities in Indonesia function as semi-autonomous social fields, as centers of self-regulation. The question arises which social units in the Netherlands perform such functions. Two kinds of social formation, which have already been mentioned in paragraph 1, the wijk and the descent-group, suggest themselves for investigation.

a) The Moluccan wijk in the Netherlands.(4) During the first two decades of their stay in the Netherlands the Moluccans were housed in camps. At the end of the nineteen-sixties they moved to wijken which were specially built for them. This second move took place within the framework of a Dutch policy aimed at the integration of the immigrants in the surrounding society while enabling them to retain their own identity. Most of the wijken are situated in relative isolation on a few adjoining streets on the outskirts of a Dutch town or village. The wijk is the predominant setting within which the daily life of the vast majority of the Moluccans takes place. The number of inhabitants of a wijk is between 200 and 3,000. Apart from residence, a variety of social activities (festivities, sports, hobbies) take place within the wijk.

The wijken are essentially heterogenous communities: their members originate from a large number of different villages and islands of the Moluccan archipelago and still orient themselves towards their village-communities of origin, especially towards the adat existing there, which they consider unique. As a consequence, wijken are divided into a multitude of larger or smaller groups, the members of which have a common orientation towards

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one Indonesian village. These groups, which are local units of the large 'descent-groups' to be discussed hereafter, consist basically of a number of nuclear families living in small houses. These families, headed by the father, consisted in the past of members of the group of ex-soldiers, their wives and their children. Most of these children are grown up and married now and have established their own nuclear families. The male married members of this second generation, in particular, tend to live close to their parents in the same wijk, but in separate houses. Parents from the first generation and their married children, especially their sons, constitute an extended family-group headed by the father. This head of the extended family, who I will call pater familias for lack of a Moluccan term, performs important tasks with regard to the maintenance of order and the solution of conflicts within his group. All locally-resident members of the various extended family groups originating from the same Indonesian mother-village, together with their cognates, constitute an informal but strong network - a loyalty-group - within the wijk.

The wijk is governed by a democratically-chosen council consisting of a president and a small number (5-6) of members. In principle, a council has a variety of tasks, such as the maintenance, together with the Dutch police, of internal order, and the formulation and execution, in cooperation with Dutch administrative organs, of policy in the socio-economic field. The council has little success with these tasks. It enjoys little cooperation from the wijk-inhabitants, since its policy is regarded as being intended to benefit the various loyalty-groups of the members of the council. The wijk-council also plays only a small role in the internal conflicts which may arise as a consequence of the division of the wijk into groups. These conflicts are dealt with by those directly involved with the help of various instruments, such as threats, abuse, violence, avoidance, and magic, or sometimes the police. Finally, and for purposes of this article most importantly: the wijk-council does not have any authority with regard to problems in the field of adat in general, or pela in particular. If problems occur in this field, they are always dealt with by the organs of the descent-groups.

b) Descent-groups. As was mentioned above, 'Dutch' Moluccans associate themselves with the village in the Moluccas where their ancestors in the patrilineal line (and to a lesser degree also those in the matrilineal line) were born. This origin-principle has led to the emergence of a multitude of social formations composed of 'ex-villagers', wherever they are living in the Netherlands. These descent-groups, with a membership of 200 to 1,000, constitute loosely structured networks of persons who

meet regularly on the occasion of groupevents, mainly festivities and funerals.

A descent-group is internally divided into various sub-groups, basically constituted out of the extended family groups mentioned before, each headed by a pater familias. The extended family-group is part of a larger group of the extended families of the brothers of the pater familias, insofar as they are living in the Netherlands. This larger formation, which I will call the 'brother-group', is headed by the eldest brother, the papa tua. The pater familias-group and the larger 'brother-group' are in turn part of the clan-group. This group, in which some elder 'wise men', orang tua, figure as informal leaders, consists of all members of a certain clan living in the Netherlands. The various clan-groups together constitute the network of ex-villagers in the Netherlands. In this group, too, one or more elder men - orang tua - function as informal leaders.

Within this descent-group network, and nearly coinciding with it, is a more institutionalized organization, the kumpulan-association, established according to Dutch law. This association, which meets once a year, regards itself as the representative in the Netherlands of the Indonesian mother-village concerned. It is the association's most important task to maintain and coordinate contacts between the descent-group and the (council of the) mother-village in Indonesia. The kumpulan also performs various tasks, often of a socio-economic character: it may for instance function as a kind of savings-association.

The various administrative organs of the descent-groups mentioned above - the pater familias, the papa tua, the orang tua of the clans and of the descent-groups, the council of the kumpulan - all perform, in their respective sub-groups, important tasks in the field of supervision of the complex of adat rules of the Indonesian mother-village concerned. In the Netherlands their task chiefly lies in the maintenance and correct application of adat rules in the field of marriage and, as we will see hereafter, of pela. These organs together also form a framework within which certain problems or conflicts between group-members and disagreements concerning adat and particularly pela rules may be handled. The framework is even wider than the Dutch Moluccan community and its various organs, since various organs (radja, council, orang tua) of the village community with which a descent-group in the Netherlands is related can take part in the decision-making. These organs in Indonesia sometimes give written advice or decisions on problems within the Dutch descent-group.

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The higher organs of the descent-group - the council of the kumpulan, the various orang tua of the group of ex-villagers, various organs in the Indonesian mother-village - are of lesser importance in dealing with adat conflicts than the lower institutions. Practical problems obstruct their frequent, active participation in decision-making. These organs only constitute a very loosely-structured network, spread over various locations in the Netherlands and in Indonesia. Communication among them and with those directly involved in the conflict can only take place by telephone or by mail, and this is not very satisfactory. As a consequence of these factors the regulative tasks with regard to adat are in practice delegated to lower organs of the descent-group, in particular to the pater familias. He is the only functionary of the group who has a good grasp of concrete problems, since they occur in his own physical surroundings. Most problems in the field of adat are thus handled at this lowest level, right after their emergence. In the execution of his task, however, he will often call on his elder brother, the papa tua, and on the orang tua of his clan, for advice.

c) Concluding remarks. The most important conclusion which can be drawn from the above discussion concerns the fact that the descent-groups in the Netherlands have adopted the tasks in the field of regulation, especially in the field of adat, which in Indonesia were performed by the various village communities. These descent-groups may be regarded as spheres of self-regulation: as semi-autonomous social fields. Within the group rules of adat are maintained and applied. The group has an extensive network of legal functionaries who settle conflicts between members within their own circle and who have the authority to handle infringements of adat rules.

The wijk is much less important as a sphere of self-regulation. The wijk is divided into a variety of sub-groups which in turn are segments of different descent-groups. The community does not dispose of any organ with authority to regulate questions in connection with adat. The wijk-council has nominal authority to intervene in general problems concerning interaction. However, as a consequence of the divisions in the wijk, the council's ability to play a role of importance is extremely limited. Conflicts which arise between members and groups in the community are generally settled (or not settled) by those directly involved, with informal means.

#### 4. Pela in the Netherlands

In this paragraph attention will be focussed on questions with regard to the intermarriage prohibition which applies to parties

involved in a *pela* alliance. In paragraph 4.2 the system of rules in this field will be described. In paragraph 4.3 the social importance of the rules will be discussed. To begin with, however, some introductory remarks will be made in paragraph 4.1 on the reception of the concept of *pela* by the Moluccan community in the Netherlands and on the way in which *pela* rules in general are used by members of the community when undertaking various activities in daily life.

#### 4.1 Reception and application of *pela* rules in general

*Pela* has survived its transplantation from Indonesia to the Netherlands with great success. From the very beginning the concept took root in the new soil; it has prospered and, as we will see, has developed into a stronger and more comprehensive institution than it is in the village communities in Indonesia.

The concept is known by Moluccans of all generations and in general is very positively appreciated. It is regarded as one of the finest products of Moluccan culture. The few who take a more indifferent or even averse attitude to it, generally accept the concept as an unavoidable part of their social environment. Moluccans in the Netherlands have the same primary associations with the concept as those in the motherland. They say that *pela* partners have two mutual obligations: they must render help to each other and they may not intermarry.

The social prominence of the *pela* rules is considerably greater in the Moluccan community in the Netherlands than in Indonesian/Moluccan villages. In Indonesia *pela* alliances may lead a dormant existence for tens of years. Actual communication and interaction between *pela* villages is obstructed by geographical factors: the villages concerned are generally situated far apart on different islands. The environment in the Netherlands, however, is extremely conducive to frequent communication between *pela* partners. The *wijken* are inhabited by individuals who originate from a number of different Moluccan villages. Thus, *pela* partners may live in the same *wijk*, on the same street, in daily touch with one another. *Pela* partners also meet when they travel to other *wijken* for parties, funerals or family-visits.

Besides these accidental meetings between *pela* partners, various activities with a specific purpose in connection with *pela* are undertaken. Description of some clusters of such activities will give an impression of the social importance of the concept of *pela* in the Moluccan community in the Netherlands. All these activities are examples of the adaptation of *pela* to the specific circumstances of this country.

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a) Socialization. In the Moluccan wijken in the Netherlands it is more necessary than in Indonesia that parents instruct their children in the system of pela. Pela partners meet daily; when youngsters do not know exactly which persons are to be considered as their pela partners, some of these contacts could result in a forbidden love-affair. Parents gradually initiate their children into pela from earliest childhood. Two methods are used. A 'concrete' method implies that children are taught during coincidental contacts in the wijk who their pela partners are, and to address such persons as 'pela'. But the system is also taught in abstract terms: children are expected to learn the names of their pela villages and particularly the surnames of the clans belonging to it. This system enables a person to identify an unknown fellow-Moluccan anywhere as a pela partner by asking him/her for his/her main personal references. The kumpulan is also sometimes used as an agent of socialization in and reproduction of pela rules. In a number of associations there are (or were) commissions at work to study the origins of the pela pact. These studies usually lead to the publication of booklets in which the genesis and history of the pact are recorded. The kumpulan may also organize an adat ceremony called bikin panas pela, aimed at re-establishing and celebrating the pact. This ceremony is held in cooperation with the kumpulan of the other pela village(s).

b) Assistance in building projects. Moluccans in the Netherlands have frequently been involved in the execution of large building projects in Indonesia. This assistance, which consists of collecting and remitting money, is coordinated by the kumpulan. A kumpulan is primarily concerned with projects in its mother-village. On request of the pela partner, however, substantial support is also given to building-projects of the Indonesian pela-village.

c) Attendance at festivities and funerals. Pela partners always invite each other to major festivities (in particular weddings) and funerals. This custom is specific for Dutch Moluccans: in Indonesia pela partners are only invited on extraordinary occasions (e.g., the marriage or funeral of a village-head). Since the geographic circumstances prevent residents of pela-villages from participating frequently in each other's festivities. This last of the cluster of specifically-Dutch Moluccan activities regarding pela has a great socialization value. Members of a delegation deliver a speech during the ceremony they attend, in which they allude to the pela relationship in question.

#### 4.2 The System of Intermarriage Rules entailed by Pela

The principal rule regarding intermarriage, according to Cooley and Bartels, has the following simple contents. Residents of village A may not marry residents of a village (village B) with which their village has a pela relationship. If village A has more pela relationships, e.g. with the villages C, D, and E, they are also not allowed to marry residents of the villages C, D, E etc. It is a rule which, as was said before, seems to produce few problems in practice, for pela villages are not situated in each other's vicinity. Wittermans, who did anthropological research, among other things in the field of pela, in a Dutch Moluccan community at the beginning of the nineteen-fifties, gives the 'Dutch' translation of this rule. He holds that ex-residents in the patrilineal line of a given village are not allowed to marry ex-residents of this village's pela villages (1955:216).

The system of rules on intermarriage which I have found, and which I consider to be generally valid among Moluccans in the Netherlands and probably, as I will argue below, also in Indonesia, is much more complicated than Cooley, Bartels and Wittermans suggest. A Dutch Moluccan determines his pela status by tracing his antecedents. He does this not only in the patrilineal line, but also - evidencing a matrilineal principle which generally leads only a latent existence in Moluccan society but which is very relevant in the field of pela - in the matrilineal line. If his/her father was born in village A, he/she inherits the pela relationships of A. He/she does not marry Dutch Moluccans who trace their origin from the pela villages of A, viz. B, C, D etc. If his/her mother comes from another village than his/her father, e.g. P, he/she also inherits the duties of the residents of village P. He/she may not marry Dutch Moluccans whose antecedents in either the patrilineal or the matrilineal line came from P's pela villages, viz. Q, R, S, etc.

So far we have only dealt with the transmission of pela duties from parents to their children. However, the system is much more extensive than this. Children inherit the pela status of their parents' parents, of their parents' parents' parents, etc. Children are committed to the pela relationships of any village from which any ancestor in either line can be shown to derive. Some informants hold that the rule entails that in investigating pela relationships one should go back to ancestors in the seventh degree. Others told me that pela relationships maintain their force "as long as Moluccans exist", or "as far as memory reaches". Some informants - a very small minority, mainly youngsters, representatives of the second generation - suggested that pela duties should only affect direct, 'first degree' pela partners.

Infringement of the rules mentioned above entails, it is generally assumed, ancestral punishments. The offenders will sooner or later be confronted with disease and/or death. The same fate may also afflict the offspring of the offenders. There is a Moluccan proverb in which the responsibility of the next generation for acts committed by their parents is formulated in a striking way: "If the parents eat sour, the children get sour teeth" (kalau orang tua makan asam, anak-anak punja gigi njilu).

As I was repeatedly assured, pela rules are immutable in character, for they are not human rules but norms imposed and maintained by the ancestors. Yet the idea does exist in some circles, especially among youngsters, that in certain circumstances it is possible for an individual to be exempted from the pela marriage prohibition. None of my informants was able to describe precisely which procedure might be followed in such a case. They could only speculate on it. One should travel to Indonesia to the village of origin. Perhaps there, one way or another, by praying or by engaging in a particular ceremony, exemption might be given from the obligations resulting from the pela bond.

#### 4.3 The Social Importance of the Intermarriage Prohibition

This paragraph, dealing with the way Moluccans apply the abstract rules on intermarriage in concrete situations, consists of two parts. The first part, paragraph 4.3.1, contains some comments on the relevance of these rules in trouble-free social life. From sheer necessity this subject can be dealt with only briefly. For the intermarriage rules essentially demand an abstinence from a certain kind of behavior. If the rules are complied with - which is usually the case in the Moluccan community - no relevant activities can be mentioned at all. The social significance of the intermarriage prohibition can only be directly observed in the context of trouble-cases. In paragraph 4.3.2 we will then discuss the way in which an infringement of the exogamy rules of pela is dealt with by the Moluccan community.

##### 4.3.1 The relevance of the intermarriage rules in trouble-free social life

As a general rule, marriages between pela partners, in whatever degree, are not concluded within the Moluccan community in the Netherlands. The pela rules were generally observed by representatives of the first generation in the past. They are still respected in the same way by representatives of the second and third generations.

The non-occurrence of *pela* marriages is no coincidence. It may be ascribed to the Moluccans' strong orientation toward the *pela* rules. Statistically speaking, a large number of *pela* marriages ought to take place yearly. As we have seen, *pela* partners often live in the same *wijk* and on the same street. Young Moluccans often go out, alone or in groups, to places outside the *wijk*, where they meet other Moluccans, potential marriage partners, at parties or in bars. Freedom of choice in finding a marriage partner is substantially reduced by the intermarriage taboo. In the *wijk* where I am doing research, the potential number of marriage partners for boys of the second generation is limited to percentages of between 70% and 90% of the available girls. This percentage will be even lower for members of the third generation. However, all these meetings with *pela* partners very seldom lead to the conclusion of prohibited marriages.

Having thus observed that there is general compliance with the intermarriage rules, despite their serious consequences for freedom of choice of a marriage partner, the question can be put what brings people to such a respectful attitude. I think a combination of factors is responsible for it. Most of these factors have been mentioned above. We have seen that there are various socializing mechanisms in the Moluccan community. This socialization has had as a result that youngsters in the Netherlands exercise caution in contacts with unknown persons of the opposite sex. Upon introducing themselves, the mutual mentioning of names and villages of origin is used to determine the mutual position. The result of this informal inquiry is generally determinative of the further development of the relationship.

A second factor which contributes to the general observance of the intermarriage rules is fear. As we have seen, Moluccans believe that infringement of the rules will result in heavy punishments by their ancestors. Hereafter (in paragraph 4.3.2) we will see that such an infringement also leads to various correctional measures of the Moluccan community. Fear of such consequences is an important incentive for conforming behavior.

Still another mechanism should be mentioned. When they decide to enter into a marriage, youngsters are mutually screened by their reciprocal parents. This inquiry includes an examination into whether the conclusion of the marriage is obstructed by the existence of *pela* relationships which have been 'inherited' by the couple from their ancestors. This inquiry is very thorough. In case of uncertainty, elder members of the descent-group, in particular the *orang tua* of the respective clans, are called in. If uncertainty over a certain relationship remains, the advice of various organs - village-head, council or *orang tua* - in the

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mother-village in Indonesia is asked for by letter.(5) Apart from its preventive effects on Moluccan youths, this careful procedure keeps the incidence of accidental pela-marriage to an absolute minimum.

4.3.2 Conflicts regarding the intermarriage taboo

As with all rules and prohibitions, those in the field of pela are occasionally broken. How frequently this occurs cannot be determined. In my wijk one such case is ongoing at the moment. Informants in this wijk were able to inform me of a small number of cases which had occurred, chiefly within their respective descent-groups, in other parts of the Netherlands. The most important features of two such trouble-cases on which I was able to gather information are as follows.

A. Concerning the pela relationship between the villages of Sirisori and Hutumori

The story begins in 1978 when a boy and a girl, both aged about 25, fell in love. They had known each other from childhood and were aware of the pela relationship which existed between them. They had grown up in two nearby wijken in the north of the Netherlands. The girl's father comes from the Moluccan village of Sirisori, the boy's father from its pela village Hutumori. The couple kept their relationship secret for a year. They felt guilty about it. They were afraid of the reaction of their parents. They were able to keep their affair secret because they lived and worked outside the wijk in a big town. Both had highly qualified administrative jobs in a hospital. In 1979 they decided to inform their parents of the secret. The boy's foster-father forbade the relationship but he did not take further measures to put an end to it. The reaction of the girl's parents was extreme. She was intimidated and threatened with violence if she did not terminate the relationship. In a later phase magical therapy was exercised on her by a special expert in this field. Eventually a magic curse was imposed on her by her father and she was (temporarily) evicted from the parental house. In a yet later phase she was summoned by an orang tua of her clan who addressed her gravely and forbade the relationship. In the course of the conflict the boy was also gravely addressed by the orang tua of his clan. Finally, the boy and girl had a joint discussion of the problem with the council of their common kumpulan.(6) During this discussion members of the council tried, by calm persuasion, to induce the partners to put an end to their relationship. In vain.

The conflict dragged on for years. In the meantime the couple started to live together and refused, with ever-increasing persistency, to conform to the demands of their social environment. In their resistance they initially appealed to norms of the Christian religion. They stated that they believed in God, not in ancestors. In a later phase their resistance acquired a more general character. They dissociated themselves from adat in general and, in justification of their behavior, referred to general norms and values of Dutch society.

In 1983 they received a letter from the council of the kumpulan stating that their membership of the association was cancelled. Still later this statement was confirmed by a letter from the village council of the boy's mother-village, Hutumori. They are still living together, unmarried. They rarely see their relatives. To their great regret they are practically isolated from Moluccan society.

B. Concerning the pela relationship between the villages of Amahai and Ihamahu

The beginning of this story is in broad outlines identical to that of case A. Two youngsters, both of about 25, fell in love in 1978. They had been born and raised in two different wijken situated near to each other in the central part of the Netherlands. They got to know each other when they both went to work outside their wijken in a big town. The boy worked as a factory-worker, the girl was attached to a social security institution. When they began their affair they knew they were each other's pela. His father comes from the village of Amahai, her mother's mother was born in Ihamahu. (The girl's father comes from the village of Ulat, which is not a pela partner of Ihamahu.) The couple felt very guilty about their relationship; they repeatedly broke it off, but each time came back to each other because their love proved to be too strong. They kept the relationship secret for two years. In the meantime they desperately tried, in endless talks with each other, to find a way out. They also prayed together to the Christian God for a solution to their problem. Gradually the conviction grew that their love was so strong and unique that, in their individual case, the pela prohibition did not apply, and that they had to defy it. In about 1980 they informed their respective parents. The boy's father forbade the relation but took no measures to put an end to it. The reaction of the girl's father - a vicar - was more negative: he broke off all contact with the girl. For about a half year he denied her admittance to the parental house. In the period 1980-1983 hardly any further developments took place. The attitude of the respective parents remained strongly negative. The girl's

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father did not talk to her during that time. The couple gradually began to appear a little more in public; they attended festivities of their respective descent-groups. Everywhere they met negative reactions. They found some moral support only from a small group of friends.

In 1983, while attending a party, they were summoned by an orang tua of the girl's descent-group. He spoke admonitory words and asked them to put an end to their relationship. They refused. Their only argument was, again, the unique strong love they felt. In a later stage of the case, they appealed to the fact that theirs was only a second-degree (through the mother's mother of the girl), not a first-degree pela relationship. This argument was rejected by their parents.

In 1984 they decided to make an attempt to break through the deadlock by going to their respective mother-villages in Indonesia. They had no idea what was in store for them nor what strategy they would apply there.

In Indonesia the boy travelled to his village of origin, Ihamahu. He submitted the matter to orang tua of his clan. Their reaction was not negative. They said: "You in the Netherlands apply the rules much more strictly than in Indonesia. With us the pela system has weakened." They pointed out that quite recently a marriage had been concluded between two pela partners - residents from Amahai and Ihamahu - and eventually they gave the boy permission to marry.

The girl first visited her father's village of origin, Ulat. In this village she stayed with her father's brother and sisters. Their initial reaction, especially that of her father's brother, was very negative. He had been informed by letter, by the girl's father, of her plan to enter into a pela marriage. Before the girl arrived, the uncle had contacted members of the clan of the girl's grandmother living in Amahai. Together with a brother of the grandmother he had visited a sacred site - a well - on the island of Ceram to pray to the ancestors. The journey had taken them three days. They took water from the well, put it in a bottle and took it to the uncle's home. It was their intention to cure the girl magically by pouring a bit of this water over her as soon as she arrived in the Moluccas, preferably at the airport. The plan failed because the girl arrived later than expected at a time at which her father's brother was unable to be present. When he met the girl a few days later he dared not use the water. The girl stayed with another relative, the sister of her father's mother - living in the capital of the Moluccas, Ambon - and established a very good relationship with her. Her father's brother did not dare to disturb that relationship directly.

In a later stage the uncle undertook numerous attempts to dissuade the girl from her plan. In vain. Again she appealed to the unique power of their love. Gradually the relationship between the girl and her uncle improved. Eventually he decided, in concert with members of the girl's clan in Amahai, that they would not attempt to prevent the marriage. They invoked the same argument given by the girl; they supposed that the couple, which had made such a long journey to Indonesia to ask for permission to marry, was predestined to love each other. Nevertheless, for fear of being struck by the wrath of their ancestors, they did not dare to give explicit permission for the marriage. They recommended transferring the problem to the Christian God by means of a prayer-service. The service was conducted by the girl's uncle. Afterwards the uncle considered the girl freed from the intermarriage taboo. The boy and girl then travelled to the Netherlands together. Their respective parents, after some further hesitation and uncertainty, finally gave permission to conclude the marriage. The marriage festivities took place in 1984 in the presence of members of both descent-groups. A small number of members continued to object to the marriage and did not take part in the festivities.

The two trouble-cases presented give in my view a fair impression of the variety of events which may follow infringement of *pela* rules with regard to the intermarriage taboo. The following more general discussion of the way in which a *pela* conflict is handled in the Moluccan community in the Netherlands is based on an analysis of these two cases, on three other trouble-cases and on comments given on these cases by Moluccan informants. The discussion will focus first on societal reactions to a *pela*-infringement and then on the way in which individual offenders try to justify their behavior.

a) Societal reactions: Societal reactions must be understood against the background of the socio-political organization of the Moluccan community (see paragraph 3). The *wijk* and its organs do not take any part in the process following a *pela*-infringement. A *pela*-problem is considered to belong to the wide field of *adat* and organs of the *wijk* do not have any competence to deal with these kinds of matters. It is striking that such infringements arouse little or no disapproval or even reaction within the *wijk*-communities in question. As we have seen in paragraph 2, *adat* is considered to be the unique property of a certain Moluccan village community. Infringements in this field committed in the Netherlands only affect the members of the descent-groups involved.

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In the descent-group the infringement is handled within the framework constituted by its various organs mentioned in paragraph 4. The cases reported were selected because, in combination, they give an impression of the full extent of this framework and of the range of institutions which may be involved in such a conflict. The following institutions make up the litigation structure: the pater familias, the papa tua, the orang tua of the clans and descent-groups, the councils of the kumpulan and, finally, the councils or various functionaries of the mother-villages in Indonesia. In a case not dealt with here, this framework was further extended when a pela conflict was submitted to institutions of the Dutch legal system.(7)

As was stated in paragraph 4, the pater familias has the most important position in this system. Of all functionaries and institutions mentioned, he is the first one who gets involved and the only one who remains involved during the whole course of the conflict. The pater familias, possibly in cooperation with his eldest brother or the orang tua of his clan, will usually stifle a problem at its birth by swift action. Institutions operating in the higher regions of the descent-group are of much less importance in the settlement of (pela)-conflicts and in this respect the cases are not entirely representative. Even conflicts which are not settled at the lower level are not automatically transferred to the higher institutions of the system. As we have seen, effective participation of these institutions - which are dispersed over various places in the Netherlands and Indonesia - in the litigation process is obstructed by practical problems of communication.

In the settlement of pela problems the various agencies forming part of the litigation structure interpret the abstract pela rules in a strict, even rigid, way. I know, for example, of a case in which a pater familias (so far) has successfully resisted his daughter's plan to marry a boy whom he regards as her pela partner. The pela relationship is in the 'fourth degree': the mother's father's mother originates from a village which has an alliance with the village where the boy's father was born. This issue will be discussed further in the next paragraph.

In the settlement of pela problems Dutch Moluccans dispose of a variety of means to correct or punish members of their descent-group who have committed an infringement of the pela rules. Six sorts of societal reaction which may follow on such an infringement can be distinguished:

- 1) In the first place, offenders are nearly always confronted with all kinds of pressure and persuasion.

- 2) A much stronger means is the curse, the sumpah, mentioned in case A. Such a curse implies that a certain person uses a 'magic' formula to ask supernatural beings (in casu the ancestors) to convey disaster to another person.
- 3) A third, very common means is breaking off contact (temporarily or permanently) with the offenders concerned. In cases A and B this means was used by the girls' fathers.
- 4) It also occurs that certain kinds of violence are used to put an end to an unwanted affair. In two cases on which I have information, violence was threatened or actually inflicted. In the first case the girl, whose relationship with a pela partner had led to the birth of a child, was corporally punished by order of the council of her kumpulan. After that, the girl broke off the relationship and the child was adopted by other parents. In the second case a boy was threatened with violence by the group of brothers headed by the papa tua of the girl with whom he had started an affair. This relationship was also broken off.
- 5) Another frequently used technique is correction of the offender(s) by magic means. In cases A and B magic was applied or considered. This reaction is based on the idea that the person(s) in question may have committed the act under the influence of magic power exercised upon them by other persons, and is meant to neutralize this magic power by applying anti-magic. Anti-magic is chiefly applied by experts in this field, the so-called orang berobat. However, magic therapies can also, as in case B, be applied by nonspecialists.
- 6) The last means to be mentioned here is the imposition of a social boycott by the members of the descent-group. This means may be informally applied by members of the descent-group who 'avoid' the offenders in everyday life. It may also, as happened in case A, take the form of an official expulsion from the kumpulan association.

It should be noted that social reactions emanate in the first place from the descent-group of the girl. She experiences the heaviest pressure. In the case mentioned where the boy was threatened with violence, the initiative came from the girl's descent-group. Informants gave me the following explanation for this fact. The boy is considered as the one who makes advances and tries to initiate a relationship, the girl as the one who makes the final decision whether the initiative will be honored. The girl's parents and the members of her descent-group bear objective 'guilt' in the case of a forbidden relationship (a relation between pela

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partners, and also in the case of an adulterous relationship). They therefore feel responsible for putting an end to the unwanted relationship in the first place.

The various organs constituting the core of the descent-group dispose of a repertoire of techniques, procedures and punishments. In the settlement of *pela* conflicts all these means are used side by side, in ever-changing combinations. Nevertheless, the community does not have the ability to force an offender to put an end to his/her relationship with a *pela* partner. If the offender offers stout resistance, the litigation process reaches a deadlock: a characteristic phase in the settlement of *pela* problems, and of many other kinds of *adat* problems. In this phase, which may last for years, none of those involved undertakes initiatives to solve the problem. Such a deadlock may be reached even before the whole repertoire of correctional means has been exhausted. In such a case the deadlock must be regarded as a strategy consciously chosen by the descent-group organs (in particular, the *pater familias*) to solve the problem eventually in a satisfactory way. The *pater familias* takes the position that time will work to his advantage. He assumes that the *pela* partners will break off their relationship during the period of deadlock, as a result of ancestral intervention. Thus the problem will be solved, seemingly 'of its own accord', without the use of harsh measures.

b) The position of the offender in a *pela* conflict: In a majority of cases organs of the descent-group, particularly the *pater familias*, are able to put an end to a *pela* relationship by means of various correctional techniques. However, as appears from the cases presented above, these techniques do not always lead to immediate results. The offenders sometimes offer stubborn resistance actions undertaken by their descent-groups. The questions which arise in that connection are as follows: Which strategies can be employed by offenders, and how successful are they? Which lines of reasoning do they use to justify their behavior? Four courses followed by offenders to find a way out of their problems can be observed in the case material, strategies which are used side by side by the persons involved. Offenders may appeal to 1) norms and values of the Christian religion, 2) norms and values of Dutch law, 3) norms and values which are supposed to be valid in the Indonesian mother-villages. Finally, 4) they may try, during a stay in Indonesia, to get a personal exemption from the *pela* rules concerned.

1) Christian norms. The persons involved in case A first appealed to Christian norms and values. Their appeal, implying

that belief in ancestors is inconsistent with belief in the God of Christianity, did not lead to the desired result. In general, such an appeal seems to be futile. As we have seen above, Bartels reports that such an appeal is also useless in Indonesian villages. Pela rules are considered to be sanctioned not only by the ancestors but also by God. That this view also obtains in the Netherlands appears from case B: the girl's father, who strongly resisted her intention to marry a pela partner, is a vicar.

2) Dutch law. Moluccans living in the Netherlands and involved in a pela conflict may, as those involved in case A did, ultimately appeal to the norms of official Dutch law. The Moluccan community cannot prevent them from making such an appeal. From the one case on pela rules (see note 7) which has been submitted to the Dutch courts by the Moluccan community, it appears moreover, that Moluccan law will not be recognized. Although an appeal to Dutch law will therefore almost certainly be successful, this 'exit' option is not attractive. For 'exit' is answered by the community by a social boycott.

3) Moluccan/Indonesian law. A third strategy involves an appeal to the norms and values in this field which are supposed to be valid in the villages of origin in Indonesia. The boy mentioned in case B, during his visit to his mother-village, was informed that the pela system had weakened there, and his plan to marry a pela partner was not forbidden by the legal functionaries of that village. Subsequently, after the girl had also solved the problem in her village of origin, he was able to marry her in the Netherlands. In another case, however, an appeal to Moluccan/Indonesian norms has so far not been successful. The persons involved are each other's pela partners in the fourth-degree. By letter they have requested the council of their mother-villages for permission to marry. This permission was given by letter, since according to the authorities of the villages concerned it is the rule there that only direct, first-degree pelas cannot marry. The girl's father, however, continues to refuse his consent to a marriage.

4) Asking for exemption. The couple mentioned in case B, particularly the girl, pursued the fourth course. In her village of origin she eventually got exemption from her pela duty through a Christian prayer-service. The pela partners, with the consent of their descent-groups, later married in the Netherlands, so that the problem was resolved in a way which was satisfactory to all involved. However, the strategy used in this case cannot be regarded as an easy and attractive one. In the first place, a journey to the Indonesian mother-village is very costly and time-consuming. In the second place, it is very uncertain whether such a journey will lead to the desired results. In the case

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presented the girl at first encountered all kinds of obstruction by functionaries in her village of origin. Only after long perseverance did she succeed. Even then, this case may not be regarded as a precedent. Its result was too much determined by various kinds of imponderable factors: the person of the functionary concerned, the interrelationship between him and the girl, the failure to change the girl's mind by magic, the motivation of the girl and finally, possibly, the interpretation of pela rules in the village concerned.

The cases show that there are hardly any possibilities for offenders to escape the force of the pela rules concerning intermarriage. They can pursue a number of courses to find a way out of their problems, but most of these come to a dead-end or are surrounded by great uncertainty.

Quite apart from a lack of effective strategies, offenders in a pela case are also hindered by a general lack of insight into their own situation. Before they start the heavy struggle with their descent groups, they really do not know how best to proceed, nor are they prepared for the problems with which they will be confronted in the period of conflict. Pela conflicts are generally handled and/or settled within a narrow circle of the descent groups involved. Outside that, in the wijken or in the Moluccan community in general, they hardly become known. It struck me that none of those involved in the above cases was acquainted with the fact that there had been other similar cases and that there were others who were at the same time involved in conflicts resulting from pela. The specific, internal settlement process has the consequence that individual offenders cannot profit from the experience of their predecessors or their contemporaries. Experiences are not exchanged, knowledge does not cumulate. Thus offenders against pela rules are in a difficult position in their resistance against the descent-group. Time and time again they have to start their long struggle as it were from the bottom. In doing so they can only rely on personal qualities: intelligence, ingenuity, motivation, and especially courage. All those involved in the above cases were in these respects highly qualified.

c) Some concluding remarks: In the introductory note to this paragraph it was submitted that the social importance of pela rules on intermarriage could really only directly be demonstrated by an analysis of trouble-cases. I think one may conclude from the description and analysis of case material that these rules - both in the context of conflict and in that of trouble-free social life - are of considerable importance in the Moluccan community in the Netherlands.

Infringement of the rules in the field of intermarriage arouses vehement social reaction in the community. The individual members get into deep conflict with their community, represented by the descent-group. Within this group there is a series of institutions/functionaries, of which the pater familias is for these purposes the most important, which may become involved in the process of litigation. These institutions, especially the Dutch branch of the descent-group, interpret abstract rules on intermarriage very strictly. Although they cannot force a given individual to end an unwanted relationship, they do dispose of a set of means and techniques to correct or punish offenders of adat, so that perseverance entails overcoming formidable obstacles.

The position of offenders who try to find a justification for their behavior in order to continue a relationship is very weak. They have hardly any structural means of defence. Their position is furthermore weakened by the fact that they are practically on their own in the struggle against the descent-group, without substantive assistance or feedback from friends, age-group members or other violators of pela rules.

Mention has been made already above of a series of social mechanisms - socialization, preventive law care, fear of supernatural and social sanctions - as factors which may explain the fact that pela rules on intermarriage are generally observed. Earlier researchers, e.g. Cooley and Bartels, stressed the importance in this respect of supernatural sanctions, but they paid hardly any attention to the way in which infringement of pela rules is followed by societal repercussions. My research demonstrates that these repercussions are very considerable. In my opinion, fear of these repercussions is at least as important in keeping members of the Dutch Moluccan community from transgressing pela rules as fear of punishments imposed by supernatural agencies.

##### 5. The Pela Intermarriage Taboo in Comparative Perspective

In paragraph 4 various aspects of the concept of pela have been discussed. Most attention was devoted to the way in which the intermarriage prohibition is conceptualized in the Moluccan community in the Netherlands and applied in concrete situations in- and outside of conflict. This description of rules and social practices with regard to the intermarriage taboo was presented from a partly comparative perspective: data on pela in Indonesia, found in the ethnographic literature, were presented in combination with data resulting from my own fieldwork. In some cases furthermore, I have been able to get direct insight into the ideas and social practices currently existing in the Moluccan community in Indonesia, since a number of the conflicts on which

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I have information were successively dealt with by various agencies of the descent-groups involved in the Netherlands as well as in Indonesia. On the basis of this data from the literature and from my own research I want now to address the question to what extent the rules and social practices regarding the intermarriage taboo diverge between the Moluccan communities in Indonesia and in the Netherlands.

I will first focus on possible differences with regard to pela rules. I will try to demonstrate that these rules have essentially the same complex contents in both Moluccan communities. Subsequently I will argue that the material found leaves room for no other conclusion than that the same system of abstract rules is being applied in a different way by the two communities: Dutch Moluccans apply these rules more strictly, more 'traditionally', than villagers in Indonesia do. Finally, I will formulate some hypotheses which may explain why the rules are interpreted in a relatively strict way in the Netherlands.

The system of abstract rules regarding the pela intermarriage taboo has been presented in paragraph 4 in a way which differs considerably from that recorded by earlier researchers. Cooley and Bartels, who did anthropological research among Indonesian Moluccans, state that the exogamy prohibition applies to residents of pela villages. On the basis of his research conducted in the nineteen-fifties among Dutch Moluccans, Wittermans concludes that they are only concerned with the pela duty belonging to the village of origin of their father. However, the intermarriage prohibition which I have recorded and observed is much more extensive than this. The prohibition affects those persons whose parents and ancestors, in either line, can trace their descent to villages joined in a pela relationship. There are two explanations for the differences between my findings and those of earlier researchers. Either they failed to notice the complex contents of the system of pela intermarriage rules, or this system, after its transplantation to the Netherlands, has undergone a radical change. I believe that the first possibility is correct, and that the basic intermarriage rules have the same complex contents in both communities. Two arguments can be given to support this idea.

The first argument may be derived from the empirical material presented in paragraph 4. We have seen that the girl in case B, who was charged with a pela duty which she inherited from her mother's mother, travelled to her village of origin in Indonesia in order to try to get exemption from this duty. During this visit legal functionaries there tried, in the first instance, to uphold the intermarriage rules at stake. Only in the last instance, after various additional factors had also been considered, was the re-

sistance in the village against her intention to conclude a marriage overcome. The case thus shows that in at least one Moluccan community in Indonesia the system of intermarriage rules does not essentially differ from the one which obtains in the Netherlands.

The second argument is derived from the structure of the Moluccan system of kinship sketched in paragraph 2. It was mentioned that a patrilineal trait dominates in this system. However, a bilateral element is not absent and is reflected, as we have seen, in the familie: the ego-centered exogamous kin-group resulting from marriage ties. One important exogamy restriction is thus conveyed to every individual bilaterally. Against this background it is certainly plausible that duties connected with pela relationships, which affect ego's parents and his/her ancestors in the bilateral line, can be passed on in the same way.

The second question concerns the extent to which the pela rules are applied in the same way in concrete cases in the various Moluccan communities of Indonesia and the Netherlands. This question can also be addressed on the basis of the case material. In my opinion these data contain indications that the intermarriage rules are applied less strictly in Indonesia than in the Netherlands. Case B contains illustrative material. On his return to his village of origin, the boy was told that the norms with regard to pela are gradually losing their importance there. The girl in the same case was in the end given a way to escape the intermarriage ban by the village functionaries. In yet another case, referred to in paragraph 4, the couple concerned is confronted with a fourth-degree pela relationship in the Netherlands; in the village of origin of the boy this relationship is not considered an obstacle to concluding a marriage.

The indications found in these cases are the more important when considered in conjunction with some other indications which point in the same direction. Within the Moluccan communities of Indonesia and the Netherlands, as well as in the literature (Bartels 1978: 229), there is a general idea - a 'feeling' - that pela rules and, more generally, adat rules are interpreted more strictly, more 'traditionally', in the Netherlands than in Indonesia. Until now no empirical material has been available to confirm this idea. The cases presented above do just that. They contain, in my opinion, convincing evidence that this feeling corresponds with processes which are actually taking place in the communities concerned.

The tendency towards a strict interpretation of pela (or adat) rules in the Moluccan community in the Netherlands calls for further attention. We have seen that for members of the Dutch

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Moluccan community, strict application of the pela rules results in a considerable restriction of the freedom of choice of a marriage partner. In my area of research the potential number of partners was reduced by approximately 10% to 30% for representatives of the second generation. It is predictable with mathematical certainty that the freedom of choice will in the future be increasingly reduced for each succeeding generation. Each new marriage brings together partners with an ever-increasing set of individual pela duties, which are passed on as a whole to their children, their children's children, etc. A strict application of the rules will eventually lead to a situation in which, due to lack of possible partners, Moluccans cannot marry within their own community. Given the drastic consequences of strict traditionalism, it is of great importance to understand the mechanisms which prevent the development of a more liberal interpretation of pela rules. This question is even more interesting if we consider legal changes currently occurring in Indonesia. Bartels (1978: 227) has reported that the population of a certain region in the Moluccas - Leitimor - completely broke with the intermarriage taboo just before World War II. The pela villages in this region are situated so close to each other that a prohibition of intermarriage was considered unacceptable. Why do Dutch Moluccans, whose freedom of choice is restricted to a much more considerable degree, not change or soften the pela duties?

In answering this question various explanations can be given. In the Moluccan community itself it is usually stated that pela (or adat) rules are not changed because they are by definition unchangeable. They are not human or social rules, but norms laid down by the ancestors and maintained by supernatural sanctions. But this explanation disregards the fact that pela rules have in fact changed in the past in certain regions of the Moluccas, and that they are applied less strictly now in certain village communities.

In the literature the following suggestions have been made to explain the strict maintenance of pela rules in the Moluccan community in the Netherlands. Bartels (1978: 227) supposes that the isolation of the community from the surrounding Dutch society and from the motherland may contribute to a rather rigid use of (pela) law. Wittermans (1955: 226) suggests that the pela norms are cherished because of their symbolic value: to the Moluccan community in the Netherlands, whose primary political ambition entails return to the motherland, they constitute 'a link with home'.

The above explanations seem generally plausible, but they need amplification and further elaboration. I think there are social mechanisms in the Moluccan community in the Netherlands which

hinder the smooth adaptation of adat and specifically of pela rules to new circumstances. These mechanisms are inherent in the community's socio-political organization. Its very structure is an obstacle to legal change. There are no agencies - legal/judicial functionaries or institutions - which can effectively initiate processes of change.

Two opposing principles essentially determine the pattern of group formation of the Dutch Moluccans. These principles have led to the emergence of two kinds of overlapping social formations, namely the wijk-community and the descent-group. I have described the wijk as the setting of everyday social life, where persons belonging to different descent-groups interact and where problems and conflicts may occur. However, such problems, insofar as they concern adat, cannot be settled in the wijk-community. Only the respective descent-groups are competent in this field. It is the pater familias, who presides over a local unit of a descent-group, viz. a family-group, who in the first instance is responsible for the performance of all kinds of regulative tasks: for the application, maintenance or renewal of adat rules. It is true that the descent-groups dispose of various higher organs which can, and indeed do, perform tasks in this field, but these organs - the council of the kumpulan, the orang tua of the group of ex-villagers, and the council and orang tua of the villages of origin - have not been able to develop into vital centers of regulation. Practical communication problems have obstructed this. Like the members of the descent-group itself, the various legal functionaries live dispersed over tens of locations in the Netherlands and in Indonesia. Effective decision-making is also obstructed because the organs lack contact with the local members of the descent-group involved in a trouble-case. If problems arise locally, these may be experienced as such within a certain local segment of the descent-group; but the higher organs of the descent-group are too far away and too uncoordinated to be able to react adequately, e.g. by making proposals for law reform. As a consequence of these communication problems regulatory tasks are, as we have seen, chiefly delegated to lower functionaries, in particular to the pater familias. He functions as point of contact between the descent-group and its local segments. But for various reasons, impulses for legal change cannot be expected from the pater familias. In the first place, he is in an isolated position, without sufficient feedback from his descent-group as a whole, which inclines him to a cautious interpretation of the pela rules. The conservatism characteristic of the pater familias is further enhanced by factors connected with his own life history. Representative of the first generation, he left his mother-village at an early age to enlist in the Dutch colonial army. Subsequently, still at an early age, came a sudden emigration to the Netherlands, and he was

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charged with the task of maintaining Moluccan culture and adat in the new surroundings. As an ex-soldier he had to perform this task without specific knowledge or experience in this field. As we have seen, the task has been very successfully fulfilled until now, but it is experienced as a heavy one. The pater familias is afraid of making mistakes in its execution. Against this background it becomes understandable that he generally exercises the greatest caution and prefers to refer to the ideal-typical version of the abstract rules of pela. His background, experience, and concrete circumstances thus incline the pater familias to a rigid traditionalism and inhibit him from contemplating the possibilities of innovation.

Structural factors thus prevent the organs of the descent-group from initiating change in pela rules. Change would have to come from the opposite direction, from 'below'; but the Dutch Moluccan community also does not function as an agency for legal development. The representatives of the second and third generations are substantially restricted, to an ever-increasing degree, in their freedom of choice of a marriage partner. One might expect that the pela rules would increasingly be challenged from this side. The 'youngsters' involved might do this by exchanging ideas and experiences of their common problems, and by organizing a more directed discussion of the values and social impact of the institution of pela. Such action from below, aimed at challenging the pela rules, is not being undertaken as yet, at least not in the wijk where I am doing research. I suppose that the same structural factors as mentioned above contribute to such a passive attitude among those directly involved. Youngsters of a wijk-community easily take part in all kinds of social activities: they go to school, festivities, dance parties, etc., together. However, as members of the group of youngsters, they have hardly any interest in or knowledge of each others' problems in the field of adat. Communication on this subject is hindered because they belong to different descent-groups and identify themselves with their own, unique adat system. And even if they did communicate on these questions, they would not have a forum in the wijk to submit their problems to. As we have seen, the wijk-council has no authority in this field.

Thus, within the Moluccan community in the Netherlands there are a number of mechanisms at work which contribute to a strict, more or less rigid, maintenance of pela (and, more generally, of the system of adat). Such a strict interpretation of the pela rules will have increasingly severe and possibly fatal consequences for the continuation of the community. Unabated application of the existing rules will in the future lead to a situation in which it will be hard, or nearly impossible, for a Moluccan to marry a member of his/her community. Such a develop-

ment is surely paradoxical. Loyalty to the institution of *pela*, which Moluccans consider central to their cultural identity, will gradually but inevitably lead to disintegration of the community.

#### Notes

- \*) This article was translated by ms. Hannie van de Put. I would like to thank her heartily for doing so.
1. The term *pela*, which will be used countless times in the following text will not be italicized anymore for esthetic reasons.
  2. In a relatively small number of alliances, the so-called *pela tempat sirih* (Bartels 1979: 186), the intermarriage prohibition is absent.
  3. The specific way in which material on law is presented here - particularly with regard to the distinction made between rules (to be presented in paragraph 4.2) and their social meaning (to be discussed in paragraph 4.3) - is taken from a scheme applied by Von Benda-Beckmann (1978) and reflects his specific concept of law. This view, extensively discussed at various places in his work (e.g. 1978: 25-39; 1983: 235-251; 1985: 61-63), implies that law principally consists of normative conceptions existing within, as he calls it, the "realm of objectified meaning" (1985: 63). Law must be conceptually distinguished from the various social processes in which these normative conceptions are created, manipulated and applied.
  4. As stated in the Introduction my research is chiefly being conducted within one *wijk* and this description of the socio-political organization of the *wijk* applies in the first instance to this *wijk*. But investigations made concerning a number of other *wijken* indicates that the socio-political organization there corresponds to that of my first area of research. I now assume that most Dutch Moluccan *wijken* share the basic features of socio-political organization described here.
  5. The social techniques used by various functionaries of the Moluccan community in the Netherlands, aimed at the prevention of norm-violation in the conclusion of marriages, fit into a general system of regulation which has been described by several earlier students of *adat* law and which, in their opinion, is to be found in all regions of the Indonesian archipelago. Holleman and Logemann, in particular, have described how important transactions (marriage, transfer of land, inheritance) take place in the presence of specific legal functionaries, whose behavior is aimed at removing legal uncertainty and avoiding future disputes. The concepts they use to describe the regulative activities of these functionaries

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- are "supported law observance" (gesteunde naleving) and "preventive law care" (preventieve rechtszorg). For a description of these concepts see Holleman (1973: 594) and Griffiths (1985).
6. The vast majority of kumpulan in the Netherlands are composed of ex-residents of a certain village in Indonesia. By way of exception the ex-villagers of Hutumori, Sirisori and of a third pela-village, Tamilau, have established a kumpulan which comprises all ex-residents of these villages.
  7. This lawsuit was decided on appeal in 1978 by the highest court in the Netherlands, the Hoge Raad. The case was brought by the parents of a girl who wanted to marry her pela partner. The court rejected the appeal without considering the Moluccan pela rules in question, after concluding that, due to international treaties, Dutch law was applicable to the matter in question. The case, which has drawn much attention among Dutch jurists, is reported in Nederlandse Jurisprudentie (1980) and commented upon by Schultz; see also Jessurun d'Oliveira (1978). The case has not been dealt with here because the court did not discuss its social context. I have so far not been able to gather data on this case in my own research.

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