THE RECONCILIATORY POTENTIAL OF THE PELA
IN THE MOLUCCAS

The Role of the GPM in this Transformation Process

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The Reconciliatory Potential of the *Pela* in the Moluccas

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Starting my study in September 2005 at the IRTI Research Master Program at the VU University Amsterdam, I really did not know what topic I would focus on. It took several presentations in the Seminar class on Methodology before I learned not to encompass a too broad field research. Even though I had a commitment to produce something which must be useful for the Moluccan society, I had no idea how to select a relevant topic. During some long distance discussions with Dr. Yaapie Watloly, a Moluccan Professor in Philosophy, he encouraged me to focus on the pela, especially on the way the church in the Moluccas can develop this Moluccan local cultural phenomenon to an instrument of reconciliation. This proved to be a challenging suggestion, especially since the church up to now neglected the potential value of cultural phenomena for its own theological reflection.

My research reached its final form as a dissertation thanks to the significant role of my promotor, Prof. Martien Brinkman and co-promotor Dr. Alle Hoekema. Prof Martien Brinkman was a friendly and an open-minded supervisor who was prepared to many open discussions. So, this study was not a stressful study. His critical questions challenged me to analyze and to develop some Moluccan local views critically. In so doing, this writing can hopefully become a contribution to intercultural theology. He was not only a supervisor; he was also a guide. He guided me to express my thoughts in a systematic way. Also, he encouraged me to complete this study within the constraints of my time schedule. So, he was disappointed any time there was too little progress in my writing. “Thank you very much, Prof.”

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The Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst e.V. (EED) in Germany granted me a scholarship during eighteen months, which enabled me to stay in the Netherlands until I completed my study. Taking part in some of the EED’s programs taught me how important it is, that a church embodies its Christian faith in its life and services. It helps a church not only to pay attention to rituals and other religious events but also to take part in solving problems faced by human beings in the world.

Raja negri Batu Merah and raja negri Passo with their local staff helped me during the first period (October 2006-June 2007) and the second period (mid February 2009-mid May 2009) of my fieldwork. As a Moluccan Christian researcher, meeting and having conversations with staff members in the negri Batu Merah office, I was able to cope with several suspicions left by the conflict. All interviewees shared their understanding, experiences and ways of thinking about the pela. They all contributed to making my fieldwork fruitful. I thank all of them.

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Finally, to my Mom and Dad, I dedicate this dissertation.

Rachel Iwamony
MAPS

MAP OF INDONESIA
Source: Drawn by Morten
MAP OF PROVINCES OF THE MOLUCCAS AND THE SOUTH MOLUCCAS
Source: Atlas Indonesia dan Dunia, Karisma Publishing Group
MAP OF AMBON ISLAND
Source: Drawn by Morten
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. General statement of the problem

The Moluccas are an Indonesian province situated in the Eastern part of Indonesia. Until 2000 the North Moluccas were also a part of this province. The North Moluccas have become an independent province since 2000, and are therefore not included in this writing. The province of Moluccas was famous for its spices which attracted countries such as Portugal and the Netherlands to sail from Europe to Asia in the sixteenth century. Because of its spices, the Moluccas were especially important to the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC) when Indonesia was a colony of the Netherlands. Besides trade activities, Portugal and the Netherlands were two countries that brought Christianity to the Moluccas.

In its history as one of Indonesia’s provinces, the Moluccas experienced a negative political movement. Around 1950, five years after Indonesia declared its independence, a political movement in the Moluccas named *Republik Maluku Selatan* or *RMS* (Republic of South Moluccas) sought independency of the South Moluccas from Indonesia. When the Indonesian Army captured this province, 3,500 (former) Ambonese soldiers who had served in the KNIL and were encamped on Java, were transferred to the Netherlands with their families. Many, but not all of them had RMS sympathies. Though this transfer was meant as a temporary measure; in the end, most of these Ambonese people stayed in the Netherlands. Since a vast majority of them was (and is) Christian, several Moluccan churches were founded in the Netherlands.

The province of the Moluccas is well known in Indonesia as *Provinsi Seribu pulau* (Thousand Islands Province) due to its geographical characteristic: it counts more than 812 islands. This implies that there are many ethnic groups in the Moluccas. Saparua (the Central Moluccas), Seram (the Central Moluccas), Buru (the Central Moluccas), Kei (the Southeast Moluccas), Aru (the Southeast Moluccas), Tanimbar (the Southeast Moluccas), sub-ethnic Kisar (the Southwest Moluccas), Babar (the Southwest Moluccas), Wetar (the Southwest Moluccas) are some of the sub-ethnic groups in the Moluccas. Besides these there are many other Indonesian ethnic groups in the Moluccas. According to the statistics of the Province of Moluccas, in 2000 there were and still are ethnic groups from Buton (Southeast Sulawesi), Bugis (South Sulawesi), Makassar (South Sulawesi), and Java. In addition, there are many Chinese who live and run their business in the Moluccas. Of these ethnic groups, the people from Buton, Bugis, Makasar and China are more active in business activities compared

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3 Pusat Statistik Provinsi Maluku, *Sensus Penduduk 2000*, (s.l.s.s.), 140.
to the original Moluccans. On the other hand, many Moluccans live and work in other parts of Indonesia such as Java, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and Papua.

This brief description indicates that the Moluccan society is a multi-cultural society because in this province people who come from different islands and (sub-) ethnical groups live together and form the Moluccan society. The differences are not only related to a different cultural and ethnical context, but to a different religious background as well.

Talking about Moluccans is also talking about the Moluccan Muslims and the Moluccan Christians (both Catholics and Protestants). These facts have formed the life of the Moluccans as a community in diversity.

The differences demand a large measure of understanding of each other in order to live in harmony. Actually, however, the pluralistic ethnic as well as religious situation causes serious conflicts in Indonesia. For example, there have been conflicts in Posso, Madura, Kupang and Kalimantan. The conflict in the Moluccas in 1999-2004 was a sad example as well. Below, I will describe briefly the conflict in the Moluccas during the years 1999 until 2004. In 1999-2004, when this conflict took place in the Moluccas, it caused Christians and Muslims to kill each other. Even though this conflict was a tragedy in the life of both Muslims and Christians, I will only reflect upon what happened from a Christian point of view. Therefore, I will pay attention to acts perpetrated by Christians.

Religious sentiment made the conflict spread to all places in the province of the Moluccas. As soon as the violent conflict happened in Ambon, almost all places in the Moluccas entered into it. Muslims and Christians in Masohi, Haruku, Saparua, Buru, Tual, Halmahera, and Ternate (the North Moluccas) joined the conflict. This condition made both Christians and Muslims think that the conflict had been arranged purposely. From the Muslim point of view, it was arranged by Christians to kill all Muslims and Christians saw the conflict as being arranged by Muslims to kill all Christians.

Because of this assumption, Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas did not try to discover what went wrong in their social life. Rather, they entrenched themselves in their respective worldview, creating a religious wall that caused them to see each other

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5 To read a brief explanation about the conflict, see C.J. Bohm, Lintas Peristiwa Kerusuhan di Maluku: 1999-2003 (Ambon: Crisis Centre Diocese of Amboina, 2003).
6 The first case causing the conflict was an individual problem which happened on Idul Fitri day. At Batumerah, a region in Ambon city, a man asked money from a driver, but the driver did not want to give any. It made both fight each other. Unfortunately, immediately, this case spread through all of Ambon city. The rumour was that Christians were fighting Muslims. This information was based on the fact that the man asking for money was a Muslim and the driver was a Christian.
7 ICG Asia Report No. 31, Indonesia: The Search For Peace in Maluku (Jakarta/Brussels, 8 February 2002), i.
8 In the beginning of the conflict, the South Moluccas was a part of the province of the Moluccas. It has become an independent province since 2000, so the South Moluccas is not included in this writing.
10 Bohm, Lintas Peristiwa Kerusuhan, 12.
as enemies. Religious people were not afraid to fight against each other. In fact, their assumptions only encouraged them to fight all the more. The concept of jihad encouraged Muslims to keep fighting, while the Christians would encourage each other with religious songs, such as Laskar Kristen Maju masuklah perang (Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war). A critical question is, “why they did so?” There are many possible answers to this question. However, in my point of view, there are two main reasons for strengthening this religious sentiment.

First, both people of the religious groups in the Moluccas already had negative views about each other. Indeed, when one looks openly at the past history, one can recognize how bad their relation was. A comprehensive description about the attitude of rivalry in religious life in Indonesia especially in the Moluccas can be found in A History of Christianity in Indonesia (2008), edited by Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink. In chapter nine of this book, especially in the description of the situation in the Moluccas, Mesakh Tapilatu and Steenbrink write:

After the arrival of the Portuguese, the Muslims and Christians became divided in a mosaic of villages. There were and still are more Muslim villages on the northern coasts of the islands, while Christians more often occupy the southern regions. But very often also there is a short distance between the two and not really a situation of larger Muslim regions clearly isolated from Christian regions. Notwithstanding the short distances between the two communities on many islands a practice of segregation had started. Christian and Muslim villages used to exist separated and in mutual exclusion.12

This exclusion has caused Moluccans who belonged to Islam and Christians to live in segregation. As a consequence, religion was not understood as a way of life which should bring reconciliation and peace to all people. The conflict situation already existed, and consequently, religion even formed a new source of conflict. This situation did not change, even in the twentieth century. According to Tapilatu and Steenbrink,

In the first decades of the twentieth century we see a whole range of conflicts between Catholics and Protestants on the Tanimbar Islands, where very few Muslims lived. Most of these conflicts were about the position of the teachers and often involved also the decision of villages or clans to opt for either Protestantism or Catholicism.13

It is clear that Islam and Christianity (both Catholic and Protestant) in the Moluccas had negative views on each other. Indeed, one may say that the conflict in the Moluccas in 1999-2004 was not really a new religious conflict.

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11 Khazanah Sabili, a periodical magazine, informs about Jihad in the Moluccas in several volumes. For example a fact is noted in Khazanah Sabili no. 15 THN VII, Februari 5 2000. In the ‘Pernik’ section, we find: ‘When the Masjd of Al-Muhajirin was burned by ‘kaum kufar’ (nasrani), there were no words but fighting…. Insya Allah, Jihad in Ambon is still going in the spirit of Allahu Akbar.’
13 Aritonang and Steenbrink (eds.), A History of Christianity in Indonesia, 408.
Secondly, it seems that when this conflict happened, Christians and Muslims looked back to the past history which contained elements of tension. Both religions recalled everything that had happened in the past. For example, Muslims remembered the RMS movement and assumed that the Moluccan Christians still wanted to separate from Indonesia by arranging this conflict. Christians looked at what happened in Situbondo (East Java) in 1996, Kupang (West-Timor) and Ketapang (a street in Jakarta) in 1998, when many Christians were killed.

Because of this religious sentiment, many Christians in the Moluccas failed to create peace in their social life at that time. This was proven by their attempts to kill Muslims who lived around them. As an example, Muslims were killed in Batu Gantung just when the conflict began in January 1999. Muslims coming from Buton had also been evicted from Batu Gantung Dalam and Eri (villages on the island of Ambon), even though they had lived in these places for many generations. Frankly, it was a great challenge to Christians because generally Batu Gantung and Eri are places in which Muslims were in the minority. In these cases, Christians were faced with a situation that should have challenged them to prove their faith, namely by saving human life irregardless of that person’s religion. Unfortunately, they did not act accordingly. There were many reasons why Christians were led to do these terrible acts. The main reason was to save Christians from Muslim attacks.

For this reason, Christians may have thought that killing was a good way to end the conflict situation. People had to protect themselves from everything which would create a danger in their lives. In my point of view, they were wrong; because in that situation, Christians must not make a generalization about all Muslims. Building strong relationships and thinking positively are the best ways to face a difficult situation together. In addition, their reasoning assumes that in order to survive one had to kill others.

In Christianity, Christians must create situations where all people live peacefully and can share life together. However, the Moluccan Christians did not follow this principle. As a consequence of leaving one’s place to look for other places that were more secure, many people became refugees. Muslim refugees stayed in public places where Muslims were in the majority and vice versa for the Christian refugees. Because of this, Christians and Muslims lived separately. Everything was done separately. Muslims had their own market as did the Christians. All office activities took place separately; even educational activities, hospitals, and public transportations were segregated in this way.

The impact of this conflict is still evident in the life of Moluccan Christians. I had a personal experience as to this. In 2004, I was taking a public bus home when I heard an old Christian woman express her feelings about the situation that she faced. She said to some of her friends in the bus, “Do not trust people from Buton. They are very cruel. I have not forgotten what they did to me and my family. I went out of my

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15 Buton is an area in the Southeast of Sulawesi-Indonesia.
16 During the conflict, Perumnas Wayame (a place in Ambon Bay) was the only place where Christians and Muslims lived peacefully.
home wearing only the clothes on my body.” Moreover, one of the Moluccan Christians staying in Jakarta told me about the psychological impact of the conflict on the life of the new generation. She shared her experience. In 2004 one of her nephews (staying in Ambon) visited her and her family in Jakarta. On the first day, with a worried expression on his pale face, he ran out of room crying, “My God, we are going to be killed by Muslims”. She asked him, “What happened?” He was afraid just because he heard Maghrib coming from a Mosque nearby the house. Another story reports, that passing a place where many houses had been burned, a four year old boy told his aunt, “Muslims are cruel; they burned our houses.”

These stories are examples of the psychological and theological impact of the conflict on the life of Moluccans. Psychologically, the Moluccan Christians live with a feeling of insecurity among Muslims. Theologically, they think Islam poses a danger to Christians. Even though these are stories expressed by Christians, Muslims surely have the same impression about Christians.

However, the violent conflict in the Moluccas cannot be separated from other conflicts which happened in Indonesia since 1998 when Soeharto, the second Indonesian President, lost the power which he had had for about thirty years. According to several sources, Indonesian analysts such as George Aditjondro and Thamrin Tomanggola argue that almost all conflicts in Indonesia were arranged by the Indonesian Army in order to retrieve its position in Indonesian political life. If this argumentation is true, one might ask why religion became the appropriate provocative issue in the conflict in the Moluccas. The answer to this question is that religious sentiments in Indonesia and especially in the Moluccas easily cause uncertainty in religious people. This religious sentiment creates problems when it is contaminated by political purposes. Komaruddin Hidayat, an Indonesian Muslim, concludes, “Unfortunately, some of the Indonesian politicians and authorities use and manipulate religious sentiments and religious groups in order to fulfill their career and political ambition…..” Hidayat, here, reveals a factual religious condition in Indonesia which observably does not always reflect harmony.

Moreover, besides religion as a provocative issue as well as a factor of being alienated, Tapilatu and Steenbrink also notice a tendency of seeing migrants negatively in the Moluccas.

On the local level this period from the 1960s to the 1990s saw many Muslim migrants from South and Central Sulawesi moving towards the Central Moluccas, especially to the town of Ambon. This caused a change in the already precarious religious balance of the region, where the Muslims had slightly outnumbered the Christians. The new migrants were looking for positions in the relatively prosperous economy of the Moluccas and threatened the job opportunities of local Muslims and Christians, both in the government and at private enterprises. The Christians felt hit twice, because local

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17 People who come from Buton, the Southeast of Sulawesi. Most of the people of Buton are Muslims.
19 A staff member of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah in Jakarta.
Muslims and newly arrived migrants were now taking ‘their jobs.’ This development threatened the earlier harmony between Muslims and Christians.\textsuperscript{21}

This information helps one to understand why, during the conflict, the willingness to neglect migrants was an issue that came to the surface. In many places in Ambon City, they wrote, \textit{usir BBM} (throw Butonese, Buginese, Makassarese out of Ambon).\textsuperscript{22} This indicated that in the Moluccas, Butonese, Buginese and Makassare people were in a negative position.

This conflict often makes people ask about the typical cultural relationship that the Moluccan Christians and the Moluccan Muslims have, namely \textit{pela}.\textsuperscript{23} The \textit{pela} is a Moluccan local cultural system through which conflicts between villages could be overcome. In addition, the \textit{pela} can also bring Christian Moluccans and Muslim Moluccans to a good relationship.

The unity of Muslims and Christians was further guaranteed and fostered by the \textit{pela}-system of alliances between villages, often at great distances and of different religious affiliation. Although most alliances are between two villages, there are also cases of three or more villages. Begun as an economic alliance, \textit{pela} is also the cultic centre of Ambonese ethnic religion.\textsuperscript{24}

Especially in the Central Moluccas, \textit{pela} had and still has a very important role; even for the Moluccan Muslim and Christians it forms a special typical religious aspect of life.

Through this \textit{pela}-system, Muslims and Christians fostered the conviction that they were of the same origin, from the same \textit{Upu} (ancestor). This can sometimes be seen in the names of villages like Siri-Sori Islam and Siri-Sori Kristen or in identical names for one clan that has Muslim and Christian members. The \textit{pela} rituals and obligations were very successful in making the religious differences subordinate to the common genealogy.\textsuperscript{25}

In its effort to overcome the conflict the \textit{Gereja Protestan Maluku} (the Protestant Church of the Moluccas, later called the GPM) is inclined to use old aspects of the Moluccan local culture such as the \textit{pela} system as a means to renew the relations with people of other religions and of other ethnic groups. It might be a promising approach because the old Moluccan local cultures still have a great impact on the life of the Moluccan community. During the conflict, almost all villages linked by a \textit{pela} did not fight one another.

\textsuperscript{21} J.S. Aritonang and K. Steenbrink (eds.), \textit{A History of Christianity}, 411.
\textsuperscript{22} Buton, Bugis, Makassar form three ethnic groups from South Sulawesi, Indonesia.
\textsuperscript{23} The \textit{pela} is a Moluccan cultural system which connects people from different villages to be brother-sister to one another. See F. Cooley, \textit{Altar and Throne in Central Moluccan Societies: A Study of the relationship between the institutions of religion and the institutions of local government in a traditional society undergoing rapid social change}, (Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Department of Religion, Yale University, 1961), 183-188. We will deal with the \textit{pela} in Chapter III.
\textsuperscript{24} Aritonang and Steenbrink (eds.), \textit{A History of Christianity}, 409-410.
\textsuperscript{25} Aritonang and Steenbrink (eds.), \textit{A History of Christianity}, 410.
However, a lot has been changed after the conflict of 1999-2004. In a certain sense, the old Moluccan society is no longer there. Only in a modified way, can we refer to the old cultural systems as \textit{pela} (the centuries old covenants between Moluccan villages).

The GPM is slowly becoming aware of this changed situation. An uncritical application of the old Moluccan habits is impossible. Therefore, the church must critically learn how the Moluccan local culture still functions and how this local culture influences the life of Moluccans in our present days. The church must also figure out the old and modern values existing in this culture. In these ways, the church will help Moluccans to experience their culture not as a mere repetition of the past but as a helpful resource in the topical situation. The Christian faith can create space for the Christians to live in a climate of diversity, especially because of its belief in reconciliation. It is because of this peace making role, that I am interested in studying this topic.

**II. Main research question and sub-questions**

The description of the problematic situation above leads to the main research question of this study: \textit{How can the GPM critically use aspects of the traditional Moluccan local culture such as the pela in order to help the Moluccan community to live as a reconciled society in a situation of diversity?} In order to answer this main question, there are several sub-questions:

1. How does the GPM see other religions? How does the GPM interpret religious reconciliation in the Moluccas? (chapter II)
2. How do the participants of a \textit{pela} understand the \textit{pela}? How does the \textit{pela} shape the life of its participants? How do the participants of a \textit{pela} see outsiders\textsuperscript{26} who are not included in the \textit{pela}? (chapter III)
3. How does the \textit{pela} shape a religious understanding between Christian Moluccans and Muslim Moluccans? (chapter III)
4. Can certain aspects of Christian theology such as the notion of the crucified Christ play a role to transform the Moluccan local culture in order to spread its virtues? (chapter IV)
5. What could be the impact of a theological transformation of the \textit{pela}? What could be new perspectives of the \textit{pela} as a result of this theological transformation? (chapter V)

**III. Objective**

This research has as its objective to deliver sound theological arguments for an active role of the GPM in the reconciliation process at the Moluccas on the basis of a transformation of the \textit{pela}. Both a transformation of the interpretation of the idea of the \textit{pela} and a transformation of the traditional Christology are necessary to achieve this objective. The second part of this transformation, the transformation of the traditional Moluccan Christology on het basis of the idea of Jesus as \textit{Tete Manis}, will only be

\textsuperscript{26} Outsiders’ in this writing refers to people who are not participants of the \textit{pela}.
briefly elaborated. In this study, the main emphasis lies upon the first part of the transformation, namely the transformation of the pela on the basis of the idea of the crucified Christ.

IV. Assumptions

There are some basic assumptions in this study.

Firstly, plurality in the life of human beings offers benefits for understanding life itself. However, plurality creates problems in the life of human beings when people cannot manage it. In order to manage the plurality both in social-cultural and religious life, people must reflect about reconciliation. Reconciliation demands people not only to recognize and to accept differences in their lives, but also demands them to come to a mutual and mature understanding about their differences.

Secondly, the pela, a local culture of the Moluccans, also offers conceptions for reconciliation. However, it cannot reach outsiders. Therefore, it must be transformed in order to spread its virtues widely. One way of transformation of the pela is to transform it theologically. By theological transformation, I try to reinterpret the pela through the notion of the crucified Christ which will help to understand the pela in a more extended way.

Thirdly, reinterpretation of the pela can help Christians to understand their Christian belief in the reality of plurality of religion. The notion of the crucified Christ can break religious gaps and social-cultural gaps as well those which make human beings tend to live in alienation or estrangement to one another. As an important implication, the mission of the church in the Moluccas should not to be to convert people but to help all people become good people as well as good religious people according to their beliefs. In other words, the mission of the church in the Moluccas is to help Muslims to be become good Muslims and visa versa, Muslims must help Christians to become good Christians.

V. Limitations

Certainly there would be sufficient reason to describe and analyze as well the way Islam in the Moluccas deals with pela and accepts or rejects the processes of change as to the interpretation of the pela. In this way, the concept of intercultural theology could be broadened even more. Indeed, we have done so only in an implicit way in the analysis of our fieldwork and at a few places in the literature used. An extended analysis of the way Moluccan Muslims are thinking here is beyond the present capacities of the author. However, and even more important, it is also beyond the main objective of this dissertation. The historically and socially dominant position of the GPM makes it necessary to start the description and analysis of the processes of change into the direction of reconciliation right there. Both the recent theological developments within the GPM, which originally had a very static theology, almost exclusively oriented towards the Western tradition of the early Indische Kerk and the missionaries, and the growing openness and changing attitude of the leadership of this church towards the pela, as made visible in the recent Five Years plans, justify in our opinion an approach which limits itself to the theological and cultural interaction
between this Christian part of the Moluccan society and the *pela*. So, even within these borders we dare speak of *intercultural* theology. Of course, we hope that our study will provoke both Muslims and other Christians (both Roman Catholics and Pentecostals) in the Moluccas to react upon our analysis and ideas. In that way the real aim of our study: a lasting reconciliation in the Moluccas can become reality.

VI. Content and method

After the description of the problematic situation at the Moluccas (chapter I) we shall describe the changes in the attitude of the GPM with regard to other religions, especially the Islam (Chapter II). Because of the disastrous impact of the conflict of 1999-2003 on Moluccan societal life, the description of the classical Moluccan *Pela* system (chapter III) has to be followed by the evaluation of the results of a limited form of field research. The field research will be focused on questions like these: Do the Moluccans understand the *pela* as a way of reconciliation? Do they accept the *pela* as part of their Christian or Muslim existence?

The most creative chapters will be chapters IV and V. In chapter IV an encounter of an adequate theology of reconciliation based on the concept of the crucified Christ and the results of the fieldwork are discussed. Among the many important themes in Paul’s theology we opted for the theme of the sacrifice of the crucified Christ because of the huge role sacrifice plays in the traditional *pela* ceremonies. A second motive for this choice is the close relation between this theme of the crucified Christ and the development of models of reconciliation theology in modern systematic theology. Especially some representatives of the South-African anti-apartheid theology offer us this model. With the help of these two tools – the role of Christ’s sacrifice in Paul’s letters and the digestion of this theme in modern models of reconciliation theology – we intend a theological transformation of the *pela*. Here we deal with a double transformation; not only can the gospel transform a culture but a culture can also offer a new perspective in understanding the gospel. A new interpretation of the *pela* through the eyes of the crucified Christ enriches and corrects the existing ideas of the *pela* and the *pela* enriches the way Moluccan Christians understand the meaning of the crucified Christ as *Tete Manis* in their daily life.

Chapter V will deal with new perspectives on understanding the *pela* as a result of the theological transformation of the *pela* that has been proposed in chapter IV. Thus, the concluding chapter V is an implementation of ideas about reconciliation which are offered by a new interpretation of the *pela* in relation to the notion of the crucified Christ.

In this way, this study will integrate a historical-descriptive approach (chapter I and II), and empirical approach (chapter III) and a systematical approach (chapter IV). It is meant as a modest contribution to an own Moluccan theology or intercultural theology (chapter V). In my opinion, the Church, as an important institution in the life of Moluccan Christians, has to play a modest, but important role in this reconciliation process. It belongs to its mission not to abstain from but to be committed to this obligation.

Finally, as this study also depends on several sources written in the Indonesian language, some quotations are my own translation. Also, we are aware of the fact, that
both in the GPM and in the *pela* men and women mostly operate on the basis of parity. We try to emphasize this by often using ‘he and she’ or other forms which explicitly or implicitly express gender equality.
CHAPTER II

GPM'S SEARCH FOR RELIGIOUS RECONCILIATION

I. Introduction

The complicated situation faced by the Moluccans which has been described in the first chapter challenges religious people in the Moluccas to think and to reformulate how they understand and live their religious life. The Protestant Church in the Moluccas, or Gereja Protestan Maluku (the GPM) as a religious institution in the Moluccas, plays an important role in this process, especially in connection with other religions around them. Therefore, this chapter will deal with two sub-themes. In the first part, we are going to describe the existence of the GPM in its historical religious context. This sub-theme is very important to figure out how the GPM came to its existence because religious understanding of each religion cannot be separated from its history. In the second part, we are going to see how the GPM understands other religions and the plurality of religions as well. In addition, the second part also will deal with how the GPM tries to work on religious reconciliation.

II. The existence of the GPM in its historical religious context

II. 1. Part of the ‘Indische Kerk’

Many scholars have written about the nature of the State Church. Therefore, my attention will be focused on how this kind of the church influenced the life of the Moluccan Christians and Muslims.

The existence of the State-Church in the Netherlands as well as in the Dutch East Indies (which after its independence was called Indonesia) was inspired by the Dutch Constitution. According to Stephen Neill, “Under the Constitution of 1830 the King was declared to be the head of all the Churches in his domain. One of his great aims was the gathering of all his Protestant subjects into one church.” Neill describes the situation, “the King assumed himself to be no less director and dictator of the missionary societies than of the Churches organized for the Dutch residents and their dependents. He claimed the right to appoint, to locate, and to withdraw missionaries at his own good pleasure.” Based on this policy all Protestant Churches in the Dutch East Indies were united by King William I into one organization called the Protestant Church in the Dutch East Indies (mostly called ‘Indische Kerk’), which later became the Gereja Protestan Indonesia (GPI). Protestant Christians in the Moluccas or the GPM became a part of this Protestant Church in the Dutch East Indies.

28 Neill, Colonialism, 188-189.
Negatively, this situation encouraged the State to take a strong position inside the Christian Church, more so than in the other religious communities in Indonesia. This contradicted the thought that religion was outside of the state’s control, or that the state must be neutral to all religions. Van den End offers two possible answers to this question. First, there were some congregations that had been built during the VOC period. The state could not leave these congregations. Second, the state had recognized that the Muslims tended to resist Dutch authority more so than the Christians. Thus, all pagans in Indonesia must become Christians instead of becoming Muslims.30 Because of these two reasons, the GPI came into existence.

One of the main characteristics of the State Church was that the chairman of the board of the church held a high position in the government.31 This also happened during the VOC period when the church became one of its departments.32 This situation provided better opportunities for the Moluccan Christians in comparison to the Moluccan Muslims. Moluccan Christians got a good education because education was an integrated part of the Protestant Church and later of the mission activities such as the Nederlandsche Zendeling Genootschap (NZG): “Therefore, the pendeta-sending had a double function: as missionaries and civilization teacher. They had to become the centre, the head, and the teacher of everything. They had to become the very example of Christian religion which was supposed to bring blessings to the whole of life.”33 Moluccan Christians received special opportunities to become part of the military force, which was not open to Muslims. Because of the good education that the Moluccan Christians got, they also had better opportunities to work in government offices. In contrast, the Moluccan Muslims tended to work in business, and consequently became good businessmen. In other words, there was no such thing as equal rights for people living in the same state or in the same region. During this period, the State discriminated against its citizens based on their religion. How did the church see this discrimination? Did the church realize that it contradicted the Christian faith? My assumption is that the church did not see any discrimination in their social life because it was a way to pursue its mission.

Since the state wanted all Christian Protestants to be united in one church, the state did not see a need for the church to have a confession.34 This policy was still held by Christian Protestant in the Moluccas, even after becoming an independent church. The GPM did not have its own confession until 2005.

Some Dutch scholars did not see any positive aspect of the existence of a State-Church in Indonesia. After visiting the Moluccas and Minahasa in 1926 on behalf of the Netherlands Bible Society, Hendrik Kraemer, describes what he saw in following sentences:

As an organization the Protestant Church in the Indies originates from a government decision. It is wholly part of the government in a twofold sense. The

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30 Van den End, Ragi Carita 1, 145.
31 Van den End, Ragi Carita 1, 146.
34 Van den End, Ragi Carita 1, 147.
appointment and defrayment of its ministers always emanates from the
government, and its organization and administration have been modeled upon and
fitted into the government system. [...] The inevitable conclusion to be drawn from
the definition above: because the protestant Church has been conceived in centralist
bureaucratic and secular official terms, its basic conception is totally un-Christian
and un-Protestant [...] It is a government institution for spiritual care carrying out
the task with the means usually employed by Protestant Churches in general.
Without this government, which in principle does not care about life or doctrine in
so far as it is outside the Penal Code, the Protestant Church in the Indies will
collapse as an institution. 35

In Kraemer’s point of view, the Indische Kerk did not reflect what the Church should
be. It was only a servant of the government. Therefore the church could not fulfill her
mission properly. Why did Christianity have this special place? There are no other
answers than the point proposed by van den End, namely, that the state favored the
church in order to keep itself in power. But by doing this, Muslims were alienated.

II.2. An independent church with a special character
Van den End and Weitjens36 note three factors influencing the Protestant Church in the
Moluccas to become an independent church in September 1935. These factors are:
1. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands Indies started to pay more attention to
its members’ faith, especially the Indonesian Christians.
2. Education was separated from the Church, so that school teachers could not
take responsibility for the congregation anymore.
3. Since the 1890s there was a significant increase in membership of the
Protestant Church.
These three factors show that the situation in the life of the Christians in the Indies as
well as in the Moluccas had forced the Indische Kerk to rethink its approach as to the
organization of the church. The church must be organized in order to maintain the life
of its members. Thus, the main motivation to create an independent church was the
need of local believers. However, this situation was also influenced by other factors.
First, the financial problem faced by the Dutch government. Second, the nationalistic
movement in Indonesia challenged the Moluccans to seek an independent church.37
Among the Moluccans, W.H. Tutuarima must be mentioned as a minister who worked
for preparing local ministers.38 All these factors influenced the church in the Moluccas
to become an independent church.
The GPM that was established in September 1935 was wider than today’s
Moluccas. Some places in Papua such as Fak-Fak were also in serviced by the GPM.
However, one has to acknowledge that the GPM is an ethnic Church. It is clearly stated

See also Neill, Colonialism, 189.
37 Van den End & Weitjens, Ragi Carita 2, 70.
38 A.G. Hoekema, Berpikir Dalam Keseimbangan Yang Dinamis, (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1997), 158.
in the Church Order that the GPM is a church in the Moluccan Islands. This statement does not only refer to the territorial aspect of the organization, but it also refers to an ethnic group. Commenting on this ethnic church, Johannes Leimena, a Moluccan Indonesian medical doctor and politician who, in the years of Sukarno, served as Deputy Prime Minister of Indonesia, writes,

> Because of this regional characteristic many of our churches are ethnically-based (Volkskirche) or traditional churches (Kulturkirche). This ethnic basis, and to some extent also traditionalism, can cause the churches to have a rather limited outlook, with the consequence that this can hinder ecumenical life in Indonesia.

This ethnic church has positive and negative aspects. Positively, the GPM can serve its members in a contextual way because most of its members share the same cultural roots. Negatively, its ministries are too regional.

Additionally, there are special characteristics of the GPM Christianity. First, because the church and Christianity have been part of the Moluccan traditions for many centuries, expressing negative views of the Christian religion and the church, causes people to react. Moreover, the Christian faith has been seen as part of their adat (custom), and consequently, they are not open to new ideas. They want to preserve everything from the past generations. Second, Christianity of the GPM is a collective or communal faith. Thus, if one decides to leave his/her common faith he/she will receive a negative reaction.

In the Indonesian context, this condition does not help the GPM to do its task in proclaiming the gospel to Indonesian society. Because the institution of a church has been connected to certain ethnicities, it is very difficult for the GPM to criticize the Indonesian government. The church’s voice will be heard as an ethnic voice that wants to create national destabilization. To avoid this impression, the church needs to become a good partner of the Indonesian government.

Another weakness of the ethnic churches in Indonesia, is that it is difficult to accommodate the believers who come from other ethnicities. It is even worse when in the spirit of contextualization, every ethnic group tries to create its own liturgy, worship and hymns. Outsiders will not feel included in church worship. They will become newly marginalized people in the life of the church. What will happen to the people who are only staying for a while in a place because of his/her job? Should they make their own congregations?

### III. The GPM and other religions

In order to figure out how the GPM sees other religions, we have to look at three recent documents which give directions to the GPM in performing its mission in the Moluccas. Those documents are:

40 J. Leimena, ‘The Task of Restoring Fellowship Within the Church and the Indonesian Nation’, ‘in’ *The South East Asia Journal of Theology* (vol. 9. no. 3 January 1968), 61.
41 See Kraemer, *From Missionfield* 20.
42 I do not think negatively regarding contextualization, however, it must be done critically, so that it does not create new problems in the lives of the believers, especially in a multi-cultural society.
1. The Chief Model of Ministry and The Chief Plan of Developing the Ministry (Pola Induk Pelayanan dan Rencana Induk Pengembangan Pelayanan (PIP/RIPP)) during the decade of 1995-2005.\textsuperscript{43}

2. The Understanding of Faith of the GPM (Pemahaman Iman GPM) 2005.

3. The Chief Model of Ministry and The Chief Plan of Developing the Ministry (Pola Induk Pelayanan dan Rencana Induk Pengembangan Pelayanan (PIP/RIPP)) in behalf of the 2005-2015 decade.\textsuperscript{44}

The first and the third documents describe some principles adopted by the GPM in building its practical, contextual mission for two decades: 1995-2005 and 2005-2015. The first decade reflects the relationship of the GPM with other religions and denominations before the conflict in the Moluccas and the second decade reflects the relationship after that conflict.

The \textit{Chief Model of Ministry} or Pola Induk Pelayanan (PIP) contains general policies for ministry approved by the Synod Assembly. Its function is to direct and to guide the GPM in its ministry during one decade. The \textit{Chief Plan of Developing the Ministry} or Rencana Induk Pengembangan Pelayanan (RIPP) contains descriptions and strategies for the development of church programs and activities. Its function is to regulate the practical activities of the church’s ministry through the annual programs of the church.

In the way of thinking of the GPM, the general policies and the program strategies (PIP and RIPP) have been tied together. Therefore, we do not refer to them separately. In behalf of this study, I will pay attention to the PIP/ RIPP\textsuperscript{45} documents concerning the decades 1995 – 2005 and 2005-2015, especially the parts which deal with other religions and denominations.

The second document is important because it addresses many themes related to the Christian faith. Understanding the Christian faith helps the church in recognizing and forming its mission in a context of plurality of religion. By studying this document, especially the themes related to the focus of this study, we will see how the GPM has changed in understanding other religions.


The plans stated in the documents of 1995-2005, show no specific paragraph which speaks about how the church understands other religions and denominations. The GPM does refer to other denominations and religions, especially Islam, in its self understanding as a church. As to its own ecclesiology, the GPM stressed that the church exists because of the willingness or work of God (point 2.1), who calls people who were in darkness to be His people (point 2.2). Through the Holy Spirit, the church

\textsuperscript{43} This document was adopted by the Synod Assembly in 1995 to offer principles and guidance for the GPM for a decade.

\textsuperscript{44} This document was adopted by the Synod Assembly in 2005 to offer principles and guidance for the GPM for the decade of 2005-2015.

\textsuperscript{45} Since becoming an independent Church, GPM has had only three PIP/ RIPP. The first one is the PIP/RIPP produced in 1983, the second is the PIP/ RIPP of 1995-2005, and third is the PIP/ RIPP of 2005-2015.
is called to witness to the Gospel which must be expressed in creating liberation for suffering people and justice for oppressed people, etcetera. (2.3). Here the GPM also speaks of harmony and reconciliation in the lives of human beings, but does not connect this idea to religious aspects of their lives. Interestingly, in understanding its own ecclesiology, the GPM here still looks to its past church history: the kind of Christianity which exists in the Moluccas has been influenced by western ecclesiology (2.4). This had been seen as a main factor in understanding other religions, especially Islam (2.8).

In explaining this ecclesiological concept, many statements expressed a form of repentance: “its members still lived the same way of life they lived before becoming Christians” (2.5). Therefore, their attitudes to their cultural relationships were very important (2.7). To the GPM, these cultural relationships are connected with the church’s relationship to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (2.6).

Two points here refer to other denominations and religions, especially Islam; they have been written as statements of repentance. First, in point 2.8 it is said:

We confess and believe that God in Jesus Christ is Lord and the Head of everything (Eph. 1:1-23; Col. 1:15-23). In His almighty and sacred works, He always leads and guides all nations and all religions. In this faith, we are aware that we are called by Jesus Christ to be ‘salt’ among believers in Indonesia, especially Muslims, as our brothers in our Indonesian nation. We acknowledge that there is much misunderstanding in our presence as followers of Jesus Christ among Muslims because of the colonial way of thinking, because of our past church history and because of our irresponsibility. Frankly, we are called to create respectful dialogue without rejecting each religious identity and its integrity. In addition, we have to create harmonious relationships and we have to respect each other in order to take part in national development.

Point 2.9:

We acknowledge that with other churches in Indonesia, we are called and have been sent into Indonesia’s pluralistic society: religions, tribes, cultures, etc. However, we are united in one Indonesian principle, namely PANCASILA, in order to develop our nation and to manifest a nation of welfare and justice. With a feeling of embarrassment, we concede that as followers of Jesus Christ in Indonesia, our presence is fragmented and broken. It is contradicted by our identity as a united church which is sacred, Catholic, and Apostolic. By confessing the power of Jesus Christ which unites everything, we, the Churches in Indonesia, are called to implement our unity as a sign of the Kingdom of God and as a witness and yeast for national unity. In our confession that God in Jesus Christ is working toward and presenting a good future for all human beings and His creatures (John 5:19-47; Rev. 21:1-8; Rom. 8:18-20) through all human efforts which are not free from sin, we are really called to present and to take part in the development of our nation in active, critical, creative and realistic ways.

Moreover, in trying to build ecumenical relationships with other denominations, the GPM decided that two programs should be implemented by the church. One of the programs was ‘Improving the ecumenical understanding.’ This program was deemed
necessary because “members of congregations of the GPM lack an ecumenical understanding. This is seen in the tendency of church members to change their membership to another denomination.” In addition, “there is also a lack of understanding of The Five Documents of Unity of the Church46 (LDKG) among the members of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI).”

Another program was called “Forum Study and Seminar”. This program was developed because “there is a lack of agreement about the liturgical patterns and the methods of ministry among PGI member churches as well as non PGI members.” The goal of the program was “to build uniformity in ecumenical understanding.”

III.2. The Understanding of Faith of the GPM

III.2.1. The context

In the introduction to the Understanding of Faith of the GPM, there is an explanation of the background of this document. One of the main reasons it was written is the changing context of the GPM. This Understanding of Faith is seen as an effort of the GPM to face many of the church’s internal problems. To be more precise, there are many spiritual movements within Christianity which tend toward fundamentalism and radical exploitation of the Scriptures, which are the main source of theology and doctrine for the Church.47 Therefore, through this Understanding of Faith, the GPM wants to guide its members in developing a critical perspective in facing this situation.

This Understanding of Faith can be seen as an expression of GPM’s willingness to take part in the efforts of the World Council of Churches (WCC). In 1982 in Lima, Peru, the Commission of Faith and Church Order of the WCC published a document entitled Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM). This document has become a frame of reference for many churches in the world as they create their own Understanding of Faith. Inspired by the BEM document, the PGI at its General Assembly in Ambon, the Moluccas in 1984 published Five Documents on the Unity of the Church (Lima Dokumen Keesaan Gereja or LDKG). The goal of this document was to serve as a source for developing or improving the active and functional ecumenical life in Indonesia. However, especially in the Moluccas, LDKG is only used as a shield (tameng) when the churches face challenges coming from the pluralistic religious context found within their own church activities.48 The GPM has noticed that ‘schism and proselytism are growing rapidly’. Many questions are emerging related to Christian faith because of new Christian spiritual movements. This challenging context pushed the GPM to publish its Understanding of Faith.

III.2.2. The readers

When the GPM became an independent church in 1935, it was not clear how the church understood the Christian faith; the church did not even have its own doctrine. Noticeably, this is a common characteristic of all churches which were part of the

46 The document points out that all churches as members of PGI must respect and accept each other.
48 Badan Pekerja Harian Sinode GPM, Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM, 2.
Indische Kerk (later, the Gereja Protestan Indonesia or GPI). The churches of the GPI were not allowed to have their own doctrine. However, at the 34th Synod Assembly in March 2001, there was a recommendation to the Theological Faculty of UKIM to prepare a proposal for an Understanding of Faith of the GPM. Based on that recommendation, a team, consisting of staff of the Theological Faculty and some prominent lay people, prepared a proposal concerning the understanding of faith within the GPM. This proposal was discussed and accepted at the 35th Synod Assembly in October 2005 as the Understanding of Faith of the GPM.

Thus, the main readers of this Understanding of Faith are the GPM church members who recently experienced the conflict in the Moluccas. The existence of this document is very important for church members because they need to understand more about the Christian faith which will enable them to live in a context of plurality of religion without losing their faith. To be precise, during the conflict the GPM recognized the weakness of its members in understanding the Christian faith, especially regarding their relationships with other religious people. Because of this weakness, they viewed other religions as their enemies. Consequently, they were not afraid to kill or to engage in other cruel acts. From this perspective, the Understanding of Faith is surely needed.

III.2.3. The contents
The Understanding of Faith of the GPM contains 26 themes. However, related to this study, I will only focus on six themes, namely:

a. The Church
b. The Church and Other Denominations
c. The Church and Other Religions
d. Pluralism
e. Religion and Other Faiths
f. The Church and Reconciliation

The first theme is very important because the question how the GPM understands what the Church is in general and how the GPM sees itself as a church, will influence the GPM in its attitudes toward accepting or rejecting other religions. In other words, having a positive or negative perspective about other religions is closely related to how the GPM understands itself as a church.

There are two reasons for choosing the second theme. In parts of the PIP/RIPP documents for the decades 1995-2005 and 2005-2015, the GPM speaks often of its relationship with other religions from a framework of ecumenical understanding. Thus, this theme will prove helpful to this study since the PIP/RIPP are documents that will be considered. In addition, this theme demonstrates the GPM’s attitude of openness to plurality in Christian circumstances and also to plurality of religion.

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49 Indonesian Christian University in the Moluccas (Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku).
The third theme is related to the attitude of the GPM toward other religions in Indonesia, which is a main focus of this study. The fourth is a theme which reflects how the GPM understands plurality. Principally, this theme is broader than the third because the plurality addressed here is not only related to plurality of religion but also to plurality in all aspects of the lives of human beings. The fifth theme is more confusing because it seems to be the same as the third. To address this confusion, critical questions need to be asked of this theme so that the reasons behind it can be discovered. The sixth theme is very important since the GPM is making efforts to restore the social and religious life of the Moluccans.

In the following pages I will describe the contents of these themes briefly.

a. The church

_The Understanding of Faith_ makes clear that the GPM understands the existence of the Church to be related to the calling received from God. This indicates an imperative for the Church: to consider its calling – to witness to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in the world – to be the basic principle for its existence. Following its calling,

The Church must be open to the world in order to invite the world to become a part of the same procession/pilgrimage (I. Pet. 2:9, 3:15-16). Related to this, the Church is called to have a good relationship with government and other institutions in society in order to create goodness and welfare for all people, so that the Church can present signs of the Kingdom of God which is still on the way toward perfection in Jesus Christ. During this time, the Church must continually examine each spirit, determining whether or not it comes from God (I John 4:1).

This point of view helps the GPM to understand its presence as a church in Indonesia and its calling to participate in Indonesian development with the goal of being active, critical, creative and realistic in working for reconciliation, justice and the care of creation.

Moreover, the document states, “The Church is principally one. The unity of the Church is like the unity of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit (John 17:21-22). The principle of this unity is community and love.” Therefore,

As a community, the Church consists of believers in Christ from all places and centuries. Thus, the Church is catholic and there is no discrimination based on human categories (Gal. 3:28, I. Cor. 11:7-12). Therefore, people of this new community come from different tribes, nations, families and languages; they are parents, adults and youth, children, men and women, the powerful and the laity, the rich and the poor; the invalid and the non-invalid, the ill and the healthy, the simple and the clever. God gives them all a place in that new community.

In addition, to be able to fulfill its mission the Church, as a community, must spend time to learn from the apostles about the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Church is

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52 _Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM_, 25.
b. The church and other denominations
First of all, we have to address the definition of the term ‘other denominations’. Generally, denominations refer to churches such as the Calvinist Church, Lutheran Church, and Catholic Church. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the GPM, other denominations are small, new revival churches. These other denominations are members of PGI Wilayah, of which GPM is also a member.

Further it is explained that the church and other denominations have their own traditions and dogmas, but they work together in mission to witness to the Kingdom of God regarding repentance, transformation and hope for the world in which there are many challenges and there is much hope. Thus, togetherness in the mission of the Church has been acknowledged by the GPM. In its mission, the church acknowledges,

In their functions as salt, light and yeast, the GPM and other denominations give constructive, positive and transformative contributions to both the internal lives of their members as well as to the nation and society. In its statement, the GPM portrays the function of the Church in the world as the basic element which ties all denominations together in becoming a united witness of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Interestingly, the GPM sees itself and other denominations as ‘agents of love’, so they must continue to reflect this in their real activities of witnessing, reconciliation, forgiveness, and respecting one other as human beings in the reality of human conflict. This points out that the GPM is trying to bring all denominations together in a climate of understanding and respect for each other. In this statement it is clear that the GPM speaks also about reconciliation with other denominations.

c. The church and other religions
From the point of view of the GPM, all religions are social realities as well as religious realities. It states, “As social realities, the church and other religions are called to develop the lives of their members and the life of the nation as well.” Thus, the GPM refers to the church and other religions in relationship to their real existence in society. Moreover, in doing its mission, the GPM is convinced that, “the church and other religions are called to reconcile each other, to open up to each other and to respect each other”. Thus, the GPM has recognized that respecting other religions will enable all religions to come to a place of openness and positive relationships with one another. However, this should not lead to losing their individual religious identities. Therefore, the church also states,

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54 Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM, 27.
55 Other denominations are: Gereja Bethany Indonesia (GBI); Gereja Pentakosta Pusat Surabaya (GPPS); Gereja Bala Keselamatan (GBK); Gereja Kalam Kudus (GKM).
56 Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM, 30.
57 Ibidem.
58 Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM, 31.
59 Ibidem.
Each specific identity must be regarded as positive, constructive, and open to relationship. This identity enables the church and other religions to be guides, inspectors of ethical and moral values for their members and for the society which still struggles for the welfare of all people.60

Principally, for the GPM, all religions aim to help people to act as human beings or to humanize human beings. This points to the fact that all religions must act to protect the lives of human beings and the world from any kind of exploitation. Factors that should been seen as challenges for the lives of human beings are science and technology. Human beings can become victims of science and technology, if all religions do not offer any moral and ethical values. This implies that the main characteristic of the mission of all religions is transformative and relevant for welfare, justice and reconciliation in the lives of human beings.

d. Pluralism

Pluralism61 is one of the themes in the Understanding of Faith of the GPM which the document explains thoroughly. However, there are only three major issues to which the GPM pays attention, namely: pluralism as an Indonesian reality; pluralism as a world reality and plurality of religions.

In the first place, the GPM confesses,

Plurality is an Indonesian reality, so it must not be rejected. Indonesians must acknowledge and accept the plurality of tribes, cultures, and languages as a blessing from God. This means that Indonesians must confess that pluralism is an Indonesian principle. Rejecting plurality means rejecting an Indonesian principle.62

The GPM, here, views plurality as the basic element which can bring all Indonesians who come from different ethnicities, culture, religions, and tribes together as a nation. Thus, there must be no discrimination and marginalization in Indonesian society based on the differentiations which form Indonesia as a nation. Therefore, an understanding of plurality must be based on mutual attitudes and mutual commitment as one nation. By understanding this aspect of the Indonesian culture, one sees that the GPM addresses plurality not as a new concept; rather, GPM’s understanding is based within the framework of how Indonesians understand Bhineka Tunggal Ika, Unity in Diversity, the motto of the Indonesian nation.

In the second place, the GPM does not only speak about plurality as it relates to the Indonesian reality but also as it relates to the global reality:

All people in the world are entering an era of globalization. In this era, the awareness of plurality is a very important element in the lives of people in the world. This awareness of plurality will enable people who come from different countries, cultures, languages and religions to acknowledge that human problems as universal fact are the problems of all religions and all nations. Only by this acknowledgement can all people

60 Ibidem.
61 Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM, 53-55.
62 Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM, 53.
in the world act together to overcome many problems faced by the world today. Therefore, all religions, all nations, are called to develop a united, a just, and a reconciled world. As members of the GPM, we confess that human beings must not live alienated from ethnicity, religion, culture, etcetera.\(^{63}\)

In the third place, the GPM especially speaks about the plurality of religions in Indonesia. The church states,

"The plurality of religions must been accepted as a true arena where all religions are able to categorize what is right and what is wrong, and no religion is meant to monopolize the right thing or the wrong thing."\(^{64}\)

Related to the plurality of religions in the Moluccas, the document states that religious relationships in the Moluccas and in Indonesia as well must not be built in order to legitimize the political interests of each individual religion. In contrast, religious relationships must pay attention to human problems.\(^{65}\) In addition, these priorities must not only be used in theory, but also in practice.

e. Other religions and faiths

At first sight, the themes ‘Religions and Other Faiths’ and ‘The Church and Other Religions’ seem to be one and the same. Nevertheless it is understandable why the GPM addresses these two themes separately.

The Indonesian government always differentiates between the categories ‘Religion’ (agama) and ‘Other Faiths’ (Kepercayaan-Kepercayaan Lain). To be more precise, ‘other Faiths’ are accepted by the Indonesian government next to Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism which form the five recognized religions of Indonesia. Confucianism, a Chinese belief system, is an example of those ‘Other Faiths’. However, it is still not clear what can and cannot be categorized as ‘other faiths’. Apparently, the GPM is using the same framework as the Indonesian government without showing a critical attitude toward the government’s categorization.

In its formulation about ‘Religion and Other Faiths’, the GPM confesses that other religions and ‘other faiths’ are fully part of God’s work:

"Differences and similarities in Religions and Other Faiths offer potential for human life. These aspects demonstrate a richness of God’s work that should be developed to build togetherness in the lives of human beings."

Moreover,

Religions and other Faiths are partners of Christians in building the life of the church, nation and state in quality ways. Through togetherness with religions and other faiths, the Holy Spirit will work and enable us to understand the presence of God in the world. Therefore, we have to learn to appreciate the positive value of Religions and other Faiths. To realize this purpose, dialogue is needed.

\(^{63}\) Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM, 54.
\(^{64}\) Ibidem.
\(^{65}\) Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM, 54-55.
f. The church and reconciliation
Some important ideas are stressed when the document talks about reconciliation.

Firstly,

Reconciliation is one of the missions of the Church as a believing community. This task is given by God (II. Cor. 5:18, see Matt. 5:9). The GPM views reconciliation within the framework of Creation. However, this relationship has been broken by humanity: By His love, God renews His relationship with humanity. God reconciles humanity to Himself through Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world (Rom. 5:16-21, II. Cor. 5:19).\(^{66}\)

Based upon that point,

The basic principle/proof of the church as a believing community is when the church carries the task of reconciliation. Rejecting this task, the church will lose its essence and function as a believing community. The church must carry this task because the reconciliation of humans with God, reconciliation among human beings and reconciliation with the environment all concern relationships under constant threat. This threat is revealed in faiths, religions, humans, individuals, communities, and the human relationship with the environment.\(^{67}\)

In addition, the document states that the form these threats take, are conflicts in society and family life, trouble/disturbance, blackmail, oppression, violence, environmental damage, etcetera. Because of these realities, reconciliation as an important mission of the church must be undertaken constantly.

Secondly, there are three main issues that must be considered by the church:

1. The church is carrying this task so that all human beings, including the church itself, must make an open commitment not to hurt each other, not to kill, not to cause others pain. Instead they must forgive each other.
2. The church must criticize disorder and disarrangement in society.
3. In doing this task, the church must value calmness, peace, pleasantness, welfare, and safety in the society universally.\(^{68}\)

Thirdly, in its further understanding about reconciliation, the document states:

There is no reconciliation among human beings and reconciliation with other creations if there is no justice (Mat. 10:34-36; Mich. 7:6). Therefore, the task of justified reconciliation is to create a relationship rather than a situation. As a consequence, the church is called to have relationship with God, mankind and the environment (Mic. 4:1-9, Eph. 2:14-17, Isa. 57:19, Rom. 14:15, 17).\(^{69}\)

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\(^{66}\) *Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM*, 32.

\(^{67}\) Ibidem.

\(^{68}\) *Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman*, 33.

\(^{69}\) Ibidem.
In doing this task, the church is called to justify reconciled relationships and to reconcile just relationships (Isa. 60:17). It is a must because reconciliation is the result of justification. It is clear that the GPM understands justice as a fundamental element of building reconciliation.

Fourthly, in the explanation about the notion of reconciliation, the GPM convinces:

Any act of reconciliation done by the church is a process. As a process, an act of reconciliation is always open to be criticized, to be evaluated, to be restated, and to be renewed in the light of God in Christ’s guidance and the work of Holy Spirit. Therefore, reconciliation must be undertaken in the form of: (1) a process of creating reconciliation in the form of stopping all kinds of enmity, violence, and all sources of pain. (2) A process of maintenance of reconciliation in the form of supervision of efforts to stop enmity and violence, and sources of pain. (3) A process of sustainability of reconciliation through the way of looking for, learning about, and examining all sources of enmity, violence, and pain in the past in order to improve stability and justice constantly.

Fifthly, Based on the points above, an act of reconciliation must be started in the following ways:

(1) The church must holistically criticize everything which has the potential to breakdown good and peaceful relationships.
(2) The church must critically ask itself whether it needs to change its mind in order to build fruitful relationships with others.
(3) The church must hear what others say and what its heart says in order to form a fruitful plan for just and reconciled relationships.
(4) The church must build networks of relationships in order to open a way into just and reconciled relationships, so that we will overcome sources of enmity, violence, mourning, and damage that happened in the Moluccas where we live and serve.


Compared to the policies and programs in behalf of the period 1995-2005, there are some principal changes in the PIP/ RIPP of the decade 2005-2015. In describing this latter document, I will pay special attention to:
 a. Changes in starting points
 b. The actual situation of the GPM
These two aspects have been chosen because they will help us to see how the GPM is making important improvements in its understanding of its existence related to other religions as well as other denominations. They can also help us to understand the orientation of the mission of the GPM in its pluralistic religious context in the coming years.

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70 Ibidem.
71 Ibidem.
III.3.1. Changes in starting points

Compared to the former ten years’ plans, the following changes that have been made:

First, the emphasis on institutional strength in the ten years’ plan of 1995-2005 has been changed into strengthening the human character and the empowerment and development of congregation and society. By stressing this aspect, the GPM wants to remind itself that institutional strength did not help the church to do its mission in the world, but rather, tended to emphasize its bureaucracy. Therefore, by orienting itself toward human life, the GPM wants to renew its existence as a church which acts to empower and to develop both congregation and society.

Second, ecclesiological strength; the church has become aware that its ecclesiology, which tends to be parochial and territorial in orientation, did not appropriately enable the GPM to do its mission in a complex society. Therefore, a new ecclesiological concept is needed which enables the church to do its mission contextually and transformatively. As the body of Christ, churches must reflect faithfulness towards the redemptive work of God and must care for humanity. Thus, changing its ecclesiological concept refers to the fact that the church’s ministry must not only focus on the situation of the church itself, but on society as well.

Third, plurality of society; we have seen above (PIP/RIPP 1995-2005) that around 1995 the GPM was aware of its lack of good relationships with other religions, but when it was determined which programs were to be offered, this awareness did not receive a concrete form. Therefore, in the ten years plans of 2005-2015, this theme receives more attention compared to the earlier plans. Plurality of religion is now seen as a real context for doing theology.

Fourth, the multidimensional crisis (the conflict in the Moluccas). Regarding this point, we recognize that the GPM regards the conflict in the Moluccas as a great challenge that must be considered in doing its mission. Understandably, that conflict has had a big impact on the life of the GPM:

The conflict and all its consequences form an important issue in the PIP/RIPP of the decade 2005-2015. This is an indication of the commitment of the GPM to form a new humanity and a new society in order to build the Moluccas up in unity, justice, welfare and reconciliation. In doing this, the church is called to take a stand on human dignity.72

III.3.2. The actual situation of the GPM

Many issues stated in the ten years plan of 2005-2015 describe the actual situation of the GPM. However, we are going to focus on two factors only, namely, the transfer to other denominations and inter-religious or Slam-Srani73 relationships.

a. Denomination transfer

When addressing “denominational transfer”, the document is referring to GPM members who move to another denomination such as Gereja Bethany Indonesia

73 Slam-Srani is a special Moluccan term which refers to Moluccan Muslims and Moluccan Christians.
(GBI), a church in Indonesia which is practicing adult baptism and requires rebaptism when GPM members cross over. This reality has been seen as a problem:

The arrival of some Protestant Church denominations in the Province of the Moluccas has caused some members of the GPM to transfer to other denominations. As a result, there is non-stop debating and fighting. Members of our congregations are concerned about claims of salvation made by some members, who announce openly, that they have transferred to another denomination and that all who wish to be saved must follow them.

Interestingly, the GPM shows a self-criticism here:

Should we blame other denominations for these transfers? Or do we openly acknowledge that our ministries do not fulfill what the church members need? Or do the believers themselves not understand themselves as Church? How can we help the believers to develop deep faith?

In addition, this document states also that these questions should lead to an internal evaluation for the GPM. The church should evaluate itself in order to build new perceptions and new attitudes and it must try to take back the ‘lost sheep’. This last sentence is confusing because it is written as an imperative which calls for an act of force.

b. Slam-Srani or Inter-religious relationships

In this section of the 2005-2015 document, the GPM sees the huge conflict in the Moluccas as an indication of the demolition of religious life in the Moluccas and in Indonesia as well:

It contradicts with past realities, when people came from different religions to live in harmony because of local wisdom such as Pela-Gandong. The conflict reflects the demolition of a social-ethical order and the change of the worldview of the society, which caused them to understand others as their brothers and fellow human beings.

Therefore, the GPM states here that,

In order to improve our relationship with Slam, our relationship must not be built on the foundation of that conflict but rather on the foundation of pure brotherhood relationships between Slam-Srani in the Moluccas. This relationship highlights GPM’s emphasis on social praxis as well as religion; the GPM is also a significant social movement working to improve human dignity.

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74 In 2000, at the Assembly of the Community of Churches in Indonesia, the GBI has been accepted as a member of the PGI.
76 Ibidem.
77 Ibidem.
78 Ibidem.
After describing some issues related to the 2005-2015 plans, we are going to see how the GPM chooses programs related to other religions and denominations. Here we find that in the 2005-2015 programs, the GPM still deals with the plurality of religion in the realm of ecumenical relationships.

Pluralism as a reality in the life of human beings has been acknowledged by the GPM. Therefore, it also functions as the main setting for all of GPM’s four programs concerning ecumenical relationships. More precisely, pluralism is not only understood in the sense of plurality of religions but has also been understood in Christian circumstances.

The first program, called ‘Education and Training’, was initiated because pluralistic conditions as complex moral and social phenomena bring members of congregations into frightening situations. The goal of this program is, “members of congregations will receive a deep understanding about ecumenism in a broad sense (wawasan oikumene semesta).”

The second program is called ‘Inter-religious Dialogue and Monologue’. The goals of this program are “to counter fanatic dogmatism, exclusivist and triumphalist attitudes in the congregation’s life, and fanatic proselytism.” Through these two programs, we discover once more that the GPM includes other religions in its discussion of ecumenical awareness.

To build an ecumenical awareness, participants in the first and the second programs presented here are, “the church members, pastors and church workers, and religious leaders.” Thus, participants in these programs hopefully come from all religions, which suits the ideals of these programs. Furthermore, the GPM has not only described the background and goals of these programs, but it has also dealt with the impact of these programs. The qualitative impact of Inter-religious Dialogue and Monologue is, “developing respectful attitudes among denominations.” Efforts to nurture such attitudes will be made at the staff level as well as the basic level because the GPM has noticed that there is a gap between staff and laity when it comes to communicating ecumenical understanding.

The third program is called ‘Improvement of laity’s theology.’ This program also considers pluralistic understanding. In the goal of this program the GPM states that congregations are able to improve the value pluralism in their life; while, attitudes changing from fanatic to tolerant is the quality impact of this program.

The fourth program is ‘Interdenominational dialogue, both advanced and basic’. The goal of this program is to improve ecumenical understanding and harmonious cooperation.

Through these programs, the GPM wants to change both the points of view and the attitudes of its members. Therefore, when we consider the qualitative impact of these programs, this tendency is noticeable.

80 Ibidem.
81 Ibidem.
IV. Analysis

To get a closer view of the relationships of the GPM with other religions and other denominations within a context of plurality of religions, we will analyze the content of the documents mentioned above. Other information from interviews or field research data will not be analyzed here. Therefore, this analysis also serves as a kind of theological evaluation.

I will analyze two significant aspects of these three documents, especially aspects which are related to the relationship of the GPM with other religions and other denominations in the pluralistic religious context. These aspects are:

1. Other Religions from the Point of View of the GPM
2. Other Denominations from the Point of View of the GPM

We need to examine how the GPM sees other religions as well as other denominations because the documents of the ten year plans for the decades 1995-2005 and 2005-2015 often speak about other religions within the framework of ecumenical understanding, that is, the relationship among churches.

IV.1. Other religions from the point of view of the GPM

Regarding the church’s understanding of other religions, two tendencies are exhibited. First, there is a tendency to deal with other religions in a general way, and second, to deal with the unique relationship between Muslim Moluccans and Christian Moluccans specifically. Therefore, we must analyze these tendencies separately. Especially in its Understanding of Faith, all religions, including Christianity, are called a social reality. When referring to plurality, this document states this many times. ‘As a social reality, they are called to develop the lives of their members and the life of the nation as well’. It seems that the GPM wants to emphasize the social reality of all religions. By stating this shared reality, the church calls its members to act together with other religions. Interestingly, under the theme ‘Pluralism’, plurality as an Indonesian reality functions as the main background for the discussion of the plurality of religion.

Plurality as a characteristic of Indonesian society must enable Indonesians to accept the plurality of religion. More precisely, the church speaks of the plurality of religion in relationship to the Indonesian identity as a nation consisting of people who came from different tribes, cultures, and religions. All of them have committed themselves to form one united nation. Therefore, the GPM sees the Pancasila\(^{82}\) as the only way to maintain this plurality as well as to maintain Indonesia. This frame of reference is reflected in the motto for the Indonesian state: Bhineka Tunggal Ika (Diversity in Unity). Thus, GPM’s attitude in terms of understanding Indonesian society is a positive one.

The motivation to encourage the awareness of the plurality of religion lies in the conviction that all religions must make contributions to solve the problems faced by human beings in the world, especially in Indonesia. Therefore, all religions are challenged to contribute to finding solutions. This idea is not only stated in the

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\(^{82}\) The eighteenth theme of the Understanding of Faith of the GPM.
*Understanding of Faith* but also in the ten years program of 2005-2015, especially in the section entitled “Ecumenical Awareness”:

The GPM is called to build an open, living ecumenical perspective which will enable the GPM – whether by itself or together with other denominations and religions – to overcome problems faced by church, society, state and humanity as a whole.\(^{83}\)

However, this concept did not appear in the ten years program prepared in behalf of 1995-2005. In this document, when referring to other religions, the GPM only spoke of Islam from the perspective of respecting each other:

In this faith, we are aware that we are called by Jesus Christ to be ‘salt’ and ‘yeast’ among believers in Indonesia, especially Muslims, as our brothers in our Indonesian nation. We acknowledge that there is much misunderstanding in our presence as followers of Jesus Christ among Muslims because of the colonial way of thinking, because of our past church history and because of our irresponsibility. Frankly, we are called to create respectful dialogue without rejecting each others religious identity and its integrity. In addition, we have to create harmonious relationships and we have to respect each other in order to take part in national development.\(^{84}\)

Consequently, in its programs on Ecumenical Relationships during the decade of 1995-2005, the GPM only speaks of ecumenical understanding in relation to other denominations. In contrast, ecumenical understanding which refers to all religions is clearly presented in the PIP/RIPP for the decade of 2005-2015, both in programs related to ecumenical awareness and in programs related to ecumenical relationships. This is an improvement in understanding other religions as well as other denominations.

It is not problematic when the term ‘ecumenism’\(^{85}\) is understood literally, thereby making room for all religions. However, from my perspective, talking about ecumenism with other religions must be based on a clear theological concept, for ecumenism is a Christian theological term which is also related to the concept of accepting Christ as the Head of all churches and seeing the Church as the Body of Christ. However, by understanding the content of Ecumenical Awareness of the 2005-2015 programs, it seems that ecumenism with other religions is understood in the sense of togetherness in all efforts to overcome all the human problems in this world. Thus, ecumenism with other religions is understood from a practical perspective. In this practical realm all religions can act together. Here, we find that the GPM tries to put its mission to real use in the world. This is an idea stressed by David Bosch, a South African missiologist and theologian. Bosch says, “The church can be a credible

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\(^{84}\) See, Chief Model of Ministry and Chief Plan of Developing the Ministry of 1995 – 2005 (above).

\(^{85}\) Oikoumene comes from the Greek word ‘οίκος’ which means ‘house’. Thus, in principle, there is no problem if we talk about ecumenism with other religions from the perspective of the one world in which all religions live.
sacrament of salvation for the world only when it displays to humanity a glimmer of God’s imminent reign – a kingdom of reconciliation, peace, and new life”.  

In fulfilling this task or mission, the church must cooperate with other religions. In other words, each religion cannot act alone. All religions must be partners of each other. Based on this point, the GPM has seen other religions as its partners. This way of thinking is a new perspective for understanding the mission activities of the Church, especially for the GPM in its pluralistic religious context. With this concept, the church recognizes that taking a part in helping human beings is not the task of one certain religion. All religions have the same task. Therefore, partnerships must be built in the life of all religions. Partnership means one has to support and to respect others. There is no domination or rivalry in such partnership relationships, but cooperation. One of the goals of the church’s ministry in the plans for 2005-2015 is, “to improve and to implement cooperation and dialogue with other religions.” This perspective will enable all religions to enter into positive relationships with one another as communities of religious people. This concept also challenges all religions to criticize their faith and their understanding of their religions if they find themselves excluding others. However, this concept does not mean that the GPM denies the specific identity of each religion. The church recognizes that in addition to being social realities, the church and other religions are religious entities.

As religious and social entities, the church and other religions must demonstrate their specific identities positively, constructively, and openly. Each specific identity enables the Church and Other Religions to be guides and inspectors of ethical and moral values for their members and society.

Social and religious elements are inherent in the life of all religions. Therefore, each religion can have its specific identity which must be respected by others. Each specific identity must be the source or the principle which inspires each religion to act in the lives of all human beings. At this point, the Understanding of Faith does not speak about accepting the traditions and doctrines of other religions. Nevertheless, when the church speaks about other denominations, however, it appears open to their traditions and doctrines.

As to the GPM itself, a significant change has occurred in its understanding of some important doctrines. For example, their understanding of God and Jesus Christ has changed. In the Understanding of Faith of the GPM, when referring to God, the church confesses that “God is creator and the source of life of all human beings. He is the only One God for all. His acts supersede religious, tribal, and group boundaries”. Talking about Jesus Christ, the GPM confesses that “Christ is the Savior of the world. The salvation of God supersedes religious boundaries. Therefore, the GPM rejects the concept that the Salvation of God is only for Christians”. In these points, we notice a

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87 See Goals of the Church’s Services based on the PIP/RIPP of the decade of 2005 – 2015.
88 Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM, 31.
89 Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM, 9.
90 Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM, 15.
different view in comparison to the concept of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. In my opinion, these changes do not reduce Christian faith in Christ, while also enabling the GPM to be open to the action of God and to follow it. This also encourages the church to establish good relationships with other religions.

After discussing how GPM understands Islam in general, we refer to some specific points as to the relationship between Moluccan Muslims and Moluccan Christians.

In the beginning of our explanation, it was pointed out that the GPM has a slightly different point of view regarding Moluccan Muslims compared to its relationships with other religions. This relationship is described by emphasizing the terms *Slam-Srani*, often used in Moluccan society. GPM wants to maintain this unique relationship between Moluccan Christians and Moluccan Muslims, which has existed for long time. This is stated in the document which maps out the plans for the decade of 2005-2015:

The conflict in the Moluccas is a negative indication of the demolition of religious life in the Moluccas and in Indonesia as well. It contradicts with past realities, when people came from different religions to live in harmony because of local wisdom such as *Pela-Gandong*. The conflict reflects the demolition of a social-ethical order and the change of the worldview of the society, which caused them to understand others as their brothers and fellow human beings. Therefore, in order to improve *Slam-Srani* relationships… our relationship must not be built on the foundation of that conflict but rather on the foundation of pure brotherhood relationships between *Slam-Srani* in the Moluccas.91

We notice critically, here, that the GPM implicitly concedes that neither Christian faith nor Muslim faith enables and encourages the Moluccan Muslims and the Moluccan Christians to live in a positive relationship with one another. They are able to live in a brotherhood relationship only because of the local culture and local wisdom, such as *Pela-Gandong*. This reflects the fact that the GPM is still influenced by a way of thinking inherited from Christianity in the colonial period, so the church is not able to form brotherhood relationships based on Christian faith. Because of this situation, the GPM does not view its efforts to maintain *Slam-Srani* relationships as a manifestation of its Christian faith but understands that *Slam-Srani* relationships exhibit many Christian values. Therefore, the *Slam-Srani* relationships are seen as purely cultural. One important question is the following: can Moluccan Christians still live in the *Slam-Srani* brotherhood relationship if their Christian faith really rejects it?

As to this point, we find a significant change in view towards the local culture compared to the ten years plan 1995-2005. In the ten years plan 1995-2005 (described above), it is stated, that its members still followed the same way of life they had before becoming Christians (2.5). Therefore, their cultural relationships are very important (2.7). For the GPM, these cultural relationships should be understood in line with the church’s relationship to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (2.6); In contrast, in the ten years plan 2005-2015, it is written, “Therefore, in order to improve *Slam-Srani* relationships… our relationship must not be built on the foundation of that conflict but

rather on the foundation of pure brotherhood relationships between Slam-Srani in the Moluccas”. Briefly, before the conflict, GPM tended to perceive local culture critically, while after the conflict GPM tended to be open to the local culture.

By reading how the GPM portrayed its attitude toward other religions as stated in the PIP/RIPP for the decade of 1995-2005, one can see that the church conceded that its (both GPM’s and its church members) understanding of other religions was rooted in three factors: “We acknowledge that there is much misunderstanding in our presence as followers of Jesus Christ among Muslims: - because of the colonial way of thinking,  
- because of our past church history, and  
- because of our irresponsibility.”

Analyzing the context of this statement, which was the section on ecclesiology, it seems that the GPM wanted to develop a new perspective for its ecclesiology. The church is not the only legitimate body of believers in the Moluccas as well as in the world. Together with other religions, the church exists in the world and does its mission.

Related to the first reason the church gives for its old understanding of other religions, we must ask: why is the colonial way of thinking still used as a ‘scapegoat’? This is a legitimate question, because the GPM made this statement after being an independent church for sixty years. A possible understanding of this reality is that perhaps during those sixty years of being an independent church, there had been no change in the GPM’s perspective on other religions. The GPM still experienced a feeling of superiority. To be more precise, feelings of superiority were a stumbling block for the GPM in viewing other religions positively.

Regarding the second factor, during the sixty years between 1935 and 1995 no big problems occurred between Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas. Therefore, it is difficult to understand why the GPM viewed past church history as a reason for their understanding of other religions. However, the motivation of GPM in 1956 to evangelize among Muslims can be seen as a ‘hidden’ problem. Frank Cooley notices that “the program presented at the 1956 Synod, worked in four different directions: missionary work amongst Muslims was the first and the most difficult of the tasks.”

After offering this information, Cooley describes in a footnote,

This is a completely new note. The history of Christianity and the Protestant Church in the Moluccas has been characterized throughout by an amazing (in view of the basic nature of the Christian Gospel) absence of any sense of responsibility for missionary work amongst the Muslims in Central Molucca. Missionary work has always been directed to the “heathen”, i.e., those still embracing the indigenous religion judged to be much inferior to Christianity, and also to Islam. 

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92 Ibidem.  
94 Cooley, Altar and Throne, 380.
The Moluccan Muslims, as well as the non-Moluccan Muslims who live in the Moluccas, were of course not satisfied with evangelization among Muslims. Abdul Djaelani wrote, “Gospel, Gold and Glory” are doctrines for every Christian in fulfilling the holy call of spreading the Gospel of Christ as stated in Matthew 28:19. This idea can be seen in an article written by Ds. A.N. Radjawane in 1964 about ‘Islam di Ambon dan di Haruku’ (Islam in Ambon and in Haruku). Djaelani refers to this idea to support his assumption that the conflict between 1999 and 2004 was a manifestation of a policy of the Christian Church in the Moluccas to destroy Islam and to convert Muslims as a manifestation of the loyal attitude of a Christian participating in the ecumenical movement. Interestingly, another Muslim writer, Mohammad Shoelhi writes, “The Muslims tend to implement a strategy of keeping their distance in order to avoid becoming renegades.” Even though it is not clear whether Shoelhi expresses his personal experience or just gives an impression, here, we find information that some Muslims in the Moluccas were upset but they did not express their feelings openly. The conflict would have been a good moment for the Muslims in the Moluccas to express their feelings about Christians in the Moluccas. Sadly, in the document written in 1995, the GPM had recognized the negative relationship between Christians and Muslims, but no real action was taken by the church to overcome it.

It is difficult to understand the third factor because there are no clues to understand what the GPM meant by speaking about ‘our irresponsibility’. However, the second and the third factors indicate that the church did not see the way of thinking of the colonial period as the only reason for the negative relationships between the GPM and other religions. How the GPM itself understands and runs its mission after being an independent church also contributes to the negative relationship with other religions.

All this demonstrates that GPM was only entering a stage of awareness at the time; no concrete efforts had yet been made to create positive relationships. There was not yet a real program aimed at the restoration of these negative relationships. Hopefully, through the 2005-2015 program, which is inspired very much by the Understanding of Faith, the GPM will be able to undertake concrete actions for improving a positive and fruitful relationship between Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas.

The GPM has now acknowledged its misconception or misunderstanding and wants to change it. Is there a Christian principle to support the Moluccan Christians in building brotherhood relationships with other religions, especially with the Moluccan Muslims? If so, this principle has not yet been found by GPM. Its only answer can be found in the following statement:

95 It is not clear what Djaelani means by Gold and Glory.
96 A. Qadir Djaelani, Agama & Separatisme, 45.
97 In his article, Radjawane explains the relationship between the Moluccan Christians and the Moluccan Muslims which, according to him, is a “static and peaceful situation”. Therefore, he suggests that the GPM evangelises among Muslims. During this evangelization effort, the GPM must pay attention to the Buru and Seram islands. See Ds. A.N. Radjawane, ‘Islam Di Ambon Dan Haruku’ in W.B. Sidjabat (ed.), Panggilan Kitab Di Indonesia (Djakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1964), 70-85.
98 A. Qadir Djaelani, Agama & Separatisme, 44.
Therefore, in order to improve Slam-Sran, our relationship must not be built on the foundation of that conflict but rather on the foundation of pure brotherhood relationships between Slam-Srani in the Moluccas. This relationship highlights GPM’s emphasis on social praxis as well as religion; the GPM is also a significant social movement working to improve human dignity.100

On the one hand, by acknowledging that a cultural point of view can contain some values of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, this kind of principle can be accepted. On the other hand, the question remains: What is the meaning of this relationship in influencing the relationships of Muslim Moluccans and Christian Moluccans with others? Does their unique relationship enable Moluccan Muslims and Moluccan Christians to spread their brotherhood relationship beyond their cultural borders? Those questions inspired me to make further examinations. Therefore, we must determine why the Moluccan Christians, especially members of the GPM, want to use a cultural system to explain their brotherhood relationship with the Moluccan Muslims.

There are two aspects of the life of religious people in the Moluccas reflected in this tendency. First, the GPM understands that conflict can be a manifestation of how a religion does not enable its followers to receive, to respect, and to see other believers in a brotherhood relationship. Second, this conflict is a manifestation of how the Moluccan Christians live with two principles which do not mix and are not connected to each other. This must be pointed out because when talking about culture, the Moluccan Muslims and the Moluccan Christians are brothers and sisters. They have to live according to certain customs given by their ancestors. In contrast, when talking about religious faith, this cultural climate feels strange for them. This matter has formed their lives and points of view in an unclear manner. In other words, they live with a contradictory way of thinking; they live in a dilemmatic situation.

This fact has specifically formed religious faith in the life of the Moluccan Christians. Some people say that Christian religion in the Moluccas is Agama Kristen Ambon101, which is like a layer cake (kue lapis).102 This term means the Moluccan Christians live according to two principles which do not mix with one another. These two principles are culture and religion or faith. When Moluccans talk about their customs, they leave their religious faith behind and they only talk about customs, vice versa. There is only one possible answer as to this problem. For a long time, the faith of the Moluccan Christians has made a distinction between religion and culture. From the official perspective of the church, local culture was appreciated negatively, so Christians often deal with this culture in a hidden way. Margareth Hendriks-Ririmasse, a Moluccan Indonesian woman theologian says, “Indeed, in our congregations, they appreciate our local wisdoms and they hold them, but they do it in an unobtrusive way. They feel embarrassed because during activities of the mission of church in the Moluccas, missionaries had taught Christians that local cultures are paganism.”103

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101 Ambon is the capital city of the province of the Moluccas.
102 A kind of the Moluccan cake made in layers.
103 An interview with M.M. Hendriks-Ririmasse on March 7th 2009.
The explanations above demonstrate that there has been a significant change in the point of view of the GPM in understanding other religions. We have to say that in its *Understanding of Faith* it is emphasized that in doing their mission, the church and other religions are called to reconcile each other, to be open to each other and to respect each other. To be precise, the GPM tries to articulate and perform its mission in a climate of mutual recognition.

This new concept and the new attitude toward other religions can be seen as a form of willingness of the GPM to work on reconciliation among religions in the Moluccas as well as in Indonesia as a whole. The negative relationships between Christians and other religions must end. This is one mission of the church. Under the theme 'The Church and Reconciliation', the Moluccan church concedes that reconciliation is one mission of the church as a believing community. This mission is given by God (II. Cor 5:18, see Matt. 5:9). This idea is not only stated under the theme ‘The Church and Reconciliation’ but it is also stated under themes: ‘The Church’, ‘The Church and Other Denominations’, ‘The Church and Other Religions’, and ‘Pluralism’. Therefore, we can say that the GPM now understands reconciliation as an important part of its mission. Because of this, the *Understanding of Faith* states that rejecting this task, the church will lose its essence and function as a believing community.104 Thus, reconciliation done by the church must be motivated by its belief or by its faith in Christ.

Interestingly, forgiveness is an important aspect in doing reconciliation. Therefore, in talking about reconciliation, the GPM states, “The church is carrying this task so that all human beings, including the church itself, have to openly commit themselves not to hurt each other, not to kill, not to cause others pain. Instead they must forgive each other.”105 Forgiveness is needed for reconciliation. This notion must be supported because during the conflict, it was hard to speak about forgiveness. In her article about *Menyembuhkan Luka-Luka Bangsa*, Margaretha Hendriks-Ririmasse, who has been involved intensively in the reconciliation process, describes,

> When representatives from the European Union came to the Moluccas in the time of the conflict, they suggested that the Christians in the Moluccas ask forgiveness from Muslims, so that the conflict could be ended. Frankly, this suggestion was rejected totally by representatives of the Moluccan Christian.  

This indicates that the inclusion of forgiveness as an element under the theme ‘The Church and Reconciliation’ would not be easy. Nevertheless, that theme reflects how the GPM strives to create a new, deep, and a positive relationship with other religions, especially Muslims. The GPM has come to embrace this perspective. Examples of this process are the reconciliation between Muslims and Christians in Kei, and the opportunity for Muslims to study in the Master Program of the Theological Faculty of UKIM-Ambon. From 2005 onwards, there are three Muslim students in this program.

104 *Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM*, 24.
105 *Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM*, 33.
106 There are some reasons behind this rejection. See M. M. Hendriks-Ririmasse, ‘Menyembuhkan Luka-Luka Bangsa’ (This unpublished article was delivered at the meeting of PERSETIA in Banjarmasin-Indonesia, in July 2002), 6.
and in 2006 additional students took part. In addition, in Ambon city, there are no longer separate activities; Muslims and Christians have again the same public services, such as transportation and schools.

In performing its mission of reconciliation, in the *Understanding of Faith*, the church is called to work on justifying reconciled relationships and reconciling justified relationships (Isa. 60:17). It seems that from the point of view of the GPM, reconciliation is connected to justice. In other words, justice and reconciliation are two elements which are tied together. Reconciliation without justice is a deceitful reconciliation and justice without reconciliation is false justice. Thus, reconciliation does not mean toleration for every mistake, but reconciliation encourages people to look for justice and righteousness without using any violence.

Explanations above offer some important ideas. Firstly, before the conflict, the relationship between the GPM and other religions was negative, while after the conflict, the GPM is trying to form a new, positive understanding among religions. This new understanding is not only happening at the practical level (in programs which emphasize togetherness or partnering to overcome humanity’s problems) but it is also happening at the level of doctrine, such as the point of view that all religions point to one and same God. Interestingly, the GPM has developed a new concept that the salvation of God is for all human beings. It is not only for Christians.

Moreover, in understanding other religions, the GPM tends to speak about Christian religion and other religions sociologically. Even though it asserts that all religions point to the same God, it is not clear yet what specific contribution Christianity can make in this context of plurality of religion. Secondly, in the document *Understanding of Faith*, the GPM regards other religions as its partners in doing its mission, especially its mission to overcome the problems faced by human beings. Therefore, mutual understanding among religions is needed.

To reach such a positive understanding among religions, the GPM recognizes that dialogue is an appropriate method. However, in the Moluccan context, the GPM regards aspects of the Moluccans’ local culture – such as Slam-Srani relationships and pela-gandong relationships – also as an appropriate framework for that dialogue. The tendency to return to the local culture is different from the GPM’s tendencies in the 1995-2005 program document, in which the GPM tended to be more critical of the local culture. Thirdly, regarding its efforts to come to a positive relationship with other religions, it seems that GPM is still seeking its position. Thus, in many sections of the most recent program for 2005-2015, the church speaks about its relationship with other religions within the framework of ecumenical understanding. In this way, inter-religious dialogue is regarded as another program of ecumenical relationships. Fourthly, reconciliation is seen as important part of the mission of the church. Therefore, reconciliation receives a great deal of GPM’s attention in both the *Understanding of Faith* and the plans and programs for the period 2005-2015.

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107 *Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM*, 33-34.
IV.2. Other denominations from the point of view of the GPM

In its statement about other denominations, the GPM concedes that each denomination has its own traditions and doctrine, but all of them are united in the mission to witness to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.\(^\text{108}\) GPM’s desire to include this statement indicates that different traditions and doctrine must not be seen as problems for churches wishing to build relationships among each other. This demonstrates implicitly that interchurch relationships in the Moluccas are weak. There even exists tension in the lives of Christians in the Moluccas because of their different traditions and doctrine. This matter can be recognized in the Ten years program for 2005-2015 as a part of the ‘Actual Condition’ of the GPM.

To realize this idea in the lives of the Christians in the Moluccas, especially the members of the GPM, all programs mentioned under ‘Ecumenical Relationships’ based on the programs for the decade 2005 – 2015 pay attention to changing the old perspectives. The Synod Assembly decided to implement four programs in 2005, namely:

i. Education and Training
ii. Inter-religious Dialogue and Monologue
iii. Improvement of laity’s theology
iv. Interdenominational dialogue, both advanced and basic

In the background of these programs, especially the second and third programs, one can recognize that “dogmatic fanatism”\(^\text{109}\) which creates exclusive thinking in faith, is a problem for Christianity in the Moluccas. The meaning of ‘dogmatic fanatism’ here is the tendency to regard a certain Christian concept as the only true concept and to judge other Christians’ beliefs as ‘wrong’ when they don’t agree with that concept. For example, baptizing people by sprinkling is seen by the Bethany Church in Indonesia (Gereja Bethany Indonesia or GBI) as a practice which goes against what the Bible says. The biblical way of baptizing is immersion. In addition, one must confess his/her faith before being baptized. Because of these concepts, the GBI does not accept infant baptism. In contrast, the GPM accepts and practices only baptism by sprinkling, infant baptism as well as youth and adult baptism. The GBI, however, tries to convince Christians who have been baptized in their childhood to receive rebaptism. In fact, some of GPM’s members have been re-baptized. Those who are changing their membership status are seen as apostates and in some GPM congregations they have been excluded from church ministries.\(^\text{110}\) “They are the lost sheep that must be taken back by the GPM.”\(^\text{111}\)

This explanation demonstrates that negative relationships among denominations are still present in the lives of Christians in the Moluccas. This should raise questions because this problem was also a concern of the GPM in its programs

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\(^{108}\) Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM, 30.

\(^{109}\) The term used in this document.

\(^{110}\) An example is what happened in 1997 in Jemaat Anugerah (a congregation in Ambon City). After a Sunday service, there was an announcement in the church that two families had been excluded from GPM ministries because they had been rebaptized by the GBI.

\(^{111}\) See Actual condition of GPM in PIP/RIPP 2005-2015.
for the period 1995 – 2005, and the intention was to have this problem dealt with in two of its programs, namely, ‘Improving Ecumenical Understanding’ and ‘Forum Study and Seminar’.

The reasons behind these two programs were as follows:

GPM congregational members lack an ecumenical understanding which caused them to change their church membership for another denomination, and there is no agreement about liturgical patterns and the method for the church’s ministry among PGI members as well as non PGI members.112

Because of these factors, GPM tried to encourage uniformity in ecumenical understanding.

Comparing the programs of 1995 – 2005 and 2005 – 2015, one can say that interdenominational relationships are still a problem in the lives of Christians in the Moluccas. The background for programs described under ‘Ecumenical Understanding’ in the 2005 – 2015 program demonstrates this problem. Here, a question arose: “Why is it not easy to change the points of view of congregational members of the GPM?” There are some possible answers.

Firstly, Christianity in the Moluccas has been formed by feelings of superiority as well as thinking oriented toward rivalry. One main reason why many Moluccans converted to Christianity is that they understood that by becoming a Christian one received a high status or pangkat. Thus, being superior to others is inherent to the thinking of Christianity in the Moluccas. Besides, majority versus minority thinking has also influenced how the GPM shapes its existence. To be superior as well as to dominate, the church has to demonstrate its strength in the lives of individual Christians and in its social life as well. One manifestation of that strength is institutional strength: the church must have many members and many congregations. This point of view has caused the GPM to try to maintain the numbers of its members. In a statement of the GPM entitled ‘Actual Condition of the GPM’ in the 2005-2015 program, it is explicitly stated that the GPM should evaluate its ministries in order to build a new perception and new attitude and it must try to take back the lost sheep.113

In that statement, one finds that GPM’s mission is still functioning from an orientation of the church as an institute, even though the GPM has also conceded in ‘Starting Point Changes’. In the same program the institutional strength that was stressed in the PIP/RIPP for the decade of 1995 – 2005 has been changed into the ‘character’ strength of humanity, improvement, and the development of congregation and society.114 These two statements seem to contradict one another and will lead the GPM to unclear manifestations of its efforts to build ecumenical relationships with other denominations. In other words, on the one hand, the GPM wants to embark on new relationships with other denominations by accepting one another’s different traditions and doctrine. On the other hand, the GPM still wants to retain its institutional strength manifested in its membership. Related to this tendency, we have to say that Song is right when he says, “But unlike other organic bodies, Christian Mission, whose

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vitality and faithfulness are measured almost solely in terms of growth in numbers, easily turns into conflicts of interests among churches and their missions”.115

Secondly, the vision of ecumenical understanding held by the GPM is still unclear. In the statement about ‘Religions and Other Denominations’ in the 1995-2005 program document, the GPM states,

> With a feeling of embarrassment, we concede that as followers of Jesus Christ in Indonesia, our presence is fragmented and broken. It is contradicted by our identity as a united church which is sacred, Catholic, and Apostolic. By confessing the power of Jesus Christ which unites everything, we, the Churches in Indonesia, are called to implement our unity as a sign of the Kingdom of God and as a witness and yeast for national unity.116

This statement seems to function as a kind of ‘repentance’ and a new ecumenical understanding. Nevertheless, questions remain: what is the meaning of the united church? Does it mean that all Christians in the Moluccas must join one institutional church? Does it mean that all churches in the Moluccas must have the same doctrine? Does it mean that all churches in the Moluccas must have the same pattern of liturgy and church ministry? By understanding the background of the second program ‘Study’s Forum and Seminar’ mentioned in the 1995-2005 plans, one can acknowledge that uniformity is the ecumenical understanding of GPM.

It is not clear why the GPM referred to uniformity related to the church effort to build ecumenical relationships. Maybe the GPM was very much influenced by the Communion of Churches in Indonesia or PGI which tended to emphasize liturgical and ecclesial uniformity in behalf of ecumenism in these years. From this perspective, ecumenism means to refuse all differences in the lives of the churches. This can be seen as a factor which causes problems in forming good relationships with other denominations. By acknowledging this factor, in the Understanding of Faith, the church states its respect for other denominations with their own traditions and doctrine. However, according to the 2005-2015 program, the GPM still refuses to accept that a church member joins another denomination. This is a good indicator of the unclear ecumenical understanding of the GPM.

Thirdly, changing one’s point of view is a process. It is a hard process because views are connected to one’s beliefs. However, as a process, this ecumenical awareness which implements positive relationships must be a commitment of all Christians. To achieve this, this process must have a clear goal leading to clear actions. It will also help focus efforts to raise an awareness of ecumenism. This does not mean that the result cannot be discovered until the process comes to an end; rather, the process itself must demonstrate change. Therefore, if there is no change along the way, it is not a successful process.

These are the factors which prevented the relationships between GPM and other denominations from improving. However, by changing some important principles in the ten year plans 2005-2015 and by articulating some new ideas in the

Understanding of Faith of the GPM, the church seems to have committed itself to building positive relationships with other denominations. A new and important idea is as follows, "The GPM is convinced that the unity of the Church is not in the world’s form but its unity is like the unity of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit (John 17:21-22)". This is an indication that the GPM understands and accepts now the reality that there are many churches and many denominations, all of them united because of Christ. This will enable GPM to form ecumenical relationships, especially in the Moluccas.

Finally, through the analysis of how the GPM forms its relation with other denominations one can recognize that the GPM is now in a process to create and promote a positive relationship among churches in the Moluccas. This is a significant change in the life of the church after the conflict.

V. Some critical points

The conclusions of our explorations so far will be divided into two parts. The first part draws some conclusions as to the relationship between the GPM and other religions before and after the conflict in the Moluccas. In the second part, I am going to map two ideas that need further study, because they form additional frameworks within which the GPM can build its relationship with other religions.

V.1. The GPM and other religions before and after the conflict

The GPM became an independent church in a context in which the Islam already had existed for a long time. This context offered a great challenge for the GPM in defining its mission, namely, whether it should appreciate or reject those other religions. In fact, this plurality of religions did not influence the church in forming its mission in terms of seeing other religions positively. Rather, the church understood other religions as objects of its mission, or even as threats to the church.

V.1.1. Before the conflict

a. Other religions as objects of the mission

According to the older vision, Christianity is the only one religion which teaches that which is true and good for human beings and for the world. Therefore, people must become Christians in order to receive salvation from God. The GPM stressed this point when the Synod Assembly decided to implement a program of evangelization for the Muslims in 1956.

That program of evangelization could not be fully implemented because the Muslims reacted strongly against it. The policy of the Indonesian government in Surat Keputusan Bersama Menteri Agama dan Menteri Dalam Negeri R.I. No. 1/BER/mdnmag/1969 can be seen as a way to stop evangelization activities among religious people in Indonesia. The Indonesian government started to talk about religious tolerance. Facing this situation, the church became ‘silent’ and maintained a gap

117 See Understanding of Faith, the theme of the Church.
between themselves and Muslims as well as other religious people. There was no evangelization and there was no dialog among religions.

Because other religions were seen as objects of conversion, the GPM never pursued a dialogue with other religions. In other words, there was no need for a dialogue because the GPM did not see that anything positive could be offered by a dialogue. As a consequence, the church did not recognize the many influential factors created by the plurality of religion for the mission of the church. Because of its exclusive thinking, the GPM was not able to overcome problems that occurred in its relationships with other religions.

b. Other religions as threat or rival
Other religions, especially Islam, were also seen as a threat to, or a rival of, Christianity as well as the church. For example, when facing social problems in Indonesia and in the Moluccas, each religion tended to act alone. If a religion addressed something which was wrong in the society, that religion spoke and acted by itself. So, in this context of plurality of religion, each religion lived for itself.

The negative relationship between the church and other religions, especially Islam, had been recognized by the GPM in 1995, but no efforts were made to overcome it because the church remained focused on the activities or programs which were related to its needs as an institution. This caused the church to live ‘at a distance’ from the religious problems in the Moluccas. Religious relationships in the Moluccas were not good, but the GPM never tried to solve this problem. Thus, the church ran its mission while a ‘hidden’ tension was growing between the church (as well as Christianity as whole) and other religions. Reactions from Muslims during the conflict must be accepted as real expressions of this ‘hidden’ tension. Commenting on the relationship between Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas before the conflict, Shoelhi concludes, “Muslims in the Moluccas tended to maintain a distance because of the unsafe feeling they had.” Shoelhi wrote this book during the conflict. However, he sometimes points to situations before the conflict. Reading his book, one notices that according to Shoelhi, the roots of the conflict which came to an outburst 1999 are to be found many years before. So, the Christians used the Laskar Jihad only as a scapegoat.

V.1.2 After the conflict
a. All religions point to one and the same God
The concept, that all religions point to the same God does not appear in the Understanding of Faith of the GPM when the theme “The Church and Other Religions” is discussed, but it emerges under the theme “The Kingdom of God and Religions”. However, one can find its spirit in many themes related to other religions and plurality which are addressed in the Understanding of Faith. In this document, the

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119 Shoelhi, Laskar Jihad Kambing Hitam, 4.
120 Laskar Jihad is a Muslim army which came to the Moluccas during the conflict to stand beside Muslims to fight against Christians. During the conflict, Christians asked the Indonesian government to remove the Laskar Jihad from the Moluccas as a way of stopping the conflict.
GPM demonstrates its position in understanding the Christian religion among other religions. The Christian religion and other religions point to the same God.

Because of this concept the tendency to understand the mission of the church as a mission of conversion no longer exists. This is a radical change made by the GPM, since for a long time the church operated its mission within the concept of the superiority of Christianity among other religions. However, within this new concept, the GPM never discusses how the church understands Jesus Christ in relation to the One God to whom all religions are pointing. This is a common tendency within religious pluralism. Theologians such as Knitter and Hick, who try to open up a new relationship among religions, confirm this tendency.

However, Ignatius Haryanto and Pax Benedanto, two Indonesian Catholics, in their book *Terbuka terhadap Sesama Umat Beragama* (Open to Other Religious People), write, “Unfortunately, this point (religious pluralism) causes people to know less about the essence of their religion. This can be seen as religious pluralism without clear integrity.” Haryanto and Benedanto want to say that the essence of each religion must be an inspiration to talk about plurality of religion as Johanis Banawiratma did in his article about ‘Open Christology In a Multi-Religious Society’.

In my opinion, accepting the plurality of religions must not lead to a vague religious faith. On the contrary, this awareness must enable all religious people to learn more about their specific faith, which must in turn enable them as believers to respect other religions. More precisely, for me the plurality of religion as a reality in the life of human beings is a great opportunity to recognize, to respect and to receive the differences of each religion openly; at the same time, each religion has to maintain its specific faith and its unique, critical voice. Religious pluralism must not cause each religion to lose their specific faith. Losing one’s identity will cause religious people to lose their clear way of life. I agree with Theo Witkamp who says, “Just by having a specific identity, we have a religious identity.”

Based on this point, the GPM should talk openly about the specific faith of the Christian religion which enables the church to embrace positive and fruitful relationships with other religions. In this way, the church does not follow the idea of religious pluralism without maintaining its critical voice. In other words, religious pluralism is functioning as ‘true awareness’ when it teaches religious people that each religion contains absolute truth which cannot be doubted by anyone. Therefore, in the context of the plurality of religion, religious people need to recognize, to respect and to

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123 J.B. Banawiratma, ‘Open Christology In a Multi-Religious Society’, 5. Presented at the consultation on “Christian Presence among Muslims”, Cairo, 8-11 April 1999 and at the international seminar on “Mission in Asia in the Third Millennium: Models for Integral Human Liberation” organized by Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeth, Pune, India and Faculty of Theology, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, 14-17 April 1999.
receive the complexity of differences of each religion rather than aiming for a compromise. With this perspective, GPM can openly state how the church understands Jesus Christ related to its concept about One and the Same God to whom all religions point.

b. Other religions are partners of the church

This second concept reflects GPM’s belief that the church is not the only one who wants to create welfare and goodness in the lives of human beings and in the world. In its Understanding of Faith, the GPM confesses that all religions have the same responsibility to humanize human beings. Apparently, the GPM has recognized positive things in other religions. Therefore the church wants to build cooperation among religions. There is no more dominance in the mission of the church. When doing its mission in the world, especially in its efforts to overcome human problems, the church cannot act alone, but needs other religions with the same mission.

However, is it true that other religions have the same mission to create welfare and goodness in the lives of human beings and in the world? Noryamin Aini, an Indonesian Muslim, in his article Islam Sebagai Agama Misionaris: Butir-Butir untuk Dialog Lintas Agama, (Muslim as a Missionary Religion: Some Points for Inter-religious Dialogue) critically comments that one of the streams in Islam (gerakan kanan) always forgets the profane or secular mission of ilahiah. God is not an egoist who sacrifices the life of human beings; God does not want to be defended; God’s holiness is not dependent on the blood of human beings; the presence of God in the world is concerned with the kemaslahatan (the goodness or the welfare) of human beings. The same point is also stressed by Jo Priastana, an Indonesian Budhist, in his article about Perspektif Misi Buddhadharma. According to Priastana,

Buddhadharma is a mission religion based upon harmonious relationships without violence (ahimsa) in order to liberate all human beings from suffering, so that all human beings can live in good conditions in every time, place and circumstance. And he adds, “in order to overcome the suffering of human beings, the mission of Buddha demonstrates that Buddhism is a religion of love and compassion. Thus, it demonstrates precisely the social involvement and action of Buddhadharma.

By quoting a Muslim’s and Buddhist’s perspective, I want to say that, from the perspective of searching for the welfare and goodness of human beings and the world, all religions have the same mission. There is no religion which searches for the wickedness of human beings. Therefore, it is a good thing for all religions to support each other, even to build good cooperation among one another. However, historical facts also show that a religion can fall into a negative spiral when it thinks only about itself. Johannes Banawiratma, an Indonesian Catholic theologian, says,

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126 Jo Priastana, ‘Perspektif Misi Buddhadharma’, 1. This unpublished article was presented at the Study Institute of PERSETIA, Cipayung - Bogor, Indonesia, 23 – 28 August.

The Indonesian history shows that the movement which fights for independence, justice and welfare for all Indonesia demonstrates the strength of gathered religious people from different religions. In contrast, without that movement, religious people tend to search for their own interests and become divided, even seeing each other as the enemy.\(^\text{128}\)

Banawiratma is right when one considers what has happened in the past church history in Indonesia and especially in the Moluccas. Apparently the GPM has recognized the negative aspects of the church’s mission in the past, and tries now to adopt a new perspective in religious relationships: that of togetherness or partnership relationships. This cooperation will reduce suspicion about a ‘hidden mission’ of the church (the mission of conversion).

c. Reconciliation is an important part of the mission
The GPM understands reconciliation as an important part of the mission of the church. Reconciliation is needed because there are many potential dangers that can destroy the lives of all human beings. Interestingly, the GPM does not only speak about reconciliation within the framework of the specific situation of the huge conflict which the church faced; rather, the church speaks about reconciliation in a broad sense and considers reconciliation to be an inherent aspect of the mission of the church as it is stated in the *Understanding of Faith*.

The basic principle/evidence that the church is a believing community is when the church carries the task of reconciliation. Rejecting this task, the church will lose its essence and function as a believing community. The church must carry this task because the reconciliation of humans with God, reconciliation among human beings and reconciliation with the environment all concern relationships under constant threat. This threat is revealed in faiths, religions, humans, individuals, communities, and the human relationship with the environment.\(^\text{129}\)

Related to its specific situation, the GPM stresses the aspect of forgiveness in the process of reconciliation. In the difficult Moluccan context, forgiveness will enable people in the Moluccas to reconcile with each other. By stressing forgiveness, the GPM reminds its members not to focus on the bad experiences which happened during the huge conflict; rather, the church asks them to think about their future. Thus, forgiveness is a key point for Moluccans if they wish to build a reconciled community.

However, this emphasis on forgiveness does not mean that the GPM should not pay attention to every act of injustice suffered during the conflict. Forgiveness is a way to avoid doing violence as well as a way to avoid revenge, but it must not be understood as a way of forgetting the injustice done by persons or institutions, whether religious or social institutions. Next to forgiveness, the GPM also speaks about justice in establishing reconciliation.

In pursuing reconciliation, the church must integrate the concept forgiveness into its life. Reconciliation is not something that exists solely in theory. Rather,


\(^\text{129}\) *Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GPM*, 32.
reconciliation must become a reality in the lives of human beings; it must be created. The church is called to create it first. Reconciliation can be encouraged by the church only if the church is not consumed by self-interest and when it understands its presence in the world as a call to pursue goodness for all human beings without any boundaries (including religious boundaries). From this perspective, reconciliation done by the church demonstrates a kind of willingness to join in God’s mission.

V.2 Two other perspectives

In the explanation above, we have seen briefly that within the GPM’s efforts to build a positive relationship with other religions, the church does not speak openly about its understanding about Christology in relation to other religions. For me, this is a weakness of its efforts. We will come back to this point in chapter IV. Here, I want to offer two ideas as additional perspectives for building religious relationships in the Moluccas. Even though these two ideas need further study, I shall describe them briefly.

V.2.1. A transformation of the Christian approach so far

To come to a positive and fruitful relationship with other religions, GPM must not abandon pointing to Jesus Christ as the foundation of the faith of the church. Here, Banawiratma’s thinking is very helpful. According to Banawiratma,

Here (in the dialogue with sisters and brothers from other faiths) we do not want to endorse relativism, as if we were indifferent and of the mind that all religions were the same, as if we left the Jesus event as the revelation of God and adopted an “indifferent attitude” in a multi-religious society. We come to this position because of Jesus Christ. Leaving Him out of it would mean cutting the branches from the vine from which we grow and bear fruit (Joh. 15:1-11).

The church as well as the Christian religion as a whole should not be afraid to talk openly about the notion of the crucified Jesus Christ as its basic motivation for respecting and accepting other religious people and their faiths or religions.

By accepting Jesus Christ as the way to live within the context of the plurality of religion, the church can offer something specific to this plurality, and that is the idea that religion must not create walls in the lives of human beings. Jesus Christ criticized religious faith that built walls among people. Thus, this idea is also not stressed because of the understanding of the plurality of religion; rather, it is an inherent aspect of Christian faith. By stressing that Jesus Christ is the basic motivation for Christians to adopt positive and fruitful relationships with other religions, I do not see Christology as a stumbling block to Christian faith.

By pointing to Jesus Christ in our efforts to build good religious relationships in the Moluccas, the GPM will contribute to a proper understanding of religious pluralism. Therefore I agree with Banawiratma when he writes,

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130 Banawiratma, ‘Open Christology’, 5.
We also need to distinguish between *indifferent pluralism* and *dialogical pluralism*. The former has no integrity and the latter has open integrity. The proper attitude in religious pluralism is to recognize and to accept the uniqueness and meaning of every religion, realizing what each can learn from the other. Open integrity takes one’s faith and religion seriously as well as the faith and religion of others, and thus offers the best possibility for dialogue and mutual enrichment.\(^{131}\)

**V.2.2. A transformation of the pela**

In our explanation of the actual condition of the GPM, we found that the GPM wants to build relationships between *Slam* (the Moluccan Muslims) and *Srani* (the Moluccan Christians) within the framework of *Pela-Gandong*. This desire has been analyzed in part three above. I have explained that this desire is a good contextual effort. However, this relationship-building must be approached from a clear theological framework as well, so that the church can help people in the Moluccas to avoid getting ‘stuck’ in its past history. Local cultures such as *Pela-Gandong* can be used as a framework for building religious relationships between the Moluccan Christians and the Moluccan Muslims, but this must be done from a new theological perspective. Therefore, the GPM must study the local culture in order to find the weaknesses and the strengths of *Pela-Gandong*. This requires an in-depth study of the local culture.

Such a study is a must for GPM, because *Pela-Gandong* has some weaknesses that will continue to create problems, whether in religious relationships or in human relationships in general. The main weakness of *Pela-Gandong* is that it still creates an ‘insider versus outsider’ thinking: it only maintains good relationships between the Moluccan Christians and the Moluccan Muslims who are participants in the *Pela-Gandong* relationship. This weakness does not help the Moluccans to enter into a broad relationship with religious people from other tribes as well as different cultures.

\(^{131}\) Banawiratma, ‘Open Christology’, 5.
Chapter III

THE PELA IN THE LIFE OF THE MOLUCCANS:

I. Introduction

The *pela* is a special relationship between two, three, or more villages based on a pact made by their ancestors. It is well known in the Moluccas, as well as in Indonesia on the whole, as an aspect of the Moluccan local culture. The participants of a *pela* have special responsibilities to one another due to their *pela* obligations. This has consequences for daily life and behavior of the participants. Specifically the *pela* behavior in the life of the Moluccans will be the focus of this chapter.

The first part of this chapter will provide a brief description of the *pela* system in the Moluccas generally. Then, in the second part, there will be an in depth description of the *pela* relation between negri\textsuperscript{132} Batu Merah and negri Passo. This part will also contain the result of my fieldwork and an analysis thereof.

II. A brief anthropological description of the pela

II.1. The meaning of the word

The *pela* system has so shaped the lives of Moluccans that they have become people with a good religious understanding and high tolerance attitude in their religious lives. Muslim Moluccans and Christian Moluccans can live side by side in harmony because of this *pela* relationship. However, the meaning of the word *pela* still must be defined. Therefore, in order to obtain a sufficient understanding of this system, it is instructive to consider the literary meaning of the word *pela* first.

It is quite difficult to find the etymology of the *pela* because we have limited sources. However, by looking at the work done by Dieter Bartels and Frank Cooley, we shall examine the meaning.

According to Bartels, who did anthropological research on the *pela* system, *pela* has a range of meanings.

The word *pela* is generally believed to have its origin in one of the indigenous dialects of the Central Moluccas. As the term is used presently in Ambonese Malay, it means ‘alliance,’ ‘confederation,’ ‘league,’ or ‘brotherhood.’ Yet the word is almost never

\textsuperscript{132} Negri has the same meaning as village. In this study, villages which accept the *adat* system as a rule are referred to as negri.
used to refer to anything but the traditional, indigenous inter-village alliance system found in the Central Moluccas.\textsuperscript{133}

At this point, there is no clue as to the original meaning of this term because this explanation is about the \textit{pela} as a pre-existed \textit{adat}\textsuperscript{134} system. It is not about the word itself. However, there are some clues in his further work. The first clue comes from local languages. According to Bartels,

\textit{Pela} in the Paulohi language, one of the few relatively well-described dialects of Seram, means ‘to be finished’ or ‘to be at the end.’ \textit{Papelae} is rendered as ‘to finish’, ‘to finish off’, e.g. \textit{papelae tuae} is ‘to drink the rest of the sageru.’ In \textit{Nusalaut}\textsuperscript{135} the word for ‘to have finished’ is \textit{pelania}; in the village of Kailolo (Haruku) it is \textit{pelaya}—both are used in the same sense as the Malay words \textit{sudah} and/or \textit{habis}.\textsuperscript{136}

Furthermore, “using \textit{pela} in the sense of something being finished, having ended, some Ambonese claim that when two warring villages formerly decided to make peace, a pact was concluded in which enmities were made \textit{pela} or ‘finished,’ a term which was eventually applied to the whole alliance.”\textsuperscript{137} In addition, Bartels writes that in Amahai (Seram Island) it was said that after a solemn oath of friendship between the former enemies, the sentence \textit{sou-sou pela nia} was uttered, meaning “all speeches (promises) have been ended”.\textsuperscript{138} Thus, in Bartels’ view, the meaning of \textit{pela} was that something had been ended or something had been finished.

Interestingly, Bartels describes these literary meanings of \textit{pela} while considering \textit{pela} as ‘friend’.\textsuperscript{139} Connection to the word ‘friend’ is quite confusing when one only considers its literary meaning. Bartels clarifies the connection by quoting Van Hoëvell:

He [sc. Van Hoëvell, RI] stated that the word ‘\textit{pela}’ spread from the dialect of the Hoamoal peninsula (Seram) to other Ambonese languages. In Hoamoalese, the word meant ‘brother’ or ‘trusted friend’. The term was eventually used as the general designation for the alliance system. Originally, however, ‘\textit{pela}’ meant ‘to be finished’. The semantic transformation is to be traced to the \textit{kakehan}\textsuperscript{140} ceremony. At the initiation into the \textit{kakehan}, the final ritual consisted of the tattooing of the initiants by the \textit{kakehan} priest, after which he uttered the word ‘\textit{pela}’, indicating the end of the ceremony and the official acceptance of the new members into the brotherhood. The tattoo became known as \textit{tanda pela}, \textit{pela} sign, and, eventually because of the closeness of the members, \textit{pela} took on the meaning of ‘brother’ according to Van Hoëvell’s theory.\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{134} Adat is an Indonesian term which refers to a local or regional cultural tradition.
\textsuperscript{135} Nusalaut is an island in the Central Moluccas-Indonesia.
\textsuperscript{136} Bartels, \textit{Guarding The Invisible Mountain}, 57.
\textsuperscript{137} Bartels, \textit{Guarding The Invisible Mountain}, 57-58.
\textsuperscript{138} Bartels, \textit{Guarding The Invisible Mountain}, 58.
\textsuperscript{139} Bartels, \textit{Guarding The Invisible Mountain}, 57.
\textsuperscript{140} \textit{kakehan} is a secret society in which tattooing characterized its members. See Cooley, \textit{Ambonese Adat}, 15.
\textsuperscript{141} Bartels, \textit{Guarding The Invisible Mountain}, 58.
Moreover, Bartels writes: “Some Ambonese refer to the people formerly belonging to the kakehan as orang pela-pela or people wearing the tattoo, an allusion to the various tattoos which were the mark of kakehan membership.”142 Thus, the link between the meaning ‘friends’ and ‘to be finished’ is found in the kakehan ceremony.

In addition to Bartels’ research on the meaning of the word pela, Cooley offers information that he received from an informant who claimed that pela derives from the word pela-u meaning ‘brother’.143 This meaning was also mentioned by Van Hoevell. However, there is more support for the view that the original meaning of pela is ‘to finish’ or ‘to be finished’.

Leirissa, an Ambonese historian, in his article about Pela: System Interaksi Sosial Antara Desa-Desa Di Maluku Tengah, writes: “Based on social characteristics of the pela system, people are of the opinion that the meaning of the word is ‘alliance’ (ikatan) or ‘brotherhood’ (persaudaraan) or ‘brotherhood alliance’ (ikatan persaudaraan). However, according to the local language (Central Moluccas) the word pela was understood as ‘to finish’ (habis) or ‘the end (selesai)’.144 To support his view, he writes:

The first meaning (alliance) refers to social relation between two or more villages; while the second meaning (brotherhood) refers to interaction between two people. For the moment, pela refers more to the relation between one village and another village; because it does not refer to interaction between two or more people, the first meaning of the pela must be considered as the real meaning of the pela system.145

In addition, Leirissa says, “In fact, the pela system emerged as local people reacted to the existence of colonialism from the seventeenth century to the first decade of the nineteenth century.”146 It seems that Leirissa arrived at his conclusion based on the fact that some pela existed in the Central Moluccas islands during colonial time.

For example, the pela between Ameth, on Nusalaut Island, and Ema, on Ambon Island; the pela between Kilang, on Ambon Island, and Werinama, on Ceram Island. These two pela were established because of accidents which happened on kora-kora147 belonging to these villages when they were accompanying a hongi of the VOC (armada hongi VOC) in order to prevent rebellion and the smuggling of cloves. Another pela between Hatuhaha (Muslim) and Oma (Christian) in Haruku Island was really motivated by a common wish to resist Dutch Colonialism.148

Leirissa’s view is important because he tries to figure out the real meaning of the word, based on how the pela system worked among its communities. However, it is not enough for the meaning of the word to be derived only from its social function. Leirissa does recognize the historical development of the word pela, for he writes:

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142 Bartels, Guarding The Invisible Mountain, 60.
143 Cooley, Altar and Throne, 261 See also Bartels, Guarding The Invisible Mountain, 59.
146 Ibidem.
147 Kora-kora is the Moluccan local boat used to travel in past.
“This interaction system has existed historically. It means that the form and the function depended on the context from time to time.”\(^\text{149}\) For me, by admitting this point, Leirissa acknowledges the development of the *pela* system and its idea as Moluccans attempted to overcome the problems they faced.

Therefore, after providing some information about the meaning of the word *pela*, it is useful to note some conclusions. Firstly, the literary meaning of *pela* is ‘to finish’ or ‘to be finished’ or ‘to be at the end’. Secondly, this meaning was applied to the *kakehan* ceremony where the word *pela* received a semantic transformation. In the *kakehan paguyuban*, the word *pela* had two meanings: the end of the ceremony and the official acceptance of the new members into the brotherhood. Thirdly, as the meaning of *pela* evolved, Moluccans, especially people from Seram Island and Central Moluccas used this word to indicate that they had ended a war. It was not only the end of enmity but it also imposed a kinship relationship. Fourthly, as John Ruhulessin, an Indonesia Moluccan scholar, states in his dissertation, the philosophical meaning of *pela* is a brotherhood-sisterhood relationship.\(^\text{150}\) *Pela* has reached this philosophical meaning through the social-cultural life of the Moluccans.

II.2. Categories of the *pela*

There are many types of the *pela* relation in the Moluccas, especially on Seram Island and the Central Moluccas. Based on work done by Cooley, we can categorize *pela* into three groups,\(^\text{151}\) namely:

- **Pela keras/pela batu karang/pela darah** (hard *pela* or coral rock *pela* or blood *pela*)\(^\text{152}\)
- **Pela tempat siri** (betel-box *pela*)
- **Pela adik-kakak** (younger-older brother *pela*)

In his explanation of the first category of *pela*, Cooley writes:

This type of *pela* was established by a *sumpah-djandi*, ‘oath-promise’, between the leaders of the two parties of ancestors, involving the mixing of blood drawn from the finger of the chiefs in a glass of locally made liquor, the dipping of the tips of weapon in it and then the drinking of it by all notables present, which act sealed in a most binding way the oath to be brothers for all time. As blood-brothers, intermarriage between the *pela* partners is strictly forbidden. They are obligated to come to one another’s help in time of warfare or any other crisis. They are obligated to render mutual assistance in all matters and at all times supply whatever the *pela*-partner requests.\(^\text{153}\)


\(^{150}\) J.Ch. Ruhulessin, *Jelajah Pemikiran Etika: Menuju Jalan Baru Etika Kristen di Indonesia*, (s.l.s.s.), 141-144.


\(^{152}\) In his categorization, Bartels uses the term *pela tuni* beside *pela keras*. *Tuni* means genuine or true *pela*. For *pela adik-kakak*, he uses the term *pela gandong*. See Bartels, *Guarding The Invisible Mountain*, 181.

The name of this *pela* indicates how seriously it was taken. However, Cooley has not yet made it clear why this *pela* was established. Happily, in his further explanation, he states his reason.

Pela minum darah (literally, ‘drink blood *pela*’) generally result from circumstances of warfare. (They are not called ‘blood *pela*’ because they occurred in circumstances of warfare or blood-letting, as is sometimes suggested, but because an oath sealed in blood was taken on the occasion). There are two common types: those established in the form of an alliance prior to an attack on or by the enemy; for example, the pela darah between Aboru, Kariu [sc. both villages are in Haruku Island, RI], Booi and Hauloi [sc. both villages are in Saparua Island, RI]; and the pela sworn out of conditions of war between two enemies, such as the *pela batu karang* (coral rock *pela*) between Ulath (Saparua) and Oma (Haruku), which was established after the two opposing Kapitan\(^{154}\) had fought their hardest on a coral rock near Oma and could not vanquish each other; so the matter was settled by swearing to be blood-brothers.\(^{155}\)

Even though Cooley tends to categorize this *pela* as another type, I would conclude that *pela minum darah*, *pela keras*, *pela batu karang*, or *pela darah* are the same types of *pela* because they have the same consequences and obligations and the same general form. Bartels says: “A *pela keras* was always established by taking an oath of brotherhood, usually involving the mixing and drinking of blood of the leaders of the participating villages.”\(^{156}\) Many *pela keras* were motivated by warfare. But so was *pela batu karang* (coral rock *pela*) between the villages Ulath and Oma. However, one must note that some *pela keras* existed not because of a war or enmity. *Pela* Amahai-Ihamahu and *Pela* Batu Merah-Passo are examples of *pela keras* which were established not after war, but after a disaster.

Bartels divides *pela keras* into: a) *pela tumpah darah* and b) *pela batu karang*. According to him,

*Tumpah darah* means ‘spilled blood’ and *pela tumpah darah* is the collective term for those *pela* concluded between villages after human lives had been taken on either or both sides. In theory at least, the conflict between two villages could have been caused by the single, perhaps even accidental, act of killing a member of one village by someone from another.\(^{157}\)

For another subtype, he writes:

The attribute *batu karang* or ‘coral rock’ symbolizes the strength and permanence of this type of *pela*. Most Ambonese agree that only an extraordinary event lead to its conclusion. Traditionally, the most frequent basis for such *pela* seems to have been some sort of aid in war, ranging from direct participation in a conflict as allies to material help.\(^{158}\)

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154 Kapitan was a chief who, during a war, led the people in one village to fight (an)other village(s).
Even though these subdivisions help to clarify how the Moluccans understood a *pela*, in Bartels’ explanation, there is no real justification for making these subdivisions. Why? Both were established for the same reason, namely warfare or conflict. If in fact there were many terms used to point to the same event or to the same *pela* pact, they were only to emphasize one aspect of the *pela*. *Batu karang* is used to emphasize the strength and permanency; *tumpah darah* is a term used to emphasize both the reason and how an oath was made, and *tuni* (genuine) is used to emphasize its originality.

Commenting on *pela kera*, Cooley emphasizes,

Interestingly enough, it frequently happens that villages bound in a *pela kera* may embrace different religions.[…] Differences in religion seem to be no barrier to entering into this *pela* relationship. It is quiet likely, in fact, that in some cases the *pela* was established before these differences came into being—That is, while the *pela*-partners still observed the indigenous religion. This was almost certainly the case with the Aboru (Christian)-Kariu (Christian)-[159] Booi (Christian), -Hualoi (Muslim).[160]

The *pela* relationship between negri Batu Merah (Muslim) and negri Passo (Christian) is also a kind of *pela* that embraces different religions. For the *pela tempat sirih* (betel-box *pela*), Cooley explains:

This type of *pela* is not as strong as the first one. It was established without mixing blood, even without an oath. Thus, there was no clear consequence for the participants if one ignored this *pela* relation. This type of *pela* is known as ‘soft’ *pela* because it has no strict obligations or prohibitions. Its aim is simply to create a relationship in which people are encouraged to help one another.

Generally, this type of *pela* can be found in almost all parts in the Moluccas. Cooperation to build public buildings is a common custom in the Moluccas, as well as mutual assistance in crisis time. In the South East of the Moluccas, an example of this kind of mutual assistance could be helping each other when the harvest fails. In 2006

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[159] It is not clear why Cooley identifies Kariu as a Christian village. Kariu is also known as a Muslim village.


[161] *Baileu* is a special building where an *adat* meeting or an *adat* ceremony must be organized in a village in the Moluccas.

people from Masbuar, a village on Babar Island, sailed to Telalora, a village on Masela Island, in order to receive free corn because their own harvest failed.¹⁶³

The last type of the *pela* is *pela adik-kakak*. Cooley explains:

*Pela adik-kakak* (younger brother-older brother *pela*) or *pela saudara* (brother *pela*) generally result from the discovery, usually at a later date, that there is a common ancestor of the two or more leaders of villages or settlements. They are in fact brothers, or at least fairly close relatives; hence this discovery is celebrated with an oath formalizing a relationship long hidden.¹⁶⁴

In the categorization made by Bartels, this *pela* is called *pela gandong¹⁶⁵* or “*pela* of the womb.”

While this type of *pela* is not considered ‘genuine’, it is just as ‘hard’ as a *pela keras* or *pela tuni*. Normally, it has all the features of the *pela keras* category, including the oath and exogamy. Exactly the same mutual obligations and sanctions for transgressing the rules of *pela* apply, and emotionally villages tied in a *pela gandong* feel just as strongly about the relationship as people linked by a *pela keras*. For all intents and purposes the two types of *pela* are identical except in their origins.¹⁶⁶

For this type of *pela* one must notice that nowadays, parties or villages involved in such a relationship do not want to use the term *pela* to indicate this relationship. They prefer to use *gandong* (literally meaning one womb) to describe their relationship because in their view, a *pela* is based on an oath or a pact which was preceded by either war or an accident, while they view their alliance as one based on blood relation or the fact that they have common ancestors.¹⁶⁷ An example of *gandong* is an alliance between Tamilow, a Muslim village on Seram Island, Hutumuri, a Christian village on Ambon Island, and Siri-Sori¹⁶⁸ on Saparua Island (both Siri-Sori Slam and Siri Sori Srani). In November 2006 when those villages performed the *adat* ceremony, which is well known as *panas pela* (warming up the *pela*), they called it a renewal of the *gandong* and not *pela*.¹⁶⁹

Andy Tehupiory¹⁷⁰ said, “The relationship among Tamilow, Siri-Sori (both Slam and Srani) and Hutumuri is not a *pela* relationship. It is a *gandong* relationship because we come from the same womb. We have the same ancestors.” A man from

¹⁶³ Information received from Nabot in November 2006.
¹⁶⁷ Interviews with H. Tehupiory on November 5th, 2006 in Hutumury, and with Mahmud on November 7th, 2006. Mahmud comes from Tamilouw. These two interviews were taken during the ceremony of *panas gandong* in Hutumury.
¹⁶⁸ This *gandong* alliance had its own story. Bartels writes that a family from West Papua had five children consisting of three brothers: Temanole was the oldest, followed by Simanole and Silaloi and two sisters named Nyai Intan and Nyai Mas, who all were still *kafir*. See Bartels, *Guarding The Invisible Mountain*, p. 173-175. See also Sylvia Huwae, ‘Divided Opinions about Adatpela: A Study of Pela Tamiliou-Siri-Hutumuri,’ *Cakalele*, 6 (1995), 77-92.
¹⁶⁹ Interviews with Mahmud on November 7th, 2006; with H. Theupiory on November 5th, 2006, and with Mrs. O. Palyama on November 7th, 2006.
Tamilow\textsuperscript{171} makes the same point. He said, “This ceremony is gandong. It is not pela because a pela alliance was caused by an accident such as natural disaster or even war. Therefore their ancestors made an oath to have a special alliance. The relationship among these three or four villages is gandong; we come from one womb, so it is not an alliance because of an oath”. Interestingly, they call each other ‘oncho’, an abbreviation of ‘bongso’ (youngest child in a family).\textsuperscript{172}

In the opinion of participants of gandong, the gandong relationship is stronger than the pela. A Gandong relationship is something that exists naturally.\textsuperscript{173} This was also pointed out by Ismail\textsuperscript{174}, a student at IAIN (Institut Agama Islam Negeri\textsuperscript{175}). He said: “Feeling as gandong to one another is something natural which comes from one’s heart.”

The tendency to differentiate pela from gandong comes not only from participants of a gandong, but it also comes from participants of a pela. Some interviewees in negri Passo and those of negri Batu Merah say that pela and gandong are two different systems. Interestingly, they (participants of pela or participants of gandong) gave the same reason for making the differentiation. Haji Awath Ternate says, “Pela was established by making an oath, while gandong was not. Gandong is a relationship of people who come from the same womb.”\textsuperscript{176}

This tendency is something new in understanding these alliances. Many sources, especially those published before the conflict, did not differentiate between pela and gandong. Of those sources, books written by Bartels and Cooley must be mentioned. Bartels and Cooley categorize gandong as a type of pela alliance, namely, pela adik-kakak. I can understand why Bartels and Cooley did not make any distinction between pela and gandong. They had good reasons. First, even though there were different motivations of establishing pela and gandong, both were established by making an oath. Secondly, like a pela, gandong has also some basic obligations which are same as those of pela, especially pela keras. Among them, one is prohibition against intermarriage. Thirdly there are similarities in the ceremony establishing a pela or gandong, namely:

- mixing blood drawn from the finger and drinking it, then
- making an oath and vow (obligations and consequences), and
- creating a visible sign of the pact.\textsuperscript{178}

Thus, one might ask, why a distinction is now being made between pela and gandong by participants after the conflict? The reason is not yet clear. However, it

\textsuperscript{171} An interview with Mahmud on November 7th, 2006.
\textsuperscript{172} There are different points of view to understand this ‘oncho/bongso’ term. Some people from these three or four villages said that term oncho refers to the little finger which was cut by their ancestors and which blood they mixed when they were going to separate from one another.
\textsuperscript{173} An interview with J. Palyama on November 6th, 2006.
\textsuperscript{174} A discussion with four students at IAIN on March 15th, 2007.
\textsuperscript{175} Islamic State Institution.
\textsuperscript{176} An interview with Haji A. Ternate on November 29th, 2006. This is also the reason mentioned by Mus Pesurnay, R.K. Simauw, Haji M.Tjiat, Haji A. Mamang.
\textsuperscript{177} Sylvia Huwae does not make any differentiation between pela and gandong. Therefore, she talks about the alliance among Tamilow-Siri-Sori and Hutumuri as a pela alliance. See, S. Huwae, “Divided Opinions about Adatpela”, 77-92.
\textsuperscript{178} Bartels, Guarding The Invisible Mountain, 82-95.
seems to me that participants of *pela* and *gandong* want to stress the motivation of a *gandong* alliance. It is a relationship, created not by war, enmity, or any disaster, but by an authentic blood relationship.

It is not my intention to differentiate between *pela* and *gandong*. Whatever they are, *pela* and *gandong* have the same function in the life of the participants. *Pela* and *gandong* form a special relationship between villages. *Pela* and *gandong* help Moluccans to cross both village and religious boundaries. *Pela* and *gandong* show the point of view of the Moluccans that one cannot exist without the other. However, in this definition, ‘the other’ is limited to those within the defined relationship of the *pela* or *gandong*.

II.3. The role or the function of the *pela*

In Bartels’ book, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain*, one can find some roles or functions of the *pela* in the life of the Moluccans, especially in the Central Moluccas.

The first role or function that is noticed by Bartels is the quest for territory. It seems that Bartels drew his conclusion based on cases he found in Leitimor about war between neighboring villages.

The Urimesing-Amahusu War was such a struggle for territory. At one time or another, Urimesing had border problems with Soya which resulted in war. Soya was victorious, and Urimesing had to give one of their virgins to Soya. The girl was decapitated at a rock called *Batu Bulan* (Moon rock), and the kapitan of Soya and Urimesing drank her blood to conclude a *pela*. Afterwards the kapitan Soya kicked this rock with such power that it split into two pieces, each designating one side of the border between the two villages. These rocks are still the border markers.

The second function is a mechanism for truce and peace. In his explanation about this function, Bartels says:

Pela seems rather to have been primarily restricted to peace treaties – a mechanism for settling previous wrongs between neighbors. Curiously, no pela resulted in other wars, such as those between Amahusu and Soya or Amahusu and Urimesing despite similar circumstances. This could mean either that pela was not always concluded automatically, that such pela pacts have been obliterated from memory, or that perhaps pela was of a semi-permanent nature and thus has only selectively survived.

Those functions of *pela* only describe the *pela* which were established because of a war or enmity. As we have argued above, *pela* alliances were not merely established because of a war. Natural disasters could become one reason of some *pela* pacts existences. It can therefore be concluded that the *pela* has varying functions.

When one looks at *pela* pacts established because of natural disaster, one can conclude that humanity was also a reason. In difficult times, one cannot help

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179 Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain*, 87.
180 Two villages situated at Ambon.
him/herself. However, the willingness to help applied in family circumstances only. Therefore, they established a *pela* pact to fulfill this need among more people. This is a human need and it is also a human feeling to want to help. A *pela* pact which was established because of a natural disaster implies that a *pela* pact has also another function or role in the life of the Moluccans. People who had experienced difficult times such as natural disasters really knew how human beings need one another’s help.

**II.4. The obligations and the rights**

Both Bartels and Cooley notice the same points about obligations and rights of the parties involved in a *pela* pact. Bartels points out some obligations of the participants. The obligations are:

1. Villages in a *pela* relationship assist each other in times of crisis (natural disaster, war, etc);
2. If requested, one partner village has to assist the other in the undertaking of larger community projects;
3. When visiting one’s *pela* village, food, and particularly agricultural products, can not be denied to the visitor;
4. All members of villages in a *pela* relationship are considered to be of one blood, thus marriage between *pela* partners is considered incest. Any transgressions against *pela* rules are severely punished by the ancestors.\(^{184}\)

In Cooley’s book, *Ambonese Adat*, he notes the same obligations and rights of parties involved in a *pela*-pact, especially a *pela keras*. As blood-brothers:

- Intermarriage between the *pela*-partners is strictly forbidden.
- They are obligated to come to one another’s help in time of warfare or any other crisis.
- They are obligated to render mutual assistance in all matters and at all time supply whatever the *pela*-partner requests.\(^{185}\)

Those are the obligations and rights of parties in *pela keras* (hard *pela*). It is slightly different from obligations and rights of parties in *pela tempat siri*. For this kind of *pela*-pact, Cooley writes: “The friendly relation established between two or more villages bound in a *pela tempat siri* involves:

- Mutual assistance in public works, especially the erection of public buildings such as *baileu*,\(^{186}\) church, mosque, or school.
- The two villages may secure sago or other basic articles from one another.
- *Pela* partners may receive free lodging and entertainment when visiting in each other’s villages.\(^{187}\)

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\(^{184}\) Bartels, *Guarding The Invisible Mountain*, 29.

\(^{185}\) Cooley, *Ambonese Adat*, 72.

\(^{186}\) *Baileu* is a special building where an *adat* meeting or an *adat* ceremony must be held in every village. However, many villages, whether in Seram Island or Central Moluccas no longer have a *Baileu*.

It is clear, here, that in the *pela tempat siri*, there is no prohibition to intermarriage. This implies that this kind of *pela* is not as hard as that of *pela adik-kakak* which is now called *gandong* and *pela minum darah*.

II.5. Panas pela (Literally ‘warming up’)

Panas pela or warming up the *pela* is an integral part of the *pela* system which must be performed in order to tie a *pela* relationship. This is organized in a special *adat* ceremony in which the two or three *pela* villages must take part. The ceremony of *panas pela* has several steps. In the beginning of the ceremony, people of the *pela* village where the *panas pela* will be organized must pick up their *pela* brothers-sisters at the gate of the village. In the circle of *kain gandong*¹⁸⁸, they go to the *baileu* or *rumah tua* (old house) where they have to communicate with their ancestors. According to Yafet Damamain, a Moluccan theologian who is a scholar in the Old Testament, Moluccans still believe in or depend on their ancestors because, in the points of view of Moluccans, their ancestors are still alive.¹⁸⁹ Based on the perspective that the Moluccan ancestors are still alive and that they live in *baileu* or *rumah tua*, the *adat* ceremony of *panas pela* must take place in the *baileu* or *rumah tua*. In this place, elders can communicate with their ancestors to confirm that they still keep the *pela* alive.

In the *baileu* or *rumah tua* the *adat* ceremony is performed. Here elders of the two *pela* villages tell the story of their *pela* relationship. Then, the elders confirm that they are still *pela* to each other. At the end of the *adat* ceremony in the *baileu*, the *raja*¹⁹⁰ of each *pela* village drinks *sopi* - a local typical drink which is always used in every *adat* ceremony- from the same cup symbolizing how their ancestors drank mixed blood. After that, together with the elders, all people go to the house of the *raja* where the participants of the *pela* demonstrate how their ancestors established their *pela* relationship. At the end of *panas pela*, everyone takes part in a party called *makan pati*ta¹⁹¹.

Even though the *panas pela* is an important element in the *pela* system, there is no a clear cultural rule stating when the *panas pela* must be organized. Actually, even without a conflict, a *panas pela* would be organized if elders of *pela* villages observed that their *pela* relationship were about to be forgotten. Therefore, one would notice that a *panas pela* can take place at different intervals during some decades. The ex-*raja* of negri Passo, Mrs. Maitimu-Simauw, informed me that the latest *panas pela* for the *pela* between negri Batu Merah and negri Passo held in Passo was in 1979. She also said, “It is not easy to undertake a *panas pela* because the village must fulfill the *adat*’s obligations. We must be certain of the history and all the *adat*’s stipulations otherwise we will encounter problems; *katong takut salah* (we are afraid to make a mistake).”¹⁹²

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¹⁸⁸ *Kain gandong* is a long piece of white cloth used to keep the people going to *baileu* in line.

¹⁸⁹ Damamain explains that according to the Moluccan world view, not only Moluccans who are still alive, but also Moluccans who have died should be counted as Moluccans. See Y.G. Damama in, *JOB: A Narrative Approach on the Characterization and Point of View* (A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Southeast Asia Graduate School of Theology, Yogyakarta, 1997), 227.

¹⁹⁰ *Raja* or *Bapak Raja* is a Moluccan term used to point to the chief of a negri.

¹⁹¹ *Makan patita* is a local party where people gather outdoors to have a meal together.

¹⁹² An interview with Mrs Maitimu-Simauw on April 20th, 2009.
Indeed, the panas pela fulfills important roles in the pela system. Firstly, new generations will experience how their pela was established. Secondly, by experiencing it, they will keep a pela relationship alive in their daily life. Therefore, some interviewees said that after the conflict, it is a must for pela villages to have a clear, regular schedule for organizing the panas pela.

The brief explanation about the pela system results in the following conclusions. Firstly, the Moluccans’ ancestors were very much aware of their weakness, namely, enmity among villages. They therefore developed a system, namely, a pela, in order to prevent themselves from fighting one another. However, this system was not only established when there was enmity, but it could also be established to create a special close relationship which enabled the Moluccans to extend their brotherhood relationships wider than the biological brotherhood relation and beyond their immediate vicinity. Thus, they overcame alienation by a pela relation. Secondly, in that perspective, one can see that the Moluccans understood the pela as a way of reconciliation. By establishing a pela, they opened a new perspective which would enable them to create a future together in a climate of brotherhood. Thirdly, the pela system was widely understood as a social-cultural phenomenon on Seram Island and the Central Moluccas as a way to create an alliance. Many alliances were established as a pela even though they were not preceded by a war, such as the pela between negri Batu Merah and negri Passo. Fourthly, the variety within the pela is a strong indication that the pela had been developed by the Moluccans’ ancestors in order to fulfill their contemporary social-cultural need.

III. The pela between negri Batu Merah and negri Passo

III. I. Why a pela between negri Batu Merah and negri Passo?

There are two main considerations in choosing these two villages. Firstly, most inhabitants of negri Batu Merah are Muslims, while those of negri Passo are Christians. This is an important factor to be noted since the religious dimension formed by this pela is the main concentration of this project. Secondly, these two villages are situated on Ambon Island, so their social-cultural-economic development is more rapid than that of other villages in the Moluccas. This condition cannot be separated from the social fact that many migrants arrive and stay there. This is very helpful since another main concentration of this writing is to see how a pela shapes the life of its participants in a multi-society existence.

The decision to do the field research in negri Batu Merah was not taken without some trepidation. My fears were overcome by the hope of understanding the existence of the Church among other religions; making contact with Muslims is important, because Christians do not live in isolation from other faiths.

Negri Batu Merah was not a new negri to me. I stayed in Ahuru, an area in negri Batu Merah, for about three years when I was attending Senior High School. However, I was quite anxious when I had to visit the local office of negri Batu Merah to report my fieldwork activity. I could not escape the bad memories of the disturbances of 1999-2004. I asked my boyfriend, who is my husband now, to accompany me. We went to negri Batu Merah by becak, a three wheeled bike in which the driver sits behind the passengers; I felt that I could hardly breathe when I had to
enter the office in which all of the officers were Muslims. I gave the information letter to one man and he read it. He told me that I had to wait for a while if I wanted to meet bapa raja. I sat outside the office until he told me that I could go upstairs to meet bapa raja. While climbing the stairs, I found myself praying “Jesus Christ, please save my life in this place”. Entering the room where raja Awath was waiting for me, I took a deep breath to try to minimize my fears. I greeted the raja and he greeted me. His warm greeting helped me to calm down. On three visits my boyfriend accompanied me. The fourth time I visited negri Batu Merah, I had to go by myself. I sat in the becak looking back at the driver. I was afraid he might kill me.

This was the same situation when I had to visit IAIN in order to interview some of its staff members and students. Four visits to meet and discuss with some people from negri Batu Merah, and staff members and students from IAIN, made me realize that there was no reason to be afraid. Even though some people appear quite cold, many people from negri Batu Merah were welcoming and were willing to participate in open discussions. From then on, I did my fieldwork in these two negri quite confidently.

III.1.1. Demographic and social-cultural characteristics of negri Batu Merah

Negri Batu Merah is well known as a Muslim village, more than 95% of its inhabitants are Muslim. It is noticeable how many places for worship have existed. Ustad Salim informed me that there are about 37 Mosques, 10 Mushollah and one church in negri Batu Merah. In a report dated 14 June 2007, there is information that the population of negri Batu Merah is 34,390. Of these, 17,303 are male, and 17,087 are female. In that report, there is no information about numbers of indigenous people and outsiders. There is also no information about the religion, education or jobs of the inhabitants in negri Batu Merah.

Negri Batu Merah is near Ambon City. A part of its area is a business district known as Pasar Batu Merah (Batu Merah’s Market), where many outsiders stay and run their business activities. According to some interviewees in negri Batu Merah, the negri Batu Merah has grown to ten times its original size due to the rapid population growth. Outsiders and their families now comprise 90% of the population, claimed Haji Awath. Ustad Salim said in an interview that, as a strategy to keep the land in the hands of indigenous people, there is an obligation in negri Batu Merah that if one wants to sell a piece of land in negri Batu Merah, the owner must inform other indigenous people. S/he can only sell the piece of land to others/outsiders if indigenous people do not want to or are not able to buy.

According to my observation during the field research, almost every day people from negri Batu Merah visited the local office in order to ask for some documentations related to their business activities. This meant that local officials in negri Batu Merah were busy every day. Sometimes, one had to wait for an hour to be served. It was also difficult to find a seat in the overcrowded office. Sadly, there is no information about

193 A Mushollah is a small place that is used by Muslims to pray.
194 Before the conflict, there were 5 churches in negri Batu Merah.
195 Ustad means the Imam in Islam.
job classifications, so it is difficult to talk about economic activity in this negri extensively.

III.1.2. Demographic and social-cultural characteristics of negri Passo

Negri Passo is well known as a Christian village, since more than 95 per cents of its inhabitants are Christians. There are eight Churches of the GPM, one Roman Catholic Church, and six churches of other denominations. There is only one Mosque, namely, Masjid An Nur, and two Mushollas. According to a census of 2006, the population of negri Passo is 17,282, of which 8,723 are male, and 8,559 are female. Among the population, 4 are registered Budhas\textsuperscript{197}, 13 are Hindus, 61 are Muslims\textsuperscript{198}, 1,791 are Roman Catholics, and 15,413 are Protestants. Buddhists and Hindus are Chinese who have their own shops and run their businesses in negri Passo, while almost all Muslims are Indonesian police officers and their families who stay in a special barracks in negri Passo. Of the 61 Muslims, three people (a widow with 2 children)\textsuperscript{199} remained in Passo, even during the conflict.

According to job classifications available in the local office, there are 949 farmers, 51 farmhands, 15 fishermen, 831 public officials, 64 labourers, 1,076 civil officers, 278 army and police, 831 administrators, 335 retired people, and 783 businessmen. Of this job classification, one can notice that the biggest group in negri Passo village is civil officers, while farmhands and fishermen are the fewest in number.

Local official activity in negri Passo was quieter than in negri Batu Merah. Besides the bapa raja and some staff members, the daily routine activities were run by two administrators. I observed that there were few visitors during office time.

However, these two negri are destined to be business centers in Ambon Island. Negri Batu Merah has already grown into a business centre, while negri Passo will become one. An interviewee said that negri Passo is the centre of Ambon Island, so it must play an important role on Ambon Island.\textsuperscript{200} According to the master-plan of the government of Ambon City, Passo will be a transit terminal. Therefore, the government will build a big bus terminal in negri Passo as well as some bungalows and small hotels. Because of these plans, G. Rinsampessy and R.K. Simauw said, “People of negri Passo must prepare themselves for a new situation. They have to maintain their adat otherwise they will lose it.”\textsuperscript{201}

III.2. History of the pela between negri Batu Merah and negri Passo

When every part of Moluccas was controlled by Sultan Baabulah in Ternate, North Moluccas, all villages had to pay tax. In 1506\textsuperscript{202}, people from negri Batu Merah and

\textsuperscript{197} They did not want to give time for interviewing.

\textsuperscript{198} It was difficult to find someone to be an interviewee since some used the argument that they would just stay for a while, so they were not able to share their points.

\textsuperscript{199} The widow went to her home town, Buton, Southeast of Sulawesi, since the recent Idhul Fitri. One of her children still stays in Passo, but it was difficult to meet him.

\textsuperscript{200} An interview with Mrs. A. Sarimanella on March 6\textsuperscript{th}, 2009.

\textsuperscript{201} Interviews with G. Rinsampessy on December 6\textsuperscript{th}, 2006; and with R.K. Simauw on January 12\textsuperscript{th}, 2007.

\textsuperscript{202} There are different opinions about the time. People from Batu Merah say it was in 1505/1506; while some from Passo say it was in 1509. These dates still cause some confusion. In bulletins about how
negri Passo were among those of other villages who went to Ternate in order to fulfill their obligations. They went by kora-kora, a Moluccan local form of transportation at that time. Coming back from Ternate, something happened to the kora-kora of the people of negri Passo, and it was lost at sea. People from negri Passo lost their panggayo[^203] and their food. They lost everything. The kora-kora of negri Batu Merah came and helped the people from negri Passo.

Mus Pesurnay[^204], an officer of negri Passo, explained that when that accident happened, there were many other kora-kora around the Kora-kora of the people from negri Passo, but it was only the kora-kora of people from negri Batu Merah who showed willingness to help people from negri Passo. Saleh Kiat[^205], the secretary of negri Batu Merah, confirmed that when the kora-kora of Passo sank, there were many other kora-kora. But God moved the people from negri Batu Merah, who were quite some distance from the kora-kora of people from negri Passo, to come to their rescue. People from negri Batu Merah brought people from negri Passo to a cove on Buru island. In this place, people from negri Batu Merah shared their food with people from negri Passo and they ate together. After eating, people from negri Passo spontaneously asked people from negri Batu Merah to become the older brother of negri Passo, and Batu Merah spontaneously also asked people from negri Passo to become their young brothers. As confirmation of their pela, they turned a stone upside down. Doing this, they cut their fingers. People from negri Batu Merah and people from negri Passo mixed their blood into one blood and drank it. Then, they swore that:

1. They must not marry each other
2. They must not fight each other
3. They must help each other

According to information found in two different bulletins which were written by people from negri Batu Merah[^206] and those from Passo[^207], as a visible sign of this pact, their ancestors crossed two of their panggayo under a stone. About this event, Sahusilawane writes: “They performed the ceremony of placing the two crossed panggayo (dayung) under the stone”.[^208] Thus the pela between these two negri had also fulfilled a common form of a ceremony when a pela-pact is concluded.

These two villages started their existence there are explanations that the negri Batu Merah was built by people from negri Ahusen, negri Amantelu, and negri Uritelu in about 1575, while Passo was built by migration of people from Seram because of a Huamual war between Patasiwa (nine divisions) and Patalima (five divisions) – each village in the central Moluccas belongs to one of these groups. When the founding ancestors of Passo migrated to the place that is now known as Passo, there was a war against the presence of the Portuguese in Hitu. It means that negri Passo was built after 1512. Thus, there are two possible argumentations to think about 1506/7/9 as to the time when the pela between Batu Merah and Passo was established. First, the pela of those years was made by ancestors among whom the new migrants were not included. Second, the pela was made by ancestors who built these two villages. It means that the pela happened after the Portuguese came to the Moluccas.

[^203]: Panggayo is a local traditional tool used when local people travelled with their traditional boat.
[^204]: An interview with M. Pesurnay on November 28th, 2006.
[^205]: An interview with S. Kiat on December 4th, 2006.
Based on that pact, people from negri Passo call people from negri Batu Merah kaka pe\textsuperscript{209} (older brother/sister), and people from negri Batu Merah call people from negri Passo adi pe (younger brother/sister). These two terms indicate that they are brothers and sisters to one another. It might be because of these terms of addressing each other, and the oath not to marry each other, that Sahusilawane categorizes the pela between negri Batu Merah and negri Passo as pela keras or a form of pela gandong.\textsuperscript{210} Sadly, there is no authentic written document containing the contents of that oath. Raja Awath Ternate\textsuperscript{211} explained: "We have no authentic version of this pact. However, it does not change or reduce the meaning of our pela relation in our lives."

This description implies that the pela relation between negri Batu Merah and negri Passo is that of pela keras. There are two justifications for this argument. The pela between negri Batu Merah and negri Passo was based on an oath given by their ancestors, even though it was not caused by a war. In addition, it contains strict obligation against intermarriage.

III.3. Fieldwork

III.3.1. Research method

In order to obtain data, I used a qualitative approach during my fieldwork. Thus, personal interviews were the main way to gain insight into the experiences and lives of the target people. The interviewing process is a dialogical interview in which interviewer and interviewee have an open discussion. However, in this interviewing process, the interviewer merely tends to be a guide in order to prevent losing the focus of the question. Related to this dialogical interview Liamputtong and Ezzy, quoting Chambron, write, “Non-interventionist styles tend to result in simplified characterization and linear plots, whereas openly dialogical interviews in which both interviewer and interviewee are ‘given a space of interpretation’ tend to achieve a narrative of greater complexity and ‘polyphonic authoring’.”\textsuperscript{212}

This fieldwork examines one main question: How does the pela exist in the life of the Moluccans, especially participants of the pela, as a way of reconciliation? This is an important question since pela creates a special relationship among its participants; it even obligates its participants to have responsibility for one another. Moreover, this pela relation offers benefits for the society because it enables participants of different religions to live side by side in harmony. This also benefits people who come from different parts of Indonesia to stay and live in these two developing villages. In order to answer that main question, there are some sub questions:

a. How do you understand the pela?
b. How do you see others who are not included in the pela?
c. How does the pela form the life of its communities?

\textsuperscript{209} Pe is an abbreviation for Pela.
\textsuperscript{210} See Sahusilawane, ‘Sejarah Lahirnya,’ 49.
\textsuperscript{211} An interview with Haji A. Ternate on November 26\textsuperscript{th} 2006.
d. Does the *pela* influence religious life of its communities? If so, in what aspects?
e. What are the characteristics of religious understanding formed by the *pela*?
f. Do you accept the *pela* as part of your Christian and Muslim identity or is it a common existence?

The main question and its sub-questions are derived from the unit analysis of this fieldwork. The unit analysis is the understanding of participants about their *pela* relation and how the *pela* works in the life of its participants. In doing research, especially when qualitative research is the method used, the researcher must decide the unit of analysis. Quoting Lofland and Lofland, Liamputtong and Ezzy describe a unit of analysis as “a tool to use in scrutinizing your data log.”

According to Liamputtong and Ezzy, “once the units have been identified, the researcher begins to ask question about them as they appear in their data.”

### III.3.2. Interviewees

There are 44 interviewees in this fieldwork. 18 interviewees are from negri Batu Merah, 21 interviewees are from negri Passo, and 5 interviewees are leaders of the church. Among the 44 interviewees, 25 are older than 50, and 19 are aged between 20 and 50. The age of these interviewees was noted to compare how the older people (aged above 50) understand this *pela* relation in comparison to the younger generation (aged 20-50). Besides age, it is also important to see how indigenous people talk about and understand their *pela* relation compared to how outsiders see it. These two categories are important factors in seeing how the *pela* is understood and how it works in the life of its participants in their new society. In undertaking this fieldwork, the difference in experience between women and men also comes into consideration in order to compare how men and women understand this local culture. However, it was difficult to reach a balance in gender categorization because some women were afraid to share their opinions. Thus, of 44 interviewees, only 12 are women.

It is difficult to classify the interviewees based on their cultural status, i.e. whether they are indigenous people or outsiders in the two negeri. The difficulty comes from the fact that different criteria are used in the two negeri, or villages, to differentiate between indigenous inhabitants and outsiders. However, based on the family name, we can determine the status of the interviewee.

According to an interviewee in negri Passo, by knowing each *soa*, one can conclude who the indigenous people are in negri Passo. There are four *soa* in negri Passo. The first three *soa* are indigenous people and the fourth *soa* consists of migrants who have lived in negri Passo for years or even generations. See the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The 1st <em>soa</em></th>
<th>The 2nd <em>soa</em></th>
<th>The 3rd <em>soa</em></th>
<th>The 4th <em>soa</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soa Koly</td>
<td>Soa Mory</td>
<td>Soa Rinsama</td>
<td>Soa Maseng or soa bebas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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213 Liamputtong and Ezzy, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 259.
214 See names and villages of these interviewees in the appendix.
216 *Soa* is a small family-group in the village.
In *negri* Batu Merah, it is rather difficult to establish or make a classification between indigenous people and outsiders. Family names such as Nurlette, Hatala, Waliulu, Masawoy, and Mamang are called *Soa Perintah* (The Head Soa), but they are not the only indigenous people to *negri* Batu Merah. Ternate, Kiat, Tjiat, and Salim are former migrant family names which are now considered as indigenous to *negri* Batu Merah. Moreover, in *negri* Batu Merah, one cannot depend on *soa* categorization in order to make a distinction between indigenous people and outsiders.

Thus, there are two indications that can help to identify someone as to being indigenous or an outsider. The first indicator is the family name. In addition, one can be treated and be accepted as an indigenous person if his/her family has been in these two villages for generations. An example of the last one is the Maitimu family in *negri* Passo or the Ternate family in *negri* Batu Merah. Mrs. Maitimu-Simauw was the *raja* in *negri* Passo for almost twenty years and Haji Ternate is the *raja* of *negri* Batu Merah.

### III.3.3. Result of fieldwork

Description of fieldwork results will be based on grouping related questions.

a. How the *pela* is understood

In order to gain an insight into the participants’ understanding there are two questions: “How do you understand the *pela*? How do you see others who are not included in the *pela*?”

According to the participants of this *pela*, their *pela* relation is a sacred thing in their lives. They refer to it as sacred because it was formed by taking an oath, and because it was done by mixing and drinking blood of their ancestors.217 An interviewee in Batu Merah, Haji Ternate218, made the same point:

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217 An interview with Mrs. Maitimu-Simauw on December 2\(^{nd}\), 2006.
218 An interview with Haji A.Ternate on November 26\(^{th}\), 2006.
Because it is a sacred thing in our lives, the people from Passo and Batu Merah strongly believe that they will be punished if they forget this pela relation; we will receive kualat (punishment). It is part of our history:

In the period of colonialism, Christians were favored by the Dutch. As Christians, people from Passo received many positive benefits. These advantages led the people from Passo to forget the people from Batu Merah, their kaka pe. On one occasion, almost everyone in Passo became ill with serious stomach aches and high fever. This not only affected humans, but also the environment around the village. In Passo and its surrounding, the trees became infected by a microbe which caused leaves to become yellow. At the most crucial point, people from Passo asked themselves what they had done to deserve this. Finally, they realized that they tended to forget their pela relationship with people from Batu Merah. Realizing this, they held a meeting, consisting of raja (the Head of the village), tua-tua adat (elders of the village), and the local Priest. They came to the agreement that they had to ask forgiveness from their kaka pe in Batu Merah. They contacted Batu Merah and told them what they had decided. After praying to God, people from Batu Merah took water from the Mushollah of a Mosque in Batu Merah and gave that water to those who were sick in Passo. Allhamdulillah (praise God), they were cured.

This information was given by almost all interviewees in negri Batu Merah. Interviewees in negri Passo supported this by an adding that similar things always happened to people of negri Passo and those of negri Batu Merah when they tended to forget this pela relation. However, people from neither negri could add more facts of actual instances.

In responding to the question as to how this pelo can continue to exist in the multicultural-society that has been created by immigration in Moluccan society, interviewees from both negri argued, that by this pelo, Moluccans can live side by side with other people from outside.” Pela is a system that is well known by all Moluccans, especially by people from Central Moluccas. Thus, if all people who take part in a pela, live according to their pelo, they can influence other people around them,” said Simauw. He continued his point, “By showing how we can live as brothers and sisters with people from negri Batu Merah, who are Muslims, we show the love of God. Because of this pela, during the conflict, the relationship between people from negri Passo and those from negri Batu Merah remained good. We have no power to reject the wishes of our ancestors. For example, people from negri Batu Merah and those of negri Passo exchanged information about security issues even during the conflicts. Therefore, we have to keep this pelo alive, even in this multi-society.” An interviewee from negri Batu Merah made the same point. Haji Tjiat said, ”We are only living according to what our ancestors wanted. It was their oath. It is a sacred thing in our life, so we must not reject it”.

In addition, to answer the question as to how the Moluccans see others who are not included in the pela, all interviewees in these both villages stressed that as

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220 Interviews with Mrs. Maitimu-Simauw on December 2nd, 2006; J. Mozes on December 8th, 2006; R.K. Simauw on January 12th, 2007; Y. Maitimu on November 29th, 2006.
222 An interview with Haji M. Tjiat on December 4th, 2006.
immigrants in the Moluccas, non Moluccas must live according to the local custom. Haji Ternate said, "Local authority must stress to its society, that all newcomers must obey the local system; we must hold the law of the local custom." However, in relation to the local ceremonies (upacara-upacara adat) such as panas pela (pela warmth), pelantikan raja (inauguration of the head of a village), he said, "Outsiders can only participate in preparing an adat ceremony, but they cannot participate in its ceremony." 223 Almost the same point is stressed by Mrs. Kalahatu. She said, "Outsiders who live in negri Passo must live according to our adat. ..." 224 Another interviewee also stresses that. "In the adat, indigenous people have special rights compared to those of outsiders. For example, only indigenous people have the right, especially bangsa parintah 225 to be elected to be a raja in negri Passo; outsiders have no such rights."

Moreover, all interviewees are of the opinion, that many problems that happened in Moluccan social life, especially in Ambon City, were caused by outsiders who stayed in the Moluccas but did not abide by local customs. This is a problem. Hassbollah Toisutta said, "People from outside of the Moluccas stay in certain areas in Ambon city. More precisely, they build their own communities, so our local customs do not penetrate their lives." 227 The same point was also mentioned by Abidin Waccano. He explained that the Moluccas has become a business place for many outsiders. They do not feel that they belong in the Moluccas. Worse, this situation has always been manipulated politically. 228

Sharing his experience as an outsider in Passo, Ricky Lesbassa 229 said, "I have been staying in negri Passo for more than seven years, but I do not feel that people from negri Batu Merah are my pela. I cannot call people from negri Batu Merah my kaka pe because they will ask my family name. Lesbassa is from Buru Island, so they will say that you are not indigenous to negri Passo." In addition, he said, "There is discrimination between indigenous people and outsiders since outsiders have never participated in adat ceremonies. Thus, if we want to hold pela in our lives, we must reform this pela." In an interview with Edo Tomaluweng 230, a young person from negri Passo, he shared his point: "We must think about renewing our understanding of pela in order to make outsiders experience the meaning of the pela. Maybe, it can be inspired and coordinated by leaders of the indigenous people, that outsiders are allowed to participate in adat ceremonies".

Some interviewees 231 recognized that many outsiders in both negri adversely influenced this pela relation. They said that sometimes outsiders who are Christian refuse to take part in building a Mosque, a habit that was inherent in the lives of people from negri Passo and those of negri Batu Merah.

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223 An interview with Haji A. Ternate on November 29th, 2006. The same point was also stressed by G. Rinsampessy, Saleh, Haji A. Mamang and J. Mozes.
225 It refers to families who are destined to be chief of the negri.
228 An interview with A. Waccano on February 26th, 2007.
Interestingly, Asgar and Nia, two students from IAIN, expressed some criticism of the *pela*. According to Asgar, "*Pela* only ties the Moluccans. *Pela* is not for non-Moluccans. In the Moluccas people will ask about the name and the family name because this helps to identify the origins and loyalties of an individual. People from outside cannot be included. Thus, after the conflict, we cannot only depend on the *pela.*" He continued to say "I do not doubt about *pela-gandong*, but in my opinion we must point our attention to the spirit of *pela*, which is to meet one another (*pela sebagai pertemuan kita*)." Nia noted the same critical point. She said, "*Pela-gandong* is only for the Moluccans".

In order to achieve a deeper insight into the participants’ opinion of their *pela*, during my field work, they were also asked about the weaknesses of the *pela* relation. Interestingly, in answering this question, no interviewees who are participants of the *pela* could mention any weakness. In their point of view, the *pela* has no weakness since it forms a good relation between people from *negri* Batu Merah and those of *negri* Passo. According to Haji Tjiat, "We cannot force people from *negri* Passo or those of *negri* Batu Merah to have the same feeling for outsiders. We see outsiders as human beings, but the strong feeling of brotherhood-sisterhood is only towards people from *negri* Passo. Anything else is too soon after the conflicts." Another interviewee from *negri* Batu Merah, Haji Mamang, explained, "We cannot state that *pela* has weaknesses because it only ties these two *negri* in a special brotherhood-sisterhood relationship, even though this brotherhood-sisterhood relationship excludes others. These are not weaknesses of the *pela*, since it only describes a special relationship between these two *negri*".

Moreover, interviewees in both *negri* could find no weaknesses of *pela* since they understand it as something that is very sacred. Mrs. Maitimu noted that *pela* has no weaknesses because it is a sacred thing. When these two *negri* tend to break this *pela*, trouble is sure to happen. "For example, when a man and a woman of these *negri* fall in love with one another; I am not able to see any weaknesses in the *pela* itself. However, maybe a weakness is our omission to tell young people of this *pela*, so they forget it. It happened during the conflict. Some of the younger generation in *negri* Batu Merah said, ‘Let’s forget the *pela*.’"

Answering the question of how long the participants of this *pela* have the strength to keep it alive, almost all interviewees have the same opinion. G. Rinsampessy said, "Our ancestors have built this *pela*, so we have to maintain it. This *pela* teaches us about how to respect others. Respecting others is also a Christian point. Christians believe in God, so do Muslims." Interestingly, G. Rinsampessy added one advantage as a motivation to keep *pela* alive. He said, "We will earn a large income if visitors come to see our local culture. If this local culture is not maintained by its habitants, I am sure they will lose this opportunity.” Another interviewee, Richard Rinsampessy said,

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232 A discussion with four students at IAIN on March 15th, 2007.
234 An interview with Haji A. Mamang on December 12th, 2006.
235 An interview with Mrs. Maitimu-Simauw on December 2nd, 2006.
People from negri Passo and those of negri Batu Merah must not neglect the three covenants. It was our ancestors’ covenant, so we must keep it alive through generations. Brotherhood-sisterhood is an important point in almost all pela relations which is well known in all parts of Central Moluccas. However, we have to recognize the fact that people who are not in a pela relation are considered to be different from people who are in a pela relation.

In order to maintain a pela, Ustad Salim\textsuperscript{237} shared his viewpoint that the Moluccans must keep symbols of their local cultures alive. "They will lose their culture if they cannot keep them alive. I cannot imagine what will happen if we lose our adat," he said.

On behalf of the new generation, Saleh Kiat said, "We, the young generation from negri Batu Merah, are very enthusiastic to maintain this pela."\textsuperscript{238} Karel Simauw, an interviewee from negri Passo said, "This pela is in our blood. Thus, even though there are some unexpected accidents, we cannot neglect our pela."\textsuperscript{239} Another interviewee in negri Passo, Richard Rinsampessy, added, "We have to maintain the wishes of our ancestors."\textsuperscript{240} Interestingly, Mrs. Maitimu said, “This pela has helped us to overcome the conflict, so we cannot abandon it. It is our heritage.”\textsuperscript{241} Mrs. Apityley, an outsider who has lived in Passo for 20 years, said, "The pela had significant power in creating reconciliation during the conflict. Because of the pela, people from negri Batu Merah and those of negri Passo were able to save each other."\textsuperscript{242}

Claiming their ancestry as the core motivation to maintain the pela, caused almost all interviewees from these two negri, especially elders, to see no possibility of reforming the pela. In an interview with G. Rinsampeyy, he said, "We must keep this pela as it is. We must not break it.” Ustad Salim\textsuperscript{243} explained that they had tried to reform this pela but they could not. He said, "It seems that we have to keep it alive according to its local form, but maybe one day it will be reformed due to a new situation.” According to Mr. Jhon Maitimu, \textsuperscript{244} “I am not sure if this pela would still be maintained by people from negri Passo and those of negri Batu Merah if it were formulated in a new way.” Richard Rinsampessy added, "We have to keep what has been done by our ancestors. This must be maintained through generations, otherwise we will lose it."\textsuperscript{245}

A different point of view comes from some younger people in the universities. In a discussion with some Muslim students from IAIN\textsuperscript{246}, these students were critical of the pela as well as the religious relations in the Moluccas.

Ismail, a student from IAIN, said,

\textsuperscript{237} An interview with Haji Ustad Salim on January 31\textsuperscript{st}, 2007.
\textsuperscript{238} An interview with M. S. Kiat, on December 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2006.
\textsuperscript{239} An interview with R. K. Simauw on January 12\textsuperscript{th}, 2007.
\textsuperscript{240} An interview with R. Rinsampeyy on December 7\textsuperscript{th}, 2006.
\textsuperscript{241} An interview with Mrs. Maitimu Simauw on December 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2006.
\textsuperscript{242} An interview with Mrs. H. Apityley on March 6\textsuperscript{th}, 2009.
\textsuperscript{243} An interview with Haji Ustad Salim on February 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2007.
\textsuperscript{244} An interview with J. Maitimu on January 20\textsuperscript{th}, 2007.
\textsuperscript{245} An interview with R. Rinsampeyy on December 7\textsuperscript{th}, 2007.
\textsuperscript{246} A discussion with four students, namely Nia, Asgar, Ismail, and Memet at IAIN on March 15\textsuperscript{th}, 2007.
We have to be aware that we, Muslim Moluccans and Christian Moluccans, can live together because of our pela-gandong. Those are principles of life for the Moluccans. To be precise, pela-gandong are our cosmology. Sadly, during the conflict, Muslims and Christians in the Moluccas appeared to be two forces which faced one another. Learning from that, we have to realise that many of us do not understand what pela-gandong are. This allowed a rift to take place between Muslims and Christians. Therefore, when we try to revive these pela-gandong after the conflict, we must take note that our ancestors believed that pela-gandong which was based on blood meant that we are brother and sister to one another. Our differences are only in religion: we are Muslims and they are Christians.247

In answer to the question: can religion influence local culture so the Moluccans can accept outsiders, Hasbollah Toisutta answered,

In the Southeast of the Moluccas, religions grow together with local culture. Religions offer a positive contribution to social life. It is different from religious life in Ambon. Therefore, in order to be a transforming force, religion must be transformed first. In other words, transforming our theologies is the first step in religious life. Moreover, to see outsiders positively in our social lives, we have to create new cultures which can enable us to live in this plural context. It means that pela-gandong must be transformed, so that its frame of reference, which only consists of two or three villages, can be extended, to create the opportunity to live in the spirit of multi-cultural society. Thus, we do not only think about religious relationships but we also think about the relationship between ethnic groups, which tends to be a problem in our society.248

In an interview with Abidin Waccano,249 he commented on some important points related to the Moluccan local culture such as the pela. He said,

Pela, gandong and other Moluccan local culture can be developed to build religious relationships in the Moluccas. We will observe some facts during the conflict. The processes of reconciliation were more motivated by cultural approaches than religious approaches. Even though this point must be evaluated, people could see this was true. At the worst point of the conflicts, there was still communication between villages who were in pela relation. For example, negri Passo and negri Batu Merah. Another example is the village Kamariang and its pela on Ceram island. People from these villages helped others to travel safely, even through dangerous areas. Thus, even though the pela ties only two or three villages, it can be a great motivation or a great stimulus to come to a reconciliation.

A student from IAIN, Ismail250 noticed, "Because of the pela-gandong, Moluccan Muslims and Moluccan Christians who are in the pela-gandong relationship did not partake in cruel actions, even though they were involved in fighting with others during the conflict. When they met, they held each other and they cried, asking why this

247 A discussion with four students, on March 15th, 2007.
249 An interview with A. Waccano on February 16th, 2007.
250 A discussion with four IAIN students on March 15th, 2007.
conflict happened.” Mr. John Maitimu\textsuperscript{251} noticed the same fact. He said that indigenous people from negri Batu Merah were very sad, asking themselves, ”Why is this happening to us? We have lived side by side for years without any problems. We had never asked about religions. Why we must ask and talk about religion now?”

b. How the pela forms the life of its communities
To describe how the pela forms the life of its communities, the focus moves to the socio-economic life of the participants.

Because of this pela responsibility, people from negri Batu Merah and those of negri Passo have a special relationship in running their daily lives. They see each other as brothers and sisters, even though they have no blood relation. Therefore, when they meet, they are obliged to call each other kaka pe or ade pe. People can recognize this special relation in these terms used by these two negri or villages. Almost all interviewees from negri Batu Merah and negri Passo said that, by hearing these two greetings: kaka pe and ade pe, one is reminded about his or her relation as brother and sister. One is reminded about who he or she is, and who the other is.\textsuperscript{252}

Their first obligation is to visit each other. This is one manifestation of living according to pela. According to an interview with Edo Tomaluweng\textsuperscript{253}, this obligation had rarely been fulfilled in a decade before the conflict of 1999-2004. He said, ”I did not see people from negri Passo visit negri Batu Merah and vice versa, especially during religious special days such as Christmas Eve or Idhul Fitri. However, it seems that after the conflict people from negri Passo and those of negri Batu Merah are trying to reinforce this pela."

Another interviewee, John Maitimu\textsuperscript{254}, also noticed the same point. He observed, ”In the period of raja Nurlete and raja Simauw, the relationship between negri Passo and negri Batu Merah was that of brothers and sisters. Almost every day we ate in Nurlete’s house when we went to Ambon city. This was also the situation when people from negri Batu Merah visited negri Passo. In that time, if people from negri Passo needed something, they asked people from negri Batu Merah, and vice versa.” Edo Tomaluweng added,

\begin{quote}
It is so, that when we pass a house in negri Batu Merah, we can come in and ask for food. If they have any, they will offer what we want. In fact, in a house in negri Batu Merah, we act as if we are at home. This behaviour in our relationship tended to be forgotten in the decade before the conflict. I do not know what the reason was but I am happy, because after the conflict, people of negri Passo and people from negri Batu Merah again work to keep this pela alive.
\end{quote}

Ustad Salim mentioned two instances indicating that people from negri Passo and negri Batu Merah were about to forget their pela. First, they rarely visited each other. Secondly, in many adat ceremonies in negri Passo, people from negri Batu Merah

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{251} An interview with J. Maitimu on January 18th, 2007.
\textsuperscript{252} Interviews with Mrs Maitimu-Simauw on December 2nd, 2006; Y. Twatanasy on January 15th, 2007; E. Tomaluweng on June 6th, 2007; Haji A. Mamang on December 12th, 2006; Haji M. Tjiat on December 4th, 2006; S. Kiat on November 4th, 2006; Mr. J. Maitimu on January 20th, 2007.
\textsuperscript{253} An interview with E. Tomaluweng on June 6th, 2007.
\textsuperscript{254} An interview with Mr. J. Maitimu on January 20th, 2007.
\end{footnotesize}
were not informed and so not invited to take part. He added, “We hope that this will not happen again, now or in the future.”

Their second obligation is taking care of each other. Ustad Salim explained,

Because of this *pela* relation, people from *negri* Batu Merah are under the obligation to offer help to people from *negri* Passo and vice versa. For example, when a person or people from *negri* Passo have a problem or are fighting other people in or around the city, people from Batu Merah have to protect their brothers or sisters facing this problem. They do not think about which person is in the wrong. In this situation, the principle that we must uphold, is to protect our brothers or sisters. This is our ancestors’ wish, so we have to maintain it.255

This responsibility was upheld during the conflict. “At the worst point, people from *negri* Batu Merah saved Berty Sarimanela, a man from Passo, who could not go back to Passo” said Mus Pesurnay.256 This fact was confirmed by Saleh Kiat.

Edo Tomaluweng described another instance. When a number of people from *negri* Passo passed *negri* Batu Merah in the beginning of the conflict, outsiders in Batu Merah held them back and wanted to fight them. Indigenous people of *negri* Batu Merah came and stopped the outsiders from being cruel to the people from *negri* Passo. Indigenous people said, ”They are people from *negri* Passo, our ade pe.” These facts were commented on by Abidin Waccano. He said, ”When the Moluccans acted according to their culture, they were civilized people, but when the Moluccans became religious people, they were uncivilized people.” Waccano offered another observation. He said,”During the conflict, if you passed *negri* Batu Merah, people from this *negri* would ask your religious conviction: if you were Christian, they would kill you; but if you were from *negri* Passo they would leave you alone, even though you were a Christian.”257

Moreover, because of the obligation to take care of each other, people from *negri* Passo and those of *negri* Batu Merah kept in contact with each other during the conflict. Mrs. Maitimu258 informed me that in the height of the trouble, people from *negri* Batu Merah always informed people from *negri* Passo not to pass ‘Galunggung’259, a part of *negri* Batu Merah, if they wanted to go to Ambon city. This kind of information was very useful for all Christians who live along Ambon bay. She added, We, people from *negri* Passo, would always spread out this kind of information to all Christian villages. You can imagine what would have happened if we had not known the dangers and passed ‘Galunggung’: we would have been killed.” Even though the people from *negri* Passo are the *pela* of people from *negri* Batu Merah, they could not pass *negri* Batu Merah because people who live in *Galunggung* are not indigenous of *negri* Batu Merah. On this fact, almost all interviewees in *negri* Batu Merah agreed. ”There are so many outsiders in *negri* Batu Merah, that we do not have the power to control them, they would even kill *raja negri* Batu Merah if he were to

256 An interview with M. Pesurnay on November 28th, 2006.
257 An interview with A. Waccano on February 26th, 2007.
258 An interview with Mrs. Maitimu-Simauw on December 2nd, 2006.
259 People who live and stay at Galunggung have come from outside the Moluccas. They come from Southeast Sulawesi and Java.
he ask them to stop being violent”, said Haji Mamang. The same point was made by Mr. John Maitimu and Ustad Salim.

Mrs. Simauw-Maitimu also understands this pela as a means of mediation during the conflict. "Whatever information we received, we would confirm with the people of negri Batu Merah, and vice versa. Through this kind of communication, we prevented ourselves from being victims of provocation”, said Mrs Maitimu.

The third duty is that they have to share life and help each other. Haji Tjiat shared one of his own experiences concerning the pela. He said, "When I was young, some of my friends and I went into the forest of negri Passo to find fruit. I climbed a tree. Unfortunatelly, I fell and prickles stuck into my buttocks. My friends carried me to negri Passo and we entered a house. An old woman came out and said, 'oh, my kaka pe, what is happened to you?’. She took off my clothes and helped me. Honestly, in that moment, I was not shy because she was like my own mother.”

The obligation to share life and to help each other was still performed by people from negri Batu Merah and people from negri Passo during the conflict. Mrs. Maitimu said, "In the height of the conflict, people from negri Passo still helped people from negri Batu Merah to build a Mosque. People from negri Passo provided stone and sand, materials needed to build the Mosque. However, people from negri Passo could not directly bring these materials into negri Batu Merah. We made the transfer in lampu 5 (place of 5 lamps). A driver from negri Batu Merah would wait in lampu 5 to take over the truck containing stone and sand driven by a person from negri Passo.”

Another manifestation of sharing life and helping each other is that people from both negri Passo and of negri Batu Merah must take part in the ceremony when a raja of either negri is to be sworn in. For example, in the last ceremony when Haji Awath Ternate was to be inaugurated as the raja of negri Batu Merah in August 2006, almost all the people of negri Passo attended the ceremony. It was also been described by raja Ternate. He said:

Before the conflict, this pela relation tended to be forgotten, but since the conflict, both people from negri Batu Merah and people from negri Passo are trying to maintain their pela relation. I noticed this tendency in the ceremony when I was sworn in as the raja of negri Batu Merah. People from negri Passo and people from Ema came. In my point of view, their presence was an indication of their determination to keep this pela alive. I believe that they would not come if they did not realize the important values that exist in this relationship. I believe also that they were aware that this pela is very important in building a relationship of compassion. If they were not aware, they would not have come.

"It is not only helping each other materially, but we have also to advise one another in overcoming problems we face," according to Ustad Salim. Helping each other by

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261 An area between Tantui village (most residents are Christian) and negri Batu Merah (most residents are Muslim).
262 In the last decade, Ema and Batu Merah found that they have a blood pela relation. However, it is not clear yet.
263 An interview with Haji A. Ternate on December 1st, 2006.
264 An interview with Haji Ustad Salim on June 18th, 2007.
offering advice was also observed during my fieldwork. The election process of raja negri Passo took a long time due to different points of view on criteria to be fulfilled by a candidate. G. Rinsampessy\textsuperscript{265} said, "It was not easy to talk about the criteria. Some people only wanted to have an indigenous raja, while others were open to candidates of mixed parentage." I witnessed a visit on 18 June 2007, when some elders from negri Passo visited raja negri Batu Merah to discuss this problem. Concerning this, Ustad Salim said, "People of negri Passo need advice from people of negri Batu Merah, their kaka pe; vice versa when negri Batu Merah has a problem."

Finally, an interesting factor in this pela is that the people must not intermarry. Of the three features of the pela, this involves the most social pressure within each negri. The covenant made by their ancestors does not allow a marriage between people of these two negri. Edo Tomaluweng said, "For me, even though I may fall in love with one of the girls from negri Batu Merah, I honestly will try to forget my feeling because of that covenant. It was the wish of our ancestors, so we must obey. We do not want to break it. However," he added, "nowadays, some young people from Passo tended to forget this aspect of the covenant. They fell in love with girls from negri Batu Merah. Sadly, they did not want to break their relationship until they were put under pressure from the elders of the negri." Ustad Salim said, "Allhamdulilah, as long as there is no marriage between people from these two negri."\textsuperscript{266}

c. Characteristics of religious life formed by the pela

It is rather difficult to talk about this aspect. However, by paying attention to what the interviewees said, that difficulty can be overcome. In answering questions "does the pela influence religious life of its community? If so, in what aspect does it?" interviewees in negri Batu Merah and those of negri Passo mentioned at least three aspects of religious life which are formed by their pela relation. Those aspects are:

1. Cooperation to build a Church or Mosque
2. Visiting each other in religious special days
3. Tolerance and acceptance of religious differences

The first aspect, and a very important one, which is mentioned by almost all interviewees in both negri, is the cooperation to build a Church and a Mosque. Ustad Salim said,

When people from negri Passo want to build a church, it is not only their task to do that work. People from negri Batu Merah have the obligation to take part in the process of building the church. People from negri Batu Merah will be very disappointed if people from negri Passo do not inform people from negri Batu Merah about the building plans and vice versa when people from Batu Merah want to build a Mosque.\textsuperscript{267}

In addition, some interviewees in negri Passo and negri Batu Merah noticed that because of the pela, in building a church and a Mosque, a church in negri Passo has a Mosque construction. The same thing was happened to a Mosque in negri Batu Merah.

\textsuperscript{265} An interview with G. Rinsampessy on December 6th, 2006.
\textsuperscript{266} An interview with Haji Ustad Salim on January 31st, 2007.
\textsuperscript{267} An interview with Haji Ustad Salim on January 31st, 2007.
Mus Pesurnay informed me that the church in negri Passo built in 1904 has a mosque construction on the top. It is a very unique church. Ustad Salim explained,

The four pillars which were called ‘tiang Ka‘bah (Ka’ba’s Pillars)’ in the old Mosque in negri Batu Merah were not of Muslim construction. It was a Christian construction. When we renovated the Mosque and wanted to change those pillars, we asked people from Hative and negri Passo to come. Hearing that people from negri Batu Merah want to change those pillars, people from Hative were angry. They said that it was done by their ancestors, so those pillars must still remain in the Mosque. People from negri Batu Merah negotiated with people from Hative and those of negri Passo. Finally, they came to an agreement to change it because the pillars were too old. We covered those pillars with a black cloth. People from negri Passo and Hative see this as a sign of their agreement to change it.

Concerning the aspect of visiting each other during religious special days, it might be said that for a decade before the conflict, it was almost forgotten. It was described by Hasbullah Toisutta as follows:

Much local wisdom, (ancient beneficial customs) in religious life in the Moluccas have been changed since Indonesian government has taken over the responsibility of the religious life of Indonesian citizens. For example, Moluccan Muslims’ custom to take part in preparing Christmas Eve was forbidden by Fatwa Majelis Ulama. This did not help, for it created a bad relationship among religions.

Moreover,” he said, ”the point of view of the elite broke good religious relations of our society.”

This was also the opinion of an interviewee in Passo, Simauw:

Before the regulation of the Indonesian government that caused separation among us because of our religious differences, people from negri Batu Merah took part in the Christian ceremony such as Christmas Eve. People from negri Passo also took part in preparation of a Musabaqoh Tilawatil Qur’an (MTQ-Qur’an Reciting Contest) event. Those things do not exist anymore. However, recently, people from negri Passo took part in a Muslim ceremony in a Mosque in negri Batu Merah when raja Haji Awath was sworn in, in August 2006. Maybe it was against the regulation of Indonesian Religious Affairs, but we had to do it because people from negri Batu Merah are our kaka pe.

Because of that example, Mrs. Ellen Wattimury noted that the pela has significant power in shaping religious lives of its participants. Good relations between people from Batu Merah and those of negri Passo during the conflict was also an indication.

268 An interview with M. Pesurnay on November 28th, 2006.
270 An annual Quran Reciting Contest.
The presence of people from *negri* Passo attending a Muslim religious service in the Mosque when Haji Awath was sworn in, was also noticed by Jan Twatanasy and his wife. They added, “In celebrating the century’s anniversary of the church in *negri* Passo in 2004, people from *negri* Batu Merah also took part in the Christian religious service in the church.” Mrs. Twatanasy said, “We are not concerned about our different faiths. In our opinion, it was only by the power of God that people from *negri* Batu Merah were willing to help people from *negri* Passo. At that time, people of *negri* Batu Merah were Muslims and those of *negri* Passo were Christians, but they did not think about the different faiths they have.” Interestingly, Mr. Twatanasy added a new important point. He said, “We believe that the basic points of this *pela* relation were compassion and love. Without compassion, people from *negri* Batu Merah could not help people from *negri* Passo.” Another interviewee stressed that the *pela* has helped Muslim in *negri* Batu Merah and Christian in *negri* Passo not to live in suspicion of each other. They respect the different faiths they have.

Sharing his experience about the custom of visiting each other on a special religious day, Mr. John Maitimu said:

Years before the conflict, I rarely saw people from *negri* Passo visiting people from *negri* Batu Merah during Idhul Fitri; as I did not see people from *negri* Batu Merah visiting people from *negri* Passo during Christmas Eve. Something had changed in our *pela* relation. In 1970s, we had a very closely tied relation; we visited *negri* Batu Merah in celebrating Idhul Fitri and they visited us on Christmas Eve. Remembering what we had experienced in the past, makes me very happy. It was a wonderfull time. Hopefully the conflict will have a positive effect if people from *negri* Passo and those of *negri* Batu Merah renew their *pela*. I could see this tendency in some efforts being done by Ibu Raja. She always contacted Matu Merah during the conflict. Together with some elders from *negri* Passo, she also visited *negri* Batu Merah in the last Idhul Fitri. I hope this will also be done by our young generations. They must understand and experience the true meaning of this *pela*.

It seems that the *pela* forms the religious life of both people from *negri* Batu Merah and those of *negri* Passo in teaching them to respect each other, even to take care of each other. Ms. Etha Sarimanella said, “Because of the *pela*, we support the religious life of each other.” However, we cannot ignore the fact, that during the conflict, there was also a tendency to use religion as a provocative issue to confront people from *negri* Passo with those of *negri* Batu Merah. Ustad Salim informed me that:

During the conflict, people from *negri* Batu Merah had contacted people from Passo not to take part in the conflict, but neither *negri* Batu Merah nor *negri* Passo could do anything since there are a lot of outsiders in those two *negri*. Consequently, at that time, the expression was used: “you were there as Christians and we were here as Muslims”. More specifically, during the conflict, some people tried to use religions as a point of provocation between people from *negri* Passo and *negri* Batu Merah. In that

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situation, negri Passo and negri Batu Merah inhabitants still took care of each other, but not of the Muslims and Christians who were outside these two negri.277

Explaining what people from negri Passo did during the conflict, Mrs. Maitimu278 noted that the young people from negri Passo were prepared to help other villages such as Galala and Poka. The same information was also given by Jambormias, a pastor of the Passo congregation.279 In answering the question "did negri Passo help other Muslims villages during the conflict?" Jambormias said, "At that time, negri Passo did not help other Muslim villages because it was a religious war. Negri Passo only helped Galala and Negri Lama." In answer to the same question, Mrs. Maitimu stated her view, “At that time, tempers were running high, so people from negri Passo did not help another Muslim village.” The same religious sentiment was also mentioned by Twatanasy.280 Twatanasy said, "We could not calm down when we talked about religion. Moluccan Muslims and Moluccan Christians did not want to argue, but outsiders had placed us in that difficult position.”

Related to the fact that religion had become a fruitful provocative issue created by such a conflict, Waccano281 noted some important factors that caused this:
- the past history, such as the Crusades on one side, and terrorist actions on another side.
- religious relations in Indonesia are more political than religious.
- there is no religious dialogue.
- religions have lost their ethic-prophetic voices.

He explained further that religious people, especially Christians and Muslims, are still reminded of past events. Muslims still remember the Crusades, while Christians identify Islam with terrorism. Regretfully, in Indonesia, religion has always been used as an issue to accomplish a political purpose. For example, during government elections, whether in Jakarta or in the Moluccas, candidates talked about religion.

Concerning religious life during the conflict, Toisutta282 said, "In some discussions I shared my thought that culture creates more integration, while religion creates more conflict. This is a tendency in our religious lives since our religious faiths are more dogmatic. Our theologies tend to divide people.” Therefore,” he continued to say, "we need to reform our theologies in our religious life.”

Furthermore, commenting on religious relations in Indonesia, Waccano283 said,

Human relations fail because of Ukhwah Islamiah. Cultural solidarity is broken by religious solidarity. In fact, there is a tension between culture and religion in the Moluccas. This is a great challenge for the Moluccans. We have to learn from the Javanese. In Java, Islam was built in Javanese form, so Javanese’s point of view dominates Islam Middle East. The contrary is true in the Moluccas. In the Moluccas, Middle East Islam and European Christianity dominate local culture. In the Moluccas,

278 An interview with Mrs. Maitimu-Simauw on December 2nd, 2006.
281 An interview with A. Waccano on February 16th, 2007.
283 An interview with A. Waccano on February 26th, 2007.
there is no relation between religion and culture; becoming Christian means becoming European and becoming Muslim means becoming Arabian. Theologically, this creates opposition.

Talking about religious relations in the Moluccas, Asgar, a student from IAIN, shared his point. According to him, "Religious leaders are not able to create good relations among religious people in the Moluccas. On the contrary, they tend to create a wall between religions.” Nia, another IAIN student, also shared her view that Muslims-Christians relation in the Moluccas is not as good as before the conflict due to bad experiences they had. “It is difficult to make a good improvement in religious relation if religious heads are not able to create a peaceful climate in their services. We cannot imagine a good relation among religions when our religions are mainly orientated to get more members or to convert people.”

Memet, also a student from IAIN, shared this opinion, "Besides the fact that religious leaders do not act accordingly, religions always become political issue.” The same is pointed out by Ismail. He stated:

Cultural as well as religious relations always become an issue in a political life. The Moluccans will ask about the background and religion of a candidate in political events such as local government elections or political party member elections. Consequently, the Moluccans do not vote for a qualified person, but will consider religion as well. For instance: the Moluccans will ask “who is he? He is Memet. Oh, he is a Muslim. His family name? It is Marasabessy. Oh, he comes from Ambon.”

In order to understand how Christians in ngr intake Batu Merah see Muslims after the conflict, it is important to know their views on the pela. Therefore I also interviewed some Christians who were victims of that conflict. Rudy said, “Please do not talk about religion. Now we Christians and Muslims live side by side. Many of our neighbours are Muslims, but we are not afraid. Our Muslim neighbours do not know about the conflict. We do not want to talk about it anymore. When I was in Jakarta due to my health, many Muslims visited me in the hospital.” Tenes, another Christian in ngr intake Batu Merah offered his experience with his Muslim neighbors: “Everyday we make jokes with our Muslim neighbours. We are not afraid to live among Muslims. They do not know about the conflict.” This as also Frits’ experience. He said, "Every morning, I walk from Ahuru to Karang Panjang with some of my Muslim neighbours. We talk to each other, sometimes we even make jokes”. Another Christian, Etus agreed: "In Ahuru, we live side by side without thinking about the conflict.”

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284 A discussion with four students at IAIN on March 15th, 2007.
286 Ibidem.
287 Ibidem.
288 Ibidem.
289 They lost everything during the conflict because their houses had been burned in Ahuru in 1999. They also stayed as refugees in camps for about six years.
Asking about how they see the *pela* between *negri* Batu Merah and *negri* Passo, Rudy said, "We know about it but we cannot say anything about that *pela* because it is relation between indigenous people from *negri* Batu Merah and those of *negri* Passo. I have been living in Ahuru, a part of *negri* Batu Merah, for more than twenty years but I have no experience with the *pela." For this matter, Etus contributed, "I was born here, but I cannot say anything about that *pela*.”

As to the question: "what are the characteristics of religious understanding formed by the *pela*?" there are some interesting points.

Talking about religious faith, almost all interviewees in these two *negri* said that they have different religions, but they have to respect the different faiths amongst them. Saleh\textsuperscript{294} said, "We have to respect each other in our different faiths.” Ustad Salim had the same opinion. He said, "In my point of view, the different faith we have must not create distance among us. In Muslim faith there is an expression about God: 'Your Religion is for you; my religion is for me'. Therefore, it must not be that because we are of a different faith, we must fight each other.” Interestingly, Ustad Salim gave an example of an adaptation or a compromise within the Muslim faith which was influenced by this *pela* relation.

Once, when raja Nurlete died, people from *negri* Passo came with their church music and took part in the funeral service. According to Islam’s law it was prohibited for non Muslims to do such a thing in a Muslim’s ceremony. We knew that law but we allowed people from *negri* Passo to present their church music at the funeral service because they are our *ade pe*. In other words, there was an exception due to this *pela* relationship. In doing this, we faced many critical comments from other Muslims. Seeing this practice, they said “*astagafirullah*”. We cannot find this practice nowadays. It was something that happened in the past.

He added,

> In my point of view, our religions teach us to respect each other. We are sharing daily life activities. We join in social activities for devotions, Christians go to Church for Sunday Service and Muslims go to the Mosque for their Friday Prayer. Thus, religion divides us, but we have to live together socially.\textsuperscript{295}

Concerning the presentation of church music in funeral service of Nurlete, Simauw\textsuperscript{296} explained, "I do not know for sure, but maybe people from *negri* Passo could present their church music at the burial of *raja* Nurlete since that kind of music was accepted widely not only as church music, but also as local music that can attract tourist’s attention.” He added, "In the *pela* relation we appreciate different faiths we have: You live according to your faith, so do I.”

In understanding the different faiths they have, Mozes\textsuperscript{297} said,

\textsuperscript{294} An interview with S. Kiat on December 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2006.
\textsuperscript{295} An interview with Haji Ustad Salim on January 31\textsuperscript{st}, 2007.
\textsuperscript{296} An interview with K. Simauw on March 9\textsuperscript{th}, 2007.
\textsuperscript{297} An interview with J. Mozes on December 8\textsuperscript{th}, 2006.
We have different faiths, but we respect each other. The different faiths do not change our brotherhood-sisterhood relation formed by this *pela*. However, as Christians, our faith encourages us to witness Jesus Christ to other believers. Therefore, when we demonstrated this *pela* relationship at the inauguration of *raja* Awath in 2006, people from *negri* Passo said, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ who we believe in, we accept people from *negri* Batu Merah as our *kaka pe*.’

Interestingly, talking about religious differences in the life of people from *negri* Passo and those of *negri* Batu Merah, some interviewees explained that the different faiths help them to understand and to experience their own religions deeply.

In answering the question: “Do the Moluccans accept the *pela* as part of their Christian, Muslim or common existence?” there are several points to consider. Haji Tjiat\(^{298}\) said, ”This *pela* relation strongly teaches us to understand our religions. Even though we have different faiths, we are taught not to fight each other. Thus, for me, this *pela* has strong religious values due to its principle which holds brotherhood relationships without asking about the different religions we have. I make this point because religion does not teach cruelty to people.” Haji Mamang\(^{299}\) mentioned additional important religious values which exist in this *pela* relation. He stated, “This *pela* relationship helps us to understand our different religious faiths. We are religious people, so we may not kill each other. During the conflict, we had no power to ask people who stay in *negri* Batu Merah not to do such cruel things. We, indigenous people from Batu *negri* Merah, did not want to fight; we saved a Chinese family, while outsiders wanted to attack and to steal from them. There are so many outsiders in *negri* Batu Merah. We could not stop them.”

Sharing his point, Ustad Salim\(^{300}\) noticed, ”In the Islam, one of the religious teachings is that one must not marry his/her her brother or sister. It is also a component of the oath of our *pela*. Thus, in some aspects of this *pela* we are really experiencing our religious faiths”. In addition, he said, ”Even though the *pela* is a cultural way of life it teaches some of the same values which existed in the Islam. Islam teaches about the *Ukhuwah*\(^{301}\) relation. *Ukhuwah Insania* and *Ukhuwah Bashariyah*\(^{302}\) are two other *Ukhuwah* which are also taught in Islam.”

From a Christian point of view, G. Rinsampessy\(^{303}\) shared his point that Christian faith teaches about belief in God as does the Muslims faith. “This makes us respect each other. It seems to me that God let the conflict happen in the Moluccas, so that we would renew our lives.” Another interviewee in *negri* Passo said:

This *pela* relation has some positive values to build better religious relationships. A *pela* relation is a manner of coming to reconciliation or peace between religious people who fight each other. For example, because of this *pela* relation, Muslims and Christians can help each other to build a Church or a Mosque, even to participate in a

\(^{298}\) An interview with Haji M. Tjiat on December 4\(^{th}\), 2006.
\(^{299}\) An interview with Haji A. Mamang on December 12\(^{th}\), 2006.
\(^{300}\) An interview with Haji Ustad Salim on June 18\(^{th}\), 2007.
\(^{301}\) In Islam, *hukumah* literally means rule or law.
\(^{302}\) *Hukumah Insyaniah* and *hukumah Basyariyah* are rules about how human beings must behave in their lives.
\(^{303}\) An interview with G. Rinsampessy on December 6\(^{th}\), 2006.
religious event such as PGI Assembly in 1984 in Ambon. Moluccan Muslims took part in the opening and closing ceremonies. Thus, those facts teach us that in practising our religious faiths, we can help each other. However, in practising our faiths, we may not press others. I have an experience concerning this. In the 1990s, at a meeting when we prepared the inauguration of raja Ali, I asked if it were possible for people from negri Passo as ade pe of negri Batu Merah to take part in prayer for the raja, so that people from negri Passo did not only support materialistically, but also they supported spiritually. In that meeting, negri Batu Merah accepted this idea, so coming back to Passo, we asked our Pastor to pray in that inauguration. Unfortunately, he rejected it and suggested to us to ask another pastor. We contacted Pastor Mrs. Husmany, but she also rejected it giving the reason that Batu Merah was not the congregation she served. We could not do it when the day came. An old man from negri Batu Merah came to me and said, "Ade pe, we could not do what we had agreed yesterday; please understand it."

Commenting on this matter, he continued, "Many outsiders in negri Batu Merah have had a bad impact on the life of people from negri Batu Merah."

Almost all interviewees in negri Passo mentioned that some Christian values existed in this pela relation. Jambormias explained, "Pela is a way to keep togetherness (kebersamaan) among people, especially between negri Passo and negri Batu Merah. Pela helps these two negri to continue a life of togetherness even during differences. Two other important things are brotherhood-sisterhood relationship (persaudaraan) and koinonia (persekutuan)." Simauw said, "Because of the pela, we do not ask about different faiths we have. We just live as bothers and sisters. It is true that we differ in living our religions, but as Christians we are taught to love all mankind. However, we must be aware that when we have no strength to face other cultures, it is easy to lose our pela relation."

Furthermore, answering the question: "how does a Christian understand the pela," Pesurnay replied, "The adat is not a religion to us but we appreciate what our ancestors did." Based on his point, Pesurnay continued by stressing the fact, "The pela has no direct impact on religious faiths. When we want to talk about something related to religious faith, we have to come to a compromise. Therefore, maybe there was a compromise formed before people from negri Passo could present their church music at funeral time of raja Nurlete." Interestingly, Simauw stressed that the people from negri Passo, believe that God, in Jesus Christ, had acted through our ancestors in forming this pela relation.

IV. The GPM’s position as to the pela

In chapter II when I described how the GPM searched for religious reconciliation, we saw that the church had spoken about the pela as a frame of reference in building religious life in the Moluccas. However, it is not clear how the GPM understands the

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304 An interview with J. Mozes on December 8th, 2006.
pela and local cultures as a whole in doing its missionwork in the Moluccas. Therefore, in order to figure out how the GPM sees local culture including the pela, I have interviewed some of the church leaders.

As to this matter, almost all interviewees have same perspective in understanding local cultures, especially the pela. According to Mrs. Margaretha Hendriks-Ririmasse,

The GPM appreciates the local culture especially its local wisdom. The existence of the Magister Program at the Faculty of Theology indicates how GPM sees local culture. Maybe, it is now on academic level only, but it is important to help our congregations to appreciate their local wisdom. Indeed, in our congregations, they appreciate our local wisdoms and they hold them, but they do it in an unobtrusive way. They feel embarrassed because during activities of the mission of church in the Moluccas, missionaries had taught Christians that local cultures are paganism. Moreover, the GPM tries to develop local wisdom as a basis for developing theology because in local culture we recognize how Moluccans develop theology. According to me, God works through local culture. Moluccans had known about the Divine, the Almighty. Maybe for them, the name of the Divine was upu lanite or whatever. Awareness about the Divine had made Moluccans recognize that brotherhood-sisterhood is very important in living together. Precisely, the Divine works in the life of Moluccans to develop the notion of brotherhood-sistrhod relationship. For Christians, the same Divinity is Jesus Christ.  

Another interviewee, John Ruhulessin, the Chairman of the Board of GPM’s Synode, said:

First, it is a must for the church to transform its understanding about local culture. Until now, there have been many different points of view in seeing local culture. Some people see the pela as paganism because it comes from ones ancestors. Other people, including me, understand that the pela must be the context for Moluccans to develop their theology in the Moluccas. I see the pela as a common ground morality through which people will be helped to live together. The pela must be a principle of ethics in the Moluccas. In order to help to develop the pela, the church needs a new method in developing theology. Therefore, the church must take a clear position and perspective about the pela. Unfortunately, we have no special theological study of the pela yet. Second, principally, local cultures have values. For the GPM, Christ transforms culture. The GPM takes an open view on local culture. Local cultures always develop. A culture is not static. The participants of a pela are also in the process of becoming.  

Victor Untailawan, the general Secretary of the Board of the GPM Synod, shared his opinions:

We have to categorize local wisdom into three types. First, local wisdosms which support the Gospel. GPM must develop those types in doing its mission work in the Moluccas. Second, local wisdoms which have spiritual value but are against the Gospel. This kind must be transformed. For instance, believing in ancestors.

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According to me, believing in ancestors has power but it must be transformed. Moluccan Christians have received the Gospel for more than 450 years but it has not changed their points of view about ancestors yet. Third, local wisdom which is against Christian faith and cannot be transformed. The GPM must reject this type. For instance, healing by mystical practice.

There are some positive aspects in local cultures which can be accepted. In my opinion, *pela-gandong* has the same meaning as brotherhood-sisterhood relationship. The participants of a *pela-gandong* who live in a brotherhood relation must continually extend this relation. Now, the church accepts positive cultures as examples of God’s work in the Moluccas. Those positive cultures indicate that God has already worked in the life of Moluccans before they accept the Gospel. The fact that God has already worked in the Moluccas can be seen in those positive cultures which have the same values as Biblical messages.\(^\text{311}\)

Moreover, informing me about efforts of the GPM in empowering congregations to appreciate their local culture, Hendriks-Ririmasse explained:

In its effort to help congregations to appreciate their local culture, the theological faculty is involved in the effort of the GPM to help our congregations to see our local culture, especially our local wisdom, through the eye of Christian faith. For example, the *pela* is only between two or three villages. Other villages are outsiders, even enemies. According to me, the attitude of insiders versus outsiders very strongly exists in the life of Moluccans. Huliselan, a Moluccan anthropologist, describes this well in one of his articles. For Huliselan, in a village in the Moluccas, people from other villages are outsiders or enemies. Therefore, I think we must develop the *pela-gandong*, so that its values such as brotherhood-sisterhood relationship can be understood widely to reach all Moluccans, Indonesians, even all human beings in the world. Brotherhood-sisterhood is not only based on a contract; brotherhood-sisterhood is not only between two or three villages. Brotherhood-sisterhood must be a common value to all people. To reach this stage or to develop this local wisdom, education is a better way.

It is a fact, however, that our education tends not to appreciate our local culture. Education is an important way to inform new generations about all values of local wisdom. It is our major weakness that in schools, new generations are not being educated to know, to appreciate, and to live according to values that already exist in their lives; rather, they are educated to be alienated with their local values. We must understand life as brotherhood-sisterhood. Indeed, the ecumenical conception has high and strong values which enable us to see this world as a house in which all human beings live. We, all human beings live in a house and the same house, so we are brother-sister to one another. We talk of the Moluccas as a house, Indonesia as a house, this world as a house. Thus, this house must promote living in peace and trying to create sense of well being. As a Christian principle, we must talk about brotherhood widely. In the Christian perspective, its is ecumenical. We talk about the Moluccas, Indonesia and the world as a house. Therefore, this house must feel safe. For this, it is not necessary to use a Christian term. Use a common term.\(^\text{312}\)

\(^{311}\) An interview with Rev. V. Untailawan, March 7th, 2009.

V. Analyzing data

V.1. The method

In order to analyze the data collected during the fieldwork, it is very important to know how the analyzing proceeds. I prefer to use the Dialectic Method as a tool for the process of analyzing. A question arises “what kind of Dialectic Method is used?”

There are many definitions to describe what the dialectic method is. However, I depend on the point described by E.R. Leach. In his Introduction of the book *Dialectic in Practical Religion* Leach writes: “By ‘Dialectic’ we mean dialectic in the Hegelian sense, the notion that the progression of every argument is self-generating. Every thesis contains within itself the germs of its own contradiction and when this has become formulated as an antithesis; thesis and antithesis stand as rival proposition in a relationship of opposition. The opposition is then resolved by a synthesis which unites the two points of view but in turn generates its own antithesis.”

There are several reasons to choose this method. First, in the effort of the participants of the pela to live according to their pela’s obligations, there are many contradictory ideas in their points and their life as well. Because of contradicting ideas, sometimes one can find inconsistency in their points of view. Secondly, this method helps to see how the participants live in times of tension or dilemma and how they try to solve these dilemmas. Precisely, this method is useful to analyze the collected data since the relationship of the participants of the pela is full of dilemmas. Facing dilemmas, participants do not try to synthesize the two different and contradicted points, but they tend to take stand on one extreme position. Consequently, they cannot find a link between their cultural standpoint and their religious standpoint. Thirdly, by using the dialectic method, we will be helped to identify the principles held by these two negri, so they can create a good relationship between Christians in negri Passo and Muslims in negri Batu Merah.

V.2. The process of analysis

Before analyzing the data, we have to remember that the main question of fieldwork is “how does the pela exist in the life of the Moluccans as a way of reconciliation?”

Based on this main question, the focus of the fieldwork was to see how the pela works in reconciling different things existing in the life of people from negri Batu Merah and people from negri Passo. Therefore, there are two aspects which are considered in this process of analysis, namely:

1. Religious life
2. Social Cultural life

These also are the two factors which are most prone to become sources of conflict in the life of a society.

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V.2.1. Cultural points versus religious points in the religious life

During the conflict in the Moluccas, almost all people in Indonesia asked questions about the pela system which is widely understood as a valuable instrument that forms a special characteristic of the Moluccan Muslim and the Moluccan Christian. Because of the pela system, they can live side by side in harmony. Frankly, religious life formed by the pela relation is a newly developed idea. It is something new in their understanding of the pela relation since their ancestors did not talk about religious life as part of this pela relation. The three obligations \(^{314}\) are only related to their social life. Thus, if the pela is now also connected to religious life of the participants, one has to realize that the participants of this pela have extended those obligations widely. They have applied those obligations to their religious life.

Nevertheless, through the fieldwork, it appeared that participants of this pela relation live in a situation in which they struggle to form their life in order to live according to both their culture and their religious faith. It seems that sometimes they must experience a situation in which they must make a decision whether to live according to the principle of their culture, or to live according to their religious faiths. This matter becomes a truly difficult dilemma since their pela obligations are also applied in their religious life. Therefore, in order to understand how this pela forms religious life of its participants, how the dilemma exists in religious life of those participants, and how they solve those dilemmas, we have to analyze in the following.

a. Acceptance versus witness

Almost all interviewees in the two villages hesitated to speak about religious faith: “Please do not speak about religion. We have different religious faiths, but we are brothers/sisters to one another.”\(^{315}\) This attitude raises the question “why they do not want to speak about religion?” A possible answer is that they just experienced the conflict, a moment in which religion had become a main provocative issue, so they tended to avoid that issue now. Another answer is that for along time, Islam and especially Christianity did not appreciate Moluccan local culture positively due to the notion that a local culture such as pela is a pagan custom. Thus, they may have been afraid to talk about their pela in religious perspective. In a certain sense these points are understandable, but do not help the participants of this pela who are religious people to come to a deeper understanding of religion.

The participants of the pela stressed many times, that residents of the two villages have different religions but they are brothers-sisters to one another. According to their point of view, different religions are a fact that cannot be rejected nor ignored, so they have to respect the different religions they have. The questions now are, “in their pela relation, what is the meaning of respecting different religions? In what form does one show his/her respect to other religions?”

In order to answer those two questions, it is better to see how these participants acted. In the 1980s, when Nurlete, the raja of Batu Merah, was to be inaugurated,

\(^{314}\) a. They must not marry each other (tidak boleh saling baku kawin); b. They must not fight each other (tidak boleh saling baku musuh); c. They must help each other (Harus tolong menolong satu sama lain)

\(^{315}\) Interviews with S.Kiat; Haji M.Tjiat; Haji A. Mamang; R.K. Simauw; M. Pesurnay; J. Maitimu; Mrs. Maitimu-Simauw.
people from *negri* Passo wanted not only to attend the ceremony but also to participate actively by presenting a Christian prayer. An interviewee\(^{316}\) in Passo said, “We requested this opportunity because we wanted to take full part in prayer according to our faith. Thus, we did not only attend but we also supported the new *raja* with our Christian prayer.” In the end, this request could not be granted by their *kaka pe*, people from *negri* Batu Merah.

During the negotiations, people from *negri* Batu Merah had agreed but then at the occasion itself people from *negri* Passo were not allowed to pray. People from *negri* Batu Merah could only say, ”*Ade pe*, we did not realize what we had agreed to yesterday; please understand.” The manner in which the people from *negri* Batu Merah apologized to the people from *negri* Passo implied that it was difficult to come to that decision. Probably, before coming to this decision – not to allow people from *negri* Passo to pray - people from *negri* Batu Merah had had a big discussion amongst themselves. It seems that people from *negri* Batu Merah faced a problem related to that request, so they had to ask forgiveness from their *ade pe*, people from *negri* Passo. Facing this matter, people from *negri* Passo only said “Indigenous people from *negri* Batu Merah could not do anything because there are many outsiders in *negri* Batu Merah.”\(^{317}\)

In this case, people from these two *negri* tried to live according to their cultural responsibilities, namely, that they have to share life. At the same time, they realized that they must also live according to their religious faiths and obligations. People from *negri* Passo thought that they must pray on that occasion according to Christian prayer, while people from *negri* Batu Merah thought that in Islamic law it was impossible to allow a Christian to pray in an Islamic ceremony. Here, one sees the dilemma in the life of the participants of this *pela*.

The dilemma was, that by rejecting the request of people from *negri* Passo it could hurt them, while allowing them to pray meant that people from *negri* Batu Merah had broken Islamic law. This dilemma could have been avoided if people from Passo had known more about Islamic religion. They both only knew that they had different religious faith but they did not know what those religious differences were. Interestingly, in that situation, people from *negri* Batu Merah chose to uphold their religious convictions.

The participants solved this dilemma by trying to understand each other. People from *negri* Batu Merah said to people of *negri* Passo, ”*Ade pe, please understand (ade pe, mangarti jua)*.” People from *negri* Passo understood that it was not a cultural behavior or attitude of indigenous people from *negri* Batu Merah. In their point of view, people from *negri* Batu Merah had made that decision because they were influenced by outsiders who stay in *negri* Batu Merah. This point raises a critical question: “could indigenous people from *negri* Batu Merah allow outsiders to influence a decision? Could indigenous people from *negri* Batu Merah let themselves be put under pressure of the outsiders since that occasion was an *adat* ceremony?” It is difficult to justify the point made by people from *negri* Passo, when one reads how Moluccans as a whole see outsiders which will appear on the next part (V.2.2).

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316 J. Mozes, interviewed on December 8th, 2006.
317 *Ibidem.*
There are two possibilities as to the reasons why people from negri Batu Merah could not allow their ade pe to pray on that occasion. Firstly, it was something strange to the Islamic faith to allow non-Muslims to participate religiously in its ceremony. Secondly, in the local cultural system such as the pela relation, there is no clear statement as to whether Christians or Muslims can interchangeably pray in an adat and religious ceremonies. Thus, blaming outsiders was the only way not to blame indigenous people from negri Batu Merah. In other words, people from negri Passo avoided problems with their kaka pe.

Understanding each other is reflected in the form of acceptance of the different religious faith they have. Accepting different religion means they must not press others to accept what they want. Therefore, both participants must talk openly about their wishes. Mus Pesurnay said,

In my point of view, this pela relation is not directly connected to religion. Thus, when we want to do something which is related to religious points of view, we must come to negotiate. That is why, before people from negri Passo presented their church music in funeral time of raja Nurlette, both negri – Batu Merah and Passo - had negotiated.

Therefore, the starting point held by people from these two negri in building religious understanding is to accept the different religions they have. They accept the fact that they have different religions but they are brothers and sisters to one another because of the pela relation. They do not see the different religion as a problem in their pela relation. However, if accepting the different religions influences the participants of this pela not to talk about the religion, it is not helpful. People from negri Batu Merah will not understand what the Christian religion is and People from negri Passo will not understand what the Islam religion is. They only understand that they believe differently. Therefore, when someone talks about religion, they are divided into two blocks. By being aware of their religious differences, they will not touch sensitive points which can create problems in their religious relation. The two examples explained above show the negative impact of knowing nothing about other religions.

However, there is an important positive value in the thesis - acceptance of different religions. The positive value is that the participants of the pela have no feelings of superiority over others regarding religious life. They do not recognize the strength of their religion after seeing the weakness of other religions, but they strongly believe in their faith, while they also let others to live according to their religious faith. Thus, this thesis helps religious people to have an open attitude toward the plurality of religion.

Interestingly, some interviewees noticed the benefit of the existence of different religions in their life. In their points of view, it helps them to understand and to experience their own religion deeply.318 They find it a positive impact in the existence of other religions which force them to learn more about and to have deeper faith in their own. This argument opens the ability of religious people to see other religions positively and not negatively. They do not see other religions as rivals or a threat in their religious life, but accept it as a fruitful co-existence.

This religious attitude is a challenge because it requires self-examination in one’s own religious life. In the context of plurality of religion, each religion tries to find the positive impact of the existence of other religions in their environment. It requires genuine willingness to search deeply in one’s own religious faith.

The opposite idea, or an antithesis, is to proclaim one’s own religious faith to other religious people including the pela brothers and sisters. This antithesis stresses the desire to try to convert religious people who are in the pela relation. Indeed, the thesis implies a passive interaction with other religions, while the antithesis opens an active interaction and communication with other religions.

An example of the antithesis can be found in the attitude of some interviewees. An interviewee in Passo said, “It is a must in our belief to witness about Jesus whenever and wherever we are.” Principally, it is not a wrong thing to witness one’s faith to other religious people. However, by doing so among the pela participants with the intention of converting someone will disappoint other pela brothers and sisters. Why? We will discuss this later.

The first important point which occurs in this antithesis is that the participants of the pela are not afraid to present their own faith when they are among other religious people. This situation could be seen when, in August 2006, Haji Awath Ternate was sworn in as the raja of negri Batu Merah. On that occasion, people from these two negri demonstrated their pela pact. An interviewee from negri Passo said, “As a demonstration of how the pela pact was honoured, we, people from Passo said: ‘In the name of Jesus Christ in whom we believe, we accept people from Batu Merah as our kaka pe’.” This pact could be created by the people from these two negri because they did not see other religions as a threat. Implicitly, people from Passo had witnessed their faith and their interpretation of the pela relation within the frame of their Christian faith.

In doing so, people from negri Passo openly witnessed how strongly they believe in Jesus Christ. Interestingly, in their situation where plurality of religion is acceptable, they did not deny the importance of their religious faith. They were not afraid to say that Jesus is Lord and it is He in whom they believe. This is something that must be pointed out because sometimes Christians are afraid to talk about Jesus when they are in such a situation.

That moment shows a contradiction to what happened in the 1980s when Nurlette was to be sworn in. On that occasion, people from Passo were not allowed to pray, while they did it on a similar occasion in 2006. Those two occasions were the inauguration of a raja of negri Batu Merah. These changes raised questions. “Is there something changed in the life of the participants in allowing other brothers-sisters to take part fully on the second occasion, even in presenting their own faith? Did people from negri Batu Merah abandon their Islamic law?” It is not easy to answer these questions. However, there are some clues which can be found in the point of view of some interviewees.

Describing how the religious relationship of the participants of the pela was broken by Fatwah Majelis Ulama Indonesia, an interviewee in negri Passo said:

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320 Ibidem.
Before Fatwah Majelis Ulama Indonesia, which forbade religious people to attend other religious ceremonies, people from negri Passo could attend MTQ occasions and people from negri Batu Merah could also attend the Christmas Eve celebration. Because of that Fatwah, we could not do so for long time. However, recently, people from negri Passo attended a Muslim ceremony in a Mosque in negri Batu Merah in August 2006 when raja Awath was sworn in. Maybe this was against Indonesian regulations, but we had to do it because people of Batu Merah are our kaka pe.

This fact was also mentioned by some interviewees in negri Batu Merah. Another interviewee in negri Passo added that when people from negri Passo celebrated the century’s birthday of their church in 2004, people from negri Batu Merah also attended Christian religious services in the church.

Based on these facts, one can draw the conclusion that after the conflict, the participants of the pela are trying to act according to their cultural obligation of the past. They want to go back to the situation in which they can meet each other, even on a religious occasion. Even though they were aware that it is contrary to the regulation of Majelis Ulama Indonesia, they did not care. In addition, it seems that they are trying to build a positive relation after facing a difficult situation. In other words, the participants of the pela want to show that a good religious relation can be formed by their pela relation. Therefore, they were not afraid to act, even though it may against the religious dictations.

Furthermore, another important aspect of this antithesis is that it implies a living religious faith. Religious people who live in such a climate will experience their faiths as a living faith. It means that religious faith will not be considered as a thing which emerges only in a church or in a mosque but must be reflected in daily life of each religious person. Religious faith must form the attitude of its followers. To be precise, religious faith must be a way of life. This point is stressed in the perspective that all religions help human beings to create a good world. In this sense, one cannot be blamed for living according to his/her own faith.

After discussing the important ideas found in the antithesis, we have to come back to the question “why is converting other religious people in the pela relation not acceptable?" Conversion efforts within the pela are a contradiction to the theory of accepting different religions. Converting is not only an individual problem but it is also a social problem. This must be considered by the participants because in the circumstance of the pela, individual faith is always connected to his/her social life. Therefore, changing ones faith or converting people will become a social problem.

Converting one means that you do not respect his/her faith. In this perspective, one can understand why people from negri Batu Merah and people from negri Passo are pleased with the explicit ban on marrying each other. Ustad Salim said, "Allhamdulliah, people from negri Batu Merah have never married people from negri Passo. People from negri Batu Merah only marry other Muslims or Christians from other villages."

321 Interviews with Haji. A. Ternate on December 1st, 2006; Haji. A. Mamang on December 12th, 2006; and Haji. M. Tjiat on December 4th, 2006.
Do the participants of the *pela* have a possibility to combine these two different ideas? It is difficult to find a point of synthesis. The participants live with this tension without any efforts to build a bridging point. Everyone lives according to his-her understanding about their religious relation.

b. Attendance versus prohibition

It has been described above that by understanding how the *pela* has formed the relation between people from *negri* Batu Merah and people from *negri* Passo; one notices that their religious understandings are new development in the *pela* system. This religious understanding is something that is formed by their daily life. There is no formal agreement about how it must happen. Specifically, the three cultural obligations have nothing to do with religion. Therefore, one can assume that the participants of the *pela* are trying to imply their cultural practices into their religious life.

For people from *negri* Batu Merah as Muslims, attending a ceremony in a church is prohibited the law of the Islam; but they cannot escape this act due to their cultural obligation. Because of cultural obligations, people from *negri* Passo could present their church music at the funeral of *raja* Nurlette, even though it was a banned by Islamic law. Thus, it seems that when the participants of the *pela* take part in a religious ceremony interchangeably, they do not consider this action as a religious action. It is merely a cultural action. This point can be recognized in the argument of some interviewees.324

However, if one more closely examines the religious ceremonies attended by Christians and Muslims interchangeably, one notices that the religious ceremonies attended by them interchangeably are only ones which are conducted in order to celebrate a certain occasion. For example, Christians attended a Muslim religious ceremony in a Mosque in order to show their support of the new *raja*, a chief of *negri* Batu Merah. Muslims attended Christian’s religious ceremony in a Church in order to show their happiness of celebrating the century’s birthday of the church in *negri* Passo.

In addition, Moluccan Christians widely taking part in preparing an MTQ moment is also a manner of sharing the Muslims’s joy of that celebration; as is the Moluccan Muslims partaking in preparations and participating in the opening ceremony of the PGI Assembly in Ambon, the Moluccas, in 1984. Thus, both Moluccan Christians and Moluccan Muslims tried to share their happiness as well as their pain throughout the time of celebration. In this perspective, for the participants and the Moluccas as a whole, a religious celebration is a time of gathering together. A religious celebration is an occasion of supporting each other in daily life as well as experiencing their own religion. A religious celebration is a bridge building moment through which religious people experience that religion must not create a gap. Taking part in preparing religious ceremonies is also an effort to make a celebration easily handled. They support each other, so the cost of the occasion can also be shared.

Here, it is clear that religious ceremonies attended by the participants of the *pela* are not sacred religious ceremonies such as Christian’s Sacraments, Sunday Service, Islamic Friday Prayer meeting, or Idhul Fitri. The participants of the *pela* have never taken part in these religious ceremonies. In this way, taking part in attending

other religious ceremonies performed by the participants of the pela does not touch sacred aspects of each religion. The participants of the pela only attended a religious ceremony of celebration. In their religious lives, the participants still respect the sacred aspect of each religious faith.

Unfortunately, the participants of the pela could not continue this practice for a long time because of the Fatwa of the Majelis Ulama which forbade Muslims to participate or to attend any Christmas ceremony. In the same way, Christians are not allowed to attend an Islamic ceremony. This is opposes the Moluccan culture, which allows Muslims to attend Christian celebration vice versa. In the point of view of one interviewee, the regulation or that Fatwa slowly changed the Moluccan local wisdom. It did not help, but created distorted relations among religious people. The cultural behavior which helped Moluccan Muslims and Moluccan Christians not to exclude each other because of religious categorization was omitted. Therefore, he said, "In many occasions, I said that religions tend to create conflict, while culture tends to create reconciliation." Here, one can clearly notice how a Moluccan sees the benefit of their local culture which imposes the obligation on them to support each other, even in a religious ceremony.

A specific example of this fatwa was that Christians could not take part in preparing an MTQ moment and Muslims could not take part in preparing a Christmas Eve celebration. The fatwa did not help religious people to have an open attitude in their religious life, but pushed religious people to keep a tight religious boundary around themselves. The way they live their lives was influenced by religious categorization. Thus, that fatwa created a gap between religious people. The cultural thesis which helps religious people in the Moluccas to cross the religious boundary had been broken. Toisutta said, "The point of view of the elite of religious people has broken a good religious relation of our society."

However, in order to justify that practice - attending each other's religious ceremony - participants of the pela understand that it is merely a cultural action. Both Christians and Muslims are afraid to place this action in a religious perspective. It means that they hold to the opinion that it is prohibited for the Christians and Muslims to take part in celebrating another religious celebration. Therefore, to justify their custom they place it in a cultural environment. This implies that the participants are in those two antitheses. They see the cultural and religious aspects as two different sides which cannot be connected. These two entities are opposite to one another. They do not try to make a synthesis of the thesis and antithesis, but they let these two antitheses remain separately in their lives.

That way of thinking does not help because the participants will blame others, such as the Majelis Ulama, while they themselves do not say that their cultural action is principally forbidden in their religious faith.

c. Co-existence versus division

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325 It is a Moluccan Christian custom to have also Christmas celebrations before Christmas, December 25. Those celebrations take place in small church service groups, even at schools, universities, hospitals, and government offices. At these public places, Moluccan Muslims participated.

This thesis describes a very important aspect in the life of all human beings. The thesis reflects the awareness of a problem in society in which people cannot reject the existence of plurality of religion.

The participants of this pela, both Christians and Muslims, mentioned some of their religious values that can be found in the pela relation. On the Christian side, an interviewee said, ‘The pela helps these two villages to form a life of togetherness during differences. The two important things are brotherhood (persaudaraan) and koinonia (persekutuan).’ Another interviewee raised the Christian value, namely ‘to love all humankind.’

In the Islamic side, an interviewee described ukhuwah as a religious value which is also included in the ideals of the pela. He said, ”Even though the pela is a cultural way of life, it teaches the same values existing in Islam. The Islam teaches about the Ukhuwah relation. Ukhuwah Insania (brotherhood of Men) and Ukhuwah Basharia Brotherhood of all creatures) are two Ukhuwah which are taught in Islam.’

Those points of view are concepts mentioned by both Christians and Muslims who tried to understand the pela relation based on their religious points of view. Looking at those points, one can clearly see how well those people recognized their religious values in the pela relation. They understand that the pela teaches the participants to love each other without being influenced by the other’s religion. Both Christians and Muslims in these two villages are aware that the pela brings them to meet each other, even to love each other. The same idea is also pointed out by Pattiselano in his article about Tradisi Uli, Pela dan Gandong pada Masyarakat Seram, Ambon dan Ulias. He writes: "Generally, pela and gandong are not concerned about different religions.”

In that frame of reference, it seems that the participants of the pela use the pela as a bridge in contacting each other, even to understand their own religions. The pela teaches them not to be concerned with religious categorization in meeting each other in their daily lives. There is no religious categorization in showing compassion to one another. To be precise, in the pela relation, there is no religious gap.

However, the antithesis - religion divides religious people- shows a contradictory idea. This antithesis is not merely an abstract idea but it was a fact in religious life of the people in the Moluccas, including the participants of this pela. In fact, sometimes, it was difficult for them to live according to their ideas shown in the thesis. In certain situations, the Moluccan Christians and the Moluccan Muslims stood on opposite sides to one another. This especially appeared when they chose to stand firmly on their religious beliefs. Their antithesis opinions were clearly expressed during the conflict.

During the conflict, when people from negri Batu Merah and those from negri Passo understood the conflict to be a religious war, they formed a new religious

sentiment. People from negri Passo helped only Christian villages, while people from negri Batu Merah helped only indigenous Christians from negri Passo. In this case, people from negri Passo especially, had forgotten what their ancestors’ situation was. They forgot a good and positive principle which motivated the existence of their pela relation, which was to be compassionate to suffering people. They were not able to see and to help oppressed people during the conflict because they made a religious boundary and acted only within this religious boundary. The principle of helping people who are in a trouble or in a difficult situation without considering their different religions was abandoned.

Moreover, that fact tells more about how these participants understood religion. In their points of view, religion divides religious people. Therefore, when trouble occurs in their lives which can be connected to religion, they will act within a religious boundary. This point was clearly expressed by some interviewees. One person in negri Passo said, "We cannot stay calm when problems are related to religion." By saying this, the interviewees tried to justify what they did. They did not recognize that their thoughts and actions could not be accepted religiously.

The point of view which tends to divide people into religious categories was criticized by an interviewee.

Human relations fail because of Ukhuvah Islamiyah. Cultural solidarity was broken by religious solidarity. Thus, in fact, there is a tension between culture and religion in the Moluccas. This is a great challenge for the Moluccans. We have to learn from Javanese. In Java, Islam was built in Javanese form, so Javanese’s points of view dominate Islam Middle East. It is contrary in the Moluccas. In the Moluccas, Middle East Islam and European Christianity dominate local culture. There was no relation between religion and local culture. Becoming Christian meant becoming European and becoming Islam meant becoming Arabian.

Waccano explained this argument in order to criticize what happened in negri Batu Merah during the conflict. He described that during those difficult times, Christians who passed negri Batu Merah would be killed, except indigenous people from negri Passo. In this case, one finds the weakness of the cultural point of view. People from negri Batu Merah could not spread their compassion to all Christians because they depended only on their cultural point.

There are some interesting points in the arguments stressed by those interviewees. The first point is that religious sentiment had caused religious people to commit offences. The second point shows how the participants, in understanding their pela relation, did not help to encourage the religious people from these two villages to show their compassion to people who were in a troubled situation without considering their religions. The third, the pela, offers benefit for its participants only.

It is quite difficult to find an idea through which one can use mediation to reconcile the thesis and antithesis. However, it seems that to come to a solution for these two antitheses, people from negri Batu Merah and negri Passo must look for

333 An interview with A. Waccano on February 26th, 2007.
universal values that exist in both religions. Interviews in both villages mentioned some universal values such as love and compassion which are taught by all religions.

V.2.2. Indigenous people versus outsiders in the social-cultural life

The problem of migrants in the midst of indigenous people exists everywhere in the world. This is an issue which sometimes creates tension in the social life. This issue will be discussed in an effort to see how the Moluccans see migrants in their social cultural life in the spirit of the pela.

a. Local culture versus multi-cultural society

In the second part of this chapter, especially in the description of my fieldwork, it has been described how the interviewees view the existence of outsiders among the Moluccans negatively. This bad impression was shown during the conflict.

The Moluccans saw outsiders as people who must be blamed, because outsiders do not know the Moluccan local culture, and do not live according to this culture which enables the Moluccans to live side by side in harmony. All problems that emerged in the Moluccan social lives were seen as the impact of the existence of many outsiders in the Moluccas. A changed attitude in the pela relation between people from negri Batu Merah and of negri Passo also has been connected to outsiders who stay in these two villages.

It seems that, for the participants, and the Moluccans as a whole, evil, immorality, and actually all unpleasantness comes from outsiders. All problems in their society are caused by outsiders. Because of this theory, indigenous people do not try to see their own weaknesses, even their own mistakes. They only see that the source of the problem lies in other hands. This was the Moluccans’ attitude in early times. Because everything that comes from outside is not good, even a threat, they must make a trusted friend or brotherhood relation.

If those points are true, one must raise a critical question: why the good values existing in the pela relation have no impact on the life of outsiders? Is it an indication that the Moluccans themselves are not able to keep their local culture alive in face of other cultures? For the first question, some interviewees offer some possible answers. Concerning the outsiders’ situation in negri Batu Merah, they said that many outsiders only see Ambon city as a place to work, so they rarely have social contact with the local people. This condition becomes worse since they stay in an exclusive area: outsiders stay and work in Ambon city but they live according to their own cultural point of views. The local culture does not penetrate their life because of the limited social contact with local people. For the last question there are two possible answers. First, social changes in the life of the Moluccans’ society have created new situations and problems. The local culture such as the pela relation is not able to respond to the multi-society existence and its new problems. Nevertheless, this new

335 Bartels explains that in earlier times, when meeting a stranger, one had to mention the word pela in order to express that s/he is a friend. Otherwise she or he would be killed. See Bartels Guarding The Invisible Mountain, 34-41.
society does not challenge the Moluccan to extend virtues of their local culture. Rather, they expect their local culture to keep the norm it had. Secondly, the Moluccans themselves are not able to live according to rules of their local culture or their adat.

The first thesis shows clearly that the opinion of the participants of the pela is that outsiders must live according to the local culture. Outsiders must abandon their own culture and live according to the local cultures. There is no other way for the outsiders to live in the Moluccas except living according to the Moluccans’ ways. In this perspective, there is no social cultural interaction. There is no cultural or mutual understanding of one another. Outsiders must adjust themselves in their new social cultural life, while indigenous people cannot adapt themselves in this new social combination. This implies that the participants of the pela see their local culture as the best one. This perspective creates problem in the Moluccan new society because one cannot abandon ones own culture, even in another place. As a consequence, there is a tension in the social lives. There was tension because the participants and the Moluccans as a whole cannot accept cultural behavior that differs from or contradicts their local culture. This is not a good climate in a society since indigenous people intend to control the attitude or behavior of outsiders. As to this intention, one may ask ‘if the local culture is the best way to live in the society in the Moluccas, why outsiders cannot take part in the adat ceremony? How can the local culture penetrate the life of outsiders if they have no chance to have a real experience of adat?’

In order to see how outsiders are able to fulfill the wishes of indigenous people, there are two tendencies noticed during the fieldwork. Firstly, the outsider who wants to survive in a new place must be able to adapt into the local culture. Mostly, outsiders can easily enter into a new circumstance if they move to a new place in order to achieve a better life socially and economically. Secondly, outsiders who only see a new place as a place for business activity or as a place to work are not able to adapt to a local culture or a new culture.

Those two tendencies offer different impacts on the life of outsiders in a new place. Outsiders who are able to adjust themselves in a new place with its culture will be accepted by local people. They will easily live their daily life because they do not feel insecure in the new place. In contrast, outsiders who are not able to adapt in a new place will not be welcome by local people. They might live among local people, but culturally they stay outside. They will live among local people as strangers. This will get worse when they stay or live in an exclusive area.

Describing ideas above, one can see that even though the participants of the pela have lived in a multi cultural society existence, they still prefer to depend on their own local culture which is their local adat. An important question is raised here: “what is the meaning of a local culture? What are the criteria of local culture? What kind of local culture is applicable for all times? Can the participants of the pela and all people in the Moluccans -indigenous and outsiders, form a universal culture? Why do the Moluccans, especially people of those two villages, want to rely on their own local culture?"

Those questions are difficult questions which I may not be able to answer in this dissertation. However, those questions will lead us to critically observe why the Moluccans expect their local culture to be the norm in the Moluccas. There is only one argument to answer this question. In Indonesia there is the tendency that people tend to
rely on their own local culture in solving problems they face. This especially appears in conflict areas such as Posso, Kalimatan, and the Moluccas. It is a way of showing their conviction that another institution cannot help them, even Indonesian government or religious institutions.

Because of the point of view that local culture is the best way to live; the participants of the pela strongly believe that the pela system has no weaknesses. Even though the pela relation only ties two or three villages, it is not considered a weakness in this multi-cultural existence. In this stage, one can understand why in their effort to renew their society after the conflict, Moluccans tend to look at their local culture. Indeed, one can say that the more Moluccans be proud of their local culture, the less they recognize its weakness or limitation. The more Moluccans look at their local culture, the less they are open to outsiders who bring their own cultures.

All the descriptions above show that the Moluccans, especially participants of the pela, are very much aware that they now live in a new society in where multi cultural existence is a real fact. In negri Batu Merah and negri Passo, even in all part of the Moluccas, one can see outsiders such as Javanese, Chinese, Butonese, and Bugis. These outsiders bring their own culture with them. Therefore, indigenous people observe a different way of life which might is not satisfy them.

The Moluccans as a whole also know what the impact of this multi cultural existence is to their local cultures; so they try to protect their culture and to accept multicultural existence by pointing out that outsiders must live according to the local culture; it is a must. It will be difficult if they cannot. By stressing this obligation, indigenous people want to solve the tension between local culture existence and multicultural existence. In other words, this point is an effort of synthesis between local culture existence and multicultural existence. Frankly, this argument creates some problems in the life of the society. Sadly, this is not a manner of seeking synthesis; rather, it is a way of applying cultural monopoly. This argument is based on the fact that there will be a superior and an inferior existence in the society. Local culture becomes superior, while other culture becomes inferior. This creates unbalance in the social-cultural interaction. There is no real social cultural interaction because one culture is unchanged, while other culture is forced to be changed. Consequently, there is always a cultural tension present in their lives.

b. We-insiders versus they-outsiders

Generally, in a social interaction in the Moluccas, knowing the first name of a person is not enough for the Moluccans. One must also know the family name. Therefore, requesting the family name is a common question in a first meeting. By knowing the family name, one is helped to identify who s/he is. By knowing the family name one is helped to know the distance between him/her and a person in front of him/her. Besides this, one must know who a person is, because in a meeting or a conversation, there is

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339 See the examples given by R. Lesbassa and Asgar in the third part of this chapter.
always social-cultural obligation. This is an important thing in the *pela* relation since *pela* participants do not live in a same place or village.

Participants of a *pela* have obligations to take care of their *kaka pe* or *ade pe*. This implies that one will only be safe in his/her cultural society. Specifically, participants of a *pela* form their own safe circumstance. Outside their cultural circumstance it is unsafe. In this environment, they are safe socially and economically. Socially, one is safe because s/he interacts with someone who has the same obligations to take care of each other. Therefore one will not be confused or afraid. This was clearly seen during the conflict, especially in Ambon city. Outsiders who stay in *negri* Passo would think to detour around *negri* Batu Merah because people from *negri* Batu Merah will ask the family name. Even though s/he stays in *negri* Passo, people from *negri* Batu Merah would not consider him/her as indigenous of *negri* Passo. Only indigenous people from *negri* Passo would be saved.340

In addition, one is safe because s/he will be accepted by another person whom she/he faces. Even though they do not know each other personally, the cultural obligations imposed on them, require them to stay to close to each other, even to take action in protecting one another. The point of view of “we-insiders” versus “they-outsiders” must be seen in this frame of reference. This tendency is understandable when it is connected to the meaning of *pela* word which basically means trusted friend or brother.341

Furthermore, the question - what is your family name?- always creates a gap between “we” and “they” in the local social cultural interaction because one will act according to the group to which one belongs. However, “we-insider” has no negative meaning if it helps to come into social cultural communication to meet the “they-outsider.” “We-insider” has a negative meaning if it makes exclusive boundaries in social life. Precisely, a “we-insider” point of view creates problem in a social life if it discriminates people and excludes people of their social rights. In addition, “we-insiders” has a negative meaning when it stands in opposition to “they-outsider.”

The frame of reference defining “we-insiders” versus “them-outsiders”, comes from the point of *anak adat* or custom-child and *bukan anak adat* or non-custom child. It is a kind of antithesis of local cultural existence against other cultural existence. This categorization creates gaps in social and cultural relations because this term (*anak adat*) implies cultural obligations and cultural rights as well. “We-insiders” are *anak adat* who have cultural obligations to control their social lives. Therefore, they also have cultural rights to make decisions about their social lives. “We-insiders” are safe in their cultural lives since their *adat* places them in a special circumstance in which “we-insiders” must take care of each other because they are brothers-sisters. In contrast, “they-outsiders” are people who have neither cultural obligations nor cultural rights, even though they live in a local place. In this situation, they tend to become an inanimate object instead of human being. They have no rights to take part in decisions. This situation puts outsiders in a difficult condition since they live in a society in where cultural safety is needed.

It is difficult for them-outside to achieve cultural inclusion because they have no cultural connection with the indigenous people. Therefore, there is no other way than that the outsiders must live according to the local culture. In this frame of thinking, one finds that in this society, insiders become dependent upon one another, but they do not depend on outsiders. In contrast, outsiders are dependent people on indigenous people or insiders. It means that outsiders are only complements in the life of the Moluccan society.

Interestingly, this thesis and antithesis produces an effort of synthesis by introducing the idea that “they-outsiders” are treated and accepted as insiders if they have stayed in these villages for generations. Those who have stayed for generations in these villages will then be considered as indigenous people. Two examples are the Maitimu family in negri Passo and Haji Awath Ternate in negri Batu Merah. The Maitimu family comes from Ema, another village in Ambon Island, but they have lived in negri Passo for generations, so they have been accepted as insiders. This made it possible for Mr. Yoyo Maitimu to be elected as the tentative chief of negri Passo. This situation tends to be changing since the chief election process in negri Passo took a long time due to criteria to be a candidate. One crucial criterion which is still in debate is that a candidate must be indigenous of negri Passo. Historically, Haji Awath Ternate, the raja of negri Batu Merah, is not truly an indigenous person but has been accepted as insider because his families have stayed in negri Batu Merah for generations.

This kind of synthesis notes three factors which must be showed by outsiders, namely:

a. One must show his/her loyalty to the village.

b. One must show his/her commitment to the village.

c. One must know and understand history of the village.

These three factors are basic requirements to be accepted into the social-cultural life of the Moluccans. Those factors reflect that in this society outsiders must show that they are part of the local society throughout their daily life. Thus, to be considered and accepted as part of the society depends on the outsiders themselves.

In this synthesis, outsiders must totally join the local culture, so that they are accepted socially and culturally.

The frame of thinking of “we-insiders” versus “they-outsiders” has a great implication on religious life. During the conflict, the cultural boundary of “we-insiders” versus “they-outsiders” imposed only indigenous people from negri Batu Merah and negri Passo to take care of each other. In the same manner, the religious boundary imposed Christians in negri Passo only to take care of other Christian villages that had problems.

VI. Conclusion

The analysis of the results of the fieldwork shows some important conclusions:

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342 People from Passo only helped other Christian villages since they understood the big riot as a ‘religious war’.
a. Religion is not an original element in the pela pact and its obligations. Religious characteristics formed by the pela are an applied understanding that comes in a later period. It is an effort which makes the pela relation touch all aspects of the life of the participants of a pela and the Moluccans as a whole. In this effort, the Moluccans can recognize how the pela helps them to experience different religious values held by Christian and Islam religions. However, when the participants of the pela try to apply their pela obligations to their religious life, sometimes they experience dilemmas, because there are not concepts that form a bridge to reconcile their religious life and the pela. In facing this dilemma, before the conflict, both Christians and Muslims who were the participants of the pela tended to hold to their religious standpoints, while since the conflict, they prefer to hold to their cultural standpoints. This observation shows that local identity has become stronger than before in the Moluccas. Thus, they moved from one extreme position to another. This tendency will not enable them to find a bridge through which they can live culturally as well as religiously. They will still run their daily life in the dilemma situation which does not help. At this stage, Christians and Muslims need to gain a better understanding about their own religions and they both need to obtain a better understanding about the pela system as well, in order to be able to link religious points of view into cultural points of view. This is a must for the Moluccan Christians and the Moluccan Muslims since, in the past, their existence in the Moluccas was dominated by the point of views of European Christian and Middle East Islam. This means that it is also a must for Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas to transform their theological points of view.

b. The pela system is not a static system. It is a system of progression which helps the local people to face their new circumstances and enables them to create peace in their lives. However, on one hand, it seems that some people, especially the older generations are afraid to reform this pela system. They want only to stick to the old form of this pela which tends to create insiders and outsiders in this multi-cultural society. On the other hand, new generations, especially the young and educated, see that transformation of the pela system must be accomplished because living in the old form of the pela in the new Moluccan society will create new problems. It will create problems since the Moluccans now live in a new society in where people of different ethnic background have become an integral part of the Moluccans. Between these two different points, continuation of life in the Moluccas must be the main consideration. Based on this point, transformation on the form of the old pela and its contents are needed in order to extend its frame of reference and its virtues. Religion can play a role to transform the pela, but the religious understanding must be transformed first.

c. In talking about the Moluccan local culture such as the pela, interviewees have different points of views. Besides ages, older generations and younger generations of these two villages, which show that the young generations have more critical points of the local culture compared to that of the older generations, people who are not participants of the pela also are more critical of the pela than those of the participants. There is no distinction on points of view.
in understanding the *pela* based on gender categorization. However, it seems that *negri* Batu Merah is more open to outsiders compared to *negri* Passo. This different attitude to outsiders might be influenced by the fact that the *negri* Batu Merah has become a place of business in which indigenous people in *negri* Batu Merah cannot deny an open interaction with outsiders.

d. Instead of developing a point of view to form a synthesis to link thesis and antithesis, the participants of the *pela* tend to live in this thesis and antithesis. As a consequence, there is always dichotomy in their lives. Therefore, transformation of the point of view of the participants and the Moluccans as a whole, to see and to understand their local culture such as the *pela* is a must.
CHAPTER IV

A THEOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE PELA

1. Introduction

In chapter III, we saw how strongly the pela influences and shapes the lives of its participants in a unique way. Even though they have different religions, in the worst situations (e.g. during the conflict) all villages linked by the pela still have a good relationship. However, this positive aspect has its limitations because the pela only works among its participants. It does not reach other people. This limitation opens up the possibility of conducting a deeper study, especially when we realize that the pela system is a dynamic, rather than a static system.343

The necessity to undertake an in-depth study of the pela in its wider horizon has been suggested by many interviewees, especially from the younger generation.344 Generally, this generation sees the possibility of transforming the pela in order to spread its value into the new multicultural society of the Moluccans. There are many ways to participate in this project. One is to undertake a theological study.

This theological study must be done because the church has denounced local culture as pagan during many years and suggested that Christians must abandon it. As a consequence, the positive aspects of local culture, such as a good religious understanding shaped by the pela, could not be developed either by Christian Moluccans or Muslim Moluccans in order to shape their religious lives. Both relate well in the sense of being Moluccans only. They are not able to see and to accept the value or virtue that existed in their local culture. They fail to see it as a good form of life that should be developed in their religious lives.

As a consequence, they tend to make a distinction between being a Moluccan and being a religious person. For instance, Moluccan Christians follow a common cultural custom to attend Islamic religious ceremonies in a mosque and Moluccan Muslims attend Christian religious ceremonies in a church; however, this is only understood as a Moluccan action: "It is not a Muslim activity or a Christian one, but it is a Moluccan activity," said some interviewees.345 This implies a dualistic understanding of their life. On the one hand, Moluccan Christians and Moluccan Muslims think that their religions do not teach them to have a good religious relationship, while on the other hand their cultural life encourages them to maintain good religious relationships. As religious people, both Moluccan Muslims and Moluccan Christians must live according to their respective faiths. They do not see any relationship between the cultural and the religious aspects of their life. Therefore, a theological transformation is necessary to show how a cultural Moluccan phenomenon like the pela can be interpreted by Christians in such a way that firstly, it can enhance Christians-Muslims relations, and secondly, it can open up itself for outsiders. In order

343 See the first part of Chapter III.
344 Interviews with J. Ruhulessin, A. Waccano, H. Toisutta, E. Tomaluweng, R. Lesbassa.
345 Interviews with J. Ruhulessin, A. Waccano, H. Toisutta, Haji Ustad Salim.
to achieve this goal, we shall deal with the following questions: what is meant with theological transformation and, how can the pela be transformed in such a way that it embraces other ethnical groups as well?

II. Gospel and Culture

In my understanding, culture includes all kinds of world-views, norms, values, and customs which form the life of human beings in a certain shape, in a certain time, and environment. Brinkman rightly says, “Both the way in which we think and the way in which we act belong to such a culture”. Hence, culture as a basic and natural expression of human life is different from place to place and from time to time. Indeed, culture expresses how human beings shape their lives as reaction towards their surroundings.

Of course, one has to be aware that culture has not only positive but also negative values, so it must be observed critically. In this respect one can notice at least three perspectives. First, aspects in a culture that embrace values and customs which are connected to the gospel. In other words, some cultures share the same values with the gospel. As an example, we mention the environment protection through the sasi system in the Moluccas. Sasi is a local cultural system that asks the Moluccans not to perform any activities in a certain area or not to consume a certain fruit or a certain fish during a certain period of time. Thus, sasi is a way of taking care of the environment which also implies reconciliation with the environment. Second, a culture with values and customs which are not against those of the gospel but which are only useful for people who support that culture. For example, the brotherhood-sisterhood relationship in a pela system is also a value in the Gospel, but it is merely limited to the participants of a pela. Third, values and customs in a culture which inspire people to do things that are dangerous for the life of human beings. For instance, in the early time of the pela system, sacrificing a person was a sign of stopping a war and establishing a pela. Other examples are the abuse of human rights and the oppression of women. These kinds of culture are against the gospel, so they must be confronted by the gospel.

How the church should understand culture is an old and ongoing issue for which no single answer has been found. The difficulty can be summed up in questions like these: “Is culture good or bad? Must one abandon one’s own culture after becoming a Christian? If so, can a Christian live without a culture?” If a culture is totally bad, which virtues will allow people to shape their lives as good people in their milieus before becoming religious? To answer those questions, we will examine the points of view of the missiologist S. Lingenfelter and the anthropologist Charles Kraft. Both have expressed interesting and challenging notions about these questions.

According to Lingenfelter, the structures and organizations of cultures are not neutral; people define and structure their relationships with others to protect their personal or group interests, and to sustain or gain advantage over others with whom

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they compete. Lingenfelter reacts upon Kraft’s position. The latter says, “I see cultural structuring, however, as basically a vehicle or milieu, neutral in essence, though warped by the pervasive influence of human sinfulness.”

I do not consider these points of view to be entirely different. Both Lingenfelter and Kraft are aware of the inherent weakness of a culture since it is created by human beings. This weakness is clearly expressed in Kraft’s point (see above). Lingenfelter also notices the same weakness. He writes that culture is created and contaminated by human beings; culture is the pen to disobedience from which freedom is possible only through the gospel.

However, it seems they have slightly different ideas about which standpoint should be adopted in seeing and judging a culture. Lingenfelter tends to take his stand on the gospel, so he writes,

The gospel, in contrast, liberates men and women from the cell of disobedience. The gospel brings a contradictory message to the peoples of the world, challenging their social order and beliefs. The Scriptures show clearly that the gospel contradicts society and worldview. Jesus became incarnate in the Jewish world, but then he began to shatter it with his preaching and teaching. His “good news” brought conflict and change. People in Judea and Samaria hated him and plotted to kill him because he challenged their “system”.

Likewise, Kraft also sees a need to transform a culture based on Scripture, but he is not really sure how one can make the distinction between one’s own understanding of the gospel, and the gospel itself. Therefore, he says,

The receptor culture, being human and sinful, will, of course, need to be judged by God’s standards. … But their tendency is to work (as they did at home) on the basis of the reflexes developed in another cultural context. They have probably never really analyzed how they made their judgments or even whether the judgments were always appropriate to groups within their culture outside the Christian community in which they developed the reflexes.

Kraft doubts the ability of missionaries and the churches to judge local culture rightly when they do so from the standpoint of their own culture.

By contrast, Lingenfelter understands the gospel in Christ as an absolute power that must shape and transform the life of the believers, including the human culture.

Nevertheless, the gospel may become a significant powerful force in the continuous restructuring of any social environment and worldview. As believers become mature in their faith, their interests reflect more and more those of the Lord Jesus Christ. As such, Christians will experience tension and contradiction with old patterns of self-

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350 Lingenfelter, Transforming Culture, 18.
351 Lingenfelter, Transforming Culture, 18-19.
352 Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 246.
interest and greed, provoking them to contradict old social rules and judge many inadequate as they attempt to imitate the person of Christ in their lives and work. As believers increasingly obey the truth of the gospel, they will discover new ways of managing resources and relationships.\textsuperscript{353}

Kraft makes almost the same point. However, he emphasizes the weakness of missionary work in witnessing the gospel since the missionaries cannot make a distinction between their own understanding of the gospel, which is obviously shaped by their own culture, and the gospel itself. Looking at this weakness, Kraft does not speak about the possibility of changing culture. Kraft tends merely to be open to positive virtues that already exist in a culture, but he does not further explain how missionaries and the church must face culture.

These two arguments have their proper strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, if we depend only on the gospel of Christ as it is written in the Scriptures, as Lingenfelter suggests, the church will lack the ability to recognize other forms of God’s actions in culture. On the other hand, abandoning the gospel of Christ as it is witnessed in the Scriptures, as Kraft suggests, will limit the church to mere cultural appreciation. In this stage, the church will lose its mission and function to witness, to guide, to help, and to nurture the believers to live according to their faith. In my opinion, by using the gospel as its basis, the church has a clear frame of reference to face culture and to criticize it in order to help Christians to live. While having an open eye or positive insight toward virtues that are already shaped by a culture, the churches will be able to recognize God’s dynamic works in the life of human beings.

In order to obtain sufficient clarity as to the relation between gospel and culture, we could look at Richard Niebuhr’s typology. Then we can understand how the stance of theological transformation takes its place in the mission of the church, especially in facing culture.

In his classic book about \textit{Christ and Culture}, Niebuhr adopts a five-part typology to illustrate the variety of Christian perspectives on the relation between Christ and culture. These five types are:

\begin{enumerate}
  \item \textit{The Christ-against-culture type.}\textsuperscript{354} This type stresses the opposition between Christ and society at large. This point does not see any relation between faith and culture. Culture is absolutely negative, so it must be abandoned by Christians who believe in Christ.
  \item \textit{The Christ-of-culture type.}\textsuperscript{355} This takes the opposite view to the first type. According to this type, there is no opposition between faith and culture; culture and faith accommodate one another.
  \item \textit{The Christ-above-culture type.}\textsuperscript{356} Culture is a natural expression of human beings while faith is a supra natural expression which is needed in order to complete that natural expression.
  \item \textit{The Christ-and-culture-in-paradox type.}\textsuperscript{357} This point sees faith and culture as two different worlds in which a Christian can live. By this position a Christian who
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{353} Lingenfelter, \textit{Transforming Culture}, 20.
\textsuperscript{355} Niebuhr, \textit{Christ and Culture}, 83-115.
\textsuperscript{356} Niebuhr, \textit{Christ and Culture}, 116-148.
believes in Christ and regularly attends Sunday Service nevertheless can take part in violence on children and women when his/her culture allows him to do so.

e. Christ the transformer of culture type.\textsuperscript{358} Christ is neither against culture, nor of it, nor above it, nor in paradox with it. He is the transformer of culture.\textsuperscript{359} This type is open to the culture in the sense that culture is under God’s sovereign rule, and that the Christian must carry on cultural work in obedience to the Lord.\textsuperscript{360}

Principally, one has to be aware that Niebuhr talks about those five types referring to western culture which was seen as a Christian culture. However, it is possible to understand other non western cultures in similar ways.

Niebuhr helps Christians to recognize the variety of Christian perspectives in dealing with culture. It seems that Niebuhr himself supports the last type of his categorizations as Charles Scriven notices: “Niebuhr has rightly favored the image of transformation as a clue to the proper relation of Christ and culture.”\textsuperscript{361} However, it does not mean that he totally rejects the other four types. Wisely, Niebuhr writes:

Yet it must be evident that neither extension nor refinement of study could bring us to the conclusive result that would enable us to say, “This is the Christian answer.” Reader as well as writer is doubtless tempted to essay such a conclusion; for it will have become as evident to the one as to the other that the types are by no means wholly exclusive of each other, and that there are possibilities of reconciliation at many points among the various positions.\textsuperscript{362}

Indeed, Niebuhr sees links among those types, so every reader is challenged to have a critical insight in understanding and applying those five types when facing culture. In his study on Niebuhr’s theology, E. Gerrit Singgih, an Indonesian Old Testament scholar with a great concern for contextual theology in Indonesia, notices that there are few differences and similarities among some of those five types. According to him, the first type, the Christ against culture type, is a radical position which has no positive insight into culture. Even though the position of the third type (Christ above culture), is not so radical, the first type has the same perspective as the third type. The positions of the second and the fourth types as to culture are the same. Both are slightly open to culture. The second type (Christ of culture) is accommodative to culture, while the fourth type sees Christ and culture in a paradox. Therefore, he summarizes Niebuhr’s view of those five-types into two types only, namely, confirmation and confrontation: “We cannot automatically reject culture as well as we cannot automatically accept culture. Confirmation and confrontation must go together.”\textsuperscript{363} However, he does not make clear yet what he means by confirmation and confrontation. Brinkman refers

\textsuperscript{357} Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, 149-189.
\textsuperscript{358} Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, 190-229.
\textsuperscript{360} Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, 191.
\textsuperscript{361} Scriven, The Transformation, 20.
\textsuperscript{362} Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, 231.
\textsuperscript{363} E.G. Singgih, Berteologi Dalam Konteks, (Jakarta/Yogyakarta: BPK/Kanisius, 2000), 40.
here to the concept of ‘confirmation’—and refers then to the incarnation—and ‘denial’ (confrontation) and refers then to baptism as a process of purification, catharsis.\(^{364}\)

Even though Niebuhr’s notion of transformation has created a new insight for the church in facing culture, his stance on transformation still has weaknesses. The Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder notices as weakness here:

If there had been a section critiquing the fifth strategy, it could well have called for Niebuhr to give attention to concrete criteria and cases. To “transform” must mean to change the form of something according to some standard. We should have had to be shown “before” and “after” pictures of how the impact of Christ can be expected to modify cultural values, or how it has in fact done in history. We would have expected to see by what criteria adequate and less adequate “transformations” would be discerned. Yet Niebuhr identifies no such cases or criteria.\(^{365}\)

Yoder, here, asks for clear criteria and standards for a cultural transformation. This is a crucial point that must be considered in a theological endeavor of transformation. Here, Brinkman’s notion about criteria for the assessment of the contextual Jesus offers an answer. Brinkman, says “Here we are, of course, immediately confronted by the question of criteria for new, contemporary syntheses.\(^{366}\) Such criteria cannot be identified without reference to the role of scriptures in a religious community because the content of a holy book always functions as the point of reference for the identity of a religious tradition.”\(^{367}\) Both Yoder and Brinkman draw the attention of the churches to the basis and the spirit of their transformation efforts which is the Scripture. Thus, looking to the Scripture as a criterion does not mean that they choose Niebuhr’s first or third type. Brinkman recognizes the Scripture as a criterion in a theological transformation in order to emphasize the vision churches have in their theological endeavor.

Each reader can have her—his own argumentation about Niebuhr’s points, whether to agree or reject them, since each of the five positions has its own strengths and weaknesses. In my opinion, Niebuhr does not provide the final answer. There is still room for discussion and debate. Nevertheless, one cannot deny the fact that Niebuhr helps Christians to recognize tendencies shown by churches in facing culture. Therefore, in order to develop and to criticize one’s own understanding of how church must face culture, it is better to be aware of the position one tends to take. As to this, Hoekema, following Yoder, comments,

Unfortunately, one cannot consider culture as something monolithic which as a whole should be and will be transformed. If one measures culture through moral evangelical virtues, one will notice that there are some parts of culture that can be transformed as

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\(^{364}\) Brinkman, *The Non-Western Jesus: Jesus as Bodhisattva, Avatara, Guru, Prophet, Ancestor or Healer?*, (London/Oakville: Equinox, 2009), 33-34.


\(^{366}\) For me, it is also the need of (question for) criteria and standard for transformation as stated by Yoder.

\(^{367}\) Brinkman, ‘Where is Jesus “at Home”?’, 113 and Brinkman, *The Non-Western Jesus*, 14-16.
Niebuhr suggests, while some other aspects cannot be transformed. There are aspects of culture in which the church generally can participate, for instance education, health care, music, the arts, and architecture. But there are also other aspects, such as the use of weapons, commercial entertainment which often used violence or the oppression of women, and certain aspects of banking, as to which Christians as followers of the Lord have to consider their positions seriously. All those things are called culture.\textsuperscript{368}

Awareness of the weakness and limitation of culture will enable the church to develop its critical attitude rather than to praise culture.

The churches in Indonesia readily have been taught to take an accommodative or transformative position. We are accustomed to appreciate culture and civilization even when there are human rights abuses. […] Therefore, according to me, in this reformation era, the churches should take a radical position not in the sense that they have to abandon this world, but in keeping a distance towards the government in order to struggle for establishing a society, which is more righteous and human.\textsuperscript{369}

Hoekema and Singgih emphasize the definition of culture which does not only point to a local culture or an adat inherited from the past history, but as a meaning which includes all aspects of human life.

I will continue by examining Niebuhr’s fifth type in greater detail. Firstly, even though Niebuhr helps to put the notion of transformation on the discussion table, it is obvious that his type is limited to a one-way process. It lacks reciprocity,\textsuperscript{370} especially when we acknowledge the virtues inherent in a culture. Secondly, by recognizing the positive values in each culture, one needs to be open to the possibility that a culture can offer something positive to one’s understanding of the gospel in each context. Thus, transformation does not only mean the gospel must transform a culture but it could be that a culture offers a new perspective in understanding the gospel. This is a kind of \textit{double transformation,}\ in the sense of two-sided transformation.\textsuperscript{371} Thirdly, as a theological endeavor, this double transformation needs criteria or standards. Therefore, one cannot deny talking about biblical texts as the standard for this process of double transformation. Here, Yoder’s critical question about criteria and standards of a transformation must be considered. Brinkman refers here to three criteria: scripture, the decisions of the great councils in church history and the current Christian communities gathered around word and sacrament and celebrating the Christian feasts. So, “the Bible, church history and liturgy form the soil and foundation for the meanings that can be attributed to Jesus”.\textsuperscript{372}

In pursuing such a theological transformation, we have to bear in mind that every human culture possesses some good virtues which indicate that Christ is already present in a culture and is working in mysterious ways. In this situation, the role of the


\textsuperscript{370} Brinkman, ‘Where is Jesus “at Home”?’, 117 and Brinkman, \textit{The Non-Western Jesus}, 20.

\textsuperscript{371} Brinkman, ‘Where is Jesus “at home”?’, 117 and Brinkman, \textit{The Non-Western Jesus}, 17-23.

\textsuperscript{372} Brinkman, \textit{The Non-Western Jesus}, 15 and Brinkman, ‘Where is Jesus “at home”?’, 115.
church is to help Christians to discover the active presence of Christ in their lives. Thus, we cannot merely understand transformation in terms of how the gospel totally changes or influences culture. In pursuing transformation, it is better to be open to the positive things offered by culture which might bring new dimensions to our understanding of the gospel. Therefore, transformation challenges the church to have an open critical discourse between the gospel and culture. In other words, in a theological transformation, culture challenges the gospel and the gospel challenges culture. This is a twofold approach which is difficult to be understood and implemented, especially when one is radically biased towards culture.

At this point, I want to quote the vision of Miroslav Volf, a Croatian theologian widely known for his contributions in the field of conflict resolution and peace making. Of course, the background of the Croatian-Serbian war resonates in his theological work. Volf describes well how a Christian must live in his own culture.

The proper distance from a culture does not take Christians out of that culture. Christians are not the insiders who have taken flight to a new “Christian culture” and become outsiders to their own culture; rather when they have responded to the call of the Gospel they have stepped, as it were, with one foot outside their own culture while with the other remaining firmly planted in it. They are distant, and yet they belong. Their difference is internal to the culture. Because of their internality-their immanence, their belonging-the particularities, inscribed in the body, are not erased; because of their difference-their transcendence, their distance-the universality can be affirmed.\textsuperscript{373}

The explanations above encouraged me to explain my position about what a theological transformation is. I agree with Lingenfelter when he says,

Transformation is neither bridging from one system to another, nor transferring a “Christian” system to another place and people. Rather, transformation means a new hermeneutic – a redefinition, a reintegration of the lives of God’s people (the church) within the system in which they find themselves living and working.\textsuperscript{374}

Thus, in my opinion, a theological transformation of our position as to culture should be pursued in two ways: how does the gospel influence culture, and vice versa, how does culture influence the way churches and Christians understand the gospel. In other words, a theological transformation of culture must be a double (in the sense of two-sided) transformation. This enables Christians to have a critical discourse between their culture and their faith. Through these approaches, Christians and churches will learn more about their faith in Christ, and will be able to recognize their belief as an important principle to develop their daily lives.

Furthermore, being aware of the role that cultural existence plays in the life of Christians creates a new understanding of how a church must be developed. Lingenfelter says, “Church distinctives reflect more the home culture of missionaries\textsuperscript{375}

\textsuperscript{374} Lingenfelter, \textit{Transforming Culture}, 19.
than those of indigenous cultures.” And he continues: “It is difficult to find in the two-thirds world a truly indigenous church. Most churches reflect more the culture of the missionaries who planted them than they do the culture of the new believers.” Some interviewees in the Moluccas have the same point of criticism. They say that the existence of both Christianity and Islam in the Moluccas is a kind of planting of European and Arabic cultures. This condition causes difficulties to both Christians and Muslims in experiencing their local culture in a positive way. “It is a kind of alienation from their original cultural lives”, according to Abidin Waccano.

Noting the same cultural alienation, Lee, a Hong Kong theologian, suggests one way to deal with this cultural alienation:

In order to integrate within ourselves, the encounter with and challenge of the “otherness” represented by Christianity, Asian scholars must take both our Asian cultural-religious texts (text A) and the biblical text (text B) equally seriously, not categorically subjugating one to the other, nor making one the absolute norm. Both text A and text B must be held in reactive dialogue and interaction.

Lee’s point of view must be appreciated in the sense that it opens an insight to a discourse between cultural religious ‘texts’ and the biblical texts. However, his notion of seeing the biblical text not as an absolute norm for Christians must be criticized. In my point of view, the biblical text which speaks about the gospel is an absolute norm on which a Christian must stand. However, this absolute norm must always be interpreted with the help of new concepts, including local concept. So, accepting the biblical text as an absolute norm does not mean that Christians will reject their cultural existence. In contrast, by having an absolute norm which, for Christians, is the biblical message, Christians shall learn about the amazing work of the Almighty God reflecting in their local culture.

The problem of cultural alienation has been recognized in many places. This challenges churches to shift their point of view in developing the life of Christianity in their world. Lingenfelter says:

We owe an enormous debt to these missionary scholars, who have challenged the contemporary mission movement to contextualize the evangelistic message and to plant contextualized indigenous churches. The idea of contextualization is to frame the gospel message in language and communication forms appropriate and meaningful to a local culture, and to focus the message upon crucial issues in the lives of the people. The contextualized indigenous church is built upon culturally appropriate methods of evangelism; the process of discipling draws upon methods of instruction that are familiar and part of local traditions of learning.

375 Lingenfelter, Transforming Culture, 14.
376 Ibidem.
378 An interview with A. Waccano on February 26th 2007.
380 Lingenfelter, Transforming Culture, 15.
Here, it is very clear that having an open positive perception of culture will lead the church to contextualize its mission. In this perspective, one can say that cultural transformation and contextualization are two theological efforts that are connected to each other.

III. The crucified Christ as main criterion

The theological theme that will form my basic theological assumption in approaching the *pela* is the notion of the crucified Christ. There is a good reason to emphasize the crucified Christ. In the *pela* system, sacrifice is an important element by which a *pela* relation was established. This element has made the *pela* to be a sacred thing in the life of its participants.\(^{381}\) It makes the *pela* alive. Accordingly, I am trying to understand the *pela* as a Christian who believes in the crucified Christ. I am also trying to see the crucified Christ through the Moluccans’ eyes. This approach opens the possibilities of shifting the way Moluccan Christians understand both the *pela* and Christ. However, before doing this theological endeavor, I will explore the meaning of the crucified Christ by concentrating on two important elements, namely: the sacrifice of Christ and the new Covenant.

In exploring the theme of the crucified Christ, I depend on Paul’s theology. I agree with Charles Cousar, a North American New Testament scholar, when he says:

> His [sc. Paul, RI] letters are punctuated with reminders of the manner and meaning of Jesus’ death. He writes of course not as a historian describing the details of how, where, when, and by whom Jesus was killed, but as a pastoral theologian interpreting the import of Jesus’ death both for congregations under his care and for himself.\(^{382}\)

However, I pursue this work not as a pioneer in Pauline studies. Rather, I will depend on existing sources and ideas already elaborated on by previous writers.

The manner in which Paul focused his attention on Jesus’ death was also pointed out by James Dunn, a prominent English New Testament scholar, and an expert on Paul’s theology. According to Dunn,

> Paul uses a rich and varied range of metaphors in his attempt to spell out the significance of Christ’s death. [...] - representation, sacrifice, curse, redemption, reconciliation, conquest of the power. It is important to recognize their character as metaphors: the significance of Christ’s death could be adequately expressed only in imagery and metaphor. As with all metaphors, the metaphor is not the thing itself but a means of expressing its meaning.\(^{383}\)

\(^{381}\) In the first stage, there was a human sacrifice. A human being was sacrificed in order to end a war; then the human was substituted by an animal, then it was changed by taking only blood from both parties and drinking this mixture. It was drunk by all founding participants of a *pela*.


\(^{383}\) J. D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids Mi: Eerdmans, 1999), 231.
Moreover, Dunn says, “It may very well have been Paul who thus gave the gospel its focus in the death of Jesus, who stamped the “cross” so firmly on the “gospel.” Dunn notices the way Paul explores the virtues of Jesus’ death as an easier way to grasp the meaning of Christ’s crucifixion. According to him, some theological ideas regarding the death of Jesus are elaborated on by Paul in a metaphorical form. Thus, Christians must understand themes such as sacrifice, curse, redemption and reconciliation as metaphors. As metaphors, these theological concepts have a deeper meaning than these words explicitly say. In order to discover the meaning of Jesus’ death in Paul’s theology, Christians and churches have to elaborate these metaphors.

Thus, in agreement with Dunn and Cousar, I want to say that Paul has a special theological understanding of Jesus’ death. He explores the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ and tries to solve problems faced in his contemporary life by depending on the meaning of Jesus’ death. Indeed, Paul wants believers in Christ to shape their minds as well as their behavior in the spirit and the meaning of Jesus’ death. In other words, the meaning of Jesus’ death must become a way of life for believers in Christ. Interestingly, in Paul’s letters, he talks about reconciliation done by Jesus Christ in order to solve problems in which people excluded one another.

The way Paul shapes his understanding of the crucified Christ, and by extension, the life of the congregations, is explored by Hoskyns and Davey: “Every aspect of Corinthian piety is described, criticized, and judged in the light of Christ’s death, and throughout St. Paul not only speaks as the apostle of Christ Jesus but (as he himself had said) he is determined to know nothing among them but Christ, and him crucified (I. Cor.2.2).” Moreover, “Here, again, however difficult it may be, St. Paul sets the whole congregation of Corinth under the death of the Christ, under his body and blood, and declares that only so can their coming together be for the better (I. Cor. 11:26-34).” Thus, Hoskyns and Davey pay special attention to how Paul connects his understanding about Jesus’ death to the life of his congregation. Here lies the specific emphasis of their studies about Paul’s theology.

III.1. The sacrifice of Christ

It might be that for our contemporary world, the word ‘sacrifice’ is a confusing word. Can one sacrifice himself-herself for others? What is the meaning of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? How do Christians understand the aspect of sacrifice in Jesus’ death?

The element of sacrifice of the crucified Christ provides many worthwhile aspects for human life. Some important elements are noticed by Miroslav Volf.

Consider, first, the foundation of Christian community, the cross. Christ unites different “bodies” into one body, […], but above all through his suffering. It is profoundly significant that, as Ellen Charry writes, “Jews and gentiles are made one body of God’s children without regard to ethnicity, nationality, gender, race, or class” precisely in “the cross of Christ”.[…] Far from being the assertion of the one against many, the cross is the self-giving of the one for many. Unity here is not the result of

386 Hoskyns & Davey, Crucifixion-Resurrection, 126.
“sacred violence” which obliterates the particularity of “bodies,” but a fruit of Christ’s self-sacrifice, which breaks down the enmity between them. […] Consider, second, a central designation for the community created by the self-giving of Christ: “the body of Christ.” For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 

Here, it is clear that the suffering of Christ is a fruitful sacrifice because He suffered to save the life of others. In relation with the cross, this kind of suffering has a specific meaning and implication since it offers a great benefit for all human beings. Its specific meaning is that in Christ, God shows His solidarity with human beings who suffer in their lives because of gaps created by themselves. As consequence of living in an estranged climate, one tends to be an enemy for others. On the cross, God opposes this situation and then, establishes a new friendly relationship by becoming the bridge which does not only open up a new way to meet God but also to meet one another. The implication is that in the way of suffering, God shows how human beings overcome alienation and enmity in their life. It means that suffering is also a way of empowering human beings. This implies that suffering can only be an element of sacrifice when it imposes goodness in the life of human beings. To be precise, suffering without any restoration is not a sacrifice.

At the heart of the cross is Christ’s stance of not letting the other remain an enemy and of creating space in himself for the offender to come in. […] The cross is the giving up of God’s self in order not to give up on humanity; it is the consequence of God’s desire to break the power of human enmity without violence and receive human beings into divine communion. The goal of the cross is the dwelling of human beings “in the Spirit,” “in Christ,” and “in God.” Forgiveness is therefore not the culmination of Christ’s relation to the offending other; it is passage leading to embrace. The arms of the crucified are open- a sign of a space in God’s self and an invitation for the enemy to come in.

Volf steps forward to give meaning to the open-arms of Christ on the cross as a sign of embracing. He understands the ritual of the sacrifice as God’s invitation for human beings to come into an intimate relationship with God. On the one hand, God opens Himself to establish and to restore this relationship; on the other hand God lets human beings respond to this relationship freely. It means that embracing is an act that demands willingness of two parties to meet and to respond to each other. Here, Volf concentrates on the great impact of the cross towards all kinds of alienation. His words are here impressive since he speaks in the setting out of his own experiences as a Croatian.

Moreover, Paul’s understanding of the sacrificial aspect of the death of Jesus provides a vivid theological insight which challenges humankind to share their lives with one another. The death of Jesus encourages human beings to create a peaceful life instead of estrangement. Therefore, one can understand why Paul pays more attention

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387 Volf, Exclusion & Embrace, 47-48.
388 Volf, Exclusion & Embrace, 126.
to the fact of Jesus’ death than to other aspects of Jesus’ life and work. Thus, according to Paul, the sacrifice of Christ brings reconciliation, which cannot become a real fact in the life of human beings if there is no sacrifice. Consequently, one cannot talk about reconciliation in the life of human beings and the entire world as a virtue of Jesus’ death without talking about the sacrifice of Christ.

One of the parts where one can find Paul’s theological exploration about the aspect of reconciliation through Jesus’ death is II. Corinthians 5:18-20. Here Paul describes clearly how reconciliation takes place in the life of humankind. According to Paul, through Jesus’ death, God works to reconcile humankind with himself. This reconciliation has a great consequence upon human life. It is reconciliation among humans themselves.

Exploring the meaning of reconciliation, Dunn bases his argumentation on II. Cor.5:18-20. “The imagery is obvious. It presupposes a stage of estrangement or hostility between God and humankind. The idea that a death can bring about reconciliation may in itself evoke the idea of martyr theology (as implied also in Rom.5:7).”

God in Christ sacrifices himself in order to overcome the estrangement between God and humankind. This sacrifice implies also reconciliation among human beings. Moreover, according to Dunn,

There are several notable features in the text:
(a) One is the strong insistence that the reconciliation is between God and the world. It is the fundamental Creator/creature relationship which is being restored here. Christ is the medium of the reconciliation, not the one who is reconciled.
(b) Another is the equally strong insistence that God was involved in the act of reconciliation —“through Christ” (v. 18), “in Christ” (v. 19).[…] The image is not of God as an angry opponent having to be cajoled or entreated, but of God, the injured partner, actively seeking reconciliation.
(c) Equally striking is the correlated or alternative metaphor — “not counting their transgression against them.” The image of forgiving or choosing to ignore active hostility can be as effective as that of sacrifice for sins.
(d) Not least is the confirmation that the message of reconciliation, focused in the cross (5:21), is the heart of the gospel. If Christ is the representative of God in effecting the reconciliation (“God was in Christ”), the apostles are the representatives of God in proclaiming it (“God makes his appeal through us”).

Reconciliation as an implication of Jesus’ sacrifice is about restoring the relation between God and humankind. God in Christ has broken alienation. He himself is the vivid bridge as Dunn says; above that, God is actively seeking for reconciliation. Dunn sees God as the initiator of this reconciliation.

In understanding reconciliation between God and human beings, there is a tendency to see this reconciliation, especially in Paul’s theology, in the sense of reconciliation between God and a human being personally. This concept could be accepted when one relates only the notion of reconciliation to the stance of belief or faith, especially in a soteriological meaning. It is true that the decision to accept and to believe in God through Jesus Christ is a personal decision; it is not a communal

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389 Dunn, The Theology of Paul, 229.
390 Dunn, The Theology of Paul, 229.
decision. Nevertheless, Paul always speaks about reconciliation in the frame of overcoming alienation or estrangement in his community. It means that he speaks about reconciliation in the real social lives of human beings.

However, in order to relate the notion of reconciliation to all human beings, Paul does not limit reconciliation to one’s individual relation to God. In Paul’s theology, there would be no real reconciliation in the life of humankind if it would be limited to isolated individuals. Only in Jesus’ death, can one find the mode or the type of a true reconciliation because God through Christ overcomes estrangement by giving Himself and so being the bridge between Himself and us all.

In his book *Pendamaian*, the protestant Indonesian theologian, Andreas Yewangoe, explores the concept of reconciliation, including reconciliation in the perspective of some ethnic groups in Indonesia. He too, mentions II Cor. 5:19-20. According to Yewangoe Christians must stand on the path of the crucified Christ in order to spread the reconciliation which has been established by Jesus Christ. Human beings are reconciled to God, and this reconciliation has great implications for reconciliation among human beings and their cosmos. The reconciliation of the cosmos is related to the new way of existence of the Christian. 391

Reconciliation between God and human beings means that human beings are no more alienated from God. God has created a relation with human beings because He knows that having no relation with God will cause estrangement in their lives. How important human beings are in God’s act of reconciliation has been well stressed by Yewangoe. He writes “It means that God’s will and his interest are connected to the fulfillment of human needs which are to solve conflicts which took place in human lives. Precisely, the reconciled God wants reconciliation among human beings themselves.” 392 According to Yewangoe, reconciliation between God and human beings has no meaning if there is no reconciliation among human beings. In this perspective, we must stress here that we cannot make a contrast between reconciliation between God and human beings and reconciliation among human beings. Instead, the reconciliation between God and human beings must be seen as the core of reconciliation among human beings because by having a good relation with God, man can recognize how important s/he is before God. This stance implies that reconciliation between God and man is not a merely individual reconciliation, but a collective or communal reconciliation as well.

Moreover, by understanding the correlation between these two kinds of reconciliation, Yewangoe sees reconciliation in Paul’s theology as something that must be pursued. 393 Reconciliation is not a static gift from God. It is a dynamic gift which calls for continuous responsibility. Human beings are asked to participate actively in God’s work for reconciliation in their lives.

Related to reconciliation in the life of human beings, another writer, Charles Cousar whom we quoted earlier, notices three important ideas of Jesus’ death which, according to him, explicate how God effects a change with regard to the human situation. These three ideas are: justification, redemption, and expiation. 394

393 Yewangoe, *Pendamaian*, 100.
Cousar explains justification in connection to righteousness as following:

The phrase “the righteousness of God,” as we saw, does not represent a moral standard that God demands of humans, but God’s own rectitude, God’s faithfulness and moral integrity. Now in turning from the noun “righteousness” to the verb “justify” […], we are reminded that God’s righteousness is not a static quality, a divine attribute to be grasped as an abstract ideal. Rather it is “a power which brings salvation to pass. … God’s power reaches out of the world, and the world’s salvation lies in its being recaptured for the sovereignty of God.395

This explanation emphasizes an understanding of justification without human participation. This point implies also that justification is a grace. Talking about grace, human beings are totally passive. This stance must be understood in the sense that man has no contribution to the justification that has been given to him. The only thing that man has to do is to receive it by faith. However, justification cannot be understood as vindicated.

As to redemption (Rom. 3:24), Cousar writes, “Its use conjures up the vivid image of a slave or prisoner released from confinement through the payment of a ransom of some sort. Since the following verse makes reference to Jesus’ blood, it is tempting to exploit the various dimensions of the image and build a soteriology based on a theory of ransom.”396 Cousar, however, exploits Jesus’ death in a frame of bringing a total change into the world. The world is an unjustified world, so it is a totally unsafe world for human beings. Human beings have become perpetrators to one another. They have lost the sense of becoming humans since they lost their relation to God. They do not know how to create justification because they depend on their own knowledge. For Cousar, in Jesus’ death, justification and redemption are connected because God did not wait to see an act of repentance by mankind. He acts before man acts.

Finally, as to expiation, Cousar writes,

In making amends for sins in Christ, God is getting at the root of the problem and “the sin that might justly have excited God’s wrath is expiated (at God’s will), and therefore no longer does so. The action aimed at the sin (“expiation”) also has an effect with respect to God. In this sense, the propitiation is a secondary result rather than a primarily cause of the atonement.397

In this explanation about expiation, Cousar wants to say that human beings are fully called to participate in responding to the death of Jesus, especially to confess their sins. This confession will lead to atonement. In this perspective reconciliation is truly the task of man himself.

By talking about these three ideas, especially justification should become the inspiration or spirit for Christians to perform forgiveness in a process of reconciliation.

396 Cousar, A Theology of the Cross, 62.
397 Cousar, A Theology of the Cross, 64.
Forgiveness enables a victim to meet the perpetrator in order to restore their relationship. However, forgiveness must be understood in the sense of refusing to take revenge and not in the sense of justifying and forgetting a wrong or a bad action that has been done. This inspiration of justification was present in the process of reconciliation in South Africa when, by relying on their faith, some victims were able to forgive their perpetrators unconditionally:

Dawie Ackerman, whose wife was killed in the attack, responded: “I want you to know that I forgive you unconditionally. I do that because I am a Christian, and I can forgive you for the hurt that you have caused me, but I cannot forgive you the sin that you have done. Only God can forgive you for that. After the hearing, Ackerman and several other survivors met in a private meeting with their attackers. Each killer walked around the table and addressed each survivor in turn, asking personally for forgiveness.398

Another victim, Jeanette Fouire showed her forgiveness towards the perpetrators who had killed her daughter:

I am very sorry that I can’t express my thoughts and feelings in Xhosa. I think you remember me. At the criminal trial, I asked the translator to tell you that I had forgiven you. Do you remember that? I shook your hands. Mr Gqomfa was unwilling and he looked the other way, but I certainly shook Mr. Mabala and Mr. Madasi’s hands. Nothing has changed. I still feel exactly the same way and I do forgive you because my High Command demonstrated to me how to do that by forgiving his killers... I think that the reason for my being here this week and particularly today, which is very important to me, is to tell you that on that day, you ripped my heart out.399

The two examples above are quoted here in order to emphasize how the idea of forgiveness contributes in a process of reconciliation in the life of human beings. However, forgiveness must not omit the necessity of repentance. Repentance is a must in the process of reconciliation because repentance reflects the willingness of the perpetrator to acknowledge the crime s/he has done. The awareness to acknowledge a crime will lead someone to restore his or her life. Therefore justification as well as forgiveness and atonement are connected with each another.

Indeed, these three images: justification, redemption and expiation (atonement) are three important factors in forming reconciliation. In the life of human beings, justification is connected to justice, an act to tell a true fact; an act to find the truth. In the case of South Africa, Nelson Mandela struggled to reconcile people in South Africa through hard endeavor to tell and to find the truth. In the situation of the Moluccas in Indonesia, reconciliation was also connected to the truth. Both Muslim and Christian Moluccans tried to find the truth, even though it was hard to be found. The more they found the truth, the more they opened possibilities to reconcile each other, especially when they, Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas, realized that religion was only a provocative issue to achieve another aim.

399 Graybill, Truth & Reconciliation, 44.
The way to this human reconciliation has been opened by God’s initiative. They belong together. The difference is well described by Cousar.

But reconciliation, admittedly rare in Paul, cannot be so easily dismissed. Its function is more than supportive. As words, pictures depicting the one salvation achieved in Christ, justification and reconciliation share much in common. For example, repeatedly in 5:18–21 Paul pictures God as the acting subject. Reconciliation functions not as a reciprocal activity in the sense that two friends who have become estranged agree to sit down and talk out their differences. Reconciliation is not equated with “making up.” It describes God’s saving a lost and disoriented world, which is in no position to negotiate a truce. In this stress on the divine initiative, reconciliation parallels justification.  

Cousar, here, stresses that there is no stipulation of precondition in the relation between God and humankind. God reconciles mankind to himself without any conditions. God justifies human beings, even though they have broken their relation with him. However, Cousar notices the differences between justification and reconciliation. He says, “Justification, as a forensic term, speaks of the action by which people are set in proper relation to God and God’s saving power. Reconciliation, however, as a social term, primarily denotes the consequences of that action – the restored relationship, the bridged chasm, the resolution of hostility.”[401] In Paul’s ideas, reconciliation and justification are interrelated to one another. God meets and creates a new relationship with human beings who broke that relationship. It is justification from God. According to Paul, reconciliation has become part of human action, while justification is only God’s action. Therefore, we have to make a distinction between justification and reconciliation, even though they are connected.

Inspired by Paul’s ideas of reconciliation as the result of Jesus’ death, Cousar tries to encourage Christians as to reconciliation in their daily lives:

Moreover, contemporary Christians, aware of the depth of estrangement marking the human situation, find reconciliation to be an immediately relevant way to express the meaning of Christ’s death. The language of relationships – brokenness, separation, wholeness, reunion – strikes a responsive chord. [402]

As the impact of believing in the crucified Christ, reconciliation effort is not a choice. It is an imperative. Therefore, the church has no other choice than to stand amidst the brokenness and separation that emerge every moment in the life of human beings. The church must take reconciliation as its fundamental calling. Nevertheless, it does not mean that once brokenness, separation and other forms of segregation or alienation have been overcome, they will not happen again. To be sure, human beings cannot escape from all kinds of segregations. However, they must always be aware of it and deal with it, so that brokenness and alienation do not become the lifestyle of human beings. It is why Cousar challenges Christians to play their role in this situation.

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400 Cousar, A Theology of the Cross, 81-82.
401 Cousar, A Theology of the Cross, 82.
402 Ibidem.
III.2. The new covenant

The first question here is of course: what is the meaning of the new covenant? As I have stated above, the theological transformation is drawn from the theme of the crucified Christ, so our view of the new covenant must be related to our understanding of the crucified Christ.

Many theologians who study Paul’s theology notice that the new covenant in Paul’s theology is Paul’s reaction to the Torah. Paul describes the new covenant as a new relation created by God through Jesus’ death. God himself has created a new way to meet him. God does not only depend on the covenant made with Israel. Through Christ, God has made another possibility to meet him, so the Torah is not the only way.

Does it mean that Paul has abandoned the Torah? Does it mean that Paul rejected the status of Israel as the chosen nation? Some theologians such as Wright, Yee, Volf and McKnight claim that on the cross, Jesus has made a new covenant with human beings. This new covenant is totally different from the one God made with Israel. How Paul compares the new covenant as a message of the crucified Christ with the Torah is well described by N.T. Wright.

It is clear that Paul is not against the Torah. He also does not reject its function. He just tries to see the Torah in the spirit of the death of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has fulfilled the Torah’s requirement. In this perspective, one can understand why Wright sees the death of Jesus Christ as the climax of the covenant. The notion of the climax of the covenant can be understood in the frame of the fulfillment of all the Torah’s rules. Paul’s theology stresses this aspect, especially when he speaks about the place of other nations or gentiles in the covenant God made with Israel. Through Jesus God has created an encounter with all people, so all the required stipulations in the Torah could be applied to gentiles.

According to Wright, Paul speaks also about other weaknesses of the Torah, namely the limitation of God’s grace. In the Torah, God is scarcely concern about other people. The Torah as the symbol of God’s covenant is only meant for Israel, the chosen nation. This does not make clear that the God of Jesus Christ is always concerned about all people. Understanding the covenant between God and Israel as His chosen nation, Tet-Lim Yee, a Chinese New Testament scholar, writes in his thesis, supervised by James Dunn:

The covenant ‘flesh’ has played an important role in fostering a deep sense of community between the Jews, whereby the difference between themselves and the non-Jews heightens their sense of belonging. The presence (or absence) of the ‘flesh’ as such serves to reinforce the latter as a boundary marker distinguishing the Jews from the non-Jews.

Yee sees the role of this covenant in the sense of making a distinction between Israel and other nations; this covenant tends to create discrimination between people by

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403 I shall talk about the Torah, the Jewish law, and the covenant between God and Israel as interdependent categories because each of them is inconceivable without the other.
placing them in different ways before God. By the covenant, Israel tries to maintain its identity as the chosen nation. Therefore, fulfillment of the Torah is an obligation of Israel. Hence, Yee says, “It is generally agreed that circumcision was by no means a Jewish monopoly, as other people also practiced similar customs [...] But circumcision became one of the most significant features considered by typical Jews as an emblem of difference between Jews and the rest of the world.” In addition, to emphasize the function of the Torah in the life of Israel Yee continues, “In sum: circumcision as the sign of the election was (and still is) for the Jews the first act of full covenant membership and obligation. In the self understanding of Jews, circumcision entails the first commitment to live as a Jew, to ‘Judaise’ and to adopt the Jewish way of conduct as a whole.”

According to Yee, in Paul’s theology the crucified Christ is the one who has broken the distinction between Jews and non-Jews. He himself formed the bridge, because through him there is no more race discrimination. In Him, there is no more religious distinction. Precisely, in the crucified Christ ‘the race and religious walls’ have been omitted.

Christ is portrayed as the mediator of peace or the bearer of reconciliation. He affects peace by bringing to an end the estrangement between Jews and Gentiles. He ‘made both one’ not because the differences between Gentiles and Jews as two distinct ethnic groups are diminished but because Jewish identity had become so confused with Israel and Israel’s God-given grace that this had been turned into a boundary marker by the Jews, separating and distinguishing Jews from the rest of humanity.

One finds here, that according to Christian theology as stated by the Christian theologians above, Israel’s ethnic identity has caused the covenant made by God and Israel to lose its function. God’s action is aimed at interaction with other ethnic groups. Again, Yee points to the crucified Christ as the person who eliminates ethnic alienation:

Our understanding of Christ as the embodiment of the ‘peace’ requires us to account for the ethnic factor which involves the estrangement of Gentiles from Israel and by the Jews, and most importantly, the annulment of the social distance between the two by Christ. As we shall see, Christ who concludes peace, has, through his death on the cross, become the term of peace (vv.15c, 16b). His death is the most decisive factor which determines the way in which a ‘settlement’ between the two estranged groups could be attained.

Notions of the special place of Israel have played a role in creating estrangement in the life of human beings, especially when that special place is understood in the sense of exclusion of others. Instead, the stance of the chosen nation must be understood as an example of God’s grace which gives place for human beings to participate in his divine work. Israel, in this sense, for me, is only an example.

406 Yee, Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, 78.
407 Yee, Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, 81.
408 Yee, Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, 143.
409 Yee, Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation, 144.
Quoting N.T. Wright, Volf shows some elements of the new covenant created by Jesus Christ through his cross.

As he worked it out in Galatians 3:1-4:11, Paul’s solution to the problem that touched the very core of his religious belief contains three simple, yet nonetheless momentous interrelated moves (which I have extrapolated from N.T. Wright’s analysis in The Climax of the Covenant).

First, in the name of one God Paul relativizes Torah: Torah, which is unable to produce a single united human family demanded by the belief in the one God, cannot ‘be the final and permanent expression of the will of the One God.’ Though still important, Torah is not necessary for membership in the covenant.

Second, for the sake of equality Paul discards genealogy: the promise ‘had to be by faith, so that it could be according to grace: otherwise there would be some who would inherit not by grace but as of right, by race.

Third, for the sake of all the families of the earth Paul embraces Christ: the crucified and resurrected Christ is the ‘seed’ of Abraham in whom ‘there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female (Galatians 3:28).

These three points touch the limited reach of the Torah. According to the Torah, other nations as well as other people cannot join the covenant. This condition implies that without the Torah other nations cannot know God’s will and God’s work. Therefore, in order to be able to recognize God’s will and God’s work, other people must receive and live according to the rules of the Torah. Only by this, can they become members of the covenant. On the contrary, by flesh, Israel will automatically live as the member of the covenant whether they act according to the Torah or not. According to Paul, this is the very essence of Israel’s misunderstanding of the covenant and the function of the Torah.

In exploring Paul’s ideas about the new covenant, Volf as well as Wright try to find out what Christ did to overcome the limitations of the Torah and of the covenant made with Israel. For Volf, on the cross, God through Jesus Christ has opened another possibility to meet men. This is the new covenant because God opens His arms to every nation, to all people who want to meet him. Thus, God through the crucified Christ, has omitted all categorizations which make gaps or walls in the lives of human beings. Volf stresses the new climate shaped by the new covenant which is beyond genealogy.

For Volf and many other writers mentioned above, the crucified Christ starts a new atmosphere and new relations in the life of mankind. This is also how Paul sees the crucified Christ. According to Volf, “Paul’s solution to the tension between universality and particularity is ingenious. Its logic is simple: the oneness of God requires God’s universality; God’s universality entails human equality; human equality implies equal access by all to the blessings of one God.”

In order to emphasize his point, Volf states,

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410 Volf, Exclusion & Embrace, 44-45.
411 Volf, Exclusion & Embrace, 45.
To place the new covenant at the center of theological reflection on social issues means for a Christian theologian to inquire about the relation between the cross and the covenant. On the cross we see what God has done to renew the covenant that humanity has broken. […] I want to point out briefly what can be learned from the cross about how to renew the covenant—renew in the triple sense of strengthening the covenants that are fragile, repairing the covenants that are broken, and keeping the covenants from being completely undone.\footnote{Volf, \textit{Exclusion \\& Embrace}, 153.}

In his effort to understand the idea of the new covenant brought by the crucified Christ, Volf notices three characteristics of this new covenant.

First, on the cross God renews the covenant by \textit{making space} for humanity in God’s self. The open arms of Christ on the cross are a sign that God does not want to be a God without the other—humanity—and suffers humanity’s violence in order to embrace it.\footnote{Volf, \textit{Exclusion \\& Embrace}, 154-155.}

Second, renewing the covenant entails \textit{self-giving}. On the cross the new covenant was made “in blood” (Luke 22:20). Notice that the blood of the new covenant was not the blood of a third party (an animal), shed to establish a fictive blood relation between the parties of the covenant and dramatize the consequences of breaking it. In this respect the new covenant is profoundly different from the first covenant God made with Abraham (Genesis 15).\footnote{Martin, \textit{2 Corinthians}, 149.}

Third, the new covenant is \textit{eternal}. God’s self-giving on the cross is a consequence of the ‘eternity’ of the covenant, which in turn rests on God’s ‘inability’ to give up the covenant partner who has broken the covenant.\footnote{\textit{}}

These three characteristics of the new covenant show that in Volf’s perception this new covenant is an eternal covenant because it is provided by God himself. God sacrificed himself in order to restore his relation with humanity. God did not ask any required condition from human beings before he acted through Jesus Christ on the cross. Actually, man had no participation in performing this new covenant. He only receives this new covenant as a gift offered by God. In this sense one can understand Ralph Martin’s point when he speaks about the divine initiative in reconciliation.

We may affirm the divine initiative in reconciliation, both in its origin and total execution. Humankind plays only a passive role as those who are ‘acted upon’ by being ‘reconciled’ and then ‘appealed to’. The cosmos is affected, presumably in the sense of being brought back to harmony with the creator and reinstated in right relations with him, ‘becoming the righteousness of God’ in Christ.\footnote{\textit{}}

This understanding imposes another characteristic of this new covenant. It was to be a risky covenant since God made himself the only party performing it. Man did not take part in performing this new covenant; Man is merely the receiver. The risk is that human beings remain passive in acting to meet God. Paul, in his theological point, anticipates the risk of this new covenant by encouraging the receivers who are the believers in Christ to take part in this covenant actively and accept their responsibility.
Moreover, to establish this new covenant, on the cross God in Christ had sacrificed Himself, while in the first covenant, an animal was sacrificed (Genesis 15). This is a great difference between the first covenant and the new covenant. In addition, renewal of the first covenant can be performed by sacrificing an animal, while there is no possibility to renew the new one. The only thing to do is to remember the sacrifice of the crucified Christ through the Eucharist.

Scot McKnight, writing about Jesus’ death, explores Paul’s understanding of the new covenant as a real event presented by Jesus through his cross. McKnight says, “The death he endured makes Jesus Christ the “mediator of the new covenant” (Hebr.9:15), and with a gentle twist of the pen the covenant (perhaps, and only perhaps) becomes a testament (Hebr.9:16-22). […] Not only is it (the death of Christ) an atoning sacrifice, it is also a covenant-inaugurating event.”

For Paul, it was a tool that separated the Mosaic covenant from the new covenant, primarily by recognizing the significance of the Holy Spirit. For the writer of Hebrews, it was a tool that ontologically separated the old system from the new system, primarily by recognizing the effectiveness of the forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and his intercessory powers. If Paul crossed the threshold by sorting out the relationship of the old to the new in terms of covenant, the author of Hebrews set up shop and made the category his home to an unprecedented degree.

McKnight presents Paul’s distinction between the covenant in Moses’ period and the new covenant created through Jesus’ death. The distinction is situated on the point of view that on the cross, Jesus brings human beings back to God without any stipulation. However, as the receivers of this new covenant, the believers are asked to show a special moral conduct as evidence of the impact of this new covenant into their lives.

In my opinion, Paul, in his understanding about Jesus’ death, does not remove the special place of Israel. He also does not reject the Torah. By his theological reflection on the fact of Jesus’ death, Paul develops a new insight about the relation between God and human beings and the impact of this relation toward inter-human beings relations. According to Paul, a covenant made by God is a way of life (read English: Gal.3:21). Instead of being a way of life, the Torah tends to be the real stumbling block in the life of Israel, especially in her relation with other people. Thus, the Torah must be interpreted in a new way. According to me, Paul’s theological notions about the new covenant through Jesus’ death imply that God has never made a final covenant with Israel. God is always working throughout human history; His work is going on. While working in a new way, He still continues with the first covenant since He is the same God in the past, in the present and the future. In this way human beings will recognize Him as living God who always tries to meet people in their milieus in order to give them life.

Ishak Hendriks, a Protestant Moluccan scholar in New Testament, offers an interesting notion about the “Kairotical Understanding”. In his reflection about the “Kairotical understanding”, Hendriks states, “We would also be open to affirm that

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415 Scot McKnight, Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005), 302-303.
416 McKnight, Jesus and His Death, 303.
every encounter of God with the world anywhere and anytime is a Kairos of God."\textsuperscript{417} The Kairotical understanding helps us to understand that the covenant with Israel and the new covenant created through Jesus’ death are related with each other. The relation between the first and the new covenant is the fact that God is concerned about humankind and the world. This position means that one must not see the new covenant as a replacement for the covenant made with Israel.

Finally, we refer here to the ideas of John De Gruchy, a South African Presbyterian theologian who has been involved in the reconciliation process in South Africa. De Gruchy writes, “For those who shared in the renewal of the covenant in Christ through faith and baptism, reconciliation with God and life in the Spirit became a reality.”\textsuperscript{418} De Gruchy connects his understanding of the new covenant with the idea of reconciliation:

Reconciliation literally has to do with the way in which God relates to us, the human ‘other’, and in turn with our relationship to ‘the other’, whether understood as an individual person or a group of people. It has to do with the process of overcoming alienation through identification and in solidarity with ‘the other’, thus making peace and restoring relationships. Reconciliation has to do, if we may put it colloquially, God making us friends.\textsuperscript{419}

According to De Gruchy, reconciliation in human life is nothing other than overcoming alienation through identification and solidarity with others. One must see oneself in the existence of others.

In conclusion we can say, that the new covenant as an element of the notion of the crucified Christ stresses the restoration of relations. This new covenant is a gift offered by God to all human beings, without any categorization. It works beyond boundaries of nation and race.

These explorations on the crucified Christ, especially on the aspect of sacrifice of Christ and the new covenant, show that there are many notions which could shape the life of the believers in Christ; especially in as far as they deal with alienation or estrangement that human beings face in their lives. The crucified Christ urges Christians to move from a self-centered orientation to sharing one’s own life with others. These theological arguments of the crucified Christ will be the basis for making a theological transformation on the pela.

IV. A creative encounter of the notion of the crucified Christ and the idea of the pela

This part will deal with the theological transformation of the pela to explore how the idea of the pela can embrace outsiders. Doing this, we are dealing with the question: How can the pela be transformed in such a way that it embraces outsiders?\textsuperscript{420} This will


\textsuperscript{419} De Gruchy, Reconciliation, 51.

\textsuperscript{420} See the questions pointed in the introduction of this chapter.
be endeavored within the framework of the double transformation, mentioned above. Therefore we will try to explain the interaction between the notions of the crucified Christ and the *pela*.

We have to create new cultures which can enable us to live in this plural context. It means that *pela-gandong* must be transformed, so that its frame of reference, which only consists of two or three villages, can be extended to create the opportunity to live in the spirit of multi-cultural society. Thus, we do not only think about religious relationships but we also think about the relationship between ethnic groups, which tend to be a problem in our society.  

H. Toisutta, February 26th, 2007

The *pela* as an *adat system* must be reinterpreted in order to extend its benefits as just pro-life.  

Rev. M.M. Hendriks-Ririmasse, March 7th, 2009

In the past, brotherhood-sisterhood relationship was depending on genealogy and *adat*, which caused the social cultural lives to be fragmentary. Therefore, religion must play an important role to fill in all those gaps.

Rev. I.W.J. Hendriks, April 16th, 2009

**IV.1. The transformation of Jesus as Tete manis**

The notion of double transformation implies, as said, two sided transformation. Every culture gives new names to Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ Himself introduces also new aspects to a culture. Of Course, new names for Jesus Christ must be adequate name (see on criteria IV, II) and also the way Jesus Christ changes a culture must fit into that culture, even if it opens up that culture radically.

The main factor that encourages the participants of a *pela* and Moluccans as a whole to maintain the *pela* and live according to it is their belief in or their dependency upon their ancestors. This tendency is expressed by several interviewees.

Because it is a sacred thing in our lives, people from *negri* Passo and those from *negri* Batu Merah strongly believe that they will be punished when they forget this *pela* relationship. Forgetting this *pela*, we will receive *kualat* (punishment).

Haji A. Ternate, Batu Merah November 26th, 2006

It was a sacred thing in our life, so we have to maintain it. It was a wish of our ancestors.

Mrs. Maitimu-Simauw, Passo, December 2nd, 2006

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421 Pro-life in the sense of respecting the life of human beings regardless their different cultures and religions.
We are only living according to what our ancestors wanted. It was their oath. It is a sacred thing in our life, so we must not reject it.

Haji Tjiat, Batu Merah, December 4th, 2006

We have no power to reject the wishes of our ancestors.


These judgments indicate that ancestors have a special place in the philosophy of life of Moluccans. Even though Christianity exists in the Moluccas for more than 450 years, the faith in Jesus Christ did not change or influence how Moluccans see their ancestors.

There are two reasons why the participants want to maintain the pela. First is to show their obedience to their ancestors. Second is to avoid punishment of ancestors. The second one is the primary reason. Ancestors have been seen as judges who will punish every person and the community as a whole when the participants do not live according to the stipulations of the pela. Therefore, they are afraid of their ancestors. Implicitly, this means that ancestors are threatening rather than inspiring figures that bring happiness.

We can only transform the pela when we transform the position and role of our ancestors.

Rev. I.W.J. Hendriks, April 8th, 2009

Thus, when we are talking about transformation of the pela, we must look for an idea that can help the Moluccan Christians to see the function of their ancestors in the pela system from a new perspective.

Yafet Damamain, a Christian scholar from the Moluccas, writes in his dissertation on Job:

In order to give a place to *tete-nene-moyang* [sc. Moluccan ancestors, RI] their role as the keepers of the adat must be stressed. Therefore, maybe, the Moluccan ancestors might be compared with Moses who received the Torah for Israel. Thus, the Moluccan ancestors can transfer the adat, because they received inner inspiration from the *Upu Lanite* or *Uplero*. In this perspective, Moluccans will still honor their ancestors, yet not as Divine Lord, but as mediators.

This point of view offers something new in understanding the role of the ancestors in the life of Moluccans, especially related to their responsibility to maintain their adat. According to Damamain, “By considering their ancestors as mediators, Moluccans confess that they only believe in God as Lord.”

Thus, if Moluccans see their ancestors merely as mediators who created their pela because of inspiration from the

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422 Y.G. Damamain, *JOB: A Narrative Approach on the Characterization and Point of View* (A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Southeast Asia Graduate School of Theology, 324 Onan Road, Singapore 1542, In Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of doctor of theology, Yogyakarta, 1997), 239
423 Damamain, *JOB*, 239.
Almighty God, who is well known as Tete Manis or Upu Lanite or Upler (The heavenly God), they would not fall into the tendency to replace God, Upu Lanite-Upler by their ancestors.

Literally, Upu Lanite comes from two Central Moluccan words, upu and lanite. Upu means ancestor or grandfather and lanite means heaven; upler is a Southeast Moluccan word, meaning the source of cosmos. Upler is a derivate of upu which means ancestors.

Upu Lanite and Upler are terms expressed in a prayer to point to the One from whom they ask a blessing, welfare, health, etcetera. This means that the Moluccan ancestors were aware of the fact that there is an Almighty One in their life. Ancestors were aware that they were only human beings whose life depends on the Almighty God. God, Tete Manis, Upu Lanite-Upler must also be the inspiration of Moluccans today to develop the spirit of the pela, even to create a new culture in this new multicultural society. Thus, in living their pela, Moluccans must not replace God, Upu Lanite-Upler, by their ancestors. The Moluccans must be aware that because of the work of God, Upu Lanite-Upler, their ancestors were able to create the pela as an adat system that could help them to overcome the limitations of consanguinity.

Seeing ancestors as merely mediators is also a new perspective offered by the notion of the crucified Christ. Interestingly, by the impact of their connection to their ancestors, the Moluccans point to Jesus Christ as Tete Manis, literally ‘Sweet Grandfather’. Tete Manis implies how the Moluccans experiencing Jesus Christ in their lives. He is God who lives not faraway from humankind. Like a grandfather who has not only power and authority in a family’s live but lives also with his family, loves and always be a wise advisor for a family, Jesus Christ loves and lives among the Moluccans and He has also power and authority in the life of the Moluccans. By mentioning Jesus Christ Tete Manis, He is ‘transformed’ to an important figure in Moluccan faith and culture. Of course, Jesus Christ is not only a Tete Manis. He is far more. But he is surely also a Tete Manis.

The crucified Christ is the mediator who reconciles God and human beings without categorizing the latter. This also implies reconciliation among human beings themselves and their cosmos and invites men to become agents of reconciliation. By establishing the pela system, Moluccan ancestors had done so because they had recognized estrangement and enmity in their lives. Thus, Molucan ancestors can be seen as mediators because they were able to respond to the invitation offered by the crucified Christ to take part in reconciliation by establishing the pela, and then they could pass on the pela to the next generations.

To inherit the pela means to keep its spirit alive in the following generations and to make it work in the life of Moluccans. Creating a new culture in order to deal with new problems faced by the society is an implication of living in the spirit of the pela. It is an expression of showing obedience to ancestors. In contrast, to keep it alive in its old forms implies a rejection of that spirit; it is disobedience to ancestors.

424 The Moluccans’ term referring to the Almighty God.
425 The Central Moluccans’ term referring to the Almighty God. Upu Lanite is well known as a ritual term.
426 The Southeast Moluccans’ term referring to the Almighty God. Upler is well known as a ritual term.
The position of ancestors as mediators also helps to transform the idea that ancestors punish participants of a *pela* when they do not live according to its stipulations. As mediators, ancestors only did the will of God, *Tete Manis, Upu Lanite-Upler*. Punishment is not in their hands but in the hand of God, *Upu Lanite-Upler*. However, since Christ died to save the life of human beings and the world, it is not anymore a question whether punishment is the only way for those who do not live according to the wish of God, including the *pela*. Therefore, it is better to say that as mediators, the ancestors want the well-being of their descendants. Thus, getting sick and harvest failure should not be counted as punishments from the ancestors.

Briefly, the crucified Christ can be seen as *Tete Manis, Upu Lanite-Upler* who, as reconciler, sacrificed himself in order to stop estrangement and enmity in the life of Moluccans, while the Moluccan ancestors can be seen as mediators who act as agents of reconciliation because they established the *pela* as a vehicle of reconciliation. They passed on this heritage to their descendants, so that the Moluccans always will reconcile all people without taking into account ethnic and religious boundaries. In the process of two sided transformation not only Jesus Christ is ‘transformed’ but also the idea of the *pela*. Because of the reference to Jesus Christ the concept of sacrifice has to be emphasized.

**IV.2. The transformation of the *pela* as sacrifice**

Sacrifice was a main element in the *pela*. As has been described in the previous chapter, in the early times a *pela* was established in order to stop a war between two or more villages; therefore a sacrifice was required. In the beginning, a human being had to be sacrificed; later, this was substituted by an animal as the third party. Finally, the sacrifice took its form by taking out a little amount of blood of the participants; then drinking from this mixture became the basic ceremony of making a *pela*. Blood as an important element of establishing a *pela* indicates that this kind of a *pela* is a hard *pela* (*pela keras* or *pela batu karang*).

It is not clear why the Moluccan ancestors first offered a human being as a victim, then offered an animal and finally only drank the blood mixture. Bartels suggests that the practice of having human beings as victims changed after the missionaries started to work in the Moluccas. This implies that the object of the sacrifice in the *pela* system can be changed and transformed. The sacrifice does not depend on a certain object. When one accepts this reasoning, one can also understand that the Moluccan ancestors did not reject a change or transformation of their cultural practice.

Not the form, but its meaning created the impact of the sacrifice. This new form symbolized a total commitment to give one’s own life to bring about a better future to his or her community. The basic idea for making this sacrifice was to give one’s life to stop enmity among villages. However, such a sacrifice was also brought by the ancestors of people from *negri* Batu Merah and Passo though their *pela* relation was not established because of a war. This indicates that there is a development in the

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428 See the categorization of *pela* in chapter III.
meaning of the *pela* system. It established a special relation between two or more villages in order to prevent estrangement or alienation and it is not only established on the occasion of a war.

Interestingly, all *pela* relations, especially the hard *pela* (*pela keras* or *pela batu karang*) were established with blood as main symbol. This provides some important notions, namely:

1. Giving one’s blood to be mixed with that of others means one has totally given his or her life to a better life of the communities. One’s life is not for one’s own sake, but is also for the other. Every one is linked to others. One cannot exist without others. Here we notice a meaning of this new form of sacrifice within a *pela* that is community sharing. As to the sacrifice of Christ, it is obvious that on the cross Jesus Christ shows his glory which was expressed by his suffering for the sake of all human beings. His suffering is not for himself but for others.

   2. A *pela* must be alive throughout generations. As long as one is a descendant of the ancestors who drank the mixture of blood, she or he must live according to his or her *pela* obligations. This idea has two consequences. On one hand, it is a positive thing for the new generations not to forget or abandon this system. On the other hand, this makes it hard for the participants of a *pela* to accept others, who do not come from the same ancestors, as their *pela*. This is the main problem that has been discussed in our analysis. This situation raises the question, how a Christian sees and understands this phenomenon. Can their faith in Christ help them to see ‘others’ as their *pela* brothers and sisters?

   We have described above how Paul’s theological understanding about the crucified Christ offers fruitful notions of suffering. Even though it is hard to find the element of suffering in the *pela*, the aspect of self-giving can be seen as an aspect of suffering.

   Self-giving is a moral commitment needed in the Moluccan society as well as in any other society. The existence of oneself is none other than to be a servant of others. Thus, self orientation must be extended to neighbor orientation. This is the message of the crucified Christ.

   Jesus’ death on the cross expresses God’s act to give His life for a better life of human beings. Similarly, the sacrificial aspect of the *pela* symbolizes a total commitment of oneself to share his own life with the other to ascertain a better future life for their community. The similarity between the cross and the sacrifice of the *pela* is that both pay attention to reconciliation in human lives. In addition, in both there is a commitment to give their lives for others. The difference is that on the cross Jesus takes part actively in the human condition which is suffering and alienation even though those conditions do not exist because of him. On the contrary, the participants of a *pela* commit to share their life because of suffering and estrangement they caused themselves. Moreover, the *pela* sacrifice was [or: is] performed by more than one person, but on the cross Christ acted alone.
IV.2.1. Sacrifice is to give one’s life for the other

We have seen in our analysis a tendency of ‘we’ versus ‘they’. A pela works only in its context.\(^{429}\) Therefore it was important to speak about the sacrifice of Christ who has broken all walls created by human beings. This sacrifice challenges the Moluccan Christians to open and to cross the wall between cultures. According to Hendriks, Jesus did not conform Himself to the norms accepted by the society where and when He lived, but moved around and made friends with people from all ranks of society, including those shunned and marginalized in the society.\(^{430}\) Indeed, Hendriks points to Jesus as the One who crosses boundaries in order to create interaction with others. That is an actual manifestation of giving one’s life to others because one tries to meet others who, by one’s own strength, are unable to come to a mutual interaction.

The ‘other’ in the perspective of the crucified Christ is everyone, including people who come from other ethnic or religious communities and even from other states. Precisely, others must be embraced in their otherness; this otherness must not be a reason to be excluded from a society. This is the message of the notion of the crucified Christ. This notion will encourage the Moluccan Christians, especially the participants of a pela to overcome the tendency to exclude others.

Thus, ‘we’ versus ‘they’ should be transformed into ‘we’ in connection to ‘they’. ‘We’ does not have a meaning when it is separated from ‘they’ and vice versa. Both remain two different existences but they cannot be separated. This perspective implies that social-cultural and religious relations in the Moluccas must not be formed in the frame of ‘we’ versus ‘they’ but as ‘we’ in connection to ‘they’.

Moreover, to be able to give one’s life for the other, recognition that others are as important as oneself is needed. Hall stresses this point of view when he writes,

> To feel compassion, deeply and sincerely, is to overcome the subject/object division; it is to suffer with the other. Not just to have a certain fellow feeling for him or her, and certainly not only look with pity upon another – […] Rather, it means to be thrust into solidarity of spirit with the other - to experience, in one’s own person, the highest possible degree of identity with the other.\(^{431}\)

As we saw above, self giving as sign of sacrifice conducted by the Moluccan’s ancestors in order to create reconciliation was performed by more than one person, while on the cross, Christ acts alone. This has an important implication in understanding and conducting reconciliation. In the case of the pela, sacrifice in order to create reconciliation should be seen as an act which concerns a specific community or the Moluccan society as a whole, while in the case of the crucified Christ everyone is called to sacrifice oneself to perform reconciliation. The ‘double transformation’ approach helps us to understand that a sacrifice which has to bring reconciliation in the life of human beings must be proactively done by every person as an inherent part of a community or a society. Through the sacrifice of Christ we have to point out that every individual has the responsibility to create reconciliation in one’s life. Thus, the pela as

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\(^{429}\) See chapter III.  
\(^{430}\) Hendriks, ‘Confessing Jesus Today’, 3.  
a way of reconciliation cannot be conducted by a community only, but must also become a personal or individual act or initiative.

Furthermore, the cross is not only a symbol of death but it is also a symbol of life. Suffering must not be seen as the ideal life of human beings. Rather, it must only be understood as a way to create and to gain a better life. People must know for what aims one has to suffer. Christ suffers because he knows the impact of his suffering.

**IV.2.2. Sacrifice is to humble oneself**

Another aspect of sacrifice is to humble oneself. This aspect, too, is drawn from the notion of the crucified Christ. The cross must be seen as a way of abandoning his glory. By humiliating himself, He brings himself to take part in human life actively and to become their guide. Moluccans express this insight through the term *Tete Manis*, the theological notion to describe Jesus who does not live far away from the Moluccans. For Moluccans, Jesus is *Tete Manis*, like a grandfather, who always lives with the family, and gives everything he has to the family, lives with and gives also his life to Moluccans.

Humbling oneself in the perspective of sacrifice serves the prime form which is to serve others. To serve others means one tries to do good things for them. The main orientation to serve is the need of others. This means that the need of one who is served is more important than the need of someone who serves.

We must speak about this aspect since it is difficult for Moluccans to find the notion of becoming a servant in their social life. Rather, culturally they tend to be proud of themselves. Their feelings of superiority made the Moluccans to see outsiders and their culture in a negative way. To be humble means Moluccans must be ready to create space for others in their lives and reform their appreciation of outsiders.

Cultural interaction is an important way to see both the strength and the weakness of our culture. This would be very helpful because one’s culture as well as the way one lives should be a dynamic culture.

Thus, in relating the theological notion of sacrifice to the crucified Christ and the notion of sacrifice in the *pela*, sacrifice really becomes a center of reconciliation in the sense of neglecting the self interest and taking action to fulfill the interest of others and the communal interest as well.

To summarize our exploration of the transformation of *pela* as sacrifice, through the eye of the crucified Christ in relation to sacrifice and new covenant, the Moluccan Christians will see the *pela* as a bridge to meet and to embrace others, while through the eye of the *pela* they will see the crucified Christ as their ancestor who sacrificed himself in order to reconcile all people without any distinction.

**IV.3. The transformation of pela as a covenant**

I like to talk about the *pela* as a covenant rather than a contract because of two arguments. First, none of the interviewees interpreted the *pela* as a contract; for all of them it is a covenant which has a special meaning because it has been conducted by blood. Second, the word ‘covenant’ has a theological meaning namely the establishing and restoration of a relation not only between God and human beings but also between

human beings. This is a main notion in Paul’s theology when he speaks about the new covenant God conducted through the crucified Christ.

Besides these two arguments, in talking about the pela as a covenant I mostly agree with Volf when he speaks about the differences between covenant and contract. According to Volf, “Covenant contains “vital elements of voluntarism and consent” and creates obligations which “drive from the nature and history of the relationship” and cannot be “fully specified in advance.” Unlike a contract, which defines a limited and reciprocal commitment, covenant structures an open-ended and morally ordered relationship.” Moreover, “Covenant” has no moral feet of its own, but must rest on substantive values that come from elsewhere. These substantive values do much more social work than the formal notion of the “covenant.” Here, Volf talks about a substantive value which, in Christian perspective, is no other than the spirit of the crucified Christ.

Based on the idea that the meaning of covenant is establishing and restoring a good relationship, which is the core notion drawn from both the crucifixion of Christ and the pela, I try to create a dynamic encounter or interrelationship between them in order to see how the Moluccan Christians can develop the pela to play a role in restoring relationships in the social and religious life. For this sake, we concentrate on two virtues of the covenant, namely:
- Covenant as restoration of relationships, and
- Covenant as creation of communal life

IV.3.1. Covenant as restoration of relationships

All pela pacts were established in order to overcome estrangement in the life of the Moluccans. Through a pela the participants have a new relation through which one does not consider others as strangers anymore. Sadly, this new relation exists only in the pela circle. Therefore, we are going to see how we can widen this cultural virtue by connecting this cultural notion of a relationship between fellow brothers and sisters with the notion of the new covenant created by the Cross of Christ.

One principle of the pela is equality and mutuality rather than a hierarchical relation, such as an older-younger or a superior-inferior relationship. Both sides of the pela participants have the same position, the same function and the same rights in this kinship. This notion has also formed the religious understanding of the participants. Both the Moluccan Christians and the Moluccan Muslims do not see their own religion as superior to that of the other.

This way of thinking can help the Moluccan Christians to understand the reconciliation established by Jesus on the cross. Jesus is the real God who reconciles all human beings to Himself. All human and religious categorizations which have caused human beings to live in estrangement have been omitted. Thus, the tendency of some interpretations which give a special place to people based upon their religion must be questioned by Moluccans.

433 Volf, Exclusion & Embrace, 150.
434 Volf, Exclusion & Embrace, 151.
Sometimes, there is a tendency to describe the relation between God in Christ and humankind as a superior-inferior relation. On the one hand, God in Christ is superior, so He can act alone to restore His relation with humankind. On the other hand, man is inferior, so he merely receives that grace. This approach can question the real humanity of Christ. For our intention to talk about restoration of human relations, it is important to recognize that the notion of a hierarchical and superior-inferior relation is a threat for reconciliation. Instead of creating a good relationship, hierarchical and superior-inferior relations tend to create walls.

The notion of equality plays unfortunately still larger role in social-cultural relations. In the latter, superiority and inferiority thinking is still found, for instance in the process of electing a local chief of negri Passo. An interviewee says “Outsiders cannot be our local chief, not even a local married woman. Our adat has been established by our ancestors, so we have to obey it. It is not good to change our adat.” Here, indigenous people from Passo still exclude others. Then it is impossible to create societal structures which are inclusive. By creating an interaction between the concepts of the crucified Christ and the pela, Moluccans must develop a new understanding of the existence of outsiders. Jesus, as their ancestor, has sacrificed Himself in order to break all walls including cultural walls. In this perspective, Moluccans should be able to establish a society in which there are no more walls based on region, religion and other categories of exclusion. Equality of all people is part of Paul’s theology of the new covenant. With it he criticizes an exclusively ethnic identity of Israel which tends to exclude other people. Similarly, Moluccans must also reinterpret their cultural and ethnic position from the perspective of this new covenant, so that exclusivity can be omitted. In addition, the new covenant has also a great contribution to criticize triumphantism in religious life.

However, one must not understand equality in the sense of rejecting all kind of differences. Accepting and developing the notion of equality must be understood in the frame of the ability to accept and to manage differences proportionally. Dealing with differences which characterize each society, the Roman-Catholic feminist theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, who was born in Cuba, says:

A third area in which much work is needed concerns our notions of diversity and differences. It is precisely our present understanding of differences as what separates, excludes and places persons in opposition to each other that is at the core of all models of oppression, causing divisions and brokenness. Such an understanding leads to conceptualizing those who are different as outsiders, with those who have power deciding what is normative –themselves- and what is deviant –others. As long as this is the prevalent understanding there is no possibility of having right-relationships, and it will be impossible to create just societal structures that are inclusive instead of exclusive.435

In this sense, people in the Moluccan society must be enabled to manage the differences they have. In our analysis, we have discovered that the pela plays an important role in shaping a religious understanding of its participants. While they have

to respect other religions, they have their rights and freedom in expressing their beliefs. This means that the *pela* helps its participants to cope with their religious differences. They do not deny religious differences, but they respect them. They can live side by side without losing their distinctive beliefs.

To establish a Moluccan society where all people are equal and have one aim as to the present and the future life of their society, one specific element in the *pela*, namely the *panas pela* can be developed as a means. The *panas pela* is an event through which indigenous people in the Moluccas and outsiders can establish a new commitment to live as brothers-sisters. Indigenous Moluccans affirm outsiders as brothers-sisters, while outsiders convince indigenous people that the Moluccas are their home too. This brothers-sisters relationship does not reject the given cultural and religious identity of others. This ‘new inclusive home’ is welcoming, so the outsiders should consider it as their own. According to the inclusive development of this ‘new home’, the cultural life also should be developed.

Through the eye of the crucified Christ, the Moluccan Christians will understand the *panas pela* as a common ‘eucharist’, a participation in Christ cross and resurrection, through which all people gather together to make a social-cultural and religious commitment to bridge all gaps. Through the eye of the *pela*, the crucified Christ shall be seen as their *Upu Lanite-Upler* who asks all people to create equality in life.

Through the eye of the crucified Christ, the *panas pela* will be an event which brings all ethnics to share their life and to come to mutual respect as to their differences, while through the eye of *pela*, this ‘common eucharist’ will be an event of gathering people together without religious distinctions. Thus, the experience of the Moluccans as to their religious life which has been offered by the *pela*, teaches Moluccan Christians not to exclude others based on religious differences. And the notion of crucified Christ teaches the Moluccan Christians not to exclude others based on ethnic and religious differences. Thus, the *panas pela* as an event of reconfirming their brotherhood-sisterhood relationship is not merely an affirmation to the Moluccan ancestors, but it is more an affirmation of being brothers and sisters. In this perspective, Moluccans always maintain the spirit of the *pela* in their contemporary life.

IV.3.2. Covenant as creation of communal life

Speaking about covenant as an element of reconciliation, one must also speak about the hope to develop a sense of belonging to a community. In Christ God restores human relations because He does not want one to live far away from others.

Covenant as an endeavor to create a communal life has been very well expressed in the *pela*. In the previous chapter, we have seen how the *pela* implies a good interaction among its participants. In the *pela*, the life of all of its participants must be shaped in cooperative ways. Two of the three cultural obligations within the *pela* deal with cooperation from both sides: “one must help each other and one must visit each other.” These obligations emphasize that the *pela* insists on cooperation of both sides. One side cannot act as if the other side does not exist.

This is not merely an abstract notion. It is a fact in the life of villages linked by a *pela*. In building or renovating a church or a mosque, Batu Merah and Passo must
take part in each others’ efforts. They do not take just a position as two different villages which are competing. Another example is when people from negri Batu Merah and those of negri Passo tried to solve the problem of the process of electing a local chief in negri Passo. Here, Batu Merah had been asked to give an advice. The pela participants share not only their economic life. They share also emotional dimensions of life such as participation in special religious ceremonies. In addition, the pela obligation not to fight each other forces its participants to take the responsibility to establish a communal life. Thus, the pela pays attention to all basic elements needed in building a communal life.

The notion of cooperation challenges one also to understand how human beings must take part in God’s mission to fight estrangement in the life of human beings. God through Jesus Christ does not reject participation of human beings in his mission. God himself restored his relation with mankind and then asked human beings to take part in that mission.

Moreover, the communal life demands responsibility of each person towards the community, while the community must support the life of the individual. To be more precise, individual and community must grow together because in the perspective of the pela, whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual.

Summarizing, the pela as a covenant implies a mutual interaction and understanding in the life of human beings, so one is aware of the impact of one’s existence to others. In shaping this human relationship, one cannot deny differences. Differences must be managed proportionally in order to see them not as a threat, while equality must be developed without loosing one’s identity. This is reconciliation: one recognizes each others differences, respects them and then performs mutual interaction.

V. Conclusion

The conclusion of my exploration of this theological transformation of the pela is that the notion of the Crucified Christ will encourage the Moluccan Christians to spread the virtues of their pela relation widely. This theological transformation can open the minds to some virtues which are needed in the Moluccas, especially in building religious relations and social communities as well. Some important notions which emerged during this exploration can be marked:

a. The theological transformation of the pela will make the pela to be the local way of life through which people from every social, ethnic and religious group can meet and interact. This theological effort opens possibilities to extend the cultural limitation of the pela. Indeed, by the notion of reconciliation through the crucified Christ others would not be excluded anymore. This theological transformation also provides a new perspective for the Moluccan Christians not to see Jesus in an exclusive way. By using the approach of a double

436 People from negri Passo provided material needed in building a Mosque in negri Batu Merah. See Chapter III.
b. transformation, the *pela* can help the Moluccan Christians to bring Jesus in a place where He comes across and works also for other religious people. Also, by interpreting the *pela* through the notion of crucified Christ, the *pela* can be understood as the Moluccan local culture which was established in order to encourage Moluccans to have a good relationship with all human beings without cultural and religious categories. So, the crucified Christ inspires the Moluccans to open up their idea of the *pela* to the so-called outsiders as well. That is one side of the transformation. The other side is the application of the idea of the *pela* to Jesus Christ as *Tete Manis* makes it clearer than in earlier time that Christ’s reconciliation really unites people. In addition, by this theological notion the *pela* can also be understood as a way of life through which Moluccans always created reconciliation in their daily lives both individually and socially, in religious as well as in social-cultural aspects of their life.

b. The double transformation has developed a new insight in understanding the *pela*. The *pela* can be a way of reconciliation in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society if it is developed out of these new perspectives: the *pela* as a suffering *pela* and as an embracing *pela*. By the suffering *pela*, Moluccans will become ready to enter a vulnerable condition as a consequence of living in a multi-society. The embracing *pela*, will provide the willingness of the Moluccans to interact with other cultures and religions. In this way, the *pela* is not merely a cultural phenomenon which is restricted to past history. Rather, it becomes a living process through which Moluccans develop and create reconciliation.

c. By opening a discourse between the *pela* and the crucified Christ, the Moluccan Christians will be enabled to communicate their faith in Christ through their *pela* relationship vividly. Especially, they can bring reconciliation into practice, as the mission of the church and Christians. Through the eye of the crucified Christ, the Moluccan Christians will see the *pela* as a bridge to meet others, while through the eye of the *pela* the Moluccan Christians will see the crucified Christ as their ancestor, the *Tete Manis* who sacrificed himself in order to reconcile all people without discrimination. So, again, double is in the sense of two-sided transformation.

d. Reconciliation always has a communal or collective dimension. Therefore, through the notion of reconciliation, one is called to take his/her responsibility to the society as a whole.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE PELA AS PART OF THE CHRISTIANS’ IDEA OF RECONCILIATION

I. Introduction

In this final chapter we would like to elaborate the results of our research. We hope to provide answers to the main question of this research, namely **how can the GPM critically use aspects of the traditional Moluccan local culture such as the pela in order to help the Moluccan community to live as a reconciled society in a situation of diversity?**

In the second chapter, we have noticed how the GPM struggles to establish religious reconciliation in the Moluccas as an actual answer to the difficult situation of a bloody conflict which caused Muslims and Christians to become enemies of each other. In this endeavor, the GPM tries to look at the Moluccan local culture such as the *pela* as its frame of reference. However, in fact, as we have described in the third chapter, apart from its virtues, the local Moluccan culture has limitations since it works only for its Moluccan participants. Thus, in order to extend its virtues and to minimize its limitations, in the fourth chapter we proposed a theological transformation of the *pela* based on the notion of the crucified Christ. Through the eyes of the crucified Christ, the *pela* can only work in this multicultural society when its participants and the Moluccan society as a whole are able to understand it in a new perspective. Thus, the GPM has the important task to implement those notions about the transformed *pela* into its mission as well as into the life of the Moluccans as an actual manifestation of reconciliation.

Finally, this chapter will deal with the implications of this theological endeavor, and will develop a theological notion of reconciliation based on the results of the double transformation involved in the application of the idea of *pela* to the crucified Christ (and interpreting Him as *Tete Manis*) and the application of the idea of sacrifice and covenant to the notion of *pela*. In this study we shall especially elaborate the transformation with regard to the *pela* and omit an extended elaboration which regard to Jesus Christ as *Tete Manis*.437

II. New perspectives on the pela

This two-sided application of the *pela* offers new perspectives through which the *pela* can develop as a cultural as well as a religious system of reconciliation. These important new perspectives are:

a. The *pela* will be a way of reconciliation when it creates the willingness of everyone to sacrifice himself in order to reach others who are not insiders according to Moluccan cultural and religious categories. As an impact of this application, sacrifice must be

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437 The Dutch Moluccan theologian Simon Ririhi is working on a Ph.D. dissertation at the VU Amsterdam, on the Christological implications of the notion of *pela*.
understood as readiness to give one’s life for others. Sacrifice is the ability to humble oneself in order to interact with others without rejecting each others’ differences.

b. The *pela* can become a way of reconciliation when it is not merely understood as a past pact or an oath but also as a social and religious commitment to overcome all kinds of alienation or estrangement in order to see and accept all human beings as brother-sister. Therefore, *panas pela* [‘warming up the pela’] as an important element of the *pela* system must be performed not only as a remembrance of the past *pela* event but also in order to develop the virtues of the *pela* to reach outsiders. In this way Moluccans will able to allow outsiders to integrate with their society.

II.1. New form of the *pela*

New perspectives of the *pela* as an impact of theological transformation imply that the *pela* must also have a new form. The *pela* does not only depend on the oath of ancestors but it must be an individual initiative to break all kinds of alienation or estrangement in the life of human beings.

I have no doubts about *pela* and *gandong*, but according to me we must put our attention on the spirit of the *pela* which is to meet one another (*pela sebagai pertemuan kita*).

Asgar, Batu Merah, March 15th, 2007

Tonny Pariela, a Moluccan sociologist, describes the *pela* as a social bridge which has the power to overcome a conflict and to create harmony among *negeri* [villages] in the Moluccas. Nevertheless, Moluccans will not be able to develop the notion and the spirit of the *pela* as a social bridge as long as they only express the *pela* as a manifestation of respect towards their ancestors.

Individuals must be the prime agents to create the brotherhood-sisterhood notion in his-her life. Thus, the *pela* is not only an expression of brotherhood-sisterhood, formed to show loyalty of a community to its *adat*, but the *pela* must be seen as a way of bridging gaps which encourages every person in the society to deal with all forms of alienation and segregation. In brief, the individual must be the subject of the *pela*. When this happens, the *pela* will be a living movement through which every person actively reaches his or her life out to others without considering all categories of segregation, such as family descent, culture and religion.

II.2. New notions of the *pela*

The theological transformation of the *pela* opens a possibility to develop the *pela* to embrace others and their otherness and to be a means or tool for reconciliation both between Muslims and Christians, and Moluccans and outsiders. This approach implies, however, that the *pela* can only be a means of reconciliation when it will be developed and understood in new terms, namely:

- The suffering *pela*

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II.2.1. The Suffering pela

A main principle of the suffering *pela* is that people are ready to suffer and take a vulnerable position in a multicultural and multi-religious society. In such a society, one cannot abstain from contact and interaction with others. One cannot live in seclusion from others. Therefore, in order to gain a positive interaction, one must be ready to face new social-cultural virtues which might be a threat for oneself. In this perspective, we are going to explore two important notions of the suffering *pela*, namely:

- Readiness to take risks
- Learning to be a stranger

II.2.1.1. Readiness to take risks

We must keep this *pela* as it was.

G. Rinsampessy, Passo, December 6th, 2006

They will loose their culture if they cannot keep it alive. I cannot imagine what will happen when we loose our *adat*.

Ustad Salim, Batu Merah, January 31st, 2007

I am not sure if this *pela* would still be maintained by people from *negri* Passo and *negri* Batu Merah if it were reformulated in a new way.

J. Maitimu, Passo, January 20th, 2007

There are several interviewees’ expressions showing that some are not ready to reinterpret the *pela* in order to make it work in a new social setting. These expressions imply that it is not easy to talk about readiness to take risks, especially in the realm of cultural life. However, the term suffering *pela* implies that people are ready to take the risk to build a bridge lives in order to avoid being alienated from others around them. To achieve that aim, they are not afraid to face challenges or problems. Thus, the basic principle of the suffering *pela* is an individual as well as a communal commitment to suffer as a consequence of creating interaction with other people in the society.

In the concept of the suffering *pela*, the readiness to take a risk expresses an inner quality of every individual as well as the society itself. An individual or a society has a mature quality of life if one is not afraid to take risks. At the contrary, those who do not want to take risks, have a childlike quality of life.

During our fieldwork, it was obvious that many interviewees, especially the older generations in *negri* Batu Merah and *negri* Passo were not ready to take risks to develop a new understanding of the *pela*. They understood these new developments as a threat that can cause the *pela* to lose its meaning. In fact, that position is counterproductive because the *pela* only works for its participants, while *negri* Batu Merah and *negri* Passo as well as the Moluccas as a whole have reached a level of
being a truly multicultural society, including non-Moluccan cultures. Thus, they better
develop the spirit of the *pela* which is to overcome segregation in human life.

It is a necessity to talk about this changed situation because only then will people
be prepared to take risks. Actually, it should be seen as a natural process through
which people can develop their ideas in a dynamic way. Especially for Christians,
suffering in the way of the crucified Christ does not mean one has to suffer until death.
Rather, it means suffering to live.

**II.2.1.2. Learning to be a stranger**

Outsiders can participate in the preparation of an *adat* ceremony, but they
cannot take part in it.

Haji A. Ternate, Batu Merah, November 29th, 2006

There is discrimination between indigenous people and outsiders since
outsiders have never participated in *adat* ceremonies. Thus, if we want to
continue to have a *pela* in our lives, we must reform this *pela*.

R. Lesbassa, Passo, June 6th, 2007

We must think about renewing our understanding of *pela* in order to make
outsiders experience the meaning of the *pela*. Maybe, it can be inspired and
coordinated by leaders of the indigenous people, that outsiders are allowed to
participate in *adat* ceremonies”.

E. Tomaluweng, Passo, June 6th, 2007

The notion of the suffering *pela* also requires that Moluccans, especially participants of
a *pela*, sometimes must step out of their culture and even out their own belief in order
to be open to other ways of existence around them; concretely, they need to learn to be
a stranger.

It is very difficult to learn to be a stranger because it is related to the ability and
wish to allow others to examine and to criticize ones own cultural and religious values. When I started with this project, I strongly believed that the *pela* was the only key
factor for the Moluccans in building reconciliation. Therefore, I only started to speak
about virtues that the *pela* has, not about its weaknesses. During methodology classes,
my classmates and lecturers asked many critical questions. At first, I thought, that they
did not appreciate virtues of the *pela* because they all were strangers who had no real
experience with living in this Moluccan local kinship. However, as we continued our
class discussions, their critical questions opened my mind not only to speak about
virtues of the *pela* but also to speak about its weaknesses as well. Consequently, I
convinced myself to study the *pela* not merely as a Moluccan but as a Moluccan
Christian as well.

Learning to be a stranger in the setting of the suffering *pela* means that the
Moluccans must have the wish to encounter other forms of cultural existence in order
to develop virtues of the *pela*. Only then will the *pela*, as a heritage of their ancestors,
continue to exist for the next generations.
II.2.2. The embracing pela

To see outsiders in our social-cultural lives in a positive way, we have to create new cultures which can enable us to live in this plural context. It means that the pela must be transformed, so that its frame of reference which only consists of two or three villages can be extended to create an opportunity to live in the spirit of a multi-cultural society. Thus, we do not only think about religious relationships but we also think about the relationship between ethnic groups, which tends to be a problem in our society.

H. Toisutta, Batu Merah, February 26th, 2007

According to Toisutta, a teacher at the Islamic State University at Ambon (IAIN), it is a necessity for Moluccans to extend the meaning of the pela to embrace others who are excluded in the society. The main notion of the embracing pela is allowing others to come into our lives. The other, in my perspective, is the one who does not belong to our social, cultural, religious and gender categories. Thus, talking about the embracing pela is talking about accepting someone with his or her differences and allowing ourselves to meet one who is different from us. Therefore, we will describe three aspects of the embracing pela, namely:

a. Creating space for the other
b. Coping with differences
c. Developing the notion of brotherhood-sisterhood

II.2.2.1. Creating space for the other

We have to recognize that people who are not part of a pela relationship are considered to be different from people who belong to a pela relationship.

R. Rinsampessy, Passo, December 7th, 2006

One aspect of the embracing pela is that one must have a great willingness to create space for others in his or her life as well as in the society. The idea of the embracing pela, extends the pela into a covenant for all human beings without cultural and religious boundaries.

Reconciliation in Christ is related to the ability to reach others. Thus, embracing is related to the ability to place others in one’s own position. Embracing others, according to Miroslav Volf, is necessary for Christians:

Having been embraced by God, we must make space for others in ourselves and invite them in - even our enemies. This is what we enact as we celebrate the Eucharist. In receiving Christ’s broken body and spilled blood, we, in a sense, receive all those whom Christ received by suffering.439

Volf stresses that through the Eucharist, Christians trust that they belong to the new covenant which places all human beings in the same position before God. This new

439 Volf, Exclusion & Embrace, 129.
covenant asks to create reconciliation among human beings themselves. Therefore, through the Eucharist all Christians who drink wine and eat bread as a symbol of taking part in the suffering of the crucified Christ must share the spirit of the new covenant. Every time Christians take part in the Eucharist, they should renew their commitment to be agents of reconciliation. The message of the crucified Christ should encourage the Moluccan Christians to develop their local pela to be an embracing pela.

The spirit of Eucharist can be developed through the panas pela. The panas pela could become a communal event through which outsiders are allowed and invited to enter the Moluccan society. However, the panas pela can only be the Moluccan communion when it provides a community where all have the same rights.

Interaction between indigenous people and outsiders will create a new cultural life and lead them to a new society as well. This new cultural life enables both indigenous people and outsiders to create a safe society for all of them. This interaction does not mean a compromise but a transformation of different views based on a commitment to embrace each other.

The awareness of creating space for others is a need that must come from every person. The subject who is embracing others is not a second person but I, myself. However, this does not mean that the second person or the outsider is a merely passive object in this process. In contrast, by stating that one must be the subject for embracing the other, all people are considered to be the first person. All people are subjects for embracing each other.

The initiative of ancestors of people from negri Passo and those of negri Batu Merah to establish their pela did not come from a second or third party but it came from themselves as people who recognized that they needed others in their lives. This should inspire the indigenous people to allow outsiders to take part in the social and cultural life of the Moluccans. It does not mean that outsiders take a passive position only; they themselves should also be the subject of embracing indigenous people.

During the conflict, the mother of one of my husband’s colleagues died in Batu Merah. His colleague, a Javanese man (outside the pela) who stays in Batu Merah, called all his Christian friends in their office to inform them and asked them to visit him. My husband said “We express our condolences to your family and you but it is impossible to visit you in this time. We all would be killed”. His colleague in Batu Merah replied: “Trust me, please. I will be killed first if someone would hurt or even kill you”. My husband and his Christian colleagues were afraid, but they started to discuss a possibility to visit their friend who lost his mother. They agreed to visit their colleague who needed their support. However, the problem was how to reach their colleague’s home in Batu Merah, a very dangerous area for Christians in that time. They called their colleague and told him about the problem. He said, “I will pick you all up in Mardika, the nearest place to Batu Merah”. He picked them up in Mardika to go to his home. They spent all night with the family. The colleagues apologized, “Unfortunately, we could not attend the funeral ceremony because we all were very sleepy: We did not close our eyes even for a second. We asked forgiveness of our colleague and asked him to drive us back”. He answered, “The most important thing for me is indeed your presence now”.

This simple story reflects the initiative of this Javanese man to communicate with his colleagues, even in the worst situation. The need of sharing their feelings...
made it possible for him and his colleagues to cross boundaries. Interestingly, the initiator of this meeting was the man who lost his mother. Therefore, this story tells us some important things about creating space for others. First, sharing feelings encourages one to meet others. The Javanese Muslim colleague did not mourn alone. He had a family who was able to support him. However, he needed also the presence of his Christian colleagues who, during that conflict, could not come to Batu Merah’s area. Sharing life is what Wismoady Wahono, an Indonesian theologian, describes as living together as neighbours, friends, fellow citizens, fellow subjects facing common challenges, and above all as fellow human beings with similar basic fears and needs.\(^\text{440}\) Second, trusting each other is necessary to conquer suspicion. There is no possibility to meet each other when there is no trust. Trust enables someone to face dangerous circumstances. Other Christian colleagues and my husband trusted their Muslim colleague because they knew him well. It is important to know each other. One cannot know others if there is no interaction. Every day official job activities have made that these colleagues came close to each other.

**II.2.2.2. Coping with differences**

Embracing others is related to the ability to cope with differences. According to Volf, “Embracing is two people holding each other. The two people meet to share the heart. Thus, when they come to embrace each other, they have known that they are different from one another. […] Our identities are shaped by others with whom we are in relationship.”\(^\text{441}\) In his point, Volf stresses that the life of human beings is always connected to the others. However, the existence of the other is not a threat to the very identity of each himself. Differences bring human beings to come to a real interaction and to understand life in a broader sense. People who respond positively to the differences will achieve an interesting and dynamic interaction. In contrast, people who respond negatively to the differences will tend not to interact with others; they tend to live in their own, closed perspective and they tend to be proud of that way of life.

In order to see how the Moluccans cope with differences in their social-cultural lives as manifestation of their efforts to embrace outsiders, we still need to look at points stressed by some writers with a personal experience in this field.

Marc Gopin, a North American Jewish scholar who has written several books and articles on the Israel-Palestine relation, states,

> The stranger continues to be different but is loved nevertheless. The boundary remains. And the love travels across the boundary day to day like light from the sun. But it does not consume and is not consumed. Both remain vibrant and effluent, and the metaphor of Divine relationship to and love for the world is re-enacted in the relationship of self and other, in the ethical relationship of meeting across boundaries that are never destroyed.\(^\text{442}\)

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This quotation implies three important steps of coping with differences. The first step is to recognize differences; the second step is to respect differences and the third step is to reconcile differences.

To recognize differences is the first step for coping with differences because a person cannot manage himself to have interaction with others in a positive way when he or she does not know what kind of person he is facing or talking with. However, one needs to step forward to the second step which is to respect differences. You cannot cope with differences when you stop at the first step. By respecting differences, one does not impose or press the other to follow and accept one’s own values. Unfortunately, this second step still has a weakness because both sides will only reach a level of tolerance. Therefore, a third step is needed, that is to reconcile differences. Reconciling differences means those differences can live side by side as human entities and those differences can come to a dynamic interaction. This is the meaning of embracing others.

The points of view of Volf and Gopin offer a positive and a new climate to speak about the pela and how the participants of a pela must embrace others. From their ideas, we notice that to embrace others does not mean that others must be culturally separate from the members of a pela. They are still different but their otherness may not be the reason to be excluded in the Moluccans’ society. Generally spoken, this is a major Indonesian problem. Struggling to search for a role of the church in relation to the problem of ethnicity in Indonesia, Gerrit Singgih says, “Ethnicity has become something very exclusive and as such must be evaluated negatively as ethnicism” Commenting on Singgih’s points, the Belgian-Dutch theologian Eddy Van der Borght, writes, “The churches [sc. in Indonesia, RI] are unprepared for this critical role, because their lack of theological reflection on the meaning of ethnicity itself.”

Through the eye of the crucified Christ, Moluccan Christians can transform their viewpoints concerning others who are not members of a pela. We agree with Volf, when he states,

*The will to give ourselves to others and “welcome” them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity. The will to embrace precedes any “truth” about others and any construction of their “justice.”*

De Gruchy adds another aspect: “The meaning of reconciliation seems so obvious to us until we really get into serious discussion with those alienated from us, and begin to explore the issues in more depth.” In his exploration about reconciliation in the South African context, he describes rightly how one must understand his or her own

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identity in connection to others: “So the question of identity, whether it prevents us from relating to the ‘other’, or whether it is transcended through identification with the ‘other’ in the fashioning of a new identity, is a critical issue in understanding the dynamics of reconciliation.”

For Moluccans, De Gruchy’s ideas are fruitful and challenging:

The struggle over identity, and the attempt to construct a common South African identity within which other identities are recognized and respected, is at the heart of national reconciliation. Indeed, it is often said that the ‘national question’ has to do with ‘who is an African’ within the South African context, a question that does not have to do so much with ethnicity as it does with commitment and building relationships.

This is a relevant question for Moluccans: who are Moluccans in the Moluccas’ context? Are they only those people who belong to the local Moluccan culture? There are many possible answers for those questions. The perspective of interviewees in the negri Batu Merah offers one way to answer those two questions.

According to some of them, especially the local officers in negri Batu Merah, they always encourage outsiders who stay in Batu Merah to confess “I am a person from negri Batu Merah coming from Bugis or from Makasar or from Java or from Southeast of the Moluccas”. In this frame of thinking, the local officers of Batu Merah are trying to convince outsiders who stay in negri Batu Merah to accept this negri as theirs. This has two consequences for both indigenous people and outsiders. Firstly, the indigenous inhabitants of negri Batu Merah must be ready to allow outsiders to enter their sphere of cultural, social, economical, political existence. This will create a new atmosphere in their lives. Secondly, as to the outsiders themselves, they will face a new society which may challenge them to accommodate, which means that they should be ready to lose their own culture.

A culture can only have a future when it does not exclude others. It can only be a developing culture when it starts to communicate with other cultures. A community of human beings experiences only a dynamic process if it has vivid contact with other communities.

For Christians, embracing others and their otherness will enable them to communicate as well as to witness through their daily lives how the crucified Christ has embraced them. Christ abandoned his glory for a while in order to embrace human beings. Christ did not lose his glory totally. Therefore, it is counterproductive to think that one will lose his own cultural identity when one wants to embrace others. While embracing others, one can continue to experience one’s own cultural identity.

II.2.2.3. Developing the notion of brotherhood- sisterhood

Hearing these two callings: kaka pe and ade pe, one is reminded of one’s relation as brother and sister. You are reminded of who you are and who she or he is.

447 De Gruchy, Reconciliation, 30.
448 De Gruchy, Reconciliation, 31.
449 Interviews with Haji A. Ternate on November 29th, 2006; S.Kiat on December 4th, 2006; Haji A. Mamang on December 12th, 2006; Haji M. Tjiat on December 4th, 2006; Haji Ustad Salim on January 31st, 2007.
Haji. A. Mamang, Batu Merah, December 12th, 2006

*Kaka pe* (older brother/sister) and *ade pe* (younger brother/sister) are general Moluccan terms to indicate that there is a *pela* brotherhood with another. These two terms are not merely technical terms. They imply a social-cultural responsibility in every aspect of their lives as human beings. As brothers and sisters, they must take care of each other and not fight each other.

Psychologically, these terms bring the participants to see, to accept, and to communicate with each other like biological brothers and sisters. The feeling of blood brothers and sisters touches the heart of the participants of a *pela*. However, this requires a special form of life.

The weakness of excluding outsiders can be overcome by understanding this brotherhood relationship based on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In Pauline theology, it is understood that Jesus Christ brings a new relationship into the life of all human beings. A brotherly relationship is not a merely biological or cultural relation.

The participants of the *pela* between *negri* Batu Merah and *negri* Passo show much openness to outsiders. Outsiders who have live for years and for generations in those two *negri* are considered as indigenous people. Nevertheless, there is still a difference in policy between *negri* Batu Merah and *negri* Passo in allowing outsiders to be an integral part of their society. In *negri* Passo, outsiders are accepted into the system of this *negri* by categorizing them in *soa mesang*, a *soa* that does not give the right to its members to be elected as a *raja*. In *negri* Batu Merah, the distinction between indigenous people and outsiders is becoming smaller. In the process of a *raja* election in *negri* Batu Merah, being indigenous is not an issue. “To be elected as a *raja*, the capability of a candidate is of greater concern than indigenous or outsider issues. However, the candidate must know the *adat* of this *negri* well". Thus, there is a kind of social-cultural examination that must be passed by outsiders before being considered as brothers-sisters.

The theological issue of the crucified Christ who opens a new sphere in human relations encourages Christians to understand the meaning of brother and sister deeply. The core message of the crucified Christ is that becoming brother and sister to one another is not merely a given existence as a biological or a social-cultural relation. It is a process and must be created. Thus, being a brother or sister in the biological sense is not a final form of existence.

Let me give an example. On April 30th, 2009, together with *pak* Hoekema, my co-supervisor, I visited *raja* Awath in *negri* Batu Merah. We came to his local office, but the *raja* was not there due to illness. After making a phone call, a staff member at his office informed us that we could go to the home of the raja. Entering *raja*’s home, *pak* Hoekema was welcomed by the *raja*. He embraced *pak* Hoekema firmly and said to him, “Welcome to my home, my brother”. In this case, the *raja* *negri* Batu Merah stepped forward to make a brotherly relation with *pak* Hoekema, a Dutch Christian pastor. There was no oath, only a meeting which encouraged *raja* Awath to act as if *pak* Hoekema were his brother. This way of greeting was totally different from

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450 An interview with Mrs. M. Tuhelelu, on May 6th, 2009.
451 *Pak* is an Indonesian word for mister.
our first meeting in March 2007, when we, pak Hoekema, his wife, and I met the raja in his office. The different expressions shown by the raja indicate that to know someone is an element in creating a brotherhood-sisterhood relation. A meeting and an interaction are means to come to such a relationship.

This brotherhood is a theological idea mentioned by Paul in his exploration about the crucified Christ. In one of his letters, Paul writes “in Christ, there are no Jews, nor Gentiles (Col.3,11)”. Biological as well as cultural relations help human beings to experience the relation and the shape of brotherhood. It should not exclude others.

II.2.3. The peacemaking pela

The first question here is “what is the difference between peace and reconciliation?” In this writing, I simply understand peace as a result or a consequence of reconciliation. Reconciliation implies a process in which certain activities are performed in order to bring two or more parties together after a situation of estrangement, while peace refers more to a stable condition in which people are harmoniously live. Peace is the ‘face’ of reconciliation and reconciliation is the ‘soul’ of peace.

The peacemaking pela is a challenging idea because it always demands one to try to manage his or her anger. It challenges everyone to respond positively to whatever caused one to become disappointed. This must be noticed since one cannot escape the fact that in the life of all human beings a very small difference of opinion can raise a problem. How human beings can be able to deal with the differences is a main idea of the peacemaking pela. Thus, peacemaking depends on the willingness of everyone to communicate or to relate to one another openly, while she or he must be ready also to get unexpected and even very negative reactions.

It is a promising idea since it can create a society in which people will always try to make peace in their lives. Therefore, in the frame of the peacemaking pela, it is important to say that every potential conflict can become a source for creating peace. This point is mentioned because places and situations of conflict and suffering can become great occasions and opportunities for renewal and healing of the life of all human beings who cannot escape from problems. In his study about peace in the New Testament, Willard Swartley, a Mennonite New Testament scholar, writes, quoting Erich Dinkler:

1. Peace and reconciliation are tied to Jesus Christ in such a way that the cause for peace is anchored in the blood of Christ, in his crucifixion. Peace is constituted through the cross, and at the same time the crucifixion with its offensive character as skandalon is interpreted as peace.
2. Peace as the abolition of enmity carries two dimensions of meaning, though with no clear separation between them: the reconciliation affects the God-human relationship, giving the reconciled person free access to God; and it leads to the unity in the church of those separated, thus tearing down the walls of enmity.452

In these two points, Swartley understands peace and reconciliation as two facts established by Jesus Christ through his crucifixion. According to Swartley, peace refers to a condition where enmity has been abandoned, while reconciliation imposes a process of creating a new climate in relationship between God and human beings, especially the process to break all gaps separating one another. This shows clearly the distinction between peace and reconciliation.

Apart from these theological arguments based upon the idea of the crucified Christ, the *pela* speaks implicitly about peace and reconciliation, though no clear distinction between peace and reconciliation is made.

Some notions of the peacemaking *pela* will be elaborated here:
1. Creating face to face encounters
2. Coping with anger and enmity

**II.2.3.1. Creating face to face encounters**

First of all, when we are going to talk about the peacemaking *pela*, we must notice that one cannot start to speak about peace and reconciliation when there is no face to face meeting. A face to face encounter is a recognizable sign of reconciliation. During the conflict in the Moluccas, there were many efforts by many organizations to stop the conflict and to start to create reconciliation between the two hostile communities. The Indonesian government was one of these organizations. Thamrin Elly, a Moluccan Muslim intellectual, who was involved in the process of reconciliation in the Moluccas, shared his experience. He said that at first the Indonesian government tried to bring Muslim and Christian leaders from the Moluccas together to have a round table talk in Jakarta. Those leaders went to Jakarta by different airplanes and they stayed there in different hotels. This situation had a negative effect on the reconciliation efforts. The approach of the Indonesian government did not work because each side refused to meet the other. The two sides, which had been manipulated to become enemies, only talked to one another through the Indonesian government, which tried to become a mediator but failed. Consequently, no positive agreement was achieved through this effort. Both sides returned to the Moluccas as they came to Jakarta: there was no change.\(^{453}\)

The reason was that no face to face meeting took place. Each side hid his face from the other; there was no eye contact to see how both of them were suffering and hurt. They could not touch one another’s pain, so there was no willingness to stop the source of that wound. Only the second Malino declaration on February 12, 2002\(^ {454}\) provided a positive result of the mediation by the Indonesian government.

Basically, in the *pela*, visiting one another, which means meeting each other face to face, indicates a strong brotherhood relationship. By contrast, rarely meeting each other indicates that the brotherhood is about to be forgotten. Simply, we have to say that through a face to face meeting, one is aware of the real existence of another, even to discover the same wound and pain that both sides are enduring. Why did this positive cultural virtue not shape the character of the Moluccans to solve their problem? Abidin Waccano and Thamrin Elly said that at that time, the Moluccan

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\(^{453}\) An interview with T. Elly on December 17, 2007 in Ibis Hotel in Utrecht.

Christians and the Moluccan Muslims saw one another as people who came from two different religions. “Indeed, they came as Muslims and Christians”, according to Waccano.455

The initiative to create a face to face encounter, especially in the midst of a conflict, demands a self-sacrifice which means that one must be ready to pay attention to not only his-her own suffering. By contrast, both sides must realize that they are suffering, so together they can take action to end the conflict. At this stage, ending the conflict as well as the estrangement is the main aim of meeting face to face. By doing so, people touch a very common basic need of human beings, that is interdependence.

In order to build a reconciled society in the Moluccans, face to face encounter is a very basic social-cultural instrument. The tendency to have an exclusive area such as having settlements based on a certain religion or culture should be evaluated, even must be questioned because this does not help the society to come to a face to face encounter.

People from outside of the Moluccas stay in certain areas in Ambon city. More precisely, they build their own communities, so our local customs do not penetrate their lives.

H. Toisutta, Batu Merah, February 26th, 2007

There is no social-cultural interaction; consequently, it is not easy to speak about peacemaking when a conflict happens. Some interviewees in Batu Merah said that it was very difficult to reach outsiders in negri Batu Merah since they live in an exclusive area. This exclusive settlement also contributes to maintaining exclusive cultural and religious sentiments during the conflict.

II.2.3.2. Coping with anger and enmity

In the pela, the participants of a pela must always try to keep peace in their daily lives. The cultural obligation of a pela emphasizes this peace aspect, for example, “not fighting each other” as a cultural obligation of the pela between negri Batu Merah and negri Passo. This cultural obligation is a common basic principle which is needed to avoid conflicts and develop a peaceful society.

Because of a pela, a potential conflict can be minimized. During the conflict in the Moluccas, Muslims from Batu Merah and Christians from Passo could have fought, but they did not because they had a pela commitment to one another. This was the situation of almost all pela villages in the Moluccas.456

Peace and reconciliation as important themes in Paul’s theology also imply suffering for each other. Many people, both Muslims and Christians, suffered during the conflict in the Moluccas because no one wanted to suffer alone. They developed suffering into a reason to continue to fight and to kill others, contradicting the message of the crucified Christ. On the cross, Jesus Christ showed his positive attitude toward suffering. He suffered but he did not act against people who punished him.

The peacemaking pela is also connected with the ability to control enmity. Minimizing feelings of enmity is not easy. It can be done when one has an attitude of

455 Interviews with both of them on December 17th, 2007 in Ibis Hotel in Utrecht.
456 All interviewees notice this fact.
sacrifice in his life. According to Willard Swartley, "the meaning of the cross as overcoming and ending the hostility between the Jews and formerly alienated Gentiles lies at the heart of Paul’s gospel proclamation.” And he adds, “Reconciliation is the outcome of God’s peacemaking event through Jesus Christ, incarnating God’s love for enemies.[…] All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation: this is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2.Cor.5:18-19)."457

Thus, the notion of the peacemaking pela teaches us, that a pela is not merely a finished event; it is an ongoing process. One element of this is that the participants of a pela as well as all Moluccans accept their once established pela as a source of learning about how to cope with enmity. That event, then, provides the Moluccans the possibilities to develop the pela system as a living process.

Unfortunately, by emphasizing only the pela as something established in old times, there is no dynamic creation of peacemaking in the life of the Moluccans. Peacemaking, which is an aspect of a pela, cannot reach out to others if the Moluccans are focused too much on the act of their ancestors. Only when they are able to see their ancestors as a mode of learning, will they be able to act as agents of peacemaking as their ancestors did in their time.

Based on this, we must read critically what the Mennonite theologians Alan and Eleanor Kreider and their Indonesian colleague Paulus Widjaja, a teacher at the theological faculty of Duta Wacana Christian University (Yogyakarta), as experts in the field of peace building, write in their book A Culture of Peace,

Conflict can indeed become a danger that may destroy human relationships between the conflicting parties and cause loss of life and property. But conflict can also become an opportunity for the conflicting parties to transform their relationship and their social system in order to make the whole community healthy.458

For me, the idea that a conflict opens opportunities to transform a bad thing is too idealistic because conflicts create more problems than good things. A transformation can take place without a conflict; in fact, in order to transform our culture, one should not wait until a conflict happens. Transformation of a culture depends on how critically a society continuously examines the existence of its own culture. Asking questions about how a culture works in a society is a way to examine it. It means that a society which never asks about its own culture will never transform its culture.

I would like to explain this sub-theme by citing a personal experience. It happened in November 2002 after attending an Assembly meeting of GPM Synod in Elat, Kei, Southeast Moluccas. Sailing back to Ambon, aboard our ship was a Javanese Muslim. It was the fasting period for Muslims. However, he ate three times a day as we did. After having breakfast, he left his place and came back at night. He had no communication with others around him. A Christian woman informed my sister and me that the man, who slept at the corner, was a Muslim. He had stopped fasting when the ship entered the Kupang area, west Timur. She told us that the man was very afraid

457 Swartley, Covenant of Peace, 201.
because this was a Christian area. For that reason he always left his place near us. When the man came back to his place at night, my sister and I tried to communicate with him. During our conversation, he told us that he decided to stop fasting because he was afraid that Christians would recognize him as a Muslim. This could be dangerous as Christians and Muslims were fighting in the Moluccas. We, all Christians on the same deck, encouraged him not to be afraid. Then he informed us that he came to the Moluccas to visit his daughter who worked in a company in a place on the island of Seram, but since it was his first journey to the Moluccas, he did not know where it was. We informed a pastor who served on Seram about the man’s problem. The pastor helped him to meet his daughter. Some months later, the pastor informed us that before going back to Java the man visited the pastor to thank him. “He very much appreciated what we had done for him”, said the pastor.

This story explains some things which religious people in Indonesia, especially in the Moluccas must consider. Firstly, even though at that time there was no religious fighting at Kupang, Timor was identified as a Christian area, which meant it was an unsafe place for a Muslim. Secondly, by having an open communication, Muslims and Christians showed each other that they were no enemies. Thirdly, the meaning of the pela is violated when other communities do not receive a positive impact from its virtues.

II.2.4. The conflict resolving pela
What we mean by the conflict resolving pela, is the commitment of people who are reconciled to one another to restore their lives. Therefore, they are ready to discover the truth of both sides of the history: the truth of the conflict.

II.2.4.1. Telling the truth
In the conflict there were many opinions about the source of the conflict and the many incidents during the conflict. This fact did not help to reconcile Christians and Muslims who were both victims of it. The aspect of conflict resolving in the pela can help Moluccans to find and to tell the truth about the conflict in the Moluccas.

One cannot restore peace and truly reconcile when the true facts are lost. Acknowledging that recovering the truth is very important, Wilhelm Verwoerd, a grandson of South Africa’s former prime minister who was the architect of apartheid, broke with the past and became a member of the ANC. He stated,

An important way to remember moral evil is to allow those who were dehumanized to tell their stories, or if the victims are no longer alive, to continue to tell and to retell what happened to them. In doing so, we prevent forgetfulness from killing the victims twice; in a ‘tiny way’ we thus repay the debt we owe to the victims’; we help to ‘restore the human and civil dignity of such victims by granting them an opportunity to relate their own accounts of the violence of which they are victims.’

Verwoerd touches the very basic reason of finding the truth as an important element in the process of reconciliation. Finding the truth is not only for the benefit of the victims but also for the benefit of perpetrators in the sense of acknowledging their guilt.

Finding the real cause of the conflict is an important element that is needed in order to restore the relationship of people in the Moluccan society. This implies a readiness of both Moluccan Muslims and Moluccan Christians to sit around a table to discover what happened in the past conflict. By doing so, they must also be ready to tell and to hear what happened, even things which may hurt themselves. Finding the truth is very important to reconcile the Moluccan society because it also opens a possibility to start a new perspective in their life. In addition, finding the truth creates many benefits not only for the Moluccans now, but it also helps the next generations to understand what happened in their history.

The conflict did not occur separately from other conflicts elsewhere in Indonesia, so Moluccans were also victims; nevertheless one cannot deny the fact that Moluccans also made many mistakes during the conflict. For example, they killed people based on their religion. Therefore, in order to restore their lives, Moluccans must openly confess what they did. Even though religion was only a provocative issue, it was a determining indicator to take action, and religious sentiments caused the conflict to spread in many places. The conflict resolving aspect of the pela helps us to discover that it is a necessity for Moluccans to confess their guilt because of the conflict.

Confessing guilt implies a responsibility towards oneself and others. One shows his or her responsibility in the sense that one acknowledges that what she or he did was wrong as the first step towards reconciliation. The second step, then, is the awareness of the fact, that because of one’s deeds, others suffered or even lost their lives; that requires openly asking for forgiveness. Therefore, confessing guilt will bring victims and perpetrators to meet each other. At this point, they share and discover their true stories about suffering and oppression.

In the process of the meeting between perpetrators and victims, perpetrators must be the first party who initiate the meeting. They should not wait for forgiveness from victims as a first step. By taking the initiative, the perpetrator convinces the victims about his wish to heal the wounds of the victims.

In a reconciliation process truth telling stories are needed. First, because to both oppressing and oppressed people such stories tell the true facts whether these facts are good or bad. This prevents misunderstandings about the past events. Second, truth telling stories encourage those, who formed part of the oppressors to recognize and to acknowledge their mistakes, whereas the oppressed people will notice that their sufferings are about to come to an end. In this way, the two parties, the perpetrators and the victims, act together in order to heal the past. This is an aspect of justice. Reconciliation without justice is merely a mask. Justice without reconciliation is an abstract idea. Third, a truth telling story reflects a deep willingness to create a new and better future together. The boundaries and the stumbling blocks have been crossed.

The good impact of truth telling became clear during the reconciliation process in South Africa. Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu truly believed that they could gain reconciliation when the true facts were recovered. Recovering the truth opens the gates to true reconciliation. In the Moluccan context, keeping the pela alive
is a way of telling the truth story, even the story of enmity between two or three villages before the pela was established. The pela must also play an important role in telling the truth about the recent conflict in the Moluccas.

We recall the story of a young Christian Moluccan boy in Jakarta, mentioned in Chapter I. He had a wrong impression about Muslims because of his misunderstanding about what actually happened during the conflict in the Moluccas. Muslims have the same wrong impressions about Christians. How the pela can play a role in the truth telling about the conflict in the Moluccas in 1999-2004, is an unfinished task for all Muslims and Christians.

II.2.4.2. Orientation to the present and future time

By living the pela to show their obedience to their ancestors, participants of a pela tend to see the past as the source of happiness, while the present life is a threat. The past provides hope and is something definite, while the present is indefinite and dark. Consequently, they cannot shape their present life in the sense of creating a better life, but they live their daily life as a fulfillment of a past cultural obligation.

We want to do panas pela but for now, we cannot because we are afraid to make mistakes. If we perform the adat in a wrong way, we will have a problem.

Mrs. Simatauw-Maitimu, Passo, April 20th 2009

Cultural obligation must not be seen as a responsibility to the past but as a responsibility to the present life in order to create future life. Responsibility to the present must shape our understanding of our local culture, including our adat.

The tendency to look only to past events as the main motivation for the participants of a pela to maintain their cultural life must be changed. The participants and the Moluccans as a whole must connect the pela into their present and future life because the pela has no meaning if it does not help Moluccans to form their present and the future. The present day is an opportunity to create a new life, to develop a new notion about the spirit of the pela, while the past should be a source for learning.

The changes the concept of the pela underwent in the course of Moluccan history (see chapter IV) must encourage the Moluccans to extend the circle of a pela. The past event is an event of inspiration; it is not a final event. It is an example of creativity, not a counterproductive event. Creativity to give meaning to the past by developing its virtues is more important than to keep the pela alive only to memorize a past event. Rather, they must give meaning to the virtues of the past event by developing them through their creativity to overcome all forms of alienation and estrangement in their cultural lives as well as in their religious lives.

The pela will be an inspiration of creativity when Moluccans are not afraid to act differently from what they did in the past. A different context forces people to act in a different way. In the same spirit, descendants must act differently compared their ancestors, especially because their life is not oriented to the past but has an orientation towards the present and the future.

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460 See Introduction of chapter I.
Please do not talk about religion. Now, we, Christians and Muslims, live side by side. Many of our neighbours are Muslims and we are not afraid. Our Muslim neighbours do not know about the conflict. We do not want to talk about it anymore. When I was in Jakarta due to my health, many Muslims visited me in the hospital.

R. Borolla, June 23rd, 2007

Everyday we make jokes with our Muslim neighbours. We are not afraid to live among Muslims.

T. Wakim, June 23rd, 2007

Every morning, I walk from Ahuru to Karang Panjang with some of my Muslim neighbours. We talk to each other, sometimes we even make jokes.

F. Borolla, June 24th, 2007

These quotes are reflections about how people understand the present day in connection with the past. The three interviewees were victims; their houses were burned, so they had to live in a shelter. Their words tell about how victims try to rebuild their daily lives together with Muslims who were earlier seen as enemies just because they belonged to a different religion. They started to see Muslims again as people who are integral parts of the society.

From their remarks, we can notice two important perspectives about healing history. First, is that the power of restoration or healing history is the wish to gain a better future without any wish to take revenge. Second, daily life meetings and conversations are a better way to heal our history. Christians and Muslims in negri Batu Merah are together in their journey to start a new history. Sharing life with others is better than controlling each other or creating conflicts.

III. The role of the GPM in creating reconciliation

As one of the religious institutions in the Moluccas, the GPM has an important role in the Moluccan society to promote and to create reconciliation which is not only needed in religious relationship but is also necessary in the Moluccans social-cultural life. In order to be an agent of reconciliation, the GPM must:

1. Develop a framework of a specific Christology
2. Be the pela-innovator
3. Promote panas pela as a Moluccan communion

III.1. To develop a framework of a specific Christology

It is a necessity in our belief to witness Jesus whenever and wherever we are. Demonstrating how the pela pact has been established, we, people from Passo said: in the name of Jesus Christ in whom we believe, we accept people from Batu Merah as our kaka pe.

J. Moses, December 8th, 2006
The plea of a theological transformation in chapter IV shows that the notion of the crucified Christ should be a basic theological assumption of the GPM to reinterpret the *pela* in order to achieve a reconciled society in the Moluccas. That double theological transformation implies also that the *pela* provides a special perspective to the GPM to understand the crucified Christ, especially as the bridge and the reconciler of all kinds of enmity and estrangement.

First of all, the crucified Christ as *Tete Manis, Upu Lanite* or *Upler*, is the almighty God who sacrificed Himself in order to stop enmity among human beings. This means that *Tete Manis*, loves all people: His love goes beyond ethnic, cultural, and even religious boundaries. The basic principle to look for reconciliation in the life of human beings is an important aspect of this notion.

For the Moluccan Christians especially, this notion offers a special perspective to understand how the message of the crucified Christ must be related to other religions. By seeing the crucified Christ as the Moluccan Ancestor who has sacrificed Himself in order to overcome religious problems, the crucified Christ did not reconcile only those who believe in him with God. Reconciliation through the crucified Christ is offered to all people who live in estrangements. Thus, he bridges all gaps created by human beings including religious gaps. This is one part of the message of the new covenant which places all human beings in an equal position before God.

This first notion opens up two perspectives in religious life, namely rejecting a triumphant attitude and rejecting religious alienation. These are two very important issues that must be considered since the GPM often deals with a triumphant attitude.

The Christian faith teaches us how to believe in God. This is also the faith of the Islam. Therefore, we must respect each other.

G. Rinsampessy, Passo, December 6th, 2006

As has been described in chapter III, because of the *pela* relationship, no triumphant attitude of Christians is possible; Jesus Christ is Lord God, their savior. Within the frame shaped by the *pela*, Muslim Moluccas do not see Christians as gentiles, even though according to Islam, Jesus Christ is not the Lord God, but only a prophet. On the other hand, Christian Moluccans do not see Muslims as gentiles or pagan, even though Muslims do not believe in Christ.

In this frame of reference, the GPM should not be afraid to speak about Jesus Christ as their Lord. Besides, the GPM must criticize notions which tend to reject speaking about Jesus Christ as Lord in facing other religions. Acting on this principle, in supporting the existence of plurality of religion, the GPM offers a new understanding about religious life which should not omit specific aspects of each religion.

This helps the Moluccan Christians to see Jesus, the crucified Christ as the One Lord who worked in the life of the Moluccan ancestors and still works in present days. From this perspective, the Moluccans should not make any differentiation between *Tete Manis, Upu Lanite-Upler* and Jesus Christ, the Lord in whom they believe. This implies that the Moluccan Christians will appreciate their ancestors as believers even though they did not know and hear who Jesus Christ is. Through this, the tendency to believe in the ancestors will be reduced. A prayer of a Muslim imam at the event of
panas gandong reminds the Moluccan Muslims and Christians that their ancestors were human beings who were also in God’s hand:

\[
\text{Ya Allah be compassionate to us as you were to our ancestors, who then could establish this gandong relationship}
\]

Haji, Hutumury, November 7\textsuperscript{th}, 2006

By the confession that Tete Manis, Upu Lanite-Upler is the Lord, Jesus Christ, the GPM takes a step forward in its understanding and belief, because the church does not understand Jesus Christ the Lord in the chronological or ‘temporal’ perspective, but the church understands and believes Jesus Christ in an eternal perspective.

Secondly, the notion that the crucified Christ as Tete Manis, Upu Lanite or Upler, is the Lord Almighty God, requires that the Moluccans do not look at their individual or particular interest, but at the interest of the community as a whole. This implies, that an individual orientation is to be regarded as an attitude against the wish of Christ, Tete Manis, and therefore as a sin.

This point of view offers a new insight in the Christians’ doctrine of salvation. Christ does not only offer salvation to each individual but to all as a community; salvation should not be just an individual effort, but also a communal effort. All people in a community must act together to experience the present dimension of the salvation. However, through the eyes of the crucified Christ, the Moluccan Christian must also develop the principle that each individual has responsibility to the life of the community. For the GPM itself, this second aspect should criticize the tendency of the church only to look for its own institutional interest. Cooperation with other religious institutions must be performed based on the principle of equality. In performing its mission, the church is called upon to take part actively in every aspect of human life because the church is part of the world community. Its mission is to work in this world. An example of its work for the interest of the community is dealing with abuse of human rights, oppression of women and any kind of discrimination.

Thirdly, as Tete Manis the crucified Christ is the Lord, Almighty God who lives with and among human beings to guide and advise them and to give them joy. This notion provides a balance to the theological idea which places Christ in a transcendent position. However, his proximity to human beings does not mean that He can be controlled by human beings. He lives among human beings but He is still the Almighty God who has an authority of his own. Psychologically and theologically, this perspective will provide a strong motivation for people to overcome all suffering.

The joy that Tete Manis, the crucified Christ, gives to the Moluccans goes beyond religious boundaries. Therefore, the Christians and Muslims can share their joy at religious events and celebrations. This idea can be noticed during religious events through which Moluccan Muslims and Christians can participate together. To be precise, for the Moluccans, time for celebration creates joy and togetherness.

As to the understanding of their belief, neither Christians in negri Passo nor Muslims in negri Batu Merah depend on formal formulations or regulations by the Indonesian government. They rather prefer to break governmental regulations and also their religious rules than to break their brotherhood relation. This implies that religions
as well as the state must help their members to celebrate their faith in a climate of brotherhood.

Before the government issued laws that separated us because of our religious differences, people from Batu Merah took part in Christian ceremonies such as Christmas and people from Passo also took part in an MTQ event. This is no longer possible. However, recently, people from Batu Merah and Passo are more likely to celebrate their religious events together. Here, I agree with Isasi-Diaz when she writes:

For the kind of dialogue needed for reconciliation to happen, we must embrace a way of understanding differences, as explained above, that does not focus on what separates, excludes and sets us in opposition, but rather recognizes that differences presume boundaries that enables people to make connections and come together. Dialogue cannot happen unless we recognize differences and diversity not necessarily as what separates us but as what we each bring to the table, as the sources from which each of us involved in the process of reconciliation can draw to conceptualize the future and begin to create it. 461

According to Isasi Diaz, “A call to true dialogue and reconciliation is not a call to betray one’s values. However, all those who engage in dialogue need to understand that there are different values and/or that the same values can be actualized differently in diverse circumstances.” 462 The Catholic theologian, Mardiatmadja, emphasizes the same position: “Authenticity, truth and truthfulness have become the essential elements for contemporary inter-religious dialogue. Dialogue is a human process to be truthfully social” 463 […] Truthfulness in dialogue also means not denying the differences that exist, but openly confessing them. 464

When we as Indonesian IFP 465 fellows were in Maastricht to attend a three months Pre-Academy Training, we stayed in an apartment building where 15 students shared two kitchens. In the first two weeks, these two kitchens were almost divided according to religion. For cooking, the three Muslim women moved to a kitchen at the other side of the floor, whereas a Christian woman who lived at that side of the building went to share the other kitchen with two other Christian women and two Muslim men. This caused an unbalance in using the kitchens: one kitchen was shared by ten students, while another kitchen was shared by five students. We, the three Christian students, realized that the three Muslim women were afraid to share kitchen utensils which might be used by us to prepare non-halal food. We explained openly to the two men Muslim students that we only used the small pan to prepare non-halal food, so they could use the big one. These two men Muslim students said “It does not matter. We can use it when you have cleaned it.” This situation led to a table discussion among all the students. We agreed that we must use the kitchen which was at our side of the building. The three female Muslim students moved back to us to

462 Ibidem.
465 International Fellowship Program of Ford Foundation.
share the same kitchen. At the beginning, we still used different tools for cleaning kitchen utensils. However, this changed as time passed by. We used the same tools for cleaning kitchen materials, and after cooking non-
halal food we made sure that the small pan had been cleaned. In the end, we ran our daily lives without excluding one another because of our religious differences.

We came to manage our religious differences after spending time together. Thus, we were not only aware of our religious difference but we tried to cope with those differences as well. We came to understand each other through a daily life dialogue. Thus, openness in religious lives does not mean one must abandon his or her faith. Rather, openness means a brave attitude to bring religious differences into contact with each other without destroying them. Through daily life communication and interaction, we discovered the possibilities of a theological relation which according to Sumartana is needed:

It is time and necessary to find systematic ways to reconcile the two with each other in the hope that their conflictual potency does not spread into the general community. A good deal of basic thinking is needed on topics such as theological relations, more communicative relations between leaders, institutional relations, joint action, etc.\(^{466}\)

What we were experiencing in Maastricht was a mutual relationship which helped us to discover the essence of our religious life, which is our limitation to understand the Almighty God fully. Acquiring that stage, one will be open to God to allow Him to do His miraculous works in this world.

This specific Christology has great implications for understanding the mission of the church in the Moluccas. Related to other religions, the mission of the church should be understood as a mission to overcome religious gaps. Besides, the pela also provides a special perspective in performing and understanding the mission of Christians and Muslims: to help the Moluccan Christians to be good Christians and the Moluccan Muslims to be good Muslims.

Also, this specific Christology implies a commitment of the GPM to help the Moluccan Christians to discover and to experience Jesus Christ in their personal lives. Of course, this does not mean that the church has abandoned the basic principle of the Christian faith. However, the GPM needs its own Christology in order to bring the crucified Christ to speak in its own context. Moreover, in its specific Christology, the GPM offers new insight to Christian faith that the crucified Christ had worked in the lives of the Moluccan ancestors although they did not know about Him.

III.2. The GPM as innovator of the pela

To be an agent of reconciliation, the GPM should develop the spirit of the pela through its mission in order to break all segregation in the life of human beings. However, the GPM can only play role in creating reconciliation, when it functions in the Moluccan society as the innovator of the pela. So, the church must not encourage participants of

a *pela* to hold the *pela* as it was. Rather, the church must help these participants and the Moluccans as a whole to live according to the spirit of the *pela*.

In order to be such an innovating force, the GPM must have a critical voice and be brave in its mission. The church should help the Moluccans to see the virtues and weaknesses of the *pela*, and then encourage them to develop the spirit of the *pela*. It means that the GPM must not be afraid to reform the *pela*. This may be a difficult thing for the church, especially if she does not want to make the same mistakes made by the earlier missionaries who tended to destroy Moluccan local culture. Instead, by raising a critical voice, the church can play a role in reinterpreting the local culture and developing the spirit of the *pela*.

To innovate the *pela* means that the church develops the *pela* in new perspectives. To do so, means that the church must be courageous and not afraid; in raising a critical voice, the church must be ready to take risks.

### III.3. To promote the *panas pela* as a Moluccan communion

The first question is: what is the meaning of the *panas pela* as a Moluccan communion? The main idea of the *panas pela* is to affirm to one another that negri or *pela* villages are still brothers-sisters. Thus, the spirit of the *panas pela* makes clear, that the brotherhood-sisterhood relationship is still alive today. In order to refresh that commitment, they have to gather together in a special ceremony.

During this ceremony, all people have to show their commitment that the Moluccan society does not belong to a certain ethnic group or religion. The Moluccan society belongs to all who stay and live in the Moluccas. Therefore, all have full responsibility to look for stability of the society; all have responsibility to look for welfare of the society.

In order to develop the *panas pela* into a Moluccan form of communion, we must pay attention to some important factors. First of all, within the communion there is equality. Second, in the communion there is openness to share hope, and pain, and third, full participation.

Equality in a communion means that all who differ from each other because of their cultural, ethnic or religious background come and join the same communion. Within the frame of reference of a communion, equality implies that those differences have the same rights to exist. They meet in an interaction, so people who celebrate the communion experience a rainbow of life through which intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects of the life of people will be touched. People will recognize that each has its own virtues that might be useful for another.

Openness means there is no ‘mask’ in performing the ceremony. Even though something might hurt somebody else, it is better to tell and to show it rather than to express it outside the communion. This communion is a place to talk about pain as well as to recover from pain, and to discover the limitations of each participant. Discovering and dealing with one’s own limitations is a difficult thing. In this communion they show their dignity.

Furthermore, full participation means that the communion is in charge of all people in the Moluccan society. All must participate in order to organize this communion. The communion will be a true communion when all take part in it actively as host and as guest. Nobody can be considered as a host, while another is a
guest. This implies also a rejection of being a minority and majority in the society. Only the ability and the will to share is the principle of participation in the communion.

This communion is slightly different from the existing panas pela. The people who gather in this communion do not have the same ancestors who once swore an oath to establish a pela. Thus, the panas pela as a Moluccan way of communion is a reconciling event which all people in the Moluccan society celebrate. This communion should not exist outside the church authority, but the church must also not prevent the creativity of each individual in the church to have a communal life with other people. It is digging into the depth of the consciousness and human dignity. For the Moluccans, celebrations are an opportunity to gather around one table; to give and to share life together. It is the principle of life of the Moluccans to share happiness during a special religious celebration.

The panas pela as a Moluccan communion can be an event through which all people in the Moluccas gather together and interact. It should be a regular event organized by the GPM together with other religious and social institutions.

This panas pela as the Moluccan way of communion differs slightly from the Eucharist and Idul Fitri. It places all people in the Moluccas in the position of hosts as well as guests, while in the Eucharist, only the Christians are hosts and at Idul Fitri, the Muslims.

The GPM as a religious institution in the Moluccan society has an important role and contribution in creating this communion inspired by religious faith and the spirit of the pela. When the GPM promotes and develops the panas pela as a Moluccans’ communion, the Moluccan Christians will not set apart the spirit of their faith and their daily social-cultural life. In contrast, they will be enabled to integrate their faith into their social-cultural life and to understand and develop their culture based on their faith. In this way, on the one hand, the faith of Moluccan Christians is a faith which touches the heart and the emotional aspects of the Moluccans. On the other hand, the Moluccan culture can be a culture that is open to change and transformation and therefore an inspiration of life.
SUMMARY

Differences and diversity are inherent in the life of human beings. However, they will create a problem when people are not able to reconcile these differences and diversities, especially in a multi-cultural society. The conflict in the Moluccas, Indonesia, in 1999-2004 was an example of the failure to reconcile differences. This conflict challenged the Protestant Church of the Moluccas (GPM) as a major religious institution to play a role in reconciling the Moluccan society, since religion was one of the provocative issues of the conflict.

In order to provide the necessary historical and ecclesiological background, in Chapter II we sketch and analyze a brief history of the GPM. The GPM made a start in meeting and understanding other religions from a new perspective. This new view has been developed in two recent documents, namely the Understanding of Faith of the GPM and the Chief Model of Ministry and Chief Plan of Developing the Ministry (or PIP/RIPP) 2005-2015. They provide some important changes in the theological understanding of other religions. All religions are accepted as pointing to the same God and as partners of the Christians. In its effort to come on speaking terms with other religions, the GPM looks to the local Moluccan culture such as the pela as its frame of reference.

In Chapter III first of all we discuss the pela as an expression of Moluccan culture which, centuries ago, has been established in order to stop enmity between two or three villages and to create new brotherhood-sisterhood relationships among villages. The pela, especially the hard pela (pela keras) is conducted in a ceremony where the parties involved mix a few drops of their blood and drink this mixture, swearing that they are now brothers and sisters. As such, the participants have obligations to one another. Interestingly, these cultural obligations are also applied to their religious lives. Moluccan Muslims may take part in Christmas and other religious celebrations in a church. Likewise, Moluccan Christians may attend a religious celebration in a Mosque. Even though Moluccan Muslims do not believe in Jesus Christ as the Lord, they do not see Moluccan Christians as ‘gentiles’. In this same manner, Christians, who regard Jesus as their Lord, do not label the Muslims as ‘gentiles’.

This cultural relationship worked well during the conflict since the participants of a pela did nearly not fight each other. Nevertheless, the pela only works among its participants; other people do not experience the virtues of the pela. Therefore, one has to acknowledge that the pela still creates estrangement because it implies that there are insiders versus outsiders. This means that the pela has weaknesses and cannot function in the multi-cultural Moluccan society. Religion can play an important role in minimizing these weaknesses. Here, the GPM is challenged to help the Moluccans to understand and to experience their local culture critically.

In Chapter IV we state that a double transformation is necessary of both the pela and the traditional Christology. Transformation of the pela is a way to minimize its weakness and to extend its virtues. In order to transform the pela, the church needs standards or criteria. The notion of double (two-sided) transformation could be an
appropriate approach because it would imply that not only the *pela* will be transformed (in the sense of enlarged), but that also the Moluccan interpretation of Jesus gets its own specific emphasis, namely on Jesus as *tete Manis*.

Paul understands the sacrifice of Christ as a way to reconcile humankind to God. In Jesus Christ, God sacrifices Himself in order to be the bridge between humankind and Himself without any precondition. As a consequence, He asks human beings to become mutually reconciled as well. Moreover, Paul’s theology of the new covenant gives a new perspective in which all human beings are put before God. The crucified Christ places all people in the same position before God. This new covenant goes beyond religious and cultural borders. It breaks down all walls that made humankind to live in situations of estrangement, including religious boundaries.

In the notion of *double* transformation, the idea of the crucified Christ and the idea of the *pela* could be brought into a creative encounter. On the one hand, through the notion of the crucified Christ, the GPM should transform the idea of the *pela*, so that the *pela* can embrace outsiders. On the other hand, the *pela* can also help Moluccan Christians to understand better the meaning of the crucified Christ against the backdrop of their own cultural heritage. Christ can be seen as *Tete Manis* or *Upu Lanite-Upler*, the Lord, who sacrificed Himself in order to break all religious and cultural estrangement and alienation.

So, this endeavor concentrates on two important elements, namely the identification (transformation) of Jesus as *Tete Manis* and the identification (transformation) of the *pela* as all embracing sacrifice and as new covenant.

In the identification of Jesus as *Tete Manis* or *Upu Lanite-Upler*, the crucified Christ receives a more important position in the life of the Moluccans. Like a grandfather who lives with his family, always being a wise and loving advisor to the family, *Tete Manis* is God who lives not far away from the Moluccans and has power in the Moluccans’ life. By the identification of Jesus as *Tete Manis* or *Upu Lanite-Upler*, Jesus Christ replaces the position of the ancestors of the Moluccans to become the only One in Whom the Moluccan Christians believe.

The notion of the sacrifice of the crucified Christ can transform the idea of *pela* which tends to create insiders versus outsiders. Reconciliation as an important aspect of the crucifixion as sacrifice should inspire the Moluccan Christians to extend their brotherhood-sisterhood relationships. Since Jesus Christ is the initiator of the reconciliation between Himself and human beings, Moluccan Christians are invited to take part actively in reconciliation processes. Both religious and cultural alienation must be confronted with the notion of the crucified Christ, so that the frame of *we* (insiders, that is: original Moluccans) *versus* *them* (outsiders, that is: non Moluccans living in the Moluccas) shall be transformed to *we* (insiders) *in connection with them* (outsiders).

In the concluding Chapter V we argue that the transformation of the *pela* as a covenant provides new perspectives in the understanding of the brotherhood-sisterhood relationship in the Moluccan society and thus in the reconciliation process. Here the GPM has to take its responsibilities. Equality should form the Moluccan social lives as well as their religious understanding. Instead of creating discrimination, equality in human relationships should be developed. Looking through the eye of the *pela*, the Moluccan Christians should criticize theological notions which exclude other religious
people before God. Also, the *pela* can teach Christians, that the new covenant established by Christ is not meant for their individual interest but for all human beings as a community. Also, because of the significance and importance of the notion of the crucified Christ the Moluccan Christians should take initiatives to develop a Moluccan society where all people have the same rights.

Inspired by the crucified Christ, the *pela* can be transformed into an embracing *pela* which means that others are not excluded. However, embracing outsiders does not mean that they must lose their own cultural and religious identity. Instead, it means to recognize, to respect and to reconcile these cultural and religious differences. When the *pela* becomes an embracing *pela*, outsiders are allowed to experience the virtues of the *pela*. In this manner the Moluccans should be ready to develop the idea of *pela* into new perspectives. In this respect, the Moluccans will experience their *pela* also as a suffering *pela* because they are ready to take courageous steps in order to create reconciliation in a multi-cultural Moluccan society.

Another new perspective is the idea of the peacemaking *pela*. This means that the *pela* must encourage the Moluccans to have face to face encounters with each other, especially in the situations of anger and enmity. There will be no reconciliation when there is no peace. And there will not be peace when there is no face to face encounter. Furthermore, the *pela* should be a conflict resolving *pela*, not oriented to the past but to the present and the future in order to help the Moluccans to restore their society and to be able to tell the truth about the conflict. Finding and telling the truth about the recent conflict is very important to heal the wounds inflicted in the past.

The GPM could play an influential role in this reconciliation process when it develops its own specific Christology which helps the Moluccans to cross their cultural and religious boundaries. Jesus Christ, as the *Tete Manis-Upu Lanite-Upler*, offers new perspectives for the Moluccan Christians to reject religious boundaries.

By transforming the *pela*, the Moluccans will be able to live according to the spirit of the *pela* rather than to experience their *pela* only as a repetition of the past and as a way to show their respect to their ancestors who established the *pela* relationship. As an important institution in the Moluccas, the GPM could play an active and critical role as the innovator of the *pela*. This role of innovator can also imply that the GPM develops a ceremony of *panas pela* as a Moluccan form of communion. This means, the GPM could take the initiative to bring all people in the Moluccas together during a special event where they take part actively in sharing their stories and expressing their commitment to build the Moluccan society.
SAMENVATTING

Verschil en verscheidenheid zijn inherent aan het leven van de mens. Ze worden echter een probleem, als mensen niet in staat zijn zich met deze verschillen en diversiteit te verzoenen, met name in een multiculturele samenleving. Het conflict dat van 1999 tot 2004 in de Molukken, Indonesië, woedde, was een voorbeeld van het onvermogen om verschillen te verzoenen met elkaar. Dit conflict vormde voor de Protestantse Kerk in de Molukken (Gereja Protestan di Maluku of GPM), als een van de belangrijkste religieuze instituties, een uitdaging om een rol te spelen bij de verzoening in de Molukse samenleving, aangezien religie een van de prangende vraagstukken van dit conflict was.

Om de noodzakelijke historische en ecclesiologische achtergrond te verschaffen, schetsen en analyseren we in Hoofdstuk II allereerst een korte geschiedenis van de GPM. De GPM maakte een begin met het ontnemen en verstaan van andere godsdiensten vanuit een nieuw perspectief. Deze nieuwe visie is ontwikkeld in twee recente documenten, namelijk een *Begrip van het geloof* van de GPM en een *Voornaamste model van dienst en Voornaamste Werkplan tot ontwikkeling van de dienst* (PIP/RIPP) voor de periode 2005-2015. Ze laten een paar belangrijke veranderingen zien in het theologische verstaan van andere religies. Alle religies worden aanvaard als verwijzend naar dezelfde God en als partners van de christenen. In haar poging om in werkelijk gesprek te komen met andere religies, kijkt de GPM naar de lokale Molukse cultuur, zoals de *pela*, als referentiekader.

In Hoofdstuk III bespreken we allereerst de *pela* als een uitdrukking van de Molukse cultuur, die eeuwen geleden is ontstaan om aan vijandschap tussen twee of drie dorpen een halt toe te roepen en om een relatie van broederschap en zusterschap te ontwikkelen tussen die dorpen. De *pela*, en dan vooral de z.g. *harde pela* (*pela keras*) ontstaat in een ceremonie waarin de betrokken partijen enkele druppels van hun bloed vermengen en dat mengsel drinken, daarbij een eed zwerend dat ze nu broeders en zusters zijn. Als zodanig hebben de participanten verplichtingen jegens elkaar. Interessant is, dat deze culturele verplichtingen ook toegepast worden in hun religieus leven. Molukse moslems kunnen deelnemen aan Kerstvieringen en andere religieuze samenkomsten in een kerk. Omgekeerd kunnen Molukse christenen godsdienstige vieringen in een moskee bijwonen. Zelfs al geloven Molukse moslems niet in Jezus Christus als Heer, toch zien ze Molukse christenen niet als ‘heidenen’. Op soortgelijke wijze bestempelen christenen, die Jezus als hun Heer beschouwen, moslems niet als ‘heidenen’.

Deze culturele relatie functioneerde goed tijdens het conflict, aangezien de participanten van een *pela* elkaar vrijwel nooit bestreden. Niettemin, de *pela* werkt alleen onder de deelnemers ervan; anderen ervaren de deugden ervan niet. Daarom moet men erkennen, dat de *pela* nog altijd vervreemding bewerkstelligt, omdat geïmpliceerd wordt dat er *insiders* staan tegenover *outsiders*. Dat betekent, dat de *pela* zwakheden kent en niet in een multiculturele Molukse samenleving kan functioneren. Godsdienst kan een belangrijke rol spelen bij het verminderen van deze zwakheden.
Hier wordt de GPM uitdagaagd om de Molukkers te helpen om hun locale cultuur kritisch te verstaan en te ervaren.

In Hoofdstuk IV stellen we, dat een dubbele transformatie nodig is van zowel de pela als van de traditionele Christologie. Transformatie van de pela is een manier om de zwakheden ervan de verminderen en de deugden ervan uit te breiden. Om de pela te kunnen transformeren, heeft de kerk criteria nodig. De notie van een dubbele (tweezijdige) transformatie kan een passende benadering zijn, want dit impliceert, dat niet alleen de pela getransformeerd wordt (in de zin van: verbreed), maar ook, dat de Molukse interpretatie van Jezus een eigen, specifieke nadruk ontvangt, namelijk Jezus als Tete Manis.


In de notie van een dubbele transformatie kunnen de idee van de gekruisigde Christus en de idee van de pela tot een creatieve ontmoeting worden gebracht. Aan de ene kant zou de GPM, door middel van de notie van de gekruisigde Christus, de idee van de pela kunnen transformeren, zodat deze ook buitenstaanders kan omarmen. Aan de andere kant kan de pela de Molukse christenen helpen om tot een beter verstaan te komen van de gekruisigde Christus tegen de achtergrond van hun eigen culturele erfgoed. Christus kan gezien worden als Tete Manis of Upu Lanite-Upler; de Heer die zichzelf offert om alle godsdienstige en culturele vervreemding en vijandschap te doorbreken.

Deze studie concentreert zich dus op twee belangrijke elementen, namelijk de identificatie (transformatie) van Jezus als Tete Manis en de identificatie (transformatie) van de pela als een allen omvattend offer en als nieuw verbond.

In de identificatie van Jezus als Tete Manis of Upu Lanite-Upler krijgt de gekruisigde Christus een belangrijkere positie in het leven van de Molukkers. Zoals een grootvader met zijn familie leeft, altijd als een wijze en liefhebbende raadgever van de familie, zo is Tete Manis God, die niet ver weg woont van de Molukkers en macht heeft in hun leven. Door de identificatie van Jezus met Tete Manis of Upu Lanite-Upler neemt Jezus Christus de positie over van de voorouders van de Molukkers om de Enige te worden in wie Molukse christenen geloven.

De notie van het offer van de gekruisigde Christus kan de idee van pela transformeren, waarin de tendentie bestaat insiders te creëren tegenover buitenstaanders. Verzoening als een belangrijk aspect van de kruisiging zou Molukse christenen kunnen inspireren om hun eigen broederschap/zusterschap relaties uit te breiden. Omdat Jezus Christus de initiator is van verzoening tussen hemzelf en de mensheid, worden Molukse christenen uitgenodigd om actief deel te nemen in verzoeningsprocessen. Zowel de godsdienstige als de culturele vervreemding moeten worden geconfronteerd met de notie van de gekruisigde Christus, zodat het kader van
wij (insiders) tegenover hen (outsiders, dat wil zeggen: niet-Molukkers, levend in de Molukken), veranderd wordt in wij (insiders) samen met hen (de buitenstaanders).

In het afsluitende Hoofdstuk V stellen we, dat de transformatie van de pela als verbond nieuwe perspectieven biedt voor het verstaan van de broederschap/zusterschap relatie in de Molukse samenleving en daarmee in het verzoeningsproces. Hier moet de GPM haar verantwoordelijkheid nemen. Gelijkwaardigheid moet de basis zijn van het sociale leven van de Molukkers en van hun godsdienstige opvattingen. In plaats van discriminatie te bewerken, zou gelijkwaardigheid in menselijke relaties ontwikkeld moeten worden. Zieende door het oog van de pela zouden Molukse christenen kritisch moeten staan tegenover theologische noties, waarin andersgelovigen worden uitgesloten voor Gods aangezicht. Bovendien kan de pela de christenen leren, dat het nieuwe verbond dat door Christus is opgericht, niet bedoeld is voor hun eigen individuele belang, maar voor alle mensen als samenleving. Gezien het belang en gewicht van de notie van de gekruisigde Christus zouden alle Molukse christenen initiatieven moeten nemen om een Molukse samenleving tot stand te brengen, waarin alle mensen gelijke rechten hebben.

Geïnspireerd door de gekruisigde Christus kan de pela worden omgevormd tot een omarmende pela, waarvan anderen niet zijn uitgesloten. Maar, outsiders omarmen betekent niet, dat deze hun eigen culturele en godsdienstige identiteit moeten opgeven. Integendeel, het betekent het erkennen, respecteren en verzoenen van deze culturele en religieuze verschillen. Als de pela een omarmende, inclusieve pela wordt, wordt het buitenstaanders toegestaan de heilzame werking van de pela te ervaren. Op deze manier zouden Molukkers klaar moeten staan om de idee van pela te ontwikkelen vanuit een nieuw perspectief. Zo zullen ze ook hun pela als een lidende pela ervaren, omdat ze bereid zijn moedige stappen te zetten om verzoening tot stand te brengen in een multicultural Molukse samenleving.

Een ander nieuw perspectief is dat van de vredestichtende pela. Dit betekent, dat de pela de Molukkers moet aanmoedigen om elkaar van aangezicht to aangezicht te ontmoeten, met name in situaties van boosheid en vijandschap. Er zal geen verzoening komen als er geen vrede is en er zal geen vrede zijn als er geen rechtstreeks ontmoeting is. Ook zou de pela conflict oplossend moeten zijn, niet georiënteerd op het verleden, maar op het heden en op de toekomst, zodat Molukkers geholpen worden hun samenleving te herstellen en in staat te zijn de waarheid te vertellen over het conflict. Het vinden en vertellen van de waarheid aangaande het recente conflict is van groot belang om de wonden van het verleden te genezen.

De GPM kan een belangrijke rol spelen in dit verzoeningsproces als ze een specifieke Christologie ontwikkelt, die de Molukkers helpt hun culturele en godsdienstige grenzen te overschrijden. Jezus Christus, als de Tete Manis-Upu Lanite-Upler biedt de Molukse christenen nieuwe perspectieven om godsdienstige grenzen te verwerpen.

Door de pela te transformeren zullen de Molukkers in staat zijn om te leven volgens de geest van de pela, zodat ze die niet alleen maar als een herhaling van het verleden zien en als een manier om hun respect te betuigen aan de voorouders die hun pela tot stand brachten. De GPM, als een belangrijke institutie in de Molukken, kan een actieve en kritische rol vervullen als vernieuwer van de pela. Deze rol van vernieuwer kan ook impliceren, dat de GPM een ceremonie ontwikkelt van panas pela.
als een Molukse vorm van ‘communie’. Dat wil zeggen, de GPM zou het initiatief kunnen nemen om alle mensen in de Molukken samen te roepen in een speciale bijeenkomst, waaraan ze actief deelnemen door elkaars verhalen te delen en door hun belofte tot uitdrukking te brengen om de Molukse samenleving op te bouwen.
APPENDIX

I. Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negri Batu Merah</th>
<th>Negri Passo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Name</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Haji Awath Ternate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Saleh Kiat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Haji Muhamad Tjiat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Haji A. Mamang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Haji Ustad Salim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thamrin Ely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Abidin Waccano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hasbulla Toisutta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Asgar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ismail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Memet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ija Bin Umar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mien Tuhelelu-Wakasihu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Frets Borolla (Christian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Rudy Borolla (Christian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Tenes Wakim (Christian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Etus Uniberua (Christian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Au Sarimanella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Pasu Kiah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The church leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>The GPM’s Leader</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Rev. J.Ch. Ruhulessin</td>
<td>church leader</td>
<td>15-03-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Rev. M.M. Hendriks-Ririmassee</td>
<td>church leader</td>
<td>07-03-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Rev. V. Untailawan</td>
<td>church leader</td>
<td>07-03-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Rev. J. Orno</td>
<td>church leader</td>
<td>06-03-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Rev. I.W.J. Hendriks</td>
<td>ex-church leader</td>
<td>08-04-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16-04-09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among 18 interviewees from negri Batu Merah, 4 are Christians, while there was no Muslim among 21 interviewees from negri Passo. Of 44 interviewees, 12 are women. Interviewees aged above 50 (50+) are 25 people, while those aged between 20 and 50 are 19 people.
II. Questions
The leading questions for interviewees in negri Batu Merah and negri Passo have been:

a. How do you understand the *pela*?

b. How do you see others who are not included in the *pela*?

c. How does the *pela* form the life of its communities?

d. Does the *pela* influence the religious life of its communities? If so, in what aspects?

e. What are the characteristics of religious understanding formed by the *pela*?

f. Do you accept the *pela* as part of your Christian and Muslim identity or is it a common existence?

The leading question for church leaders was:
How does the GPM understand the *pela* and local culture in general in doing its ministry and missionwork in the Moluccas?
ABBREVIATIONS

BBM: Butonese, Buginese, Makasarese
BEM: WCC Document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry
GBI: *Gereja Bethany Indonesia* (Bethany Church in Indonesia)
GPI: *Gereja Protestan Indonesia* (Protestant Church in Indonesia)
GPM: *Gereja Protestan Maluku* (The Protestant Church of the Moluccas)
IAIN: *Institut Agama Islam Negeri* (State Institute of Islamic Studies)
LDKG: *Lima Dokumen Keesaan Gereja* (The Five Documents of Unity of the Church)
MTQ: *Musabaqoh Tilawatil Qur’an* (Qur’an Reciting Contest)
NZG: Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap
PGI: *Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia* (Communion of Churches in Indonesia)
PIP/RIPP: *Pola Induk Pelayanan/Rencana Induk Pengembangan Pelayanan* (The Chief Model of Ministry and the Chief Plan of Developing the Ministry)
RMS: Republic of South Moluccas
UKIM: *Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku* (Indonesian Christian University in the Moluccas)
VOC: Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie
WCC: World Council of Churches
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SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Rachel Iwamony was born in Telalora, near Tepa at the Moluccas (Indonesia) on March 2, 1968. After finishing her Junior High School in 1983, she moved to Ambon to continue her study. In September 1987 she enrolled at the Theological Faculty of the Christian University in the Moluccas (Ambon). She received her Bachelor of Christian Education degree in 1993.

From 1994 until 1999 she was part-time lecturer at the Theological Faculty of the Christian University in the Moluccas and the STAKPN (Ambon). She continued her education at the Theological Faculty of the Duta Wacana Christian University in Yogyakarta in 1999 and received her ‘Magister Theologiae’ degree in 2001.

In 2002 she became a staff member of the Theological Faculty of the Christian University in the Moluccas until she continued her study at the VU University Amsterdam in September 2005. After she received her Research Master degree of this university in 2006 in order to obtain her doctoral degree, she returned to Ambon to conduct her fieldwork in October 2006. During that time, she married Oscar Tiwery in March 2007. She came back to the Netherlands in July 2007 to continue her research and completed her dissertation in the middle of 2010.