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ARTICLE

Revolution and Resistance: An Exploration of the Looping Effect in the Moluccas in 1817

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Abstract

This article explores three instances of the looping effect by studying colonial resistance in the Moluccas in 1817. It focuses on the relations between Dutch colonial officials and the sultan of Ternate in the North Moluccas, and between Dutch officials and the regents of Ambon in the Central Moluccas. The first instance of the looping effect revolves around how Ambonese regents, who adhered to Calvinism, used Christian principles to contest Dutch rule within the Moluccas. This became evident in 1817 when a revolt broke out against the reestablishment of Dutch rule within the Moluccas. The leaders of this revolt used religious precepts of Calvinism, previously introduced by the Dutch, to argue that the reestablishment of Dutch rule should be rejected. The article continues with a second instance of the looping effect, reconstructing how Ambonese rulers used instructions issued by the colonial state in 1818 to mitigate claims from the colonial government. Finally, a third instance of the looping effect can be perceived in how the sultan of Ternate used contracts, signed with the Dutch colonial state in 1817, to request Dutch military assistance against internal uprisings and thereby increased his authority throughout the region.

Keywords: the Moluccas; looping effect; colonialism; resistance; Pattimura

Introduction

The year 1817 holds a special significance in the history of the Moluccas—and Indonesia more generally. In this year, a large-scale revolt broke out against Dutch colonial rule in Ambon, which was the first region where the Dutch had claimed territorial rights in the early seventeenth century. Led by Thomas Matulessy, better known as Kapitan Pattimura (1783–1817), fighting commenced in May 1817 and lasted for many months, during which both sides ruthlessly attacked each other. What particularly angered Dutch officials who commented on the uprising was that Pattimura and his followers used Christian notions of justice to criticise the colonial regime. For example, one of them, naval officer Maurits Ver Huell (1787–1860), described how "one of the most prominent rebels was well-versed in the Scriptures, leading him to constantly refer to certain passages of the Bible to support the supposed justice of the actions of his countrymen."[1] Calvinism, the denomination of

[1] Maurits Ver Huell, *Herinnnering aan een reis naar Oost-Indië. Reisverslag en aquarellen van Maurits Ver Huell, 1815–1819,* ed. Chris F. Van Fraassen and Pieter Jan Klapwijk (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2008), 291.

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Protestantism introduced to the Moluccas by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in the seventeenth century, had always been used by the VOC to instil respect for its authority. However, as Ver Huell's quote shows, in 1817, local Ambonese were turning the tables against the colonial state and used religious precepts to challenge its claims.

This article discusses this phenomenon in more depth and explores how the tools and concepts of imperial rule in themselves furnished the very possibility of social and societal change. This is what in this special issue is called the "looping effect," a particular form of imperial resistance. In recent decades, historians have moved away from analysing resistance solely through the lens of "grand nationalist anti-colonial narratives," according to which acts of colonial resistance were regarded as "precursors for the contemporary struggles for national independence."[2] Instead, scholars of colonial resistance have expanded the scope of their research and have studied acts of everyday resistance that did not require elaborate planning or grand ideological schemes. Examples of these are flight, dissimulation, and sabotage, among others.[3] In addition, scholars have focused on how precolonial beliefs, stories, and memories continued to offer alternative visions of authority.[4] Others, such as Sujit Sivasundaram, have pointed to the importance of the exchange of ideas to foster colonial resistance. In his *Waves Across the South,* Sivasundaram has foregrounded the importance of the Indian and Pacific Oceans in the Age of Revolutions and has shown how "[its] inhabitants [...] adopted and at times forcibly took from outsiders new objects, ideas, information and forms of organisation, all of which were used for their own purposes."[5] Where Sivasundaram emphasises resistance in these regions based on newly introduced ideas at the turn of the nineteenth century, this article stresses the importance of resistance based on long-lasting continuities, which reach back to colonial governance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

As explained in the introduction to this issue, zooming in on the looping effect adds to these studies by studying the mechanisms through which local actors advance causes of their own concerns. More concretely, it analyses how locals navigated the colonial bureaucracy for societal or political change and highlights how these bureaucracies offered unintended opportunities for local agents to navigate the imperial state. This article looks at three interconnected ways in which religious precepts, bureaucratic instructions, and political treaties—introduced by the colonial authorities—were used by local actors to empower themselves. It does so by looking at the colonial rule in the Moluccas around 1817, focusing on the relations between Dutch colonial officials and a variety of local actors: the sultan of Ternate in the North Moluccas and the regents of Ambon in the Central Moluccas.

By focusing on the Moluccas, this article zooms in on colonial resistance in a region that has received less attention than other parts of the Indonesian archipelago, especially in comparison with Java. By studying the looping effect, it will be shown, however, that colonial agency was particularly present in the Moluccas around 1817. The importance of Pattimura's revolt has long been recognised—he is, after all, one of Indonesia's national

[2] Nuno Domingos, Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, and Ricardo Roque, "Introduction," in *Resistance and Colonialism: Insurgent Peoples in World History*, ed. Nuno Domingos, Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, and Ricardo Roque (Cambridge: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 4.

[3] James Scott, "Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance," in *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance in South-East* Asia, ed. James Scott and Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet (London: Frank Cass, 1986), 8.

[4] Merle Ricklefs, *The Seen and Unseen Worlds in Java, 1726–49: History, Literature and Islam in the Court of Pakubuwana II* (Sydney: Allen Unwin, 1998).

[5] Sujit Sivasundaram, *Waves Across the South: A New History of Revolution and Empire* (London: William Collins, 2020), 2.

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heroes (Pahlawan Nasional Indonesia). Robert Cribb, for example, writes that "a true anti-colonial rebellion in Ambon under Pattimura in 1817 was the earliest instance of resistance to the Dutch after the Napoleonic interlude."[6] However, while many scholars have investigated Pattimura's anti-Dutch stance, there has been little research on how his criticisms of the Dutch were inspired by the very religion that the Dutch had introduced. Furthermore, if Pattimura's importance is widely recognised, few researchers have investigated how resistance remained a part of Moluccan politics after the Dutch had suppressed Pattimura's revolt.

This article studies three instances of the looping effect, of which two concern the relations between Dutch colonial officials and the regents of the central Moluccas, and the third one, those between the Dutch and the sultan of Ternate. The first revolves around how Pattimura and his followers used religious ideals within Christianity to contest Dutch rule within the Moluccas, arguing that, based on Calvinist principles, the Dutch state lacked legitimacy. The article then continues with a second instance of the looping effect, focusing on how Moluccan regents made use of instructions that the Dutch colonial state had reissued in 1818 to resist its power. The Dutch issued these instructions to the local regents to remind them of their obligations towards the colonial government. However, they did not anticipate how the regents would then use these instructions against the Dutch. The third instance of the looping effect revolves around the policies of the sultan of Ternate in the North Moluccas. It will be shown how he used contracts, signed with the Dutch colonial state in 1817, to request military assistance against internal uprisings in subsequent decades. The sultans of Ternate had supported the Dutch in putting a stop to the Ambonese uprising in 1817, sending out some 1,500 men. When a decade later the sultan of Ternate was confronted with a potential uprising of his own, he could point to the contract he had signed in 1817 to request assistance from the Dutch colonial government.

The article is structured as follows. It will begin by describing how Dutch rule worked in Ambon and Ternate and will explain the positions of the local regents and the sultan in the Dutch colonial administration. It will then discuss the first instance of the looping effect by zooming in on how religion was used to legitimise the revolt against the Dutch administration. After the Dutch quelled this revolution with the help of the sultan of Ternate, they had to reestablish relations with local regents in Ambon, and reissued instructions for them. The article then considers the second instance of the looping effect by analysing the contents of these instructions and will address how the Ambonese regents used these instructions to their advantage. It will continue by discussing a third instance of the looping effect by showing how the sultan of Ternate managed to use the contracts which he had signed with the colonial government to request Dutch assistance against an internal uprising and thereby increase his authority.

Change and Continuity in the Moluccas

The Moluccas have been a part of trade networks centred in the Indian Ocean for more than two millennia. This has been because of the abundant presence of three valuable spices in this region: cloves, nutmeg, and mace. References to these spices can be found in ancient Roman texts, which advise their use not only to improve the taste of food but also because of their spiritual and medicinal qualities. In the early modern era, the spice trade became increasingly controlled by Middle Eastern and Venetian merchants, after which there was a brief spell of Portuguese dominance in the Moluccas. At

[6] Robert Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 122.

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the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Portuguese were defeated and ousted by the Dutch; from then on the Dutch East India Company, founded in 1602, rapidly beat its local and European rivals, often through violence, and gained a dominant position in the Moluccas.

The VOC's dominant military position was reflected in how it organised the spices trade. To control the supply of the Moluccan spice trade, it established a monopoly, which was in place from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards.[7] It determined the precise number of spice trees that locals could grow and bought the spices that were cultivated at a fixed price. While the cultivators remained impoverished due to their position within the system, the Company garnered substantial profits by selling the spices globally. Cloves were cultivated exclusively on Ambon and a few nearby islands, a practice strictly enforced by the VOC to maintain its monopoly. Similarly, nutmeg cultivation was limited to the Banda Islands. The VOC prohibited spice cultivation on other islands in the Moluccas, particularly on Ternate, where clove trees originally grew. All existing spice trees there were ordered to be uprooted. This policy was designed to consolidate the VOC's control over the spice market by centralising production in specific areas that could be more effectively monitored, ensuring a secure monopoly. To ensure that spices were not grown on other islands, the VOC carried out inspection tours, which were called *hongi* expeditions. Every year, hundreds of VOC employees and local Ambonese would inspect dozens of islands to ensure that any illegally planted trees were cut down.

This monopoly was ultimately based on (the threat of) violence, but its day-to-day operations could only be carried out with the support of local regents and sultans. On Ambon, the VOC maintained close relations with a large number of regents, and on Ternate it interacted with a sultan. These local rulers played essential roles in the way the VOC governed because intervening directly in Moluccan affairs would have required a far larger military and bureaucratic presence. The local regents and sultan were especially crucial for mobilising sufficient labour to cultivate cloves and maintain the Dutch spice monopoly. These forced labourers were essential in maintaining VOC buildings, delivering letters to and from local regents, and loading and unloading ships.

The regents and sultans were able to mobilise large numbers of labourers because they held a privileged status within their communities. The Dutch colonial authorities would refer to the village heads in Ambon as regents, but they were known in their societies as *raja*, *patih*, or *orangkaya*, and, in Dutch historiography, the term *regent* is mainly used for Javanese rulers.[8] When a regent stepped down, the village elders would convene to discuss and select a candidate from among their ranks. This nominee would then be recommended to the colonial authorities. Typically, the colonial government would accept the elders' recommendation, leading to the official appointment of the nominee by the Dutch colonial government in Ambon.[9] On Ternate, the VOC did not have to deal with a large number of regents but interacted with one sultan. As this sultan was not allowed to grow spice trees on his lands, the VOC had decided to pay him a considerable amount of money as compensation, which he received every year. The sultan and regents were theoretically subject to Company control and, formally, the VOC had the authority to depose them. However, because of their privileged positions within their communities, the Company relied on them extensively and needed to establish durable relations with these local leaders.

[7] Gerrit Knaap, *Kruidnagelen en christenen. De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie en de bevolking van Ambon 1656–1696*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2004).

[8] Ch. F. Van Fraassen, *Ambon in het 19-eeuwse Indië, van wingewest tot werfdepot* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2018), 73.

[9] Knaap, *Kruidnagelen en christenen*, 44.

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Stable relations with the local regents on Ambon were important not just for the cultivation of spices but also because they played a role in ensuring that religious precepts were carried out properly. While most of the VOC's operations were geared towards trade and maximising profits, it did recognise that it had religious duties. This had been part of the VOC's raison d'être, founded as it was to combat the might of the Catholic powers of Spain and Portugal. Furthermore, it made sense strategically to use religion to create ties between it and its Asian subjects. This was especially evident in the Moluccas. When the Dutch took control of Ambon, the Portuguese had already converted some sixteen thousand locals to Catholicism.[10] The VOC's policy was focused on converting these Catholics to Calvinism. It would do so by sending out Dutch preachers, who, in each of its establishments, were supported by a large number of schoolteachers (*schoolmeesters*). The number of Dutch ministers was very small, often consisting of at most four men in the Moluccas, and in practice, the Ambonese schoolmasters played a crucial role in teaching the locals about the Christian faith. On the Ambonese islands, some sixty local teachers were supervised by four Dutch preachers. On average, each of these sixty schools welcomed around eighty to ninety children, primarily boys. The schools focused on teaching children how to read and write, mainly using Christian study books, and children sang psalms each day. On Sundays, the schoolmaster typically delivered a sermon, emphasising the importance of loyalty to the Company. According to their regulations, "the schoolmasters primarily must inculcate in the young a fear of the Lord, to teach them to pray, sing, attend church, and to catechise them; next to teach them obedience to their parents, the authorities, and their masters."[11] Because of this, one expert on Dutch Calvinism, Charles Parker, concludes that "from the point of view of VOC officers in Asian territories, ministers [...] were necessary to instil loyalty among local inhabitants."[12] As these Calvinists ministers and schoolmasters emphasised the importance of loyalty to the Company, Parker states that "Calvinism served the companies' imperial and commercial interests."[13]

During the eighteenth century, Dutch control in the Moluccas remained largely unchallenged. However, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, this dominance was significantly undermined when the British successfully expelled the Dutch from the region on two occasions. From 1796 to 1803, the British controlled Ambon, and from 1801 to 1803, they also took control of Ternate. After a brief period of Dutch rule between 1803 and 1810, the British resumed occupation of both islands from 1810 to 1817. These events unfolded against the backdrop of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, following the French takeover of the Dutch Republic in the mid-1790s. Britain's strategic goal was to secure these former Dutch territories to protect trade routes to India and limit French expansion in Asia.[14] The brief peace achieved by the Treaty of Amiens in 1802 led to the return of the Moluccas to the Batavian Republic in 1803.[15] However, the subsequent restoration of Dutch rule marked a significant shift; it was now the Dutch government, not the financially troubled VOC, which assumed authority. The VOC had dissolved near the end of the eighteenth century due to near bankruptcy. The British recaptured the Moluccan islands in 1810, expanding their control to include Java, as part of a broader strategy to assert their influence over the Indian Ocean.[16] This action followed the earlier removal of the French from Mauritius, significantly reducing their influence in

[10] Charles Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 163.

[11] Charles Parker, *Global Calvinism: Conversion and Commerce in the Dutch Empire, 1600–1800* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2022), 128.

[12] Ibid., 33.

[13] Ibid., 17.

[14] Alexander Mikaberidze. *The Napoleonic Wars: A Global History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 62.

[15] Jeroen Koch, *Koning Willem I, 1772–1843* (Amsterdam: Boom Uitgeverij, 2013), 125.

[16] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 498.

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the area.[17] British control, however, was short-lived. Following Napoleon's downfall and the re-establishment of the Dutch monarchy under William I of Orange, discussions began regarding the return of Dutch colonial holdings. The 1814 Treaty of London between the British and Dutch governments stipulated the return of the Moluccas, which was finalised in 1817.

A New Colonial Philosophy

On 24 March 1817, Dutch representatives Jan Albertus van Middelkoop and Nicolaus Engelhard, alongside British representative William Byam Martin, finalised an agreement that meticulously outlined the procedures for the transfer of power. The following day, the Dutch flag was hoisted in Ambon, marking the official celebration of this transfer. While the flag was familiar to all, the Dutch aimed to demonstrate to the British and the Ambonese that their governing philosophy had markedly shifted from that of the defunct VOC. Many colonial officials from this new era argued that the Dutch East India Company had been plagued by corruption, with officials more focused on personal gain than the interests of the company or the Moluccan people. This corruption, they asserted, was a primary reason for the VOC's downfall.

Now, however, colonial authority was not exercised by a trading company but by the government of the Dutch East Indies, officially established in 1816. It was proclaimed loudly that the race for profits would no longer reign supreme and that instead genuine care for the colonial subjects would be demonstrated. The Dutch colonial administration was reorganised, and new institutions were established to create a more professional bureaucracy. This professionalisation entailed that officials needed to adhere to strict protocols and instructions and that there was little room for personal enrichment. In these instructions, it was ordained that the governor would ensure that neither he, nor his subordinates, would take any "emoluments, silent profits, percentages, or other advantages."[18] These bureaucratic changes also contained a new way of interacting with the locals. One governor wrote that this colonial philosophy also entailed new respect for the Ambonese: "I have made it my pleasant duty to instil respect among the natives (*inlander*) for the Dutch administration. On all occasions, I have received and spoken to the regents and those of the lowest descent, and conveyed to them that the government, in the broadest terms, desires that the natives are ruled softly and justly, and that they are not repressed or treated unfairly."[19]

Pattimura's Uprising

However, if the Dutch had a completely different idea about themselves, it would soon turn out that the Ambonese still had clear notions about who they were. In the eyes of the Moluccans, Dutch speeches about a new colonial philosophy were nothing more than hollow phrases. Instead, there were fears that the Dutch would put profit before principle and revert to the policies of their infamous predecessor, the VOC. Moreover, Dutch prestige had suffered tremendously after being beaten rather easily by the British a few years prior. If, throughout the eighteenth century, the VOC was perceived

[17] Sivasundaram, *Waves Across the South*, 230.

[18] National Archives (NA), The Hague, Koloniën 2.10.01, 2367, Instructions for the Commissioners tasked with the transition of power for the Moluccas, 31-01-1817, Art. 30, http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/middenmolukken17961902/?page_number=1817-01-31%201.

[19] Leiden University Library, Leiden, D H 71, Beknopte memorie overgeven door den afgaande Gouverneur [der Molukken] H. M. de Kock, Generaal Majoor, aan den aankomende Gouverneur [J. H.] Tielenius Kruithoff, 1 January 1819, http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/middenmolukken17961902/?page_number=1819-01-07.

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as a powerful force, the ease with which the British beat the Dutch showed Moluccan leaders just how fragile their power was.

The restoration of Dutch rule led to great discontent among Ambonese rulers, which helped spark off a considerable uprising, led by Thomas Matulessy, known as Captain Pattimura. He was a devout Christian who had joined the British army after it had taken over control of the Moluccas. In it, he reached the rank of sergeant major and, partly because of his martial capabilities, soon became the leader of the revolt. The uprising started on 15 May 1817 on the island of Saparua and involved the murder of a Dutch colonial official, whom the Ambonese regents accused of oppressing the local villagers. For Pattimura and many other Ambonese leaders, the harsh policies of the Dutch colonial government had become all the more apparent because they contrasted so strongly with British rule, which had been perceived as much softer and was borne more easily by the Ambonese. One local inhabitant stated, "if the Dutch want to rule us, then they have to be fair and just, like the English, who kept their promises."[20] Many people were angered when they learned that the Dutch were planning on reinstating the spice monopoly. In addition, there were fears that the Dutch government wanted to force Moluccan men to join the army, only to then send them to faraway Java. Pattimura and scores of local regents, therefore, focused on ensuring that the Dutch were ousted before they could consolidate their power over all the islands in the Central Moluccas. Between May and November 1817, there were multiple violent clashes between the Dutch armed forces and these Ambonese leaders.

A Christian Revolt?

The dynamics of the looping effect can be perceived in the role religion played in mobilising support among Ambonese leaders to resist the return of the Dutch. On 29 May 1817, the leaders of the revolt presented a petition to the Dutch colonial government. This document, written and signed by Pattimura and many other regents, contained some fourteen articles, which, in the eyes of the authors, legitimised "everything that has happened."[21]

The first point of their list went right at the heart of the matter. As Pattimura and his followers put it, "What concerns religion: the Dutch government wanted to fire the schoolteachers and destroy the Christian religion."[22] These schoolteachers, often of Ambonese descent, had formerly been paid by the VOC and played a crucial role in providing education and religious instruction in Ambon. In 1817, rumours spread that the colonial state believed that it would be more beneficial and cheaper if the Ambonese villagers themselves paid these schoolmasters. Pattimura and his followers perceived this as an attempt "by the Honourable Company to convert us into pagans, and this has hurt us Christians tremendously, as it was the Honourable Dutch Company which, in the times of our forefathers […] had made us Christians."[23] The importance of the schoolmasters had become particularly clear during the years of British rule and revolutionary turmoil. Between 1794 and 1815 there were no Dutch ministers in Ambon, and it was only because of the hard work of the schoolmasters that Christian principles and teachings were still

[20] Quote in Piet Hagen, *Koloniale Oorlogen in Indonesië. Vijf Eeuwen Verzet Tegen Vreemde Overheersing* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2018), 278.

[21] P. H. van der Kemp, *Het Nederlandsch-Indisch bestuur in het midden van 1817; naar oorspronkelijke stukken* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1915), 29.

[22] Ibid.

[23] National Archives of Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta, Ambon 566, Report of Captain Groot's actions in Saparua, annex O, http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/middenmolukken17961902/?page_number=1817-07-21%2009.

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taught among the Moluccan communities.[24] Believing that the "Company had not kept the religion as it should have," the time had come for the Ambonese communities to break with their former colonial masters. The continued referring to the colonial state as constituting "the Company" shows that in the minds of the Ambonese, there was little notion of the VOC as having been replaced by a supposedly more enlightened regime.

The petitioners contrasted these new Dutch policies to how religious affairs had been left alone by the British colonial government during the second British Interregnum. As the petitioners claimed, "the British paid us for our work and respected our religion; that is why the people obeyed them and lived in peace, but as soon as the Dutch came to rule us, that was all over. That is why the people have become discontented and have revolted against the government."[25] Pattimura stated that if the Dutch wanted to continue their rule, they would have to be "just and fair like the English were, who kept their promises." But, he stated, in case the Dutch did not rule like the English, then "we will oppose it [the Dutch state] for all eternity."[26] The fight would be led by Pattimura, who, the petitioners reiterated, not been chosen by their community, but who had been "appointed by the Highest."[27]

The importance of religion is also relevant in another point in the list of complaints, which on first reading seems to be about trade and economic issues. The Ambonese complained that a lack of silver forced them to use paper money instead. This was problematic not only because of the lower value of paper currency but also because it went against the church custom of how alms were given, which dictated that only silver coins could be put in the church's offertory box. As one of the regents stated in a negotiation with a colonial official: "We do not want to accept paper money, which prevents us from being able to take care of the poor in our church, as paper cannot be put in the box."[28] The regents claimed they wanted to maintain their old traditions, "without which peace cannot be attained, even if this leads to the destruction of the whole island."[29] The importance of religion is also highlighted in some of the compromises that Pattimura and the regents were willing to make. The notion that this revolt was not primarily anti-colonial can also be seen in how some Ambonese leaders believed peace could be obtained between them and the Dutch. They claimed that they would continue to "live in peace and quiet" if "two preachers were stationed on Ambon" and were allowed to continue to "maintain their religion, which was brought to these islands by the Dutch government."[30] These sentiments show that the Moluccan leaders connected their religion to the coming of the Dutch and still had a modicum of respect for them because they had introduced Calvinism in the Moluccas.

Furthermore, not only was the proper compliance with Christian ritual a reason for the revolt, but psalms from the Bible were also used to legitimise the uprising that Pattimura had staged. In a European context, many scholars have emphasised how the Atlantic revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century were justified by enlightened rhetoric about equality, human rights, and people's sovereignty. While such notions are very much present in the rhetoric of colonial officials, Pattimura and his followers mostly harked back to

[24] Karel Steenbrink, "Moluccan Christianity in the 19th and 20th century between *Agama Ambon* and Islam," in Karel Steenbrink, Jan Aritonang eds. *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, ed. Karel Steenbrink and Jan Aritonang (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 383.

[25] Van der Kemp, *Het Nederlandsch-Indisch Bestuur,* 30.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., 32.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] National Archives of Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta, Ambon 566, Report of Captain Groot's actions in Saparua, annex D.

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a much older tradition of Calvinist doctrines to rebel against colonial policies. Examples of this can be found in a travel account written by a Dutch colonial official, Maurits Ver Huell, whose very vivid and detailed account of the Pattimura uprising was quoted in the introduction of this article. In his narrative, he mentioned how he met "several of the rebels," among whom one of the schoolteachers of Saparua. Ver Huell describes him as "the grey, ancient schoolmaster[, who] was one of the main troublemakers; and since he was well-versed in the Bible, he would repeatedly quote the Holy Scriptures to support the supposed justice of the actions of his compatriots."[31] Ver Huell does not share any information on what verses were presented by the schoolteacher, but more on this can be found in a different account. In this report, one colonial official discusses how, during an inspection of an Ambonese village that took place the day after an attack on one of the Dutch fortifications had been carried out, he found a Bible in a church in Saparua. It was opened at Psalm 17, parts of which reads:

> Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry! [...] Let your eyes behold the right!
> Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings,
> from the wicked who do me violence, my deadly enemies who surround me.
> They close their hearts to pity; with their mouths they speak arrogantly.
> [...] Arise, O LORD! Confront him, subdue him! Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword, from men by your hand, O LORD.

This psalm, with its lines about the just cause, spoke tremendously to the Ambonese feelings of being treated unjustly by the Dutch colonial regime. Furthermore, the mere fact that service for Holy Communion was held to prepare for the fighting against the Dutch is a sign that the Ambonese had rejected not only the Dutch state's political claims but also the role of the Dutch within religious ceremonies. Up to that point, only Dutch preachers had been allowed to perform the sacrament of Holy Communion, while the Ambonese schoolteachers only played a secondary role in these rituals. By holding a service without the participation of Dutch preachers, the Ambonese Christians had also proclaimed their independence from the Dutch in a religious sense.

After the uprising had started, Pattimura regularly stressed the importance of complying with Christian rituals to strengthen the relations between the insurgents. This need for unity was crucial, as the Dutch had always managed to hold sway over the Moluccas through a divide-and-conquer policy and were now attempting to sow division among the Ambonese during times of war. Pattimura stressed that his followers needed to hold on to their Christian beliefs. He exhorted them to "continue to further the interests of us Christians in accordance with the commandments of the Almighty who is in heaven. This must be done by going to Church on Sundays and attending the gatherings during the week."[32] Furthermore, in these times of crisis, Pattimura stressed the importance of a Christian education. He admonished his followers to "see to it that the children go to school," as there they could be "taught the word of God and become a Christian, for the glory of our country, in accordance with God's holy will."[33] Religion was not only a crucial element in how the VOC had tried to create loyal subjects, but Pattimura also stressed its power in creating unity among the large group of Ambonese who had revolted against the Dutch colonial government.

The notion of the looping effect can thus be applied in multiple ways to how Pattimura and his followers used religion to justify their attacks on the Dutch colonial government.

[31] Ver Huell, *Herrinering*, 291.
[32] Quoted in Ben Van Kaam, *The South Moluccans: Background to the Train Hijackings* (London: Hurst, 1979), 18.
[33] Ibid.

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For the Dutch, Calvinism was part of the identity of their republic in Europe, as well as of the VOC. This had come about in the context of the wars against the Iberian empires, which adhered to Catholicism. The Dutch ministers, after having converted many people in the Moluccas, regularly emphasised the importance of loyalty to the Company. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, many followers of Pattimura recognised that Christianity, in its Calvinist interpretation, had been brought to the Moluccas by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. The continued relevance of Calvinism at the turn of the nineteenth century, however, was not due to the Dutch ministers, but to the local schoolmasters, who had taught the Ambonese the fundamentals of the Christian faith in times of war and crisis. Their Christian faith offered them spiritual and ethical guidelines as to what they expected of a political regime. When the belief became widespread that the returning Dutch would cease the payment of the schoolmasters and reimpose the spice monopoly, Pattimura and his followers used Christian ideals and psalms to legitimise their actions against the Dutch.

An Unexpected Ally

Before we can analyse the second and third instances of the looping mechanism, it is important to understand how the Dutch reacted to the Pattimura uprising and mobilised the support of the sultan of Ternate to put a stop to it. Initially, the Ambonese revolt seemed very successful, especially when many islands surrounding Saparua joined Pattimura and started fighting the Dutch. During one of the first violent clashes on Saparua, Dutch losses were tremendous, with over two hundred men and the leader of the military campaign, Major Beetjes, perishing. The Dutch quickly realised that they needed additional forces and devised a plan to receive assistance from Batavia but also from their old allies, the sultan of Ternate, Mohamad Ali (r.1807–21), and the sultan of Tidore, Mohamad Tahir (r.1810–21). Arnold Adriaan Buyskes (1771–1838) was the man responsible for arranging their support. The colonial government in Batavia had instructed him to go to the Moluccas as quickly as possible, with the sole mission to quell the revolt and restore Dutch colonial authority throughout the Ambonese islands. To do so, Buyskes visited the sultans in the North Moluccas to enlist their help. In Ternate and Tidore, he negotiated with both sultans, agreeing to all kinds of payments in return for a large force that would help the Dutch against Pattimura. As Buyskes would write to his superiors in Batavia, "the sultans from Ternate and Tidore will prepare all their armed ships and send these to Amboina. I absolutely need these to cut off all supplies and communications between Ceram [an island close to Ambon] and the rebels."[34]

In return for this support, the sultans signed a new contract with the Dutch, according to which they recognised the sovereign power of the Dutch over part of their islands, allowing them to establish soldiers and colonial officials there. Furthermore, the sultans agreed to accept whatever the Dutch colonial government would decide on concerning the cultivation of spices. And, important in the context of the revolt of Pattimura, both sultans "promised to support the government in times of peace and war with vessels, men, and war requirements."[35] In return for this, the sultans could call on the Dutch if they were confronted with their own uprisings. As it was put in one report of a meeting with the sultan of Ternate, "the sultan answered that the Company could always trust on

[34] NA, Buijskes 1.01.47.05, Letter from A. A. Buijskes, 1817-09-06, http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/middenmolukken17961902/?page_number=1817-09-06%202.

[35] Johannes Olivier, *Reizen in den Molukschen Archipel naar Makassar, enz. in het gevolg van den Gouverneur-Generaal van Nederland's Indie in 1824 gedaan* (Amsterdam: G. J. A. Beijerinck, 1834), 301.

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his support, and he trusted on the Company to support him in case he would encounter inconvenient situations himself."[36] The importance of this for understanding the looping effect will become clear later on in the article.

As a result of these treaties, the sultans of Ternate and Tidore sent out a large number of vessels, carrying some 1,500 men in total. As Maurits Ver Huell noted with a sigh of relief, "on 11 October 1817, eighteen armed Corra Corra's [a type of vessel] arrived from Ternate and Tidore."[37] Each of these eighteen vessels carried some 75 to 150 armed men, bringing much-needed reinforcements. The previous months had witnessed heavy fighting and tremendous bloodshed, but when additional forces arrived from Batavia as well as Ternate and Tidore, the Dutch managed to overwhelm the Ambonese rapidly. In a little over a month, many of the Ambonese regents had been captured. On 13 November, the Dutch apprehended Pattimura and regained power over the Moluccas. Soon after he was captured, Pattimura and dozens of other Ambonese leaders were sentenced to death, causing Ambonese society to lose many of its leaders. The description of Pattimura's execution again shows how important his Christian faith was to him. As Ver Huell painted the scene: "The entire war fleet from Ternate and Tidore (...) was assembled here and could bear witness to the execution of the main rebels, which took place on the 16th of this month, in front of the town hall, on the town square, outside of Castle Nieuw Victoria [...]. I visited those who were sentenced to death in their prisons the evening before [their execution]. I found the chief Thomas Matulesia surrounded by schoolteachers, preparing himself for his death by incessantly singing psalms."[38] Pattimura was sentenced to death by hanging, and while the bodies of the other regents were hung on the gallows, his body was tied to an iron cage—as an example for all to see.

Rebuilding the Colonial Infrastructure

With the death of Pattimura—tragic though it was for Moluccan society—resistance against the Dutch would not disappear, however, which brings us to a second form of the looping effect. This second form concerns how local regents made use of bureaucratic instructions to improve their own position against the Dutch. These instructions were part of a larger plan of the Dutch colonial government to rebuild the colonial infrastructure after the execution of Pattimura and his men. This task was carried out by the newly appointed governor of the Moluccas, H. M. de Kock (1779–1845), who arrived in Ambon in 1818. He realised that to cultivate, collect, and transport the valuable spices that could be found in the Moluccas, it was crucial to establish close relations with the Ambonese regents. Furthermore, with the Ambonese having lost many of their leaders in the uprising, a new Ambonese elite had to be formed and familiarised with the expectations the Dutch colonial government had of them. To inform them of their duties, De Kock issued a document in 1818 containing a long list of instructions for the regents. In the text accompanying these, he explained that they were necessary because many new regents had only been appointed in the last year. These newly appointed regents needed to replace those who had joined the resistance against Dutch authority in the Pattimura campaigns. Many of these new regents were "completely unfamiliar with the old instruction," and De Kock believed the time had come to inform them of their duties and obligations towards the Dutch colonial state.[39]

36 Ver Huell, *Herinnering*, 314.

37 Ibid., 259.

38 Ibid., 307.

39 H. A. Idema, "De oorzaken van den opstand van Saparoea in 1817," *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 79:1 (1923), 619.

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The Regents and the Colonial State

The instructions that De Kock issued were not new, but they were based on ones that had been first issued on 11 January 1771 by Governor Johan Abraham van der Voort, who had been in power between 1770 and 1775. The instructions of 1818 contained forty-five articles and set out in detail what was expected of the regents.[40] De Kock believed that reaching back to these old regulations would make it easier for the Ambonese regents to accept their legitimacy, as these articles had already structured the interactions between the VOC and the regents in the previous century and, therefore, had a form of legitimacy within Moluccan society. To understand the scope of these instructions and gain insight into how they allowed for forms of resistance, it is important to focus on a couple of the forty-five articles.

The first article pointed out that "all local heads shall rule in a correct and lenient way without engaging in exactions and cruelty."[41] This focus on protecting the common man against his own rulers was part of a larger narrative through which the Dutch legitimised their rule in Asia.[42] The instructions then discussed the role of regents in ensuring a proper observation of religious obligations. Christian regents were obliged to make sure that children within their communities attended school and that all forms of superstition and paganism were banned. But they were not to interfere in the religious life of other communities, and their subordinates ought not to engage in religious conflicts, which is why Christian men were not allowed to marry Islamic women and vice versa. This immediate discussion of religious tasks again emphasises the importance of religion in the colonial system. Additionally, there were a few articles that dealt with diseases. Regents were obliged to immediately report cases of leprosy and were exhorted to have their communities inoculated against smallpox.

The following articles especially focused on the types of labour that local Ambonese had to carry out for the colonial state. Naturally, most articles focused on the cultivation and collection of spices, but there were also detailed instructions on how the *hongi* expeditions were to be organised. Furthermore, the regents were forcefully exhorted to not engage in any private trade—only trade with the Dutch was allowed. There was to be no contact with other nations, and when a foreign ship was sighted, the regents immediately had to notify the governor of Ambon. Common to all these articles was the notion they derived part of their legitimacy from being based on a very old tradition. Article 9, for example, discussed certain duties incumbent on the regent of Manipa, and referred to a treaty that the VOC signed with its rulers in 1622. Article 4 explicitly made the point that "the regents will not burden their subordinates with any other commands than those they have been traditionally subjected to."[43]

Negotiating Colonial Rule

The instructions were not the result of long negotiations with the Ambonese regents but were simply imposed on them by the Dutch colonial bureaucracy. As such, they dovetail well with the view that "imperial bureaucracies were authoritarian, extractive and backed by violence."[44] But if these instructions could be used by the colonial government to

[40] For a more detailed discussion of the continuities between these instructions, see P. Post, "Governors, Regents, and Rituals: An Exploration of Colonial Diplomacy in Ambon at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century," *Diplomatica* 3:1 (2021).

[41] Ibid.

[42] J. van Goor, *Prelude to Colonialim: The Dutch in Asia* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004), 103.

[43] Idema, "De oorzaken."

[44] Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons, "Empires, Bureaucracy and the Paradox of Power," in *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History: From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 4.

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increase its authority, the same was true for the local regents. Documents from the archives in The Hague and Jakarta show that the local regents repeatedly used the instructions to their own benefit: they interpreted them in such a way as to counter claims made by the Dutch government. This can be interpreted as a second example of the looping effect, and it shows how resistance to colonial rule remained important after Pattimura's revolt had ended.

A meeting that was held between the prefect from Haruku, a subordinate of the governor of Ambon, and several regents shows that the regents were very aware that the instructions were not set in stone. The regents, whose names were not written down in the minutes, explained that they could not provide three *orembai* (types of boats) for the *hongi* expedition, which was required according to De Kock's newly issued instruction. Instead, they offered to supply the government in Ambon with a few thousand kilos of chalk. They then negotiated about when this was to be supplied and managed to convince the prefect that they would do so much later than the government originally had asked for.[45] Later on in the meeting, the regents of Haruku complained about a request from the governor to provide the Dutch government with twelve men for corvée labour, as they had never been obliged to do so under the old instructions. The resident who wrote the report then noted that, according to this document, this was indeed the case. As such, the instructions were navigated by the regents to negotiate with the Dutch official.

These examples show that the regents did not passively follow everything that they were required to do according to the instructions. Instead, they show the regents negotiating about complying with certain rules and thereby finding room to manoeuvre. Furthermore, these documents reveal that at times the regents also rejected requests from the governor, as there was not an obligation in the instructions to comply with such a request. This shows that attempts by the government to describe the obligations of the regents and thereby force them to comply more readily with colonial rules also gave regents the chance to reflect on what exactly the colonial government could ask from them, which empowered them to sometimes resist certain demands from the colonial authorities. One colonial official later wrote that the instructions were known "so well among the natives in the villages that many of them, upon hearing the number of a certain article, can make a few comments on his rights or duties."[46] As such, these dynamics illustrate the looping effect because they show how the Ambonese regents, after Pattimura and his followers had been killed, still managed to advance their own position by making use of Dutch colonial procedures.

Internal Security and the Looping Effect in Ternate

The regents of Ambon were not alone in using documents that they had signed with the Dutch to improve their own position. A third instance of the looping effect can be discerned in how the sultan of Ternate managed to use the contract that he had signed with the Dutch colonial state in 1817 to request its help in putting a stop to several uprisings against the sultan's authority in the first half of the nineteenth century. Multiple scholars have stressed how colonial governments, such as that of the Dutch, were intent on negotiation treaties because these were perceived as "a more legitimate means of acquiring lands than were conquest of occupation."[47] In fact, according to one scholar,

[45] ANRI, Ambon 1037/d, Report of a conference of the underprefect of Haruku (Mazel) with regents of his domain, dated 22-01-1810, http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/middenmolukken17961902/#page=446&accessor=toc&view=htmlPane.

[46] Petrus van der Crab, *De Moluksche Eilanden* (Batavia: Lange & Co., 1862), 168.

[47] Saliha Belmessous, "The Paradox of an Empire by Treaty," in *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600–1900*, ed. Saliha Belmessous (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.

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"treaty-making with non-European rulers was adopted by the Dutch as the basis of their colonial development."[48] However, we have seen before that the treaty of the sultan and the Dutch in 1817 had come about in unusual circumstances, as the Dutch were desperately seeking the support of the sultan of Ternate to stop Pattimura and his followers. Because of this, the sultan could negotiate the inclusion of several articles that, in the course of the nineteenth century, enabled him to enlist Dutch support to put a stop to several revolts. These mainly took place in what is now known as North Sulawesi, a region over which the sultan of Ternate formally claimed sovereignty but where his actual power was very limited.

According to the contracts, the sultan had to recognise the supreme power of the Dutch in the North Moluccas, taking away much of his independent authority. As it was stated in Article 1 of the Treaty signed in 1817: "His Highness, the sultan of Ternate, recognises the sovereignty of the Dutch government and promises to be completely loyal, subject and obedient to its authority."[49] In return for this, however, the sultan would be able to call on the Dutch if he were confronted with uprisings in his own domain. As Article 4 put it, "there will be a permanent friendship and alliance between the Dutch government and High Highness, the sultan of Ternate, and his successors. The friends and enemies of one of the parties are considered as such by both parties."[50] As a result of this friendship, both parties declared in Article 5 to mutually support each other with "ships, men, and other war necessities."[51] The Dutch government committed itself to "protect the sultan of Ternate against all internal and external threats."[52] In Article 6, both parties also agreed that they would not support any "rebellious forces [...] and instead go to any lengths to apprehend mutineers and have them brought to justice."[53] Together, these articles set out a clear obligation of mutual assistance. In 1817, these articles had benefited the Dutch tremendously in their attempts to quell the Pattimura revolt, as it had only been because of the sultan's assistance that peace had been restored in the Central Moluccas.

Soon enough, however, the sultan of Ternate pointed to these articles and claimed that the Dutch government ought to offer assistance when he was confronted with internal unrest in his own domains. These uprisings occurred quite regularly in the first half of the nineteenth century and would all take place in areas over which the sultan claimed sovereignty but where his actual authority was very limited. In 1826, for example, combined Dutch-Ternatese forces headed out to Tobungku in North Sulawesi to suppress a local revolt. Under the command of Dutch lieutenant Lockemeijer and the Ternatese headman Kapitan Laut Price Abu Maha, a small expedition was launched to crack down on an uprising by several local traders who wanted to put a stop to the influence of the sultan of Ternate. After the uprising had been quelled, the sultan of Ternate placed a permanent representative, called an *utussar*, within the community of Tabunku.[54] This official had to keep an eye out for Ternate's interests and ensure that future revolts not take place.[55]

It was not only in North Sulawesi, however, that the Dutch assisted the sultan of Ternate to put a stop to an internal uprising. In 1849, several individuals who lived on

[48] Ibid., 3.

[49] NA, Engelhard and Van Alphen 2.21.004.19: 319. The first article of the treaty.

[50] Ibid., article 4 of the treaty.

[51] Ibid., article 5 of the treaty.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., article 6 of the treaty.

[54] J. N. Vosmaer, *Korte beschrijving van het zuid-oostelijk schiereiland van Celebes* (Badjau: Landsdrukkerij, 1839), 110.

[55] C. van der Hart, *Reize rondom het eiland Celebes en naar eenige der Moluksche eilanden* ('s Gravenhage: K. Fuhri, 1855), 67.

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Makian, close to Ternate, visited Sultan Muhammad Zain to protest against the enormous quantities of timber that he had claimed. The sultan immediately rejected their complaints and had some of the visitors placed under arrest, allowing the others to return to Makian. According to the account of the Dutch resident, C. M. Visser, the people on Makian then "continued [their] revolt against the Ternatese administration."[56] This again led to a Dutch ship, *de Zwaluw* (the Swallow), headed by Commander Claas Noordduijn, to head out to Makian with a detachment of soldiers and an armed fleet of some 450 Ternatan soldiers.[57] After some quick but violent skirmishes, around eight inhabitants of Makian were killed and this small insurrection was struck down. With the help of Dutch armed forces, the sultan of Ternate was able to increase his authority over the lands which were formally subject to him, but where his influence had always been limited. This ultimately not only made him more powerful within his domain but it also meant that he had a stronger position to negotiate vis-à-vis the Dutch colonial government. As such, this is a clear instance of the looping effect, as it shows the sultan navigating the treaties to improve his authority within the Moluccas.

Conclusion

In this article, it has been argued that multiple instances of the looping effect can be observed in the Moluccas around 1817. This effect has been studied to understand how local rulers used the colonial bureaucracy for social or political change and it highlights how these bureaucracies offered unintended opportunities for local agents to navigate the imperial state. First, it has been shown how Pattimura and his followers used Christian precepts to justify their revolt against the Dutch colonial state, whose predecessor, the VOC, had originally introduced Calvinism into the Moluccas. While the Company had always used religion to link its subjects spiritually to its way of governing, Pattimura and his followers pointed to notions of justice in biblical psalms that contrasted with the way the Dutch operated in the Moluccas. These inspired them to launch a large-scale revolt against the Dutch state demanding to be treated more justly and fairly.

Second, it has been argued that a second instance of the looping effect can be perceived in how local Ambonese regents used instructions that were reissued by the colonial government to mitigate claims from the Dutch authorities. This has been shown by analysing how in 1818 instructions were issued concerning the role of the regents in the colonial administration, which were used by these regents to delineate where colonial authority began but also ended. This shows that even after the Pattimura revolt was suppressed, more minor forms of resistance continued to be carried out by local regents in the Moluccas. A third way the looping effect can be perceived is in how the sultan of Ternate used the contracts that he had signed with the colonial state to suppress internal unrest and potential uprisings in the first half of the nineteenth century. Because the sultan had helped the Dutch in suppressing Pattimura's revolt, he could point to the contract that had been signed in 1817 to call on the colonial government when faced with uprisings of his own later on. This was not a form of resistance against the Dutch, but it was part of a larger scheme from the sultan to enhance his power by using a contract, which had originally been drawn up to reduce his power, to his benefit.

By focusing on such instances of the looping effect, it is possible to become more attentive to how a large variety of local actors, operating within and through colonial contexts, could navigate colonial power structures. Local actors, such as Pattimura, could thereby use structures, norms, and concepts of imperial rule to effect political change and

[56] F. S. A. de Clerq, *Bijdragen tot de kennis der residentie Ternate* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1890), 129.
[57] Ibid.

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improve their position within colonial society. As such, the looping effect helps us understand how a variety of colonial actors, even in the most dire of situations, could turn the tables against the colonial state and thereby reveal local agency in unexpected ways.

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