

The Other Side of a Maritime Frontier

Pearl-shelling in Aru, 1870-1942

By

Ligia Judith Giay

Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University

BA History (Universitas Sanata Dharma)

MA Colonial & Global History (Universiteit Leiden)

This thesis is presented for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Murdoch University

April 2022

Declaration

I, Ligia Judith Giay, verify that in submitting this thesis:

the thesis is my own account of the research conducted by me, except where other sources are fully acknowledged in the appropriate format,

the extent to which the work of others has been used is documented by a percent allocation of work and signed by myself and my Principal Supervisor,

the thesis contains as its main content work which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any university,

the University supplied plagiarism software has been used to ensure the work is of the appropriate standard to send for examination,

any editing and proof-reading by professional editors comply with the standards set out on the Graduate Research School website, and

that all necessary ethics and safety approvals were obtained, including their relevant approval or permit numbers, as appropriate.

Attribution Statements

The content in this thesis was developed by the Candidate with advice from their supervisory panel.

The following individuals contributed to the thesis.

Contributor	Contribution (%)	Concept Development	Data Collection	Data Analyses	Drafting of Chapters
Ligia J. Giay	80	X	X	X	X
Prof. James F. Warren	10	X		X	X
Dr. Joseph Christensen	5	X			X
Dr. Carol Warren	5	X			

Contribution indicates the total involvement the individuals has had in the creation of the thesis. Placing an 'X' in the remaining boxes indicates what aspect(s) of the thesis each individual engaged in.

By signing this document, the Candidate and Principal Supervisor acknowledge that the above information is accurate and has been agreed to by all other contributors.

Candidate

Principal Supervisor

Abstract

This thesis studies pearl-shelling activity in the Aru Islands, Southeast Moluccas (Netherlands Indies) from the 1870s to the outbreak of World War II. The Aruese have traditionally searched for pearl-shell and traded with foreigners since the 1600s. Their marine procurement activities remained largely undisturbed until the second half of the 19th century. From the 1870s, Australian pearl-shellers entered Aru waters to assess the potential of its pearl-banks, intent upon expanding their pearling activities in the archipelago.

This thesis focuses on Aru which was situated at the far side of this expanding maritime frontier. Responding to Australian incursions, in the 1880s the Dutch installed their administration there, establishing their authority without consulting the Aruese. The Aruese organised resistance movements but the Dutch crushed them. The Dutch used their expanding administrative reach to regulate traditional Aruese marine rights through the pearl fishing ordinances. In creating the Ordinances, the Dutch wanted to preserve traditional pearl-shelling activities, and foster the growth of modern NI pearl-shellers. The ordinance facilitated Sech Said Baadilla's activity in Aru, and later allowed the Australian pearl-sheller James Clark and his multiethnic workforce to operate from Dobo in 1905. His company, the Celebes Trading Company, operated in Aru for four decades. However, by the 1930s it was in trouble, due to repeated crises in the global pearl-shelling industry. The company's failure to modernise led to a situation from which it never recovered due to the outbreak of war.

This thesis uses Dutch colonial records and oral history materials to describe and analyse the transitions and transformations of pearl-shelling in the Aru archipelago between 1870 and 1940 and it highlights the role of foreigners, especially Australians, within the context of an expanding colonial state and a maritime resource frontier.

Some Remarks on the Names of People and Places

Identity is flexible and can be either ascribed or achieved. My use of the term Aruese to refer to the indigenous people of Aru follows the generalising label that the Dutch colonial government, an external party, applied to the whole populace. Aru is home to various communities speaking several different languages. While the use of archipelago-level identity is not unheard of (cf. 'orang Aru' or 'orang Jarjui'), in their day-to-day interaction people from Aru articulate their identities differently based on time, space and audience. These identifications can be based on clan, villages, moieties, religions, islands, etc.

The spellings of names of people and places in Aru varies in different documents and at different moments in time. Barakai, for example, has alternate spellings such as Workai, Workay, and Barakay. Batuley too, appears in documents and books as Watoelei, Watuley, and Gwatle. As much as possible, I adhere to current Indonesian spelling of names and places in this thesis.

Table of Contents

Declaration	i
Attribution Statements	ii
Abstract	iii
Some Remarks on the Names of People and Places	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Figures	vii
List of Tables	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Weights, Measures, and Currencies	x
List of Abbreviation	x
Glossary	xi
INTRODUCTION	1
<i>Space, Place, and Periodisation: A World Pearl-shelling Made and Unmade</i>	6
Literature Review	9
<i>Global Pearl-shelling</i>	10
<i>Aru and History</i>	18
Frontier: Conceptual Underpinnings	24
Sources and Approach	31
Structure of study	33
CHAPTER 1 A LONG HISTORY OF CONNECTION	35
Aru, the Aruese and Its Neighbours	35
<i>Aru under the Shadow of the VOC</i>	38
Dobo and Aru Trade in the 19th century	46
<i>Pearl-shelling in Aru, 1800-1870s</i>	51
<i>The Coral Sea Schooner Incident</i>	55
CHAPTER 2 TURBULENT TIMES ON A FRONTIER	58
The March of the <i>Bestuur</i>	59
<i>Dobo versus the Rest: Early Visitations</i>	62
<i>A More Permanent Presence</i>	70
Aru Resists	73
<i>Belbel in Feruni</i>	75
<i>Naelaer in Baletang</i>	76
<i>Toelfoelen in Krei</i>	78
Towards a National Governance of the Sea	80
CHAPTER 3 SHARING A SEA	87
The Interest of Fellow Countrymen	88
Some Meetings in Aru	95
<i>A Grand Consultation</i>	99
Netherlands Indies' Pearl-shellers	103

CHAPTER 4 SHARED SEAS, SHARED PROBLEMS	113
Merauke: The Push and Pull of the Netherlands Indies	114
Labouring for Pearl-shell at Home and Away	123
<i>The Netherlands Indies and Indentured Labour</i>	124
<i>Pearl-shelling Labour in the Indies</i>	128
The Influence of the Experienced	134
 CHAPTER 5 TWO PEARL KINGS COALESCE	 141
The Celebes Trading Company in Aru	141
The Baadilla Brothers and Its Shadow	145
<i>The CTC and The Baadilla Brothers: An Uneasy Partnership</i>	151
Dobo, Still of Its Own	154
Unseen Encounters	160
 CHAPTER 6 A LONG AND SLOW RETREAT: THE AUSTRALIANS' PROTRACTED WITHDRAWAL	 166
Locked Out of Australia: The Extension of the CTC Permit	166
<i>A Short Reverie: The CTC in Aru, 1909-1915</i>	172
World War I and Pearl-shelling in Aru	177
<i>A New CTC</i>	180
The CTC after Baadilla and Clark	183
 CONCLUSION: A WORLD SHARED AND LEFT BEHIND	 193
 EPILOGUE	 204
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 206
 APPENDICES	
Appendix 1 Overview of pearl-fishing parcels, 1910	218
Appendix 2 The CTC's reported average catch, 1911-1934	219

List of Figures

Figure 1 A <i>Pinctada maxima</i> shell with a blister	1
Figure 2 Aru Map	4
Figure 3 The two moieties (Ursia and Urlima) and their spread in Aru.	42
Figure 4 Schooner <i>Frederika</i> 's movement throughout the Moluccas, 1864-1867.	49
Figure 5 A. J. Bik, <i>Gezicht op een nederzetting op de oostkust van Workai</i> ,	52
Figure 6 Pearl-shelling sites in Aru, 1880s.	67
Figure 7 Sketch of Dobo and Batuley.	72
Figure 8 The centres of revitalisation movements in Aru, 1880-1893.	77
Figure 9 The years coastal lines were charted in the Moluccas and New Guinea	102
Figure 10 Studio portrait of Sech Said bin Abdullah Baädilla	109
Figure 11 A pearling lugger and its crew in Aru	142
Figure 12 Pearling fleets leaving Dobo	143
Figure 13 CTC workers having meal on board a lugger	151
Figure 14 Dobo, 1900	154
Figure 15 Map of Southeast Aru	163
Figure 16 A guidebook's depiction of Dobo	174

List of Tables

Table 1 Vessels leaving the port of Amboina directly to Aru and their cargoes	50
Table 2 The CTC pearl-shelling lease in Aru, 1905-1938	182
Table 3 The value of Netherlands Indies pearl-shell export, 1928-1932 (in guilders)	185

Acknowledgements

I want to express my utmost gratitude to my supervisor Emeritus Professor James Warren, Associate Professor Carol Warren, and Dr. Joseph Christensen. I am immensely grateful for their patience, guidance, grace, good humor, constructive comments, and reading recommendations. I thank them for believing in me, especially during some of the more challenging moments in my candidature.

I am a Murdoch International Postgraduate Scholarship recipient and Dale Banks, Karen Richardson and Kathryn Marquis at the Graduate Research Office consistently supported me throughout the period of my doctoral study. I thank them for their advice and help over the last four years.

My study in Leiden with the Encompass and Cosmopolis group prepared me for this journey. I thank Prof. J.J.L. Gommans, Carolien Stolte, and Marijke van Wissen-van Staden for their support. Alicia Schrikker remains a fantastic mentor, and Esther Zwinkels kindly taught me to be brave with my work and open myself to criticism. The research required me to use Dutch documents and I thank Lili Evers and Rene Wezel who taught me the language and refined my reading skills. Daito Norifumi, FX. Widiarso, and Xu Xiaodong generously shared their day-to-day PhD experiences with me. I mysteriously acquired friends in Leiden; Alita Dyah, Anugrah Rizky, Bagus Sugiharta, Edy Wiria, Fajri Adieyatna, Grace Leksana, Joel Edouard, Maaike van der Kloet, Maria Ingrid, Paula Hendrikx, Raisa Kamila, Ravando Lie, Sanne van Ravensbergen, and Tjahjono Prasadjo. I am grateful for them, it is truly a gift to be surrounded by such intellect and kindness.

My first day at the Asia Research Centre, Prof. Warren told me that it was comprised of a group of good people. He was right, as the ARC became my home, I repeatedly met people who supported me and helped me grow. I want to thank Sia Kozlowski, Prof. Garry Rodan, Drs. Ian Wilson, Jacqui Baker, Jane Hutchinson, Jeff Wilson, and Prof. Kanishka Jayasuriya for their discussions and the good atmosphere of the ARC. I thank my fellow PhD students Brian Giron, Charlotte Pham, Chu Minh Thao, Elaine Llarena, Faris Al-Fadhat, Ghamal Muhammad, Howard Lee, Indra Saefullah, Jely Galang, Jessica Manulong, Kazi Haque, Lian Sinclair, Marco Lagman, Max Findley, Melissa Johnson, Nguyet Tran (Moon), Patricia Dacudao, Rebecca Meckelburg, Sait Abdullah, and Trissia Wijaya for their friendship and companion. I cannot imagine doing my PhD elsewhere.

Numerous people helped me during my fieldwork and archival research. I sincerely want to thank the staffs of the EFEO Library in Jakarta, Het National Archief, Het Utrechts

Archief, JCU Townsville Library, Leiden University Library, the Queensland Maritime Museum and the Rumphius Library in Ambon. I also wish to thank all the ANRI staff, especially those in the reading room, among them Ibu Mira, Ibu Retno, the late ibu Yanah, Mbak Harti, Mbak Zulaikha, and Kakak Othe. I thank too my ANRI buddies: Alexander van der Meer, Mark van de Water, Okubo Shohei, Philip Post, Sander Tetteroo, Ibu Sri Pangastoeti, Tedy Harnawan, and Victor Xu. I appreciate our rants, lunches, and discussions.

I began this journey with almost no knowledge about Aru, and I would like to think I have learned some things along the way. Kaka Sonny Djonler is immensely generous with his knowledge and expertise. He is part of a group of scholars who welcomed me and shared their work about Aru; Ross Gordon, Hans Hägerdal, Antoinette Schapper, Emily Wellfelt, and Joss Whittaker. Bapa Maris Hetharia, Kaka Mika Ganobal and LKDM organised a conference in Dobo that allowed us to meet and discuss the culture, society and history of Aru. Glenda Beilohy and Kaka Wim Manuhutu's passion for the Moluccas constantly fueled my own interest. Kaka Dicky Takndare, Nancy Jouwe, and Veronika Kusumaryati encouraged me to think beyond the confines of my own project. I also want to thank Bapak Anton Haryono, H. Purwanta, Rio Aji, Ign. Sandiwan, Rm. FX Baskara T. Wardaya, and the late Hery Santoso for giving me a good foundation.

I owe much of my local understanding to people who were willing to sit down and share their stories with me. The interviews were very much family affairs, so I thank the divers and their families for taking the time to sit with me: Bapa Clemens Korisen, Bapa Ferdi Malagwar, Ibu Emmy Mangar, Daud Malagwar, Bapa Lukas Remkuy, and Ibu Penina Djamdjig, who provided me with insights and vivid descriptions of their pearling lives. Bapa Jamal Roimenag and his family patiently explained basic things to me. Ibu Margaretha Mangar shared her precious knowledge of Benjuring's history. Ibu Evi and Bapa Abdul Rahim Baadilla kindly answered questions about their family history.

Throughout the course of my entire journey, my family constantly offered their prayers and support. My parents, Benny and Damaris Giay; my siblings, Libbie and Vico, were always interested and patient. As I travelled abroad, Tanta Lidia and Wiwince Pigome enabled me to feel at home in Australia the way Tante Elsy and Nelly Ukung did in the Netherlands.

Weights, Measures, and Currencies

Weights

1 pikol 64.1 kilograms*

1 kati 641 grams

Measures

1 fathom 6 feet or 1.8288 metre

Currencies

f (*florijn*, Dutch guilders) 1 pound = ± f12 = (1876-1926)**

* This measure applies only for pearl-shell, based on a 1907 official's report. I use the specific measurement instead of the common 122-125 pound from Knaap and Sutherland, but I follow their estimate that 1 kati is 1/100 of a pikol (Knaap & Sutherland, 2004:7-8, 176).

** de Hoog, de Vries, van Riel, & Stellinga, 2021: 54.

List of Abbreviation

ANRI *Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia*, Jakarta (The National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia)

NL-HaNA *Het Nationaal Archief*, The Hague (The National Archives)

VOC *Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie* (The Dutch East Indies Company)

Glossary

of Malay (M.) and Dutch (D.) words

<i>Besluit</i>	D. Decree
<i>Bestuur</i>	D. (Government) administration and or rule
<i>Buitengewesten</i>	D. Outer Islands, used to areas in the Netherlands Indies outside of Java and Madura
<i>Controleur</i>	D. Dutch colonial official in charge of <i>onderafdeling</i> administrative region
<i>Nahkoda</i>	M. master of a native vessel
<i>Orangkaja</i>	M. community leader in the Moluccas
<i>Perkenier</i>	D. the plantation-estates system the Dutch established in the Banda Islands wherein enslaved people cultivated and collected nutmeg
<i>Posthouder</i>	D. Dutch colonial official below the <i>controleur</i>
<i>Staatsblad</i>	D. State Gazette
<i>Suanggi</i>	M. a vengeful spirit, a witch

Introduction

I saw a pearl-shell for the first time in the Aru Islands in 2019. My host in Benjuring, Aduar Island showed me a *Pinctada maxima* shell with blister (see figure 1). The shell was between twenty and twenty-five centimetres in diameter, and my host hoped it would fetch him around two hundred and fifty thousand rupiahs (around 25 AUD). Aduar Island is home to two diving communities; Benjuring and Kabalsiang (see figure 2). Both are Batuley-speaking communities, and together with five other communities, they make up the Batuley group.¹ The Batuley group live in seven different communities, spread around the north-eastern coast of Aru and these communities are home to numerous divers who go to the seas to gain livelihood. My host was one of those divers, and his occupation contributes to the littoral character of his community.² The industry he participates in, pearl-shelling, is centuries old and its character has changed since it was first documented in the seventeenth century.



Figure 1 A *Pinctada maxima* shell with a blister.

¹ The Batuley language is an Austronesian language; one among the fourteen languages in the archipelago. According to Benjamin Daigle, in 2015 there were approximately four-thousand Batuley speakers. Most of them live in the seven Batuley-speaking communities: Benjuring, Kabalsiang, Batuley, Kumul, Waria, Jursiang, and Sewer. Henceforth, unless specified, when I speak of the Batuley I am referring to people from these seven communities. Benjamin Daigle, "A Grammar Sketch of Batuley: An Austronesian Language of Aru, Eastern Indonesia" (MA Thesis, Universiteit Leiden, 2015), 1-6.

² Michael N. Pearson, "Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems," *Journal of World History* 17, no. 4 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2006.0059>.

The Aruese have gathered marine and forest produce for distant markets for centuries, defying the erroneous perception that the archipelago is remote and isolated. The archipelago's history is one of connections, not just among communities residing there but with foreigners representing the global forces that compelled the Aruese to adjust their economic activity. As anthropologist Patricia Spyer writes, any discussion about Aru must start with an understanding of the region's long-standing cultural and commercial entanglements.³

These historical entanglements are directly connected to Aru's long-established commercial importance. Aru had trade goods of a special kind; desirable natural items that could be commodified. The archipelago is rich, as both its seas and forest have products that foreign traders found worth traveling a great distance to acquire. Apart from sustenance, the seas around Aru contained trepang (edible sea-slugs), tortoise, and sharks; the forest had damar and birds-of-paradise.⁴ Aru was early enmeshed in regional-global trade with all its ups and downs. As Pamela Swadling notes, in different periods of time, specific natural products became high-demand market commodities and at other times, the same products faded into the background of regional trade as others became more popular.⁵ The Aru archipelago remained important throughout the cycle of changes because it always had something to offer the distant market. The archipelago's ability to provide desired trade goods ensured the Aruese continued entanglement with the outside world and regional-global trade.

Among all those products that Aru offered, this thesis specifically focuses on the *Pinctada maxima*; the history of its collection in Aru and how it affected the history of the people collecting it. It is important to begin with a caveat that the focus here is not on pearls, but rather the shells that could produce them. The nacre within the shell, also known as mother-of-pearl, has been an important material for engravings and other ornaments for centuries. Historically, the pearling industry in Aru developed because of the need for nacre. As a commodity-centred history, the intent of this thesis is modest, namely to explain how the commodification of pearl-shell and global desire for it changed Aru's

³ Patricia Spyer, *The Memory of Trade: Modernity's Entanglements on an Eastern Indonesian Island* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 4.

⁴ For the history of trepang trading, see Heather Sutherland, "Trepang and Wangkang; The China Trade of Eighteenth-century Makassar c.1720s-1840s," *BKI* 156, no. 3 (2000), <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003835>. For the history of the birds-of-paradise trade in the region and in Aru see Pamela Swadling, *Plumes from Paradise: Trade Cycles in Outer Southeast Asia and Their Impact on New Guinea and Nearby Islands until 1920* (Boroko: Papua New Guinea National Museum, 1996), 49-107, 166-172.

⁵ Swadling, *Plumes from Paradise*, 15-17.

economic and social character. Pearl-shelling, the search for pearl-shell, in Aru predated the arrival of the Dutch in the region and it intensified in the nineteenth century as desire for the shell skyrocketed. Between 1870 and the outbreak of World War II the search for *Pinctada maxima* reached its zenith, attracting entrepreneurs and merchant adventurers from Australia who also wanted to operate in Aru. Their persistent presence altered the history of Aru as they compelled the Dutch colonial government to administer Aru waters. Some tangible and intangible remnants of these changes still remain today, attesting to the role of pearl-shelling in Aru history.

Before I move on, let me acknowledge the limits of the commodity-centred approach this study uses. Patterns of desire or consumption of pearl-shell was not constant, and the fluctuations did not necessarily reflect the volume or value of the trade. This study is not a history of Aru trade and to claim to do so would do a disservice to the histories of communities in the interior of the archipelago since their economic activities are largely unmentioned. The focus of this study concentrates upon those communities which have traditionally collected marine products for centuries and the largely external pearl-shelling enterprise that operated alongside them in the first half of the twentieth century.

Having said that, let me now justify the commodity-centred history approach of this study. Studies focusing on commodities demonstrate that commodified things have stories that go beyond their procurement, transportation, manufacture, and eventual consumption. This is true globally, as Sven Beckert convincingly shows in his work on the diverse histories that converge and diverge around cotton as a commodity.⁶ Closer to Aru, a focus on the collection of birds-of-paradise revealed connections between disparate regions around the Moluccas and New Guinea and the entangled lives of those involved in the procurements of the birds.⁷ Closer to pearl-shelling activity, Campbell Macknight demonstrates through the voyaging Makassarese traders, there existed a shared language in the trepang trade in Aru that continues all the way south to the northern coast of Australia.⁸ Aru features in both studies because it was among the regional places that provided such commodities. These studies place the Aru archipelago within wider trading networks and revealed connections with other more distant places, as external traders arrived, collected, and transported the products to other ports to be sold and

⁶ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014).

⁷ Swadling, *Plumes from Paradise*.

⁸ Charles Campbell Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege: Macassan Trepangers in Northern Australia* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 1976)., 6-7, 36-37. It is important to note that Macknight was uncertain whether there were direct trepang voyages between Aru and Australia.

processed.⁹ Their works have also contributed to the understanding that Aru was not an isolated place.

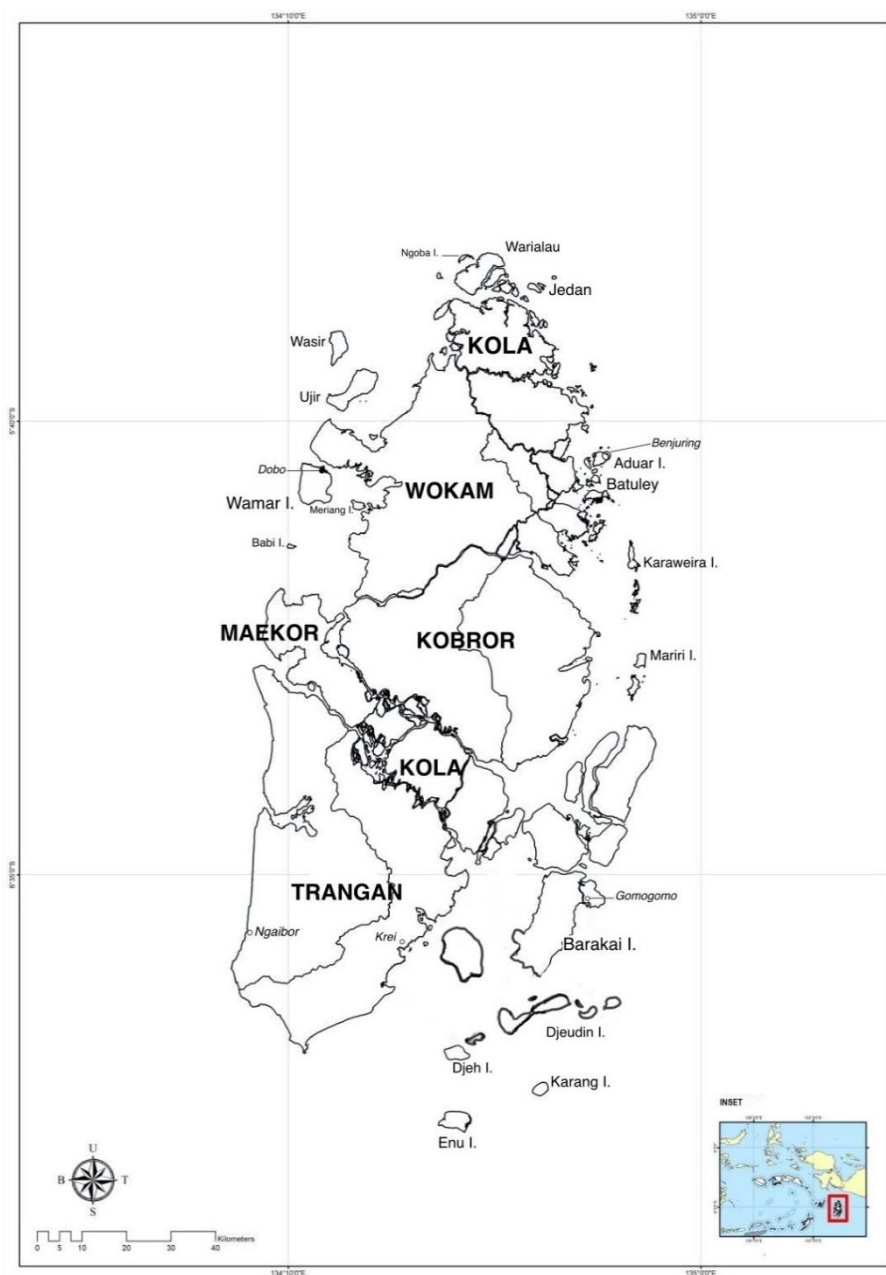


Figure 2 Aru Map.

The study of Aru with a focus on pearl-shelling reveals how a niche industry had wide-ranging local implications beyond the search for the commodity itself. We have seen this

⁹ The inverse was true as well, as the movement of traders and the goods they exchanged in Aru were integrated into social life. See Leonard Y. Andaya, "The Social Value of Elephant Tusks and Bronze Drums among Certain Societies in Eastern Indonesia," *BKI* 172, no. 1 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17201001>.

in the case of birds-of-paradise, whose collection inspired questions about extinction and conservation.¹⁰ In Aru, the desire for pearl-shelling triggered discussions within Dutch colonial ranks about traditional rights over water and the limits by-proxy of state territorial waters. This thesis does not focus on the circulations of pearl-shell, instead it localises the commodity-centred approach, by tracing how fluctuating demand affected the course of life in Aru. This allows me to track local economic and social changes as demand for pearl-shell rose and later declined. Furthermore, it establishes a context to attend to those crucial moments when both Aruese and Australian pearl-shellers responded to changing global circumstances in their own ways. This object-centred focus allows us to understand an industry whose peak is now in the past but whose legacies still affect lives today.

My thesis statement is straightforward yet complicated: the Dutch colonial government's effort to accommodate Australian pearl-shellers in Aru and manage pearling activity there opened Aru and its people to foreign capital. The colonial government's effort to make space for foreigners came at the expense of the Aruese, and this eventually contributed to their dispossession. Several related processes and themes emerge to support this thesis and illustrate how it unfolded between 1870 and 1942: colonial expansion and state consolidation, protracted negotiation over traditional marine rights, and the vexed question of jurisdiction over territorial waters. To properly manage pearl-shelling in Aru the Dutch had to resolve all these problems; their ability to mediate with foreign interlopers was the result of small, calculated processes and measures that gradually compromised the Aruese traditional hold over their land and waters, making them accessible to foreigners. Put more simply, Aru had to go through an enclosure movement, wherein nature had to be understood, reviewed and altered to 'ensure that their economic activity was legible, taxable, assessable and confiscatable or, failing that, to replace it with forms of production that were [productive].'¹¹ The Dutch primarily viewed the pearl-shelling industry as a political problem. To learn how the Australians altered the terms under which pearl-shelling proceeded in Aru, we need to first understand how the Dutch acquired enough authority to impose their rule in the

¹⁰ R. B. Cribb, "Birds of Paradise and Environmental Politics in Colonial Indonesia, 1890-1931," in *Paper Landscapes: Explorations in the Environmental History of Indonesia*, ed. P. Boomgaard, Freek Colombijn, and David Henley, Verhandelingen van het KITLV (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997), 387ff and Swadling, *Plumes from Paradise*, 92-99.

¹¹ James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 4-5.

archipelago. An understanding of that explains why the history of pearl-shelling in the region is not self-contained.

Space, Place, and Periodisation: A World Pearl-shelling Made and Unmade

This thesis' intention constrains a global history and makes it local. It speaks about the global world as a phenomenon that gradually arrives instead of focusing on the mobility of the pearling industry. Aru was part of what Julia Martinez and Adrian Vickers call the pearl frontier, 'a single sphere of activity' that spans an area from:

'..[the] westernmost point the far north of Western Australia; it then tracked eastward across the Northern Territory to the Torres Strait in north Queensland and from there across to Papua New Guinea. Moving westward from the Island of New Guinea it included the oldest known pearling beds in Maluku (the Moluccas) in eastern Indonesia. The zone covered the Arafura and Timor Seas, and part of the Flores Sea.'¹²

From the 1870s until WWII, Australian pearl-shellers recruited indentured labour from Singapore and Kupang.¹³ Martinez and Vickers framed the pearl frontier with a keen awareness of the workers' mobility and lived experience, envisioning the geographic space as a backdrop for the story of the relationships that they built in Australia, with each other and with Indigenous Australians.

Broadly speaking, the Aruese were not the mobile participants mentioned in the history of the pearl frontier. It is possible that some Aruese worked in Australia, but collectively Aru's participation was limited to people from its east coast who continued to dive throughout this period. The Aruese were not part of the labour circulations Martinez and Vickers discuss; their continued activity at home already marked participation in the unfolding historical moment in regional time from which the pearl frontier emerged. It was traditional business as usual for the Aruese, but the pearl frontier and its labour mobility came to them.

Along the pearl frontier, different ways of pearl-shelling developed side by side. The Aruese and some Indigenous communities in Australia have collected pearl-shells by

¹² Julia Martínez and Adrian Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier: Indonesian Labor and Indigenous Encounters in Australia's Northern Trading Network* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015): 10.

¹³ Julia Martínez, "Indonesians Challenging White Australia: 'Koepangers' in the north Australian pearl-shell industry, 1870s to 1960s," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 40, no. 117 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2012.683678>, 234-236.

wading in low tides and engaged in naked diving for centuries.¹⁴ When white men began pearl-shelling in Western Australia they engaged Indigenous shell collectors or bought shell from them. However, when a small number of them began operating with boats in 1866, the industry became a more diverse and complicated economic activity.¹⁵ Aruese, undisturbed by all those regional changes, continued their traditional pearling activities. The Makassarese who, for at least two centuries, have traded with different indigenous Australian nations perhaps sensed the shift from the outside world first.

The pearling industry that facilitated so much movement within this frontier was an industry in the truest sense. White Australians, aware of its profitability, began sinking serious capital into pearl-shelling; purchasing vessels, acquiring diving technology, and recruiting labour to work in their employ. This began in the 1870s when they employed indentured labour on a large scale from Kupang to collect pearl-shell. The emergent industry was different from the traditional Aruese and Indigenous Australian fishing activity because of its exclusive focus on pearl-shell. On the other hand, the Aruese and most Indigenous Australians were more inclusive and collected pearl-shell in addition to other marine produce.

Besides the labour recruitment, industrial pearl-shelling was also mobile in its operation. For several centuries, regular visits from Makassarese traders in search of trepang connected the Eastern Seas and Torres Strait.¹⁶ From the 1870s until WWII, Australian fleets regularly moved around the pearl frontier in search of pearl-shell and people to collect them. The industry flourished in the decades after 1870, and the region was full of economic activity and intra-race and intra-ethnic interactions. At the height of the frontier's development, the space had similar qualities and characteristics to the marine produce collection in the Sulu Zone. There, James Warren notes, multiple cultures and peoples encountered one another beyond their own geographical border, operating within

¹⁴ Mike McCarthy, "Naked Diving for Mother-of-Pearl," *Early Days: Journal of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society* 13, no. 2 (2008), 243-252.

¹⁵ Under the guise of cooperation, there were paternalistic schemes in the Torres Strait to facilitate Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders with vessels to operate more like an industry. See Steve Mullins, "Company Boats, Sailing Dinghies and Passenger Fish: Fathoming Torres Strait Islander Participation in the Maritime Economy," *Labour History*, no. 103 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.5263/labourhistory.103.0039>. See also Regina Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait: Resource Use, Development and Decline 1860s-1960s* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1994), 61 ff.

¹⁶ Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege*, 18-37.

a context of social and class inequality and conflict.¹⁷ The regional seas were thoroughly alive and contested, and the pearling industry made it a busy place where many things happened.

It is notable that the emergence of this regional moment coincided with high imperialism and that the pearl frontier emerged and developed on the peripheries of two colonial regimes. Colonial administrations from both sides of the Torres Strait had various concerns about specific aspects of the industry and its development. Colonial states in Australia interfered in the modern industry relatively early since they wanted more direct control and to levy taxes. The same administrative concerns only bothered the Dutch a few decades later. The industry's range of mobility was at the heart of the various colonial regimes' anxiety, the fleets entered and left different colonial jurisdictions beyond the reach of government authority. In Australia, this concerned state governments because they wanted to levy taxes from pearling activities that took place in extraterritorial waters, while the Indies' government was concerned because the mobility of Australian pearl-shellers threatened the integrity of their islands and seas. Oceans and seas are difficult to police, and the pearl-shellers' unsurveilled mobility was the enemy of both colonial regimes.¹⁸

From the beginning to the end of the pearl frontier, the industry went through repeated crises wherein pearling enterprises had to repeatedly consider whether the business was worth conducting on a large scale. The answer to this question depended on different factors, including the different level of support that the colonial regimes gave to the industry. In Australia, white pearlers developed a relationship with colonial governments that involved both subsidy and scrutiny. The Dutch were not as involved in the industry, although they welcomed several aborted efforts to build small-scale pearling operations in Aru. However, it was not until Sech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla began his operation in the 1890s that the Aruese regularly worked side by side with regional strangers in an organised fleet. The scale of the process intensified when the Australian-financed Celebes Trading Company began operating multiple fleets within Aru territorial waters in 1905.

¹⁷ James F. Warren, "The Sulu Zone, the World Capitalist Economy and the Historical Imagination: Problematizing Global-Local Interconnections and Interdependencies," *Southeast Asian Studies* 35, no. 2 (1997), <https://kyoto-seas.org/pdf/35/2/350201.pdf>, 178.

¹⁸ This was also the time during which the nomadic Bajau and their fishing 'rights' started becoming an issue for the colonial government. See Natasha Stacey, *Boats to Burn: Bajo Fishing Activity in the Australian Fishing Zone*, vol. 2. (Canberra: ANU E-Press, 2007).

The pearl frontier began to wane when demand for pearl-shell decreased and the industry declined on the eve of the Pacific War.

The pearl frontier marked a moment in regional time, and the end of pearl-shelling centred mobility occurred at different times along the frontier.¹⁹ WWII was a watershed moment for the Netherlands Indies; after dealing with the Japanese occupation, the post-war years witnessed the decolonisation process. The end of large-scale pearl-shelling in Australia was relatively protracted. There some companies continued to operate until the 1960s. Mobility and circulations in this space continued, but with different regimes, actors, and after the 1960s, primarily centred on other economic activities. Although the pearl frontier had contracted because demand for pearl-shell declined, the Aruese continued to dive, ever ready to once again adapt their marine product-gathering to the changing global demand.

Literature Review

This thesis narrates pearl-shelling's history in Aru while placing it within the context of changing regional-global circumstances. There are four people whose works this study particularly relies upon: anthropologist Patricia Spyer, and historians Julia Martinez, Steve Mullins and Adrian Vickers. The influence of Martinez and Vickers' work, *The Pearl Frontier*, on aspects of this thesis is hopefully obvious; their framing of the space as a shared frontier is a useful comparative basis to see the Aruese, who participated in the evolution and development of this space while remaining only in one place. Spyer's seminal work on Aru, *The Memory of Trade*, situates this experience in the memory of Backshore communities. A keen understanding how those two worlds met is possible through a reading of Steve Mullins' thorough body of work. His recent book, *Octopus Crowd*, is a summation of decades of exhaustive research on the floating station system, which signified the mobility of the fleets, while placing it within the context of both Australian history and history of the pearling industry. To better see that, we need to unravel related works and the historiography that form basis of those works. In summation, this study is inspired by and borrows from literature on the wider history of pearling and on Aru and its history.

¹⁹ My reading of the end of the pearl frontier draws upon Warren's idea of regional time. See Warren, "The Sulu Zone, the World Capitalist Economy and the Historical Imagination", 183-186.

Global Pearl-shelling

The gap between the acclaimed beauty of pearls and the danger divers faced in procuring them, is perhaps not a gap at all. The industry is an ancient one; the hazard and the mysterious origin of pearls add to the romantic aura of the industry. Desire for pearls is very old; a standard book described pearls as ‘the earliest gems known to prehistoric man’.²⁰ Their value has been self-evident for so long that a biblical reference to oblivion of pearl’s value involves the mention of swine.

A wide array of bivalve species all over the world produce pearls but for a long-time they were primarily associated with the Far East.²¹ Nineteenth-century English pearler and jeweller Edwin Streeter lists the myriad functions of pearls, ranging from ornamental to medicinal.²² Kunz and Stevenson note the use of pearls in China, India, Egypt, and Arabic communities throughout history. They suggested that, through trade contacts, appreciation of pearls travelled from the Greeks who had contact with Persians, all the way to Rome in the fifth century BCE.²³ In any case, by the beginning of the Common Era, the value of and desire for pearls was well-established. Despite the spread of demand until the nineteenth century and beyond, the pearl commodity chain was still primarily oriented in Asia.²⁴

The demand for pearls compelled people from different parts of the world to search them and made for an equally old industry. Some places in the world became particularly famous for their pearling activities, which Streeter briefly mentions in his 1886 book, *Pearls and Pearling Life*. The most celebrated pearling sites are in the Red Sea and Sri Lanka.²⁵ When Europeans expanded their seaborne empires to the Americas in the late

²⁰ George Frederick Kunz and Charles Hugh Stevenson, *The Book of the Pearl: The History, Art, Science, and Industry of the Queen of Gems* (New York: The Century Co., 1908), 3-4.

²¹ Ibid., and Molly A. Warsh, *American Baroque: Pearls and the Nature of Empire, 1492-1700* (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture, 2018), 2.

²² Edwin William Streeter, *Pearls and Pearling Life* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1886), 23-47, 65-68.

²³ Kunz and Stevenson, *The Book of the Pearl*, 3-10.

²⁴ William G. Clarence-Smith, ‘The Pearl Commodity Chain, Early Nineteenth Century to the End of the Second World War’ in Pedro Machado, Steve Mullins, and Joseph Christensen, eds., *Pearls, People, and Power: Pearling and Indian Ocean Worlds* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2019), 35-44.

²⁵ For pearling in the Red Sea see Streeter, *Pearls and Pearling Life*, 213- 221. More recently see the works of Robert Carter and Matthew Hopper in Machado, Mullins, and Christensen, *Pearls, People, and Power*, 233-280. For Sri Lanka see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Noble Harvest from the Sea: Managing the Pearl Fishery of Mannar, 1500-1925," in *Institutions and Economic Change in*

fifteenth century, pearling also became part of their economic activity in the Caribbean.²⁶ Closer to the pearl frontier of the eastern seas, are the pearling grounds in Burma and Sulu.²⁷ Of particular relevance to the study of Aru is the southern Philippines, whose maritime influence stretched all the way south to the Torres Strait and waters in northwest Australia.²⁸ In different parts of the world at different moments in time, the demand for pearls initiated pearling industries. Pearling was a global enterprise and different places developed their own collecting methods, depending on the local conditions and environment.²⁹

Recognising all the history, glamour, and splendour associated with pearls and still focusing on pearl-shell is akin to researching the ordinary cousin of a pop star. Yet it was this unassuming product that beckoned Australian pearl-shellers to the seas and coasts of Aru, even though most of the time it did not produce pearls. To quote Streeter, ‘...between nacre and Pearls (*sic.*), there is virtually only the difference of the form of deposition.’³⁰ The latter has value in itself, the former needs a longer process, but they come (until quite recently) from the same activity, diving. Divers searching for pearl-shell face the same danger but share little of the notoriety or glamour.

Pearl-shells were worth far less in comparison to pearls, but they were still worth collecting. What mattered for pearl-shelling was not the enduring value of the shells, but the enduring demand for it. Pearls are nowadays mostly procured through pearl farming. But the demand for shell explains why pearl-shelling is a maritime activity that still exists. It explains why my Aruese host and his community still gain a livelihood from pearl-shelling now, the same way numerous other people and communities did in the last two centuries. But its relative lack of importance now allows us to observe what happened when the boom ended, and the shell receded into the economic background while also stubbornly remaining a commodity in some demand. In other words, when a commodity

South Asia, ed. Burton Stein and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

²⁶ Warsh, *American Baroque.*, 3-4. Interestingly, Warsh informed us it was the abundance of pearls that inspired the naming of Costa Rica (which means rich coast in Spanish).

²⁷ For pearling in Sulu, see James Warren, ‘Tea, Pearls and Pearl Shell: Cross-Cultural Trade, Slave Raiding and the Transformation of Material Worlds—The Sulu Zone, China, and the West, 1349-1898’ in Machado, Mullins, and Christensen, *Pearls, People, and Power.*, 55-82.

²⁸ John G. Butcher, *The Closing of the Frontier: A History of the Marine Fisheries of Southeast Asia, c.1850-2000* (Leiden, Netherlands: KITLV Press, 2004)., 124-135.

²⁹ Michael McCarthy, ‘Early Pearling on the Indian Ocean’s Southeast Fringe’ in Machado, Mullins, and Christensen, *Pearls, People, and Power.*, 148.

³⁰ Streeter, *Pearls and Pearling Life.*, 90.

is no longer profitable for a large-scale capital and labour-intensive industry, but still remains a viable source of livelihood for a community-based enterprise.

Studies on pearl-shelling in Australia are especially important in order to contextualise what happened in Aru. Like Aru, until the 1860s pearl-shelling in Australia was primarily the activity of Indigenous communities. In three related studies of pearl-shelling in West Australia, Mike McCarthy identified different methods of gathering shells before the use of diving dresses. When settlers began trading with Indigenous people in 1868, the latter collected shell on the beach during low tide (dry shelling). With increased demand more people joined the industry and the search for pearl-shell took them to the coast, wading in shallow waters.³¹ Soon there were also early efforts to use diving apparatus to search for pearl-shell, but this development failed until the 1880s, when the industry really took off in Australia.

It was this larger-scale industry, that 'took off' with its cross-border complications and idiosyncrasies, that made the pearl frontier what it was. John Bach wrote the first broad history on the pearl-shelling industry in Australia. His pioneering book, *Pearling Industry of Australia: An Account of its Social and Economic Development* is a detailed survey of the state of the industry from its beginning in 1857 until 1955, when the Australian Government commissioned the work.³² Bach investigated pearl-shelling activities in the northern regions of Australia, from the Torres Strait in the east to Shark Bay in the west. This vast region encompasses what is now three states around which Bach structured his study: Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia.³³ He highlighted major themes that affected the industry in Australia, chief among them the issue of labour composition and government regulation. Through his commissioned work, a general picture of the actual nature of pearl-shelling in Australia emerged. While there were regional differences that made one centre of pearl-shelling different than another, for purposes of this study, the similarities between the various centres are more important than their differences. Since then, numerous scholars have used his work as a basic source to study different aspects of the industry.

³¹ Mike McCarthy, "Before Broome," *Great Circle* 16, no. 2 (1994). See also Michael McCarthy, 'Early Pearling on the Indian Ocean's Southeast Fringe' in Machado, Mullins, and Christensen, *Pearls, People, and Power*; McCarthy, "Naked Diving for Mother-of-Pearl."

³² J. P. S. Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia: An Account of its Social and Economic Development* (Dept of Commerce and Agriculture 1955).

³³ Until 1911, Northern Territory was under the administration of South Australia.

When Bach wrote his monograph, the most controversial issue concerning pearl-shelling in Australia was the industry's dependence on non-white labour, as well as their success in maintaining an exemption from the White Australia Policy. Indentured labour was a basic aspect of pearl-shelling's industrialisation in Australia. When enterprising white men tried to employ Indigenous Australians to be divers, they soon encountered a shortage of labour. Some pearlers resolved this crisis by blackbirding, whereby Indigenous people were captured for 'employment on a slave basis'.³⁴ Young women were most prized because they, ostensibly, could remain underwater longer and had better sight than the men. Therefore, Aboriginal women became targets of abductions and subject to serious sexual misconducts. In response to this slaving activity, in 1871 the Western Australian government passed the Pearl Fisheries Act to regulate and protect Indigenous labourers and prohibit the employment of women in the industry. The impact of this regulation is unclear because the Governor refused to supply a vessel to ensure proper enforcement of the Act.³⁵ However, once the law was passed, the importation of 'Malays' from the Netherlands Indies began in earnest.³⁶

From the 1870s, pearl-shelling enterprises grew rapidly, and recruitment of indentured labour continued. As Mullins importantly noted, innovations in the industry between the 1870s and 1890s enabled more 'efficient management on water'.³⁷ The successful adoption of diving dresses allowed divers to reach the deeper pearl-banks, stay underwater longer, and collect more shells. Further logistical innovations allowed pearl-shellers operating in fleets to depend less and less on regular supply from the shore. Strategically positioned coastal stations in the Torres Strait enabled fleets to work for several weeks at sea before they needed to resupply. By the 1890s, the innovative development of the floating station system drastically decreased dependency on the shore, as pearling fleets could now operate offshore for months. Instead of a shore-based station, the floating station system

³⁴ Mary Albertus Bain, *Full Fathom Five* (Perth: Artlook Books, 1982): 21-22. See also Tom Dooley, Tiina Manne, and Alistair Paterson, "Power in Food on the Maritime Frontier: A Zooarchaeology of Enslaved Pearl Divers on Barrow Island, Western Australia," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 25, no. 2 (2021/06/01 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10761-020-00575-3>.

³⁵ Bain, *Full Fathom Five*: 22-23. Bain reported that as late as 1882 an inspector was summoned to deal with illegal capturing of Aborigines.

³⁶ Malay is an ambiguous racial category that appears *ad nauseam* in studies and records about pearl-shelling. But, like the label 'Koepanger' and 'Manilamen', they do not automatically reflect one's ethnic origin; but rather the ports where these men were recruited. For an in-depth investigation about the ambiguous ethnic categories in the pearling industry, see Peter J. McGann, "'Malays' as Indentured Labour: Western Australia 1870-1900" (BA Hons. Thesis, Murdoch University, 1988), especially 14-18. For an explanation on the different uses of Malay in the Indies versus British colonies, see Martínez and Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier.*, 9-10.

³⁷ Steve Mullins, *Octopus Crowd: Maritime History and the Business of Australian Pearling in Its Schooner Age* (University of Alabama Press, 2019), 5-9.

comprised a large vessel, usually a schooner, acting as a mother ship that stored provisions and collected and processed the shells brought from the smaller vessels (luggers) operating around it. These technological and logistical innovations allowed pearl-shellers to be more efficient and expand their business activities even further on a regional basis.

The successful development of Australian fleet-based pearling enterprises was directly connected to the importation of indentured labour. In 1876, pearl-ers recruited a number of Japanese men as indentured labour and found their work satisfactory. Guided by racial essentialist thinking common at the time, the pearl-shellers believed that the Japanese were naturally suited to using diving dresses and continued recruiting them as divers.³⁸ Malays (and Koepangers) were still recruited to be crew, but not as often now as divers. The result of this recruitment pattern was the development of a multi-ethnic labour force and social organisation. White men occupied the top positions in management, Japanese/Filipino/Malay divers or tenders filled the middle ranks, while Malay or Aboriginal crew comprised the bottom strata in the industry.

The structure of the pearl-shelling industry encouraged mobility and circulations across the region. Martinez and Vickers' *Pearl Frontier* discusses movement of people from around the Lesser Sunda Islands. Thus far, there is little work about how Australian pearling affected the mobility of Filipino workers. Valuable contributions that are the exception to this are the work from Anna Shnukal whose work discusses the presence of Filipinos in Torres Strait and the work from Deborah Ruiz Wall and Christine Choo who used oral history to understand their arrival, vibrant lives, and the mobility of Filipino divers in Australia.³⁹ Far more is known about how the industry affected the Japanese overseas diaspora, most of it due to the work of David Sissons.⁴⁰ The Japanese crewmembers developed communities in monsoon Australia with a very strong presence in Thursday Island, Darwin, and Broome. The Japanese diaspora was not solely based on the divers but also included store merchants and the *karayuki*-sans, women who were

³⁸ Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait*: 30, 100-104.

³⁹ Anna Shnukal, "They don't know what went on underneath": Three Little-known Filipino/Malay Communities of Torres Strait" in *Navigating Boundaries: The Asian Diaspora in Torres Strait*, ed. Anna Shnukal, Guy Ramsay & Yuriko Nagata (Acton, ACT: ANU Press, 2017), 85-90. See also Deborah Ruiz Wall & Christine Choo, *Re-imagining Australia: Voices of Indigenous Australians of Filipino Descent* (Queensland: Keeaira Press, 2016).

⁴⁰ See chapter Four to Six of his work in the edited volume from Arthur Stockwin and Tamura Keiko, eds., *Bridging Australia and Japan: The Writings of David Sissons, Historian and Political Scientist* 2vols., vol. 1 (Acton ACT: ANU Press, 2016).

mostly sex workers, and collectively they became a competitive threat to the white pearl-shellers.

The pearl-shelling industry maintained the social organisation of their non-white workforce, despite the repeated efforts of proponents of the White Australia Policy, until the end of the industry. While sugar plantations in Queensland repatriated kanakas to Papua New Guinea and the rest of the Pacific from 1906, the pearling industry survived numerous attempts to replace their workers.⁴¹ There are different ideas as to why the industry maintained the exemption and it seems that at different times different reasons prevailed. Loraine Philips insists it was because pearl-shellers convinced the Australian government that the industry could not survive without indenture. Between 1901 and 1918, the government accepted this as a compromise because they were not willing to subsidise an industry whose product was consumed overseas.⁴² Equally effective was the repeated threat to move their entire operations to the Netherlands Indies at the start of the twentieth century.⁴³ The argument shifted after WWII, when the Indies were no longer a factor. Instead, according to Adrian Cunningham, their continued exemption was the result of three factors: the geographic remoteness of the industry, the relatively small size of the workforce and strategically positioned allies in the Commonwealth public services.⁴⁴ Adding to this viewpoint, Ganter argues that national security interest, which considered northern coastal towns important for defence, strengthened the case for the exemption.⁴⁵ In light of the Japan-Australian dispute in Arafura Sea in the 1950s, the government needed to maintain the economic life of towns such as Broome.

Pearl-shelling was a factor in the settler expansion of Australia, and its diverse workforce made for the founding and development of equally diverse frontier settlements. As the White Australia Policy was entrenched, the ethnic composition of coastal pearling towns became demographically more like one another other than their direct neighbours in the interior. In his study of frontier towns in Australia, *North of Capricorn* (2003), Henry Reynolds presented Broome, Thursday Island, and Darwin as towns in the tropical north

⁴¹ Deryck Scarr, "Recruits and Recruiters: A Portrait of the Pacific Islands Labour Trade," *The Journal of Pacific History* 2 (1967), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25167892>.

⁴² Lorraine Phillips, "Plenty More Little Brown Man! Pearl-shelling and White Australia in Queensland 1901-1918," in *Essays in the Political Economy*, ed. K. Buckley and E. L. Wheelwright (Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Company, 1980).

⁴³ Martínez, "Indonesians Challenging White Australia.": 236-237. See also J. P. S. Bach, "The Political Economy of Pearlshelling," *The Economic History Review* 14, no. 1 (1961), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2591357>: 105-14.

⁴⁴ Adrian Cunningham, *On Borrowed Time: The Australian Pearlshelling Industry, Asian Indentured Labour and the White Australia Policy, 1946-1962* (Master Thesis: ANU, 1992).

⁴⁵ Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait.*, 142.

with cosmopolitan populations.⁴⁶ But these lives, interactions, and relationships threatened the beliefs in racial purity of government and officials that produced the White Australia policy.⁴⁷ In *Mixed Relations* (2006) Ganter and her colleagues further complicate our understanding by recounting the long history of social interaction between Aboriginal Australians and Asians, arguing that these relations were as significant as their contact with Europeans.⁴⁸ All the works mentioned above reveal how this industry fostered rivalry and cooperation, hatred and friendship, especially among the workers and their respective communities until the pearl-shelling industry's demise.

The pearl-shellers, faced with the prospect of losing their non-white workers, used the danger divers regularly faced as an argument to maintain the exemption. Diving was a dangerous occupation and pearl-shellers argued that they could not pay the rates white men demanded for the risks the job posed. The procurement of pearls has a long history of using unfree labour; enslaved people were drafted in the Americas as early as the sixteenth century and one century later in the Sulu Zone.⁴⁹ Pearl-shell was not a small-scale luxury item that was worth a lot of money, but its collection was nevertheless dangerous. Part of the risk was inherent in the activity of diving itself, which includes encounters with sharks, sea snakes and manta rays.⁵⁰ The use of a diving suit allowed its wearer to descend deeper in the water and stay on the bottom longer, but there was the increased danger of paralysis if divers moved to the surface too quickly. Australian fleet-based pearling enterprises added more hazard because the inter-ethnic composition of workforce, the arduous work schedule and the mobile character of the fleets.⁵¹ Life on the luggers was difficult: natural disasters at sea, inter-ethnic tension on board, the prevalence of diseases like beri-beri, all contributed to the high morbidity and mortality

⁴⁶ Reynolds provided a brief overview of the demographics of the towns and their social life. But other works have focused on specific towns and their non-white migrant community there. For Broome see Joseph Christensen, "A Patch of the Orient in Australia": Broome on the Margin of the Indo-Pacific, 1883-1939," in *Subversive Sovereigns Across the Sea*, ed. Kenneth R. Hall, Rila Mukherjee, and Suchandra Ghosh (Kolkata: Asiatic Society, 2017); Bain, *Full Fathom Five*. For Thursday Island see Shnukal, Ramsay, and Nagata (eds.), *Navigating boundaries*.

⁴⁷ Henry Reynolds, *North of Capricorn* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003): xi.

⁴⁸ Regina Ganter, Julia Martinez, and Gary Mura Lee, *Mixed Relations: Asian-Aboriginal Contact in North Australia* (Crawley, W.A: University of Western Australia Press, 2006): 2.

⁴⁹ Molly A. Warsh, "Enslaved Pearl Divers in the Sixteenth Century Caribbean," *Slavery & abolition* 31, no. 3 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2010.504540>.

⁵⁰ J. D. F. Hardenberg, "De Parelmoervisscherij in het Oosten van den Indischen Archipel," *Indische Gids* 2 (1939), 98-101.

⁵¹ Australian pearl-shellers had trouble finding a balanced ethnic workforce in their fleets. They wanted to avoid inter-ethnic conflict on board, but they also did not want too many people of the same ethnicity on a vessel because it could cause strikes or a mutiny. See Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait*, 108-109. For a description of the dreadful working conditions onboard pearling luggers, see McGann, "'Malays' as Indentured Labour.", 97-103.

rate.⁵² Convincing the Australian government that pearl-shellers could not afford a monthly rate sufficient to attract white men, given the risk level, was vital in securing the exemption.

A major source of weakness in the industry was the fluctuations in price and demand for pearl-shell in European (and later American) markets. Part of the problem was the lack of a domestic market for the commodity. There were some efforts made to mitigate this problem by processing pearl-shell in Australia to add value to the export, but nothing came of this initiative.⁵³ Another solution to the problem was also considered: the creation of a cartel that would enable pearl-shellers to set a minimum price. Scholars are divided on the issue of such efforts to control prices; Bach and Ganter believe there was no serious attempt made to achieve this outcome, but recent studies have revised this assumption. Steve Mullins and Robert Lehane believe that James Clark, a large-scale pearl-sheller, worked hard behind the scenes to form an Australian cartel, to reduce the exposure of pearl-shellers to price fluctuations.⁵⁴ However, just when his hard work seemed about to succeed in 1913, the outbreak of WWI rendered his efforts useless. After the War there was no further effort to strengthen Australia's bargaining position in the global pearl-shelling market.

There was an intense rivalry among pearl-shellers and given the fluctuation in market prices, the only way to maximise profit was to procure as many shells as possible during the pearling season. Consequently, there was occasionally more supply of pearl-shell than demand for it, which only further weakened the industry at times. For this reason, over-exploitation of labour and resource depletion constantly bedevilled the industry. Through her investigation of the history of pearl-shelling in the Torres Strait, Ganter concludes that the colonial principles guiding pearl-shellers partly explains the shells frequent depletion.⁵⁵ According to her, pearl-shellers refused to change their practices not because

⁵² F. W. Bamford (chairman), *Royal Commission on the Pearl-shelling Industry: Minutes of Evidence, Appendices, and Indices* (Melbourne: Government Printer for the State of Victoria, 1913), 35-37, 40, 44. Streeter, *Pearls and Pearling Life.*, 149. For a detailed narration on the dangers of working on Australian pearling fleets see Christensen, "'A Patch of the Orient in Australia'.", 265-268.

⁵³ Robert Lehane, *The Pearl King* (Brisbane: Boolarong Press, 2014), 301-311.

⁵⁴ Steve Mullins, "To Break 'the trinity' or 'wipe out the smaller fry': The Australian Pearl Shell Convention of 1913," *Journal for Maritime Research* 7, no. 1 (2005), <https://doi.org/10.1080/21533369.2005.9668351>: 215-44. See also Robert Lehane, *The Pearl King* (Brisbane: Boolarong Press, 2014).

⁵⁵ Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait*. Furthermore, she proved that in their use of labour, the pearl-shellers utilised beliefs about the inferiority of certain groups in their placement and treatment of labourers. Unfortunately, Ganter is not particularly clear on how the treatment of

they lacked options. The pearl-shellers envisioned the sea as an unlimited resource with ample pearling beds. This predatory belief explains why they worked competitively over a pearl bed until it was exhausted and then moved elsewhere searching for the next pearling bed to exploit. Thus, there was this misplaced belief in the inexhaustibility of the ocean that was widely shared among the ranks of pearl-shellers.⁵⁶

Pearl-shellers varied from single boat operators to the those who ran sophisticated floating stations, but they all resisted measures that would introduce a degree of sustainability into the industry. Their individual greed caused depletion of pearling beds in the Torres Strait. Ganter borrows Garret Hardin's formulation and describes the depletion of the pearl-banks as an example of the tragedy of the commons.⁵⁷ All the pearl-shellers wanted to exploit the (common) unregulated pearling beds, and nothing stopped them since they carried the burden of depletion collectively. If any individual took the initiative to be more careful and conserve the beds, the wanton practices of other pearl-shellers would undermine his effort. Not one pearl-sheller had a genuine interest in the sustainability of the pearling beds in the period under investigation. Considering such circumstances, depletion was a natural consequence and tragedy.

All these studies of Australian pearl-shelling have made good use of government documents, personal papers, newspapers, photographs and oral history accounts to trace the industry's historical and social contours. Apart from contextualising the Australian incursion, the richness of the literature provides a comparative basis to study pearl-shelling in Aru and see whether similar problems emerged there when the Celebes Trading Company began operating.

Aru and History

Until quite recently, not many studies of Indonesia have focused on Aru. But rather than convey the idea that Aru is a remote archipelago, existing studies reveal the islands are far from isolated. In discussing the Aru Tenggara Marine Reserve, Gerard Persoon et al. show that Aru was actually *too* well connected to the outside world for its own good.⁵⁸ The

labourers was particularly 'colonial,' even though colonialism enabled the exploitative use of such labour.

⁵⁶ This view also prevailed in the Mergui Archipelago, where pearlers believed that the pearling bed could rejuvenate itself because the waves would bring in new spat. See Butcher, *The Closing of The Frontier*: 135.

⁵⁷ Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162 (1968).

⁵⁸ Gerard A. Persoon, Hans de Iongh, and Bob Wenno, "Exploitation, Management and Conservation of Marine Resources: the Context of the Aru Tenggara Marine Reserve (Moluccas,

rapid depletion of marine resources in the 1970s led to the establishment of a marine reserve because too many parties were exploiting the waters around Aru. Manon Osseweijer's dissertation, *Taken at the Flood*, investigates the conservation efforts even deeper. Her work on the Aruese in Beltubur, Trangan Island show how they negotiated changing cultural relationship in traditional fishing activities considering resource depletion and conservationists' attempt to halt it.⁵⁹

Generally, most works about Aru are from the field of anthropology, discussing the (over)exploitation of Aru and the Aruese. Many people have gained a livelihood from the archipelago's rich seas and forests for a long time, and if we believe the conservationists, far too many for Aru to sustain.⁶⁰ An edited volume based on a 2002 Australian National University archaeology project delivered much material even as it revealed the numerous sites yet to be studied.⁶¹ Recent archaeology work on materials from Ujir (an island north of Dobo), one of the sites the ANU project mentioned, suggests that the Aruese historically used and recycled porcelain, a trade item that came to Aru by way of Chinese circulations.⁶² Apart from the ruins of an old mosque in Ujir, connections also left traces in the psyche of some communities.⁶³

This thesis began with an argument about how pearl-shelling historically connected littoral communities in Aru with a distant world. And in that respect, there is little doubt that Patricia Spyer in *The Memory of Trade* has produced the most important work on how distant connections to the outside world affected the Aruese.⁶⁴ The book is a deep dive into the long relationship between Aru and another world that is far away, yet ever present in the daily life of people living in Bemun, a village on Barakai Island. The Bemunese speak the Barakai language, and they shared the language with people from

Indonesia)," *Ocean & Coastal Management* 32, no. 2 (1996), [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0964-5691\(96\)00025-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0964-5691(96)00025-7).

⁵⁹ Manon Osseweijer, "Taken at the Flood: Marine Resource Use and Management in the Aru Islands (Maluku, Eastern Indonesia)" (PhD Thesis, Universiteit Leiden, 2001).

⁶⁰ Historically the most important forest product was birds-of-paradise, but for an idea of the forest products the Aruese collected more recently, see Christopher J. Healey, "Traps and Trapping in the Aru Islands," *Cakalele* 6 (1995).

⁶¹ Sue O'Connor, Matthew Spriggs, and Peter Marius Veth, *The Archaeology of the Aru Islands, Eastern Indonesia*, vol. 22 (Canberra, Australia: Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 2005).

⁶² Joss R. Whittaker, "The Lives of Things on Pulau Ujir: Aru's engagement with commercial expansion," *Wacana* 20, no. 3 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v20i3.760>.

⁶³ For more on Ujir, see Antoinette Schapper, *Wooi fana: Life and Times in Ujir* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2018). Glenn Dolcemascolo recorded a story in the village Wokam of foreigners creating the resources in Aru. See Glenn Dolcemascolo, "Foreign Encounters in an Aruese landscape," *Cakalele* 7 (1996), 83-84.

⁶⁴ Spyer, *The Memory of Trade*, especially 4-9.

Longgar, Aparara, Mesiang and Krei. Those communities make up the Barakai group.⁶⁵ And like Benjuring, for generations people from the Barakai group have been divers collecting sea produce for distant markets. For the benefit of my study, her work is immensely important because it discusses the credit relations that underpinned pearl-shelling activities and the sometimes ambivalent ways the Aruese viewed their connections with the outside world. Spyer also discusses how the Aruese adapt their fishing activities to the demands of markets far removed from their world, and also how such demands exposed them to the boom-and-bust cycles. Using both ethnography and Dutch colonial records, she shows how the Aruese engaged big questions of modernity that had long bothered them because they were so connected to a globalised world.

The works mentioned above are not technically historical works, because until quite recently, there were not many historians working specifically on the history of Aru. However, this is not to say that Aru is invisible in the historiography of the Outer Islands; works on the Eastern Indonesia region from Roy Ellen, Pamela Swadling, and Leonard Andaya convincingly demonstrates the historical involvement of Aruese in regional trade networks and circulations of goods.⁶⁶ There is no doubt that Aru and Banda had important trade connection, as the former supplied the latter with sago, various exotica, and even unfree labour from the sixteenth century onwards. Notably, in their 1995 book on Southeast Moluccas, Nico de Jonge and Toos van Dijk, briefly cover Aru's history and (material) culture juxtaposing it with other archipelagos in south Moluccas.⁶⁷ An exception to this is Mgr. A.P.C. Sol's work narrating the history of Catholicism in Aru.⁶⁸ However, with the exception of Sol, none of these historical works exclusively focus on Aru's history, a problem that fresh studies in the last three years began rectifying.

Both Sol's work and de Jonge and van Dijk's work broadly address the long presence of the Dutch in the Aru archipelago. On paper, the VOC claimed to have imposed authority

⁶⁵ Not to be confused with the Barakai Island. Henceforth, when I use the word the Barakai group I am referring to these Barakai-speaking communities.

⁶⁶ Swadling, *Plumes from Paradise*; Leonard Y. Andaya, "Local Trade Networks in Maluku in the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries," *Cakalele* 2, no. 2 (1991); R. F. Ellen, *On the Edge of the Banda Zone: Past and Present in the Social Organization of a Moluccan Trading Network* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003); Leonard Y. Andaya, "Eastern Indonesia: A Study of the Intersection of Global, Regional and Local Networks in the 'Extended' Indian Ocean," in *Reinterpreting Indian Ocean Worlds: Essays in Honour of Kirti N. Chaudhuri*, ed. Stefan C. A. Halikowski Smith (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011).

⁶⁷ Nico de Jonge and Toos van Dijk, *Forgotten Islands of Indonesia: The Art & Culture of the Southeast Moluccas* (Singapore: Periplus, 1995).

⁶⁸ Mgr. A.P.C. Sol MSC, *Sejarah Gereja Katolik di Kepulauan Aru* (Jakarta: Penerbit Hati Baru, 2009)

over the archipelago as early as 1623 until the end of eighteenth century. But it is only recently that new publications from Hans Hägerdal allow us to understanding what the VOC claim meant for the conduct of Aruese lives then. In two different detailed studies on the Dutch-Aruese relationship, Hägerdal established that the Aruese approached the Dutch encounter with a strategy that hovered between resistance and cooperation.⁶⁹ While contracts were signed and renewed, Hägerdal found, borrowing from James C. Scott, strategies of state-avoidance.⁷⁰ But avoidance was not always possible; different communities devised various ways to deal with the noble company as they lived and worked among the Aruese and intervened in intercommunal conflicts.

The VOC was a complex presence for two reasons: firstly, they were an alien presence in the middle of Aru and secondly, the company wanted to control the Aruese. Sonny Djonler, Ross Gordon and Hägerdal have analysed the murder of a company official in the Backshore because of a local scandal in the 1790s.⁷¹ Apart from the officials' poor conduct, the company's larger vision posed a serious threat because the VOC promoted Christianity among the Aruese. In the middle of the seventeenth century, some communities in Aru already embraced Islam and the company's effort to introduce a strange new religion was considered controversial.⁷² In her recent thesis Linette van 't Hof describes how the VOC saw Christianity as an indirect means to cement their connections with local communities, and thus gradually extend their control over the region.⁷³ Van 't Hof's ideas on conversion concur with earlier work of from M. J. Lampers who suggested that the VOC deliberately tried to convert the Aruese.⁷⁴ In a pattern that

⁶⁹ Hans Hägerdal, "Between Resistance and Co-operation: Contact Zones in the Aru Islands in the VOC period," *Wacana* 20, no. 3 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v20i3.803>.

⁷⁰ Hans Hägerdal, "On the Margins of Colonialism: Contact Zones in the Aru Islands," *The European Legacy* 25, no. 5 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2020.1751965>.

⁷¹ A. Ross Gordon, Sonny A. Djonler, and Hans Hägerdal, "The Killing of Posthouder Scheerder and Jifar Folfolun (The War of the Breasts): Malukan and Dutch Narratives of an Incident in the VOC's Waning Days," *JSEAS* 50 (2019).

⁷² Emilie Wellfelt and Sonny A. Djonler, "Islam in Aru, Indonesia: Oral Traditions and Islamisation Processes from the Early Modern Period to the Present," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 47, no. 138 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2019.1582895>; Hägerdal, "On the Margins of Colonialism.", 559-561.

⁷³ Linette van 't Hof, "Het Kansrijke Buitengewest Aru: Een Analyse van Hoe en Waarom de VOC het Beleid voor Handel en Religie Uitvoerde op de Aru-eilanden in de Periode 1658-1694" (MA Universiteit Leiden, 2019), <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/75553>.

⁷⁴ M.J. Lampers, In het Spoor van den Compagnie: VOC, Inheemse Samenleving en de Gereformeerde Kerk in de Zuidooster- en Zuidwestereilanden 1660-1700, Unpublished Manuscript, n.d., KITLV Collection, UB Leiden. Aru was not the only place where the company tried to do this, as Gerrit Knaap wrote how the same thing also happened in Amboina. See G. J. Knaap, *Kruidnagelen en Christenen: de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie en de Bevolking van Ambon, 1656-1696* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1987).

would repeat itself later on, the limited resources placed a constraint on how far the Dutch could actually act on their expansionist vision. Islam remained a strong opposing force and an ideology to articulate and express resistance against the Dutch, as the case of Tamalola and Prince Nuku at the end of the nineteenth century revealed.⁷⁵

Scholarly works on nineteenth century Aru are not as numerous. In this study, most works concerned with the century are also primary sources because they were written contemporaneously by European visitors and Dutch officials: Alfred Wallace, Baron van Hoevell, A. J. Bik, among others. Spyer is the only contemporary scholar thus far that discusses the nineteenth century in any depth. In *The Memory of Trade* she describes interactions between the Aruese and the Dutch colonial government then. Her discussion follows the broader idea of the colonial government as an agent of modernisation. However, her article on the Aruese view of their past, *Zaman Belanda*, touches on the tumultuous albeit crucial final decades of the nineteenth century when the Aruese repeatedly revolted against the foreign presence.⁷⁶

Nowhere is this story about the transformations in the nineteenth century Aru more obvious than in Charles Zerner's work where he juxtaposed Wallace's writing in 1856 with a 1997 activists' note on Aru in the anthology 'Portrait of the Defeated'.⁷⁷ Zerner used these texts to frame different visions of Aru's nature, culture and trade across two centuries. A central theme is the nature-culture debate that conservationists and traditional rights activists referenced when discussing the future of Aru Tenggara Marine Reserve, which cordoned off some key sections of water. What is missing here, however, is how and why the state now knows enough about Aru to cordon off sections of its waters and has sufficient authority to officially do so. In the decades following Wallace's visit to Aru, the Dutch colonial government acquired local knowledge and authority to impose their designs on Aru. Pearl-shelling was inextricably implicated in this colonial expansion. The effort to manage the industry involved mapping Aru waters in 1893 and colonial effort to integrate the region into the Netherlands Indies' administration and

⁷⁵ Hans Hägerdal and Emilie Wellfelt, "Tamalola: Transregional Connectivities, Islam, and Anti-colonialism on an Indonesian Island," *Wacana* 20, no. 3 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v20i3.802>.

⁷⁶ Patricia Spyer, "'Zaman Belanda': Song and the Shattering of Speech in Aru, Eastern Indonesia," *Indonesia*, no. 70 (2000), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3351495>.

⁷⁷ Charles Zerner, 'Dividing Lines: Nature, Culture, and Commerce in Indonesia's Aru Islands, 1856-1997' in Paul R. Greenough and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, eds., *Nature in the Global South: Environmental Projects in South and Southeast Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 47-78. An edited write-up of the article is available in Pieter Elmas, 'Orang Jarjui: Terpojok di Metropolis Ujung Dunia' in Roem Topatimasang, ed., *Orang-Orang Kalah: Kisah Penyingkiran Masyarakat Adat Kepulauan Maluku* (Yogyakarta: INSISTPress, 2016), 195-209.

bureaucracy.⁷⁸ The gap between the early lack of information about Aru waters and recent efforts to regain access to traditional fishing waters spanned the years of colonial state consolidation and its demise after WWII.

There are several very valuable studies contextualising pearl-shelling in Aru. Peter Boomgaard and John Butcher both situate Aru's pearling industry within the wider framework of regional fishing history and Dutch effort to manage and profit from this industry.⁷⁹ The works of Steve Mullins, and Martinez and Vickers, also place Aru within the broader history of pearl-shelling in Australia. While Shimizu Hiroshi touches on pearling in Aru and directly connects it to the mobility of *karayuki-san* in the region at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁸⁰ Peter Post has also placed the pearling industry within the context of expanding Japanese economic activities in the Netherlands Indies.⁸¹ However, few studies have approached pearl-shelling in Aru from a more local and historical standpoint, which is why Spyer's *The Memory of Trade* is a classic and an instructive starting point for historical inquiry.

Spyer's body of work and more recently, the research of Sonny Djonler and Ross Gordon help explain how pearl-shelling fit into the everyday lives of pearl-diving communities in Aru. Spyer's research reveals not only how long the Barakai have fished for pearl-shell but also how that search and history permeates their current life and practice in rituals, songs, and the ways they envision their relationship with traders, foreign things, and the sea.⁸² Gordon and Djonler have begun doing similar work concerning the Batuley. Their collaborative work reveals the depth of the Batuley communities' cultural-ecological

⁷⁸ For a consideration of maps and colonial expansion in the Netherlands Indies, see R. B. Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Indonesia* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 113-136. For the effort to use maps to regain authority in Aru and its limits, see Lisa Tilley, "'The impulse is cartographic': Counter-Mapping Indonesia's Resource Frontiers in the Context of Coloniality," *Antipode* 52, no. 5 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12634>; Roem Topatimasang, "Mapping as a Tool for Community Organizing against Power: A Moluccas Experience," in *Communities and Conservation: Histories and Politics of Community-based Natural Resource Management*, ed. Peter J. Brosius, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, and Charles Zerner (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 2005).

⁷⁹ Peter Boomgaard, "Resources and People of the Sea in and around the Indonesian Archipelago, 900-1900," in *Muddied Waters: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Management of Forest and Fisheries in Island Southeast Asia*, ed. Manon Osseweijer, David Henley, and Peter Boomgaard (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2005); Butcher, *The Closing of the Frontier*, 128-132.

⁸⁰ Hiroshi Shimizu, "Rise and Fall of the Karayuki-san in the Netherlands Indies from the Late Nineteenth Century to the 1930s," *RIMA* 26, no. 2 (1992).

⁸¹ Peter Post, *Japanese Bedrijvigheid in Indonesie, 1868-1942: Structurele Elementen van Japan's Vooroorlogse Economische Expansie in Zuidoost Asie* (Amsterdam: Centrale Huisdrukkerij Vrije Universiteit, 1991).

⁸² Patricia Spyer, "The Eroticism of Debt: Pearl Divers, Traders, and Sea Wives in the Aru Islands, Eastern Indonesia," *American Ethnologist* 24, no. 3 (1997), 519-522. See also Spyer, *The Memory of Trade*, 121-132.

knowledge about the seas and their adaptation to it.⁸³ The Batuley have continued to find ways to reconcile their pre-diving season rituals with their Abrahamic religious beliefs.⁸⁴ These works on traditional rituals among the Barakai and Batuley clarify that pearl-diving remains an integral part of communal life, and how this history is still alive in the collective memories and traditional practices of both groups. Communities in the Batuley and Barakai groups have a similar appreciation and sense of the past; the understanding that history is a part of their daily life, but the past is also sacred knowledge that one shares with care and caution.⁸⁵

Understanding now how enmeshed pearl-shelling is in the lives and history of the Batuley and Barakai communities also remind us of how little we still know about Aru's past. Hence, these recent important works have also challenged us to question how far back pearl-shelling goes, the changes that have occurred within it, and the troublesome question of whether coercion and unfree labour was present in pearl-diving and if present, how prevalent was it. Based on the nature of debt relations Spyer discusses, obviously the dichotomy between Australian and Aruese pearl-shelling is not one between unfree and free labour.⁸⁶

There is still so much to learn and discover about the previous history of Aru and the Aruese, thus this thesis attempts to help close the existing gaps in that literature by doing the opposite of what Mullins, Vickers and Martinez have accomplished: namely, it places the Australian pearl-shellers within the context of the history of Aru and Dutch colonial expansion in the Outer Islands.

Frontier: Conceptual Underpinnings

Nineteenth century pearl-shelling in Aru evoked the frontier concept in multiple ways. The region was considered a colonial frontier, a resource frontier and the application of

⁸³ Sonny A. Djonler and Ross Gordon, *Marine Biology Knowledge in Gwatle Kal: An Illustrated Encyclopaedia* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2016).

⁸⁴ Ross Gordon and Sonny A. Djonler, "Hope and Energy at the Arafura Sea Shore," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 33, no. 2 (2019).

⁸⁵ A. Ross Gordon and Sonny A. Djonler, "Oral Traditions in Cryptic Song Lyrics: Continuous Cultural Revitalization in Batuley," *Wacana* 20, no. 3 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v20i3.757>.

⁸⁶ Recent works about Aru reveals the presence of slavery in the seventeenth and eighteenth century and the enslavement of Aruese in Banda, but these works are very much still in an early stage. See van t'Hof, "Het Kansrijke Buitengewest Aru.", 52-58 and Hägerdal, "Between Resistance and Co-operation.", 499-502.

new diving technology meant pearlers were also pushing the limits of the bathymetry frontier. Tsing evocatively writes about the frontier as ‘an edge of space and time: a zone of not yet—not yet mapped, not yet regulated. [...] They are projects in making geographical and temporal experience.’⁸⁷ In terms of this thesis, the frontier is a space of desire and source of potential profits. Australian pearl-shelliers saw Aru as a place where they could expand their activity while the Dutch projected their imperial ambition upon this resource frontier. Remaining in their homeland, the Aruese experienced increasing complex encounters with the foreigners who arrived, settled among them, attempted to change them and in general refused to leave them and their region alone.

Frederick Jackson Turner in his classic work on the American western frontier, wrote about the advanced movement of the settlers and the receding area of free land.⁸⁸ This moving frontier was the meeting point between ‘savagery and civilisation’, where ‘the environment is at first too strong for the man’. People on the frontier initially transformed the wilderness and their westward movement involved the first push against the ‘Indian frontier’, First Nation people defending their land who unintentionally helped consolidate colonial empires.⁸⁹ There was a temporal dimension to the process because once a place was ‘tamed’, the frontier moved on as other pioneers and settlers moved further west to transform the wilderness beyond. Henry Reynolds narrates the story of Indigenous Australians who stood on the other side of this moving frontier, on the side of ‘savagery’ and the wilderness, attesting to the fact that the land was neither empty nor free for the taking. Frontier history is shaped by the forward movement of outsiders and the pushback from people who already live there. It was a place where information spread, and innovation occurred through contact and conflict. The frontier was often a very violent place where cultural encounters turned into confrontation and culminated in wars.⁹⁰

When applying this approach in Aru one must account for the lack of settlers and the fact that Aru is an archipelago. Aru had no settlers who were eager to expand their pioneering activity or to actively engage in negotiations with the colonial government. Yet Aru was located on the other side of the frontier as the Dutch expanded their colonising activities

⁸⁷ Anna L. Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005), 28-29.

⁸⁸ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: H. Holt, 1947), 1-4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹⁰ Henry Reynolds, *Dispossession: Black Australians and White Invaders* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 40-59. Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia*, UNSW Press ed. (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006), 67-131.

to Aru's shores. Because there were no land hungry settlers, the Dutch colonial expansion did not involve the direct annexation of land that Turner and Reynolds describe occurring in the American and Australian Frontier. It was not as dramatic a dispossession as in Australia where '...wherever a white man sets his foot the black man must go, and as the latter never cares to go quietly, there is always an argument, and the white man must come out on top.'⁹¹ Frontiers in the Netherlands Indies mostly appeared in that crucial moment of Dutch expansion and pacification, which always occurred at the expense of uncooperative local communities or polities. Such moments on the frontier were often full of bloodshed, involving 'punitive expeditions' and sanctioned 'official violence'. In an archipelago as large and diverse as the Netherlands Indies, this frontier and associated violence arrived at different moments in time. On land, for example, the frontier in Borneo was also a colonial border-making project, but this did not apply in the maritime context of Aru where other imperial powers just accepted the Dutch claim over the entire archipelago.

By the nineteenth century Aru already had several centuries of contact with outsiders, to such an extent that Hägerdal labelled Aru a 'multicultural contact zone'. Aru constituted a paradox of sorts before the forceful incursions of Australian pearl-shelliers and the interventions of the Dutch colonial administration. In summarising the history of southern Maluku, Hägerdal argues that it was 'a frontier zone of state avoidance in Scott's sense, but also an open maritime frontier.'⁹² The VOC maintained a presence on Wokam in northeast Aru, from where they hoped to monopolise regional trade routes. But the Company had limited control over the autonomous communities located on the Backshore of Aru. They still engaged with other foreign traders and selectively dealt with the VOC when it suited their political and economic interest.⁹³

It is here that I must explain my use of the Frontshore and Backshore (respectively *Voorwal* and *Achterwal* in Dutch records) distinction and use of capitals in this thesis. At the surface, the distinction is geographic; the Frontshore refers to the western coast of Aru, and the Backshore refers to the eastern coast. However, the use of both terms has a deeper meaning; Spyer writes of the sense of hierarchy and inferiority embedded in their

⁹¹ Reynolds, *Dispossession.*, 63.

⁹² Hans Hägerdal, "Contact Zones and External Connectivities in Southern Maluku, Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 47, no. 138 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2019.1583884>, 128.

⁹³ Hägerdal, "On the Margins of Colonialism.", 564-566.

usage, especially when coupled with the Malay term *'belakang tanah'* with its pejorative meaning of a place left behind.⁹⁴

The term is important because it served a special function in the frontier history of Aru especially when the colonial government as a key modernising force intensified its activity in Aru. Hong Seok-Joon argues for the application of James C. Scott and Willem van Schendels's *Zomia* concept to archipelagic Southeast Asia, where port towns functioned as windows or verandas into the broader world beyond.⁹⁵ In Aru, communities in the northwest served that portal function for the entire archipelago, which is why Hägerdal has argued that there was a *hulu-hilir* (upstream-downstream) dynamic between villages in the Frontshore and Backshore.⁹⁶ The pattern existed in the Malay World, where groups upriver gathered products to be brought to centres near the river mouth for further export.⁹⁷ Similarly, communities in the Frontshore connected foreigners with communities in the interior and the Backshore and their products. Aru's topography and trade, and later government administration, was oriented to islands situated northwest of the archipelago. It is no surprise that Dobo, the centre of Aru's administration today and the capital of the regency, lies on the northwest of Wamar Island in the Frontshore: this place-based distinction shaped Aru's history and present.

It was in the final decades of the nineteenth century that Aru became a colonial frontier. Frontiers are more than just multicultural spaces. They are places where contending aspirations and visions wrestle for supremacy over a space or area. The Dutch, intent upon expanding their authority and control over the margins of their colony, imposed a

⁹⁴ Spyer, *The Memory of Trade.*, 5-6. Based on my own experience, in Ambon sometimes people refer to the whole of Aru as *belakang tanah* also to invoke the same sense of a place left behind, if not backward.

⁹⁵ Seok-Joon Hong, "The Social Formation and Cultural Identity of Southeast Asian Frontier Society: Focused on the Concept of Maritime Zomia as Frontier in Connection with the Ocean and the Inland," *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures* 5, no. 1 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.imic.2016.05.004>, 30.

⁹⁶ Hägerdal, "Contact Zones and External Connectivities in Southern Maluku, Indonesia.", 129. In Aru, this pattern expresses itself in the Frontshore/ Backshore dichotomy mentioned above. There is no study yet on how this pattern affected intra-community relations and whether the communities in the northwest exerted influence or control over their Backshore counterparts, due to their control of things the Aruese desired. However, an observation in 1790 from Farquhar stated that the communities in the Frontshore did not allow foreign traders to 'trade on other parts of the island then where the vessel is at anchor and the smallest opposition to will and customs of these people puts the merchant in danger of losing property or life.' See W. G. Miller, "An account of trade patterns in the Banda Sea in 1797, from an unpublished manuscript in the India office library," *Indonesia Circle. School of Oriental & African Studies. Newsletter* 8, no. 23 (1980), <https://doi.org/10.1080/03062848008723804>, 50.

⁹⁷ Most pointedly here is Barbara Watson Andaya, *To Live as Brothers: Southeast Sumatra in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993).

vision of law and order through the introduction of modern governance. Aru's frontier was not defined by what the Dutch achieved on the ground but also by what it wanted to achieve socially and politically.

Technology was a vital force on the frontier. In the westward movement across North America technology and related infrastructure played a decisive role in tipping the balance in favour of settler expansion.⁹⁸ In the colonisation of Africa innovations in weaponry and medicine gave Europeans an advantage when they pushed further inland, while in India it was the centralised bureaucratic organisation of the British armed forces and East India Company that assisted them.⁹⁹ In Aru, it was the steamship that enabled the Dutch colonial government to reach more and more distant communities and the gunboat that brought them under direct government administration and control. In other words, the use of steamships and steam warships assisted Dutch colonial expansion because these modern vessels flattened time and space, they reduced the number of places such communities could flee to escape from the colonial government.

Imperialism in the nineteenth century, as Daniel Headrick notes, depended on both appropriate motives and adequate means, and by the final decades of the nineteenth century the Dutch had both.¹⁰⁰ Dutch imperial ambition was not new, but in the 1880s they had stronger motives in Aru because the Australian pearl-shellshers' incursions and modern technology enabled them to build a more effective bureaucratic network in the Outer Islands.¹⁰¹ Adrian Vickers links this colonial expansion to Aru's status as a resource frontier by identifying the arrival of Australian pearl-shellshers as part of a pearl rush. The designation is appropriate, especially because it conjures the image of the Klondike gold rush.¹⁰²

One caveat is necessary: Aru lay at the extreme peripheries of the colony. For most of its colonial history, Aru's economic importance outweighed its political importance. The efforts to stop piracy and slave raids in the Netherlands Indies taught the Dutch that maintaining a permanent presence over such a vast archipelago was expensive, even with

⁹⁸ Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 7-10.

⁹⁹ Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 83-94, 105-126. He

¹⁰⁰ Headrick, *The Tools of Empire*, 9.

¹⁰¹ The consolidation of KPM (the Royal Packet Company) strengthened the administrative network even further, as its vessels visited Dobo regularly, establishing a more dependable line of communication. See Joseph N. F. M. à Campo, *Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij: Stoomvaart en Staatsvorming in de Indonesische Archipel, 1888-1914* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1992).

¹⁰² Adrian Vickers, "The Pearl Rush in Aru, 1916: A Case Study in Writing Commodity History in Southeast Asia," *Wacana* 20, no. 3 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v20i3.801>.

development in shipping technology. Dutch imperial ambition was large, but its resources were limited, and this limitation was always most keenly felt at the very edges of colonies where colonial ambition met pragmatic practical concerns. There, at the colony's outer edge, the task of balancing the two factors was often placed on the shoulders of one person, the official on the spot.

The Netherlands Indies was a vast archipelago and in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Dutch were extremely busy pacifying other regions while also trying to establish control over Indies waters. The limited resources had to be carefully shared among the newly pacified regions the government just 'opened', and the strategic allocation of military resources (both technology and manpower) depended on specific circumstances and moments in time. From the 1880s onward, various priorities vied for government's attention especially the prolonged and expensive war in Aceh.¹⁰³ The Dutch never pursued conflict in Aru the way they did in Aceh and other places. Some of the autonomous communities in the Frontshore were friendly to the Dutch, so they simply installed a local administration and began the business of governing without pacification wars.

The task of governing Aru was primarily left to the person on the spot. Their success was largely dependent on individual ability, in order to strategically negotiate and execute governance when the military was not readily available. This was not a novel approach, Benjamin Hopkins notes the role of individual and prestige in frontier governance, which had a legal-judicial basis but was in practice 'a system of personal administration, [...] reliant on its subjective interpretation and application by men'.¹⁰⁴ It was an inexpensive and pragmatic way of running a government on a shoestring when circumstances required fast practical decisions.¹⁰⁵ As Warren shows among the Bajau in North Borneo, accomplished British officials achieved a great deal by combining force of personality, posturing, and timely use of military resources when they were available.¹⁰⁶ In the larger scheme of things, the Dutch never considered Aru important enough to move beyond the person-on-the-spot style of governance. Around the beginning of the nineteenth century,

¹⁰³ For a brief review of Dutch expansion into Aceh, see M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c.1200* (Third Edition), (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 184-189.

¹⁰⁴ Benjamin D. Hopkins, *Ruling the Savage Periphery: Frontier Governance and the Making of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2020), 5.

¹⁰⁵ John S. Galbraith, "The 'Turbulent Frontier' as a Factor in British Expansion," *Comparative studies in society and history* 2, no. 2 (1960), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500000645>.

¹⁰⁶ James F. Warren, *The North Borneo Chartered Company's Administration of the Bajau, 1878-1909: The Pacification of a Maritime, Nomadic People*, vol. 22, Papers in International Studies, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center of International Studies, 1971).

when VOC rule ended and the French conquered the Netherlands, Aru 'quite simply vanished into obscurity from the European point of view.'¹⁰⁷ Whenever the Dutch lacked resources and officials in the Netherlands Indies, they withdrew from Aru. In terms of the longer, autonomous history of Aru, the late nineteenth century was an aberration. The Australian pearl-shellers' incursion led to the only moment thus far where Aru's political importance rivalled its economic importance.

As John Butcher writes from a maritime perspective, the appearance of Australian pearl-shellers in Aru was also an expanding the frontier of capture. These incursions broadly coincided with other patterns of fishing activities throughout Southeast Asia, which increasingly became integrated into global markets.¹⁰⁸ The consequence of this colonial market-oriented strategy in Southeast Asia was the intensification of marine capture in the years between 1870 and the 1930s. In this period, fishers who were trying to collect ever more produce extended the moving frontier through two processes: using either conventional technology to capture more produce or introducing new technologies to do so.¹⁰⁹ In Australia, we see this process when the pearl-shell industry went from wading to naked diving in 1868, which enabled Aboriginal divers to collect pearl-shells from dinghies in depths up to 7 fathoms (approximately 12 metres).¹¹⁰ The introduction of diving suits and later the floating station system allowed Australian pearl-shellers to operate further from the shore and thereby push the frontier of capture further west into the Arafura Sea.

The maritime nature of pearl-shelling demands a broader definition of the frontier of capture that goes well beyond the distance from the shore. John Gillis and Franziska Torma stress that the application of the frontier notion to the sea must be tridimensional.¹¹¹ They highlight the significance of the depth, signifying the bathymetry frontier that divers could now confront with modern diving suits and related gear. Writing in 1886, the Bond Street pearler Edwin Streeter wrote of the depths divers could reach: 'Mother-of-pearl shells are taken as low down as 45 and 50 fathoms; beyond this depth the divers have hitherto been unable to explore, and hence their extreme limit is

¹⁰⁷ Hägerdal, "On the Margins of Colonialism.", 566.

¹⁰⁸ Butcher, *The Closing of the Frontier*: 2.

¹⁰⁹ Butcher, *The Closing of the Frontier*: 72-73. Butcher notes that these two processes were not completely separate from each other.

¹¹⁰ McCarthy, "Naked Diving for Mother-of-Pearl.": 246-247, Bain, *Full Fathom Five*: 16. 1 fathom equals to 6 feet (1.8 metre) deep.

¹¹¹ John Gillis and Franziska Torma, 'Introduction' in John Gillis and Franziska Torma, eds., *Fluid Frontiers: New Currents in Marine Environmental History* (Winwick, Cambridgeshire: The White Horse Press, 2015)., 3-4.

unknown.¹¹² Pearl-shelling was very much concerned with pushing the bathymetry frontier as the shells lie on pearling beds of various depths. On the other hand, the Aruese were naked divers who worked their traditional pearl-banks at modest depths without modern diving gear. There was a basic reason the Australian pearl-shellers were interested in the pearl-banks of Aru; no one that far had used new technologies and floating station system to exploit the bathymetry frontier of its waters.

Sources and Approach

This thesis uses Dutch colonial records, travel reports, local interviews, and newspaper articles to reconstruct Aruese lives and pearl-shelling from the nineteenth century until WWII. There appears to be no written historical records from Aru, so except for the extensive oral history traditions, everything written about the Aru archipelago is seen through the eyes and experience of visitors. While the earlier trade traffic in Aru was relatively constant, most visitors were either Makassarese, Bugis or Chinese traders who had an ambivalent relationship with the VOC and the colonial state. If these traders kept their own records, they are rarely found in Dutch colonial repositories.

Aru never had many European residents even as Dobo grew in importance. Before 1900, the archipelago at times only had one or two Europeans at a time; the colonial officials.¹¹³ In 1937, when Australians searched for pearl-shells from Dobo, the town had 16 European residents.¹¹⁴ It was then that Australian newspapers too occasionally published updates from the archipelago. For a long time before then it was visitors, like Wallace, who wrote most of the travel reports and newspaper articles. But very few of them travelled throughout Aru and provided detailed information about places beyond Dobo. While information about Aru and Dobo is plentiful for certain periods, it is not always detailed. Most of the time the historian must make do with a limited range of sources to understand the archipelago's social and economic milieu. The written colonial records, Aruese oral

¹¹² Streeter, *Pearls and Pearlning Life.*, 91.

¹¹³ In 1898, the Posthouder Oscar Theodoor Erntsen was the only European living in the entire archipelago. See *Naamlijst der europeesche inwoners van het mannelijk geslacht in Nederlandsch-Indië: en opgave omtrent hun burgerlijken stand*, (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1898), 278.

¹¹⁴ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Koloniën: Memories van Overgave, nummer toegang 2.10.39, inventarisnummer 1242 (henceforth: NL-HaNA, Koloniën/ Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. ...), 4.

traditions and local interviews, are very different sources which require different approaches to historical study and writing.

When I refer to colonial records, I also include the writings of colonial officials found in periodicals and newspapers. Ann Stoler argues that unlocking the content of the Dutch archives requires understanding particular colonial officials and the colonial enterprise's character that produced the records.¹¹⁵ Critically assessing Dutch colonial archives, Stoler further notes the changing priorities that guide their classification and their unstable ordering.¹¹⁶ To use colonial archives to study colonialism and its subjects, one needs to maintain a keen awareness of colonialism's character and categories of recordkeeping and classification at all times. These records are basic elements of what Spivak called the epistemic violence that haunt the effort to constitute a colonial other.¹¹⁷ Hence, using Aru's colonial sources requires a constant negotiation over colonial officials' ambitions, how such documents affect their circumstances there, and awareness that colonial subjects did not always welcome their presence.

On a more practical note, Aru's distant location on a colonial periphery affected the kind of records manufactured for future historians. I could not find a systematic record of births, deaths, marriages, or the more ordinary life markers that historians use to write history from below. The person on the spot had to wear many hats, with limited help, time, and resources. It is unclear how many records colonial officials actually kept in Dobo and even less clear how many records survived the destruction of WWII and more recent historical events. It was obvious that officials were not neutral presences, nor were they silent and dispassionate observers. On the other hand, there were naturalists, zoologists and other visitors who were not as inclined to look at the region with a colonial view to radically change it.¹¹⁸ My using these records in the thesis follows the tradition of trying to 'reconstruct ordinary, everyday assumptions [about life] on the basis of the records of what were extraordinary events....'¹¹⁹ The circumstances that produced these records were singular events; a naturalist traveling to Aru to 'discover' biological organisms was

¹¹⁵ Ann Laura Stoler, "'In Cold Blood': Hierarchies of Credibility and the Politics of Colonial Narratives," *Representations*, no. 37 (1992), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928658>, 180-182.

¹¹⁶ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 9-11, 35-39.

¹¹⁷ Gayatri Spivak, "Can the subaltern speak?," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 76.

¹¹⁸ Zerner argues that Wallace for example, waxed lyrical about nature and its peaceful coexistence with trade and markets in Aru, uncorrupted by modernity. See Charles Zerner, 'Dividing Lines' in Greenough and Tsing, *Nature in the Global South*, 50-55.

¹¹⁹ Peter Burke, *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 11.

not a common occurrence, nor was a colonial official visiting most communities dotting Aru to write a field report to his superiors in Bogor.

As equally important for understanding the history of pearl-shelling in Aru are the interviews with informants and research into the archipelago's oral traditions. For this thesis research, I interviewed members of the Baadilla family in Ambon, Ibu Evi and Bapak Abdurrahim and ten people in Dobo and Benjuring, Aduar. The interview with the Baadilla family helps to reconstruct the family history and their business activities as the once most successful pearl-shelling enterprise in Aru. The interviews conducted in Dobo and Benjuring reveals how the industry is remembered now and whether Australian pearling remains in that memory and history. What I discovered was promising as it shows how small-scale communities collectively retain a sense of their past, but also not enough. Scholars that I previously note; Patricia Spyer, Manon Osseweijer, Antoinette Schapper, Joss Whittaker, Sonny Djonler, Ross Gordon, Emily Wellfelt and Hans Hägerdal all demonstrate that a proper account of Aru's history must begin from the various communities' standpoint before expanding beyond that horizon. The Benjuring community, for example, cannot speak for the whole Batuley group, in the same way they cannot substitute for an inquiry into the past of other pearl-diving communities in the Backshore.¹²⁰ For each of these Aruese communities, separate studies are still necessary. Aru needs more comparative community-based studies, but this thesis has a more modest intention with its focus on the history of pearl-shelling between 1870 and 1942.

Structure of Study

This thesis seeks to understand the history of pearl-shelling in Aru by answering the following question: who were the individuals and enterprises searching for pearl-shells in Aru since the nineteenth century and on what terms? Each chapter in this thesis concerns that question, focusing on different moments in Aru's history. The argument surrounding what constitutes separate periods guides the division of chapters. Consequently, the temporal span covered in each chapter differs; it spans two centuries in some and contracts to just several years in other. This is a consequence of not only the source material but also an insistent focus on the nature of progressive changes affecting the pearl-shelling industry in Aru. The first chapter argues that pearl-shelling existed before

¹²⁰ As far as I know, there is yet to be a study on Mariri, another pearl-diving community in the proximity of Karaweira Besar Island (known locally as Kararai).

the Dutch arrived and elaborates on how it fared as the colonial regime changed. The second chapter describes regional trade in Aru in the nineteenth century and the political changes the Aruese experienced as trade grew in the second half of the nineteenth century. The third chapter narrates how the Dutch responded to Australian incursions by reifying and placing Aruese traditional rights within the emerging international order and drafted ordinances which paved the way for a modern pearling industry. The fourth chapter discusses the historical circumstances at the beginning of the twentieth century, namely the development of Pearlfishing Ordinance in the Netherlands Indies and how the Celebes Trading Company (CTC), an Australian-funded company gained access to Aru waters. Chapter Five focuses on the height of the CTC's pearl-shelling activities in Aru, between 1905 and 1908 and how the company altered social lives there. The final chapter discusses the Australian withdrawal from Aru and what remained of the pearling industry and the CTC after they left. This thesis closes with description of the company's faltering operation in the 1930s, until its abrupt end in 1942 when Japanese troops landed, marking the end of the CTC and Australian pearling activities in Aru.

Chapter 1 A Long History of Connection

The 1950 Japanese film *Rashomon* ended with a revelation that the woodcutter stole a dagger from a dead man's chest. The dagger was exquisite, unusual and expensive. The visual sign of its superiority was the shell inlay on its handle. The shell inlay elevated the value of the dagger, turning it into an item worth stealing. In this film about how self-interest influences the stories we tell, the shell inlay dagger was at the heart of the woodcutter's interest, if not obsession.

Throughout history, craftspersons used shell inlay to turn ordinary 'things' into luxury products. Daggers, mirrors, and furniture with shell inlay were not just useful to the rich; they also conveyed status and prestige. This desire to possess pearl-shell objects and the effort required to fulfil it ushered Aru into the modern world system and a global market. Some Aruese searched for pearl-shell, transported it to regional trading centres, traded it to foreign buyers, beginning a commodity chain of exchanges until it eventually reached the hands of craftspersons. To the Aruese, these shells were more important trading items than the pearls they sometimes contained. Until the establishment of pearl farms in the twentieth century, pearl-shelling activities in Aru were centred on the search for pearl-shell.

In this chapter I situate pearl-shelling activities in the longer history of Aru. To accomplish this, I do three things, beginning with an explanation of the physical features of Aru. I then briefly discuss Aruese culture, society, and regional trade before the nineteenth century. I conclude by reconstructing patterns of the pearl-shelling trade in the nineteenth century, prior to the arrival of Australian pearlers in the region

Aru, the Aruese and Its Neighbours

The Aru archipelago is located on the outer edge of Indonesia, south of New Guinea. Since 2004, it is designated as a separate regency, *Kepulauan Aru* (Ind. *Kabupaten Kepulauan Aru*). Before then, it was considered part of the Southeast Maluku regency (Ind. *Kabupaten Maluku Tenggara*), which includes the Kei and Tanimbar Islands. Among this group, it is the easternmost. Aru archipelago stretches 180 kilometres from Warialau in the north to Enu islands in the south. The 'mainland' is constituted of six islands – Kola, Wokam, Kobroor, Maikor, Koba and Trangan in the centre—separated by relatively

narrow channels. These six islands are surrounded by smaller islands, most of them along the eastern coastline.¹²¹

The Aru archipelago has different ecological zones. Islands in the north have higher rainfall and dense forests, while the south is drier and its vegetation mostly wood and grassland savannah.¹²² The landscape differentiated and determined Aruese lives and livelihoods. The main islands are large enough that they have hinterlands, whose populace the Dutch called ‘*alfurs*’ (D. Alfoeren). Like other archipelagos, the channels acted as conduits, connecting Aruese who lived near water. However, those living along the channels on the main islands led different lives than those who lived on small islands separated from the main islands.¹²³

The various physical features of Aru also affected the commodities it exported. For example, the interior of the main islands provided sago, the staple food found across the Moluccas, birds nest and birds of paradise.¹²⁴ While the littoral communities collected the marine products in demand; trepang, tortoiseshell, ambergris, pearls, and pearl-shell. Outside of Aru, this distinction is not as important, because all marine and forest products, except for sago, were catered to global demand. Sago had both a use and exchange value, while all other export products only had exchange value.¹²⁵

I have mentioned before how geography created the Frontshore and Backshore distinction in Aru. This was not only a matter of relative location but also of topography; both the function of Banda and Seram as conduits for growing external market demand and the uneven depth of the waters are factors. The Backshore of Aru is dominated by shoals and shallow waters. Expert navigation is necessary to avoid grounding in the channel and along the coastal line. The vessels adapted for these channels have shallow hulls, which are unsuitable for sailing rough open seas. The obvious problem between the ocean-going craft needed to reach Aru and the sailing vessel required to navigate the archipelago made the Backshore troublesome to reach. By comparison, Ujir in the northwest of Aru, for

¹²¹ Persoon, de Iongh, and Wenno, "Exploitation, Management and Conservation.", 98-99.

¹²² Persoon, de Iongh, and Wenno, "Exploitation, Management and Conservation.", 100.

¹²³ Sonny Djonler, personal communication, February 2019. Djonler informed me of the dichotomy between strait people (Ind. orang selat) and sea people (Ind. orang laut) whose villages faces the sea.

¹²⁴ Healey, "Traps and Trapping in the Aru islands.", 61. The edible bird's nest here is of *Collocalia* sp.

¹²⁵ One might argue that beche-de-mer, tortoiseshell, and pearl-shells have edible parts, but Aru has a lot more fish, crabs, and other choices around them. In Benjuring at least, the oysters are eaten, but they are by-products. These marine products were not gathered for their meat.

example, has a ‘protected deep water harbour,’ which is convenient for big vessels.¹²⁶ The ecological distinction was even more pronounced because the regional trade was centred on Banda.

The initial integration of Aru into the global market was the consequence of changes occurring beyond the archipelago. By 1500, the intensification of the nutmeg trade in Banda caused the emergence of a trading zone in the region. The increasingly nutmeg-oriented islands became ever more dependent on the islands around them for sago.¹²⁷ Aru was part of the Banda-East Seram trade corridor, one of the neighbouring islands supplying Banda Neira. It is unclear exactly when Aru began trading with Banda and became enmeshed in this trading zone. But, in 1515, Tome Pires noted the presence of Aruese selling birds of paradise in Banda.¹²⁸ Their presence is early evidence of Aru’s involvement in regional trade, and the local awareness that there was a demand for birds of paradise.¹²⁹ Presumably, around this time, foreign traders who frequented the region also learned of the existence of the pearl-banks in Aru.

From the very early stages, the movement of pearl-shell depended on demand from beyond the archipelago, and it quickly fell under the purview of regional trade. Even when pearl-shell changed hands between communities within Aru, external demand still drove the trade and its value. Peter Boomgaard suggests that marine products have played a role in shaping the societies that procure them.¹³⁰ This was certainly the case for Aru, especially considering their historic importance in the export of sea products in eastern seas.

The activities of communities in the northwest (Wasir, Ujir, Wokam and Wamar) were vital to Aru’s involvement in regional trade, and they were thus the main forces in the Frontshore. Presuming Ujir is indicative of the way these communities operated, they functioned as hubs and gateways; entry points through which foreign things entered Aru,

¹²⁶ Sue O’Connor, Matthew Spriggs and Peter Veth, ‘On the Cultural History of the Aru Islands: Some Conclusions’ in O’Connor, Spriggs, and Veth, *The Archaeology of the Aru Islands, Eastern Indonesia*, 22., 312.

¹²⁷ On regional trade in earlier period see Ellen, *On the Edge of the Banda Zone.*, 5-6 and J. H.F. Sollewijn Gelpke, *Heady Perfumes of Spice and Gold: The Secret Portuguese-Spanish Struggle over the Moluccas and New Guinea 1490-1570*, 12ff.

¹²⁸ A. Cortesão, ed., *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, written in Malacca and India in 1512–1515, and The Book of Francisco Rodrigues, Rutter of a Voyage in the Red Sea, Nautical Rules, Almanack and Maps, Written and Drawn in the East before 1515* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1944)., 209.

¹²⁹ Schapper, *Wooi fana.*, 33-34.

¹³⁰ Boomgaard, "Resources and People of the Sea ", 114.

and exits, from which export products left the islands.¹³¹ An archaeology study concluded that the settlement of Ujir was established in the late fifteenth century, perhaps during the period of intensification of trade with Banda.¹³² It was a sound decision; within the archipelago, all marine and forest products for global markets flowed from the Backshore to the Frontshore. Everything that the Aruese desired, everything that connected them to the world beyond Aru came from the northwest. One cannot help but wonder how much initial influence this gave to communities located there.

Aru under the Shadow of the VOC

In the seventeenth century, colonialism began to cause occasional disruptions in the local-regional network. The Dutch were not the first outsiders the Aruese encountered. But their contact and terms upon which the contact was predicated were peculiar; they set themselves apart from other outsiders by the demands they imposed upon the Aruese. Furthermore, the wholesale destruction of Banda and enslavement of its people set an effective example to the region of the extreme coercion the Dutch were capable of.

The 1621 Dutch massacre and expulsion of Bandanese reverberated throughout the region.¹³³ Some Bandanese survivors fled to Kei, East Seram and Aru. After emptying Banda and dismantling its social structure, the Dutch had an empty space to forcefully introduce their managerial skills to produce nutmeg, this time completely on the VOC's own terms. To that end they introduced the *perkenier* system, splitting land in Banda Islands into smaller plantation-estates where enslaved people cultivated and collected nutmeg.¹³⁴ Lasker calls Banda the 'site of a particularly ruthless experiment in slavery by a colonial power'.¹³⁵ The *perkenier* system, as a mode of production, stood out as a cruel exception in the region and was dependent on slaves who needed to be fed. Consequently, Dutch Banda inherited the prior dependence on local linkages to obtain sago.¹³⁶ The Dutch

¹³¹ Schapper, *Wooi fana.*, 22 and O'Connor, Spriggs, and Veth, *The Archaeology of the Aru Islands, Eastern Indonesia*, 22., 312.

¹³² O'Connor, Spriggs, and Veth, *The Archaeology of the Aru Islands, Eastern Indonesia*, 22., 312.

¹³³ Willard A. Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands* (Philadelphia, PA: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978)., 54-56. In a recent article Antoinette Schapper argues that the devastation of Banda and Dutch manoeuvring in this period led to the building of stone wall fortification in islands southeast and southwest of Banda. See Antoinette Schapper, "Build the wall!," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 47, no. 138 (2019/05/04 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2019.1554778>.

¹³⁴ Phillip Winn, "Slavery and Cultural Creativity in the Banda Islands," *JSEAS* 41, no. 3 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463410000238>., 367-371.

¹³⁵ Bruno Lasker, *Human Bondage in Southeast Asia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950)., 34-35, 75.

¹³⁶ Ellen, *On the Edge of the Banda Zone.*, 19

needed a steady supply of sago to Banda to feed the enslaved, therefore they needed the pre-existing trading network to continue.

When the Dutch made land fall in Aru in 1623, their primary interest lay in the need to sustain their sago supply and secure their nutmeg monopoly.¹³⁷ This was explicitly articulated in the agreement they signed with representatives from nine Aru villages: Ujir, Tutafaning, Salquadingh, Wokam, Wamar, Fangabel, Maekor, Ratu and Tarangan.¹³⁸ The agreement demanded that the Aruese only bring their trade and business to Banda and Amboina, which were under Dutch control. Other parts of the contract were simply a recognition of Dutch suzerainty and the pledging of their loyalties to them.

Among their demands, one was particularly impossible; namely that Aru had to end trade and association with the displaced Bandanese and the 'rebellious' Seram. The demand brought into sharp relief the different manner in which the VOC and Aru conducted trade. With rare exceptions, the VOC never conducted their trade with parties of equal power. The circumstances in Banda and Ambon saw the VOC demanding total obedience from their trading partners, with the looming threat of violent coercion for noncompliance.¹³⁹ This conduct of trade stood in contrast to traditional trading and exchange activities in the region, where different historical and social ties lay beneath the reciprocity and exchanges itself.¹⁴⁰

It is unclear whether the Dutch fully understood the social-cultural significance of their request. When the Dutch demanded a constant supply of products to Banda, as well as an end to Aruese association with the Seramese, what they stipulated was an end to centuries-old ties, not just economic but also familial.¹⁴¹ This extreme demand was so ludicrous to the Aruese that it was doomed to fail the moment the Dutch announced it. It

¹³⁷ There is evidence that confirm this; In 1636 Pieter Pietersz made a request and 'strongly exhorted' Aruese (D. *vermaande hen ernstig*) in the northwest to continue producing and sending sago to Banda. See P. A. Leupe, "De Reizen der Nederlanders naar Nieuw-Guinea en de Papoesche Eilanden," *BKI* 22, no. 1 (1875), <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90000660>, 22.

¹³⁸ Hägerdal, "Between Resistance and Co-operation.", 486. The agreement was the result of Jan Carstensz' voyage to the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1623, see Schapper, *Wooi fana.*, 18-20 for a transliteration of the 1623 contract.

¹³⁹ For a brief overview of the pervasiveness of violence in VOC trading see G. J. Knaap, *De 'Core Business' van de VOC: Markt, Macht en Mentaliteit vanuit Overzees Perspectief* (Utrecht Universiteit Utrecht, 2014), 14-17.

¹⁴⁰ These trading ties were not all peaceful or always friendly too, see Thomas Goodman, "The Sosolot: An Eighteenth Century East Indonesian Trade Network" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 2006).

¹⁴¹ Schapper, *Wooi fana.*, 21-22.

is not clear exactly how Jan Carstensz, the explorer deputised by the VOC, communicated this important article to the local representatives. Nine communities in west Aru signed the contract, and then spent the next century strategically accommodating and evading the VOC based on their immediate interest.¹⁴²

In characterising the traditional connections between Makassar and traders in East Indonesia later, Andaya notes that the tortoiseshell trade was valuable in its 'reaffirmation each season of the relationship between the Makassarese traders and the collectors in many small islands'.¹⁴³ Before the advent of the Makassarese, traders from Southeast Seram also developed and maintained ties with their regional trading partners.¹⁴⁴ I believe this was also the case in Aru.

The trade Aruese engaged in had a strong social element, dictating connections within the archipelago and with more distant traders. Ujir was one of the most prominent villages in Aru when the Dutch arrived, and externally it had established links with communities in Seram and Tidore.¹⁴⁵ It is unclear when they established these ties; the ties with Seram were more legible to the Dutch than the alliance with Tidore, which only became obvious during the revolt of Nuku in the 1780s.¹⁴⁶ Such alliances were most notoriously apparent in times of conflict. But, considering these ties of kinship and trade, the Dutch demand to simply stop associating with each other was a difficult request to follow. In addition, the role of Southeast Seram in the regional trade network was significant enough that it made sense not to comply with the VOC demand.

Within Aru, established ties along community lines also were most visible during moments of unrest. In 1646, the Dutch *fiscaal* Adriaan Dortsman witnessed residents from Batuley assisting Ujir in their conflict with Wokam and Wagnabar.¹⁴⁷ Contemporary research based on oral history corroborates this alliance, confirming the connection

¹⁴² See Hägerdal, "Between Resistance and Co-operation.", 485-492 and Hägerdal, "On the Margins of Colonialism.", 557-558, 564-566.

¹⁴³ Andaya, "Eastern Indonesia.", 130.

¹⁴⁴ Ellen, *On the Edge of the Banda zone.*, 126-128.

¹⁴⁵ Schapper, *Wooi fana.*, 21-22.

¹⁴⁶ Hägerdal and Wellfelt, "Tamalola.", 435-436, 448-451. Not much is known yet about the hold of the Tidore sultanate there over time; apart from the strong support for Nuku and the anointment of his brother Jou Mangofa in 1787, the remaining exercise of Tidore's power in Aru was demonstrated through occasional raids by its fleets in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, see Muridan S. Widjojo, *The Revolt of Prince Nuku: Cross-cultural Alliance-making in Maluku, c.1780-1810* (Leiden: Brill, 2009)., 111, 115.

¹⁴⁷ J. E. Heeres, "Documenten Betreffende de Ontdekkingsstochten van Adriaan Dortsman," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 46, no. 1 (1896)., 695. Fiscaal were VOC legal officials tasked to maintain order.

between them. In contemporary stories, the conversion to Islam caused a split among the Ujirese, and some of them moved to settle in the Batuley area. Despite the conflict that caused this split, the communities still respect the longstanding connections they had established, and this fact most likely affected their choice to continue bring their sea products to Ujir. The moments when commodities exchanged hands, foreign things for export products, were points in time that renewed such connections. The historical repetition of the trade and exchange thereof strengthened ties among the two communities, while it upheld the place of Ujir as a trading hub under the shadow of the VOC.

The Aruese built community alliances on different social levels. Let us briefly discuss two relatively stable inter-village alliances; the Ursia-Urlima and *jabu*. The existence of the Ursia-Urlima confederation was an Aruese adaptation to regional moiety system. The moiety, an organisation and division of communities into two complimentary sections, have existed for a long time in Maluku. In Aru, the Dutch first recorded the presence of these moieties in 1681, and even then it was already described as existing 'from olden times'.¹⁴⁸ However, historically they were not as rigid as in the Central Moluccas, where the division influenced the conversion of communities.¹⁴⁹ Communities' belonging in the moieties were not always static.¹⁵⁰ It only became institutionally static later, and once they become rigid, stories of the origin of the moiety tend to historicise this divide (see figure 3).¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ W. Ph. Coolhaas, ed., *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, Deel IV:1675-1685* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 432.

¹⁴⁹ The Siwa-Lima are two opposing moieties who were mutually constitutive of each other in the Maluku *weltanschauung*. These confederations of communities were the Aruese adaptation to Siwa-Lima system. This system was present throughout Maluku in different names; PataSiwa-Patalima, Ulisiwa-Ulilima and in Banda and Aru as Ursia-Urlima. Its mere existence in Aru illustrated the influence from Banda in the region. It seems to have originated from the Central Moluccas Valerio Valeri, "Reciprocal Centers: The Siwa-Lima System in the Central Moluccas," in *The Attraction of Opposites: Thought and Society in the Dualistic Mode*, ed. David Maybury-Lewis and Uri Almagor (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989), 120.

¹⁵⁰ Villages in the Barakai group, according to Riedel, were part of Urlima in the 1890s. See J. G. F. Riedel, *De sluik-en kroesharige rassen tusschen Selebes en Papua* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1886), 246. Hägerdal and Gordon believe villages in the past shifted moieties.

¹⁵¹ In Batuley tradition, the divide was caused by a competition among two brothers. The two ancestral lords of Ursia and Urlima had an argument about who was older among them. They resolved it by competing, each trying to conquer more villages than the other. The Lord of Ursia won. According to the story, he conquered more villages because his vessel (a hammerhead shark) enabled him to traverse shallow and narrow waters. The geography of Aru was inexpedient to Lord of Urlima, who used a whale as his vessel. See Djonler and Gordon, *Marine Biology Knowledge in Gwatle Kal: An Illustrated Encyclopaedia*, 7-8. Whales and hammerhead sharks are sacred to the moieties. There are whale resting places in Urlima villages, including at least one in Benjuring.

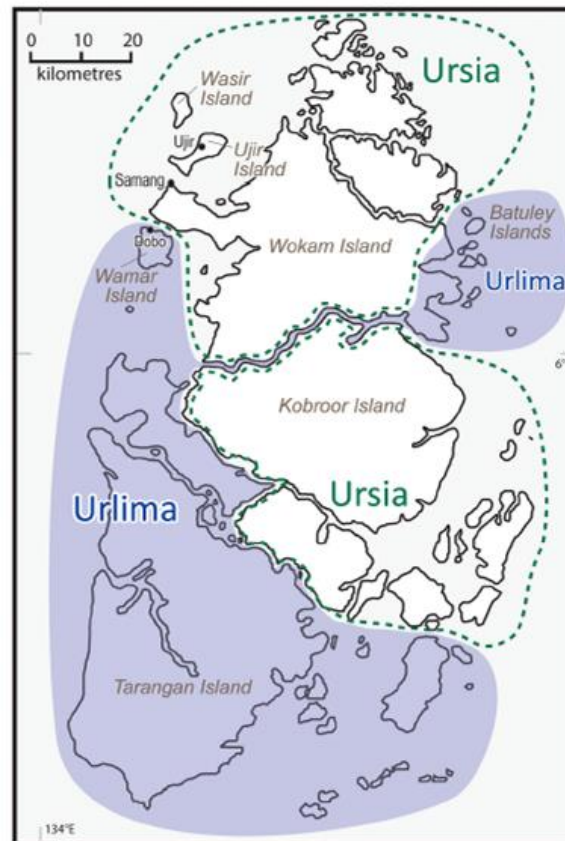


Figure 3 The two moieties (Ursia and Urlima) and their spread in Aru. ©Antoinette Schapper. Published in Djonler & Wellfelt (2019: 3.) Reprinted with permission.

Another intra-village alliance form is the *jabu*. Wellfelt and Djonler characterised *jabu* as ‘an alliance with an element of kinship’.¹⁵² This is characteristic of the connection between Benjuring, one village of the Batuley group and Lorang, a village on Koba Island. Dolcemascolo noted a similar alliance between Wokam and Koba.¹⁵³ Both of these *jabu* alliances are products of specific historical circumstances. For example, the history of the Benjuring-Lorang alliance originated when members of the Djonler clan established their village in Aduar and the subsequent move of the indigenous Mangar clan to Koba. The alliance between Koba and Wokam is based on a story that people from Koba visited

After the Kongres Kebudayaan Maluku III in Dobo on November 2018, a whale was beached in Northwest Aru (Ujir?). Hence, Urlima communities went to an Ursia village to perform a ritual. According to Djonler, this was a celebration because the Ursia and Urlima communities worked in harmony for the Congress.

¹⁵² Wellfelt and Djonler, "Islam in Aru, Indonesia.", 175 n31. No intermarriage is allowed between *jabu*.

¹⁵³ Dolcemascolo, "Foreign Encounters in an Aruese landscape.", 88-89.

Wokam and taught its resident to cultivate rice.¹⁵⁴ Villages in Aru also have different *jabu* alliances with other villages, forming a criss-cross of alliances and loyalties. It is essential here to note the function of such historical ties in connecting communities in Aru. The involvement of Batuley community in the 1646 conflict between Ujir and Wokam, for example, does not make sense when one sees the Ursia-Urlima configuration. But such connections and patterns of allegiance were enmeshed in an interplay of clan and village history and presumably, on a community's assessment of self-interests at a specified moment in time.

Before discussing pearl-shelling in the region, an elaboration of the transient nature of Aru communities is also necessary. Villages were not always permanent; they were communities that rose, declined, fell apart, and or disappeared. This knowledge is vital in the *longue durée* study of the region. Some villages were abandoned; Fangabel, one of the villages signing the 1623 contract with the VOC is now uninhabited.¹⁵⁵ Some of the disappearances and dislocation were caused by external factors. In some stories, Wasir, for example, was abandoned because of an attack of Papuan pirates.¹⁵⁶ Other villages were abandoned because of epidemics. Scholars have documented stories about 'large village sites' on the east coast which were 'decimated by a smallpox epidemic that passed through the region in the mid-to-late 1800s and the communities then split their settlements into a number of small villages'.¹⁵⁷ The Aruese also abandoned some places because of natural disasters. As a matter of fact, the origin story of how Aru was originally populated began with a natural disaster in the heart of the Aruese ancestral lands, now the islands Karang

¹⁵⁴ The nature of these alliances is somewhat like the *pela* alliance in central Maluku, but in the absence of an in-depth study I will not juxtapose them much further. I am making this clarification because in his paper, Dolcemascolo used the term *pela* to describe the Koba-Wokam alliance. For a short overview on the nature of the *pela* alliance see Birgit Bräuchler, "Cultural Solutions to Religious Conflicts? The Revival of Tradition in the Moluccas, Eastern Indonesia," in *Faith in the Future: Understanding the Revitalization of Religions and Cultural Traditions in Asia*, ed. Thomas Reuter and Alexander Horstmann, Social Sciences in Asia (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 46-47. Or for a thorough study of this, see Dieter Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible: Ambonese Christians and Moslems in the Moluccas* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1977).

¹⁵⁵ Schapper, "Build the Wall!.", 224.

¹⁵⁶ The other version of the story is that people left to avoid having to convert to Islam. Wasir is still considered a scared place, Djonler informed me that one should not utter the word 'Papua' on Wasir, because it will rain. Wellfelt and Djonler, "Islam in Aru, Indonesia.", 13.

¹⁵⁷ On the cultural history of the Aru islands, O'Connor, Spriggs, and Veth, *The Archaeology of the Aru Islands, Eastern Indonesia*, 22., 312.

and Enu, in the extreme southeast of the archipelago. The shared history of the shattering of Enu and Karang due to a tsunami led to the Aruese exodus into the 'mainland'.¹⁵⁸

The history of Aru is full of movement and displacement, or to borrow Spyer's phrase 'ancestral wanderings.'¹⁵⁹ Throughout the history of Aru, places were abandoned, villages disappeared or split apart. The Ujir split is an example of this historical process. The Batuley group itself has an origin story of how they were dispersed into seven villages the way it is now, the *peristiwa* Rar Kada.¹⁶⁰ Stories of villages fragmenting, or disappearing indicate the function of these stories as historical repositories. The communities' history and connections with each other provide a common stable element in Aru, creating a continuous bond between the past and present among Aruese.¹⁶¹

In Aru, villages were often ephemeral, while clans were meant to last forever. Wellfelt and Djonler point out that clan histories exist parallel to village histories.¹⁶² In this mobile if chaotic world, the historical stories of clans and their movements are sources of knowledge that Aruese could draw upon to establish their identity and lineage. These stories are not always nostalgic and solely concerned with tranquil and peaceful time. They also contained conflict which occurred from time to time, both within and between villages, causing them to split apart or go to war with other villages. Here we clearly see how oral histories dealt with the traditions of movement and displacement, which allowed the Aruese to maintain vital kinship and exchange connections with each other even when villages disappeared. They also used these stories to transmit historic ties and memories of events across generations, in order to preserve those social ties even when some members of the village left.

Villages often consisted of several clans living side by side. The 1623 contract with the VOC defined their form and functions as distinct, self-organising, social-political units, but it is important to stress here again the organic character of these villages. These communities embodied Tonnies' idea of *Gemeinschaft*. They were organic entities built on

¹⁵⁸ There are different stories concerning the catastrophe that hit Enu and Karang. Patricia Spyer described it as a shattering. See Spyer, *The Memory of Trade*, xviii. I was informed that the dispersal occurred because of a tsunami or a rise in the level of waters.

¹⁵⁹ Spyer, *The Memory of Trade*, xviii.

¹⁶⁰ Wellfelt and Djonler, "Islam in Aru, Indonesia.", 175. According to the story, Batuley men raped and murdered Rar Kada, a young woman. The horrific incident caused a war within the village which tore the village apart. In the aftermath, some people left and began living in other Batuley villages that still exist now, while Rar Kada's family moved away and are now settled in a village in Kei.

¹⁶¹ Spyer, *The memory of trade*, xix.

¹⁶² Wellfelt and Djonler, "Islam in Aru, Indonesia.", 175-176.

personal and kinship ties, and still they have stories that create, maintain, and consolidate cultural-historical ties.¹⁶³ Using Tönnies' terminology, these villages at their core were a community defined by blood (kinship) and place, an ascribed group that lives in close proximity to each other.

I have elaborated on the multilayered connections the Aruese have historically maintained to argue two important points. First, that the rich relationships Aruese historically had with each other have an entangled social, political and economic basis. Second, this element of social organisations should be integrated in an ethnohistorical analysis of how pearl-diving communities in the Backshore chose their trading hubs. Put simply, utilising oral histories of these connections can help us understand the procurement and flow of pearl-shell from the Backshore to communities in the northwest before the nineteenth century. The oral evidence and explanation above also indicate that Aru was not always a peaceful place. In this respect, Aru was no different from the rest of Maluku in the early modern period.¹⁶⁴ The history of Aru shows conflicts occurred at all levels of society, but comparable alliances were also forged.

There is another reason why the social elements of trade are essential to consider. Because of the way trade in Aru was structured (Frontshore/Backshore), the flow of goods depended on specialised activities. The groups of people in the Backshore or the interior, collected commodities, and transported them to the Frontshore. There, others would receive and store it, or traders would purchase the products directly on the spot. For a smooth exchange of goods, all connections at every step of the way had to be amicable. The flow of goods was disrupted when communities who were part of the commodity chain were in conflict. Dutch skipper Pieter Pietersz witnessed this in 1636; the Aruese he encountered could not procure birds-of-paradise for him because they were embroiled in the middle of a conflict with Aruese in the mainland on Wokam.¹⁶⁵ Apart from the uncertainties of the sea, the highly adaptive character of the island people who formed these trading networks alleviated the vulnerability of this pre-colonial economic system.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Ferdinand Tönnies, Jose Harris, and Margaret Hollis, *Tönnies: Community and Civil Society* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 24, 27-28.

¹⁶⁴ See for example Widjojo, *The revolt of Prince Nuku: cross-cultural alliance-making in Maluku, c.1780-1810*; G. J. Knaap, "Headhunting, Carnage and Armed Peace in Amboina, 1500-1700," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 46, no. 2 (2003).

¹⁶⁵ Leupe, "De Reizen der Nederlanders naar Nieuw-Guinea en de Papoesche Eilanden.", 22.

¹⁶⁶ Ellen, *On the Edge of the Banda Zone.*, 273ff.

The trading activities in Aru became more complicated after the establishment of the fort in Wokam in 1659. Technically, the VOC were established there to secure their monopoly of nutmeg and stop 'smuggling'.¹⁶⁷ But the unreasonable VOC demands now forced all pre-existing regional trading activities into the category of 'smuggling'. Hägerdal records how from time to time the foreign traders went directly to the Backshore to evade them.¹⁶⁸ The intensification of Dutch-Aru contact with the erection of the fort gave another centre along which communities formed their economic and political orientation. The dispatches that Banda received documented Aruese attitude towards the Dutch, namely how communities chose to accommodate or evade them.¹⁶⁹

Dobo and Aru Trade in the 19th Century

The global conflict at the turn of the nineteenth century did not stop regional trade in Aru. During the two decades when the Dutch and the British took turns colonising the area, local-regional trade continued. The Dutch regained control of the Netherlands Indies in 1816, but the first notable visit to Aru did not occur until 1824. A top end Australian push to the North and an increasing awareness of the importance of the Aru trade motivated the Dutch consider visiting regularly from 1839.¹⁷⁰ However, the Dutch did not announce their plan to visit Aru annually until 1848. Dobo, on the other hand, came to exist and flourish without colonial interference. Hägerdal described the town as a product of 'local initiative in conjunction with Chinese, Makassarese traders'.¹⁷¹ Its story is a prime example of Houben's statement that markets consist of network of people.¹⁷² The Dutch followed the existing arrangement by placing a *Posthouder* there in 1882. This was directly opposite to Amboina, for example, whose status as a centre of exchange was the result of deliberate VOC policies.

¹⁶⁷ W. R. van Hoëvell, "De Aroe-eilanden, in Vroeger Tijd en Tegenwoordig," *Tijdschrift van Nederlands Indië* 20, no. 6 (1858), 257-275., 263.

¹⁶⁸ Hägerdal, "On the Margins of Colonialism.", 563-565.

¹⁶⁹ Hägerdal, "Between Resistance and Co-operation." 485- 490.

¹⁷⁰ Tim Penyusun, *Ikhtisar Keadaan Politik Hindia-Belanda 1839-1848*, vol. 5, Penerbitan Sumber-sumber Sejarah, (Jakarta: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 1973), 332-333.

¹⁷¹ Hans Hägerdal, keynote speech given at the International Conference on Moluccan Research, Dobo November 8, 2018.

¹⁷² Vincent Houben, "The Pre-modern Economics of the Archipelago " in *The Emergence of a National Economy: An Economic History of Indonesia, 1800-2000*, ed. Howard Dick (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin 2002), 49.

An early record of the strategic value of Dobo came to light in the middle of the rising tension between the VOC and Ujirese in 1787, when an officer wrote:

‘.The supreme VOC authorities were now asked to approve of a new fortification to be built in the Aroe Islands, either on the protruding cape on Wammer Island, called Dobbo, or at Klappa Doea close by, where the ships would be protected by the post. It would be possible to keep good watch there and there was running water. It was the best provided place for defence. It was strange that this place had not been used before.’¹⁷³

From this passage, we know that Dobo was already a known place locally, but that it was still not the recognised regional hub it became later. The town grew as Aru became more involved in global trade. Dutch sketch artist and colonial official A.J. Bik visited Dobo on April 1824 and found a semi-permanent traders’ settlement recognisable from the coconut trees and huts. Bik mentioned that most of the huts belonged to Makassarese, who recently had to rebuild them. The Frontshore was in upheaval due to the ongoing war between Wasir and Wamar. Trade suffered as a consequence of this local war; the Wasirese burnt the settlement in Dobo and the Wamarese could not gather trepang.¹⁷⁴

The growing importance of Aru in the regional trade network was also evident due to the diversity of traders present in Dobo and the way they conducted business. The most obvious were the Chinese traders, who added to a diverse cast of merchants wheeling and dealing in the trade in sea products. Bik saw eleven Bugis *paduwakangs* and one brig, belonging to a Chinese merchant from Surabaya.¹⁷⁵ Most of the Chinese merchants Bik encountered were from Makassar, who used *paduwakangs* to get to Dobo. While Arabic

¹⁷³ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), nummer toegang 1.04.02, inventarisnummer 8034 (1789), f.116. Hans Hägerdal kindly drew my attention to this document.

¹⁷⁴ A. J. Bik, *Dagverhaal eener reis, gedaan in het jaar 1824, tot nadere verkenning der eilanden Keffing, Goram, Groot- en Klein Kei en de Aroe-eilanden* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1928), 42-44. There is a possibility that Wamar was once one single community that was also then later split into the Wangil and Durjela villages now. Wangil began appearing in Dutch records after the 1850s.

¹⁷⁵ Bik, *Dagverhaal eener reis.*, 42. *Paduwakangs* were traditional vessels from South Sulawesi, the Makassarese started making and using them sometime in the eighteenth century. Throughout the eighteenth century, the shipwrights built bigger and bigger *paduwakangs*. Knaap noted that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the average volume of *paduwakangs* was 9 last. The volume of *paduwakangs* when Bik saw them would have varied widely, from 7 to 90 last. In matters of shape, Knaap and Sutherland described *paduwakangs* as ‘a ship with one, two or sometimes three tripod masts to which traditional tilted rectangular sails were connected’. See G. J. Knaap and Heather Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders: Ships, Skippers and Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Makassar* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004), 47-49.

merchants, who began moving into the region in the 1850s, started frequenting Aru later.¹⁷⁶

Makassar remained an important port in the export of sea products. The merchants calling its homeport were mostly Chinese, Makassarese or Bugis. They usually voyaged east between November and January to Amboina or Banda to obtain sail passes and sail to Aru in the January to March period. Most of them used paduwakangs to sail east, although by the 1850s some merchants began using schooners and brigs.

A complete report from the harbourmaster in Banda is unfortunately very difficult to locate. From the bits and pieces of information available, we know that some merchants chose to transit in Banda and then head to Aru. For example, on December 10, 1863 Oewa Raga and his bark *Snuffelaar* anchored at Banda after its journey from Amboina. Five days later, he left for Dobo.¹⁷⁷ The report from Banda does not detail the cargo he brought to Dobo to exchange for sea products there. Oewa Raga seemed to prefer this route because on January 13, 1865 he arrived from Makassar in Amboina. Then on January 30 he sailed for Banda. Oewa Raga represented the nature of traders in the region, in that they used a regular route to voyage to Aru.

The merchants sailing to Dobo were a group of people who spent a lot of time there. Maintaining contact with Seramese or Aruese who provided sea products was a crucial part of the trade. Not all the benefits of these contacts instantly paid off, some contacts were slowly developed as long-term investments. It is around the latter process that the issue of debt and credit emerged.¹⁷⁸ Most traders heading to Dobo formed part of a core group who understood what they wanted, where they would stay, what they would bring and how much of it. Their local knowledge was not limited solely to Dobo, as their travel itinerary also took them to many other trading hubs in the region.

¹⁷⁶ I only found one record of an Arabic merchant heading to Aru and returning via Amboina. On Mei 29, 1870 Said Oemar bin Aloe Assegaff arrived from Aru, captaining the schooner *Banda Balgaair*. He brought 10 pikols coconut oil, 10 picols of *dending* (dried venison), 5,000 coconuts, 100 pieces of textile, and 2 boxes of pedlar's wares (D. *Kramerijen*). On July 1870, he left for Sangir via Sula, Ternate and Manado. From ANRI Ambon 587 *Kort Verslag Amboina Mei 1870* and *Kort Verslag Amboina Juli 1870*. For more details on the activities of Arabic merchants here see William Gervase Clarence-Smith, "The Economic Role of the Arab Community in Maluku, 1816 to 1940," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 26, no. 74 (1998).

¹⁷⁷ ANRI Ambon 320 *Kort Verslag van den stand van Zaken en van het personeel in de Residentie Banda over de maand Desember 1863*. I use a lot of this type of material, so henceforth I will abbreviate them. For example, this one I will abbreviate as 'Kort Verslag Banda Desember 1863.'

¹⁷⁸ For a nuanced treatment of debt among Aru pearl divers see Spyer, "The Eroticism of Debt."

The vessels actively trading in the region repeatedly appear in official records. A prime example of this pattern is the schooner *Frederika*. (see figure 4) The schooner, a 15 *lasten* (27.2 tonne) vessel, belonged to the Chinese trader Tjia Jhoei.¹⁷⁹ On January 1, 1864 it sailed to Banda under his captainship. The vessel returned to Amboina in March. Two weeks later, the same schooner sailed to Seram now under Malek Djapala's captaincy, who would command the schooner the rest of the year. The schooner eventually returned to Amboina on June 4. On June 29, the schooner left Amboina and headed to Buru. Then, on August 2, the *Frederika* arrived in Amboina, and left for Ternate on August 15. The vessel finally returned to Amboina again on February 13, 1865.



Figure 4 Schooner *Frederika*'s movement throughout the Moluccas, 1864-1867. Map reproduced and modified with the permission of CartoGIS Services, Scholarly Information Services, The Australian National University.

When the schooner left Amboina for Aru on March 16, 1865, it was under the command of The Ko. None of the cargo onboard belonged to the captain or the owner of the schooner. The cargo belonged to three different merchants; it consisted of cloth and opium. To their misfortune, the *Frederika* sailed off course and had to return to Amboina three days later.¹⁸⁰ On April 11, the schooner once again headed to Aru. This time under the command of another person, Liece, as the captain. Everything worked out, because the

¹⁷⁹ ANRI Ambon 586.

¹⁸⁰ ANRI Ambon 586 *Kort Verslag Amboina Maart 1865*.

next time the vessel returned to Amboina was in February 1866 via Makassar. This time however they were not as active as the previous year, just sailing to Banda. Liece remained captain throughout the year.

In February 1867, the *Frederika* reappeared in Amboina under the captaincy of yet another person, Batjo. It left for Aru on February 25. The story of the *Frederika* ended when she ran aground on a reef south of Rosengain in October 1867. The schooner was sailing from Kei, on its way to Makassar when the shipwreck occurred. No lives were lost but the *Frederika* was not heard of again.¹⁸¹ The *Frederika* was interesting because it passed through Amboina a lot. And through its movements we can sense the extent of the area the vessel regularly covered, something that is not available for most of the traditional trading craft heading to Aru.

*Table 1 Vessels leaving the port of Amboina directly to Aru and their cargoes.*¹⁸²

Year	Number of vessels				Cargo		
	Paduwakan	Djonko	Schoener	Bark	Cloth/textile (in pieces)	Rice (in pikols)	Coins (in £)
1864	2		-				13,500
1865	1		2		2,077*	180	6,235
1867	2	1	1		260*	550	900
1868	3			1 ^a	1,700*	450	10,600
1869	4				8,500	1,650	8,000
1870	5		2		6,140	2,008	28,500
1871	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1872	2				600	371	

^aThe Bark *Snufelaar* only declared bringing two *kisten* (around 2 pikols) of opium

Aru did not have a harbourmaster then, so there is no systematic information about the volume of trade in Aru. Instead, I pieced together information from various reports in Amboina and from Europeans visiting the region. Records from vessels leaving Amboina for Aru reveal that the trade was still dominated by paduwakangs who called Makassar their home port (see Table 1). Another notable trend is that after 1864 more paduwakangs stopped in Amboina to obtain their passes. But for some unknown reason, this number dropped to zero in 1871. The decade also saw a rapid increase in the import of intoxicants

¹⁸¹ ANRI Ambon 586 *Kort Verslag Amboina October 1867*.

¹⁸² Statistic compiled from ANRI Amboina 586 and 587. The two bundles contain *Kort Verslagen* from the Residentie Amboina. I note down the report from the Harbourmaster, and the cargoes the vessels declared. The numbers that I arrive at are based on the measurement that G.J. Knaap provided. See G.J. Knaap, *Shallow Waters, Rising Tide: Shipping and Trade in Java Around 1775* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996), Appendix 2 Measures and weight, 189-193.

to Aru; arak began rivalling the amount of rice imported to Aru along with some opium and other alcoholic beverages.

There is a problem in analysing this trade data. As the case of Oewa Raga illustrates, not all vessels sailing to Aru stopped in Amboina. Some made other stops along the way and occasionally, vessels skipped calling at Amboina port altogether before sailing to Aru, like in the year 1868. That year only four vessels officially passed through Amboina, but the *Controleur* noted the presence of 42 trading vessels from Makassar in Dobo that February.¹⁸³

Pearl-shelling in Aru, 1800-1870s

Information is also unfortunately scarce about the amount of pearl-shell Aru exported annually. It is obvious though that over the course of the nineteenth century the export of pearl-shell steadily increased. Bosscher noted in 1849, Aru exported 3,096 pikols of pearl-shells worth f117,618. That year, the price of pearl-shell per pikol was f38.¹⁸⁴ In 1851, the overall export value of the shell had increased to f130,000.¹⁸⁵ By 1870, Aru exported f250,000 worth of pearl-shell.¹⁸⁶

The increase volume of export resulted in an increased trading traffic at Dobo. It made Dobo a thriving multicultural place, where people from diverse backgrounds increasingly converged. Spyer has challenged Wallace's oft-quoted depiction of a peaceful Dobo, stressing the long record of strife in the nineteenth century.¹⁸⁷ Let me briefly situate Dobo within the context of this thesis by saying it was an emergent frontier town. It was a settlement that emerged specifically to cater to foreigners who were there to trade with

¹⁸³ ANRI Ambon 587 *Kort Verslag Amboina Maart 1868*.

¹⁸⁴ The math does not add up here, as I calculated the total worth of the export to f117,648. C. Bosscher, "Staat van den in- en uitvoer op Aroe-eilande, gedurende het jaar 1849," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 1 (1853), 330. Bosscher admits that these numbers were based on information he received from the biggest merchants, there were peddlers who did not stop in Dobo, but went straight to the Backshore. He estimates that their trade amounts to 10% of Aru export, which means the number he filed is at best, 90% of the volume of trade in the archipelago.

¹⁸⁵ Boomgaard, "Resources and People of the Sea", 109.

¹⁸⁶ ANRI Ambon 587 *Kort Verslag Amboina April 1870*.

¹⁸⁷ Spyer, *The memory of trade.*, 11-12.

Aru communities. Increased trade in Aru led to it becoming more than a temporary settlement for seasonal traders.¹⁸⁸



Figure 5 A. J. Bik, *Gezicht op een nederzetting op de oostkust van de Oera-eilanden, Zuid-Molukken, 1824.* (View of a settlement on the east coast of Workai, Southeast Moluccas). (Collection Rijksmuseum: RP-T-1999-173)

Dobo was not just a market town, it also functioned as a place where traders lodged before they went to Aru communities. Based on the movements of the traders that Bik recorded in 1824, most of the marine products the merchants desired were from the Backshore. Some Chinese traders hired translators and used small local vessels bought from Kei or Goram traders to reach the Backshore. Bik's observation also confirms the continued importance of Seramese traders for local-regional trade. Bik saw them bringing oil, sago, areca nuts (*M. pinang*), betel leaves (*M. sirih*), coconuts, textiles, gunpowder, elephant tusks and gongs to trade in Aparā, a community in the Barakai group.¹⁸⁹ They bought trepang from Aparā and traded them to Makassarese merchants, exchanging them for textile or silver coins which enabled them to go to Banda and buy commodities that Papuans wanted to purchase.

¹⁸⁸ This process appears to be very gradual. In 1872, Italian naturalist L.M. D'Albertis visited Dobo outside the trading season in December, and stated there were only ten to twelve people living in the town. See L.M. D'Albertis, *New Guinea: What I Did and What I Saw* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1880), 168.

¹⁸⁹ Bik, *Dagverhaal eener reis.*, 43, 45.

Bik visited Aparā when he was in Aru. Based on his experience, he drew a sketch of people placing the shells they collected along the beach (see figure 5). Bik witnessed a pearl-shell exchange transaction there and summarised it:

An agreement is made with the *Alfoeren* for the amount of *arak*, *lijnwaad*, etc. that is to be paid for a hundred of pearl-shells; if the price is agreed on, the men will go to the pearl-bank, where oysters from the depth of 4 or 5 fathoms are brought to the surface [D. *opgedoken*]....¹⁹⁰

Two important points need elaboration here before we go further; the labour involved in the procurement of pearl-shell and access to the pearl-banks. What Bik mentions is a negotiating process during which 'free' divers bargained with traders before they undertook the difficult and dangerous work of diving at the pearl-banks. No mention is made of slaves employed to dive for pearls. The absence of slaves in the industry is notable because of the historical involvement of Aruese as slaves in the region. As a matter of fact, the first Aruese the Dutch encountered were enslaved in Banda decades before the 1621 massacre.¹⁹¹ As Valentijn noted earlier, Aru still exported slaves to Banda throughout the eighteenth century. However, I have found no Dutch record describing traditional pearl-shelling in Aru using slaves. The only mention of this comes in 1852, from a notice in the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*, which stated that Papuan slaves were diving for pearls and trepang in Aru.¹⁹²

Generally, historical records provide more evidence of the enslavement of Aruese. Banda, always in need of labour, considered Aru a dependable source of slaves, although not the most important one. Aru was not densely populated. In 1826, Kam reported that it had approximately 17,000 inhabitants.¹⁹³ In 1850, the number had dropped to 13,000 inhabitants.¹⁹⁴ The previous year, a cholera epidemic hit Aru and, according to Bosscher, killed three thousand Aruese. The historical records also suggest that Aru was the victim of occasional raids. Papuans from Onin, the nearest slave market, were feared. I previously mentioned a Papuan attack that led to the abandonment of Wasir. When Bik

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 73.

¹⁹¹ P. A. Leupe, "Beschrijvinge van de Eijlande Banda," *BKI* 3, no. 1 (1855), 76.

¹⁹² Anonymous, "Ceram Laut Isles," *JIAEA* 6 (1852), 691.

¹⁹³ Het Utrechts Archief, *Raad voor de Zending: rechtsvoorgangers*, nr. 1442, Cahier met excerpten uit brieven en verslagen van J. Kam. mevr. S. M. Kam-Timmerman, en G.J. Hellendoorn, alsmede beknopte beschrijving van de inhoud van twee 'portefeuilles Ambon', 1823-1839.

¹⁹⁴ C. Bosscher, "Staat aantoonende de voornaamste der eilanden der Aroe-groep, benevens de voornaamste negorijen en het aantal van hare bewoners en huizen," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 1 (1853), 325-326.

inquired about the possibility of reaching the New Guinea coast from the Backshore, the Aruese he met reacted with horror.¹⁹⁵

Another group whose presence incited fear were the so-called 'Sooloo pirates'.¹⁹⁶ During his stay in Dobo, Wallace saw firsthand the fear and panic they caused among Aruese in 1857. In Wanumbai Wallace heard stories of missing ancestors who strangers took away. However, while slave raids can explain the presence of enslaved Aruese in Sulu and elsewhere, it does not explain the historic export of slaves. When he was in Aru, the *orangkaya* of Wammar gifted Bik with two slaves.¹⁹⁷ Bik rejected this gift and asked that they be freed persons on Aru. Kolff, a Dutch naval officer who visited Aru in 1825, inquired into the circumstances of the two manumitted persons. He found they had incurred so much debt that they sold themselves back into slavery again.¹⁹⁸ We have no idea how far back this system of debt bondage went, but it is likely that indebtedness contributed to the Aruese export of slaves. The other causes include enslavement through conflict, raids or disasters.¹⁹⁹ Recently we have learned that in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conflicts in Aru did lead to enslavement and how widespread slavery was within the archipelago.²⁰⁰ Whereas in Sulu the intensification of demand for sea products led to violent long-distance maritime raids to accumulate more labour, there is no evidence of a similar process occurring in Aru. The Aruese were the victims of this process because slave raids targeted them too.

The issue that most affected the Aruese was the issue of scarcity in resources. The increasing demand for pearl-shell increased the importance of pearl-bank ownership as more traders arrived to buy shells. Pearl-banks in Aru were collective properties of communities who had always jealously guarded their rights to certain pearl-banks. But

¹⁹⁵ Bik, *Dagverhaal eener reis.*, 77. Fear of Papuans also led them to hide their riches (copper gongs and elephant tusks) in holes of limestone rocks or burying them in the ground.

¹⁹⁶ Alfred R. Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago* (New York Harper & Brothers, 1869). 441-442, 471. These pirates were the dispersed Balangingi Samal, whose atoll enclave was destroyed by the English and Spanish in the 1840s. See James F. Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768-1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981)., 190-195.

¹⁹⁷ Bik, *Dagverhaal eener reis.*, 91.

¹⁹⁸ D. H. Kolff, *Voyages from the Dutch Brig of War Dourga (translated from the Dutch by George Windsor Earl)* (London James Madden & Co, 1840)., 204.

¹⁹⁹ See Peter Boomgaard, "Human Capital, Slavery and Low Rates of Economic and Population Growth in Indonesia, 1600-1910," *Slavery & Abolition* 24, no. 2 (2003), <https://doi.org/10.1080/01440390308559157>., 88-90. Boomgaard made a very brief review of the communities throughout the Netherlands East Indies and the circumstances that ensured a steady supply of slaves.

²⁰⁰ Hof, "Het Kansrijke Buitengewest Aru.", 52-56. See also Hägerdal, "Between Resistance and Co-operation.", 496-497.

in 1860s a lot of conflicts occur over access and control of pearl-banks. For example, in March 1867, a dispute ‘quite serious in nature’ occurred between the villages of Batuley, Kumul, and Mariri.²⁰¹ The dispute halted all trading activities. Local stories record this dispute as an outright war for ownership of the pearl-banks around Karaweira Besar Island (locally known as Kararai).²⁰²

Unfortunately, there is no historical data to compare the current situation to the circumstances before the 1850s and it is inconclusive whether the number of disputes increased or whether the Dutch were simply paying more attention. The following year, 1868, Mariri was involved yet again in another conflict with Ujir and Wamar over the reefs around Jedan Islands.²⁰³ According to Dutch reports, these disputes were resolved in accordance with local customs (D. *landsinstellingen*). In his report summarising the 1868 dispute, the colonial official expressed hope to resolve the issues through pearl-bank ownership once and for all.²⁰⁴ Like everything else in Aru, ownership of pearl-banks was complicated and prone to change over time. As the Dutch drew near to Aru, access to pearl-banks increasingly became an issue of governance. I cover this matter in Chapter 2.

The Coral Sea Schooner Incident

The contentious nature of access to pearl-banks came to the fore in 1885 with incident involving the schooner *Coral Sea*. The incident occurred on December 4 when *Coral Sea* anchored in Dobo. The schooner was from Australia, flew the British flag, under the command of a Captain Willam.²⁰⁵ When it anchored at the shore, the Posthouder informed the captain that Dobo was not an open port catering to general trade, (D. *Algemene handel*) and he would have to leave immediately. The captain allegedly informed the Posthouder that they would head home for Australian waters.

²⁰¹ ANRI Ambon 579 Politiek Verslag 1867.

²⁰² Today, the Batuley group villages have tenure (*petuanan*) over the pearl-banks in Karaweira Besar. Sony Djonler, pers. comm., February 2019.

²⁰³ Ambon 587 Kort Verslag Amboina Maart 1868.

²⁰⁴ ANRI Ambon 412 *Aanteekeningen gehouden op eene reis naar de Aroe en Key Eilanden door Jhr W. C. F. Goldman*.

²⁰⁵ ANRI Ambon 583 *Algemeen Verslag van de Residentie Amboina en Onderhoorigheden met uitzondering van de Assistentie Banda over het jaar 1886*. I am unsure whether the captain’s name is William, Millam, or Willam. I found no corresponding report on this in pearl-shelling historiography from Australia even though the stories about pearl-shelling in Aru tell this story repeatedly.

However, on December 15, a *nahkoda* of an incoming junk informed the Posthouder that the *Coral Sea* was still in Jedan searching for pearl-shell. The previous day they had been sighted between Warialau and Kola whose inhabitants opposed their presence there. This apparently did not bother the captain who threatened them with loaded guns. Later, when searching for pearl-shells he fired some shots to prevent the locals from approaching his vessel. The Posthouder was not aware of the fact that the schooner carried firearms and ammunition. The Dutch dispatched the warship *Bali* was to investigate the schooner, but it arrived too late. Thus, they could not find them around Jedan or along the entire Backshore. Later, a Chinese merchant in Batuley village reported that the schooner had left the area. This incident was only one among the numerous Australian pearl-sheller overtures into Aru in the second half of the nineteenth century. Before this, there were rumours that curious Australians were seen around the waters of Aru. The previous rumours alarmed the Dutch administration in Amboina, but this near confrontation made action even more urgent.

The *Coral Sea* incident occupied a special place in the Dutch colonial imagination. Des Alwi, grandson of a famous Arabic pearler in Banda, recounts how this incident unified locals with the non-white traders and, incorrectly, the moment when the floodgates were opened to Australian pearl-shellers.²⁰⁶ L. H. W. van Sandick, who later became the Governor of the Moluccas, expressed the same sentiment and believed that the schooner was the first sign of an Australian encroachment.²⁰⁷ While this is factually incorrect, it was still a foreboding harbinger of things to come. It signified the role that the Aruese would play in the future when the Australians arrived; namely, wary spectators and on occasions, local rebels. Later, it was retrospectively used as a pretext for Dutch colonial expansion into Aru. Ironically, one of the people who would pave the way for the arrival of the Australian pearlshellers was Des Alwi's own grandfather.

In this chapter I have described the geography of Aru and how it shaped Aru's history and its involvement in local-regional networks and trade. The arrival of the VOC in the seventeenth century was a complicating factor. Their brutal actions in Banda

²⁰⁶ Des Alwi, *Sejarah Maluku: Banda Naira, Ternate, Tidore dan Ambon*, Cet. 1. ed. (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 2005)., 587-588.

²⁰⁷ *Memorie van den Gouverneur der Molukken L. H. W. van Sandick, Septr. 1926. Hoofdstuk XIII Parelvisserij*. See Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Koloniën: Memories van Overgave, nummer toegang 2.10.39, inventarisnummer 329. (henceforth NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. ...)

reverberated throughout the region and paved the way for the strengthening of Aruese ties with Makassar. These ties of kinship and trade last until the nineteenth century, when Makassar was still the main destination for Aru's export product. Over the two centuries, the Aruese never ceded control of their precious pearl-banks. The arrival of foreign pearl-shelliers especially Australians in the late nineteenth century would force them to negotiate their control.

Chapter 2 Turbulent Times on a Frontier

The arrival of Australians in Aru waters was a logical expansion of their activities from the north of the Australian continent. Their constant incursions were reminders of the porousness of the region and of how close the other side of the sea is. However, they were not the only newcomers to affect the lives of Aruese in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The increase of demands for pearl-shell in distant markets brought other newcomers to Aruese shores too. Again, the common desire to obtain pearl-shell fostered these cross-cultural encounters, allowing them to begin, flourish and sustain themselves for considerable periods of time.

These pearling encounters did not occur in a vacuum. The *Coral Sea* incident occurred during a tumultuous time in Aru's history. The period, marked by such incursions and an influx of ever more outsiders, saw a shift in the social-cultural landscape of the region. These newcomers had no established social standing or rapport with the Aruese. Before this, trade in sea and forest commodities in Aru was a function of social connections, so it stands to reason that such social changes would affect trade. Australians were an important factor in causing this change; they were newcomers who challenged the existing circumstances and social conventions. However, in this period, when Aru shifted from being a multi-cultural region into a colonial society, it is also essential to pay attention to the increasing colonial presence. The colonial government imposed itself upon this porous frontier to mediate and police these encounters. Depending on the time and circumstances they were confronting, the colonial government both thwarted and opened the way for these interlopers and adventurers.

To understand how Aru was slowly transformed into a place where Dutch colonial law could be applied and enforced, we need to consider the preceding period that led to such a moment. This chapter begins by explaining the changing character of the Dutch colonial state in the Netherlands Indies and how these changes affected people's lives in distant Aru. The integration of Aru into the Dutch colonial state proved a turbulent process for quite a while, as some Aruese resisted Dutch presence. The chapter then describes how the Dutch dealt with the three resistance movements that occurred between 1882 and 1893. The chapter concludes by discussing how the colonial government treated the Netherlands Indies pearl-shellers who were interested in working Aru's pearl-banks in this transitional period.

The March of the *Bestuur*

In 1882, the Dutch colonial government issued a decree officially establishing two government posts in Aru, one in Dobo and one in Gomo-Gomo (southeast of Aru on Barakai Island).²⁰⁸ There is no denying that the establishment of these posts was a crucial step for the government, one which would also affect the daily lives of the Aruese and their economic activities. However, it is wrong to view these posts as simply a fulfilment of a long-standing colonial aim. Instead, the establishment of these posts signifies a useful place from which we can understand various colonial development and state-making activities. To grasp this moment properly, it is necessary to contemplate the nature of the posts and address the character of the colonial government then before expounding on the changes it effected in Aru.

The opening of government posts throughout the archipelago was a direct sign of the expansion of Dutch colonial power in the area. However, using the word ‘expansion’ to characterise this proactive, forward march of colonialism in certain parts of the Netherlands East Indies risks misunderstanding. During this period, the Dutch did not formally ‘acquire’ or annex new territory in the archipelago. Instead, they began to insert themselves in places over which their authority had been nominal for a long time.²⁰⁹ It is more accurate to characterise the stride of the Dutch colonial state as a progressive ‘rounding-off’ instead of a simple rapid expansion.²¹⁰ The opening of more government posts was a part of this rounding out process of expansion on colonial frontiers.

It is therefore fitting to characterise such posts as part of a deliberate programme to expand Dutch authority and control. In this sense though, the process and policies were not new; the beginning of the nineteenth century saw anti-piracy efforts as integral to the

²⁰⁸ *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch Indie* 1882 no. 36 officially divided the archipelago into two administrative regions. The first one was *afdeeling* Wammer, which included the northern parts of Koboer and the entirety of Wokam, Wammer, Maikoor, Kola and Lotta. They were under the purview of the post in Dobo. The other division is the *afdeling* Watoelei, which encompassed the southern part of the island Koboer, and the entirety of Trangan, Barakai, Gomo-Gomo and Penambulai.

²⁰⁹ G. J. Resink problematised Dutch authority over the Netherlands Indies, pointing out the existence of independent rulers and realms and the enduring character of native states within the colony, arguing that the Indies’ long existence was a myth whose bases was mostly built on treaties instead of legal clarity and consistent, direct exercise of power. See Resink, ‘Native States of the Eastern Archipelago, 1873-1915’ & ‘Independent Rulers, Realms, and Lands in Indonesia, 1850-1910’ in G. J. Resink, *Indonesia's History between the Myths* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1968).

²¹⁰ For a brief but thorough overview of the literature, see J. Thomas Lindblad, "Economic Aspects of the Dutch Expansion in Indonesia, 1870–1914," *Modern Asian Studies* 23, no. 1 (1989), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00011392>, 5-7.

establishment of Dutch authority. As early as 1818, Dutch officials wrote numerous reports and dispatched various expeditions to end piracy in the waters of East Indies.²¹¹ On the surface, these two initiatives seem like separate projects, but a closer inspection reveals striking parallels. There remains an obvious difference between water and land but at the core of these two Dutch colonial policies were efforts to gain monopoly of violence and authority.²¹² The opening of posts, however, did not replace expeditions; rather, they were symbol of an increasing presence and intensity of the colonial government in the 1880s. In the next part of this chapter, I demonstrate how governance in Aru involved these two practices. It is essential to begin by understanding the nature of the drive from the centre of colonial power in Batavia.

The Dutch colonial state-making project was neither always coherent nor consistent. Thomas Lindblad identified the period 1870 to 1890 as a transitory stage, when 'the traditional policy of abstention was becoming obsolete, but the time was still not ripe for a full of reversal of priorities.'²¹³ Hence, the rounding-out process did not take place at the same time and or same pace in different parts of the archipelago.

The manning of a post meant more than simply a constant presence; it also signified a seeming integration of Aru into the administration of the nascent colonial state. In other words, the relative importance of the two postholders went well beyond their presence on the spot, it was also about how their activities fit into the wider agenda of the colonial state. This is what the gradual march of the *bestuur* was about, namely a process that saw the administrative integration of more and more communities brought under the control of colonial power, through violence and bureaucratic administration. As noted earlier, the process was protracted and inconsistent at times, but the Dutch were intent on securing control over their distant subjects and far-flung territories.

To characterise developments in this period in the Netherlands Indies, some historians have used the term 'late colonial state'. The term is somewhat troublesome, because of the variety of changes the term seeks to explain. Depending on the empire and place, the late colonial state arrived within colonies at different times. Therefore, following John

²¹¹ Joseph N. F. M. à Campo, "Discourse without Discussion: Representations of Piracy in Colonial Indonesia 1816-25," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34, no. 2 (2003), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463403000201>, 201-206. See also James F. Warren, *Iranun and Balangingi: Globalization, Maritime raiding, and the Birth of Ethnicity* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2002), 86-93.

²¹² à Campo, "Discourse without Discussion.", 206-207.

²¹³ Lindblad, "Economic Aspects of the Dutch Expansion in Indonesia, 1870-1914.", 7.

Darwin's argument, the term needs to be justified when used.²¹⁴ Fortunately, Robert Cribb usefully summarises the period after 1880, listing three key elements in the case of the Netherlands Indies; 'a growing administrative separation from the Netherlands, an increasingly complex and unified administrative structure, and a growing sensitivity to the issues of citizenship and democracy.'²¹⁵

The late colonial state, conceptually speaking, is extremely useful to describe the changing colonial entity that was taking hold in the middle of Aruese. The term addresses both the discourse emerging within the colony and its simultaneous expansion to other, more peripheral places. Of the key factors Cribb listed above, the point regarding the consolidation of administrative structure is most relevant to this section. Without such developments, the changes in discourse between The Hague and Batavia would have been meaningless to Aruese lives. The strengthening of the central colonial administration and the opening of more posts were a potent combination, mainly due to the paper chain and connections linked through missives, reports, decrees and ordinances. Slowly but inexorably, different regional units converged towards becoming a 'national' colonial unit, the Netherlands Indies, administered from Batavia.

Some factors played a role in determining the urgency of the Dutch state-making project in particular regions. They were directly connected to the prevailing colonial assessment of remaining threats to their authority. Eric Tagliacozzo notes that from the 1870s the nascent colonial state viewed the largely autonomous Outer Islands with anxiety since it was a region filled with threats to their state-making project.²¹⁶ The threats were uncontrolled violence (including piracy), the Asian outsiders, and the native populace. In numerous places in the Buitengewesten, including Aru, these threats converged. Complicating matters further was the repeated incursions of Australian pearl-shelliers into Aru waters.²¹⁷ Even when their encounters with the Aruese were peaceful, the presence of Australian pearl-shelliers was a growing source of Dutch anxiety. These incursions reminded them of the proximity of a neighbouring colonial power and their

²¹⁴ John Darwin, "What Was the Late Colonial State?," *Itinerario* 23, no. 3-4 (1999), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0165115300024578>.

²¹⁵ Robert Cribb, "Introduction: The Late Colonial State in Indonesia," in *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands Indies, 1880-1942*, ed. Robert Cribb (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994), 3.

²¹⁶ Eric Tagliacozzo, "Kettle on a Slow Boil: Batavia's Threat Perceptions in the Indies' Outer Islands, 1870-1910," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (2000).

²¹⁷ Lindblad compared how the Dutch approached the incursions of British subjects into North Borneo shifted overtime. The establishment of North Borneo Company in 1878 led to a deployment of troops, for fear of further British expansion. Lindblad, "Economic Aspects of the Dutch Expansion in Indonesia, 1870-1914.", 7.

own inadequate colonial presence. After all, Aru was one of the more distant places where, to quote Lindblad, ‘the Dutch claims to sovereignty were the flimsiest and the external boundaries least precise.’²¹⁸ The arrival of Australians brought these two issues to the fore and the solutions for the problem of sovereignty and boundaries were not singular. Until the 1890s, the Dutch colonial authorities could not properly resolve the question of external boundaries, and by extension, their control over territorial waters. Before then, the physical presence of sovereignty in Aru were solely placed upon the two posts opened in 1882.

Dobo versus the Rest: Early Visitations

To the people in Aru the establishment of the posts, and by extension, the nascent colonial expansion, was experienced as a ramping up of colonial governance. From the 1850s, the Dutch made annual voyages to Aru. These voyages, based upon directives issued from the Hague in 1840, were intended to ‘commit small acts of sovereignty’ in order to expand Dutch authority.²¹⁹ Thus for three decades, these voyages were a means to demonstrate nominal authority and a visible sign of colonial governance. These visits provided the Aruese with short spells of Dutch supervision and a taste of colonial governance.

Consistent with earlier developments and the historical pattern in Aru, communities in the Frontshore felt the impact of these changes more immediately. The Dutch considered Dobo a fertile ground for implementing the colonial agenda. Apart from its location, Dobo had other characteristics that made it ideal. It was a foreign settlement, and the town was distinct for not having a permanent Aruese community. While it shared the island with two Christian villages, Durjella and Wangil, it was a totally different place. It had a different social structure and power dynamic, one that therefore made it easier for the Dutch to install themselves. The town was a multicultural trading settlement, whose residents belonged somewhere else and were only there on temporary basis. In terms of Tönnies’ distinction concerning social units, Dobo was more like a society (*Gesellschaft*) rather than a coherent community.²²⁰ The itinerant population of Dobo comprised a

²¹⁸ Lindblad, "Economic Aspects of the Dutch Expansion in Indonesia, 1870–1914.", 5.

²¹⁹ Tim Penyusun, *Ikhtisar Keadaan Politik Hindia-Belanda 1839-1848*, 5. Literal wording: ‘*kleine daden van Souvereiniteit te doen plegen, ten einde alzoo de kring, op welken toepasselijk zijn de uitsluitende bepalingen voor de Molukken bestaande, zich niet verkleine, maar veeleer ongemerkt vergroote.*

²²⁰ Tönnies, Harris, and Hollis, *Tönnies: Community and Civil Society.*, 17-18, 52ff. It is fitting that Tönnies wrote ‘We go into *Gesellschaft* as if into foreign land.’

collection of various self-interested communities who simply lived alongside each other. These communities had divergent interests and were in no sense a unified entity capable to confront the Dutch growing presence. As we later see, its growth into a town did not change the character of Dobo.

The existence and growth of Dobo as a foreign settlement then was also a symptom of changes in the pearl-shelling industry within the wider region. In 1868, white men in Australia began pearl-shelling and introduced a modern, mechanised approach to procuring pearl-shell.²²¹ Similar to Aru, the industry developed far away from its colonial administrative centres in the far north and northwest coast of Australia, hereto mostly the realm of indigenous nations and Asian migrants.²²² The development of pearling contributed to the emergence of settlements along the coast: Shark Bay, Cossack, and Broome in west and northwest Australia; Thursday Island and Darwin in northern Australia and the Torres Strait. Much of this pioneering development was centred on pearl-shelling and therefore, Julia Martinez and Adrian Vickers conclude the 1870s witnessed the emergence of the pearl frontier.²²³ Across the pearl-frontier, which included Aru, numerous autonomous settlements emerged, independent of colonial regimes who later followed in the footsteps of the shell traders and settlers. The competing changes occurring among colonial powers meant that after the 1870s the Dutch were among the most eager contenders for taking power in Aru. If they were to achieve control in Aru, they needed to establish control in Dobo first. Its frontier town character became an effective barometer to assess the progressive social and political changes Aru experienced after 1880.

I stated above that the opening of the post in 1882 was not the origin of colonial governance in Aru, but rather an intensification of the process. To understand the background to that process, it is essential to understand what colonial governance meant throughout this period and focus on its escalation and limits. Two accounts, written several decades apart, provide a glimpse of Dobo under the episodic colonial gaze and its character. The first account is an 1868 report from W. C. F. Goldman, a Dutch Controleur while the other is a September 1881 account of H. Knotterus, a Dutch minister who was on Aru to visit Christian settlements.

²²¹ Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia*.

²²² Reynolds, *North of Capricorn*.

²²³ Martínez and Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier*, 11.

The Goldman report is rich in details, allowing us to readily grasp the nature of colonial presence and governance in Aru before the posts were opened. Since he was in Aru to conduct an inspection tour (D. *inspectiereis*), the trip itself was an important sign of the changes occurring within Dutch colonial ranks as well. The inspection, based on an official decree, had multiple intentions; to maintain and extend the mediation of the Dutch officials, to take necessary measures to confirm and expand Dutch authority, and to ensure public peace and safety.²²⁴ To fulfil those aims, Goldman had to conduct face to face gatherings with local headmen and village groups.

It is clear from records that meetings were crucial among the formal activities of visiting Dutch officials. This was not a coincidence; Knotterus noted when a government steamship called at Dobo port the head of the Buginese would notify communities on neighbouring islands by firing a small canon located on the strand.²²⁵ This cannon shot was a call to assemble and outlying people came to visit the Dutch official. During such meetings, the officials received reports on the current conditions of Aru, and resolved existing conflicts, either among Aruese or foreign traders. Records from these meetings recount dispute resolved, troubles brewing, and epidemics, or the absence of them.²²⁶

Chinese and Makassarese merchants welcomed Goldman when visited Dobo in 1868.²²⁷ Normally, visiting Dutch officials would use a designate building to conduct their official affairs and meetings. Unfortunately, this building, that Goldman left in good state the previous year, was in such a sad state of disrepair it was impossible to hold meetings there. Instead, he had to use the house of Tjoso, a Chinese merchant from Makassar.

In March 1868, Goldman had to adjudicate on various issues. Among them were a dispute over the pearl-banks in Jedan, a war between Maikor and Djerami (*sic*), an ongoing conflict among communities along the Kobror channel, an inferno in Longgar, and a

²²⁴ Tim Penyusun, "ANRI Ambon 1495 Verslag van den gecommiteerden ambtenaar van Ceram C. W. Wer 1857," in *Kontrak Perjanjian Wilayah Perbatasan Republik Indonesia Jilid IV*, (Jakarta: ANRI, 2009), 121-122. The literal wording: 'de tussenkomst van den ambtenaar of van het Nederlandsch Indisch bestuur te behouden'.

²²⁵ Het Utrechts Archief 1102-1 nr. 1539 Extract uit het verslag van de kerkelijke dienstreis naar de inlandsche christengemeenten in de Minahassa en de residentie Amboina, van 15 mei tot 8 december 1881, door H. Knotterus, predikant en lid van het bestuur van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederlands-Indie (met bijbehorende correspondentie), 1880-1882, 44.

²²⁶ The involvement of Dutch officials in resolving conflicts was not new. Bik also spoke of resolving issues between villages in the frontshore when he was visiting Aru in 1824. It is not always clear whether these interferences were requested or when the officials simply ascribed the role to themselves. However, as time progresses, interference would occur even without the permission of the Aruese.

²²⁷ Tim Penyusun, "ANRI Ambon 1495.", 122.

murder in Dobo. Among all these cases, two stand out as they revealed the turbulent state of Aru at the time. The first concerned a murder in Dobo and the second was about an intra-community dispute over the pearl-banks in Jedan. The problems associated with these cases were certainly not equal from a governance standpoint. However, Goldman's handling of these issues allows us to glimpse the social landscape of Aru in 1868 and the exercise of authority required to resolve conflicts and or administer justice.

The murder Goldman intended to resolve had occurred the previous year. On the night of August 30, 1867, a Chinese merchant, Deboet, left his dwelling and visited Tangdijan, another Chinese merchant to borrow some money from him.²²⁸ Tangdijan could not help him, and he let Deboet go with an offering of some pork in a small bowl. On his way back, Deboet stopped by the house of Masajo, a Bugis women because he promised to come if he was unable to borrow money from Tangdijan. But Deboet could not find Masajo, so he went inside and sat on a bench, placing the bowl next to him. It was then that someone murdered him.

The murderer stabbed Deboet twice, who apparently yelled loudly 'I am dying!' His screams attracted his nearby Chinese neighbours, who initially thought this was some kind of joke until he screamed again in his native dialect. Tangdijan ran to the dwelling, but he could not open the door. Aware of the gravity of the situation, he then pried the door open and saw Deboet bleeding on the ground. He went to get help and returned, 'accompanied by almost the entire population of Dobo'.²²⁹

Until then, Masajo, the owner of the house had been absent. But when the concerned group returned to the scene of the crime, she was there. Responding to the demand of the crowd for an explanation, Masajo claimed that Deboet had already been injured when he entered her dwelling. The crowd immediately turned detective, using torches in an attempt to find the place of the stabbing, but they found 'no drop of blood in the entire *negorij*'.²³⁰

Masajo was not in Dobo when Goldman investigated the murder. She was away on the Backshore, although no one was able to tell Goldman in which *negorij*.²³¹ This was also the case for the alleged three witnesses; Sokin, Katoepa, and Babie. They were boarding at her dwelling at the time and witnessed the murder. However, by the time Goldman

²²⁸ Tim Penyusun, "ANRI Ambon 1495.", 124-125.

²²⁹ Ibid., 125.

²³⁰ Ibid., 126.

²³¹ Penyusun, "ANRI Ambon 1495.", 126.

arrived, no one could tell him where they were on the Backshore. He had to make do by interviewing bystanders, who stated that the witnesses had confirmed Masajo's statement.

This was Dobo, a place set apart from the rest of Aru because it was the domain of foreigners. There were not a lot of places where the Dutch felt at home in Aru, but Dobo was as good as it would get for them.²³² It was a place inhabited by loosely structured communities, mostly connected to each other and the rest of Aru by multiple entanglements of trade and credit. But even these diasporic communities in Dobo were not always cooperative with the Dutch. Their opposition toward them was often expressed in more subtle ways, as revealed in the challenges Goldman faced in his search for Masajo.

Masajo and her accomplices continued to evade Goldman. Part of his tour included a visit to villages in the Backshore, where he continued to inquire into their movement. Failing to trace them, he concluded that they were deliberately avoiding him.²³³ He had to settle on merely explaining his futile search and requesting communities to transport them to Dobo if located. Nothing came of his request; the Controleur left Aru empty handed without having solved the case. Optimistic nevertheless, he wrote that the investigation remained on hold until his next visit.²³⁴

The trouble Goldman experienced in attempting to solve the crime in Dobo was indicative of the circumstances in Aru; namely a fluid, chaotic place where people, both Aruese and others, entered and exited the Dutch field of vision. Despite Dutch claims of authority, the outer islands were still a 'watery region of refuge', where people chose to engage or evade the state according to their own interest.²³⁵ The case also demonstrates the glaring limit of sporadic governance via inspection tours; namely justice, even if achieved, was still invariably delayed. It is unclear whether Deboet's murder was ever solved. However, even if it was resolved, the opportunity to evade justice undermined the aspiration of the nascent colonial state.

²³² Goldman allegedly expressed his displeasure about the wrecked government building in Dobo to the merchants. They were ordered to repair the house with the help of people from Durjella and Wangil. The reception he received that year seemed to be lacking to him, because he threatened to take 'serious steps' if they failed to receive him more appropriately next time. See Penyusun, "ANRI Ambon 1495.", 128.

²³³ Penyusun, "ANRI Ambon 1495.", 164.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

²³⁵ Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed.*, xiv.

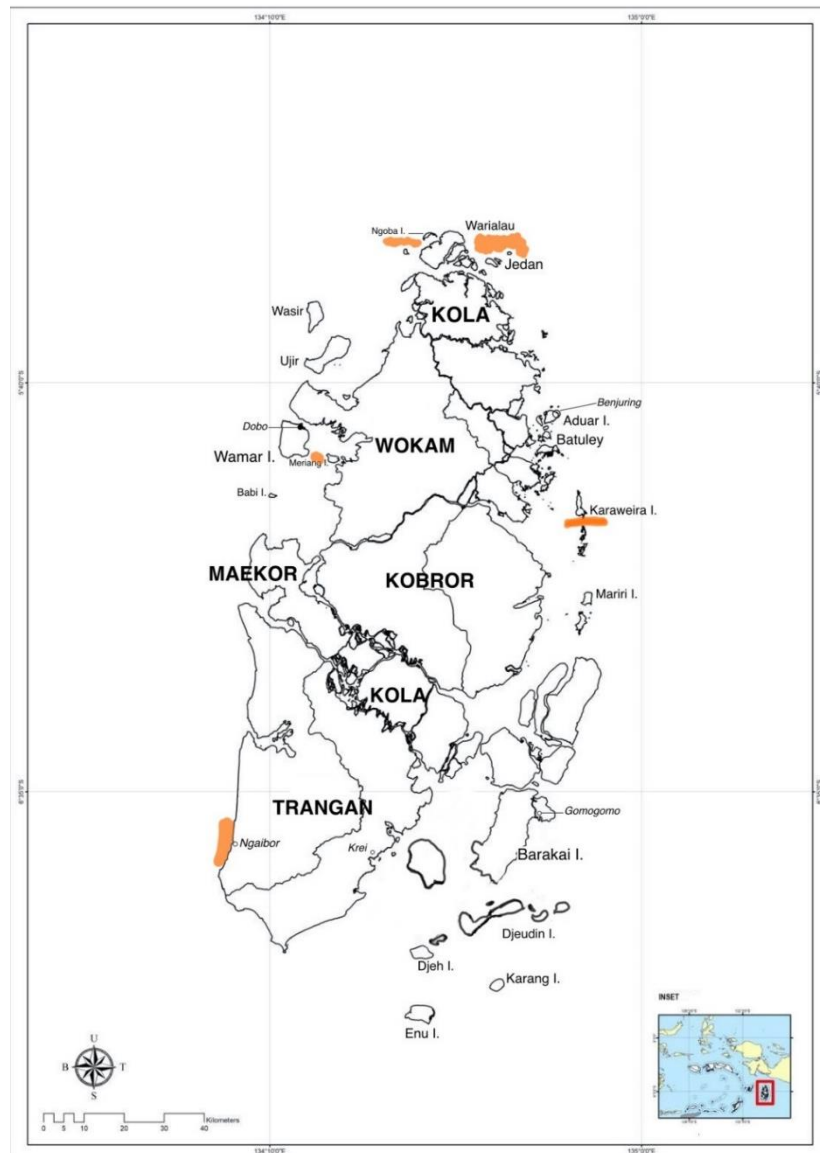


Figure 6 Pearl-shelling sites in Aru, 1880s. (van Hoevell, 1890)

The most pressing weakness of episodic governance was the time constraint it imposed on official rulings. Whatever legal order the official achieved through his ruling, it would only last for as long as he was physically there. Put simply, such law and order, as achieved through this form governance, was invariably temporary. As soon as the official left, life on Aru resumed its regular course. The disputes over the pearl-banks in Jedan demonstrated this outcome conclusively. In Aru, the pearl-banks were like powder kegs, sites over which contestations regularly occurred and competing claims were made.

Jedan was a thorn in Dutch officials' shoes; historically, the pearl-banks and their uses caused numerous conflicts among communities in Aru. The archipelago had multiple pearl-banks and communities on the Backshore lived within sailing distance of and held

tenure over them.²³⁶ Jedan, however, remained a flash point of contention for three different reasons. First, there was the matter of location; Jedan is in the northernmost point of the archipelago; in the open, deeper seas, making it readily accessible to bigger vessels.²³⁷ Then there is also the matter of its large size. According to an 1886 report, the pearl-banks of Jedan were approximately 24 kilometres², stretching for three miles from the beaches.²³⁸ The most obvious reason, however, has always been the wealth of these pearl-banks. Summarising the remarkable reputation of Jedan in the 1860s, Goldman wrote it was a place where ‘people sometimes dove for pearl-shells to 13-14 fathoms deep, and as I have heard, no one has ever dived in Jedan in vain’.²³⁹ The divers, he continued, upon reaching the bottom, would find such a field of oysters, that they would carry 4 or 5 to the surface with ease.

The global growth of interest in pearl-shells only made Jedan more valuable than before and by extension, a more crucial point of dispute. It was not simply about how many shells one could find, but also about the revenue and lease one could levy from owning it. In 1868, Goldman presided over a dispute that involved Ujir, Samang, Batuley and Kollor. The cause of conflict was the change in the cost of levy imposed upon communities who wanted to dive for pearl-shells in the pearl-banks. It was common to tax the pearl-shells on a per person basis for the entire fishing period, but recently the levy had shifted to one shell per *mettie* or per diving day.²⁴⁰ The shift in the levy caused considerable discontent among the divers. They objected to it and intended to resolve the issue with violence. Describing the tension then, Goldman wrote, ‘a general war in which every *negorij* would take part, was near eruption when I arrived, and it was up to me to cut the Gordian knot and end the bickering concerning the Jedan reefs.’²⁴¹ Permanently resolving the festering issue in Jedan was essential if the Dutch hoped to establish more permanent order and peace in Aru.

²³⁶ Van Hoëvell helpfully listed known pearl-banks around Aru in the 1880s see figure 6. From G. W. W. C. Baron van Hoëvell, "De Aroe-eilanden, geographisch, ethnographisch en commerciëel," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* 33 (1890), 65ff.

²³⁷ Even today, it is one of the limited number of sites where divers can use ‘modern equipment’. The pearl-banks here are found in deeper depths than in other spots in Aru. For this reason, there is a convention that any method to dive as deep as possible is allowed. This convention also applies to the waters around Karang Enu, far in the Southeast of Aru.

²³⁸ ANRI Ambon 583 *Algemeen Verslag van de Residentie Amboina 1886* (henceforth abbreviated as *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1886*). Original wording: ‘voormelde banken eene groote hebben van 24000, zich ongeveer 3 Engelsche mijlen van de wal in zee uitstrekken’.

²³⁹ Tim Penyusun, "ANRI Ambon 1495.", 143. Literal wording: ‘zooal ik stillig heb hooren beweren, heeft nimmer een duiker te vergeefs van Djedan gedoken.’

²⁴⁰ Tim Penyusun, "ANRI Ambon 1495.", 126-127.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

The locus of power and authority in Aru was still unclear at the time, and the real extent of Dutch influence was still unknown. Hence, Goldman's rulings also tested the limit of recognised authority. The approach to the Jedan case revealed that the boundaries of Dutch power were still unclear, and therefore it was up to visiting officials to test the actual limit and expand it. This approach and decision-making process contributed to the haphazard character of Dutch colonial expansion in the Outer Islands.

The Dutch did not possess an integrated approach to the issue of marine tenure yet. For decades, these disputes over tenure in the Outer Island were handled locally. In 1868, it was left up to Goldman to resolve the conflict, and his personal decision was bold, if not unrealistic. He gathered the leaders of the eight villages together in Batuley village. These eight villages; Ujir, Samang, Durjella, Wasir, Kumul, Jursiang, Thaboa (*sic*) and Batuley itself were all somehow involved in the dispute. After listening to their claims and deliberating upon them, Goldman declared that henceforth the Jedan reefs were the property of the Netherlands Indies government.²⁴² The reefs were now open to anyone, not just for the Aruese but also all Netherlands Indies subjects. Goldman claimed that all attendees were pleased with the ruling, and concluded that he had permanently settled the troubles in Jedan.

Of course, the actual ownership of Jedan was never really settled. Less than two decades later, the reefs still belonged to Ujir and Samang.²⁴³ Left to its own devices, normal life on Aru resumed as if Goldman's ruling had never occurred. In 1888, the Batuley were still the main group exploiting the pearl-banks in Jedan. Some of them were also diving among the pearl-banks around Toba and Ngoba. These islands, both northwest of the archipelago, belonged to Wasir, Ujir and Samang. The levy for the exploitation of the pearl-banks there was ten *katis* of pearl-shell per prauw per annum.²⁴⁴ The continued recognition of traditional tenure and the complete disregard for the 1868 ruling suggests Goldman overestimated his personal influence and Dutch authority. It is difficult to interpret the attendees' sense of acceptance as other than humouring Goldman, knowing that his decision carried very little weight.

Aru's history indicates that if Goldman had been capable of enforcing his ruling, the climate of the gathering would have been different. His decision was not simply heavy-

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 146.

²⁴³ van Hoëvell, "De Aroe-eilanden, geografisch...", 65.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

handed, it also ignored Aru's longstanding social dynamics. Goldman was certainly arrogant, and his ruling reflected his attitude, but the general reaction to his rash ruling indicates that the leaders entertained the absurd, as long as it was not enforced. This was perhaps the only advantage of episodic colonial governance; its temporary nature did not upset the fragile balance of power in the archipelago. The short periods of governance could be intense and overbearing, but they had a clearly defined closure. However, this abbreviated temporal limit to an overbearing state presence slowly came to an end. There was less and less space to flee the colonial state, which now took up residence among them.

A More Permanent Presence

I invoked Tagliacozzo before to discuss how circumstances in the Outer Islands became unacceptable in colonial eyes in light of the state expansion agenda. In his study, Tagliacozzo identifies three elements that the colonial government considered as threats to their programme in the Outer Islands: uncontrolled violence, the Foreign Asians and the native populace.²⁴⁵ These threats were present in numerous places in the Outer Islands, including in Aru where all three elements had been present for a long time. The archipelago was a resource frontier surrounded by waters, which were traditionally pirate hunting grounds. Conflicts occasionally broke out between its populace and economic activities were centred on trade with the Chinese and Makassarese. In the eye of the expanding colonial state, the social circumstances in Aru were undesirable, because they were not under direct Dutch control and supervision. These circumstances were a problem that the Dutch wanted to resolve.

The colonial government gradually began placing its officials among their subjects. Knotterus arrived in Dobo in September 1881, a time of the year that until recently already marked the end of the trading season. But upon his arrival, he still found traders in Dobo.²⁴⁶ When G. W. W.C. Baron van Hoëvell visited in 1888, Dobo consisted of two wide streets, with about sixty 'decently built houses' belonging Chinese, Makassarese and Bugis traders.²⁴⁷ The town was ethnically divided into separate quarters. The Chinese

²⁴⁵ Tagliacozzo, "Kettle on a Slow Boil", 70-72. For an extensive study of how this 'state visions of danger' applied to Dutch colonial frontiers, especially West Borneo see Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005), 108-177.

²⁴⁶ Het Utrechts Archief 1102-1 nr. 1539, 44.

²⁴⁷ van Hoëvell, "De Aroe-eilanden, geografisch...", 63.

quarter was administered by a quarter master [D. *Wijkmeester*]. The house of the Posthouder was located directly in front of the Chinese quarter. A Bugis captain led the group's quarter, which stretched southward from there. The location of the house was a fitting metaphor for a presence that installed itself in the middle of a town to see and manage everything. But managing Dobo was not enough, the Dutch hoped to use it as a stepping stone to expand their administrative and managerial reach.

The Dutch saw many aspects of daily life that needed control and regulation in Aru. Problems with gambling, debt, drunk and disorderly behaviour, and petty crimes which were integral to multicultural lives built on trade, occurred here and there. One major problem for them was the excessive use of intoxicants on Aru. Knotterus witnessed the unloading of the steamship *Banda* with its large cargo of arak, gin and a 'horrible sort of brandy' in Dobo.²⁴⁸ Intoxicants (which included alcohol and opium) were dangerous for several reasons. Alcohol and drugs presented a real threat to law and order that the Dutch were eager to introduce. The liquor and opium contributed to aggression and heightened tensions in communities.²⁴⁹ As in Borneo, here too one heard echoes of moral panic about how drink and drugs corrupted society. Goldman relayed complaints about how intoxicants made the Backshore Aruese lazy and unwilling to work.²⁵⁰ Van Hoëvell noted that some Aruese women were forced to marry traders because of their opium addiction, a drug the traders deliberately introduced.²⁵¹ These problems were not isolated from each other, thus the government's desire to resolve them.

Since the pearl-shelling industry was such an integral part of the economy of Aru, the colonial state wanted to manage it too. Having established a post on Aru, the administration in Amboina considered it strategic for a European buyer to settle there to systematise the collection of export products.²⁵² Borrowing Tania Muray Li's idea, this was a scheme to improve the industry because the Dutch were dissatisfied with the existing trading pattern.²⁵³ Until 1882 Aruese still conducted the pearl-shell trade the way A. J. Bik described in 1824; they waited for Chinese and Bugis traders to arrive and

²⁴⁸ Het Utrechts Archief 1102-1 nr. 1539, 44.

²⁴⁹ Tim Penyusun, "ANRI Ambon 1495.", 131-133, 146-147.

²⁵⁰ In Borneo too, the Dutch expressed their frustration about the traders, complaining that they brought this on themselves as they brought the intoxicants to Aru.

²⁵¹ van Hoëvell, "De Aroe-eilanden, geografisch...", 101.

²⁵² ANRI Ambon 582 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1882*.

²⁵³ Tania Murray Li, *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 5-9.

proceeded to negotiate prices before diving. The Dutch wanted to improve this way of conducting business within the trade.

Li identified two steps in the effort to improve things, firstly to problematise current circumstances and then second to render it technical. The Dutch considered the existing trading pattern problematic for two reasons, the first one concerns the wide use of intoxicants as exchange items and the second was connected to the tensions that sometime coloured the relationship between the traders and the Aruese. As I note in chapter 1, in the nineteenth century traders began bringing intoxicants to Aru to exchange for the marine and forest produce. When Wallace was in Aru in 1856, he noted that arak, tobacco and betel were the chief luxury items.²⁵⁴ In light of its popularity, in the 1880s intoxicants were also used among Aru communities to pay for access to pearl-

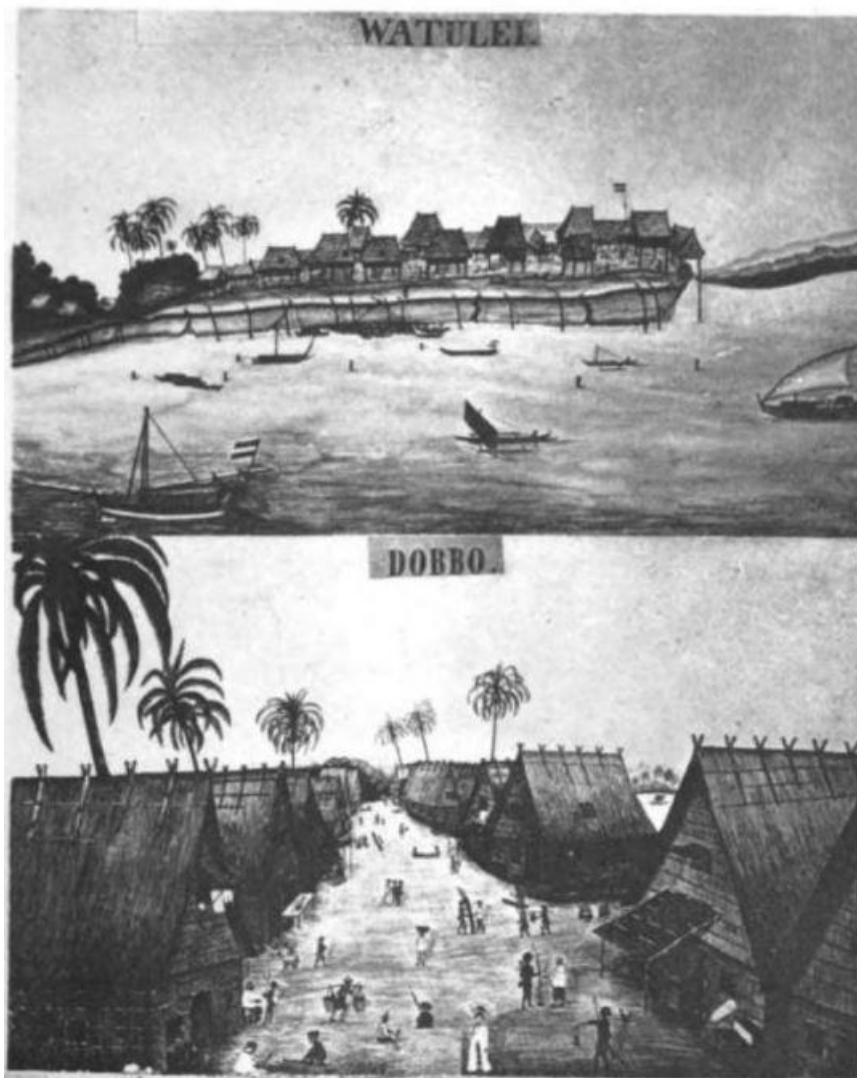


Figure 7 Sketch of Dobo and Batuley. (Carl Ribbe, 1888)

²⁵⁴ Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*, 449.

banks. In 1889, divers from Batuley paid communities in the Frontshore one box of arak and two katis tobacco before diving in the pearl-banks from Hokmar to Naegoelie. People from Krei paid other communities two casks of arak to gain access to their pearl-banks.²⁵⁵

The Dutch were wary of the intoxicant because it signified exploitative arrangements within the industry. The pearl-shell trade brought together Aruese and foreign merchants and defined their relationships with outsiders. But unfair business practices and debt complicated these trading connections and fostered conflict. This was a persistent concern; in 1895 the Resident of Amboina requested that the Dutch prohibit Chinese, Makassarese and Bugis traders from going to the Backshore to protect Aruese from such exploitation.²⁵⁶ The Dutch hoped that by inserting a European buyer they could eliminate these two problems in the industry and thus introduce order in the economy and society. There was one glaring problem with their belief in this approach; this required more direct control, and not every Aruese really wanted more Dutch governance.

Aru Resists

I found no record that represents how the Aruese personally viewed these rapid changes occurring in their region. Dutch records repeatedly express no hesitation in promoting their claim over the region. They installed governance in Aru with some local considerations but no prior consultation. Their actions and rulings were predicated on the assumption that the Aruese would tacitly accept their presence. The colonial records indicate there was no doubt among the Dutch about legitimacy of their presence, even when they expanded into areas where their presence was previously merely tolerated.

The colonial government infiltrated the daily lives of the Aruese and made ever more demands than in the past. As Dutch political reach expanded, their demands affected more and more communities. In 1885, the Dutch began distributing flags to communities in Aru. The government wanted to achieve certain goals by having the Aruese recognise the sovereignty Dutch flag. Locally, it established a visible bond between the communities and the government. The Dutch gained more from this flag programme than the

²⁵⁵ ANRI GBBT 367.

²⁵⁶ ANRI MGS 04-06-1895- no.1092. The Raad van Nederlands Indie (henceforth the Council of Indies) rejected the idea because they believed that it would place undue burden on the Backshore Aruese, will not solve the problem, and that they could not actually enforce it.

communities, as it outwardly displayed their authority against 'foreign drifters'.²⁵⁷ Although the flags (and the silver knobbed canes that came with them) were technically gifts and status symbols, in practice they also implied obligations. Upon receiving the flags, the Dutch insisted communities ritually wave them. Visiting officials chastised communities that failed to comply.

Some communities on Aru have a long history of tolerating the Dutch and were more prepared to follow their directives. The Dutch considered Wangil and Durjella, for example, as reliable allies. It was no coincidence that they were among the oldest Christian communities in the archipelago.²⁵⁸ These communities had been in contact with the Dutch for a long time and had more experience in dealing with them. The Dutch sometimes instructed them to watch over the archipelago when there were no Dutch officials. Because there were several cooperative communities, they also watched each other. When the regent from Wokam, for example, was found guilty of disorderly conduct and abuse of power, Goldman suspended him and ordered the regent of Durjella to keep an eye on him.²⁵⁹ For his misconduct, the Dutch suspended the regent from his official duties and stripped him of his silver knobbed cane for six months. The silver knobbed cane was a powerful symbol of authority, but what the Dutch gave they could also suddenly take back.²⁶⁰ Through their indirect policing of communities in Aru, the Dutch hoped to bring law and order, but this process was rarely achieved without sacrificing Aruese freedom.

The Dutch considered their forward movement legitimate, but this sentiment was not shared among many Aruese. The further they angled for control, the more the Aruese pushed back against such colonial encroachment into daily lives. The recently established permanent colonial outposts allowed little reprieve from the Dutch presence or the outside world. There were Aruese who preferred the colonial state left them alone, but their

²⁵⁷ ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1885*

²⁵⁸ In this respect, VOC's original intent to use religion to strengthen ties with their local allies paid off, in the same way they did in the 1780s when Prince Nuku waged a rebellion across the region. See Hof, "Het Kansrijke Buitengewest Aru.", 28-34 and Hägerdal and Wellfelt, "Tamalola.", 448.

²⁵⁹ Tim Penyusun, "ANRI Ambon 1495.", 131-133.

²⁶⁰ For a consideration of the meaning of European fashion and gifts in Aru, see Spyer, *The Memory of Trade.*, 54- 62. I could not find any literature on the silver knobbed canes and the function of a regent in Aru, although I am certain it is very different from its contemporary use in Java. In Java, a regent would be a *bupati*, a high-status position encompassing more than one village. In Aru, most villages had a regent set alongside the village leadership. For more on the position of the bupati and the changes of function see Sartono Kartodirdjo, "Bureaucracy and Aristocracy. The Indonesian experience in the XIXth century," *Archipel* 7, no. 1 (1974)., 155-157.

opposing opinion did not matter to the Dutch. In the absence of written historical records documenting their dissenting viewpoint, it is instructive to read about their deeds instead.

If we consider actions to be louder than words, these two decades were explosive. Between 1882 and 1893, three distinct resistance movements emerged in Aru. These movements were respectively led by Belbel, Naelaer and Toelfoelen. Spyer argues that the resistance movement by Backshore Aruese 'surfaced within a complex situation which must have involved the reshuffling of Backshore trade dynamics...'.²⁶¹ The colonial forward movement and encroachment played an unwelcome role in the reshuffling process. Apart from expressing local grievances, the movements are also important because efforts to crush them showed brutal edge of Dutch colonial expansion.

Belbel in Feruni

The 1882 movement caught Dutch attention when a visiting official learned that a man named Belbel in Tarangan had declared himself a '*Iese warkoo*, or someone with supernatural powers'.²⁶² Belbel was the brother of Aijsgado, the orangkaya of Feruni, a village in Trangan. He received divine inspiration when he went to the forest to collect firewood. While he was chopping down a *pinang* tree (*Areca catechu* L.), a woman approached him and took him to the clouds. There, she told him that Iaboeng Watdjoerin chose him to revive the old state/condition of Aru.²⁶³ His messianic prophecies caused social upheaval among some Aruese, who began traveling en masse to Tarangan to visit the holy man and offer him gifts.

The revitalisation movement alarmed the Dutch from its start. However, in 1882 their steamship *Tagal*, could not reach Tarangan. The Dutch official therefore deputised their allies to solve this problem, people who in official records emerge as collaborators in the governance in Aru; the orangkaya of Wangil, the Raja of Durjela, the orangkaya of Maekor, and the Kapitan Boegis from Dobo, Daeng Lebo Schoedjoe.²⁶⁴ They were ordered to go to Tarangan, investigate the case and explain to the 'gullible' people that they should

²⁶¹ Spyer, "Zaman Belanda.", 57.

²⁶² ANRI Ambon 582 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1882*.

²⁶³ The report was purportedly compiled based on statements from 'some trustworthy natives', stating that *Iaboeng Watdjoerin* is one of the first *matmats* or spirit of the ancestors of Maikoor. Anonymous, "Hoe men in 1881 een woelgeest op de Aroe-eilanden tot rede bracht," *De Indische Gids* 15, no. 2 (1893), <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0000DE0000090000>., 1248.

²⁶⁴ ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1885*.

continue working as normal and not be swayed by this ‘trickery.’²⁶⁵ Regarding the leader of the movement, Belbel, he was to be brought to Durjella, a village near Dobo, and incarcerated there until the Dutch could resolve the problem.

However, when the Resident returned to Aru in 1885, Belbel was still a free man. The local leaders commissioned to stop the movement failed, in fact the social political conditions were worse than when the official visited in 1882. In 1885, Feruni was involved in a war with a neighbouring community, Fatural (see figure 8). Belbel did not cause this war, but his decision to shelter an alleged *suanggi* exacerbated it.²⁶⁶ His movement also disrupted Aru trade because Belbel forbade his followers to visit Dobo. This travel prohibition affected some traders who relied upon the produce Tarangan usually provided.

The movement allegedly ended peacefully due to a clever manipulation of Aruese superstition.²⁶⁷ The Resident of Amboina gave Belbel an *iene* (a sacred ancestor statue wrapped in cloth), which would act as an official witness in the official’s absence if he continued to cause unrest. However, Spyer doubts the truth of this account because in 1886 Aruese from Feruni (Trangan) delivered Belbel to the Dutch.²⁶⁸ According to Dutch record, Belbel sprang overboard from the steamship *Bali* on the way to Amboina, and was declared missing.

Naelaer in Baletang

Towards the tail-end of the Belbel-led movement in 1885, another resistance movement intensified on the Backshore of Aru. The leader, a man named Naelaer, was based in Baletang, a village on the east coast of Kobror. It is not clear when it first began, but the Dutch started to hear rumours about Naelaer in 1882. By 1885, he had a significant following among Backshore Aruese.

His movement was a direct opposition to Dutch presence. Sometime between 1882 and 1885, Naelaer inspired communities to take down their Dutch flag and chop down the

²⁶⁵ ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1886*.

²⁶⁶ ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1885*. There was a mysterious death in Fatural and Maegoelie, a Feruni woman, was accused of being the *suanggi* responsible for the death. A *suanggi* could mean different things related to belief in dark magic, but in this context, it is perhaps best understood as a witch who stole the life force of another, thereby killing them.

²⁶⁷ Anonymous, "Hoe men in 1881", 1249.

²⁶⁸ Spyer, "Zaman Belanda.", 56. ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1886*. According to the report, an account of the events can be found in a letter from the Resident, July 3 1886 no. 2487. Van Hoëvell wrote this up as a death by suicide, see van Hoëvell, "De Aroe-eilanden, geographisch...", 83.

flagpoles in their villages. It seemed not all villages were so bold; to the extreme irritation of the Dutch, some communities who tacitly supported Naelaer still hoisted the flag, but only when a government vessel appeared in sight.²⁶⁹ The rest of the time they hoisted a white flag, signifying their support for Naelaer. These flags were symbolically important to the Dutch colonial agenda, so his provocation touched a raw nerve. But more than the loss of prestige, part of the problem was also economic. The movement caused disruption in both marine and forest produce-gathering activities, the economic backbone of Aru's trade. In the Backshore, pearl-divers left their communities in droves to converge on Balatang.

To end this resistance movement, the Dutch again tried to capture Naelaer and remove him from the communities that sheltered and revered him. In January 1886, they sent a letter to communities in Mariri and Lola, to arrest and deliver him to the Dutch

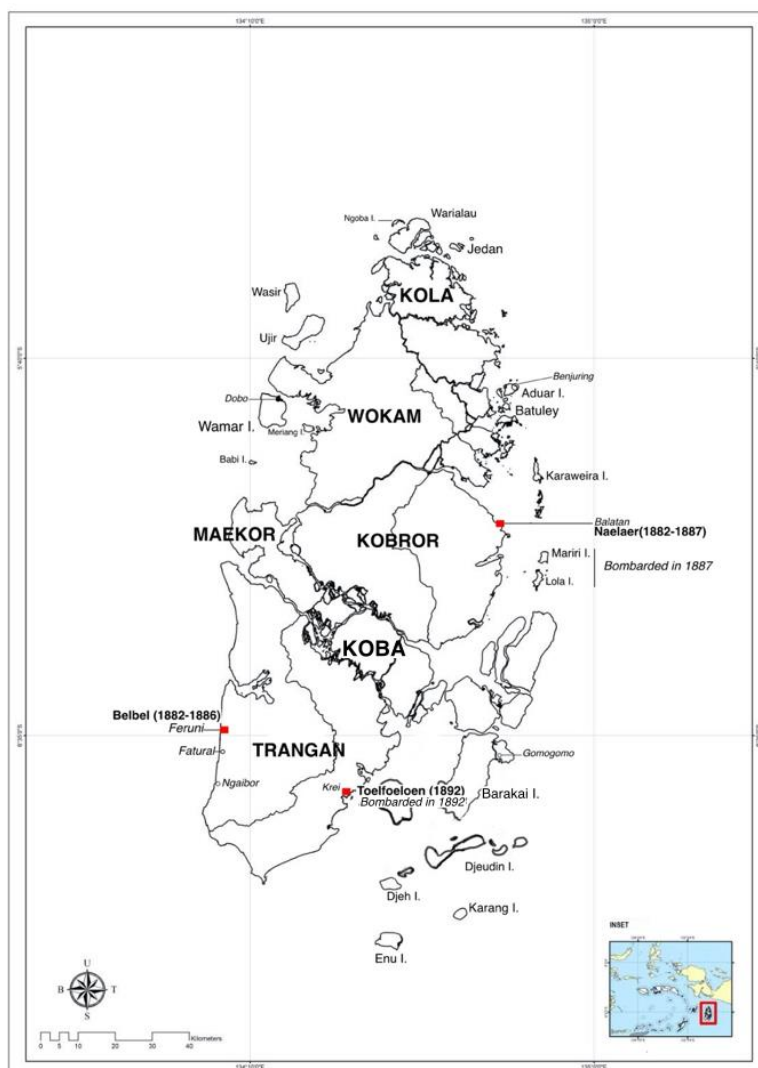


Figure 8 The centres of revitalisation movements in Aru, 1880-1893.

²⁶⁹ ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1886*.

authorities. The communities were reluctant to act, Naelaer still enjoyed widespread popular support among Aruese. In September, the Posthouder of Watulei wanted to seize him on his service tour but he saw that there were too many people to make the arrest without causing undue trouble.

The Dutch then used the original tactic of forcefully demanding his surrender and delivery. When they sent such a letter in December, it was no longer a request, it was an ultimatum.²⁷⁰ The letter demanded communities to deliver Naelaer on time and encouraged the Bugis and Makassarese traders to help in the effort to arrest him, promising a two-hundred guilders reward.²⁷¹ The communities in Lola and Mariri did not fulfil the strident demand. As a result, in May 1887 the Dutch attacked Mariri using their warships *Java* and *Samarang* just as they threatened to do.²⁷² It was a bombardment, but the Dutch considered it punishment for explicit disobedience to a government edict.

Toelfoelen in Krei

The most violent of these resistance movements occurred in 1892. Spyer provides important details about this revitalisation movement; their anti-colonial actions and the severe reprisals of the Dutch.²⁷³ Their leader was a former pearl-diver from Krei, one of the Barakai groups, Toelfoelen. He claimed to have had contact with the sun and was called upon to restore the old religion in Aru. If people followed his orders, 'all of the dead will come back to life and that without the help of foreigners they will receive from heaven everything they require.'²⁷⁴ They did not need to fear the Dutch navy because Toelfoelen

²⁷⁰ Letter from the Amboina Resident, December 1886 no. 4678, as quoted in ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1886*. The report claimed that Naelaer's followers were not as numerous as the communities implied, based on a confidential information (D. *onderhandse mededeeling*). Hence, the Dutch viewed the hesitation of the communities to comply with their request as a sign of their belief in Naelaer.

²⁷¹ Letter from the Amboina Resident, December 1886 no. 4678, as quoted in ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1886*. To put this number in perspective, in 1882 when the Dutch established the Posthouder positions in Aru, their wage was f100 per month, see Besluit van den Gouverneur Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indië 1882 no. 36.

²⁷² van Hoëvell, "De Aroe-eilanden, geografisch...", 83.

²⁷³ Spyer, "Zaman Belanda.", 58-60.

²⁷⁴ Het Nationaal Archief, *Mailrapport* 1893: 6499 #38+, as translated and quoted in Spyer, "Zaman Belanda.", 58-59. See Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist* 58, no. 2 (1956), <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1956.58.2.02a00040>.

would cause the sea level to drop when warships approached their village, a major concern that was foremost in their mind in light of the 1887 bombardment of Lola and Maririe.²⁷⁵

The movement distinguished itself by being more confrontational than the others. On November 24, 1892, followers of Toelfoeloen launched an attack on Dobo.²⁷⁶ The raiding party consisted of eighty-five native *prahus*, each carrying fifteen to twenty men. The traders in Dobo and Aruese communities near the town were successful in staving-off the attackers who had to withdraw. Aru was in a state of panic; merchants from the Backshore fled to Dobo and all trade was put on hold.

When the movement ended, it became clear that twenty-three Chinese and Makassarese had been killed.²⁷⁷ The Dutch held a court procession in 1893, where they compensated twenty-seven traders for their loss of property. These individuals lived in the five Barakai communities. Again, promised reprisals on behalf of these communities were delayed, but they were harsh when they came. In December 1892, two steam warships, *Java* and *Arend* arrived at the shores of Aru. This punitive voyage destroyed Krei, Trangan and two villages in the Batuley area.²⁷⁸

These revitalisation movements were different in scale and intent to the everyday conflicts in Aru. They were organised around two basic ideas: the return of ancestors and to a former Aru way of life and a fight to drive the presence of foreigners. Borrowing Anthony Wallace's broad typology of revitalisation movements, they hovered between *nativistic* in their intent to remove all foreign elements and *revivalistic* in their intent to return the old time of their ancestors.²⁷⁹ These types of movements emerge in the context of crises when a socio-cultural system is placed under a lot of 'stress' and people have no choice but to adapt to the crises.

However, if van Hoevell's opinion is any indication of the Dutch interpretation of these movements (and other documents echo his sentiment), they were considered nothing more than the consequence of a collective irrational zealous incitement. Van Hoevell wrote: 'in

²⁷⁵ Great Britain repeatedly took advantage of the innovation in steamships to stamp resistance and expand their imperial sphere. See Headrick, *The tools of empire.*, 18-21. For a contemporaneous occurrence and use of steam boat technology as a tool for disciplining and policing among the Bajau in North Borneo, see Warren, *The North Borneo Chartered Company's administration of the Bajau*, 22., 58-61.

²⁷⁶ Spyer, "Zaman Belanda." 59.

²⁷⁷ Spyer, "Zaman Belanda.", 58. Spyer went further to note that this was not the final number, since a number of people also went missing.

²⁷⁸ Spyer, "Zaman Belanda.", 59. The warships, Spyer mentioned, also visited other villages in the Backshore and 'severely reprimanded' the head of the villages and its populace.

²⁷⁹ Wallace, "Revitalization Movements.", 267-270, 275.

general, and if there is no supernatural influence over them, the Aruese have a deep respect for the Government, [and are] very willing to follow orders given [to them]'.²⁸⁰ Based on the intent and spirit of the movements, the Aruese were experiencing a general sense of crises. But the Dutch ignored their spiritual beliefs and refused to recognise their own role in precipitating the crises which inspired the movements and structured its demands. Long gone was the day when Goldman made empty claims of authority, the Aruese had witnessed the violence this colonial regime could mete out. The Dutch administration from Amboina and the officials in Dobo were no longer actors the Aruese could evade and engage at will; they now had the technology to coerce the Aruese into submission.

As intermittent Australian incursions in this period continued, this violent overlord, who annihilated a few Aru communities and refused to respect their wishes, was the only power to whom Aruese could turn to for protection against interlopers who wanted direct access to their valuable pearl-banks.

Towards a National Governance of the Sea

Until the 1890s, the waters of the Netherlands Indies' outer islands were governed under various regimes of indigenous tenure. This was a problem of scale; the increasingly centralised colonial state wanted an ordinance whose legal coverage included communities with different interests regarding the sea and its use. The Residency of Amboina highlighted this problem because its administrative realm covered several groups of islands that traditionally had various relationships to the waters around them. An 1890 correspondence between Dutch officials reveals an awareness of this problem. In Batavia, the Department of Internal Administration recognised the policy contradiction of allowing the firm Langert en Co. to freely search for pearl-shells in the waters of the Kei Islands while denying a similar request for the Aru Islands.²⁸¹ The reasoning behind the decision was straightforward; pearl-shell was not as important to the economy of Kei as it was to Aru.

²⁸⁰ van Hoëvell, "De Aroe-eilanden, geographisch...", 83.

²⁸¹ ANRI AIscc Bt 21-11-1890 nr. 8. The Department of Internal Administration (D. *Binnenlands Bestuur*) was a national institution that dealt with domestic affairs.

The colonial government wanted to develop a uniform ordinance and to bureaucratise pearl fishing in the Netherlands Indies, but their knowledge of the archipelago was still too limited in the 1880s and 1890s. Managing the issue of marine tenure in the Netherlands East Indies required a deep understanding of the customary law of the sea and a way of reconciling *adat* and these various cultural differences. Creating a unified pearl-shelling ordinance would require a comprehensive knowledge of the vast range of community approaches to ownership of the pearl-banks. In Chapter 3 I discuss how their expanding and forceful administrative presence enabled the government to collect information about marine produce procurement in the Indies. However, creating an ordinance to regulate pearl-fishing was a hugely complicated effort that required a lot of time while circumstances in Aru required a more immediate resolution.

Australian pearl-shellers' repeated incursions into Aru waters forced discussions about foreign pearl-shellers and extraterritorial fishing activities into the spotlight.²⁸² In the 1880s, there was still no survey of the waters around Aru. So, when the Australians appeared, one of the first issues the Dutch needed to tackle about boundary maintenance was the question of where their territorial waters ended. The 1886 report on the *Coral Sea* incident focused upon the question of whether it was possible to forbid foreign vessels from pearl-shelling.²⁸³ Responding to this question, the Colonial Secretary wrote a strong directive stating that 'it is not necessary to allow foreign vessels to fish'. More broadly, it addressed the customary right to fish which, in line with the *volkenrecht*, belonged exclusively to the traditional inhabitants of a territory and its seas unless these *adat* rights had been restricted through treaties or formal exceptions. The Secretary noted that no such treaty or exception existed in the case of Aru waters. However, they were still not completely certain about what this actually implied; the directive noted that this could possibly mean that all residents of Netherlands Indies, including direct subjects of the colonial state, had the right to fish in Aru waters.

The Government directive only provided direct answers for one specific incident while hinting at the broader implications and problems. Responding to the incursion of foreign vessels into Aru waters, they commanded local Dutch officials to assist Aruese in the case of such incursions, but at the same time make Aruese understand that international laws

²⁸² For a detailed explanation of the diplomatic processes that was triggered by Australian presence in Aru and the Moluccan waters see John G. Butcher and R. E. Elson, *Sovereignty and the Sea: How Indonesia Became an Archipelagic State* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017), 8-17, and Steve Mullins, "The Costa Rica Packet Affair: Colonial Entanglements and Tests of Empire in pre-Federation New South Wales," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 87, no. 2 (2001).

²⁸³ ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina* 1886.

also imposed a limit on their claims. In 1886, the Dutch had already conceded to the three-mile limit marking territorial waters. And since Aru was now part of the Netherlands Indies, they too were supposed to adhere to the commitments of the colonial state. The colonial government placed the Aruese traditional rights within the emerging international law.²⁸⁴ Apart from the issue of territorial waters, two matters in the directive hinted at a broader problem, mainly the lack of understanding about marine tenure in Aru and the lack of a coherent stance on traditional marine rights. The directive frankly recognised the need for more research on the nature of marine tenure and claims to it in the region.²⁸⁵ However, it did not discuss claims at all, which would return to haunt the colonial government in the future. Responding to the problem then, the letter authorised local officials to remove/escort foreign vessels if they entered Aru waters.

Not all Australian ventures fell into the category of what the Dutch considered illegal activities. The Dutch noted at least one group asked for a permit to dive for pearl-shell in 1886. Findley and Barnes, two men based in Sydney, sent a letter to the Dutch Consul General in Melbourne, asking for permission to fish in Aru waters.²⁸⁶ The Consul gave them permission to fish the waters between New Guinea and the east side of Aru, as long as they remained beyond the three-mile limit. The truth is some Dutch officials recognised that they could not prevent Australian pearl-fishers from doing so and were resigned to the fact that they needed to patrol the waters to guarantee the foreigners remained outside the three-mile limit.²⁸⁷

Australian pearl-shellshellers were not the only adventurers desiring access to Aru pearl-banks, other contenders were already Netherlands East Indies subjects. The Aruese saw all the outsiders as foreigners, but the colonial state which was incorporating them disagreed. Instead of treating them as potential threats, the Dutch presence eased their arrival. These fellow colonial subjects had no prior contact or long-standing rapport with the Aruese. They reaped benefit from the creeping expansion of the state because it gave them access to Aru and an administration that could mediate their connection and difference with the Aruese. No longer was Aru a difficult and mysterious space, they had a legible bureaucracy on their side.

²⁸⁴ The Aruese point of view here is that the Dutch collaborated to bring them under international law and limit their rights to the three miles that was territorial waters.

²⁸⁵ ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1886*.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ Even realising this, the government later did reject their request in their Besluit 04-12-1886 no 6/c.

The subjects of the Netherlands Indies who took advantage of colonial presence in Aru were of a specific type. They were mostly Europeans or Indies-born Europeans, a group that the state did not consider a threat. The effort the Dutch made to mediate their economic interests in Aru would reveal the nuances of colonial citizenship and or subjugation. These Indies subjects wanted direct access to the pearl-banks over which the Aruese had traditional ownership, while most of the Aruese were not willing to share them with the outside world. As consequence of this push and pull, the Dutch granted a patchwork of inconsistent permits.

An early visitor to the pearl-banks in Jedan was De Bordes & Co., a firm based in Banda Neira. In 1885, the two owners of the company, A. I. de Bordes and A. E. Bruinier, requested an exclusive pearl-fishing lease for at least five years. They wanted to dive in the deep waters of Aru and use a diving bell in their pearl-fishing venture. In return, they offered ten per cent payment of their catch, to be sent to the Treasury in Banda Neira.²⁸⁸

The Dutch approached the request with caution. They still did not know much about the complexities surrounding marine tenure in Aru, but from prior experience, they were aware this was a delicate issue. A mistake would cause resentment and lead to conflicts. It took a year for the government to issue the permit and when they did it had a strange proviso: they were allowed to dive for pearl-shell within three-miles of Aru coast, but not in places where Aruese historically dove for pearls.

De Bordes & Co. apparently underwent some restructuring even before the government issued the unusual permit.²⁸⁹ In any case, the revamped company managed to find a way to work around the odd provision by negotiating directly with Aruese instead. De Bordes, according to van Hoëvell, paid an annual lease of f750 for the right to fish in Jedan. The fact that they had not receive a five-year lease proved to be beneficial to them. De Bordes, who were in Jedan fishing for pearls instead of pearl-shells, were not satisfied with their yield there. Bordes & Co did not extend their lease beyond the first year; in their eyes, it was not profitable, as 'one could open three hundred shells, yet find no single pearl.'²⁹⁰

In 1886 the Posthouder in Dobo reported that the heads of Ujir, Samang and Wokam had reached another lease agreement with a Dutchman, Keijzer. They agreed that he would

²⁸⁸ ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1886*.

²⁸⁹ ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1886*. According to the report, by 1886 de Bordes himself had left for the Netherlands, while de Bruinier had moved to Batavia.

²⁹⁰ van Hoëvell, "De Aroe-eilanden, geografisch...", 89.

pay them f750 every year for a permit to dive for pearls on the banks along Jedan.²⁹¹ It seemed that he too soon withdrew from Jedan and by 1888 only Backshore Aruese were diving at the pearl-banks there.²⁹²

Until they formulated an ordinance, all the Dutch could do was facilitate negotiations between communities in Aru and colonial subjects who wanted to dive for pearls there. It was an effective compromise for both the pearl-ers and Aruese, because it was consistent with the prevailing government view that ‘the right to fish in the territorial waters along the coast belong to the inhabitants of the lands to which that part of the sea belongs’.²⁹³ The compromise was advantageous because it allowed the Dutch and the outside pearl-ers to approach the matter per community basis. This method and approach was an essential factor because communities in Aru had very different opinions regarding the lease of their respective pearl-banks. From the 1880s, for example, Ujir, Samang, and Wokam were more willing to lease their pearl-banks, whereas other communities were not prepared to do so.²⁹⁴

Yet the compromise also clearly had its drawbacks as demonstrated by the 1892-1893 confrontation involving the Australian schooner *Mavis*.²⁹⁵ The confrontation was brought to the fore by the Orangkaya of Ujir who complained that the schooner would not stop diving for shells on his community’s pearlbank (presumably in Jedan). The schooner *Mavis* used the highly efficient floating station system, the result of innovation in the pearl-shelling industry in Australia.²⁹⁶ In the system large sea-faring vessels acted as motherships for smaller crafts which collected shells. The innovation enhanced the mobility of large-scale pearl-shelling operations as it minimised their dependency on ports. Pearl-divers in the fleets used diving dresses and air pumps which enable them to descent into deeper waters and stay there longer. This incident was perhaps the first time

²⁹¹ ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1886*.

²⁹² van Hoëvell, "De Aroe-eilanden, geografisch...", 89.

²⁹³ Missive from the Gouvernements Secretari ddo. 20 Maart 1886 no 220/c, as quoted in ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1886*. Literal wording: *het recht om te visschen in de zoogenaamde territoriale zeeen langs de stranden door inwoners van het land tot welks grondgebied dat gedeelte der zee behoort enz.*

²⁹⁴ ANRI Alsec Bt 21-11-1890 nr. 8. It is very likely that their willingness to lease their pearl-banks stemmed from the fact that they had ownership over Jedan. Most of the pearl-banks in Aru are not as rich and deep, making the threat of depletion more conspicuous and immediate. See van Hoëvell, "De Aroe-eilanden, geografisch...", 89-91. Another as important reason is because they themselves were not a community of divers, and as such they have been leasing their pearl-banks for decades, if not centuries.

²⁹⁵ Steve Mullins, "VRIJBUITERS! Australian Pearl-shellers and Colonial Order in the Late Nineteenth-Century Moluccas," *The Mariner's Mirror* 96, no. 1 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00253359.2010.10657127>, 34-36.

²⁹⁶ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 5-9.

an enterprise used the floating station system in Aru. It makes sense that the orangkaya of Ujir had never seen how fast this system could strip pearl-banks.²⁹⁷

During the process of mediation and resolution, van Hovevell learned that the captain of the *Mavis*, Alex Mackellar, had paid the orangkaya of Ujir for a permit to dive for pearl-shells there. If he had been a Netherlands Indies subject, there would not have been a problem. But he was a foreigner as defined by colonial state legislation and therefore was not allowed to dive in the waters of Aru, irrespective the personal arrangement he made with the orangkaya.²⁹⁸

There was a protectionist reasoning behind the government refusal to allow Australians like Mackellar to operate in Aru. The Dutch objection to the exploitative practices of Australians did not stem necessarily out of concern for the Aruese or their claims to the pearl-banks. They stemmed rather from the fact that the interlopers were Australian foreigners.²⁹⁹ The other factor was the growing awareness of how technologically more advanced the Australian pearl-shelling industry was and the apparent inability of Dutch pearlers to compete with them.³⁰⁰

The struggle over the exclusion of foreigners provided the context and basis for the 1893 Pearling Ordinance, published that year in the Netherlands Indies' State Gazette.³⁰¹ The ordinance prohibited any pearl-fishing without a permit by people who were not indigenous in a designated area. Violations included the imposition of fines up to f1000 for Europeans and their counterparts, and up to two years punishment by forced labour for *inlanders*. If a non-indigenous vessel was caught within Netherlands Indies territorial waters possessing pearl-shells and or trepang, they were considered in violation of the 1893 ordinance and subject to the legal punishments above.

Having reframed all Australian pearling activities as illegal, the Dutch now could focus on the next step of their expansionist plan, which was to formulate standardised

²⁹⁷ The system was infamous in Queensland because people considered it responsible for the depletion of pearl-banks along the Torres Strait, which led to the pearl-sheller exodus to western Australia. See Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait*, 147-172.

²⁹⁸ Van Hovevell was more extreme than that, believing the Australians were not supposed to fish beyond the three-mile limit. One of course, has to concede here that van Hovevell was being, according to international law, unreasonable and overzealous. But then again, he was not alone in this stance.

²⁹⁹ ANRI Ambon 583 *Alg. Vers. Res. Amboina 1886*.

³⁰⁰ ANRI GB MGS 4593.

³⁰¹ For a list of Dutch-Australian confrontations that led to this ordinance, see Steve Mullins, "Australian Pearl-shellers in the Moluccas: Confrontation and Compromise on a Maritime Frontier," *Great Circle* 23, no. 2 (2001).

guidelines to enable pearl-fishing by their colonial subjects. This proved not an easy task. The next chapter shows the introduction of such guidelines would require a widespread process of consultation with the indigenous populace, as well as a comparative study of pearl-shelling ordinances elsewhere, including Australia.

An array of policies and activities from the middle of the nineteenth century gradually merged, assisting in the consolidation of the colonial state in the Outer Islands. Aru was located far from the centre of Dutch colonial power, but it was slowly absorbed into an emerging Netherlands Indies. Some Aruese resisted the Dutch presence, hoping to restore traditional ways of life but their resistance was met with violent repressions and repercussions. The Netherlands Indies gradually became an actual state whose policies the Aruese had no choice but to deal with and ultimately accept. Some of these policies would force them to surrender the longstanding control they traditionally had over their pearl-banks.

Chapter 3 Sharing a Sea

The 1893 Pearl-fishing Ordinance did not resolve the problems the Dutch had in regulating the search for pearl-shells in the Netherlands Indies and did not stop their problem with foreigners' 'illegal' fishing activities. It merely demarcated the boundaries of illegality in the pearling, pearl-shell and trepang fisheries in the Netherlands Indies and further entrenched the colonial state's authority to police pearl-shelling activities within their formally recognised territory.

The ordinance was important not for what it attempted to end but rather for what ensued upon its implementation. Here, it is fitting to turn to the Dutch Controleur Goldman who compared the problem of pearl-shelling in Aru to the mythical Gordian knot. The 1893 ordinance untied one tangle from the knot, but what remained was still a complex overlap of different matters that needed resolution: namely, issues around non-local pearl-shellers, traditional tenure, collection of state revenue, depletion of resources, etc. In the context of this study, the importance of the ordinance does not lie in its immediate enforceability, but rather in the pretext of what it allowed the colonial government to do moving forward on the edge of a distant maritime frontier.

This chapter recounts the period before 1902, when the Dutch issued yet another ordinance to police pearling in the Netherlands Indies. The 1902 Pearlfishing Ordinance proved more comprehensive; a product of experience, consultation and comparison with other pearl-shelling regulations. All these regulatory processes, separate and overlapping, took place between the 1880s and 1902. This crucial period was filled with legal trials and conflicts as the government tried to mediate and manage the various groups searching for pearl-shells within the waters of Indies. Hence, this chapter and the following one investigate the ways Aru effected the creation of a national ordinance and consequently how ordinances affected Aru lives. This chapter focuses in the domestic elements of the Pearlfishing Ordinance.

This chapter begins with a focus on the relationship between the colonial government and its other colonial subjects. It then moves to the series of meetings attempting to mediate non-local pearlers' arrival in Aru. The 1893 state-wide survey is then discussed and how the combination of these two factors influenced the permits the Dutch issued before a national pearling ordinance was established. The chapter concludes by examining the

terms which enabled other colonial subjects to engage in fishing activities in Aru, and what it signified about colonial authority.

The Interest of Fellow Countrymen

Outlawing the search for pearl-shells by outsiders in Aru waters did not magically end the problem. The seas around Aru are vast and demarcating the boundaries between Aru waters and international waters were as artificial then as they are now, and not clearly defined yet.³⁰² The direct interest of Australians in Aruese pearl-banks and their activities in Moluccan waters caused continued alarm and ensured that the Dutch maintained their guard. Suspicion of Australians was a constant feature in Dutch-Australian relations along this maritime frontier, leading sometimes to overzealous actions from Dutch officials, like the *Costa Rica Packet* incident illustrated. At the edges of the colony, interactions are rough and unsanitary, and as John Galbraith observed in India, there was no time for niceties which was the domain of diplomats in the metropole.³⁰³

It is curious that the *Coral Sea* incident did not gain traction, despite the place it later occupied in the regional Dutch colonial psyche. Instead, the charged situation in the frontier in Moluccan waters are more visibly understood through the *Costa Rica Packet* and *Mavis* incidents. The *Costa Rica Packet* incident concerns the 1891 controversial arrest of J.B. Carpenter, the master of the vessel, for wrongfully salvaging a ship in waters around Buru.³⁰⁴ The case caused furore in Australia and a diplomatic kerfuffle between The Hague and London. But before the incident was resolved, the *Mavis* incident also occurred. In November 1892, van Hoeffell was in Aru to handle the Telfoelen resistance movement (see chapter 2), when the orangkaya of Ujir approached him because the Australian schooners *Mavis* and *Flowerdale* as taking pearl-shells from his traditional pearl-banks.³⁰⁵ Van Hoeffell confronted Mackellar, the *Mavis*' master, but he found out the orangkaya had allowed Mackellar to work on the pearl-banks. The Posthouder allegedly allowed Mackellar to operate as long as the traditional owner gave permission.

³⁰² To add to this confusion, there was not yet an international agreement about the extent of 'territorial waters' as far as it concerns defence and economic activities. Butcher and Elson, *Sovereignty and the Sea.*, 10-11.

³⁰³ Galbraith, "The "Turbulent Frontier"., 151-155.

³⁰⁴ Mullins, "The Costa Rica Packet Affair: Colonial Entanglements and Tests of Empire in Pre-Federation New South Wales."

³⁰⁵ Mullins, "VRIJBUITERS! Australian Pearl-shellers and Colonial Order in the Late Nineteenth-Century Moluccas.", 33-36.

When the meeting culminated in verbal abuse with the mate of *Mavis*, van Hoevell ordered a gunboat to escort *Mavis* when leaving the territorial waters and filed an official complaint. This was not a problem that could readily be resolved on the frontier as the epicentre of this emergent crisis. The issue of foreign interlopers and their questionable activities beyond colonial territorial waters remained a serious subject of diplomatic correspondence between The Hague and London.

The 1893 Ordinance was a way to manage such problems, as it took care of the Australian issue, and made it a direct responsibility of the metropole. The Ordinance allowed the colonial government to mobilise its expanding administration to begin governing ‘domestic’ pearl-shelling. The colonial servants needed to understand the broad range of these activities across the entire archipelago, before they could frame and consolidate a national approach to pearl-shelling. To that end, the colonial government framed and launched a state-wide survey. This survey was completed in 1893, when the Department of *Binnenlands Bestuur* (henceforth the Department of Internal Administration) received wide-ranging responses from Residents across the Indies on the nature of pearl fishing in their respective regions. The next subsection examines the results of the survey in the rest of the Moluccas and elsewhere. However, chronology and force of circumstance dictate I begin in Aru, because the files that the Resident of Amboina sent to Batavia in 1893 contained transcripts of a series of meetings held four years earlier. Aru was a place where circumstances compelled discussions about pearl-shelling long before the Dutch in Batavia were ready to confront it.

Aru commanded not only the special interest of Australians but also the attention of Dutchmen. The *Mavis* incident revealed how the vague chain of legal-judicial authority with respect to pearl-shelling permits caused confusion and conflict. The cause of the problem was partly that the orangkaya of Ujir, a central protagonist to the incident, was yet to be ‘educated’ of how the colonial state intended to curtail his authority and introduce limits to his autonomy in such matters.³⁰⁶ In the incident, the orangkaya’s major concern was that the crew of the *Mavis* would strip clean his people’s pearl-banks. This did not trouble the colonial government whose main objection to the pearl-shellers’ presence stemmed from the nationality of the pearl-shellers. Afterall, the Dutch in

³⁰⁶ Transcription of van Hoevell letter to Gouverneur Generaal van Nederlands Indië ddo 01-04-1893 no. 1179 in ANRI GBBT 367. Perhaps the most revelatory aspect of this incident was the statement van Hoevell made when presiding over the *Mavis* incident. He informed the captain that they were not allowed to dive for pearls in the waters of Aru irrespective of whether the community permitted them.

Batavia were working towards creating a permit that could ostensibly welcome an equally exploitative pearl-sheller in the Netherlands Indies. In Aru, the tension then between their need to keep the Australians out and usher Dutchmen in collided, hence the urgent need to resolve it early.

It was the push from enterprising Dutchmen that led to the 1889 survey. This occurred despite fragile the Dutch authority in the region, considering the ongoing resistance discussed in Chapter 2. The Dutch individuals who requested the permit were not actually in Aru; rather, they were simply people from elsewhere who knew of the pearl-banks and wanted to exploit them. Two requests were the catalysts for the 1889 survey of Aruese; they came from J. H. de Siso, a Dutchmen living in Kupang and C. W. R. van Renesse van Duivenbode, a merchant based in Ternate.³⁰⁷

The effort the government put into accommodating their requests revealed the unfolding, albeit inevitable, connection between colonialism and capitalism in Aru. This was not a new initiative for the colonial government. In other parts of the Netherlands Indies, numerous subjects had already experienced the arrival of capitalism in their midst, but that development had occurred on land. In Java, the 1870 Agrarian Law marked the beginning of the liberal period in the Netherlands Indies. The Law saw the government fashion a compromise between fear of alienating the indigenous populace from their land and satisfying colonial commercial interest.³⁰⁸ Elsewhere in the Indies, the arrival of colonial administration brought land enclosures and the opening up of so-called unproductive land to foreigners and foreign capital.³⁰⁹ Vast tracts of forests previously unmapped were discovered through expeditions and the practise of cartography, their contours were put on paper, divided, and leased out to produce crops for an increasingly integrated global market.³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ ANRI ALSEC Bt. 21-11-1890 no 8.

³⁰⁸ Anne Booth, "Night Watchman, Extractive, or Developmental States? Some Evidence from Late Colonial South-East Asia," *The Economic History Review* 60, no. 2 (2007)., 259. For an understanding about the debate and motives that preceded the creation of this law see Cees Fasseur, "Purse or Principle: Dutch Colonial Policy in the 1860s and the Decline of the Cultivation System," *Modern Asian Studies* 25 (1991)., 35-40.

³⁰⁹ There are numerous studies on this in different parts of Netherlands Indies, however for a broad overview of the interplay between Dutch colonial expansion and private commercial interest in different regions see Lindblad, "Economic Aspects of the Dutch Expansion in Indonesia, 1870–1914.", 9-23.

³¹⁰ For a brief explainer on how this connected to the global market, see Nevins, Joseph, and Nancy Lee Peluso. "Introduction: Commoditization in Southeast Asia." In Joseph Nevins and Nancy Lee Peluso, eds., *Taking Southeast Asia to Market: Commodities, Nature, and People in the Neoliberal Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

The Dutch needed an equivalent law to demarcate waters of the Netherlands Indies. However, they had no template to deal with this unprecedented situation. The regulation of fishing in Java and Madura was linked to tax farms, credits and salt for the preservation of catch fish.³¹¹ Fishing activities in the Moluccas, including Aru, was centred on specialised sea products. The VOC had sporadically dabbled in administering pearling in the Indies, primarily to derive revenue, but they lacked a template to deal with the complexities of traditional tenure.³¹² Like on Java, the colonial government needed to reconcile the interests of various communities, all of whom dealt with different sea produce, as well as the Dutch enterprises who wanted to search for pearl-shells in their waters. This was a major problem in Aru, where what the Dutch enterprises desired and what the local communities held dear was the same marine commodity.

It is necessary here to briefly address how changes in relations between the colonial government and private Dutch citizens enabled them to exert pressure on Batavia. The liberal turn in colonial economic policy led more Dutchmen to migrate to the colony in order to seek their fortunes. Upon arrival, the realisation that they lost some of their political rights caused consternation among the Dutchmen.³¹³ This frustration and anger was communicated in Indie's newspapers, which became a public space for them to express their grievances.³¹⁴ It was through such communication and their petitions that the demand in the colony for an increase in public investment was first heard. Both in the Netherlands and in the Indies, the interplay between the impacts of the publication of *Max Havelaar* (the novel critical of the Cultivation System), the Socialist criticism of the liberal system and the paternalistic faction among the liberals established the foundation for a new native welfare policy.³¹⁵ In the longer term it became the basis for the so-called Ethical Policy.

³¹¹ Butcher, *The Closing of the Frontier*, 93-110.

³¹² Boomgaard, "Resources and People of the Sea", 106-112.

³¹³ E. Locher-Scholten, *Ethiek in Fragmenten: Vijf Studies over Koloniaal Denken en Doen van Nederlanders in de Indonesische Archipel 1877-1942* (Utrecht: H&S, 1981), 14-18. Unlike in the Netherlands where every man could vote for members of the Lower House, there was no representative body in the Indies to convey their aspiration and interest.

³¹⁴ For details on the contentious relationship between the colonial government and the press, see Ahmat B. Adam, "The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness (1855-1913)" (Ph.D Thesis, University of London (SOAS, 1984), 24-39; 109-112; 174-178. Coincidentally, John Darwin pointed out that the growth of these associations and lobbies capable of influencing the course of the colonial government was another aspect of the late colonial state. See Darwin, "What Was the Late Colonial State?," 77-78.

³¹⁵ Suzanne Moon, "The Emergence of Technological Development and the Question of Native Identity in the Netherlands East Indies," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 36, no. 2 (2005), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463405000135>, 197-199.

However, before the Ethical Policy was formulated, one way the concern for native welfare in the Outer Islands was expressed by insistence upon preserving traditional access to the sea. In Aru, the Dutch government also felt there was a practical reason for such a policy; namely, in a region where pearl-banks were such a sensitive issue, the preservation of access was also a matter of law and order. On the other hand, there was the economic pressure to make the colony self-sustaining and profitable, both for Dutchmen and the colonial treasury.³¹⁶ When the two Dutchmen requested access to Aru waters, they were asking the colonial government to reconcile these divergent interests.

Jacob Hendrik de Siso sent his request on January 4, 1889, from his residence in Kupang to the Governor General in Batavia. He wanted to search for pearl-shells using diving gear along the shores of Aru.³¹⁷ Apart from the detailed nature of his request, the letter was testament to how the increasing substantial character of the colonial administration paved various ways for such capitalist incursions into Aru.³¹⁸ His message to Batavia was a desperate last resort; the Resident of Amboina had not answered the two earlier requests he sent to the previous year. His letter to the Governor General proved useful, the request led to a directive from Batavia to the Resident to establish an investigation in Aru.

The second request was unusual if only because of who filed it. On June 8, 1888, A. E. Bruns wrote a letter to the Governor General of the Netherlands Indies, asking for confirmation of the procedures to obtain a pearling permit. He represented C. W. R. van Renesse van Duivenbode, a Ternate merchant who had inherited his family business. His family business was nothing to scoff at because by the time he was running it, it had offices in Paris, Amsterdam and Ternate. He came from a wealthy family; his father was a powerful merchant, who according to naturalist Alfred Wallace, was known as the king of Ternate, due to his wealth and influence over local rulers. His father had helped Wallace to find housing during his stay in Ternate. Mr Duivenbode, Wallace wrote, ‘owned half the town, possessed many ships and above a hundred slaves.’³¹⁹ The family

³¹⁶ For a broad overview on how Dutch colonial expansion fit into theories of capitalism and colonial expansion, see Joseph N. F. M. à Campo, "Orde, Rust en Welvaart. Over de Nederlandse Expansie in de Indische Archipel rond 1900," *Acta Politica* 15 (1980).

³¹⁷ ANRI ALSEC Bt. 21-11-1890 no 8.

³¹⁸ His effort was not limited to Aru; a ‘H. Siso’ also dealt with Nasu Mollo, the Dutch-appointed ruler of Sonba’i in Timor to prospect for alluvial gold in the latter’s realm. The venture was unsuccessful, but it illustrates that he was among the most enterprising of men trying different ventures to profit at the colonial margin. See Hägerdal, Hans. “Timor and Colonial Conquest: Voices and Claims about the End of the Sonba’i Realm in 1906.” *Itinerario* 41, no. 3 (2017): 581–605., 587.

³¹⁹ Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*, 305.

was well connected and also not new to the trade in exotic luxury products. Van Renesse van Duivenbode had supplied some museums in Europe with the skins of birds of paradise from New Guinea.³²⁰ It seems a member of the family was also involved in pearl-fishing in the waters around Tobelo, for which they arranged a lease from the Sultan of Ternate.³²¹

In his request, van Renesse van Duivenbode claimed to have sufficient capital and to own diving gear and air pumps. Unlike de Siso, he did not want access to the shallow coastal shores of Aru. He professed a respect for indigenous economy and a willingness to cooperate with Aruese by providing them compensation. What van Renesse van Duivenbode wanted was access to pearl-banks far too deep to be reached by the Aruese, a depth he approximated to be beyond five or six fathoms. His diving gear, he believed, would allow him to overcome obstacles that confronted the Aruese at such depths. In short, van Renesse van Duivenbode was a perfect candidate; the kind of wealthy and connected trader whose interest in Aru the Dutch ideally wanted to encourage.

These two requests came from two men of different social status, and they are both interesting because their sales pitch to Batavia was indicative of the emergent atmosphere in the colonial administration. De Siso was a person trying his luck, while van Renesse van Duivenbode came from money and wanted to expand his family enterprise. However, there were some similarities in the requests that provide instructive insight about the persuasive points they presumed were in their favour with the government. Two points are of note; the issue of patriotism and its connection with making the pearl-shelling industry profitable. Both requests demonstrated awareness of a government preference for Dutch capital and raised their connections with the Netherlands in their appeal. de Siso began and ended his request by stressing his vessels would fly the Dutch flag and that his enterprise was supported with capital from the motherland.³²² Van Renesse van Duivenbode took a different approach, pointing out his social status by referring to his membership in the Order of the Oak Crown.³²³

³²⁰ See Bruce M. Beehler and Tim Laman, *New Guinea: Nature and Culture of Earth's Grandest Island* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 49-50.

³²¹ Letter from the Resident of Ternate to the Dir v. BB in bundle in ANRI GBBT 367. Benschbach (then Resident of Ternate) wrote that a W. C. van Renesse van Duivenbode had an agreement with the Sultan of Ternate to fish for pearls and trepang in the waters between Tofongo and Tobelo for fee of £2,000 annually.

³²² ANRI ALSEC Bt. 21-11-1890 no. 8.

³²³ He was an officer in the *Orde van de Eikenkroon*, an order of knights of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Between 1841 and 1890 the Kings of the Netherlands were also the Grand Dukes of Luxembourg, so they were the one bestowing the knighthood. It bears mentioning that there is a

The activities of Australian pearl-shellers were also featured in both requests. Van Renesse van Duivenbode made reference to Australian incursions into Aru waters and the conflict it caused among Aruese. But his essential comparison with Australia was related to a professed colonial ambition to ‘improve’ the colony and make it more economically productive. Both de Siso and van Renesse van Duivenbode also stressed the importance of their future enterprises for the improvement of the colony. In doing so, they made two related points; they lamented the current state of pearl-shelling in Aru and argued that approving their requests was a step towards improving the Netherlands Indies’ industries. Their points were well received among government officials who, as described in chapter 2, were not satisfied with the conduct of pearl-shell trade in Aru, because the dominance of Chinese, Bugis and Makasarese traders in it.

The issue of industrialising pearl-shelling was partially an issue of technology. Van Renesse van Duivenbode commented on the fact that Aruese pearl-divers dove without suits, hence there were physical constraints that limited the depths they could reach. The introduction of modern diving gear, he believed, would overcome that limit and increase the volume of pearl-shell export. This line of thinking drew an analogy between the hitherto unreachable depths of pearl-banks of Aru and the unproductive plots of land in Java; both were problems that could be solved with proper use of Dutch capital and modern technology. Van Renesse van Duivenbode stressed in his letter that pearl-shelling in Aru was still conducted in a ‘primitive manner’, referring specifically to the lack of modern technology in their search for pearl-shell.³²⁴

Equally crucial to the issue was the overall transformation of pearl-shelling in Aru to establish a proper industry. The scale and development of pearl-shelling in Australia was especially instructive in demonstrating how far behind the industry lagged in the Netherlands Indies. The Australian industry was not only very lucrative, de Siso remarked, but was also able to absorb a large amount of labour and ‘provide a livelihood for thousands of people.’³²⁵ There was no mention, however, of how in its traditional state, the industry already provided a livelihood for thousands of Aruese. Nor was there any discussion of how these new technologies would improve Aruese lives.

possibility that he did not stress the point of being a Dutchmen with the Dutch capital because his mother was of Chinese descent, a detail that certainly mattered in a racially stratified colonial society.

³²⁴ ANRI ALSEC Bt. 21-11-1890 no. 8.

³²⁵ Ibid. De Siso, of course would be familiar with this considering the importance of Kupang as a recruitment centre for the indentured labour for the pearl-shelling industry in Australia. See Martínez and Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier*, 30-46.

Both of these early requests were ultimately rejected, but that does not negate their importance. The process that led to their rejection highlighted the evolving coordination within certain departments in the colonial administration. The deliberations involved correspondences between the Governor General, Council of the Indies, the Department of Internal Administration, and the Department of Justice. This level of coordination and decision-making demonstrated the complex range of elements this pearling licence issue touched upon. The administration faced a dilemma; they wanted to grant the licences but could not give de Siso and van Renesse van Duivenbode what they wanted. The rejection of their requests was a matter of both local and technical knowledge, and it revealed a problem in Dutch efforts to regulate pearl-shelling activities in the Netherlands Indies; they simply did not know enough about the basic elements of traditional pearl-shelling to regulate it properly. Therefore, it is essential to understand this rejection as an effort to delay dealing with a problem that the Dutch could not yet manage properly. Awareness of this lack of knowledge, or ignorance, inspired them to send the Resident of Amboina, D. Heijting, for a research expedition to Aru.

Some Meetings in Aru

Aruese opinion was one crucial part of the thread the Dutch needed to unravel to find a way to industrialise pearl-shelling. Hence, D. Heijting focused most of his investigation on the existing traditional pearl-shelling activity. Aware also of foreigner interest in trepang procurement, he also inquired into Aru communities' involvement in trepang collecting activities. As a rule of thumb, he began every meeting by asking the same seven questions to community leaders in Aru:³²⁶

- 1) Does this community own pearl-banks?
- 2) Where are they located, and what are the extent of the pearl-banks?
- 3) Who are exploiting these pearl-banks?
- 4) For whose gain and profit?
- 5) How far out into the sea does the exploitation of the banks take place?
- 6) What is the approximate annual yield of pearl-shell?
- 7) I am here to investigate the possibility of allowing pearl-fishing in the waters of Aru by Europeans with diving gear, without it disadvantaging Aruese, because

³²⁶ Afschrift. Proces-verbaal Vergadering, gehouden aan boord van het Gouvernements Stoomschip *Arend* ter reede Djeoedin, den 17 November 1889 in ANRI GBBT 367. He also asked whether communities collected trepang and how far away from the coast such collecting activities extended.

some Dutchmen have filed requests to do so. Are you and your people for or against such an enterprise?

The meetings to seek the opinions of the Aruese took place in between November 15 and 20, 1889. Heijting traveled on board the Government Steamship *Arend* to Aru and conducted a series of meeting with different coastal communities.³²⁷ He began his voyage from the southeastern part of the archipelago, then moved northward to the Batuley groups. As the questions indicate, the fact-finding objectives of the meetings were wide-ranging. The Resident wanted to create a map of the pearl-banks Aruese exploited at that point in time and to which communities they belonged, the maximum distance of the pearl-shelling activities from the coast, and their opinion concerning Europeans using diving gear to exploit their pearl-banks.

The first meeting took place in Krei, where Heijting met with the Posthouder of Wamer and Watoelei and the regents from Durjella, Krei, Wangil, Wokam, Ujir and Samang. In addition, the meeting also involved the *tuan negeri* from Maikor and Krei, and the captain of Makassarese in Dobo.³²⁸ With the exception of Krei, all these communities lived in the Frontshore, and the Dutch wanted to know whether there were pearl-banks around their villages and the respective nature of pearl-shelling there.

The representatives from Krei and Maikor confirmed there were pearl-banks in their vicinity.³²⁹ The parties present declared that pearl-shelling activities on their pearl-banks extended from four to six nautical miles from the coast. The communities were adamant in demanding the retention of their pearl-banks. An essential aspect of the meeting was concerned with whether it was possible for Europeans with diving gear to seek pearls around Aru without harming the Aruese economy. The leaders uniformly responded that they could tolerate a foreign presence and technology as long as their activities were conducted beyond six miles off-shore. Anything inside the six-mile limit they considered a serious threat to their economic interests. The orangkaya from Ujir was the only leader

³²⁷ All the records from these meetings are found in MGS 07-07-1903 no. 2243a in ANRI GBBT 367.

³²⁸³²⁸ According to van Hoëvell, a *tuan negeri* refers to the oldest living descendant from the first resident of a village. See van Hoëvell, "De Aroe-eilanden, geographisch...", 81. However in other regions, the *tuan negeri* is a hereditary village leadership who acts as the keeper of sacred knowledge. See I. H. T. Harkes, "Fisheries Co-management, the Role of Local Institutions and Decentralisation in Southeast Asia: With Specific Reference to Marine Sasi in Central Maluku, Indonesia" (PhD Thesis, Universiteit Leiden, 2006), <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/4385>, 72.

³²⁹ Of course, Samang, Ujir and Wokam had claims over Jedan, but Jedan was not on the Frontshore.

who expressed a willingness to provide inshore space for foreigners, provided they were willing to pay a tax of one shell for each diver.

The meeting in Krei was only the beginning of Heijting's journey and work. The centre of the pearl-shelling activity was, the Backshore of Aru where communities of traditional divers resided. There, it became apparent to the Resident that the issue of pearl-shelling was a livelihood issue. Changes to ordinances and or the presence of Europeans with their technology could directly impact their livelihoods. Heijting met with all these pearl-diving communities, and he began in the southeast of the archipelago among the Barakai.

The second meeting took place in the waters around Jeudin Island on November 17. Heijting met the leadership of the villages Aparu, Longgar, Bemun, Gomo-gomo and Massiang. These communities comprised of pearl-divers whose activities extended far beyond their own pearl-banks, to Enu and Karang islands, in the southeasternmost part of Aru. Their leaders judged the extent of their pearling activities to stretch as far as six miles from the coast. They also expressed objection to the use of diving gear in their pearl-banks and their traditional fishing grounds for fear it would also harm their livelihoods.

The third meeting occurred on November 19 in the waters of Mariri at the middle of the Backshore. There Heijting met the village leadership of Jambuai, Lola, and Mariri. Consistent with the extensive character of the waters of the Backshore, the communities claimed their pearling activities extended as far as twelve miles offshore from their villages. Thus, they too requested their pearl-banks not be opened up to Europeans with their modern diving gear.

The final meeting was held on November 20 in the waters of Batuley. The leaders from communities of the Batuley group were all there; namely Sewer, Jursiang, Batuley, Kumul, Kabalsiang and Benjuring. As elsewhere, they were asked how far into the sea their pearl-shelling activities extended. They responded by stating that the distance they dived from the shore was measured to a point in the sea where they could barely see the top of the tallest tree of their islands. Heijting estimated this distance to be fourteen to sixteen miles from the coast. The leadership were united and vocal in their resistance to European incursions and the use of modern diving technology. They had no interest in either sharing or relinquishing their pearl-banks under any circumstances; not for a lease,

rent or compensation. Not even after the government pledged that they would retain their rights to fish for trepang.³³⁰

The meetings were a pragmatic first step in government effort to understand the prevailing opinions among the Aruese leadership, the issue of traditional marine rights, as well as the inter-communal nature of pearl-shelling. The survey also revealed the limited knowledge the Dutch had about the topography of the Backshore of Aru and how much environmental and ethnographical knowledge was required if the Dutch hoped to manage pearl-shelling in Aru. When discussing the margins of their pearl-diving areas, none of the leaders expressed strong opposition regarding the presence of foreigners beyond the limits of their traditional fishing zones.³³¹ However, they were adamant that if there was a foreign presence near their customary waters, then there must be recognised markers demarcating the boundaries of their respective activities.

This stipulation subsequently proved to be the bane of the Dutch regulations. It would not have caused such a problem if there had been another nearby island east of the Backshore of Aru. But there were none; the western coast of New Guinea was more than three hundred kilometres from the easternmost islands of Aru. The east coast of Aru faces the open seas. To complicate matters even further, the waters surrounding Aru are shallow, and their ebb and flow causes the coastline of the Backshore to constantly change.³³² Even if the Dutch were prepared to implement their request to patrol the area, the shifting coastline. The Dutch simply did not know enough yet about the local marine environment and the customary law of these eastern waters.

This lack of technical and social knowledge was a problem that could not be readily resolved with speed or ease. It was a problem that would continue to hinder the permit-making process for some time. In summarising the difficulty of finding a way to expedite the pearl-fishing ordinance, the *Raad van Nederlands Indie* (henceforth the Council of the Netherlands Indies), stated the delay was due to ‘the uncertainties in so many aspects of

³³⁰ The literal wording: De gezamenlijke aanwezige hoofden maken bezwaar tot afstand aan anderen hunne parelbanken, vermits zij daardoor van hun levensonderhoud zouden verstoken worden; ook wenschen zij van geen pachtschat of huurloon voor die banken te weten. Noch van eene door het Gouvernement te betalen schadeloosstelling by eventueele overdracht aan anderen van het recht tot het duiken op die banken; ook niet met toezegging, dat de meti's voor de tripang-visscherij hun eigendom blyven.

³³¹ ANRI GBBT 367.

³³² This was the reason the debate about the Netherlands Indies waters did have to cover the troubles of what constituted an island, and its outlines. See Butcher and Elson, *Sovereignty and the Sea.*, 16-17.

the subject, either partially or completely.³³³ But, the technical and social knowledge was only one part of this intricate problem. The other issue, and this was not a problem specific to Aru, was the crucial question of who possessed the authority to issue such permits. To understand this issue of status and power, the government launched a survey in 1893.

A Grand Consultation

The 1893 consultation had multiple intentions, but at the core of it was analysing the basis of traditional authority. The Dutch needed to classify the legal jurisdiction of the Netherlands Indies' waters. They needed to map the entire archipelago and define maritime areas where the government exercised full control over the waters and where they did not. Pointedly, the government needed to resolve the issue of self-governing realms (*zelfbesturend landschap*).³³⁴ Throughout the archipelago, the colonial government had contracts with rulers of autonomous polities. Legal scholars of the Netherlands Indies agreed that these contracts were formally binding; however, there was no clear agreement on what they entailed. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, disputes over land, marriages and issues of maritime jurisdiction revealed the awkwardness of such arrangements. Pearl-shelling was one of these disputed issues, because it raised the question of whether the self-governing realms possessed their own territorial waters.³³⁵ Clearly, if some of the Residencies contained both self-governing realms and pearl-banks, who then had the actual authority to issue permits for pearl-fishing?

The colonial government tried to resolve this legal-judicial problem by launching a survey. The questions in the survey reveal government priorities in dealing with the self-governing realms. The issue of defining and recognising traditional authority was not a simple matter, and the need to regulate pearl-shelling demanded a review of the contracts they had established with these rulers. The Dutch needed to know the waters where they could issue permits, and those where they also needed to consider the rights of local rulers. But there were also other issues beyond authorising the permits. For example, some of

³³³ Advies van den RvNI 05-04-1895 no. XVIII in ANRI GBBT 367. Literal wording: 'ten aanzien van het onderwerp in zoo menig opzicht geheele of gedeeltelijk onzekerheid bestaat.'

³³⁴ For a debate on the problem of self-governing realms in the Netherlands-Indies, see G.J. Resink, 'Native States of the Eastern Archipelago, 1873-1915' in Resink, *Indonesia's History Between the Myths*, 269-303.

³³⁵ Resink believes that they did, but Butcher has recently criticised Resink's reading of statutes and supplements. See John G. Butcher, "Resink Revisited: A Rote on the Territorial Waters of the Self-Governing Realms of the Netherlands Indies in the Late 1800s," BKI 164, no. 1 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003697>, 1-5.

the questions were practical and touched on the issues of sustainability. The survey required the Residents to address nine questions:

1. Are there pearl-banks in the sea around your administrative territory which if exploited are expected to do well?
2. Are the pearl-banks located within the territorial waters of native rulers?
3. If yes, what does the existing contract with the Government say about the use of the banks?
4. If there are no provisions therein, is there a concept and understanding of the rights of disposal (D. *recht van beschikking*) over water (with the reefs and banks therein) which incorporates a certain distance from the coast, and how are these rights exercised?
5. Did it occur to Your Honour given the circumstance, that according to our understanding of international law, the government of the Netherlands Indies has a duty to regulate all that happens along the coasts of the realm, and that it is desirable in the case of approval for native rulers to search for pearls first then followed by the Government thereafter?³³⁶
6. Is it to be expected that if the native rulers granted permission, that they have sufficient means to maintain the rights of the concession and to be able to in general to police/supervise, when required, the sea?
7. Based on the science and in the interest of the cultivation of pearl-shells, the pearl-banks should not be exploited for a period. Is it important to stipulate a part of the year when the pearl-banks should not be worked on?³³⁷
8. If yes, which season of the year can be considered best for the exercise of the industry?
9. Is it possible for the government issued enactments to protect the territorial waters of realms under direct rule, which would then also incorporate the waters around every island, and address violations of the proposed regulations?³³⁸

The list of questions raised up two important points. One was concerned with science and the longevity of the industry, which is an issue I discuss in chapter 4. The colonial government until then had repeatedly stated that they hoped to learn about how to cultivate pearls and how to conduct pearl-shelling sustainably from the British scientist William Saville Kent, as well as the conduct of the pearl-shelling industry in Queensland. The second point concerned the economic and political capacities of states, both the colonial government based in Batavia and the self-governing realms. This was an

³³⁶ Literal wording: ...de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering de lasten draagt van al hetgeen geschiedt op de kusten der landen die tot Haar gebied behooren, wenschelijk voor om in het bevestigend geval de gevraagde vergunning tot de uitoefening der parelvisserij door de zelfbesturende Vorsten dan wel door de Regeering te zien verleend?

³³⁷ Literal wording: Is het met oog op de wetenschap, dat in het belang van de voorttelling van den pareloester deze gedurende eenigen tijd ongestoord moet worden gelaten.

³³⁸ ANRI GBBT 367. Literal wording: ‘...waaronder ook dient te worden gerekend het zeegebied van ieder eilandje hetwelk daarbij administrative is ingedeeld in bescherming te nemen...’

important question because the Dutch connected the legitimate authority to issue a pearling permit with the same authority to maintain the rights of permit holders. It thus came as no surprise that no Resident was willing to answer in the affirmative to all these questions. According to the Residents, no native state had the capability to police activities over water, especially the archipelagic one.³³⁹

The survey received a vast array of responses. The letter from the Resident of Bali and Lombok, for example, was less than seventy words long. He confirmed that as far as he understood, there were no pearl-banks or profitable marine produce found in the waters around his administrative territory and therefore, there was no guideline required to limit their procurement.³⁴⁰ On the other end, the reply from the Resident of Amboina G.W.W.C. Baron van Hoevell arrived with extensive appendices, including the transcript of the 1889 meetings and letters concerning the *Mavis* incident. He used the *Mavis* incident to directly answer the ninth question, restating his view that Australians remained a serious threat to the territorial integrity of Netherlands Indies waters.

For Aru, van Hoevell shut down the question of autonomous authority by stating that there were no independent rulers in the region with whom the colonial government had a contract, making question 2 to 6 void.³⁴¹ The fact that the colonial government had no contract with Aru leaders meant that the archipelago came, for all intents and purposes, directly under the purview of colonial rule. This, as we see below, had direct implications for future permits issued to fish in the waters of Aru.

There are problems associated with repeatedly using old surveys to answer later inquiries and policy issues.³⁴² To begin with, this practice assumes the Aruese and their leadership did not change their minds with the passage of time. It contained the uncomfortable element of ascribing an attitude of timelessness to the Aruese; the certainty that they had not adopted the modern technology, and that their collective ownership of the pearl-banks

³³⁹ This was doubly true in the Moluccas, where the two sultanates, Tidore and Ternate, had strong maritime roots by virtue of their location. Tidore especially was a sultanate whose naval power was based on political alliances of strong maritime communities; however, the Dutch had undermined such alliances through their effort to end piracy in the region. For a glimpse into piracy and the political culture of the Tidore sultanate see Widjojo, *The Revolt of Prince Nuku*. Of course, there was no telling whether the rulers were actually just did not want to spend their resources to establish and maintain constant surveillance over the seas.

³⁴⁰ ANRI GBBT 367.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Records indicate that the Dutch consulted the notes from this meeting repeatedly. The transcript of the 1889 survey shows up in at least three separate bundles of documents in The National Archives in Jakarta: ANRI GBBT 339, ANRI GBBT 367 and ANRI ALSEC Bt. 21-11-1890 no 8.

was permanent and not negotiable or subject to change. The repeated use of the survey was an important sign of what the Dutch had learned during the four years immediately following the survey. It signified no new inquiry was necessary to see whether anything had changed in the pearling industry. It is also worth noting here that the survey did not recommend the idea of integrating Aruese pearl-shelling into the modern industry which relied on Western technology. The letter the Resident filed late in 1893 suggested that the Aruese had not learned anything new and worthwhile, but it is unclear whether they fully understood the scope and magnitude of the 1889 survey.

The colonial government took another step that was quieter but as impactful in 1893-1894: they charted the Backshore of Aru. Aru's Backshore was the first coastline that the government charted in the entire Moluccas. (see figure 9) Between November 1893 and April 1894, the government dispatched the survey vessel HM *Banda* to map Aru's coastline.³⁴³ I could not find official details about the reason for this expedition, but the *Costa Rica Packet* and *Mavis* incidents which caused a diplomatic nightmare in the metropole must have played a role in this decision. The expedition and the map it produced would help in case of future arbitration, as it simplified the complex reality of Aru's landscape making it into a legible, transferable form of knowledge.

Image probably still in copyright. The image is a scanned picture of a map detailing the years the government charted the coastal lines along the Moluccas and New Guinea. The title of the map is *Stand der Hydrografische Opname September 1926*.

The image comes from Beversluis & Gieben, *Het Gouvernement der Molukken*, directly after page 54.

Figure 9 The years coastal lines were charted in the Moluccas and New Guinea. (Beversluis & Gieben, 1929)

³⁴³ Editors' note in J. W., Tissot van Patot, "Een viertal tochten door het eiland Terangan (Aroe eilanden)," *TKNAG XXV* (1908), no. 2: 77-93., note 1.

Using Giddens' idea, the charting of Aru's Backshore was part of a disembedding process.³⁴⁴ The mapping project was an 'emptying of space', to borrow Giddens' wording, as it stripped the social elements from the Aru landscape and presented it as a cartographic abstraction which distant European officials and diplomats could debate about without intimate knowledge of the archipelago or Aruese. This social simplification of perspective overlaid on maps was a key element in modern state-making projects. As James C. Scott notes, maps were more than the object itself because in combination with state power, they 'would enable much of the reality they depicted to be remade.'³⁴⁵

Like the 1889 survey, the 1893 expedition is impactful not only in its direct use, but also in what it allowed the colonial government to achieve next. The mapping exercise assisted Dutch officials far from Aru, in Batavia and all the way back to The Hague, to integrate Aru into the global imperial system by demarcating the limits of the Netherlands Indies territorial water. These maritime boundaries defined the limits of Dutch authority, and the extent of the Aruese traditional claims. This cartographic exercise later affected the ordinances but, in that moment in 1893, the Dutch had no ordinance at hand yet. Nevertheless, the government was working on a map and had a solid enough bureaucracy that allowed other Indies' enterprise to begin operating in Aru.

Netherlands Indies' Pearl-shellers

Van Hoevell's assertion that there was no self-governing realm in the Residency of Amboina had profound consequences. It meant that there was no sultanate or ruler whose authority the Dutch government had to consider when making decisions or building an ordinance. Still, this did not negate the fact that the Residency comprised of disparate littoral communities. The Dutch had to consider these communities when they issue permits. To that end, after 1894, the government agreed to grant the Resident of Amboina extra authority. The colonial government reached this decision in December 1894, and it would affect the nature of permits for many years.³⁴⁶ The colonial administration thus

³⁴⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), 18-28. Giddens does note that disembedding is not a one-way process, 141-142.

³⁴⁵ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 2-3.

³⁴⁶ Koloniaal Verslag van 1896, bijlage RRR. 'Overzicht van de in het tijdvak 1 juli 1895 t/m ult. Juni 1896 tot wederopzeggens verleende vergunningen tot het visschen en duiken naar parelschelpen, paarlemoerschelpen in de territoriale wateren van Nederlandsch-Indie.', footnote g.

perpetuated an age-old pattern of governance, namely they granted the person on the spot the authority to mediate on behalf of the national interests. This tacit agreement concerning recognition of authority was the backbone of the first article in the fishing permits the government issued.

The Residency of Amboina was the only residency where the Resident had such additional authority, and its impact was quickly evident, once the government began issuing permits. The government issued twenty-two permits for pearl-fishing between July 1895 and the end of June 1896.³⁴⁷ Of these, sixteen were issued for fishing in the waters of the Residency of Amboina. The permits were granted in separate decrees and five of them were issued on one day, August 22, 1895. All of them contained permission to fish in the entire waters of the Residency or parts of it. The permits were given to four Europeans and one Chinese man: F. Cramer, F.W. de Rijk, Thoeng Hae Gie, H.S. Visman and H. J. Kohler. They were not the first permits the government issued, but they are important because by the time they were issued the government had an established template for the permits. The process is also revealing because it highlighted the way non-administrative factors affected the issuing of permits.

A case in point was the permit issued to Frederik Cramer, a merchant based in Banda Neira.³⁴⁸ He was representative of the Rotterdam-based limited partnership (D. *Commanditaire Vennootschap*, CV) Blankert & Co. Cramer filed his request on November 8, 1893, because he was in an awkward spot. The government had issued the 1893 Pearlfishing Ordinance on October 5, 1893, forbidding the use of foreign vessels in the search for pearl-shells in the Netherlands Indies territorial waters. By then Cramer was finalising his purchase of 60% ownership of a schooner which sailed under the British New Borneo flag. He had purchased this vessel, *Enterprise*, with the intention of searching for pearl-shell and trepang in the waters of the Residency of Amboina. The introduction of the 1893 Pearlfishing Ordinance now meant he could not proceed as originally planned. Apart from the flag under which the schooner was registered, there was also the delicate matter of its prior owner-cum-captain, Charles Henry Griffin, who was not Dutch. Therefore, to strengthen his case for the permit, he mentioned that his intention was to go into partnership with the captain and also another Dutchmen based in Banda, Hermanus Petrus de Vries, who was part of the *Banda Perkerniers en*

³⁴⁷ Koloniaal Verslag van 1896, bijlage RRR. 'Overzicht van de in het tijdvak 1 juli 1895 t/m ult. Juni 1896...'

³⁴⁸ ANRI GBBT 339.

Handelsvereniging (The Association of Perkeniers and Trades of Banda, henceforth BPH).³⁴⁹

Aware of his possible disadvantage, Cramer asked whether it was possible to use the newly acquired schooner or, if required, another vessel, in order to search for pearl-shell and trepang. He communicated his concern about whether the marine produce he obtained through the schooner *Enterprise* outside the waters of the Residency could be stored in one of the open ports before he went to a place where he could sell his catch.³⁵⁰

The central government eventually approved his request in a decree issued two years later on 1895.³⁵¹ They gave Cramer permission to search for pearl-shells and trepang in the waters of the Residency. The permit did not specify a time limit and was valid until the government revoke it (D. *wederopzeggens*). He did not have to pay fees for this permit, but Cramer had to adhere to some general and specific terms outlined in the decree. The terms are worth mentioning here because they served as a blueprint for future ordinances and conveyed the government priorities at the time.³⁵²

There are six articles in the terms the government presented Cramer.³⁵³ The articles begin with specifics before moving on to the more general principle. The second article raises the issue of sustainability, stipulating that no pearl-shell under the weight of one *kati* can be taken from the pearl-banks. The third article states that the vessels used in dive operations have to be boats authorised for coastal trade (D. *kustvaart*).³⁵⁴ The fourth and fifth articles concerns the transfer of the permit, either to a surrogate or to another party. In such an event of a transfer, the permit could only be transferred to a Dutch citizen, resident of either the Netherlands or Netherlands Indies, and to trading partners based in the Netherlands or the Indies. The surrogate had to be a resident in the Indies. Both of

³⁴⁹ BPH was an association of former of planters formed by the last of the independent perkeniers after the slow death of the plantation system in Banda caused by the end of slavery and the spice monopoly. See Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands.*, 103-121. For more on the social changes caused by the decline see Joop van den Berg, *Het Verloren Volk: Een Geschiedenis van de Banda Eilanden* ('s Graven-hage: BZZTôH, 1995)., 55-56, 70-85.

³⁵⁰ Bt. 22-08-1895 no. 4 in ANRI GBBT 339.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² One should note that this did not mean that Cramer was not involved in pearl-shelling in the time before he received the permit. As in all cases, the outlines more often reflected what was ideal rather than reality.

³⁵³ Bt. 22-08-1895 no. 4 in ANRI GBBT 339.

³⁵⁴ à Campo, *KPM.*, 40-41.

these cases required final authorisation from the Resident of Amboina. The final article stipulates that both the entrepreneur and their surrogate have a fixed address.³⁵⁵

The first article of the permit needs further elaboration because of the importance of the template and its specificity. The specificity in the permits addressed the particular needs of the different islands and their respective interests. For Cramer, the permits made quite clear the different fishing activities that he and partners should not hinder. For example, in East Seram, Seram Laut, and Matabello islands, they could not infringe upon the *agar-agar* fishing activities. To the southwest, Cramer had to be aware of the tortoise catching activities around the waters of Tanimbar Islands and Babar.³⁵⁶

Thus, the character of the first article demonstrated the tight line the government walked when reconciling the decrees issued in Batavia and the actual fluid situation on the coasts and the maritime periphery. The permit itself did not allow its owner to immediately operate in a specified area. To begin operations, they first needed an agreement from the communities in whose waters they wished to work.³⁵⁷ This agreement was a written document (always to be ready at hand as proof) which the Resident of Amboina had approved. Consequently, in the case of a dispute, the locally placed European administrative officer would have the authority to step in and adjudicate the matter. However, if any of the parties concerned wanted to appeal the decision, they could do so with the Resident. And thus the administrative expansion of the state enabled non-locals to search for pearl-shell in the Residency of Amboina. The colonial administration bridged the tyranny of distance and reconciled the diverse array of fishing activities in the Moluccas, with decrees made in Batavia.

This permit-making process gave the Resident of Amboina a lot of discretionary authority. Even before the decree was issued, there was always prior consultation with the office of the Resident. Cramer, for example, had received his permit despite his awkward situation. The Resident, van Hoevell, wrote him a recommendation attaching two contracts that Cramer and de Vries had closed with communities on the Frontshore.³⁵⁸ However, others could not expect the same extent of cooperation and assistance from the Resident.

³⁵⁵ Literal wording: naleven dezer voorwaarden algemeen en onveranderlijk domicilie gekozen te hebben ten kantoor van den Residentie van Amboina.

³⁵⁶ Bt. 22-08-1895 no. 4 in ANRI GBBT 339.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

Things did not always go that smoothly when applying for those permits, as the process for Thoeng Hae Gie's application showed. He was a Macassar-based merchant who filed a request to search for pearl-shells and trepang in the waters of Aru, Kei and Seram.³⁵⁹ His permit was issued at the same time as Cramer, but correspondences linked to the permit indicates he could not clear the next step easily. The reason was simple; a disagreement with the Resident. Van Hoevell, in two missives (one of which was a telegram), refused him access to Aru. As noted in Chapter 2, van Hoevell did not like the Chinese and Makassarese merchants. In his letter, he explained the cause of his concern; he feared that his administration could not provide appropriate supervision to prevent 'vexation and dishonest practices' from such merchants.³⁶⁰ The Department of Internal Administration endorsed this colonial identity politics and difference in administrative practice. The first draft for Thoeng Hae Gie's permit was therefore different. The first article in his permit only gave him direct access to Kei and Seram, not to Aru. The draft also contained an additional article that forbade him from searching for trepang. Van Hoevell wanted to deny Thoeng formal access to regional procurement industries that Chinese merchants and traders had occupied thus far. This first draft was eventually abandoned in favour of a permit like the one issued to Cramer. However, the standard permit gave so much authority to van Hoevell, that there was still no guarantee that Thoeng would be allowed to proceed with trepang fishing.

Twenty-two permits were issued between July 1895 and June 1896, but only one was granted to a Chinese man.³⁶¹ The treatment and suspicion Thoeng Hae Gie experienced was indicative of the hierarchical and preferential character of Dutch colonial society.³⁶² Judging from the correspondence, Thoeng Hai Gie's Chineseness was a disadvantage in dealing with the Resident, while Frederik Cramer, being Dutch, found himself readily resolving his issues with the help of the Resident. This did not necessarily make

³⁵⁹ Bt. 22-08-1895 no. 3 in ANRI GBBT 339.

³⁶⁰ Bt. 22-08-1895 no. 3 in ANRI GBBT 339. This was also the reason van Hoevell initially refused to let Thoeng Hae Gie fish for trepang in Kei Islands.

³⁶¹ Although this trend fluctuated, between July 1899 and June 1900, the government issued twelve permits, six of them were given to Chinese men. See Koloniaal Verslag van 1900, bijlage JJJ. 'Overzicht van de in het tijdvak 1 juli 1899 t/m ult. Juni 1900 voor bepaalde gedeelte van het territoriaal zeegebied van Nederlandsch-Indie tot wederopzeggens verleende vergunningen tot het visschen naar paarl-, en paarlemoerschelpen, in de meeste gevallen ook tot het visschen naar tripang.'

³⁶² This is hardly surprising, the relations between the colonial state and the Chinese populace were always problematic, especially after the removal of *verpachting* system in the Netherlands Indies and when the state tried to extract revenue from the Chinese mercantile activities. See Alexander Claver, "Struggling for Justice: Chinese Commerce and Dutch Law in the Netherlands Indies, 1800-1942," in *Linking Destinies: Trade, Towns and Kin in Asian History*, ed. Peter Boomgaard, Dick Kooiman, and Henk Schulte Nordholt (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2008).

everything easy for his business. Indies journalist and writer V. I. van de Wall later wrote that the venture of BPH, Blankert & Co. en de Vries was a complete fiasco, to the extent that people for a while believed that there was no future in the pearl-shelling industry.³⁶³

The lack of government permits granted to Chinese entrepreneurs did not mean that they were completely absent from the industry. The continued existence of self-governing realms provided a way for Chinese and Arab merchants to remain involved in the industry without having to accommodate a government who dealt with them out of desperation rather than genuine interest. In the self-governing realm in the Ternate Residency, the government primarily oversaw the making and signing of contracts. They were not involved in extensive discussions with Batavia over the eligibility of certain pearl-shellers. Put simply, this self-governing realm provided reprieve for Chinese and Arab merchants, like Que Eng Soei, who already had a contract with the Sultan of Ternate prior to 1893, and merchants such as Sech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla.³⁶⁴

Thus far, one name had been conspicuously absent from these pearling debates and documents, namely Sech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla, the so-called Pearl King of the Netherlands Indies.³⁶⁵ Sech Said and his firm would later be remembered primarily for his involvement in pearl-shelling, but both he and his company were involved in more than just pearling. Sech Said was well regarded among colonial circles. The Dutch appointed him as Captain of the Arab community in Banda around 1889.³⁶⁶ The colonial government held him in high esteem because he was accommodating; van de Wall mentioned that he lent his schooner to the Resident when Papuans attacked the British cutter *Lizzie* at Etna Bay.³⁶⁷ Apart from that incident, there was his well-known generosity in the effort to rebuild Ambon in the aftermath of the 1898 earthquake.

Van de Wall was not far off the mark when noting that Sech Said's life was inseparable from the fortunes of Banda Neira. It was not just that Sech Said had been there from the

³⁶³ V. I. van de Wall, "Sjech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla: Een Arabier van Beteekenis in de Grootte Oost," *Nederlandsch-Indie Oud en Nieuw* 15 (1930/1931), 349.

³⁶⁴ Letter from the Resident of Ternate to the Dir v. BB in ANRI GBBT 367.

³⁶⁵ Alwi, *Sejarah Maluku*, 188.

³⁶⁶ He replaced Said Aloei bin (R) Achmat Assegaf, who was granted a one-year leave of absence to visit Arabia in 1886, but he did not return. Relayed in the letter from the Resident of Amboina, 28-06-1889 no. 27 as noted in ANRI Folio GM, f 1727. It seems that this was a promotion from the position he held in 1882 as the Lieutenant of the Arab community (*lieutenant der Arabieren*). See M. D. Etmans, *De Bevolking van Banda van 1818 tot 1920*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Ferwert: Etmans, 1998), 191.

³⁶⁷ van de Wall, "Sjech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla", 348, 350.



Figure 10 Studio portrait of Sech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla, Banda 30 Augustus 1909. (National Museum of World Culture-KIT-TM-60038850.)

start to see Banda Neira through thick and thin.³⁶⁸ His prosperous rise was also part of a bigger change occurring in the economic developments of the Banda Islands. As the *perkenier* system declined owing to the end of slavery and monopoly in the spice trade in the 1860s, the next couple of decades saw Arab and Chinese merchants moving into Banda. This transitional and transformation period provided new opportunities for them, and in the process also allowed them to diversify their economic activities in the archipelago. The Baadilla family was in the perfect position to take full advantage of this; they had established ties in the shipping business and were involved in the inter-archipelago trade on the north coast of Java.³⁶⁹ Seen from this standpoint, Sech Said's venture into pearl-shelling was a novel expansion into a different sort of maritime enterprise.

This still leaves unanswered questions about his relative absence in records about Aru. On December 15, 1899, the Semarang-based newspaper *De Locomotief* printed a notice that Sech Said had received permit to fish for pearl-shells and trepang in the waters of

³⁶⁸ van de Wall, "Sjech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla", 347. By 1912, Sech Said and Sech Salim bin Baadilla had shares and were administrators of the perk *Kelie en Norwegen*. It is unclear when they purchased the share. See Etmans, *De Bevolking van Banda*, 191 & 284.

³⁶⁹ They were not the only family involved in shipping, from the 1830s many Arab merchants were involved in shipping. See William Gervase Clarence-Smith, "The Economic Role of the Arab Community in Maluku, 1816 to 1940," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 26, no. 74 (1998), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639819808729909>, 39-40.

the Residency of Amboina.³⁷⁰ Unlike the formal decrees, the notice did not detail the terms upon which his permit was granted, but it did mention the permit was valid until revoked and granted gratis. Sech Said most likely received a permit similar to the type granted to Cramer. It is also worth noting that the permit allowed him to fish the waters of the entire Residency, which covered not only Banda and Ceram, but also Aru, Kei and the Tanimbar Islands, provided he could negotiate an amicable arrangement with the respective communities.

The discrepancy in the statement can be attributed to several reasons. It suggests that his movement into the waters of Aru did not happen as early as thought. In a missive dated June 15, 1900, the Resident of Ternate wrote that the Baadilla company had finalised a contract with the Sultan of Tidore. The contract of March 15, 1898 concerned the exploitation of pearl-banks around Salawati and Waigeo (of the Raja Ampat Islands).³⁷¹ The rent was set at f2000 for a period of six months. The contract also contained a provision stating that if within the stipulated period the government issued a new regulation, the contract would be considered null and void. In the absence of such a regulation, the contract would continue to be valid until there was a government regulation in place. They entered another contract with the Sultan of Tidore on September 15, 1899. This time the contract was for the exploitation of the banks around the island of Misool (also in the Raja Ampat islands). The company had to pay f1000 to work at those pearl-banks for a half year. Both these contracts came with the proviso that they did not impede the customary fishing activities of the locals.

While these contracts were from 1898 and 1899, it is possible that Sech Said began his pearl-shelling activities earlier and expanded his reach to other places later. Van de Wall stated that when he first began pearling in 1896, Sech Said operated around the waters of Banda and Ternate.³⁷² Official Dutch records, however, suggest that most of his pearl-shelling activity took place in the realm of the Sultan of Tidore. This lack of evidence indicates gaps in colonial oversight, and that authority remaining in the hands of independent rulers; the less deliberation required among the colonial government, the less paper trail and records left behind. As damning is the possibility that Sech Said began pearling in Aru before the government gave them official permit.

³⁷⁰ 'Uit Buitenzorg: Berichten aan De Locomotief', *De Locomotief* 15-12-1899. This permit was outlined in a government decree, Bt. 10-12-1899 nr. 36), see Koloniaal Verslag van 1900, bijlage JJJ. 'Overzicht van de in het tijdvak 1 juli 1899 t/m ult. Juni 1900 ...'

³⁷¹ Letter from the Resident of Ternate, 15-06-1900 no.1631 in ANRI GBBT 885.

³⁷² van de Wall, "Sjech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla", 348.

In 1899, when Anne Weber-van Bosse visited Dobo, she met Tjoe Seng, a Chinese merchant who handled Sech Said's business affairs in Aru.³⁷³ Tjoe Seng took Weber-van Bosse and her group to Jedan, where he had four luggers working the pearl-banks. At that point, the manager and the business seemed to have been running too well there to assume it had just begun operation. Hence, it is reasonable that Sutherland believes Baadilla began operating in Aru in 1897.³⁷⁴ In Aru, the Baadilla Brothers also procured pearl-shell in Ngaibor, where they provided building material for a community church in exchange for access to their pearl-banks.³⁷⁵ If we consider that factor, the application for a permit was more an effort to comply with Dutch regulation than an effort to gain access to Aru's pearl-banks. Sech Said was skilled in fostering goodwill among the Dutch and other communities, which was an invaluable asset to possess, in order to thrive on the maritime frontier. It also enabled him to overcome the complex issues of governance on the periphery of the Netherlands Indies.

Sech Said, Cramer, and Thoeng Hai Gie pursued different paths in entering and developing the pearl-shelling industry in the Netherlands Indies. But they were part of a niche group that grew in numbers, over the years, as the colonial government issued ever more permits. J. H. de Siso, the individual whose letter led to the 1889 survey of Aru was part of this initial group; in 1899, the government approved his request to search for pearl-shell around the island Sumbawa.³⁷⁶ Through every permit issued between 1895 and 1901, the government was establishing and consolidating a special interest group; the non-indigenous pearl-shellers of the Netherlands Indies, a group of people who had no traditional claim to the pearl-banks but who were exploiting them for commercial interest. The colonial government had to consider this interest group, one would call 'experts', when they were formulating the 1902 Pearlfishing Ordinance.

Consulting the pearl-shellers in the formulation of this new ordinance would once again demonstrate how the colonial government attempted to mediate the industry's interest

³⁷³ A. Weber-van Bosse, *Een Jaar aan Boord H. M. Siboga* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1904), 253, 276-277.

³⁷⁴ Heather Sutherland, *Seaways and Gatekeepers: Trade and State in Eastern Archipelagos of Southeast Asia c.1600-1906*, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2021), 426.

³⁷⁵ NL-HaNA, Kolonien/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01, inv.nr. 378., 7-8.

³⁷⁶ Koloniaal verslag van 1899, bijlage KKK. 'Overzicht van de in het tijdvak van 1 Juli 1898 tot ult. Juni 1899 voor bepaalde gedeelten van het territoriaal zeegebied van Nederlandsch-Indie tot wederopzeggens verleende vergunningen tot het uitoefenen van de parelvisscherij (het visschen en duiken naar parel- en paarlemoerschelpen), in sommige gevallen ook tot het visschen in naar tripang.'

with limited accommodation of Aruese customary rights. The time for the Aruese to make a strong claim over rights was over; the Dutch gave them one chance in 1889. Now was the time for the pearl-shellers to have their say. And once again, Australia managed to involve itself in the process. This time, the involvement came in the form of A. L. Coventry, a fleet manager, who in 1893 was under the employment of T. H. Haynes of the Pearling and Trading Co.³⁷⁷ James Clark, a major Australian pearl-sheller, had been in correspondence with Coventry for some time regarding the depletion of pearl-shell around Thursday Island and had carefully observed the *Mavis* incident from Queensland with interest. During this correspondence, Coventry applied for a permit to search for pearls and shell in the waters around Kei, Tanimbar, and the Frontshore of Aru.³⁷⁸ He was among the first to receive a permit to search for pearl-shell. For all his bluster, van Hoevell was correct in one sense; the Australian pearl-shellers were now far closer than the government originally anticipated.

In the period between the 1893 Pearlfishing Ordinance and the 1902 Pearlfishing Ordinance, the Dutch colonial government attempted to create an appropriate licensing permit to grant temporary permits to entrepreneurs. The need for permits was most acutely felt in Aru, which led to an early survey of Aruese opinion regarding pearl-shelling in 1889. However, when the government conducted an official survey in 1893, the Dutch did not consult them anymore, since they were not a self-governing realm. Henceforth, the person now mediating capitalist incursions in their midst was a colonial official, a representative of the colonial state, whose view of Aruese interests was tinged with paternalism. On the other hand, the colonial government also consulted these other colonial subjects, whose pearl-shelling activities the Dutch welcomed. But pearl-shelling was a global endeavour, and as such an ordinance for it requires the Dutch to also understand how pearl-shelling was regulated beyond the Netherlands Indies. The next chapter discusses the international circumstances the Dutch had to consider when formulating the 1902 Pearlfishing Ordinance.

³⁷⁷ Lehane, *The Pearl King*, 221-223.

³⁷⁸ Koloniaal Verslag van 1896, bijlage RRR. 'Overzicht van de in het tijdvak 1 juli 1895 t/m ult. Juni 1896...' The decree that contained his permit was issued in July 18, 1895 (Bt. 18-07-1895 no. 23.)

Chapter 4 Shared Seas, Shared Problems

A proper pearl-fishing ordinance not only had to deal with the diverse array of sea produce collecting activities within the Netherlands Indies but also resolve the more international elements of the industry. This partly concerned issues surrounding marine science, as the Dutch had no scientist in their employ with knowledge of the pearling industry. Another part of the proposed legislation was equally important; they needed to create a pearl-shelling ordinance comparable to pearl-fishing regulations elsewhere. Industrial pearl-shelling was a complex industry whose management required knowledge of conservation for sustainability, a provision for the mobile and extraterritorial activities, and labour management.

This chapter focuses on the latter element in the framing of the ordinance, namely, those factors that demanded the colonial government look beyond their border. Australia, especially, was a case from which the Dutch colonial government could learn a great deal. At the turn of the twentieth century, state governments in Australia already had a more developed regulatory scheme to deal with pearl-shelling, based on prior investigations into the industry.³⁷⁹ The Dutch also shared an interest in the sphere of pearling activities, the pearl frontier, which included part of their territory. It was fortuitous that the pearl-shellers interested in Aru were the very people the state governments in Australia were trying to control and regulate. It is not surprising that the Dutch administration paid close attention to Australia.

This chapter describes and analyses the interconnectedness of pearl-shelling activities in these waters. It emphasises how the interplay between pearl-shellers and both colonial regimes shaped the contours of history along the pearl frontier. Two particular policies are particularly important in shaping the moment: the passing of the *Immigration Restriction Act* in 1901 and the 1902 Pearlfishing Ordinance, which would officially pave the way for James Clark and the Celebes Trading Company. The governments of Australia and the Netherlands Indies respectively issued these policies to exert control over two separate spheres of interest—labour and the economy. The unregulated activities along the pearl-frontier were where their respective priorities collided.

³⁷⁹ For a retelling of the problems that plagued the pearl-shelling industry in Australia and the respective legislations to deal with them, see Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia*, 26-81.

The structure of this chapter is thematic rather than chronological. It begins with an explanation of how Merauke fitted into the effort of Australian pearl-shellers to deal with the *Immigration Restriction Act*. It then explains how the *Act* and the activities of Australian pearl-shellers influenced the discussion of labour in the pearl-shelling industry in Netherlands Indies. Subsequently, internal conversations compelled the Dutch colonial government to reconcile their aims through consultations concerning various ordinances and reports. Included in the discussion is the question of where the indentured workers in the pearling industry fitted into a broader colonial policy framework. I then investigate the activities of the Baadilla Brothers at the turn of the century and place their company among its contemporaries. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the 1902 Pearlfishing Ordinance and how it influenced the incursion of James Clark and his accomplices into the waters of Aru.

Merauke: The Push and Pull of the Netherlands Indies

The beginning of the twentieth century brought trouble to Australian pearl-shellers. The colonies of Australia were consolidated into a federation, and its new government passed the *Immigration Restriction Act* in 1901. The policy, commonly recognised as the beginning of the White Australia Policy, was meant to end Asian migration and restrict the non-white populace in Australia.³⁸⁰ The *Act* had a direct impact on industries where the majority of the workforce were non-white, and therefore subject to the new laws. This was trouble for the pearl-shelling industry.

From the 1870s, indentured Asian labour were vital as divers and crewmembers in industrial pearl-shelling in Australia.³⁸¹ By 1900, major Australian pearl-shellers were white men whose workers came from Japan, the Philippines, Singapore and Netherlands Indies. The industry wanted to maintain their Asian workforce because they were cheap.³⁸² But even before the Federation of Australia, state governments saw the industry

³⁸⁰ Reynolds, *North of Capricorn.*, xi-xii.

³⁸¹ For a background on the shift of the pearling industry labour composition from the 1860s to 1900 across the pearling centres in Australia and overview of debates about the presence of Asians, see Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia*, 77- 109. From time to time, the number of workers they recruited fluctuate depending on changing government policies, etc. For a closer look at Asian labour in WA see McGann, "'Malays' as Indentured Labour.", 55-59; Ronald Moore, "The Management of the Western Australian Pearling Industry, 1860 to the 1930s," *Great Circle* 16 (1994)., 131-134. For a close look at how this unfolded in Thursday Island, see Ganter, *Pearl-shellshers of Torres Strait*, 99-117.

³⁸² Phillips, "Plenty More Little Brown Man.", 60-61.

with critical eyes. In Western Australia, the government introduced and amended the Imported Labour Registry Act (1874, 1884 and 1897) to control and limit the entry of Asian labour.³⁸³ In the centre of pearling in Queensland, the Torres Strait, Asian labour also dominated. In the 1870s, some white boatowners in Sydney employed Pacific Islanders to dive for them. Around the same decade, the owners also started employing men from the Philippines, Japan and the Netherlands Indies. From 1885 the heavy presence of the Japanese in particular caused concern and displeasure among white Australians.³⁸⁴ Queensland had a regulation restricting the entry of Chinese workers in place by then, and by 1896 there were calls to limit their entry but they did not really restrict the Japanese until the 1898 Pearling Bill Act. The 1898 Pearling Bill Act was intended to end the pearl-shelling operations of Japanese boat owners.³⁸⁵ While the pearling industry in Northern Territory was not as developed as in WA and Queensland, there too, the government refused any license for Japanese boat operators from 1895.³⁸⁶ In summarising 'the Japanese problem' on the eve of the introduction of the White Australia Policy, Bach states that the white Australians had to '...retain access to such labour in defiance of a national anti-Asian feeling, while, on the other [hand, LG], to make certain that the imported labour remained subordinate.'³⁸⁷ In short, while state governments in WA, the Northern Territory, and Queensland expressed their dislike of Asian labour, they thus far had accepted the assertion that they were necessary.

The Federation and the passing of the *Immigration Restriction Act* marked the beginning of another round of struggles for the pearl-shellers. Before, in spite of the restrictions, the pearl-shelling industry was successful in convincing all three states that their entire industry would perish without them. However, the new *Act* wanted to replace non-white workers and thereby make the industry totally 'white'. Under the act, the workforce of the plantations in Queensland was repatriated as the government subsidised the industry, in

³⁸³ McGann, "'Malays' as Indentured Labour.", 58, 64-76.

³⁸⁴ Ganter, *Pearl-shellers in Torres Strait*, 99-105; Shnukal, "They don't know what went on underneath", 87-88; David Sissons, 'The Japanese in the Australian Pearling Industry' in Stockwin and Tamura, *Bridging Australia and Japan: The Writings of David Sissons*, 97-118. For a detailed look into the diverse Asian diasporas in Torres Strait, see Shnukal, Ramsay, and Nagata (eds.), *Navigating boundaries*.

³⁸⁵ The Act was a result of the 1897 Hamilton Commission which also investigated the Japanese ownership of pearling vessels in Queensland. It was difficult for the Queensland state government to act because they signed the 1894 Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. See Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia*, 95-101; Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 150-157.

³⁸⁶ David Sissons, 'Japanese in the Northern Territory 1884-1902' in Stockwin and Tamura, *Bridging Australia and Japan: The Writings of David Sissons*, 119-170.

³⁸⁷ J. P. S. Bach, "The Pearlshelling Industry and the White Australia Policy," *Australian Historical Studies* 10, no. 38 (1962), 205.

order to phase out the non-white workforce and replaced it with white men.³⁸⁸ A similar fate threatened the pearl-shelling industry.

In the run-up to the Australian federation, the pearl-shelling industry was mostly ignored in debates about immigration.³⁸⁹ However, recognising the uncertainty of their situation, the Australian pearl-shellers waged a fight that reached the parliament to maintain their exemption. In Queensland, between 1897 and 1916, there were six attempts made to challenge the presence of non-white workers in the pearl-shelling industry.³⁹⁰ On each occasion, the government thoroughly investigated the workings of the industry. This continued until WWI, when the sudden fall in the price of pearl-shell highlighted the apparent weakness of an industry so dependent on the vagaries of an external market. The fall in prices due to war occurred when the Bamford Commission were investigating the use of indentured Asian labour. The Commission worked from 1913 to 1916 and concluded that work in pearling luggers should be left in the hands of Asian migrants. 'The life is not a desirable one [for white men, LG], and the risks are great,' the Commission report notes.³⁹¹ More than that, 'the work is arduous, the hours long, and the remuneration quite inadequate.' In short, the conditions under which the Asian labour worked was far below the standard of what white men deserved. The combination of these factors and the lack of interest among white men to enter the industry led the Minister for Home Affairs to extend the employment of non-white workers after 1916.³⁹²

For the pearl-shellers, uncertainty marked the period before the 1916 exemption was finalised, and it is essential to dwell on the uncertainty here. The federal government devised temporary measures to maintain the status quo, but their temporary nature meant the labour issue was never completely resolved.³⁹³ While the measures were enacted, the pearl-shellers and the Australian government continued their negotiations. The pearl-shellers wanted reassurance that the exemption would remain despite the advent of the White Australia Policy. In their fight to gain permanent exemption, the pearl-shellers had two strong arguments. The first was the now-familiar claim that the

³⁸⁸ Scarr, "Recruits and Recruiters: A Portrait of the Pacific Islands Labour Trade.", 126-131.

³⁸⁹ Phillips, "Plenty More Little Brown Man.", 61-62.

³⁹⁰ Phillips, "Plenty More Little Brown Man.", 80.

³⁹¹ F. W. Bamford (chairman), *Pearl-shelling Industry: Report and Recommendations of Commission* (Melbourne: Government Printer for the State of Victoria, 1916), 6.

³⁹² See Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia.*, 131-132.

³⁹³ Phillips, "Plenty More Little Brown Man.", 66., Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia.*, 128-129.

industry could not survive without non-white workers.³⁹⁴ The second was the threat they would move their base of operation offshore. Because immigration restriction applied to all of Australia, they threatened to move abroad and place themselves under a different colonial regime; one still located along the Pearl Frontier but lacking the same restrictions. The Netherlands Indies ideally fulfilled those requirements.

The threat to exit Australia and move their base of operations to a neighbouring colony revealed the way Australian pearl-shelliers viewed the territorial sphere of their activities. The mobile nature of the industry allowed them to seriously consider unusual options to counter the threat the *Immigration Restriction Act* posed to their interests. If they could not retain the exemption, then they could ostensibly move their headquarters overseas, while their operation would continue uninterrupted.³⁹⁵ Australian pearl-shelliers had done it before and could do it again, maintaining an operational base at a great distance from home. It was evident that while it was impractical for the pearl-shelliers to move overseas, it was not impossible.³⁹⁶

The Australian government commissioned two inquiries to check the efficacy of the pearl-shelliers' claims. In 1901 and 1902, M.S. Warton and C. Dashwood respectively submitted their reports on the current state of pearl-shelling in Australia. To answer the claims, the first commission needed to visit pearl-shelling centres in Australia and interview a cross-section of people involved in the industry. To understand the basis of the second claim, Australia needed to consult directly with the government of the Netherlands Indies, as it could not rely on the words of the pearl-shelliers alone.

In 1901, the Netherlands Indies lacked bases like Thursday Island, Port Darwin and Broome. However, the Netherlands Indies had Kupang, a town already deeply entrenched as a labour recruitment port on the pearl frontier. But in this period the newly established Merauke also showed some potential for pearling activity. The presence of these two

³⁹⁴ Ultimately the industry managed to convince the government and maintain their exemption until the demise of the pearl-shelling industry in the 1960s. As Cunningham states, it was remarkable that they managed to convince the Australian government of their plight and that 'the Government viewed the survival of the industry as being more important than a strict application of the White Australia Policy.', see Cunningham, *On Borrowed Time: The Australian Pearlshelling Industry, Asian Indentured Labour and the White Australia Policy, 1946-1962*, 5-6.

³⁹⁵ There was a precedent for this. In 1885-1886 James Clark ran his fleet from the sea for six months while still maintaining a base on Thursday Island to avoid government regulations in Western Australia. Mullins writes about how this initiative contributed to the invention of the floating-station system. See Mullins, *Octopus Crowd.*, 81-83.

³⁹⁶ As a matter of fact, Mullins believed that the exodus of James Clark and his fleet to the Indies in 1905, contributed to the passing of another (temporary) compromise in November that year. See Mullins, *Octopus Crowd.*, 191.

maritime outposts were vital elements in the discourse and arguments of the Australian pearl-shellors, and this was the assertive claim Dashwood investigated.

Let me begin by discussing the significance of Kupang. M. S. Warton, the Resident Magistrate and Sub-Collector of Customs in Broome, warned in 1901 that Australian pearl-shellors could ostensibly move to the town.³⁹⁷ Prior to January 1903, there were some indications in Australia that the Dutch were prepared to offer some incentives to pearl-shellors willing to move their operations there.³⁹⁸ Martínez and Vickers quoted an article to that effect as sign of a changing Dutch policy on Australian pearl-shellors, now actively inviting the pearl-shellors into the region.³⁹⁹ However, the article is a retelling of a statement from a Captain Pitts, who allegedly heard this rumour from the Resident of Timor.⁴⁰⁰ As will become evident in the next section when I discuss the labour question, an interpretation of the newspaper article forces us to confront the basic question as to whether the Resident ever had the power to do that in the first place.

The rest of this chapter demonstrates that, according to official records, the Dutch did not shift their stance this early. They did not open doors for Australian pearl-shelling fleets to operate in the Netherlands Indies. I explain two reasons that contradict that claim in the following two sections: first, the flurry of letters James Clark's nephew letter inspired in 1902 when he wanted to start operating in the Netherlands Indies; and second, the colonial government's treatment of Merauke.

Merauke was a Dutch colonial post established as the administrative base of the new *afdeling* Zuid-Nieuw Guinea (henceforth ZNG). As the name suggests, the administrative unit was located in the southern part of Dutch New Guinea, not far from the Torres Strait. On January 20, 1902, the colonial government issued a decree to establish the special administrative region under direct rule of the Government of Netherlands Indies.⁴⁰¹ This was an implementation of a decree the government issued the previous year when they formally announced expansion of their authority into southern New Guinea. The

³⁹⁷ M. S. Warton, *Pearl Shelling Industry in North-West Australia* (Government Printer for the State of Victoria 1901-2), 10. Tangentially, in the document reviewing this, the Dutch colonial government did not immediately deny Dutch eagerness to take advantage of the situation if the pearl-shelling industry were to move to Kupang. See ANRI GB TZGAG 6280.

³⁹⁸ "THE PEARLING INDUSTRY," *Advertiser* (Adelaide, SA), 31 January 1903, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4920548>.

³⁹⁹ Martínez and Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier*, 55.

⁴⁰⁰ There is the possibility that the article was referring to changes in the recruitment policy.

⁴⁰¹ See Staatsblad 1902 nr. 63 in *Staatsblad van het Nederlandsch-Indie over het jaar 1902*, (Batavia Landsdrukkerij, 1903). <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB07:001309001:00007>. The two decrees that followed made provisions for who would need to step in if the Assistant Resident were to fall ill or pass away and confirmed that the official had to settle in Merauke.

government published a detailed list of the f20,000 financial expenditure allocated for the establishment of this settlement.⁴⁰² Part of the decree was published in a newspaper in Java, in order to attract a capable Dutchman to the position of Assistant Resident, advertising a sizable wage (f800 per month) with an additional f100 if housing was not available yet.

The establishment of Merauke was a classic frontier pioneering project, and by February 1902, it had barely begun. But the supposed existence of this new settlement provided Australian pearl-shelliers with an additional bargaining chip in their protracted dispute with the Australian government. James Clark, in a March 1902 mentioned that the Dutch colonial government had offered inducements to pearl-shelliers in order to move to Merauke.⁴⁰³ His information was based on the message of a visiting Dutch official. The official seemed convincing enough that George Smith, Clark's brother-in-law and the manager of one of his fleets, intended to visit Merauke in April.⁴⁰⁴ In the interview, Clark claimed that the new Dutch outpost had three hundred soldiers and three gunboats stationed there, and that they were promised only a nominal licensing fee. Given these circumstances and the imposition of the immigration restrictions, Clark depicted an industry which had no choice but to move across the seas. He was not alone; a month later news spread of Burns, Philps & Co., another big player in the Australian pearl-shelling industry, starting to construct a building in Merauke.⁴⁰⁵

These alarming developments led to the 1902 inquiry into the state of pearl-shelling in the Northern Territory. Judge Charles Dashwood led the investigation (also known as the Dashwood Inquiry) which questioned the viability of Merauke as a pearl-shelling hub, and how much of a problem it posed to the traditional position of Thursday Island. Submitting his report in July 1902, Dashwood concluded that Merauke was not a genuine threat.⁴⁰⁶ Apart from the harbour which one could only enter on the tide, the winds were

⁴⁰² "Uitbreiding Bestuur," *De Locomotief (1863-1956)* (Semarang), 23 November 1901. The news was copied from another newspaper, the *Javasche courant*. According to the decree in Staatsblad 1902 nr.65, the listing was contained in Besluit 15 November 1901 nr. 55.

⁴⁰³ Lehane, *The Pearl King.*, 208-216.

⁴⁰⁴ See Mullins, *Octopus Crowd.*, 176-178. As part of the Dashwood inquiry, Smith sent a letter dated June 10, 1902, writing that he had visited Merauke and based on his personal experience, the port was a viable base for their pearl-shelling venture. See C. J. Dashwood, *Pearl Shelling Industry in Port Darwin and Northern Territory* (Melbourne Government Printer, 1902), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-850655994>, (Appendix A).

⁴⁰⁵ Burns, Philp & Co ran a store in Merauke until April 1903. A correspondent of the newspaper *De Locomotief* wrote that its closure was 'a sign of their dejection and a significant loss for the economic development of the region.' Gruno, *De Locomotief (1863-1956)* (Semarang), 04 May 1903, Uit Merauke, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001622079:mpeg21:a00002>.

⁴⁰⁶ Dashwood, *Pearl Shelling Industry*, 13.

not always favourable for a vessel making the 140-mile voyage to the central pearl-shelling ground in the Torres Strait. The settlement was basic, consisting only of ‘...a small enclosure of a few acres, surrounded by a barbed wire fence, with temporary buildings thereon...’.⁴⁰⁷ Dashwood however, confirmed that the frontier post had around three-hundred-and-fifty soldiers, and ninety prison labourers. Based on his firsthand observation of the settlement, he concluded that Merauke did not represent a threat or a potential replacement for Thursday Island as a pearling centre.⁴⁰⁸

Dashwood also met the Assistant Resident of ZNG, J.A. Kroesen and questioned him about the supposed incentives for the pearl-shellers. In response, Kroesen denied having promised anything of the sort to the pearl-shellers.⁴⁰⁹ He had received no formal directive on how to deal with the pearl-shellers. During his inquiry, Dashwood also asked the acting manager of Burns, Philps & Co., David William Campbell Shiress, to clarify the nature of their activity in Merauke.⁴¹⁰ Shiress confirmed that his company had opened a branch there at the behest of the Dutch colonial government to supply them with stores. He also confirmed the threat of pearlshellers moving there, mentioning how much cheaper it was to conscript and pay workers.

Two things are important to highlight here regarding how Clark and Shiress described Merauke as an alternative pearling centre. They both described the *Immigration Restriction Act* as a key factor that would push them into the embrace of the Netherlands Indies, and spoke of Merauke as if the Dutch colonial government established it to simply invite the Australians there.⁴¹¹ These initial conversations occurred even though the Dutch still had no clear ideas on how the establishment of the post would be connected to the present activities of the Australian pearl-sheller, especially as past encounters with them along the frontier were riddled with concerns over their repeated incursions. If

⁴⁰⁷ According to an interview with the manager of Burns, Philps & Co., the construction of the settlement began in February 1902. See Dashwood, *Pearl Shelling Industry*, 50.

⁴⁰⁸ A description of the situation in Merauke a year later demonstrates Merauke still had a long way to go. A part of the settlement’s population suffered or died from *beri-beri*, especially the convict labourers brought there to build it. Gruno, *De Locomotief (1863-1956)* (Semarang), 06 June 1903, Uit Merauke, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBDDD02:000203927:mpeg21:a0004>. There was also the problem of Merauke not having good drinking water yet and not being connected to the telegram lines. This meant that, the Assistant Resident would occasionally send a telegram to Java via Thursday Island.

⁴⁰⁹ Dashwood, *Pearl Shelling Industry*, 13.

⁴¹⁰ Dashwood, *Pearl Shelling Industry*, 49-50.

⁴¹¹ In the interview with Dashwood, Shiress stated that Dutch administration expansion into Merauke was a political move. He also repeated the statement that moving there would be beneficial because ‘it is absolutely a free port as far as duty is concerned’, Dashwood, *Pearl Shelling Industry*, 50. The General Secretary in their review of the Dashwood report, noted that the last statement is untrue, see ANRI GB TZGAG 6280.

indeed there were three gunboats stationed in Merauke, it was more likely they were there to patrol the area against the Australian interlopers. In short, the establishment of Merauke did not mean that the Dutch colonial government already had an explicit policy regarding the presence of Australian pearl-shelliers.

From the letters sent to his superiors, it seems Kroesen was also not eager to have the Australian pearl-shelliers in his region. Throughout the process of formulating the 1902 Pearl-fishing Ordinance, Kroesen queried whether it was possible to exclude the ZNG from the ordinance. In a letter summarising his concerns, the Secretariat noted his argument that the colonial government lacked the capacity to properly oversee the implementation of the ordinance in his region.⁴¹² His request to exclude Merauke from the 1902 Pearlfishing Ordinance was directly connected to the activities of Australian pearl-shelliers. Kroesen felt that without a proper colonial presence to regulate the activities of lease holders, granting a lease for the ZNG area would not necessarily bring income to the government treasury. The Indies Council discussed his concerns in a meeting held on November 8, 1901, and dismissed them. They could not consider the lack of resources to enforce the ordinance as a sufficient reason to exclude ZNG, because, as the Council wrote, then they would have to scrap the ordinance altogether since this lack of capacity was also felt in the other parts of the Outer Islands. The correspondence revealed that J. A. Kroesen and the colonial government were still undecided on the matter of Merauke's development and future.⁴¹³

One of the reasons the government was unable to conclusively resolve the issue of Australian pearl-shelliers in the ZNG was also the constant ambivalence surrounding their presence. The opening of the frontier settlement had required significant financial expenditure from the government. But despite the initial expenditure, the subsequent expansion of the settlement was a slow and arduous process. Even within colonial circles, there was support to not exclude ZNG out of hand, because the waters around the region had the potential to be very profitable.⁴¹⁴ The official advocates for this point of view mentioned that it would presumably attract Australian pearl-shelliers bent on evading the

⁴¹² MGS 30-10-1901 nr. 3254 in ANRI GBBT 885.

⁴¹³ The dismissal of the concern was not the end of the discussion, as the matter was brought to the council again in a meeting on 13 December 1901 (which was less than a month before the 1902 ordinance was published and inserted into the State Gazette). This time the question was simple, does the council have any concern or objection about the fact that ZNG was not mentioned in article 3a of the draft ordinance. The council deliberated on this fact and pointed out that even if the ZNG is not explicitly mentioned in article 3a, the provision in article 3b would still give the colonial government the discretion to decide how this applied to ZNG. See ANRI GBBT 885.

⁴¹⁴ ANRI GBBT 885.

heavy taxation imposed by the Queensland government. These individuals hoped that the presence of an Australian-run pearling enterprise in Merauke waters could accelerate the growth of the frontier settlement.

Gruno, a correspondent of *De Locomotief* wrote an article in August 1903 summarising the climate of opinion among Dutchmen in the Indies regarding colonial policies about Merauke. The article was written in response to a piece printed in the *Javabode* two months earlier. The earlier article in *Javabode* addressed the future of Merauke, stating that while there was the possibility of some pearling fleets moving in from TI, 'everyone agrees that that is not happening.'⁴¹⁵ Gruno, on the other hand, disagreed with this point of view. He displayed a keen awareness of developments in Australia; explaining there was continued pushback against the *Immigration Restriction Act*, and that Merauke was still considered a possible destination in this process. Gruno rejected the idea that there was no hope for the growth of Merauke which he felt could be connected to overseas pearl-shelling enterprises. Instead, he pointed the finger at the government who had failed to take advantage of the circumstances in Australia. Over a year had passed since the enactment of the 1902 Pearl-fishing Ordinance but the government continued to refuse to issue any pearl-shelling concessions in the region. Hence, Gruno argued the government was obstructing the development of Merauke and the industry.

However, Gruno and other proponents supporting development of Merauke through the pearl-shelling industry were to remain disappointed. In 1905, the Dutch colonial government amended the 1902 Pearlfishing Ordinance. The amendment made the exclusion of the ZNG permanent, only allowing pearl-shelling enterprises in the region with the permission from the Assistant Resident of ZNG.⁴¹⁶ While the debate in Australia about the use of non-white workers raged, the Netherlands Indies was unwilling to allow Merauke to become a crucial factor in the debate by allowing Australians free entry to the lucrative pearling grounds and relinquishing control over the area.

One issue that has not been investigated yet, is how the *Immigration Restriction Act* affected Dutch subjects. Warton noted in 1902 that Kupang, together with Singapore, were the principle recruiting ports of more than one thousand workers in Broome.⁴¹⁷ There was an awareness within Dutch colonial ranks that the restriction would directly affect

⁴¹⁵ Gruno, "Uit Merauke," *De Locomotief (1863-1956)* (Semarang), 24 August 1903, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001623136:mpeg21:a00116>.

⁴¹⁶ This was an amendment to the 1902 Ordinance and made official through the decree published in the *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch Indie* 1905 No.50.

⁴¹⁷ Warton, *Pearl Shelling Industry in North-West Australia*, 3.

them.⁴¹⁸ The *Act* did not just affect the pearl-shellers, it was also a major problem for the workers, but especially the colonial regime that sent them to work overseas.

Labouring for Pearl-shell at Home and Away

While discussions about the role of foreign labour in Australia continued, a letter from a pearl-sheller based in Broome raised other questions in the Netherlands Indies. In June 1901, Frank Biddles wrote to the Resident of Timor requesting an extension of his twenty-month contract to a two-year term for workers recruited in Kupang.⁴¹⁹ The Resident stated that Biddles had recruited labourers in Kupang for several years. His request for a four-month extension was based on personal experience.⁴²⁰ The current contract did not take account of the time required to train the workers, and that very often the end of their agreements occurred 'at a most inconvenient time'. The Resident, responding to his letter, stated that he had no authority to extend the contract terms. He informed Biddles his letter should be sent to the Governor (D. *Landvoogd*). Biddles did send a letter to Batavia with at least four major points which I will discuss later.⁴²¹

His letter was a reminder of the different ways the population of Netherlands Indies participated in the pearl-shelling industry. The territory that was becoming the Netherlands Indies was not just home to pearl-banks, it was also home to people who were indentured to work in pearl-banks beyond the colonial territory. As Vickers and Martinez convincingly argue, the indentured laboured recruitment in Kupang was the building block of the pearl frontier from the time it took form in the 1870s.⁴²² The request illustrated the inter-connectedness of pearl-shelling activities in this region and the depth of the labour problem. Until then, talks about pearl-shelling in the Netherlands Indies

⁴¹⁸ MGS 13-02-1902 nr. 537, 538, & 539 in ANRI GB MGS 4116. This was a sticking point, regarding whether it was even advisable to change the duration of indenture. There were questions of what to do if the *Act* came into effect and the workers had to leave with threats of punishment.

⁴¹⁹ Captain Biddles was, according to his obituary, 'one of the leading pearl-ers' in Broome. See "Obituary: Capt. F. Biddles," *Fremantle Advocate (WA: 1926 - 1942)*, 23 June 1932, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article255753745>. He was a senior player in the pearl-shelling industry; Biddles was one of the pearl-ers the scientist Saville Kent met when he visited Broome in 1893 to discuss conservation. See Bach, *The pearling industry of Australia.*, 33.

⁴²⁰ The terms limiting the duration of this contract was based on the *Staatsblad* 1887 no. 31. See Letter from the Resident of Timor, 23-02-1902 no. 466/30 in ANRI GB MGS 4166.

⁴²¹ MGS 10-02-1904 no. 626 in ANRI GB MGS 4166.

⁴²² Martínez and Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier.*, 9-11, 31ff. See also Martínez, "Indonesians Challenging White Australia." It would be remiss of me to not mention that in 1886 the pearl-sheller Edwin Streeter complained to the Western Australian Government that further added to the difficulty of the pearl-ers who were already obligated 'under a heavy guarantee to the Dutch government to return the divers, and pay their wages punctually.' See Streeter, *Pearls and Pearling Life.*, 149-150.

had been dominated by discussions over the pearl-banks within their territory, making it primarily an issue of resources rather than labour in the industry.

Biddles' request led to a scrutiny of labour conditions in the pearl-shelling industry as the colonial administration briefly entertained the question of whether there was a need for an ordinance to regulate them.⁴²³ Responding to the reminder of the colonial subjects working overseas, the government pondered whether there was an actual need for an ordinance to deal specifically with the industry. The activities and work of the pearl-shelling industry mostly took place over water and was mobile, which meant the government could not always regulate them. On the other hand, the existing ordinances and procedures in place for the recruitment of workers were based on industries whose scope of activity took place on land.

The Netherlands Indies and Indentured Labour

The Governor General tasked the office of the Governor of Celebes and Its Dependencies to draft an ordinance specifically for the pearl-shelling industry.⁴²⁴ The proposed draft had fourteen articles, including some model contracts and a memo of explanation. It borrowed heavily from previous Coolie Ordinances and therefore provides us an opportunity to foreground this discussion of the pearling industry and indentured labour within the broader context of colonial labour policies and practice in the Netherlands Indies.

By 1903, when internal discussions about the ordinance took place, Coolie Ordinances already existed to manage employer-worker relationship in Western colonial enterprises. In the second half of the nineteenth century, progressive developments in the Netherlands Indies had led to the establishment of Western enterprises employing indentured workers. Foremost among them were various plantations in Sumatra and Borneo,⁴²⁵ where ordinances were issued to manage the employer-worker relationship. The first

⁴²³ ANRI GB MGS 4166.

⁴²⁴ ANRI GB MGS 4166.

⁴²⁵ For a brief overview of the different labour conditions in the Netherlands Indies for the first half of the twentieth century, see Vincent J. H. Houben & J. Thomas Lindblad (eds.), *Coolie Labour in Colonial Indonesia: A Study of Labour Relations in the Outer Islands, c. 1900-1940* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999). For a nuanced discussion of how the colonial system impinged on the lives of workers in the plantations, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt, 1870-1979* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Jan Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast: Plantation Society and the Colonial Order in Southeast Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Coolie Ordinance issued in 1880 only applied to East Sumatra but later, it was also used in various parts of the Outer Islands.⁴²⁶ In the following decades, further Coolie Ordinances were amended and enacted to continue management of indentured workers.

The draft ordinance was similar to the Coolie Ordinance except that it specifically addressed the maritime nature of the industry.⁴²⁷ Apart from the technicalities of the contract, the articles focused on the requirements and responsibility of the employer.⁴²⁸ When discussing the workers, the ordinance focused primarily on breaches of contracts and desertions. This pattern was similar to Ordinances based on experiences in the plantations where desertion was a problem.

Some regulations were included to deal with aspects of the pearl-shelling industry. The ordinance made provisions for dealing with the pearling fleets and vessels as actual workplace sites like plantations were. The Dutch therefore added responsibility to harbourmasters, and the colonial official in charge now determined by where the pearling fleet actually happened to be at any particular time. Acknowledging the mobile nature of the industry that allowed pearlers to enter and exit different regional waters within the colony, the draft made provisions for supervision over wide-ranging waters. Outside ports, the authority to regulate the industry was also given to commanders of warships and government marine craft sailing in the same waters as the pearling fleets.

The Coolie Ordinances and the ways they regulated employer-worker relationships are vital for several reasons. They contextualised how the draft fitted into the array of broader colonial policies on indentured labour and clarified the inquiries and concerns that Residents voiced as reflected in their correspondence. Correspondence in 1903 concerning the pearl-shelling industry centred around desertion; the reports however were based on conversations with employers in the industry and not the workers. It is fitting that the reports have more to say about the obligations of the workers because, as the historian Vincent Houben observed, the Ordinances displayed a significant imbalance and were more intent on protecting the rights of employers than their workers.⁴²⁹ Until the end of

⁴²⁶ Vincent Houben, "Introduction: The Coolie System in Colonial Indonesia," in *Coolie Labour in Colonial Indonesia: A Study of Labour in the Outer Islands, c. 1900-1940*, ed. Vincent J. H. Houben and J. Th. Lindblad (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999), 13.

⁴²⁷ Houben has a very brief and instructive review on the anatomy of an 1889 Coolie Ordinance. See Houben, "Introduction.", 13-16.

⁴²⁸ ANRI GB MGS 4166.

⁴²⁹ Houben, "Introduction.", 16. Abuse was rampant on plantations in the Netherlands Indies, where disciplining of indentured workers often included harsh physical abuse, which was also a major reason for desertion. See Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast.*, 160-175. Plantations were places where the social inequality and abuse created a lot of tension and violence. Breman

colonial rule, employers used the Coolie Ordinances to wield control of their workers, with different levels of assistance from the colonial government.⁴³⁰

The Governor of Celebes sent the draft ordinance for review to four Residents: the Residents of Amboina, Ternate, Menado and Timor. The Residents of Amboina, Ternate and Menado oversaw areas where various pearl-shelling enterprises operated. The Resident of Timor had authority over Kupang, the port with a long history as a recruitment centre for indentured workers.⁴³¹ Based on their collective responses, the government discarded the draft ordinance; the Governor General decided that the causes of concern were not serious enough to regulate worker-employee relations in the industry.⁴³² The Department of Internal Administration endorsed this position, stating that thus far there was no need for this type of regulation and that the existing labour condition were satisfactory.

The ordinance was tabled and never enacted, but the basis of the discussion and correspondence behind it is worth discussing. The letters from the Residents discussed the various conditions of labour in their respective regions. Their reports provide a glimpse of the pearl-shelling industry in the Netherlands Indies at this time and in the case of Timor, it also provides us with an idea of how the government dealt with indentured workers in the pearl-shelling industry. More broadly, the discussion signified what the Dutch colonial government felt was satisfactory conditions for their colonised subjects.

What follows is a discussion of the various responses. Among all the responses, the Resident of Timor and the Resident of Amboina are particularly important to highlight, albeit for different reasons. The Resident of Timor's report was relevant because Kupang, the port from where Frank Biddles intended to recruit labour, was under his purview. The letter from the Resident of Amboina is crucial because it contained information about pearl-shelling activities in Aru. For purposes of structure and clarity, I begin with the

concluded that 'the coolies were systemically terrorised and that their exploitation was accompanied by maximum oppression.' The rampant abuse of workers led to the establishment of the *Arbeidsinspectie* in 1904 in Sumatra, and a decree in 1908 enabled them to operate throughout the Indies.

⁴³⁰ Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast.*, 272-285.

⁴³¹ See Martínez and Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier.*, 44-51, 84-85.

⁴³² At the time, the government was also developing a new *Koelie-ordonantie* for the Outer Islands, which the Department of Internal Administration believed would cover employee-worker relations and concerns. See ANRI GB MGS 4166.

response from the Resident of Timor about labour recruitment before discussing labour conditions in the pearl-shelling industry in the Netherlands Indies.

The response of the Resident of Timor was specifically concerned with the trans-national element of labour migration. In a letter from February 1902, the Resident provided an explanation of the existing recruitment procedures in Kupang. He agreed with Biddles that the duration of the contract was inconvenient for returning the workers on time.⁴³³ He had no objection to the four-month extension because he felt the employers in Western Australia treated their workers fairly. The returning workers, he stated, made no complaints about abuse, bad victuals, or overwork. Instead, many of them were able and willing to be re-indentured.

Biddles also expressed objection to the requirement that the crew only receive one-third of their pay while still employed. Upon entering their indenture, workers received f45 as a deposit, and during their employ, their wages were f15 per month.⁴³⁴ He argued that the pay provision was a problem because it only allowed workers to access f4.25 per month. This limited amount made it difficult for pearling workers who needed supplies in Western Australia during the colder months. He wanted workers to have access to two thirds of their wage during the period of their employment, so they could purchase blankets for themselves (such items were expensive in frontier Western Australia). The Resident supported this request as well.

But the Resident expressed concern at the third point of Biddles' request. Biddles was asking whether he could transfer the indentured workers to a different employer. The Resident was concerned that approving such a request defeated the purpose of the original regulation, namely, to provide some protection to the indentured workers.⁴³⁵ He acknowledged that if there was a sudden shortage of workers, they could make exceptions to the rule. However, all such occasions fell under the force *majeure* category (epidemics or storms), which meant that there was no pressing reason to change the existing regulation.

⁴³³ See Letter from the Resident of Timor, 23-02-1902 no. 466/30 in ANRI GB MGS 4166. The Resident added that there had been occasions when the end of their indenture occurred in January or February. In those cases, having to return the workers to Kupang during the unfavourable monsoon season posed danger to the workers.

⁴³⁴ During their twenty-month indenture, every single worker would receive f300 in total.

⁴³⁵ The strong reaction to this request makes sense because the regulation was initially put in place because of the conditions of employment in Australia. See Martínez, "Indonesians Challenging White Australia.", 234-235 and Ronald Moore, "The Management of the Western Australian Pearling Industry, 1860 to the 1930s," *Great Circle* 16 (1994), 127.

Biddles' request that elicited the strongest concern called for the removal of the requirement to provide a personal security bond. The Resident adamantly stated that this request should be unconditionally rejected.⁴³⁶ Baron van Hoevell, now governor of Celebes, agreed with this assessment. In his introductory letter to the draft ordinance, the governor stated that the request to abolish the security bond (*D. borgtocht*) should not be granted in any circumstance. If a company suddenly ceased operating, he wrote, the existence of the security bond would motivate pearl-shellers to return the workers to their recruitment port.⁴³⁷

This internal correspondence displays an interesting example about the idea of worker's rights and welfare and their limits within the Netherlands Indies colonial regime. On the one hand, the higher-ranking administrative officers of the colony agreed with the assessment of the Resident and shared his concern regarding the welfare of indentured workers. Consequently, all the recommendations of the Resident of Timor were heeded and the request Biddles filed resulted in several separate amendments to the labour recruitment regulations and practice in Kupang.⁴³⁸ However, the overall content of the proposed ordinance and the shared belief of what was considered 'satisfactory working conditions' at the time encourages us to not overstate the extent of the colonial administration's concern for the plight of indentured workers.

Pearl-shelling Labour in the Indies

The government's assessment of labour conditions in the pearl-shelling industry was based on reports from the Resident of Ternate and the Resident of Amboina. Apart from the conclusions reached, the reports themselves provided an important glimpse of the terms and conditions under which workers laboured for pearl-shell in these two residencies. It is significant that the activities of the Baadilla Brothers were central to the 1903 report from the Resident of Amboina.

It is necessary to briefly reiterate that the initial aim of the report was to ascertain whether the industry maintained adequate working conditions and address problems

⁴³⁶ Letter from the Resident of Timor, 23-02-1902 no. 466/30 in ANRI GB MGS 4166.

⁴³⁷ Letter from the Governor of Celebes, 11-11-1902 no. 6017/2 in ANRI GB MGS 4166. Two of his requests were eventually approved and led to amendments of the previous ordinance.

⁴³⁸ The two amendments were published in the 1903 *Staatsblad van NI* no 203 and 204, respectively. A full dossier of this can be found in the Nationaal Archief in The Hague. See Nationaal Archief (Den Haag), *Ministerie van Koloniën: Openbaar Verbaal*, nummer toegang 2.10.36.04, inventarisnummer 181. (henceforth NL-HaNa, Kolonien/OV, inv.nr....).

with desertion. The inquiry was centred on the requirements of the employers in the industry and what exactly they provided to their workers.⁴³⁹ There was a principal focus on wages and the diet of the workers, while any information offered about labour conditions was considered coincidental in order to understand the role of labour in the industry.

To better understand the focus on the workers diet, it is necessary from a comparative standpoint to review the victuals large-scale pearl-shellers in Australia provided to their workers. The 1902 Dashwood report contained information on the provisions on board Australian luggers. The scale of provisions varied from company to company, but the information George Smith provided was instructive. Each company lugger had six men on board and each month Smith provided them with the following provisions:⁴⁴⁰

4 bags flour, each 50 lbs	72 lbs salt beef	2 bottles pickles
2 bags rice, each 50 lbs	12 tins (each 2 lbs.) boiled beef	2 bottles vinegar
40 lbs sugar	6 tins sardines	2 lbs candles
6 lbs salt	4 tins fresh herrings	2 tins curry
2 lbs tea	6 tins jam	1 bar soap
2 lbs coffee	4 tins milk	4 boxes of matches

Based on the report from the Resident of Amboina, we learn that the Baadilla Brothers were the only pearl-shelling enterprise operating in the region in 1903. The Resident did not discuss the management of the company but confirmed that each lugger had seven crew on board during its operation. Among these seven crew members, one was the diver, one a signalman (D. *seiner*), and five deck hands.⁴⁴¹ The composition of crew on board seemed to mirror the crew composition of industrial pearl-shelling enterprises in Australia.

⁴³⁹ It was the company and not its workers that informed the Internal Administration of the working conditions.

⁴⁴⁰ Dashwood, *Pearl Shelling Industry.*, 18. One cannot help but notice that the diet of the pearl-shelling workers in the Indies was dominated by rice, while fleets in Australia continued to use a variety of flours because they believed the consumption of rice could lead to *beri-beri*.

⁴⁴¹ Letter from the Resident of Amboina, 28-10-1903 no. 4880 in ANRI GB MGS 4166.

Like the practice of large-scale pearl-shellers in Australia, the various crew ranks also translated into different wages and benefits. The divers received f12.50 per month, as well as received f0.25 extra for each shell they collected. The *seiner* received f10 per month and received f0.05 extra for each shell they procured. The rest of the crew received no bonus. Rather they were paid received from f8 to f12 per month depending on their work rate and skill.⁴⁴² All the crew were given food while on board, but it is clear that the Baadilla Brothers also highly valued their divers.

Besides the wage and bonus structure, the divers were also entitled to extra food items. Each month, the Baadilla Brothers reported, their divers received:

4 kgs of Australian sea-biscuit

1 kg butter

8 cans of sardines (each can weigh approx. 250grams)

8 cans of salmon (each can weigh approx. 500grams)

8 cans of Australian meat (each can weigh approx. 500 grams)

8 cans of milk.

This allocation supplemented the rations the divers consumed while at sea. The itemised list below gives an idea of the normal diet of the Baadilla Brothers' workers and the scale of provisions they needed for their crews every month, per lugger:⁴⁴³

10 packs of tea	3.125 kg salt
2.5 kg coffee	30 coconuts
6.25 kg sugar	8.50 litres vinegar
157.50 kg rice	60 bell peppers
18.75 kg of mung beans	8.50 litres coconut oil
8.75 kg fish	5 boxes of matches

⁴⁴² ANRI GB MGS 4166.

⁴⁴³ Letter from the Resident of Amboina, 28-10-1903 no. 4880 in ANRI GB MGS 4166. According to an interview with Sech Said, at this point the Baadilla Brothers had forty luggers, which gives an idea of how significant their operations were. See J. E. Jasper, "Het Een en Ander omtrent de Parelvisserij in de Molukken," *Weekblad voor Indie*, May 6, 1906, Universiteit Leiden <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:2486519>, 36.

When not at sea, their workers were housed at Dobo, even though the Baadilla Brothers company was based in Banda Neira. On land too, the different classes of workers lived different lives; the diver and *seiner* received f20 and f10 per month respectively to shop their own food. The rest of the crew were not paid cash. Instead, the company provided them with daily rations at the company's kitchen. These details, in combination with the claim that medicines and a first aid kit were stowed on board, convinced the Resident that workers in the pearl-shelling enterprise in Aru were labouring under a decent enough condition.⁴⁴⁴

The Baadilla Brothers also had to respond to the question of whether they thought an ordinance was necessary to regulate the employee-worker relationship in the pearling industry. The Resident of Amboina had echoed their sentiment, stating it was not necessary to have an ordinance that would regulate the duties of employers and workers. According to company records, the Baadilla Brothers had only experienced two desertions. However, they did not consider the men absconders because they knew where they lived and expected to recover the cash advanced to these runaway workers.

Before turning to the 1902 Pearlfishing Ordinance, I also want to discuss the Resident of Ternate's response to situate the provisioning of the Baadilla Brothers company and pearl-shelling activities there. His report has the added benefit of providing further information on labour conditions. In summarising his assessment, the Resident of Ternate also expressed general satisfaction with the state of the industry.⁴⁴⁵ The resident did not mention a specific company, but he wrote about the changing recruiting practices across the industry.

By 1903, the pearl-shellers in Ternate no longer had to recruit workers from distant Singapore. This, the Resident wrote, had changed from a few years earlier when diving gear was first used to search for shell in Ternate's waters. Now, the pearl-shellers in Ternate did not have to go further than Bacan Island to find suitable workers. These people had picked up the necessary skills from observing the Manilamen who were previously recruited for the work. The Resident did not specify who the locals were and

⁴⁴⁴ Letter from the Resident of Amboina, 28-10-1903 no. 4880 in ANRI GB MGS 4166.

⁴⁴⁵ Letter from the Resident of Ternate, 25-03-1903 no. 436 in ANRI GB MGS 4166.

where they came from, only that they were recruited from Tidore, Ternate and Buton where people availed themselves to the pearl-shellers.⁴⁴⁶

The Resident described a division of labour that was similar to how people searched for pearl-shell in Aru and Australia. The representative of the licence-holder was known as the *koewasa-besar*, and he resided on a vessel located usually halfway between the nearest roadstead and the waters where the smaller praws searched for pearl-shell. The report did not specify the type of vessel used in this preliminary search, merely calling it a diving prau. There were eight people on each prau; one *toekang-tali* (diver), one *toekang-toem* (tender), five personnel and one *djoeroetoelis*.⁴⁴⁷ The enterprises which were operating in Ternate had a different wage structure. The diver received f12.50 every month and was given a bonus of f0.15 for each live shell he collected and f0.05 for each dead shell. The wage of the tender was not dependent on the amount of shell procured; he received a flat f30 per month. The *djoeroetoelis* received between f25 to f40 each month.

The employer also had to provide food for their workers. Like their wages, the different positions also meant a different diet. For the crew, the regular meal consisted mostly of rice, deer meat and bell peppers. The report also noted the company supplied personnel with as much tea as they required, but they were not entitled to coffee. The *djoeroetoelis* received better quality food, but the Resident noted, it was not as good as the food the diver and tender received every month, which included the following:⁴⁴⁸

2 tins cabin biscuits

2 pounds butter

8 tins milk

8 tins corned beef

8 tins salmon

8 tins sardines

4 katies coffee

⁴⁴⁶ None of the enterprises had complaints regarding desertion and supply of workers because they did not have to travel far to recruit workers.

⁴⁴⁷ *Djoeroetoelis* was the secretary or clerk, the five personnel maintained the daily upkeep of the vessel, and operated the air pump under the command of a tender (*D. man aan het koord*), see ANRI GB MGS 4166.

⁴⁴⁸ Letter from the Resident of Ternate, 25-03-1903 no. 436 in ANRI GB MGS 4166.

10 katies sugar

unlimited access to tea.⁴⁴⁹

The Resident of Ternate's report is interesting because, unlike the report from Amboina, it displayed a clear awareness of the more troublesome aspect of the industry.⁴⁵⁰ One in particular was hierarchy in the labour structure and such social stratification was reflected in the disparity in food the crew received. The value of the on board ration the diver and tender received per month was f22, which is alarming when compared with the f4 per month spent to feed the regular personnel. Another serious point for consideration was the dangers attached to the job of the diver. The Resident recognised that the health and safety of the workers was a major issue and therefore recommended the necessity of an annual inspection of the diving gear and air pump.

However, the colonial government did not consider the obvious dangers associated with pearling work and the need to have regular gear inspection as a high priority. Consequently, high level Dutch officials agreed that the safety issue was best left to the discretion of regional administrators.⁴⁵¹ The colonial government had reached the limits of its authority and concern here and did not want to actively intervene in the issue of workplace safety. The issue of workers safety therefore remained a local regional issue whose importance depended on the local colonial administrator, the person on the spot.

Both reports also broadly inferred that the 1903 character of pearl-shelling enterprises in the Indies was not lagging far behind the industry in Australia. They had a comparable, diet, labour and bonus structure. However, even in Australia there were different types of pearl-shellers, starting from single operators to large-scale operators employing hundreds of indentured workers. The Baadilla Brothers and other pearl-shellers in the Indies were not small-time operators at this point, but their operations were not as large or industrially advanced as those of James Clark. As the Dutch would learn, dealing with such technologically advanced enterprises required a new knowledge and skill sets and they needed to learn fast, because the Australians were still as eager as ever to gain access to their waters.

⁴⁴⁹ The report did not specify whether this was per person or for both.

⁴⁵⁰ Letter from the Resident of Ternate, 25-03-1903 no. 436 in ANRI GB MGS 4166.

⁴⁵¹ MGS 10-02-1904 no. 626 in ANRI GB MGS 4166.

The Influence of the Experienced

As stressed in the previous chapter, the Dutch until 1902 had no clear guidelines to regulate ‘modern’ pearl-shelling activity in the Netherlands Indies. Until then, the major concern was to simply reconcile difference between non-local enterprises and traditional fishing activities. When the Dutch began to focus attention on non-traditional fishing activities, they immediately turned for guidance to the British Empire and its pearl-shelling regulations.

The learning curve of pearling regulation in the British Empire had a history longer than the advent of modern pearl-shelling in the Netherlands Indies. Some of the solution predated those temporary measures the Dutch colonial government had devised. In February 1892, the Consulate General of the Netherlands in Melbourne forwarded a copy of the Annual Report of British New Guinea for the previous year.⁴⁵² Summarising the report, the government secretariat earmarked a section referring to the recently issued pearl-fishing ordinance, specifically for the attention of the Director of Internal Administration. The official who earmarked it referred to a missive sent in December 1891 and wrote that it should be ‘used as much as needed in (...) the formulation of the general regulation on pearl-shelling in Netherlands Indies’.⁴⁵³

It was obvious that at this stage the formulation of the new ordinance had just begun. The part earmarked for the benefit of Internal Administration was outlined in the Ordinance no. III of 1891.⁴⁵⁴ The ordinance stated who had the authority to issue a license for pearl-fishing in Possession Island, the licensing of vessels, and its costs. This short outline was significant to the Internal Administration because it highlighted just how embryonic the ordinance still was at this stage and how much work remained to be done before it would be truly ready.

From then, it took the Dutch another ten years to formulate a working ordinance. The correspondence was long and complicated, and at times included discussions bogged down on trivial points. It entailed reflections on the 1893 Ordinance, as well as pearl-shelling

⁴⁵² It appeared there was a general agreement among Dutch officials that this was necessary. J. Bensbach, who was the Resident of Ternate at 1893, wrote his superiors that he also wanted to get a copy of the 1891 Pearl-shell and Beche-de-Mer Fishery Ordinance. See letter from the Resident of Ternate, 23-05-1893 (Afschrift) in ANRI GBBT 367.

⁴⁵³ ANRI GB MGS 3782.

⁴⁵⁴ (Administrator) WM. Macgregor, *Annual Report on British New Guinea from 1st July, 1890 to 30th June, 1891* (Brisbane: Government Printer, 1892). <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-84490144>, vii.

ordinances from elsewhere. In an explanatory memorandum written at the beginning of the process, there was an acknowledgement that the 1893 Ordinance did not regulate the fishing activity itself.⁴⁵⁵ Even the actual naming of the ordinance was subject to heated discussions. Concerning the naming, the administration thought they should rectify it because ‘mother-of-pearl and pearl-shell are the same thing’, a statement though that revealed the still inadequate state of Dutch scientific knowledge about pearl-shell when the 1893 ordinance was drafted.

In light of this lack of knowledge, the work of English biologist W. Saville-Kent was consulted in formulation of the Ordinance. The Dutch relied upon his book, ‘*The Great Barrier Reef of Australia*’, to obtain information about the pearl-shelling industry in Northern Australia.⁴⁵⁶ The sections repeatedly quoted concerned the technical elements of pearl-shelling operations in Thursday Island and how the use of luggers generated government revenue. However, it made good sense to the government to also use the latest information in the book about pearl-shell species, because Saville-Kent provided an overview of the recent science relevant to the industry.⁴⁵⁷

The book was also important in highlighting a type of permit the colonial government would utilise for the industry in the Indies. The model in Queensland was one of the examples they considered from the British Empire.⁴⁵⁸ Based on these comparative examples to guide the process, the Director of Internal Administration set out the options the Dutch could adopt. The first scheme would issue short-term permits to anyone who owned one or more vessels. The second scheme granted a long-term concession, which was exclusive and then regulated under different terms and conditions. The third option was a long-term lease.⁴⁵⁹

The Director of the Internal Administration proposed the first option. He argued that they still did not know enough about the location of the pearl-banks to do otherwise. He reluctantly endorsed this first type of permit scheme, but the Indies Council dismissed it. The first option was already in use by 1895 but as a temporary measure. The Council

⁴⁵⁵ ANRI GBBT 885.

⁴⁵⁶ ANRI GBBT 367.

⁴⁵⁷ Saville-Kent admits in the book that ‘the technical nomenclature of the mother-of-pearl shells is by no means satisfactory.’ and proceeds to speak about his ongoing research into the life cycle of the shells. See William Saville-Kent, *The Great Barrier Reef of Australia: Its Products and Potentialities* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd, 1893), 211- 213, and 214-222.

⁴⁵⁸ The colonial government also considered the state of the pearling industry in Burma (presumably the Mergui Archipelago) and Ceylon.

⁴⁵⁹ Advies van den RvNI 05-04-1895 no. XVIII in ANRI GBBT 367.

expressed dissatisfaction with it that year, because the Dutch had barely issued any permits to non-traditional enterprises. The council criticised the fact that permits were being issued at no cost, so the industry did not contribute anything to the government treasury.⁴⁶⁰ Clearly, the above suggested schemes were necessary not just for practical reasons, but also to compel the industry to contribute to the state coffers elsewhere like in the British empire.

The 1902 Pearlfishing Ordinance was issued in January of the same year, and took effect in May.⁴⁶¹ The Ordinance was called the ‘Regulations for the fishing of Pearl-shells, Mother-of-Pearls and or Trepang, within the distance of not more than three English sea-miles of the coasts of Netherlands Indies’. As the title suggests, the ordinance was issued to replace the 1893 Pearlfishing Ordinance, and this was reflected in the detailed articles it contained. The Ordinance had twelve articles, some of which echoed the one it was replacing.⁴⁶² It signified a centralised effort to manage pearl-shelling at the state level, as well as an effort to account for more regional administrations, including the existing self-governing realms, and regions which the government considered ‘special’ according to their own criterion.

However, one could not read too much into the capacity of the Ordinance to regulate pearl-shelling activities in the Indies. In spite of its comprehensive title, the Ordinance primarily focused upon the issue of permits; the terms upon which people or enterprises were eligible for it, the kinds of fishing that required a permit, and the types of vessels used to fish for shell, among other clauses.⁴⁶³ For James Clark, this Ordinance would be most important in the future because it dictated the requirements he had to fulfil to gain

⁴⁶⁰ The Council also argued that giving an unlimited permit may not be the most profitable route because it might discourage enterprises with big capital to apply for a permit that is not exclusive; a point that would be relevant for the arrival of Clark later.

⁴⁶¹ Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indie 1902 no 4.
<https://www.delpher.nl/nl/tijdschriften/view?coll=dts&identificer=MMKB07:001309001:00107>

⁴⁶² The 1893 Ordinance had five articles and all the issues addressed in that Ordinance were found in the new Ordinance, albeit with some modifications in wording. Article 1 in the 1893 Ordinance was Article 8 in the 1902 Ordinance; Article 2 was placed in Article 1.2. in the new Ordinance; Article 3 was transferred to article 9; and Article 4 to Article 10. The fifth article in the 1893 Ordinance was not an article per se in the new Ordinance, but that is because it was the final article/clause (D. *Slofbepalingen*). It is important to note the tonal difference between the final articles of these two Ordinance. Article 5 in the 1893 Ordinance stated that the Ordinance became effective the day it entered the State Gazette. This was fitting because as Mullins note, the goal of the Ordinance was to penalise Australian activities in Netherlands Indies waters by immediately giving Dutch officials the authority to punish them. (Mullins, *Octopus Crowd.*, 121.) The final clause of the 1902 Ordinance, on the other hand, went into effect four months after it was issued, presumably to deal with some technicalities and issues with the existing permits as discussed in Chapter 3.

⁴⁶³ The rest concerned supervision, transfer of permit, and dispute resolutions.

a permit. However, the Ordinance had no specific articles to govern the search for pearl-shell once a person like Clark obtained the permit.

The 1902 Pearlfishing Ordinance affected the development and expansion of James Clark's pearl-shelling enterprise into Aru waters in three ways. First, the transitional provision (D. *Overgangsbepalingen*) stated existing permits were valid for another three years, providing they fulfilled the requirements outlined in the new ordinance. This provision thus enabled the Baadilla Brothers to retain their lease until May 1905, denying James Clark the chance to bid for the rights to fish in those waters before then.⁴⁶⁴

The second way the Ordinance affected Clark's incursion into the Indies was connected to his pearl-shelling fleets. More specifically, it was linked to the activities of James' nephew, Victor J. Clark, in Aru waters.⁴⁶⁵ In July 1903, his two vessels were seized at Dobo because he and his crew were accused of fishing within the three-mile limit. Those two small vessels, the thirteen-ton *Archima* and ten-ton *Notredame*, belonged to the Netherlands India Pearling Co.⁴⁶⁶ The company was a family venture that James established and had John and Victor run in order to quietly explore opportunities for pearl-shelling in the Indies.

James Clark's quietly and secretly dispatched his relatives because he did not want to attract too much public attention.⁴⁶⁷ To that end, he sent his brother and nephew there on his behalf, with the two newly bought vessels. They filed for a permit to search for pearl-shell while moving to the Netherlands Indies. But their request was denied, and therefore their presence around Aru was unsanctioned, which led to the seizure of their two vessels. The Dutch seized these vessels because they did not have proper permit to search for pearl-shell and because Dobo was a regional port that was not open for general trade.⁴⁶⁸ Hence, the Netherlands India Pearling Co. as an enterprise could not legally search for pearl-shell in the Indies. In September 1904, James Clark dissolved the

⁴⁶⁴ Lehane, *The Pearl King*, 232.

⁴⁶⁵ James and his brother John, Victor's father, brought him into the industry around 1898. He worked on the schooner *Olive* in the Torres Strait before this event occurred. See Lehane, *The Pearl King*, 169-171.

⁴⁶⁶ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 186-189.

⁴⁶⁷ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 186.

⁴⁶⁸ This incident began the separation between James and Victor, his nephew, and culminated in James expelling Victor from the company in September 1904 because he misused company credit. See Lehane, *The Pearl King*, 223 ff. He was subject to article 9 of the new ordinance. This article required unlicensed vessels to have evidence that the shell on board were found outside the three-mile limit. Failure to produce that evidence was automatically considered a violation of the ordinance. As noted in the footnote above, this term was part of the 1893 ordinance.

partnership with his nephew because he had misused company credit.⁴⁶⁹ This spelled the end of the company. However, as an exploratory enterprise, it was a success because it enabled James Clark to see the vast potential of the Indies and the benefit of moving there later to establish the Celebes Trading Company.

The third way the Ordinance influenced Clark was particularly interesting. Article 7 of the 1903 Pearlfishing Ordinance outlined the requirements for vessels used in pearl-shelling. The article stated that vessels involved in the pearl-fishing industry had to be vessels that belonged in the Indies or the Netherlands. (D. *Thuisbehoorende schepen*).⁴⁷⁰ The article sounds uncomplicated, but the amount of paperwork the article generated suggests otherwise.

In April 1904, Victor Clark filed a request to Indies officials to use his pearling fleet to operate in Indies waters. The letter prompted a flurry of correspondence within colonial ranks, discussing the legal status and transfer of vessels registered elsewhere. Put simply, the question was whether Clark's vessels could be recognised in the Netherlands Indies, and therefore eligible for pearl-shelling.⁴⁷¹ This issue was not yet resolved when the CTC and James Clark began operating in Aru the following year. It was an issue that the Dutch would revisit several years later when CTC fleets were already operating in the Indies. However, by all accounts, this requirement had no effect on James Clark's incursion.

The General Secretary classified the correspondence regarding Article 7 as 'agendas placed aside' (D. *Terzijde Gelegde Agenda*). The decision to put the issue aside is rather unusual. Legally, this was a significant issue. Not only did it determine whether Clark could use his fleet to operate in the Indies, but also whether they could access Dobo as a centre of operations. Dobo was then still not a port open for foreign trade (D. *Algemene handel*), so barring emergencies, it was not open for Clark's vessels.⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁹ Steve Mullins, "James Clark and the Celebes Trading Co.: Making an Australian Maritime Venture in the Netherlands Indies," *Great Circle* 24, no. 2 (2002), 38-39.

⁴⁷⁰ This also includes the local vessels, which were automatically considered to belong in Netherlands Indies. Literal wording: '*Voor de in deze ordonnantie bedoelde visscherij worden geene andere vaartuigen gebezigd dan Nederlandsche schepen, schepen in Nederlandsch-Indie thuis behoorende en de Inlandsche vaartuigen aan deze laatste gelijkgesteld, tenzij de Gouverneur-Generaal in bijzondere gevallen vergunning verleent tot het bezigen van andere vaartuigen.*'

⁴⁷¹ ANRI GB TzgAg 6652. It is interesting that this article did not come up when *Archima* was seized in 1903. This vessel and *Notredame*, as Lehane noted, were both formerly registered elsewhere before it was used in the Indies. But perhaps because the fishing itself was already illegal, the registry of the boat was considered a less important issue.

⁴⁷² ANRI GB TzgAg 6652.

Here, one can infer a shift in Dutch policy towards Australian pearl-shell-ers. Previously, in such cases of uncertainty, the Dutch rejected Australian advances, both by force (police patrols) and legal gambits (the 1893 Ordinance and the schooner *Mavis* incident). In moments when such ambiguity existed, it was often used to halt Australian advances.⁴⁷³ The decision to put the issue aside allowed James Clark to bring his fleets from Thursday Island and legally establish himself in Dobo with less difficulty.

Having thus dealt with all the legal requirement necessary to operate in the Netherlands Indies, James Clark still had to wait until the lease in Aru ended. In the auction for the new lease in Amboina, he had the Baadilla Brothers as competitors. They were already established there and wanted to maintain their operation in Aru waters. But this was an auction, and as Mullins notes, the Baadilla Brothers could not outbid the CTC.⁴⁷⁴ Clark's company was bigger, had more capital and was more technologically advanced.

On October 2, 1905, the auction result was published, and the CTC had won the coveted lease to operate in the waters of Amboina by bidding f85,300.⁴⁷⁵ This victory did not spell the end for the Baadilla Brothers, because two documents were issued to amend the 1902 Pearl-fishing Ordinance which came into effect in May 1905. The amendments allowed the leaseholder to sublet their rights to other parties. The CTC took advantage of the provision and sublet their lease, allowing the Baadilla Brothers to continue their activities in waters they previously monopolised. Later, the Dutch would develop concerns over the 'clandestine' connection and operations between Clark's CTC and the Baadilla Brothers. But for the moment, the existing Ordinance enabled them to work together in the waters of Aru.

⁴⁷³ The event also displays the ambiguities in the legal system that allowed Dutch officials to use their own discretion in adjudicating serious legal matters. Indeed, internal correspondence between the Ministry of Colonies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, warned the latter to be careful and suggested a conciliatory yet cautious tone in responding to a letter from the British envoy, Sir Henry Howard. The letter from the envoy was asking for clarity on article 9, which was used to seize Victor Clark's two vessels in 1903. There was no memo attached to this article in the 1902 Ordinance to clarify its content. Hence, a memo within the bundle of correspondence states that 'as long as we have no footing, we should not admit that the issue is not in order.' The Ministry was also very careful about not saying that the letter contributed to the clarification of Article 9. See missive 27-12-1904 nr. 22 in NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, inv.nr.284.

⁴⁷⁴ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 191-193.

⁴⁷⁵ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 193. Mullins wrote that they had to pay an additional f25,000 as compensation to Aruese.

This chapter has discussed the local and regional changes in pearl-shelling at the turn of the twentieth century, focusing on two government regulations that impacted the industry. It explained how Australian pearl-shellers reacted to the 1901 *Immigration Restriction Act* by looking to Merauke as an option for establishing a new pearling settlement, but the colonial authorities refused to accommodate them. The Dutch were concerned that the *Act* would affect the Indies indentured workers abroad and thus researched the working conditions in the pearl-shelling industry domestically. Another important event for the pearl-shelling industry was the publication of the 1902 Pearlfishing Ordinance which outlined a list of requirements for pearl-shellers interested in operating in Netherlands Indies territorial waters. This Ordinance paved the way for James Clark to move to Dobo and legally operate in Aru waters.

Chapter 5 Two Pearl Kings Coalesce

The previous chapter ends with an account of how James Clark managed to obtain permission to operate in the waters of Amboina Residency. This chapter continues that story, recounting the presence of Celebes Trading Company and the Baadilla Brothers in Aru. It focuses on their early days in Aru, specifically the period between 1905 and 1908, when the CTC and the Baadilla Brothers were operating at full throttle.

In terms of scale, the CTC's early days in Aru also marked the height of their operations. The arrival of a large number of foreign fleets and workers in the Aru archipelago altered its social landscape. The offshore industry that arrived had its own rules and practices that would collide with the traditional ways of Aru. Foreigners searching for pearls were not new to the archipelago; it had a long history of cultural contact and encounters, and the Baadilla Brothers had been a recognised fixture in Aru for a while.

The arrival of the CTC added a powerful new competitor and complicated the social and pearling landscape in Aru. Like in Australia, the use of the floating station system in Aru resulted in multiple intercultural interactions. On the Australian side of the Pearl Frontier, this was demonstrated by the racial composition of its workforce, ranging from the managers to the divers, tenders and the regular crew. Clark's offshore operation in Aru fit well into this tradition and complicated it, as the CTC fleets that arrived with their fleet encountered Dutch colonial government officials, the Baadilla Brothers, the population of Dobo, and the Aruese.

This chapter focuses on the CTC and explores its operation as a web of social interactions, which I will disentangle to understand. Therefore, this chapter initially discusses the inner workings of both companies before delving into the nature of the social interactions. Hence, it begins with a discussion of the CTC and its activities before concentrating on the Baadilla Brothers. The chapter then discusses the Aruese and their economic activities in this transitional period and how the CTC's presence altered the social landscape of Aru. It concludes by discussing the nature of the interaction between the Aruese and the foreign pearl-shellers.

The Celebes Trading Company in Aru

Among scholarship discussing an Australian presence in Aru, the recent work of historian Steve Mullins is highly relevant. His recent book on the floating station system offers a

comprehensive account of the early days of the CTC exploits in Aru and James Clark's longstanding plan to expand his activities into the Backshore.⁴⁷⁶ It also places the CTC move within the wider context of Australian pearl-shelling. The book dwells upon the origin and inner workings of the CTC as a pearl-shelling business in this crucial period of global-local history. This chapter compliments Mullin's economic history by focusing on the CTC's presence in Aru through a series of multicultural encounters.



Figure 11 A pearling lugger and its crew in Aru. (National Museum of World Culture-KIT-TM-10013588.)

Mullins characterises the exit of James Clark's fleets from Thursday Island as an exodus.⁴⁷⁷ This description is apt for two reasons. It invokes the initial 1886 exodus from the Torres Strait to Western Australia when the threat of resource depletion pushed Clark and his fleet to the north-western coast of Australia. It was also apt because it conveys the scale of this pearling fleet migration.⁴⁷⁸ When the CTC began operating in Aru, Clark convinced his partners to move their six fleets with 115 luggers to its waters. The fleets, named after each floating station, were *Wanetta*, *Sketty Belle*, *Alice*, *Aladdin*, *Three Cheers* and *Ariel*. Besides them, there was James' brother, A. J. Clark, his schooner *Ruby* and its fourteen luggers. In total, the seven fleets comprised the Australian side of CTC's pearl-shelling venture in Aru.

⁴⁷⁶ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*.

⁴⁷⁷ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 190-191. Mullins provides an itemised list of the fleet that left TI: six schooners, a steamer, a ketch, a tender, around 115 luggers with around five hundred crew.

⁴⁷⁸ For a retelling of the impact of the departure on the marine industry in Thursday Island, see Steve Mullins, "From TI to Dobo: The 1905 Departure of the Torres Strait Pearl Shelling Fleets to Aru, Netherlands East Indies," *Great Circle* 19, no. 1 (1997), 30-31.

The CTC was not a single company that James Clark owned; it was rather, as Mullins describes it, a ‘complicated configuration of interconnecting partnerships’.⁴⁷⁹ The company was a consortium, and each fleet that Clark lured to the Indies was a semi-independent firm that his associates managed.⁴⁸⁰ These fleets only moved into Aru based on James Clark’s assessment. He had faith in the windfall potential of the Aru pearl-banks, and in turn, his partners trusted his judgement. This trust partially explains Clark’s success in managing his associates, as was his astute use of his financial power.⁴⁸¹



Figure 12 Pearling fleets leaving Dobo. (National Museum of World Culture-KIT-TM-10013585)

It is important to remember the consortium-like character of the CTC for two reasons. Firstly, it influenced their daily operation and, later, the circumstances of their withdrawal from Aru waters. Second, it helps to contextualise their partnership with the Baadilla Brothers. This potent combination consolidated culturally different people whose business interests and ties were loose and subject to change. Consequently, rivalries developed between the CTC fleets.⁴⁸² In their daily operation, the semi-autonomous character of each fleet gave its managers the flexibility to choose where to search for pearlshells. Theoretically, the lease gave the CTC opportunity to work across the entire waters

⁴⁷⁹ See Mullins, "James Clark and the Celebes Trading Co..", 26.

⁴⁸⁰ *Three Cheers*, for example, belonged to Torres Pearling Co., a company James co-owned with George Smith, Percy Outridge, Ned Munro and Vincent Jessup. See Lehane, *The Pearl King.*, 192.

⁴⁸¹ Mullins, "James Clark and the Celebes Trading Co..", 29. It is necessary to note this was not his first experience managing this kind of arrangement, as he had organised a similar partnership combination in Australia before.

⁴⁸² Mullins, *Octopus Crowd.*, 212-213.

of Amboina Residency, but the managers of the CTC fleets did not use that broad clearance in this period. Instead, they concentrated primarily on the pearl-banks around Aru.⁴⁸³

When the Dutch zoologist Pieter Nicolaas van Kampen visited the archipelago in February 1907, he had a chance to witness the CTC fleets working along Aru's pearl-banks.⁴⁸⁴ In their actual pearl-shelling operation, the combined fleets operated throughout the pearl-banks in Aru. Hocking's *Wanetta* and Baadilla's *Reliance* were working around Jedan. Sailing south around Penambulai Island, van Kampen met Baadilla's *Fanny* fleet. Beyond Penambulai were the pearl-banks of the Barakai group. He encountered there the *Sketty Belle* and *Ariel* around Jeudin Island. Van Kampen saw the rest of the fleet (*Aladdin*, *Alice*, *Three Cheers* and *Ruby*) working around Karang Island on the Southeast side of Aru. The fleets, it appears, were free to search for pearls and shells where they saw fit, but they were all operating at places where the Aruese had traditionally searched for pearl-shell.⁴⁸⁵ This made sense, as the pearl-banks around these two islands are deeper than 5 fathoms, and the CTC was therefore allowed to operate there. Before this, Aru naked-divers could not fully exploit those pearl-banks because of their physical limitations. The CTC employed their diving suits to collect pearl-shell from depths that Aruese could not reach before. In the language of fishing history, they were pushing the undee frontier.

The CTC's fleet mobility allowed them to rapidly move from one pearl-bank to another if the circumstances proved unfavourable. Their business association with the Baadilla Brothers also allowed them to work in the waters of the neighbouring Ternate residency so they could freely venture there from time to time.⁴⁸⁶ In February 1907, however, when van Kampen visited, all the fleets were concentrated around Aru. We do not know for sure that their activities were only confined to these waters this season. The Dutch still had limited resources and could not always properly monitor their movements.⁴⁸⁷ Unless

⁴⁸³ The reason perhaps was because the ordinance still required them to have a permit from traditional rights owners before they could operate elsewhere outside of Aru.

⁴⁸⁴ P. N. van Kampen, 'Verslag van een reis naar de Aroe eilanden tot onderzoek der paarlvisscherij (Jan.-Maart 1907.)' in ANRI GB MGS 4471.

⁴⁸⁵ They could do this because a stipulation in the 1905 Pearl-shelling Ordinance reserved and separated the territorial waters based on depth. The shallow waters, defined as not deeper than 5 fathoms (9 metres) during low tide, were reserved for traditional pearl-fishing. See Ordinance no. 263 of 1905 Verpachtingsreglement voor de parelvisscherij in *Staatsblad van het Nederlandsch-Indie over het jaar 1905*, (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1906). <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB07:001311001:00007>.

⁴⁸⁶ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 194.

⁴⁸⁷ In 1906, the Dutch commissioned the *Amboina*, as a designated vessel to patrol the waters of the Amboina and Ternate Residencies, which included Aru. While this meant that there were now

the fleets were anchored in Dobo during the layover season, most of their sailing activities and pearling operations evaded Dutch eyes. The impacts of the largely undetected activities will be clear when I discuss the encounters between the fleets and the Aruese.

The character of the CTC as a consortium is important to help situate Clark's association with the Baadilla Brothers. This business combination or alliance was an entity wherein every part had different degrees of association with each other. The association with the Baadilla Brothers could be framed as an outlier because it was looser than the ties the CTC fleets had with each other. Clearly, the degree of association and autonomy that these fleets maintained was important for their success. It was apparent that when searching for pearl-shell, all the fleets acted independently from each other. The CTC maintained their own office and warehouse in Dobo but, it is not clear whether they shared their dorm complex.⁴⁸⁸ Their distribution of the pearl-shell also remained a separate activity; the CTC sent half of their catch to Brisbane, while the Baadilla Brothers continued to send their catch to Makassar through Dobo.⁴⁸⁹ The Baadilla Brothers company was an independent entity whose inner workings deserve its own discussion.

The Baadilla Brothers and Its Shadow

The Baadilla Brothers (*D. Gebroeders Baadilla*) was a Banda Neira-based company run by the sons of Sech Abdullah bin Awat Baadilla.⁴⁹⁰ The oldest son was the most prominent

more reports from Aru, CTC activities were still not under constant supervision. See Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Kolonien: Openbaar Verbaal, nummer toegang 2.10.36.04, inventarisnummer 454. (henceforth NL-HaNA, Kolonien/Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, inv.nr. 454.).

⁴⁸⁸ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*; A.G.H. van Sluys, "Dobo-ervaringen," *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 5, no. 1 (1916), <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:2256597>., 204-205. Of course, it is also possible that, like in Broome, the divers lived in boarding houses in the Japanese quarter in Dobo.

⁴⁸⁹ P. N. van Kampen, "De paarl- en parelmoervisscherij langs de kusten der Aroe eilanden," *Mededeelingen van het Visscherijstation te Batavia* 2 (1908)., 25.

⁴⁹⁰ Etmans, *De Bevolking van Banda*, 191. Etmans wrote his book based on the population registry of Banda, and it provides useful glimpse into the connected lives of people living in Banda Neira. However, the book contains some errors, particularly its note on the Baadilla family. Two anecdotes are important evidence of this problem. The first one concerns the mother of Sech Said, who the book notes as being an Arabic wife, Fatima. This conflicts with the Baadilla family story that his first wife was a Chinese woman from the family Tay. See D. Alwi and B.S. (ed.) Harvey, *Friends and Exiles: A Memoir of the Nutmeg Isles and the Indonesian Nationalist Movement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2008)., 11. In his other book, Alwi said that she was from the Tay family, but this is perhaps just a matter of spelling. See Alwi, *Sejarah Maluku*., 190. There is a basis for this family belief; their mother's Chinese origin explains their nicknames. Evie Baadilla and Abdul Rahim fully concur with Des Alwi's retelling. The second error Etmans made is to confuse Sech Said with his brother Sech Abdul Rahim. At its core, the weakness

among the three; Sech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla. Also known as Tjong within the family, he was the one recognised as the Pearl King of the Netherlands Indies because he ran the pearl-shelling part of the company.⁴⁹¹ However, the overall operation of the Baadilla Brothers cannot be separated from the activities of his brothers; equally important were the second son, Abdul Rahim, known in the family as Nana and the third son, Sech Salim (Tjotjo).

In his retelling of the history of the family company, Des Alwi, grandson of Sech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla, made clear that Sech Salim was also involved in the family pearl-shelling enterprise.⁴⁹² Sech Said ran the company and Sech Salim oversaw the fleets. However, it appears Abdul Rahim played a bigger role in the company than just having 'strategic marriages,' like Des Alwi claims.⁴⁹³ The Baadilla Brothers was not just a pearl-shelling enterprise. The company had its origin in a shipping business in Tuban before expanding to pearl-shelling. According to family stories, Abdul Rahim was always more involved in the agricultural side of the family enterprise.⁴⁹⁴

Abdul Rahim's activities reveal how the Baadilla Brothers' activity in Aru fit into the broader family business. Victor Clark's presence in Aru also inspired him to try other things besides pearling. In September 1906, he and Abdul Rahim bin Abdullah Baadilla submitted separate requests to the Resident of Amboina.⁴⁹⁵ They wanted to establish coconut cultivation on islands not far from the traditional pearling grounds in Aru. Abdul Rahim wanted to cultivate coconuts on Jedan Island. In his request, Abdul Rahim mentioned that he already planted some coconut trees on the island.⁴⁹⁶ Victor Clark, on

of the book was that it only relies upon what was written in official records and does not take account of oral recollections of more informal conjugal arrangements.

⁴⁹¹ Alwi and Harvey, *Friends and Exiles*, 11-13. Khalijah, Des Alwi's mother, was one of the fourteen children of Sech Said. This is an important caveat in reading Alwi's book; most of his retelling is focused on Khalijah's generation rather than Sech Said's generation.

⁴⁹² Alwi and Harvey, *Friends and Exiles*, 11. According to Alwi, his grandfather had thirty schooners and ninety-nine luggers, so far, I have found no records corroborating this number.

⁴⁹³ According to a family document, he had at least eight wives. Not all his marriages were listed in registries nor official. When I visited Ambon in 2019, the family was still working on a family genealogy. The project began in 2007 and is still not done.

⁴⁹⁴ The company owned the *perk* 'Keli en Norwegen' in Banda from as early as 1892, which alludes to the other ventures within the company. See *Regerings-almanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1892). <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB26:000981001:00905>. Bijlagen: 483*. This makes the Baadilla Brothers unusual among the Arabic community in the region, who were rarely involved in plantation agriculture. See Clarence-Smith, "The Economic Role of the Arab Community in Maluku, 1816 to 1940.", 40.

⁴⁹⁵ Bt. 27-10-1906 no. 31.

⁴⁹⁶ This statement is consistent with current local knowledge in parts of Eastern Aru. When I was in Aru in 2019, people credited this period as the time coconuts were planted in different parts of the archipelago.

the other hand, wanted to cultivate coconuts on the islands of Jei and Jeudin in the southeast area of Aru.⁴⁹⁷ It is particularly interesting to note that Abdul Rahim resided in Dobo enough to consider making this venture. Dutch records indicate that in 1906 he lived in Dobo, where the Baadilla Brothers had a dorm.⁴⁹⁸

Presumably, Sech Salim also lived in Dobo to manage the family pearling fleets.⁴⁹⁹ Their pearl-shelling activity had expanded from when they first began operating in Aru sometime after 1895. According to Sech Said, they began the business with six luggers, employing around fifty to sixty people.⁵⁰⁰ By 1901, they had thirty luggers, which grew to forty luggers the following year. By 1905, the Baadilla Brothers had two fleets, *Fanny* and *Reliance*, with thirty-five luggers. They were still running a smaller operation when compared with the fleet size of James Clark and his associates. But this comparison is somewhat misleading because van Kampen estimated in 1907 that the company had about three hundred people in its employment.⁵⁰¹

The presence of an extra lugger which van Kampen mentioned reveals a bit more about the internal organisation and working family connections of the Baadilla Brothers. During his visit, van Kampen noticed a 'Manila man' who worked with a single lugger alongside the CTC and the Baadilla Brothers.⁵⁰² It is unclear to whom he was actually referring because he mentioned no names. However, an unfortunate incident in 1906 provides information about this person and his ties to the Baadilla Brothers.

In January 1906, a schooner based in Thursday Island, *Fanny*, encountered an off-course lugger around the Bowen Strait. The lugger at that point had five crew, all of them Malay, according to their report. They claimed to have drifted away on their voyage to East Seram from Banda. The *Fanny* was on its way to Port Darwin and encouraged the lugger to follow it to the Customs Station at Bowen Strait. But the *Fanny* lost contact with the wayward lugger due to poor weather.⁵⁰³ The mysterious lugger was not found again until March

⁴⁹⁷ Their requests were rejected because it would harm local interest.

⁴⁹⁸ Bt. 27-10-1906 no. 31. Personal family document copied from ANRI, bundle number unknown. I would like to thank Ibu Evie Baadilla and Bapak Abdulrahim in Ambon for their kindness in sharing this document with me. When van Kampen visited Dobo in February 1907, one of the Baadilla Brothers accompanied him to the backshore. He did not mention names but described the man as a manager of the pearl-fishing activities there. Based on Alwi's narrative this would be Sech Salim.

⁴⁹⁹ Unfortunately, van Kampen gave no information who was running the two Baadilla fleets when Sech Salim was in Dobo.

⁵⁰⁰ Jasper, "Het Een en Ander.", 36.

⁵⁰¹ van Kampen, 'Verslag van een reis...' in ANRI GB MGS 4471.

⁵⁰² van Kampen, "De paarl- en parelmoervisscherij langs de kusten der Aroe eilanden.", 5.

⁵⁰³ Letter from the Vice-Consulate of the Netherlands in Palmerston-Port Darwin, 20-01-1906 in ANRI GB MGS 4413.

1906 around Thursday Island, and by then, it was obvious that the vessel had been through a very rough time.

Apart from its broken mast, a number of the crew were dead. In summarising the tragic events that the crew experienced, Bosschart, the Dutch Consul General in Melbourne wrote, '...remaining two admitted witnessing diver and tender murdered by the three others who were killed by blacks.'⁵⁰⁴ When the crew left Banda, there were seven crewmembers onboard. There was evidence of sabotage on board; the diving air pipe was cut.⁵⁰⁵ The question that lingered in the heads of Dutch and Australian officials was whether the two survivors were directly involved in the tragedy.

It was during the process to resolve the murders onboard the *Primo*, the ill-fated lugger, that its ownership was revealed.⁵⁰⁶ The employer of the *Primo* crewmembers was Balentijn Seczon, a Filipino man who lived in Banda. But as the inquiry probed deeper, the name Baadilla was repeatedly mentioned because of Seczon's connection to the Baadilla Brothers. The thirteen-ton lugger belonged to the company which had leased it to him from September 1902 for a three-year period.⁵⁰⁷ The terms of their lease entitled the company to a quarter of his catch and allowed Seczon to work the waters in Aru.

Records reveal that this business connection predated their familial connection, but Seczon would eventually be related to Sech Salim bin Abdullah Baadilla through a web of marriages. According to public records, he was born in 1867 in Calibo, the Philippines, and moved to Banda Neira where he worked as a pearl-fisher.⁵⁰⁸ On June 20, 1901 he married Uslah Meintje Lodewika Versteegh. Her sister was Wilhelmina Johanna Carolina Versteegh, who in 1928, married Sech Abdullah, son of Sech Salim.⁵⁰⁹ Unfortunately, public records do not reveal anything about the history of Seczon's personal relationship with the Baadilla family before this time, particularly the

⁵⁰⁴ Afschrift: Telegram 29-03-1906 no. 290 in ANRI GB MGS 4413

⁵⁰⁵ This is in direct contrast to the original statement the crew gave to the schooner *Fanny* where they claimed to have dropped the one crew member at an unknown island because he did not want to continue the voyage.

⁵⁰⁶ The suspects were interrogated twice, once in Thursday Island and once in Dobo when they arrived. There were numerous contradictions in the statement the crew gave the Australians. Until the Australian authorities read the lugger's letters, correspondence refer to it as the *Kurteena*, its name according to the crew. In addition, they claimed that the weather shifted their voyage to some distant pearling-grounds. Upon searching the vessel, the Australians found pearl-shell which makes the initial statement problematic. For the whole dossier of this case, see ANRI GB MGS 4413.

⁵⁰⁷ MGS 17-09-1906 no. 2747 in ANRI GB MGS 4413.

⁵⁰⁸ Etmans, *De Bevolking van Banda.*, 298. Documents in the dossier refer to him as either Valentine or Valentijn.

⁵⁰⁹ Etmans, *De Bevolking van Banda.*, 226-227.

circumstances leading to his arrival in Neira or his association with the family. As such, we cannot know whether he was involved in pearl-shelling before he leased the *Primo* from the Baadilla Brothers, and we do not know when this arrangement ended. However, it appears that the 1902 agreement was extended, and therefore, he continued pearl-shelling in Aru.⁵¹⁰

Balentijn Seczon's presence revealed two additional things about the Baadilla Brothers pearling enterprise. The first is rather obvious, the interconnectedness between kinship, family ties, and their business. This remained a fundamental characteristic for a long time; Des Alwi's father captained one of the Baadilla Brothers' luggers around the 1920s.⁵¹¹ The second is that the company and its business activity contributed to changing the social landscape of Banda Neira. The previous chapter mentioned that the Baadilla family's arrival signified the changes taking place in Banda and the shift occurring in its economy. But this shift also changed the social landscape, as the islands also drew in ethnically different people seeking employment in new enterprises as the Dutch left.⁵¹² While a broader case study is still lacking, the Baadilla Brothers demonstrate how such enterprises in Aru also changed the social structure elsewhere in the Moluccas. In the case of pearl-fishing, its activities drew in 'Manila' men as well as 'Moro' divers from the Sulu archipelago.⁵¹³

Not everybody was happy about the demographic changes this enterprise caused in Banda. G.C.A.A. van den Wijngaard, a local member of the Church Council, wrote disapprovingly about the Filipinos' conduct. In 1914, he wrote that the small Catholic community in Banda was mostly comprised of their children. Their mothers were Malay women who were 'seduced with the promise of marriage', van den Wijngaard noted with disapproval.⁵¹⁴ These Manilamen, as he called them, were all involved in pearl-fishing in Dobo and returned irregularly to Banda. However, they made sure their children were

⁵¹⁰ It is not clear whether he had to negotiate subletting the lease from the CTC separately or whether he was included as part of the Baadilla Brothers company.

⁵¹¹ Alwi and Harvey, *Friends and Exiles.*, 15-16.

⁵¹² Abdul Rahim & Evie Baadilla, January 30, 2019. Baadilla recruited and employed a lot of people from various places, but people from Buton specifically were extensively employed in their agricultural enterprises.

⁵¹³ Of course, as noted in the previous chapter, there were pearl-fishing enterprises in Ternate Residency around 1900s which also employed Filipino men.

⁵¹⁴ 'Document 181: Predikant Banda G.C.A.A. van den Wijngaard namens kerkenraad Banda aan bestuur over de Protestantse Kerk in Nederlands-Indie te Batavia, Banda Neira 14 maart 1914' in Dr. M van Selm, *De Protestantse Kerk op de Banda Eilanden 1795-1923: Een Bronnenpublicatie* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2004)., 354.

raised as Catholics. Van den Wijngaard's complaint reveals that until 1914, there were still many Filipinos involved in the pearl-fishing enterprise in Aru.

Tracking changes over time in the racial composition of the Baadilla Brothers workforce is difficult without surviving ledgers, even though we know that it happened. In a 1906 interview, Sech Said stated that when he began pearl-shelling, sometime after 1895, his workers were exclusively Japanese and Filipinos.⁵¹⁵ He had begun his venture with just six luggers, employing fifty to sixty workers. By 1902, the company had forty luggers and at that point, the Baadilla Brothers only employed twenty Japanese and Filipino workers. The rest of Sech Said's workforce were from the Netherlands Indies, including the divers.⁵¹⁶

In short, the racial composition of the *Primo* did not mirror the emergent character of the Baadilla Brothers' workforce. Seczon signed up the crewmembers on his own in Banda, and the *Primo* had five Malay crew, but the diver and tender, --who were murdered before the vessel was spotted in the Bowen Strait in January 1906—were both Filipinos.⁵¹⁷ This ethnic composition resembled the crew makeup of the CTC fleets which, like Seczon, also had problems with intra-ethnic crew tensions.

In November 1907, a Kei crewmember attacked and badly injured Kosahera, a Japanese diver on the *Mimcie*, a lugger from the *Sketty Belle* fleet. The remaining Japanese divers then ceased working for fear that the crew would sabotage the air pipe to kill them. Consequently, *Sketty Belle* had to remain in Karang Island and stop operating in open waters for a while.⁵¹⁸ This was not an isolated incident; during this particular season, the Controleur received repeated reports of fights between crew members of different backgrounds. The tension was especially high between the Kei and Buton workers over the death of a Buton crew, Lasenga.⁵¹⁹ To avoid further bloodshed, the Controleur confiscated all kinds of sharp weapons from the crew. These incidents do not mean that

⁵¹⁵ Jasper, "Het Een en Ander.", 36.

⁵¹⁶ These divers apparently had their hips branded so everyone would know that they were Baadilla's workers. Baadilla, interview.

⁵¹⁷ According to records, the name of the diver was Plesamo Agunja, and the tender was M. De La Cruz. They were most likely killed in the waters around Aru before the lugger drifted. During the investigation, the surviving crew testified that they were recruited in Banda to work in Aru around September 1905. It appears Seczon was independent in both the recruitment of workers and his operation in Aru. See MGS 17-09-1906 no. 2747 in ANRI GB MGS 4413.

⁵¹⁸ 'Tournée rapport van den Controleur der Aroe-eilanden loopende van 16 October tot 10 November 1907' in NL-HaNA, Kolonien/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01, inv.nr. 378., 3-5.

⁵¹⁹ See 'Verslag van den politieken- en gezondheidstoestand in de residentie Amboina van 10 Januari tot en met 6 Februari 1908' in 'NL-HaNA, Kolonien/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01, inv.nr. 379., 4.

pearl-shelling in Aru was always full of conflict and bloodshed, but rather that the daily operations were not as smooth as the catch reports would have us believe. As I explain below, this violent chaos and ethnic tension spilt over into Dobo when the entire workforce was there off season.



Figure 13 CTC workers having a meal on board a pearly lugger. (National Museum of World Culture-KIT-TM-10013599)

The CTC and The Baadilla Brothers: An Uneasy Partnership

The *Primo* mutiny highlighted the advantages in associating with Clark and the CTC for the Baadilla Brothers and, by extension, Seczon. Clark's steamer *Pretoria* brought the drifting lugger and the two suspects-cum-survivors back to Dobo in April 1906.⁵²⁰ The association with Clark eased the suspects' repatriation process and closed discussions of the possible costs incurred to the Dutch government and the fact that James Clark was the Dutch Consul in Brisbane surely helped in this case.⁵²¹ The *Primo* incident was not the first time this association with Clark proved advantageous for the Baadilla Brothers. Just before they began operating in Aru in 1905, the CTC sold their old schooner *Fanny*

⁵²⁰ MGS 17-09-1906 no. 2747 in ANRI GB MGS 4413.

⁵²¹ Lehane, *The Pearl King.*, 227. Clark was appointed Dutch consul in Brisbane in March 1905.

to the Baadilla Brothers and helped the company modernise their fleet.⁵²² In addition, Clark also introduced Sech Said to alternative networks to sell his pearls.

For the CTC, working with the Baadilla Brothers enabled them to take full advantage of the family's local-regional networks. Sech Said was a highly regarded person among most Dutch officials. He had a well-established network of worker recruitment.⁵²³ Most importantly for the CTC was the longstanding relationship established between the Baadilla Brothers and the Aruese communities who maintained rights over the traditional pearl-banks of Aru. The Baadilla Brothers, having fished around Aru from the 1890s, had established a good rapport with the Aruese.

The nature of the relationship between the CTC and the Baadilla Brothers is important to discuss here. The business relationship appeared cordial and mutually beneficial, and from a practical point of view it made good sense for them to join forces. However, the CTC was awarded the lease because of their financial and technological superiority. This unequal advantage set the tone of their association. As Mullins notes, the Baadilla Brothers had no chance of outbidding Clark in the auction for the pearl-fishing lease in 1905.⁵²⁴ Consequently, it was only logical for the Baadilla Brothers to cooperate with the CTC because it was the best way for the company to continue their operation.

As consequence, Sech Said expressed some unease when speaking publicly about this partnership. In a 1904 interview, he expressed mixed feelings, stating that the Australian fleet was trying to deplete the pearl-banks too rapidly.⁵²⁵ To justify his association with the CTC, he stated that this alliance of sorts was the only way he could continue searching for pearl-shell. In 1906, Sech Said announced that he was considering releasing his divers to the Australian pearl-shellers and focus his energies primarily on his agricultural

⁵²² Mullins, *Octopus Crowd.*, 194-195. Mullins stated that the Baadilla Brothers bought the old *Sketty Belle* and rechristened it as *Armenia*. However, van Kampen did not encounter this schooner during his visit in February 1907. He saw the Baadilla fleet using the old *Reliance*, so this purchase perhaps happened after that.

⁵²³ It is notable that *Sketty Belle* had Kei and Buton men in their employ. In January 1905, a Dutch priest on his way from Ambon to Kei wrote that the vessel he was on also had about 130 men on their way to work in pearl-shelling in Aru. See J v.d. Kooij, "Brief van den Eerw. Pater Van der Kooij, uit Rijswijk," *Annalen van Onze Lieve Vrouw van het Heilig Hart*, June 1, 1905, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMENLK03:007078011:00007>., 167. It is possible that because of their association with Baadilla, Australians were able to quickly tap into their labour network to fill vacancies when they moved to Aru.

⁵²⁴ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd.*, 193. The CTC's success in securing the lease was based on their merit, and from a liberal economy perspective, it was a rational choice. On the other hand, Baadilla and his supporters lamented the exploitation of Netherlands Indies resources by foreigners.

⁵²⁵ Jasper, "Het Een en Ander." Of course, there is no way of knowing whether Baadilla really felt this way or whether he was compelled to say this to appease his more patriotic countrymen.

enterprises, thereby abandoning his pearl-shelling enterprise altogether.⁵²⁶ Sech Said was not alone in his public expression of regret that foreigners now ran pearl-shelling in Aru. Some articles written in widely read newspapers in the Indies expressed similar sentiments.⁵²⁷

Des Alwi provides an interesting example of how this uneasy relationship was remembered and reframed in family history. His account acknowledges that James Clark and the CTC had a partnership with the Baadilla Brothers as well as the rivalry/tension that existed within this partnership.⁵²⁸ But in Alwi's retelling, James Clark left the waters of Aru in 1913 after making a fortune from his cooperation with the Baadilla Brothers. Abdul Rahim, his relative, shared the same sentiment; that part of Clark's wealth in Australia came from the Baadilla family.⁵²⁹

Based on James Clark's correspondence, the CTC also held an ambivalent view of their partnership with the Baadilla Brothers. In his correspondence, Clark expressed gratitude for the assistance the Baadilla Brothers offered them.⁵³⁰ But he was also suspicious of Sech Said and where he stood on the possible extension of the lease. In chapter 6 I discuss how this suspicion and increasing colonial official distrust of the CTC affected the

⁵²⁶ "Uit Ternate," *De locomotief (1863-1956)* (Samarang), March 1 1906, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001632151:mpeg21:a00024>.

⁵²⁷ An article in *Java-Bode* on this matter was reprinted in two Dutch newspapers, the title itself an effective summation of the widespread feelings: 'an opportunity missed by Dutchmen'. It lamented the loss of such natural wealth to the 'more energetic foreigners.' See "Den Hollandschen neus voorbij," *Nieuwe Tilburgsche Courant (1879-1944)* (Tilburg), October 16 1907, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010158776:mpeg21:a00068>. This sentiment was echoed again a decade later when CTC's lease was about to end. "De Parelvisserij," *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indie (1900-1950)* (Batavia), July 11 1917, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010169739:mpeg21:a00002>.

⁵²⁸ Alwi, *Sejarah Maluku*, 199. He recounts this with some bitterness that while James Clark's family are still wealthy in Brisbane, Sech Said passed away having watched the business he built crumble into ruin. There is an important caveat here; this is completely true if one believes that pearl-fishing was the only source of family income. However, records from other branches of the family reveal that they had more diverse sources of income. But none of them were as glamorous or lucrative as pearl-fishing. As Hanna noted, it was not as if the family was impoverished in Alwi's generation, but the decline of the family fortune affected their educational opportunities. Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands*, 125.

⁵²⁹ Abdul Rahim and Evie Baadilla, interview. It is at the point of how the family fortune reversed that Abdul Rahim and Evie differ from Des Alwi. As mentioned above, Baadillas had diverse plantations in various parts of the Moluccas, including Seram and Ternate and were granted land use rights for them. However, in the sixties when the local government began organising the ownership of land in Maluku and Ambon specifically, they refused to recognise these rights and compensate the Baadilla. Instead, land was distributed among officials' families and peers. The post-colonial Indonesian government played a role in the decline of family fortune because the family was considered foreign and not Indonesian citizens.

⁵³⁰ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 208-210. See also Mullins, "James Clark and the Celebes Trading Co.," 42-43.

extension of the lease. For now, it is important to briefly speak about how the CTC altered the social and economic circumstances of Dobo and Aru.

Dobo, Still of Its Own

It was inevitable that the arrival of the CTC in Aru would alter its social landscape; the sheer scale of their workforce determined it. In 1904, Aru had approximately one thousand foreign residents, most of them based in Dobo.⁵³¹ The arrival of an additional 1,000 outsiders doubled the town's population. The influx of CTC workers upset the already fragile social balance in the town and changed the ethnic composition of the community. In Chapter 2, I discuss the character of Dobo as a lively place whose pace of life varied depending on the season. Due to the arrival of the CTC and the presence of the Baadilla Brothers, this period saw an intensification of that seasonal character. Their operations fit both into the traditional pattern of movement in Aru and made Dobo a town similar in many respects to other pearling settlements in Australia.

The CTC followed the longstanding pattern of the pearl-shelling trade in Aru; namely, they were based in Dobo while mostly operating in the Backshore. The CTC, like the Baadilla Brothers, located its warehouse complex in Dobo and not in the middle of the Aru communities. Most of the CTC's activities took place over water, so the social impact



Figure 14 Dobo, 1900. (National Museum of World Culture-KIT-TM-10017394.)

⁵³¹ Henri Zondervan, *Nederland buiten Europa: Aardrijkskundige Schets der Bezittingen en Kolonien*. (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1904). <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMUBL07:000001830>, 73-74.

of their presence in Dobo was often limited to the off-season months, when they spent all their time in town. There was no consequent wave of migration of Aruese to Dobo, therefore the old separation between Dobo and the rest of Aru remained intact.

The arrival of the CTC made Dobo more ethnically heterogeneous and similar to other pearling towns along the pearl frontier, like Thursday Island, Darwin, and Broome.⁵³² Broome offers a particularly interesting case to view Dobo's development in this period. Sister Mary Albertus Bain *Full Fathom Five* describes the pioneering daily life of this north-western Australia town at the heights of the pearl-shelling boom.⁵³³ Broome was a lively multicultural town, especially during the off-pearling season. When the crew were onshore, the town was even livelier, as they spent their free time and income there indulging in the available social amenities and vices. In Broome, enterprising people supplied tobacco, alcohol and drugs in numerous stores, brothels, and gambling dens. This also occurred in Dobo. But one particular development in this period needs elaboration: the growing presence of a Japanese community in this period.

The arrival of Japanese divers in Dobo was a direct consequence of industrial pearl-shelling in Aru, since both the Baadilla Brothers and the CTC employed Japanese divers. While the Baadilla Brothers slowly replaced their Japanese workforce, the arrival of the CTC saw more Japanese divers arriving in Dobo. By 1906, the Japanese population in Dobo were made up of not just divers, but also of *karayuki-san* and storeowners.⁵³⁴ The presence of these two groups and the pearl-divers in Aru predated the developing interest of the Japanese government's plans for expansion into island Southeast Asia.⁵³⁵

The *karayuki-san* were, according to Shimizu Hiroshi, specifically attracted to Dobo because of the divers.⁵³⁶ They were pioneers who arrived in Dobo before the storeowners. These women became deeply enmeshed in the town's social landscape mostly as sex workers and concubines. Van Sluys wrote that Dobo had 120 registered sex workers in 1906, but he did not specify how many of them were *karayuki-san*.⁵³⁷ Their tolerated activity was the reason he felt that Dobo was not a place for a woman who cherished their

⁵³² For a brief explanation of these towns and their multicultural social lives, see Reynolds, *North of Capricorn.*, 85-142.

⁵³³ For a detailed description of the Asian quarters of Broome in the early 1900s, see Bain, *Full Fathom Five.*, 238-248.

⁵³⁴ van Sluys, "Dobo-ervaringen.", 204-205.

⁵³⁵ Post, *Japanese Bedrijvigheid in Indonesie.*, 56.

⁵³⁶ Shimizu, "Rise and Fall of the Karayuki-san.", 31.

⁵³⁷ van Sluys, "Dobo-ervaringen.", 303.

good name. Three of the karayuki-san became concubines of the white men in the CTC management, unfortunately Shimizu did not mention any specific name.⁵³⁸

Not all karayuki-san were permanent Dobo residents. The number of karayuki-san in Dobo increased during off-season, when approximately one hundred women would move temporarily to the town.⁵³⁹ Ms Weaver, an Australian woman, was onboard the KPM steamer *Linschoten* with around 70 'geishas' on their way to Java from Dobo.⁵⁴⁰ She accidentally encountered them in August 1911, right at the moment pearl-shelling season commenced again in Aru. More broadly, the seasonal movement of karayuki-san in and out of Dobo fit into the social pattern of the pearling settlement in Australia too. Like Shimizu, David Sissons believes the pearling industry was responsible for the large-scale karayuki-san movement into Australia.⁵⁴¹

Besides the karayuki-san, it is also important to broadly note the character of the Japanese community in Aru. Unlike other parts of the Indies, the Japanese population of Aru did not possess a large amount of capital. The Japanese in Aru were store-owners and small-scale traders, and this situation would not change for quite a while.⁵⁴² But, the community was tight-knit, and their activities centred on their own quarter not far from the harbour. They had their own club in Dobo, around which they converged for business and social occasions.⁵⁴³

The Japanese occupied a specific place in the racial hierarchy of the Netherlands Indies at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1899, the government issued a law recognising the equal status between the Dutch and the Japanese.⁵⁴⁴ However, the Dutch were still

⁵³⁸ Sachiko Sone, "The Karayuki-san of Asia, 1868-1938: the role of prostitutes overseas in Japanese economic and social development" (MA Thesis, Murdoch University, 1990). Sone has argued that the karayuki-san's remittances made an important contribution to Japan's pre-war economy. However, as Japan's international prestige grew after WWI, the Japanese government began calling them home. On the vital role of karayuki-san in sustaining Japan's pre-war economy and society, see James F. Warren, *Ah ku and Karayuki-san: Prostitution in Singapore, 1870-1940* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1993), 181-224.

⁵³⁹ Hiroshi Shimizu, "The Japanese Fisheries Based in Singapore, 1892-1945," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 28, no. 2 (1997), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340001448X>, 331-332.

⁵⁴⁰ "Miss Weaver's Letter," *Armidale Chronicle (NSW: 1894 - 1929)* (NSW), 09 September 1911, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article188101476>.

⁵⁴¹ David Sissons, 'Karayuki-san: Japanese Prostitutes in Australia, 1887-1916 (I& II)' in Stockwin and Tamura, *Bridging Australia and Japan: The Writings of David Sissons*, 328-329.

⁵⁴² Post, *Japanese Bedrijvigheid in Indonesie.*, 21. Before 1913, exports from Japan were primarily matches and pit coal. Other than that, they also sold all kinds of household items and manufactured products such as toys, earthenware, medicines, and glassware.

⁵⁴³ Post, *Japanese Bedrijvigheid in Indonesie.*, 232.

⁵⁴⁴ The law was controversial and caused dissatisfaction among the Chinese in the Indies. See Cees Fasseur, "Cornerstone and Stumbling Block: Racial Classification and the Late Colonial State in

concerned about the Japanese presence as they were a recently arrived foreign community with their own written language. *Controleur* A.G.H. van Sluys wrote that the Japanese were considered the most dangerous group among these newcomers because they possessed a singular cultural solidarity and were 'closed off'.⁵⁴⁵ He was not alone in forming this view. The steady growth of the Japanese enclave and community in Dobo proved so alarming that a 1907 article warned, 'Aru may not become Hawaii!'⁵⁴⁶

The Japanese were not the only large-scale ethnic group to arrive with the CTC, but they were the ones that the Dutch were particularly concerned about. In 1906, there were also between two to three hundred Filipinos in Dobo.⁵⁴⁷ Most of them were under the employ of the CTC and the Baadilla Brothers, and their marked presence also contributed to the towns' changing landscape. But their presence as a community was not considered a possible threat to social order, nor did their presence compel the Dutch to send a translator to Dobo.⁵⁴⁸

The diverse ethnic origin of the CTC workers was also a problem for pragmatic administrative reasons. In 1904, the Dutch colonial government decided to place a *Controleur* in Dobo, in order to expand their authority into the interior.⁵⁴⁹ The envisaged expansion entailed a more rigorous enforcement of a poll tax, which the *Controleur* had

Indonesia," in *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands Indies, 1880-1942*, ed. Robert Cribb (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994), 37-38.

⁵⁴⁵ van Sluys, "Dobo-ervaringen.", 305.

⁵⁴⁶ "Makassaarsche Brieven. II," *De locomotief (1863-1956)* (Samarang) 1907, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001643134:mpeg21:a00010>. On the other side of the pearl frontier, the Japanese were not particularly welcomed either. In Australian pearl-shelling towns various administrative officers were also suspicious of their activities. These suspicions took different forms and worked in tandem with the White Australia Policy. Even before Federation, their involvement in pearl-shelling was already under scrutiny for fear that they would dominate the industry through the practice of 'dummying'. Dummying was a practice wherein an enterprising Japanese would lease (in secret) a lugger from a white man. It was a way for the Japanese to circumvent the prohibition of vessel ownership by foreigners. Bain, *Full Fathom Five.*, 118-134. For Thursday Island, see also Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait.*, 105-107, 129-133.

⁵⁴⁷ "De Nederlandsche Missie in Nieuw-Guinea," *De Katholieke Missien*, 202-204, 1906, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKDC04:001151001:00003>.

⁵⁴⁸ In 1910, the Dutch sent H. R. Sinia, an official Japanese interpreter to Dobo. He was sent there specifically to explain the 'different regulations' to the Japanese. "Mutaties," *De Preanger-bode* (Bandoeng), December 29 1910, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB08:000123688:mpeg21:a0005>.

⁵⁴⁹ The appointment of a *Controleur* in Aru was part of the administrative restructuring of the Amboina Residency, placing the archipelago under the direct control of the Resident of Amboina. Before this, the archipelago was under the *Aroe-, Kei-, en Zuidwester-eilanden afdeling* and its *Controleur* was based in Tual. For Aru specifically, the restructuring was about the intensification of contact with the Aruese in the interior and in anticipation of the government's role to manage the arriving foreign pearl-shellers. See Letter from the Resident of Amboina, 05-04-1907 in NL-HaNA, Kolonien/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01, inv.nr. 378.

to determine based on the nationality of the individuals. The CTC's multicultural employees and crew complicated this administrative process and added to the Controleur's work.⁵⁵⁰ In 1906, van Sluys complained about the difficulty in classifying the nationality of the crewmembers and the category they belonged to in the existing colonial tax bracket classification. Van Sluys, complaining openly, asked in frustration: in which category was he supposed to place Samoan men?⁵⁵¹

The Dutch administration was aware of the potential tension in a multicultural town. Despite his short tenure in Dobo, van Sluys quickly noticed the tension brewing among the different ethnic groups living there. The Controleur's account of his time in Dobo is filled with stories of inter-ethnic skirmishes.⁵⁵² There was a major scuffle between the Buton and Makassar communities and also great tensions because a Filipino pearl-diver abused a karayuki-san. There were also the occasional intra-communal conflicts, like the murder of a Japanese man at the hands of his countrymen and a gunfight between two Filipinos. These events all occurred during the one hectic year of his tenure there. The Dobo that van Sluys portrayed was chaotic, disorderly, and in need of more effective law and order.

That van Sluys maintained a keen eye on the local tensions is hardly surprising; these early Dutch officials had prior experience in observing such situations in the Outer Islands and were obsessed with the implementation of law and order.⁵⁵³ His successors built on this assessment and were also wary as they patrolled the archipelago and observed the violent interactions among the CTC crew. It did not take long for the officials to designate the off-diving months as a special, albeit dangerous moment, a period when all the pent-up tension and aggression from their work at sea descended upon Dobo, where

⁵⁵⁰ As the colonial government expanded their taxation system in the Indies, they tasked regional officials to assess the populace in the regions and place them in the system. Frustration was a constant feature in this process which, to borrow Maarten Maanse's suggestion, was characterized by 'a lack of knowledge, by incapacity and speculation.' See M.R. Maanse, "Promise, Pretence and Pragmatism: Governance and Taxation in Colonial Indonesia, 1870-1940" (PhD Thesis, Leiden University, 2021), 6 & 91-107.

⁵⁵¹ van Sluys, "Dobo-ervaringen.", 307. My research places his period of tenure in Dobo a bit earlier than the work of Adrian Vickers suggests. He dates van Sluys' report to be from 1911, but official records indicate that van Sluys' tenure began a bit earlier, between 1906 and 1907. See Vickers, "The Pearl Rush in Aru, 1916." There are two sources to support this belief, the first is the mention of *Wanetta*, the fleet which left Aru waters in 1908. The second is a January 1907 article announcing his transfer to Saparua. See "Personalalia," *Bataviaasch nieuwsblad* (Batavia), January 19, 1907, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011034751:mpeg21:p002>.

⁵⁵² van Sluys, "Dobo-ervaringen.", 304-305; 308-311.

⁵⁵³ Vickers correctly pointed out that it is curious that van Sluys thought Dobo was extreme considering his extensive experience as a colonial official. Vickers, "The Pearl Rush in Aru, 1916.", 472.

law and order had always been fragile. To deal with this unusual situation, van Sluys recommended strengthening the police force.⁵⁵⁴ When the government appointed du Cloux as his replacement in 1907, the maintenance of civil order in Dobo was in the hands of a military detachment.⁵⁵⁵ But in spite of this military presence, inter-ethnic conflict still occasionally occurred.⁵⁵⁶

Here again, Bain's portrayal of Broome provides an instructive comparison. Like Dobo, Broome was also livelier and culturally tense during the off season.⁵⁵⁷ In 1907, 1914, and 1920 communal tensions erupted into inter-ethnic riots in Broome.⁵⁵⁸ Of course, the multicultural lives of the crew and owners was not solely about such tensions and conflict, it was also about other more peaceful times and day to day interactions. Broome was also a place where inter-ethnic friendships, partnerships, and marriages took place involving the European settlers, Asian labourers and aboriginal Australians.⁵⁵⁹ It is not unthinkable that, like Broome, Dobo was also a backdrop for this kind of more amicable inter-ethnic interactions and social relations. Unfortunately, public social records of this sort are lacking since Dobo had no newspaper at the time and the town had no regular news contributors in this period. Consequently, there is scant news about aspects of daily life in the town except from the communal skirmishes and celebrated local criminal cases.

Christensen writes about how Australian authors romantically wrote about Broome as an isolated place near the top end with a character completely different from the cities in the rest of Australia.⁵⁶⁰ Wallace too, wrote romantically about Dobo, but his idealised description of the town was unusual; colonial officials seeking to establish law and order could only describe it as a disordered place and their records reflect that point of view. Nevertheless, all these accounts consistently reveal that the story about Dobo in this period is clearly not the story of the Aruese.

⁵⁵⁴ van Sluys, "Dobo-ervaringen.", 306.

⁵⁵⁵ 'Verslag van den politieken- en gezondheidstoestand in de residentie Amboina loopende van 19 Juni tot 20 Juli 1907' in NL-HaNA, Kolonien/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01, inv.nr. 378.

⁵⁵⁶ In October 1907, there was a conflict between some Japanese and Chinese that required an additional troop deployment from Banda. "Opstand te Dobo," *Bataviaasch nieuwsblad* (Batavia), October 12 1907, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011088652:mpeg21:p006>. The tension between the two nations was tied to the rise of Chinese nationalism, see Post, *Japanse Bedrijvigheid in Indonesie.*, 70-71.

⁵⁵⁷ Bain, *Full Fathom Five.*, 139-140.

⁵⁵⁸ Christine Choo, "Inter-ethnic Conflict in Broome, Western Australia: The Riots of 1907, 1914 and 1920 between Japanese and other Asians," *Continuum* 25, no. 4 (2011), [https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2011.575213.](https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2011.575213)

⁵⁵⁹ Reynolds, *North of Capricorn.*, 136-142.

⁵⁶⁰ Christensen, "'A Patch of the Orient in Australia'."

Unseen Encounters

Because Dutch officials were mostly based in Dobo, both the CTC and the Aruese were not constantly within their gaze and colonial records reflect this concern. The CTC and the Aruese did not often encounter each other on land because of where the CTC located their principal complex. However, the CTC mostly operated on the Backshore, where they could potentially encounter the Aruese out of Dutch sight and hence, no mention of them in the records.

The Dutch inserted a provision regarding customary diving depth in the Pearlfishing ordinance to maintain a separation of activity between the Aruese way of pearl-shelling and the CTC's floating station system. This provision explains the relative absence of the Aruese in any discussion about industrial pearl-shelling in this period. Most Aruese still resided within their communities and continued their pearl-shelling activities. In this manner the Dutch broadly succeeded in separating the two different worlds within the pearl-shelling industry; deriving revenue from the pearl-shellers, while maintaining the political status quo, in order not to upset the social and economic order in the archipelago. However, offshore and over water, this strict separation of pearling activity could not always be maintained: there is evidence of sporadic contact and conflict with foreign pearlers, suggesting that despite the government efforts, such contact was inevitable. What follows is a discussion of Aruese lives that recounts their semi-autonomous history and episodic contacts with the CTC and the Baadilla Brothers company.

The key provision in the 1905 Pearling Ordinance stated all pearl-banks shallower than 9 metres were only reserved for Aruese pearl-divers. Therefore, traditional pearl-shelling, as the Aruese historically practiced continued and official records suggest it did. In 1907, people from Fonum (on the eastern side of Koba Island), paid Kobror around ten to twenty gongs to dive on the banks near Kobror.⁵⁶¹ While further south, Barakai divers from Longgar and Aparā continued to dive for pearl-shells to sell to the seventeen Chinese and three Bugis merchants who lived among them.⁵⁶² I did not find similar reports from other pearl-diving communities, but presumably pearling business and activity continued there

⁵⁶¹ 'Kort verslag van den zaken en het personeel in de afdeeling Aroe-eilanden van 19den Augustus tot en met den 15 den September 1907' in NL-HaNA, Kolonien/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01, inv.nr. 378., 6-7.

⁵⁶² "Tournée-rapport van den Controleur der Aroe-eilanden," *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* (Batavia), May 10 1907, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011034892:mpeg21:a0089>.

too. Between October 1905 and September 1906, despite the difficult year the traditional pearl-shelling sector in Aru exported 125,000 kg of shells.⁵⁶³

It is important to realise the degree of separation these two worlds could maintain even though they shared the same waters and searched for the same marine produce. They worked in close proximity, but the problems they faced were very different. For the Aruese, the period between 1904 and 1907 was disruptive. The end of 1905 and beginning of 1906 was particularly difficult because the entire archipelago experienced a smallpox epidemic.⁵⁶⁴ On Barakai Island, an infected Aruese man set himself alight due to his illness and accidentally caused a fire, destroying eighteen houses.⁵⁶⁵ According to Tissot van Patot, the epidemic killed one-third of Aru's population.⁵⁶⁶ The colonial government watched these developments with alarm and deployed a vessel to vaccinate people in the archipelago.

This tumultuous period had a serious impact on the interior of South Aru, where the *Tiploiloi* movement took hold.⁵⁶⁷ Unfortunately, this was not the first time Aru experienced an epidemic during the decade. In November 1902, a lethal illness had spread among Aruese, causing 250 people to seek refuge in Kei and a general state of fear and unease.⁵⁶⁸ In 1906, this accumulation of unease inspired a revitalisation movement in the southern part of Aru. A man named Lenggam and his disciple Djaoe-djaoe were behind this movement.⁵⁶⁹ Lenggam (in some sources spelled as Lengam) claimed that the god of smallpox (M. *tuan tjatjar*) had visited him in a dream. The epidemic, the god stated, occurred because people were sinful and had embraced Christianity. Lenggam and Djaoe-djaoe travelled through villages on Trangan preaching their message, including to

⁵⁶³ 'Verslag van een reis naar de Aroe-eilanden.' in ANRI GB MGS 4471. To place this into perspective, in the same period the Baadilla Brothers reported a catch of 157,700 kilograms of shells.

⁵⁶⁴ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Kolonien: Politieke Verslagen en Berichten uit de Buitengewesten, nummer toegang 2.10.52.01, inventarisnummer 377. (Henceforth NL-HaNA, Kolonien/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01, inv.nr....).

⁵⁶⁵ "Brand op de Aroe-eilanden", *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indie* (Batavia), February 5 1906, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010134343:mpeg21:a0025>.

⁵⁶⁶ Tissot van Patot, "Een viertal tochten.", 80.

⁵⁶⁷ The word Tiploiloi comes from the combination of the word *tip* or *tif* from *tifa*, a traditional percussion instrument, and the word *loi-loi*, gathering. In combination the word means an invitation to gather that had a religious character. See "Tournee-rapport van den Controleur der Aroe-eilanden."

⁵⁶⁸ "Op Vormreis in de Buitenposten: Ontleend aan Brieven van Mgr. E. S. Luypen, Apostolisch Vicaris van Batavia Nov.-Dec. 1902," *De Katholieke Missien*, 1904, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKDC04:001149001:00005>., 30.

⁵⁶⁹ "Een nieuwe profeet", *De Preanger-bode (1896-1923)* (Bandoeng), July 20 1907, van hier en daar, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB08:000127229:mpeg21:a0005>.

communities that had already converted to Christianity. Lenggam allegedly told people that Christians would get the pox and encouraged them to return to traditional beliefs and asked his followers to gather at Kokongai.⁵⁷⁰

The revitalisation content of his teaching was a threat to colonial social order in the southern part of Aru, including Krei and Batugoyang. Tissot van Patot wrote that in some divers stopped pearl-shelling, as Lenggam converted people to his cause.⁵⁷¹ Some of these communities also held rights over the pearl-banks where the CTC operated. In the first six months of 1907, the Dutch observed his movement with growing alarm and ultimately deployed a military contingent for their arrest.⁵⁷² They managed to catch Lenggam in April 1907, and within a month, sentenced him to twenty-years of hard labour. Djaoe-djaoe managed to evade the Dutch dragnet, but officials quickly reported Lenggam's capture with relief, claiming it was an important moment in the restoration of law and order in Aru.⁵⁷³ Interestingly, there is no mention of this movement in Mullins' thorough account of the CTC in Aru. The CTC's contact with Aruese was uneven and because most of the resistance took place inland, the crisis did not affect the company.

More curious is the fact that the epidemic did not affect the CTC. George Smith of the CTC was aware of the smallpox epidemic, but there is no mention of it disrupting CTC's operations.⁵⁷⁴ The contagious disease outbreak caused an archipelago-wide crisis, and yet appears not to have touched the CTC and their workforce. This could lead to the wrong impression that the company had no contact with the Aruese whatsoever. Written records and oral history accounts suggest that contacts did take place in this period, but they were episodic and brief.

The CTC fleets were closer to the Aruese when they were on the move, for example on the way to their pearling grounds or when they were diving on the Backshore. In September 1907, du Cloux encountered *Aladdin* with its seven luggers around Kolawatoe channel.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁰ Tissot van Patot called the village Kongkongai. The creation of a myth as a reading of an epidemic has also happened in Bali according to Barbara Lovric. See Barbara Lovric, 'Bali: Myth, Magic and Morbidity' in *Death and Disease in Southeast Asia*, ed. Norman G. Owen (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987).

⁵⁷¹ Tissot van Patot, "Een viertal tochten..", 80.

⁵⁷² For a detailed account of the expedition to capture Lenggam, see Tissot van Patot, "Een viertal tochten..", 84-90.

⁵⁷³ 'Verslag van den politieken en gezondheidstoestand in de residentie Amboina loopende van 19 Mei tot 20 Juni 1907' NL-HaNA, Kolonien/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01, inv.nr. 378, 3-6.

⁵⁷⁴ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 214.

⁵⁷⁵ 'Kort verslag van den zaken en het personeel in de afdeeling Aroe-eilanden van 19den Augustus tot en met den 15 den September 1907' in NL-HaNA, Kolonien/Politieke Verslagen

The Baadilla Brothers also had a slipway at Jeudin Island from which they could regularly head to the pearl-banks around Enu.⁵⁷⁶ Jeudin is near Barakai Island, placing it in very close proximity to the Barakai communities pearl-diving on the Backshore (see figure 15). It was around these places that unseen encounters occurred outside the Dutch gaze.

Stoler writes of colonial archives as a place where 'the panoptic is a frail conceit.'⁵⁷⁷ In Aru's Backshore, the state could not even feign conceit, as documents from the region recount incidents that had already occurred and, at times concluded, when the officials noticed. In August 1907, an orangkaya from Aparā (a Barakai community) complained that some of the Baadilla Brothers workers had fished in waters shallower than five fathoms.⁵⁷⁸ One of the Baadilla siblings was in Jeudin, and he denied knowing anything about this violation of the Pearlfishing Ordinance. Later, an inquiry revealed that the same orangkaya had once asked a Baadilla company craft to fish in waters three fathoms

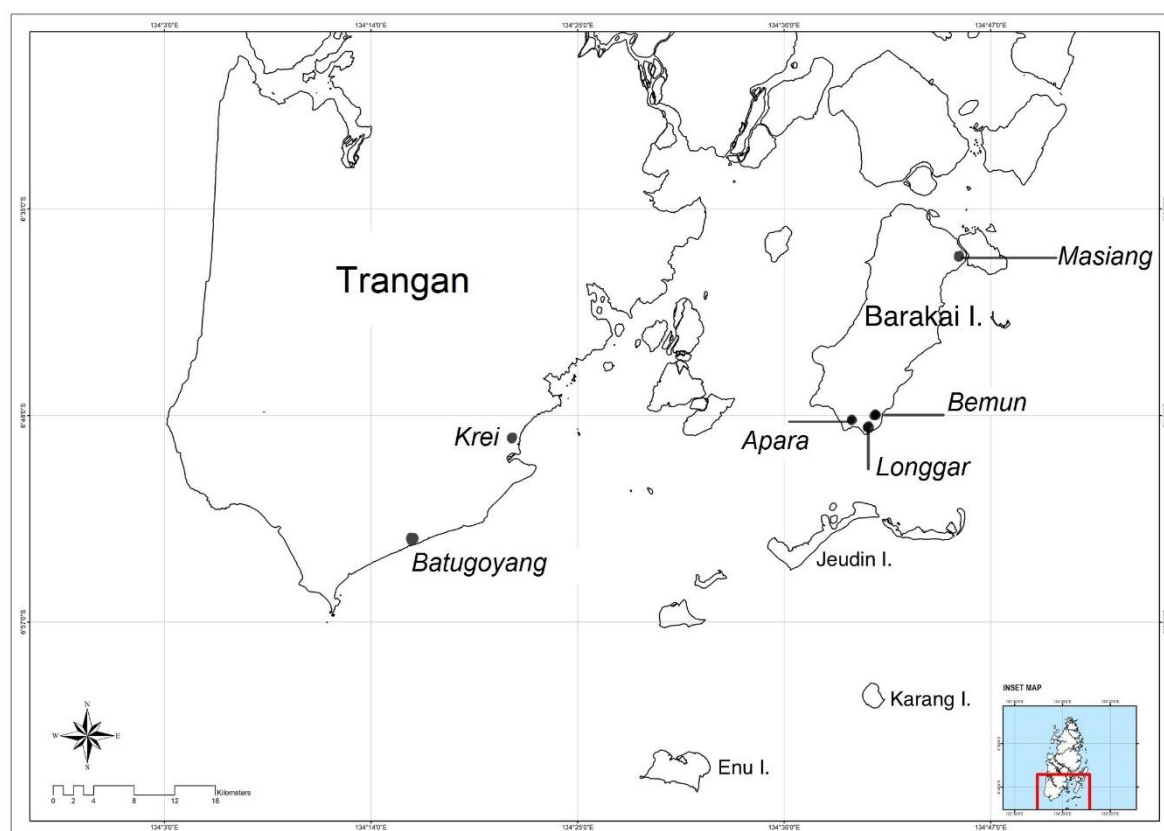


Figure 15 Map of Southeast Aru

Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01, inv.nr. 378., 11-12. This means they were not far from Warialau community.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁷⁷ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 23.

⁵⁷⁸ Kort verslag van den zaken en het personeel in de afdeeling Aroe-eilanden van 19den Augustus tot en met den 15 den September 1907' in NL-HaNA, Kolonien/Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten, 2.10.52.01, inv.nr. 378., 5-6.

deep, because people from Aparā would not dive there after spotting sharks. The Controleur warned the Baadilla sibling to maintain better watch over his workers and forbade the orangkaya from requesting such assistance again before he left. The event demonstrated that on the Backshore, the foreign pearlers and the Aruese had encounters and dealings outside colonial eyes.

There are also other signs of encounters between Aruese and the pearl-shellers within these communities. The Baadilla Brothers had been in Aru longer and left physical traces of their contact with communities in Aru.⁵⁷⁹ Other such signs are less physical. Margaretha Mangar recites a Batuley song about a confrontation with the Baadilla Brothers and some Englishmen. The confrontation occurred because the pearl-shellers were diving around Mantai Island, which lies within three miles of Aduar Island. There are some pearl-banks around it, where the Batuley occasionally dove for pearl-shells. The incursion caused anger among the Batuley in Aduar, who sailed to Mantai to chase them away.⁵⁸⁰

Another story of such encounters was not as long or dramatic as the song Mangar narrated. Jamaludin Roimenag heard stories from his parents and grandparents of Australians operating around Enu and Karang Island.⁵⁸¹ He heard stories recounted of people engaging in trade with them using the *pikol* and *kati* as measurements. He noted that the Australian workers wore diving-suits (it is known as *deba-dress* in Dobo Malay). His relatives did not work for the Australians, but they traded the shell they procured while skin-diving. It is not clear when such encounters took place, and how often, but they occasionally occurred when the opportunity presented itself to do so.

During his work in the Batuley communities, Ross Gordon encountered at least two men whose fathers had worked for Australians before WWII.⁵⁸² Contrasting this memory with Dutch conviction that no Aruese worked for the CTC is a reminder of how much is still left to learn about the on-the-spot activities of the company. In the decades that followed,

⁵⁷⁹ According to Sonny Djonler, Warialau has some gongs that the Baadilla Brothers gave in exchange for the rights to fish in Jedan Island. Sonny Djonler, Pers.comm.

⁵⁸⁰ Interview Margaretha Mangar (11/02/2019). Mangar is an elder who maintains the community history, and while she was willing to repeat the lyrics, she refused to give more details. This made sense because her knowledge is considered sacred. Her knowledge of the song and the story is a direct consequence of her position and social status, but it was also the result of an exclusive social process which allowed 'community elders to ensure the content of the knowledge is transmitted to select individuals at appropriate times.' See Gordon and Djonler, "Oral traditions in cryptic song lyrics.", 401.

⁵⁸¹ Interview Jamal Roimenag (13/02/2019).

⁵⁸² Ross Gordon, pers.comm. 2021. Gordon thinks they were likely workers for the CTC, but he is not certain.

more Australians and Japanese fishers began operating in Aru's Backshore leading to even more contact outside of Dutch gaze.

Despite the large amount of pearl-shell that Aru provided to the CTC, the company soon realised that there were too many fleets working the pearl-banks around Aru. Based upon the records of their movements and activities, it appears the CTC primarily operated over pearl-banks that were deeper than 9 metres *and* where the Aruese also traditionally dove. The CTC did not discover new pearl-banks in Aru during this early period and this was unsettling news for the company. James Clark and his associates were, after all, using the floating station system in Aru's waters. The system was highly effective, and it was rapidly depleting the pearl-banks. This was a problem that had long affected industrial pearl-shelling, as the continued success of the industry depended on constant expansion, moving on and finding new banks that could systematically be exploited.⁵⁸³

In Aru the legal constraints imposed meant the CTC fleets could only exploit the pearl-banks around Jedan and Enu-Karang Islands. It is thus not surprising that, barring discovery of a new pearl-bank deeper than 9 metres, the CTC fleets would strip the crowded banks quickly. As early as 1907, Reg Hockings, manager of the *Wanetta* fleet, began considering a return to Thursday Island where he could find, to use a terrestrial analogy, greener pastures. For the CTC, this initial return to the Torres Strait began the scaling down of their operations in Aru. Throughout inter-war years, this winding down process continued. The next chapter explains how that process worked out.

This chapter has explained how the arrival of the CTC in Aru changed the social landscape there. When the company arrived there with its workforce, they helped make the character of Dobo similar to other settlements on the pearl frontier. The CTC changed the demographic composition of the town and fostered the growth of a Japanese community in Dobo. The ethnically diverse workforce also led to tensions and conflicts in the town during the off season, much to the chagrin of the colonial government. The Dutch could only govern them when they were in Dobo, but not when they were offshore, where their encounter with the Aruese occurred away from the prying eyes of the Dutch. Their contact with the Aruese were still limited, and the Aruese still maintained their own semi-autonomous social and cultural world that occasionally intersected with the CTC's pearl-shelling operation.

⁵⁸³ Ganter, *The Pearl-shelliers of Torres Strait.*, 155-157.

Chapter 6 A Long and Slow Retreat: the Australians' protracted withdrawal

The previous chapter narrates the arrival of the CTC and what their presence meant for the development of Aru during the height of their pearling activity. This chapter follows the story of the CTC from 1908 until the onset of WWII in Aru. The chapter discusses the key changes that occurred within the company throughout these years. Put simply, the three decades after 1908 saw the company slowly scaling back their activities in Aru, but still managing to retain the pearl-shelling lease.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first part covers the withdrawal of Hocking's fleet *Wanetta* and the extension of the CTC lease. The second part discusses the company until the end of WWI and James Clark's withdrawal from Aru. The third part recounts the impact of WWI on the CTC, how the company fared under Schmid and Jeandel, and the end of the Baadilla pearl-shelling enterprise. The final section focuses upon economic activities in the 1930s, placing the CTC within the context of the regional and global economy. The section describes the state of the pearling enterprise just prior to July 30, 1942, when the Japanese troops arrived in Dobo.

Locked Out of Australia: The Extension of the CTC permit

The year 1908 was important in the history of the CTC. That year witnessed the withdrawal of the *Wanetta* fleet from Aru and the looming expiration of the CTC lease. Both developments offer an insight into the nature of the company and the conduct of its pearl-shellers. Reg Hockings was the manager of the *Wanetta* fleet and it appears at some point in 1907 he considered returning to Thursday Island.⁵⁸⁴ There was recognition among the pearl-shellers in the CTC that there were too many vessels working on the lease area.⁵⁸⁵ However, the average catch in Aru per lugger was still higher than in the Torres

⁵⁸⁴ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 224 -227.

⁵⁸⁵ Clark admitted as much when asked during an inquiry. John Mackay, *Report of the Royal Commission Appointed Inquire into the Working of the Pearl-Shell and Beche-de-Mer Industries* (Brisbane: Acting Government Printer, 1908). <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-52848217>, 30.

Strait. Therefore, Mullins concludes that the reason for Hockings' withdrawal was personal and not connected to the potential depletion of pearl-banks in Aru.⁵⁸⁶

The timing of Hockings' departure was linked with changing policies on the other side of the Pearl Frontier. In Queensland, Hockings' presence inspired rumours among TI pearl-shellers that James Clark was coming back. These local pearl-shellers and the state government pushed for a reintroduction of a moratorium on granting new boat licenses,⁵⁸⁷ which would make it impossible for the Australian fleets of the CTC to return to TI and operate there. The moratorium was announced on March 31, 1908, but somehow Hockings and his *Wanetta* fleet still managed to gain a license to operate in the Torres Strait.⁵⁸⁸

The moratorium was directly connected to Clark's possible return and the broader circumstances then surrounding pearl-shelling in Queensland. These circumstances, formulated as problems, included pearl-banks depletion and the continued dominance of the Japanese in the industry. The CTC fleets and the floating station system were at the heart of the problem because of their industrial efficiency and Clark's insistence that Japanese divers were indispensable to the industry. Pearl-shellers in the CTC were in conflict with local shore-based pearl-shellers and proponents of the White Australia Policy who were still bent on replacing their workforce. To deal with those growing concerns, John Mackay led a Royal Commission whose task it was to investigate the issue of resource depletion and the conservation of pearl-banks.⁵⁸⁹ This concern directly affected the Australian fleets in Aru because, despite Hocking's luck, the advent of the moratorium in Queensland meant the remaining six CTC fleets could not return home.⁵⁹⁰

The moratorium meant that every Australian fleet operating in Aru *had* to extend their lease in there. But the CTC already had incentive to extend their lease, as the previous three years were good for the fleets.⁵⁹¹ The lease expired on December 31, 1908, but the

⁵⁸⁶ Lehané made this argument earlier, citing personal missives that indicate that Hockings was not as eager to move to Aru and only did so because he did not have full ownership of the *Wanetta* company. See Lehané, *The Pearl King*, 254.

⁵⁸⁷ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 224-225.

⁵⁸⁸ This process was still ongoing when Mackay interviewed him during the Royal Commission in June 1908. Hockings was evasive when asked about the status of the registry and licences of his fleet. Mackay, *Report of the Royal Commission*, 177-178.

⁵⁸⁹ Mackay, *Report of the Royal Commission*, xlvi-lix. James Clark was also interviewed during this commission, and he repeated his belief that the Old Ground could not be totally depleted.

⁵⁹⁰ According to Lehané, James Clark tried to apply for licences for 20 luggers to operate in the Torres Strait in May 1908 and March 1909. The government rejected both applications. See Lehané, *The Pearl King*, 255-256.

⁵⁹¹ Clarke claimed that the fleet had lifted 2,200 tonnes between 1905 and 1907. To put this into perspective, in the same period Queensland exported 1,564 tonnes of pearl-shell. See Bach, *The*

CTC had already made it clear to the Dutch that they wanted to extend it. George Smith, on behalf of the company proposed a ten-year lease, from 1909 to 1919. The CTC offered to pay f30,000 annually for this lease. However, the request met a lukewarm and delayed response from the Dutch government.

There were several reasons for the unenthusiastic Dutch response including the company's unpopularity among Dutch officials and the public. That sentiment had not changed during the company's tenure in the islands.⁵⁹² Complicating matters even further was the insufficient offer that Smith made which, as Mullins points out, was f4,000 less than their original bid for Aru in 1905.⁵⁹³ The Dutch were not satisfied; the local officials sensed that the CTC was deceiving the government and believed that Aru pearl-banks could give them much more revenue. The government's desire to gain more revenue from pearl-shelling in Aru presented another hurdle to an extension of the lease for the CTC.

Believing that they could gain more by denying the CTC the extension, the administration looked elsewhere for other parties interested in pearl-shelling. It was clear in their minds that the expiry of the license provided an opportunity to put an end to the Australian presence in the archipelago and replace them with Dutch subjects. In another calculated act to increase revenue, the government briefly considered adopting an individual boat licensing scheme, which would allow small operators to enter the pearl-shelling industry in Aru.⁵⁹⁴ The idea was eventually abandoned for reasons I discuss below, but the vessel-based math behind it was not shelved. The government then discretely contacted other parties. The circulaire contains two important pieces of information on what the Dutch expected from the next lessee: namely, a party who would use between 50 and 150 vessels in their operation and for each vessel the lessee would pay f600 per year.⁵⁹⁵

The administration approached the Baadilla Brothers and two Netherlands Indies firms that had a major interest in pearl-shelling, Moraux and A. Schmid.⁵⁹⁶ The Baadilla

Pearling industry of Australia, 284 (Appendix). For a brief breakdown of the profits of the fleets, see Mullins, "James Clark and the Celebes Trading Co.", 43-44.

⁵⁹² Adding insult to injury was the fact that the CTC was perceived to not contribute to the Indies and Dobo economies, as most of the goods the company purchased came from Australia, Singapore and Britain. Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 214.

⁵⁹³ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 216.

⁵⁹⁴ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 215-217.

⁵⁹⁵ ANRI GB MGS 4593.

⁵⁹⁶ Another person who expressed interest in bidding was a Josef Weissberger. He represented a United States firm, Otto Issenstein & Co., and was interested in buying pearl-shell from Aru. The 'Trinity' apparently tried to shut him out of the purchase of Aru pearl-shell, which is why at some point he was in communication with James Clark. See Lehane, *The Pearl King*, 273. While

Brothers initially agreed to the increased government rate, but then reduced their offer to f400 per vessel, citing the fluctuating market price of shell.⁵⁹⁷ The government considered Moraux because he had a longstanding interest in pearl-shelling in Aru, but the Dutch authority thought A. Schmid was a more serious contender.⁵⁹⁸ His company purchased pearl-shell in Makassar including from the CTC.⁵⁹⁹ Schmid was one of the regional entrepreneurs that connected the Netherlands Indies' supply of pearl-shell from Aru to the London markets. In addition, his brother, Conrad Schmid, occasionally visited Aru and was familiar with the workings of the local industry there. Schmid was prepared to pay f600 per lugger, calling it a reasonable fee.⁶⁰⁰

Even the lower rate that the Baadilla Brothers offered would, in the government estimation, double the annual state revenue from Aru.⁶⁰¹ The government was still willing to seriously consider the company's offer, because the annual income received could potentially reach f60,000 which readily outbid the CTC. However, when the official auction occurred, the Baadilla Brothers made no official offer at all.⁶⁰² Schmid made a very low offer of f166 per lugger while the CTC offered f240 per lugger. The CTC won the auction once again, offering to pay f33,600 per year and secured the lease. The pragmatic colonial concern to ensure the Aru economy remained profitable triumphed over patriotism. The lease allowed the CTC to operate unimpeded from June 1, 1909, to May 31, 1919.

The colonial administration begrudgingly admitted defeat and the CTC continued their widespread operation. But this did not end the distrust held among colonial officials towards the pearl-ers; they felt that the Baadilla Brothers and Schmid had deceived them. The Dutch subsequently penalised the Baadilla Brothers for their apparent scheming.⁶⁰³ In June 1909, a government decree permitted interested parties to explore the potential of the pearl-banks within the Amboina Residency (outside of Aru). The Resident

it appears that he was interested in pearl-shelling, he never made a formal offer. See ANRI GB MGS 4593.

⁵⁹⁷ Letter from Resident of Amboina, 14-04-1908 nr. X (Geheim) in ANRI GB MGS 4593.

⁵⁹⁸ Moraux was also an experienced pearl-sheller, although not really a successful one according to the Resident of Amboina. He was one of the people who applied for a permit to fish in Aru in the mid-1890s. The government granted his company permit to operate in Aru in 1894 and 1895 but it appears nothing came out of it.

⁵⁹⁹ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd.*, 223.

⁶⁰⁰ Letter from Resident of Amboina, 14-04-1908 nr. X (Geheim) in ANRI GB MGS 4593.

⁶⁰¹ The resident approximated that with 150 vessels, they would get f60,000 per year. Letter from Resident of Amboina, 14-04-1908 nr. X (Geheim) in ANRI GB MGS 4593.

⁶⁰² MGS 20-03-1910 nr. 720 in ANRI GB MGS 4593.

⁶⁰³ Letter from Resident of Amboina, 07-11-1909 nr. 5478 in ANRI GB MGS 4593.

nevertheless recognised that it was unlikely anyone would apply for the permit considering the CTC's presence there. What was the point of anyone risking all their capital and resources to discover new pearl-banks, if they eventually could lose them in an auction to the CTC? The Baadilla Brothers, the Resident wrote, possessed such assets and potential but their company was too closely tied to the CTC; for example, if the Baadilla Brothers discovered new pearl-banks and obtained a permit, the CTC would also automatically have gained direct access to the grounds.

In July 1912, the CTC, the Baadilla Brothers and Schmid filed a complaint to the Governor General's office because a company, the *Nederlandsche Nieuw Guinea Handel Maatschappij* (The Netherlands New Guinea Trading Co., henceforth NNGHM) obtained a pearling lease the previous May to operate in Banggai through private correspondence rather than public auction. The CTC and the others protested because the government did not give them an opportunity to bid in an auction for the lease. According to the agreed terms, NNGHM only had pay f2,000 each year, which was not a lot compared to the Aru lease. However, the decision to grant the lease to the company was deliberate and not based on profit. The Governor of the Celebes and Dependencies explicitly wrote: 'I would rather gain less money from a Dutch consortium than more from Australians or Japanese.' The Governor continued, stating he'd also rather have NNGHM in his region than Baadilla.⁶⁰⁴ He did not specify whether he was referring to the Baadilla Brothers or Sech Said.

The granting of the extension did not soften the local Dutch officials' opinion about the CTC and their lease. The sense that the lease was far too low continued to linger; the Dutch acknowledged that they did not even know the CTC's overall earnings.⁶⁰⁵ They did not levy customs duty from the pearl-shells or *pearls* the Australians and the Baadilla Brothers obtained so there was no government record of their annual income. Here, one must note that in comparison to other regions in the Netherlands Indies, the lease in Aru was special because it was exclusive and did not rely upon than vessel-based-licensing (see appendix 1). The government only gained revenue from the lease and not from the customs they levied.

⁶⁰⁴ ANRI ALSEC Bt. 21-09-1912 nr. 32.

⁶⁰⁵ It bears remembering Mullins' note about the character of the CTC as consortiums of different firms, wherein each firm kept their own books. Mullins, "James Clark and the Celebes Trading Co..", 43. For a brief but thorough explanation on how the Dutch tried to interpret the CTC's business model and profits, see Mullins, *Octopus Crowd.*, 219-221.

The key to the CTC's success was not based upon the merit of their proposal but rather in the lack of alternative competitors and the broader historical circumstances. Like three years earlier, the auction proved that no one in the Indies was suitably equipped to compete with the CTC on an industrial scale. Two things in particular worked in the CTC's favour. First, the rest of the bidders agreed with Smith's defence regarding the fluctuation of price of pearl-shell in the global economy.⁶⁰⁶ This oscillation was a feature of pearl-shelling in Australia, where the oligopolistic market allowed the purchasers to control demand for the commodity and take full advantage of rivalries between the pearl-shellers who were also sellers.⁶⁰⁷ At this time, most Australian and Aru shells were sent to London via three major purchasers referred to as 'the Trinity': Ochse, Myers and Landsberger.⁶⁰⁸ The combined purchasing power of the Trinity allowed them to influence market pricing, and according to James Clark, it was their inside collaboration and trading that kept the price of pearl-shell low. Ganter argued that this monopoly practice was the weakness of an industry which positioned itself as a 'dependent producer for Britain's need', consistent with Australia's colonial position.⁶⁰⁹ Australia lacked a domestic manufacturer who could absorb the pearl-shell, and everything the pearl-shellers obtained was destined for a manufacturer overseas. This pattern of dependence on overseas demand continued when the Australians in CTC moved into Aru waters.⁶¹⁰

The second point of contention and pressure that favoured the CTC was the existence of a Japanese community in Dobo. As I note in chapter 5, the Dutch were not particularly accepting of the Japanese. When the CTC's lease was about to expire, the government was considering a boat-licensing scheme to replace the current system of exclusive

⁶⁰⁶ Mullins, "To Break 'the trinity'.", 225-228 and Bach, "The Political Economy of Pearlshelling." 107-109.

⁶⁰⁷ Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait.*, 196, 201-202. There was also the belief that the fluctuation was a consequence of changes in fashion which would affect demand for pearl-shell, but Ganter does not believe this to be a significant cause of the movement in price.

⁶⁰⁸ James Clark experienced this himself. In 1910, he and Albert Ochse agreed that the latter would buy the pearl-shells from Aru at the price of f170 per ton for the next two years. It sounded reasonable then, but as prices continued to rise to f 185 per ton in 1911 and to f200 in 1912, Clark did not benefit from the rise in prices. See Lehane, *The Pearl King.*, 274.

⁶⁰⁹ Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait.*, 196.

⁶¹⁰ From 1897 until his withdrawal from the industry, Clarke tried to increase the bargaining position of Australian pearl-shellers. Australia (and Aru) were major suppliers of pearl-shell then, and Clark insisted that Australian pearl-shellers would not fall victims of the Trinity if they united and formed an Australia-wide cartel. His effort culminated in the 1913 Pearl Shell Convention. Ultimately the creation of such a cartel failed because of the competition among the shellers themselves, and the onset of the WWI. For a thorough retelling of this effort, see Mullins, "To Break 'the trinity'.", 222, 228-230.

lease.⁶¹¹ The Dutch wanted to increase revenue from the industry, as well as enable smaller operators to search for pearl-shell. However, if the Dutch licenced boats instead of leasing the permit wholesale, the Japanese in Aru could take advantage of the system and become operators. The CTC was not happy about this prospect; the Australians had longstanding problems with Japanese boat-owners at home and were trying to restrict their economic activities with the help of their government.⁶¹² Australians brought this concern and prejudice with them to Aru and used it in combination with the Dutch colonial government's wariness of the Japanese as a strong point in their negotiation.⁶¹³ The CTC managed to convince the Dutch and won this round of argument. The lease allowed them to operate with a degree of certainty and stability. The longer term means they could operate without concerns of extensions. The CTC's prospect looked good and everything perhaps would have been fine, if it was not for how the following decade unfolded.

A Short Reverie: The CTC in Aru, 1909-1915

The renewed lease allowed the CTC to conduct their business and operation for another decade. And for a few years, it appeared industrial pearl-shelling in Aru settled to a steady pace. The 1909-1914 period was relatively calm, as the CTC resumed their day-to-day operation. Until it suddenly wasn't; as Europe descended into WWI, it forced the pearl-shelling industry on both sides of the frontier into disarray. The days before this War and chaos are essential to discuss.

This period saw the Netherlands Indies-Australia relationship settle down, and the connection between Thursday Island and Dobo made routine through a new commercial shipping route, the KPM's Java-Australia Line. In July 1908, the *Koninklijke Pakketvaart Maatschappij* (Royal Packet Company, henceforth KPM) dispatched steamers for the new Java-Australia line.⁶¹⁴ The line connected Batavia and Melbourne, with the Batavia-Semarang-Surabaya-Macassar-Banda-Dobo-Thursday Island-Sydney-Melbourne route. The KPM deployed two of their biggest steamers for this line, *Le Maire*

⁶¹¹ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 213-215.

⁶¹² As early 1897, the government in Queensland designated Japanese operators as a threat to white pearl-shellers. See Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia*, 142. For a broader overview on how the Australian government dealt with the Japanese in the pearling industry see Bach, "The Pearlshelling Industry and the White Australia Policy," 207-213.

⁶¹³ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 216-218. As we shall see later, CTC's fear was not baseless.

⁶¹⁴ à Campo provides a thorough history of this line and situates it effectively within the context of contemporary Netherlands Indies-Australia trade and political relations. See à Campo, *KPM*, 321-338.

and *Spilbergen*. The steamers and route changed in the years after that, but Dobo remained the first port of call in the Netherlands Indies for visitors from Australia.⁶¹⁵

The Line made Dobo accessible to more people, including paying passengers. The combination of the opening of the Java-Australia Line route and the nascent birth of tourism in the Netherlands Indies, results in a different type of historical source; newspaper articles recording impressions of local people and places from regular visitors to spots like Dobo. A 1912 KPM guidebook advertised Dobo as ‘the centre of the pearling industry’ (see figure 16).⁶¹⁶ Dobo was still no place for a respectable working woman, but it cleaned up well enough for respectable visitors.

Dobo visitors from this period were quick to note the town’s distinct social dynamic, and ethnically diverse population.⁶¹⁷ Their accounts describe the town residents and the development of its infrastructure. In 1908, the town did not have a pier yet, so when big vessels reached Dobo, they dropped anchor close to the shore.⁶¹⁸ Smaller boats would approach the steamer and transport the passenger to waiting locals who would carry them to the beach. However, by February 1909, there was already a motorized launch to transport people to the shoreline.⁶¹⁹

The CTC, their workers, and the industry, shaped the contours of the town. The hazards of pearl-diving left apparent physical signs in the town. Pearl-diving was a dangerous occupation; in 1908, German zoologist Hugu Merton wrote that annually, around ten percent of the divers experienced work-related injuries, some of them life threatening and permanent.⁶²⁰ In 1911, the town had monuments to remember people who were lost at sea and whose bodies were never recovered.⁶²¹ In an effort to alleviate these hazards, the CTC

⁶¹⁵ There was for example route-wise, the addition of Port Moresby, Brisbane and later, Singapore in this line. The steamers were also occasionally refurbished like the outfitting of the 3000-ton *Van Linschoten* and *Van Waerwijck* in 1911. à Campo, *KPM.*, 328, 334-336. à Campo attributes the inclusion of Dobo to the existence of the pearl-fishing enterprise there.

⁶¹⁶ W. Lorck, *Isles of the East: an illustrated guide: Australia, New Guinea, Java, Sumatra, Singapore, Etc.* (Sydney: Edward Lee & Co., 1912). <http://reader.library.cornell.edu/docviewer/digital?id=sea:007>.

⁶¹⁷ It bears noting that in most instances, their articles did not say much about the rest of Aru. Their interactions were limited to the residents of the town, and perhaps at most, the Aruese from Durjela and Wangil, the two communities also on the Wamar Island.

⁶¹⁸ Harold M. Mackenzie, "THE EAST INDIES," *Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW), 31 October 1908, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article15013167>.

⁶¹⁹ Rambler, "A TRIP TO THE DUTCH EAST INDIES," *Townsville Daily Bulletin* (Queensland), 23 February 1909, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article58122270>.

⁶²⁰ Hugo Merton, *Forschungsreise in den Südöstlichen Molukken (Aru- und Kei-Inseln)* (Frankfurt A.M.: Im Selbstverlage der Senckenbergischen Naturforschenden Gesellschaft, 1910), 20-21.

⁶²¹ Miss Weaver of Armidale, "Aboard a Dutch Boat," *Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser* (NSW), 01 December 1911, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article191949247>. Miss Weaver

built a modest hospital for their workers in order to treat people with dysentery, malaria and *beri-beri*.⁶²²

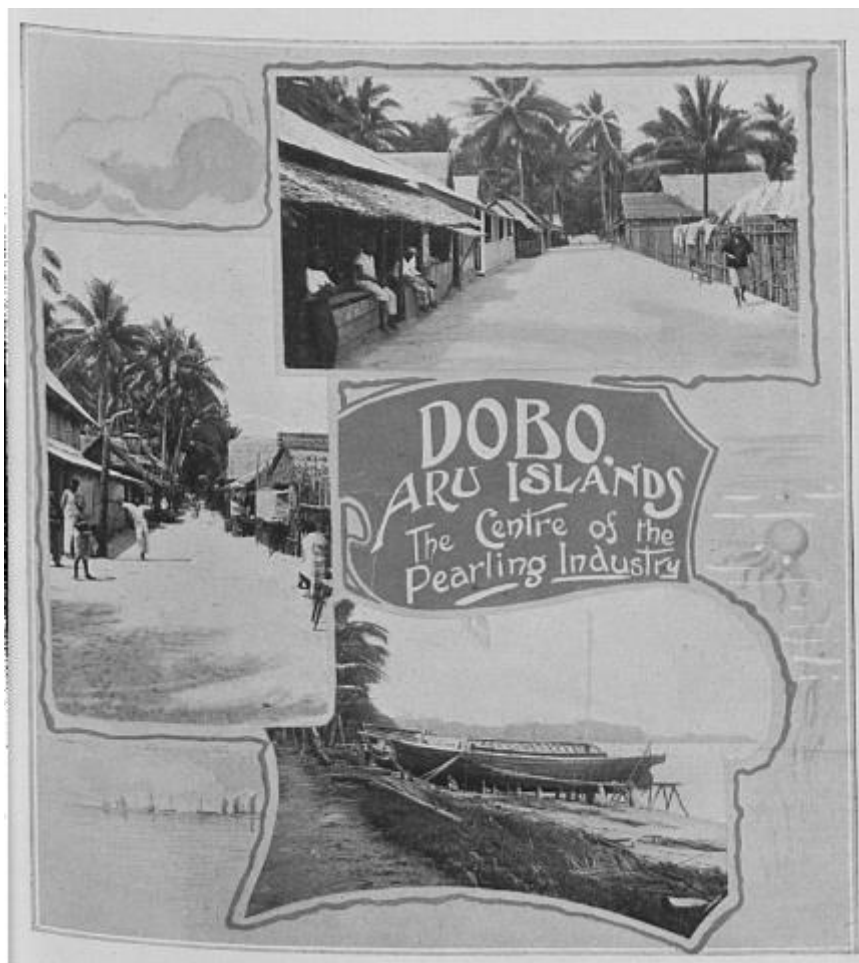


Figure 16 A guidebook's depiction of Dobo. (W.Lorck, 1912)

However, the hospital did not always have medical personnel. In 1906 Resident van Sluys had disagreements with his superiors regarding the availability of doctors in Dobo.⁶²³ At that point in time, there was a Japanese doctor in the town, but he lacked a formal permit to work in the Indies. Van Sluys refused to stop the doctor unless the government replaced him with a properly licensed doctor. It seems this was the doctor Merton met during his travels and Merton considered him well qualified.⁶²⁴ But this problem persisted; in the decades that followed, the town and the hospital constantly had difficulties in maintaining

was referring to the Japanese graveyard that was still present in Dobo in 1937. See also "MEN OF IRON," *Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW), 16 January 1937, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article17295964>.

⁶²² "Amboina," *De Maasbode* (Rotterdam), December 27 1910, Koloniën: Uit onze Oost., <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB04:000186808:mpeg21:a0077>.

⁶²³ van Sluys, "Dobo-ervaringen.", 307.

⁶²⁴ Merton, *Forschungsreise in den Südöstlichen Molukken.*, 16.

good medical personnel.⁶²⁵ In 1928, the nationalist leader-cum-doctor Tjipto Mangunkusumo requested to spend his exile in Dobo as a doctor in the employ of the pearl-fishing enterprise, but his request was denied.⁶²⁶

The persistent problem of procuring suitably trained medical personnel also reflected the colonial government's unwavering stance on labour conditions. In 1912, H.R. Sinia, a colonial official, sent a letter to the Department of Colonies in The Hague.⁶²⁷ Through contact with Japanese divers in Dobo, he became aware of the occupational danger they faced. He wrote to the Department about the hazard of decompression sickness, describing in detail the hardships the divers faced every working day. The letter was timely, in the previous season two divers lost their lives. The question at hand was whether the government should take a more active role in ensuring the divers' safety. Sinia suggested that someone needed to inform the divers about the nature of the danger. But the CTC managers explained to Dutch officials that the divers were already aware of the fact and credited the fatalities to the divers' 'indifference and nonchalance'.⁶²⁸ The Governor General refused to interfere further, stating that if the divers were aware of such dangers there was nothing more the government needed to do.⁶²⁹

Daily life in Dobo in this period was as dynamic as earlier years. Rare news stories about the town continued to focus on events that implied a chaotic milieu: a murderous diver on the run, a workers' strike, cockfighting in the streets.⁶³⁰ KPM passengers noted that the town was very clean, because each morning prisoners swept the streets.⁶³¹ It bears noting that the visitors' observations about the town often signified how they actually experienced it. Thus, an Australian visitor wrote of being invited for breakfast, and of a

⁶²⁵ "PEARLING NEAR PAPUA: Foreigners Engaged in It.," *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 11 February 1910, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article186241160>.

⁶²⁶ "De banneling Tjipto," *De Locomotief* (Semarang), September 6 1928, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001720013:mpeg21:a00128>.

⁶²⁷ ANRI ALSEC Bt. 06-07-1912 nr 2. In 1909 the government dispatched Sinia to Dobo to explain government policies to the Japanese community there. His mission to Dobo is likely connected with van Sluys' concern that the language barrier hindered him from being able to do his job effectively. See van Sluys, "Dobo-ervaringen.", 311. For the article announcing his dispatch, see "Mutaties."

⁶²⁸ They furthermore attributed the risk-taking behaviours to the divers being among the 'least developed Japanese'. The reasoning that the Japanese were more fatalistic was also used in Australia to explain away the hazards of diving, see Martínez and Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier*, 90.

⁶²⁹ In general, the Dutch did not pay much attention to the dangers of diving, although occasionally reports of CTC workers dying made it to the news.

⁶³⁰ See among others "A TROPICAL GARDEN," *Advertiser* (Adelaide, SA), 18 June 1914, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article6421302>.

⁶³¹ "A Trip to Java," *Sydney Stock and Station Journal* (NSW), 18 August 1914, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article125345471>.

tennis court whose floor was cracked because of an earthquake.⁶³² Hugo Merton described a stratified colonial and society life as early as 1908, when he wrote 'we had expected to live completely among savages in Dobo, instead we sat on a veranda in a circle of educated Europeans'.⁶³³ One's origin determined one's social standing in Dobo and access to alcohol provides an instructive case in point.

By 1907, the Dutch had acted on the ethical and moralistic concerns of the previous century by forbidding liquor importation to Aru. Van Kampen echoed earlier prohibition sentiments, noting the rampant use of alcohol in trade exchange and exploitation of the Aruese.⁶³⁴ In 1908, Merton witnessed people in Makassar loading boxes of red wine on the vessel headed to Dobo.⁶³⁵ The so-called export of red wine for alleged European consumption was a way to evade the strict Dutch regulation of hard liquor. In practice, the liquor ban became yet another point of contention and ethno-racial difference; as white men continued drinking exported alcohol, the Japanese used the privacy of their club to flaunt the liquor ban, and the Chinese were accused of 'smuggling' for conveying the spirits as they did in the past.⁶³⁶ Van Kampen mentions an incident where *Amboina*, the Dutch patrol boat, confiscated five-hundred boxes of arak, with a 95% alcohol content.⁶³⁷ The Dutch had placed the *Amboina* in Aru waters to patrol pearl-shelling activity, but by 1907 he hoped that it would also help curb arak smuggling.⁶³⁸ By 1912, only white men were still legally allowed to drink alcohol in Dobo and opium consumption was also restricted. The local Chinese acquired a terrible reputation. The colonial government rendered their centuries-long alcohol and opium trade illicit, labelling it smuggling and declared their defiance of the law as a peculiar character trait.⁶³⁹ The Aruese, supposedly

⁶³² "A Trip to Java," *Sydney Stock and Station Journal* (NSW), 18 August 1914.

⁶³³ Merton, *Forschungsreise in den Südöstlichen Molukken.*, 14.

⁶³⁴ Van Kampen was more inclusive in his accusation, also blaming Bugis traders for smuggling. van Kampen, "De paarl- en parelmoervisscherij langs de kusten der Aroe eilanden.", 4-5.

⁶³⁵ Merton, *Forschungsreise in den Südöstlichen Molukken.*, 9.

⁶³⁶ "TRIP TO ARU ISLANDS," *Northern Miner* (Charters Towers, Qld.), 22 October 1912, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article79139845>.

⁶³⁷ van Kampen, "De paarl- en parelmoervisscherij langs de kusten der Aroe eilanden.", 4.

⁶³⁸ Van Kampen was not alone; the former Resident of Amboina A.J. Baron Quarles de Quarles called the foreign Asiatics in the backshore of Aru 'the biggest smugglers of strong liquor' and encouraged the use of the existing government vessel to combat it. See NL-HaNA, Koloniën/Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. 311, 19.

⁶³⁹ The rise of 'smuggling' as a category of analysis in Aru was a symptom of an expanding colonial state and so was the effort to curb it. Historian Eric Tagliacozzo has produced multiple studies about the connection between illicit trade and colonial state-making projects. See for example, Eric Tagliacozzo, "The Indies and the World: State Building, Promise, and Decay at a Transnational Moment, 1910," *BKI* 166, no. 2-3 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003619>, 279-280.

denied access to alcohol by these government regulations meant to protect them, were still willing to exchange pearls or pearl-shell for alcohol and drugs.

World War I and Pearl-shelling in Aru

WWI had a lasting impact on the pearl-shelling industry along the pearl frontier. In Australia, it exposed the fragility of an industry so dependent on foreign markets.⁶⁴⁰ In Broome and Thursday Island, as pearl-shelling activities temporarily declined, questions emerged about the future of the industry's non-white workforce.⁶⁴¹ Possible repatriation brought with it questions about who should pay for the return passage and whether the pearl-shellers would be able to recruit them again when circumstances changed. Between 1914 and 1918, most of the CTC fleets returned to Broome. As such, for Aru, the war years saw the fleets leave Dobo and for the CTC specifically, the consortium was dissolved. When WWI began, the CTC still had six schooners in Aru: *Sketty Belle*, *Alice*, *Aladdin*, *Three Cheers*, *Ariel* and *Ruby*. By the time the war ended, most of the schooners were gone and the CTC was a changed entity.

WWI began in July 1914, during off-season time in Aru, so it did not immediately disrupt the CTC's operations. The timing of the outbreak of war gave the managers some time to figure out what to do next.⁶⁴² It was obvious that the war would disrupt the pearl-shell market and thereby affect the CTC. Europe was still their principal market, and at that moment the demand from the United States was not enough yet to offset the closure of the European market. In the first half of 1915, a hundred ton of shells caught the previous season was not sold and stored in the CTC warehouse in Dobo.⁶⁴³ This stockpiling continued until almost the end of the war. By July 1918, a significant amount of the catch was still being kept in godowns in Makassar.⁶⁴⁴ By then, the CTC had dramatically adjusted its operations.

⁶⁴⁰ Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia.*, 180-183. Bach was quick to point out that after a year, it appeared the United States became a major buyer of pearl-shells. However, his point also stands that the war continued to affect demand especially after the United States entered the war in 1917. For a thorough treatment of this problem, see Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait.*, 197-213.

⁶⁴¹ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd.*, 233-235. Some of the workers were repatriated, especially after an untimely December 1914 riot in Broome confirmed the government's concern.

⁶⁴² Mullins, *Octopus Crowd.*, 234-235.

⁶⁴³ NL-HaNA, Koloniën/ Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. 313, 36.

⁶⁴⁴ "De Parelvisscherij in Oorlogstijd," *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia), July 19 1918, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBDDD02:000199277:mpeg21:a0016> .

As in previous years, the CTC was supposed to continue their work in September. But in September 1914, the fleets were idle, and there were worries about maintaining the workforce.⁶⁴⁵ It required a lot of capital to maintain the CTC's workforce, especially if the company could not search for pearl-shells. Consequently, responding to the slump in demand, the CTC scaled-back their activity. In December 1914, the CTC repatriated between five to six hundred workers to their recruitment ports in Banda, Tual and Amboina.⁶⁴⁶ At that time, the Company fleet comprised of five schooners, one steamer, and ninety-two luggers, all standing idle on the east coast of Wamar. The company only maintained their Japanese divers who were essential for their future operation if the CTC resumed it. According to H. J. A. Raedt van Oldenbarnevelt, the Resident of Amboina at the time, the CTC continued paying them their monthly bonus, despite the company losing money.⁶⁴⁷

The uncertainty of war provided the Australian partners in the CTC with the opportunity to return home. They preferred to spend the complicated times in Australia rather than Aru.⁶⁴⁸ James Mackenzie, one of James Clark's partners, was in Broome in October 1914 and persuaded him to take advantage of the opportunity to bring their fleet back home. In May 1915 two CTC fleets left Aru for Broome; the schooner *Alice* and Victor Clark's ketch *Ruby* with thirty-two luggers.⁶⁴⁹ In addition, the steamer *Pretoria* also left Dobo for Australia and the following month James Clark offered it for sale.⁶⁵⁰ By the end of June, only three schooners and 60 luggers were still present in Aru.⁶⁵¹

In October 1917, Vince Jessup, one of James Clark's managers, brought another twelve luggers to Broome.⁶⁵² With that accomplished, all of James Clark's vessels had left Aru

⁶⁴⁵ "THE WAR. ARRIVAL OF THE HOUTMAN," *Brisbane Courier* (Qld.), 03 September 1914, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article19981195>.

⁶⁴⁶ NL-HaNA, Koloniën/ Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. 313, 35-37.

⁶⁴⁷ Raedt van Oldenbarnevelt laid the foundation in this report for the company to ask for government support after the war ended.

⁶⁴⁸ It was not easy to arrange this fleet return, because Broome based shellers did not like James Clark. To achieve this goal, Mackenzie had to coordinate the process with various government officials. See Lehane, *The Pearl King*, 292-296.

⁶⁴⁹ The schooner *Alice* hit a reef on its way to Broome and was wrecked, and thirteen crewmembers lost their lives. Mullins recounts the tragedy that befell the schooner in his book, see Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 1-2.

⁶⁵⁰ "From the Pearl Grounds at Dobo," *Brisbane Courier* (Qld.), 26 June 1915, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article20027685>.

⁶⁵¹ A. J. Beversluis and A. H. C. Gieben, *Het Gouvernement der Molukken* (Weltvreden: Landsdrukkerij, 1929), 192-193.

⁶⁵² Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 236. Vince Jessup was the manager of the schooner *Three Cheers*, but it is unclear whether he brought the schooner with him when he left for Broome. Like in 1915, the pearl-shellers in Broome were not pleased with this fleet return either, see Lehane, *The Pearl King*, 304-305.

waters and his company now operated from Broome once again. Around this time the schooner *Aladdin* was sold, Mullins believes to the Banda-based *Crediet & Handelsvereniging*.⁶⁵³ All that remained from the initial CTC fleets in Aru were the schooners *Ariel* and *Sketty Belle* and twenty-five vessels.⁶⁵⁴ When the diving season began in 1918, the size of their operation was barely one-sixth of what it was when the CTC first began pearl-shelling in Aru. Clark and his partners were gone, and the company was no longer a consortium but a small company with a new owner: Schmid & Jeandel.

Two things from this period bear noting before we discuss how the CTC fared under Schmid & Jeandel. The first concerns whether WWI had an impact to the rest of Aru.⁶⁵⁵ Government records reveal a world where regular colonial governance and policing of the Aruese continued with minor disruptions. Three Batuley communities on the Backshore (Kumul, Benjuring and Kabalsiang) were allegedly planning to murder foreign traders in January 1915.⁶⁵⁶ The murders were planned as retaliation against the outside traders' unfair business practices. In April 1915 there was a conflict between non-Christian and Christian villages, which caused some people to flee their villages.⁶⁵⁷ Other than these two incidents, there is little evidence to understand how WWI affected traditional pearl-shelling in Aru.

WWI also promoted the rise of trochus shell as an alternative material for the button industries.⁶⁵⁸ Australia first shipped trochus to Japan in 1912, where it was manufactured into cheap buttons. The local export only became noticeable because it continued throughout WWI. This development also occurred in the Netherlands Indies, where various places in the east began exporting trochus.⁶⁵⁹ After the War, the volume of Indies' exported trochus continued to rise as the export of pearl-shell fluctuated.

⁶⁵³ Mullins, *Octopus Crowd*, 240.

⁶⁵⁴ "De Parelvisserij in oorlogstijd," *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia), July 19 1918.

⁶⁵⁵ For a brief review on how WWI impacted the rest of Netherlands Indies economy, see Kees van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007), 143-164

⁶⁵⁶ NL-HaNA, Koloniën/ Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. 314, 46-47. It reveals the colonial mindset that the Dutch chose to use their centuries-old perception of trading practices in Aru to explain the event instead of the global freefall in pearl-shell demand that also affected the CTC at the time.

⁶⁵⁷ NL-HaNA, Koloniën/ Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. 313, 223-225. At this point the police corps in Dobo was 26 people strong, p.229.

⁶⁵⁸ Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait*, 199.

⁶⁵⁹ "Indisch Parelmoer," *De nieuwe vorstenlanden* (Soerakarta), February 19 1921, Gemengde berichten, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB19:000528055:mpeg21:a00022>.

A New CTC

The consortium structure of the CTC changed during WWI. The consortium broke up in 1915 and the CTC was sold on July 28, 1916.⁶⁶⁰ Schmid & Jeandel bought the CTC; before this purchase, the firm had an interest in the company but after 1917 it had a controlling interest.⁶⁶¹ Broadly speaking however, the company did not change much except in scale; workers who remained were still in employment and the Baadilla Brothers still operated alongside the CTC.⁶⁶² The ownership transfer changed the organisation of the CTC from a schooner-based fleet consortium to a unified company with a single account book.

On the other side of the maritime frontier, former CTC managers and operators continued their activities with one notable exception, James Clark. After suffering losses at the hands of two associates, James Clark sold his remaining fleet in 1921, marking an end to his participation in the pearl-shelling industry.⁶⁶³ His sole remaining tie with the Netherlands Indies was a coconut plantation he had in Seram. He and his nephew Victor Clark were co-owners the plantation Awaya since 1911, but in 1921 he severed their association over a dispute.⁶⁶⁴ James Clark spent the following decade focusing on his pastoral enterprises and involved in debates about merino wool export. He passed away in July 1933 in Brisbane, and most of his remaining wealth was then invested in his pastoral enterprises.⁶⁶⁵

Schmid & Jeandel (known as *Compagnie Commerciale Schmid et Jeandel*) was a trading firm based in Makassar.⁶⁶⁶ One of the company's namesake, Schmid was one of the CTC's representatives in the town and a principal contender for the Aru lease in 1909. It was a firm engaged in the export of exotic natural commodities, not only pearl-shell but also

⁶⁶⁰ Mullins, "To Break 'the trinity'"., 236.

⁶⁶¹ "Uit Makassar," *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia), March 10 1919, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010179684:mpeg21:a0003>.

⁶⁶² "De Parelvisscherij in Oorlogstijd." *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia), July 19 1918.

⁶⁶³ Lehane, *The Pearl King.*, 306-307 and Mullins, *Octopus Crowd.*, 239-240.

⁶⁶⁴ Lehane, *The Pearl King.*, 265-267. For more about Victor Clark and the plantation see Martínez and Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier.*, 66-68.

⁶⁶⁵ Lehane, *The Pearl King.*, 357-358.

⁶⁶⁶ According to the database Colonial Business Indonesia, the CTC under Schmid and Jeandel had f560 in equity in 1920. This amount is less than in 1910, when the company had f750 in equity. The database contains a brief, 5-year-lapse in information about the company between 1910 and 1940. See J. Thomas; Lindblad and David Henley, "Colonial Business Indonesia," (March 2, 2021 2016). <https://www.colonialbusinessindonesia.nl/nl/database/database>. The database compiled information from the annually published *Handboek voor Cultuur- en Handelondernemingen in Nederlandsch-Indië*. It was an output of historians Thomas Lindblad and David Henley's research project about the contribution of foreign investment in the development of Indies' economy.

bird-of-paradise feathers.⁶⁶⁷ The firm had a diverse portfolio and subsidiaries involved in different economic sectors. From 1917, the firm owned *Aroe Cultuur Maatschappij*, a coconut plantation outside of Dobo in Wamar. Beyond Aru, the firm administered plantation and a forest produce enterprise on Obi Island in 1925 and then expanded into the financial sector in the Outer Islands by 1935.⁶⁶⁸

Locally, Schmid & Jeandel's takeover of the CTC was not disruptive, it just meant that industrial pearl-shelling in Aru continued as usual. Nothing changed in the CTC operations, except the war continued to affect the CTC's ability to sell pearl-shell. There is not much evidence available about the CTC's day to day operation at this time, apart from the fact that the company was operating on a smaller scale and a glut of pearl-shell stockpiled in the CTC warehouse.

Schmid & Jeandel extended their pearl-shelling lease repeatedly after 1919 until WWII (see table 2). Their 1919 lease enabled them to operate until May 31, 1924 with between 25 vessels and 60 vessels.⁶⁶⁹ In the run-up to the 1924 extension, the government once again considered a licence system in order to increase revenue but discarded the plan, because enforcing it was simply too expensive. The lease running from 1924 to 1929 required an annual fee of f9,000 which allowed the CTC to operate thirty luggers. If the company wanted to add ten luggers, they had to pay an additional fee of f360 per vessel per year.⁶⁷⁰ Table 2 reveals the gradual decline of the Aru lease, an issue I discuss later. Here, it is important to stress what impact WWI had on pearl-shelling in Netherlands Indies.

WWI left a strong pessimistic impression on the pearl-shelling industry among Indies' observers and critics. As early as 1919 a newspaper article declared the CTC a company whose best days were behind it.⁶⁷¹ A 1920 article declared Dobo a *ville morte* since 'the collapse of pearl-shelling'.⁶⁷² Broadly speaking, the fact that the CTC scaled down its

⁶⁶⁷ Emiel Hullebroeck, *Insulinde: Reisindrukken* 2e druk ed. (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 1921). <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB21:036418000>, 138-140.

⁶⁶⁸ See Lindblad and Henley, "Colonial Business Indonesia." and "De Exploitatie op Groot-Obi en Obi-Bisa," *Bataviaasch nieuwsblad* (Batavia), October 2 1925, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011071670:mpeg21:a0179>.

⁶⁶⁹ NL-HaNA, Koloniën/ Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. 329, Hoofdstuk XIII Parelvisserij, 12-15.

⁶⁷⁰ The traditional owners in Aru received f1,800 per year in damages between 1924-1929.

⁶⁷¹ "Uit Makassar." *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië (Batavia)*, March 10 1919.

⁶⁷² "Hr. M's "Tromp"," *Sumatra-Bode* (Padang), January 15 1920, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB19:002112012:mpeg21:a00017>.

activity conveyed an impression that the era of pearl-shelling had passed. Years after this, newspaper articles writing about pearl-shelling in Aru continued to use the 1905 depiction of the CTC to recall golden years of the industry.

*Table 2 The CTC pearl-shelling lease in Aru, 1905-1938.*⁶⁷³

Leasing period	Lease per year	*
1905-1908	f30,000	
1909-1919	f240 (f33600)	*per vessel
1919-1924	f240	*per vessel
1929-1934	f12500	
1934-1935	f9000	
1935-1937	f8000	
1937-1938	f10000	
1938	f5000	

Schmid & Jeandel did little to counter these concerns. After WWI, the CTC requested debt liquidation from the colonial government, citing the war as the main reason. The request asked for a tax waiver for the Aru lease between June 1914 and May 1917 (three years).⁶⁷⁴ Apart from that, the CTC also asked the government to review the fee for the Aru pearl-shelling lease. The government approved a partial remission of the CTC's debt in 1921 and also agreed to review the Aru lease. There was not a lot of opposition to the decision, testament to a general agreement that the industry needed help.

However, the decline of the pearl-shelling industry in the Netherlands Indies was not so dramatic or drastic as depicted in the newspapers. This was, after all, an industry that in Australia lasted to the 1960s. Rather, the industry experienced a slow but steady erosion, a process which repetitive crises highlighted. As Bach notes, the pearl-shelling industry experienced three crises in the first half of the twentieth century. The first one was connected to WWI, whose impact upon the CTC I explain above. The next two entangled crises came in close sequence, as the Great Depression hits, followed by the overwhelming

⁶⁷³ Reprinted from Besluit 1941-07-14 (afschrift) in ANRI GBBT 3671. The overlap in leasing periods is as in the original source.

⁶⁷⁴ "Kwijtschelding Vordering-Celebes Handelsmij.," *De Preanger-Bode* (Bandoeng), September 12 1921, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB08:000131226:mpeg21:a0044>.

competition from Japanese shellers in the 1930s.⁶⁷⁵ All three crises altered demand in pearl-shelling. The CTC barely weathered the first crisis, but worse was to come.

Neither James Clark nor Sech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla went through the ensuing post-war crises. While James Clark withdrew from the industry with some losses in 1921, Sech Said, exited the industry with significant losses. On June 25, 1928 the court in Makassar declared Sech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla bankrupt.⁶⁷⁶ Lamenting the downfall of his business and fortune, an article in *De Locomotief* portrayed Sech Said as a diligent hard-working man, yet expressed no surprise at his bankruptcy, stating that for years the threat to his pearling business was obvious. The article blamed his bankruptcy on the irresponsible character of his descendants, who ‘were beguiled by the expensive delights in western big-city life’ and failed to maintain the family business.⁶⁷⁷ Des Alwi, Sech Said’s grandson, agrees with this assessment and his memoir explains in detail the wasteful spending of his uncles.⁶⁷⁸ Sech Said’s eventual bankruptcy marked the end of his family-run pearl-shelling enterprise; Chiu, a Chinese man, purchased the remaining company vessels. With the exit of Sech Said in 1928, the era of pearl-kings was over.

The CTC after Baadilla and Clark

Before discussing the decade of the 1930s, it is necessary to discuss the repeated economic crises in this decade. The global Depression began in 1929 and it further exacerbated the crisis in the Netherlands Indies’ export sector. The economic expansion of the Indies from the 1830s owed much to the rise of the so-called ‘Western sector,’ Western entrepreneurs heavily invested in export-oriented agricultural production.⁶⁷⁹ The sector was heavily dependent on export commodities and circulations and was, therefore, vulnerable to changes in the world markets. From 1920 to 1928 the prices of the Indies’ main export

⁶⁷⁵ Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia.*, 180, 184-185. CTC shared Australia’s target market for their produce, so it is reasonable that the two ensuing crises also affected CTC.

⁶⁷⁶ "Faillissementen," *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* (Batavia), June 23 1928, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011071913:mpeg21:a0080>.

⁶⁷⁷ "Bankroeten in de Molukken: Wat al jarenlang dreigde," *De Locomotief* (Semarang) 1928, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001719107:mpeg21:a00006>.

⁶⁷⁸ Alwi and Harvey, *Friends and Exiles.*, 13-15, 18. Abdurrachim and Evie Baadilla also agreed that the family’s opulent lifestyle led to unwise financial decisions.

⁶⁷⁹ Vincent Houben, “Java in the 19th Century: Consolidation of a Territorial State,” in Howard Dick et al., *The Emergence of a National Economy: An Economic History of Indonesia, 1800-2000*, Southeast Asia Publications Series, (Crows Nest, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2002)., 66-73.

commodities were in decline.⁶⁸⁰ The outbreak of the Depression plunged the trade-dependent economy further into recession, with the export sector suffering most as the prices of Indies' main export commodities (sugar, coffee, and rubber) fell sharply in this period.⁶⁸¹

The pearl-shelling industry on both sides of the pearl frontier shared a similar fate in the 1920s. There was a surplus of pearl-shell, and no market was able to absorb the excess product.⁶⁸² Responding urgently to the problem, both the federal and state governments devised schemes to reduce the Australian industry output. In 1930, Gerdau asked the pearl-shellers in Broome, Thursday Island and Darwin to reduce their annual take. The pearl-sheller associations in the first two centres were willing to impose a quota and did until 1933. But the pearl-shellers in Darwin could not come to an agreement. When the government tried to step in, some members threatened to work offshore from Dobo, where the Indies government made no effort to interfere in the industry.⁶⁸³ However, even if they did move, the Darwin pearl-shellers still could not escape the impact of the economic crises.

The Depression also affected the scale of pearl-shell export in the Netherlands Indies. In 1931 especially, the value of Indies pearl-shell experienced a drastic free fall. The recorded value of the export that year was only two-thirds of the previous year; f651,522 in 1931 as opposed to f914,778 in 1930.⁶⁸⁴ That year the export to the United States, the most important overseas market, dropped from f464,070 to f183,500 in value (see Table 3). The Depression also affected the CTC; in a 1932 interview a manager confirmed that their income had decreased over the last few years. The Depression had markedly affected the world market and the CTC's export capacity, but the manager expressed hope that the industry would recover.⁶⁸⁵

⁶⁸⁰ Thomas Lindblad, "The Late Colonial State and Economic Expansion, 1900-1930s," in Dick et al., *The Emergence of a National Economy.*, 123-128. See also Anne Booth, *The Indonesian Economy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A History of Missed Opportunities* (London: MacMillan Press, 1998), 34-47.

⁶⁸¹ Howard Dick, "Formation of the Nation-state, 1930s-1966," in Dick et al., *The Emergence of a National Economy.*, 155-157.

⁶⁸² Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait.*, 211-213 and Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia.*, 184-189.

⁶⁸³ Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia.*, 185.

⁶⁸⁴ "De handel in schelpen," *De Indische Mercur*, October 11, 1933, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMUBL09:001052042:00002>.

⁶⁸⁵ The article suggests that pearl-bank depletion also contributed to the crises, but the manager did not comment at length on it and blamed both the lack of pearls and the market. Van een correspondent, "Door de Molukken. XIII. De Aroe-eilanden.," *Soerabaijasch handelsblad* (Soerabaja), August 18 1932, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010968814:mpeg21:a0219>.

Table 3 The value of Netherlands Indies pearl-shell export, 1928-1932 (in guilders).⁶⁸⁶

Destination	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932
The Netherlands (v.o.)	57,618	35,551	-	108,109	110,020
Great Britain	107,040	26,775	84,625	86,546	143,810
Great Britain (v.o)	-	106,926	25,826	-	-
Germany	74,962	77,201	139,540	77,785	70,041
Italy	36,520	36,916	42,903	10,476	13,379
Italy (v.o.)	8,234	20,790	82,379	132,550	-
United States	548,345	587,459	464,070	183,500	414,358
France	-	24,207	19,717	7,672	-
France (v.o.)	-	-	31,864	34,189	-
Japan	-	14,298	23,654	6,390	6,520
Singapore	-	-	-	3,818	-
TOTAL	839,210	931,454	914,778	651,522	764,726

All these extrinsic developments and crises over the two previous decades led to the CTC's precarious circumstances in the mid-1930s. The activities of two people in the 1930s allow us to glimpse the situation in Aru after Sech Said and James Clark left the area; the first individual is a Japanese merchant Chahacij Samabara (*sic.*), and the second one is an Australian, H. C. Jardine. The activities of both provide effective insight into understanding the CTC's condition in this decade and the character of pearl-shelling in Aru just before WWII.

In 1935 the CTC saw *Nichelen*, a Japanese vessel, searching for pearls within Aru territorial waters.⁶⁸⁷ Responding to their concerned report, the government investigated the incident. The subsequent inquiry revealed the complicated arrangement behind the ownership of the vessel. The vessel belonged to Christoffel Karam, the orangkaya of Balatang (a community on the Backshore) who had an arrangement with Chahacij Samabara a Japanese man based in Dobo. According to the arrangement, Samabara was to assist them in the operation, providing diving gear in exchange for a percentage of the

⁶⁸⁶ Reprinted from "De handel in schelpen.", *De Indische Mercur*, October 11, 1933, 642.

⁶⁸⁷ Letter from the General Secretary to the Advisor for East Asian Affairs, 07-10-1935 in ANRI GBBT 3671.

catch. The Dutch forbade the arrangement, stating that it violated the spirit of the pearl-shelling ordinance and would inspire others to develop similar covert schemes with local communities.⁶⁸⁸ The decision confirmed that the spirit of the pearl-shelling ordinance depended on the Aruese never obtaining diving gear and expanding their own pearl-shelling activity.

Apart from Samabara's aborted business scheme, by the mid-1930s the Japanese population in Dobo were also involved in various enterprises. In 1937, there were 115 Japanese people residing in Aru.⁶⁸⁹ Among them, 78 were men older than sixteen years of age, the rest (thirty-seven) were women and children. Of the seventy-eight men, twenty-five were CTC workers.⁶⁹⁰ The others were involved in various enterprises, some connected to the pearl-shelling economy. By 1933, three people were recognised as independent pearl-shellers and this number continued to grow.⁶⁹¹ By 1937, the Japanese populace owned and or operated around 120 vessels around Aru.⁶⁹² Responding to the opportunity presented by the pearl-shelling export industry, a widow named Nagano opened a sawmill on Wokam, manufacturing wooden boxes to transport pearl-shell and supplying ironwood for a Japanese enterprise in south New Guinea. Others were involved in more mundane day to day enterprises, like operating stores. For example, Gitaro Wada, a storeowner was found guilty for clandestinely selling gunpowder and ammunition in 1936.⁶⁹³

The hypervisibility of the Japanese in colonial records is notable because they were not the largest population of Dobo.⁶⁹⁴ Trade disruption during WWI enabled an influx of Japanese commercial enterprises in the Netherlands Indies.⁶⁹⁵ The Dutch considered the continued dominance of Japanese products a commercial threat, and in 1933 issued an

⁶⁸⁸ In May 1935, Samabara asked for permission to teach some Aruese to use diving gear, but the Dutch forbade him because they also feared that it might inspire other Japanese-Aruese collaborations. Letter from the Resident of Amboina, 20-06-1935 in ANRI GBBT 3671.

⁶⁸⁹ NL-HaNA, Koloniën/ Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. 1242., 4.

⁶⁹⁰ NL-HaNA, Koloniën/ Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. 1242., 11-12.

⁶⁹¹ "De Dobosche paarlvisscherij," *De Indische courant* (Soerabaia), September 8 1933, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010284714:mpeg21:a0150>.

⁶⁹² There were a lot of other privately-owned vessels around Dobo at that time, but the CTC was the only one legally allowed to fish within the three-mile limit, per their lease. In 1937, two big Japanese business groups also began operating around Aru, perhaps part of the 120 vessels. See Howard Dick, "Japan's Economic Expansion in the Netherlands Indies between the First and Second World Wars," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 20, no. 2 (1989), 262-263.

⁶⁹³ NL-HaNA, Koloniën/ Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. 1242, 6.

⁶⁹⁴ The report noted that in 1937, there were approximately 650 Chinese living in Aru, and around one thousand non-Aru colonial subjects. See NL-HaNA, Koloniën/ Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. 1242.,4.

⁶⁹⁵ Post, *Japanse Bedrijvigheid in Indonesie.*, 97-99.

ordinance imposing a quota on Japanese imports.⁶⁹⁶ The trade competition exposed the increasing tension between the Netherlands and Japan. By the middle 1930s, the Manchurian invasion had compromised Japan's standing in the international community. This affected the Japanese diaspora, colonial regimes across Southeast Asia suspected Japanese fishers of providing intelligence information to the Japanese military.⁶⁹⁷ This growing suspicion and concern also affected the community in Dobo, where the possibility of a so-called Japanese invasion was heard as early as 1933.⁶⁹⁸

The Japanese community also demonstrated that foreign economic activities in Aru no longer evolved solely around pearl-shelling. In 1937 some Japanese business groups were among foreigners that had interest in the diverse enterprises. The entrance of foreign capital was directly connected to the arrival of migrant settlers. The Sato Coconut Plantation in Fatoedjoering (southwest of Maikoor island) provides an instructive example. The Dutch granted Sato Kaname a territorial lease to open a plantation in 1917.⁶⁹⁹ The lease was meant to expire seventy-five years after it was granted, but Sato placed the plantation on sale in 1933. He advertised that his company operated 1,500 hectares of land on which there were forty-three thousand coconut trees. Taiwan Kaisha Bank, a bank connected to a large Japanese business group, immediately took over the plantation.⁷⁰⁰ By the 1930s, the CTC was hardly the only significant foreign enterprise operating in Aru.

The circumstances that initially enabled the CTC to operate in 1905 also had led to the arrival of additional foreign capital in Aru. In 1906, Victor Clark and Abdul Rahim bin Abdullah Baadilla submitted requests to the Resident of Amboina to pioneer coconut cultivation in Aru.⁷⁰¹ The government rejected their request, citing concern that the new enterprise might harm Aru local interests. But after 1917, the government began to issue territorial leases. As I mention earlier, Schmid and Jeandel had a subsidiary enterprise in Aru, Aroe Cultuur Maatschappij. In the 1930s two Australians, C. Monsted (the CTC

⁶⁹⁶ Dick, "Japan's Economic Expansion.", 253-254. See also Post, *Japane Bedrijvigheid in Indonesie.*, 187-190, 193-203.

⁶⁹⁷ See Butcher, *The Closing of the Frontier.*, 166-167. See also Dick, "Japan's Economic Expansion.", 259-260, 264-267. Dick addressed how WWII had made it difficult to separate Japan's economic expansion from the state's imperial ambition.

⁶⁹⁸ "De Dobosche paarlvisscherij," *De Indische courant* (Soerabaia), September 8 1933.

⁶⁹⁹ "Openbare Verkoop," *De Locomotief* (Samarang), March 3 1933, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001744007:mpeg21:a00323>.

⁷⁰⁰ NL-HaNA, Koloniën/ Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. 1242, 14. The group was Taiwan Takushoku K.K., one of the four business groups that the Dutch government called 'organs of penetration.' See Dick, "Japan's Economic Expansion.", 261-263.

⁷⁰¹ ANRI Bt. 27-10-1906 no. 31.

manager) and H.C. Jardine, also obtained ground-leases and developed their own coconut plantations.⁷⁰² Aru in 1937 was a place where foreigners with venture capital invested in various agricultural enterprises and pearl-shelling.

The presence of the plantation-owner H. C. Jardine also provides a useful point of entry into considering the state of pearl-shelling in 1930s Aru. Before his death in 1935, Jardine represented J.B. Carpenter & Sons in the archipelago.⁷⁰³ Carpenter & Sons was a pearl-shelling company based in Thursday Island, but by 1934 they also had a headquarter in Dobo from where they operated up to four vessels in the extraterritorial waters beyond southeast Aru.⁷⁰⁴ Their operations revealed how pearl-shelling in Aru had changed by then. The changes were a direct consequence of colonial policies which also allowed foreigners to lease land in Aru. In a 1905 Decree, the Dutch colonial administration had opened Dobo as a port for general import and export.⁷⁰⁵ A proper enforcement of this decree should have enabled foreign pearl-shellers to enter and exit Dobo without restraint, even when they had a cargo of pearl-shell. Local officials did not act upon this decree until much later.⁷⁰⁶ This delay in enforcement favoured the CTC, because when the decree finally came into effect the company lost their competitive advantage as other foreign pearl-shellers, like the Australian Carpenter & Sons, could now also operate from Dobo, as long as they searched for shells beyond the boundaries of territorial waters.

Carpenter and Sons were one of many foreign pearl-shellers operating in extra-territorial waters in 1935. Two Dutch officials visited the pearling grounds fifteen miles south of Enu and Karang Island in March that year.⁷⁰⁷ The CTC was pearl-shelling there, using the schooner *Ariel* as the mother ship for the twelve luggers. The two officials also saw the

⁷⁰² NL-HaNA, Koloniën/ Memories van Overgave, 2.10.39, inv.nr. 1242, 12 &14. Monsted's plantation was in Pulau Toba where he kept eight or nine cows. Jardine passed away in 1935 and an Englishman, C. R. Sheldon took over his copra plantation on Pulau Babi. Sheldon was the respondent for the Dobo News Item for Australian newspapers.

⁷⁰³ "DEATH OF MARK AITKEN," *Northern Standard (Darwin, NT 1921 - 1955)* (Darwin, NT), 07 January 1936, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article49429184>.

⁷⁰⁴ According to Schmid and Jeandel, there were two Carpenter vessels in August 1934. A government report from March 1935 mentions that the company had four vessels around Aru: *Zena*, *Collin*, *Torres* and *Adriana*. See Letter to the Resident of Amboina, 07-08-1934 & Verslag van een gedane zeeronde naar den achterwal der Aroe-eilanden met de motorschoener 'Princess Mary' in ANRI GBBT 3671.

⁷⁰⁵ See Decree no. 587 of 1905 Openstelling van de havens van Dobo en Toeal voor den algemeenen handel in *Staatsblad van het Nederlandsch-Indie over het jaar 1905*, (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1906). <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB07:001311001:00007>.

⁷⁰⁶ Dutch officials were aware and discussed this contradiction when the CTC was applying for the lease extension in 1909. See in ANRI GBBT MGS 4593.

⁷⁰⁷ Verslag van een gedane zeeronde naar den achterwal der Aroe-eilanden met de motorschoener 'Princess Mary' in ANRI GBBT 3671.

Carpenter & Sons' vessel and several other Australian pearling vessels. At that time, Victor Clark had five vessels operating out of Darwin. In the 1935 season, there were forty-two non-CTC vessels operating near Enu and Karang, and half of them were from Australia.⁷⁰⁸

As important to note were the presence of Japanese vessels. Of the forty-two vessels around Enu-Karang in March 1935, fourteen sailed under the Japanese flag.⁷⁰⁹ This is distinct from the Japanese populace in Dobo and Amboina who also had vessels flying the Indies flag. The growing presence of Japanese vessels was part of a larger trend emerging in fisheries history. What the local officials witnessed was the expansion of Japanese fishing activities in archipelagic Southeast Asia.⁷¹⁰ The fourteen vessels in question shipped their pearl-shell to Palau. While operating in the Aru pearl-banks, they relied on support from *New Guinea Maru*, a motorised schooner also flying the Imperial Japanese flag.

In the 1930s, some Japanese corporations used Palau as their principal centre for trading activities in the region. One of the key activities was pearl-shelling, operating around Aru and northern Australia.⁷¹¹ In 1937, *Nanyo Kohatsu Kabushiki Kaisha*, a major Japanese public corporation, began sending fleets to Aru and as far south as Australia's northern coast.⁷¹² The company, historian Peter Post suggests, had connections to Japanese pearl-shellers in Thursday Island. Palau became particularly important after British colonial authorities issued policies to curb Japanese fishing enterprises.⁷¹³ The Netherlands Indies government reacted to the 'Japanese threat' by reversing their 1905 Decree and closing Dobo to foreign vessels in 1936.⁷¹⁴

Beside closing the port of Dobo to external trade, the Dutch could do little to deter the foreign pearl-shellers. Like the Australians, Japanese pearl-shelling activity took place in extraterritorial waters and the impacts were negligible until 1935. In 1936, 6,015 tons of pearl-shell were lifted; Australia produced 2,780 of them, Japanese fishers lifted 1,850

⁷⁰⁸ In the late twenties, there was a small exodus as some pearl-shellers relocated from Broome to Darwin. Victor Clark moved in 1924 after a dispute with the Fisheries Department according to John Bach. See Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia*, 167. The other vessels in Enu belonged to V.J. Kepert, R. Edwards, J & T Muramats and R. Gregory.

⁷⁰⁹ Verslag van een gedane zeeonderzoek naar den achterwal der Aroe-eilanden met de motorschoener 'Princess Mary' in ANRI GBBT 3671, 5-6.

⁷¹⁰ Butcher, *The Closing of the Frontier*, 132-135, 141-159.

⁷¹¹ Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait*, 135-138.

⁷¹² Post, *Japanese Bedrijvigheid in Indonesie*, 266-267.

⁷¹³ Shimizu, "The Japanese Fisheries Based in Singapore, 1892-1945.", 339-340.

⁷¹⁴ Post, *Japanese Bedrijvigheid in Indonesie*, 263-264.

and the Indies produced 1,385 tons.⁷¹⁵ This represented a rapid increase over the previous year when Japanese fishers procured 750 tons from the extraterritorial waters across the pearl frontier. The volume of pearl-shell lifted by Japanese fishers continued to rise in the following years. It culminated in the 1938-1939 crisis, when Australian pearl-shellers found no American buyers, because Japanese pearl-shellers allegedly sold their catch in New York at a lower market price. The competition between Japanese and Australian pearl-shellers had led to a glut of pearl-shell with no new market to purchase them.

The 1938-1939 crisis further exacerbated the CTC's misfortune and sent the company into further decline. As noted above, the decade began with the onset of the Depression which had an immense impact on the CTC. Their constant difficulty was revealed in 1934, when the Aru lease expired. When the company wanted to extend it, Schmid & Jeandel were in a difficult financial position. They needed to convince the government that the price of the Aru lease was too high and to reduce the lease to f9,000, due to the falling global pearl-shell price.⁷¹⁶ To make their case, Schmid and Jeandel shared the company books with the government accountant, who agreed that 1933 and 1934 were particularly bad years for the CTC. They convinced the government to reduce the cost of the lease in 1934, but that did not solve the problem. In April 1936, the company experienced a more severe blow as strong winds wrecked *Ariel*, their only remaining schooner from the early days of the CTC.⁷¹⁷ The CTC was in trouble and government reduced the 1938 to 1940 Aru lease further to f5,000 per year, but in September 1939 Schmid & Jeandel still requested a debt waiver for the 1938-1939 period.⁷¹⁸

Schmid & Jeandel requested the waiver for several reasons. The company claimed that the CTC had lost hundreds of thousands of guilders since 1932.⁷¹⁹ The CTC effectively stopped their pearl-shelling operations in November 1938 because their financial conditions had worsened. The company provided an itemised list of the challenges they faced which included the poor global market price for shell due to oversupply and a disease outbreak among Aru pearl-shells.⁷²⁰ The CTC was operating at a total loss at that point,

⁷¹⁵ Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia.*, 189-190.

⁷¹⁶ See Rapport, inzake een nader onderzoek naar de resultaten van het parel- en schelpen visscherbedrijf der Celebes Trading Company Ltd. in ANRI GBBT 3671.

⁷¹⁷ "DOBO ITEMS," *Northern Standard* (Darwin, NT), 08 May 1936, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article49431798>.

⁷¹⁸ Bt. 16-10-1940 nr. 12 in ANRI GBBT 3671.

⁷¹⁹ Schmid & Jeandel claimed they had accumulated f145,191,80 in unsettled loss in September 1940. Letter from N.V. Compagnie Commerciale Schmid & Jeandel to the Director of Economic Affairs, 13-09-1940 in ANRI GBBT 3671.

⁷²⁰ Letter from N.V. Compagnie Commerciale Schmid & Jeandel to the Governor General, 22-09-1939 in ANRI GBBT 3671.

and had no intention to resume their operation in 1940. The government was convinced of the company's dire financial strait and approved their request for a further debt waiver.⁷²¹

Nevertheless, the CTC at this point was an embattled company as their rivals triumphed. In January 1934, a Dutch official wrote a critical report assessing the CTC and concluded that the company was simply not modern enough.⁷²² To save the company and to compete against their rivals, he recommended they modernize and expand their fleet. There is no indication that the company did this. Instead, the CTC manager C. A. Monsted blamed their losses on the ability of their rivals, either from Japan or Australia, to freely move into Aru waters.⁷²³ The CTC's problem was that there were too many rival pearl-shellshers. As more foreigners arrived in Aru, the CTC lost their competitive advantage.

I could not find record on how the Aruese and their pearl-shelling activities fared in this period and how they dealt with the repeated crises and changes in the global market. Reports on social interactions around Aru's pearling grounds in the 1930s are also sparse, but the evidence available is very interesting. Pearl-shellshers appear to have had more extensive contact with the Aruese when operating in the southeast of Aru. A 1935 report mentioned that the Japanese schooner *New Guinea Maru* sometimes anchored at Enu Island and operated there as a floating store.⁷²⁴ In Mesiang, Australian products and money were used in trade and exchange at the local level. Other glimpses of episodic contact appear in moments when all the vessels operating around Karang and Enu went to get water from a well in Pulau Kelapa.⁷²⁵ The pearl-shellshers also hunted wild pigs and doves there during their off-time. All of this contact and interactions occurred outside the prying eyes of colonial government, who still did not have the resources to maintain an official there. In the eve of WWII, Aru was still a lively remote place where pearl-shelling allowed a diverse group of foreign traders and business interests to meet and interact

⁷²¹ The company also asked for an extension of the lease without pay but the government rejected that request.

⁷²² Nota van den Gezaghebber der Aroe-eilanden betreffende de visscherij van Aroe-paarlemoerschelpen (hoofdzakelijk betrekking hebbende op de werkwijze der Celebes Trading Company) in ANRI GBBT 3671.

⁷²³ Letter from C.A. Monsted, 23-02-1935 in ANRI GBBT 3671.

⁷²⁴ Verslag van een gedane zeeronde naar den achterwal der Aroe-eilanden met de motorschoener 'Princess Mary' in ANRI GBBT 3671.

⁷²⁵ It appears this pattern of contact continued into the 1970s. According to Lukas Remkuy, every Sunday workers of the pearl-shelling enterprises would attend church service on the island. Interview Lukas Remkuy & Penina Djamdjig (14/02/2019).

with the Aruese. WWII would put an abrupt end to this, as the Japanese troops arrived and began occupying Aru.

This chapter discussed the decline of the CTC in Aru. Their initial lease extension was the last time CTC really faced a challenge from the Dutch colonial government. The reversal of their fortune was a consequence of price changes in the global commodity market due to WWI, the onset of the Depression, and the expansion of Japanese fishing fleets, which dealt blows to the entire industry. When James Clark left the pearl-shelling industry and Sech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla went bankrupt, what remained of the CTC continued to decline. The Japanese fishers and other Australian pearl-shellers became the CTC's principal rivals. The porous borders that once allowed the CTC founders to monopolise Aru waters also now proved to be a source of the company's financial collapse.

Conclusion: A world shared and left behind

A retelling of the Celebes Trading Company's arrival and tenure in Aru would make for poor fiction; such a dramatic build-up over three decades just to have everything gradually fall apart in the following three decades. All that initial pioneering drama from the 1870s led to some good years for the Australians, followed by a protracted decline between 1908 and WWII. In the long history of pearl-shelling in the region, the four-decade presence of the CTC was not remarkable and a focus on the company's operations and profits impress on us its episodic and transient nature. However, by placing the CTC's presence and activities within the broader framework of Aru's historical development one can reveal their long-standing impact.

This thesis, through a historical focus on pearl-shelling, demonstrates how the industry triggered a series of chain-related socio-economic processes in a distant border region between two colonial regimes after the 1870s. Unlike Mullins, Martinez and Vickers, this thesis focuses on a historical sense of place on Aru and thereby reveals the localised, historical consequences of the mobility of the industry. Australian interventions into Aru, which culminated in the CTC's operations, affected the archipelago's political history as the colonial government responded by reordering the Aruese landscape, seascape, and local lives. The Aruese did not seek the unfolding pearl frontier, the pearl frontier found them. That temporary moment in regional time from 1870 to 1942 framed specific cultural-ecological, economic, and political encounters that shaped Aru's past and present. In this respect, the thesis also differs from Spyer's more contemporary ethnographic work on the historic and continued engagement of the Aruese with foreigners and modernity. The historic moment this thesis covers ends with the arrival of Japanese occupying forces in 1942, and this thesis simply excavates what the moment left behind.

An enduring commodity

A few themes appear throughout this thesis, and central among them is the enduring quality of pearl-shell as a trade commodity. This thesis focuses on *Pinctada maxima*, a species of pearl-shell found in the pearl-banks around Aru, specifically the silver-lipped variety. Chapter One discusses how demand for it and other marine produce had shaped lives in Aru for centuries. Through trade in Banda, Aru was integrated into a global trade

network which predated the arrival of the Dutch in the region.⁷²⁶ From their arrival in the seventeenth century, the VOC were somewhat interested in the pearling industry and tried tapping into it. The VOC maintained some presence in the archipelago, but it is unclear how their presence affected the industry, as the experienced local traders were able to evade them.⁷²⁷

Pearl-shell is a specific kind of commodity, as it was considered both a luxury and bulk commodity. Pearls were historically desirable items and always marketable, but the value of the bivalve that produced them differed. Pearl-shell was a niche product, with inherent potential that highly skilled artisans could unleash. These artisans were located far from Aru in China and Europe, so the pearl-shell had to travel a great distance. As Meilink-Roelofs notes, 'the greater the distances, the more luxurious character of the merchandise predominates'.⁷²⁸ Pearl-shell was not rice nor pearls, but traders believed it was worth transporting long distances to places where it was processed.

Trade in Aru survived even when desire and demand for pearl-shell fluctuated. The Aru archipelago also had other desired trade commodities both from the sea (trepanng) and the forest (birds of paradise). Hence, historically speaking, the Aruese adapted to changes in global demand for commodities. Throughout the nineteenth century, external trade flourished and Dobo, a foreign settlement where seasonal traders resided during the trading season, grew. Despite such growth, life for the Aruese proceeded with only sporadic colonial interference and governance. This changed in the second half of the nineteenth century because demand for pearl-shell rose when it became the primary material for button manufacture.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, global demand for pearl-shell inspired British and European men in Australia to participate in the industry.⁷²⁹ Some of them had sufficient capital to purchase shipping and diving technologies that enabled them to develop advanced ways to collect pearl-shell. The biggest pearl-shellers operated using the floating station system, wherein a schooner acted as the mother ship around which smaller vessels searched for shell. The extractive industry was labour and capital-

⁷²⁶ Lampers, *In het Spoor van den Compagnie.*, 11.

⁷²⁷ Gordon, Djonler, and Hägerdal, "The Killing of Posthouder Scheerder.", 338-340.

⁷²⁸ M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague Martinus Nijhoff, 1962)., 6.

⁷²⁹ Before this time, for centuries Aboriginal communities along the north and northwest of Australia also searched for pearls along the coasts. See Michael McCarthy 'Early Pearling on the Indian Ocean's Southeast Fringe' in Machado, Mullins, and Christensen, *Pearls, People, and Power.*, 153-169. See also Ganter, *The Pearl-shellers of Torres Strait.*, 155-175.

intensive, and dependent upon indentured labour from Japan and archipelagic Southeast Asia. The floating station system was also very mobile, operating across the top end of Australia from Thursday Island to Broome and Darwin. As the men pushed further and further away from northern Australia in search of pearl-shell, they, like numerous others before them, arrived in the waters around Aru.⁷³⁰ Aru was historically accustomed to foreigners, but the Australian pearl-shellers were intruder of a different kind; one that pushed the Dutch to colonise Aru.

A special kind of intruder: from contact zone to frontier

Australians began appearing in the waters of Aru sporadically in 1872.⁷³¹ Part of their wandering search brought them to the waters of the wider Moluccan and New Guinea region, but Aru was special because of its pearl-banks. Between 1870 and 1890, there were various sightings of Australian vessels pearling in the region. Three vessels are particularly important because their sightings and activities caused incidents and set precedents: the barque *Costa Rica Packet* and schooners *Coral Sea* and *Mavis*. Chapter One and Three discuss how these vessels and the prospect of further incursions influenced the future course of Aru history.

The incursions of Australian pearl-shellers into Aru waters occurred during the height of colonial expansion and border-making project in the Outer Islands of the Netherlands Indies. Internally, the Dutch first began annexing more and more territory on Java, Borneo and Sumatra from the 1820s.⁷³² Externally, European powers were constantly negotiating colonial borders and territorial occupation and expansion. In the Indies, the problems this caused were especially apparent in Outer Islands whose landmass the Netherlands Indies shared with other colonial powers. In North Borneo, the energetic and ambitious James Brooke laid the foundation and influenced the Anglo-Dutch rivalry and border-making project, demonstrating the undue impact of an enterprising individual.⁷³³ The Dutch quickly recognised his presence in Sarawak as a threat to their authority in Borneo as he exposed their tenuous hold over the neighbouring region. This fear and

⁷³⁰ Butcher, *The Closing of the Frontier*, 124-129.

⁷³¹ Mullins, "VRIJBUITERS!"

⁷³² Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Indonesia*, 114-122.

⁷³³ For Brooke's career, his dealings in North Borneo and Dutch reaction thereto from the 1840s, see Graham Irwin, *Nineteenth-Century Borneo: A Study in Diplomatic Rivalry*, vol. 15 (Brill, 1955). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctvbnm4tq>, especially 71-171. Later, the North Borneo Chartered Company in the 1880s were also implicated in the debate over the Anglo-Dutch border, see Warren, *The North Borneo Chartered Company's Administration of the Bajau*, 22., 48-50.

concern remained present in the following decades and helps explain their reaction towards the Australian pearl-shellers.

Thus, the Dutch administration frantically followed in the footsteps of the Australian interlopers. Aru was not a landmass bordering a British protectorate; but the Dutch were aware that these incursions highlighted their absence in such border regions. Unlike on land, determination of the limits of territorial waters depends on the coastline. In the 1870s and 1880s, the concept of demarcated territorial waters was still undefined and to further confuse matters, the coastline of the Aru Islands was still uncharted. The activities of Australian pearl-shellers near Aru brought the question of territorial waters in the Netherlands Indies to the fore, as it applied to their activities in Aru until 1890s.

Due to these Australian incursions, the colonial border-making project in Aru were expedited and included both its land and waters. The Dutch resolved the territorial question on by abandoning indirect rule and absentee governance through the placement of colonial officials in Aru. The resolution of jurisdiction over water was complicated and required more time. The archipelago itself became backdrop for this confusing and tumultuous time, as the imperial ambitions of the Dutch collided with the Australians' desire for pearl-shell.

The Aruese had limited choice and say regarding these developments and changes in their midst. Opinions about these foreigners were divided, as were ideas about their place in local cosmology. The last two decades of the nineteenth century saw at least three resistance movements occur; Belbel, Naelar and Toelfoeloen. In each of these uprisings, local opinions about foreigners and visions of Aru's future circumstances were expressed. The Dutch quickly suppressed them and moved to resolve the vexed issue of territorial waters to handle Australian pearl-shellers. The British were the only contender to their authority in Aru that they brought to the negotiation table.

Territorial waters and the person on the spot

Resolving the 'Australian pearl-sheller problem' required a two-pronged approach. In London and The Hague, the metropolises took on the 'territorial waters' issue and its legal-philosophical questions.⁷³⁴ In the Indies, the pragmatic solution sought was technical: chart the Aru backshore. A precise map of Aru's Backshore was required for both The

⁷³⁴ Butcher and Elson, *Sovereignty and the Sea.*, 6-15.

Hague and London to use in case of future disputes, as Australian pearl-shell-ers insisted on operating in the seas east of Aru. A satisfactory resolution of the problem for both sides required intimate knowledge of the region, something that the Dutch did not have at the time. Hydrographic knowledge of Aru and its waters was a practical necessity, to resolve the diplomatic jurisdiction problem in the metropole.

An essential part of the process in the discussions between The Hague and London, was the correspondences from the colony. Historian C.A. Bayly in his study on social information and intelligence gathering in India demonstrated the British Raj needed diverse forms of information to govern their empire.⁷³⁵ Before the 1890s, the Dutch had a general, if somewhat vague knowledge of the Aru archipelago, compiled from sporadic visits over the centuries. The expanding colonial administration utilised these accounts and reports; Dutch officials stationed in Aru and in Amboina wrote numerous letters and reports to their superiors in the nineteenth century, to provide 'local' perspective to colonial officials in Batavia and The Hague.

In the colonial periphery like Aru, local officials were physical manifestations of government expansion who also established a direct line of communication between the Dutch government and the Aruese. In the works of such colonial officials, the Dutch imperial ambition and the reality of daily life in Aru coalesced. Chapter Two and Three discusses the character of colonial governance, which was heavily dependent on officials in-situ. In the day-to-day administration of Aru they had to establish law and order and become the government's eyes, ear and mouthpiece. In such a capacity, they filed topical letters and conducted the 1889 consultation on the nature of the contemporary pearling grounds and related activities. They also acted as government's emissaries tasked with relaying decisions from their higher-ups, including when adverse decisions from Batavia and The Hague, limiting the traditional rights of the Aruese.

Pearl-shelling issues and problems in Aru in this period reveal how colonialism compromised traditional rights. An instructive starting point is the 1889 consultation, when the government investigated the customary inner workings of traditional pearl-shelling in Aru. The investigation included an inquiry into the traditional rights

⁷³⁵ C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 6-8. This of course was not just a feature of the colonial state, as Bayly points out, Indian rulers were heavily involved in information gathering because understanding their realm was necessary to project authority.

communities claimed and the extent of their activities.⁷³⁶ The local knowledge was necessary because the Dutch needed to translate Aru's traditional rights into something that was legible to the imperial regimes, to make it commensurable for the London-The Hague discussions. Ultimately, these local claims entered the colonial records only as possible considerations to fit into the nascent international order, as the Dutch readily discarded any Aruese claim that other European powers did not recognise.

The colonial element in the territorial water making process revealed itself in the limits of Dutch accommodation to cohere with other imperial powers. The only way other imperial powers could recognise the Aruese traditional rights over water was through Dutch mediation. Hence, the three-mile territorial limit determined the point where Dutch vigilance and authority ended and the Australian pearl-shellshellers could operate with impunity. Where the Indies territorial water ended, was also where Aru's territorial water ended. The implications of the legal process and jurisdiction also reached other parts of the colony. Butcher and Elson explain how this process also concluded that self-governing realms did not have their own territorial waters.⁷³⁷ The Netherlands Indies acquired 'territorial waters' through a process of either erasure or dispossession. Aru was not considered a self-governing realm, therefore for its residents the demarcation of its over water boundaries limited what areas pearling grounds communities could rightfully own. International recognition of their ownership of the pearling banks now depended on their status as Dutch subjects.

The management of pearl-shelling and the Celebes Trading Company

Hydrography divided the seas around Aru into territorial waters within Dutch purview and waters beyond the reach of their authority. It is straightforward to literally say that Aru was 'brought to the map', but one needs to seriously consider the implications of cartography here. This labelling and development of 'empty space', as sociologist Anthony Giddens calls it, stripped the waters from of meaning that the Aruese placed on them and prepared them for the government's future resource management projects.⁷³⁸ It was no

⁷³⁶ There was a risk that the 1890 consultation would rigidify pearl-bank ownership that was previously more dynamic and dependent on circumstances.

⁷³⁷ Butcher and Elson, *Sovereignty and the Sea.*, 11-16.

⁷³⁸ Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity.*, 19. There is a reading of the 1880s-1890s resistance as an effort to deny the removal of meaning from these waters by foreigners. See Osseweijer, "Taken at the Flood.", 79-102 and Spyer, "Zaman Belanda.", 57-58.

coincidence that this process took place at the zenith of imperial expansion, which required Aru to be integrated into the emerging global system under Dutch rule.

The Dutch realised, if they wanted to keep Australian pearl-shellers away from their waters, they needed constant vigilance with patrol vessels. But as decades before, the Dutch did not have the financial and military resources to maintain steady presence in Aru. The colonial administration in Aru was stretched thin in the final decades of the nineteenth century because the ongoing expansion and pacification elsewhere in the Netherlands Indies required vast expenditure. The allocation of manpower and military resources depended on government priority and warding off Australian interlopers was not always at top of that security list. The recognition and existence of territorial waters was practically more cordoning off a portion of the sea, unto which the Dutch could apply their plans without undue conflict with a foreign power.

From the 1890s, the Dutch tried to manage pearl-shelling in Aru while maintaining two different aims and priorities. They recognised the traditional fishing rights of Aruese, but like the VOC two centuries earlier, they also wanted to tap into the existing local-regional economy and make it profitable for them. Now, the presence of a colonial state enabled them to connect their intent with the government treasury. The government experimented in pearl-shelling management, focusing on efforts to balance protection of traditional rights and encouraging other colonial subjects to try their luck in pearl-shelling.

The Dutch effort to manage pearl-shelling in Aru was first and foremost an effort to manage relationships. The colonial government inserted themselves into the process whereby Dutch subjects with capital could now operate in Aru waters if they had agreements with right-holding communities. Early examples of this practice already existed in 1880s, when Bordes & Co. and other Dutchmen tried to establish such operations in Aru, but in the 1890s this process became more formalised and bureaucratised. The Pearl King from Banda, Sech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla, first entered government records on pearl-shelling in 1899, when he applied for a permit to operate in Aru, as one now had to obtain such a permit from the Dutch.

It remained true in the 1890s that to operate in Aru waters, there had to be an agreement with local communities. However, the Aruese only had limited say in who they could negotiate with; for example, they were not allowed to independently enter agreements with Australians. It is still unclear whether they could refuse any suitable pearl-sheller.

The requirement that communities receive compensation would continue until the end of Dutch occupation. However, this requirement also became increasingly bureaucratised, when the Dutch government after 1905 took charge of compensation and direct negotiation with communities became unnecessary.

Until 1902, the Ordinance that managed pearl-shelling in Aru was meant primarily to thwart Australians instead of sustainably managing the industry itself. At the start of the twentieth century, Australian pearl-shellers had more incentive to move their operations to the Indies because White Australia Policy had come into effect. The biggest Australian players in the industry were dependent on non-white workers. They saw the establishment of Merauke in Southern New Guinea as both an opportunity and bargaining chip to maintain their workforce and operation, in both Torres Strait and extraterritorial waters east of Aru. Chapter Four discusses how the Dutch continued their efforts to ward off an Australian presence in Aru. They did not allow Australians to use Merauke as a base for pearl-shelling thereby obstructing their expansion into the Indies. The 1902 Ordinance enabled the Baadilla Brothers to operate freely in Aru for three more years without having to compete with Australian rivals.

The 1902 Pearlfishing Ordinances focused in detail on the nature of pearl-shelling permits in the Netherlands Indies. The Dutch made public the requirements and procedures for entrepreneurs committed to working in the colony, including on Aru. The explicit new procedures enabled the Australian pearl-sheller James Clark to work out a way to meet the requirements. With the help of agents in Batavia, he managed to fulfil the requirements set out in the 1902 Ordinance. The Baadilla Brothers' lease expired in 1905 and the Aru lease was then auctioned to the highest bidder. James Clark's company, the Celebes Trading Company, won the right to work in Aru and the requirements the Dutch laid out enabled the CTC to operate within Aru waters without of having to socially engage with the Aruese.

In 1905, the CTC brought their entire workforce to Dobo to join the existing Baadilla fleets. Their large-scale move changed the town demographics, where around one thousand people of diverse ethnic origin lived and socialised. The town now not only boasted people from Makassar but also the CTC's Japanese and Filipino workers. The former increased the size of a growing Japanese community in Dobo. Collectively, the impact of their move to social life was most obvious during lay season. Chapter Five discusses the social life and activities that the CTC brought to the area and the company's

early days in Aru. Unfortunately, records of their daily contact with the Aruese are sporadic.

The CTC's best times were its early years. Like the Aruese, the CTC and Australian pearl-shellers were extremely vulnerable to shifts in the global market and patterns of consumption were outside their control. The CTC soon realised that one hundred and fifty vessels were simply too many to operate around Aru, and thus their withdrawal from there began in 1908. Chapter Six traces the decline of the CTC after its best days were over. The global market for pearl-shell was no longer favourable for long periods after the CTC began operations in Aru waters; the beginning of WWI, the onset of global depression, Japanese competition, and the rise of alternative materials for buttons manufacture delivered repeated hits to the industry.⁷³⁹ The Aruese adjusted to these changes the way they had always done, by reorienting their economic activity to alternative commodities and activities. As Spyer suggests, the reorientation of their economic activity may have been clumsy and tense, but it was not new.⁷⁴⁰ The CTC, was an unwieldy company with a heavy investment in labour and technology, operating under a specific government permit, and could not be as flexible as the Aruese. The CTC in 1930s was a company in marked decline, barely surviving through the assistance of the colonial government. Their fate repeatedly inspired the question of whether pearl-shelling was still worth operating with this much investment. However, any discussions the company's future never took place as the Japanese forces arrived in Aru in July 1942 and abruptly stopped their operation.

The post-colonial legacies of pearl-shelling in Aru

The Australian managers of the CTC fled Dobo just before the Japanese troop arrived. With these events, it appeared the company stopped operations, but a lot of practical questions still remain unanswered. It is not clear what happened to the CTC's workforce, although some of them stayed in Dobo. In 1986, however, Graeme Henderson and Ian Crawford met two men who were once CTC workers.⁷⁴¹ Not much is known about how Aruese fared under Japanese occupation, or how their economic activities were adapted

⁷³⁹ Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia*, 180, 184-185.

⁷⁴⁰ Spyer, *The Memory of Trade*, 121. In fact, it is likely throughout history, that the volatility of the global market had caused some Aruese-merchant disputes.

⁷⁴¹ Graeme Henderson and Ian Crawford, "Sampan, Belangs, and Junkos," *Expedition* 28, no. 1 (1986), 45.

to the occupation.⁷⁴² Not much is known about how the War effected pearl-shelling enterprises, and whether the CTC ever resumed their operation in Aru. In 1949, Schmid & Jeandel, which then owned the CTC, was declared bankrupt. Clearly, WWII and the post-war Indies decolonisation process violently disrupted the future of industrial pearl-shelling in Aru.

Physical evidence of the CTC's presence in Aru are difficult to find nowadays. During WWII, the Allied Forces considered Dobo as a Japan military base and major target. The Royal Australian Air Force bombed Dobo and other nearby places in the archipelago repeatedly during the War.⁷⁴³ Dobo burned down in the post-war years and finding the remains of the CTC buildings, jetty and tennis field will require future archaeological work.

The intangible legacies of the CTC's presence are easier to track down. In 1986, Crawford and Henderson met a shipwright who used to work for the company. The men, of Banda descent, learned to build ships from the CTC carpenters on Kenari Island.⁷⁴⁴ He was still building *junkos* when Crawford and Henderson spoke to him, and because shipbuilding in Dobo relies on moulds it is likely that his knowledge is still maintained among shipwrights today. Traces of Australian pearl-shelling are also seen in the shared industry language in industrial pearl-shelling until the 1980s. Divers who used diving dresses speak of the classification of shell quality, and used Malay versions of English terms, like *neptaid* (from neap and spring tide), *parales* (paralyses), and even *deba dres* (from diver dress).⁷⁴⁵

As early as the 1930s, a legacy of the CTC's presence was already evident due to the economic activities in Aru becoming more diverse. The lasting impact of CTC's presence was not confined to just pearl-shelling, although there was an obvious increase of foreign pearl-shellers in the waters around Aru by then. In the 1930s, foreigners (European and

⁷⁴² Some works offer glimpses of life under Japanese occupation and WWII. Ujirese had to move because the Allies bombed their old location, see Schapper, *Wooi fana.*, 75-77 and Hägerdal and Wellfelt, "Tamalola.", 431. People in Barakai retreated into the forest, while other Aruese were forced into labour, see Spyer, *The Memory of Trade.*, 300 n.20.

⁷⁴³ See "LEFT DOBO," *Recorder (Port Pirie, SA: 1919 - 1954)* (Port Pirie, SA), 17 February 1943, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article96355791>. and "JAPANESE BASE IN ARU AREA WRECKED BY BOMBS," *Newcastle Sun (NSW: 1918 - 1954)* (NSW), 09 February 1943, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article167635134>.

⁷⁴⁴ Henderson and Crawford, "Sampons, Belangs, and Junkos.", 38 & 45. They note that this transfer of knowledge was not one way, as fleets returning from Aru to Broome in 1915 also reputedly influenced local shipbuilding.

⁷⁴⁵ Interview Jamal Roimenag (13/02/2019), Interview Clemens Korisen (13/02/2019), and Interview Lukas Remkuy & Penina Djamdjig (14/02/2019).

Japanese), including CTC managers, owned, and operated numerous copra plantations in Aru under government leases. These leases changed hands under the watchful eye of the colonial government, but the Aruese were not involved in such transactions and deals. Instead, the legal right to operate a business in Aru was arranged in Surabaya, Batavia or elsewhere through the mediation of a colonial bureaucracy.

The CTC had opened door of opportunity to Aru for other foreign investments. The colonial government duly established an administration and formal procedures to accommodate their operations. In Aru, pearl-shelling was the first industry for which the Netherlands Indies government developed a management scheme after spending several decades at the turn of the twentieth century adjusting to the industry's maritime nature. What followed subsequently was the application of the same logic and process to land appropriation, which was possible because similar schemes already existed for the rest of the Netherlands Indies. For Aru, pearl-shelling was the first industry the colonial government established authority over, in order to mediate access to a natural resource. But when pearl-shell ceased being a precious commodity which attracted foreign capital the Dutch used their authority, bureaucracy, legal frameworks, and procedures to manage access to other natural resources in Aru.

When Indonesia became a state, one of the things it inherited was this pre-war colonial policy regarding access to resources, which included the government's role in mediating contact between (foreign) capital and traditional-local communities. The New Order implemented this practice and belief. Jakarta was the centre of government and various administrative bodies had direct authority to access the economic life of Aru. The recent, Post-New Order decentralisation wave sweeping Indonesia has tried to undo this legacy by involving local communities and seriously considering customary law beyond Java, in more distant places in the Outer Islands like Aru.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁶ This is a highly complicated and rich field in itself, for a broad discussion about the debate on local leadership and community-based resource governance see Carol Warren and Leontine Visser, "The Local Turn: An Introductory Essay Revisiting Leadership, Elite Capture and Good Governance in Indonesian Conservation and Development Programs," *Human Ecology* 44, no. 3 (2016), <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10745-016-9831-z>.

Epilogue

“Why would I work to death just to enrich someone else?” A man said defiantly when Sonny Djonler and I were walking around Kabalsiang in February 2019, looking for divers who had experience working for pearl-shelling enterprises. His statement met nods among his friends, a reaction that explains why, on an island housing two diving communities, there were less than ten people who had used diving dresses. Using diving dresses implied working as someone’s employee, something which did not interest many divers on the island. Working conditions were rough, and pearl-shelling operation would require them to be away from home for months. Therefore, the enterprises also recruited workers from Babar Island. I spoke with four divers during my stay, they were all retired and all over sixty years old.

Bapa Ferdi Malagwar dove for pearl-shell for almost four decades before he retired of old age.⁷⁴⁷ If being a professional diver requires one to be employed and certified, he only spent six months a being professional. By the same measure, Bapa Jamal Roimenag, who dove since he was a teenager, was only a professional for one year.⁷⁴⁸ Bapa Clemens Korisen was a professional for two-and-a-half years.⁷⁴⁹ Only Bapa Lukas Remkuy was a veteran professional diver with at least two decades of experience.⁷⁵⁰ By that measure of professionalism, there are almost no professional pearl-divers in Aduar Island today.

It has been a while since people professionally dove for pearl-shell. All these divers worked for single-vessel operators who were storeowners of Chinese descent. They agree that 1982 was the last year operators used the diving dress from the CTC’s time.⁷⁵¹ The next year, the operators introduced oxygen tanks, but industrial pearl-shelling continued to decline. The reason for this decline was simple, as Ibu Penina Djamdjig stated ‘shells had no value anymore’.⁷⁵² As demand for pearl-shell declined, the Island’s economy shifted. For this reason, there is little industrial pearl-shelling today; like Australia in the 1960s,

⁷⁴⁷ Interview Ferdi Malagwar & Emmy Mangar (11/02/2019).

⁷⁴⁸ Interview Jamal Roimenag (13/02/2019).

⁷⁴⁹ Interview Clemens Korisen (13/02/2019).

⁷⁵⁰ Interview Lukas Remkuy & Penina Djamdjig (14/02/2019).

⁷⁵¹ On and off the record, people expressed distaste for the oxygen pumps for sanitary reason and the time limits it imposed for divers working on the bottom of the sea. Diving suits of course had its drawbacks too. Malagwar describes the vulnerability of wearing a diving suit, where the person operating the air pump had so much power over the diver’s life. Korisen and Remkuy confirmed this and while they are healthy, their prolonged use of diving suits had thinned their hair.

⁷⁵² Interview Lukas Remkuy & Penina Djamdjig (14/02/2019). Lit. wording: ‘Siput sudah tidak ada harga lagi’.

demand for shell is not high enough make investments in diving gear and organised fleets worthwhile.

It is not clear how industrial pearl-shelling fared during WWII and the immediately following years. But alongside the organised industry, community-based pearl-shelling activity continued the way it always had.⁷⁵³ These two pearl-shelling activities were not entirely separate. As I note above, apart from Remkui, everyone else spent most of their tenure as divers entering and exiting formal employment depending on circumstances and opportunities. The Aruese have witnessed modern enterprises arriving and leaving when investments did not pay off. In this sense too, the Celebes Trading Company was not an outlier in Aru's history. When enterprises closed and left, the divers returned home and resumed their fishing activities. As pearl farming began, some companies employed divers to collect live shells for those operations. Aru's pearl king today, Robert Sukendi (also known as Gie), makes his fortune from pearl farming and not pearl-shelling.

Traditional pearl-shelling activity continues today because pearl-shells are still desired. The activity also persists because shells are not the only marine products the Aruese collected. When I was in Benjuring, local economic activities were not as diverse as usual. The community had placed a customary moratorium on trepang collection, and most days people took care of their *agar agar* gardens. Depending on the tide and season, people could still go and collect pearl-shell at the traditional pearl-banks. As pearl-shell price declined, the traditional way of procuring pearl-shell persists. Pearl-shelling is only profitable for such a low-capital, low-scale operation wherein groups of self-employed divers independently organise their activities with no strict division of labour and hierarchy. Pearl-shell is a niche product again and we have no indication if this will change. The markets and their demands are fickle, the Aruese are very aware of that.

⁷⁵³ This does not mean the industry has not changed at all. Henderson and Crawford note that the vessels Aruese used have changed as transfer of knowledge among shipbuilders continued. See Henderson and Crawford, "Sampan, Belang, and Junkos."

Bibliography

a. Archival Sources

Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta

Algemene Secretarie (Alsec)

Ambon

Grote Bundel Besluit (GBBT)

Grote Bundel Missiven Gouvernement Secretaris (GB MGS)

Grote Bundel Terzijde Gelegde Agenda (GB TZGAG)

Het Nationaal Archief, Den Haag

Ministerie van Koloniën: Memories van Overgave (nr. toegang 2.10.39)

Ministerie van Koloniën Politieke Verslagen Buitengewesten (nr. toegang 2.10.52.01)

Ministerie van Koloniën: Openbaar Verbaal, nummer toegang (nr. toegang 2.10.36.04)

Het Utrechts Archief, Utrecht

Raad voor de Zending: rechtsvoorgangers

b. Published Sources

Bamford (chairman), F. W.. *Royal Commission on the Pearl-Shelling Industry: Minutes of Evidence, Appendices, and Indices*. Melbourne: Government Printer for the State of Victoria, 1913.

Bamford (chairman), F. W.. *Pearl-shelling Industry: Report and Recommendations of Royal Commission*. Melbourne: Government Printer for the State of Victoria, 1916.

Koloniaal Verslag van 1896. I. NEDERLANDSCH (OOST-) INDIE. 's Graven-hage: Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 1896-1897. (bijlage RRR)
https://repository.overheid.nl/frbr/sgd/18961897/0000374448/1/pdf/SGD_18961897_0001272.pdf

Coolhaas, W. Ph., ed. *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, Deel Iv:1675-1685*. 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971.

Dashwood, C. J. *Pearl Shelling Industry in Port Darwin and Northern Territory*. (Melbourne Government Printer, 1902). <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-850655994>.

Macgregor, (Administrator) WM. *Annual Report on British New Guinea from 1st July, 1890 to 30th June, 1891*. Brisbane: Government Printer, 1892.
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-84490144>.

Mackay, John. *Report of the Royal Commission Appointed Inquire into the Working of the Pearl-Shell and Beche-De-Mer Industries*. Brisbane: Acting Government Printer, 1908 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-52848217>.

Regerings-Almanak Voor Nederlandsch-Indië. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1892. <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB26:000981001:00905>.

Staatsblad Van Het Nederlandsch-Indie over Het Jaar 1902. Batavia Landsdrukkerij, 1903. <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB07:001309001:00007>.

Staatsblad Van Het Nederlandsch-Indie over Het Jaar 1905. Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1906. <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB07:001311001:00007>.
 Warton, M. S.. *Pearl Shelling Industry in North-West Australia* Government Printer for the State of Victoria 1901-2.

c. Newspapers and Periodicals

Advertiser (South Australia)
Annalen van Onze Lieve Vrouw van het Heilig Hart
Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser (NSW)
Bataviaasch nieuwsblad (Batavia)
Brisbane Courier (Queensland)
Fremantle Advocate (WA)
De Indische courant (Soerabaja)
De Indische mercur
De Katholieke Missien
De Locomotief (Semarang)
De Maasbode (Rotterdam)
Newcastle Sun (NSW)
Nieuwe Tilburgsche Courant (Tilburg)
De nieuwe vorstenlanden (Soerakarta)
Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indie (Batavia)
Northern Miner (Queensland)
Northern Standard (Darwin)
De Preanger-bode (Bandoeng)
Recorder (South Australia)
Soerabaijasch handelsblad (Soerabaja)
Sumatra-Bode (Padang)
Sydney Morning Herald (NSW),
Sydney Stock and Station Journal (NSW)
The Telegraph (Brisbane)
Townsville Daily Bulletin (Queensland)

d. Books and Journal Articles

à Campo, Joseph N. F. M. "Discourse without Discussion: Representations of Piracy in Colonial Indonesia 1816-25." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34, no. 2 (2003): 199-214. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463403000201>.
 ———. *Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij: Stoomvaart en Staatsvorming in de Indonesische Archipel, 1888-1914*. Hilversum: Verloren, 1992.
 ———. "Orde, Rust en Welvaart. Over de Nederlandse Expansie in de Indische Archipel Rond 1900." *Acta Politica* 15 (1980): 145-89.
 Adam, Ahmat B. "The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness (1855-1913)." PhD Thesis, University of London (School of Oriental and African Studies), 1984.
 Alwi, D., and B.S. (ed.) Harvey. *Friends and Exiles: A Memoir of the Nutmeg Isles and the Indonesian Nationalist Movement*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2008.

- Alwi, Des. *Sejarah Maluku: Banda Naira, Ternate, Tidore dan Ambon*. Cet. 1. ed. Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 2005.
- Andaya, Leonard Y. "The Social Value of Elephant Tusks and Bronze Drums among Certain Societies in Eastern Indonesia." *BKI* 172, no. 1 (2016): 66-89. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17201001>.
- . "Eastern Indonesia: A Study of the Intersection of Global, Regional and Local Networks in the 'Extended' Indian Ocean." Chap. 6 In *Reinterpreting Indian Ocean Worlds: Essays in Honour of Kirti N. Chaudhuri*, edited by Stefan C. A. Halikowski Smith, 107-40. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011.
- . "Local Trade Networks in Maluku in the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries." *Cakalele* 2, no. 2 (1991): 71-96.
- Anonymous. "Ceram Laut Isles." *JIAEA* 6 (1852): 689-91.
- . "Hoe Men in 1881 Een Woelgeest op de Aroe-Eilanden tot Rede Bracht." *De Indische Gids* 15, no. 2 (1893): 1247-49. <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0000DE0000090000>.
- Bach, J. P. S. *The Pearlshelling Industry of Australia: An Account of Its Social and Economic Development*. Dept of Commerce and Agriculture 1955.
- . "The Pearlshelling Industry and the White Australia Policy." *Australian Historical Studies* 10, no. 38 (1962): 203-13.
- . "The Political Economy of Pearlshelling." *The Economic History Review* 14, no. 1 (1961): 105-14. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2591357>.
- Bain, Mary Albertus. *Full Fathom Five*. Perth: Artlook Books, 1982.
- Bayly, C. A. *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. New York: Vintage Books, 2014.
- Beehler, Bruce M., and Tim Laman. *New Guinea: Nature and Culture of Earth's Grandest Island*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020.
- Beversluis, A. J., and A. H. C. Gieben. *Het Gouvernement der Molukken*. Weltvreden: Landsdrukkerij, 1929.
- Bik, A. J. *Dagverhaal Eener Reis, Gedaan in het Jaar 1824, tot Nadere Verkenning der Eilanden Keffing, Goram, Groot- en Klein Kei en de Aroe-Eilanden*. Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1928.
- Boomgaard, Peter. "Human Capital, Slavery and Low Rates of Economic and Population Growth in Indonesia, 1600-1910." *Slavery & Abolition* 24, no. 2 (2003): 83-96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01440390308559157>.
- . "Resources and People of the Sea in and around the Indonesian Archipelago, 900-1900." In *Muddied Waters: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Management of Forest and Fisheries in Island Southeast Asia*, edited by Manon Osseweijer, David Henley and Peter Boomgaard. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2005.
- Booth, Anne. *The Indonesian Economy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A History of Missed Opportunities*. London: MacMillan Press, 1998.
- . "Night Watchman, Extractive, or Developmental States? Some Evidence from Late Colonial South-East Asia." *The Economic History Review* 60, no. 2 (2007): 241-66.
- Bosscher, C. "Staat Van Den in- En Uitvoer Op Aroe-Eilande, Gedurende Het Jaar 1849." *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 1 (1853): 327-31.
- . "Staat Aantoonende de Voornaamste der Eilanden der Aroe-Groep, benevens de Voornaamste Negorijen en het Aantal van Hare Bewoners En Huizen." *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 1 (1853): 323-26.
- Bräuchler, Birgit. "Cultural Solutions to Religious Conflicts? The Revival of Tradition in the Moluccas, Eastern Indonesia." Chap. 3 In *Faith in the Future*:

- Understanding the Revitalization of Religions and Cultural Traditions in Asia*, edited by Thomas Reuter and Alexander Horstmann. Social Sciences in Asia, 39-61. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Breman, Jan. *Taming the Coolie Beast: Plantation Society and the Colonial Order in Southeast Asia*. Second impression (with corrections) ed. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Burke, Peter. *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.
- Butcher, John G. *The Closing of the Frontier: A History of the Marine Fisheries of Southeast Asia, C.1850-2000*. Leiden, Netherlands: KITLV Press, 2004.
- . "Resink Revisited: A Note on the Territorial Waters of the Self-Governing Realms of the Netherlands Indies in the Late 1800s." *BKI* 164, no. 1 (2008): 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003697>.
- Butcher, John G., and R. E. Elson. *Sovereignty and the Sea: How Indonesia Became an Archipelagic State*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2017.
- Choo, Christine. "Inter-Ethnic Conflict in Broome, Western Australia: The Riots of 1907, 1914 and 1920 between Japanese and Other Asians." *Continuum* 25, no. 4 (2011): 465-77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2011.575213>.
- Christensen, Joseph. "A Patch of the Orient in Australia": Broome on the Margin of the Indo-Pacific, 1883-1939." In *Subversive Sovereigns across the Sea*, edited by Kenneth R. Hall, Rila Mukherjee and Suchandra Ghosh, 257-76. Kolkata: Asiatic Society, 2017.
- Clarence-Smith, William Gervase. "The Economic Role of the Arab Community in Maluku, 1816 to 1940." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 26, no. 74 (1998): 32-49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639819808729909>.
- Claver, Alexander. "Struggling for Justice: Chinese Commerce and Dutch Law in the Netherlands Indies, 1800-1942." In *Linking Destinies: Trade, Towns and Kin in Asian History*, edited by Peter Boomgaard, Dick Kooiman and Henk Schulte Nordholt, 99-118. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2008.
- Cortese, A., ed. *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515, and the Book of Francisco Rodrigues, Rutter of a Voyage in the Red Sea, Nautical Rules, Almanack and Maps, Written and Drawn in the East before 1515*. London: The Hakluyt Society, 1944.
- Cribb, Robert. "Birds of Paradise and Environmental Politics in Colonial Indonesia, 1890-1931." In *Paper Landscapes: Explorations in the Environmental History of Indonesia*, edited by P. Boomgaard, Freek Colombijn and David Henley. Verhandeling Van Het Kitlv, 379-408. Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997.
- . *Historical Atlas of Indonesia*. Richmond: Curzon, 2000.
- . "Introduction: The Late Colonial State in Indonesia." In *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands Indies, 1880-1942*, edited by Robert Cribb, 1-29. Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994.
- Cunningham, Adrian. "On Borrowed Time: The Australian Pearlshelling Industry, Asian Indentured Labour and the White Australia Policy, 1946-1962." Master Thesis, ANU, 1992.
- D'Albertis, L.M. *New Guinea: What I Did and What I Saw* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1880.
- Daigle, Benjamin. "A Grammar Sketch of Batuley: An Austronesian Language of Aru, Eastern Indonesia." MA Thesis, Universiteit Leiden, 2015.
- Darwin, John. "What Was the Late Colonial State?". *Itinerario* 23, no. 3-4 (1999): 73-82. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0165115300024578>.

- Dick, Howard. "Japan's Economic Expansion in the Netherlands Indies between the First and Second World Wars." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 20, no. 2 (1989): 244-72.
- Dick, Howard, Vincent Houben, J. Thomas Lindblad, and Thee Kian Wie. *The Emergence of a National Economy: An Economic History of Indonesia, 1800-2000*. Southeast Asia Publications Series. Crows Nest, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2002.
- Djonler, Sonny A., and Ross Gordon. *Marine Biology Knowledge in Gwatele Kal: An Illustrated Encyclopaedia*. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2016.
- Dolcemasclo, Glenn. "Foreign Encounters in an Aruese Landscape." *Cakalele* 7 (1996): 79-92.
- Dooley, Tom, Tiina Manne, and Alistair Paterson. "Power in Food on the Maritime Frontier: A Zooarchaeology of Enslaved Pearl Divers on Barrow Island, Western Australia." *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 25, no. 2 (2021/06/01 2021): 544-76.
- Ellen, R. F. *On the Edge of the Banda Zone: Past and Present in the Social Organization of a Moluccan Trading Network*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003.
- Etmans, M. D. *De Bevolking van Banda van 1818 tot 1920*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Ferwert: Etmans, 1998.
- Fasseur, Cees. "Purse or Principle: Dutch Colonial Policy in the 1860s and the Decline of the Cultivation System." *Modern Asian Studies* 25 (1991): 33-52.
- . "Cornerstone and Stumbling Block: Racial Classification and the Late Colonial State in Indonesia." in *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands Indies, 1880-1942*, edited by Robert Cribb, 31-56. Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994.
- Galbraith, John S. "The "Turbulent Frontier" as a Factor in British Expansion." [In English]. *Comparative studies in society and history* 2, no. 2 (1960): 150-68. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500000645>.
- Ganter, Regina. *The Pearl-Shellers of Torres Strait: Resource Use, Development and Decline 1860s-1960s*. Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1994.
- Ganter, Regina, Julia Martinez, and Gary Mura Lee. *Mixed Relations: Asian-Aboriginal Contact in North Australia*. Crawley, W.A: University of Western Australia Press, 2006.
- Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990.
- Gillis, John, and Franziska Torma, eds. *Fluid Frontiers: New Currents in Marine Environmental History*. Winwick, Cambridgeshire: The White Horse Press, 2015.
- Goodman, Thomas. "The Sosolot: An Eighteenth Century East Indonesian Trade Network." Ph.D. Thesis, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 2006.
- Gordon, A. Ross, and Sonny A. Djonler. "Oral Traditions in Cryptic Song Lyrics: Continuous Cultural Revitalization in Batuley." *Wacana* 20, no. 3 (2019): 400-29. <https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v20i3.757>.
- . "Hope and Energy at the Arafura Sea Shore." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 33, no. 2 (2019): 1-18.
- Gordon, A. Ross, Sonny A. Djonler, and Hans Hägerdal. "The Killing of Posthouder Scheerder and Jifar Folfolun (the War of the Breasts): Malukan and Dutch Narratives of an Incident in the VOC's Waning Days." *JSEAS* 50 (2019): 324-46.
- Greenough, Paul R., and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, eds. *Nature in the Global South: Environmental Projects in South and Southeast Asia*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

- Hägerdal, Hans. "Timor and Colonial Conquest: Voices and Claims about the End of the Sonba'i Realm in 1906." *Itinerario* 41, no. 3 (2017): 581–605.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0165115317000699>
- . "Between Resistance and Co-Operation: Contact Zones in the Aru Islands in the VOC Period." *Wacana* 20, no. 3 (2019): 480-506.
<https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v20i3.803>.
- . "Contact Zones and External Connectivities in Southern Maluku, Indonesia." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 47, no. 138 (2019): 125-32.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2019.1583884>.
- . "On the Margins of Colonialism: Contact Zones in the Aru Islands." *The European Legacy* 25, no. 5 (2020): 554-71.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2020.1751965>.
- Hägerdal, Hans, and Emilie Wellfelt. "Tamalola: Transregional Connectivities, Islam, and Anti-Colonialism on an Indonesian Island." [In English]. *Wacana* 20, no. 3 (2019): 430-56. <https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v20i3.802>.
- Hanna, Willard A. *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands*. Philadelphia, PA: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978.
- Hardenberg, J. D. F.. "De Parelmoervisscherij in het Oosten van den Indischen Archipel." *Indische Gids* 2 (1939): 827-33.
- Hardin, Garrett. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science* 162 (1968): 1243-48.
- Harkes, I. H. T. "Fisheries Co-Management, the Role of Local Institutions and Decentralisation in Southeast Asia: with specific reference to marine sasi in Central Maluku, Indonesia." PhD Thesis, Universiteit Leiden, 2006.
<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/4385>.
- Headrick, Daniel R. *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Healey, Christopher J. "Traps and Trapping in the Aru Islands." *Cakalele* 6 (1995): 51-65.
- Heeres, J. E. "Documenten Betreffende de Ontdekkingsochten van Adriaan Dortsman." *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 46, no. 1 (1896): 608-719.
- Henderson, Graeme, and Ian Crawford. "Sampans, Belangs, and Junkos." [In English]. *Expedition* 28, no. 1 (1986): 36-46.
- Hof, Linette van 't. "Het Kansrijke Buitengewest Aru: Een Analyse van Hoe en Waarom De VOC het Beleid voor Handel en Religie Uitvoerde op de Aru-Eilanden in de Periode 1658-1694." MA Thesis, Universiteit Leiden, 2019.
<https://hdl.handle.net/1887/75553>.
- Hong, Seok-Joon. "The Social Formation and Cultural Identity of Southeast Asian Frontier Society: Focused on the Concept of Maritime Zomia as Frontier in Connection with the Ocean and the Inland." *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures* 5, no. 1 (2016): 28-35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.imic.2016.05.004>.
- Hopkins, Benjamin D. *Ruling the Savage Periphery: Frontier Governance and the Making of the Modern State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020.
- Houben, Vincent. "Introduction: The Coolie System in Colonial Indonesia." In *Coolie Labour in Colonial Indonesia: A Study of Labour in the Outer Islands, C. 1900-1940*, edited by Vincent J. H. Houben and J. Th. Lindblad, 1-23. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999.
- . "The Pre-Modern Economics of the Archipelago ". Chap. 2 In *The Emergence of a National Economy: An Economic History of Indonesia, 1800-2000*, edited by Howard Dick, 35-55. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2002.
- Hullebroeck, Emiel. *Insulinde: Reisindrukken* 2e druk ed. Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 1921. <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB21:036418000>.

- Irwin, Graham. *Nineteenth-Century Borneo: A Study in Diplomatic Rivalry*. Vol. 15: Brill, 1955.
- Jasper, J. E.. "Het Een en Ander Omtrent de Parelvisserij in de Molukken." *Weekblad voor Indie*, May 6, 1906, 36-38. Universiteit Leiden
<http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:2486519>.
- Kartodirdjo, Sartono. "Bureaucracy and Aristocracy: The Indonesian Experience in the XIXth Century." *Archipel* 7, no. 1 (1974): 151-68.
- Knaap, G. J. *De 'Core Business' Van De VOC: Markt, Macht en Mentaliteit Vanuit Overzees Perspectief*. Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht, 2014.
- . "Headhunting, Carnage and Armed Peace in Amboina, 1500-1700." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 46, no. 2 (2003): 165-92.
- . *Kruidnagelen en Christenen: De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie en de Bevolking van Ambon, 1656-1696*. Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1987.
- . *Shallow Waters, Rising Tide, Shipping and Trade in Java Around 1775*. Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996.
- Knaap, G. J., and Heather Sutherland. *Monsoon Traders: Ships, Skippers and Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Makassar*. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004.
- Kolff, D. H. *Voyages from the Dutch Brig of War Dourga (Translated from the Dutch by George Windsor Earl)* London: James Madden & Co., 1840.
- Kunz, George Frederick, and Charles Hugh Stevenson. *The Book of the Pearl: The History, Art, Science, and Industry of the Queen of Gems*. New York: The Century Co., 1908.
- Lampers, M.J. In het Spoor van den Compagnie: VOC, Inheemse Samenleving en de Gereformeerde Kerk in de Zuidooster- en Zuidwestereilanden 1660-1700. Unpublished Manuscript (KITLV Collection).
- Lasker, Bruno. *Human Bondage in Southeast Asia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950.
- Lehane, Robert. *The Pearl King*. Brisbane: Boolarong Press, 2014.
- Leupe, P. A. "Beschrijvinge van ve Eijlande Banda." *BKI* 3, no. 1 (1855): 73-105.
- . "De Reizen der Nederlanders naar Nieuw-Guinea en de Papoesche Eilanden." *BKI* 22, no. 1 (1875): 1-114. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90000660>.
- Li, Tania Murray. *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Lindblad, J. Thomas. "Economic Aspects of the Dutch Expansion in Indonesia, 1870–1914." *Modern Asian Studies* 23, no. 1 (1989): 1-24.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00011392>.
- Lindblad, J. Thomas; and David Henley. "Colonial Business Indonesia." March 2, 2021 2016. <https://www.colonialbusinessindonesia.nl/nl/database/database>.
- Locher-Scholten, E. *Ethiek in Fragmenten: Vijf Studies over Koloniaal Denken en Doen van Nederlanders in de Indonesische Archipel 1877-1942*. Utrecht: H&S, 1981.
- Lorck, W. *Isles of the East: An Illustrated Guide: Australia, New Guinea, Java, Sumatra, Singapore, Etc*. Sydney: Edward Lee & Co., 1912.
- Maanse, M.R. "Promise, Pretence and Pragmatism: Governance and Taxation in Colonial Indonesia, 1870-1940." PhD Thesis, Universiteit Leiden, 2021.
- Machado, Pedro, Steve Mullins, and Joseph Christensen, eds. *Pearls, People, and Power: Pearl and Indian Ocean Worlds*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2019.
- Martínez, Julia. "Indonesians Challenging White Australia: 'Koepangers' in the North Australian Pearl-Shell Industry, 1870s to 1960s." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 40, no. 117 (2012): 231-48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2012.683678>.
- Martínez, Julia, and Adrian Vickers. *The Pearl Frontier: Indonesian Labor and Indigenous Encounters in Australia's Northern Trading Network*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015.

- McCarthy, Mike. "Before Broome." *Great Circle* 16, no. 2 (1994): 76-89.
- . "Naked Diving for Mother-of-Pearl." *Early Days: Journal of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society* 13, no. 2 (2008): 243-62.
- McGann, Peter J. "'Malays' as Indentured Labour: Western Australia 1870-1900." BA Hons. Thesis, Murdoch University, 1988.
- Meilink-Roelofs, M.A.P. *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and About 1630*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962.
- Merton, Hugo. *Forschungsreise in Den Südöstlichen Molukken (Aru- Und Kei-Inseln)*. Frankfurt A.M.: Im Selbstverlage der Senckenbergischen Naturforschenden Gesellschaft, 1910.
- Miller, W. G. "An Account of Trade Patterns in the Banda Sea in 1797, from an Unpublished Manuscript in the India Office Library." *Indonesia Circle. School of Oriental & African Studies. Newsletter* 8, no. 23 (1980/11/01 1980): 41-57.
- Moon, Suzanne. "The Emergence of Technological Development and the Question of Native Identity in the Netherlands East Indies." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 36, no. 2 (2005): 191-206. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463405000135>.
- Moore, Ronald. "The Management of the Western Australian Pearling Industry, 1860 to the 1930s." *Great Circle* 16 (1994): 121-38.
- Mullins, Steve. "Australian Pearl-Shellers in the Moluccas: Confrontation and Compromise on a Maritime Frontier." *Great Circle* 23, no. 2 (2001): 3-23.
- . "Company Boats, Sailing Dinghies and Passenger Fish: Fathoming Torres Strait Islander Participation in the Maritime Economy." *Labour History*, no. 103 (2012): 39-58. <https://doi.org/10.5263/labourhistory.103.0039>.
- . "The Costa Rica Packet Affair: Colonial Entanglements and Tests of Empire in Pre-Federation New South Wales." *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 87, no. 2 (2001): 267-85.
- . "From TI to Dobo: The 1905 Departure of the Torres Strait Pearl Shelling Fleets to Aru, Netherlands East Indies." *Great Circle* 19, no. 1 (1997): 30-39.
- . "James Clark and the Celebes Trading Co.: Making an Australian Maritime Venture in the Netherlands Indies." *Great Circle* 24, no. 2 (2002): 22-52.
- . *Octopus Crowd: Maritime History and the Business of Australian Pearling in Its Schooner Age*. University of Alabama Press, 2019.
- . "To Break 'the Trinity' or 'Wipe out the Smaller Fry': The Australian Pearl Shell Convention of 1913." *Journal for Maritime Research* 7, no. 1 (2005): 215-44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21533369.2005.9668351>.
- . "Vrijbuiters! Australian Pearl-Shellers and Colonial Order in the Late Nineteenth-Century Moluccas." *The Mariner's Mirror* 96, no. 1 (2010): 26-41.
- Nevins, Joseph, and Nancy Lee Peluso, eds. *Taking Southeast Asia to Market: Commodities, Nature, and People in the Neoliberal Age*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.
- O'Connor, Sue, Matthew Spriggs, and Peter Marius Veth. *The Archaeology of the Aru Islands, Eastern Indonesia*. Vol. 22, Canberra, Australia: Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 2005.
- Osseweijer, Manon. "Taken at the Flood: Marine Resource Use and Management in the Aru Islands (Maluku, Eastern Indonesia)." PhD Thesis, Universiteit Leiden, 2001.
- Tim Penyusun. "ANRI Ambon 1495 Verslag Van Den Gecommitteerden Ambtenaar Van Ceram C. W. Wer 1857." In *Kontrak Perjanjian Wilayah Perbatasan Republik Indonesia Jilid IV*, 121-86. Jakarta: ANRI, 2009.
- . *Ikhtisar Keadaan Politik Hindia-Belanda 1839-1848*. Penerbitan Sumber-Sumber Sejarah. Vol. 5, Jakarta: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 1973.

- Persoon, Gerard A., Hans de Iongh, and Bob Wenno. "Exploitation, Management and Conservation of Marine Resources: The Context of the Aru Tenggara Marine Reserve (Moluccas, Indonesia)." *Ocean & Coastal Management* 32, no. 2 (1996): 97-122. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0964-5691\(96\)00025-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0964-5691(96)00025-7).
- Phillips, Lorraine. "Plenty More Little Brown Man! Pearl-Shelling and White Australia in Queensland 1901-1918." In *Essays in the Political Economy*, edited by K. Buckley and E. L. Wheelwright, 58-84. Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Company, 1980.
- Post, Peter. *Japane Bedrijvigheid in Indonesie, 1868-1942: Structurele Elementen van Japan's Vooroorlogse Economische Expansie in Zuidoost Asie*. Amsterdam: Centrale Huisdrukkerij Vrije Universiteit, 1991.
- Resink, G. J. *Indonesia's History between the Myths*. The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1968.
- Reynolds, Henry. *Dispossession: Black Australians and White Invaders*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989.
- . *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia*. UNSW Press ed. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006.
- Reynolds, Henry. *North of Capricorn*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003.
- Riedel, J. G. F. *De Sluik-en Kroesharige Rassen tusschen Selebes en Papua*. 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1886.
- Saville-Kent, William. *The Great Barrier Reef of Australia: Its Products and Potentialities*. London: W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd, 1893.
- Scarr, Deryck. "Recruits and Recruiters: A Portrait of the Pacific Islands Labour Trade." *The Journal of Pacific History* 2 (1967): 5-24. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25167892>.
- Schapper, Antoinette. "Build the Wall!". *Indonesia and the Malay World* 47, no. 138 (2019/05/04 2019): 220-51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2019.1554778>.
- . *Wooi Fana: Life and Times in Ujir* Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2018.
- Scott, James C. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- . *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020. doi:10.2307/j.ctvxkn7ds.
- Shimizu, Hiroshi. "The Japanese Fisheries Based in Singapore, 1892-1945." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 28, no. 2 (1997): 324-44. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340001448X>.
- . "Rise and Fall of the Karayuki-San in the Netherlands Indies from the Late Nineteenth Century to the 1930s." *RIMA* 26, no. 2 (1992): 17-43.
- Shnukal, Anna, Guy Malcolm Ramsay, and Yuriko Nagata, eds. *Navigating Boundaries: The Asian Diaspora in Torres Strait*. Acton, ACT: ANU Press, 2017.
- Sol, Mgr. A.P.C. *Sejarah Gereja Katolik di Kepulauan Aru*. Jakarta: Penerbit Hati Baru, 2009
- Sone, Sachiko. "The Karayuki-San of Asia, 1868-1938: The Role of Prostitutes Overseas in Japanese Economic and Social Development." MA Thesis, Murdoch University, 1990.
- Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak?". In *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, edited by Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.
- Spyer, Patricia. "The Eroticism of Debt: Pearl Divers, Traders, and Sea Wives in the Aru Islands, Eastern Indonesia." *American Ethnologist* 24, no. 3 (1997): 515-38.
- . *The Memory of Trade: Modernity's Entanglements on an Eastern Indonesian Island*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.

- . "'Zaman Belanda': Song and the Shattering of Speech in Aru, Eastern Indonesia." *Indonesia*, no. 70 (2000): 53-70. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3351495>.
- Stacey, Natasha. *Boats to Burn: Bajo Fishing Activity in the Australian Fishing Zone*. Vol. 2., Canberra: ANU E-Press, 2007. doi:10.26530/OAPEN_458834.
- Stockwin, Arthur, and Tamura Keiko, eds. *Bridging Australia and Japan: The Writings of David Sissons, Historian and Political Scientist* 2 vols. Vol. 1. Acton ACT: ANU Press, 2016.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt, 1870-1979*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.
- . "'In Cold Blood': Hierarchies of Credibility and the Politics of Colonial Narratives." *Representations*, no. 37 (1992): 151-89. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928658>.
- . *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Streeter, Edwin William. *Pearls and Pearl Life*. London: George Bell and Sons, 1886.
- Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. "Noble Harvest from the Sea: Managing the Pearl Fishery of Mannar, 1500-1925." Chap. 7 In *Institutions and Economic Change in South Asia*, edited by Burton Stein and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 134-70. Delhi: New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Sutherland, Heather. "Trepang and Wangkang; the China Trade of Eighteenth-Century Makassar C.1720s-1840s." *BKI* 156, no. 3 (2000): 451-72. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003835>.
- . *Seaways and Gatekeepers: Trade and State in Eastern Archipelagos of Southeast Asia c.1600-1906*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2021.
- Swadling, Pamela. *Plumes from Paradise: Trade Cycles in Outer Southeast Asia and Their Impact on New Guinea and Nearby Islands until 1920*. Boroko: Papua New Guinea National Museum, 1996.
- Tagliacozzo, Eric. "The Indies and the World: State Building, Promise, and Decay at a Transnational Moment, 1910." *BKI* 166, no. 2-3 (2010): 270-92. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003619>.
- . "Kettle on a Slow Boil: Batavia's Threat Perceptions in the Indies' Outer Islands, 1870-1910." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (2000): 70-100.
- . *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005.
- Tilley, Lisa. "'The Impulse Is Cartographic': Counter-Mapping Indonesia's Resource Frontiers in the Context of Coloniality." *Antipode* 52, no. 5 (2020): 1434-54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12634>.
- Tissot van Patot, J. W., "Een viertal tochten door het eiland Terangan (Aroe-eilanden)." *TKNAG* XXV (1908), no. 2: 77-93.
- Tönnies, Ferdinand, Jose Harris, and Margaret Hollis. *Tönnies: Community and Civil Society*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Topatimasang, Roem. "Mapping as a Tool for Community Organizing against Power: A Moluccas Experience." Chap. 14 In *Communities and Conservation: Histories and Politics of Community-Based Natural Resource Management*, edited by Peter J. Brosius, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing and Charles Zerner, 363-90. Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 2005.
- , ed. *Orang-Orang Kalah: Kisah Penyingkiran Masyarakat Adat Kepulauan Maluku*. Yogyakarta: INSISTPress, 2016.
- Tsing, Anna L. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. New York: H. Holt, 1947.

- Valeri, Valerio. "Reciprocal Centers: The Siwa-Lima System in the Central Moluccas." In *The Attraction of Opposites: Thought and Society in the Dualistic Mode*, edited by David Maybury-Lewis and Uri Almagor, 117-42. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989.
- van de Wall, V. I. "Sjech Said bin Abdullah Baadilla: Een Arabier van Beteekenis in De Grootte Oost." *Nederlandsch-Indie Oud en Nieuw* 15 (1930/1931): 347-52.
- van den Berg, Joop. *Het Verloren Volk: Een Geschiedenis Van De Banda Eilanden 's Graven-hage*: BZZTôH, 1995.
- van Dijk, Kees. *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War*. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007.
- van Hoëvell, G. W. W. C. Baron. "De Aroe-Eilanden, Geographisch, Ethnographisch En Commerciëel." *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* 33 (1890): 57-102.
- van Hoëvell, W. R.. "De Aroe-Eilanden, in Vroeger Tijd en Tegenwoordig." *Tijdschrift van Nederlands Indië* 20, no. 6 (1858): 257-75.
- van Kampen, P. N. "De Paarl- en Parelmoervisscherij Langs de Kusten der Aroe Eilanden." *Mededeelingen van het Visscherijstation te Batavia* 2 (1908): 1-30.
- van Selm, Dr. M. *De Protestantse Kerk op de Banda Eilanden 1795-1923: Een Bronnenpublicatie* Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2004.
- van Sluys, A.G.H. "Dobo-Ervaringen." *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 5, no. 1 (1916): 299-317. <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:2256597>.
- Vickers, Adrian. "The Pearl Rush in Aru, 1916: A Case Study in Writing Commodity History in Southeast Asia." *Wacana* 20, no. 3 (2019): 457-79. <https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v20i3.801>.
- Wallace, Alfred R. *The Malay Archipelago* New York Harper & Brothers, 1869.
- Wallace, Anthony F. C. "Revitalization Movements." *American Anthropologist* 58, no. 2 (1956): 264-81. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1956.58.2.02a00040>.
- Warren, Carol, and Leontine Visser. "The Local Turn: An Introductory Essay Revisiting Leadership, Elite Capture and Good Governance in Indonesian Conservation and Development Programs." *Human Ecology* 44, no. 3 (2016): 277-86. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10745-016-9831-z>.
- Warren, James F. *Ah Ku and Karayuki-San: Prostitution in Singapore, 1870-1940*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- . *Iranun and Balangingi: Globalization, Maritime Raiding, and the Birth of Ethnicity*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2002.
- . *The North Borneo Chartered Company's Administration of the Bajau, 1878-1909: The Pacification of a Maritime, Nomadic People*. Papers in International Studies. Vol. 22, Athens, OH: Ohio University Center of International Studies, 1971.
- . *The Sulu Zone, 1768-1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State*. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981.
- . "The Sulu Zone, the World Capitalist Economy and the Historical Imagination: Problematizing Global-Local Interconnections and Interdependencies." *Southeast Asian Studies* 35, no. 2 (1997): 177-222. <https://kyoto-seas.org/pdf/35/2/350201.pdf>.
- Warsh, Molly A. *American Baroque: Pearls and the Nature of Empire, 1492-1700*. Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture, 2018.
- . "Enslaved Pearl Divers in the Sixteenth Century Caribbean." *Slavery & abolition* 31, no. 3 (2010): 345-62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2010.504540>.
- Weber-van Bosse, A. *Een Jaar aan Boord H. M. Siboga*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1904.
- Wellfelt, Emilie, and Sonny A. Djonler. "Islam in Aru, Indonesia: Oral Traditions and Islamisation Processes from the Early Modern Period to the Present." *Indonesia*

and the Malay World 47, no. 138 (2019): 160-83.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2019.1582895>.

Whittaker, Joss R. "The Lives of Things on Pulau Ujir: Aru's Engagement with Commercial Expansion." *Wacana* 20, no. 3 (2019): 375-99.

<https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v20i3.760>.

Widjojo, Muridan S. *The Revolt of Prince Nuku: Cross-Cultural Alliance-Making in Maluku, C.1780-1810*. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

Winn, Phillip. "Slavery and Cultural Creativity in the Banda Islands." *JSEAS* 41, no. 3 (2010): 365-89. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463410000238>.

Zondervan, Henri. *Nederland Buiten Europa: Aardrijkskundige Schets der Bezittingen en Kolonien*. Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1904.

<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMUBL07:000001830>.

e. Interview

Ambon:

Evi Baadilla & Abdulrahim Baadilla (30/01/2019)

Aru:

Clemens Korisen (13/02/2019)

Ferdi Malagwar & Emmy Mangar (11/02/2019)

Jamal Roimenag (13/02/2019)

Lukas Remkuy & Penina Djamdjig (14/02/2019)

Margaretha Mangar (11/02/2019)

Sonny Djonler (05/02/2019)

Appendices

Appendix 1 Overview of pearl-fishing parcels, 1910

Parcel	Lease term (Before)	Annual Lease (in guilders)	Lease Term (Current)	Annual Lease in guilders)
Cheribon	01-11-05 to 31-12 1908	216		
Preanger Regency	idem	300		
Residency of Aceh	idem	150	01-04 -1909 to 31-03-1910	36 ^a
Billiton	idem	72		
afd. Gorontalo and Sangi & Talaud Islands (Residency of Manado)	idem	600		
Minahasa (Residency of Manado)	idem	480		
Residency of Amboina	idem	26,936.82	01-06-1909 to 31-05-1919	33,600 ^b
Afd. Noord Nieuw Guinea (Residency of Ternate)	idem	11640		
Afd. West Nieuw Guinea (Residency of Ternate)		6000	01-01-1909 to 31-12-1911	500 ^c
Obi Islands (Residency of Ternate)	idem	696		
Banggai and Boengkoe region (Governorate Celebes)			01-04 -1908 to 31-10-1912	2000

- a Lease extended to March 1911 and increased to f60.
- b The lease only from the Aru Islands, every year the government pays an annual compensation of f6350.
- c Does not include the Raja Ampat Islands.

(Source: Letter from the Dept. of Agriculture, 26-01-1910 no.816 in ANRI GB MGS 4593)

Appendix 2 The CTC's reported average catch, 1911-1934

Financial Year	Number of luggers operating	Number of months operating	Total catch (in lbs)	Average catch of lugger per month
1911/1912	44	8 1/3	369,665	1,008
1911/1912	34	8 1/3	no record	
1912/1913	60	8 2/3	502,825	965.44
1912/1913	18	8 2/3	no record	
1913/1914	44	8 1/2	319,964	857.92
1913/1914	34	8 1/2	no record	
1914/1915	80	2 5/8	158,036	752.64
1915/1916	No fishing activity			
1916/1917	36	2 1/10	104,583	1,394.4
1917/1918	63	2 1/2	234,028	1,480.64
1918/1919	No record available in Makassar			
1919/1920				
1920/1921				
1921/1922				
1922/1923				
1923/1924	26	8 1/10	384,547	1,831.2
1924/1925	26	8 1/3	407,045	1,876
1925/1926	28	8	504,196	2250.08
1926/1927	29	7 4/5	476,246	2,097.76
1927/1928	30	7 9/10	458,249	1,933.12
1928/1929	30	7	514,224	2,448.32
1929/1930	30	7	487,267	2,319.52
1930/1931	30	4	449,586	2,378.88
	23	3		
1931/1932	23	7	412,303	2,484.16
1932/1933	30	4	496,381	2,319.52
	27	3 1/2		
1933/1934	20	4	452,845	3,038.56
	23	3		

(Source adjusted from statistic in ANRI GBBT 3671)