Missions of Exchange: The Spatial Logic of Conversion in Maluku Tenggara

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Missions of exchange

The Spatial Logic of Colonization in Maluku Tenggara

Research Master Thesis
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Research Master Asian Studies
06/08/2021

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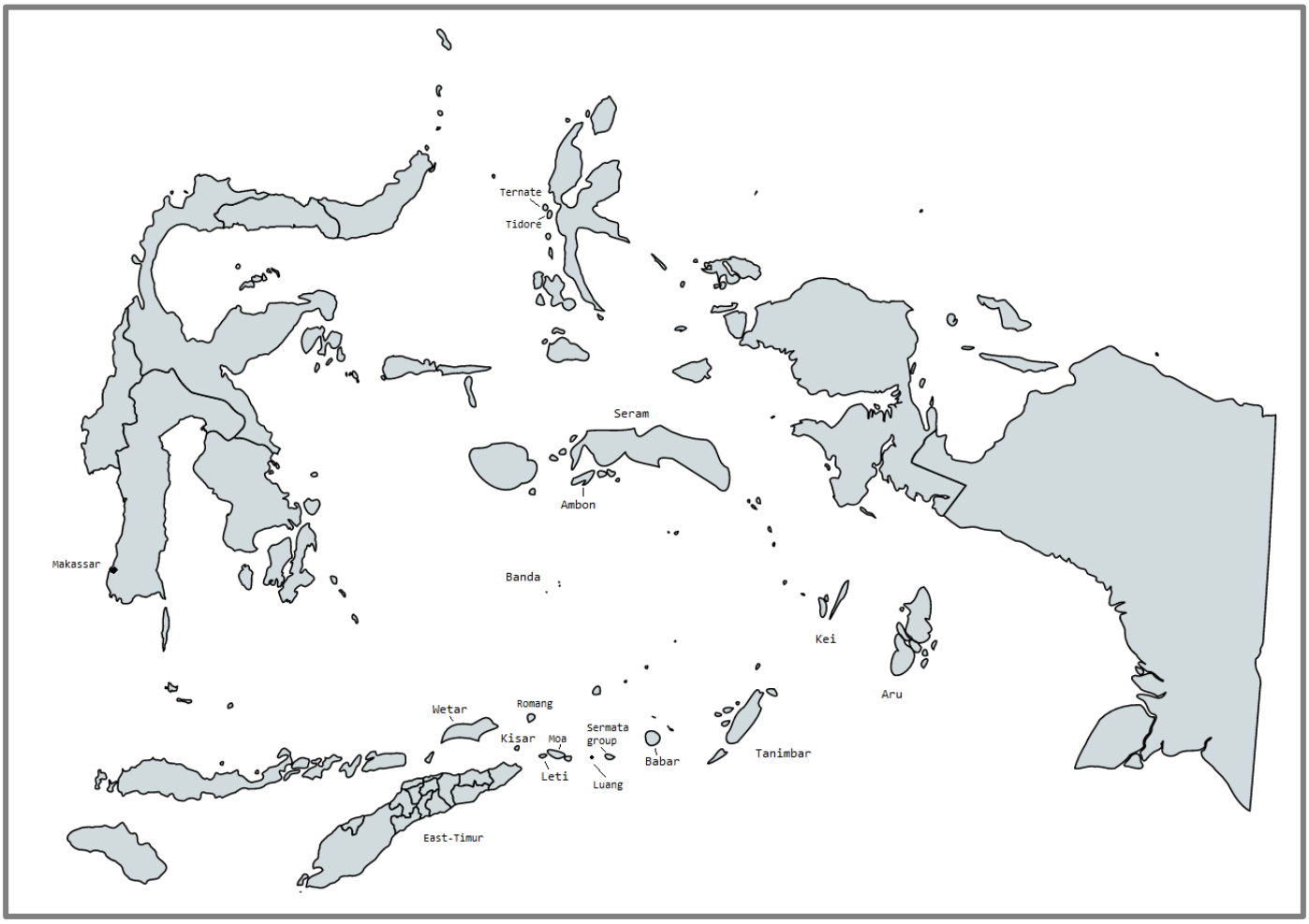

Figure 1: Map of Eastern Indonesia

Introduction

Space can be deceitful; histories can be silent. This is the impression one gets when writing a history of Maluku Tenggara[1]. Its written histories are few and far between, the spaces between the islands more prominently displayed on the map than the islands themselves. But at least there is a shape and direction to be found on the map. It begins just off the tip of East-Timur and arches over to the Southern coasts of West-Papua. Its history, too, has a shape and direction, but one that is not so easily read on a map. It's central position between New Guinea, the Northern Moluccas, Sulawesi, Timur, and of course the giant continent of Australia suggests in no way it's modern relegation to the peripheries of history.

The central claim of this thesis is that space is an important concept to struggle with while writing a history of Maluku Tenggara. In this thesis, the focus will be on a particular trip taken through the region at a particular time. On the sixth of June 1825, a Dutch war brig called the *Dourga* arrived at Wetar island. The ship was manned by a lieutenant of the Dutch colonial navy called Dirk Hendrik Kolff whose worldly mission was to draw the inhabitants of these islands into Dutch colonial spheres of rule. The lieutenant was accompanied by a missionary called Joseph Kam, who was more concerned with the religious project of the Christianization of the inhabitants. Both missions were formulated in terms of incorporation: into an imperial sphere of influence and into a spiritual community. Here we will ask how different perspectives on space – geographical, local, experienced – contributed to or resisted such incorporations.

However, while the journey of the *Dourga* will be central to the argument and narrative of the thesis, we will explore many adjacent and fundamental historical processes taking place at the beginning of the 19th century. From the emergence of a social consciousness in Europe, to the changing sphere of commerce in Maluku, and a shifting balance of power as the Dutch state took over the faltering project of the Dutch-India Trading Company. The *Dourga* was propelled by, and crosscut all these developments.

[1] *Maluku Tenggara* means South-eastern Moluccas in Indonesian and is a modern regency coinciding with the Kei islands. However, I will use this denomination for the region described above following Van Dijk and De Jonge (1995). I have avoided referring to the islands using the more obvious choice of Southern Moluccas – as this has often been used for Ambon and the surrounding islands and has a strong political connotation as it was the name of a separatist republic in the 1950's (Republik Maluku Selatan). We might take this as an example of how geographical, political, cultural and experienced spaces can be often be at odds with each other.

0.1 Historical review

The fifty years between 1780 and 1830 are significant in the colonial history of the Moluccas (and Indonesia in general) because of several political and economic transformations that took the world by storm. The Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-1784) weakened the economic position of the Dutch Republic significantly, while it frustrated the colonial efforts of the Dutch East-India Trading Company (VOC) in Asia. These troubles laid the foundation for the Batavian Revolution in the Netherlands and opened the possibility for a British take-over in the Moluccas – which happened twice between 1796-1801 and 1810-1814.Adding to the transitory nature of the time, the destitute VOC was nationalized in 1795 only to be liquidated five years later – a date which marked the beginning of the Dutch East-Indies as a formal colony of the Dutch state.

These events made it clear that large policy changes were needed if the colony was to become profitable again. Some colonial administrators, influenced by enlightenment ideals, called for a liberalization of trade and land on Java and in the Moluccas, where the production of spices was strictly controlled to maintain a monopoly. In the period between 1815 and 1830, such recommendations were sometimes implemented, often investigated, and frequently experimented with. Yet full scale liberalization of the spice trade was eventually rejected and, if any hope for liberal reform had survived, it was crushed in 1830 with the introduction of the *cultuurstelsel* on Java. This thesis will mainly be concerned with the timeframe of the fifteen years leading up to 1830 which means that this possibility for reform of colonial policy in Maluku constituted an important background for the events described in the following pages.

Leonard Blussé (2008) has noted the importance of this period in the shift from a multitude of flexible political and cultural communities in the Malay Archipelago towards more fixed systems of governance overseeing a single plural society. Contrary to the more accepted decade of the 1870s, he suggests this earlier period between 1780 and 1830 as 'the prime fixer of change in Southeast Asia.' That is to say that the large social, economic, and institutional changes of these years laid the groundwork for western imperialism and later the post-colonial nation-states in Southeast Asia. These changes include an economic shift from monopoly-trade to tropical plantations (Reid, 2015: 196-200), the political take-over of both the British (1784) and Dutch (1800) chartered East India Companies, as well as the substantive rise in piracy and Asian resistance to colonialism (Bosma 2019: 44-67). Blussé proposes four dimensions through which the transformations of the period can be examined (the political,

juridical, economic, and cultural), here, however, we are concerned with a fifth: space. As the VOC was replaced by the Dutch state, how did the spatial imagination of the archipelago change? More fundamentally, what was the role of spatial conception and experience in the relationship between the Dutch colonial state and the Indigenous societies of Maluku Tenggara?

We can identify a number of spatial dynamics at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of nineteenth which played a role in transforming the dynamics in the region. First and most foremost, Europe saw the rise of the concept of Society; a space separate and distinct from religious and political authority (Hunt 2014: 82). This development is important here for two reasons. To begin with, it set in motion a process that Patricia Spyer, in the context of the Aru Islands, has called 'serialization.' Religious denomination, socioeconomic class, nationality, level of education, ethnicity, and citizenship all became separate but interchangeable markers of individual identities. These categories were imagined as separate components of the subject providing color to a universal human experience. Thus, one could change one's religion – from Islam to Protestantism, for example – without any consequence for one's standing in or even experience of the world. This vision spurred on many Europeans to follow the lines of Empire on their mission to Christianize the people of the global South. The fact that such ideas were not necessarily shared among the subjects of their proselytization explains the frustrations with the durability of 'idolatry' that run rampant through missionary writing. In the context of this thesis, we will examine the ways in which the experience of space was difficult to separate from one's religion. Moreover, the emergence of Society in Europe brought with it a number of new spaces. The salon and the magazine are the most poignant examples. The development of these new public spaces was intimately connected with the enlightenment and scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. A whole range of scientific associations (or societies) saw the light of day and these often set up scientific expeditions which set out to the far reaches of Empire. In this thesis we will look at the rise of one such 'society', the Dutch Missionary Society. This organization was set up in the middle of the political turmoil at the end of the 18th century and had to navigate the shifts in authority from the VOC to the British to the Dutch state in the Malay Archipelago.

In Maluku Tenggara this landmark shift from company to state was hardly noticed. As the *Dourga* anchored at the various islands of the archipelago some 24 years after the fall of the company, both Kolff and Kam noted that they were still met as representatives of the VOC.

Kolff noted fondly the words of welcome with which they were received on the island of Kisar: *'Terimah kasih pada Tuhan Allah, Compania belom loepa sama kami orang!*' (Kolff 1828: 55). In his translation 'Compania' simply becomes Dutch authority: 'Thank the Lord, the Dutch authorities have not yet forgotten us!'(ibid).

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the VOC had been one of many players vying for political influence and economic opportunity. The islands of Maluku Tenggara seemed most important to them, because they constituted crucial supply lines for the Banda islands which relied on trade for the most basic foodstuffs. As we shall see in the next chapter, the aggressive Dutch take-over of these islands greatly impacted the trade networks that had developed in the region. Thus, the aim one of the first VOC expeditions to the Southeastern islands of Maluku (Damar, Kei, Aru, and Tanimbar) under captain Adriaan Dortsman was to include these islands in the nutmeg monopoly. That is, they were to survey and exterminate any spice trees present and establish trade relations between Banda and these 'outlying islands' (Heeres 1896; Schapper 2019).

Instead, the Southwestern Moluccan islands (Wetar, Leti, Kisar, Babar) were more of political importance for the Dutch. The Portuguese had been relegated to East Timur and Eastern Flores after a power struggle in the early seventeenth century and were regarded with suspicion by Dutch administrators. Thus, these Moluccan islands featured in their consciousness as a kind of buffer. Besides, they had some valuable products to offer. Beeswax from Wetar, textiles from Kisar, turtleshells from the seas, as well as slave labor (Hägerdal 2019).

The relations established between the islands of Maluku Tenggara and the VOC were tentative at best and always contingent on indigenous agency as much as colonial initiative. Thus, if the Company was refused at some places (Aru and Tanimbar for example), it was welcomed at other places – most notably on Kisar where Dutch names and customs are still found to this day. Colonial incorporation was not a unilinear process in which native populations were posed against European aggressors. Instead, European weapons and support were deployed and resisted to different extends both politically and symbolically in highly variated and stratified indigenous contexts. The idea of a 'Stranger-King' has been much explored in the literature on Austronesian cultures (Andaya 1994; Henley 2004; Sahlins 2008), and it is one we shall return to down in the first and final chapter For now, it is enough to say that the emergence of a European hegemony in the region was highly disruptive in some senses

but could at the same time be incorporated within long-existing indigenous structures. The shape of these checkered structures determined in part the shape of colonialism in Maluku Tenggara (Sahlins 1994).

But if indigenous societies in the region were never a homogenous, the same could be said about the Dutch colonial hegemony. As the VOC's extreme economic successes of the seventeenth century started dwindling in the eighteenth, its relationships with the islands of Maluku Tenggara suffered. The accounts of the lieutenant and the missionary are littered with ruins of VOC-era churches and *blokhuizen*. These features are a constant reminder of the extend of the deterioration of Dutch influences, but also hinted at the opportunities of renewed relationships. The colonial field had shifted significantly since the demise of the company and thus the parameters and motivations for renewed Dutch interest in the area shifted as well. In the second chapter we will explore the new geopolitical factors that incited the Dutch to re-establish old relationships, while the third explores the novel social concepts that fueled the missionary activity in the early nineteenth century. But we will start in chapter 1 with the economic shift of the newly minted Dutch colony, which moved decidedly away from spices as a pillar of the colonial economy and instead focused more and more on the plantation industries on Java and Sumatra.

These plantation industries were characterized most of all by their high demand for labor and land, two factors in which the Eastern Islands could not compete at all with the emergent industry in Java (Bosma 2019: 71). In Ambon indigenous corvee labor had long been mobilized through contracts with the *orang kaya* (village heads, literally 'rich men'), while the original populations of the Bandas were almost completely replaced by foreign slave labor (Van Zanden 1991; Loth 1995; Winn 2010). Instead, the emerging industries of Java, and later Sumatra, were starting to rely more and more on wage laborers (Bosma 2019: 74). These developments coincided with, insofar that they weren't the result of an emerging articulation of liberal ideologies by the European colonial powers. The British were the biggest proponents of free commerce, markets, and movements, and during their take-over of the Moluccas and Java in the early nineteenth century they attempted to reform the economic regimes maintained by the VOC before them.[2]

[2] These efforts are most closely linked to the figure of Sir Stanford Raffles, but Dutch administrators, especially Dirk van Hogendorp and later Herman Willem Daendels also made effort to re-organise the *ancient regime*, be it of the VOC or Javanese sultanates (see van Fraassen 2018: 27-38).

However, these reforms never reached the islands of Maluku Tenggara. Probably because there was little to reform. The economies in these regions were based mostly on the horticulture and the trade of niche luxury goods. Such goods could be traded with foreign merchants (most often Seramese, Makasarese, Buginese, and Chinese) for food supplements, weapons, or other high-status objects[3] (Van Dijk & De Jong 1995 xii; Ellen 2003). Another of feature of the economy, as well as the political landscape, were frequent raiding and wars. Such conflicts could be instigated between two neighboring islands but could come from afar as well. Throughout the region, fortifications can be found, and most villages were located at high and easily fortifiable locations (Schapper 2019; Van Dijk & De Jonge 1995: 34-35).[4] The motivations -for these raids were diverse. Head-hunting was a part of ritual life on some islands, and a raid was thought to generate 'heat', which was seen as a necessity and 'fuel' for ritual success (Ellen 2012: 39). Furthermore, the economic benefits that such raids could provide was the acquirements of slaves. Slavery was a widespread phenomenon in Maluku Tenggara. On Wetar, for example, slaves were used to gather beeswax, the islands main exchange commodity (Hägerdal 2019). However, it seems that the importance of slaves in this region lay mostly in their exchange value, as they made up a substantial part of the regions exports.

Thus, much of Maluku Tenggara's export consisted of slaves and luxury products and both markets expanded significantly in the late eighteenth century. First, the demand from China for products such as sandalwood, turtle shells, birds' nests and *trepang* (sea cucumber) – the latter two being delicacies in East Asia – increased greatly (Sahlins 1994). Some Chinese merchants undertook the journey to Maluku themselves to buy up the products, but most were traded through intermediary trade hubs in Makassar, Eastern Seram and especially the Sulu sultanate (Warren 1999). In Europe, on the other hand, a market was developing for the pearls and bird of paradise feathers found mostly on Aru (Andaya 2017). In chapter two we shall describe how Dutch officials in Ambon planned to capitalize on the trade between Maluku

[3] Objects like bronze canons, elephant tusks, and gongs played an important part in marriage gifts, and they still do (Hägerdal 2020; Laksono 2002).

[4] Van Dijk and De Jonge argue that these fortifications were the result of 'waging war' which was a 'part of the normal way of life' in Maluku Tenggara (1995: 34). Schapper constructs a more detailed argument that the direct impulse for fortification in the seventeenth century was given by European naval aggression and more specifically the Bandanese massacre by the Dutch in 1621. Furthermore, Winn (2010: 370) writes that inter-island warfare was most likely exacerbated by the European arrival as original spice production waned and the demand for slavery rose. Whatever the case, both colonial and indigenous violence seemed to have been frequent occurrences and the fortification could help protect against both.

Tenggara and China by replacing the Makkasarese and Buginese traders. The promise of trade was part of a larger push for colonial incorporation.

Secondly, it is well known that piracy and raiding increased exponentially in the late eighteenth century. One reason for this might have been the waning influence of the VOC in this period. As described above, the fourth Anglo-Dutch war during the 1780's cut the most supply lines between the Netherlands and Southeast Asia while its maritime force was stretched thin. Local pirates called Iranun made use of the vacuum and spread throughout the whole archipelago, from Sumatra to Papua's Bird's Head Peninsula (Bosma 2019: 46-47). Other pirates came from the Raja Ampat islands (often identified as Papuans in the colonial sources) and Eastern Sulawesi (Knaap 2010; A Campo 2003; Gaynor 2016). Furthermore, the growing markets for luxury products in China described above caused an increase in demand for slave labor to harvest such products (Warren 2007).[5]

These developments – the transition from company to colony, the shift in economic mode of production, and the increasing market for luxury products and slaves – all contributed to the integration of a regional economy into a world capitalist system. In the lingo of postcolonial economic historians this would suggest Maluku Tenggara was taking shape as a periphery to the colonial center. Yet this framing paints too squeaky clean a picture. The islands in this region weren't suddenly pulled into a global system, they had been part of such systems for centuries. Moreover, the moniker of 'periphery' assumes that the economies and social organization found in Maluku Tenggara were configured to the needs of a far-off metropole. This is an assumption which cannot be sustained in the light of the distant and often mediated relationships between the West and the region in question (for a general critique of the concept see Anievas & Nișancioğlu 2015: 16-19). The colonial expeditions in the early nineteenth century signal an increase of interests in the region, but these didn't necessarily translate into direct economic and colonial involvement. Instead, as circumstances outside and within these societies changed, the spatial perception towards them changed. It is this spatial awareness we shall focus on in this thesis.

In order to render the notoriously vague concept of space useful and methodologically viable, the research here has been heavily influenced by the anthropological literature, even

[5] There is some debate surrounding this issue. David Henley (2000) has suggested that it was not a mechanical increase in labour demand which 'pushed' the Sulu sultanate towards slave labour, rather the increasing economic power *enabled* them to turn towards slavery as a marker of prestige. (See also Sutherland 2004).

though its subject is historic in nature. Philosophers, geographers, and social scientists have all written important, if not classic texts on the subject (for example: Lefebvre 1991; Massey 2005; Harvey 2001; Tuck & McKenzie 2015; Smith 2008). Their insights, however, failed to offer a framework for the interpretation of these specific historical sources. First, the work has most often focused on capitalist relations in urban contexts. These insights carry less weight in societies which might be posited at the edge of a germinating capitalist 'world-system'. Not only because capitalist relations had not yet crystalized in Maluku Tenggara, but also because such an analysis always fails to center these societies on their own terms. Furthermore, while there were a number of commercial hubs in the area – especially Dobo in the Aru islands – these can hardly be compared to the capitalist urban environments of 20th century Europe. Furthermore, the spaces discussed by Lefebvre, Harvey, and Augé can more readily described as the outcome of capitalist relations than be put at their conception (or outside of it for that matter). Other works, such as Doreen Massey's *For Space* (2005), excel in their diagnostics of our current (mis)conceptions of space and its consequences for the writing of history but fail to offer an alternative coherent program for practical research. Massey argues among other things that the view of space as an empty container tends to equate history with movement through that space (ibid: 3-4). In effect that means that one is encouraged to describe the journey of the *Dourga* as an historical event, while treating the islands of Maluku Tenggara as static stops being visited and left behind again. Her alternative program of 'imagining space as a multiplicity of trajectories' (ibid: 59), however, is one of political philosophy and looking at the future. It remains unclear how such highly abstract concepts should be incorporated in historical research.

Instead, I have attempted to approach the concept of space through a dialogue between History and Anthropology. These disciplines have long been in conversation with each other but can also occasionally clash. The 'ethnographic present' remains a difficult thing to historicize, while history has often been muzzled by anthropologists on the hunt for cultural structure. In the next section we will look at the Dutch historiography of empire and the ways in which the concept of space has played a role within the discipline. Next, we will turn to a case study of the Leiden school of Anthropology and the uses and misuses of space within the discipline of Anthropology.

0.2 Historical perspective on space

Dutch historiography as it relates to the country's colonial history has long been a seemingly straightforward affair. The history of the Malay Archipelago has long been adapted to the flows of the history of the Netherlands. But already in 1935, Dutch historian Van Leur cautioned his colleagues not to forget the 'autonomous history' of Southeast Asia (Van Leur 1955; Smail 1962). Such a history is not just in the interest of a specific region, culture or identity group. Van Leur's primary objective was the positivistic formulation of concepts and 'types'[6] based on the unique historical conditions of different regions and concepts. His suggestion was warmly received by some (for example: Wertheim 1954), but mostly scoffed at by others. His dissertation, which is regarded as a classic nowadays, received little attention in the year of its publication and mostly made its mark after being translated to English and published posthumously (1955).[7]

In general, Dutch historiography took a long time to address the issues of perspective and conceptualization raised by Van Leur. Only in the 1990s Dutch historians were starting to experiment with new and different approaches to colonial history, following the work done abroad on both the British and French empires (Raben 2013). These 'New Imperial Histories', according to Remco Raben, were mainly concerned with three characteristics of imperial history. First, there is 'the application of new spatial concepts of the interrelationship between different parts of the empire' (ibid: 11). Specifically, relationships modeled along the lines of center-periphery models have been questioned and critiqued. European Empires, these historians argue, did not just have one center – in London, Paris, or Amsterdam – but were rather highly interconnected networks with multiple regional and global 'centers' (Ward 2008: 6-9). Secondly, the myriad consequences of colonialism for the metropole are being investigated. Imperial history in England, France as well as the Netherlands has long been separated from their respective national histories.[8] This tendency betrays a certain spatial bias within the discipline of history; it is most often framed by the borders of the nation-state (Hunt 2014: 46-50) Thirdly, more attention is being paid to the moral dimensions of empire. This does not just refer to the contemporary public re-appraisal of Empire (Kuipers 2018) but is

[6] Van Leur was heavily influence by Max Weber.

[7] Bouman, P.J. "Posthume erkenning van jong begaafd Indoloog Dissertatie vond weinig genade bij professoren". "Het Parool". Amsterdam, 1955/09/24 00:00:00, Geraadpleegd op Delpher op 21-05-2021, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010829766:mpeg21:p013
Vogel, J. "Leur, Jacob Cornelis van (1908-1942)". *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*. http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn3/leur

[8] Anecdotally, the book from which I was taught Dutch 'Vaderlandse geschiedenis' at the university offers no chapters on colonialism (nor subheadings for that matter). (Blom & Lamberts 2014).

instead mostly focused on the historical 'moral spaces' that emerged in response to imperial practices. In this thesis we will look at the emerging European 'societies' in the late eighteenth century, specifically focusing on the Dutch Missionary Society which had been responsible for sending the missionary Joseph Kam to Maluku. These spaces did not necessarily adhere the social stratifications of the time, crosscutting gender, race, culture, religion, and political identity. Such categories are found in excess in the colonial archives on which the historian relies (Stoler 2009). How do we avoid reifying these categories of the colonial archive? Raben, in his his inaugural address, offers the following:

> "There is no credible antipode to the colonial archive. Thus, its contra point is a different perspective. The opposite of colonial history is not an anti-colonial history but a trans-colonial history: a history that assumes space and time as ordering principles and does not take the arbitrary dividing lines of nation, race or language – as relevant they may be – as hardened axioms" (my translation: Raben 2016: 19).

Thus, it becomes clear that different approaches to space are an important tool in the historian's box. But how do we approach it here? A distinction is in order. First, there is the geographical dimension: space as it is conceived. The space as it was represented on maps, talked about in treaties, experienced 'from the deck of the ship, the ramparts of the fortress, the high gallery of the trading house' to appropriate Van Leur's famous phrase (Van Leur 1955: 261). But in order to take the implication of the question seriously, we must also ask how 'geographical' space in the Malay archipelago was experienced differently from "the deck of the junk, the walls of the kraton, and the office of the *syahbandar*." Indigenous perspectives on space mattered just as much in the process of imperial incorporation as the European maps, borders and speres of influence. Leonard Andaya has written on such indigenous conceptualization of political and cultural space in Maluku[9] and the influence the Islamic religion and European powers had on that space. 'The world of Maluku, delineated and legitimized through myths, was a unique entity which served as a cultural map in the relationship of the individual communities within it and those outside, including Europeans' (Andaya 1993: 23). If the imperial geography of 19th century Europeans was often concerned supply lines, military expeditions, commercial hubs, and border treaties, the geography of Moluccan societies put more emphasis on the dynamics of ritual exchange. We will explore

[9] 'The world of Maluku', as Andaya uses the concept, applies mostly to the northern Moluccas, centring on Tidore, Ternate, Jailolo and Bacan.

this concept and its consequences further at the end of chapter one. For now, however, it is important to stress that the different conceptions of space did not necessarily contradict each other. While a different emphasis is in order, it should always be noted that Moluccan societies were also concerned with material and political flows just as European powers developed their own mythological legitimations of empire. Thus, the relationship between a 'European' and 'Indigenous' concept of space was not always one of antagonism and contradiction[10] just as these two imaginations are not as easily separated as generally assumed.

If our first use of space can be painted as 'geographical' with broad strokes, we will use and equally large brush to call the second notion of space 'phenomenological' or 'experiential.' Tim Ingold (2000; 2005) has advocated for a 'dwelling perspective' towards life. He uses the concept to resist the general tendency of Western ontology to divide the world into speres of the cultural and the natural, human and non-human. Instead, the process of life is co-produced by human and non-human actors alike and human history is inseparable to the history of their environment. This may be the built environment, the political environment, the geographical environment, or the non-human environment. Human relationship are thus often relationships of (co-)production, but sometimes also of protection. It is this protection against outside forces, according to Ingold, that transforms space into a place: 'Against this infliction, most creatures attempt various means of protection. Human beings are generally concerned to protect themselves, their homes, their fields and garden, their animals and their land. They do so in order to create a sphere in which they can dwell in relative peace and prosperity. We could call such a sphere a place, meaning by that not a bounded portion of territory but a nexus of ongoing life activity' (Ingold 2005: 506). Excepting the last sentence, Ingold sketches the image of an 'anthropological village' protecting itself from direct and surrounding threats. As such it might be tempting to apply the concept of dwelling to the societies found in Maluku Tenggara, as their political alliances were often based on villages instead of whole islands. Instead, I would like to examine how the creation of 'places' out of space functioned within the ever-growing colonial world of European empires. How did colonial administrators and missionaries identify threats in the spaces around them and how did this influence their own processes of place-making?

[10] Just as the relationship between the 'coloniser' and the 'colonised' was not always one of resistance (Henley 2004; Li 2014: 10), so the cosmological differences between 'Modern' and 'Traditional' thought were not always antipodes of each other.

If Ingold's language meanders between the Human species and the Human individual, I have attempted to analyze the colonial documentation from a vantage point in between these extremes. Postcolonial theory has often struggled with a lack of distinction between the individual and the structural. Sarah Mills, in her book *Gender and Colonial Space*, critiques the incessant reliance of postcolonial theory on the concepts of psychoanalysis. 'In focusing attention on the colonial psyche, as if there were a stable national psyche, we risk ignoring the political and economic bases… on which individuals within colonial institutions were constructed' (Mills 2013: 7). Instead, we might focus on the 'parameters' which allow for the rise of these colonial fantasies, desires, and stereotypes. In practice, this means that we will not focus on such articulation in the source material as a goal in themselves. Instead, they are treated as diagnostics pointing at broader economic, political, and cultural structures. The insistent of Dutch colonial actors in Ambon, for example, that the indigenous population is lazy and "*vadsig"* might say something about the political and economic relations present here. Compared with Kolff's observation on the island of Kisar that 'the people of Kissar are far more superior to the Ambonese, both in productivity and industry' (Kolff 1828: 60) something is revealed about both the political and economic motivations for the expedition itself.

In short, the writing of history should be intimately tied to representations and experiences of space. First, the historian should be mindful of the different representations of space that influence the historical actors in the research. This is a matter of perspective, as was already argued by van Leur some 90 years ago. However, these perspectives and their consequences for the flow of history cannot be described as static, well-rounded views on the world. More recently new perspectives have provided the historian with methods of dealing with process and change; it is notable that all of them stress the importance of spatial dynamics for the understanding of imperial histories.

0.3 The Leiden School of Anthropology: Structure without History

Another question that will need to be answered in the course of this research is how to compare anthropological knowledge with historical inquiry. This is a methodological question founded on theoretical insight. The reason why it is methodologically important can be found in the nature of the sources on Eastern Indonesian societies. There is the historical: the archives, oral histories, and the work of historians. These works are mostly concerned with the events, people, objects, and developments. On the other hand, there is much material to be found which is

written from the perspective of the ethnographic or anthropological. Integrating this material into historical research is not as easy as it sounds, as the assumptions under which it was produced were sometimes profoundly ahistorical. To illustrate this fact, I will now turn to a brief case study of the so-called *Leidse richting* in anthropology. This structuralist school of thought is important as it focused intensely on societies of the Malay Archipelago, and Eastern Indonesia specifically. As such, much contemporary anthropological work on the region is indebted one way or another to the theoretical assumptions of this group of scholars.

Both the history and the anthropology of Indonesia written at Leiden University had been a product of the Dutch colonization of the archipelago. Yet if this history was one within a wider discipline, benefitting of the colonial engagement but never completely dependent on it, Dutch anthropology, in the words of Roy Ellen, 'was a *direct* product of colonial experience with no independent scholarly tradition and separate origin' (Ellen 1976: 424). Here we shall explore the colonial roots and post-colonial transformations of this anthropology, specifically focusing on the 'Leiden school' and the importance or neglect which they afforded the concept of space. Ultimately, this is not meant as an exhaustive intellectual or institutional history but rather as a framing device for our discussion of that concept.

We can begin our discussion of the school in 1935, as this year saw the publications of two texts which are generally regarded as foundational. These were an inaugural address given by J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong titled 'De Maleische archipel als ethnologisch studieveld' as well as Van der Wouden's famous *Types of social structure in Eastern Indonesia*.[11] These two publications are generally regarded as the start of the so-called Leiden School of structuralism, which predated and, in some ways, anticipated the anthropology of Lévi-Strauss.[12] Reading the work produced by this school can strike the reader as obsessively antiquarian. Even before the thirties, Dutch ethnography of Indonesian peoples was 'encyclopedic' in nature, listing the most minute details besides the most foundational observations (P.E. Josselin de Jong 1989). The importance of the work of De Josselin de Jong and Van Wouden was that it was able to add a

[11] This was the doctoral dissertation of van Wouden and it should not come as any surprise that he was supervised by J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong. The latter's nephew, P.E. de Josselin de Jong, would later write: 'I cannot now, forty years later, contribute anything to the question to what extend van Wouden's comparative research led de Josselin de Jong to recognize Indonesia as a field of ethnological study or whether van Wouden was stimulated by his supervisor's teaching to apply the field of ethnographic study approach to eastern Indonesian societies' (quoted in: Barnes 1985: 87-88).

[12] The Leiden school of structuralism would differ with a number of points with the work of Lévi-Strauss. One of the most important points of discrepancy was Lévi-Strauss' insistence on a kind of universal human mind to which the identified structures pointed. In contrast, the Leiden school would sidestep such innate universalism in favour of regional sociocultural structures (Berger 2009: 7).

sophisticated theory to these vaults of highly variated information. In other words, the Leiden school created a comprehensive framework for comparison.

Such comparisons were mostly concerned with specific forms of kinship and other sociocultural structures. The Leiden school, following de Josselin de Jong's concept of *studieveld* (field of study), argued that universal generalizations were nearly useless while particular societies could hardly be understood by themselves (J. de Josselin de Jong 1977: 166-167; P. de Josselin de Jong 1977: 234). Instead, the comparison of open societies within a single *studieveld* made it possible to articulate the relationships between the conceptual and lived-in orders of those societies (Schwimmer 1982: 3). This concept of a field of study runs through most of the work by the Leiden School, and is the first way in which space is mobilized to render ethnographic data meaningful. It was envisioned as a 'certain area of the earth's surface' on which can be found a sufficiently homogenous cultural group to distinguish it from surrounding areas, while preserving enough internal differentiation to make meaningful comparisons within it (J. de Josselin de Jong 1977: 167). Such comparison leads the anthropologist to formulate a 'cultural pattern' taken to be general to the whole field of study. The definition of the 'Malay archipelago' as one such fields of study was of course highly motivated by the colonial context of the time. Different societies in this area show a high degree of linguistic and cultural variation. In fact, one of the key aims of the program envisioned by De Josselin de Jong was to explain this high degree of cultural variation within the field (Oosten 2006).

We can point to a curious tension in this 'field of study' approach proposed by de Josselin the Jong. On the one hand, geographical space became a methodological tool for the Leiden school. Colonial borders became inextricably linked to sociocultural analysis. On the other hand, the importance of these geographic and spatial dimensions was deemphasized in comparison to socio-cultural 'structural core' of the region.[13] This approach had large consequences for the concept of the 'historical' in the work of the Leiden school. Jarich Oosten (ibid: 58-59) writes that in contrast with the French school of structuralists, the scholars in Leiden were generally more concerned with the history of particular socio-cultural forms. However, such history most often was expressed in highly conceptual language, lacking any historical narrative explaining the spread, influence and change of cultures. As was already

[13] De Josselin de Jong found that this core was made out of four phenomena: asymmetrical marriage systems, double descent lineages, socio-cosmic dualism, and resilience to outside influences (see: Oosten 2006: 57).

mentioned above, the explanation of cultural variation within the region, and later its 'transformations' provided the substance for these historical analyses. Yet these transformations were described in conceptual, rather than historic language. Events, object, and people were all laundered from the historical narrative. Take, for example, P.E. de Josselin de Jong's (1977a: 17-20) brief comparison of Seramese political organisation, Keiese past-time games, and central Javanese village relationships. The conceptual similarities are demonstrated in a very refined manner, yes, but one is left to wonder what the historical relations between these phenomena are. How, and especially when, did these cultural forms travel from one place to another. And why did they survive in these specific forms? This historical lacuna is exacerbated when one realises that one has to travel some 2.300 km as the crow flies from Java to the Kei archipelago.

Thus, the eloquent and sometime even esoteric nature of the theory produces in Leiden was paid for with a rather narrow understanding of what did and did not constitute ethnographic material. As Marshall Sahlins put it for structural anthropology in general: 'It seemed that history had to be kept at a distance, lest "system" be put at risk' (Sahlins 1981 [2004]: 6). Doreen Massey offers a slightly more detailed critique: 'The structuralists were arguing against the dominance of narrativity, which was translated as temporality. And in their eagerness to do this… they equated their a-temporal structures with space' (Massey 2005: 37). The foregrounding of abstract structures in anthropological explanation led to an 'eventless' history of the region. The focus on sociocultural phenomena came to the detriment of the political, economic, and mostly historical perspectives. And a space without a time, as Massey describes is, can hardly be said to be a space at all (ibid). The consequences for the Leiden school of Anthropology were damning. As Van Baal puts it:

> "And thus it happened that anthropologists industriously studying local and tribal cultures and law, collecting data on languages and specific differences between peoples, pleading respect for the exorbitant richness and diversity of… cultures among themselves, with few exceptions failed to pay proper attention to a phenomenon which afterwards appeared to be of extraordinary importance, the birth of a new people, the Indonesians." (quoted in: Ellen 1976: 320).

The birth of the Indonesian people, in contrast to the assertion of local identities, was a process intimately linked with space and history. The nation might be the most forceful example of

how space can be historicized and in the following pages we shall treat spaces as historical entities, rather than simple containers in which the action took place.

0.4 Historical Anthropology: A perspective on space

Fundamentally, the question posed in this thesis is about the relationship between structure and event in Eastern Indonesian history. This is both a methodological as a theoretical question. It is methodological because much of the research and literature focusing on Moluccan societies is of a structuralist bend, describing culture and social organization as if it were outside of time. Furthermore, compared to, say, French or American history, the sources on Moluccan history are few and far between. Thus, if we want to write a history of the region, we would do well to make us of a broad array of sources. The methodological question is then, how do we integrate the synchronic perspective of the anthropologist with the diachronic narrative of a historian?

The question is theoretical in the sense that it identifies problem with both approaches. Structuralist theory, as we've seen by now, leaves little role for history and change. It also runs the risk of essentializing societies and sealing them off from the outside. Instead, history without sense for cultural specificity quickly falls into the trap of casting the native for the role of the irrational Other or explain how in the end their seemingly irrational actions were actually deeply concerned with economics, military and social strategies. For a synthesis, we might turn to the field of Historical Anthropology which attempts to explain historical processes as determined by cultural and social concepts as simultaneously remaining open to the conjectures of history and the world. Marshal Sahlins sums up the project quite succinctly: 'What anthropologists could provide [to History] is the idea that the historical efficacy of persons, objects and events… arises in their cultural value. Another word for such value is significance' (Sahlins 2004 [1981]: 7-8).

In the third chapter we will put this advice into practice and analyze the event of the arrival of the *Dourga* at the tiny island of Luang through the lens of the sociocultural structures of the indigenous people. The argument is that the ritual of baptism was rendered significant not as a ritual of conversion on Christian terms, but rather as a ceremony of stability and fertility within Luangese society. Spatial concepts played a crucial part in this as the arrival of the *Dourga* from elsewhere carries widespread significance in the world of Maluku, but also carried direct similarities with an indigenous ritual called the *po'orga*. The fact that the baptism

and the arrival of Europeans could be rendered significant in indigenous terms, created a space within these structures for historical change.

We shall then turn the missionaries' efforts on the Tanimbar islands, and argue that the reverse was also possible. Christian conversion has often been described as a 'colonization of consciousness' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991) but this description has always been skewed by a unidirectional and inevitable tendency. It is always the Indigenous being colonized and the Europeans doing the colonizing. Those instances in which the reverse was true have often been portrayed as exceptional cases of Europeans 'going native.' On Tanimbar, however, we find an example of the way in which indigenous concepts of space and smell 'colonized' the consciousness of missionary Kam. That does not mean that these concepts lodged themselves into the European mind unaltered nor that they were expressed through orientalist exoticism. Instead, they were rendered culturally significant to Kam who described the space here as 'dark', 'dense', and 'impenetrable.' Concepts which resonate closely with indigenous myth and meaning in Tanimbar. As such, the historical effect of these structural conceptions of space was that conversion was deemed impossible by the missionary in this hostile place.

Before we arrive at this analysis, however, we shall first sketch the historical and cultural outlines of the region discussed in the first chapter. Dutch interests in the region from their arrival in the early 17th century until the 19th century were closely linked to the production of clove and nutmeg in Ambon and Banda respectively. Thus, the relationships between Europeans and the people of Maluku Tenggara were structured by the Dutch endeavor to establish a monopoly on these spices from the earliest contact. However, Indigenous polities used their alliances with and rebellions against Europeans in a strategical manner, and most of Maluku Tenggara remained free of direct Dutch control, in contrast to Ambon and Banda to the north. This also meant that the cultural expressions of space remained relatively distinct up to the 19th century. Christianity would only get a major foothold in the early 20th century.

The second chapter will look at the ways in which European geographical imagination and conflict shifted in the early nineteenth century, setting up the conditions which motivated the expedition of lieutenant Kolff in the first place. A British settlement on Melville Island, along the northern coast of Australia, caused Dutch administrators to attempt to re-establish relationships with Maluku Tenggara, in a form of imperial preemption. Furthermore, shifting economic circumstance in the newly minted colony caused the Dutch to look for new streams

of revenue, while the liberal ideologies of both Governor-General Van der Capellen and Governor of Ambon spurred them to look for alternatives for the monopoly system.

Chapter 1: Historical and cultural contexts

The main reason the Dutch found themselves setting sail to the islands of the Moluccas was the lucrative spice trade. Both clove and nutmeg are indigenous to Maluku and had been known and used in Europe at least since Roman times. In 335 CE, the Roman emperor Constantine the Great gifted multiple jars containing 45 kilograms of clove to the pope (Czarra, 2009: 31). This was a generous gift as the price of these spices was extremely high. Nutmeg and clove could be found in the dishes of the wealthy throughout European history and yet no one really knew their origin. It was the Portuguese that made their way to the fabled spice-islands of Maluku in 1512, establishing friendly relationships with the Sultan of Ternate while alienating the Sultan of Tidore (the two main polities which controlled the spice trade in the area). The Dutch arrived almost a century later in 1599 and allied with Ternate to push the Portuguese out of the region (Knaap, 2004: 20). They would go on to establish a monopoly on the production and trade in cloves in the Central Moluccas, with an administrative center in Ambon. Nutmeg was treated in much the same way, and was contained in the Banda Islands, but the socio-economic organization of the monopoly deferred greatly between these islands.

The European presence on the islands to the north of Maluku Tenggara made a large impact on the economic, political, and cultural dynamics of the region. That is why this chapter will depart from a general economic description of both Ambon and the Banda Islands to slowly travel south to review the impacts on the economy, politics and culture of Maluku Tenggara. Later, we will review social impacts of European contact as well as the cultural dynamics present in the region. The structure of this chapter, beginning with economy and ending with culture, should not be confused with a theoretical assertion that culture is downstream from the economy. In fact, as we shall see at the end of this chapter cultural significance and ritual necessity were often the prime causes for material circulation. Here we make a separation between economy and culture for analytical purposes, in reality it is very difficult where one starts and the other ends (Yang 2000). The aim of this chapter, then, is to sketch the outlines of a wider sphere of circulation of material goods and cultural meaning. Both physical objects and cultural meanings were distributed in different ways throughout Maluku. Dutch trade and colonialism complicated the picture. Ambon's corvée labor system and Banda's slave labor system both had different effects on the region. At the same time, indigenous relationships created new spaces and separate pathways – both symbolic as material.

Here we will have a brief look at the establishment of this monopoly in spices and the effects it had on the islands of Maluku Tenggara further south. We shall see that local institutions played an important role in shaping the economic structures of empire. The exploitation of corvée labor in Ambon and the Lease islands and the establishment of a plantation system in the Banda's were two different means serving the same purpose: extracting value in the form of spice cultures. These different socio-economic systems were just as contingent on the local circumstances than on Dutch initiative. Thus, the form conquest and colonization took cannot only be found in the economic and cultural structures of the metropole. In later chapters we shall explore how later 'incorporation' and 'conversion' were similarly determined by existing structures on both sides of these processes.

1.1 Clove: Production and transformation on Ambon

When admiral Steven van der Haghen set sail as the head of the first VOC fleet Asia in 1603, he was 'obliged' by Gentlemen Seventeen (*Heeren* XVII) 'to take the offensive, in any manner whatsoever, against the Spaniards, Portuguese and their allies' (quoted in Widjojo 2008: 15). This missive reveals a number of things. First, Maluku had already been the stage for local and global power struggles long before the arrival of the Dutch. Europeans, as represented by the Portuguese and Spanish, had been trading, fighting, and living in the region for a century by the time the Dutch ships arrived. Asian powers, as represented by the meagre word 'allies' in the missives, also vied for access and position in the ports of Maluku. First the indigenous sultanates of Ternate, Tidore, Jailolo, and Bacan were the main powers in the region, the former two allying with Portugal and Spain respectively. Secondly, other Malay and Papuan groups such as the Javanese, Buginese, and Makassarese all had commerce in the region. Other ships arrived from Luzon, Melaka, Sumatra and Mindanao (von Benda-Beckmann 2018: 421). Still other groups such as the Bengalis, Chinese and Japanese came from even further, looking to trade not just in spices but in other tropical delicacies as well. Finally Muslim traders like the Gujarati, Persians, and Arabs did not just bring riches to Maluku, but also introduced their religion.

In light of these widening concentric circles of global connections, local politics and identities are easily glossed over. But even though, according to Leonard Andaya (1993), something akin to a regional "Moluccan" identity could be identified already before the arrival of the Europeans, internal strive was a characteristic of Moluccan life. These Moluccan

relationships were 'characterized by all the mutual responsibilities, obligations, squabbles, and shifts in authority found in a human family' (ibid: 23). Take, for example, the rivalry between the people of Hitu and Leitimur which roughly make up the northern and southern halves of what is now called Ambon Island. After their relationship with the people of Hitu went sour, the Portuguese were welcomed in Leitimur and invited to establish a fort there. The conflict was exacerbated by the rather successful Portuguese mission headed by the Jezuit Francis Xavier, adding a religious rift to a political conflict. It festered for seventy years and came to a head in 1602 after a large Portuguese fleet pacified and conquered Hitu. It was a short-lived victory: the Portuguese would surrender to admiral Steven van der Haghen just three years later.[14] However, Europeans weren't the only ones trying to play out these conflicts for their own gain. The Hituese, for example, had long been backed by the sultan of Ternate as well as Javanese forces who were looking to establish their own political influence and bolster their commercial interest in the area.

A second element of Dutch colonialism made clear by van der Haghen's missives was that the trading company was more than just a commercial enterprise. It was a force, and in some respect a sovereignty, in and of itself. In the early days of the Dutch empire, the direct links between the metropole and the Moluccan islands were few and far between. So while the merchants, captains, and admirals of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) fleet acted on the missives of the *Heeren XVII* (the Seventeen Gentlemen), they took the opportunity to act on their own. Their mandate was so large that even today some of them are remembered as 'merchant-kings'(van Goor 2015). In fact, the dual nature of the VOC as both a trade organisation and an instrument of war – acting like any other state actor in the region is often touted as the defining feature of the company's early days (Verhoeven, 1941; Rietbergen & Locher-Scholten, 2004; Gaastra, 2012). This state-like role of the company was emphasized not just by modern scholars but by contemporary commenters as well. Most famously, Hugo Grotius in his *Mare Liberum* took the sovereignty of the company for granted and thus denied any accusations of piracy which dogged the company's actions (Gaynor, 2016: 69; Wood, 205: 68-72).

When "Jan Compagnie" arrived at Ambon, it first acted from that very commercial spirit, establishing contracts with the numerous "rich men" (*orang kaya*) in the region. Van der

[14] Van der Haghen, who had already headed an expedition of one of the so-called *voorcompagnieën*, had already established relations with the Hituese some five year before his arrival with the VOC fleet – exploiting the very same conflict by presenting himself as an advisory of the Portuguese (Von Benda-Beckmann 2018: 428).

Haghen, despite his missives, was averse to the use of naked violence; he convinced the Portuguese to surrender by a show of force rather than actual fighting. The fort, renamed Fort Victoria, became the main base for Dutch commerce in the area and would sprawl into the city of Ambon. This fort and many like them, became the center of early colonial life in the Moluccas. Gerrit Knaap (2006) has argued that the main pattern of Dutch colonialism in Southeast Asia began with the establishment of a fort, later culminating into a city and only then spilling out to the *ommelanden*. Thus, in the early days colonial life was centered on the fort itself. Social and political life was mostly separated from the Indigenous societies of Ambon. Most of its inhabitants were employed by the VOC, but over time other groups established themselves and further social differentiation ensued. Besides company employees, Indigenous, Chinese and Europeans all lived within the fort as free burghers. They paid taxes to the high council but did not have any political influence in the decisions being made. They were, however, exempt from the bonded or corvee labor that the other local populations owed to the orang kaya (van Fraassen 2018: 62-69).

Indigenous society in Maluku was also differentiated. Both Europeans as communities that closely associated with them distinguished another Indigenous group: the *orang Alifuru*. Originally the term applied to the peoples living in the highlands of Seram. However, as many Moluccans relocated to the coastal regions from the 17th century onwards, a development we will discuss below, the term began to cover most people remaining in the heartlands of the Moluccan islands, distinguishing them from the new *pasisir* communities on the coast (Bartels 1978: 6-9). For the Dutch, as for the coastal communities, Alifuru became synonymous with the savage and the wilderness (van Fraassen 2018: 69). Conversions to Christianity and Islam in the *pasisir* only exacerbated the distinction.[15] These social differentiations created a spatial hierarchy as well. "Civilization" was thought most concentrated in the Dutch strongholds, with which littoral communities associated. Further inland but also overseas in the outlying islands including Maluku Tenggara, one could find the Alifuru. The coastal communities were in constant association with both the Europeans as the Alifuru. In Kam's report of the *Dourga* expedition, we can find a clear example of this balancing act. The missionary visits the village

[15] Nowadays the term is often cast in a more positive light, denoting an authentic Indigenous Moluccan identity (Turner 2003: 254-254). Furthermore, the term is sometimes used to refer to the 'original' religion, beliefs, and practices found throughout the region. For example Adhuri (2014: 21) writes that the term 'Alivuru' has been used to describe the Indigenous religion of the Kei islands – more recently being replaced by the Hindu label to conform to the modern Indonesian views on religion as expounded in the Pancasila.

of Sola on Damar Island where he promises to baptize the local population if the orang kaya was willing to remove all the idols of the local religion from the town.

> "To this he said to not dare do such a thing in fear of the Alifuru living in the mountains, who were used to finding such things [idols] in the *negeri*, and if they did not they would soon declare war on them." (de Jong & van Selm 1999: 15).

One might speculate the extent to which the fear was a strategic ploy to receive the baptism without having to renouncing any local deities.

Throughout Maluku these orang kaya headed particular villages or settlements but were often the subordinates to a regional king, called a *latu* on Ambon and *raja* in standard Indonesian and Dutch colonial lingo. One of the ways in which the distinction between common people and these kings was periodically reinvigorated was through a large feast. The common people would provide the ruler with the raw products, and the leader would return these products in the form of a feast. 'The products are prepared or "cooked" literally and symbolically on behalf of the ruler, who thus domesticates or "socializes" the natural goods and people' (Andaya, 1993: 56-57). Leonard Andaya argues that a similar thing happened with cloves: local leaders transformed (that is: traded) the "raw" cloves into "domesticated" goods such as cloth, ceramics and weapons (ibid). However, such social systems had gradually been losing their power as the locus of authority shifted from regional affiliations of power and politics (*uli*) to the villages itself. This process seems to have begun already before the arrival of Europeans in the 16th century but was exacerbated as the Dutch dealt directly with the orang kaya and mostly disregarded and worked against any higher forms of political organization in Ambon (Cooley, 1969: 142; 1963: 142).[16] Other traditional functions of village leadership also gradually lost significance in the Moluccas. The tasks of the *mauweng*, a local shaman who negotiated harvest, health, and power with ancestral spirits, and the *kapitan*, who was responsible for raiding and warfare, gradually lost their significance or were included into the responsibilities of the orang kaya (Zerner, 1994; Cooley 1963: 143-154). The growing prominence of these "rich men" in Ambon and the surrounding islands signaled a general shift of the social life towards economic activity.

[16] These systems, called *uli* are no longer found on Ambon and the surrounding islands. Yet they are still present on the nearby island of Seram which the Europeans never really managed to colonise (Valeri, 2000) as well as in further regions such as the Kei islands (Adhuri, 2013)

The function of indigenous systems of natural resource management, generally called *sasi* in Maluku and Papua, slowly adapted to colonial modes of resource exploitation. The production of spices in Ambon was based in the commons. Communal spice gardens called *dusun* were maintained by the shared labor of the village and regulated through the practice of *sasi*. In effect, the harvest of certain products or plots was restricted to specific periods and persons. The enforcement of these rules relied heavily on local knowledge and belief systems. Nils Bubandt (2006) has argued that from the early nineteenth century onwards, *sasi* became a tool of indirect colonial control over the production of spices and other crops. The authority of *sasi* shifted from the *mauweng*, or spiritual authority, to the *kewang*, presented here as a kind secular indigenous police force (ibid: 199). Bubandt portrays this as an instance of invented traditions, but his conclusions seem too sweeping for the evidence presented. He stresses a break with earlier forms of *sasi*, recasting the tradition as if it was rationalized and fully co-opted by colonial powers. It also places most agency, the actual act of invention, in the hands of Dutch colonial authority, who formalized *sasi* 'as a tool of indirect rule by controlling what the colonial government saw as the leading traditional positions within the village' (ibid: 199).

With the orang kaya as intermediaries, the Dutch managed to dominate a large part of the clove market. However, large amounts of the spices were still traded with Chinese, Javanese, Makasarese and other European merchants. The Dutch endeavored to command the full market in order to fix the prices, however this could not be accomplished with the methods of the merchant alone. Georg Rumphius, an employee of the company and chronicler of its history in Ambon wrote the following words about the growing tensions in the 1640's:

> "Up to this point we have seen how many surgeons have tried to cure the old wounds of the Company's spice trade with the soft bandages of persuasion, the cleansing of punishment, and the firm swathes of contracts and commitments. Yet nothing was achieved. Now we shall follow the rules of medicine and state: that which the art cannot mend, must be cured by iron. And that which iron cannot mend, must be cured by fire" (Rumphius, 1910: 199, my translation).

The fire and iron would eventually burst out during the Great Ambonese War (1651-1656). During this war the VOC destroyed a Makassarese merchant fleet, depopulated the rebellious island of Hoamoal, banished any hostile *orang kaya* to Batavia or Ambon City and exterminated all remaining clove trees outside Company-controlled islands (Knaap, 2004; 25-30). The resulting monopoly enabled the company to 'buy cheap and sell dear' like never before. Spices

bought for very low prices in Maluku could deliver the company a gross profit of up to a thousand percent when sold in Europe (Anievas & Nișancioğlu 2015: 240).

However, a little more was involved than simple selling and buying. Even if the company did not directly produce the spices, it did control the process to a large degree. First, the company had forced all indigenous settlements, which were traditionally found more inland and uphill, to relocate to the coast. It seems that this process of relocation, at least in Ambon, had started already before the arrival of the Dutch. With the expansion of the clove trade, immigrants from the sultanates in the northern Moluccas had begun to settle on the coast and gained some political influence. However, the Dutch forced these developments for their own benefits: mainly the ease with which coastal communities and their spice production could be surveyed (Benda-Beckmann et al 1992: 9-10). These surveys, secondly, were carried out yearly by boat, manned and made possible once again by indigenous practices of corvee labor, and the number of clove trees were counted and meticulously managed. If there were too many, the excess trees would be uprooted and destroyed. This production schema – in which indigenous population produced the clove, but the VOC heavily managed their access to the means of production – differed heavily from the production of nutmeg in the Banda Islands to the South of Ambon.

1.2 Nutmeg: Violence, diaspora, and plantations on Banda

The Bandas are eleven tiny islands located almost in the centre of the Greater Moluccas. The nutmeg tree is native to these islands, another plant which could be harvested for its valuable spices. When the VOC first arrived here, it followed a similar strategy as in Ambon: negotiate contracts with the orang kaya and try to push out other merchants from the market. However, the Bandanese differed considerably from the people of Ambon. First, their economy had been based on trade far more than subsistence farming. The objects of trade were not just luxury items like cloth and ceramics – as was mostly the case in the Northern Moluccas, but also basic foodstuffs like rice and sago (Schapper 2019: 245). These were imported from surrounding islands as Banda did not produce sufficient crops to feed its own population. Furthermore, because of these long-held trade relations with foreign merchants the population was highly diverse compared to the population of Ambon. This diversity, it could be argued, might have undermined the traditional clan-based hierarchies found throughout Maluku (Van Pagee 2021: 57-58). Whether this was the case or not, Dutch merchants quickly found that contracts signed

by the orang kaya of Banda had considerably less effect on the common people than they had had in Ambon. Political power, and with it economic organization, was far less centralized in Banda than in Ambon. Thus, the Dutch were unable to buy nutmeg in bulk though local leadership and instead had to resort to buying small and expensive quantities from small merchants (van Zanden 1991: 85). When it became clear that many Bandanese merchants had been selling their valuable wares to Javanese, Arab, Makassarese and, worst, British ships, the VOC took drastic steps ensure itself of another monopoly in the region.

After a Bandanese attack on a Dutch delegation in 1609 and increasing "meddling" of the English in VOC affairs the following years, conquest replaced trade as the main objective for the Company. Starting with an attack on the small island of Ay in 1615-1616 and culminating with a larger assault on the other islands in 1620-1621 under the leadership of Jan Pieterszoon Coens, the population of Banda was decimated from 15.000 inhabitants to at most 1.000 survivors. Some 789 people, mostly the families of executed orang kaya, were send to Batavia and would work as slaves there. Others starved to death during a long siege, threw themselves off cliffs, were massacred by Dutch soldiers, and a small group managed to escape by boat to surrounding islands (See: Loth 1995 for a general description). Even today, small Bandanese communities can still be found on the Kei Islands 500 kilometers to the east (Kaartinen 2013).

Off course, these dramatic events also had a severe impact on the local economy, which was almost totally reorganised by the Dutch in what was called the *perkenierstelsel*. This *perkenier* system divided the land into 70 plots (Dutch: *perken*) and each plot of land was assigned to a former employee of the company (who became *perkeniers*). Most of the work was done by slaves, coming from elsewhere in the archipelago or indigenous Bandanese who had survived the genocide. This latter group of indigenous Bandanese were highly valued by the VOC for their knowledge of the nutmeg tree, yet at the same time highly distrusted. Thus were evenly dispersed over the plots. They were further distinguished from other slaves because they could not be sold or bought (Barjiyah 2010). The *perkeniers* were officially tenants of VOC land, but since the company had capped the prices of nutmeg and provided the only goods (both necessary as luxury) which could be bought by money, there was little opportunity to accumulate capital and reinvest it in the production process (Loth 1995).

This kind of social organization in which the local population was almost completely replaced by a European elite and enslaved labor force does not seem to fit any other economic

patterns in Southeast Asia.[17] It is reminiscent, however, of the Spanish and Portuguese plantations in South America. This lead historian Vincent Loth to characterize the Bandanese system as 'a Caribbean cuckoo in an Asian nest' (Loth, 1995: 35). Other scholars have argued that while the mode of production was a clear outlier in the region, the way in which slavery was practiced was still heavily influenced by regional types of slavery (Winn, 2010). According to Winn slavery in the Bandas was integrated within larger household which shared features with other indigenous bondage systems in Southeast Asia.

1.3 The ramifications of monopoly in Maluku Tenggara

The decimation of the original societies on Banda had major consequences for the whole region, while the new European settlements at Ambon established new opportunities and restrictions on trade for the inhabitants of Maluku Tenggara. First, the Europeans set up expeditions to these islands in order to survey for the presence of any clove or nutmeg trees in the southern islands. A second aim was to (re-)establish trade relations, especially between Kei and Aru on the one side and the Banda's on the other. As described above, Banda did not produce enough food crops to sustain itself and instead traded its spices for rice and sago (Ellen 2003: 79). After the Bandanese genocide, earlier trade relations with Kei and Aru were disrupted and the VOC had to import the food from Java, a costly enterprise. Re-establishing supply chains over shorter distances thus became a primary concern. However, indigenous trade networks also shifted. Trade deemed illicit by the Dutch found a high-paying market and trading hubs off the Easters tip of Seram reached out to establish new and bustling networks of commerce. A third consequence of these developments was social: as the Dutch surveyed the waters, set up forts in the archipelago and established lasting relations, the societies of Maluku Tenggara accommodated or resisted these changes. Probably the most famous example was fort Vollenhoven built in 1665 on Kisar. Here Dutch soldiers intermarried with the indigenous population, resulting in the adoption of many Dutch names and customs. Many colonial scholars have shown a fascination for the 'mestizos of kisar' and imagined the island as a kind of racial laboratory (Pols & Anderson 2018). But the Dutch were not the only *pendatang*, or newcomers; as described above the Bandanese diaspora settled on the surrounding islands. Their settlements caused tensions and change. Antoinette Schapper (2019) has argued that their expulsion caused a wave of fortifications throughout the region. We will explore these

[17] Even the Spanish Philippines did not follow the pattern of Latin America. In the nineteenth century, however, plantations akin to the *hacienda* would be set up on Northern Sumatra in the nineteenth century.

developments in further detail below, as they constituted the relationships between Europeans and indigenous groups in Maluku Tenggara on which the 19th century Dutch colonial administration tried to build new communications. After, will describe the indigenous cultural and spatial cosmologies of the region.

Two years after the genocide on Banda, the first recorded visit of the Dutch on Aru in 1623 immediately presented the inhabitants with a proposition: 'If they were to accept our friendship and reject the deliberations of the expelled Bandanese or Seramese, they would enjoy the permission to come to Ambon and Banda for free and uninhibited commerce with their wares, as well as enjoy the return of their captured which are still alive at the above named place' (van Dijk 1859: 6). This proposition was made by Jan Cartenszoon, who was send by the Governor of Ambon to chart the coast of Papua as well as establish exclusive trade relations between Banda on the one side and Kei, Aru and Tanimbar on the other (Tent 2019). The supposed deal highlights, on the one hand, the shifting political and commercial arena in Maluku at the start of the 17th century. On the other hand, it also signals that the VOC during this time was still very much one player within an already established archipelagic world. A later visit to Kei in 1946 by captain Adriaan Dortsman shows us that the Dutch never succeeded in establishing an exclusive trade with the islands and that they functioned as commercial hubs where various traders arrived and bartered for the same goods:

> 'Soon after our successful arrival, we had the fortune to trade the elephant tusks for slaves, so we soon had acquired for a good price according to the inhabitants a party of strong men capable of carpentry. This had kept us in these regions for considerable time during which several Westerners, Makassarese, renegade Bandanese, and Javanese appeared in four junks... On a daily basis they would trek across the mountains with their merchants, from one village to another, looking for slaves to buy.' (Heeres 1896: 640-641)

Dortsman also confronted the inhabitants of Kei with a contract of alliance, which would limit their European trade to the Dutch only. The Keiese refused which Dortsman simply attributed to the high profits they made with other European traders, most of whom were Portuguese.

It would take approximately 30 years for local trade networks to re-establish themselves after the Banda massacre. The Dutch negotiated the supply of Banda with foodstuffs some 20 years after they had first set foot on Aru. Most of these supplies originated from Kei, Aru, Tanimbar, Eastern Seram and the Papuan coasts (Ellen 2003: 85). However, it seems that trade

Figure 2: Illustration of Dobo (Aru) during trading season based on a sketch by Sir Alfred Russel Wallace (1872: 472)

shifted in the eighteenth century in Maluku Tengara from the export of foodstuffs towards the export of luxury products. Most agricultural products came to originate from Eastern Seram, some of which were shipped onwards to Kei and Aru to exchange for bird's nests, pearls, turtle shells, birds of paradise, and slaves (ibid: 79, 103). These markets had grown as the Bandanese society was radically uprooted and replaced with the slave-based *perkenier* system. Furthermore, private trade by the *perkeniers* themselves focused mostly on these niche luxury products. Lastly, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the introduction of South Sulawesi traders – mostly Makassarese and Buginese – looking for openings in 'illicit' trade after they were expelled from the profitable spice trade in the northern Moluccas (ibid: 88-89).

On the Western side of Maluku Tenggara, relationships between the Dutch and indigenous polities were structured in part by both global and local economy and politics. The Portuguese presence on Eastern Timor sparked Dutch interests in alliances with these islands, rather than a clear economic goal. In 1613 the Dutch had already attempted to establish a fort on Solor to partake in the trade in Sandelwood, but mostly to confine the Portuguese presence in East-Timur (Knaap 2006: 26-27). Further to the east, Wetar and Leti were mostly known for their production of beeswax. Kisar, on the other hand had a more variated economy, being able to support a denser population on its own agriculture. The islands also traded gold from Timor, of which they crafted various ornaments (Hägerdal 2019). As we shall see, Wetar often suffered raids of various kinds – slave raiders from farther away, but also head-hunting raids from nearby islands.

The Dutch were able to successfully conclude a similar kind of contract in Kisar which they had failed to establish in the Eastern islands. Kisar would supply them with slaves, turtle shells, beeswax, as well as sandalwood from Timor, and do so exclusively (ibid). Hägerdal describes that the orang kaya of Kisar sought Dutch protection after a large raid from Ternate which took silver, gold and prisoners. However, they remained suspicious of the Dutch; It was a deal made in necessity. In 1668, the Dutch constructed a fort on Kisar and regimented a handful of soldiers here. Some of them decided to settle on Kisar after their service was over in the middle of the eighteenth century, which gave rise to the much discussed 'mestizos of Kisar' (Pols & Anderson 2018). These descendants of Europeans formed a third social group on the island and over time began to emphasize racial markers as signs of superiority over the other two: the Meher, who made up the majority of Kisarese speaking people and the Oirata, a smaller Papuan speaking group (Hägerdal 2019).

Looking at the islands of Maluku Tenggara on a map, one might conclude that these small spots of lands would probably made home by a homogenous group of people, sharing language, culture, and custom. Yet as the description of Kisar above illustrates, this was hardly ever the case. Moreover, the arrival of European and Asian merchants, ministers and soldiers impacted the social, ethnic, and cultural differentiations and stratifications. The Mestizos of Kisar are, along with the Portuguese Topasses on Timor and the Mardijkers in Ambon, clear examples of how Indo-European subgroups emerged over time in Maluku. But local politicians also aligned with European powers to bolster their position in local politics. The orang kaya of Kisar who aligned with the Dutch saw his position bolstered and was promoted by his new allies to a king. In response, most of the Oirata fled to Timor, only to return a few decades later (ibid).

1.4 The Culture of Space in Maluku Tenggara

Even though the Meher of Kisar have long outnumbered the Oirata nine to one, the latter are considered to be the original inhabitants of the island, while the former are regarded *pendatang*, arrivals. Movement and immigration are a constant driver of social change in Maluku, and authenticity and authority are not always derived from a position of indigeneity. To the contrary, most societies tell tales about a 'culture hero' coming from elsewhere. Either to establish a society or to 'civilize and existing one.' In Kei it is said that a man named Dewa arrived from Bali to make the sun rise in times of (moral) darkness (cf. Howes 1988: 90-91; Adhuri 2014: 64-65).[18] Howes also tells the story of Atuf who arrived at the Tanimbar islands from Babar to raise the sky and split the sun with his spear (cf. Howes 1988: 90; De Jonge & Van Dijk 1995: 104). We shall turn to this story in chapter three.

Origin stories about arrivals are important throughout the region and Luang, a tiny island part of the Sermata islands, is an extraordinary place in this regard. It is seen by many people throughout the region as the place of departure of their ancestors. Moreover, for these people Luang is often also seen as the ontological centre of the region, the islands of Maluku Tenggara being fragments of it that scattered after the original island was destroyed. The people spread, according to a version in the story told in Damer, to Seram, Tanimbar Kei, Sermata,

[18] Adhuri (2013) tells the story differently: two men named Kasdew and Jangra arrived at Kei Kecil and Kei Besar respectively and established order in times of social unrest. Contemporary adat-law in Kei is based on the rules set by these figures. *Hukum Larvul* (the law of red blood) refers to the sacrifice of a bull at the first adat gathering; *Hukum Ngabal* (the law of the Balinese spear) refers to the spear brought by Jangra.

Timor, Kisar, Lakor, Teun, and Damer itself (Pannell 2007: 78). The destruction of the original island was done by a great sailfish called Upa Hrui in retaliation to a grave social transgression. After the destruction the fish turned into a rock of the same name. The sailfish was responsible for giving shape to the islands and waters which constitute the contemporary world of Luang, spaces which are filled with a whole array of ambiguous entities to be avoided or respected. 'Like Aboriginal cosmologies, people of Luang are spatially confronted with the displacing and dangerous effects of transgression and indiscretion in their physical engagement with the landscape created by Upa Hrui.' (ibid: 79). Myth, religion and morals are thus inseparable from the spatial experience of environment.

Besides its progeny, Luang was also famous within the region for its production of golden ornaments, especially earrings, which it traded with the eastern part of Maluku Tengara (De Jonge & Van Dijk 1995: 110).[19] Gold was an important means for economic activity but also carried strong ritualistic connotations. Depending on the form it was cast in, it could generate "heat" or "coolness." The significance of these related concept is found throughout the Moluccas, and in a general way we can say that the former relates to masculinity and hunting while the latter is tied to femininity and fertility. These concepts play important parts in ritual, as Ellen describes for the Nuaulu on Seram: 'One requirement of ritual is evident above all other…: the necessity of heat for its effective performance' (Ellen 2012: 39). Coolness for the Nuaulu could ruin the ritual by quenching heat. However, regional variations do matter and as we shall see in the last chapter, other societies saw this eventual quenching with coolness as the goal of ritual: establishing stability and fertility associated with coolness.

Heat could be generated in more ways than one, and some form of conflict was primary among them. Headhunting was a widespread practice in Maluku Tenggara and Luang was no exception. For example, the *po'orga*, an important fertility ritual held every seven years on Luang and also found at other islands in Maluku Tenggara, required the men to set out and collect heads on a different island. Wetar was 'from time immemorial the island selected to furnish the victims for their human sacrifices to all the inhabitants of the Serwatty group' (Earl 1850: 175-176).[20] It is unclear why Wetar specifically was designated as the island on which headhunting took place. But it did seem that the other islands had come to the understanding that the violence was legitimate on Wetar and not on any other island. When a raiding party

[19] Kisar, too, produced golden ornaments for export

[20] Sir Windsor Earl was a British ethnologist who we will discuss in more detailed in the following chapter. The 'Serwatty Group' here refers to the Southwestern islands of Maluku Tenggara, 'serwatty' probably being an English bastardization of the Dutch *zuidwester*.

from the Sermata group was effectively fended off by the inhabitants of Wetar in 1837, they sailed to Moa for their spoils. After killing two herdsmen from the small town of Klis and bringing their heads back home, they were met with the indignation of their kin:

> "This proceeding on the part of the Sermattans had apparently not been approved of by their friends at home, for… an ambassador had arrived at Klis from Sermatta, bringing a golden moon, a quantity of beeswax and other valuables, as a compensation for the massacre they had been guilty of." (ibid)

Such offerings were not just significant for their exchange value but carried more important symbolic meaning. As De Jonge and Van Dijk explain: 'The handing over of hot gold, especially, can ensure the rehabilitation of a tarnished reputation' (De Jonge & Van Dijk 1995: 123). In this particular case, the offering seems to have been enough, but only barely as before an agreement had been reached 'the orang kaya Paulus [of Klis] had the greatest difficulty in preventing [the people] from tearing the ambassador to pieces on the spot' (Earl 1850: 175).

This whole affair seems to illustrate a number of points. First, cultural ideas and rituals were instrumental in establishing spatial hierarchies within the region itself with the island of Wetar being designated as a legitimate location for head-hunting and raiding. Other places in these Western islands were off-limits and recognized as such even by the societies who transgressed these limits. Secondly, exchange had just as much of a symbolic dimension as an economic one. The gold from which jewelry was forged on Kisar and Luang was not mined in the region itself. Instead, it came from farther afield. While the origin of the precious metals before the colonial era remains unclear, we do know that the source of gold and silver during the 18th and 19thcenturies was found in Dutch, British, and Japanese coins (De Jonge & Van Dijk 1995: 110). Even money, the so-called neutral arbitrary of the economy, gained its value through the logic of culture rather than the market. This might have been what Marshall Sahlins had in mind when he stated that 'a history of the world system must discover the culture mystified in capitalism' (Sahlins 1994: 416).

In just the same way that arrival can establish a sense of authority, departure is seen as a way in which persons can establish character.[21] In Kei, as in most other islands of Maluku

[21] This cultural importance of travelling or wandering can be found throughout the Malay Archipelago. In Sumatra and especially among the Minangkabau people, the concept of *rantau* (wandering, or even meandering) has been well described. It denotes the practice of (often) young men who leave the village to wander around looking for odd jobs and sometimes a partner before returning to the community of origin (*Alam*). This return to the Alam enriched the community by introducing foreign elements of the outside world. As one Minangkabau

Tenggara, departure into the outside world is seen as a vital part of the conservation and continuation of life. The voyage, mostly associated with masculinity, generates symbolic heat, and incorporates new and foreign elements into the community. It is seen as the masculine counterpart to the feminine fertility associated with the land itself. On Tanimbar, the return of a ship with a hull full of spoils is explicitly compared to the belly of a pregnant woman (De Jonge & Van Dijk 1995: 69, 84). Boats, then, carry an enormous symbolic significance in Maluku Tenggara. In fact, the boat offers both a spatial template for the layout of traditional villages in Maluku Tenggara and a metaphorical device for society. As Cécile Barraud has argued for the case of Tanimbar Kei, 'The sailing-boat does not refer to one ideological level or another; it is the ideology, the society as a whole' (Barraud 1986 :130).

The conception of space, both in daily life as in academic literature, has long been highly impacted by economic concepts. Centre-periphery models, network societies, the flight of capital, and off course globalization have all been formulated in response to economic developments and activity. However, as the examples above show, spatial conceptions and experiences are just as intimately linked with power and cultural significance. Such cultural spaces of circulation, or to put it differently, spheres of cultural circulation cannot only be identified in non-western societies. We will encounter such a novel sphere of cultural circulation in the West in the last chapter. The emergence of a secular society at the end of the eighteenth century had a profound impact on economic, political and cultural engagements with Maluku Tenggara. First, however, we will turn to the imperial logic of colonization as we encounter it in the writings of lieutenant Kolff in the next chapter. Here it will be argued that the renewed engagement with Maluku Tenggara at the beginning of the 19th century can be seen as a form of imperial preemption.

Chronicle explains: "through continuing exploration, the Alam's portentiality unfolded, and outside elements were incorporated." (quoted in: Mrázek 1972: 4; see also Barnard 2015)

Chapter 2: Geopolitics on paper

In 1829, the *Arnhemsche Courant* published a discussion of a travel account on the islands of the Maluku Tenggara, written by lieutenant Dirk Hendrik Kolff. The article was brief, but highly animated, and drawing far reaching conclusions:

> "The reception of the ship's crew on these islands could hardly be any warmer and affectionate: everywhere the people huddled around the *Hollanders* and requested that rulers (*Orang Kaija's*) would be appointed by them on the numerous islands. Does this not prove beyond any doubt that the old *Hollandsche* government of the company on these islands – in spite of some abuses and the all too strict monopoly system – was in general truly beneficent and fatherly? Does it not prove beyond a doubt that these islanders were ruled *to their own needs* and that our authority was cherished by them?"[22]
>
> 'Mengelwerk', *Arnhemsche Courant,* 20 October 1829. (all italics and emphasis found in the original)

Some ten years later the *Champion,* a short-lived newspaper based in London, published another discussion of the same book which had recently been translated to English by George Windsor Earl. It described some very different scenes:

> "As the trade [between the 17th century Dutch and Moluccans] increased, military forts were erected, and as settlers increased in number, the natives began to show an imposition to imitate European custom – even their mode of dress, their religion, their laws, their language became, to a certain extent, European; but when the Hollanders abandoned the settlements, the natives nearly relapsed into their pristine barbarism, and received the visits of M. Kolff and his companions with feelings of fear and suspicion, apparently forgetful of the friendly relations which had previously existed betwixt themselves and the Dutch colonists."

[22] "Het onthaal, dat de schepelingen er vonden, kon bijna niet hartelijke noch minzamer zijn: overal verdrong men zich om de *Hollanders* heen, en verzocht hen bestuurders (*Orang Kaija's*) over de onderscheidene eilanden aan te stellen. Ligt hierin niet een onbetwistbaar bewijs, dat de oude *Hollandsche* regering der compagnie over deze eilanden – in weerwil van eenige misbruiken en van het al te gestrenge monopolie – over 't algemeen waarlijk weldadig en vaderlijk was? Dat men deze eilanders *naar hunne behoeften* wist te leiden en ons gezag bij hen te doen beminnen?"

‘Literature’, *Champion,* 1 December 1839, London.

Kolff’s book was a product of empire and as such it was contingent on the imperial realities in which it was written. As we shall see, it itself added to this reality and sketched an important stage on which a minor geopolitical struggle of the early nineteenth century played out. The quotations above stake the claims for two of the players: The Dutch who felt they had a right to the islands as they fell within their sphere of influence in the Moluccas, and the British who were looking to open up new avenues of trade in the eastern islands of Southeast Asia and through newly established colonies on the northern coasts of Australia.

But as we’ve seen in the previous chapter, despite the monopoly the Dutch were far from alone in shaping the direction of history in these regions. Besides Indigenous Moluccan traders and sultans, merchants from Sulawesi, mostly Buginese and Makasarese also vied for a foothold on the islands, and East Asian ships had frequented them for centuries looking for delicacies found here in abundance. Furthermore, the Bandanese diaspora had spread out through the region. It found itself sometimes at odds with local populations and other times collaborating with them. Then there were the raiders, coming from places as far away as Papua’s Bird’s Head Peninsula and the Sulu Zone located to the north of Sulawesi. These ships were less interested in the natural products found in the islands and more so in the capture of slaves. All these groups influenced the Southern Moluccan islands from the outside, but of course there were also the indigenous groups themselves. They not only shaped their own history through trade, war and alliances among themselves and with the wider region, but also recast the terms on which colonization and incorporation were settled.

This chapter will begin with a brief sketch of the life of lieutenant Dirk Hendrik Kolff junior in order to show the ways in which his journey through the Southern Moluccas was part of a broader process of colonial incorporation and consolidation that began in the early nineteenth century. We will then look at the regional context in which the expedition took place and the direct motivations that caused it. An emerging struggle between the Dutch and English for an imperial foothold in the region provided Governor Merkus of Ambon with one incentive to organize the survey. A liberal aspiration to recast the system of economic monopoly in the Moluccas along the lines of a more liberal ideology provided another. We will then look at the effort of the British imperial project in the region through the lens of George Windsor Earl, the translator of Kolff’s book and himself a colonist and ethnologist on Melville Island off the

northern coast of Australia. As such, the discrepancies between the two discussions of the book quoted above will be explored as manifestations of a larger geopolitical tension.

Travel journals had long been an established and popular genre of writing in Europe and Kolff's text neatly followed the most tried and true conventions (Blussé, 2014). Its long title was evocative of little known or even entirely unknown coasts. In the introduction Kolff establishes himself not only as loyal servant of the Marine, but also a man capable of standing his own among the natives. As such, it not only painted a picture of distant lands, but simultaneously placed them within the geographical imagination of Empire. The author of the review in the *Arnhemsche Courant* had led his imagination run wild, for he tells us that 'the prime importance of this work comes from the knowledge of these almost forgotten islands, to which the Dutch have an unquestionable right which comes forth from *the will of the the natives themselves*, even if this right has not been exercised for years' (*Arnhemsche Courant,* 1829, emphasis in original).

In this way the relations of Empire were disseminated through popular consciousness while its geographical imagination became more and more refined. The author fails to note most of the instances described by Kolff in which the inhabitants of these islands responded less than amicable to the approach of his brig. And if he does, such scenes merely illuminate the meddling nuisance of the British in the Malay Archipelago or the spread of the 'dissent-hating religion of Islam'. Such explanations might not be found quite as pronounced in Kolff's own writings, but they were still some of the original motivations to undertake the journey in the first place. In his directives to Kolff, Governor Pieter Merkus of Ambon urged him to re-establish the political ties to the Southern islands, scout for any British activity in the area and establish a port on the coast on Papua. The lack of engagement during the previous decades had opened the possibility for British envoys (real or imagined) to establish relationships. 'Uninformed about the faith of the former Dutch East India Company, which had long neglected to give any sign of her existence, many chiefs and residents would look out for protection and accept it of the first European power to arrive if they were not reminded of their former commitment [to the Dutch].'[23] In his eyes, Kolff's expedition was a resounding success, 'so that the authority of the Government was reinstated on the Southwestern and Southeastern islands, and received with joy and gratitude.'[24]

[23] Merkus, *Gouverneur der Molukken (Merkus) aan commissaris-generaal des konings in Nederlands-Indië (Du Bus de Gisignies),* Ambon, 15 mei 1826.
[24] ibid

Kolff's account of his expedition to the Southern islands, Merkus' political interpretation of this account, and the discussion of it in the *Arnhemsche Courant* represent the different levels of imperial legitimation. As we shall see, the Kolff's report deals almost exclusively with the colonial encounter. Merkus places this encounter within a regional perspective, arguing for a stronger incorporation of the islands in the Dutch empire to preempt an English take-over, supply the central islands of the colonial Moluccas, and stimulate a profitable trade with the Chinese. The final piece in the *Arnhemshce Courant* approaches the region through a broader lens of great imperial game of filling-in-the-gaps. Here we will explore these different reiterations of Empire, how they changed with each step, and how they influenced the colonial policies and spaces in the Moluccas.

2.1 Remotely at home: the life of Dirk Hendrik Kolff

The life story of Dirk Hendrik Kolff illustrates not only own dispositions toward and engagement with empire, but also the changing relationships between Dutch administration and indigenous states in the Malay Archipelago in the early 19th century. Kolff took part in several campaigns, expeditions and punitive missions against Asian polities and rebellions. The survey of the islands of Southern Maluku was one of his more peaceful engagements of his career, even if he was met with hostilities on some islands. Furthermore, recounting Kolff's recollections of his career can show us how imperial conquest and incorporation were not just rational processes. Decisions were highly influenced by personal inclinations and emotional attachments. Through his own narration of his life's events, Kolff sketches an image of self that is constituted by the relations of empire but escapes the dreadful stereotypes of the sluggishness of European colonial life.

Dirk Hendrik Kolff was born on the 14th of February 1800. His father, whose name he bore, had already served a life in the navy. He had fought in the Fourth Dutch-Anglo War to reconquer Ceylon, Melaka, and other territories from the English. Later, during the battle at Kamperduin in 1797, Kolff senior fought on the side of the British against a French-Dutch coalition, a feat which he would use to apply unsuccessfully for a Willemsorde, the highest Dutch military order, in 1815. At fourteen years old, Kolff junior would serve under his father on the *Van der Werff* to the West-Indies before continuing his career in the Eastern colonies (Klooster & Kolff, 2011).

After arriving in Batavia, Kolff jr. would quickly set sail to the Moluccas in 1818 where he would be engaged with the Pattimura rebellion in Saparua and Seram. He had little to say about these historic events and spends about twice as long describing the 'beautiful birds of paradise' that died on his voyage back to Batavia. This is rather unexpected since some details would probably be known to his readers and it offers him a chance to introduce his own character through the framework of this rebellion. However, he quickly moves on noting that he spent about a year in Moluccan waters to combat piracy and smuggling, especially of weapons that were being transported to support the rebellion. The difficulty, he found, was not necessarily the size of the native ships and crews engaged in these practices, but rather their speed and ability to out-maneuver the Dutch ships. He offers solution rather modern for the time: 'A few steamboats would provide us a powerful means to pursue this scum [*gespuis*] into their deepest lairs' (Kolff, 1828: 4).

The lieutenant would have to wait some longer for such technological innovations to be introduced in the Dutch East-Indies. All his later expeditions would be caried out on old-fashioned brigs, frigates or even the indigenous kora-kora. Probably the most impactful expedition was against the "pirates" of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II of Palembang. It is worth noting that the leaders of both rebellions – Pattimura in the Moluccas and the Sultan of Palembang – are regarded as national heroes (*pahlawan nasional Indonesia*) in modern-day Indonesia and have been featured on the 1.000 and 10.000 rupiah banknotes. This fact stresses the pivotal importance of the period in Indonesian national consciousness, an understanding bolstered by scholarly work which have referred to the nineteenth century as 'the last stand of Asian autonomies' (Reid, 1997).

Yet the events in Palembang in 1821 cannot simply be explained as a kind of proto anti-colonial struggle. In fact, the South-Sumatran state had been known to cooperate extensively with the VOC up to the end of the 18th century. The declining trade and rising piracy in the area, along with a British invasion of the Sultanate made the Palembang elite actively hostile to a Dutch return. Kolff, then, was part of an expedition send by the Dutch to dethrone the sultan in 1821, partly because of fears of prolonged indigenous resistance to the returning Dutch, and partly because of a fearful eyeing of British activities in the strait of Melaka (Andaya 1997: 204).

Kolff himself did not take part in the taking of the palace, but mostly provided support from his gunboat. He frames the expedition not in a wider political context but foregoes such

consideration to sketch out his personal rivalry with the 'famous' Radin-Allin, a Sumatran captain who had repeatedly clashed with Kolff. This personalized account leads Kolff to make two interesting assertions. First, as he spends most of his time commandeering a ship crew solely made out of native Javanese, he 'found ample opportunity to convince [him]self of the loyalty which the Javanese can show us in the middle of danger…. In fact,' he continues, 'If the Javanese is awarded that which he deserves, and is not abused, he is just as trustworthy as the European, and on top of that much easier to control' (Kolff, 1828: 8).

Secondly, Kolff notes that the expedition to Palembang interfered with his plans to return to the Netherlands. He consoled himself with a short reflection on duty, and more interestingly, with the realization that in effect he already was in his home-country:

> "All prospects of a speedy return home were thus destroyed, but I consoled myself with the consideration that duty required sacrifice, and that I could serve my country just as well in these remote regions as in the Netherlands. Or are our foreign possessions not essentially provinces of our fatherland, even if they are located far away from it?" (Kolff, 1828: 6).[25]

These short two reflections highlight that, in the words of anthropologist Danilyn Rutherford (2009: 4) 'empire is an affair of the heart, as well as the head.' Put more academically, affective strains influenced the ways in which empire was experienced, built, and maintained. Recent scholarly work has used this emphasis on the influence of emotions on colonial state making to provide an alternative to an all too often assumed narrative in which the process of colonization is equated with a process of rationalization and bureaucratization, a framing which subtly suggests an irrationality in pre- and postcolonial societies (Stoler, 2004). Kolff, in his text, shows us that his geopolitical understanding of the Malay Archipelago was at least partly influenced by a certain amount of homesickness while his relationship with the native Javanese crew was partly constructed in contrast to European ideas about them. The same could be said about his own sense of self, as becomes clear when he concludes his rendition of the Palembang expedition: "My time in *Indië* as such, without noticing anything of the faithful lassitude so often complained about by many Europeans, was a satisfying experience' (Kolff, 1824: 11).

[25] Unless stated differently, I refer to the Dutch version of the text published in 1828. In 1840, an English translation was published by George Windsor Earl, and this translation is often used to provide English quotations in this thesis. Sometimes, however, the translation by Earl does not necessarily capture the point being made by the Dutch text, in which case I will provide my own translation. This is the case with the last sentence of this quotation, which Kolff frames as a question, but Earl renders into a matter-of-fact statement. The original Dutch reads: 'Of zijn, inderdaad, onze overzeesche bezittingen niet wezenlijke provincien van ons vaderland, ofschoon wij daarvan zeer ver zijn afgelegen?'

Returning to Batavia after his experiences, then, was a less satisfying experience and he quickly grew bored of the 'unemployed life' there. Thus, he soon turned to Governor-General Van der Capellen to inquire for a more active position. This would eventually lead him to be send on a mission through the Moluccas, which provided the basis for his 1828 book.

2.2 Geopolitics in translation

Kolff's book was published in 1828 and we've already briefly analyzed a response published in the *Arnhemsche Courant* the following year. What was striking is the way in which the text was perceived: as a testimony to the unquestionable Dutch right to the Islands of the Southern Moluccas. However, the author also pays attention to the new geographical knowledge produced by Kolff's work. Comparing it to Van den Bosch' (1818) *Atlas van Onze Overzeesche Bezittingen* (Atlas of Our Oversea Possessions: Figure 1), he corrects a name here, adds an island there and clarifies the economic importance of specific areas. The map of the archipelago found in the atlas is very detailed, showing not just the many names and islands and cities, but also suggesting the elevation of the land and staking colonial claims of territory in red. The lands to the East and South of the archipelago however, that is Papua and modern-day Australia (or *Nieuw Holland* as it was still referred to), are left entirely blank. Two ghostly outlines framing the spoils of Dutch colonialism. One gets the sense from looking at the map, that the geographical knowledge displayed, exaggerated, or omitted by the author was more than the antiquarian subject of academic interest. It made possible the imperial project in the first place.

The hunch is corroborated by the 1840 English translation of Kolff's book. The translation was written by George Windsor Earl on board to the English colony of Port Essington on the northern coast of modern-day Australia. The British had already settled their penal colony at Botany Bay, but the settlements on the northern coast were expressly intended to facilitate trade with Asia. In his translator's preface to the book, Earl explained this himself:

> 'It was chiefly to establish an intercourse with the natives of these parts [the islands in the eastern part of the archipelago], by presenting them a more convenient mart for their produce, that British settlement was formed on Melville island, near the coast of Australia, in 1824, by captain, now, Sir J. J. Gordon Bremer, and if this, and the settlement subsequently formed at Raffles Bay, proved unsuccessful, it is more to be attributed to our want of information concerning these islands than to any other cause' (Kolff, 1840: xiv).

Figure 3: ‘Kaart van Nederlandsche Bezittingen in Oost Indiën’ (van den Bosch 1818).

Earl specifically names the Aru's at the center of a larger Buginese trading network in the Southern Moluccas. Earl himself would set out to become an avid collector of such information. Besides the translation of Kolff's book, he wrote several articles on his ideas of the 'racial types' of the Arafura Sea. Comparing Moluccans to Papuans and the natives of Northern Australia. His ideas would go on to greatly influence the 19th century anthropology and racial sciences on Papua, even if it seems that he never visited the island himself (Ballard, 2008). In fact, Earl had a vision that the Australia as a British colony-in-the-making would partly depend on a rich 'intercourse' between its Northern coast and the 'simple and industrious people occupying the richly productive islands' of the Southern Moluccas (Kolff, 1840: xvi). His work in producing knowledge in the region would provide the means to through which to establish that intercourse.

This emphasizes a basic fact about the position of the Southern Moluccan islands in the early 19th century: that their belonging to one empire or another – or any at all – was far from decided. If the author of the *Arnhemsche Courant* felt quite certain about the 'unquestionable right' of the Dutch to these islands, both the British as Dutch administrations were still very much testing that question. Eventually, the British settlements on Melville Island and at Port Essington would prove unsuccessful, but this was not yet clear in 1827, when the Dutch Ministry of Finance decided to maintain the spice monopoly in the Moluccas. On the one hand it looked with distrust to the western British settlements at Penang and especially Singapore, but they noted as well the settlement at Melville Island which 'could soon become the Singapore of the Southern and Eastern parts of the archipelago.'[26]

It was generally understood by both the Dutch and the British that the Southern Islands of the Moluccas, while in the sphere of influence of the Dutch, fell under the free trade agreement of the 1824 treaty of London. This treaty stipulated that British and Dutch vessels would be able to trade freely in the colonial ports of island Southeast Asia, with duties no more than double those inflicted on the ships of the colonial power in charge. With one exception however: 'The Moluccan Islands, and especially Amboyna, Banda, Ternate and their immediate dependencies… until the Netherland Government shall think fit to abandon the monopoly of Spices.'[27] The treaty then takes great care in establishing what is and what is not understood with the Moluccan Islands: The area between Sulawesi in the west, Papua in the

[26] *Nota van generale directie van Financiën inzake herziening van het monopoliestelsel in de Molukken*, Batavia, 16 mei 1827.
[27] Treaty of London, 1824, Article VII.

east, and Timur in the south, excluding these islands themselves. For this reason, Merkus concludes in his 1826 report to Governor-General Du Bus de Gisignies that 'an immediate supervision is immediately needed on these islands which, according to the most recent treaty [of London] were included in the free trade and could thus fall under the influence a neighboring establishment.'[28]

This was both a geopolitical as a discursive struggle, but to assume that the Dutch and the British were the only players in it would not do justice to the historical reality of the period. Merkus notes that most products of trade found in the Southern Moluccas (turtle shells, birds nests, sea cucumbers, and pearls to name a few) found their value on the East Asian Markets. Buginese and Makasarese traders had already established their hold on the market, yet the Dutch might be able to replace them as intermediaries for trading in cloth, as the 'developing civilization' there would surely increase the demand for clothing.

2.3 The politics of exchange in Maluku Tenggara

Relations of trade in the Southern Moluccan Islands had enjoyed a depth and breadth that was not simply dependent on imperial networks. We have already described some of these in the preceding chapter, but here we will look into them through the lens of the colonial archive. We are able to differentiate between different "zones" of trade in the region. One centering on the western islands and rarely recognized by colonial administrators as a valuable enterprise. A second network of relations was the creation of colonial policy in the 17th century. The genocide of Banda and the establishment of the *perkenierstelsel*, made the import of food to these islands a contentious issue. Most rice was imported from Java, but the long trip and high prices had long been decried by the VOC a later Dutch officials. Thus, attempts were made to create supply-routes between Banda and (especially) Kei. It was this project, in the seventeenth century, that had motivated the first Dutch ships to the islands of Southern Moluccas.

However, once there, they had encountered a lively trade between the indigenous populations, Buginese, and Chinese traders. Such trading focused on *trepang*, a seacucumber and delicacy in East Asia, sea turtle shells (*karet*) and pearl fishing in the eastern parts. Antrhopologists Julia Martinéz and Adrian Vickers have argued in their book *The Pearl*

[28] Merkus, *Gouverneur der Molukken (Merkus) aan commissaris-generaal des konings in Nederlands-Indië (Du Bus de Gisignies)*, Ambon, 15 mei 1826.

Frontier (2015) that the exchange of labor, products, and peoples between the northern coast of Australia and the islands of Eastern Indonesia had been developing since at least the eighteenth century. Especially the collection and trade of trepang and pearls motivated many South Sulawesi people to establish temporary settlements in Australia, but also some Aboriginal Australians to marry and migrate to Makassar (ibid: 15-16). Such activity had not escaped the notice of European observers. As Merkus relates in his report: 'The occupation of Melville Island on the barren coast of *Nieuw Holland*… was not done with the intention to establish a colony of exiles… but solely to establish trading relations with the peoples of the Moluccan seas and with the Makassarese who, as is known, are used to collect trepang at *Nieuw Holland* and in the golf named after the former Governor Carpentier [the Gulf of Carpentaria].'[29]

Yet the islands of Southern Moluccan were more than simple steppingstones towards the Australian coast. Especially the Aru islands, in the east, developed into a regional trade-hub. In fact, scholars have argued that Arunese trade networks and society actively and successfully avoided colonial control through deliberate strategy and by the grace of its far-off location from the colonial centers (Hägerdal, 2020: 556). Yet, the Dutch had maintained relationships and even settlements on Aru. These deteriorated significantly form the 1780's onwards, much like other Dutch settlements in the area, because of the impact of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch war and the stretching finances of the VOC (ibid: 566). Instead, most Arunese trade relations depended on contacts with the Makasarese, but also with merchants from Eastern Seram and Goram. This relation is reflected in it's modern name, which stems from a Southeast Seramese language (*ar* meaning water) and was taken over by the Portuguese and Dutch (Ellen, 2003: 72).[30]

This trade, which was mainly concentrated at a few regional centers, had important consequences for local cultures and social structures. Foreign goods, for example, became important markers of social status. To this day, marriage payments and fines in the Kei islands are still satisfied through the exchange of bronze canons (Thorburn, 2000; Steenbergen & Visser, 2016). But the development of relationships with foreign powers, and possible foreign regents could also have long-lasting effects on the power dynamics on the different islands.

[29] The latter part of the text, in Dutch, states that the Makassarese are known to collect trepang 'tot onder Nieuw Holland.' I'm not sure if this is an exaggeration (it says literally 'as far as below New Holland') or if Merkus is referring to a specific peninsula on the Northern coast, so I have simply rendered it as 'at New Holland.'
[30] The same goes for the Kei archipelago which is named *Ewab* in Keiese. Kei stems from the Seramese word for trees: *kai*.

Many scholars have noticed and debated the phenomena of "stranger kings" in Eastern Indonesia specifically (Henley, 2004; Andaya, 2006) and the wider Melanesian and Polynesian contexts (Sahlins 2008). Such foreign leaders were sometimes seen as authorities and even mythologized as an authentic source of the indigenous culture. To take the Keiese islands as an example once more, the people of this archipelago still trace their adat back to two Balinese migrants. According to the tradition, these two figures established during ancient times of social unrest the customary law on the islands called *hukum larvul ngabal* or 'the law of red blood and spear from Bali' (Adhuri, 2013). Such foreign authority was not only found in people from other Austronesian cultures, but also very much in European powers which arrived in the 16th century in the region.

Tanya Murray Li has noted for example that the Lauje people of the Northern Sulawesi highlands, 'welcomed their inclusion in the system of rule through headmen situated on the coast that had been in place since Dutch colonial times because they found it helpful for keeping the peace and resolving disputes. It was Dutch rulers, they claimed, who gave them their *adat*…. By which they meant their lightly institutionalized system for convening disputing parties and reaching settlements paid in fines' (Li, 2014: 10). As we have seen from the article in the *Arnhemsche Courant*, some people in Maluku Tenggara also requested Dutch intervention in local disputes. However, such requests should be better understood as opportunistic appeals to a foreign arbitrary rather than a recognition of the 'unquestionable right' of the Dutch to rule these parts.

The island of Kisar in Western Maluku Tenggara provides maybe the best example of an indigenous society which incorporated Dutch rule and symbolism in daily life and culture. Kolff and his companions found themselves surprised as they were presented with a feast of 'spices and pastries.' 'The table was set in the European way, with plates, knives, forks, and spoons. The natives here are generally very attached to our national customs, and also like to dress up in Dutch traditional costume…. Between them, and especially between those of a higher social status, there are many who speak a little Dutch, and they are very glad to use it whenever they can' (Kolff, 1828: 57). Besides the use of the Dutch language and clothing, the more prominent members of Kisarese society carried Dutch names. The *raja*, for example, was called Zacharis Frederik Bakker, but names like Joostenz, Wouthuysen, and Peelman are still found on the island today.

Such surprises had been the result of the presence of a Dutch garrison on the island in the second half of the 17th century. As a result of inter-marriage between the Dutch and the Kisarese, a mestizo population emerged which became the object of later colonial racial fascinations (Pols & Anderson, 2018). However, these relations also became the cause of significant tensions on the island. As the garrison was stationed close to the village of Meher, and most relationships between the Dutch and the Kisarese were formed within the social structures of this village, another village called Oirata. The conflict eventually resulted in an stream of refugees from Oirata to Timur, and those who remained kept themselves distinct form the people of Meher up to modern times (Hägerdal, 2019). Such conflicts highlight the fact that the islands of Maluku Tenggara, in spite of their size, could be culturally, linguistically, and politically diverse. In such contexts, the adoption of foreign cultural markers and the maintenance of far-reaching economic relations could become a tool within local struggles for power. And it was especially the religion of Christianity, which became a central point of cultural contention in the region.

This chapter explored how the geographical plans for Maluku Tenggara were formulated at the drawing tables of European administrators. In the next chapter we will explore the ways in which cultural structures motivated, allowed for, or defied the implementations of these plans on the ground. To do so we will shift the focus of the narrative from Kolff's description of the islands to the report written by Joseph Kam, who came with the goal of converting its inhabitants to his own religion of Christianity.

Chapter 3: Conversions of space

Along with Lieutenant Kolff there was a missionary named Joseph Kam aboard the *Dourga*. Kam had arrived in Maluku some ten years earlier in 1815 and his name had travelled far by the time he joined on the expedition to the Southern Moluccas. Most men and women with a somewhat religious inclination would visit his home in Ambon when passing through the region, and almost all missionaries looking to work in the region would stay a few weeks up to a number of months before travelling on to their missionary post. Kam had considerable influence on the historical direction of the Protestant mission in Maluku. Not only through his role as a 'gate-keeper', helping beginning missionaries to find their way in this new society, but also through his education of schoolteachers and the printing press he operated on in Ambon.

In this chapter we will focus on the same expedition but this time we'll approach it through the report written by the missionary, Joseph Kam. Our conceptual perspective will also shift slightly. Instead of focusing on imaginations of geographical and imperial spaces, the bigger picture as it were, we will by looking at the moral space encountered and inhabited. This concept is itself relates to two phenomena. First, there is the moral space as described by Remco Raden (2013), and briefly touched on in the introduction. These were not so much geographical spaces enclosed by walls or border, but rather networks of likeminded who carved out spaces of moral convictions. The NZG, the Dutch Missionary Society, of which Kam was part is a clear example of such a moral space. Secondly, a moral space also points toward a morality of the space itself. The dwelling-perspective outlined in the introduction provides the frame for analysis here. That is to say that Humans do not just 'project' their cultural construction of space on their disinterested environments but instead co-produce these spaces. Thus cultural structures gain a certain reality through space. It will be argued that these spaces can help "colonize consciousness" both of indigenous and European people (Comaroff & Comaroff 2021).

3.1 Moral societies and empire

Numerous of political and cultural developments of the 18th century were intertwined with the rise of a new phenomenon in Europe: the society. In the first sense, this refers to the social space that can neither be reduced to the state nor to religion. The rise of a new civil and public

culture gave opportunity to reflect on the relationships between people. 'Society became more visible as new spaces were created between the individual and his or her family on the one side and the state on the other; these spaces are often called "civil society"' (Hunt 2014: 85). But in a narrower sense, these encompassing spaces were speckled by smaller associations: societies of science, philosophy, morals, and religion became a defining feature of this European age. But they were intimately committed to empire as well. Especially the scientific societies would have a heavy hand in the production of knowledge on the colonised lands and people. The famous expedition to the Malay Archipelago by Alfred Russel Wallace, for example, was partly financed by the Royal Geographical Society in London (Smith 2010: 390). Such financial support, however, came with its own drawbacks. 'As was expected, such support, whether in the form of references or hard cash, came with strings attached. Those strings often limited the dissemination of findings, if not the actual freedom of inquiry.' (Flaherty 1992: 8)

In the Netherlands, as in the Dutch Indies, such societies (*genootschap* or *maatchappij* in Dutch) also proliferated. Many of them were scientific in nature, such as the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences (1798) in the Indies as well as its Dutch inspiration The Holland Society of Science (1758). But many others rallied around moral causes such as The Society for General Welfare (1784) and, albeit of a later date, The Society for the Well-Being of the Javanese (1866).[31] Lambert and Lester (2004) have demonstrated how British societies and philanthropists of this era contributed to 'historical geographies of imaginative and material connection' (ibid: 321). Not only did these networks disseminate knowledge and technology but they also contributed to a linked understanding of morality in the colonies and the metropole. These are the 'moral spaces' Remco Raben (2013) referred to in his article on Dutch historiography of empire, and Joseph Kam was part of one.

The societies of the late eighteenth century weren't all secular in nature. Many religious organizations also sprang up, worried about the 'quenching of civilian Christianity', they endeavoured to spread the word of God both abroad as domestically. Peter van Rooden has argued that the sudden appearance of missionary societies of this kind should thus be treated as a historical phenomenon, contingent on specific social factors, instead as an expression of an inherent push towards proselytization within the Christian religion (van Rooden 1996: 66).

[31] The society was created in response to Multatuli's scathing critique of the *cultuurstelsel*. However, the writer had little good to say about the society either. "Along with some other elements,' he wrote to them, 'the Society for the Welfare etc. is unconsciously one of the tools in the hands of evil, and as such a stupid, cruel satire of the Havelaar-case which points out the cancer that is devouring the Indies' (Janse 2016: 37).

Furthermore, these religious societies were neither dependent on the guidance of ecclesial bodies, nor on stately support. Individuals could become members by paying contribution. They weren't bounded by religious prescripts, which had long been the condition for joining religious congregations, monasteries, and gatherings in Europe. However, inner individual piety was closely linked to social duty. This was most exemplified by the missionaries themselves who were thought to be propelled by their inner conviction to effect social change in the name of Christianity. But through the dissemination of their stories, the societies effectively functioned as a bridge between the individual morals of their members and the greater societal good (ibid: 67).

Furthermore, as a result of the unfolding separation of church and state, European religion underwent what Patricia Spyer had called "serialization": 'the process by which homogenously defined and bounded units are created… which at least for the practical purposes of rule are regarded as alike, interchangeable, and enumerable; in short as belonging to a series of like sorts' (Spyer 1996: 172). These 'bounded units' refer to the social cateogries of modern life: religious affiliation, ethnicity, class and so forth. As such a clearly circumscribed sphere of life, distinct from such life spheres as law, class, and citizenship, it could be compared to other 'like sorts' found in different places.[32] Thus, in most of the missionary literature Christianity is incessantly and favorably compared to 'Heathendom', a homogenous category applied to countless of beliefs, laws, and social structures found in non-Abrahamic cultures. We should remain aware, in the pages to come, that such a serialization had not necessarily occurred in the Moluccas where an understanding of the world was contingent on the very intertwining of all these spheres of life.

One of the most important of these organizations was the London Missionary Society (LMS) and its Dutch counterpart the Dutch Missionariy Society (Nederlansch Zendelinggenootschap: NZG) which were in close coordination with each other. In fact, Dutch clerics found a direct inspiration for their missionary work in an address written by LMS to the Dutch congregations. The pamphlet was spread throughout the Netherlands and widely read. In essence, it was a plea for co-operation in spreading the Christian religion world-wide. "We are infinitely falling short in the task to bring the light of life to these widely spread, unvisited regions of the earth, and to the tens of thousands of perishing sinners in every country. So grant

[32] For a later example of serialization in the Dutch East-Indies we can turn to the creation of the *adatrechtboeke*n by Leiden scholars of law, which codified the customary laws and regulations into comparable works of law.

us our request to you… , to stand up with us in fervor and diligence, and to erect the temple of salvation in the midst of the heathens."[33]

Missionaries and their societies have often been characterized as agents of empire, and certainly their work was almost completely contingent on the infrastructure such empires provided. However, the close co-operation between Dutch and British societies, even during times of severe conflict between the countries and their empires, shows a more transnational character. The work, communications, and infrastructures maintained by missionary societies did not adhere to the borders of state and could be mobilized to buttress as much as subvert imperial designs. The life and work of Joseph Kam might be used as an example here.

3.2 Joseph Kam

Joseph Kam joined the NZG in 1807 after the tragic death of his young wife and daughter. Despite his age of 37 years, he was received with enthusiasm and quickly started his education in Rotterdam. However, due to political tensions in 1811 he was unable to set sail towards his post. Trade in the Netherlands, which had been annexed the year before by Napoleon, had grinded to a halt under the Continental System which banned all commerce with the British Isles. Furthermore, the British take-over of Java and the Moluccas made departure from the Netherlands impossible. As such, Kam along with two other students[34] were provided residence at a monastery in Zeist where they received further education but were also given the chance to practice in the smaller villages around Amersfoort (Enklaar 1963: 5-8). As was noted above, philanthropy and missionary work often made direct connections between the fate of people in the colonies and those less fortunate in the metropole. In the same way, the NZG responded to both 'the needs' of the unchristened peoples overseas as it did to the lack of Christian education within the Netherlands. It should come as no surprise then, that Kam wrote in his diary that the people he met while practicing in the villages 'looked truly miserable, almost equal to the description of the wild heathens, both in dwelling as in clothing' (quoted in: Enklaar 1963: 9).

Such descriptions were read out on the first Monday of every month. The letters and reports from missionaries already at work in far-away places – from South-Africa to Northern

[33] "Adres van het zendelings-genootschap te London, aan de godsdienstige ingezetenen der Vereenigde Nederlanden.". Geraadpleegd op Delpher op 28-05-2021, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=dpo:11439:mpeg21:0001

[34] These two were Gotllob Brückner and Johan Christopher Supper, both Germans. Many of the missionaries of the NZG came from different European countries, attesting to the transnational character of the organization.

Canada – constituted another way in which moral spaces or networks took shape in the early nineteenth century. These were read and published as the *Maandberigten* of the NZG between 1798 and 1917. These monthly notices were filled with news, announcements, and reports on the development of missionary work all over the world and read out loud at the meetings of the NZG. They provided a space in which the lives of many different evangelist residing in remote and sometimes isolated locations came together to play a part in a larger narrative of ministration. As such they are an early and striking example of the increasing entanglement human relationships all over the globe. If travel stories had been a popular genre within European societies before, they had always been presented in the singular form, a heroic eccentricity. But here these stories were collected, bundled, and presented to the reader with regularity, suggesting an accessibility that previous travel stories lacked.[35] As such, they served to inspire people like Kam to join the ranks of those who went before him: 'Such reports are very encouraging for us to hear,' he wrote in his diary, 'and they make us hope despite all hindrances, that the Lord in his time will grant us too the enjoyment to find such people that are waiting for His Teachings' (quoted in: Enklaar 1963: 11).

However, the space in which these narratives appeared was heavily regulated. Letters and reports were edited so that any critique of the NZG, the methods of other missionaries or the colonial administrations did not reach the pages of the *Maandberigten* (Hägerdal 2013). As Kam's comments in the above paragraph suggests, these periodicals not only helped their readers imagine themselves part of a larger community with a shared goal but could also directly informed their readings of the world around them. Thus, the *Maandberigten* are not simply an early artefact of globalization, they were the ideological site of it as well.

Joseph Kam and his two fellow students would travel to Batavia in 1814 but only after taking a large detour. Travelling north through Germany and Denmark, they eventually embarked from Sweden towards England, where they were received at the LMS in London. In fact, after their arrival they were officially employed by the British organization. Here it would be decided that the three would find their post in the East Indies, not least after a plea had arrived from Sir Stanford Raffles, who was by then the British governor of Java, that missionary work was desperately needed (ibid: 16). And so, it came that a Dutch missionary

[35] Even if these stories became less eccentric, they were often still steeped in language of courage and heroicism (see: Comaroff & Comaroff 1991: 172-178).

found himself, after a five month trip across the ocean, together with his two German peers at the dinner table of a British governor in Batavia.

Eventually, Kam would find his post at Ambon, in the Central Moluccas, partly by desire of Raffles himself. He requested the British government for a salary (which was granted) under the 'perfect conviction that the advancement of the morals of the inhabitants has always constituted one of the primary objects of [the British] administration at the Moluccas, and that their progress in this important branch of duty is intimately blended with their improvement in religious knowledge.'[36] The British, and later Dutch, Governor would whole-heartedly agree.

3.3 The educated vanguard

Ambon had long been the administrative center of the Moluccas under Dutch rule. As such, Kam's positioned himself as a kind of gate keeper. Almost all missionaries sent by the NZG to Eastern Indonesia after Kam would preside at his house for a few weeks, or maybe even months. Kam helped them to learn Malay and brought them along various trips – sometimes around Ambon city and Hitu, other times along the southern coast of Seram. Partly because of the wide scope of his work, he is still remembered fondly in the Moluccas today. Steenbrink and Aritonang write in their *History of Christianity in Indonesia*: 'After Francis Xavier and Justus Heurnius, Joseph Kam has been called "the third apostel of the Moluccas." He was by far the most successful in his own lifetime' (2008: 388). Kam left ample testimony to these successes, as he frequently wrote the NZG and provided them with lists of the number of baptisms he had performed in this or that village. But he would also find more fundamental ways to leave his mark. Kam's house was not only regularly visited by missionaries and pastors of other areas in the Dutch-East Indies but it also housed at any time ten to sixteen young men receiving training to become schoolteachers. After they had finished their training, they would be sent to various locations in the Moluccas to set up modest schooling for the people there (ibid: 386). These schoolmasters functioned as the vanguard of missionary work, as they also introduced basic Christian concepts and saw to it that the most fundamental precepts of the religion were respected.

The role of these teachers has often been underestimated, or at least afforded with little discussion. One reason for this might be that they left little written sources of their own, another

[36] 'Predikant en zendeling te Ambon J. Kam aan resident der Molukken (Martin), Ambon, 4 april 1815'.

one might be the dismissive voice in which others often speak of them. Gaps in knowledge were often highlighted instead of their long and thorough commitment to their work. Thus, when one Dutch pastor joined Kam on his visits around Ambon city, he mentioned that the schoolteacher in Kilang was 'for Ambonese standards rather capable, quick and polite. He did, however, ask me whether Afrika was a large city?' (Roorda van Eysinga 1831: 115). Another reason might be that contemporaries saw the efforts of the schoolteachers as precarious at best, as they were part of the same racial category – that of *inlanders* – as the people they were supposed to teach. However, even if the criticism was overt at times, the secular powers at the very least realized the importance of these teachers. As governor Merkus argued in his report to the Governor-General: 'Through the adoption of Christianity the believers will come into a direct relationship with those from whom they received the generosity of the message, and both their happiness and interests as those of the government will be promoted. To accomplish this wholesome goal, only a certain number of schoolteachers need to be appointed.' The presence of these teachers as well as a yearly visit of a Dutch officiary would be enough to cement Dutch control over various outlying islands, Merkus speculated. 'In this manner, the Government's influence can be maintained in a simple and low-cost manner.'[37]

Thus, these schoolteachers – salaried by the empire, educated by the missionaries – became one of myriad ways in which the secular and spiritual powers in Maluku fell in line. Kam himself was responsible for setting up a school at his own house for educating schoolteachers. While it seems that the quality of education was not extraordinary, Kam did expect his students to travel to outlying islands to take a post as schoolteacher there for a number of years. Kroeskamp (1974: 62) suggests that this might have been the source of a later pattern of Ambonese teachers traveling through Eastern Indonesia to provide education.

The network which they formed was more extensive than the network of European missionaries ever could be, and in fact it was the foundation on which the missionary work was built. Kam encountered many of his former students on the islands of Maluku Tenggara, and the journey itself would convince the colonial administration to send eleven more schoolteachers to these islands. These were later followed by a number of European missionaries to Leti, Moa, and Kissar. This signaled the interest of both the administration as the clergy in these southern Moluccan islands. In 1841, some years after Kam's death, four out

[37] Merkus, *Gouverneur der Molukken (Merkus) aan commissaris-generaal des konings in Nederlands-Indië (Du Bus de Gisignies)*, Ambon, 15 mei 1826.

of the sixteen missionaries in the service of the NZG were stationed in these 'Southwestern Islands.'[38]

If the quality of education for these new schoolteachers is often commented on in negative terms, these commenters miss Kam's extraordinary success in another form of education. He succeeded in instilling an ethic of missionary work: the idea that going to a different place and a different people to educate them in the religious and the secular is a moral virtue in and of itself. This missionary ethic was one that had only emerged a few decades earlier in Europe (Van Rooden 1996), so to encounter it in Maluku in the early nineteenth century is a remarkable fact.

3.4 Baptism as indigenous ritual on Luang

However, to judge Kam's life by his 'achievements' is a tricky thing as he had a knack for emphasizing his successes in his writing. He managed to portray possibility in even those places which had showed almost no memory of earlier Christian missions. Luang, the very small island in the Sermata group described in chapter one, was one of those places. Even though the welcome by the *kapitan* was warm, it seemed like there hadn't been any schooling or ministration on the island for a very long time. And while it was said that some ancestors had been known to receive baptisms on neighboring islands, even the oldest could not remember a clergyman setting a foot on Luang during their lifetime. Still, 'many of them were possessed by the utmost desire to receive the Holy Baptism, especially the women' (De Jong & Van Selm 1999: 16). Why would the people of Luang be so eager to undergo this foreign ritual?

First, it should be noted that marriage on Luang was matrilocal and descent, too, was organized in matrilineal fashion. This meant that, during marriage, the male party would leave his house of descent to join the family of the wife. His children belonged to the lineage of his wife, but he still bore responsibility for his sister's offspring, which belonged to his lineage (Van Dijk & De Jonge 1990). Within this system, the woman was considered as a stable segment within the community, while the cultural significance of the man was found in his transitory status of an outsider.

[38] Numbers, however, did not equal success: 'These missionaries are making very little progress, for which we find cause in the still deeply uncivilised and rough nature of the inhabitants of these islands who are averse to all kinds of education.' (Kist & Hugenholtz 1841: 479).

As already discussed in the first chapter, an eleborate fertility ritual called the *po'ora* would begin by men setting out to raid and hunt heads on Wetar. After an extended period of dances, and the replacement of the male-signifying ancestral statues, the ritual was concluded with all able-bodied men (dressed as warriors) rowing out to an outlying reef island, perform a dance and pierce one of several coconuts, and rowing back to the main island again to be greeted by the women. Here they would over the intact coconuts of which the water was sprinkled on all who were present. On Luang, as on many other islands surrounding the Babar Archipelago, 'coolness' is associated with fertility, but can only be achieved by first generating hotness through conflict. Toos van Dijk and Nico de Jonge write about this ritual: 'In our view the prime aim of this ritual was to achieve a cool state, beneficial to the continuity of life of the village community. This coolness arose from the heat of the head-hunting raid, and thus hotness must be regarded here as positive for the community. Aimed as it was at renewed fertility, this raid might best be described as 'catching fish'' (Ibid: 15).

It is easy to establish in hindsight an equivalent between the *Dourga* arriving on Luang and the men returning to the island during the *po'orga*. The offering of the baptism, a ritual that involves sprinkling or even submerging someone in water, becomes an offering of coolness necessary for the fertility and stability of Luang societies. The comparison, then, is not made to argue that the people of Luang interpreted Kam's arrival solely in terms of the *po'orga*, but rather to show that 'conversions' never took place in empty spaces. The ontological constellations that formed the foundation of a Christian ritual such as the baptism are not easily grasped and it follows that such complicated rituals could only be significant if they found footing on indigenous ontological grounds. In short, the ritualised practices of Christianity could signify wholly different things for the people offering themselves up for baptism.

As Van Dijk and De Jonge argued, the fertility of coolness could only be received if heat had been generated beforehand. In the *po'orga* this heat is generated through conflict and aggression by the very men who offer the cool coconuts at the closing of the ceremony. What heat was there for which the baptism could provide a cooling? Kam's own account of their arrival provides us with a clear answer:

> 'In the morning, part of their *negeri* had gathered and heard a volley of salutes from the muskets for the occasion of the reading of a circular letter of our Governor. To this end, our commander had ordered the armed seamen, as well as detachment of land militia, to debark the previous day… which impressed

> these incredibly remote peoples greatly, even more because they are not accustomed to the use of firearms for engaging their enemies, or to defend themselves, which is only done with bow and arrow.' (De Jong & Van Selm 1999: 17).[39]

Seen through this lens, a Christian ritual of conversion and change became something wholly different on Luang, namely a ceremony ensuring stability and continuity of life on the island.

However, confronted with the 'public idolatry' and 'heathen lifestyle', Kam was cautious to administer the holy baptism. Thus, they would have to agree with receiving a schoolteacher from Ambon, and if they were unwilling 'then it would be better for them to remain Heathens' (ibid: 16). This sparked a nightly debate among the people that was so fierce, 'that we feared that they would soon assail one another' (ibid: 17). Some were unwilling to part with the *agama lama*,[40] the old religion, according to Kam, others were concerned that they would not be able to provide for the schoolteacher. Kam quickly assured this latter group by telling them that he would provide the teacher with a salary if he would become the only source of education on the island. Another argument was that the people feared retaliation from neighboring islands if they were to adopt Christianity, to which Kam also had an answer: 'the power and benevolence of our king [is] far too great, to allow them to be attacked or disturbed by those neighbors who are also under his authority for their religion which he himself also professes' (ibid: 17). Such an argument, Kam notes, was further strengthened by the spectacle of power displayed that morning.

What would drive the people of Luang to have this discussion in the first place? And what did it mean *to them* to 'give up the *agama lama*'? As we have seen the concept of religion in Europe had slowly become "serialized" in the latter half of the eighteenth century; being separated from the spheres of state and family it no longer was part of a holistically dwelt experience. Instead, it slowly became a floating marker of identity, able to be replaced by another of its kind. But we cannot assume the same for Luang. Religion was not some clearly bounded collection of 'supernatural beliefs' which could be switched out, after some deliberation of course, for another such package. Instead, most objects, beings, sites, stories, and experiences which we would quickly relegate to the religious sphere were free to roam through all fields of life in Luang. In her article on sea cosmologies in Luang, Sandra Panell

[39] A Dutch flag along with stud engraved with the Dutch Kings insignia was also handed over to the orang kaya.
[40] It is not clear from the text if the people of Luang use this phrase to describe their own religion or if Kam simply interjects it himself.

(2007) provides us with an abundance of examples. The seas surrounding the island are inhabited by numerous beings whose lives are inscribed in particular sites in the reef. Their presence informed the particular ways of relating to and being in the world. In short, these entities were coproducers of Luang society. As protections and relationships are maintained, they contribute to the sense of dwelling in Luang. It would thus stand to reason that the *agama lama* could not easily be swapped for Christianity as the latter had little connection with the spatial environment.

3.4The hostility of space in Tanimbar

Events took a different direction in Tanimbar. In Kam's account, this is the only place that is portrayed as unwilling, even hostile, to his Christian mission. Before recounting his own experiences, Kam remembers his reader of the faith of an English crew who had stranded at the Tanimbar islands. All but one had been killed by the inhabitants, the lone survivor would be kept for the next 17 years as a captive.[41] Search expeditions had failed and actually added to the loss: 'during [one expedition] we had lost another man of our *Europesche Equipagie,*[42] who had been shot with an arrow from the dense forest edge not far from the beach' (De Jong & Van Selm 1999: 24). Here, metaphors of darkness and impenetrability, which had always been favorites in missionary literature, ran freely from Kam's pen. It is a place where 'Heathendom is still covered in the thick night of ignorance' (De Jong & van Selm 1999: 24). And, at the end Kam's 'heart called out: O! Lord, send Your light and Your Truth just once to these dark lands, so that they will guide and bring them to the knowledge of salvation' (ibid: 25).

But amid the drama (or maybe because of it) Kam's usual narrative breaks down. If we've met only the homogenous 'heathens' in various places in the preceding changes, the text turns towards a mode which might be best described as simply ethnographic. Kam relates how, in the middle of the village, they find a short stake with a single hen's egg perched upon it. When the inhabitants are asked about the purpose of this, 'they started to laugh similar to oafish children…, for the Malay language is wholly unknown here.' After some perseverance, though,

[41] The man, named Joseph Foley, would only have been in the fourth year of his ordeal as Kam was writing his report.
[42] Once again it is telling that Kam refers to the fallen Englishman as 'another man of our European crew.' Certainly, as he must have known from Kolff that the geopolitical goal of the expedition was to pre-empt the British at

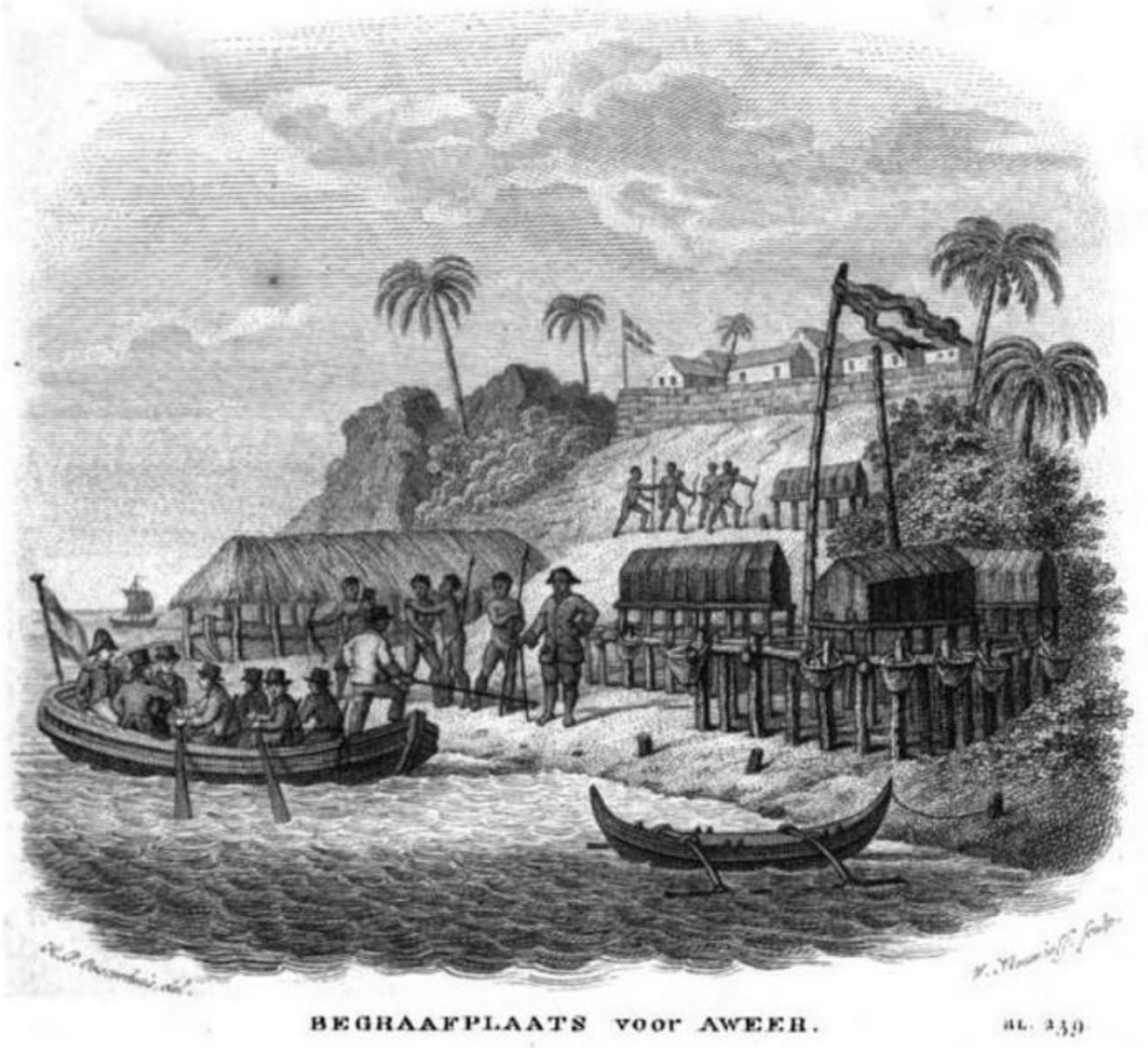

Figure 3: Illustration on the title page of Kolff's travel account (1828) showing the arrival at a Tanimbarese village including Tanimbarese 'coffins' on the beach.

it turns out that it is there to ensure a healthy recovery for a gravely ill person. Kam continues relating his ethnographic discoveries:

> 'They do not bury their dead bodies but lay them on four stakes near the beach or hang them in a kind of hammock on low branches near their villages. These corpses are wrapped in linen, while the living will visit them totally naked excepting a so-called *dajakker* to cover their privates… and when finally, the body has been fully decomposed the head is usually taken away and carefully kept in the house of those who remain, while all other parts are left to their fate' (ibid: 25).

We can be quite certain that Kam must have seen and smelled these corpses for himself, as Kolff writes that even before they had reached the villages they were confronted with several corpses on the beach. Not only does the liutenant go on to describe the linen and 'coffins' in which they were wrapped and lain in detail, but he also notices 'the unbearable stench, of which the natives show no nuisance at all' (Kolff 1828: 241). In Tanimbar, the smell of the dead instantiates both the body and soul of the deceased and its presence is a sign of their remaining agency. Through smell, the dead makes him or herself known. At the end of the decomposing process, when the corpse ceases to smell, the deceased are said to have moved on (Howes 1988).

This sense of smell, according to David Howes, is intimately tied to the experience of space in Tanimbar. Here it is important to observe that Kam's descriptions of Tanimbar as a dark, dense, and inward-looking place carry curious resemblances to the histories told by Tanimbarese themselves about the origins of their society. A hero named Atuf arrived at the islands from Babar at a time when the sky stood so low that the sun was unable to rise. As he journeys to the sun to split it with his spear, he had to keep cutting the top off his boat's mast as the sky descends further-and-further (De Jonge & Van Dijk 1995: 104). 'What [this] suggests,' writes Howes, 'is that the space in which the heroes of Tanimbarese mythology move has always been less expansive, more 'contracted'…. For Atuf, space *had* resistance, a certain bodily presence' (Howes 1988: 90-91, emphasis in original). These contracted spaces and the heightened sensitivity and valuation of smell are intimately connected, according to Howes.

I would like to suggest that the scenes in Tanimbar can be interpreted as a reversal of the scenes in Luang. There, the Christian ritual of baptism could be understood and to a certain extend be adopted because it latched on to established indigenous understandings. In this sense the Baptism was grasped in a distinctly Luangese manner, but its adoption did create the space

for ‘conversion.’ In Tanimbar the reverse is true. Instead of Christian concepts latching on to indigenous spaces, these spaces impose themselves upon the European visitor. The ‘contracted’ space and smells of Tanimbar were rendered significant to Kam in the form of established metaphors of darkness and density. In this sense, space is not only the container in which historical action takes place, but also the medium through which cultural structures confront each other. Any opening to conversion is closed by this reversal, as it is the missionary who is on the defensive side. Kam finds only a small possibility for education and conversion in Tanimbar in a single (unbaptized) Christian man named David. If he were to send a schoolteacher, David would have to take this man ‘under his protection.’ Once again, the narrative has shifted from the ‘provision’ of schoolteachers in other parts of Maluku Tenggara to the defense of one in Tanimbar.

A last solution is found in another reversal. Instead of sending schoolteacher or missionary to the hostile space of the Tanimbar islands, Kam conceives of another plan: ‘Gladly I would have taken a few adolescent youth from this Tanimbar nation to Ambon to test in what extend they would be susceptible to our education, with the intention to send these same men back to their islands under supervision of one of our Ambonese teachers, but their adhesion to their father country was too strong for this’ (De Jong & Van Selm 1999: 25). Kam reaches the latter conclusion because some traders who had boarded the *Dourga* for their commerce had promptly jumped overboard as the ship started drifting and the sails were hoisted to adjust the ships positioning. ‘It would be impossible to take someone of these regions voluntarily’ (ibid). And thus, it would be impossible to create for them the space in which conversion could take place.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have attempted to approach the space of early nineteenth century Maluku Tenggara in three dimensions. First, there was the 'geographical' space conjured up by European administrators. Through maps and treaties, spaces were carved up, incorporated, and struggled over. Changing geopolitical situations in Europe, following the fourth Anglo-Dutch war, the French take-over of the Netherlands and eventually the signing of the treaty of London put forth Maluku Tenggara as a site of contestation. Furthermore, a burgeoning liberal ideology, represented by the British and emulated by the Dutch, opened the area up for 'free commerce.' Finally, the establishment of a British colony on Melville Island on the northern coast of Australia spurred the Dutch to 'renew' their relationship with the area. Old influences of the VOC, now only found in the several ruined churches and forts on the islands, were thought to be 'beneficent' and 'fatherly' which legitimized the new project of colonization in the 19th century.

Secondly, the latter half of the eighteenth century was characterized by the appearance of several 'moral spaces.' Most often in the form of societies, these spaces took the form of extensive networks linking the ethics of colonization to the morals of the metropole. For the first time, Europeans developed the sense that it was their task to 'civilize' the inhabitants of the colonies. Specifically, missionary societies created the most extensive moral networks. The stories of these missionaries were collected and published in monthly notices, becoming sites of a novel global understanding of the world. Christianity was enfolding in all directions simultaneously, and as such the people which became the object of their mission were homogenized as 'heathens' with little differentiation of their respective faiths.

And finally, space was something more than a container or a metaphor; it was most of all experienced. Furthermore, I have argued that space these experiences of space can become a medium for cultural exchange, quite distinct from language. This dimension of space is the most difficult to tease out of the colonial archive, as it is often taken for granted by both writer and reader. However, we have seen certain actions could gain cultural significance through space itself. In Tanimbar the people have distinct ideas and experiences of space as contracted and dense, having a bodily presence. These were not separated projections onto a flat world but shaped the environment itself. Through smell, particularly the smell of decomposing bodies which were located closely to the villages and on the beaches, the space gained an oppressive,

if not hostile quality to the European visitors. It closed the possibility for conversion, and thus gave a particular shape and direction to the history of these islands.

In this thesis I have attempted to write a small history of Maluku Tenggara through the lens of anthropological theory. Small because the focus of the research was a particular colonial expedition of only a few months. However, as we have seen, to get a grasp of such a 'micro-history' it is necessary to cast a wide net. To gain an insight into the cultural dynamics of this single trip, we have discussed economic and colonial modes of production, the meaning of precious metals in Maluku, Bandanese diaspora's, European colonial rivalries, the Moluccan tradition of *sasi*, the role of indigenous *schoolmeesters* in the Christian mission, the emergence of secular society, fertility rituals, piracy and headhunting, indigenous origin myths and the auto-mythologizing of colonial travel accounts, to name just a few. The goal of all of this was to gain better insight into the role of space, a term which can be as vague as it is important. The nature of the research, which was carried out in the archives, at a distance, dictates that the conclusions reached remain essentially exploratory. Ethnographic research is needed to close the gap. Space needs to be experienced; history needs to be felt.

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