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Spice War: Ternate, Makassar, the Dutch East India Company and the struggle for the Ambon Islands (c. 1600-1656)

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II. THE EASTERN ARCHIPELAGO IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

After familiarizing ourselves with the natural and human environment that made up the eastern archipelago, this chapter aims to make another brief tour around the region, this time to familiarize ourselves with some of its political, economic and, to a lesser degree, cultural and religious characteristic as these stood and developed over the sixteenth century. It is emphatically not an attempt to give any kind of complete overview, but mainly tries to provide a conceptual basis for the subsequent study of the Spice Wars. It therefore limits itself to regions, characteristics and developments most acutely relevant to our understanding of these conflicts.⁷⁸

BANDA AND THE OTHERS

Any consideration of spice trade and statecraft in the sixteenth century eastern archipelago must begin with a brief stop at the Banda Islands. The small group of islands, a good 100 kilometres south of Seram, was not only the sole area producing nutmeg and mace, but also a major regional trade entrepôt. Easily reached from major port cities further west, easily recognized from the sea by its volcano and with a large safe anchorage between the central group of islands, Banda was firmly embedded in Asian maritime trade networks by the early sixteenth century. When two Portuguese vessels, trying to locate the spice islands from recently-conquered Melaka, made their appearance there in 1512, they were surprised to find the islands welcoming and accustomed to international traders, with established trading practices and a population 'much taken to conducting business.'⁷⁹ The first two Portuguese ships spent a month buying nutmeg and mace. To their delight they were also able to buy a junk to replace an indigenous-built vessel they had lost earlier, and left the islands 'most contented'.⁸⁰

The Bandanese were also traders in their own right, both within the eastern archipelago and beyond. In addition to trading with communities in, for example, Seram, Aru and Kei for various necessities, including staple foods such as sago, the Bandanese bought cloves produced in the various clove-producing

78 For a somewhat similar tour of the region, but with different purposes and therefore different emphasis, see e.g. Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 47-112.

79 João de Barros and Diogo do Couto. *Da Asia de João de Barros e Diogo de Couto ; decada 1-12. Nova ed.* Lisboa: Carlos, 1778, Dec III, Cap. VI, 587.

80 Ibid., 589.

regions to their north. As these regions were more difficult to reach from the west, had less well-established relations with long-distance traders and did not engage in long-distance trade of their own, the Bandanese were happy to serve as middlemen, paying for the cloves with cloth, gold, ivory and other luxury goods obtained from the long distance trade, and subsequently shipping them to Banda to sell. Furthermore, the Bandanese also participated in this long-distance trade themselves, sailing their own vessels to places like Tuban and Gresik on the Javanese coast, Melaka, and, later in the sixteenth century, Makassar. All the while, the elite of orangkaya ruling the various Bandanese communities was able to retain its political independence, both of the Portuguese and local expanding powers such as Ternate, throughout the sixteenth century.⁸¹

Other polities were making efforts to share in, or emulate, Bandanese commercial success. One way to do so was to introduce cloves to one's region, or extend its cultivation, and thus profit from the expanding world market. As the Portuguese made their way into the region, many polities also attempted to establish relations with them – not only as a potential customer for their spices, but also as a powerful potential ally. The Portuguese crew of the junk bought in Banda described above was to experience this first-hand. During the voyage back from Banda to Melaka, it lost sight of the other two ships and was stranded on the uninhabited Lucipara Islands. These Portuguese, led by Francisco Serrão, made their escape by attracting the attention of a passing Malay perahu, apparently lured by the potential loot to be obtained – the earliest Portuguese source describing the episode calls them *ladrões*, i.e. thieves or robbers. As these supposed robbers came ashore, the Portuguese lay in ambush, captured them and subsequently forced them to bring them to the nearest inhabited land. This ruse landed them at the settlement of Asilulu, on Ambon's northwest coast.⁸²

The Portuguese were popular: a community on Western Seram immediately demanded that the inhabitants of Asilulu turn over their Portuguese guests or face the consequences. The leaders at Asilulu decided to ask the Portuguese to help them teach this rival community a lesson. The Portuguese obliged and with their assistance, the unnamed community on Western Seram was crushingly

81 John Villiers. 'The Cash-Crop Economy and State Formation in the Spice Islands in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries.' In: J. Kathirithamby and J. Villiers eds. *The Southeast Asian Port and Polity: Rise and Demise*. Singapore: Singapore University Press [etc.], pp. 83-106, esp. 83-95; Ellen, *On the edge of the Banda Zone*, esp. 54-89.

82 Barros, *Da Asia* 5 (Dec III, Cap. VI), 590-591.

defeated. This joint victory laid the basis for subsequent Portuguese involvement on the island of Ambon.

Meanwhile, the sultanates further north had also learned of the arrival of the Portuguese. Both the sultans of Ternate and Tidore rushed a fleet of kora-kora down to Ambon to invite the Portuguese to their island. The Ternatans were first to arrive, and Serrão accepted their invitation all too happily, as reaching the North Maluku had been one of the original goals of the expedition.⁸³

Both in Ambon and in Ternate, the Portuguese were thus hailed not only as traders but also as allies. This put its mark on subsequent relations – whereas in Banda, the Portuguese do not appear to ever have established a permanent presence or gained political influence worth mentioning, they decidedly did so in both Ambon and Ternate. Their presence there would turn out to be a somewhat of a mixed blessing.

TERNATE AND THE MALUKU SULTANATES

With Serrão, we travel some 600 kilometres to the north, to what was considered Maluku proper at the time: the sultanates of what we would today call North Maluku. This region was home to the sultanates of Ternate, Tidore, Jailolo and Bacan. The most powerful and consequential of these were Ternate and Tidore, two continually rivalrous states centred in two adjacent small islands (*See plate 2, below*), but both with political power far beyond these islands at their core, as large areas throughout Maluku, as well as some areas of Sulawesi, were at some point vassals of one or the other. These sultanates, Ternate in particular, were also trade destinations in their own right, as, in the early sixteenth century, the region was still the exclusive producer of cloves.⁸⁴

With Serrão's arrival in Ternate, the Portuguese immediately became tied up with the political rivalry between Ternate and Tidore. The race of the two rivalling sultans to court the favours of the Portuguese, with Ternate winning

83 Ibid., 593pp. For a serviceable overview of these events in Dutch, based on Barros, see P.A. Tiele, 'De Europeërs in den Maleischen Archipel, Eerste gedeelte.' *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 25 (1877), esp. 355-361.

84 Much of what follows heavily relies on Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 1993, Ch. 4. Footnotes have been placed where a specific reference was useful, or where other sources were used. For a recent source publication giving further texture to these episodes from the Spanish perspective: Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, (Glen F. Dille ed.) *Spanish and Portuguese Conflict in the Spice Islands : the Loaysa Expedition to the Moluccas 1525-1535 : from Book XX of the General and Natural History of the Indies*. Hakluyt Society, series III, vol. 38. London: Routledge for the Hakluyt Society, 2021.

the day, appears to have sprung from the hopes that the Portuguese would be an asset in the conflict, and that an alliance with them would raise the sultan's own standing and power. The Ternaten Sultan Abu Lais wrote a letter to the Portuguese king, inviting him to come and buy not only cloves, but also nutmeg and mace in Ternate. The sultan would also welcome Portuguese soldiers and weapons, and would allow them to build a fort in his domains. Nine years later, Tidore, along with Jailolo, tried to make a similar arrangement with the Spaniards when the two remaining ships of Magellan's expedition, sent out specifically to contest the Portuguese claims to the Spice Islands, passed through the region. From the very beginning, European competition for access to the spices was entwined with political rivalries between the states in Maluku.

For the time being it was the alliance between the Portuguese and Ternate that stuck. In 1522, the Portuguese, startled into action by the appearance of the Spanish ships, sent a contingent of Portuguese under Antonio de Brito to Ternate to begin building a fort on the southern coast of Ternate. They completed its construction in 1523. The following year the Ternatens and their newfound European allies successfully attacked Tidore, burning down the capital Mareku. The Spanish presence in the archipelago, meanwhile, was too intermittent and fleeting for them to substantially help their Malukan allies. In spite of some limited Spanish help to Jailolo,⁸⁵ the Portuguese conquered it in 1534, captured the sultan and, after his suspiciously untimely death, installed a new one that was loyal to them. In 1551 Jailolo, after renewed conflict with Ternate and the Portuguese, would become entirely subservient to Ternate.

The alliance therefore really did help to make Ternate into the most powerful of the Maluku sultanates. Portuguese traders, like their Muslim counterparts, also brought wealth, some in the form of cloth, iron, and luxury goods, to Ternate, reinforcing the position and status of the ruling class in the process. It has been suggested that the clove trade, with the income it provided and the organization that was required to meet Portuguese demands for timing and preparation of the harvest, accelerated the state formation process underway in the islands.⁸⁶ However, this all came at a significant cost. Relationships between the Ternatens and the Portuguese soon turned sour. De Brito's successor, Dom Jorge de

85 Some Spanish survivors of the Saavedra expedition, which had stranded in Jailolo in 1528, had remained there and apparently helped the sultan with weapons, training and fort building. Andaya, *World of Maluku*, 121-122.

86 Villiers, 'Cash-crop economy and state formation', p. 101. Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 1993, pp.55-57.

Menese, managed to alienate the ruling class within a very short period of time with his heavy-handed policies, which included keeping the sultan hostage in the Portuguese fort and executing various Ternaten high officials he suspected of conspiring against him. Under the leadership of the sultan's mother, the Ternatens started starving the fort of food supplies, only lifting the blockade when Menese was replaced as Captain of Ternate in 1530.

Menese's captaincy was the start of increasing Portuguese involvement in Ternaten politics, and Ternaten resistance against this. Subsequent decades saw frequent conflict, and the exile or even death of sultans at the hands of the Portuguese. On one occasion the Ternaten leaders swore to 'destroy all the spice and fruit trees on the islands' so that the Portuguese would have no further interest in the area.⁸⁷ Meanwhile, Christianity was taking hold in many areas that the sultan of Ternate laid claim to. The latter usually happened not only on the initiative of Portuguese missionaries, but on that of the population of these areas, who, among many motivations, sometimes saw it as a means of weakening Ternaten control over them.⁸⁸ The Muslim Ternaten sultans rightly felt that this was undermining their power.

Things came to a head after 1570 when Sultan Hairun was killed by the Portuguese. His son and successor, Babullah, then resolved to drive the Portuguese from Ternate altogether – and would turn out to be a lot more successful than his predecessors. He managed to unite a Muslim coalition against the Portuguese, and proceeded to starve them into submission in their fort. He meanwhile campaigned around Maluku, driving out the Portuguese and forcing Christian communities to convert to Islam. In 1575, after what had amounted to a five year siege and with no prospect of help from the ailing Portuguese empire, the Portuguese surrendered the fort and were evicted to Ambon. The Portuguese presence in Ternate came to an end. The experience had, however, not made alliances with Europeans lose their appeal. Interestingly, Tidore would open its doors to the Portuguese soon after. Ternate, for its part, was soon courting the new European powers coming to Maluku. When Francis Drake sailed through the area in 1579,

87 Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 1993, p. 124.

88 This local agency in the spread of Christianity is demonstrated in Baker, Brett. 'Indigenous-Driven Mission: Reconstructing Religious Change in Sixteenth-Century Maluku.' PhD. Diss, Australian National University, 2014. Baker also points out that interest in Christianity not only stemmed from the elite considerations of political and economic power I emphasize here (although these certainly played a role), but also from individual religious choices.



Fig 2.1 The Ternaten capital of Gamalama, as depicted in Van Neck's published journal about the second Dutch expedition to Asia (1601). This print was made on the basis of Van Warwijck's visit to Ternate, 1599. A are Van Warwijck's two ships. C. are the king's warships. G. shows the old Portuguese fort, now turned into the royal palace. M. shows another fortified Portuguese building. O shows a tower 'with one gun'. Collection Universiteit van Amsterdam, O 60 641, p. 40.

he had initially intended to sail to Tidore. A Ternaten approached the ships and implored Drake to come to Ternate instead, as he would find a warm welcome there and the Portuguese were in Tidore now, where the English had nothing to expect but deceit and treachery. Drake obliged, setting sail for Ternate instead.⁸⁹

Babullah meanwhile started reasserting and extending his power, sending a fleet to the western Ambon islands in 1576, and setting out with a fleet himself in 1580, first to North Sulawesi, and then to Southeast Sulawesi. The campaign

89 Francis Fletcher c.a. *The World Encompassed by Sir Francis Drake* etc. London: Printed [by G. Miller] for Nicholas Bourne and are to be sold at his shop at the Royall Exchange, 1628, p.85. It is worth noting that Portugal and England were allies at the time.

ended at Selayar, just below South Sulawesi, where a treaty was allegedly made with the Gowa ruler.⁹⁰

Sultan Babullah was now free of the Portuguese and presided over a self-confident and cosmopolitan Southeast Asian court. The report of Francis Drake's visit to Ternate illustrates this very nicely – not only were Drake and his crew impressed by the opulence and state of the court, they also took note of the cosmopolitan character of the sultan's retinue, which included four 'Romans, or strangers [Rumi?], who lay as lidgiers [agents or representatives] there to keepe continuall traffique with this people; there were also two Turkes and one Italian as lidgiers; and last of all, one Spaniard who, being freed out of the hands of the Portugals in the recovering of the iland, served him now in stead of a souldier.'⁹¹

Drake was less impressed with the state of defence – the sultan had taken up residence in the old Portuguese fort, but Drake's men did not 'find it to be a place of any great force; two onely cannons there they saw, and those at that present moment untraversable because unmounted.'⁹² Six years later, however, the Ternate court had apparently improved dramatically on this point. In 1585 the Spanish, now allied with the Portuguese since the Iberian Union of 1580, made an attempt to conquer Ternate, sending a fleet from Manila. The Spaniards and a host of local allies, however, found a significantly reinforced fort, with an added ring of walls, new bulwarks and towers, mounted with guns captured from the Portuguese. Spanish sources also describe how some twenty Turkish gunners participated in the defence, using bombs and grenades against the attacking Spaniards. In the end, the Spanish broke off their attack.⁹³

Thus, at the end of the sixteenth century, Ternate had become militarily

90 Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 1993, p. 134. Andaya bases himself heavily on Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* here, and Valentijn's information seems to come from local lore, so that the reliability of this information is somewhat uncertain. It must be noted that the Gowa Chronicle (Cummings, *A Chain of Kings*, p. 41) makes no mention of this treaty, although it does mention Maluku in the information about diplomatic contacts built up by this ruler: 'It was also this *karaeng* [Tunijalloq, r.1565-1590] who befriended the Javanese, crossed over to Karasanga, to Johor, crossed over to Melaka, crossed over to Pahang, crossed over to Balambangan, crossed over to Patani, crossed over to Banjar, went east to Maluku'; Ibid, p. 41.

91 Fletcher, *The World Encompassed by Sir Francis Drake*, 90-91. Incidentally, on Ternate they also met with a Chinese who claimed to have been exiled from the Chinese court and would only be allowed to return when he had discovered some worthwhile information.

92 Fletcher, *The World Encompassed by Sir Francis Drake*, 1628, p. 92.

93 Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 1993, p.137.

strong, independent of the Iberian powers, and expanding to include an ever greater number of vassals throughout the eastern archipelago. Various areas of Sulawesi had come within the Ternaten sphere of influence – some areas on its north coast, but also the islands of Southeast Sulawesi, including the sultanate of Buton. Closer to home, they included the populous Sula and Banggai Islands, important to the Ternaten realm as a whole as they provided an abundance of sago and other staple foods.⁹⁴ Furthermore, its vassals included some regions of the western Ambon islands – the western peninsula of Seram, called Hoamoal, had a Ternaten governor or kimelaha, as did the island of Buru, directly to its west.⁹⁵

AN ISLAND DIVIDED: AMBON

While little is known with certainty about the political structure of Maluku before the arrival of the Portuguese, we do know that the dynasties of North Maluku traced their lineages back for several centuries before that time, and that state formation processes, spurred on by clove exports, had been underway there for an extended period of time. In Ambon, Seram and the smaller surrounding islands in what we would today consider Central Maluku, by contrast, polities were typically still limited to village federations. In the course of the sixteenth century, however, as clove cultivation entered the region, both Portugal and Ternate increasingly built up a sphere of influence, and local power structures started to aggregate and integrate. By the late sixteenth century, then, the region constituted a complicated patchwork of states, local political affiliations and foreign influence.

The island of Ambon consists of two peninsulas – a larger northern one and a smaller southern one, joined together by a land-bridge towards the east side still known as the Passo. As the Portuguese were welcomed into Asilulu, the various communities of the northern peninsula were in the process of integrating into what would become the state of Hitu.

The *Hikyat Tanah Hitu*, a seventeenth century history of Hitu written by the Hituese imam and nobleman Rijali, recounts how four groups of migrants arrived in the islands from various other parts of the archipelago – Seram, Java, Jailolo (in North Maluku) and Gorom (an island and local trade hub off eastern Seram, to be discussed below), and each staked their claim to part of the area

94 Andaya, *The world of Maluku*, pp. 85-90.

95 The Dutch often referred to these kimelaha as 'stadhouders'.

around the Hitu Bay and established a *negeri*, a town community, there. Their leaders resolved to merge into one larger community which they would jointly rule, the four groups each represented by a leader called *perdana* (literally: first). The leader of each group was given a ringing title: the *perdana Totohatu* for those from Seram, the *perdana Tanihitumesen* for those from Java, the *perdana Nusatapi* for those from Jailolo, the *perdana Patih Tuban* for those from Gorom. In the wake of these events, more village federations on Hitu joined or were subsumed under the various *perdana*, and the four original groups of migrants were joined by three local polities, adding up to be seven federations of villages known as *uli*. This gave Hitu (which means seven) its name.⁹⁶

While Rijali's account of the founding of Hitu would have stemmed from an oral tradition, rendering it into an origin story with all the associated motifs and literary tropes, we can accept the underlying notion that groups of migrants arrived in the region and were able to set themselves up as rulers around the Bay of Hitu. These developments have been tentatively dated to the early sixteenth century. The influence of the *perdanas* subsequently spread over the rest of the peninsula, and a hierarchical structure of rule developed in its wake. A raja was subsequently also installed, but this seems to have been prompted by the notion that a state worth taking seriously needed a king of some sort, and had little bearing on where real power rested. The raja remained largely ceremonial, and actual power remained with the four *perdanas*.

The success of the four *perdanas* at building a state seems to have gone hand in hand with two simultaneous developments: the spread of Islam and the introduction of cloves. Rijali recounts how the leader of the migrants from Gorom visited Tuban on east Java, learned about Islam and brought it to Hitu. His later title, *perdana Patih Tuban*, recalled this accomplishment.

Just around the same time, the first attempts at planting clove trees must have been undertaken. Like Islam, these also seem to have arrived in Hitu some two decades into the sixteenth century, and both would tie the emerging state into wider cultural, economic and political networks in the region. As the first clove harvests would have come in slightly over a decade later, they would have increasingly contributed to the economic and political power of the *perdanas* and their families. Not only did the *perdanas* tax the clove harvests; also, as a Muslim elite that originally came from abroad, they maintained the foreign trade relations. Thus, in a pattern that was common throughout Southeast Asia, the political

96 Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu*, pp. 32-33, 89-98.

leaders were also a merchant elite. Clove production, Islam, foreign trade and state formation processes were thus all mutually reinforcing.⁹⁷

All this did not, however, reinforce the emerging state's relationship with the Portuguese. Initially, as we have seen, the latter had been welcomed both as traders and as allies. Indeed, they periodically assisted the Hituese against rivalling Seramese communities in subsequent years, and were allowed to build a trading post slightly east of Hitulama. To facilitate the contact, Djamilu, the first *perdana Nusatapi*, who had received the Portuguese after their arrival on the north coast, was given the additional title Kapitan Hitu, was tasked with maintaining relations with the Portuguese, and had the privilege of receiving the customary gifts that each Portuguese vessel had to present for them to anchor and trade in Hitu.⁹⁸

Soon enough, however, the Portuguese made themselves unpopular. While both the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* and Portuguese sources mention episodes of drunk Portuguese misbehaviour as among the causes, more structural forces were also at play, including the advent of Islam and its wider political consequences. As Portuguese relations with their other supposed ally, Ternate, turned sour from the late 1520s onwards, Hitu increasingly became suspicious of the Portuguese, and became part of the camp of Ternate's Muslim allies. The *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* mentions a pact between Ternate and Hitu, dating back to the time that Islam first came to Hitu, and its early state formation process.⁹⁹ In 1537, the Portuguese were shown the door, and escorted out of Hituese territory. They resettled on the other side of the peninsula, on the north coast of the Bay of Ambon, welcomed by the local population, which adhered to the region's traditional animist and polytheistic beliefs and was under threat from Hitu. The inhabitants soon started converting to Catholicism, cementing the newfound alliance in terms of religion as well. The Portuguese, who subsequently moved across the bay in 1576 and built their main fortification in what is now Kota Ambon, set themselves up as the ruling elite of the southern peninsula and some parts of the adjacent

97 Ibid., 32-35; Villiers, 'Cash-crop economy and Sate formation', pp. 98-101.

98 Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu*, pp. 110-111.

99 Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu*, p. 36, 103pp. Dating this pact is problematic: the passage mentions the Ternaten Sultan Zainal Abidin, who ruled until 1512 and supposedly travelled to Java in the late fifteenth century, where, according to Rijali, he would have met the later perdana Patih Tuban and come to a pact with Hitu, later confirmed in Hitu itself. Zainal Abidin's travels, however, cannot be reconciled with the timeline of the formation of Hitu as we know it, which started only later.

islands, ruling over an increasingly Christian population. Ambon was thus divided into a Muslim state encompassing most of the northern peninsula, and a Portuguese-ruled Christian region encompassing the southern one.¹⁰⁰

The details of the subsequent military conflict between the Portuguese and the Hituese are beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is significant that it started with a large Portuguese punitive expedition along the Hituese coast, which served as a staging area for Bandanese, Makasar, Javanese West-Seramese and Hituese vessels shipping weapons to Ternate to exchange them for cloves. The Muslim networks in the region remained important in subsequent decades: the Hituese could count on incidental support from northeast Java, the Ternaten territories on Western Seram and, by the late sixteenth century, Banda. The tide of the conflict swayed wildly, with the Portuguese sometimes conquering most of Hitu, forcing much of its population to flee, and the Hituese, in turn, almost driving the Portuguese from Ambon altogether on more than one occasion. The increasing mutual support among the Muslim states of the region was not lost on the Iberians: a letter by the Jesuit Antonio Marta written in the early 1590s, musing on the possibilities of a Spanish conquest of the region, noted with concern how all the Muslims in the region were now apparently coordinating their efforts against the 'Christians'. During a recent siege of the Portuguese castle at Ambon (presumably the one in 1591), Bandanese and Seramese vessels and warriors had joined the ranks of the Hituese and the Hoamoalese Ternatens. Marta was concerned the Portuguese might not be able to hold onto Ambon at all if things continued down this road.¹⁰¹

CLOVES AND KIMELAHA: HOAMOAL AND THE SURROUNDING ISLANDS

The 'Hoamoalese Ternatens' that Marta mentioned were just to the north, across the water from Hitu. Hoamoal was the peninsula on the far west of the large island of Seram, and it was one of the regions that Ternate expanded into in the course of the sixteenth century.

The region is known by many names. It is often referred to as Western Seram or Small Seram – or sometimes, particularly in earlier Portuguese sources, simply as Seram, as it was, to them, apparently the only part of the island worth being

100 Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu*, I, 36-38.

101 Letter by Antonio Marta, quoted in Bartolomé Juan Leonardo de Argensola. *Conquista de la Islas Malucas: al Rey Felipe Tercero, nuestro señor*. Zaragoza: Imprenta del Hospicio Provincial, 1891, pp. 189-190. Also see Tiele, 'De Europeeërs in den Maleischen Archipel', V (1881), p. 190.

aware of. The peninsula was sometimes also referred to as Luhu, actually the residence of the kimelaha on its east coast and therefore its main political centre. Also, it was sometimes referred to as Veranula or Varnula, which means Greater Banda – a name sometimes also given to Seram as a whole, and expressive of the proximity and the ties between Banda and Seram.¹⁰²

Compared to Hitu, we are much less informed about the history of Hoamoal in the sixteenth century. There is no source on its history comparable to Rijali's history, although the latter gives us occasional insights into Hoamoal as well, and much of the knowledge and tradition of the region would have been lost as its entire population was ultimately driven from the peninsula by the VOC. It is clear, however, that the region was going through very similar developments as Hitu in the early sixteenth century. Cloves were introduced: according to Rumphius, the people of Kambelo, at the west coast of Hoamoal, were the first to do so, secretly taking so-called *moernagels* (literally: mother cloves, the fruits, with their seeds, that form if the flower buds are not harvested but left on the tree), and bringing them to their own region. As tradition had it, the seeds were planted in the mountainous interior near Kambelo and came up successfully, after which clove cultivation spread throughout the peninsula. In the early Dutch period, a couple of very old clove trees inland from Kambelo were alleged to be the living testimony to that history.¹⁰³

Kambelo and nearby Lesidi subsequently became a trade destination in their own right, and by the time the Dutch first arrived in the region, these were the only settlements directly on the coast, rather than up on a fortified hill. The easy access to the sea apparently compensated for the increased vulnerability to the seaborne raids that were so common to the warfare and statecraft of the region, and the trade income and their relations with foreign traders would have given them the means to take additional defensive measures.¹⁰⁴ Rumphius recounts how Malay, Javanese and Makasar people settled in Kambelo, and we may surmise that Islam would also have come to the peninsula with them.¹⁰⁵

The spread of Islam would only have been accelerated by the escalating ri-

102 Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu*, 39.

103 Rumphius, *Kruid-boek*, II, 4.

104 This was certainly the case by the early seventeenth century, when Kambelo boasted an impressive system of fortifications, and, during the trade season, could also rely on the visiting traders to aid in the defence if the need arose: see below, chapter V, paragraph 'a stand-off', and chapter IX, paragraph 'the meeting of two rulers'.

105 Rumphius, *De Amboonse eilanden*, 125-133.

valries between the Portuguese and their various Muslim opponents. Hoamoal was drawn into these conflicts, as fleeing Hituese temporarily resettled there, and as the Ternaten court increased its involvement in the region – remarkably enough, to keep it out of the sphere of influence of its supposed ally, the Portuguese.¹⁰⁶ The sultans of Ternate had already been trying to increase their hold over the Ambon region in previous decades and seem to have considered the region as rightfully belonging to their sphere of influence. In 1558, the sultan sent a high-ranking noble from the Ternaten Tomagola family, named Laulata, there to assist and protect those opposing the Portuguese. Laulata fought the Portuguese ferociously and also managed to establish himself as a ruler in his own right, turning the abovementioned settlement of Luhu into his residence and becoming the first kimelaha, governor of the Ternaten sultan, on the peninsula. In 1563, his struggle against the Portuguese was even briefly joined by Babullah, the later sultan of Ternate. After Laulata's death, another member of the Tomagola family was sent as the new kimelaha. Like his predecessor, he seems to have been able to operate relatively autonomously from the Ternaten sultan, building up his own power base in the peninsula. Both, however, certainly took their task of opposing the Portuguese very seriously. For the latter, we might glean his martial reputation from the name by which he is remembered: Rubohongi, 'destroyer of fleets'. His military exploits are recorded both in Portuguese sources and in the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu*. After his death, the function of kimelaha would remain hereditary within the Tomagola family,¹⁰⁷ which also supplied the separate kimelaha of the nearby island of Buru.¹⁰⁸

By the end of the sixteenth century, then, Hoamoal was formally under indirect rule from Ternate, whereas Hitu was an independent state with its own system of rule. In practice, however, we should not overemphasize the distinction, as they often found themselves in very similar positions within the power dynamics of the region. The kimelaha of Hoamoal, as we have seen, were quite content with their relative autonomy. The increasing clove production in the

106 Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu*, 119; Tiele, 'De Europeeërs in den Maleischen Archipel', IV (1880), pp. 400-450.

107 Fraassen, 'Ternate, de Molukken en de Indische archipel', I, 42-45; Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu*, pp. 40-42, 121-129.

108 The kimelaha of Buru will not feature very strongly in this dissertation, and less is apparently known about them, both in Dutch and indigenous sources of this period. For some of the members of the Tomagola family occupying the position, see Fraassen, 'Ternate, de Molukken en de Indonesische Archipel', II, 82pp.

region gave them a strong financial base of their own, and in order for their rule to retain its legitimacy, the interests of the local population and its elite were far more crucial to them than the will of the Ternaten sultan, whenever these conflicted. In practice, then, this made the kimelaha an entrenched local power fiercely defending its position when Ternaten central rule was strong, and for all practical purposes independent whenever it was weak.

The relation between Ternate and Hitu, for its part, had a formal basis in the pact between them, briefly discussed above. Opinions seem to have differed on what this pact amounted to. On the one hand, Hitu, like many polities in the region, considered its affiliation with the sultan of Ternate to be an important source of prestige.¹⁰⁹ Rijali therefore proudly stated that Hitu was added to the nine *soa*, the political units of the sultanate of Ternate, and became the tenth, a notion echoed in later Hituese oral tradition, implying that Hitu was formally a part of the realms of the sultan.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, the Hituese clearly preferred their affiliation to the sultan of Ternate to remain symbolic. Whenever Ternatens attempted to gain actual political control over Hitu, as they would on several occasions in the course of the seventeenth century Hituese leaders fiercely defended their autonomy.¹¹¹

LOCAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES, ALLIANCES AND RIVALRIES: ULISIWA AND ULILIMA

As state formation processes got underway in the region, and outsiders were trying to impose their power onto it, the consequent conflicts and power blocks interacted with older political structures, affiliations and rivalries in the region. If we are to make sense of such political dynamics, we should familiarize ourselves with the most important of these.

Already briefly mentioned above was the *negeri*, the town or village community. It is important to emphasize that the term is different from our notion of a town, as it indicated the community and the political unit, rather than a demarcated settlement and its location. A *negeri* could consist of several smaller

109 Passages throughout Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu* make this clear, for instance p. 105 and 179pp.

110 Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu*, 36, 105.

111 For the two clearest examples, see below chapter, V, paragraph 'Kaicili Ali's long stay in the Ambon Islands' and chapter IX throughout. For the complicated relation between Ternate's claims in the region and the actual political power it had, see Fraassen, 'Ternate and its dependencies'.

settlements, or, conversely, several *negeri* could be clustered together in one strategic location, effectively forming one town.¹¹² Also, in the mobile and dynamic human geography of the region, *negeri* could move, and many of them did so more than once in the course of their documented history. Some of the *negeri* in the region, for example, seem to have moved ever closer to the coast as the clove trade took off in the course of the sixteenth century. In the course of this dissertation, we will also see how the VOC, in its efforts to control the region, would use this relatively mobile character of *negeri* by forcing them to move to the coast.¹¹³

In the Ambon region, these *negeri* were organised into *uli*, village federations. These could, in turn, be part of larger political units, as in the case of Hitu, where a total of thirty *negeri*, organised into a total of seven *uli*, formed the entire Hituese state.¹¹⁴

The political units of the region at large tended to be divided into two rival factions, one associated with the number 'five', and the other with the number 'nine'. In Ambon, western Seram and the surrounding islands, the *uli* considered themselves either *ulilima* ('federation of five') or *ulisiwa* ('federation of nine'). This did not mean that the federation necessarily consisted of that number of *negeri*, but, rather, signalled that the community considered itself a member of that side in a dualistic order that pervaded the entire region. Depending on region and context, the distinction revolved around other political units, with the Bandanese often speaking of the *urlima* and the *ursia*, and the polities of the interior of Seram speaking of the *patalima* and *patawiwa*. Whatever the exact form the division took, it tended to divide regions and islands. The northern pen-

112 This, for instance, was the case with Ihamahu, which consisted of no less than eight *negeri* sharing the highly defensible coral platform of Ulapalu on the island of Saparua. Rumphius, *Ambonse eilanden*, 107-112.

113 Knaap, *Kruidnagelen en Christenen*, 7-10. One example of this mobile character of *negeri* seems to be preserved in the lore surrounding the Wapauwe old mosque in Kaitetu, on the Hituese coast, allegedly the oldest mosque in its original state in all of Indonesia. It is told that the mosque was originally built in the fifteenth century up in the hills at Wawani, but floated to a new location of its own accord when the community subsequently moved in 1614 as a result of tensions with the Dutch. In the wake of the Hitu and Ambon Wars, as the VOC redrew the political map of the region, the mosque was moved twice more, to finally end up at its present location near the shore. Information received from my guides Liz and Avin when visiting Hitu, 21 February 2019.

114 Rumphius, *Ambonse eilanden*, 26.

insula of Ambon, for instance, was largely *ulilima*, while its southern peninsula was largely *ulisiwa*. In the Lease islands, the distinction was even clearer, with Haruku and Saparua both neatly divided into an *ulilima* northern half and an *ulisiwa* southern half.¹¹⁵

The division predates and to some degree eludes the later rivalries between, say, Ternatens and Portuguese or Muslims and Christians in the region. In their attempts to make sense of the dualistic factionalism, early Dutch observers tended to compare it with bitter factional conflicts in medieval Europe, such as the Hook and Cod Wars in Holland or the wars between the Guelphs and Ghibellines in northern Italy.¹¹⁶ While these provided a sensible point of reference, we actually understand the social and political origins of those conflicts a lot better than those of the *lima* and the *siwa*, which, many existing hypotheses notwithstanding, remain somewhat of a mystery.¹¹⁷

What is clear, however, is that new political and cultural distinctions subsequently interacted with, and in some cases, mapped onto, these existing affiliations and rivalries. Many of the communities which first became involved in international clove trade and converted to Islam, such as Hitu, counted themselves among the *ulilima*. This goes some way to explain why, after Hitu got into conflict with the Portuguese, the latter were welcomed into the rival *ulisiwa* communities on the south side of the island, and why they were able start converting the population and set up a system of colonial rule there. The kimelaha of Hoamoal, for their part, ruled over a largely *ulilima* territory which, in addition to a shared religion and common interests, undergirded their alliance with Hitu against the

115 Fraassen, 'Ternate, de Molukken en de Indonesische Archipel', II, 462-469.

116 Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, II.2, 31.

117 Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, II.2, 31, already ventured the hypothesis that the *ulilima* originated in the allies and followers of the sultan of Ternate, and the *ulisiwa* in the followers of the sultan of Tidore. Apart from the fact that this did not match the existing divisions, this was an inversion of cause and effect, as the distinction and rivalry between *ulisiwa* and *ulilima* seems to have predated Ternaten and Tidorese involvement in the region. 20th century ethnographic research subsequently added a number of hypotheses. This dissertation is not the place to dive into them, but see Fraassen, 'Ternate, de Molukken en de Indonesische Archipel', II, 460-514 (which also contains a virtually complete reconstruction of the various area that were *siwa* or *lima* throughout Central and South Maluku), and Valerio Valeri. 'Reciprocal Centers : the Siwa-Lima System in the Central Moluccas.' In Maybury-Lewis e.a. eds. *The Attraction of Opposites : Thought and Society in the Dualistic Mode*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 1989, pp. 117-142.

Portuguese. The factional division was therefore an important factor in how religions spread, colonial rule took shape, and alliances and rivalries formed.¹¹⁸

The affiliation with either the *lima* or the *siwa* transcended the local level and also undergirded more long-distance relationships – for instance, between Bandanese communities and their trading partners in eastern Seram or the Aru and Kei Islands.¹¹⁹ Even where communities had no previous direct contacts, identification as either *siwa* or *lima* was a strong factor in determining who was friend and who was foe.¹²⁰

While the antagonisms between *ulilima* and *ulisiwa* were therefore a substantial factor in the power dynamics of the region, it is also important to emphasize that they were not all-determining, and that they were a living and dynamic system, more complex than can be adequately described here. While *siwa* and *lima* were dominant, other forms of organisation, although rarer, also existed, such as the *uliteru* and *ulifito* (federations of three resp. seven).¹²¹ In addition, the generalisation that the *ulilima* tended to be Muslims involved in long-distance trade, and *ulisiwa* therefore tended to ally themselves with the Europeans and to be receptive to Christianity, only works for the Ambon region, and even there only as a very general rule. The diversions from this pattern are too many to list, but a few prominent ones are Kambelo and Lesidi, which were the first clove exporters in the region and Muslim but *ulisiwa*; the villages on the west coast of the Hitu peninsula, which were Muslim but *ulisiwa*, and not part of the Hituese state; and various clusters of *negeri* on Leitimor, which were Christian, and an integral part of the area ruled by the Portuguese and later the VOC, but still identified as *ulilima*. Although being *ulilima* or *ulisiwa* was, by all accounts, a heartfelt part of a community's identity, on rare occasions, communities switched from one to the other. Furthermore, when circumstances dictated it, rival *ulisiwa* and *ulilima* communities were often willing to bridge their factional divides and cooperate against a common enemy. In the course of the seventeenth century, the VOC would give ample occasion for the latter to occur.¹²²

118 Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu*, passim, esp. 42-43; Fraassen, 'Ternate, de Molukken en de Indonesische archipel', II, 495-512

119 Ellen, *Into the Banda Zone*, 84-85.

120 See below, chapter VII, 'Revenge against the fruit trees' for an example.

121 Knaap, *Kruidnagelen en Christenen*, 10; Ellen, *Into the Banda Zone*, 83-84.

122 There are several characteristics of the region's political structure I ignore here, including the *pela* village alliances and the institution of the Saniri Tiga Air through which the Alfurs of Western Seram resolved certain disputes. Although both insti-

BEYOND THE EUROPEAN EYE: SERAM AND FURTHER EAST

The regions discussed above, where European powers were actively involved throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, feature relatively prominently in European sources. The rest of the region, which was also part of the political, cultural and economic landscape of the eastern archipelago, was, by comparison, obscured from view in early European sources, and, as a consequence, from much of European historiography. Recent historical and anthropological work has tried to counter this imbalance by reconstructing indigenous networks of trade and political affiliation in which Europeans played no significant role.¹²³ Familiarizing ourselves with some of these will also help make sense of the Spice Wars and the European role in them.

The first of these regions to be discussed is Seram, the largest island in Central Maluku, of which Hoamoal is a small western peninsula. Beyond the land bridge connecting Hoamoal to the rest of island, the main landmass stretches east for 300 kilometres. The conflicts described in this dissertation would gradually extend Dutch knowledge of, and influence over, the coastal regions of the island, but its mountainous and heavily forested interior remained *terra incognita* to the VOC until well after the conclusion of the Spice Wars. This region was home to various peoples collectively known as the Alifuru or Alfurs.

The term Alfur was used throughout the eastern archipelago to refer to what were considered the ‘wild’ peoples of this inaccessible interior of the larger islands, not only on Seram but also on parts of Sulawesi, Buru and Halmahera. Around Seram and Ambon, they are now often considered the original inhabitants and, by implication, the carriers and guardians of the original culture of the region. The distinction between the inhabitants of the coasts and the ‘Alfurs’ of the interior is geographical and cultural rather than ethnic: the Alfurs distinguished themselves from the coastal communities by their way of life, relatively

tutions appear to have had their roots in the period discussed in this dissertation, this has only been inferred from later evidence and their influence on the conflicts I describe cannot be ascertained. Explaining them here would therefore not add to the understanding of what follows. For *pela* alliances, see Dieter Bartels. *Guarding the Invisible Mountain : Intervillage Alliances, Religious Syncretism and Ethnic Identity Among Ambonese Christians and Moslems in the Moluccas*. Ann Arbor, Mich., 1981. For the Saniri Tiga Air, see Knaap, ‘The Saniri Tiga Air’.

123 For a historiographic overview, see Heather Sutherland. *Seaways and Gatekeepers : Trade and State in the Eastern Archipelagos of Southeast Asia, c. 1600 - c. 1906*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2021., esp. pp. 1-34. For an excellent example relevant to our topic: Ellen, *On the edge of the Banda zone*.

isolated as they were from the influence of seaborne trade and migration, and, as a consequence, from that of Islam and Christianity.¹²⁴

The first incidental visits of VOC employees to the interior regions of Seram only took place from the 1670s onwards, well after the conclusion of the Spice Wars, and real efforts to understand Alfur culture, society and cosmology would only gather steam in the early 20th century.¹²⁵ However, the VOC became aware of their existence, and their potential as an ally, much earlier than that. Governor-General Jan Pietersz. Coen, for instance, wrote this about them when on Ambon in 1621:

The mountains of Seram are populated with a certain people which are collectively called Alfurs or *boeren*.¹²⁶ They feel that there is a God, but have little knowledge of religion and practice very strange superstition. These people are plagued by the Moors living by the sea, and wage war over this in their way. The principal kings of the aforementioned Alfurs, which are those of Sahulahu, Sumite, Wasia and Liang, have made their acquaintance with us and put themselves under the rule and protection of the High and Mighty Lords of the States-General. [...] We believe that the evil, pride, dissimulation and cunning of the Moors will, in time, be punished and bridled all the better and the easier with the help of these aforementioned Alfurs.¹²⁷

Whereas Coen interpreted these locals antagonisms to be between evil 'Moors' and their various adversaries, it bears mentioning that the various peoples of the Seramese interior also identified as either *lima* or *siwa*. The peoples of the

124 Maarten Manse. 'Promise, Pretence and Pragmatism: Governance and Taxation in Colonial Indonesia, 1870-1940.' PhD. Diss Leiden University, 2021, pp. 299-304; Dieter Bartels. *In de schaduw van de berg Nunusaku : een cultuur-historische verhandeling over de bevolking van de Midden-Molukken*. Utrecht: Landelijk Steunpunt Edukatie Molukkers, 1994, p. 29, 35-38.

125 For a brief overview of these contacts, see Knaap, 'The Saniri Tiga Air (Seram)'.

126 The Alfurs are often referred to as *boeren* in early Dutch accounts, for reasons unclear, as the word means farmers, which is not exactly the most obvious distinctive feature of their lifestyle.

127 Coen and Council to Directors, 16 Nov. 1621, quoted in Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen*, I, 296. Interestingly, Rumphius only dates the contacts to the governorship of Lucasz (i.e. 1630), a good nine years later. The letter continues to explain that the Alfurs had requested the building of a Dutch redoubt at Koak, a small peninsula near present-day Amahai on Seram's south coast. Coen had recommended that Van Speult should indeed build it.

westernmost part of Seram's main landmass counted themselves among the latter, and it was specifically their leaders who first approached the VOC to form an alliance.¹²⁸ An actual alliance with the Alfur leaders of Sumite and Sahulahu would subsequently take shape from the 1630s onwards. Company officials, noting that the Alfur headhunting bands were extremely successful in isolating settlements from their surroundings, and that the Alfurs of this region enjoyed a ferocious reputation among the coastal inhabitants, would thankfully call on the Alfurs not only to fight known *ulilima* rivals to their east and west, but would also occasionally employ them on other islands – with the VOC and their allies providing seaborne transport, the Alfurs were more than happy to fight *ulilima* in regions they had never visited before.¹²⁹

The rest of the island of Seram, including the islands directly to their east, consisted of several large regions alternately identifying as either *siwa* or *lima*. The distinction had a strong bearing on the VOC's later allies and enemies, as the VOC initially tended to count the *lima* communities along the Seramese coast among its enemies, and the allies it made tended to be *siwa*.¹³⁰

The far eastern end of Seram and the islands to its immediate east, including

128 Sumite and Sahulahu were two of the three main Alfur 'kingdoms' of this western region at the time. Wasia had its own raja but was also a dependency of Sahulahu. Liang was a minor independent *ulisina* polity towards the east of this region. The third major *ulisina* kingdom of the region was Sisiulu, slightly further north – not mentioned by Coen, it would also become an ally to the VOC in the conflicts from the 1630s onwards. Important to note is that these polities might not have been all that prominent in the early 1620s and 1630s, but that their alliance to the VOC subsequently gave them prestige and increased influence, facilitating their rise to power. This specific region would become intensely studied in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the Dutch colonial state tried to gain control over Seram, leading to sustained contact with the inhabitants of its interior for the first time. In its wake, ethnographers rushed to study what they considered an unspoilt primordial society, in danger of disappearing in the face of colonialism. See Knaap, 'The Saniri Tiga Air'; Manse, 'Promise, Pretense and Pragmatism', Ch. 7; Valeri, 'Reciprocal Centers'; Johan Philip Duyvendak. *Het Kakean-geenootschap van Seran*. S.l.: s.n., 1926.

129 See below, chapters VII, paragraph 'Revenge against the fruit trees' and XI, paragraph 'Remember Kapahaha!'

130 The settlements of Tobo and Werinama and the island of Seram Laut, for instance, which governor Gijsels attacked in the years 1631-1633 were all *lima*; the Alfurs who came to assist him against Tobo were *siwa*, as was the community of Keffing on the far eastern side of Seram which offered the VOC its services during and in the wake of the attack on Seram Laut. See below, chapter VII, paragraph 'To the far side of Seram.'

Seram Laut, Gorom and Geser, were an important node in the local trade networks of the region. More peripheral to the view of sixteenth and seventeenth European visitors, this region was a crucial producer and thoroughfare of goods. It formed a link between Banda and various sago-producing regions, with the nutmeg from the Bandanese monoculture being traded for the much-needed staple food that Banda itself hardly produced. Sandalwood, iron, textiles and gold reached the region from further west; gold also came from New Guinea, as did Papuan slaves, medicinal massoia bark and birds of paradise, to name some of the goods that found their way through this local trade hub.¹³¹

While somewhat out of the way of European influence, the eastern side of Seram and its trade networks would also certainly feel the impact of the VOC's policies, as did the islands further east, such as those of Aru and Kei. As the VOC made its mark, the trade changed, refugees found their way through the established economic and cultural networks, and the region would, as we will be seeing, eventually be caught up in the wars themselves.

CONNECTIONS TO THE WEST: NORTHEAST JAVA AND MELAKA

While the cultural, political and economic networks of Maluku stretched east beyond the European horizon, it was its relations towards the west that tied Maluku into the great trade system of the Indian Ocean basin. In these long-distance relations, like those within Maluku itself, trade, political protection and cultural and religious influence tended to be intertwined.

Northeast Java was one of the regions which maintained early contacts with Maluku. As already mentioned above, Hituese tradition has it that Islam was introduced to Hitu from Tuban, an important trading centre of which the ruling family converted to Islam in the fifteenth century and which was subsequently instrumental in the further spread of Islam in Java and beyond - the prince who, according to lore, was the first to convert, is one of the nine *Wali Sanga*, the legendary Islamic saints who spread Islamic teaching over Java and beyond. Tuban, then, was an important hub in the trade networks that connected Maluku with the Indian Ocean World, Islam being among its exports.

The centre of gravity of Javanese-Malukan contacts subsequently shifted to Gresik and Giri. These twin towns, both of which are also associated with a *Wali Sanga*, would become ever more important both as a trading partner, an ally, and a religious centre. Gresik, along with several other smaller port towns in the area,

131 Ellen, *On the edge of the Banda Zone*, pp. 1-89.



Map 2.1 Map of archipelagic Southeast Asia, showing Maluku's main political, religious and economic contacts in the wider region.

came under political and religious influence of the nearby hill town of Giri in the mid-sixteenth century. Giri was the home of an important Muslim religious leader and his followers, and Gresik became its gateway to the islands further east, once again combining the role of a port in the spice trade with a function as an important spiritual centre. The relationship also had a political dimension, as Giri and Hitu became allies against the Portuguese: the Javanese vessels and warriors periodically coming to the aid of Hituese in the course of the second half of the sixteenth century were sent by the lord of Giri. Through the religious networks of which Giri was the centre, it would remain influential in the region even as its political power waned in the course of the seventeenth century.¹³²

Much further away in every respect, but of similarly great importance to the

132 Simon C. Kemper. 'The White Heron Called by the Muezzin: Shrines, Sufis and Warlords in Early Modern Java.' In Michael R. Feener and Joshua Gedacht. *Challenging Cosmopolitanism: coercion, mobility and displacement in Islamic Asia*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018, pp. 81-120, esp. 91-94.

region, was the large entrepôt port of Melaka. The sea strait between Sumatra and Malaysia that still bears its name was the main sea lane connecting the China Seas with the Indian Ocean. Melaka's strategic location at an excellent harbour along this strait connected it to all the major Asian markets, facilitating its rise to become the major Southeast Asian trade entrepôt from the early fifteenth century onwards. The sultans who ruled Melaka made every effort to support and facilitate the trade, so that by the second half of the fifteenth century, 'from below the wind to above the wind Melaka became famous as a very great city', as an indigenous history, the *Sejarah Melayu*, phrased it.¹³³ While its role as a major trade entrepôt gave the city an eminently cosmopolitan character, its own indigenous Malay population was actively involved in the trade, and counted the eastern archipelago among its destinations. As we have seen, the Bandanese themselves also undertook the journey to this major port themselves to sell their nutmeg and mace there.¹³⁴

As already touched upon above, the Portuguese took Melaka after a bloody siege in 1511. Almost as soon as the smoke had cleared, they went looking for the spice-producing regions from there themselves, and it is illustrative of the earlier existing contacts that a Melaka merchant served as their guide. As discussed above, they were initially hailed as both welcome traders and valuable allies throughout the region, their conquest of Melaka first and foremost interpreted as proof of their military prowess. Melaka would remain important to Maluku as a trading partner, although now primarily as a Portuguese base of power and trade. If anything, it became more prominent as a source of political and religious influence than it had been – that is, of Portuguese influence and Christianity.

Although Melaka remained an important and cosmopolitan trading city under the Portuguese, it would never return to its former prominence. The Portuguese initially resolved to rid the city of its entire Muslim population. While this policy was ultimately unsuccessful, it did initially prompt an exodus of its Malay population, which resettled in other regions, including Johor and Aceh, bringing along their trading expertise and contacts.¹³⁵ Some of them would eventually

133 Quoted from Andaya & Andaya, *A history of early modern Southeast Asia*, pp. 102-103.

134 M.A.P. Roelofs. *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago Between 1500 and About 1630*. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1962, pp. 60-88, 93-100.

135 Roelofs, *Asian trade and European influence*, pp. 136-172. Leonard Andaya. *Leaves of the Same Tree : Trade and Ethnicity in the Straits of Melaka*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.

settle in Makassar, a town that was a relative late-comer among Southeast Asian trade entrepôts, but of which the influence on the subsequent history of Maluku cannot be overstated.

THE RISE OF MAKASSAR

The emergence of Makassar as a trade entrepôt dates back to the mid-sixteenth century, when the principality of Gowa, which had an economy based on wet rice agriculture, expanded to incorporate various surrounding polities. In the 1530s it defeated various neighbouring states, including Tallo, which was an important trading port at the time. Rather than turning it into a vassal, Gowa formed a union with Tallo, laying the foundations for the dual kingdom it would remain until 1669. Under the rule of Karaeng Tunipalangga (r. 1547-1565), they made vassals of most of the polities on South Sulawesi's west coast.¹³⁶

With the increase of the importance of trade to this emerging state, its political centre moved to the coast and the entrepôt that we know as Makassar started taking shape. During the rule of Tunipalangga, the office of *shahbandar*, already created under his predecessor as part of the duties of one minister, became a separate position. Tunipalangga also gave written guarantees of freedom and rights to the Malay community which settled there during his reign: a Malay captain called Nakhoda Bonang is mentioned in the Gowan court chronicles as coming to the court bearing gifts, and asking for permission to settle in Makassar, setting several conditions that would protect their possessions and livelihood there. The Karaeng agreed.¹³⁷ The next important Karaeng, Tunijalloq (r. 1565-1590), built a mosque for the Malay community, years before the rulers of Gowa and Tallo would themselves convert to Islam.¹³⁸ Tunijalloq, according to the court chronicles, also made active efforts to build up diplomatic ties in the late sixteenth century: in Maluku and Timor, as well as with Mataram, Banjarmasin and Johore.¹³⁹ In the same period, Portuguese private traders from Melaka

136 *Karaeng* is the Makasar word for ruler. Its Bugis equivalent is *Arung* (as in Arung Palakka.) After their conversion to Islam, the rulers of Gowa and Tallo would be referred to as Sultans.

137 Cummings, *A Chain of Kings*, 2007, p.34; W. Cummings. 'The Melaka Malay Diaspora in Makassar, c. 1500-1669.' *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* Vol. 71, No. 1 (1998): 107-122, esp. pp.107-110.

138 Tunijalloq was not his direct successor, but almost – in 1565 Tunibatta ascended to the throne, then immediately went to war against Bone, and got himself killed. His rule lasted only 40 days.

139 Cummings, *A Chain of Kings*, 2007, p. 41.

became regular visitors to the Makassar roadstead.¹⁴⁰ Makassar became a particularly attractive trading town from which to sail to Maluku, not only because trade goods from further west, including textiles from India, were amply available there, but also because its hinterland produced great amounts of high quality rice. Both found a ready market in Maluku.

Islam and Christianity, which had dominated most of the other main trade centres in the region for decades or more, now also generated an interest in Makassar both among the general population and the political elite, which resulted in the rulers of Gowa and Tallo converting to Islam around 1605.¹⁴¹ While it has been convincingly argued that the choice for Islam was the outcome of heartfelt theological and spiritual inquiry by the rulers,¹⁴² the conversion also certainly did not hurt the political and economic rise of Gowa and Tallo. It would have given further impetus to their diplomatic contacts and Makassar's rise as an international trading port, providing a basis for more intensive contacts with other Muslim regions throughout the archipelago, including Maluku, while also tying the state into the Islamic networks spanning the Indian Ocean and beyond. It also gave Gowa-Tallo's further expansion a strong impetus, as the conversion signalled the beginning of what are called the 'Wars of Islamisation' on South Sulawesi, in which the forces of Gowa and Tallo conquered the main Bugis states in the peninsula and imposed the new religion on them. Islam thus also functioned as an engine of further expansion and consolidation of the power of the Gowa-Tallo state within South Sulawesi.¹⁴³

At the conclusion of these wars of Islamisation, all the polities in the coastal plains of South Sulawesi had become affiliated to the Gowa-Tallo state. The expansion, however, was not limited to the mainland of South Sulawesi. Gowa-Tallo had also been expanding overseas. By the late sixteenth century, it commanded an impressive navy and used it to gain political influence over areas of Sumbawa,

140 Maria do Carmo Mira Borges. *Os Portugueses e o Sultanato de Macassar no Século XVII*. Cascais: Câmara Municipal de Cascais, 2005, pp.62-63.

141 The sources are somewhat ambiguous about the exact moment that this occurred. Noorduyn, who has dedicated an article to both the motivations for the rulers of Gowa and Talloq to convert to Islam and the moment this conversion occurred, holds it to be 1605, rather than the other likely possibility, 1603. J. Noorduyn. 'De islamisering van Makassar.' *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde* 112.3 (1956): 247-266, esp. 252pp.

142 Jacobus Noorduyn, 'De Islamisering van Makassar'.

143 Reid 'A Great Seventeenth Century Indonesian Family', p.139; Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*, p.33.

among others. By the early seventeenth century, as the Gowa-Tallo state was consolidating its hold over South Sulawesi, it strived to bring several areas on the north coast of Sulawesi, around Manado, under its protection.¹⁴⁴ To its east, it sought to turn the sultanate of Buton into its vassal.¹⁴⁵ These attempts at further expansion made its sphere of influence collide with that of Ternate, which, as we have seen, was also expanding into these same territories. Gowa-Tallo and Ternate were therefore increasingly becoming rivals from the late sixteenth century onwards.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter aimed to lay out the main polities and political structures relevant to understanding the Spice Wars. In doing so, it has also sketched the rather substantial developments in the region in the course of the sixteenth century, both due to the expanding world market for cloves, nutmeg and mace, and to the entry of the Spanish and Portuguese into Asia.

In the early sixteenth century, Banda and the sultanates of North Maluku were the main spice exporting centres in the region. As the demand for spices grew, however, the cultivation of cloves, in particular, spread rapidly to Central Maluku, where it was introduced to the west coast of Hoamoal and to Hitu early in the sixteenth century. Both in regions where it was introduced and where cultivation had been established before, this increased market for spices seems to have gone hand in hand with increased political, cultural and religious contact with the outside world, and with an intensification of state formation processes, as the increased wealth and influence of local elites also translated to political power, and smaller polities began to integrate and aggregate. Hitu is perhaps the clearest and best-documented example: there, clove production, Islam, foreign trade and state formation processes all reinforced each other to give rise to the Hituese state in the early sixteenth century.

The clove trade also drew expanding powers, both Asian and European, hoping to get a piece of the pie. Ternate increased its influence over Central Malu-

144 Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 1993, pp. 84-85.

145 Cummings, *A Chain of Kings*, 2007, p. 88, which sums up the conquests under Karaeng Matoaya (r. 1593-1623). Between several places in South Sulawesi and many names I do not recognize with certainty, he mentions e.g. Buton, Wowoni (another island below Southeast Sulawesi), Sula (the Sula Islands east of Sulawesi, which would also be a bone of contention between the two in the course of the seventeenth century) and several places on Sumbawa.

ku; Portugal gained political control in Ternate and part of the Ambon region from its new local stronghold in Melaka. The increased trade also gave rise to new powers outside the region, who subsequently joined in the jostle for trade and influence. This included Gresik and Giri, which together formed both an important trade entrepôt and religious and political centre. As Islam established itself throughout the region, it increasingly served to unite the various Muslim polities against the Portuguese, who were driven from Ternate by 1575, and were hanging on by their fingernails in the Ambon region by the close of the century.

As the sixteenth century drew to a close, a new rising power started making its influence felt in the region: Gowa-Tallo, the state of which the rising trade entrepôt of Makassar was the capital, extended its influence beyond Sulawesi towards the east, setting it on a collision course with Ternate, which was also asserting itself throughout the region with renewed vigour after the expulsion of the Portuguese.

Then, new European powers also made their appearance in the region.

