Chapter 3

Society in the Spice Islands

The many and varied accounts of the Spice Islands left by merchants and travellers leave the impression of an easy-going life-style interrupted only periodically by the intrusion of an agency of aggression. Until the advent of the Europeans into eastern waters, this aggression was little more than a ripple in the waves, and the foreign influence was either assimilated into the native life-style, or expelled. The majority of pre-European contacts were of a peaceful, trading nature, and the merchants left their mark mainly in the genetic make-up of the natives. Chinese, Javanese and Malayan contact was maintained with the Spice Islands, in the miscegenation of the races and, on a more commercial level, by regular trading contact. This is a tolerably superficial picture of life in the Spice Islands, but it is by no means a complete or even necessarily accurate. The European appellation of 'barbarian' to the Spice Islanders, and the constant expositions of their primitive way of life, belie the fact that the islanders followed a way of life perfectly suited to their environment and that they had developed a social structure which was just as complex as those of the large centres in the western archipelago. It was different, not inferior.

As is often the case in recorded history, the concentration on matters of 'significance' to the observer most often focuses on the rule of kings and accounts of politics or economics to the detriment of the masses of people who functioned daily in that same society, but in a very different capacity to those at the top of the social hierarchy. Fortunately, António Galvão has proved diligent in his attention to detail in all aspects of Moluccan life, and his account reveals a wealth of information concerning both strata of society, the socially superior and the 'common people'. From his *Treatise* a clear picture is presented of life in sixteenth century Ternate and the Moluccas in general. This chapter will therefore examine

the structure of the Spice Island societies, using Galvão's account as a foundation, and where possible, comparing and contrasting it to accounts from other primary sources relating to the social functioning of the other island group in this study, Banda. The chapter will illustrate that the two groups, although experiencing many common challenges, developed quite differently.

The origin of the first Moluccans is difficult to determine from the available primary sources, and it has not been possible to ascertain which of the Moluccan islands was the first to be inhabited, and therefore an accurate and acceptable definition of the label 'original' Moluccans is difficult to find. It does seem clear, however, that there were two distinct groups of Moluccan inhabitants, an indigenous component of alfuros, and a second 'wave' of inhabitants from neighbouring islands, settling permanently in the Moluccas.[1] By the time those sources were reporting, the Moluccan stock had been genetically diluted with Chinese, Malay, Javanese and possibly Arab blood, and this is apparent in the contemporary descriptions of the physical appearance of the Moluccans. Abdurachman suggests that it was the larger island of Halmahera which first hosted a Moluccan population;[2] Valentyn says that the Ternatans themselves believed that they originated from Celebes and its surrounding islands. Other people, according to this account, believed the Moluccans were a mix of Chinese peoples who had been coming to Ternate's shores since 1278, escaping from the expansion of the Central Asian Mongols who had earlier (1253) invaded Nanchao (modern Yunnan province) in southern China.[3]

Lach suggests that the relatively recent habitation of the islands is indicated by the absence of references in their oral history to a long tradition, and to the numerous tales of the islanders originating elsewhere (but the location of this 'elsewhere' is never clear).[4] A geological reason

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1 This area is discussed in the following chapter.

2 P.R. Abdurachman outlines the evolution of Moluccan authority structures in the pre-Islamic period in the article "Moluccan Responses to the First Intrusions of the West" in Soebadio (ed.), *Dynamics of Indonesian History*, pp.163-64 . Unfortunately, in this section Abdurachman does not cite any references for his information.

3 Valentyn, *Beschryving, opcit.*, p.15; K.R. Hall, 'Economic History of Early Southeast Asia', in N. Tarling (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol.I, From Early Times to c.1800*, Cambridge, 1992, p.216

4 D.F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Vol.I, Chicago, 1965, p.607

for this late occupation was put forward by Barros, who speculated that parts of the Moluccas must have been submerged until 'fairly recent times', evidenced by the discovery by the Portuguese of small sea shells in holes dug in the ground and at the roots of trees.[5] This is quite probable, when the spontaneous nature of the birth of volcanic islands is considered. Further evidence of the conglomeration of peoples in the Moluccas comes from the testimony of the sources concerning the speech of the islanders. Galvão writes that they

> have many and different languages ... for not only does every one of them have their own, but there are towns with different languages .... Some speak from their throat ... others from the point of their tongue.[6]

At the arrival of the Europeans, Malay was the *lingua franca* of the region, an obvious adoption by the inhabitants to facilitate business with the traders from the western archipelago region. Maximillanus Transylvanus, a sixteenth century chronicler who recorded the exploits of Magellan, indicates yet another possibility when he writes that Borneo (the city rather than the country) was the place from which "all the other islanders had learnt the arts of civilized life", and that the common people of the Moluccas "have much the same manners and customs as the islanders of Porne [Borneo]".[7]

All that can be surmised from this variety of accounts is that the majority of the Moluccan people encountered by the European visitors in the early sixteenth century were not what could be classed as an indigenous population, but were relative new-comers to the islands themselves. Plentiful references to the alfuros are solid evidence of a pre-existing population, but it is probable that even these people migrated to the Moluccas from the neighbouring islands, notably Celebes and Gilolo. A gathering of people with diverse cultural backgrounds does not necessarily mean there is a 'clash' of these cultures. Rather, as the social environment grew, particular aspects of each culture were either adopted by the general population or abandoned. As is shown in Chapter 4, this applied to legends of authority structures as well as the more tangible aspects of culture. Successive waves of new groups and cultural traits had to be accommodated, and, as the sources show, were assimilated - note

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5 Barros, cited in *ibid.*, p.607

6 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.75

7 Maximillanus Transylvanus, *De Moluccis Insulis*, Manila, 1969, pp.124,127

Galvão's Chinese legacy or Translyvanius' "manners and customs". If it is accepted that once an indigenous body (that is, the Moluccans) accepts and assimilates particular aspects of other cultures, from this point these must be seen as components of an evolving Moluccan culture. Therefore, the Moluccan society which greeted Pigafetta in 1521 was representative of a complex mixture of a number of different cultural influences which combined to produce an essentially unique Moluccan culture.

The origin of the Bandanese is even more difficult to determine than that of the Moluccans. No primary source document deals with this aspect of Bandanese history, and it is only in the physical appearance of the islanders that any clue may be found. This in itself is a trap, as the constant interaction between these islanders and traders from all part of the eastern archipelago had obviously blurred the original features of the indigenous population. Some early European accounts of the islanders represent them as uncivilised pagans,[8] whereas Tomé Pires noted that the people had "straight black hair"[9], reflecting a Javanese or Chinese genealogy rather than the Papuan characteristics of the Moluccan alfuros.

The extensive contact which the Spice Islands had with merchants from the western archipelago naturally meant the incorporation of some elements from those merchants' own cultural centres into that of the Spice Islanders. While material articles of those cultures will be discussed in Chapter 5, the present chapter will look at non-material cultural imports such as customs, entertainments, as well as the material imports and other manifestations of external cultural influences.

In the following portrayal of Spice Island society, it should be recognised that it is the coastal rather than inland societies which are being referred to. As shown earlier, the coastal region as the area of first foreign contact, was the most likely site of the development of more complex societal structures, based on this sporadic stream of foreign contact. It was the natural focal point for foreign attention, both European and Asian, as it was the collection and distribution point for the cloves and other goods of commerce traded to the islands. The interior of the islands was not thoroughly explored by the Europeans, and it appears that the coastal people had little interest in it beyond securing the delivery of goods to the ports and maintaining a tolerable degree of control over and peace with the inland inhabitants.

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8 Castanheda in Villiers, *Trade and Society, op.cit.*, p.727

9 Pires, *Suma Oriental, op.cit.*, p.206

In general the entire Moluccan population benefited from the expansion of the clove trade and the contact with Islam, although there can be no doubt that it was the more powerful who experienced the direct material benefits. This group in Moluccan society was represented by the royal family and the executives of the court, the *sengadjis, marsaolis* and the *menteris.*[10] In this chapter the social aspects of the king and court will be examined. The common people of the Moluccas, unlike their counterparts in Majapahit Java who gained a measure of respect and protection because of their production of the rice harvests which were responsible for that kingdom's favourable balance of trade, were not recognised by their superiors as anything other than slaves, or *ngofangares*. These people were of the lowest standing in Moluccan society. They, together with the *alifuros* (peasants), *orang tjari-ikan* (fishermen) and *chettis* (merchants) made up the general population of the Moluccas. Moluccan society had differentiated into these social roles well before the time of European contact. In contrast to this, Bandanese society had developed with an emphasis on the commercial development of the island's produce for the benefit of the ruling *orang-kaya* and foreign merchants. The need to maintain a royal family and its necessary accompaniments did not form a part of Bandanese life after the early sixteenth century, and so the social differentiation which did take place was not the result of a focus on a monarchical hierarchy. There is evidence of several different social groupings in Banda, with the ruling oligarchy, the *orang-kayas*, at the top, the Islamic priests, shahbandars and foreign merchants, and the local population, both wealthy and poorer classes. These social groupings, excluding foreign residents, were divided into two major social groups, the Ulilimas and the Ulisawas, and these groupings dictated the pattern of inter-village behaviour on those islands.

Customs adhered to by the Moluccan population reveal a complex social organisation strongly based on traditional beliefs and customs, many of which were probably formulated in the early years of the development of the Moluccan political and social system, remnants of a superstition focussing on the divinity of the *kolano* as paramount leader. The primary focus of these codes of behaviour was the proper conduct and attitude towards the empowered groups in Moluccan society, that is, the *kolano* and his ruling executive. This is exemplified in the number of customs or taboos which relate directly to the ruling *kolano* and his family and court.

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10 The functions of these officials are encountered in Chapter 4.

These customs illustrate the growth of the status of the *kolano* and also the changing perception of the general population towards this office. Some relate to court behaviour, others to established rules of warfare. They show a combination of deference to the pre-Islamic ways, and the Moluccan adaptability to the demands of the new religion. Above all, they clearly delineate the basic elements of Moluccan society, breaking it into its two major components, the empowered and the unempowered. All of the customs related by Galvão enhanced the status of the *kolano* and his court. They were, as in other cultures, essentially a mechanism of social control which effectively kept the common people in a position and attitude of subservience.

Before proceding, a definition for the title *kolano* is required. To the Europeans writing in the sixteenth centuries, and later, the *kolano* was described as a king. While in one sense this is accurate, it is also inaccurate. The *kolano* was the pre-eminent person in the kingdom, but he was not a monarch in the European sense of the word. The *kolano* grew out of a kin-based society in which small, separate political blocks functioned, sometimes in concert and sometimes in conflict. Village or clan leaders were essentially equal in status, and the communities were politically unintegrated, a state described by anthropologist, Marshall Sahlins, as "constrained and truncated in their evolution".[11] By the second half of the thirteenth century, the Moluccan political system had evolved into a complex pyramidal chiefdom, similar to those found among the Polynesians of the Pacific. This was the rise of the *kolano* above the other chiefs, not as an autocrat, but rather supreme chief among lesser chiefs. In this capacity he was respected, feared and worshipped by his people, and to protect his person and his special status particular customs grew around the position.

It was important to observe the established rules of courtesy in Moluccan society, and transgression of particular customs warranted a sentence of death. Some of these, such as gazing upon one of the royal women or trespassing near the women's house, are discussed below. Customs surrounding the status of the *kolano* also required a high degree of reverence and respect. His presence was denied to the common people who were not to look upon him, but had to "flee and hide themselves from him." Castenheda adds that the people would cover their eyes and

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11 M.D. Sahlins, 'Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-Man, Chief' in T.G. Harding & B.J. Wallace (eds.), *Cultures of the Pacific*, New York, 1970, pp.204-205

crawl along the ground for fear of seeing his face.[12] When his courtiers wished to have an audience with him, they had to undergo an elaborate ritual which reinforced their inferior status in comparison to his own. Courtiers were required to perform the *sembahjang*, a gesture of obsequience where the lesser person had to squat, join both their hands and raise them to face level in an act of adoration. This was done two or three times. If the courtiers had to speak to the *kolano* they had to cover their mouth with their hand, so as not to breathe on his person. When giving the *kolano* any item, they did so with the right hand and used their left to support it at the elbow. When leaving from his presence they were not to turn their face from him until they were at a distance or eight to ten steps away, and then, while turning, they were to make "two or three jumps of courtesy and a couple of clicks in their mouth."[13] Nor were they permitted to speak in his presence. A general rule that applied to all levels in this social hierarchy was that an inferior was not to speak to a superior, "because before superiors the inferior must keep silence, and only answer when questioned."[14] Likewise, the common people were not permitted to speak about the noblemen, in public or in private; "when caught doing so they are punished by death."[15] The *kolano* was addressed as 'Sun' or 'Moon' by his courtiers, as it was regarded offensive if they used his name. Jacobs regards these as symbols of the Ternatan king, as they appeared in silver on standards carried at his funeral.[16]

The *kolano*, as supreme head, was physically seen to be on a higher plane than his people. Galvão notes that "when descending, all march before the king, and when ascending, after him, because nowhere must they be on a higher level than or equal with his." This custom was duly noted by Pigafetta when the Spanish received a visit from the Tidorese king. The king would not stoop to enter the cabin but "entered from above". Once inside, the Spanish, "in order to show him greater honor ... sat down on the ground near him."[17] This show of status is again in

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12 Castanheda, cited in Villiers, *Spice Islands, op.cit.*, p.98

13 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.125

14 *Loc.cit.*; van Neck, Tweede Schipvaart der Hollanders, in I, Commelin (ed.), *Begin ende voortangh van de Vereenighde Nederlantsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, Amsterdam, Vol.I, p.34

15 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.125

16 Jacobs, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.341, fn.2

17 A. Pigafetta (trans. B.R. Robertson) *First Voyage Around the World*, Manila, 1969, p.65

evidence when the king was banqueting in public, as is discussed further in this chapter.

The grandness of the *kolano* was emphasised by ceremony, and his standing was distinguished by his clothing. The enthronement of the new *kolano* was a ceremony in which the whole population took a part. The *sengadjis* and other officials were there to reaffirm their loyalty; while the dignity and spectacular sight of the procession was a direct connection in the minds of the common people between the *kolano* and the well-being of the kingdom. The *kolano,* in his grandest clothing and wearing a gold crown, stood with his guard in the palace square to receive the *sembahjang* from the "prominent men of the realm". This impressive procession then made its way to the mosque, with music and banners and dancing. The return journey was conducted in the same manner.[18] There is no mention in the sources of how *kolanos* in the pre-Islamic period were enthroned. It may be assumed that the ceremony gradually developed into an occasion of similar splendour. Some form of procession appears to have been in order for all public appearances of the *kolano,* usually accompanied by an entourage of his courtiers. His passage to the mosque (see Chapter 6), his feastings on the beach or travels through his realm were all a spectacle, emphasising his special position. Among his entourage were "female dwarfs, disfigured and humped in the most monstrous way, and people say that as young girls they have their backbone broken for that." He was also often accompanied by the *menteris,* men of "good age and gravitie".[19]

The clothing of the *kolano* was elegantly magnificent. Pigafetta described the king of Tidore as a man with "royal presence", who greeted them wearing "a shirt of the most delicate white stuff with the ends of the sleeves embroidered in gold, and in a cloth that reached from his waist to the ground."[20] On festive occasions the king wore silk or cotton robes, satin, velvet or woollen garments. Galvão notes the Malay style of dress, and the multi-coloured fabrics, but says that only the *kolano* was permitted to wear yellow. The sumptuousness of royal attire was still noted later in that century, when some members of Sir Francis Drake's crew had an audience with the sultan of Ternate.[21] The sultan entered the

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18 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.,* p.113

19 *Ibid.,* p.115; F. Drake, 'The Two Famous Voyages' in R. Hakluyt, *The English Voyages,* Vol.VIII, London, p.68

20 Pigafetta, *op.cit.,* p.65

21 Drake, *op.cit.,* p.70

meeting hall, guarded by twelve lances and sheltered by a gold embossed canopy. He wore a sarong of rich gold, and a turban wreathed in fine hoops of gold. He wore a "perfect golde' chain around his neck, and "sixe very faire jewels" on his fingers.

Curious customs surrounded the travelling arrangements of the *kolano*. If one was required to leave his realm, either for peaceful purposes or for war, he asked of the other *kolanos* certain items which they delivered, regardless of whether they were allies or enemies at that time. The items delivered included fishing-line and a *tifa*, or drum, and other objects "of little value". During his absence no other *kolano* may enter his kingdom, and if a vassal of another *kolano* was found near the boundaries of the absent *kolano*, he could be taken and killed. The returning *kolano* then had the right to wage war on the "transgressor".[22] The origins of such a custom cannot be discerned, and it appears that the situation had changed in later years, perhaps due to the influence of the Portuguese. Valentyn cites an example of Tidore being attacked and burnt by the Ternatans while the Tidorese *kolano* was campaigning on Halmahera.[23]

Customs and taboos relating to conduct during war also reflected the position and 'sacred' nature of the Moluccan *kolano*. It was an observed custom never to kill or wound a king in a battle. As the living symbol of the well-being of the state and with all the superstitious and spiritual connotations attached to his position, the death of a king would have had a tremendous detrimental psychological impact on his people. This catastrophe did occur and was recorded by its perpetrator, António Galvão. During an assault against the confederation of the four Moluccan kings, Galvão fatally wounded the rash young king of Ternate. The Moluccans were so shocked at this that they did not reveal the death of the king for some time.[24]

Even in death the *kolano's* privileged position was obvious. His tomb was placed higher than those surrounding it, and Galvão says they used pillows of black ironwood. In the post-Islamic period the tombstone itself was highly sculptured with foliage, fleur-de-lis and other kinds of flowerwork. It had a shelter built over the top, which was filled with perfumed flowers. If the *kolano* happened to die outside his own kingdom, his subjects were obliged to go and collect his remains "and

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22 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.153
23 Valentyn, *Molukse Zaaken, op.cit.*, p.176
24 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, pp.249, 255

bring them to the burial place of their ancestors."[25] Throughout his life, the *kolano* maintained a very special position in Moluccan life. This was apparent in both the pre-Islamic and the post-Islamic periods. In the post-Islamic period the nature of the position altered, usually attributed to the coming of Islam, but possibly influenced by the appearance and continued presence of the Europeans. This aspect of the position of *kolano* is discussed in the following chapter.

Major groupings in any society fall into some obvious categories; women, the wealthy, the poor or 'common' people, and slaves, for example. The largest group, women, is discussed first. Anthony Reid has argued a case for the high standing of women in Southeast Asian society, derived from their traditional work as rice harvesters, food gatherers, weavers and marketers of goods which gave them economic importance, as well as the "magical and ritual powers" ascribed to them by virtue of their reproductive role.[26] This picture of Southeast Asian womanhood is one that also applies to women in the Spice Islands. While there was an obvious distinction between the rights and privileges of courtly women and common women in the Moluccas, and the wealthy and poor women of the Bandas, those of the former categories enjoyed particular honours while those of the latter enjoyed a level of freedom denied to their socially superior sisters.

The importance of women in Moluccan society is exemplified by the inclusion of a woman in two versions of their 'foundation' legend.[27] The Bachian head-man, Bikusigara, had found four sacred serpent's eggs. Having hatched, one of these was found to be a woman who then married into royalty (the king of Loloda), thereby emphasising what can be regarded as a recognised place for women in the realm of royal authority. It also serves to illustrate the role this woman had in creating a sense of unity within the Moluccan region, and of centring this unity within the Moluccas themselves. According to a second version of this legend, only a daughter was born out the dragon's egg, and this princess married a king from Loloda. This showed, according to the Ternatans, that Gilolo was

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25 *Ibid.*, p.183

26 A. Reid, 'Female Roles in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia' in *Modern Asian Studies*, 22, 3, 1988, p.629

27 These legends are discussed in the following chapter.

one of the oldest Moluccan islands and was directly connected to the origins of the Ternatan people.[28]

Very early in the course of Moluccan history women became marriage partners for political reasons, and they also formed a link between the infant Moluccan polity and the more developed centres further west. According to Valentyn, the chief wife of the fourth *kolano* of Ternate (Calebatta) was a Malayan woman, and it was through her connections that her son, Comala, was able to attract Malay and Javanese traders to Ternate when he became *kolano* in 1304.[29] Valentyn records a Javanese woman as one of the principal women in the court in 1347. Thus by the middle of the fourteenth century Ternate can be seen to have established trade contact with the major centres of the western archipelago region and had cemented these with marriage contracts. The fact that at least one of these women was the principal wife of the Ternatan *kolano* is indicative of the importance that the Moluccans laid on the early development of this external trade. It is further suggested that it was the combination of this early trade and these marriage connections with the centres to the west which brought to the Moluccas some of the cultural aspects which are attributed to a later period and a later set of circumstances, that is, the strengthened Javanese connection in the later fifteenth century associated with the coming of Islam.

From the sources it appears that marriage alliances between the kings became a feature of Moluccan politics some years after the marriages contracted through the course of trade. In fact, the first recorded marriage alliance was recorded quite late, in 1372, according to Valentyn. After a prolongued period of warfare between the kings, peace was made by the Ternatan king, Gapi Baguna I, who married his eldest son to the daughter of the king of Gilolo. In time this son became king of Gilolo. Meanwhile Gapi Baguna I married the daughter of Hassan Shah, the king of Tidore. Another marriage alliance, in 1380, was contracted between the king of Bachian and the daughter of the king of Ternate.[30] It is probable that Moluccan women had been exchanged in this fashion before 1372. The reason for this was not lack of daughters, for a number of the kings had several daughters, apparently by their principal wives. In the late sixteenth century it was observed that the sultan of Ternate had about

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28 Valentyn, *Beschryving, op.cit.*, p.93
29 Valentyn, *Molukse Zaaken, op.cit.*, p.136
30 *Ibid.*, pp.138-139

forty wives, and Andaya notes that Tidore had the highest status based on wife-giving.[31] Nor is there any indication of brothers or uncles marrying their sisters or nieces, or even of fathers marrying their daughters, showing that inheritance was never passed through the female line, as it was elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

In Galvão's time, the queen and other high ranking women, when out in public, were carried piggy-back so that their feet did not touch the ground. This honourable but most undignified mode of transport "belongs to their rank".[32] In this procession they were preceded by men who cleared the roads of onlookers. In their homes women could not admit any man other than their husband. Even fathers and brothers were denied their presence. This was attributed by Galvão to the jealousy Moluccan men had for their women. More than a decade before Galvão made his observation, Pigafetta had already noted that the Moluccan men "are so jealous of their wives that they do not wish us to go ashore with our drawers exposed; for they assert that their women imagine that we are always in readiness."[33] Pigafetta implies that this jealousy concerning the women was not confined to the upper echelons of society, but to the common man as well. At Drake's arrival in 1578 the Moluccan men still "hate[d] that their women should bee seene of strangers", but he notes that women were offered in "high courtesie".[34] Women in Banda did not go abroad during the day, not out of any sense of modesty it seems, but rather because their time was taken up by the process of drying nutmegs and other domestic chores.[35]

Women were also an important part of the king's court, contributing to the maintenance of his special status.[36] Hump-backed women were the king's betel carriers and they also carried his sword. When the *kolano* of Tidore met the Spaniards aboard their ship he was accompanied by three women who carried his betel, and it was observed

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31 van Neck, *Tweede Schipvaart, op.cit.*, p.34; L. Andaya, *The Structure of Authority in North Maluku in the Sixteenth Century*, Canberra, 1990, p.8. Andaya claims that because of its wife-giving capacity, Tidore was acknowledged as 'spiritually superior' by Ternate, although the connection between wives and spirituality is not made clear. No reference is cited for this assertion, and so an independent assessment cannot be made.

32 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.119

33 A. Pigafetta, 'First Voyage Around the World' in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, Vol.XXXIV, E.H. Blair & J.A. Robertson, eds., Cleveland, 1903-1909, p.47;

34 Drake, *op.cit.*, p.72

35 J. van Neck, *A Journall, op.cit.*, p.34

36 Andaya, *op.cit.*, p.7

that no-one except the king could have women in his retinue.[37] The betel and the sword may be considered to be two of the symbols of the ruler's greatness, the betel symbolising his hospitality and the sword his strength. An extension of this symbolism presents the women as guardians of the state. Andaya has already pointed out their role as the guardians of rank, whereby marriages were contracted only with those of equal or higher rank.[38] Thus marriages were arranged between the ruling house and the *sengadjis*, those men with the influence and man-power to present a possible threat to a throne not related to them by ties of blood or marriage. The conditions by which these marriages are contracted is clearly set out by Galvão:

> The *kolano's* wife must be another [*kolano's*] daughter; she is the principal wife and her son will be the hereditary successor; if there is none, any son of the other wives may succeed.[39]

This should be seen as a post-Islamic development in the Moluccan traditions of marriage. The Islamic doctrine which the Moluccan court followed after the mid-fifteenth century prescribed the inheritance of the son of the principal wife, but this conflicted with the more traditional view of royal marriages. As early as 1317 it was decided by the people of Ternate that the line of succession would no longer pass from father to son, but rather from brother to brother, uncle or nephew. This system was adhered to until Gapi Baguna, when he managed to re-establish a direct line of succession. Daughters of the *menteris*, as well as those of the *sengadjis*, could also be brides of the *kolano*. Some were designated for service to the king even before birth. He could have as many wives and concubines as he pleased. In 1521 the king of Tidore had two hundred 'chief' women, with a further two hundred women to attend them. They lived in a large house outside the city, and were regarded so highly that "No-one is allowed to see those women without permission from the king, and if any-one is found near the king's house by day or by night, he is put to death."[40] Pigafetta also notes that every family was obliged to give the king at least one or two of their daughters, and so he had a large harem as well as a considerable wealth of marriagable daughters - of twenty-six children, eighteen were daughters.

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37 Barbosa, *op.cit.*, p.203; Pigafetta, Blair & Robertson, *op.cit.*, p.57
38 Andaya, *op.cit.*, p.7
39 Galvão, *A Treatise*, *op.cit.*, p.87
40 Pigafetta, Robertson, *op.cit.*, p.68

The marriage ritual was intimately connected with the role of women. The *kolano* had to fetch his intended bride in person, and so took with him his mother, sisters and the noblewomen of his palace. He was also accompanied by the dignitaries of his kingdom. When he returned to his own kingdom, he had to carry his wife on his back.[41] What dowry returned with his bride is unknown. It was the accepted practise among the islands to provide a dowry. These were composed of items of great value, and the contents appear to have consisted mainly of imported goods. Javanese gongs, Chinese porcelain, rich cloth and ivory were counted among island dowries.[42] As noted in Chapter 5, these items were traded for local products. Plumes of the bird of paradise were one of these, and while magnificent in appearance and dramatic in effect, they are not in themselves expensive items, unlike the goods for which they were exchanged. An explanation for the preference of the islanders for these costly Javanese imports is not attempted, but it is noted that these rather than local goods were in demand for culturally significant purposes.

Sexual promiscuity was not common among the islanders according to Galvão. He has devoted an entire chapter to the "virtuous women of Indonesia", recounting the virtuous and chaste life of several high-ranking Moluccan women. He notes that this was a quality not confined to women of high standing, but was also found the common women, where:

> they preserve the bloom of their maidenhood at least until the age of sixteen, and at the most until that of twenty or twenty-five years. Although they always go around among the men, and then nearly naked, they do not fail to be very chaste and good, which seems to be quite impossible among such a debauched people.[43]

It seems their virtue won them little merit or respect from their male counterparts, as the wives could be sold by their husbands, even if they were mother to his children. Adultery was judged harshly, but the society did not produce prostitutes. While the common women of the islands restrained themselves from any unbecoming behaviour, Moluccan noblewomen were protected from all forms of male temptation by being housed outside the towns and living only in the company of other

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41 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, pp.115-117
42 Schurhammer, Vol.III, *op.cit.*, p.100
43 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.89

concubines or female servants. It is therefore a curious statement of Galvão, when discussing the women given to the *sengadjis* by the Moluccan *kolanos* that they "marry their daughters and sisters to them; and these women, as soon as they become bored with them, pass to other men."[44] It is unclear whether Galvão means that the husbands tired of these wives and passed them on, or whether the women tired of their husbands. Neither is a very satisfactory option, as the *sengadji* would surely insult the *kolano* deeply (and unwisely) if he discarded a blood relative of the ruler; likewise the casual treatment of the *sengadji* by the wife could result in embarrassment and incite the desire for revenge against the woman and her family; in reality disloyalty to the throne. The passage does imply the latter, and if this is the case, it is one of the few instances of the woman's freedom of choice, for, whatever form it took, the fate of a noblewoman or princess was, in the Moluccas as in many other countries, merely to be a pawn in the political games of their fathers, brothers or uncles. They were commodities, albeit valuable. The idea of women as commodities is further reinforced with the example of the wedding of the brother of the king of Bachian to the daughter of the Tidorese king. As a gift, the prospective groom "brought two other praus filled with girls to present to his betrothed."[45] Their value is put succinctly by Galvão: "the more daughters a man has, the richer he is; and for the nobleman they represent a treasure."

The status of women in the Banda Islands is less clear. Circumstances of marriage, divorce or adultery are not discussed in any detail in the few sources which do make observations of Bandanese society. Valentyn notes that Bandanese widows were not permitted to marry the younger brother of her husband, but was able to marry his older brother. Also, before marriage young couples were not permitted to have any sexual contact, risking death if they did so.[46] It is known that women in those islands, as in many other places in the Southeast Asian region, served as sexual partners for the transient trading population.[47] Van Neck described this process in Banda where:

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44 *Ibid.*, p.105

45 Pigafetta, Blair & Robertson, *op.cit.*, p.59

46 Valentyn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien, Vol.II, Beschryving der Banda,* Amsterdam, 1724-1726, p.36

47 Reid, *Female Roles, op.cit.*, p.632, names Patani, Vietnam, Cambodia, Siam and Burma as places where this was common practise.

> at their first comming, to buy a Woman to do their businesse, and dresse their victuailes: but when they have finished their affaires, and are ready to depart thence, they cast off the sayd woman to goe where she will, untill the next yeere, that they come thither againe.[48]

This gives the impression of being a permanent or at least semi-permanent arrangement, with the same trader co-habiting with the same woman each year. Galvão makes no mention of this being the practice in the Moluccas.

Women were noted in the role of traders or negotiators, implying some economic independence, but it was more than likely that their husband or owner reaped the profits of their labours. Galvão says that it was the Moluccan women who negotiated and carried out the business of buying and selling.[49] He is not clear as to what business was conducted, but it must have been regular market business, as the clove trade was out of the hands of the common people. Barros also remarks on the role of women in business, saying that the men were slothful in everything but war.[50] Trading was not an unusual occupation for women in Southeast Asia, Reid notes the women of Cambodia, Siam, Malacca and Java as traders, and in a notable case, that of Nyai Gede Pinateh of Gresik, as shahbandar.[51]

Overall, women in Moluccan society are represented as assets to their husbands by virtue of their work capacity and the marriage value they possessed. It is not clear what their status was in the pre-Islamic society, but there is no indication that they would have held a higher social standing than in the post-Islamic world. Some of these women, however, have left their mark in Moluccan history.

At the death of Bajan Ullah[52] in 1521 the Ternatan kingdom was left without an heir. His sons were minors, and their mother, Niay Tsjili was their guardian.[53] This remarkable woman had to deal with the machinations not only of a succession of Portuguese governors, but also of

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48 Van Neck, *A Journall, op.cit.*, p.31

49 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.75

50 Barros, cited in Crawfurd, *Dictionary, op.cit.*, p.284

51 A. Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680*, Vol.I, The Lands Below the Winds, New Haven, 1988, pp.163-165

52 Boleif/Bayan Sirrullah. He was the Sultan of Ternate at the arrival of Francis Serrao.

53 Valentyn, *Molukse Zaaken op.cit.*, p.154 says that she had been given full rein to govern by her husband, but by all accounts Bajang Ullah died suddenly.

the ambitious Prince Tarruwese.[54] Aware of the friendship between the regent and the Portuguese governor, the queen solicited help from her father, the sultan of Tidore. In response to this, her sons were imprisoned by de Brito. They remained in Portuguese custody throughout the governorships of de Brito, Garcias Henrik, Jorge Menesez and Gonzalo Pereira, during which time the queen, ably assisted by the Tidorese, mounted successive attacks on the Portuguese and Ternatans alike. Some unwise Portuguese policies, including the poisoning of the Tidorese sultan, refocussed the loyalties of the Ternatans and Tidorese on the queen. Several times, at Niay Tsjili's instigation, the Portuguese were driven to near-starvation inside their fortress because of a lack of deliveries from the Ternatan markets. In their custody one son died and the queen consistently petitioned for the release of the other.[55] In 1530 she became regent, on the occasion of Tarruwese's execution.[56] A combined Ternatan-Portuguese plot hatched against the governor, Pereira, saw the release of the remaining son, and soon thereafter, the death of his untiring mother. Niay Tsjili had effectively kept the kingdom out of the hands of Tarruwese, and had also hindered the Portuguese in both their attempts to gain a firm foothold on the island and to control the succession of the ruling family of Ternate.

The dispensation of justice in the Moluccas is not well documented. Apart from the sections in Galvão's *Treatise*, there are virtually no references to the administration or application of any specific legal code. Although oaths were sworn on copies of the holy books of Islam, usually the Quran (*mozafo*, as Galvão calls them), there is no evidence that in the sixteenth century and earlier the Moluccans were subject to any form of written law, traditional or Islamic. This may be a legacy of the pre-Isamic system of justice, but it also conforms to the Islamic principle of *ijma*, or

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54 *Ibid.*, p.153 says that Tarruwese was a cousin to the sultan; according to W. Hanna & D. Alwi, *Turbulent Times Past in Ternate and Tidore*, Banda Naira, 1990, p.32 claim he was a brother to the sultan and guardian of the princes.

55 There is some confusion in the sources about which son died. Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, pp.219, 249 says that Bohajat died in the castle, and he himself was responsible for Dayal's death; de Sousa, *op.cit.*, p. 323 agrees that it was Bohajat who died in the castle; while Valentyn, *Molukse Zaaken op.cit.*, p.178 says that it was Dayal who died and Bohajat who inherited the throne.

56 A female regent, even ruler, was not unheard of under Islamic law. See, for example, the career of the Indian Sultana, Raziyya, who ruled over the Delhi sultanate in the mid thirteenth century, in R. Thapar, *A History of India*, Vol.I, Harmondsworth, 1966, p.269

consensus, which was recognised as valid under Islam. Galvão himself states that the Moluccan arbiters judged from reason, implying that the law was neither written nor inflexible. While this obviously may have lead to some inconsistencies in the application of the law, it was an effective and familiar system to the largely illiterate population. This may have appeared on the one hand crude to the Europeans, on the other hand it aroused some admiration from Galvão, who says "Unknown to them are attorneys, clerks, replications and rejoinders, and other ways to lengthen and to protract things; they rather try to shorten them."[57] We can assume that Moluccan justice was judged to be fair and impartial by the general population who accepted a system in which their fate was left to the oral pursuasiveness of their representative, and in which there was no fear or denial of any crime, even murder.

Without the evidence of codified law we know little of what the Moluccans considered the most heinous of crimes, but from Galvão's evidence it seems that dissatisfaction with the system of government, or rather the king, or continued refusal to pay a debt merited the most serious of penalties. The crime of adultery resulted in the death of both parties, but upon whom the execution of this deed fell is not mentioned. The types of crimes generally perpetrated by individuals appear limited to debt, theft and defamation. In the case of theft, if the guilty party could not be determined the district where the crime was committed was made to pay, "and in that way they often come to know the truth because he who has to pay detects the crime." In Banda it was noted that thievery was not punished on the first two occasions, but if found guilty a third time the guilty party was either fined a substantial sum or severely beaten.[58] Galvão notes that "among them [the Moluccans] murder hardly ever occurs". This obviously does not include the ritualised murder of their constant inter-island skirmishes.

The administration of justice and law in the Moluccas, as described by Galvão, differed in some ways to the general system of justice and law in Southeast Asia. According to Reid, a general characteristic of the legal system throughout Southeast Asia was that the plaintiff and defendant stated their respective cases themselves, were subjected to oaths to determine the truth, and then to ordeal to determine guilt.[59] While these

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57 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.127
58 Valentyn, *Beschryving der Banda, op.cit.*, p.36
59 Reid, *Lands Below, op.cit.*, p.137

latter practises are described by Galvão, he also presents a rather sophisticated system of legalities operating in the Moluccas. Justice was dispensed by members of the nobility who were appointed to this high office by the *kolano* himself. These men were "venerated and esteemed" by both the nobility and the general population. Hearings were held in public squares or streets on designated days, and the cases were judged from reason - "as being a better and clearer rule than the laws one acquires by learning".[60] Unlike Reid's generalisation of legal processes elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the common people of the Moluccas did not present their cases themselves, but were spoken for by their local governors or the *menteris*. What fee or debt this representation incurred to the respective parties is not recorded. Judgement was final, and sentence having been passed, the defendant was obliged to make a part payment or give appropriate guaranties to the satisfaction of the opposing party. For his role, the judge received one-tenth of the penalty, but Galvão does not say whether these penalties were regularly large or moderate. Under a system called *bulinjaga* if the debt was not paid within the specified period the plaintiff could legally kidnap a friend or relative of the debtor. This person was held under house arrest until such time as the debt was paid. This actually increased the amount the debtor had to pay, as an indemnity also had to be paid to the kidnapped person, according to his rank, "and this is often more than the amount proper .... And for this reason the debtor [prefers to] pay."[61]

If the case was not easily resolved and the two parties were required to undergo ordeal to determine the truth of the matter there was several different form which these could take. The two forms which appear to have been common throughout Southeast Asia were plunging a hand in molten tin or boiling water or total immersion in water. These methods were witnessed by European visitors to Burma, Siam, Cambodia, the Moluccas and the Philippines.[62] An additional method used in the Moluccas was described by Galvão as such:

> they take a certain quantity of clay in which they write some letters, and they give it to the person who denies [his guilt] to eat. In the meantime the *casizes* say certain prayers. When

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60 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.127, at least, Galvão adds, if the judges do not take sides.

61 *Ibid.*, p.129

62 Reid, *Lands Below, op.cit.*, pp.139-140

> they finish them before the [accused] party finished eating,
> they condemn him; and when not, they absolve him.[63]

Elsewhere in Southeast Asia the king was the arbiter in legal matters, hearing suits personally and giving judgement in his audience hall of under the banyan tree in the town square.[64] Of course he could not do this for all matters, and so deputised his officials to hear cases other than those requiring the death penalty. In the Moluccas the king was responsible for the application of the law within his own court, leaving his officials to dispense justice outside the court. The king appears to judged only in cases when the plaintiff was a man of 'quality'. Such cases were usually of defamation against himself or his *menteris* and were heard by the king and his council. The guilty party had to pay a substantial fee to have his case heard in this court. If the guilty party was one of the *menteris* themselves, and if the crime was suitably severe, he and his accomplices would be set adrift in a prau, as this was deemed a worse punishment than death.[65] This suggests that death still involved the incorporation of a person in the society, whereas banishment meant a person was then considered to be outside the society, effectively persona non grata.

The Spice Islanders differed from their Southeast Asian counterparts in their attitude to death in warfare, or, as Galvão often terms them, their "skirmishes". Reid has suggested that elsewhere in the region battles were fought with the objective of increasing the man-power available to a particular king or chief rather than actual territorial conquest, and so it was preferred that the enemy was taken alive if possible.[66] In contrast to this, the Moluccan and Banda islanders took particular delight in the death of their opponent, and the ritual surrounding such a death was quite elaborate and was shared with the entire community. These opponents were not necessarily from an invading force, in fact in the Bandas they were regularly people from other villages, either on the same island or a near neighbour. The basis of this antagonism is found in the social structure of the islands, where the inhabitants were divided into two factions, the Ulilimas and the Ulisawas. The nature of these social groupings is unclear. The names of these

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63 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.131
64 Reid, *Lands Below, op.cit.*, p.138
65 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.129
66 Reid, *Lands Below, op.cit.*, p.122

divisions mean 'league of five' and 'league of nine', respectively, and it has been suggested that these numbers hold a mythological significance in the entitlement of a state formed of a number of regions.[67] A similar social structure was evident in Amboina, and a brief look at this island may be enlightening regarding the same structure on Banda.

Keuning's study of early Ambonese society unravels some of the complexities of the Ulilima/Ulisawa construct.[68] An *uli* was a group of people who believed they had a common descent. This group was subdivided into smaller groups, five or nine depending on the nature of the main group. These sub-groups were known as *hena* or *aman*, and were patrilineal clans. Each *hena* was composed of a number of closely related families, or *ruma tau*. This group lived together, forming a kin-based village; all the *ruma tau* of one *hena* lived in the neighbourhood; and the numerous *hena* held common territory as a sub-division of the *uli*. Leadership among the various groups was focused on one head; those of the *ruma tau* were later called *orang tua*; the head of the *hena* was called the *upu aman*, and later the *orang kaya*.[69]

Exactly how this system was transposed into Bandanese society is unknown. It is likely that the original inhabitants of the Banda Islands formed the kin groups which were the basis of the Ulilima/Ulisawa system, and the later development and superior status of the *orang kaya* on Banda has already been noted. The origin of the four kings remains a mystery, but this itself may have some connection with Amboina, where four *perdana's* ruled until the middle of the seventeenth century.

Daily existence in the Bandas was constantly disrupted by internecine strife, antagonisms based on this division into Ulilimas and Ulisawas. It was observed that the inhabitants of the different towns possessed a "mortall hate" of each other,[70] and their irreconcilable differences frequently led to bloody encounters. Attacks were swift, savage and unpredictable, as was revenge. The towns had a night watch placed within the town and in the surrounding woods to warn of an attempted surprise assault. Attacks also took place during the day. In all such attacks the object was the collection and display of enemy heads. The dead, after

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67 J. Jansen, cited in Aveling, *op.cit.*, p.354, fn.25

68 J. Keuning, 'Ambonese, Portuguese and Dutchmen: The History of Ambon to the End of the Seventeenth Century', inM.A.P. Meilink-Roelofsz, M.E. van Opstall & G.J. Schutte (eds.), *Dutch Authors on Asian History*, Dordrecht, 1988, pp.362-397

69 *Ibid.*, pp.364-367

70 *van Neck, A Journall, op.cit.*, p.35

their heads had been on display for an hour or so, were given a respectful burial. The heads were wrapped in cloth and buried, and frankincense was burned over the graves. This was the same ritual that was followed for a death which was not the result of war.[71] These gruesome trophies of war were also put on display in the Moluccas. One location was in the harbour off Gama Lamo, where a stake rose out of the sea which was specifically for the head of the Ternatans' enemies. The head was fastened to the stake with a rope which was fed through the mouth and came out under the chin.[72] The constant state of warfare occurred likewise in the Moluccas, where:

> They never spare each other, and they immediately cut off the other's head. They hang it around their neck by the hair, put [something like a] tongue in its mouth, and besmear their breast and hands with its blood; and then they go and show themselves before the kings and chiefs in order to receive honor and reward, and after that they weep.

Galvao adds that "after having plundered their enemies, they do so to themselves."[73] This ritual head-hunting was common throughout the eastern archipelago. Heads were collected and used as funeral decorations in the Moro region and Amboina, and they dangled on the pennant poles of Ternatans returning from war.[74]

Curious customs relating to the practise of warfare in general have some relation to those held elsewhere in the Southeast Asian region. The idea of retreat as a strategy was not looked upon as a sign of defeat or as lack of courage. It was a commonly employed stategy to avoid capture and certain enslavement, if not death. Pires notes that the Bandanese retreated to the mountains in times of danger, likewise it was observed that often the women of Ternate and Tidore fled to the mountains in times of trouble. Several signs of intended hostility were recorded by Valentyn. It was a sign of war if a visiting king approached with his coracora attached one behind the other, presumably to hide the number of war ships. A silent declaration of war was made if two kings visited each other but departed without performing the formal farewell ceremonies. Valentyn also records folded hands raised in front of one's forehead as a sign of

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71 *Ibid.*, p.34

72 *Ibid.*, p.49. This stake can be seen in Chapter 1, picture I, designated by the letter D.

73 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.169

74 Schurhammer, Vol.III, *op.cit.*, pp.174, 100-102, 147

war.[75] They were possibly some form of courtesy which perhaps is derived from the close relations the islanders had earlier in their history, that is, when these wars were fought on an inter-village basis before extending to an inter-island basis.

The Spice Islanders had at their disposal a variety of offensive weapons - in Banda they made use of pikes of hard wood and tipped with iron; harpoon-style weapons (*turana*), also tipped with iron; shields, and sabres they called *pedangs*. They had hand-guns of a sort (*caleevers*), and also mounted their coracoras with weapons.[76] Moluccan weapons were similar. Their *pedangs* were decorated with feathers, with wooden hilts and guards of a tin-lead alloy. They had a cord attached to the hilt for wrapping around the wrist. Other swords had a disc which shielded the hand, "as big and as round as a small plate, and made of ivory and gold." Described as being made of "dull iron" and heavy, they were capable of cutting a person through in one stroke. The Moluccans also used krisses, *turana* and *sagu-sagu*, missiles of scorched areca wood, "well barbed". They used darts called *kalawai* which were capable of piercing a double coat of mail; other weapons appeared "to be rather a thing for laughter and play than for making war."[77] However, both islanders and Europeans found the weaponry accurate and effective.

The defensive weapons used by the Moluccans included padded suits, called *barut*, which reached the knees and covered the neck and head to the ears. They had cuirasses made from buffalo hide, fish skin or rattan, all imported materials. Shields, two-handed swords, lances, surcoats, habergeons, bucklers, helmets, bombards and muskets completed the Moluccan armoury.[78] Many of these weapons had come into use as a result of the contact with the Europeans. The Spanish had left behind gunpowder and salt-petre, and it was also traded by the Portuguese for spices.[79]

The lives of the common people of the Moluccas were centred around the collection of food and cloves, and servicing their obligations to the royal household. Sago production was a constant occupation. Galvão

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75 Valentyn, *Molukse Zaaken, op.cit.*, pp.129-130

76 van Neck, *A Journall, op.cit.*, p.32

77 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, pp.164-165

78 *Ibid.*, p.165

79 *Loc.cit.* The Moluccan supply was confiscated by Galvão after his victory over the four kings.

left one of the earliest European descriptions of the sago harvest and manufacture in the Moluccas:

> They cut the *sagu* palm or *nipah* at the foot with axes made of cane, and they split them lengthwise and draw out the pith. They put this in a kind of *perahu* or long trough which has at one end, before the neck, a piece of tree bark like a filtering cloth. They knead it with their hands, in sea water if this at hand, or ... in fresh water; and they squeeze it until the pulp for the bread comes out. It falls into other troughs where it settles to the bottom; thence they put it up in packs made of leaves, which they call *perotjos* and in which they sell it.[80]

He notes that in this tallow-like form sago bread could remain three or four years without spoiling. Baked sago pulp, in the shape of a brick, could last ten or twelve years.[81] The peasants and the *ngofangares* also planted ginger, banana and sugar plantations, betel palm groves and areca woods. Rice was sown from August to September, as was a large variety of vegetables introduced by the Portuguese. Galvão himself introduced a number of new crops, including grapes from Malacca, which he says were harvested twice per year, in February and September, and two species of jack trees from Mindanao.[82] The peasants were also responsible for collecting salt, and, most importantly, with the harvesting of the clove crops.

Details of the duties the common people were required to perform are not so clearly set out by Galvão. The peasants and the *ngofangares* had to till the land of the *kolano*, but how often this service was required is unstated. Apart from the clove trade, this was the only revenue available to the ruler. The peasants, therefore, may have worked on a corvee basis, while the *ngofangare* worked on a full-time basis, receiving only their basic keep in return. Galvão indicates that other duties of the *ngofangare* were to supply the court with its needs and to be prepared to man a kora-kora for the *kolano* in the event of a war. When important work was to be done, such as the building of a mosque or besieging a town, the people were organised into shifts for months, weeks or days, depending on the nature of the work.[83] In this way all the able-bodied in the kingdom

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80 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, pp.133,135

81 *Ibid.*, p.135

82 *Ibid.*, pp.49, 51, 133. Galvão names broad beans, lentils, Indian corn and yams, among others.

83 *Ibid.*, p.75

performed some form of duty to their lord. In van Fraasen's work on the Ternatan court from the late sixteenth to the early twentieth century he says that the *ngofangare* can be equated with the *ngosa-ngosa*, or corvee labourers, who were obliged to serve a full year at Ternate.[84] Duties of a less onerous kind included dancing performances at royal banquets, at the enthronement of the *kolano* and similar occasions.

A pattern of daily life in the Banda islands is difficult to reconstruct. Apart from the production of nutmeg and mace, we know very little about the Bandanese and their way of life. Clearly the *orang kaya* and the shahbandars enjoyed a degree of wealth (and therefore leisure) not available to all of the group's inhabitants. This wealth was expressed in the possession of slaves and the acquisition of valuable imported goods such as Javanese gongs. These gongs were traded throughout the eastern archipelago and fetched large exchange prices. Jacob van Neck, in his visit to the islands in 1599, makes it clear that Bandanese society was divided into different levels according to wealth when he distinguishes between "A woman of Banda [who] goeth in the streets with a woman slave (commonly) waighting on her", and a "poore Woman comming from the wood with all kind of Fruites, which she carrieth to the market to sell".[85] Those who did not enjoy the same level of wealth may have derived their income from either hiring out their services for harvest or, as the woman described above, by selling at the local markets foodstuffs gathered from the forests.

Trade in spices were the main occupation of both the Moluccas and the Banda Islands, but their industry was not confined to this lucrative business. The heavily-forested islands supported a reasonably sized ship-building industry on Banda. Although their ships were not notably sea-worthy, they must have been sufficiently well-constructed, for they were known to have made the long voyage to Malacca.[86] Many of the problems associated with Bandanese shipping, according to Pires, was that the Moors knew little of seamanship and their mariners were slaves[87] - not a good sailing combination for the faint-hearted voyager. As well as building vessels for inter-island trading, the Bandanese built their own kora-koras.

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84 van Fraasen, *op.cit.*, p.173

85 van Neck, *A Journall, op.cit*, p.36

86 Pires, *Suma Oriental, op.cit.*, p.212. Pires says the duration of the Malacca - Banda voyage was two to three years, during which many junks were lost.

87 *Loc.cit.*, p.212

The technique used in the construction of the kora-koras probably differed little from that used in the trading vessels:

> ... the outside is made of planckes, lyned upon the ioyntes, and bound together with roopes: and commonly the same roopes are fastened thereunto with the lyninges, every lyning is some faddome one from another: in the smithing whereof, the lyninges are so placed, that they lie levell uppon every plancke, which are pinned in the inside of the Gallie on both sides of the lyninges, for the strengthning & binding together of the worke: then they Kauke her with a certaine substance made of the inner barke or peeling of the Indian Nut-tree (which they call Clappus) after the same hath bin beaten with an hammer untill it be like unto Towe. Pitch they have none, but instead thereof, they daube all the seames, chinkes, and ioyntes, with Lyme, tempered with some other substaunce, which Iyeth so fast that the water cannot wash it away.[88]

In the Moluccas the main ship type built was the kora-kora. These vessels were of a superior construction, and it was the ships of the Ternatans that enabled them to extend their empire to encompass more than seventy islands in the eastern archipelago region. The Moluccan kora-kora was constructed thus:

> ... in the middle they are egg-shaped and at both ends slope upwards .. they can sail forwards as well as backwards .... The keel, the ribs, and the fore and aft timbers having been adjusted, they firmly fasten all of them with cords of gamuto through holes made in certain places .... before joining the planks together, they put *baru* between them so that no water may enter.[89]

This was the main body of the boat, but added to this was ten or twelve cross-beams, called *ngadju*. These stretch either side of the body "one, two or three fathoms according to the ship's bulk." To the *ngadjus* are fastened two or three rows of canes, called *cangalha*, on which the oarsmen sit. The body of the vessel is divided into decks and compartments, suitable outfitted for the passengers, especially the

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88 van Neck, *A Journall, op.cit.*, pp.35-6

89 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.157

kolano.[90] Essentially war ships, these kora-kora could carry up to four hundred rowers and one hundred soldiers. According to Rebello, the Ternatans were feared pirates,[91] and their kora-koras with tall, carved bows ending in dragon's heads compounded the fear of the surrounding islanders as the Ternatans patrolled their territory.

The rigid hierarchy in Moluccan society, evident by the early years of the sixteenth century and probably before, is reflected by the sources most obviously in living conditions and clothing. The latter shall be dealt with in this section. While by the sixteenth century the Moluccan clothing showed the influence of Malay styles, originally their clothing was made from the trees and plants found on the islands, although Galvão indicates that the wearing of this bark-cloth was confined to the "prominent" people, the commoners wore nothing. The sago tree provided the traditional dark cloth worn when in mourning, and *fisa* tree supplied a cloth of the same name, although it was not a durable material, virtually disintegrating when wet. This was white but had colour applied to it.[92] At the time of Pigafetta's arrival in 1521 the people were still wearing this *fisa* cloth as their only covering. He describes its production as such:

> They take a piece of bark and leave it in the water until it becomes soft. Then they beat it with bits of wood and [thus] make it as long and as wide as they wish. It becomes like a veil of raw silk, and has certain threads within it, which appear as if woven.[93]

By this time its use was confined to the common people. Pigafetta's description of the rich clothing worn by the *kolanos* indicates that with the contact with other cultures brought by trade, fabulous cloths of many different textures and colours had become available to the Moluccans, and the royal or courtly folk had adopted the use of these imported textiles whole-heartedly. Although for everyday wear the noblemen wore a cloth, like a poncho, with a hole in the middle and the ends tied under their arms; for special occasions the wealthy adorned themselves in fine Bengali muslins, or other fine-spuns cloths, or taffetas of orange, red or green.

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90 *Ibid.*, pp.157-161. Galvão mentions several other types of ships and says they were all propelled by oars, that is, not cargo ships.

91 Rebello, cited in Schurhammer, Vol.III, *op.cit.*, p.147

92 Galvão, *A Treatise*, *op.cit.*, pp.43,51,77

93 Pigafetta (Blair and Robertson), *op.cit.*, p.47

Van Neck observes that the young people wore a wreath of cotton on their heads, and these were decorated with flowers on special days. Selected pieces of fine jewellery and camphor cosmetic and scented oils completed their festive toilet. The young men apparently scented their clothes as well, to arouse the interest of the women.[94] The women dressed in almost the same manner as the men, their garments were longer and reached the ground. It is not clear from Galvão's description whether the women also indulged in the cosmetic finery of the men.

An additional part of the Moluccan wardrobe was the kris, said to have been introduced by the Javanese.[95] This vicious looking weapon was for decoration as well as more practical purposes. It was worn by the men on their right hip, but its twisted blade and sharp tip was often coated in poison.[96] According to Crawfurd, the kris was invented by the king of Jangala in the early fourteenth century, and since then had spread throughout Southeast Asia as a weapon of war.[97]

Galvão described the Moluccans as caring little for sowing and planting, living "as in the first age". This attitude was no doubt rooted in the pre-Islamic Moluccan society which was structured around a subsistence lifestyle, based primarily on the acquisition and consumption of sago,[98] and supplemented by a variety of indigenous fruits, sea food and terrestrial animals. This apparently leisurely life-style was facilitated by the year-round availablity of sago and its lack of natural predators, and to the variety of uses to which the palm could be put, aside from a food source. While sago by itself may be rather unpalatable, numerous recent studies have demonstrated that the quantities which limited labour can produce make it an ideal, if not very nutritious, basis for diet.[99]

During their early history the people enjoyed none of the refinements that were later known in the islands. They prepared their

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94 van Neck, *Tweede Schipvaart, op.cit.*, p.40

95 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.105

96 Schurhammer, Vol.III, *op.cit.*, p.146

97 Crawfurd, *A History, op.cit.*, Vol.I, pp.224-226. The weapon is illustrated on p.20 of the same volume.

98 See the article by Roy F. Ellen, Sago Subsistence and the Trade in Spices: A Provisional Model of Ecological Succession and Imbalance in Moluccan History in P.C. Burnham & R.F. Ellen, *Social and Ecological Systems*, London, 1979

99 *Ibid.*, pp.47-50. Ellen outlines recent results of studies into sago production/energy intake in the Moluccan region. Galvão, *op.cit.*, p.43, mentions the variety of uses to which the Moluccans put the palm - table covers, drinking cups, wine (*tuak*), vinegar, thread for weaving, cords, strings, and cables ("the best known").

food in reeds and stored it in leaves. There was no concept of long-term food production and storage, for "early in the morning they fetched from the jungle and the sea that with which they maintained themselves for the whole day."[100] With respect to the flora of the islands, it was bountiful, and the islanders made full use of the variety and abundance of trees and shrubs. The sago tree, apart from a food staple, was used for table-covers, drinking cups and thread which was woven into the traditional mourning cloth. They also made strong cables from the plant, which later was used to cover their mosques, palaces and burial structures.[101] The *nipa* tree and *areca* palm also provided bread for the inhabitants. Numerous other trees and shrubs were utilised for purposes ranging from the production of intoxicating beverages to ship's planking. None appear to be the basis of any trade, with the exception of sago as an inter-island commodity, and the fruit, the *durian*, which Galvão notes was in demand in Malacca, "and it is told that ships arrived there with rich people who because of their gluttony spent the whole of the merchandise on them."[102]

The islands' flora also provided medicinal plants, loosely described by Galvão as herbs. Among these which was counted betel. Galvão distinguishes between two types, the Javanese betel which he says was not held in high esteem, and the other being "that of the ear", a local variety. It was this betel which was commonly used in the Moluccas, chewed with chalk and gambir.[103] From Pires it seems that this local betel was the dried leaves of the clove tree.[104] Betel chewing was common throughout the Southeast Asian region, and was reputed to prevent tooth decay, aid digestion and prevent dysentry, and the juice of the betel leaf acted as a kind of mild antiseptic.[105] Other plants were used to reduce fever or to relieve upper chest pains. Even cloves were applied medicinally, to the forehead and face, when one felt indisposed.[106]

For their daily sustenance the Moluccans relied on a variety of edibles from both sea and land. On the sea they fished for the dugong, and several smaller varieties of fish. They ate fresh-water turtles, lobsters,

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100 *Ibid.*, p.77
101 *Ibid.*, p.43
102 *Ibid.*, p.47
103 *Ibid.*, p.57 & Jacobs, fn.1, p.331
104 Pires, *Suma Oriental, op.cit.*, p.219
105 Reid, *Lands Below, op.cit.*, p.54. Reid also notes that betel acted as an anti-bacterial agent, working against many waterborne diseases and general infections.
106 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.77

mussels and oysters. Land crabs were highly prized. These were caught at night by torch light with brass wire, and were farmed by the people, kept in earthen vessels and fattened on coconuts and kenari nuts. They also raised small fish in ponds along the shore for use as bait. Meat was provided by pigs, sheep, chickens and two kinds of goats, although Barros noted that the Moluccans preferred fish to flesh.[107] Bandanese society was structured around the busy inter-island trade that operated in the eastern archipelago. They were traders by necessity, as their small islands did not yield sufficient food to sustain its population, and the import of rice as a staple was essential. This was supplemented by sago, a small variety of fruits, products of the sea, and no doubt, some native animals.

Common among the Spice Islanders was the Southeast Asian fondness of banquets, which were an essential component of celebrations of war and occasions of amusement. These occasions served the important function of reinforcing social cohesion, and in the Moluccas of reinforcing the superior position of the king to his own subjects and, when foreign dignitaries of kings were the guests of honour, displaying the power of the host king by virtue of the numbers of his officials attending, and the sumptuousness of the banquet. Banquets also carried heavy religious overtones and were the natural accompaniment of momentous events such as the enthroning of a new king or the birth of a royal child. Galvão described the celebrations which followed a royal birth, with feasting continuing for seven days.[108]

Banquets were both public and private occasions. In the case of the former, the status of the Moluccan *kolano* was reinforced in several ways. First, his clothing and utensils set him apart. In his best attire, he made his way to the banquet site, held either in a public square or sometimes along the beach. Guests of honour arrived before the appearance of the *kolano*. When dining, the common people used palm leaf cups and plates, while the *kolano* used finely made imported utensils - small gold cups, porcelain pitchers and finger bowls, bronze and copper jugs. This privilege was doubly reinforced with a small piece of yellow *fisa* tied around the *kolano's* cup.[109]

Secondly, the manner in which the *kolano* approached the banqueting area, with great pomp and ceremony, served to impress not

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107 *Ibid.*, pp.59, 67,69; Barros in Crawfurd, *Dictionary, op.cit.*,p.284

108 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.121

109 *Ibid.*, pp.107, 143

only his guests but also his subjects. He was preceded by a train of men brandishing swords and spears (a display of his kingdom's strength), and musicians playing what Galvão terms 'customary instruments'. This is not elaborated upon, but it is likely that these instruments were part of the gamelan ensemble, again reflecting the cultural adoptions of the Moluccas.

Finally, the seating arrangements reflected the high status of the *kolano* in relation not only to his subjects, but also to his nobility. The *kolano's baileu*, which was set apart from the others, had a raised seat and a raised curtain "in order that the people may see him". Ambassadors and strangers were honoured above his own nobles by being allowed to sit near him. Their seats were also raised, but obviously not so much as that of the *kolano*. This seating arrangement may reflect the importance that the sixteenth century rulers placed on good trade relations and on harmonious relations between the ruling elite throughout the Moluccas. Insulting these men by assigning them to a lower seat could have proved very costly for an over-confident king. After these guests came the king's brothers, then the *sengadji* and the *menteris*. Again, this reflects the predominance of the military at court, and also probably an element of security for the king's person. The remaining nobility sat in other *baileus* around the royal *baileu*, and the general population sat on the ground.

During these public feasts, which could last from midday to the following morning, the people were entertained with music, jokes and other pleasantries.[110] Further entertainment was provided by the performance of the *lego-lego*, described as a stately dance but performed by the commoners. Following this the courtiers came to perform the *carracheo*, during which they:

> run and jump from one side to the other with great ferocity; and when they have some enemies, they direct their last blow towards their side, then lay down buckler and sword and make the *sembahjang* before the king.[111]

The courtiers come splendidly dressed for this, making good use of the colourful feathers available from the inter-island trade. They wore a kind of helmet which came from Persia, variously coloured with green, red and yellow crests of fibres, while on the forehead they wore wide multi-coloured plumes. Galvão's description sounds very much like that of

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110 *Ibid.*, p.145. Unusually, they were not permitted to speak of marriage topics at these occasions, but no explanation for this is offered.

111 *Loc.cit.*

Jacob van Neck's depiction of the warriors preparing for battle on Banda. Here the warriors wore the entire Paradise bird on their helmet, rather than a few feathers. They leapt around, "springing this way and that way", and took pride in this agility.[112]

In the Bandas such public feasts were also common. These were held in the forest in the middle of the island or in their mosques, where they "make good cheere, and to be merrie togither". Up to one hundred people gathered together for these feasts, and these provided both entertainment and a forum for the discussion of matters of public import.[113] They also sat in the streets for these banquets, using a banana leaf or a fig leaf for a table. They ate sago and boiled rice from a folded leaf which they used as a plate, and van Neck notes that "they eat like pigs".[114] The Bandanese feasters were also entertained by dancers during their meal. These performers would dance "with funny jumps", being replaced by another dancer if they tired before the meal had ended.

Other forms of entertainment indulged in by the Spice Islanders included what the sources call 'mirror fights'. These are not described but it is suggested that they are individual warriors, fully attired in their customary war costume, who act out combat situations with an invisible foe; or two warriors, one 'reflecting' the movements of the other in a stylised fashion. Apart from entertainment value, these would have improved the fitness and dexterity of the participants. Another sport engaged in by the courtiers was boat-racing. Galvão says the racing kora-koras were manned by the *menteris*, and that this is what the people like most to see. During the course of the race "there is much betting, quarreling, and disorder."[115] A popular sport observed by van Neck in Banda was 'kaertsen' or *sepak raga*. The players stood in a circle, with one man in the middle. He threw the ball (made of interlaced reed) and it was "a great shame and reproch to him that misseth and hitteth not the Ball with his foote when it cometh to him". Van Neck says that the game was "greatly esteemed among them".[116] The same game was played in the Moluccas, as was bowls, chess and 'odds and evens' with dice. *Sepak raga*

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112 van Neck, *A Journall, op.cit.*, p.32
113 *Ibid.*, p.31
114 van Neck, *Tweede Schipvaart, op.cit.*, p.23
115 Galvão, *A Treatise, op.cit.*, p.147
116 van Neck, *Tweede Schipvaart, op.cit.*, p.24; van Neck, *A Journall, op.cit.*, p.36

was quite common elsewhere in Southeast Asia, but it seems the Moluccans were renowned for their skill.[117]

One form of entertainment which does not appear among the Moluccans or Bandanese was the famous wayang theatre. Why this popular form of entertainment was not adopted by the Spice Islanders is entirely unknown. The answer is not isolation from the main cultural centres; these were brought infinitely closer by the trade links which had long been established between the eastern and western archipelago. Evidence of other cultural adoptions abound in Moluccan society - the clothing style of the people, the many musical instruments used by the islanders, and the famous Javanese gongs which accompanied the *kolano* on his processions throughout his realm. It canonly be suggested that the Spice Islanders found their entertainment in their banquets, dances and frequent "skirmishes".

The society of the sixteenth century Spice Islanders reveals a combination of elements. Although its origins could not be determined, the society appears to have been composed of several different ethnic groups, and the social and cultural mores of the islanders reflect this. By that period the *kolano* figure had emerged as the *primus inter pares*. He was privileged in the way he lived; this was reflected in his clothing and the many customs which had developed surrounding the sacredness of his person. A fuller discussion of the development of the *kolano* figure is found in the following chapter.

The situation of women in the Spice Islands was generally the same as for women throughout the region, although within the Moluccan court they were favoured as 'guardians of rank' and performed tasks specifically revolving around the physical comfort of the ruler. Women had a strong economic contribution to make, particularly in Banda, by virtue of their role in the processing of spices. They were also the marketers of the produce of the islands, though this was limited to foodstuffs and common goods. This economic contribution does not appear to have been acknowledged by any increased prestige within the male-dominated community.

There is a strong element of Javanese influence, found in the clothing styles and some of the precious 'treasures' hoarded by the islanders. This was obviously the result of trade contacts which reached

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117 Reid, *Lands Below, op.cit.*, p.200

back many years before the coming of the Europeans. These 'foreign' cultural elements, however, were fully assimilated into the Spice Island way of life, becoming an integral part of marriage ceremonies. The many forms of entertainment enjoyed throughout Southeast Asia were also found in the Spice Islands, banqueting, dice, chess, *sepak raga*. The islanders also enjoyed the *lego-lego*, a ceremonial dance, and the *carracheo*, or war dance. In war the islanders differed from their western neighbours. Head-hunting was common, even after the adoption of both Islam and Christianity, and here the earlier culture of the islanders asserted itself. Heads were displayed, buried and even worn, in a macabre gesture of victory.

The overwhelming impression left by an examination of the Spice Island society of the sixteenth century is that, despite the obvious role that imported cultural goods played in the lives of the islanders, the society encountered by the Portuguese and Spanish in the early years of the sixteenth century was not a Java-dominated or China-dominated entity. The demand for, and acceptance of, cultural treasures brought into the network from outside was a conscious decision by the islanders. It was not imposed, and while it could be said that the western traders benefited most in the exchange, this was only in a material sense. The benefit to the islanders was a cultural and spiritual richness, derived from these deliberate cultural adoptions. The society of the Spice Islands then, was distinct in several ways from the centres to the west in Southeast Asia, but at the same time, by the early sixteenth century, they had become dependent on the western archipelago, notably for culturally significant items. The long-established contact with the west, particularly Java, reflected itself in other areas - common dress, forms of entertainment, and aspects of law and justice. Regardless of this, however, the Spice Islands were not pale reflections of the great cultures to the west. They were dynamic and prosperous in their own right.