SELF-REDRESS AND FEUD

AMONG MOLUCCANS IN THE NETHERLANDS [1]

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INTRODUCTION

Moluccan society in Indonesia and the Netherlands disposes of a small range of procedures with regard to conflict settlement. This range varies from well-organised forms of adjudication, provided by traditional or state organs, via some intermediate procedures, to simpler and more private reactions, such as self-redress by violence or magic.[2] In previous studies I have described the system of conflict settlement in general and in addition some of the more important procedures. In this paper attention will be asked for the category of private reaction procedures mentioned above, especially for self-redress by the use of violence.

The choice of this theme nearly automatically implies that some attention is to be paid to a connected theme. As is known, self-redress is hardly a successful procedure. In many societies it is followed by a counter-attack by the opponent and subsequently by a series of acts of violence. Such violence with a serial character is usually described by anthropologists in terms of feud. Two other elements are considered to be characteristic.[3] a) Feud-like conflicts proceed according to certain rules and formalities. b) In addition to the primary opponents it tends to involve backing groups consisting of kin groups and friends

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of the primary opponents. Feud-like conflicts also occur in Moluccan society and form, together with self-redress, my main subject here.

The article has a simple, more or less chronological set-up. Section 1, dealing with violence and feud-like conflicts in the Moluccan archipelago in Indonesia, has an introductory nature. It shows that these phenomena have long been connected with Moluccan culture. It also describes how self-redress is applied within the various units of the Moluccan social organisation. Section 2 deals with the way in which self-redress and feud continue to exist among Moluccan immigrants in the Netherlands. The description focusses on forms of self-redress applied within genealogically organised groups: clans and extended families. With reference to case materials important characteristics of self-redress are mentioned and the way in which these conflicts usually proceed is described. In section 3 the hypothesis will be presented that the greatest vigour of self-redress is over, and that this institution will gradually lose its importance in the near future. Some indications derived from field data and from the literature on feud will be presented to support this supposition.

1. MOLUCCAN VIOLENCE IN HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

The Moluccan archipelago globally consists of some five small islands, separated by narrow straits. The population, now one million, is ordered in villages, nearly all of them situated in close proximity to others along both sides of these straits. Of old each village constituted a free republic, ruled by a chief, the *radja*, and a village council. Today the villages are incorporated in the Indonesian state system and the *radja* functions not only as a traditional chief, but also as mayor and deputy of the Indonesian authorities. In the settlement of conflicts, the *adat* - the ancient, indigenous system of rules and customs, partly protected by ancestral sanctions - is referred to in a large number of cases, especially in the field of 'land'. Matters in the field of criminal law, however, are withdrawn from the competence of village organs. These matters are dealt with by Indonesian judges according to written law. The legal power of the *radja* (and *a fortiori* of the state judges) is limited in practice. Daily life with its conflicts takes place as of old, relatively unhampered by influences from outside, in the various branches and social units of the villages. The chief social unit in the Moluccan village community is the patrilineal clan, consisting of many hundreds, sometimes thousands of members. These clans are in possession of their own land and their own magic symbols and rituals. General clan problems are sometimes submitted to the informal leaders of the clan, the *orang tua*, for discussion and settlement. The clans are further subdivided into clan-parts and segments. The basis of the clan system is the family (parents plus married

children), under the command of the head of the family.

In the anthropological literature on the Moluccas violence, self-redress and feud are often described as and considered to be indissolubly connected with Moluccan culture. In all three present-day monographs on the Moluccas, or at least on the Christian part of their population[4] separate attention is paid to these phenomena (Cooley 1961, Van Fraassen 1972 and Bartels 1976). The social climate among Moluccans, however calm and pleasant it usually is, always bears, as all accounts show, the possibility of a sudden outburst. A small reason, a minor incident, may have an explosive effect, resulting in a physical encounter. It may eventually disturb the relationship between persons and groups for a short or a longer time, even permanently. Explosions of violence, arguments and feuds occur between all kinds of groups at all conceivable levels. In the first place conflicts between villages can be mentioned.

As is reported, many villages and village bonds were in conflict with each other in the earliest period of recorded history, viz. around 1600 when the Europeans - first Portuguese, then Dutch - arrived in the archipelago (see e.g. Bartels 1977: 34-63, 88-115). Territory on land and sea was at stake in these village wars. Sometimes the conflicts had a ritual character: by headhunts sculls were acquired from the enemy. Later, during the 18th century, the existing discord between villages was even stimulated by the Dutch government and used to strengthen its authority and induce economic development. In a number of cases these historical conflicts between villages have carried through to the present. Cooley reports:

> Nearly every village has a particular enemy, another village
> with which it has feuded, sometimes smoulderingly,
> sometimes explosively.... Sometimes the rivalry will have
> become traditional with the original cause or incident being
> forgotten or remembered only in legend. (Cooley 1961: 108)

Known to me, from information from Moluccans in the Netherlands, are the recently regenerated feuds between the villages of Itawaka and Noloth and between Porto and Hariah. Youths from Porto raided and set fire to a part of Hariah in 1986.

Conflicts also frequently arise not only between, but also within villages. Cooley

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4 The population of the Moluccas is globally divided into two parts by religion: Christian and Islamic. These population groups are about equally large.

writes:

> Every village also has its blocs or cliques, its divisions within.
> In some cases there will be two groups in conflict with one
> another, each group having its allies, with a good many
> families remaining neutral. There are villages which are split
> in four or more ways with a large number of families, and
> frequently clans, lined up in various blocs. (Cooley 1961:
> 108).

All these conflicts may result in incidents, fights and clashes between members
or subgroups of the factions mentioned. While the moments at which outbursts
arise are unpredictable, certain events seem to be conducive to them. The
election of a new *radja* is such an event. Problems also occur almost invariably
when decisions have to be made with respect to the administration of the local
religious community and to the management (including repairs, renovation,
expansion, etc.) of the church building (Cooley 1961: 109). They are the result
of structural, unclear competence agreements, particularly regarding the question
as to who is qualified to administer and manage the Christian church, the *radja*
or the church council.

At the lower level of the clan, the clan-segment and the family-group conflicts
may also rise, resulting in incidents and feuds between or within these groups
(Cooley 1961: 110). The conflicts may emanate from more or less apparent
causes such as disagreement on boundaries of landed properties or the extent of
a bride-price and other marital obligations, but can also arise from apparently
spontaneous 'incidents'. Such incidents can, nevertheless, often be connected to
behaviour which is felt to injure the *honour* of the individual and group, such as
gossip, insults or threat. Gossiping women in particular are mentioned as
instigators of rows (Van Fraassen 1972: 130). Such incidents can even have their
very first origin in quarrels between children.

Once a minimal event has turned into an incident, an independent affair, a self-
confirming process may be set off, eventually resulting in a series of fights
between groups, as a consequence of the fact that group members close ranks. In
Moluccan society solidarity is a high virtue. Collective anger and involvement in
the fate of a fellow group member easily result in instantaneous action and
fighting. Reflection on the causes and consequences of the conflict is out of the
question at such a moment (Van Fraassen 1972: 137; see also Cooley 1961:
110). It is not a matter of right or wrong, but of the group feeling, the pleasure
of a lightning action.

The authors mentioned describe outbursts of violence as natural phenomena,

which however do not necessarily work out disastrously. Group members experience a well-appreciated feeling of excitement and fulfilment through action, neutral outsiders feelings of amusement and sensation. Little is reported on possible attempts to intervene by the village council. As far as my personal knowledge of Indonesian conditions goes, village authorities will certainly, just like many others in the village, intervene with attempts to terminate such outbursts, and will also make attempts at reconciliation. Their influence will be slight. A little more good is to be expected from informal mediators (mentioned by Van Fraassen 1972: 246), the *orang tua* of various clans. In my view, one may generally assume that the failure of such mediation does not induce the traditional village authorities to transfer the matter to the official authorities. Some kinds of violence will constitute, within certain bounds, which perhaps exclude nothing short of homicide, more or less accepted behaviour in Moluccan villages.

A final comment may be made on the origin of cultural violence in the Moluccas. Cooley (1961: 108 ff.) suggests an original but partial explanation for this. In his view violence is the result of a peculiar interaction pattern which characterizes the Moluccan community. Only two instead of three forms of interaction are known, namely cooperation and conflict. Cooperation is by far the dominant form. It is manifest in some magnificently developed institutions for mutual help. *Pèla*[5] is the finest example of the Moluccan ability to cooperate. Conflict, as a form of interaction, is the sub-dominant anti-pole of cooperation, at the other end of the continuum. Between them an intermediate form of interaction, that is to say competition, is lacking. The absence of a more or less regulated form of competition, for instance in the election of a village head, after which old relations could be taken up again *sans rancune*, is the cause of the existing profusion of violence in the Moluccas. I find Cooley's theory helpfully explanatory up to a point. It is a fact that an observer in the Netherlands or Indonesia may be surprised to find that the element of competition is more or less lacking.[6] This lack may certainly be related to the

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5 The concept of *pèla* refers to alliances, concluded in ancient times between two or more Moluccan villages, in which the partners agree *inter alia* that they will not inter-marry and will always render mutual assistance (Strijbosch 1986).

6 The lack of competitive spirit is, in my view, also an explanation for the nearly total lack of Moluccan businesses in the Netherlands. Moroccans, Turks, Surinamese, Vietnamese, Yugoslavs and other minorities all have established their ethnic shops, bars, restaurants and other enterprises. Moluccans have not. As they say, aspirant entrepreneurs are dissuaded from entering doing business by the knowledge that, in the framework of cooperation and solidarity, they

frequent occurrence of violence. However, Cooley's theory cannot be considered to be a total explanation of the violence: it does not indicate the cause of this peculiar lack of the element of competition in Moluccan culture.

2. VIOLENCE IN THE DUTCH-MOLUCCAN COMMUNITY

Since 1951 a segment of the Moluccan population has been resident in the Netherlands. It consists of former soldiers from the Dutch colonial army, their family members and their children. This group, now amounting to 40,000, was from the beginning housed in separate locations. Until the end of the 1960s these locations looked like 'camps' and consisted of simple barracks. Nowadays Moluccans live mainly in rather well-located, but still separate, neighbourhoods spread over a number of Dutch cities and villages. The internal matters of these neighbourhoods are handled by their own Moluccan 'neighbourhood councils'. This migrant group for a long time preserved, in a somewhat adapted form, the Moluccan-Indonesian language, culture, and socio-political organisation. Recently, however, a fairly broad process of integration and assimilation has started. This process, which had proceeded gradually from the time of the first arrival of these immigrants, accelerated in the 1980s as a consequence of various factors (Bartels 1986: 35-40). The most important factor was the disappearance at that time of a common political ideal, namely of a return to Indonesia and the establishment there of their own state, called the RMS (South Moluccan Republic). This ideal disappeared when, after a series of very violent but highly ineffective actions, particularly hijackings of trains, carried out in the 1970s, the notion came to be accepted generally, if tacitly, that it was unattainable. From the beginning of the 1980s most Moluccans seem to have reconciled themselves to life-long residence in the country which, until then, they had considered a place of temporary exile.

The youngest generation of migrants is no longer able to speak the Moluccan language; an increasing number of young people, already over 40%, look for marriage partners outside their own communities; it occurs more and more often that Moluccan individuals and families do not settle inside but outside the neighbourhoods mentioned; the traditionally strong authority of the *adat* and of *adat* functionaries - heads of the family, clan elders - is declining. Nevertheless, this is a slow process of change. According to Bartels in his recent monograph (1989: 532), the integration of Moluccans into Dutch society has a functional and economic nature only; integration in an emotional and cultural sense has

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would have to pay for their whole group of family-, village- and *pèla*-fellows, and this would make the prospect of healthy management rather illusory.

hardly gotten into stride.

To date Moluccan patterns of social interaction in the Netherlands do not differ essentially from those in Indonesia, described in the previous section. Here too the general climate is characterized by community spirit, willingness to cooperate and warm personal relations. However, the sub-dominant anti-pole - conflict - is also not lacking in the Netherlands and has influence in various ways and in various strata of the Moluccan community.

The discordant aspect is visible firstly at the level of the community as a whole. One can hardly read a publication on the migrant group in question without coming accross mention of a phenomenon which, depending on the taste of the author, is described in terms such as discord, inclination to split up in blocs, particularism, and heterogeneity. The Moluccan community is divided into a multitude of parties, groupings, movements. Just as in the Indonesian villages, matters of policy - particularly the election of political leaders and functionaries such as ministers and members of church and neighbourhood councils - constitute a recurring source of conflict. In such cases choices are determined by particularism, that is, the tendency to choose candidates on the basis of existing loyalties, primarily because of a common village of origin, common membership of a clan (segment), extended family, and suchlike. The losing party is often not prepared to accept defeat: he/she and his/her supporters break with the mainstream, and establish a party, movement or bloc for themselves.

The same phenomenon is visible at the level of the neighbourhood. Most Moluccan districts, even though they consist of no more than 25 families, dispose of a double or triple administrative staff. They have two or more neighbourhood heads, councils, ministers and church councils. This formation of blocs entails that the various supporters of each are mutually hostile not only in business or administration, but also personally. During the first phase of Moluccan-Dutch history, especially in the 'camp period', this kind of political or religious division often resulted in violence, even in near-wars between large groups from various villages or islands. Nowadays these disagreements do not usually result in physical violence. But there are exceptions. Recent cases were reported to me of ministers who conducted services under the protection of bodyguards, after competing groups had threatened to set fire to the church buildings.

If one analyses cases of conflict which involve self-redress or feud, one arrives

at basic social groups such as the clan (segment) and the extended family.[7] Self-redress, including feud, seems to occur rather frequently: it was not hard to find informants who, although they were familiar with no more than two or three neighbourhoods, could report on as many as 15 problems involving physical violence. All these problems had occurred over the past 15 years. It struck me, however, that the majority of these conflicts (11) had taken place before 1980.

The reasons for conflict are various, and, apart from the absence in the Netherlands of problems over land, are generally comparable with those reported from Moluccan villages in Indonesia. They concern specifically matters such as children's quarrels, gossip by women, 'wrongly' chosen marriage candidates, and accusations of sorcery. In essence I think they always concern matters of 'honour': one family member feels that the familial honour has been injured by provocative behaviour on the part of members of another family, and calls for an appropriate reaction. Such conflicts easily escalate and may eventually result in conflicts between the groups involved and in a series of acts of violence. The following case is typical.

Case 1. The families of H and R

> *1979.* H and R are church council members and friends. R's daughter (aged 20, and a student at a teachers' training college) falls ill with neurotic and hysterical behaviour. She sees visions, feels the devil within her. Moluccan traditional doctors are consulted. In a visionary state the girl points out the church council member H as causing her illness. The doctors take over her self-diagnosis: H is a sorcerer and has bewitched her. She is lodged with a family in a nearby town, outside the sphere of H. The latter is not informed ("for he himself knows it best"). Every day R's daughter is chaperoned from the station to school by sons of R. One day a son sees H loitering around the school building. The son flies into a

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7 There is another social context, namely among young adults, in which culture-bound violence has frequently occurred. Instances of that violence have been dealt with a number of times by Dutch criminal courts. Some have been instances of violence between groups of Moluccan youths and others of violence between Moluccan and Dutch youths. This violence constitutes a separate category: it is acceptable only within the subgroup of young people, and is generally disapproved of by public opinion in the Moluccan community as a whole, let alone in Dutch society generally. Mainly because of lack of data, I do not pay separate attention to this specific form of violence.

temper, walks up to H, calls him names and, finally, expresses the feared accusation: "You are a sorcerer". According to Moluccan beliefs this is a heavy accusation and an insult: H is designated a potential murderer. That same night the fight begins. Sons of H visit R's house, armed with guns. They smash all the windows, break furniture, shoot into the air. Soon R's answer follows. His sons, assisted by the sons of neighbour C, hit back. H's house and his windows are wrecked. There is mutual shooting. The noise is enormous. The police have to intervene. Some of the attackers, sons of H, are arrested and spend some days in jail, *inter alia* for illegal possession of firearms. Other sons are able to smuggle their arms away in time, through the help of their *pèla*-partners. Not only the police, but also the district council - as it happens, this district has only one council - intervene. Their intervention has a tempering influence, since the persons concerned enjoy authority as individuals.

1981. In a bar in the town a tremendous fight takes place. Sons of R and C beat up a son of H. There is no serious injury, and it is the bar's inventory which suffers the most damage. At the request of someone (I was unable to ascertain who), a minister is asked to mediate. This is not a minister of their own community, but Rev. Tutkei, who enjoys a reputation within the general Moluccan-Dutch community. He brings the parties together and finally organises a religious service which is attended by them both.

1983. H's sons take revenge, again in a bar. The chief victim is a son of R's ally C. The boy is left in a bad condition, with a severe headwound from a blow with a barstool. He is taken to hospital and lies unconscious and bleeding. The sight of blood flowing has an extreme effect in the Moluccan community. C's father is distraught, and cannot be restrained. He rages through the streets, appears in front of H's house on Saturday night, paces up and down, kicks, and shouts the most serious threats. The house will be set on fire if his son dies. H's family keeps quiet during the siege. The lights stay out, · but inside there are feverish phonecalls to family members and other relatives. The following morning they are all there, from all parts of the country. They patrol the area in minibuses. R's supporters - clan-fellows and others from the same village -

also drive around in a patrol bus. (C's father, who has no
relatives or fellow villagers in the Netherlands, does not take
part.) The confrontation does not result in a clash, but the
climate is very tense all Sunday. The Moluccan neighbourhood
council tries in vain to pacify the parties. The neutrals in the
district watch breathlessly, but the police are not called in, the
boy does not die, and the crisis passes. At the request of H a
minister with a national reputation, Rev. Metiari, is called in
for a further round of mediation. He comes, brings about a
reconciliation, and leads in prayer. End of the story (for the
time being).

It is possible, by referring to elements of this case, to give a more general
picture of self-redress in the Moluccan community in the Netherlands.

(a) Group formation

A conflict involving violence seldom remains restricted to the original individual
opponents. Their various supporting groups get involved at various moments.
The nuclear and extended families are the most important groups of supporters.
They do not have to be mobilized. In nearly all conflicts they automatically
become actively involved. The *pater familias* of the family plays an important
role. He has primary responsibility for the course of participation throughout the
conflict. He exercises supervision over all the various actions undertaken. In
addition, an important task is performed by the group of sons, possibly
reinforced by their nephews. They act as a fighting group. While its members
act on behalf of the whole family, it would be wrong to think of them as acting
only at the instigation of the *pater familias*. They can undertake action on their
own and are then usually supported by the *pater familias*.

The family group provides itself with allies, as the case shows, and as is
reported by Cooley (1961: 108), quoted in section §1. The choice of allies is
determined by practical possibilities. Co-residence in the neighbourhood involved
is an important criterion. Friends, neighbours, clan-fellows and, very important,
pèla's - but only when they live in the neighbourhood - act as allies. When the
conflict develops into later phases, help is asked of the clan in general. The clan
group is quite large, varying from some tens of persons to some hundreds, and
its members are spread over various towns and neighbourhoods in the
Netherlands. Nevertheless, mobilisation of a proportion of them is not difficult.
Contact is by telephone and chain systems are developed in each clan to circulate
messages quickly. The system is kept active by the practice of regularly
circulating messages on all kinds of events in the clan, particularly messages
concerning death, marriage and large parties. Initially the clan elders are

informed. On a request for help because of conflict, the clan elder takes the lead, in consultation with the family involved. Young clan members are mobilized by the elder. They arrive, if possible in groups, packed in mini-buses. They are able and prepared to come immediately, wherever they are in the Netherlands. Again, matters of right or wrong in the conflict are of no importance at all. These troops take up their weapons, mostly guns, hidden in their homes, board the mini-bus and, with feelings of joy and triumph, plunge into the fight. When troops from far away have thus been called in, the conflict has reached its largest size.

(b) Feud

Moluccan conflicts do not owe their sometimes great impact only to the involvement of supporters. They can also be prolonged in time. Self-redress is not a procedure which settles conflicts. It provokes counter-violence and results eventually in a series of violent acts that can last for years, generations, and in the Moluccas even for centuries. As reported in the literature (e.g. Rieder 1984:138; Peristiany 1966:16), such feud-like conflicts tend to be characterized by certain formalities, even rituals. One of the most important principles, already known from the Bible (Deuteronomy 19:18-21 - "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"), is that of equality: revenge is taken on the opponent in a similar way, and according to a fixed rate. This formal aspect is clearly reflected in the case. Action proceeded mirrorwise. The windows were smashed reciprocally, twice threats were made with guns, twice a boy was beaten up.
The rules of Moluccan feud law are rather mild. In many cultures, e.g. that of Finnish Gypsies (Grönfors 1986) and in some of those of the Mediterranean (Hasluck 1967, Van Dijken and Nauta 1978), a feud is focussed on the execution of *blood* revenge, on the killing of a member of the opposing party. Among Moluccans in the Netherlands homicide is definitely considered to be too strong a reaction. Actions go no further than intimidation and, at the most, the infliction of physical injury. In addition to this it should be remarked that fighting groups - especially those consisting of spontaneously mobilized clan-members - have somewhat unclear immediate aims. They are sufficiently heavily-armed that a fight might well have a fatal result, which is certainly not intended. In such circumstances they can hardly afford to come to a physical encounter. During the action both parties' mini-buses drive slowly back and forth, challengingly, but also evasively; here and there shots are fired, but into the air; incidental skirmishes occur; and that is all. The most important achievement is for the parties to show themselves and to demonstrate their

strength, preserving the clan honour by the fact of being present.[8]

(c) Social acceptance

Self-redress, if executed within the given framework, can be regarded as socially accepted in the Moluccan community at present. The outbreak of such conflict evokes approval and satisfaction among both those involved and outsiders. I was surprised at the way in which my neutral informants, among them neighbourhood heads and ministers, talked about acts of violence as more or less normal, excusable conduct. The legitimacy of the feud rules is also manifest in the behaviour of those - clan members, '*pèla's*', friends - who are called on for help. They feel it their duty to take action and possibly to use violence if another group member is in danger. Failure to participate in such a case would be treason and a violation of the Moluccan rules on feud. For this reason I have pleaded, in a legal article based on this study of feud, for violence committed in this framework to be considered as a 'cultural delict' and to be judged accordingly in a possible court case.[9]

(d) Settlement of the conflict

Procedures to settle feud-like conflicts are almost totally lacking in the Moluccan community. Despite the general approval of feud-like conflicts, there is some need for effective settlement. Conflicts, feuds and factionalism can dominate relations within a neighbourhood, spoil the atmosphere, and severely complicate useful plans and initiatives. Mediation is sometimes attempted by neighbourhood heads, but without much success. They do not dispose of substantial sources of power, and any authority some of them may have is based on particular, personal grounds. As functionaries they are not able to bridge conflicts between groups. The case presented above shows that the position of ministers is a little stronger. They are often called upon. In such cases they act as go-betweens. They hear the various arguments of the parties and then try to effect a reconciliation. They usually appeal to Christian ideals and values, which are supported by the parties. (The majority of Moluccans in the Netherlands are pious, practising Christians.) Another way to bring parties to reason is to appeal to their common ethnic-cultural origin: 'We constitute one people, don't we?'

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8 The same indeterminate style of fighting is described by Bourdieu (1966: 202). Parties in Kabyle go on fighting until, by some coincidence, one of the parties has the feeling that it has the upper hand, or at least has preserved its honour. Then the parties quickly part.
9 See Strijbosch 1991. For an extensive comparative study of the normative-legal concept 'cultural delict', see Renteln 1988.

The mediation of ministers is not always successful either. Their neutrality is often doubted by one or both parties, on the ground of their alleged loyalty - due to village or island of origin, family, friendship or *pèla* relations - to the opposing party. Only a few ministers, like Rev. Metiari, with enormous prestige in the Moluccan community, can sometimes bridge the gap. The greatest success such a minister can have is to bring parties together in a prayer service especially arranged for them. However, such success, although achieved in the case described, is rare.

3. CHANGES IN MOLUCCAN FEUD LAW?

In this last section I discuss possible changes in the practices of self-redress and feud. It is probable that these procedures will lose their social significance, and that they are already used less frequently and on a smaller scale than some years, say one decade, ago. My discussion will be presented tentatively: as a recently started and ongoing process it cannot yet be observed with sufficient distance to draw firm conclusions. My discussion will be based on some field data and on an analysis of factors which, according to the literature, may contribute to the development and change of institutions like self-redress and feud. But I start by presenting a second case.

This case resulted in intervention by the state courts in 1988. It was told to me by the (Moluccan) lawyer of one of the parties. My report below is a copy of a summary written by this lawyer.

Case 2.

> T was charged with attempted manslaughter or grievous bodily harm. There had been a prior conflict over a number of years between the families of T and S. One day this conflict escalated. The son of T was said to have spat when he passed S on his bike. According to T's son he had only spat out an insect. S considered this spitting in his direction a severe insult. Therefore, he went to the house of the T family for reparation or revenge. However, he kept a distance of some metres from the front door. To the T family this act of S was a provocation. A fight began. S hit T on the head with an iron bar and T's son flew at S with a samurai-sword.
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> In the Moluccan culture spitting in passing, even if the other person is not hit and one spits in another direction, is very

insulting. S's conduct, in approaching the front door of T and standing there with arms akimbo, would also generally be seen as insulting and provocative.

Neither the prosecuting attorney nor the magistrate could understand that these acts had excited those involved to such a degree. The magistrate stated that the parties should have calmly talked the dispute out. The magistrate estimated that the chance of repetition was small.

Sentence: 6 weeks probation.

Additional information from a clan elder (in this case a woman: Moluccan culture accords respect and status to women) taught me that the law-suit described here was only the tip of the iceberg. The problems had started in the seventies and in her estimation the law-suit was surely not the end of the feud. Unlike the judge, she expected new problems. On the same day that the duel with the samurai-sword and iron bar took place, this clan elder had been asked for help. She had been asked, in her capacity as clan elder, to mobilize the other clan members to conduct patrols. She had refused. She is a well-known Moluccan leader and spokeswoman, but because of her work as a labour consultant in the Dutch government, she can also distance herself from Moluccan conflicts. She advised T to break with what she thought to be a disastrous strategy of provocation and escalation, and finally pointed out to him that a violent procedure like self-redress was inappropriate in Dutch society.

After this first round of information, I visited T, together with the clan elder. From the conversation it became clear that neither he nor his opponent had taken physical action since the judgement by the state court. However, the conflict had not been dispelled, but rather it seemed that it was being continued by other means. T left the room for a while during the interview, to collect a blood-soaked shirt from a side-room. It was the shirt that he had worn on the day of the Big Fight. He had carefully kept it ever since, unwashed, on a small house altar in the side-room. This house altar - *piring nazar* - needs some explanation. Each Moluccan family with its own house has a *piring nazar*, which constitutes a place of daily prayer to the Christian God. However, it is not only a Christian shrine, but also a place to contact the 'ancestors', according to rules of a pre-Christian Moluccan religion. The ancestors are particularly called upon for help in times of stress and misfortune. When T told us that he and his family group regularly met around the shirt on the house altar to 'pray', it was clear that they were following a standard procedure in cases of conflict (see Strijbosch 1988). Certain manipulations, with the help of coins representing the opponents, are carried out on the altar and the ancestors are requested by prayer to take revenge

on these opponents, in this case on S and his group members.

Case 2 obviously shows a deviation from the stereotypical pattern of the development of self-redress described in section 2. T did not succeed in enlarging 'his' conflict into a larger *clan* conflict. The clan elder declined his request and even admonished him for his irresponsible behaviour. I view this second case, though it involved violence, as a sign of change in the social domain concerned. It shows that the old institution of feud is under pressure. This supposition, which forced itself on me more and more in the course of my field work, was supported by examination of the pattern in which my violence cases were spread over time. The majority (11) came to a head before 1980, and only 4 exploded after that date.

For a better understanding of current·ideas and opinions on feud I submitted Case 2 to a meeting of some informants for their comment. Their reaction was illuminating. They noticed during, and possibly even as a consequence of the discussion, that their views on the legitimacy of feud were changing. To be sure, they did not suddenly condemn the institution as such. That would have been inconceivable because they themselves had told me, with enthusiasm, some feud stories. However, like the clan elder they thought that self-redress was no longer, or would shortly cease to be, appropriate. As they more or less generally stated: 'perhaps it is a bit old-fashioned'. In my view this latter observation is significant, since it may show that the spell is broken. An institution which was 'naturally' applied in the course of centuries, suddenly appears susceptible to detached comment. A procedure which can thus be objectively assessed by a group of its former adherents will, in my opinion, have lost its inner strength.

Having mentioned my field data as to feud and change, I submit next in support of the views expressed some circumstantial evidence, namely evidence of some social developments which may further explain a gradual decay of self-redress and feud.

(a) Assimilation

This first development needs little explanation. It concerns the spirit currently prevailing in the Moluccan-Dutch community, namely the broad process of assimilation which started at the beginning of the 1980s, and is referred to above in section 2. As I observed there, this process includes *inter alia* the loss of significance of certain *adat* rules. It seems plausible that an institution like feud, which is so removed from the current ideas on violence prevailing in the surrounding society, should be affected by this general trend.

(b) Milder socialization

This development needs special attention. Socialization is mentioned by Koch (1974: 180) and Rieder (1984: 130) as a factor that may contribute to developments concerning self-redress and feud. According to them comparative studies show that these institutions occur relatively often in communities with harsh systems of upbringing characterized by cultivation *inter alia* of a fighting spirit, group loyalty, assertiveness toward foreign groups, and a resolve to revenge injuries to a person's or a family's honour in a hard-handed way. It is not hard to show that traditional Moluccan socialization fully met the model described. It is elaborately described in a recent monograph by Bartels (1989). During the first years that the Moluccans were in the Netherlands their socialization system was characterized by severity, corporal punishment, and the accentuation of courage and a fighting spirit. However, this harsh method was abandoned at a rather early stage, around 1960 (Bartels 1989: 256). From that moment on Moluccan parents adjusted to the 'mild' system of their Dutch counterparts. They are said to have done so because they realised that their own socialization system was less suitable in the Dutch set-up, and hindered their children in achieving the much desired good results at school. The odd result occurred that children within a single large family might have been raised according to two completely different principles. The effects on feuding behavior of this new way of socialization will have become operative around 1980, when the new generation of 'mildly' raised children came of age. These new youth may be less prepared to take part in fights than their predecessors. And they may certainly lose interest when these fights turn on traditional values (like clan loyalty, or honour) and are fought between clan groups.

(c) More central government

A last factor to be mentioned as contributing to the decay of self-redress and feud (see again Koch 1974: 180 and Rieder 1984: 138) relates to the sort of government in a society. The hypothesis is that a weak central government in a social unit promotes the emergence of institutions of self-redress and feud.

Conditions in the old Moluccan society were conducive to this effect. The *radja's* - rulers of the Moluccan villages in Indonesia - do not, according to Van Fraassen in his detailed study of this subject (1972: 220 ff.), have very much power. They are not able to control local factionalism. The same picture was applicable in the Moluccan neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. The position of neighbourhood heads was, if possible; even weaker than that of the *radja's*. They were barely able to influence the course of events within their own area. Thus the neighbourhoods were not controlled by Moluccan institutions. And they were also hardly controlled by Dutch institutions. Within the Moluccan

neighbourhoods it was against the code to call in the police, for whatever reason. The police in their turn avoided these areas, where no cooperation whatsoever was to be expected, as much as possible. These neighbourhoods constituted a kind of 'law-less rooms'. Such rooms, according to Rieder (1984: 187), also exist in various cities in the USA and constitute a context for new types of self-redress there.

However, these favourable conditions for self-redress seem to be changing. It is not the Moluccan, but the Dutch organs that are strengthening their legitimacy. During my research I noticed that neighbourhood members no longer found it inconceivable to call in the police when they felt threatened. That the conceivable can become reality was proved by a case (1989) on feud which occurred recently in a neighbourhood in the southern part of the country. One of the fighting parties turned up in the neighbourhood with its clan group and used physical violence. The fight, inside and in front of the Moluccan church building, was ended when, *at the request of their opponents*, the police came to maintain order in the neighbourhood.

In light of this overview of new developments in the field of self-redress and feud, and of the factors that may contribute to them, I do not expect these institutions suddenly to lose their relevance. The process will proceed gradually. Self-redress will continue to be practised, certainly in the basic units of the Moluccan community, the extended and nuclear families. It is my conviction that self-redress will, if physical violence is no longer tolerable, be continued by other means. I am particularly thinking of the magic means mentioned in connection with case 2 above. The magic domain of the Moluccan culture is still characterized by great activity. After the possible fading away of violence as a standard procedure, magic will undoubtedly be able to take over certain functions in the field of self-redress.

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