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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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VI. BETWEEN WAR AND DIPLOMACY AROUND SULAWESI (1617-1632)

As the Company got mired in its wars around Ambon, it was also still at war with Gowa. This war, it bears reminding, was largely a result of the Company's attempts to obtain and enforce a spice monopoly – the Company's alliance with Ternate had put pressure on the relationship with Gowa, its desire to be able to enforce its monopoly pretensions with violence had been a major factor in the decision to abandon its lodge in Makassar. The eruption of violence in 1615 described in chapter III, while caused by a clash with the Spanish, seems to have merely accelerated what would inevitably have been the outcome of the VOC's strategies and choices.

While the war around Ambon was fought ferociously, the simultaneous and related conflict with Gowa soon became more of a cold war – after some initial clashes in the aftermath of 1615 and 1616, no actual fighting occurred off Makassar, and the Company and the Gowan court took care to keep open channels of negotiation, both through unofficial go-betweens and continued official diplomatic contact. This chapter will investigate these efforts, and the factors complicating them, against a background of wider political developments in the eastern archipelago.

These efforts are interesting to investigate not only because the conflict with Gowa and those around Ambon were sides of the same coin, so that the history of the Spice Wars would remain incomplete without them. Additionally, diplomatic contacts between Gowa and the Company have been an important case study to many authors interested in early modern diplomacy in Southeast Asia. Most of these have focused either on the conception of treaties, or specific cases of 'high' diplomacy resulting in a treaty.³⁴² While the sources on the

342 Leonard Andaya, 'Treaty Conceptions and Misconceptions; A Case Study from South Sulawesi.' *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde* 134.2 (1978): 275–295, for instance, points to the differences in the cultural notions of the nature of a treaty between Europeans and indigenous parties, specifically looking at South Sulawesi from the Bungaya Treaty of 1667 onwards. It concludes that these differing conceptions resulted in structural misunderstandings. Much of his later work reasons along similar lines. By contrast, Carl Feddersen, 'Principled Pragmatism : VOC Interaction with Makassar 1637-68, and the Nature of Company Diplomacy.' PhD. Diss., Leiden University 2016, investigating the processes that resulted in the treaties between the VOC and Makassar from 1637s up to and including the Bungaya Treaty, comes to entirely different conclusions: he contends that both European and indigenous parties to such treaties

largely unofficial diplomatic contacts of the period under study here provide comparatively little detail on the negotiations themselves, they do provide valuable additional insight into the dynamics of such diplomacy: the low-level diplomacy aimed at sending out feelers for the reestablishment of relations, with its middle-men, its intelligence efforts, and its unofficial channels, add elements to the picture that have in recent years been recognized as crucial to our understanding of diplomatic history.³⁴³

Additionally, the chapter will make excursions to the other side of Sulawesi – the Buton sultanate, which had been an ally of the Company since 1613. The importance of Buton, and the Buton Strait along which it was situated, as a vital strategic bottleneck on the route between the spice-producing regions and major trade entrepôts such as Makassar, which also made it a major bone of contention in the rivalry between Gowa, Ternate and the VOC, has gone under-recognized in literature on the eastern archipelago, the work of Pim Schoorl and Jennifer Gaynor being the welcome exceptions.³⁴⁴ This chapter aims to give further substance to their insights. The interconnectedness of Makassar, Buton and the spice-producing regions further east is prosaically demonstrated by the fact that it was often the same Company fleets, either traveling to or from Ambon or Ternate, that called at both Makassar and Buton for diplomatic purposes.

GOWAN OVERTURES AND CONTINUED DUTCH AGGRESSION

After the hostilities of 1615 and 1616, Gowa soon started making overtures to the VOC to reach a peace agreement again. Coen's first brief mention of a request from Makassar to negotiate dates to December 1617.³⁴⁵ Another such overture, described in more detail, followed in September 1618, when Coen mentioned how a Gujarati named 'Mamet' had arrived at Jayakarta from Makassar, and had advised him that the sultan would be very willing to come to some agreement again. Coen, however, was already invested in a more aggressive strategy at the

learned from each other, were responsive to each other's diplomatic and legal traditions, and were very much willing and able to take advantage of this understanding. He thus paints such diplomacy and treaty-making as a much more level playing field.

343 See e.g. Guido van Meersbergen, 'Diplomacy in a provincial setting: The East India Companies in seventeenth-century Bengal and Orissa', in: Mostert and Clulow eds., *The Dutch and English East India Companies*, 56-78, for historiographic context and an example of such an approach.

344 Gaynor, *Intertidal Histories*, esp. Ch. 3; Schoorl, 'Het eeuwige verbond'.

345 Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, I, 297.

time, and wrote to the directors that ‘although the rice from there would be very welcome at this time, a peace treaty with that king would be far more damaging in other matters; it would therefore be best if the vile murder committed by them would be properly punished.’³⁴⁶ Just a few lines below, he concluded his letter with a more general remark that the treason by ‘these kings’ (meaning Asian rulers in general, and those of Bantam, Jayakarta and Gowa in particular) would continue, and that he would therefore need more troops and ships, concluding with his somewhat famous remarks: ‘Do not despair, do not spare your enemies, there is nothing in the world which can hinder or hurt us, as God is with us.’³⁴⁷ These words would become an oft-used quote in a variety of contexts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which makes it worth pointing out that Coen wrote them specifically to argue for a more aggressive strategy towards the various Asian rulers of the region.³⁴⁸ As if to illustrate the point, he sent out a punitive expedition one week later.³⁴⁹ After wreaking havoc in Japara, that expedition continued to Makassar, but no description of its actions there survives.

Just a couple of months later, Coen was in Ambon, assembling a fleet to

346 Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, I, 398.

347 Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, I, 399.

348 To name but two examples, the words ‘dispereert niet’ are still visible above the entrance to the Tropeninsituut in Amsterdam, originally built as the Colonial Institute, an initiative of various colonial entrepreneurs and officials, and completed in 1926. Slightly less consciously colonial was the use of these words by Dutch Queen Wilhelmina, who found them apt in her first speech from exile in London, in the wake of the German occupation of the Netherlands in 1940.

349 The instructions for the expedition specify it should first visit Japara, where the VOC lodge had been plundered by Mataram forces, with several VOC employees killed, and then continue to Makassar, to do ‘all possible damage’ there, and indiscriminately attack all and any ships present, paying no heed to their port of origin. The sultan should then be informed that this was ‘punishment and revenge for the great murder committed on those of the ship *Eendracht*, and the people on Banggai’ (which were contested between Ternate and Gowa, and where two VOC employees had been killed by Makasars two months earlier.) Any Makasar ships encountered elsewhere should also be pursued. (Colenbrander, *Bescheiden*, I, 372; *ibid*, II, 484.) The expedition duly wreaked havoc in Japara, and continued to Makassar, although no description of its actions there survives. It does seem to have taken place, as a letter from the English factory in Makassar, September 25, 1619, mentions two Dutch fleets having made ‘incursions into these roads’ – presumably the one by Martensz and then the subsequent one by Reael described below. Thomas Staverton to EIC, in: W. Noël Sainsbury. *Calendar of State Papers : Colonial Series : East Indies, China and Japan 1513-1634 : Preserved in H.M. Public Record Office etc.* London: Longman, 1862-1892, vol. III (1617-1621), letter 746.

relieve the Company's besieged post in Jayakarta, which would ultimately result in its conquest and the foundation of Batavia. Wanting to make good use of this great force now that he had it, he sent part of it past Makassar, in order to see 'whether we could gain any advantage there.'³⁵⁰ After the original prospective commander of this flotilla died, Coen replaced him, oh irony, with Laurens Reael, the former governor-general who had been so opposed to conflict with Makassar. Reael duly sailed to Makassar with four ships, where he took a small Portuguese junk loaded with nutmeg and sappanwood, left various empty Javanese junks alone, and unsuccessfully tried to take a Portuguese frigate moored just under the walls of a newly finished 'closed fort'.³⁵¹

LOW-LEVEL ENVOYS AND VENETIAN GO-BETWEENS

It was only in 1621, after the conquest and depopulation of Banda, that governor-general Coen first attempted to come to a peace agreement with the sultan of Gowa. Before departing the eastern archipelago for Batavia, he left the new governor of Ambon with instructions to send an envoy to Makassar, to see if any kind of agreement could be made, and if the sultan of Gowa could be brought to send some ambassadors of his own to Batavia.³⁵² His motives for sending a representative to Makassar just then are not obvious from the sources, but we may infer that the operation in Banda had taken away one of the VOC's reasons for retreating from Makassar in the first place: their involvement in Banda and their ongoing trade there. For the Gowan court, on the other hand, what the VOC had done in Banda would remain an important factor in their hostility towards the Dutch, presumably diminishing Gowan willingness to make peace.³⁵³

In August 1621, Van Speult's envoy, called Jan Joosten, arrived before Makassar. He had formerly been a translator and had only recently been employed in Amboina in the rank of *koopman*. His instructions seem to have been limited to delivering a letter written by Van Speult; he was not qualified to engage in negotiations himself. Through mediation of the English, he announced his arrival to sultan Ala'uddin of Gowa who, however, would not receive him until conferring with the *karaeng* of Tallo, who was many years his senior and his advisor. The

350 Coen, I, 454.

351 Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, I, 458.

352 Orders for Van Speult as the new governor of Ambon, 23 June 1621, in Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, III, esp. p. 68.

353 For the effect of the depopulation of Banda on Makassar, see above, chapter III, paragraph 'Reverberations from Banda'.

sultan stated that his lands had always been open to the Dutch and that he had never sought war with them. He underlined his good intentions by presenting the Dutch embassy two buffaloes, 150 chickens and some 'baubles.'

The next day, Jan Joosten was once again called to the court, and asked whether he had anything to say besides the content of the letter. Joosten replied that he would only like to request that the sultan send 'two or three' ambassadors to the governor-general in Batavia. The sultan replied that as much as he would like to, he was afraid that the ambassadors might make some mistake due to a lack of experience with the language, and that he would rather settle things in a letter, expressing his regret that Joosten was not qualified to make peace, or they could have settled it there and then. In any case, the Dutch were very welcome to return and then conclude the peace.³⁵⁴

For Coen, this 'lame excuse'³⁵⁵ for not sending envoys was a deal-breaker. In any case, he was still wondering whether peace would not 'hamper rather than serve the Company', and decided nothing for the moment.

With Coen, we may wonder why Ada'uddin, while outwardly seeking a peace agreement, refused to send envoys to Batavia on a pretext that indeed has the hallmarks of an excuse. A partial answer seems to be provided by Giovanni Maria Moretti, the Venetian we already came across earlier, who would be the next protagonist in the diplomatic contact between the Gowan court and the Company. From 1624 to 1626, he ran various errands for the VOC to Makassar, in the role of unofficial envoy, spy and even privateer.³⁵⁶ In September 1624, we find him testifying in the Batavia *Dagh-register* about a recent visit to Makassar. He explained how the Gowan sultan had expressed his desire for peace with the Dutch,

[to which Moretti] answered that if His Majesty would send a high-ranking person to the Dutch General in an embassy, his Majesty would not have to doubt that this would be well received, and that peace would be made. The King, however, held that this would greatly disagree with his honour, and

354 Jan Joosten's report published as a supplement to in IJzerman, 'Het schip 'De Eendracht' voor Makasser.', 369pp.

355 'flauw excuse'. Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, I, 653.

356 *Dagh-register Batavia*, I (1624-1629), pp. 77-78, 179-81, 183-84, 225-26, 230-31 describe his various exploits. His cooperation with the Dutch apparently also made him a target of the English and Portuguese, who imprisoned him in Makassar, but Moretti eventually made it back to Batavia.

said that if Prince Maurice was around somewhere, he might send [an embassy] to him as if it were to his brother, but he would not demean himself by sending someone to the General, who was merely the head of merchants, and that all the business of the Dutch in India was done by merchants.³⁵⁷

This was a more general problem that the VOC had been grappling with since its founding: a trading company from a Republic did not operate easily in diplomatic traditions where diplomacy was conceived as something conducted between kings. In its early years, it had often deliberately created the impression that its ambassadors were acting on behalf of Stadholder Maurits – VOC officials would bring prints with his image,³⁵⁸ informing Asian rulers that this was their ‘king’, and in some cases the Stadholder would play along by supplying the Company with his letters.³⁵⁹ By 1624, however, the VOC, which had by now established its power in Batavia and was becoming a military and political force of consequence in Asia, was confident it could conduct diplomacy on its own, and that Batavia would be taken seriously as a court in its own right. Clearly, not all Asian heads of state were immediately buying into it.³⁶⁰

When Coen was considering how to proceed with Makassar after the Joosten embassy, the main concern he voiced was not the spice trade per se, but the fact that ‘that [sultan] of Makassar greatly aspires to a great state. Time and time again, he is attacking the surrounding lands.’³⁶¹ Recently, while the VOC and EIC were waging their war and Coen was occupied trying to found his *rendezvous*, an overseas campaign apparently led by Ala’uddin himself, managed to bring several areas on present-day Sumbawa, including Bima, under its influence.³⁶² Not much later, the VOC also received calls for assistance from, among others, the king of Bali, fearing Makasar expansion into his territory.³⁶³ Buton also continually feared annexation by Gowa-Tallo, and the Banggai and Sula

357 *Dagh-register Batavia*, I, 16 sept 1624, p. 80.

358 Pauline Lunsingh-Scheurleer. ‘Uitwisseling van staatsieportretten op Ceylon in 1602.’ In: Lodewijk Wagenaar ed., *Aan de overkant: ontmoetingen in dienst van de VOC en WIC (1600-1800)*, Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2015, pp. 165-197, esp. 173-176.

359 Clulow, *the Company and the Shogun*, pp. 31-39.

360 The spectacular way in which this backfired in Japan was recently analyzed in Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 59-94.

361 Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, I, pp. 653.

362 Cummings, *The Makassar Annals*, pp. 7-8, 36.

363 Artus Gijsels (Ambon) to Coen, 14 August 1620 in: Colenbrander, *Bescheiden Coen*, VII, 625.

Islands east of Sulawesi were a continual bone of contention between Ternate and Makassar. Although the VOC certainly found the spices being traded at Makassar a major problem, it was at least as concerned with the initiative and agency of Makassar traders to get them there, with the active support of the rulers of Gowa and Tallo. Trade and politics went hand in hand in this matter: junks from Makassar buying up spices in Maluku were inextricably intertwined with the political expansion of Gowa-Tallo.

1625: THE NASSAU FLEET AT BUTON AND MAKASSAR

The first high-ranking Company official to come to Makassar to negotiate since the outbreak of hostilities was none other than Herman van Speult, the governor of Ambon until just recently. In the wake of the 1625 campaign of the Nassau Fleet, which had eradicated such a great number of clove trees, Van Speult and his successor Van Gorcum were confident that they had changed the game with regard to Makassar as well. In his first official letter as the new governor, Van Gorcum wrote that 'the Makassar, who we believe will now see that his designs are frustrated and that no cloves can be had from his followers, will most likely be inclined to something else, and will abandon the grand design he had devised with the Ternaten [kimelaha].' The time might therefore be right for another round of negotiations in Makassar. He and Van Speult decided that the latter would depart on the ships of the Nassau Fleet, which would then call at Makassar so that Van Speult could negotiate there. Additionally, Van Speult had recently received a request for assistance from the sultan of Buton, as the latter was expecting a Gowan attack with the next western monsoon. On his way to Makassar with the fleet, Van Speult also made a call there.

We have already seen how Buton had allied itself to the VOC in the wake of the VOC's alliance with Ternate, in opposition to Makassar, which at the time sought to bring Buton under its own influence. The VOC had built two small fortifications and stationed a garrison to safeguard it against Makassar attack, but on the recommendation of Hans de Hase, who noted that there was nothing to trade on Buton, the VOC had retreated all its personnel from the island two years later.

Trade goods or not, Buton would turn out to be a place of which the VOC could not simply wash its hands. In addition to being situated right on the frontier between the Ternaten and Gowan spheres of influence, it lay at a strategically crucial location, as the main sailing routes from Java and Makassar to Maluku passed through or near its territory – the Buton Strait, which was guarded by

the Butonese capital, and the Straits of Tiworo north of the island of Muna. The littoral region along the latter was inhabited by Sama communities and constituted a political entity of its own. Both were bones of contention between Ternate and Gowa – in the early seventeenth century, the Sama communities living in Tiworo were loyal to the sultan of Gowa. The Straits of Tiworo were hard to navigate for large European ships, and not charted or used by the Europeans, but they were well-known and friendly territory for the Makassar fleets – the recent study by Jennifer Gaynor introduces the term ‘hinterseas’ to describe these inhabited littoral regions and their importance to their political overlords. In effect, therefore, the VOC and the fleets from Makassar both had their own sailing routes to Maluku. For the VOC, losing Buton to Gowa would have left both routes in Gowan hands.³⁶⁴

As the VOC now thought it was opportune to come to a peace agreement with Gowa, it was in a difficult position with regard to the calls for help from Buton. Its solution was apparently to try and include Buton in the peace they intended to make with Gowa, by acting as a go-between. After the sultan of Buton had received Van Speult ‘in a most friendly way’, Van Speult informed him of the intention to come to a peace agreement with Gowa, which ‘they wanted to announce up front to [the sultan of Buton] as true and sincere friends, so that he could direct his affairs accordingly.’³⁶⁵ The sultan then stated his resolve to ‘be enemies with whomever were our enemies, and be friends with whomever we wanted to make a friendship with.’³⁶⁶ Van Speult suggested that, in that case, the sultan might send an envoy with the fleet, so that Buton could become a party in the negotiations and the VOC might intercede on its behalf. The sultan thought that was a great suggestion and immediately arranged for an envoy to go along.

Arriving before Makassar with nine ships from the Nassau Fleet, Van Speult sent a letter written in Spanish ashore, stating that he had called at Makassar ‘in passing’, and wanted to see whether they might negotiate in person to end the ‘bloodshed’. The sultan communicated his willingness to negotiate, hostages were exchanged, and Van Speult was brought ashore in the sultan’s barge. He,

364 Gaynor, *Intertidal history*, esp. 14-17; Schoorl, *Power, ideology and change*, esp. 1. As to the strategic role of the Buton Strait: although it is possible to reach the Ambon region by going over the open seas south of Buton, the sheltered, deep and easy-to-navigate Buton Strait was much preferred. Personal correspondence with Horst Liebner, 25-28 June 2018; Parthesius, *Dutch ships in tropical waters*, 52-54.

365 Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwnstoffen*, II, p. 84.

366 Ibid.

the sultan and their respective entourages met in a *baileu* (meeting house) at the shore, with a 20-man strong Makasar armed guard present. The latter struck Van Speult as being present 'out of fear rather than to give a proper welcome.'³⁶⁷

The first thing Van Speult emphasized when talking to the sultan was that he had *not* come on the orders of the governor-general, but simply to see whether it would be possible to bring the bloodshed to an end, thus communicating the status of the coming negotiations to the sultan. He proceeded to state the VOC's conditions: first, that all the debts still owed to the Company should be properly settled,³⁶⁸ and second, that the sultan should make sure his subjects would no longer sail to Hitu, Luhu, Lesidi, Kambelo or Eram to buy cloves there, as these rightfully belonged to the Company and the cost of buying cloves there had been driven up so much by Makasar activities, that the VOC had seen itself forced to cut down the clove trees in those regions. Of course, if the sultan wished to resume friendship, he would be welcome to send his subjects to come and trade at Castle Victoria in Ambon, but when found in any other place, they would be treated as enemies.

The sultan replied that he had never been the guarantor of the VOC's debts and did not consider himself in the least responsible, but that the settlement of debts could of course be arranged insofar the debtors were still alive and around. As to the spice trade in the western Ambon islands, he simply professed his complete innocence and denied any involvement: the Makasars only conducted overland trade. He could only assume it was the Malays who were involved in this trade, but he could not really prevent them from doing so, as they could go wherever they liked as soon as they were at sea. All the same, the sultan said it would please him to once again have peace and friendship with the VOC, and he had never denied them access to his land.

Van Speult then announced that he had brought envoys from Buton, as Buton and the VOC were longtime allies, and he wanted to intercede on its behalf and prevent bloodshed, 'as it behooved reasonable people do.'³⁶⁹ This was not at all to the liking of the sultan, who retorted that the sultan of Buton had been a real annoyance to him, that he had no intention of talking to Butonese envoys,

367 Ibid., p. 85.

368 The report mentions them as amounting to 20.000 bahar, which strikes me as an error, and we should probably read 'realen' or 'mas'.

369 Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen*, II., p. 86.

and that, if the Butonese wanted to negotiate with him, they might send their own envoys without any intercessions by anyone else.

This concluded the negotiations. The sultan presented the Dutch with two *last* (some 6000 pounds) of rice and three buffaloes. Van Speult presented him with two small bronze cannon (*dragontgens*)³⁷⁰, together weighing 500 pounds, with which the sultan seemed most pleased. The return gift of the sultan consisted of a 'piece of cloth and a rotan walking stick' for the governor-general – the accompanying letter accounted for this meagre gift by stating that Makassar was a small and poor town, 'like a chicken coop', and the sultan himself like 'a man from the woods'.³⁷¹ Van Speult sailed on to Batavia to make his report.

While the negotiations had been outwardly promising, it is worth pointing out that they took place with nine of the heavily armed warships of the Nassau Fleet riding at anchor in the background – a fact that was clearly not lost on the sultan and his people, as the description of these events in the Makassar Annals is limited to the remark that 'nine ships arrived'.³⁷² Regardless, Governor-General De Carpentier was optimistic about the prospect of peace with Gowa. In his subsequent general letter to the directors, he called it 'very useful and appropriate', and hoped it would increase trade with Batavia. He would even be happy to allow the Makasars to buy cloves, if they did so at Castle Victoria for a fixed price, and expected that, now that the Nassau Fleet had destroyed so many clove trees in Hoamoal, they would be compelled to do so anyway.³⁷³

His optimism turned out to be unwarranted. The next year, traders from Makassar once again visited the Amboina region in large numbers, and Ala'ud-din and Matoaya personally went on a military campaign to Buton, Solor, Sumbawa, Bima and other islands, to the concern of the sultans of Buton and Ternate and to Company officials, as described in earlier chapters. After returning from his campaign, the sultan had the Venetian Giovanni Maria Moretti inquire in Batavia whether the Company was still willing to make peace, but no action on

370 These were most likely *druakstukken* (dragon pieces), anti-personnel guns with a conically shaped powder chamber. The weight of 250 pounds each likely indicates a caliber of 3 pounds. This is a surprising gift, as the *druakstuk* was a relatively state-of-the-art weapon at the time. Personal correspondence with John Verbeeck, Nov. 2017.

371 Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen*, II, 87.

372 Cummings, *Makassar Annals*, 39.

373 Carpentier and Council to directors, 27 October 1625 in VOC 1085, esp. fol. 23v. Note that this bit is not included in the published transcriptions.

behalf of the Company followed.³⁷⁴ Carpentier had apparently lost the impression that a formal peace with Gowa would be realistic, or beneficial to the Company, and relations with Makassar remained in limbo. For Gowa, this would turn out to be just as well: as we have seen, the clove traders from Makassar would keep coming to the Ambon region over subsequent years, and the Gowan sultanate also felt no inhibitions about expanding its influence at the cost of that of the main ally of the Company in the eastern archipelago, the sultan of Ternate.

HAGGLING OVER CANNON AND CASTAWAYS: ANTONIO CAEN IN MAKASSAR AND BUTON, 1632

Even as the contacts between the Makasar traders and the Company became ever more warlike in subsequent years, the Company did maintain a modicum of diplomatic contact with the rulers of Gowa and Tallo, which, as before, took place both through middlemen, including free traders but also officials from other European Companies, and the occasional official envoy. The Danish company, for example, became especially successful in Makassar in these years, giving the English company such fierce competition as to raise eyebrows with English officials in Bantam.³⁷⁵ The interaction between the English, Danes and Dutch, trade rivals in Asia, but officially on good terms back in Europe, was a mix of hostility and suspicion on the one hand, and cordiality on the other. The Danish company was an especially interesting case as many of its leading figures were in fact Dutchmen, who had worked for the VOC before going to Copenhagen and putting their experience to use in Danish service.³⁷⁶ ‘General’ Roeland Crappé, *de facto* head of the Danish Company, was one of them. On one of his regular calls at Batavia, in April 1631, he returned the twenty six survivors of the shipwreck of the *Suratte* mentioned earlier, who had been picked up by Makasar vessels and brought to Makassar after their ship had foundered off Kabaena. Crappé had paid their rather hefty ransom after due correspondence with the Dutch governor-general, conducted through English ships, and was subsequently reimbursed by the Dutch.³⁷⁷ The occasion of his visit was also used to make prepa-

374 *Dagh-Register Batavia*, I, 278 (31 August 1626).

375 Bantam to Makassar factory, 29 December 1632, as summarized in IOR G/10/1, p 55.

376 For some short biographical notes on him, see Diller, *Die Dänen*, passim, esp. 28; Sanjay Subrahmanyam. ‘The Coromandel Trade of the Danish East India Company, 1618-1649.’ *The Scandinavian economic history review* 37.1 (1989): 41–56, esp. p. 44.

377 *Daghregister Batavia*, 1631-1634, 13 (25 April 1631); Specx to Crappé, 21 November 1630, in: VOC 855.

rations for a prisoner exchange with the Portuguese which was to take place at Makassar – in spite of the Company clashing with Makasar vessels throughout the archipelago, Makassar, with its extensive Portuguese community yet with a leadership able to enforce peace between rivalrous Europeans within the city, was still the eminent neutral ground for such an exchange.

In March of the next year, veteran VOC official Antony Caen was sent to Makassar for this purpose.³⁷⁸ Although his instructions, and the letters he brought along for the sultans of Gowa and Buton, have all survived, his report about the journey and the return letters have not, and his trip has left surprisingly little mark on the Dutch East India Company records. Fortunately, he was accompanied by a lay pastoral worker (*ziekentrooster*) named Seygers van Rechteren, who was keeping a travelogue, later to be published back home. Although Van Rechteren was by all appearances not particularly interested in the political details of the trip, his descriptions nonetheless give life and texture to our understanding of the embassy.

The ship *Buren* approached the Makassar roadstead on the 4th of April 1632, and fired a massive 38 gun salute that thundered over the roadstead. The Dutch flag and a white flag were hoisted at the stern to signal peaceful intentions: as Van Rechteren noted with some understatement, ‘we were not on good terms with Makassar, due to the clove trade in the Ambon islands etc.’³⁷⁹ All the same, the interactions with the Makasars would turn out to be cordial enough – within the hour, two young princes and a few high nobles came on board. The two princes remained on board as hostages when, that evening, Anthony Caen, accompanied by an eight man retinue including Van Rechteren, rowed towards the shore. Roeland Crappé cordially received them to the Danish lodge. The 40 or so Dutch prisoners, who had already been brought there, were overjoyed to see them.

From the Danish lodge, Caen and his retinue went to the palace of the sultan of Gowa later that evening. Van Rechteren was amazed at the sight. The palace was raised up on wooden beams, as was common in Southeast Asia, but Van

378 For a very short outline of Caen’s turbulent career, see W. Ph. Coolhaas. ‘Gegevens over Antonio van Diemen.’ *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde* 103.1 (1946): 469–546, esp. 469–470. This rather curious article starts with the observation that the biography of Caen, ‘dien anderen Antonio’, is far more worth writing than that of Van Diemen, illustrating the point by enumerating some of the exciting things Caen had done (junior merchant at Jakarta and Banda, ambassador to various destinations, privateer...) to then grudgingly return to Van Diemen.

379 Commelin, *Begin ende Voortgangh*, II, 20th journey, p. 38.

Rechteren had never seen such a building on this massive scale. The beams were some five meters high, and carried a huge palace, with wall panels of intricately carved gilded woodwork in the shape of leaves. Inside, amidst a retinue of some one hundred servants, concubines and nobles (the latter all armed with intricately ornamented crisses), was Sultan Ala'uddin, sitting on a mat, surrounded by velvet cushions, clean-shaven, wearing a gold-threaded sarong which left his rather stout upper body bare. Van Rechteren estimated him to be in his late 50s.³⁸⁰ Caen, Van Rechteren and Crappé were invited to sit down with the sultan and chew sirih together - Van Rechteren explained to his intended European readership that this was a bit akin to sharing a glass of wine with a guest.

Caen had been furnished with two Chinese parasols, half a picul (a good sixty pounds) of Japanese copper, and a piece of yellow fabric to present to the rulers, and he would have received gifts in return. The letter of the governor-general would also have been presented and presumably read. Unfortunately, Van Rechteren tells us nothing about all this – which is particularly unfortunate as the letter contained a rather shameless request, rather in character with stereotypes of Dutch merchants. In addition to some friendly words about the sultan and an attempt to smear the Spanish and Portuguese by alluding to some intercepted letters in which they were apparently plotting against Makassar, it argued that the ransom of 3059 ½ pieces that had been paid for the release of their shipwrecked crew earlier, had been rather too excessive, considering that the Company and the sultan were not really enemies after all. The governor-general politely asked for the ransom to be returned, and while he was at it, for the five cannon the Makasars had salvaged from the vessel as well, as this would greatly benefit the relations between the Company and the sultan. The sultan's response was not recorded, but the Dutch did not get their cannon or their ransom back.

Caen had also been instructed to tactfully broach the topic of the trade to Ambon. With the Makasar trade there so badly thwarted the previous season, this might be an opportune time to bring it up. Caen was to point out that if the sultan would but make an effort to halt this trade in cloves that rightfully belonged to the Company, nothing would stand in the way of the restoration of the old friendship between the sultan and the Company. The Company would very much welcome it if the sultan could send some official envoys to Batavia to discuss this. If, on the other hand, the trade would continue, it was bound to lead to open war between Gowa and the VOC in the future.

380 Ala'uddin was 46 years of age at the time.

Van Rechteren's descriptions remain silent on all this. Instead, quite a different detail of the audience apparently stuck in his mind: as they were sitting there, a young prince, who he estimated to be about 22 years old, sat down with him, and upon learning that he was a man of God, struck up a conversation. The two amicably discussed the stories of the Old Testament, about which the young man turned out to be very well-informed. Surmising that the Makasars were Muslims, Van Rechteren argued that the Dutch Reformed religion was the one true faith. The young man rather seemed to enjoy sparring about religion, and asked whether the Reverend might not procure a Bible in the original Hebrew back in Batavia, and send it to him. Van Rechteren promised to do so, 'as I noted he was studious and sharp-minded', and for now presented him with a Malay translation of some of the Psalms.³⁸¹ The young prince remains unnamed, but his interest in discussing religion and collecting books seems rather compellingly in character with what we know of Karaeng Pattingalloang, who would become the chancellor of Gowa seven years later. This either means that Van Rechteren was a rather poor judge of age, as Pattingalloang was 32 years old at the time, or that this was another prince with similar interests, which would then appear to have been more widespread at the courts of Gowa and Tallo than other sources would have us believe.³⁸²

The day after the audience, as Caen, Van Rechteren and others were staying at the Danish lodge, a group of the sultan's servants arrived to present Van Rechteren with a gift, which had been promised to him the previous day. Caen, who apparently knew what would follow, started laughing as soon as he saw them approaching. The seven or eight servants all lined up and solemnly presented Van Rechteren with a small basket, each one telling him in Malay 'The king of Makassar presents you with this gift' before laying the basket at his feet. When they had left and Van Rechteren opened the gifts, he found that he had been presented with items worth a grand total of 50 *stuivers*, to the great hilarity of the others already familiar with this custom, who told them that this was in fact quite generous already.

The ship stayed in Makassar for ten more days. Caen was supposed to gather intelligence about such things as the market prices of cloves in Makassar, the number of junks that had left for Ambon that season, and news about the situa-

381 Commelin, *Begin ende Voortgangh*, II, 20th journey, p. 39.

382 For more on Pattingalloang and existing scholarship about him, see XIII, paragraph 'Affairs of state'.

tion in other Asian regions including Sukadana, Banjarmasin, Solor and Macau, and the market prices of various goods there. He learned, among other things, that after the events of last season, only three junks had left for the Ambon islands from Makassar, two of which had been forced to return because of adverse winds, but that all the same, 400 bahar of cloves had recently arrived on the Makassar market by way of a Portuguese ship from north Maluku. These had largely been bought up by the Danes and the English.³⁸³

Van Rechteren meanwhile had his own interests. The Reverend's descriptions of Makassar touched upon such subjects as the dress of the men and women and the prevalence and acceptance of 'sodomy', but he also showed himself particularly impressed by the three royal galleys of the sultan, each of them built to accommodate 500 or 600 rowers alone, made of what Van Rechteren described as ivory and ebony, and intricately decorated from bow to stern. The sultan, he learned, could raise a vast army within a matter of six hours, mostly armed with pikes and poisoned blow-darts, the latter being a weapon not to be underestimated and also used to execute criminals. Van Rechteren noted the four round bulwarks on the west side of Somba Opu, which were defended with heavy guns, gifts by Europeans coming to Makassar to trade or negotiate, and including some guns the Dutch had presented to the rulers in better days. The constable-major in charge of these guns was a renegade Englishman who had converted to Islam and was now living in luxury in Makassar – prompting the pastor to muse on 'what worldly splendour and money may bring about, that a Christian might be brought to the Islamic, or heathen, faith.'³⁸⁴

The ship set sail from Makassar on the 15th, and arrived before Buton five days later. In addition to making a courtesy call with the sultan, after all one of the oldest Dutch allies in the eastern archipelago, the purpose of the visit was rather prosaic: Caen had been instructed to buy wood here. In Batavia, a new church was being built as the old one had gone up in flames during the siege of the city by Mataram, and Buton produced heavy teak perfect for building. Caen also brought a letter and some gifts to the sultan, both lending some meagre moral and material support for the sultan in his anxiety about an imminent

383 *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-1634, 78 (22 May 1632).

384 *Ibid.*, 40. Regarding the forts, Bulbeck, 'Construction history' and Bulbeck and Caldwell, 'The indigenous fortifications on South Sulawesi' hold the four round bastions on Somba Opu to have been built in this form in 1631. I have been unable to convincingly trace the renegade Englishman back to EIC sources, but he is mentioned in other Dutch sources: see *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1637, 280-284.

attack from Makassar. He presented the sultan with a barrel of gunpowder, one hundred pounds of lead, and three muskets. The governor-general's letter informed the sultan that not only would another fleet under the leadership of Anthonissen, nine ships this time, soon head out to Amboina and make a call at Buton, but that the *Buren* would remain at the Buton roads throughout the western monsoon, and would be able to assist the sultan in case of any trouble. Van Rechteren did not apparently join Caen in his visit to the sultan, providing us with no details of the audience, but one cannot imagine that the gift, or the assistance of the *Buren* would have been much comfort to the sultan, particularly as 'throughout the western monsoon', in this case, meant only ten days – the ship had arrived on the 20th of April, and would leave again on the first of May. Things certainly must have looked bleak to Sultan La Elangi, the ruler who had minted the alliance with the Company almost two decades earlier, and was by now 'an old man with a white beard'³⁸⁵, faced with growing Makasar influence in the wider region and at his own court, and with a rather unforthcoming European ally.

The *Buren* had, however, arrived just in time to witness the arrival of some other reinforcements to Buton. On the 23rd of April, the large kora-kora of Kaicili Ali rowed into view. After staying in the Ambon islands until November 1630, where his influence had steadily waned, he had then left for the Sula Islands, which had by then been brought back under Ternaten control. There, apparently once again acting in line with Sultan Hamzah, he had mustered a new fleet, reconquered Banggai,³⁸⁶ made his way to Tobungku, and retaken it from the control of Gowa-Tallo. He now arrived in Buton to further strengthen the earlier reinforcements from Ternate, sent there to keep Buton out of Gowan control.

Kaicili Ali's kora-kora paid respect to the Dutch vessel, rowing around the Dutch ship three times, while gongs, flutes, drums and voices sounded. The *kapita Laut* then came aboard the Dutch ship, and was hospitably received. Van Rechteren was invited into the great cabin, and both Caen and Kaicili Ali boasted about the latter's prowess in battle, impressing upon Van Rechteren that he could jump over a man while decapitating him on the go. Afterwards, Kaicili

385 Commelin, *Begin ende Voortgangh*, II, 20th journey, p. 41.

386 A fleet sent out from Ambon to the Buton Strait by Artus Gijssels in July 1631, to catch any junks that might still escape the Ambon Islands with cloves that season, actually sighted several Makasar vessels who were retreating from Banggai after Kaicili Ali had reconquered it. See below, chapter VII, paragraph 'mopping up'.

rowed to shore, to assist in Buton's defense, but also to use it as a base from which to negotiate with the sultan of Gowa.³⁸⁷

Caen and Van Rechteren were probably the last Dutchmen to speak with Kaicili Ali, as he died in Buton soon after. As always, rumours of poison made the rounds, the supposed source this time being a jar of preserves sent to him as a gift from Gowa.³⁸⁸

CONCLUDING REMARKS

While the early sources on diplomatic contact between Gowa and the Company discussed in this chapter are relatively poor in details about the negotiations themselves, they do highlight the interesting ballet of middlemen, cautious initiative, and considerations of rank and precedence that characterized such low-level diplomatic feelers, meant to retain some kind of working relationship and investigate the possibility of ending the hostilities. Over the course of the chapter, we have seen the Gowan court and the Company headquarters in Batavia relay messages through foreign merchants, both Asian and European. We have seen how rank and prestige were major concerns, with the first contacts established through unofficial channels, Van Speult emphasizing that he was *not* sent by the governor-general, both parties insisting that the other one send an official delegation first, and, most saliently, the sultan of Gowa refusing to send an official delegation to 'merely the head of merchants.' Over the period described, the two parties did reach a kind of working relationship and the tacit mutual recognition that, at the very least, they were no longer in open war. They stopped short, however, of coming to a formal peace agreement and the re-establishment of trade relations, as the resolve to do so was never mutual at any given time, and the wider interests of both parties would have made coming to such an agreement exceedingly difficult.

Seygers van Rechteren's description adds another interesting dimension to established scholarship. While remaining curiously silent on the actual substance of negotiations, he is meanwhile able to paint a vivid picture of the social dimensions of such diplomacy – the customs, the role of other Europeans as go-betweens, the socialising both with them and with people at the Gowan Court,

387 He also wrote a lengthy letter to the governor-general, now lost, which apparently explained his recent actions both in Ambon and since then, which Caen brought back to Batavia. Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche historie', I, 79; *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-1634, 78 (entry of 22 May).

388 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche historie', I, 79.

give texture and atmosphere to such diplomatic interactions found in few other sources.

A final element in the history of the eastern archipelago that this chapter has aimed to highlight is the crucial role of Buton. While Gowa attempted to increase its influence over many regions originally part of Ternate's sphere of influence, Buton was particularly crucial, due to its location at the main sailing routes to and from the spice-producing regions. As the Company was militarily preoccupied elsewhere, its willingness and ability to assist the Butonese sultan tended to be limited. Unable to reach a peace agreement with Gowa itself, the Company was particularly ill-equipped to broker a deal between to Asian sultanates, as was made clear to Van Speult in 1625 in no uncertain terms. Although Gowa's subsequent 'conquest' of Buton in 1626 did not apparently bring the sultanate under its control, the threat of this happening loomed large throughout the period, and would continue to do so as the conflict heated up throughout the region in subsequent years.