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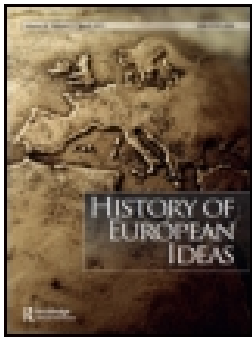
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Debating Natural Law in the Banda Islands: A Case Study in Anglo–Dutch Imperial Competition in the East Indies, 1609–1621

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SUMMARY


This article examines Anglo–Dutch rivalry in the Banda Islands in the period from 1609 to 1621, with a particular focus on the process of claiming initiated by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and English East India Company (EIC). Historians have paid little attention to the precise legal justifications employed by these organisations, and how they affected the outcome of events. For both companies, treaties with Asian rulers and peoples were essential in staking out claims to trade and territory. Because so many different parties were involved, individual documents had to serve multiple purposes, both on the ground in the East Indies and at the negotiating tables back in Europe. Whenever a VOC or EIC official presented a treaty to a Bandanese leader, he had to recognise local power structures in the Spice Islands, but also needed to consider his European competitors in the area, his superiors in Batavia or Bantam, and the company directors back in Amsterdam or London. Consequently, the safest and most reliable course of action was to make as many arguments as possible, piling them on top of one another. The result was an inherently messy process of claiming, yet one that was also clearly intelligible to most parties involved, including Asian rulers and peoples. A constantly changing legal suite extended to freedom of trade and navigation, contracts and alliances with native peoples, just war, conquest, actual possession, and the (perceived) surrender of native sovereignty to European authorities.

KEYWORDS

Banda Islands; Spice Islands; VOC; EIC; Hugo Grotius; William Keeling; George Ball; George Cockayne; Nathaniel Courthope; Pieter Willemszoon Verhoef; Gerard Reynst; Jan Dirkszoon Lam; Laurens Reael; Cornelis Dedel; Jan Pieterszoon Coen; natural law; treaty-making; claims-making; freedom of trade and navigation; just war; conquest; actual possession

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1. Introduction

Located two thousand kilometres east of Java, the Banda Islands—a group of seven small islands, including one volcano, the Gunung Api—are now a forgotten backwater in the Republic of Indonesia. It used to be very different. For centuries, the Spice Islands—meaning the Moluccas, Ambon, and the Banda Islands—were part of an Asian trading network connecting the island of Java with the Philippines and the South China Sea. Merchants from ports on Java’s north coast frequented the Banda Islands on a regular basis, exchanging rice from Java and textiles from the Indian subcontinent for nutmeg and mace. They brought Islam as well. Like elsewhere in Southeast Asia, state development was slow in the Banda Islands. Confederations of villages competed with each other, primarily *ulilima* (a group of five villages) and *ulisiva* (a group of nine villages). *Orangkayas* (i.e., aristocrats, with wealth from trade) met on the island of Nera in order to reduce conflict between villages and negotiate trade deals. Although the Bandanese successfully played off Javanese merchants against each other, they had become dependent on the spice trade for their livelihoods. Not much was left of the islands’ original subsistence economy by the time the first Europeans arrived in the sixteenth century.¹

Nutmeg, mace, and cloves had reached Europe via ports in the Middle East during the Middle Ages. One of the aims of European expansion into Asia was to cut out Muslim middlemen and establish direct trade links with the Spice Islands. The Portuguese were the first to reach the Banda Islands. However, they were not able to establish a military presence there, in sharp contrast with the Moluccas and Ambon, where they built and garrisoned fortresses. Nor did the Portuguese obtain any special trading privileges in the Banda Islands, but traded on the same footing as Javanese merchants.²

The situation in the Banda Islands changed completely when the Dutch East India Company (VOC) appeared on the scene. Swift Dutch penetration of Southeast Asia went hand in hand with naked aggression against both Portuguese and indigenous shipping. The voyage of Pieter Willemsoon Verhoef (1573–1609)—the VOC’s so-called Fourth Voyage (1607–1612)—was crucial in tipping the balance of power in the Banda Islands. For the first time, the Bandanese had to accept a European military presence in their country. Dutch fortresses were established on Nera in 1609, on Pulo Way in 1616 and on Great Banda (also known as Lonthor) in 1621. Yet the indigenous inhabitants had no intention of surrendering without a fight, and took up arms against the VOC. An already complex situation was rendered yet more complicated by the presence of merchants and mariners employed by the English East India Company (EIC), who were eager to advance their own trading interests while sabotaging those of their Dutch rivals.³

Given the high stakes, Anglo–Dutch imperial competition in the Banda Islands in the period from 1609 to 1621 has attracted sustained attention, but little detailed scholarship. For English

¹Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680*, 2 vols (New Haven, CT, 1988), I, 11–31, 90–96, II, 1–61, 114–73; Ashin Das Gupta, ‘The Maritime Trade of Indonesia, 1500–1800’, in *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500–1800*, edited by Ashin Das Gupta and M. N. Pearson (Oxford, 1987), 240–75; Gerrit Knaap, *Kruidnagelen en Christenen: De VOC en de bevolking van Ambon, 1656–1696* (second edition, Leiden, 2004).

²John Villiers, ‘Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 15 (1981), 723–50; Bernard H. M. Vlekke, *Nusantara: A History of the East Indian Archipelago* (Cambridge, MA, 1944), 68–90.

³*Hof en Handel: Aziatische Vorsten en de VOC, 1620–1720*, edited by Elsbeth Locher-Scholten and Peter Rietbergen (Leiden, 2004); *De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie Tussen Oorlog en Diplomatie*, edited by Gerrit Knaap and Ger Teitler (Leiden, 2002); Giles Milton, *Nathaniel’s Nutmeg: How One Man’s Courage Changed the Course of History* (London, 1999); Vincent C. Loth, ‘Armed Incidents and Unpaid Bills: Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Banda Islands in the Seventeenth Century’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 29 (1995), 705–40; John Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (New York, NY, 1993); George Masselman, *The Cradle of Colonialism* (New Haven, CT, 1963); K. N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint-Stock Company 1600–1640* (New York, NY, 1965); William Foster, *England’s Quest of Eastern Trade* (London, 1933).

propagandists, the events in the Banda Islands were evidence of VOC perfidy. At the time, the English clergyman Samuel Purchas (1577–1626) narrated the dramatic events in *Hakluytus Posthumus, or, Purchas his Pilgrimes* (London, 1624/5), a panegyric of English expansion overseas. Since it reproduces many documents from the EIC archives and since a reprint appeared in 1905–1907, it is Purchas's story that tends to be replicated in the modern English-language literature, most recently in Giles Milton's *Nathaniel's Nutmeg: How One Man's Courage Changed the Course of History* (1999). Yet it is dangerous to treat *Purchas his Pilgrimes* as plain historical fact, as the author also intended it to be a work of anti-Catholic and proto-nationalist propaganda. *Purchas his Pilgrimes* became a foundational text for the EIC, in fact. Copies were still sent to its trading posts in Asia as late as the 1680s.⁴

In the Dutch-language literature, the VOC's brutal conquest of the Banda Islands has become inextricably intertwined with the reputation of Governor-General Jan Pieterzoon Coen (1587–1629). In a multi-volume source publication, the Dutch archivist J. K. J. de Jonge (1828–1880) arrived at the damning conclusion that the Dutch capture of Great Banda in 1621 had left an 'indelible bloodstain' on Coen's reputation. J. A. van der Chijs (1831–1905), director of the *Landsarchief* in Batavia (now Arsip Nasional in Jakarta), echoed these sentiments in a short monograph on the establishment of Dutch sovereignty in the Banda Islands in the period 1599 to 1621. It was the conservative Dutch historian C. Gerretson (1884–1958), a firm believer in Dutch imperialism, and his student L. Kiers, who sought to defend their hero Coen against what they considered the unjust strictures of De Jonge and Van der Chijs. In a Nazi-occupied Netherlands, they published two short studies claiming that the ethnic cleansing which followed Coen's capture of Great Banda was all perfectly legitimate according to the legal standards of seventeenth-century Europe. They conveniently ignored the fact that contemporary Dutch accounts had already deplored the Governor-General's 'cruel procedures'. Coen's biographer Jurriën van Goor takes a more even-handed approach than Gerretson. He does not downplay or deny Coen's share in the murder and mayhem. However, he emphasizes the VOC directors' long-term strategy to acquire a monopoly of the spice trade, and also relates the dramatic events of 1621 to developments in international politics, such as the expiry of the Twelve Years Truce in Europe and the VOC's uneasy relationship with the EIC. Still, by its very nature, Van Goor's magisterial biography focuses on Coen's life and career, rather than on other high-ranking company servants who contributed to the formulation and implementation of VOC policy. Coen only visited the Banda Islands twice, as a junior merchant in 1609 and as Governor-General twelve years later. We may want to find out what happened in between.⁵

⁴David Armitage, 'Purchas, Samuel (bap. 1577, d. 1626)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2007, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22898> [accessed 18 August 2015]; Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes, Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells by Englishmen and Others* (Hakluyt Society extra series), 20 vols (Glasgow, 1905–1907); Milton, *Nathaniel's Nutmeg*; Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty & the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford, 2011), viii, 71, 107.

⁵*De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch Gezag in Oost-Indië*, edited by J. K. J. de Jonge, 13 vols (The Hague, 1862–1909), IV, lxi, cxliii; J. A. van der Chijs, *De vestiging van het Nederlandsche Gezag over de Banda-eilanden, 1599–1621* (Batavia, 1886). On J. K. J. de Jonge and J. A. van der Chijs, see *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek*, edited by P. J. Blok and P. C. Molhuysen, 10 vols (Leiden, 1911–1937), IV, columns 815–16, X, columns 171–72; L. Kiers, *Coen op Banda: de conqueste getoetst aan het recht van den tijd* (Utrecht, 1943); C. Gerretson, *Coens Eerherstel* (Amsterdam, 1944); G. Puchinger, 'Gerretson, Frederik Carel (1884–1958)', in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*, edited by J. Charité; I. Schöffner; A. J. C. M. Gabriëls et alii, 6 vols. (The Hague: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 1979–2009); 'Rapport van Personen Komende uit Oost-Indie, 1622' and 'Verhaal van Eenige Oorlogen in Indië, 1622', in *Kroniek van het Historisch Genootschap gevestigd te Utrecht XXVII* (1871), 321–39 (criticism of the harsh treatment of Bandanese prisoners in Jakarta in 1621 on p. 329), 497–576, 583–658 (criticism of the beheading of Bandanese *orangkayas* in 1621 on p. 511); Jurriën van Goor, *Jan Pieterszoon Coen, 1587–1629: Koopman-Koning in Azië* (Amsterdam, 2015), 433–66. 'Rapport van Personen Komende uit Oost-Indie, 1622' [Account from several people who arrived in Amsterdam from the East Indies in 1622] and 'Verhaal van Eenige Oorlogen in Indië' [History of several wars in the Indies] are extant in the Van Hilten files at the Utrecht provincial archives. The States of Utrecht received a scribal copy of the 'Rapport' on 3 November 1622. Both documents contain offhand comments suggesting that the author(s) was/were (a) high-ranking VOC servant(s) who had returned to the Dutch Republic quite recently. He/they compiled the reports on the basis of his/their own experiences in Southeast Asia and conversations with VOC personnel who had returned to the Dutch Republic after he/they did. The author of 'Verhaal van Eenige Oorlogen in Indië' warned that the events of 1621 might result in a lot of bad press for the VOC.

This article focuses on Anglo–Dutch rivalry in the Banda islands, in particular on how the two sides justified territorial expansion. Little attention has been paid so far to the claims and counter-claims made by VOC and EIC servants in their efforts to secure the spice trade, or how justifications of empire affected the outcome of events. This is not surprising. By its very nature, Anglo–Dutch imperial competition in seventeenth-century Asia presents us with a complicated story, involving many actors, which does not lend itself to easy summary. The endless twists and turns, all meticulously recorded in the archives, mean that the rivalry cannot be reduced to a single moment or a single argument. This article focuses on the long process of claiming in the Banda Islands during the period from 1609 to 1621, and seeks to show the range of arguments that were deployed by both sides.

Whereas Patricia Seed and other scholars have argued that European claims were essentially unintelligible to all but their own national groups, my case study of Anglo–Dutch imperial competition in the Banda Islands shows the exact opposite. Both VOC and EIC servants concluded contracts and treaties with native peoples, which, in turn, they used to confront European competitors. They routinely issued written ultimatums to each other, threatening violent action on their own part if the other party failed to right an alleged wrong. They justified the (potential) use of armed force by reference to an unstable hierarchy of claims, based in natural law—freedom of trade, freedom of navigation, contracts and alliances with native peoples, just war, conquest, actual possession, and the (perceived) surrender of native sovereignty to European authorities. None of this should necessarily surprise us. In their 2010 article ‘Acquiring Empire by Law’, Lauren Benton and Benjamin Straumann identify a ‘common repertoire of ceremonies of acquisition and possession’ that was used by different European groups. As Benton notes elsewhere, most European merchants and mariners who engaged in overseas exploration had a rough and ready understanding of the various modes of claims-making. But although VOC and EIC servants recognised the validity of each other’s arguments, they constructed very different *hierarchies* of claims. Each side maintained that it presented stronger arguments than the other.⁶

There was a close correlation between the changing situation on the ground in the Banda Islands in the period 1609–1621 and the claims-making of VOC and EIC officials. Crucially, the treaties concluded with native peoples and the written exchanges between company servants connected them with the negotiating tables back in Europe. It was two-way traffic, of course. Agreements reached in London (1613) and The Hague (1615) were intended to reduce tension and conflict on the ground

What, after all, was the difference between Spanish tyranny in the West Indies—so frequently denounced in the war propaganda of the Dutch Republic—and Coen’s bloodstained rule in the Banda Islands?

⁶Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession: Europe’s Conquest of the New World, 1492–1640* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995) p. 179, 13; Martine Julia van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies, 1595–1615*, Brill Intellectual History Series (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006) pp. 359–483; Lauren Benton and Benjamin Straumann, ‘Acquiring Empire by Law: From Roman Doctrine to Early Modern European Practice’, *Law and History Review* 28 (2010) pp. 1–38, particularly pp. 30–31; *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500–1850* ed. Lauren Benton and Richard J. Ross (New York and London: New York University Press, 2013); Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (CUP, 2010) and *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900* (CUP, 2002). Adam Clulow, ‘The Art of Claiming: Possession and Resistance in Early Modern Asia’, *American Historical Review* 121 (1), Feb. 2016, 17–38. Justifications of empire by the Dutch and English East India Companies have become a hot topic in the historiography. See, for example, Peter Borschberg, ‘From Self-Defence to an Instrument of War: Dutch Privateering around the Malay Peninsula in the Early Seventeenth Century’, *Journal of Early Modern History* 17 (2013) pp. 35–52, *Hugo Grotius, the Portuguese, and Free Trade in the East Indies* (NUS Press, 2011) and *The Singapore and Melaka Straits: Violence, Security and Diplomacy in the 17th Century* (NUS Press, 2010); Adam Clulow, ‘The Art of Claiming: Possession and Resistance in Early Modern Asia’, *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014) and ‘European Maritime Violence and Territorial States in Early Modern Asia, 1600–1650’, *Itinerario*, 33 (2009) pp. 72–94; Jan A. Somers, *De VOC als volkenrechtelijke actor* (Kluwer, 2002); *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* ed. Philip J. Stern and Carl Wennerlind (OUP, 2014); Philip Stern, ‘Corporate Virtue: The Languages of Empire in Early Modern British Asia’, *Renaissance Studies* 26 (2012) pp. 510–530 and *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (OUP, 2011); Robert Travers, ‘A British Empire by Treaty in Eighteenth-Century India’ in Saliha Belmessous (ed.), *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600–1900* (OUP, 2015) pp. 132–160; Arthur Weststeijn, ‘“Love Alone Is Not Enough”: Treaties in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Expansion’ in: Belmessous (ed.), *Empire by Treaty* pp. 19–44, and ‘The VOC as a Company-State: Debating Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Expansion’, *Itinerario* 38 (2014) pp. 13–34; E. Wilson, *The Savage Republic: De Indis of Hugo Grotius, Republicanism and Dutch Hegemony within the Early Modern World-System, c.1600–1619* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Leiden, 2008).

in Asia. Frequently, it did not turn out that way. One important factor was how the results of diplomatic negotiations in Europe were analysed and presented in the directors' correspondence with their servants in the East. Another important factor was the discussions within the companies' ranks, particularly among the top brass in Asia. Neither the VOC nor the EIC spoke with one voice. It has become a truism to say that they acted as both trading companies and states. For this reason alone, it should not surprise us that the archival record reveals endless policy debates. We need to take these debates seriously if we want to write the new history of empire and understand how, exactly, the native came to be dispossessed. As Tamar Herzog notes, it is a mistake to portray imperial rivalry between European powers as somehow separate from confrontations between European powers and natives, and from conflicts among different native groups. These processes influenced each other and have to be studied in tandem.⁷

The Bandanese were the victims of Anglo–Dutch imperial competition in Asia in the period 1609–1621. Caught in an upward spiral of violence, their room for manoeuvre diminished rapidly. Appeals for help to EIC servants and indigenous leaders elsewhere (the rulers of Ternate, Makassar and Bantam, among others) went unheeded or did not have the desired effect, also due to internal divisions among the Bandanese. If there was a 'middle ground' in the Banda Islands (i.e., an equilibrium of native and European power), it can only have existed for a fleeting moment in the 1610s. A toxic combination of warfare and treaty-making stripped the Bandanese of their liberty and independence. From a European perspective, treaties with indigenous peoples were never meant to be agreements between equals. To quote Herzog, treaties were 'instruments of containment', aimed at realising 'the subjection of all things indigenous'. Even English assistance against Dutch aggression came at a high price for the Bandanese: according to the treaty which they concluded with Nathaniel Courthope in December 1616, they did not just promise the EIC all spices harvested on Pulo Run in perpetuity, but also surrendered the island to James I of England and put themselves under the latter's protection as his subjects. It was all to no avail. Lacking sufficient EIC support, the game was up for the inhabitants of Pulo Run by the time Coen arrived in February 1621, commanding sixteen warships and nearly one thousand soldiers.⁸

Coen's brutal conquest of Great Banda is an inconvenient truth for many present-day global historians, eager to ascribe agency to indigenous peoples through various forms of 'negotiating' and 'resisting' empire. Yet the power differential between Europeans and certain native groups in Asia and the Americas is something that we ignore at our peril. At the time, many Bandanese clearly underestimated the VOC's determination to secure a monopoly of the spice trade and the enormous resources which it could marshal against a weak, isolated polity. Of course, there were plenty of areas in the pre-modern world where Europeans struggled to get a foot in the door—but the Banda Islands was not one of these places.⁹

Coen's punitive expedition resulted in the near-total destruction of Bandanese society. Forty-eight *orangkayas* were captured, tried and executed at his order. Their relatives—nearly eight hundred old

⁷Tamar Herzog, 'Struggling over Indians: Territorial Conflict and Alliance Making in the Heartland of South America (Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries)', in *Empire by Treaty*, edited by Belmessous, 78–100 (78). See also Van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle*, 359–483; Van Goor, *Coen*, 115–17, 143–47, 151–84, 416–20, 433–66.

⁸Herzog, 'Struggling over Indians', in *Empire by Treaty*, edited by Belmessous, 78–79; Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, V, 181–83; Masselman, *Cradle of Colonialism*, 417–22; Van Goor, *Coen*, 433–66.

⁹On indigenous peoples 'negotiating' and 'resisting' empire, see, for example, Clulow, 'The Art of Claiming'; *Empire by Treaty*, edited by Belmessous; *Native Claims: Indigenous Law against Empire, 1500–1920*, edited by Saliha Belmessous (Oxford, 2012); Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade: Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595–1674* (Leiden, 2012). In their contributions to *Empire by Treaty*, Alain Beaulieu, Tamar Herzog, Daniel Richter, and Robert Travers are far less sanguine about the natives' ability to resist or negotiate empire than the editor, Saliha Belmessous, seems to be in her introduction. Adam Clulow emphasises Bandanese legal resistance against the Dutch. He shows how, through both treaty texts and indigenous ceremonies, certain Bandanese groups successfully manipulated the English into supporting them against the VOC. Clulow recognises, however, that the English put their own spin on the treaty texts, and tended to overstate their case in negotiations with the VOC. The VOC repaid the compliment, of course: it routinely over-interpreted its treaties with indigenous rulers and peoples, if doing so served its own interest; see Clulow, 'The Art of Claiming'; Alain Beaulieu, 'The Acquisition of Aboriginal Land in Canada: The Genealogy of an Ambivalent System (1600–1687)', in *Empire by Treaty*, edited by Belmessous, 101–131; Herzog, 'Struggling over Indians', in *Empire by Treaty*, edited by Belmessous; Robert Travers, 'A British Empire by Treaty in Eighteenth-Century India', in *Empire by Treaty*, edited by Belmessous, 132–160; Daniel K. Richter, 'To "Clear the King's and Indians' Title": Seventeenth-Century Origins of North American Land Cession Treaties', in *Empire by Treaty*, edited by Belmessous, 45–77.

men, women and children—were shipped off to Batavia (modern-day Jakarta), the VOC headquarters in Asia, where they were put to work as slaves. In the end, there were only about one thousand of an estimated fifteen thousand original inhabitants left on the Banda Islands. Just as had happened after the 1616 conquest of Pulo Way, the arable land on Great Banda was divided into plots called *perken* and distributed among European tenants. Many of these so-called *perkeniers* were former VOC soldiers. Together with company officials, they would form the upper crust of the new colonial society for centuries to come. In cultivating and harvesting the valuable spices, they could dispose of a large labour force of slaves, imported by the VOC from all parts of Asia. The Dutch conquest, then, marked a fundamental break with the past.¹⁰

Dutch and English claims-making in the Banda Islands, and how it affected the outcome of events, is the subject of this article. My argument is based primarily on archival and printed sources produced at the time. Three sets of documents are of particular importance: Courthope's journal and other documents reproduced in *Purchas His Pilgrimes*; the letters of various VOC officials, such as Cornelis Dedel and Laurens Reael, extant at the National Archives in The Hague; and the written exchanges between Courthope and the Dutch authorities in the Banda Islands, extant at the National Archives in Kew. When read in conjunction, these documents provide a singular insight into the dynamics of Anglo-Dutch rivalry in the Banda Islands. The older secondary literature (in both Dutch and English) tends to ignore what the actors on the ground said about what they were doing. Yet there is a clear connection between thought and action—between how company servants conceptualised claims to trade and territory and how they went about realising these. Many English-speaking historians who undertake research on the EIC are not proficient in Dutch, and are therefore unable to consult the rich holdings of the VOC archives. Frequently, their treatment of the EIC's trials and tribulations in the Spice Islands is rather one-sided. Using source materials in both Dutch and English, my aim is to correct these notable imbalances in the secondary literature.

In analysing Anglo-Dutch rivalry in the Banda Islands, this article focuses on major flashpoints in the period 1609–1621, starting with the violent death of VOC commander Pieter Willemszoon Verhoef. All dates mentioned in this article are new style, unless indicated otherwise.

2. The Murder of a VOC Commander in the Banda Islands

In April 1608, the VOC directors sent a new set of instructions to their commander Pieter Willemszoon Verhoef (c. 1573–1609), who had left for the East six months earlier, commanding nine ships and three yachts. The directors sought to secure the company's interests in the Spice Islands in anticipation of a peace or truce treaty between the Dutch Republic and Philip III of Spain and Portugal. The VOC commander was told to renegotiate all existing treaties between the VOC and Asian rulers and peoples, and to return copies of the new agreements to Amsterdam post-haste. The directors urged Verhoef to establish Dutch strongholds wherever he could, in order to reassure the indigenous peoples of the following:

we will always remain in good friendship with them and never join the other side, but always protect them against Portuguese wrongdoing as much as it lies within our power'.¹¹

¹⁰Van Goor, *Coen*, 433–66; Philip Winn, 'Slavery and Cultural Creativity in the Banda Islands', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 41 (2010), 365–89; Vincent C. Loth, 'Pioneers and Perkeniers: The Banda Islands in the 17th Century', *Cakalele*, 6 (1995) 13–35; H. E. Niemeijer, "'Als eene Lelye onder de doornen': Kerk, kolonisatie en christianisering op de Banda-eilanden 1616–1635', *Documentatieblad voor de Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Zending en Overzeese Kerken* 1 (1) (1994), 2–24; Williard A. Hanna, *Indonesia: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands* (Philadelphia, PA, 1978). In 1638, slaves constituted approximately two thirds of the population of the Banda Islands. Inevitably, a degree of racial mixing occurred, with *perkeniers* routinely marrying slave women. Although a steady trickle of slaves escaped to other nearby archipelagos, *marronage* never threatened colonial society in the Banda Islands. At the end of the eighteenth century, there were over four thousand slaves in the archipelago, constituting three quarters of the population.

¹¹The Hague, Nationaal Archief (henceforth NA), VOC 478, f. 4r (instructions for VOC commanders and officers in the East Indies, 10/11 April 1608). See also *De Reis van de Vloot van Pieter Willemsz Verhoef naar Azie, 1607–1612*, edited by M.E. van Opstall, 2 vols. (The Hague, 1972) 6. All translations are my own.

Fortifications also served as a guarantee for the company's commercial interests. The directors noted that fortifications were proof that 'we have the possession, not the Spanish and Portuguese'. They came with exclusive trading rights. As the directors put it,

in the principal places where you conclude friendships and alliances, we recommend that you establish fortresses with the consent of the Indians, in order that we may secure these places and defend them as our possessions, keeping their trade for ourselves alone and excluding the Portuguese and all others.

As Benton and Straumann note, actual possession was an attractive notion for European explorers and merchants in laying claim to something. Rather than having to establish title, it was sufficient to show that they had a *better* claim than other European competitors. For a long time, the VOC directors cherished the notion that the company served as the protector of the native peoples of the East Indies, having liberated them from Iberian 'oppression'. The directors wished to believe that the indigenous peoples freely consented to the establishment of VOC fortresses and garrisons, in return for which the natives agreed, again of their own free will, to sell their spices exclusively to the VOC in perpetuity. The reality was very different, of course, particularly in the Banda Islands, where native inhabitants sought to play off the VOC and EIC against each other.¹²

William Keeling (1577/8–1620), Admiral of the EIC's Third Voyage (1607–1610), was engaged in a brisk trade with various villages on Great Banda, Pulo Way and Pulo Run by the time Verhoef arrived in the roadstead of Nera in early April 1609. The Bandanese showed little enthusiasm for the exclusive military alliance-cum-trading agreement desired by the VOC directors. They reluctantly consented to the establishment of a Dutch stronghold on Nera, out of fear that Verhoef might otherwise resort to violence. According to Keeling, the Bandanese briefly thought of turning to the English for help. In conversations with Nera's *sabandar* (i.e., harbour master), he expressed his support for the native cause and suggested 'the formall delivering of Banda, to the use, and in the Name of his Majestie of England, our Sovereigne, before the Hollanders did land, or begin their purposed fort'.¹³ Although nothing came of it, Keeling's proposal created a pattern for English involvement in the disputes between the VOC and the Bandanese for many years to come.

Keeling's position became precarious when hostilities broke out between the Dutch and the Bandanese. In late April, Verhoef and his men landed on the island of Nera, put the native population to flight, and started work on Castle Nassau. A month later, Verhoef accepted an invitation from the Bandanese to negotiate a new treaty and, at their request, went to the meeting place without his customary retinue of soldiers. The VOC commander walked straight into the trap: he was ambushed and murdered in the jungle, along with several members of his Broad Council (*Brede Raad*). Forty Dutchmen shared his fate in the days which followed. His successor, Simon Janszoon Hoen, immediately declared war in order to avenge the murder of his countrymen. The escalating conflict made Keeling suspect in the eyes of both friend and foe. Hoen openly accused Keeling of sharing sensitive information with the Bandanese, and selling guns and ammunition as well, which, in Hoen's view, accounted for the stiff resistance that the Dutch were encountering in various villages on Great Banda. Keeling received an ultimatum in late July: he was given five days to wrap up his affairs and leave the Banda Islands, but would be recompensed for any debts that remained outstanding among his native customers.¹⁴

Hoen's ultimatum invoked the notions of *jus conquestus* and actual possession. Since VOC soldiers had conquered the island of Nera, and since VOC commanders held commissions from Maurice of Nassau, a sovereign prince in his own right, Hoen believed he was entitled

¹²NA, VOC 478, f. 1v, 2v (all quotations are taken from this source); Benton and Straumann, 'Acquiring Empire by Law' 16–17

¹³Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, II, 530–531 (all quotations taken from this source); J. K. Laughton, 'Keeling, William (1577/8–1620)', rev. G. G. Harris, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15243>, accessed 6 March 2014].

¹⁴*De Reis van de Vloot van Verhoef*, edited by Van Opstall, 94–105, 267–69; Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, II, 534–39.

to regulate trade and navigation in the waters surrounding Nera. According to Western European rules for siege warfare, it was perfectly legitimate to ban neutrals from a war zone. As Hoen put it:

We, by vertue of our Commission, and Patent of his Princely Excellency [Maurice of Nassau], commaund the foresaid Generall [Keeling] to withdraw with his ship from forth our Road, out of our Fleet, and without the command of the Artillery of the Foretrasse of Nassau, within the time of five daies, after the date hereof. And in that we have conquered, by force of Armes, the lland Nera, so doe we also pretend, and hold the Roades thereabout depending, as the Road of Labatacca, &c. to bee under our commaund: and will not permit any (the time that we warre with the Bandenesses) to anchor there.

Keeling denied that he had done anything wrong, and denounced the ultimatum for containing ‘as many untruthes as lines’. Yet he was forced to reconsider Hoen’s offer before long. When he learnt that it would take the inhabitants of Pulo Way another twenty-five days to deliver a cargo of nutmeg and mace, he realised that, if he waited that long, he might not be able to reach Bantam, the easterly monsoon being almost spent. Everything seemed to go the VOC’s way: on 10 August 1609, the natives signed a peace agreement with the Dutch, while Keeling accepted a letter of credit, ‘for the receipt of my debts left at Banda’. The Englishman departed from the archipelago four days later, never to return.¹⁵

In signing this treaty, Hoen claimed to have concluded an agreement with ‘the honourable *orangkayas* of all the islands, towns and estates of the entire Banda Islands’. In reality, the *orangkayas* of Pulo Way and Pulo Run were no parties to the agreement. Bandanese opponents of the VOC were determined to continue their resistance on Pulo Way and Pulo Run, where they had fled from, for example, Nera. The new treaty did meet the requirements of the VOC directors, at least on paper. The natives were now obliged to sell the entire harvest of nutmeg and mace exclusively to the VOC. If they wanted to buy rice from Javanese merchants, they needed to obtain the prior consent of the Dutch governor in the Banda Islands, which would only be forthcoming if the Javanese merchants agreed to a) anchor in the roadstead of Castle Nassau, and b) sell on to the VOC any spices obtained from the Bandanese. According to the treaty, Nera had been conquered in its entirety ‘by reason of the murder of Admiral Verhoeff’ and was now held ‘in eternal and hereditary possession’ by the Dutch States General, Prince Maurice and the VOC directors. Yet it only took the arrival of David Middleton (d. 1615) in February 1610 to rupture the tenuous peace in the Banda Islands. Middleton convinced his indigenous interlocutors that an English fleet would come to liberate them from the Dutch, thus instigating another revolt, which quickly turned into a civil war.¹⁶

¹⁵Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus* II, 539–544 (quotations on 540, 542); *De Reis van de Vloot van Verhoef*, edited by Van Opstall 101; S. Groenveld, *Verlopend Getij: De Nederlandse Republiek en de Engelse Burgeroorlog 1640-1660* (Dieren, 1984). Maurice of Nassau (1567–1625) became sovereign Prince of Orange on the death of his eldest half brother, Philip William, Prince of Orange (1554–1618). Yet he had been appointed *Stadtholder* of Holland and Zeeland well before that. The provinces that made up the Dutch Republic effectively treated Maurice of Nassau as his father’s direct successor. Consequently, he had signed (privateering) commissions for Dutch merchants and navy captains since the 1580s. See, for example, Victor Enthoven, *Zeeland en de opkomst van de Republiek: handel en strijd in de Scheltedelta c. 1550–1621* (Luctor et Victor, 1996). In all probability, Keeling dismissed the ultimatum because it was too truthful to his taste. It may well have included a summary of the depositions of VOC personnel, detailing his arm sales to the Bandanese. Copies of these depositions are still extant in the Grotius Papers at the NA: Supplement I, f. 229–230 (‘Copy of a Declaration of Master Dirick Allerts’, 22 February 1612, which mentions Keeling explicitly), f. 389–392 (VOC petition, addressed to Dutch States General, 28 July 1612), f. 588–604 (extract from letters arrived from the East, prepared by VOC director Dirk Meerman, 26 August 1612). Keeling was fortunate enough to have Purchas as his editor: “[t]hen followed many presumptions of his assistance of the Bandanese, by English Powder and Munition, by signes, &c. which I omit”, see Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, II, 542.

¹⁶*Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum: verzameling van politieke contracten en verdere verdragen door de Nederlanders in het Oosten gesloten, van privilegebrieven aan hen verleend, enz.*, edited by J. E. Heeres and F. W. Stapel, 6 vols (The Hague, 1907–1955), I, 66–69; *De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch Gezag in Oost-Indië*, edited by De Jonge, III, 315–16; Van der Chijs, *De vestiging van het Nederlandsche gezag over de Banda-eilanden*, 51; *Geschiedenis van Nederlands Indië*, edited by F. W. Stapel, 6 vols (Amsterdam, 1939), III, 72–73; Foster, *England’s Quest of Eastern Trade*, 203–05; Van Goor, *Coen*, 106–11.

3. Gerard Reynst Seeks to Prevent EIC Trade in the Banda Islands, with Particular Reference to the Anglo–Dutch Colonial Conference of 1613

Increasingly desperate, the Bandanese opponents of the VOC continued to appeal to the English for help. In July 1614, Benjamin Farie wrote to the EIC directors that the *orangkayas* of Pulo Way had complained to the ruler of Makassar of ‘the oppression and cruelty of the Hollanders’, but also of the EIC’s lack of support, contrary to ‘your Worships’ promise made to them by General Keeling and Captain Middleton’. Farie reported that adverse winds and currents had prevented English ships and Javanese junks from sailing to the Banda Islands that year. He surmised, quite rightly, that famine was the result.¹⁷

George Ball and George Cockayne had better luck reaching the Banda Islands the following year. In the middle of March 1615, the *Concord* and the *Speedwell* anchored in the roadstead of Castle Nassau. The two English merchants quickly discovered that they had arrived ‘in the devil’s mouth or worse’. Seven tall ships were lying at anchor in Nera’s roadstead as well. Despite the signing of the Twelve Years Truce, the VOC continued to send powerful fleets to the East Indies, aggressively pursuing a monopoly of the spice trade. And while the EIC failed to construct a clear chain of command in Asia—each voyage remained a separate enterprise—the VOC directors streamlined their overseas operations by creating the office of the Governor-General, modelled, of course, on the Portuguese Viceroy in Goa. All VOC servants in Asia owed obedience to the Governor-General and his Council of the Indies. It was Governor-General Gerard Reynst (c. 1568–1615), former VOC director and scion of a powerful *regent* (i.e., patrician) family in Amsterdam, who awaited Ball and Cockayne at Castle Nassau. Though courteous, Reynst was determined to prevent trade between the English and the natives. Four months earlier, he had already taken the decision to conquer Pulo Way and establish a Dutch fortress there. Ball was explicitly told not to go ashore on any of the Banda Islands, with the exception of Nera, ‘whereon stands their castle’. Reynst proved as true as his word. Ball noted in his letters that he was ‘kept back by their boats whensoever I attempted to land elsewhere’.¹⁸

In these circumstances, trade with the natives called for a combination of chutzpah and subterfuge. Cockayne detailed in a letter of July 1615 how, three days after their arrival, Ball and he had visited the village of Lonthor on Great Banda in order to ‘capitulate’ with the *orangkayas* about the establishment of an English trading post. Since not all *orangkayas* were present, no treaty could be made on that occasion. When the two Englishmen made another attempt a few days later, Reynst—who undoubtedly had gotten wind of the first meeting—intervened and invited them to Castle Nassau. Ball declined the invitation, but sent Cockayne in his stead.¹⁹

When Cockayne presented himself at Castle Nassau, he found Reynst and his council sitting at a long table ‘with many writings before them, as if all the matters in Holland had been there to be decided.’ The table was filled with copies of the Dutch contracts with the Bandanese and letters from the VOC directors, including a report, written by Hugo Grotius, on the first Anglo–Dutch colonial conference in London in April and May 1613. In all likelihood, Reynst had been briefed on the negotiations between the VOC and the EIC just before he left the Dutch Republic in early June 1613. He explicitly referenced the negotiations in his conversation with Cockayne.²⁰

¹⁷ *Letters Received By The East India Company From Its Servants In the East* [hereafter EIC Letters], edited by Willam Foster, 6 volumes (London, 1896–1902; reprinted Amsterdam, 1968), II, 78 (Benjamin Farie to the EIC, written at Patani, 26 July 1614 o.s.)

¹⁸ EIC Letters, III, 286 (George Ball to John Jourdain at Bantam, 24 June 1615 o.s.); see also *Bouwstoffen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederlanders in den Maleischen Archipel*, edited by P. A. Tiele and J. E. Heeres, 3 vols (The Hague, 1886–1895), I, xv (resolution taken by the Governor-General and the Councillors of the Indies, 15 November 1614); Van Goor, *Coen* 116; A.J. van der Aa, *Biographisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden*, 21 vols. (Haarlem, 1852–1878), VI, 217–218.

¹⁹ EIC Letters, III, 140–141 (George Cockayne to Sir Thomas Smythe, 16 July 1615 o.s.).

²⁰ EIC Letters, III, 141; *Geschiedenis van Nederlands Indië*, edited by Stapel, III, 94–95; W. J.M. van Eysinga and G. N. Clark, *The Colonial Conferences between England and The Netherlands in 1613 and 1615*, 2 vols., *Bibliotheca Visseriana* XV and XVII (The Hague, 1940–1951); British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts 12.498 fol. 1r–19r. The Dutch negotiators returned to The Hague from London on 31 May 1613 and reported orally to the Dutch States General that same day. Grotius put together the written report for the Dutch States General, including detailed accounts of oral conversations with James I. The VOC directors must have received copies of the report. Did they forward one to Reynst, who departed from Texel on 2 June 1613? Jurriën van Goor

The Governor-General started the conversation by demanding to see Cockayne's commission. When the latter refused, he became angry, stood up, and, 'fluttering his papers at [Cockayne's] face', denounced Ball and him as 'rogues and rascals'. Moreover, Reynst claimed that James I of England had taken the VOC's side at the conference in London. He clearly knew that James I had sought to mediate in person between the two trading companies at the Dutch delegation's farewell audience in late May 1613. On that occasion, Sir Thomas Smythe (1558–1625) had requested permission for the EIC to trade in the Banda Islands on the same terms as English merchants in Holland and Zealand. Yet James I had agreed with the Dutch negotiators that, unless the VOC enjoyed a substantial income from the spice trade, it could not be expected to pay for the defence of the Spice Islands—a scenario which, the monarch noted, would only benefit the Spanish and the Portuguese. As Reynst put it, James I had 'silenced' Smythe, and conceded that the VOC 'had all the right that might be [...] to these places of Banda'. The Governor-General could be forgiven for concluding that the VOC enjoyed 'more favour of his Majesty than the Company of England'. Cockayne limply replied that it was the EIC's ill luck to be 'so overswayed at home'. He was not cowed by Reynst's outburst, however. Just a couple of nights later, Ball and he managed to slip away from Nera, and reach Pulo Way.²¹

At their arrival on the island, Ball and Cockayne beached their pinnace, landed their merchandise and started trading with the Bandanese. The inhabitants of Pulo Way turned out to be tough negotiators, however. Ball and Cockayne wanted to establish an English trading post on the island, rather than 'lade a ship at dear rates'. Allegedly, mace was flooding the markets in Europe, and could be obtained 'as cheap in England' as in Asia. However, the Bandanese would have none of this. Ball and Cockayne were told to 'follow the fashion of Captain Keeling', and pay a price that would be 'for [the Bandanese's] profit'. Nor did inhabitants of Pulo Way want the English to stay indefinitely, but rather 'to dispatch and be gone', much like the Javanese merchants. The issue had not been resolved yet when Ball and Cockayne departed in the *Concord* in late April 1615. They left behind Richard Hunt and Sophony Cozucke (Sophonias the Cossack), Master of the *Speedwell*. In the middle of May, Dutch troops landed on Pulo Way, but were driven back by the natives. Did the attack convince the latter that a permanent English presence would be a good idea after all? When the *Speedwell* departed in September 1615, filled to the brim with mace and nutmeg, Hunt stayed put in order to continue trading with the Bandanese.²²

An *orangkay* from Pulo Way was also on board the *Speedwell*. He carried a letter from the 'principal states' of Pulo Way, Pulo Run and Nera, addressed to 'general Keeling, and the principal factor of the English at Bantam'. The letter safely reached John Jourdain (1572–1619), President of the English trading post in Bantam. The writers vehemently opposed the Dutch presence in their lands, and appealed for help to James I of England, something Keeling had already suggested back in 1609. They claimed to have heard 'of the greate love and peace, that the King of England hath with all the world'. Since James I was not in the habit of invading other countries, but commanded his subjects to engage in peaceful trade, they wished to enter into a treaty with him. They feared that the Dutch—those 'sonnes of Whores' and 'utter Enimyes'—were out to conquer their land and destroy their religion. They pleaded with James I to arrange for deliveries of 'powder, shot, cloth and rice', and help them 'recover the Castle of Nera' (i.e., Castle Nassau). In return, they promised to sell their spices exclusively to the English, provided the latter would not seek to 'overthrowe our religion' or 'committ offence with our Weomen'. The appeal did not fall on deaf ears. In January 1616, Jourdain resolved

suggests in his biography of Coen that the Amsterdam VOC director Reinier Pauw briefed Van Reynst in person about the negotiations with the EIC. See Van Goor, *Coen* 227–28, 272–75 and Van Eysinga and Clark, *Colonial Conferences* I, annex 46, especially 145, 147.

²¹*EIC Letters*, III, 141; Van Eysinga and Clark, *Colonial Conferences*, I, 145–46, II, 61–62, 74–78; Van Goor, *Coen*, 272–75; Basil Morgan, 'Smythe, Sir Thomas (c.1558–1625)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2008, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25908>> [accessed 13 March 2014].

²²*EIC Letters*, III, xxxiv, 142 (Cockayne to Smythe, 16 July 1615 o.s.), 286 (Ball to John Jourdain, 24 June 1615 o.s.); Foster, *England's Quest of Eastern Trade*, 202–05, 262–63; *Geschiedenis van Nederlands Indië*, edited by Stapel, III, 95; Van Goor, *Coen*, 247.

to send four ships and a yacht to the Banda Islands, under the command of Samuel Castleton. Ball and Sophonias joined the expedition as well.²³

4. The Battle for Pulo Way

Castleton reached Pulo Way in the middle of March 1616, and duly landed the Bandanese envoy. A naval battle with a VOC fleet of nine ships under the command of Jan Dirkszoon Lam (d. 1626), a Councillor of the Indies, was called off at the last minute, when Castleton discovered that his Dutch opponent was none other than his old friend Lam, who had come to his rescue at St Helena four years earlier. When questioned by Lam as to whether he had sold the Bandanese any victuals, guns or ammunition, Castleton was rather economical with the truth and denied that he had assisted them in any way. Yet Lam did learn that ‘the natives of Pulo Way had wanted to surrender their land to [the English] and fly [the English] flag’. Castleton signed an agreement with Lam on 26 March 1616, and left the Banda Islands that same day, firing honorary salutes. The agreement stipulated that the English merchants on Pulo Way would maintain a strict neutrality in any armed conflict between the Dutch and the Bandanese. Should Lam conquer the island, they would be permitted to leave with their goods ‘frank and free’. If a Dutch attack proved unsuccessful, they could continue to trade there on the same terms as before. As we shall see, Richard Hunt had no intention of sticking to this agreement. Lam went on the attack eleven days after Castleton’s departure: he landed troops on Pulo Way and managed to pacify the island within a month. At least four hundred Bandanese tried to escape in boats, fleeing to nearby Pulo Run, for example. Many, however, drowned at sea.²⁴

On 3 May 1616, Lam concluded a new treaty with the Bandanese. It was signed ‘in Arabic script’ by *orangkayas* of the islands of Pulo Way, Pulo Run and Rosengain, by *orangkayas* of the village of Labatacca on the island of Nera, and by *orangkayas* of the villages of Lonthor, Selamon, Dender and Orantatta on the island of Great Banda. The *orangkayas* swore on the Koran to live in eternal and unbroken peace with the Dutch and their subjects, ‘whether of the black or the white nation’. The *orangkayas* relinquished any claim they might still have to Nera and Pulo Way, and recognised that both islands had been conquered ‘in a just war’. The Bandanese agreed not to convert any deserters from the Dutch garrisons to Islam, but to send them back to the Dutch governor. Similarly, the Dutch promised not to convert any inhabitants of Rosengain, Great Banda and Pulo Run to Christianity. Spices harvested in the Banda Islands could henceforth be sold only to representatives of the Dutch States General, Maurice of Nassau and the VOC—to the exclusion of the ‘English, French, Javanese, Malay, Makassarese, Butonese and other European and black nations, whichever these might be’. Mace would be purchased from the Bandanese for the fixed price of 100 rials of eight

²³*The Register of Letters etc. of the Governour and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies* ed. George Birdwood and William Foster (London, 1893) pp. 492–493 (“A Letter from the Governour and all the principall states of the lland Banda called Puluway Puluroone and Nera sent vnto generall Keelinge and the principall ffactor of the English at Bantam,” s.d.); *EIC Letters*, III, 294 (Sophony Cozuck to the East India Company, Bantam, 21 December, 1615 o.s.); John Jourdain, *The Journal of John Jourdain, 1608–1617, Describing His Experiences in Arabia, India, and the Malay Archipelago*, edited by William Foster (Cambridge, 1905), 328–29; Foster, *England’s Quest of Eastern Trade*, 262–63; J. K. Laughton, ‘Jourdain, John (c.1572–1619)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2008, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15141>> [accessed 6 March 2014]; Clulow, ‘The Art of Claiming’ 31–32.

²⁴Foster, *England’s Quest of Eastern Trade*, 261–65; *EIC Letters*, IV, 67 (John Jourdain to the EIC, 17/27 March 1615/16), 72–74 (agreement between Captain Castleton and the Dutch, 16/26 March 1615/16, in Dutch with an English translation), 74–75 (instructions from Captain Castleton to Richard Hunt, March 1616); Jourdain, *Journal*, 328–29; *Geschiedenis van Nederlands Indië*, edited by Stapel, III, 99; Van der Aa, *Biographisch Woordenboek*, XI, 55–56; *Bouwstoffen*, I, 146 (Adriaen van der Dussen to the VOC directors, 25 July 1616); NA, VOC 1063, f. 354–55 (resolutions taken by Jan Dirkszoon Lam and his council, 21 and 27 March 1616) and f. 495r–95v (Jan Dirkszoon Lam to the Amsterdam VOC Directors, 3 August 1616); *Dutch- Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, edited by J. R. Bruijn, F. S. Gaastra, and I. Schöffer 3 vols (The Hague, 1979), III: *Homeward-Bound Voyages from Asia and the Cape to the Netherlands (1597–1795)*, 16–17; Loth, ‘Armed Incidents and Unpaid Bills’, 713–14; Van Goor, *Coen*, 281. In 1612, Jan Dirkszoon Lam extracted Samuel Castleton from a sticky situation at St Helena, where the latter was attacked by a Portuguese carrack while taking in fresh water. Lam, who was in command of three VOC ships, decided to side with the English and chase the carrack away. Following the incident, Lam sent provisions to Castleton’s ship—the *Pearl*—and allowed it to join his own squadron. The *Pearl* sailed in the company of the three VOC ships as far as the English Channel.

per 'Portuguese bahar' and nutmeg for 10 rials of eight per 'Portuguese bahar'. In order to ensure a steady flow of rice deliveries, vessels coming from Bantam, Jakarta or Japara were permitted to anchor in the roadsteads of Lonthor and Selamon, once they had been searched by the Dutch and received passports. Natives were not allowed to set out to sea without the prior knowledge of the Dutch governor of the Banda Islands. VOC personnel were at liberty to search any Bandanese vessel, and to confiscate it if it lacked a proper passport.²⁵

Following the treaty's signing, Lam gave orders for the establishment of a stone fortress on the north side of Pulo Way, christened Castle Revenge. Adriaen van der Dussen was appointed vice-governor of the Banda Islands and captain of the Dutch garrison on Pulo Way. Lam departed with his ships to the Moluccas, where he and other Councillors of the Indies elected Dr Laurens Reael (1583–1637) as Governor-General in June 1616. A lawyer by training, Reael belonged to a powerful Amsterdam regent family. He had sailed for the East in May 1611, and served as governor of the Moluccas with distinction. Like his predecessor, Reynst, who had died the previous December, the new Governor-General would soon be forced to pay a visit to the Banda Islands.²⁶

Lam's treaty with the Bandanese already started to fray at the edges in early June 1616. Inhabitants of Pulo Run went over to Nera to kidnap thirty-four men and fifty women originating in Siau, an island just south of Mindanao. At Reynst's orders, the Siauese had been forcibly relocated to the Banda Islands the previous October. It was Van der Dussen's idea to employ the Siauese in harvesting nutmeg and mace on the island of Nera, which had suffered substantial population losses in the wake of the Dutch conquest. No wonder, then, that the inhabitants of Pulo Run kidnapped the Siauese as a counter-move. Dirk van de Sande, Governor of the Banda Islands, was not prepared to tear up Lam's treaty just yet; doing so would greatly endanger the VOC trading post on Great Banda, where the Dutch merchants found themselves—as Van der Dussen put it—in 'enemy territory'. Still, the latter quickly discovered that, in kidnapping the Siauese, the people of Pulo Run had enjoyed the tacit cooperation of quite a few inhabitants of Great Banda. The stage was set for another showdown between the Dutch and the Bandanese, in which the EIC merchant Nathaniel Courthope would play a crucial role.²⁷

5. Cornelis Dedel and Nathaniel Courthope Debate Dutch and English Claims to the Banda Islands

Following the Dutch conquest of Pulo Way, Richard Hunt had managed to escape to Makassar and thence to Bantam, where he could inform Jourdain that the Bandanese were far from reconciled with the Dutch. Allegedly, eight days before Lam's attack, the inhabitants of Pulo Way had ceded their land 'for the use of the English nation', and drawn up 'articles' (no longer extant) to protect 'their liberties'. As physical proof, Hunt brought with him 'the earth of the countrye, sticks and stones', which he claimed to have received from the Bandanese 'in signe of possession of the countrye'. Here was a golden opportunity for the EIC to lay down a marker in the Banda Islands. Jourdain immediately decided to send a new expedition under the command of Nathaniel Courthope, and appointed Sophonias, Hunt and Thomas Spurway as the latter's assistants.²⁸

²⁵ *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, edited by Heeres and Stapel, I, 122–24.

²⁶ Van Goor, *Coen*, 116, 187–91; P.J.A.N. Rietbergen, *De Eerste Landvoogd Pieter Both (1568–1615), Gouverneur Generaal van Nederlands-Indië (1609–1614)* (Zutphen, 1987), 50, 55, 99, 102–03, 324–31; Van Goor, *Coen*, 281–82; *Album Advocatorum: De Advocaten van het Hof van Holland, 1560–1811*, edited by R. Huijbrechts, S. Scheffers, and J. Scheffers-Hofman (Den Haag, 1996), 258; Van der Aa, *Biographisch Woordenboek*, XVI, 115–22; M.E. van Opstall, 'Laurens Reael in de Staten-Generaal, het verslag van Reael over de toestand in Oost-Indië', in *Nederlandse Historische Bronnen*, edited by A.C.F. Koch e.a., 10 volumes (Den Haag, 1979–1992), I (1979), 175–213.

²⁷ *Bouwstoffen*, I, 132–60 (Van der Dussen to the Amsterdam VOC Directors, 25 July 1616); Van Goor, *Coen*, 352–53.

²⁸ Jourdain, *Journal*, 328–29; Foster, *England's Quest of Eastern Trade*, 262–67; Clulow, 'The Art of Claiming' 32–34; Van Goor, *Coen*, 291.

It was Courthope who would become most famous for tenaciously resisting the Dutch claims to the Banda Islands, and defending the rights of the people of Pulo Run. He was recently lionised in Milton's *Nathaniel's Nutmeg*, for example. Not much is known about Courthope's early life. He enlisted in the service of the EIC in November 1609. Disaster struck two years later: captured by the Turks, he languished in prison at Aden and Mocha for many months. On regaining his freedom, he was posted to the EIC trading post on the island of Borneo. At Jourdain's instigation, he departed for the Banda Islands in late 1616, commanding the *Swan* and *Defence*.²⁹

In his instructions, Jourdain warned Courthope to be circumspect in his dealings with the Bandanese—'a peevish, perverse, diffident, and perfidious people'. However, he was also dispatched to find out whether the inhabitants of Pulo Way and Pulo Run still desired to become subjects of James I, in which case they should be induced

to ratify under their hands and seals the former surrender, if lawfully made; if not, then to make a new surrender of all or part of such islands as are yet under their own commands and at their own dispose, leaving out those where the Flemings are possessed and have command.³⁰

Clearly, Jourdain had his doubts about the validity of the ceremony of cession staged by the inhabitants of Pulo Way in March 1616. In staking out claims to overseas trade and territories, the EIC President in Bantam preferred to play by the European rules of the game. If the VOC enjoyed actual possession, meaning fortresses and soldiers on the ground, it was not Courthope's task to challenge the Dutch claims to Nera and Pulo Way. As noted earlier, actual possession was the most potent argument in the toolkit of European empire-builders. Jourdain knew that. He sought to rebalance the power struggle in the Banda Islands by, firstly, inducing those natives who were still in control of their own land to surrender their sovereignty through written treaties and, secondly, by invoking the authority of James I. Written treaties were the lingua franca of European diplomacy—easily understood and valued highly by the parties involved. At the negotiating tables in London and The Hague, the EIC directors would be able to make effective use of a document in which the Bandanese alienated their sovereignty to James I and declared themselves the king's subjects. As Jourdain realised, the Dutch position vis-à-vis the English was notably weaker in Europe than in Asia. The Dutch Republic was still considered a rebel state in European diplomacy, and depended on its French and English allies for survival. In return for James' continuing support at home, surely the Dutch States General could be persuaded to rein in the VOC in Asia?³¹

Courthope arrived on Pulo Run in late December 1616, with two ships in tow, the *Swan* and the *Defence*. He immediately entered into negotiations with the Bandanese leaders who were waiting for him there, in order to renew (as he saw it) the treaty concluded by Hunt. Allegedly, the Bandanese had surrendered both Pulo Way and Pulo Run to James I, 'and given ground to the English' to symbolise this agreement. Moreover, the flag of the King of England had flown over the indigenous defence works on Pulo Way, while three pieces of ordnance had been fired 'in token of the Covenant of the men of Pooloway and Pooloroone'. Yet the new treaty recognised that, as a result of Lam's successful invasion, Pulo Way was now in the 'hands and possession' of the Dutch. It called upon James I to recover Pulo Way as a matter of justice—the Bandanese had, after all, 'absolutely surrendered' it to him. The signatories stressed their indissoluble bond with the English—'one bond to live and dye together—' and offered to send James I a 'branch of Nutmegs' as an annual gift. Moreover, they agreed to sell nutmeg and mace produced on Pulo Way and Pulo Run exclusively to the subjects of the King of England. They assured Courthope that they made these promises not 'in madnesse or

²⁹Alsager Vian, 'Courthope, Nathaniel (d. 1620)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2008, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6462>> [accessed 6 March 2014].

³⁰*EIC Letters*, IV, 215–220, particularly 217 ('The true copy of a Commission for a voyage to Banda', 29 October 1616 o.s.); *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: East Indies, China and Japan*, edited by W. Noel Sainsbury, 8 volumes (London, 1864–1892), II, no. 1171 (Jourdain's Instructions for Nathaniel Courthope, 29 October 1616 o.s.); Foster, *England's Quest of Eastern Trade*, 262–67; Van Goor, *Coen*, 291–92.

³¹Foster, *England's Quest of Eastern Trade*, 265; Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, V, 181; Benton and Straumann, 'Acquiring Empire by Law', 16–17; Van Goor, *Coen*, 291–92.

loosely as the breathing of the wind', but 'in their hearts'. They requested that James I respect their property and persons, and prohibit any practices offensive to Islam, such as 'unreverent usage of women' and 'mayntayning of swine in our country'. Moreover, all inhabitants of Pulo Way and Pulo Run would enjoy freedom of religion: any Bandanese would be free to convert to Christianity, while any Englishman who wished to become a Muslim could do so. Still, the document cautioned against 'discontent betwixt us and the English' on this particular point. Finally, eleven *orangkayas* from Pulo Way and Pulo Run covenanted with Courthope to surrender the two islands to James I. It was again noted that the treaty was a renewal of their agreement with Hunt of late March 1616.³²

Courthope did not have to wait long for a Dutch response. On Christmas Day, a Dutch vessel appeared on the horizon. Courthope immediately decided to land his ordnance and erect substantial fortifications, establishing one bastion on Pulo Run (Fort Swan) and one on the nearby islet of Nalaka (Fort Defence). Three VOC ships nevertheless managed to enter the road of Pulo Run on 13 January 1617 and anchor right next to the *Swan* and the *Defence*. Courthope thereupon advised the Dutch admiral in writing of 'our possession' of the island. The recipient was Cornelis Dedel, a Councillor of the Indies, *fiscaal* (i.e., public prosecutor) and right-hand man of Steven van der Haghen (1563–1624), the Governor of Ambon.³³ Van der Haghen had sent Dedel to the Banda Islands the moment he heard of Courthope's arrival there. According to Dedel's account, he went on board one of the English ships in order to play for time, but met with 'burning wicks' and 'such choler and passion' that he did not even get a chance to speak. He was told in no uncertain terms to leave within two hours. The VOC ships lifted anchor that same evening. Still, Dedel did not depart without a proper exchange of written ultimatums, i.e., a set of documents that legitimised armed conflict between Europeans. These materials survive in Colonial Office 77/1 at the National Archives in Kew. Significantly, the secretary of Castle Nassau—Philip Zuerius—copied, collated and countersigned the documents. In other words, it was the intention of both parties to, firstly, document in writing that they had done everything by the book and, secondly, send copies to Europe for possible use in negotiations between the VOC and EIC.³⁴

³²Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, V, 181–83 (all quotations); Van Goor, *Coen*, 293.

³³Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, V, 87–88; The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA), CO 77/1 f. 96r (council minutes of Nathaniel Courthope, Sophony Cozucke, Thomas Spurway, John Davye, and John Hinchley, 3/13 Jan. 1617); M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs, 'Steven van der Haghen (1563–1624)', in *Vier eeuwen varen: kapiteins, kapers, kooplieden en geleerden*, edited by L. M. Akveld (Bussum, 1973), 26–49. Cornelis Dedel travelled with Gerard Reynst to the East Indies. On his arrival in Bantam in November 1614, the Governor-General appointed him as a Councillor of the Indies and *fiskaal-generaal* (head of the judiciary). Dedel was first sent to the Moluccas. In October 1616, he was transferred to Ambon, where he acted as public prosecutor. Reael had a high opinion of the young man and considered him a potential successor as Governor-General. Sadly, Dedel died in June 1617, on a voyage from the Banda Islands to Ceram. Reael deplored his early demise; see *Geschiedenis van Nederlands Indië*, edited by Stapel, III, 94–95; *Bouwstoffen*, I, 165 (Reael to the Gentlemen XVII, 22 September 1616); NA, VOC 1064, f. 10v (Reael to the Amsterdam VOC Directors, 2 July 1617). Dedel belonged to an established Dutch regent family which had risen to prominence in the Utrecht town government in the fourteenth century. Cornelis Willem Joostz Dedel (d. 1574) was a member of the so-called *Veertigraad* (Council of Forty) of the town of Leiden, and burgomaster of Leiden in 1573. His son, Willem Joosten Dedel (1552–1632), held a law degree and served as a VOC director in Delft. The latter sent at least three of his own sons to the University of Leiden. Nicolaas Dedel (1587–1647) enrolled at the University of Leiden in 1616, and received his appointment as Professor of Law *extraordinarius* eight years later. Johan Dedel (d. 1655) was appointed to the *Hoge Raad* (High Court) of Holland, Zeeland and West-Friesland, and became its President in 1653. Willem Dedel (d. 1650) served as clerk of the *Hoge Raad*; see Van der Aa, *Biographisch Woordenboek*, IV, 82; *Album Advocatorum*, edited by Huijbrechts, Scheffers, and Scheffers-Hofman, 107; W. J. C. Bijleveld, *Opmerkingen over de geslachten behandeld in het Nederlands' Adelsboek* (The Hague, 1949), 48.

³⁴Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, V, 88 TNA, CO77/1 f. 96r (council minutes of Nathaniel Courthope, Sophony Cozucke, Thomas Spurway, John Davye, and John Hinchley, 3/13 Jan. 1617 –copy collated and countersigned by Philip Zuerius: "naer gedane collatie mette originele is dese daarmede bevonden te accorderen [signed] Phs. Zuerius, 1617"), f. 97r (copy of an ultimatum signed by Courthope, Cozucke, Spurway, Davye, and Hinchley, 3 /13 Jan. 1617), f. 98v ("Tweede insinuatie bij de Engelschen aende Hollanders onder Pouloron gedaen 3/13 January 1616/1617" –i.e. "second English ultimatum given to the Dutch in the roadstead of Pulo Run, 3/13 January 1616/1617"), f. 101v ("De l'insinuation jaicté par les serviteurs de la Compagnie des Pays Bas aux serviteurs de la Compagnie Angloise en Banda le 14e du mois de Janvier 1617"), f. 102r (council minutes of Nathaniel Courthope, Sophony Cozucke, Thomas Spurway, George Muschamp, Robert Hayes, John Davye, John Hinchley, Walter Stasie, Barnard Downes, and Richard Swannley, 5 /15 Jan. 1617 –copy collated and countersigned by Philip Zuerius: "naer gedane collatie mette originele is dese daarmede bevonden te accorderen [signed] Phs. Zuerius, 1617"), f. 103v ("Coype van sekere resolutie gevonden int Engelsche aengehaelde Schip de Swaen genaemt"), f. 104r (John Davis to Nathaniel Courthope, 4/14 March 1617 –copy collated and countersigned by Philip Zuerius: "naer gedane collatie mette principale is dese daarmede bevonden te accorderen [signed]

On 14 January 1617, the Dutch sent Courthope a long list of grievances in French. The English stood accused of having aided and abetted the VOC's enemies in the Spice Islands, and of having purchased nutmeg, mace and cloves in contravention of the delivery contracts. The document substantiated the serious accusations with various proofs:

1. After the capture of the indigenous defence works on Pulo Way, the Dutch had discovered a quantity of English arquebuses, powder and artillery, which the English themselves confessed to having sold to the Bandanese.
2. The previous day, the English had planted an English flag on Pulo Run, constructed two or three batteries, and compelled three Dutch ships to withdraw from the island's roadstead within two hours.
3. The English required restitution of Pulo Way, and threatened to take the island by force in case of refusal.
4. The English had planted English flags on the island of Rosengain and in the village of Wayer on Great Banda, and provided rice to the starving inhabitants of Pulo Run, who might otherwise have fled the country.³⁵

These accusations provide one of the clearest expressions of just how the VOC legitimised its claims to the Banda Islands. Significantly, the Dutch ultimatum made no mention of a surrender of sovereignty by the Bandanese. Rather, the official line was that the VOC had entered into exclusive contracts and agreements with the inhabitants of the Spice Islands, who, in return, were obliged to sell their produce to the company alone, as a quid pro quo for the military and naval assistance that they received from the VOC—their champion and protector against Portuguese and Spanish 'tyranny'. Thus, 'in the most courteous manner', the Dutch authorities in the Banda Islands declared that

our nation has taken under its care, and with the assistance of God, effected the defence of several Indian kings and people against the violence and oppression of the Spaniards, Portuguese, and their adherents, and we are resolved henceforth to persevere in so laudable a design, according to the contracts and agreements which the said kings and people, and above all those of the Moluccas, Amboyna, and Banda in general, have reciprocally allowed to our nation, not to give up the fruits of the spices or any other [commodity] to any but our own [people ...].³⁶

As the Dutch authorities saw it, they made a 'legitimate and reasonable request' for the English to leave Pulo Run—taking their two ships, artillery and ammunition with them—and to anchor in the roadstead of Nera instead. If the English complied, they would be treated 'as our best friends'. Should Courthope reject the ultimatum, however, the Dutch authorities would be constrained to

Phs. Zuerius, 1617"), f. 105v ("cotype van den brief van Mr. Davids gevange capitain oft Schipper, aende Engelschen op Poulo Run"), f. 106r (Nathaniel Courthope, Thomas Spurway and John Hinchley to Dedel, 7/17 March 1617 – copy collated and countersigned by Philip Zuerius: "naer gedane collatie mette originele is dese daermede bevonden te accorderen [signed] Phs. Zuerius, 1617"), f. 107v ("Antwoorde der Engelschen opte gedaene insinuatie"), f. 108r (Laurens Reael to Nathaniel Courthope and his companions, 30 March/9 April 1617 – "Copie de la lettre envoyer à Nathiel Courthope cum cosijns à Pouleron de 9 d'avril anno 1617"); *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series* III no. 5; NA, VOC 1064 f. 224–225 (Cornelis Dedel to the Amsterdam VOC directors, 10 May 1617); *Geschiedenis van Nederlands Indië* edited by Stapel, III, 94–95, 102. Reael's letter to the Amsterdam VOC Directors of 10 June 1618 suggests that the Governor-General and the Councillors of the Indies realised the importance of sending their superiors official, notarised documents regarding English activities in the Spice Islands: 'Please find enclosed several documents relating to the English, including an ultimatum which should have been sent as part of Advocate Dedel's dossier [*Hier nevens ghaan eenighe pampieren vande Engelschen ende onder anderen de insinuatie dat bij de stucken moet wesen vande advocaat Dedel*]; see NA, VOC 1067, f. 138v. In 1616–17, Philips Zuerius was a member of the Broad Council at Castle Nassau. His signature can be found in the letter books of the VOC, e.g., NA, VOC 1063, f. 355 (resolution taken by Jan Dirkszoon Lam and the Broad Council of Castle Nassau, 21 March 1616) and NA, VOC 1064, f. 28–37 (resolutions taken by Laurens Reael and the Broad Council of Castle Nassau, 9 and 26 April, 4 and 31 May 1617).

³⁵TNA, CO 77/1, f. 100–01 ('Insinuation des serviteurs de la compagnie du Pais Bas aux serviteurs de la compagnie Angloise en Banda, le 14.e du mois de Janvier 1617'); *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series* III, no. 5; NA, VOC 1064, f. 225 (Dedel to the Amsterdam VOC Directors, 10 May 1617).

³⁶TNA, CO 77/1, f. 100v–101r; *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series* III, no. 5. I have used the English translation in the *Calendar of State Papers*.

use all means possible, including armed force, to maintain the contracts with the Bandanese and compel the English to withdraw. Dedel did not make idle threats. He sent a pinnace to take soundings around Nailaka.³⁷

Courthope reconvened his council the next day, and decided to land another seven pieces of ordnance. In case of a Dutch attack, armed force would be used ‘in defence of our right and ourselves’. Still, the lack of fresh water on Pulo Run—not to mention a fast-diminishing supply of victuals—posed a far bigger threat to the well-being of the English and the Bandanese. A small island to start with, most of the area under cultivation was given over to the nutmeg tree. The inhabitants depended for their survival on food imports from other islands—rice from Java, for example, and sago from Ceram and Buru (near Ambon). Since the Dutch were the dominant maritime power, they effectively controlled the food supply. In times of war, they could simply let their native enemies starve to death.³⁸

The lack of fresh water made itself felt first. On 28 January 1617, John Davis took the *Swan* to Great Banda in order to fill its water casks. In addition, he received from disaffected Bandanese the ‘surrender’ of the village of Wayer and the island of Rosengain. Returning to Pulo Run, Davis had the misfortune to encounter the wily Dedel in the *Morgensterre*. Dedel first gave chase to the *Swan* and then attacked her. According to Master Davis, ‘we fought almost board and board an hour and a half till they had killed five men, maimed three, and hurt eight’. There were no dead or wounded men aboard Dedel’s ship. The *Swan* was towed in triumph to the roadstead of Nera. Its crewmembers were imprisoned in Castle Nassau. As Dedel wrote to the VOC directors, he had no qualms about attacking the *Swan*. The English had received plenty of warnings and ultimatum in the past.³⁹

At the end of February, Courthope sent one of his most trusted men, Robert Hayes, to Castle Nassau to inquire into Dedel’s reasons for capturing the *Swan*. According to Courthope’s journal, the English were accused of being little more than free riders in the Spice Islands, uninvolved observers who took no responsibility for the war against Iberian ‘tyranny’. The authorities at Castle Nassau expected the Dutch and English governments to resolve the conflicts between the EIC and VOC before long. Still, they would do their best to capture the *Defence* and arrest any Englishman found in Wayer and on Rosengain. Hayes received a written message to the effect ‘that the wrongs we offered [the Dutch] could no longer be indured’. Further pressure was put on Courthope in the middle of March, when an envoy from Castle Nassau arrived at Pulo Run, carrying John Davis’ letter. According to the Master of the *Swan*, Courthope was best advised to enter into negotiations with the Dutch and avoid any more bloodshed. Since a merger of the VOC and the EIC seemed to be in the offing, he urged Courthope to anchor the *Defence* in the roadstead of Nera and ‘let the law end it at home’. By his own admission, he and the other surviving crewmembers of the *Swan* were treated well by the authorities at Castle Nassau.⁴⁰

Courthope would have none of this. He sought to spin out the proceedings as much as possible, for the sake of ‘our better fortification’. Thus he replied to Dedel that he could not accept the Dutch offer until he had an opportunity to speak with the *Swan*’s surviving crewmembers. A Bandanese refugee from Nera reliably informed him that the ship’s entire crew had been murdered in cold blood. How could he even be certain that Master Davis’ communication was a ‘true letter’? As for Dedel claiming to have authorisation to ‘beate us of from Poolarooone’, he had been commissioned to ‘maintain the King’s Majesty’s right of England’, and fortify the island ‘against all nations’. Dedel’s reaction was one of unbelief: he wrote to the VOC directors that he had wished to resolve the affair peacefully, but received ‘an absurd answer’ from Courthope, ‘as you can tell from the enclosed

³⁷TNA, CO 77/1, f. 101r; *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, III, no. 5; Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, V, 88–89.

³⁸TNA, CO 77/1, f. 101v, 102r, 103v; *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, III, no. 5; Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, V, 88–89.

³⁹TNA, CO 77/1, f. 104r; *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, III, no. 5; Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, V, 88–89; NA, VOC 1064, f. 225

⁴⁰TNA, CO 77/1, f. 104r; Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, V, 88–89; NA, VOC 1064, f. 226 (Dedel to the Amsterdam VOC Directors, 10 May 1617).

documents'. Still, another Dutch envoy was sent to Pulo Run, carrying Dedel's letter and a second communication from Master Davis, along with the latter's 'boy'. Courthope noted with satisfaction in his journal that he and his men on Pulo Run were now 'almost readie for them'. On 21 March, he returned an 'absolute answer', saying that he had no intention whatsoever to leave Pulo Run.⁴¹

Three days later, Courthope and his council decided to bring all provisions ashore and to beach the leaky *Defence*, which had lost two anchors already. On 30 March, the ship lost her moorings again and drifted towards Great Banda. The twenty crewmembers made a virtue out of necessity: they sailed into the roadstead of Nera and surrendered to the authorities at Castle Nassau. According to Purchas, the editor of Courthope's journal, the ship had been betrayed 'by perfidious knaves'. Courthope may have believed that as well. It was a stroke of luck for the Dutch, of course. Dedel had left the roadstead of Nera in an attempt to reach Pulo Run, but ended up in Ambon instead, largely as a result of adverse currents and winds. It was during his absence from the Banda Islands that the *Defence* fell into Dutch hands. The ship and its crew provided crucial information about Courthope's defences at Pulo Run. Dedel estimated that twenty-two or twenty-three cannons had been landed from the *Swan* and the *Defence* and that fifty or sixty Englishmen remained on the island, which, consequently, could only be attacked 'with iron fists'. Was Courthope really in a strong position, though? Having lost two ships, how was he now going to defend Pulo Run from the Dutch or, indeed, obtain fresh water and food supplies for the men remaining on the island?⁴²

6. Laurens Reael and Cornelis Dedel Construct a Legal Basis for the VOC Monopoly of the Spice Trade

In early April 1617, Reael arrived on Pulo Way. He was alive to the threat that the EIC posed to the incipient VOC monopoly of the spice trade. As Governor of the Moluccas, he had successfully used a combination of blandishments, veiled threats and a show of force to forestall any trade between the inhabitants of the island of Matjan and Captain John Saris in March and April 1613, for example. As Governor-General, he did not feel that, in dealing with the English, he received much guidance or backing from the Gentlemen XVII, the VOC's highest governing board. In late July 1616, he wrote to the Gentlemen XVII to confirm that he had received their letters of 18 March and 29 April 1615, containing detailed accounts of the negotiations between the VOC and the EIC in The Hague that spring. Reael complained that the directors gave contradictory advice on how to deal with the English in the Spice Islands. The enclosed sample ultimatum was simply not fit for purpose. As Reael noted, the directors apparently assumed—or wished to assume—that the English resorted to violence in order to obtain trade in the Spice Islands. If that were the case, the VOC would indeed be entitled to use armed force in defence of its indigenous allies. Ever the jurist, Reael pointed out that he did not need authorisation from the directors to prevent an attack or 'repel violence with violence [*vim vis repellere*]'. This was a right which 'nature itself teaches us to use'. However, the situation in the Spice Islands was quite different. The inhabitants of the Spice Islands traded with the English of their own free will. EIC interloping had become an enormous nuisance: it diverted valuable resources from the war against the Spanish and the Portuguese, and caused growing feelings of resentment towards the VOC. The English merchants never failed to remind the natives how 'their free trade was now shackled by the Dutch and that, ipso facto, they had completely lost their liberty'.⁴³

⁴¹TNA, CO 77/1, f. 106r; Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, V, 88–89; NA, VOC 1064, f. 226.

⁴²Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, V, 90; NA, VOC 1064, f. 227 (Dedel to the Amsterdam VOC Directors, 10 May 1617).

⁴³NA, VOC 1064 f. 1r–2v (Reael to the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, 10 May 1617); Van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle* 436–446; *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, 1610–1638*, edited by W.Ph. Coolhaas, RGP series 104 (The Hague, 1960) 65–66 (Reael to the Gentlemen XVII, 18 July 1616 –all quotations taken from this source); NA, VOC 312 f. 148–157 (Gentlemen XVII to Governor-General Reynst and the Councillors of the Indies, 30 April 1615 –includes a draft ultimatum on f. 156–157); Van Goor, *Coen*, 280–281

Reael's need for greater clarity from the directors was met when he reached Castle Victoria at Ambon in early March 1617. Steven van der Haghen showed him a letter from the Gentlemen XVII of 10 December 1615, instructing the Governor-General and the Councillors of the Indies 'to maintain and assure the trade in the Spice Islands with armed force, without any further simulation or connivance'. Enclosed was yet another sample ultimatum, according to which 'the Chinese, Javanese, Cling and English' should be given 'friendly warning and advertisement' upon their arrival in the Spice Islands. The threat of force was thinly veiled. The directors gave explicit orders for the natives to be 'rigorously punished' for trading with 'foreign nations' in contravention of the contracts concluded with the VOC. The Governor-General and the Councillors of the Indies received permission to use armed force against 'those who support the Indians in their wantonness' or who sought 'to harm the Indians because of a refusal to trade'—that old canard of the Gentlemen XVII. Still, their letter provided Reael with the legal backing he craved in order to take decisive action against the English in the Banda Islands. On 6 March 1617, he and the Councillors of the Indies, including Van der Haghen and Dedel, signed a resolution to put the directors' orders into immediate effect.⁴⁴

That same month, both Dedel and Jaspas Janssen, Governor of Ambon and Councillor of the Indies, tried to attack the English positions at Pulo Run, but failed miserably. Each was in command of a squadron of three warships. Due to contrary winds and currents, neither squadron got near the island, however—Janssen and his ships drifted as much as '50 or 60 miles' east of the archipelago. Arguably, these setbacks left Reael no choice but to cross over to the Banda Islands himself. In order to expedite matters, he decided to travel light and leave 'his papers' behind. When he arrived at Pulo Way on 3 April 1617, he had a sizeable maritime force at his disposal. The squadrons commanded by Dedel and Janssen lay at anchor in the roadstead of Nera, along with the *Defence*. The Dutch ship *Hope* reached the roadstead of Nera the following day, as did a Portuguese pinnace, captured by the Dutch in the Moluccas. Why did the Governor-General and the Councillors of the Indies decide to negotiate with Courthope and the Bandanese, rather than lead an all-out assault on Pulo Run?⁴⁵

Reael and Dedel gave their reasons in letters addressed to the Amsterdam-based directors of the VOC on 10 May 1617. According to Dedel, three hundred and fifty soldiers at most could be spared from garrison duty in the Banda Islands for an expeditionary force against Pulo Run. In order to put them ashore on the island, Dutch ships would have to anchor close to Run Village, a roadstead within range of the three powerful English batteries of Fort Swan. Moreover, Dedel did not doubt that any roads and paths on Pulo Run would be full of caltrops. It would take many days for the soldiers to clear these, and capture the English batteries. In view of the strong sea currents, it would also be a risky undertaking to supply victuals and drinking water to an expeditionary force on Pulo Run.⁴⁶

There were other considerations as well. On Reael's arrival, the Bandanese had presented themselves on the beach with white flags in their hands, requesting peace negotiations. The armed conflict with the Dutch had reduced them to extreme poverty and want. The maritime blockade of the Banda Islands, a tried and tested method in naval warfare in Europe, had been extremely effective: very little sago and rice had reached the Bandanese in the previous ten months. Dedel commented that 'we have seen many [Bandanese] looking like skeletons because of the famine'.⁴⁷ Prior to Courthope's arrival, the inhabitants of Pulo Run had even removed the pits from 'their coconut trees [sago palms?]' and, in their despair, made preparations to leave the island. Indeed, had the armed conflict continued, Reael did not doubt that the entire population of the Banda Islands would have fled elsewhere. Many starving Bandanese had already relocated to the island of Ceram (near Ambon), a place

⁴⁴NA, VOC 1064, f. 24–25 (resolution of 6 March 1617), VOC 312, f. 286 (Gentlemen XVII to Steven van der Haghen, 10 December 1615); Van Goor, *Coen*, 353–54. The VOC directors used the term 'Cling' to denote merchants from the Indian subcontinent.

⁴⁵NA, VOC 1064 f. 1r–2v

⁴⁶NA, VOC 1064 f. 228v (Dedel to the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, 10 May 1617)

⁴⁷NA, VOC 1064 f. 227v (Dedel to the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, 10 May 1617)

where they were accustomed to go with their proas in order to obtain sago and rice from Javanese traders. Since the VOC only cared about the bottom line, it would 'be rather unproductive to possess a land without people'. The expertise of the Bandanese was simply indispensable for harvesting spices. The Governor-General admitted that their 'faithless, extreme fury' irritated him—but he saw no alternative to concluding yet another peace treaty. As Dedel noted, how could the *Outhoorn* otherwise leave for Bantam in July 1617 with a cargo of mace and nutmeg?⁴⁸

Both Reael and Dedel deemed the experiment to repopulate the island of Nera with the inhabitants of Siau to be a complete disaster. In Reael's view, it was hardly surprising that the Bandanese should have 'seduced' the inhabitants of Siau with 'great promises', and carried them away from Nera in June 1616. The Bandanese knew full well 'how disadvantageous it would be for themselves if spices could be harvested without their help'. Nor could one blame the inhabitants of Siau, who had been kidnapped by the VOC first, tearing them away from their 'wives, children, land and king'. A recent eruption of the Gunung Api, which had covered Nera in volcanic ash, had not helped either. While the Dutch busied themselves with their repopulation experiments, the nutmeg trees on the islands of Nera and Pulo Way simply went untended, weeds springing up everywhere. According to Reael, so few knowledgeable workers were available on Pulo Way that nutmeg and mace could be harvested from only a quarter of the trees.⁴⁹

As noted earlier, the VOC directors had given explicit permission for the use of force against European competitors in the Spice Islands in their letter of 10 December 1615. Both Dedel and Reael fully endorsed this policy change, and wished the directors had acted earlier, 'for then it would not have come to this'. However, Reael did not wish to take action against 'Cling, Malay, Javanese and other Asian merchants'. Squeezed by the Spanish and the English, the VOC should avoid creating more enemies in the Spice Islands. There was a strong legal case against the exclusion of Asian merchants. Reael told the directors in no uncertain terms that we 'do not have that kind of sovereignty here'. Speaking as a former Governor of the Moluccas, he explained that all islands and areas of signal importance for the spice trade were subject to 'the King [of Ternate] and his favoured *orangkayas*', who recognised 'our suzerainty' only out of courtesy—'since we took them into our protection, they are bound to sell their cloves to us in return'. However, no other servitude had ever been imposed upon them, let alone discussed with them. Unless reduced to the greatest misery, they would never consent to the VOC de facto banning Asian merchants from the Spice Islands, certainly not co-religionists. There were other considerations. The income of the 'kings and lords of these countries' was crucially dependent on harbour tax, anchorage fees, and other duties related to the spice trade. The common people benefited from the visits of Asian merchants as well. The latter offered a wide variety of products at very cheap prices—'thousands of small items, which we do not import'. In sum, the VOC should do everything in its power to exclude European competitors from the Spice Islands, but leave Asian merchants alone.⁵⁰

Dedel, a law graduate like Reael, made similar points in his letter to the VOC directors. It would be 'very dangerous'—and in contravention of natural law—to suddenly prohibit all trade and communication between the inhabitants of the Spice Islands and 'other Indian nations'. The natives only had to point to the written texts of 'our contracts', which contained no prohibitions to this effect. Moreover, they could obtain their necessities from Asian merchants in far greater variety and at cheaper prices than anything offered by the VOC. Indeed, Dedel doubted that the VOC would be able to fulfil its obligations to the Bandanese with whom Reael had just concluded a new peace treaty. The *Aeolus*, coming from India with textiles, had been shipwrecked near the Sunda Straits. Few VOC vessels laden with rice had reached the Spice Islands that spring, due to a sudden change in the monsoon winds. Moreover, 'so sweet is the notion to be able to trade freely with all the world that [the

⁴⁸NA, VOC 1064 f. 227r, 229r (Dedel to the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, 10 May 1617); *Generale missiven* I 71–72 (Reael to the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, 10 May 1617); NA, VOC 1064 f. 10r (Reael to the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, 10 May 1617).

⁴⁹*Generale missiven*, I, 71–73 (Reael to the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, 10 May 1617); NA, VOC 1064 f. 227r; Van Goor, *Coen* 352–353

⁵⁰*Generale missiven* I, 72–73.

natives] will gladly suffer great dangers for the sake of this'. Dedel's words were prophetic: civil war would not just ravage the Banda Islands, but also Hitu and Ceram (near Ambon) in the first half of the seventeenth century, all because of the VOC's determination to monopolise the spice trade.⁵¹

What were the principal clauses of the peace treaty of 30 April 1617, which Reael concluded with the inhabitants of the islands of Great Banda and Rosengain? First of all, it was affirmed that all the provisions of the peace treaty of May 1616 remained in force, unless noted otherwise. The main difference between the two treaties was that the Bandanese were now instructed to refuse anchorage to the English and other foreigners from Europe. This was clearly aimed at Courthope and his crew at Pulo Run. As stipulated in the 1616 peace treaty, Javanese junks were still permitted to anchor in the roadstead of Nera or in sight of the town of Selamon on the island of Great Banda, provided they first obtained passports from the Dutch. All trade and communication with the inhabitants of Pulo Run was suspended for the duration of the war. The Bandanese were forbidden to, first, visit Pulo Run 'to trade in nutmeg, mace or any other goods', second, support its inhabitants with 'people, ammunition, food stuffs and anything else', and, third, allow them access to any of the other Banda islands. This meant that Bandanese navigation was confined within strict geographical limits. No Bandanese were allowed to sail west of Pulo Way for the duration of the war. In his letter to the VOC directors of 10 May 1617, Reael was not terribly hopeful that the new treaty would last any longer than the previous one. In his view, the Bandanese made promises that they would find it impossible to keep. He would leave orders for the Dutch forces in the Banda Islands to practise restraint, however, and thus 'obtain as many fruits from the country as possible, in order that Your Honours' excessive costs be defrayed by means of rich cargoes'. Of course, Reael would rather have included Pulo Run in the new peace treaty. In April 1617, he had negotiated for three weeks with Courthope, before reaching out to the inhabitants of Rosengain and Great Banda. What had Reael hoped to achieve in his negotiations with Courthope and how did he handle it?⁵²

7. Laurens Reael and Nathaniel Courthope Debate Dutch and English Claims to the Banda Islands

The negotiations between Courthope and Reael have left a long paper trail in the National Archives in Kew, England, courtesy of Philip Zuerius, Reael's private secretary. Zuerius prepared two identical sets of copies—for one for the Dutch, one for the English—of all the documents exchanged between the two parties, copies which he collated and notarised himself. Since the VOC was the dominant naval and military power in the Banda Islands and there was little possibility of inflicting a direct defeat, Courthope and his employers had every incentive to carefully preserve such materials. One day, these might prove useful at the conference tables back in Europe. No wonder, then, that many original documents were reproduced in *Purchas His Pilgrimes*. Still, there is an element of luck involved in the survival of Zuerius' copies at the National Archives in Kew. Reael's letter of May 1617 indicates that he enclosed the other set of copies prepared by Zuerius. The Governor-General realised that it was just as important for the VOC directors to receive the correct documentation. While his letter is extant at the National Archives in The Hague, the enclosures are not. We have no way of knowing what went wrong, or where or when—suffice it to say that not many historians, not even Sir William Foster (1863–1951), have looked at Zuerius' copies in the National Archives in Kew. It is far easier to cite *Purchas his Pilgrimes*, after all. Yet Zuerius' copies, along with the letters of Reael and Dedel, are indispensable for a balanced assessment of what happened in the Banda Islands four hundred years ago.⁵³

⁵¹NA, VOC 1064 f. 223r-v, 228r (Dedel to the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, 10 May 1617); Knaap, *Kruidnagelen en Christenen* 21–35; Gerrit Knaap, 'Kora-kora en kruiddamp: De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in oorlog en vrede in Ambon' in *De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie Tussen Oorlog en Diplomatie*, edited by Knaap and Teitler 257–279.

⁵²*Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, edited by Heeres and Stapel, I, 128–30; NA, VOC 1064, f. 3r–v (Reael to the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, 10 May 1617) and f. 228r (Dedel to the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, 10 May 1617).

⁵³See footnote 34 above; NA, VOC 1064 f. 3v; Stern, *The Company-State* viii, 71, 107.

On 2 April 1617, Courthope dispatched an English messenger to Nera, in order to demand the return of the *Defence*. The messenger did not get any further than Great Banda, where peace negotiations were underway between the Bandanese and the Dutch. Two days later, Reael sent a representative to Pulo Run with a proposal for a meeting. Initially, Courthope turned his offer down for fear of ‘treacherie’. At the same time, he received another letter from John Davis, the unlucky Master of the *Swan* imprisoned at Castle Nassau. The letter was quoted selectively in *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, and for good reason. There were deep divisions among the English in the Banda Islands. ‘If I lose any more men by your arrogance’, so Davis wrote, ‘as here I have lost by sicknesse already, their lives and bloods shall rest upon your heads and your faction’. He clearly blamed Courthope for the fact that the crews of the *Swan* and *Defence* still languished in prison. He warned that the Dutch were authorised to use force against the English. To prevent further bloodshed, he was desperate for an agreement with Reael—‘let the Law decide between our Masters and theirs’. In addition, he cautioned Courthope against putting too much trust in his native allies. He pointed out that the ‘treacherous Bandanese’ were already negotiating a peace treaty with the Dutch on the island of Great Banda, ‘so that they may have time to cut your throats’. Although afterwards Davis’ letter was dismissed by Courthope (and consequently by Purchas) as little more than Dutch propaganda, at the time it did the trick of persuading him to get in touch with Reael. Courthope’s letter has not survived, but Reael’s reply has.⁵⁴

In his letter of 9 April 1617, Reael expressed his astonishment at the ‘very unworthy proceedings’ of the English, who had received plenty of warnings and ultimatums from the Dutch. Notwithstanding the ‘strict alliance’ and ‘good understanding’ between the Dutch States General and the English Crown, ‘the law of nature [*droict de nature*]’ compelled VOC servants to resist English interloping in the Spice Islands. Reael begged Courthope to reconsider his position ‘in order to avoid the further effusion of blood’. Under no circumstance could the Dutch allow other nations to enjoy a trade that they had acquired in the Spice Islands at so great an expense, and to the exclusion of all others. In accordance with the directors’ instructions, the Governor-General was ready to forcibly drive the English out of the Banda Islands. He protested before God and the world to be innocent of any ‘evil or inconvenience’, having desired to maintain a ‘strict friendship’ with the English. Still, he wished to find a solution through negotiations if at all possible. Three days later, Courthope replied that he would cross over to Nera together with Spurway if Reael sent him two ‘pledges’. The Governor-General agreed to this condition. On 16 April, a Dutch galley arrived at Pulo Run with two Dutch hostages, who remained on the island for the duration of the talks. The galley returned to Castle Nassau with Courthope and Spurway on board.⁵⁵

In the letter’s postscript, Reael had inquired after the whereabouts of assistant merchant Christopher van Laar, who had been sent to Pulo Run as a messenger on a previous occasion. Reael warned Courthope not to detain Van Laar against ‘the law of nations [*le droict commun des gens*]’. The young man was indeed at Pulo Run. Complaining about bad treatment by his superiors at Castle Nassau, Van Laar decided to offer his services to the English instead. He even proposed to take a force of fifty armed men to Pulo Way and capture the Dutch fortress there. Spurway did not trust him, however. He explained to Van Laar that the English had no commission to retake Pulo Way ‘by force of Armes’. Since the English enjoyed the island’s ‘first possession and surrender’, he was confident, however, that they would receive it back ‘by right of Law and Justice’, presumably as part of a diplomatic agreement in Europe. To his annoyance, Van Laar enjoyed Courthope’s complete confidence, and could roam freely over Pulo Run, ‘so that he saw all our fortifications’. Spurway took the Dutchman with him when, at Courthope’s behest, he set sail for Bantam in a Bandanese proa in late April. The plan was to seek much-needed assistance from the English factory at Bantam

⁵⁴Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, IV, 521, V, 90–91.

⁵⁵TNA, CO 77/1, f. 108r–v (Reael to Courthope, 30 March/9 April 1617) and 108v (Courthope to Reael, 2/12 April 1617); Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, IV, 522, V, 91; *EIC Letters*, V, 349 (Nathaniel Courthope and Thomas Spurway to the English President at Bantam, 15 April 1617 o.s.).

and put Van Laar on the first ship bound for England. It did not work out that way. George Ball, interim head of the English factory, had no intention of sending a relief force to the Banda Islands. After two months in Bantam, Van Laar switched sides again and fled to the Dutch trading post there. Spurway vented his anger and disappointment in a letter to the EIC directors of November 1617. Had Van Laar been sent to England, he could have acted as a star witness in negotiations with the VOC, which Spurway equated with a 'prosecution in Law'. Arguably, this was how VOC and EIC servants understood a process of negotiation between European powers. When Reael and Courthope sat down for talks at Castle Nassau on 17 April 1617, the companies' various natural law claims to the Banda Islands were uppermost in their minds.⁵⁶

The conversation between Courthope and Reael was far from friendly. Grievances were aired on both sides. The Dutch complained about English 'abuses'. For example, Sir Henry Middleton was alleged to have flown the Dutch flag on *The Trade's Increase* when he turned pirate in the Arabian and Red Seas in 1611/12. Courthope, who had served on *The Trade's Increase*, denounced the accusation as a complete and utter lie. 'Sir Henrie was a Gentleman that much scorned to weare the Hollands colours'. Courthope gave as good as he got and asked his hosts to exhibit the King's letter authorising them 'to take any English to the Eastward of the Selebes' [i.e., modern-day Sulawesi]. If the Dutch could produce it, he would be happy to vacate Pulo Run. But, of course, 'they could shew no such Letter'. Next it was the turn of Reael to use many 'perswasions' to get Courthope to leave Pulo Run, all to no avail. Courthope declared that he had no intention of giving up 'that right which I am able to hold' and thus turning 'Traitor unto my King and Country'. Nor did he wish to betray the Bandanese who had surrendered their land to James I. Apparently, the Governor-General became so irritated at Courthope's intransigence that he 'threw his Hat on the ground, and pulled his Beard for anger'. At the suggestion of Spurway, who was eager to get out of Castle Nassau, Courthope declared that he could not take any decisions on his own, but had to report back to his council at Pulo Run. He promised to send 'an absolute answer' before long. Yet Reael insisted that Courthope sign a written document prior to his departure, acknowledging that he had been offered the *Swan* and the *Defence*, along with their cargoes and crews, on the condition that he remove his artillery from Pulo Run and leave the Banda archipelago with all his people. According to Spurway, Courthope had not signed the document—yet the copy prepared by Zuerius suggests that he had.⁵⁷

Reael had one more ace up his sleeve. In the expectation that Courthope would heed the advice of a countryman, he arranged for Master Davis to be brought into the room. The prisoner proceeded to have 'much discourse' with Courthope, but not in the manner Reael would have wished. Courthope reiterated his offer to vacate Pulo Run if the Dutch could show him a commission of James I, authorising the capture of English ships east of Celebes. Master Davis, 'perswaded that it was true', considered Courthope's offer to be very reasonable, only to discover that Reael could not produce the relevant documentation. Not to be outdone, the Dutch questioned the validity of the surrender of Pulo Run to King James, citing the prior treaty of May 1616 concluded by Lam. Courthope demanded to see the evidence, i.e., 'a true surrender made from the country people to them'. If we may believe the Englishman, his Dutch interlocutors were again unable to come up with anything—'so plainly I saw it was but words'. This seems strange. The treaties between the VOC and the Bandanese are extant at the Dutch National Archives in The Hague in the so-called *Contractboeken*. It is hard to imagine that there were no notarised, authenticated copies at hand in Castle Nassau—unless, of course, Reael had left them behind at Ambon, along with his other papers. At this point in the negotiations, Courthope made a clever counter move. If the Dutch would return the *Defence* 'to carry my goods away and part of my ordnance', he would be content for the Dutch and English factories at Bantam

⁵⁶TNA, CO 77/1, 108r–v; Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, IV, 526–28; Foster, *England's Quest of Eastern Trade*, 269–70.

⁵⁷TNA, CO 77/1 f. 109r (Copy of Reael's offer, signed by Nathaniel Courthope on 7/17 April, 1617); Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, IV, 522–24 (all quotations taken from this source); *EIC Letters*, V, 349–50 (Courthope and Thomas Spurway to the English President at Bantam, 15 April 1617 o.s.); Foster, *England's Quest of Eastern Trade*, 194–97.

to settle their differences through negotiations, provided Pulo Run would not be attacked in the meantime. Should the factories at Bantam fail to arrive at a negotiated settlement, the Dutch would be at liberty 'to do their best against us' when the western monsoon came around again. It is clear from Courthope's letter to the English President at Bantam of 25 April 1617 that he expected an English relief force to reach the Banda Islands at that time as well. Not surprisingly, Reael declined Courthope's offer. Meanwhile, Master Davis burst out 'in great furie' against his Dutch hosts, who, he now believed, had told him 'nothing but lies'. He complained about the ill treatment—'hard usuage' and 'want of food, and clothing'—that he and his crew had received at Castle Nassau. Moreover, they resented being used by the Dutch as bargaining chips in the negotiations with Courthope. Master Davis declared he would be happy to remain a prisoner indefinitely if it meant that Courthope could keep Pulo Run out of Dutch hands. This outcome was not at all what Reael had expected from Davis' meeting with Courthope. Face-to-face negotiations were at an end.⁵⁸

Courthope and Spurway safely returned to Pulo Run, where they released the Dutch hostages. They then replied in writing to Reael's presentation, rejecting all of his demands. They had sworn an oath of allegiance, and were duty-bound to maintain the right of the EIC and James I, 'our Souveraignie Lord'. Nor could they betray the inhabitants of Pulo Run, 'who have surrendered their islandts and themselves unto his Majesty of England'. Indeed, if the Bandanese suspected any kind of double-dealing by the English, the situation could become very dangerous very quickly, the Bandanese 'being the stronger'. Finally, Courthope and Spurway repeated the proposal already tabled at Castle Nassau: they asked Reael to return the *Defence*, allow them to transport their goods to Bantam, and give a promise in writing not to attack Pulo Run until its status had been determined by means of negotiations 'in England or Bantam'. The reply was delivered to Castle Nassau on 21 April 1617.⁵⁹

Reael discussed the reply with the Councillors of the Indies and issued an ultimatum to Courthope and Spurway that same day. Dedel's letter to the VOC directors gives a good insight into the deliberations at Castle Nassau. Dedel dismissed the English proposals as 'totally absurd'. Why should Reael release the *Defence*, allow mace and nutmeg to be shipped to the English factory at Bantam, and wait for Pulo Run's status to be decided 'in Bantam or the fatherland', while the English would remain 'in possession of the aforesaid island'? As Dedel knew very well, actual possession usually tipped the scales in any disputes over European claims to overseas territories. The longer Courthope stayed in undisturbed possession of Pulo Run, the stronger the English case would become in negotiations back in Europe. It was imperative for Reael to assert the Dutch claim to the island, in word as well as in deed.⁶⁰

The ultimatum of 21 April should be seen in this context. Reael first repeated the terms of his presentation four days earlier, but then responded to Courthope's letter. The fact that the Englishman set great store by his alliance with the Bandanese puzzled the Governor-General. Surely, this new alliance could not be more important than 'the ancient alliance and confederation between the Crown of England and the United Provinces'? Moreover, it had been concluded without any authorisation from James I, 'against all right', and with 'infidel moors', enemies of the Dutch, yet bound to the latter 'by contract'. Courthope and his men were given three days to make up their minds. If they persisted in aiding the inhabitants of Pulo Run, Reael protested before God and

⁵⁸Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, IV, 524 and *EIC Letters*, V, 349–50 (all quotations from these two sources); NA, VOC 1064 f. 227v (Cornelis Dedel to the Amsterdam VOC directors, 10 May 1617). Most of the *Contractboeken* (NA, VOC 4777–4783) are bulky, bound volumes of collated, notarised copies of the VOC's treaties and contracts with Asian rulers and peoples. As a rule of thumb, the copies contained in these *Contractboeken* were produced at Batavia Castle (modern-day Jakarta) in the second half of the seventeenth century or later. Clearly, the originals were kept there as well. VOC 4778 is a collection of unbound copies of contracts and treaties with indigenous rulers and peoples that includes materials from the first half of the seventeenth century, such as Hoen's treaty with the Bandanese of August 1609. It is not clear where the originals were kept prior to the construction of Batavia Castle in 1618. Thanks to Coen, Batavia Castle quickly became the undisputed centre of Dutch power in the East Indies, and would remain so for centuries to come. The treaty texts found in the *Contractboeken* form the basis of the twentieth-century source edition, *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, edited by Heeres and Stapel.

⁵⁹TNA, CO 77/1 f. 109r-v (copy, Nathaniel Courthope and Thomas Spurway to Laurens Reael, 10 April 1617 o.s.); NA, VOC 1064 f. 227v.

⁶⁰NA, VOC1064, f. 227v.

the world that he would be innocent of any effusion of blood that might ensue. He also demanded the return of Christopher van Laar.⁶¹

Courthope reacted to the ultimatum by quickly dispatching Van Laar and Spurway to Bantam. The pair safely arrived there in early June. Courthope's side of the story thus reached George Ball and eventually the EIC directors in London. The second Bandanese proa that Courthope sent to Bantam was not so lucky. She hit 'rockie ground' near the island of Buton. Although the crew got ashore, her valuable cargo of mace—which would have been worth five thousand pounds sterling in England—disappeared into the sea.⁶²

Once he had issued the ultimatum, Reael met again with the Councillors of the Indies in order to discuss how best to proceed. The Dutch found themselves on the horns of a dilemma. Was it better to continue the war with the Bandanese or to make a separate peace treaty with the inhabitants of Great Banda and Rosengain? Dedel examined the arguments for and against in his letter to the VOC directors of early May 1617. He realised, for example that the English and the native inhabitants of Pulo Run might profit surreptitiously from a peace treaty with Great Banda and Rosengain. What could prevent the inhabitants of Great Banda and Rosengain from selling spices to the English at Pulo Run or from sending over foodstuffs and reinforcements? There was an important counter argument, however. If the state of war continued, the VOC would not obtain any spices whatsoever. This clinched the argument. Of course, Reael did try to make the new peace treaty as watertight as possible, by prohibiting all trade and communication with Pulo Run—yet he decided against attacking the island during the eastern monsoon. There were not enough soldiers to both launch a successful invasion of Pulo Run and keep the garrisons elsewhere at full strength. Moreover, the island's geography and the batteries established by the English made it difficult to safely land an expeditionary force and send in sufficient reinforcements and supplies. Nor was Pulo Run worth the effort in Dedel's view. Since it produced few spices, it could only be of service to the English as a gateway to the rest of the Banda Islands. Dedel estimated that there were fifty or sixty armed men left on the island, albeit 'with little order and authority'. As far as Dedel could tell, the natives were in charge of the English batteries. Moreover, the rainy season was at hand. The food supplies that Courthope had brought from Bantam would run out at some point. Dedel concluded that the English could expect 'not a little trouble and inconvenience' in the coming months.⁶³

Although Reael and Dedel prioritised European rules of engagement in defending the VOC's claim to the Banda Islands, they were quite willing to employ native ceremonies and structures of authority to buttress their arguments. Dedel explained in his letter to the VOC directors that, when hostilities broke out again in 1616, the Bandanese had appealed to Sultan Mudaffar of Ternate for his intercession. Their letter had reached Ternate through the good offices of Cimelaha Sabadin, the Sultan's governor at Ceram (near Ambon). As John Villiers notes, the rulers of Ternate had claimed suzerainty over the Banda Islands in the sixteenth century, but enforced it sporadically and in a rather nominal fashion—for the purpose of exacting small tributes, for example. If we may believe Portuguese sources, the submission of the Bandanese had been entirely voluntary. In 1607, the Sultan of Ternate had accepted the VOC as his protector (*beschermheer*) in the fight against the Spanish and Portuguese, and agreed to sell the company all spices harvested in his dominions. For a certain section of the Bandanese population, this made the ruler—a co-religionist—an ideal mediator in the worsening conflict with the VOC. According to Dedel, the Bandanese had sought the Sultan's 'aid and consolation', and entreated his intercession on their behalf. When Reael arrived in the Banda Islands in early April, he brought with him the ruler's reply, addressed to the Bandanese 'in general'. According to Dedel, the message was 'not unfavourable to us [i.e., the Dutch]'. The inhabitants of Great Banda and Rosengain treated the letter 'with great reverence and respect', but refused to show it to the inhabitants of Pulo

⁶¹TNA, CO 77/1 f. 109v, 110r (copy, Laurens Reael to Nathaniel Courthope, 21 April 1617, signed by Reael).

⁶²Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, IV, 524–531 (quotation on p. 531); *EIC Letters*, V, 345–52.

⁶³NA, VOC1064, f. 227v–229v (Dedel to the Amsterdam VOC Directors, 10 May 1617—all quotations are taken from this letter), see also 232r–v (Dirck Pieter van de Sande to the Amsterdam VOC Directors, 9 May 1617) and f. 28r–31r (resolutions signed by Reael and the Councillors of the Indies at Castle Nassau, 9, 16, 26, 28 April, and 4 May 1617); Van Goor, *Coen*, 352.

Run or send the latter a copy, claiming that all bonds between them had been severed. Needless to say, the ruler's intervention may well have been decisive in persuading various *orangkayas* on Rosengain and Great Banda to enter into peace negotiations with Reael in late April 1617.⁶⁴

The reaction of the inhabitants of Pulo Run reveals just how important Sultan Mudaffar's letters was for the Bandanese. It also spelled trouble for Courthope. According to Dedel, the inhabitants of Pulo Run managed to obtain a copy of the Sultan's letter from the Ternatan crew of 'a small junk filled with sago'—undoubtedly foodstuffs intended for the hungry Bandanese. With an eye to the peace negotiations, the inhabitants of Pulo Run felt the need to formulate a proper response to the Sultan's letter, declaring that 'they wanted to live in peace with [the Dutch]' and 'let the whites deal with the whites', but could not in good conscience get rid of the English, 'who had treated them so well'. Their response failed to impress Dedel, who dismissed it as mere 'pretext'. The Bandanese had always preferred to 'trade with two nations rather than one', and thus stay in control of the spice trade.⁶⁵

Yet Dedel may have drawn his conclusions too quickly. The written exchanges between the Bandanese and the Sultan of Ternate clearly alarmed Courthope. In his own letters, the English merchant was adept at painting a black-and-white picture of the natives' relationships with the Dutch and the English—allegedly, irreconcilable enmity and hatred versus sweetness and light. He did not have much choice. Should he so much as hint that the Bandanese wavered in their loyalties, how could he justify sinking all his resources into the defence of Pulo Run, with little to show for it? No nutmeg or mace would reach the English factory at Bantam that year. In his letter of 25 April, Courthope mentioned the replies that the Bandanese had received from the Sultan of Ternate and Cimelaha Sabadin, but immediately dismissed these last two as 'slaves to the Hollanders'. Why the outrage? Could it be because he knew that Sultan Mudaffar had advised the Bandanese to submit to the Dutch, on the grounds that 'there is no nation that can compare with them for forces'—to cite Courthope's own paraphrase of the ruler's reply? Curiously, the merchant made no allusion whatsoever to the response of the inhabitants of Pulo Run. Dedel's letter is our only source. Was Courthope unsettled by the thought that his Bandanese allies—putative subjects of James I—might act upon the advice of a Muslim suzerain? There is no doubt that Reael benefited from the Sultan's letter in negotiating a new treaty with the inhabitants of Great Banda and Rosengain. Still, peace would remain elusive in the Banda Islands.⁶⁶

Reael and Dedel left the Banda Islands in early July 1617. The Governor-General expected the English to vacate Pulo Run before long. Two Dutch ships remained in the Banda Islands in order to instil in the natives greater loyalty to the VOC. At the change of the monsoon winds, the ships would go on patrol in the waters west of Pulo Run, in case English relief forces should try to reach the island. Reael was confident that he would find a large Dutch fleet in Bantam at the start of the western monsoon, capable of intercepting any English vessel that dared to set sail for the

⁶⁴NA, VOC 1064 f. 229v (all quotations are taken from this source); Villiers, 'Trade and society in the Banda Islands in the sixteenth century' 730; *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, edited by Heeres and Stapel, I, 50–52, 61–63, 75–78; Van Goor, *Coen* 225, 293–294, 354. Cimelaha Sabadin governed Luhu and Cambello on the island of Ceram on behalf of the ruler of Ternate. He is mentioned in TNA, CO 77/1, f. 100–101, for example. John Jourdain came into contact with him during a visit to Ambon in 1613. Jourdain's journal confirms that 'Cambello, Lugho and Lasede, with other towns' on the island of Ceram were subject to the Sultan of Ternate. The Englishman dismissed the ruler as a puppet and, indeed, a prisoner of the Dutch—'for the [Sultan] doth nothing butt what the Hollanders please'; see Jourdain, *Journal*, 273. Van Goor makes the point that Sultan Mudaffar of Ternate is described as a friend, rather than a vassal, in the 1609 treaty with the VOC. Indeed, the Company was happy to return to the ruler various Moluccan islands captured from the Spanish and Portuguese in the early 1610s. Reael had a good personal relationship with the Sultan. Still, as Governor of the Moluccas, he had few qualms about explicitly instructing the ruler not to have any dealings with the English; see Van Goor, *Coen*, 225, 349–54; Van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle*, 436–46.

⁶⁵NA, VOC 1064, f. 229v.

⁶⁶NA, VOC 1064, f. 229v; *EIC Letters*, V, 351 (Courthope and Spurway to the English President at Bantam, 15 April 1617 o.s.); Van Goor, *Coen*, 293–94. Both Dedel and Reael were aware of deep divisions among the Bandanese. In the report that Reael submitted to the Dutch States General in March 1620, he noted that the Bandanese were 'accustomed to liberty', and, though bound to the VOC by treaty and contract, wavered endlessly in their loyalties. *Orangkayas* could reach internal agreement only 'with great difficulty'. Indeed, it frequently happened that 'young Bandanese [broke] the solemn promises made by their elders'; see Van Opstall, 'Reael in de Staten-Generaal', in *Nederlandse Historische Bronnen*, edited by A.C.F. Koch e.a., I 197.

Spice Islands—‘we will be the strongest’. Since Bandanese proas still visited the island of Ceram to obtain rice from Javanese merchants—in exchange for spices, of course—the Governor-General had dispatched Dedel to put an end to this. Dedel received authorisation to either buy the cargoes of rice in their entirety or persuade the Javanese merchants to anchor in the roadstead of Castle Victoria at Ambon. It was not to be. The young man became gravely ill and died during the crossing to Ceram. Reael deplored his untimely death in a letter to the VOC directors of 2 July 1617, ‘both for the company’s sake and for my own’. Dedel’s penetrating insight and mature judgement were seldom found in older company employees, ‘let alone the younger, giddier ones’. The Governor-General continued on to the Moluccas. His visit to Ternate was a brief one. In early October, he arrived at Bantam with three ships and a frigate in order to consult with Jan Pieterszoon Coen about the situation in the Spice Islands. As Director-General, Coen was the VOC’s second-in-command in the East Indies. It was the first time the two men met in person.⁶⁷

8. Defending Dutch Claims to the Spice Trade in Jakarta and Bantam

The Dutch secondary literature tends to create a stark contrast between Jan Pieterszoon Coen—a Counter Remonstrant with a fierce and decisive personality—and Laurens Reael—allegedly, a ‘gentle’ Remonstrant and broadminded humanist, but lacking in leadership skills. It is certainly true that Coen boasted in his correspondence about his bruising confrontations with pretty much anybody perceived to be standing in the company’s way. As Van Goor notes, Coen consistently advocated a hard line against the VOC’s native enemies and European competitors. He had the advantage of being stationed in Bantam and Jakarta, where he received letters from the Gentlemen XVII months before Reael did in the Spice Islands. Nor did he eschew political manipulation. When he forwarded the directors’ letters of December 1615, in which they explicitly authorised the use of force against the English, he shared their contents with other Councillors of the Indies, including Steven van der Haghen, just to make sure that the Governor-General would abide by the directors’ instructions. Still, we give Coen too much credit if we cast him as the proverbial evil genius behind VOC policy. The measures which Reael and he adopted jointly in late 1617 to safeguard the company’s monopoly of the spice trade were completely in line with the policies which Reael and Dedel had formulated in the Banda Islands that spring. The resolutions taken by the Governor-General and the Councillors of the Indies in Bantam and Jakarta conceptualised hostilities in Asian waters in much the same terms as before, referencing treaties with the natives, actual possession, and just war, through which the company could and did acquire territorial sovereignty.⁶⁸

On 19 November, Reael gave orders in Jakarta to attack any European interloper encountered in ‘those places where we possess fortresses and trading posts’ and where contracts obliged the natives to ‘sell the produce of the land exclusively to us’. By supplying food and ammunition to ‘our enemies, both Spanish and Bandanese’, European interlopers had sought to hollow out ‘our contracts’. They were given a final warning to leave the Spice Islands, or risk having their ships captured, confiscated and incorporated into the VOC fleet. Reael continued in this vein in an ultimatum issued to the English the following day. He accused Courthope of having supplied food and ammunition to Bandanese enemies of the VOC, against whom the company fought ‘a just war’, as well as having ‘formally taken up arms against us’ through the establishment of batteries on Pulo Run. He demanded that the island

⁶⁷NA, VOC 1064 f. 3v, 10v (Reael to the Amsterdam VOC directors, 10 May and 2 July 1617) and f. 39r (resolution of the Governor-General and Councillors of the Indies, 2 June 1617), VOC 1066 f. 375v–378r (Herman van Speult to the Amsterdam VOC directors, 19 Aug. 1617); *Cornelis Buijsero te Bantam, 1616–1618*, edited by J.W. IJzerman (The Hague, 1923) 101; Stapel, *Geschiedenis van Nederlands Indië*, edited by Stapel, III, pp. 104–11; Van Goor, *Coen* 285–87, 293–94.

⁶⁸W.Ph. Coolhaas, ‘Over karakter en daden van J. Pz. Coen’ in: *Bijdragen voor Vaderlandsche Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde* VIII (1943–44) no. 4, 201–237, and no. 5, 60–74; M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian trade and European influence in the Indonesian archipelago, 1500–1630* (The Hague, 1962) 196–222; Meilink-Roelofs, ‘Steven van der Haghen (1563–1624)’ in *Vier eeuwen varen*, edited by Akveld; Van Goor, *Coen* 349–359; *Jan Pieterszoon Coen: Bescheiden Omtrent Zijn Bedrijf in Indië*, edited by H. T. Colenbrander and W. Ph. Coolhaas, 7 vols. (The Hague, 1919–1952), I, 269 (Coen to the Amsterdam VOC directors, 22 August 1617) and 320–321 (Coen to the Gentlemen XVII, 10 January 1618).

be vacated and restored to its original state. English ships heading towards the Spice Islands would be attacked and confiscated. In order that nobody could claim ignorance of the ultimatum, he arranged for copies to be affixed to the doors of the Dutch factories in Jakarta and Bantam.⁶⁹

On 23 November, news reached Jakarta that violent brawls had broken out between the English and the Dutch in Bantam the previous day. It was not the first time. On this particular occasion, the brawls resulted from a Dutch attempt to recapture fugitive Spanish and Portuguese prisoners who had sought refuge in the English factory in Bantam. The English and their supporters—two hundred and fifty armed men in total, among whom were quite a few Bandanese—responded with an attack on a VOC warehouse in Bantam, killing three Japanese guards. On the English side, the losses consisted of one dead (a Bandanese, in fact) and three wounded. Reael reacted with a second ultimatum, demanding that the English either punish the culprits or surrender them to the Dutch. This second ultimatum was delivered into the hands of George Ball four days later, together with the previous one. Needless to say, it did nothing to improve relations with the English merchants in Bantam.⁷⁰

Reael received three replies to his ultimatums, two signed by George Ball on 29 November and another signed by Henry Pepwell, commander of the *Charles*, the following day. In his replies, Ball was his usual acerbic self. He contended that the Dutch had ‘most unjustly’ captured English ships and goods, and murdered and imprisoned the crews, in contravention of the ‘bandes of amity’ between James I of England and the Dutch States General. Ball dismissed Reael’s complaint that the English had colluded with the Bandanese in circumventing the VOC contracts and kidnapping ‘the newe Christian Chiauwers’. In his view, it was just one more example of ‘your accustomed untruthes’. He did not intend to raze English fortifications on Pulo Run or vacate the island, quite the contrary! Since Pulo Run belonged to the ‘crowne of England’, he could defend it ‘in all reason’ against the ‘injust demands and actions’ of the Dutch. He then proceeded to issue an ultimatum of his own. It was entirely lawful for the English to take up arms in self-defence. Unless Reael gave up his ‘evil beginnings’, the Governor-General would bear full responsibility for any effusion of ‘Christian blood’. Ball was equally obstructionist in his second reply to Reael, pooh-poohing both the English attack on the Dutch warehouse in Bantam on 22 November and other violent brawls that had occurred in the streets of Bantam five months earlier. Ball loftily declared: ‘I denye not justice, but where it is refused to bee done anew’. If Reael looked more closely into these incidents, he would find that the blame lay fairly and squarely with ‘the insolencie of thie people’, not the English. Should the Dutch engage in any more hostilities, they would not be righting themselves, but wronging the English, ‘which God, the world and your consience will one day acuse you for’.⁷¹

Captain Henry Pepwell, who had arrived in Bantam in July 1617, was equally firm in his reply to Reael, albeit more diplomatic in his wording. The English had not done anything unworthy of ‘honest men or the honour of our nation’. The commissions issued by James I and the EIC directors prohibited the use of violence unless ‘first provoked thereunto’—instructions which Pepwell had followed to the letter. Yet he also knew—as did Reael—that ‘neither the lawe of God nor of nations forbid to succour the afflicted’. When people decided of their own free will to ‘become the

⁶⁹NA, VOC 1066 f. 199–200 (Reael’s orders to all VOC personnel to attack European interlopers in the Spice Islands, 19 November 1617) and f. 194–196 (Reael’s ultimatums addressed to the English at Bantam, 20 and 23 November 1617); Van Goor, *Coen* 285–87, 294, 301–06, 349–59. On Isaac le Maire’s attempts to break the VOC monopoly of Dutch trade with Asia, see R.C. Bakhuizen van den Brink, ‘Isaac le Maire’ in: *Dutch Authors on Asian History: A Selection of Dutch Historiography on the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, edited by M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs, M.E. van Opstall, and G.J. Schutte (Dordrecht, 1988), 29–75

⁷⁰NA, VOC 1066 f. 201r–203r (three attestations signed by VOC personnel in Bantam regarding the violent brawls with the English on 22 November 1617) and f. 194–196 (Reael’s ultimatums addressed to the English at Bantam, 20 and 23 November 1617); *EIC Letters*, VI, 206–07 (‘Frenchmen’s relation concerning the Hollanders’ abuses of the English, 1617’), 312–315 (‘French account of events at Bantam, July–December 1617’); *Buijsero te Bantam*, edited by IJzerman, 71–76, 105–106; Van Goor, *Coen*, 294–306.

⁷¹*EIC Letters*, VI, 308–315 (‘English replies to the Dutch protest’, signed by George Ball (A) and Henry Pepwell (B), and ‘French account of events at Bantam, July–December 1617’); NA, VOC 1066 f. 196–198 (two replies to the Dutch protests, signed by George Ball on 19 November 1617 o.s., and a reply to the Dutch protests signed by Henry Pepwell on 20 November 1617 o.s.), f. 201r–203r (three attestations signed by VOC personnel in Bantam regarding the violent brawls with the English on 22 November 1617); *Coen: Bescheiden* I, 269; *Buijsero te Bantam*, edited by IJzerman 76, 167; Van Goor, *Coen* 305.

vassals of a king or monarch', as the Bandanese had done by subjecting themselves to James I of England, they were received into the protection of the ruler or his representatives. There was another reason why Dutch claims to the Spice Islands did not stand up in law. Pepwell feigned ignorance of any 'just dominion or superiority' over the Spice Islands other than the title of the King of Spain and Portugal, whose subjects had been 'the first Christians that discovered and conquered in these parts'. Clearly, Pepwell assumed that these competing natural law claims were entirely intelligible to his Dutch interlocutors. Although they operated within a shared legal framework, the English and Dutch parted company when it came to the significance each side attached to different claims. For example, the author of *Mare Liberum* rejected the Iberian title of discovery as totally inapplicable to monsoon Asia, which, far from being undiscovered, had been known to the Ancients.⁷²

Constructing his own hierarchy of natural law claims, Pepwell contended that the Bandanese surrender of sovereignty to James I of England trumped both the VOC's trading contracts with the inhabitants of the Spice Islands and Philip III's titles of discovery and conquest. It is revealing what Pepwell chose not to mention in his reply to Rael. He ignored the fact that the VOC had conquered and built numerous fortresses in the Spice Islands since 1605, and kept sizeable garrisons of soldiers there. Garrisoned fortresses were understood by the VOC as clear markers of sovereignty. The contracts that Lam and Rael had concluded with the Bandanese in 1616 and 1617 explicitly designated the inhabitants of Nera and Pulo Way as VOC subjects, on the grounds that the company had conquered both islands in a just war, and built and garrisoned fortresses there. Even Courthope, who fiercely contested the VOC's claims to the Banda Islands, recognised that the Dutch fortresses on Nera and Pulo Way denoted actual possession of those islands. It certainly informed his conceptualisation of the English claim to Pulo Run. The establishment of English batteries on the island and his long sojourn there were proofs of actual possession. In the hierarchy of natural law claims constructed by Courthope, these proofs were just as important as his treaty with the Bandanese of December 1616, if not more so.⁷³

In his reply to Rael, Pepwell obliquely referenced the argument of actual possession in the context of European politics. He reminded Rael that the English had given many testimonies of their 'sincere and true affection to your nacion'. Had Elizabeth I not staunchly defended Dutch 'liberties', even though thousands of her subjects lost their lives in the wars against the King of Spain and Portugal? Had James I of England not handed back the 'strongholds which he possessed' in the province of Zeeland, in order to show the world 'how upright and just a prince and monarch' he was? Ever since the Treaty of Nonsuch of 1585, the Zeeland towns of Brill, Flushing and Rammekens had served as sureties for the repayment of Elizabeth I's war loans, and had been garrisoned by English soldiers. However, James I had been reluctant to press any claims of actual possession or sovereignty. In his 1604 peace treaty with Spain, the monarch declared himself bound by Elizabeth I's arrangements and unable to hand over the so-called 'cautionary towns' to Philip III of Spain and Portugal. When the United Provinces repaid the war loans in full in April 1616, the King withdrew the English garrisons and returned the towns to Dutch rule. Pepwell expected the VOC to reward James' statesmanship and generosity by accommodating, not prohibiting, English trade in the Spice Islands.⁷⁴

⁷²*EIC Letters*, VI, 310–11 and NA, VOC 1066 f. 198 (Pepwell's reply to the Dutch protests, 20 November 1617 o.s.); *Buijsero te Bantam*, edited by IJzerman, 76, 227; Hugo Grotius, *The Free Sea*, translated by Richard Hakluyt, edited by David Armitage (Indianapolis, IN, 2004) 14.

⁷³*EIC Letters*, VI, 310–11 and NA, VOC 1066 f. 198 (Pepwell's reply to the Dutch protests, 20 November 1617 o.s.); *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, edited by Heeres and Stapel I 122–124, 127–130; Van Goor, *Coen* 305.

⁷⁴*EIC Letters*, VI, 310–11 and NA, VOC 1066 f. 198 (Pepwell's reply to the Dutch protests, 20 November 1617 o.s.); *A General Collection of Treaties, Manifestos, Contracts of Marriage, Renunciations, and other Publick Papers, from the Year 1495, to the Year 1712*, edited by Stephen Whatley (second edition, London, 1732) 136 (article VII of the 1604 treaty between James I of England and Philip III of Spain and Portugal and Archdukes Albert and Isabella); J.C. Grayson, 'From Protectorate to Partnership: Anglo-Dutch relations, 1598–1625' (University of London, 1978) 32, 34, 55–68, 168–173; *Buijsero te Bantam*, edited by IJzerman, 227; Van Goor, *Coen*, 305.

Upon arrival in the East Indies, Pepwell had been disappointed to discover that the ‘good turns’ of the English monarchs meant very little to the Dutch. Reael and his men seemed intent upon breaking ‘the long continued amity and peace’ between the two nations, ‘causelessly’ complaining about ‘wrongs and outrages’ for which the Dutch alone bore responsibility. Given these ‘unchristianlike proceedings’, how could the English have reacted any differently than they did? Pepwell then issued an ultimatum of his own. He protested before ‘Almighty God and the worlde’ that, if the Dutch continued to attack English ships, they alone would be responsible for any ensuing bloodshed.⁷⁵

The replies of Ball and Pepwell must have disappointed Reael. Writing to the Amsterdam VOC directors in July 1617, he was confident that Courthope and his men had acted without proper authorisation from ‘their king and their superiors’, and that a quick visit to the English President at Bantam could resolve the matter. Clearly, that dream had gone up in smoke. Reael was not naïve, however. He explained in his letter of May 1617 that he had already given orders for a sizeable fleet, outnumbering the English, to be assembled at Java at the start of the western monsoon, with the aim of pursuing with ‘double capacity’ any EIC vessel that tried to set sail for the Spice Islands. Plan B was implemented by means of the ultimatum of 20 November 1617. The gloves had come off.⁷⁶

When news arrived in Jakarta of the violent street brawls in Bantam, Jaspas Jansen Jr received instructions to take two ships to Bantam and join two other Dutch ships there in order to demand justice from the local ruler, the Pangoran of Bantam. On 5 December 1617, the Governor-General and the Councillors of the Indies decided to send the ‘remaining ships’ to Bantam as well, in order to cruise for English vessels and prevent any departures for the Spice Islands. A day later, two Dutch yachts intercepted and searched an English vessel about to leave the port of Bantam, on suspicion that it was heading for Makassar and thence to the Spice Islands. The English crew did not exactly cooperate. A fight broke out on board the vessel, which left one Englishman wounded and another killed. Anglo–Dutch relations in Bantam had hit rock bottom.⁷⁷

9. Back to the Banda Islands: Reael and Lam Attempt to Assert VOC Sovereignty through *Jus Conquestus*

In Reael’s view, it was imperative to keep a sufficient number of ships in the Spice Islands to intercept and arrest any European interlopers. He left Jakarta in early January 1618, at the start of the western monsoon. Upon arrival at Ambon, he learned that the mortality rates at Castles Nassau, Belgica and Revenge had risen dramatically due to the ravages of tropical disease. One Dutch governor of the Banda Islands had died already, while his successor was gravely ill. The capture of three indigenous vessels lacking Dutch passports had ruptured the tenuous peace with the Bandanese. None of this came as a surprise to the Governor-General, who protested forcefully against the company’s policy to exclude Asian merchants from the Spice Islands in letters written to the Amsterdam VOC directors that summer. Steven van der Haghen and Jan Dirkszoon Lam did so as well. The three men crossed over to the Banda Islands together, reaching Nera in late March 1618. While they passed by Pulo Run, they did not see any English vessels lying in the roadstead. Reael intended to keep it that way. He ordered four Dutch ships to cruise west of Pulo Run, in order to intercept and arrest any English vessels that attempted to reach the island. On 4 April 1618, Courthope watched in despair as Dutch ships engaged the *Solomon* and *Attendance*—the fight lasted from ‘two of the clocke till nine at night’—and managed to capture both. The English vessels, which carried cargoes of rice obtained at Makassar, were triumphantly towed into the roadstead of Nera. Their crews, ‘stripped out of all money and clothes’, were distributed over the Dutch fleet. There were now over sixty

⁷⁵EIC Letters, VI, 310–11 and NA, VOC 1066 f. 198 (Pepwell’s reply to the Dutch protests, 20 November 1617 o.s.); Van Goor, *Coen*, 305.

⁷⁶NA, VOC 1064 f. 10r, 3v and VOC 1066 f. 194–196

⁷⁷NA, VOC 1066 f. 7–10 (resolutions taken by the Governor-General and Councillors of the Indies, 13 October–6 December 1617); *Geschiedenis van Nederlands Indië*, edited by Stapel, III, 109–11; Van Goor, *Coen*, 305–307.

English prisoners in the Spice Islands. Master Cassarian David, the imprisoned commander of the English squadron, wrote to Courthope at Reael's behest. The Governor-General was eager to reopen face-to-face negotiations. Courthope did not take the bait, however. He protested that he would resist a Dutch invasion of Pulo Run with all his might. Was it idle talk? Since no English relief force had been able to reach Pulo Run, Lam fully expected Courthope to be lynched by his own Bandanese allies—yet the Englishman turned out to have more staying power than Lam anticipated.⁷⁸

Tropical disease and inclement weather took their toll on the Dutch in the Banda Islands in spring and summer 1618, wreaking havoc with Reael's plans to deal decisively with both Courthope and the Bandanese. Lam noted in his letter to the Amsterdam VOC directors that the Governor-General had to sort out the various problems largely on his own. Disease and death dramatically reduced the number of VOC officers and merchants capable of assisting him in his duties. Philip Zuerius, died in the middle of April, for example. The weather conditions were not favourable to Reael's military plans either. Strong winds and heavy rain prevented a military assault on the island of Great Banda in the month of May. When an attack was launched on 4 June—Lam commanded eight companies of soldiers, five hundred and eighty men in total—it proved too difficult to scale the Bandanese fortifications, erected high in the mountains. The following day, a decision in principle was taken to invade Pulo Run, but again the weather refused to cooperate: first becalmed seas then heavy rains and strong winds made a landing impossible. All plans for an invasion were shelved at the start of July. By that time, Lam had fallen dangerously ill—he managed to recover, though. Clearly, factors beyond Reael's control prevented him from bringing all the Banda Islands under VOC control, rather than his supposed indecisiveness. Twentieth-century Dutch historians have given too much credence to Coen's correspondence, which is, indeed, full of denunciations of the Governor-General.⁷⁹

Still, Reael left the Banda Islands in July 1618 with an achievement of sorts. He noted in his letter to the Amsterdam VOC directors that the inhabitants of Selamon (on Great Banda) were selling their mace at Castle Nassau again. The VOC's *Contractboeken* contain an agreement to this effect, signed by Reael and the village's 'orangkayas and magistrates'. The Governor-General used the opportunity to strengthen VOC claims to the Banda Islands, and impose more restrictions on indigenous navigation than ever before. For example, Bandanese fishermen were not permitted to beach their proas on the island of Nera. Clearly, the Governor-General believed that, like all other sovereigns, the VOC was entitled to regulate access to its territory. In addition, the Bandanese were expected to abide by European rules for siege warfare. If the Selamonese wished to sail to other places on the island of Great Banda, they would have to fly a white flag, for instance. Should Bandanese vessels encounter Dutch ships, they were required, 'if shot at', to take in their sails and allow a search. If they were in possession of valid passports, they would receive free passage, of course. The Governor-General and the Councillors of the Indies can have had few illusions that this truce treaty with the inhabitants of Selamon would last any longer than the previous agreements. The other villages on Great Banda remained defiant, and allied with Pulo Run—yet Reael had to continue his voyage to Ambon and

⁷⁸NA, VOC 1067 f. 133–138 (Reael to the Amsterdam VOC directors, 7 May and 10 June 1618), f. 178–183 (Steven van der Haghen to the Amsterdam VOC directors, 6 May and 10 June 1618), f. 186–188 (Jan Dirckszoon Lam to the Amsterdam VOC directors, 10 June 1618), VOC 1068 f. 355 (Martin van der Strenghe to the Amsterdam VOC directors, 15 Aug. 1618); Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, V, 93–95 (all quotations from this source); *Generale Missiven*, I, 82–86 (Reael to the Amsterdam VOC directors, 7 May and 11 July 1618); *Geschiedenis van Nederlands Indië*, edited by Stapel, III, 111–112; Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian trade and European influence* 209–218.

⁷⁹NA, VOC 1067 f. 133–138, 178–183, 186–188, VOC 1068 f. 216–217 (Reael to the Amsterdam VOC directors, 11 July 1618), f. 230–234 (resolutions of the Governor-General and Councillors of the Indies, 19 June–10 July 1618); *Generale Missiven*, I, 86; *Geschiedenis van Nederlands Indië*, edited by Stapel, III, 111–123; Foster, *England's Quest of Eastern Trade*, 275; *Bouwstoffen*, I, xxxiii; Menno Witteveen, *Antonio van Diemen: De Opkomst van de VOC in Azië* (Amsterdam, 2011) 77–96; Van Goor, *Coen*, 286, 316. The correspondence of Jan Pieterszoon Coen and many other documents relating to his VOC career were published in *Coen: Bescheiden*. Needless to say, it is far easier (and quicker) to consult this massive source publication than to read the handwritten letters of Reael, Lam, Dedel, etc. at the Dutch National Archives in The Hague. Van Goor notes in his biography of Coen that Reael addressed far fewer letters to the VOC directors in the period 1611–1619 than Coen did. Judged by sheer quantity, then, the written evidence heavily favours Coen; see Van Goor, *Coen*, 189–92.

the Moluccas, where the VOC's native allies were becoming restless as well. It was hardly a coincidence that an English interloper, the *Thomas*, managed to obtain a cargo of cloves from the ruler of Tidore that summer.⁸⁰

Reael's tenure as Governor-General was coming to an end. The Gentlemen XVII had decided in October 1617 to give the top job to Coen instead. Their appointment letter suggests that they wanted the Governor-General to reside in Bantam to oversee the shipment of rich cargoes to the Dutch Republic, rather than fight expensive wars against the Spanish and Portuguese in the Moluccas. They nevertheless expected Coen to pay a visit to the Spice Islands first—'to put everything in order'—and hoped to receive news of the conquest of Pulo Run before long. Ominously, they were all in favour of peopling the island with Chinese settlers, as Coen had suggested in one of his letters. Van der Haghen and Reael received honourable discharges, and were recalled to the Dutch Republic. Yet the directors stipulated that both men would remain Councillors of the Indies until their departure for Amsterdam, voting second and third in any meeting called by the *governor-general*.⁸¹

Coen received the news of his appointment in late April 1618, and immediately wrote to Reael and Van der Haghen. It took a while for the directors' decisions to be implemented, however. Both van der Haghen and Reael were too ill to return to Bantam that autumn. Coen preferred to stay in Jakarta to oversee the construction of a Dutch fortress there—a highly controversial building project, to say the least. Growing opposition from both the English and the rulers of Jakarta and Bantam spilled over into open warfare in December 1618. When the English gained temporary maritime dominance, thanks to the fleets of Martin Pring and Sir Thomas Dale meeting up in Bantam, Coen finally set sail for Ambon in order to collect more ships, soldiers and ammunition. In March 1619, he took his oath of office at Castle Victoria, in the presence of both Van der Haghen and Reael. The two men returned with him to Jakarta. In late May, Coen managed to relieve the Dutch fortress there and completely destroy the indigenous town. Conquered in a 'just war'—or so the Dutch thought—Jakarta was renamed Batavia, and became the nucleus of the VOC's territorial sovereignty on the island of Java. Coen was not finished yet. He started a maritime blockade of Bantam, and sent out various vessels in pursuit of the English. In July, John Jourdain was caught and killed at Patani, a port on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula.⁸²

Reael and van der Haghen took ship for the Dutch Republic in August 1619, and arrived home after a six-month voyage. It was the first time a Dutch Governor-General had returned alive from the East Indies. In March 1620, the VOC directors offered Reael a gold medal with a 'glorious inscription', commemorating his very real achievements in the East. The report that he wrote on his tenure as Governor-General survives in the archives of the Dutch States General until this day. Indeed, it soon became clear that the VOC could not do without his expertise in Asian affairs. In 1625, he became a VOC director in the Amsterdam Chamber, a position he retained until his death in 1637.⁸³

⁸⁰*Geschiedenis van Nederlands Indië*, edited by Stapel, III, 112, *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, edited by Heeres and Stapel, I, 134–135 (all quotations are taken from this source); NA, VOC 1068 f. 221–222 (Reael to the Amsterdam VOC directors, 20 August 1618), f. 230–234 (resolutions of the Governor-General and Councillors of the Indies, 19 June–10 July 1618); on the *Contractboeken*, see footnote 58 above. According to the treaty text, the *orankayas* of Selamon also signed on behalf of the inhabitants of Rosengain and the villages of Wayar and Dender on Great Banda. In reality, their sympathies lay with the Bandanese on Pulo Run.

⁸¹*Pieter van Dam's Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie 1693–1701*, edited by F. W. Stapel and C. W. T. baron van Boetzelaer van Asperen en Dubbeldam, 7 vols (The Hague, 1927–1954), III, 6–7; *Coen: Bescheiden*, IV, 376–390 (Gentlemen XVII to Coen, 25 October 1617); Van Goor, *Coen*, 345–59. Increasing conflicts between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants in the Dutch Republic may also have played a role in Reael's dismissal and Coen's appointment as Governor-General. Not many VOC directors in Amsterdam relished the thought of Arminius' brother-in-law directing their affairs in the East Indies.

⁸²*Geschiedenis van Nederlands Indië*, edited by Stapel, III, 111–146; Foster, *England's Quest of Eastern Trade*, 272–274; Witteveen, *Van Diemen* 77–96; Van Goor, *Coen* 308–319, 326–359.

⁸³*Dutch-Asiatic Shipping*, edited by Bruijn, Gaastra, and Schöffer, III, voyage 5133.2; *Van Dam's Beschryvinge*, edited by Stapel and Boetzelaer, III (RGP 87) 6–7; Van Opstall, 'Laurens Reael in de Staten-Generaal', in *Nederlandse Historische Bronnen*, edited by A.C.F. Koch e.a., I (1979), 175–213. The VOC directors rewarded Reael handsomely for his services. In addition to the gold medal, he received a lump sum of approximately two-and-a-half thousand guilders and a salary of six hundred guilders a month during his tenure as Governor-General. Coen received the same salary following his appointment as Governor-General.

Reael's distinguished career as a VOC director and Dutch government official—he served the United Provinces both as an ambassador and an admiral of the navy—contrasted sharply with the dismal fate awaiting Courthope in the Banda Islands. The fleets of Pring and Dale, assembled at Bantam in December 1618, were of no help to him. Rather than following Coen to Ambon, Sir Thomas Dale decided to assist the rulers of Bantam and Jakarta in the siege of the Dutch fortress. Only a small pinnace arrived at Pulo Run at the end of January 1619, with letters from Dale and Jourdain encouraging Courthope to hold out and promising speedy assistance. Yet no English ship appeared on the horizon, neither that year nor the following. As Courthope noted in his journal in spring 1620, 'this yeare I had no Letter nor any advice from our Commanders at Bantam, nor any supply'. News of the capture of seven English ships, including the death of Jourdain, reached Pulo Run in March 1620. Characteristically, Courthope's increasingly desperate position did not prevent him from negotiating with the *orangkayas* of Great Banda about 'the surrender of their Land to the Kings Majestie of England'. He was not entirely sanguine, however: 'God grant mee good getting out of these Countrie peoples hands', he wrote in his journal. He knew that his Bandanese allies had spent everything they possessed, while quite a few had lost their lives as well, 'in holding out in expectation of the English forces'. Should the Bandanese conclude that Courthope could not deliver on his promises, his life would be in mortal danger—just as Lam had predicted. Courthope never resolved the dilemma. In October 1620, returning from yet another visit to Great Banda, his proa was intercepted by the Dutch in the waters around Pulo Way. He received a shot in the chest and then leapt overboard, never to be seen again. Arguably, the fact that Courthope had been killed by a Dutch bullet, rather than by his Bandanese allies, earned him the status of a martyr back in England. Samuel Purchas consciously emphasised Courthope's martyrdom in selecting documents for publication in *Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625). An important source for the EIC's early years, its skewed perspective continues to be reproduced in the Anglophone literature, most recently in *Nathaniel's Nutmeg*.⁸⁴

10. Conclusions

Anglo-Dutch imperial competition in the Spice Islands in the period 1609–1621 was steeped in the discourse of natural law and the law of nations. In evaluating claims to trade and territory, it was the framework of choice for VOC and EIC personnel in Asia and diplomats in London and The Hague, most notably Hugo Grotius. As the VOC directors realised, the rapid expansion of the company's territorial and maritime empire required the appointment of trained lawyers to senior positions in Asia—if only to ensure that the company's personnel and subjects would live under a well-regulated government. Apart from Reael, at least two other seventeenth-century Governor-Generals had a background in law, Pieter de Carpentier (g. 1623–1627) and the long-serving Joan Maetsuycker (g. 1653–1678).⁸⁵ Although little is known about the education of EIC servants in this time period, it is very clear from the extant documents that they, too, justified their own conduct with reference to natural law and the law of nations. Whenever the VOC and EIC came into conflict with each other or with indigenous rulers, merchants and peoples, this discourse assumed particular importance.

As relative latecomers to the imperial game, both companies loudly proclaimed a universal freedom of trade and navigation that could not be annulled by any title of discovery or papal grant. Dutch and English interloping in the Iberian maritime and territorial empires in Asia went hand in hand with such verbal attacks on their legitimacy—the one could not have happened without

⁸⁴Helena Winkel-Rauws, *Nederlandsch-Engelsche samenwerking in de Spaansche wateren, 1625–1627* (Amsterdam, 1946) 53–69, 144–192; Van Goor, *Coen*, 308, 323–359; Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, V, 116–119 (letters addressed to Courthope by Sir Thomas Dale and John Jourdain, December 1618) 119–125 (Courthope's journal, February 1619–September 1620—all quotations are taken from this source), 126–127 (journal of Robert Hayes, October 1620); Foster, *England's Quest of Eastern Trade*, 272–276; Milton, *Nathaniel's Nutmeg*.

⁸⁵*Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek*, VI, columns 273–74 and 983–84.

the other. Freedom of trade and navigation was an equally potent argument in dealing with recalcitrant natives. If the VOC and EIC did not get what they wanted, or suspected that competitors received undue advantages, they were quick to invoke natural law and take matters into their own hands. For example, both VOC and EIC merchants reviled the Pangoran of Bantam for most of the 1610s, on account of his alleged ‘tyrannical’ interventions in the Bantam pepper market, suspending trade if and when he saw fit. As M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofs noted in her classic study *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago, 1500–1630* (1962), the ruler simply sought to ensure a level playing field for all merchants in Bantam, including a large number of Chinese traders. From the VOC’s perspective, he had transgressed natural law, however, and deserved condign punishment—hence the maritime blockade of Bantam in summer 1619.⁸⁶

The story was a great deal more complicated in the Spice Islands. By establishing fortresses in preparation for the Twelve Years Truce, the VOC sought to tighten up the protection/tribute exchange with its native allies and strengthen its position as a co-ruler in these territories. The Bandanese saw things differently, of course. As Adam Clulow notes, the *orangkayas* ‘had long been accustomed to finding security by playing off foreign powers’.⁸⁷ Until Verhoef’s arrival in the archipelago, they had treated the VOC as simply one more merchant bidding for their produce. If and when the VOC failed to supply the trade goods they required, such as textiles and rice, they had been at liberty to sell their nutmeg and mace to somebody else—and frequently did. Verhoef was determined to change that. His murder in May 1609 suggests that many Bandanese objected to a close military alliance with the VOC, and were desperate to prevent the construction of a Dutch fortress. Did they suspect that, ultimately, it would result in a complete loss of indigenous sovereignty?

Thanks to Keeling’s presence in the Banda Islands in spring 1609, followed by visits from other EIC merchants and commanders, native opponents of the VOC were confident that they could play off the English against the Dutch and thus regain control of the situation. The Bandanese suffered from internal divisions, however. According to Reael, they governed themselves ‘entirely in a democratic fashion [*populariter*], like a republic’—not exactly a compliment in the seventeenth century.⁸⁸ It may explain why they dismissed Keeling’s suggestion to surrender their sovereignty to the king of England. Only in April 1616, when Lam was about to launch an all-out assault, did the inhabitants of Pulo Way enact a ceremony formally acknowledging James I as their protector. This failed to stop Lam’s conquest of the island—but it did create a very useful precedent for the EIC. Eight months later, Courthope had little difficulty in persuading inhabitants of Pulo Run—many of whom were refugees from Pulo Way—to repeat the ceremony and sign a treaty with him.

Meanwhile, VOC officials continued to sign contracts with the Bandanese, primarily inhabitants of Rosengain and Great Banda. The *orangkayas* of Nera and Pulo Way could no longer be treaty partners. From the VOC perspective, the islands’ conquest in a just war and the establishment of Dutch fortresses there had turned local populations into company subjects. By concluding treaties with inhabitants of Rosengain and Great Banda, both Lam and Reael sought to obtain native recognition of the changed status of Nera and Pulo Way, secure a steady supply of nutmeg and mace for the VOC, and completely isolate Pulo Run and its inhabitants. Although the Governor-General failed to launch a successful invasion of Pulo Run, he used all other means at his disposal to make life difficult for Courthope and his indigenous allies. The wavering loyalties of the Bandanese proved to be the Achilles’ heel of his strategy. In summer 1618, he signed a truce treaty with the ‘*orangkayas* and magistrates’ of Selamon, not with any other villages on Great Banda, which had effectively sided with the inhabitants of Pulo Run.

From the Dutch perspective, the next logical step was to conquer and pacify Great Banda. More nutmeg trees grew on Great Banda than on all the other islands of the archipelago combined. The inhabitants of Pulo Run were crucially dependent on foodstuffs and water reaching them from Great

⁸⁶Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence*, 239–259; Van Goor, *Coen*, 297–349, 361–377.

⁸⁷Clulow, ‘The Art of Claiming’ 30.

⁸⁸Van Opstall, ‘Laurens Reael in de Staten-Generaal’, in *Nederlandse Historische Bronnen*, edited by A.C.F. Koch e.a., I (1979), 197.

Banda. In other words, a Dutch conquest of the island would make it impossible for the English to continue in actual possession of Pulo Run. And so it turned out to be. The inhabitants of Great Banda repulsed Lam's expeditionary force in June 1618, but were soundly defeated by Coen three years later. The Treaty of Defence, concluded by the VOC and EIC in London in June 1619, proved an unexpected benefit in pacifying the archipelago. Since the companies were now officially allied, neither the EIC merchants in Bantam and Jakarta nor the few Englishmen left at Pulo Run dared to interfere with Coen's invasion plans, or offer any support to the Bandanese. Yet a monopoly of the trade in nutmeg and mace came at a high price. Since most Bandanese were killed or put to flight, the VOC had no choice but to create a new colonial society, leasing plots of land to Dutch *perkeniers* and importing thousands of slaves to work the plantations in the archipelago.⁸⁹

For the VOC and the EIC, treaties concluded with Asian rulers and peoples were essential in staking out claims to trade and territory. Any document had to serve multiple purposes, both on the ground in the East Indies and at the negotiating tables back in Europe. The result was a scattershot approach to claiming. Both companies deployed a constantly changing legal suite, which included freedom of trade and navigation, contracts and alliances with native peoples, just war, conquest, actual possession, and the (perceived) surrender of native sovereignty. Europeans lacked a clear and unambiguous formula for making claims to Asian trade or territory. They were improvising all the time. This is abundantly evident in the present case study of Anglo–Dutch rivalry in the Banda islands.

Its maritime dominance in the Spice Islands notwithstanding, the VOC found it difficult to erase the EIC's legal claims. Might did not make right. As we have seen, documents signed in the Banda Islands travelled to Europe with remarkable speed and regularity. Both companies had such effective channels for circulating information that any change in the legal equation in Asia usually found its way back to Amsterdam and London, to add to the wider case. Yet key questions remained unanswered in negotiations between company officials. To whom, and to which goods, did freedom of trade and navigation apply in the Spice Islands? Did Courthope's agreement with the inhabitants of Pulo Run of December 1616 completely annul the long list of treaties between the Dutch and the Bandanese, dating back to 1599? How important was actual possession—fortifications, gun batteries, European soldiers and settlers, etc.—as compared to claims derived from treaties? A straightforward answer to these questions was not forthcoming. At the Anglo–Dutch colonial conferences of 1613 and 1615, Grotius signally failed to convince his English interlocutors that the VOC's treaties with native rulers and peoples had put an end to English freedom of trade in the Spice Islands. Nor could the companies reach agreement on the relative merits of the various arguments in subsequent negotiations. Only when the directors put legal claims aside did they succeed in concluding a Treaty of Defence (1619). According to the treaty text, the EIC was entitled to one third of the spices produced in the Spice Islands, in return for paying one third of the costs of the VOC's military establishment there. That, of course, became the sticking point. Unable to keep up with Dutch military spending, the EIC president in Batavia, Richard Fursland, gave orders in January 1623 to withdraw all English merchants from the Spice Islands. It was Courthope's treaty with the inhabitants of Pulo Run that would keep English claims alive long after any kind of actual possession had ceased.⁹⁰

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⁸⁹Van Goor, *Coen*, 433–65; Loth, 'Armed Incidents and Unpaid Bills', 724–27.

⁹⁰*Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, edited by Heeres and Stapel, I, 11–12, 23–26, 36–41, 66–69, 122–24, 127–30, 133–35, 160–61, 179–83; Grayson, 'From Protectorate to Partnership', 251–70; Van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle*, 359–483; Loth, 'Armed Incidents and Unpaid Bills', 726–28; D. K. Bassett, 'The "Amboyna Massacre" of 1623', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 1(2) (1960), 1–19. The English formally relinquished all claims to Pulo Run at the Treaty of Breda of 1667.

University of Tulane, New Orleans, USA in February 2014, and at the Imperial Locations Workshop at the University of Helsinki, Finland in October 2014. I am greatly indebted to the conference and workshop participants for their constructive criticism, in particular Martti Koskenniemi (University of Helsinki), Liliana Obregón (University of los Andes), and Philip J. Stern (Duke University). I am profoundly grateful to Gerrit Knaap (Huygens ING) and Adam Clulow (Monash University) for commenting extensively on draft versions of this article. I thank my husband, Jaap Jacobs, for his painstaking editorial work.

I wrote this article at the same time that Adam Clulow prepared 'The Art of Claiming: Possession and Resistance in Early Modern Asia' for publication in the *American Historical Review*. We engaged in an extensive email correspondence about seventeenth-century Dutch and English claims-making and Asian responses to it. From different angles, our articles shed new light on the dramatic events that took place in the Banda Islands four hundred years ago.

The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam generously supplied the illustrations for this article. The maps are reproduced by the kind permission of Brill Academic Publishers in Leiden.

I dedicate this article to the memory of Mark Kishlansky, Frank Baird Jr Professor of History at Harvard University. As my academic adviser at Harvard, he taught me the signal importance of relating political theory to real-life events, i. e., human beings thinking and acting in the world. I will be forever in his debt.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Appendix

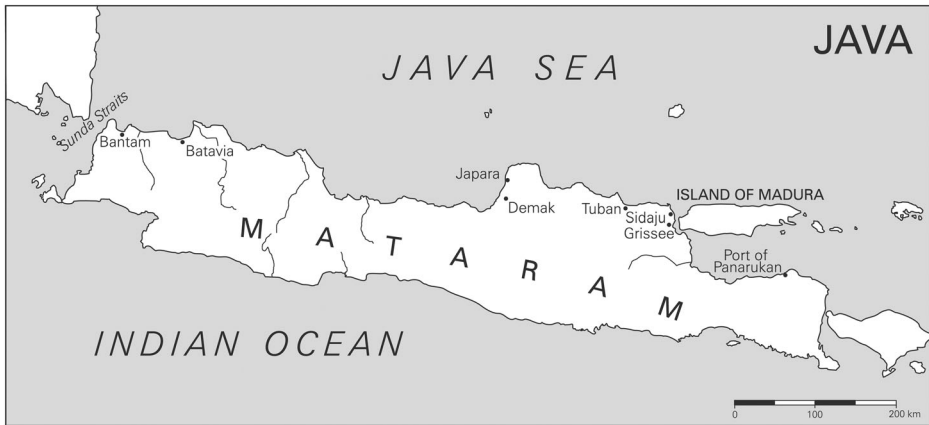
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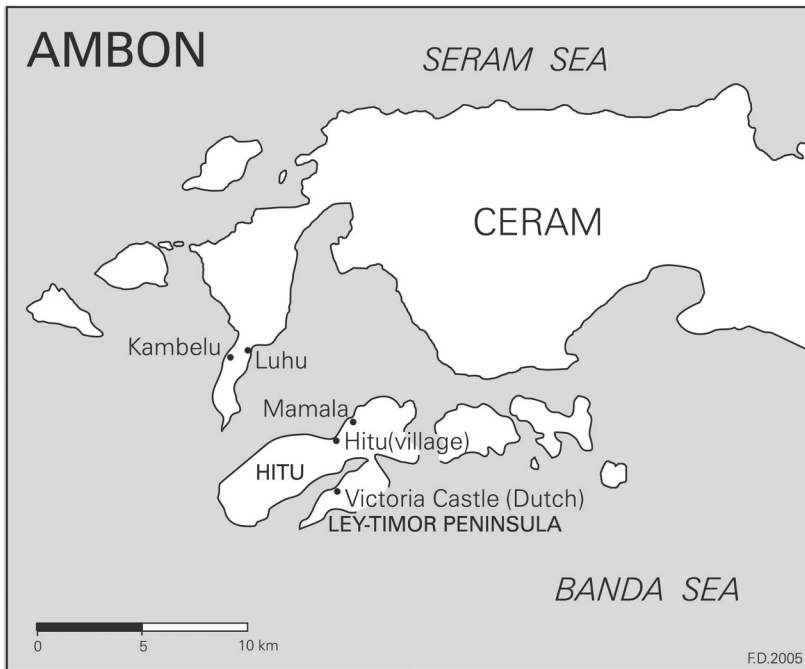
The Netherlands around 1600.



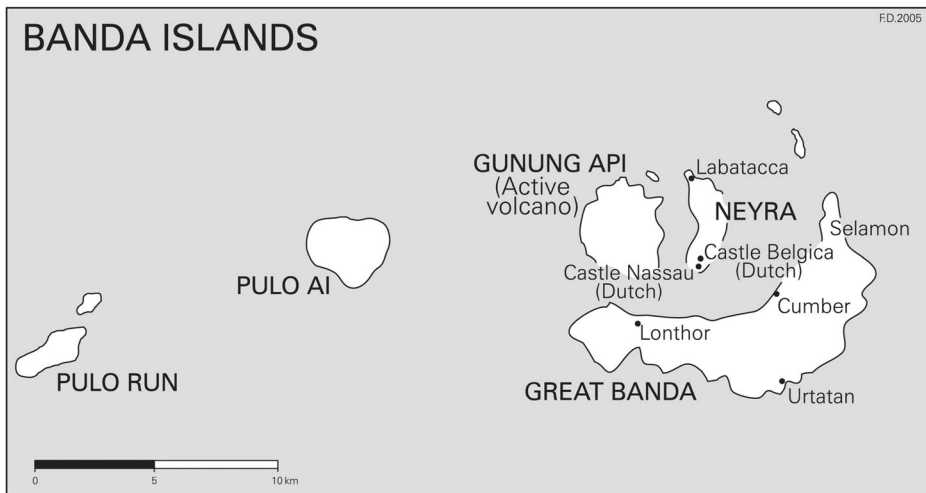
Europe around 1600



Java around 1600



Ambon



Banda Islands



Nutmeg from the Banda Islands, 1599 (Object number: RP-P-OB-75.396)



View of the Banda Islands (Neyra) (Object number: SK-A-4476)



Portrait of Pieter Willemsz Verhoeff (c. 1573-1609) (Object number: SK-A-1469)



Portrait of Gerard Reynst (c. 1568–1615) (Object number: SK-A-3756)



Portrait of Laurens Reael (1583–1637) (Object number: SK-A-3741)



Portrait of Jan Pietersz Coen (1587–1629) (Object number: SK-A-4528)



Batavia Castle, viewed from Kali Besar West, ca. 1656. (Object number: SK-A-19)