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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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III. TERNATE, MAKASSAR AND THE EUROPEANS (1599-1616)

As already touched upon in the last chapter, the English and Spanish ventured into the eastern archipelago in the late 1570s and the 1580s. The Dutch followed in the 1590s. Much like in the early sixteenth century, with the first Portuguese and (abortive) Spanish entry into the region, the contacts they made would become inextricably entangled with existing power structures and rivalries. This chapter describes this process up to 1616, with particular emphasis on the development of one rivalry which would be of particular consequence for the Spice Wars: that between Ternate and Makassar, or, more accurately, the sultanate of Gowa of which Makassar was the capital. Among other things, this rivalry, which emerged just as new European powers were entering the region, would also draw in the various Europeans who tried to get a foothold in the spice trade.¹⁴⁶

ENTER THE DUTCH

Dutch attempts to build up their own trade network in Asia were partly prompted by the Iberian Union after 1580, making trade with Portugal harder as it was now ruled by a king with whom the Dutch Republic was at war. However, even without it, the ailing Portuguese empire had already been failing to supply northern Europe with enough pepper and other Asian goods, leading to rising prices, and creating a market for other suppliers.¹⁴⁷ The first Dutch fleets setting out to Asia were looking for a profit rather than a fight, trying various alternative routes to those of the Portuguese in the hopes of avoiding conflict.

In contrast to the first Dutch expedition to ever reach Asia, which did not make it beyond Java and Madura, the second Dutch expedition did reach Maluku, and was actively invited to Ternate when calling at Ambon. When two ships under the leadership of Wybrant van Warwijck arrived at Ternate, he found that the sultan was more than willing to sell cloves to the Dutch, but that he was also

146 Much of this chapter was already published as part of Tristan Mostert, 'Scramble for the spices: Makassar's role in European and Asian Competition in the Eastern Archipelago up to 1616' in: Adam Clulow and Tristan Mostert (eds.), *The Dutch and English East India Companies: Diplomacy, Trade and Violence in Early Modern Asia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018, pp. 25-54. It has been updated and extended to reflect some progressive insight and includes more information about the Ambon region.

147 Gaastra, Femme, *Geschiedenis van de VOC*. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2009, p. 15.

intensely keen on an alliance against the Portuguese, very much hoping that some Dutchmen would stay at Ternate, and very interested to see demonstrations of the fire power of the Dutch ships.¹⁴⁸

One of the men on this second expedition also wrote the first somewhat elaborate Dutch description we have of Makassar, and was involved in the first diplomatic contacts. In 1601, Augustijn Stalpaert van der Wiele, one of twenty men who had been left on the Banda islands by this expedition, compiled a report about various trading ports throughout Asia, in which he gave comparatively generous attention to Makassar. He described it as an important trading city, where most merchants bound for the Spice Islands would call, in order to sell textiles, provision their ships and buy the high-quality rice, which was available in abundance and for which one would always find a ready market in the Spice Islands. ‘You will also be freed from the Portuguese here’, Stalpaert van der Wiele wrote home, ‘who come here every year to conduct quite some trade, but who do not have any fortification here, and come here in junks, not in ships.’¹⁴⁹ He then described how he and his colleagues had already opened up relations with the ruler of Makassar by sending him a letter and an appropriate gift. The ruler had replied that the Dutch should certainly come and trade, but as he was aware they were at war with the Portuguese and wanted to avoid trouble, he would prefer them to send no more than eight men, whose protection he would guarantee. The exact moment the Dutch sent their first merchant to Makassar is unclear, but it would seem that around 1605, Claes Luersen moved from Banda to Makassar to reside there permanently.¹⁵⁰

By that time, the conflict between the Dutch and the Portuguese had taken on a different character. In 1602 the VOC was founded, uniting the various smaller companies that had equipped the first expeditions to Asia under one

148 Commelin, *Begin ende voortgangh*, vol. I, 7th voyage [‘Tweede schipvaart’], pp. 28-41

149 The report is partly printed in J.K.J. de Jonge. *De opkomst van het Nederlandsch gezag in Oost-Indië: verzameling van onuitgegeven stukken uit het oud-koloniaal archief*. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1862-1888, vol. III, p.156. The full report, which includes long lists of types of textiles that were in vogue in Makassar, with an indication of the price they would yield, can be found in G. P. Rouffaer and H. H. Juynboll eds. *De batik-kunst in Nederlandsch-Indië en haar geschiedenis*. Publicaties van’s Rijks Ethnographisch Museum. Utrecht: A. Oosthoek, 1914, XI–XXV.

150 This, in any case, is compellingly argued in Noorduyn, ‘Islamisering’, 260, as the first known Makasar merchant, Claes Luersen, was still in Banda until 1605. Of course it is possible that someone else occupied the function before that time, or that the merchants were travelling up and down from Banda.

umbrella organization. Both its permanence and its founding charter, which allowed the VOC to conduct politics and defend itself in the name of the Dutch Republic, made it possible for it to develop a political and military strategy in Asia, and it immediately started doing so. In 1603, in response to various reports of incidents with the Portuguese throughout Asia, the VOC directors decided to take to a more aggressive policy. At the end of 1603, Steven van der Hagen was sent to Asia as the first VOC admiral, with a heavily armed fleet and orders to do all possible damage to the Portuguese and Spanish. In Bantam he met with several representatives of Hitu, who asked for his help against the Portuguese.

The Hituese had already established contacts with the *Oude Compagnie*, one of the VOC's predecessors, in 1600, concluding what was the first agreement explicitly offering military support in exchange for clove deliveries. Not much had come of their military cooperation, as a Portuguese expedition drove the Dutch from the island soon after and put the Hituese in an even more difficult position than before, many of them fleeing to Hoamoal and Banda. From there, the *perdana Nusatapi* of that time, Tepil, sent delegates with a letter to Bantam to call in the help of the Dutch.

Van der Hagen was more than happy to oblige. In February 1605, he sailed into the bay of Ambon with ten ships. Faced with not only the Company fleet at sea but also with the Hituese on land, and noticing that the supposed Christian Ambonese allies of the Portuguese had absconded to the mountains, the Portuguese captain of the fort decided to simply surrender.¹⁵¹ In commemoration of this easy victory, the Dutch would later rename the fort *Victoria*. This conquest was the beginning of the VOC as a territorial power – the southern half of the island of Ambon, as well as the *ulisiwa* regions of the Lease islands to their east, had been directly under Portuguese control and had a predominantly Christian population. The VOC had now replaced the Portuguese as ruler of these areas. In addition, it inherited the town which had sprung up around the castle over the previous three decades. Whereas most of the Indo-Portuguese and mestizo population of the town was unwilling to swear loyalty to the VOC and was evicted to Melaka, a handful remained – as did the *orang merdeka*, or Mardijker, population in the town and the nearby village of Mardika. This group had its origin in free Christian Asians originally from outside Ambon, many of them freed slaves who had also provided military services for the Portuguese.¹⁵²

151 Tiele, *Europeërs*, VI, 226-228.

152 Knaap and Den Heijer, *Oorlog en overzee*, 60; Knaap, 'A City of Migrants'. The Mardijker

Hitu, for its part, concluded a treaty with the VOC in which it recognized it as ally and protector and promised to exclusively sell its cloves to the Company. A price agreement, fixing the price of cloves at 60 reals per bahar, would be made in subsequent negotiations a few years later. The abovementioned Tepil, who had established contacts with the Dutch, was also the *perdana* Nusatapi, and therefore Kapitan Hitu. While there had been little in terms of friendly relations to maintain with the Portuguese over the previous decades, this function would be reinvigorated by newfound friendship between the VOC and Hitu.

SPANISH-DUTCH RIVALRY IN MALUKU

The increasing Dutch presence in the region at the cost of the Portuguese, however, prompted the Spanish to take action. In early 1606, a Spanish fleet of five large ships and several dozen smaller vessels, carrying over 1400 Iberian troops, set sail from the Philippines towards Maluku under the leadership of Pedro de Acuña. Rallying the allied sultanate of Tidore to his cause, he proceeded to attack Ternate. This time, the Spanish managed to conquer the old Portuguese fort on the south coast. Acuña left a garrison of 600 soldiers in the fort on Ternate, another 50 on Tidore, and established Spanish outposts on the other main islands of the North Maluku before returning to Manila in May. He brought the most important members of the Ternaten royal house with him to live in exile there.¹⁵³ North Maluku was, it would seem, now under Spanish control.

In the wake of this conquest, many leading Ternatens fled to Jailolo, and worked from there to build a coalition against the Spanish. They turned to the English and Dutch for help. Kaicili Ali, nephew of the now-exiled Sultan Said, was sent out to confer with the Dutch. After almost a year of fruitlessly looking for a VOC official with the authority to help him, he was finally able to sit down with VOC admiral Cornelis Matelief de Jonge. The latter was at the head of an impressive fleet which had just laid siege to Portuguese Melaka, but was now anchored off Ambon in April 1607. Kaicili Ali asked for his help in driving the Spaniards from Ternate, and Matelief gladly obliged, setting sail for Ternate from there on the 3rd of May.¹⁵⁴

population would continue to grow as freed Makasar prisoners of war and later freed slaves would also become part of this group.

153 O.H. K. Spate. *Monopolists and Freebooters. The Pacific since Magellan* vol. II. London: Croom Helm, 1983, pp.11-12; Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 1993, pp.152-153; Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, I, 215.

154 Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, I, 216-217.

Having arrived there, Matelief met with the new Ternaten sultan Muzaffar, the twelve year old son of the old sultan, who is described in European sources describe as sickly and indolent. He had managed to avoid being taken to Manila, and was under the tutelage of kimmelaha Hidayat, who was not present at the meeting. Matelief soon discovered that it would be impossible to take the Spanish fort with his fleet and the limited number of warriors that the Ternatens would be able to muster. Instead, he sailed around the island and built a Dutch fort at Melayu on the east coast.¹⁵⁵ In subsequent years, the VOC would fortify much of the northeast of the island, whereas the Spaniards entrenched themselves on the southwestern half. The fort, initially named fort Melayu, would eventually be rechristened Fort Oranje, and would become the headquarters of the VOC in Asia until the founding of Batavia in 1619.

THE VOC ALLIANCE WITH TERNATE

Their home island thus divided, the Ternaten royal family and nobility threw in their lot with the Dutch, whom they considered to be allies, and built up their new capital around the Dutch fort in Melayu on the east coast. The treaty that had been concluded between the new sultan Muzaffar and the VOC meanwhile stipulated that the sultan of Ternate recognized the Dutch state to be its 'protector', and also gave the VOC a monopoly on buying the cloves from the Ternaten territories.¹⁵⁶ This included the various areas in the Ambon islands that were ruled by the Ternaten stewards, and the monopoly there was reconfirmed in a separate treaty with them two years later.¹⁵⁷ Tidore, conversely, threw in its lot with the Spanish, and North Maluku would be the scene of intermittent fighting between the two blocks for the next decades.¹⁵⁸

Aside from the building up of the spice monopoly, of which the conquest of Ambon and the treaty with Ternate constituted the first serious steps, the VOC now had an alliance with, and a certain degree of power over, a sultan in the

155 Leo Akveld, *Machtsstrijd om Malakka: reis van VOC-admiraal Matelief naar Oost-Azië, 1605-1608*. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2013, p.168.

156 J.E. Heeres, 'Corpus diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum: verzameling van politieke contracten en verdere verdragen door de Nederlanders in het Oosten gesloten, van privilegebrieven aan hen verleend, enz.', vol I. *Bijdragen tot de Taal- Land en Volkenkunde* (1907), pp.50-53.

157 Knaap, 'De Ambonse eilanden tussen twee mogendheden', pp.51-52.

158 Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 1993, pp.152-156; Knaap and Den Heijer, *Oorlogen overzee*, pp.61-67.

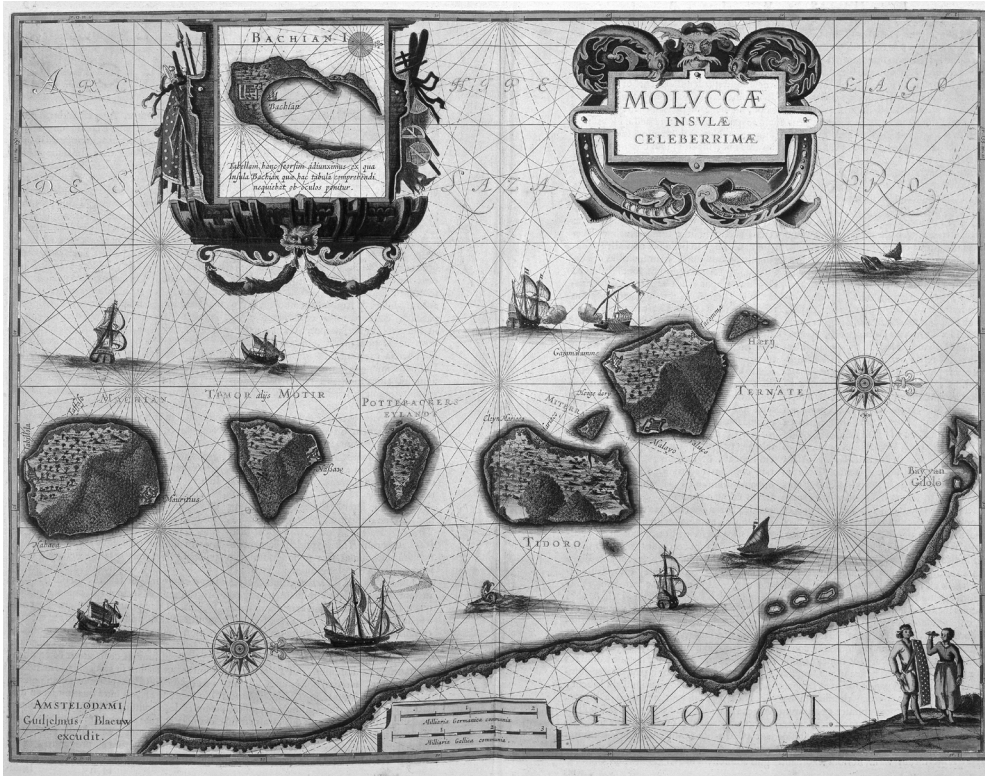


Fig 3.1 The islands of Ternate and Tidore off the coast of Halmahera (here called Gilolo, i.e. Jailolo, the name of the sultanate situated there). North is right. To the far right, we see Ternate, with the now Spanish fort of Gamalama on the left, and the Dutch fort at Melayu slightly below it. On Tidore we see fort Marieko, originally built by the Spaniards but conquered by the VOC in 1613; the other islands further left have various other Spanish and Dutch forts. This map was used in many of the Blaeu atlases and dates to c. 1635. Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem, collection Austrian National Library, Van der Hem 43:53.

eastern archipelago. This was of consequence for how it could operate politically in various ways.

For one, the VOC's alliance with, and its role of 'protector' of, Ternate meant that it now also had a stake in various vassalages, conflicts and alliances that Ternate already had. In 1613, for example, the VOC had to deal with the effects of its alliance in various places. In this year, the VOC concluded a treaty with what they called the kingdom of Buton – the sultanate of Wolio, which included the islands of Buton, Muna, Kabaena and the Tukang Besi islands (nowadays better-known as Wakatobi). The sultanate had been among the areas brought

under Ternaten influence by the campaigns of sultan Babullah in 1580, and still fell in the Ternaten sphere of influence in 1613.

In the treaty, the Company promised to protect the small kingdom against invasion, specifically mentioning 'the king of Makassar' as the main threat. The ruler declared that he had called the Dutch to his kingdom 'to wage offensive and defensive war against the enemies of the mighty king of Ternate, with whom our friendship shall continue as of old'.¹⁵⁹ The VOC built two small fortifications on Buton and stationed a garrison there. When, two years later, it was decided to lift the permanent presence at Buton, the ruler uttered his surprise, because when his kingdom would fall to 'the enemy' (presumably Gowa-Tallo), it would be a shame to both the Dutch and to Ternate, of which he was the loyal servant.¹⁶⁰

Similarly, the VOC conquered the Portuguese fort on Solor in 1613, and found that, whereas the population proclaimed allegiance to the sultan of Ternate, Gowa-Tallo was actively engaged in collecting tribute there. The VOC brought an end to this, sending away the ships from Makassar. In early 1614, Adriaan van den Velde, the Dutch commander on Solor, informed the governor-general that he had written to the ruler of Gowa, explaining 'that it was not their intention to divert, or draw away from his obedience, any of his subjects, but that, as friends and allies of the king of Ternate, they could not but bring them back under his rule'.¹⁶¹ He added, however, that they had not received a reply, and that he feared Gowa-Tallo might try and collect the tribute by force and join forces with the Portuguese. The alliance with the sultan of Ternate, and the way it played out in practice, therefore appear to have been a strong negative factor in the Company's relationship with Gowa-Tallo.

On the other hand, the alliance with a local sultan was in itself a political tool that the VOC soon learned to value and use. Being a trading company from a European republic, operating in a world where diplomacy was typically conducted between kings, the VOC had no real experience with, or standing in, Asian politics. In its early years VOC officials tried to work around this by presenting

159 Heeres, *Corpus Diplomaticum*, I (1907), pp.105-108. In addition, however, the sultan (who was described by Coen as a recent usurper of the throne) also sought out the VOC as a sort of guarantor to his succession, which was a departure from established custom in Buton. Schoorl, Pim, 'Islam, macht en ontwikkeling in het sultanaat Buton.' In L.B. Venema and Edien Bartels eds. *Islam en macht : een historisch-antropologisch perspectief*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1987, pp. 52-65, esp. 56-58.

160 Coen to directors, 22 Oct 1615, printed in: Colenbrander ed., *Jan Pietersz Coen*, I, p.120.

161 Tiele-Heeres, *Boumstoffen*, I, p.95.

themselves as representatives of the ‘King of Holland’, in some cases bringing images and diplomatic letters of Stadholder Maurice of Orange, with mixed results.¹⁶² In the eastern archipelago, it now had another option: it could conduct ‘diplomacy by proxy’ through the sultan of Ternate. As we shall see below, it did so with enthusiasm as it was trying to establish a monopoly over the spices from this region.

THE DEVELOPING ROLE OF MAKASSAR IN THE EUROPEAN SPICE TRADE

In 1607, the Dutch factory near Makassar (which was initially located not in Makassar proper but in Tallo, just to the north) had been temporarily abandoned, not because of conflicts with the ruler, but because Claes Luersen, the merchant mentioned earlier, had been cooking the books and, in the eyes of the visiting fleet under Jacques l’Hermitte and Paulus van Solt, had been a little too friendly with the Spanish.¹⁶³ The ruler of Tallo¹⁶⁴ professed his sadness at seeing them go, and implored them to come back soon – he would make sure that they could buy all the mace they wanted, and added that gold noble coins¹⁶⁵ were particularly in demand in Makassar. His remark was not entirely idle, as the ruler had a trade agent permanently stationed at the Banda islands, and was a consequential trader there.¹⁶⁶

The Portuguese, who were entirely forced out of Maluku in this period, in-

162 The various strategies the VOC used to be able to operate diplomatically in Japan were analysed in Adam Clulow. *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch encounter with Tokugawa Japan*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. For the attempts to present the Stadholder as their king, see op. cit., 31-39.

163 He had, for instance, been adding debts of local rulers that did not in fact exist. When Paulus van Solt travelled around the area to inform about these debts, and it became clear that there were none, he remarked that falsely accusing local rulers of being in debt would have been a very dangerous job, if it were not for the fact that the Makasars were such ‘kind and friendly people’. Commelin, *Begin ende voortganch van de Vereenighde*, vol. II, 13th voyage (under Steven van der Hagen), pp.81-82. Commelin does not mention Luersen by name, but various VOC-documents, including a mention of Van Solt’s ‘examinatie’ of him in VOC 1053 (unfoliated), do.

164 This would have been Karaeng Matoaya (r. 1593 to 1623). The description in Commelin gives the impression that the first Dutch lodge was actually in Tallo, rather than in Gowan-ruled Makassar. What is certain is that the new merchant Samuel Denijs, who arrived in 1609, constructed a new lodge in Makassar itself.

165 ‘Rozenobels’

166 Commelin, *Begin ende voortganch van de Vereenighde*, vol. II, 13th voyage (under Steven van der Hagen), p.82.

creasingly bought their spices in Makassar. The trading policy of the VOC in Makassar was, however, a different one. It preferred to buy the spices in Maluku directly, particularly as its monopoly was slowly taking shape in the wake of the conquest of Ambon, the treaty with Ternate, and, in 1609, a treaty with many of the *orangkaya* in the Banda Islands, concluded under pressure in the wake of a military campaign which had brought the island of Banda Neira fully under Company control. Makassar was prominent among several port towns where it would buy the rice that was brought to Maluku as a trade good, with which the spices were then bought - under trading conditions and for prices that the Dutch were increasingly trying to control through treaties.

The new VOC merchant Samuel Denijs, who arrived in Makassar in 1609, was, however, not extremely successful in executing this policy. His correspondence from the years 1610-1612 paints a tragicomic picture of successive failures and setbacks. The price of the rice that he was supposed to send to Maluku happened to be unusually high in these years, because of bad harvests, the above-mentioned Wars of Islamisation, and, after the conclusion of these wars, a prohibition on the export of rice as the sultan needed it prevent famine among the Bugis 'who he has recently subjugated, who have become Muslim, and who were nearly starving'.¹⁶⁷ The letters also betray a total dependence on local shipping and trade that stands in stark contrast to the great monopolistic ambitions that the VOC was developing in Maluku. The provision of Ambon and Banda from Makassar took place exclusively in local vessels. Denijs was entirely dependent on local captains planning to sail there and, for want of VOC ships providing him with fresh capital, on local credit, his creditors including Karaeng Matoaya of Tallo. Most of the cargoes of rice, arrack, salted buffalo meat and fish he was able to send off never reached their destination: in 1610, five junks carrying provisions for Banda and Ambon were all turned back by the monsoon, and part of the cargo was spoiled by seawater getting into the hold. In 1611, another junk bound for Ternate was shipwrecked on a reef, and the entire cargo was lost.¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile, he had to stand idly by as the Portuguese, arriving from Melaka each year, were dumping large amounts of textiles onto the Makassar market for low prices, bringing down the value of his own trade goods, and buying the spices that both

167 Letter of Samuel Denijs to Jacques l'Hermite in Bantam, 19 October 1610, in: VOC 1053, Makassar folder (unfol.).

168 Letter of Samuel Denijs to the Directors in the Netherlands, 12 July 1612, in: VOC 1053, Makassar folder (unfol.)

Makasar and Javanese ships were bringing in, which sometimes sold for a lower price than what the VOC paid in Maluku itself. Denijs had no instructions to buy these up himself, and in any case he did not have sufficient means to do so.¹⁶⁹ In addition, the rulers of Gowa and Tallo were demanding all sorts of diplomatic gifts from the Company, including a small gun for the Gowan royal ship, kris, various textiles and porcelain. Two *bahar* of mace, which Claes Luersen had accepted from the sultan of Gowa, and in exchange for which he was to deliver chainmail armour and a small gun, but which had apparently gone missing, were a continuing annoyance to the court and a worry to Denijs.¹⁷⁰

In July 1613, the English opened a factory in Makassar, which soon developed into the base of operations for their own trade in the Spice Islands. Their use of the Makassar roadstead was very similar to that of the Dutch: they mostly bought rice there, selling it for spices in Maluku.¹⁷¹

Trading in Maluku, however, was already becoming ever more difficult for the English even before they built their lodge in Makassar, as VOC control in Maluku increased and the VOC increasingly asserted the right to be the sole buyer, forcing the *orangkaya* on the Banda islands into concluding trade treaties with them and using their influence over Ternate to increase their grip on areas like Hoamoal. The people living there, unhappy with the increasing Dutch control that was the consequence of being vassals of Ternate, also clandestinely sold spices to the English.¹⁷² In 1615, the people at the village of Kambelo invited the English to build a lodge there – the Dutch, upon noticing this, approached with a ship and started firing on the village. Kambelo had a fortification, and the inhabitants approached the English, telling them that they would give the fort, along with ‘the whole island’ to the English, if they would but help against the Dutch.¹⁷³ The peace between England and the Republic tied the hands of both European companies, but things nearly devolved into an open fight on this occasion. The English sent some of their men into the fort, betting that the Dutch

169 Ibid.

170 This is a recurring topic throughout the letters, but handily summarized in Hendrik Brouwer to Directors in the Netherlands, 27 June 1612 in: VOC 1053, Bantam folder (unfol.). I thank independent historian Menno Leenstra for his help locating some of these early archival references to Makassar.

171 Bassett, ‘English trade in Celebes 1663, 1954, pp.1-4.

172 E.g. in 1613, as described in: John Jourdain, William Foster ed. *The Journal of John Jourdain, 1608-1617 : Describing His Experiences in Arabia, India, and the Malay Archipelago*. Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1905, pp.247-273.

173 Foster, *Letters Received*, III, p.134.

would not then dare attack it. Some shots were exchanged; the Dutch issued an ultimatum. In the end the English decided they could not win, retreated from the castle and abandoned their new lodge. The incident, however, bears testament to the fact that not all areas affiliated with Ternate were too happy with the increasing Dutch control, and were trying to turn elsewhere for political protection. The English ship with which this expedition had been undertaken, the *Concord*, then returned to Makassar, where, to their surprise, the crew found the Dutch lodge abandoned and the English one guarded by only one man. While they had been away, things had escalated at the Makassar roads.

EUROPEAN RIVALRY AT THE MAKASSAR ROADSTEAD

‘Arriving here at Macasser I find our people to be run away, all but one lame man who, more honester than the rest, stayed [...]’, a surprised George Ball wrote to Bantam, the day after arriving before Makassar on the 23rd of June, 1615.¹⁷⁴ Although his letter is rather brief and vague about what had happened, it does mention that the English factor had been a little too close with the Dutch, had sided with them against the Spanish, and the English were also complicit in the killing and abduction of several Makasar dignitaries, so that the sultan now wished for the English to leave entirely.

A letter by director-general Jan Pietersz. Coen, written several months after the incident, gives more details about the eruption of violence between the various Europeans. In April 1615, a small flotilla of Spanish ships had attacked the VOC-ship *Enkhuizen* as it approached the Makassar roadstead.¹⁷⁵ The ship repelled the attack with difficulty, losing 11 men in the process. Fearing more Spanish aggression, and worried that the sultan, who had been away from the city when the attack happened, was no longer willing or able to protect them,

174 Foster, *Letters Received*, III, p.287.

175 Interestingly, George Ball might have been partly responsible for the incident in the first place. On its way out from Makassar, the *Concord* had taken a small Spanish frigate on the 18th of February. The Spaniards had subsequently been seeking compensation from the English through Sultan Ala’uddin of Gowa. When the sultan proved unwilling to get involved and subsequently left town, the Spanish apparently decided to get their compensation single-handedly by attacking the Dutch and English lodges. (In spite of the escalating situation in Maluku, the Dutch and English were technically still on friendly terms.) Right around that time, the *Enkhuizen* came in sight, and the Spaniards, who wanted to avoid the ship making contact with the lodges, immediately launched an improvised attack. Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, I, pp.120-122; Foster, *Letters Received*, III, p.286.

the Dutch decided to abandon their lodge, as did the English, who were given passage on the Dutch ship. As preparations to leave were made, the crew of the ship tried to take a number of Makasar dignitaries, who had come on board in the wake of the attack, hostage, to be used as collateral for the outstanding debts that local dignitaries had with the VOC. A skirmish broke out, in which nine of these dignitaries, including one of the sultan's sons, died. Two others, the assistant *shahbandar* and another member of the royal family, were captured alive. They were taken along as the ship departed from Makassar.¹⁷⁶

George Ball found that the sultan had not taken the incident lightly and was now resolved to ban 'all Christians' from Makassar. It took all of Ball's negotiation skills to convince him otherwise for the English, but in the end he was allowed to once again leave George Cockayne as a factor in Makassar.¹⁷⁷ The latter wrote to his superiors two months later that the sultan was mobilizing his defences in anticipation of an all-out war with the VOC, and that:

all the whole land is making... bricks for two castles this summer to be finished; in the armoury is laid ready 10000 lances, 10000 cresses with bucklers to them, spaces [a type of lance] as many, pieces 2422: 800 quoyanes of rice [roughly one million kilograms] for store; all this is to entertain the Flemings.¹⁷⁸

DIPLOMACY BY PROXY, ESCALATING CONFLICT

The governor-general and council, however, had already decided to retreat from Makassar before the incident ever took place, for reasons that had little to do with fear of Spanish aggression. Before word of the incident had reached Governor-general Reynst, he had already sent out commissioners to close the lodge, and to request from the sultan that he cease all trade with the Spice Islands. This

176 Coen to directors, 22 Oct. 1615, in: Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, I, pp.121-122. The hostages would ultimately be released by the end of 1616, without making any attempt to use them as leverage for the outstanding debts.

177 Foster, *Letters Received*, III, pp.286-289. Interestingly, another English letter (John Skinner in Makassar to Adam Denton, 12 July 1615) reports that this also applied to the Portuguese, who 'are commanded hence and are the most part gone...' (Foster, *Letters Received*, III, p.134.) Later, they were evidently also allowed back in, and in the longer term would turn out to be the largest beneficiaries of the conflict between the VOC and Makassar. Cf. Borges, *Os Portugueses e o Sultanato de Macaçar*, pp.82-83.

178 Foster, *Letters Received*, III, pp.151-152.

decision was closely connected to the evolving monopoly policy in Maluku.

In August 1613, the governor-general had appointed Hans de Hase as Inspector-General, and given him the task of making a financial and general inspection round of all the VOC's posts. The reports and advice he would submit in the course of his commission might be considered the first documents clearly stating that the VOC had already become overstretched, and they would be pivotal in the formulation of the policy of concentrating on Maluku.

De Hase started with a tour of Maluku, and did not like what he found: he considered the Malukan posts severely understaffed and undersupplied. After continuing on to the other posts of the eastern archipelago in December 1613, he found most of them unprofitable and useless, noting, for instance, that the freshly-conquered Fort Henricus on Solor would probably not be able to become profitable because the VOC had been unable to completely remove the Portuguese from the area. Continuing to Buton, he noted that there was 'absolutely nothing to trade there, and the two bastions have only been established to please the king', who for reasons he did not divulge, he incidentally also considered 'the biggest liar of all the Oriental kings'.¹⁷⁹ Being first and foremost a financial inspector and seeing no point in a trading post for political purposes, he recommended closing the lodge as soon as possible.

Moving on to Makassar, he found that Samuel Denijs had died, that the lodge was in complete disorder and that the ledgers were 'in complete disarray'¹⁸⁰, so that, like Van Solt seven years earlier, he had to inform himself from the Company's debtors themselves how much they owed, as it could not be discovered from the books. He left a new merchant, who he hoped would 'take better care', but also recommended the lodge be closed. Not only was it 'a money drain, rather than the breadbasket it is reputed to be', but also because junks from Makassar were sailing to Maluku, Banda in particular, 'but we do not dare attack these junks due to our lodge in Makassar'.¹⁸¹ He came to similar conclusions with respect to Gresik, which was similarly sending out junks to Banda and where the Company also had an unprofitable lodge.¹⁸²

De Hase's recommendations were heard, and the lodges in Buton, Makassar and Gresik, as well as Fort Henricus on Solor, were all abandoned in the course

179 Hans de Hase to Directors, 12 August 1614, in: VOC 1057, fol. 65r and v.

180 Ibid., fol. 65v.

181 By the time that letter arrived, the High Government had, however, already gone ahead and closed these lodges. Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, I, p.315.

182 See above, chapter II, paragraph 'Connections to the West'.

of 1615. The commissioners sent to close the lodge at Makassar, unaware of what had happened there, found the VOC lodge already abandoned. All that was left for them to do was bring across the request to no longer trade with Maluku. In a return letter to them, the sultan somewhat famously replied: 'God made the land and the sea, divided the land among the people, and gave the sea in common. It has never been heard that anyone has been prohibited from navigating the sea. If you would do it, you would take the bread out of the mouths of people. I am a poor king'.¹⁸³

The incident in April 1615 would therefore seem merely to have hastened the breakdown of the relationship with Makassar. The break itself would have been an inevitable consequence of various policies the VOC had put into effect in that period, aimed at concentrating the Company's resources on Maluku, and freeing its hands to take a more aggressive stance there.

Meanwhile, the Dutch were making ample use of their Ternaten ally to maintain and strengthen their grip on the spice-producing regions. In the same letter in which Cockayne informed his superiors of the military preparations, he also informed them that he had heard the Dutch were now attempting to get western Seram back under their control by using the authority of the sultan of Ternate, and referring the conflict to him.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, the Dutch were using Ternaten representatives to resolve the matter, and the people of the Banda island of Ai had now sued for peace by sending representatives to the Ternaten sultan.¹⁸⁵

For their part, Sultan Ala'uddin and chancellor Matoaya do not appear to have been intent on a further escalation of conflict with the Dutch. When reports went around Makassar that VOC ships were on their way in August 1615, the English factor George Cockayne wrote to his superior in Bantam that, even though the sultan was fortifying the coast in anticipation of a possible conflict with the Dutch, '[t]he King says that at their arrival here he will send them their house and pagarr [factory stock] upon rafts to them, but not a man come to land. He will do them all the good he can, but the commonalty will not be pacified but would willingly have them come to land and put them all to the sword.'¹⁸⁶ Cockayne added that the court had asked for his opinion, which he had wisely kept to himself, although he privately felt 'they have all the reason in the world

183 Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, I, p.122.

184 Foster, *Letters Received*, III, 1897, pp.150-153.

185 Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, 1919, p.120.

186 'George Cokayne to John Jourdan at Bantam, Sambarrppa, this 17th August anno 1615', in: Foster, *Letters Reveived*, III, 151.

to make clear work with as many as they can of them, for their proceedings is in blood and so they must continue' – clearly, it was not just the Makasars who were growing very annoyed with the Dutch. The feeling was mutual: in early 1616, the VOC sent a warning letter informing the English they would keep them from Maluku with violence if necessary.¹⁸⁷

Notwithstanding the sultan's desire not to escalate things further, it soon became apparent that the incident of 1615 was not forgotten. In December 1616, the VOC ship *Eendracht* arrived before Makassar. On its way from the Cape to Batavia, this ship had gone too far east, becoming the first European ship to land at the west coast of Australia.¹⁸⁸ Then turning north, it ended up in Makassar, as yet unaware of the events of the last one-and-a-half years. The junior merchant was sent ashore in a launch, accompanied by a small crew, to go to the Dutch lodge. They found only the English. Meanwhile word of the arrival of a Dutch ship spread through Makassar, and the Gowa sultan personally came to the shore with some 2000 armed men. He allowed the Dutch to leave but made clear that they should not come back. The crew rowed away and, afraid the sultan would still change his mind, hid in one of the English ships anchored offshore, before rowing back to the *Eendracht*, which was anchored further out, under cover of darkness. Before they found the *Eendracht* the next day, however, another boat had already been sent ashore to look for them. This time, the Makasars shot on sight and then stormed the boat, killing all its sixteen crewmembers.¹⁸⁹

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, I have tried to give a detailed answer to the question why conflict broke out between the VOC and Gowa-Tallo in 1615 and 1616, giving specific attention to the role of the political interaction between various polities in Maluku, in which the sultanate of Ternate was of great importance. The fact that, in the early seventeenth century, Gowa and Tallo became a militarily strong and prestigious Muslim dual kingdom, in competition with other Muslim states

187 E.g. Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, 1919, p.147; *Ibid.*, pp.74-75.

188 They also left what is believed to have been the first European object on the Australian coast: a tin pewter dish in which they inscribed the details of their visit to the coast. This dish is now in the Rijksmuseum collection (inv. nr. NG-NM-825).

189 J.W. IJzerman, 'Het schip 'De Eendracht' voor Makasser in december 1616' in: *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 78.1/2 (1922): 343-372. An appendix to the article contains the report of Joannes Steins, the junior merchant in charge of the first launch.

further east, was of great consequence for the relationships between Gowa-Tallo and the VOC. As the VOC became the 'protector' of Ternate on paper in 1607, and increasingly started acting the role in subsequent years, this already set it on a path towards rivalry with Gowa and Tallo.

Of course, the relationship with Ternate was intimately connected to the monopoly policy elsewhere. Ternate itself was a clove-producing region, indirectly ruled the western areas of the Ambon Islands and was an ally in making war on the spice-producing areas not controlled by the Dutch (like Spanish Ternate and Tidore). The alliance with the Ternaten sultan also gave the Dutch a way of having more political influence in the eastern archipelago by conducting 'diplomacy by proxy'. Ternate, all in all, was indispensable to the Company's monopoly policy. In the period leading up to 1615, when the VOC also started a policy of keeping other Asian traders, such as those from Makassar and Javanese ports like Gresik, out of Maluku, and aware it could not have it both ways, it decided to abandon its lodges there. Breaking off the trade relationship with Makassar was therefore a conscious decision on the part of the VOC – the incident of 1615 merely accelerated the process.

The emphasis on Makassar's role as a cosmopolitan *bandar* in much of the existing literature therefore only tells part of the story. Whereas the rulers of the Gowa and Tallo did try to have Makassar remain an open port based on early modern notions of free trade, they were also at the head of an expanding empire, not just an open market place. Trade was politics, not just for the Europeans but also for Gowa and Tallo, and spices were secured through existing networks that were political as much as economic. Additionally, it acts to obscure the chronology and causality of events. Although spices were certainly being traded in Makassar in the early seventeenth century, it was at the time mainly a rice port, where various traders, including Europeans, would buy rice before going to the Spice Islands to trade there themselves. Only after the watershed events of the 1615 and 1616 would the market for spices in Makassar increase so much that the city became the main non-Company spice port in the Archipelago for both Asian and European traders.