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# Treacherous Translators and Improvident Paupers: Perception and Practice in Dutch Makassar, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

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**Abstract**

Translator/interpreters in (pre)colonial settings were gatekeepers, capable of shaping both perceptions and policy. Their ability to bridge cultural divides was crucial, but consequently their identities could appear ambiguous and their loyalties uncertain. This case-study analyses the changing character of official translators in the East Indonesian port of Makassar in the 18th and 19th centuries. It considers the fluctuating fortunes of the mestizo families who dominated the role under the VOC and until the mid 1800s. Subsequently the Dutch East Indian state was increasingly able to subordinate personal networks to professional administrative criteria, marginalizing the mestizo and consolidating the colonial bureaucracy.

Les traducteurs-interprètes qui ont été employés dans un cadre précolonial et colonial peuvent être considérés comme des véritables gardiens à cause de leur habilité à traduire des perceptions et à formuler des stratégies. Leur capacité d'établir un rapprochement entre des mondes culturels divergents était crucial. Cependant, cette même aptitude leur valait des fois une réputation d'identité ambiguë et de loyauté douteuse. Cette contribution traite des traducteurs officiels du port de Makassar (l'Indonésie orientale) aux XVIII$^{e}$-XIX$^{e}$ siècles, et en détaille la transformation de leur statut social durant cette époque à travers l'analyse des fortunes instables des familles métisses qui exerçaient un rôle dominant sous la VOC jusqu'à la mi-XVIII$^{e}$ siècle. Par la suite l'État colonial des Indes néerlandaise s'est montré de plus en plus capable de soumettre les réseaux personnel en les remplaçant par des critères relatifs à une administration professionnelle. Il s'ensuivit que les traducteurs métis furent marginalisés tandisque la bureaucratie coloniale fut renforcée.

**Keywords**

intermediaries, translators, mestizo families, cultural interaction, Makassar, VOC, Dutch Indies, colonial bureaucracy

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The Italian expression *tradutorre traditore* ("translator traitor") refers to the impossibility of true translation. Simple word equivalencies seldom exist, and each translator's choices are informed by his background and attitudes.[1] Good translators or interpreters had to be at least bi-cultural, able to appreciate the nuances and resonance of languages in their changing social contexts. Such men negotiated and exploited zones of difference, which were particularly complex in cosmopolitan ports and in imperial or colonial settings, where cultural difference and related social capital determined access to political and economic resources.[2] Translators were not passive go-betweens, but gatekeepers, controlling communication and consequently capable of shaping both perceptions and policy. They had inevitable, if sometimes regretted, access to privileged knowledge. In situations where mutual understanding was limited, and politics personal, they were key figures, entrusted with diplomatic and strategic roles.[3] Since intelligence and advice were always in demand, so too were those capable of rendering explicit texts, implicit meanings, and inside information into accessible and potentially advantageous terms. They were central to cross-cultural processes of explanation and legitimation.

As armies advanced and treaties were signed, many interpreters were able to achieve a higher status for themselves and their descendents within emerging imperial or proto-colonial systems.[4] Indeed, the best-documented examples of translators in early modern Asia are those who

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1) Steiner argued that translation was a hermeneutic challenge, demanding an awareness of the philosophical bases of interpretation; G. Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1998). See also J. F. Graham, ed. *Difference in Translation* (Ithaca, New York, and London: Cornell University Press, 1985).

2) T. Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley Cal.: University of California Press, 1992).

3) In sixteenth-century New Spain Dona Marina, or "the Indian woman" and other interpreters "were more important to Cortes than the Tlaxcalan soldiers and other allies with whom he eventually conquered Mexico," J. Delisle and J. Woodsworth, eds, *Translators through History* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995). See also B. Andaya, *Intermediary Figures in Diplomacy in the Malay World before 1800. The Eighth Conference. International Association of Historians of Asia: Selected Papers* (Bangi, Selangor, 1988); D. Ehsan and F. E. Karttunen, *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

4) S. Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); N. Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel, and Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

worked for the European trading companies. Imported career officials in such companies came and went, as their postings took them to different ports and capitals, but their interpreters and translators usually stayed, being either native, or at least experienced, in the regional *lingua franca*. Within their own hierarchies the officials felt superior to the translators, but their lack of local knowledge ensured that they were dependent upon them. The frustrated Europeans were well aware that their translators had ample opportunity to manipulate situations for their financial or political advantage, yet were quite unable to monitor their activities. The translators' value depended on their closeness to native society, but this also meant that their identities could appear ambiguous and their loyalty uncertain.

Later, in more formally organized colonial regimes, when a stable symbiosis had developed between Asian leaders and European officials, interpreters and translators tended to occupy strategic administrative niches. In the nineteenth and especially the twentieth centuries bureaucratization, urbanization, new forms of communication and travel, economic integration, and education created much wider and more inclusive arenas of interaction between rulers and ruled. If anything, this complicated issues of representation, interpretation, and (mis)understanding, as specially trained bureaucrats, journalists, and political leaders with their own agendas joined the translators of earlier eras, adding new voices to the often contradictory chorus of commentary and clarification. Consequently, the translators' monopoly was broken, and their changing role tells us much about shifting social and political hierarchies. This article will examine one such case, considering the fluctuating fortunes of translator families in Makassar from the late seventeenth to the late nineteenth centuries.

## Makassar: Fixed Precepts, Fluid Practice

The port-town of Makassar lies on the southwest peninsular of Sulawesi (Celebes) in East Indonesia, within relatively easy sailing distance of spice-rich Maluku (the Moluccas), North and East Borneo, the Southern Philippines, and Java. Rising to prominence in the sixteenth century as the chief port of the Goa-Talloq kingdoms, Makassar's economic role was shaped, on the one hand, by the geographic logic of its position and, on the other, by its increasing ability to exploit wider catchment areas and

more distant markets. In the early sixteenth century, before Makassar became a major commercial player, the Portuguese Tome Pires noted that rice, foodstuffs, and gold were exchanged for Gujerati, Bengali, and Coromandel textiles. Ships from Makassar sailed to Java, Melaka, Borneo, and Siam, and "all the places between Pahang and Siam."[5] East Indonesia does not seem to have had direct contacts with China before the late sixteenth century; previously they were linked by entrepot in places like Sulu, Brunei, and Java.[6] By the early seventeenth century, however, Makassar had gained a new and lucrative role: as the Dutch East India Company, or VOC,[7] consolidated its control of Maluku, Asian traders moved to the Sulawesian port, where they could access "smuggled" spices and continue the established commerce centered on the exchange of Indian textiles for cloves, nutmeg, mace, and pepper. This vibrant growth paralleled Makassar's rise to political power, as the newly Islamized state challenged its Bugis neighbors.[8]

However, since the 1620s it had become increasingly clear to the VOC that they had to stop the Makassarese kingdoms from circumventing the Company's claimed monopoly on the Maluku spice trade. After much diplomatic maneuvering and several military campaigns, Makassar was finally subjugated in 1669 by Admiral Speelman and his ally, the disaffected Bugis prince Arung Palakka.[9] This cleared the way for the establishment of a Company garrison based in Fort Rotterdam. The emergence of

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5) J. Villiers, "Makassar: The Rise and Fall of an East Indonesian Maritime Trading State, 1512-1669." In *The Southeast Asian Port and Polity: Rise and Demise*, eds J. Kathirithamby-Wells and J. Villiers (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990): 145. For English comments on seventeenth-century trade, see J. Villiers, "One of the Especiallest Flowers in our Garden: The English Factory at Makassar, 1613-1667." *Archipel* 39 (1990): 159-78.

6) R. Ptak, *China's Seaborne Trade with South and Southeast Asia (1200-1750)* (Ashgate Variorum: Aldershot, 1999). A. Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680, vol. 2: Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

7) *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, United East India Company, est. 1602, nationalized in 1795.

8) Makassarese speakers occupied the south and southwestern parts of the southwestern peninsula of Celebes, this area came under varying levels of Dutch control in the later seventeenth century. The main Bugis language states to the north were Bone, Wajo, and Soppeng; these were only gradually incorporated into the Dutch East Indies between 1860 and 1916.

9) F. W. Stapel, *Het Bongaais Verdrag* (Leiden: University of Leiden, 1922); L. Y. Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka: A History of South Sulawesi (Celebes) in the Seventeenth Century* (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1981).

a small trading and service-based town in the shadow of the fort was both a severely truncated continuation of previous commercial traditions, and a result of this new military and diplomatic power. Although travel was officially curtailed and lucrative commodities were reserved for the Company, the remaining VOC-approved connections with Batavia, Maluku, and the southern archipelagos could be profitable, and illicit trade also continued. For the communities of Chinese, Malays, and, to a lesser extent, Sulawesians and immigrants from elsewhere in the archipelago, the port-town's advantageous location and opportunities under the new regime ensured a continuing economic prominence, particularly as trade with China expanded from the late seventeenth century.

Makassar was thus an uneasy combination of a Dutch political and military outpost, monitoring the often turbulent politics of the peninsula's Bugis states, and a commercial presence that was itself ambiguous. VOC economic policy strove to maximize income through a restrictive domination of trade, while at the same time trying to ensure that customs duties and taxes (primarily on the port's merchant communities, notably Chinese, Malays, and Bugis) were profitable enough to cover local costs.[10] The Company headquarters in Batavia and The Netherlands were consistently disappointed, as expenditure always exceeded revenue, but the subsidy was deemed essential because of Makassar's crucial political role in guarding the sea-lanes to Maluku.[11]

On paper, the VOC was a unified bureaucracy, but it was essentially a hybrid:[12] part business, part state. Although formally highly centralized, it was necessarily pragmatic in practice. The very notion of "the VOC" is problematic. The reality of the Company on the ground was contingent upon unstable local, regional (Indian Ocean, East Asian), and European commercial and political contexts. The different VOC branches followed the same regulations within standardized institutions, based on Batavian models,[13] but they also had to adapt to existing realities. If the VOC was

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[10] G. Knaap and H. Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders: Ships, Skippers and Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Makassar* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004).

[11] E. M. Jacobs, *Merchant in Asia: The Trade of the Dutch East India Company during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2006).

[12] J. van Goor, "A Hybrid State: The Dutch Economic and Political Network in Asia." In *From the Mediterranean to the China Sea*, eds C. Guillot, D. Lombard, and R. Ptak (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998): 157-92.

[13] This combination ensures that the VOC offers excellent potential for comparative studies.

to obtain commodities cheaply, it had to achieve a mutually advantageous *modus vivendi* with Asian elites. European officials' careers were determined by their performance within the Dutch hierarchy, but this in turn depended upon their ability to negotiate with people speaking different languages, following their own agendas, within their own political arenas. In such situations, translation, in the broadest sense of the word, was intrinsic to every transaction.

The strength of the VOC varied from place to place and time to time, as did the extent to which Dutch norms could be applied. Company officials' interlocutors ranged from powerful kingdoms capable of imposing their own priorities as they defined them themselves, to client headmen whose existence depended upon their ability to satisfy VOC requirements. Like its competitors, predecessors, and successors throughout the Indian Ocean, the VOC was essentially a superstructure that depended on local partners in order to be able to function.[14] This principle also applied to the personal activities of Company officials, whose search for wealth over and above their salaries depended on a successful participation in what remained an essentially Asian commercial scene. VOC envoys and interpreters bargained with their counterparts from local states and communities, or with entrepreneurial brokers, to close the necessary deals. Such mediating roles demanded special skills, sensitivities, and connections, which were mainly to be found in the *creole* and *mestizo* communities that developed in the wake of European settlement.[15]

Opportunism and compromise characterized Makassar's inhabitants, and blurred the boundaries which seemed, on the surface, to define the structures of everyday life. Local politics and commerce required negotiation, as did the implementation of Company policy, from the most paro-

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14) G. V. Scammell, "The Pillars of Empire: Indigenous Assistance and the Survival of the 'Estado da India' c. 1600-1700." *Modern Asian Studies: Special Issue: Asian Studies in Honour of Professor Charles Boxer* 22 (1988): 473-89. More specialized were the *banian*s of Calcutta, the *dubash*es of Madras, or the *comprador* of the China coast. See Y.-P. Hao, *The Comprador in Nineteenth-Century China: Bridge Between East and West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970); S. Neild-Basu, "The Dubashes of Madras." *Modern Asian Studies* 18 (1984): 1-31.

15) *Mestizo* refers to people of European legal status, but of *creole* birth and mixed ancestry. For Indonesia see H. E. Niemeyer, *Batavia: Een koloniale samenleving in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2005): 35, 45-9; U. Bosma and R. Raben, *Being 'Dutch' in the Indies: A History of Creolization and Empire, 1500-1920* (Athens and Singapore: Ohio University Press and NUS Press, 2008): 21-2, 26-34, 41-5, 170.

chial attempts to create an orderly settlement to the widest strategic plans. Institutionalization was weaker than Company or colonial rules would indicate, and contemporary political analysis can provide insights into past experience. Recent descriptions of "shadow states," for example, have underlined the extent to which personal networks, patronage, and half-hidden violence and corruption continue to shape politics. Even within many modern countries the official state remains, in fact, only part (often a minor part) of the actual systems for obtaining, contesting, and exploiting power.[16] Early empires, or proto-imperial polities like the VOC, which were characterized by many varieties of indirect rule, offered even more leeway for bargaining and intimidation as elites tested each others' ability to control diverse political resources. Personal ambitions and networks were often more influential than formal regulations or notions of contract. This was frequently deplored in theory, if tolerated in practice.[17]

At first glance, colonial states such as the nineteenth and twentieth-century Dutch East Indies—which emerged from the 1795 dissolution of the VOC—seem to be another matter altogether. They were top-down structures, without mechanisms of accountability (no elections, little need to be sensitive to non-violent expressions of dissatisfaction), capable—in theory—of imposing the metropolitan will untrammeled by local politics. However, even here the division between state and society remained artificial, assuming a depersonalized political structure, when actually this is always a social product, populated at all levels by individuals pursuing their own agendas within specific environments. Organizational discipline only began to be imposed gradually, particularly from the mid-nineteenth century, and it remained imperfect, particularly on the geographic and social margins of the state.

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16) J.-F. Bayart, *et al. The Criminialization of the State in Africa* (Oxford: Curry, 1999); J. Sidel, *Capital, Coercion and Crime. Bossism in the Philippines* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); H. Schulte Nordholt and G. v. Klinken, eds, *Renegotiating Boundaries: Local Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007).

17) Admonitions recur frequently in the twice-yearly General Letters from the Company's Gentlemen Seventeen in The Netherlands (the VOC headquarters) to their Asian High Government in Batavia. Those up to the mid-eighteenth century have been published: *Generale missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (Den Haag: Nijhoff en Insituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 1960-2007). For an introduction to the VOC see Jacobs, *Merchants,* and also F. S. Gaastra, *De geschiedenis van de VOC* (Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1982).

Company documents offer a partial, but seductively coherent, view of the world in which its representatives operated. Written for official consumption, they are rich in commercial data and analyses of courts and wars, but silent on day-to-day routines, individual politics, and the internal life of the Asian communities. The archives reflect the priorities and perceptions that structured administration. In both VOC Asia and the East Indies the basic systems of categorization were bureaucratic and cultural. In Company times the lines were drawn between those who worked for the VOC and those who did not, between Christian and heathen, and between ethnic groups. These boundaries also formed the framework of urban administration. But with the exception of the basic Company/non-Company division, based on employment contracts, borders were, in practice, permeable, ambiguous, and flexible. "Racial" classification became increasingly explicit in the course of the nineteenth century, but even this was contingent, and often conflated with achieved status. Bosma and Raben have argued persuasively that class and gender did much to determine who was labeled *mestizo* or *creole* in the Indies.[18]

Makassar remained an Asian emporium while developing into a small Company town.[19] Face-to-face interaction was the norm, domestic arrangements were loose and poly-cultural, and personal ties cross-cut formal distinctions between communities. Families, like households, were highly variegated, and mobility between "identities" seems to have been common for such hybrid groups as the Malays, the Muslim or locally-acculturated Chinese (the *peranakan*), and the *mestizo*s. While these were numerically insignificant in the peninsula as a whole, they were central to urban life and the port's commerce.[20] The Dutch had neither the need nor the knowledge to develop a close understanding of the diverse populations under their rule. They simply wanted to have cheap and effective control, so, as was usual, Makassar's population was divided into ethnic categories under headmen acceptable to their own communities and accountable to the VOC.

The Company administration in Makassar had to accept the consequences of a Dutch policy hostile to the emergence of a white settler com-

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18) Bosma and Raben, *Being 'Dutch':* 62-5, 114.

19) H. Sutherland, "Eastern Emporium and Company Town: Trade and Society in Eighteenth-Century Makassar." In *Brides of the Sea: Port Cities of Asia from the Sixteenth-Twentieth Centuries*, ed. F. Broeze (Kensington, N.S.W.: New South Wales University Press, 1989): 97-128.

20) Knaap and Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*.

munity which could undermine Company interests. Sponsored immigration of European women was soon abandoned, and it was made almost impossible for Company servants to bring Asian wives back to The Netherlands. Marriage to Asians—who had to be Christian—was only allowed for VOC men who made a commitment to settle in the Indies for at least five years after leaving the Company's service, by becoming a *vrijburger*.[21] Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries most (c. 75%) of Makassar's Europeans were *mestizo*s;[22] they formed the settled core of the town, but their typically Makassarese-speaking households were very different from Dutch norms, characterized as they were by slavery, concubinage, and *creole* life-styles. In a small and remote outpost like Makassar, the transitory group of white European officials also tended to live with slave concubines or *mestizo* women. If we are to believe the *predikant* Francois Valentijn the local women—slave and free—were renowned for their attractions.[23] The many illegitimate children were granted European status, provided that they were legally acknowledged by their father and brought up as Christians. Their mothers had few rights, although it was accepted practice that owners freed the slaves who bore their children.[24]

Christian subjects of the Company, whether they were European *vrijburgers* (*burghers*), *mestizo*s, or Asian, were administered through the usual institutions of church and town (church council, deaconate, orphanage, militia etc). Official contacts between the Dutch-speaking elite and the Asian majority were channeled through the Company *tolken* (translators, interpreters). They were the link between the VOC and urban communal

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21) Niemeyer, *Batavia*; Bosma and Raben, *Being 'Dutch'*.

22) H. Sutherland, "Mestizos as Middlemen? Ethnicity and Access in Colonial Macassar." In *Papers of The Dutch-Indonesian Historical Conference held at Lage Vuursche, The Netherlands 23-27 June 1980*, eds G. Schutte and H. Sutherland (Leiden and Jakarta: Bureau of Indonesian Studies, 1982): 250-77. Parts of this essay are a reworking, and correction, of sections in the earlier article, and also draw on my valedictory lecture, "Imposing Identities: Self, Community and the State: Makassar as Microcosm, 1660-2008," Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 16 May 2008.

23) Valentijn reached his post in Ambon at the age of 20 in 1686, and in his account of the East Indies (published in 1724) he provides us with an appreciative account of the women of Sulawesi: more beautiful, whiter, and hence, for Europeans, the most highly sought-after as slaves (F. Valentijn, *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indiën* (Den Haag: H. C. Susan, 1856)).

24) See note 15.

leaders, the *kapitan*s and *letnan*s who governed the Chinese and Malays.[25] Makassar's Sulawesian inhabitants were in some cases placed under similar headmen (e.g. the Wajorese under their *matoa*)[26] and then the translator, or, in the case of apparently less corporate groups, they were directly subjected to the authority of the *tolk* himself. The translators supervised all legal matters involving non-Europeans, and maintained their own networks of informants and clients.[27] The VOC's local income was organized along similar indirect lines, with the main sources of revenue allocated to tax-farmers, usually on the basis of competitive bidding, but sometimes purely through patronage.[28]

Contacts with the powerful states of the Buginese and Makassarese hinterlands were similarly personal and indirect, and were also maintained through the translators. At the highest levels these were men whose local knowledge and language skills enabled them to handle diplomatic relations, political intelligence, and protocol. When necessary, they led troops themselves. While the Company's military might was predominant (but not unchallenged), war was expensive; negotiation was preferable, and this implied recognition of different modes and interests.

The traditional view of mediation in VOC-controlled settlements is that of "middle-men" negotiating between two sides: the "native rulers" and "ethnic groups" on the one hand, and the Company bureaucracy on the other, a view I adopted in a much earlier article.[29] Indeed, the appointment of Chinese and Malay officers and *tolken* was designed to delineate lines of communication and fix responsibilities, although there were great differences in their roles. The *kapitan*s and *letnan*s were primarily based within their community; they could only be effective instruments of the VOC if their own people recognized their authority, an authority which

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25) H. Sutherland, "The Makassar Malays: Adaptation and Identity, c. 1660-1790." In *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity across Boundaries*, ed. T. P. Barnard (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004): 76-106. The Chinese who visited Makassar from Amoy (Xiamen) in the annual junk after 1746 were subject to the authority of the *syahbandar* (VOC harbormaster) and the junk captain.

26) J. Noorduyn, "The Wajorese Merchants' Community in Makassar." In *Authority and Enterprise among the Peoples of South Sulawesi*, eds R. Tol *et al.* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2000).

27) See for example the NA, VOC 3150: 163-8.

28) J. Butcher and H. Dick, eds, *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming* (London: St. Martins Press, 1993); on Makassar, see Knaap and Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*.

29) Sutherland, "Mestizos as Middlemen."

was reinforced by their access to Dutch decision-makers. Company *tolken*, however, were appointed and paid by the VOC and were expected to have a single-minded devotion to its interests. However, even these formally designated brokers were embedded in many-stranded sets of relationships, not in a simple dialogue between the Company and native authorities. From the Governor of Makassar down, officials and merchants alike sought favorable commercial contacts and expected a certain tolerance and flexibility in the application of regulations. Successful symbiosis required a range of relationships across communal lines, facilitating access to information, networks, and commodities. The traditional bi-polar approach—Company versus community—is simplistic. It credits both with an unlikely degree of corporate uniformity and stability over time, while mistakenly assuming that their individual interests and strategies were confined within a spectrum approved by the VOC.

As was to be expected, the early eighteenth century was a time of VOC consolidation, focused on enforcing trade restrictions and establishing the institutions and relationships which would govern life in the settlement and manage the tense relationships with neighboring kingdoms. The nucleus of the town was the Company's Fort Rotterdam, together with the Sino-Eurasian trading and service community of Vlaardingen, which huddled just to the north of its walls. The *kampung* or semi-rural settlement of the Malays formed a buffer zone between Vlaardingen and the largely independent and unruly Bugis *kampung* still further north. South of the Castle were smaller and poorer streets. A fairly typical town profile during the 1700s would have included a Company contingent of 800 to 1000 soldiers and sailors, recruited from the lower levels of various European societies, and about 100 higher VOC officials, including religious and medical men as well as artisan specialists. The next largest category would have been that of the Malays, followed by the Chinese and *mestizo* Europeans. Although less closely linked to the Company than the *mestizo*s, the Chinese and Malay communities, under their VOC appointed *kapitan*s and *letnan*s, were regarded as essentially part of the town, unlike the Sulawesians whose loyalty and obedience lay with their own patrons and kingdoms.

A detailed breakdown in 1730 was the last one before the Company only began to list aggregates, and the figures reveal the complexity behind the bald statistics. Company officials numbered 100 (excluding soldiers and sailors), their wives and children 171; together they owned 648 slaves. The *burgher* population included 72 men, no doubt including many born

in Europe (retired Company employees), and 351 women and children, presumably virtually all Asian or *mestizo*. The 870 slaves held by these families were also reckoned as part of their community, although some were no doubt trade goods in transit. "European" households (excluding soldiers and sailors) were thus reckoned to number 2,212, although probably less than two hundred men had been born in that continent.[30] The total of the VOC town (Fort plus Vlaardingen) remained quite steady in the eighteenth century, at least in VOC statistics; the population numbered 2,140 in 1730; 2,710 in 1760; and 2,706 in 1790. By the early 1700s, Makassar's "European" population had already achieved the demographic balance it was to retain throughout the long eighteenth century: growing slowly from c. 500 at the beginning of the century to c. 700 at the end. The inhabitants of the neighboring *kampung*, including Chinese and Malays, rose from 6,174 in 1730 to 7,640 in 1790.[31]

Such statistics indicate a relatively stable social structure. But while population numbers were fairly constant, people themselves were highly mobile. Port-towns like Makassar were characterized by continual immigration, emigration, and a high death rate. VOC garrisons and officials changed as men moved through the career hierarchies and variable postings of the Company, while many Asians were either occasional or regular temporary residents. Those who returned every season would often maintain households in Makassar; these included the Buginese court and aristocracy from the powerful state of Bone, which passed a couple of months each year in the town, as did other powerful Sulawesian families, while Chinese merchants from Amoy (Xiamen) would spend up to six months a year in port collecting their cargoes of sea-products. Other passing traders would simply come and go, reflecting the tides of business opportu-

30) The Chinese had a similar profile (85 men, 310 women and children, 492 slaves) while the Malays were more numerous: 141 men, 577 wives and children, and 421 slaves.

31) Despite the reams of paper produced by the VOC it is quite difficult to get a clear picture of Makassar's demography in the eighteenth century; both social and geographical classifications changed, while periods of insecurity would swell both the garrison's numbers and those of refugees seeking shelter by the Dutch fort. Population details were given every year in the Makassar Governor's reports to Batavia and passed on to The Netherlands in the *Overgekomen Brieven* or "forwarded letters." These form a major part of the VOC collection in the Dutch National Archives in The Hague, the source of the data given here. See R. Raben and H. Spijkerman, *De archieven van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, 1602-1795* (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgeverij, 1992).

nity. Such visitors epitomized Makassar's role as both administrative outpost and regional emporium.

But there were also those whose families had lived in Makassar for generations, and possessed indispensable local knowledge and transcultural connections, which enabled them to introduce newcomers to established networks. Such personal ties were essential for access to political intelligence or commercial partnerships. A few of these local families were able to gain and retain privileged entry to those formal Company positions designed to regulate interaction between the VOC and local communities, translating not only among languages, but also among interests, both official and personal. The emergence of such dynasties was by no means unusual,[32] and can be clearly seen in the trajectories of Makassar *mestizo tolk* clans, such as the Brugmans, Volls, and Mesmans.

## Makassar's Eighteenth-Century Translator Dynasties

Translators and interpreters were indispensable for VOC trade and politics, and so were present from the earliest Dutch missions to Makassar, when Portuguese was still a more useful diplomatic language than Malay.[33] However, it was only after 1669 that regular information on these men became available, as their names began to be listed in the VOC muster-rolls. At first the *tolken* were brought in from more established Company settlements, such as Ternate, Ambon, or Batavia. Almost thirty years, or a generation, had to pass before Makassar-born translators became available.

From the very beginning, Dutch dependence on their *tolken* gave rise to suspicion, particularly when their loyalty seemed dubious. In 1680 the Company was unhappy to discover that their chief translator, Jan Japon, who had served them through the wars, was also receiving an allowance from the Buginese.[34] Since the chief Dutch official in Makassar had little knowledge of Malay, he was uncertain if the interpreter had been giving honest accounts of the negotiations. Japon died in 1681, and a successor, Willem Everts Stosius, was brought to Makassar, but Company officials

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32) Indeed, this is one of the themes in Bosma and Raben, *Being 'Dutch'*.

33) Despite strong Portuguese influence on the pre-conquest Makassar court, Portuguese does not seem to have been a popular *lingua franca* in Makassar, as was the case in Batavia.

34) NA, VOC 1359/1680: 359-60.

found that he too fell short of the expected standards. The Governor complained that "his discourse is precipitant, and has none of the moderation required of a translator," noting that only time would tell if he would learn enough from experience to meet the demands of his office.[35] The next recorded translator was another Batavian, Jan Ferdinandus, who entered VOC service in 1690, but fifteen years later the appointment of a locally-born ex-soldier, Jacob Brugman (see below) initiated a tradition of *mestizo* continuity. For over a hundred years, the post of *tolk* was the proven pathway to administrative success for the Makassar *mestizo*s. In most cases it represented the peak of their achievement, but in rare instances it provided access to the coveted higher or "qualified" ranks of the VOC.

As the VOC administration in Makassar expanded and then settled down, so too did the Company office of translator/interpreter.[36] Initially there seems to have been just one *tolk* of European status, but in 1715 a junior Second Translator was appointed. He was another Makassar-born *mestizo*, Willem Muller, who had entered Company service as a soldier in 1705. In 1723 and 1746 third and fourth translators were added, for both the Malay and Dutch languages. We have little information on the native clerks or writers the VOC employed, although they would have been useful sources of knowledge and access to their own communities. One Malay writer (also probably a man of local origin) was Bumi Parisi Ince Jenal, who served from 1704 into the 1730s, longer than any *tolk*, and was no doubt a mainstay of the office. These "native clerks" translated local languages into Malay (usually written in Arabic script), while the *tolken* had to be fluent in Dutch as well as Malay, Bugis, and Makassarese.[37]

The translator's position was not insignificant; if the pay of a soldier or sailor was about nine rds. (*rijksdaalders*) per month, the Chief Translator received 24 to 40 rds., corresponding to the salaries of qualified VOC officials with the Company rank of Assistant, Bookkeeper (*boekhouder*), or Junior Merchant (*Onderkoopman*). By the middle of the eighteenth

35) NA, VOC 1426/1686: 259.

36) There were of course many other trusted interpreters in Makassar, attached to Bugis and Makassarese courts and to local community leaders.

37) In the early nineteenth century it was said that since the translators could only speak, and not read or write, local languages they were regarded as rather ignorant by educated Sulawesians. ANRI, Mak 353, Letter by the Commissioners Van Schelle and Tobias, 18 August 1824: 4.

century the translator's bureau had developed the structure it was to retain into the 1800s: there was a Chief Translator (*Oppertolk*) and two lesser *tolken* in Makassar, and four others of this lower rank assisting the Residents in the outlying districts of (in decreasing order of importance) Maros, Bulukumba and Bantaeng, Selayar, and Tanette.[38] The Makassar *tolken* were the channels for all interaction, written and spoken, with nearby kingdoms, handling negotiations, while providing intelligence and advice to the governing Political Council. They also worked with, and supervised, the Asian community leaders to manage all legal, administrative, and economic matters concerning the town's non-Europeans. To these ends, they maintained not only a wide range of instrumental alliances, but also networks of clients, agents, and informants.

Although the *tolken* were officials within a bureaucratic hierarchy, they enjoyed extraordinary latitude within the administration and great influence outside it. Articles 3 and 4 of the 1758 "Instructions for the Chief Translator," for example, specified that he was to handle all matters that came before him "according to the rules of fairness and justice" without any obligation to report or record his actions; he was only advised to inform the Governor "when situations were too intricate" for him to handle on his own. His power was virtually unchecked. It goes without saying that informal profit-taking could easily develop into extortion and corruption, against which the only safeguards were moral exhortations by the VOC, the personal qualities of the *tolken* themselves, and the potential existence of rivals defiant enough to inform the Company of wrong-doing.

The qualities needed in a *tolk* were described as follows:[39]

> The man who holds this office must not only have a thorough knowledge of the Malay, Makassarese, Buginese and Dutch languages, but must also be familiar with the histories of the country as well as the ruling families and petty princes. He must, in the fullest sense, be a man of good character, and absolutely incorruptible. He must never put the interests of one king over those of another, but be respected by all. He is in a certain sense the executive power among the natives, and enjoys such

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[38] Information on the careers of the *tolken* has been compiled from the listings given in the VOC's annual *monsterrollen* or muster-rolls and annually published *Naamboekjes*, as well as many scattered references in the Company archives. There are occasional inconsistencies in these lists.

[39] ANRI, Mak 353. Letter of the Governor of Makassar to the Governor General, 29 Sept. 1821, 6: 1; the description certainly applied in the eighteenth century as well.

> prestige among them, that even in times of great unrest he can travel everywhere without fear, as his person is respected. In all ceremonial receptions he stands between the Governor and the King, he attends all meetings with natives, and so all political affairs are discussed in his presence, and he either translates, or supervises the translation of, all official documents.

Despite their great responsibilities, these key figures only held mid-level ranks in the official Company hierarchy, usually having *Boekhouder* status, below the regional Residents or the higher officials in the central Makassar administration. There was an obvious discrepancy between this formal status on the one hand, and their strategic significance in Dutch policy and their power within Sulawesian society on the other. This considerable gap could only be bridged by *tolken* who combined the resources, lifestyle, and inside knowledge of both VOC and Sulawesian systems. The tension generated by such ambiguity was a constant source of uneasiness for Company officials.

The hybrid nature of the chief translator's role was clearly revealed in his economic rights, which resembled the tributary rights of a Sulawesi chief.[40] The Company *oppertolk*'s official salary was only a minor part of his income.[41] He was also allocated ten percent of the annual rice tax from the "Southern District" of Bantaeng, equal to about 2,000 *bos* or c. 20,000 kilo of padi or unhusked rice, as well as the entire tithe (10%) of rice and salt from the village of Lakatong, averaging six to ten thousand *bos* padi, and c. 10 *last* or over 2,000 kg of salt. In addition, he had the farm (*susong* Mak., *pacht* Dutch) or monopoly rights over the very rich *trepang* (*beche-de-mer*, sea-cucumber) fishery of the Spermonde islands of Kodingarang and Barrang Lompo,[42] which was reckoned to be worth about 160 *rijksdaalders* p.a. Moreover, he was in sole charge of native

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40) Some Company positions, such as that of harbormaster, also enabled well-connected men to skim substantial amounts from the flow of goods, or the local communities. Bosma and Raben comment that the post of Commissioner for Native Affairs was one of the most highly desired in VOC Batavia, since it involved control of the lands around Batavia: "Here the Commissioner ruled like a prince and in no time at all would be able to rake in a fortune selling various licenses…" (*Being 'Dutch'*: 55)

41) In 1821 the Makassar governor, as part of his case for reform of the chief translator's office, summarized his perquisites "under the former Dutch administration," i.e. the VOC.

42) H. Sutherland, "Trepang and Wangkang. The China Trade of Eighteenth-Century Makassar." In *Authority and Enterprise among the Peoples of South Sulawesi*, eds R. Tol *et al.* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2000): 73-94.

affairs in Makassar's southern Districts (Bulukumba and Bantaeng), and spent some time there every year. For this he received yearly an estimated 1,800 Spanish *matten* or 2,400 rds. He also made money from Makassar's flourishing slave trade, receiving a fee just under 1.5 rds. for each transfer of ownership. In addition, the Governor noted, the chief translator enjoyed unknown but considerable "hidden income" deriving from his control over all non-European legal cases, and his ability, as gate-keeper, to provide or deny access to VOC officials. In 1822 the Governor added that the *tolk* had the right to all income from land under dispute, and could impose fines at will. In the outlying villages, particularly in Bantaeng, he could govern as he saw fit.

The monetary equivalents of the rice and salt received by the *oppertolk* were negligible,[43] compared to his income from the *trepang* and the southern Districts, but access to foodstuffs helped him meet his obligations. Just as his sources of income reflected the patrimonial style of the local nobility, so too did his duties. In the course of his work he had to travel a great deal, and so he maintained a stable of twelve horses, with their four grooms, as well as two ships, whose crews totaled 14 men. He also had a personal retinue of twenty-four to twenty-six "trusted natives," for use on both "open and secret missions." Supporting this establishment cost him an estimated seventy rds. per month. In addition, he had to pay for his own clerk, and personally had to cover the household costs of all envoys and embassies who stayed longer than three days in Makassar (they themselves would bring supplies for the initial period). And while he could call upon the Regent of Galesong (in the northern districts) and various village headmen to provide people when he required extra manpower, he had to feed and house them himself. In their own areas the lesser *tolken* had similar if more limited perquisites and powers.

It is clear that the official pay and designation of *tolk* completely fail to convey the reach, influence, and potential wealth of the Chief Translators, so is not surprising that the position was highly coveted. Although they were members of the Christian European community, these established local clans had kin, friends, and contacts in Bugis and Makassarese societies. The foremothers of these families may typically have been slave women, but in the course of generations they intermarried with Sulawesians from all levels, including the nobility. They were embedded in local

43) These would have been in the region of 16 rds. for salt and 14 rds. for rice p.a. See appendices, Knaap and Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*.

cultures, and their role demanded that they maintained the households and networks that reflected their status and ensured their prestige.[44] The European officials who rotated through Makassar could never build up the necessary connections, so the *tolken* were always recruited from these local *mestizo* clans. Patronage, and the fact that personal ties and reputations were handed down from generation to generation, ensured that certain families had an inside track on access to the position of *tolk*.

The founder of the dynastic monopoly of the translators' role was the above-mentioned Jacob Brugman. He entered VOC service as a soldier in 1694 (or 1697), was transferred to the island of Selayar in 1701, and became the first Makassar-born *tolk* in 1705.[45] His father must have been in Makassar soon after the Dutch conquest, and was perhaps the sergeant Cornelis Brugman, who arrived from Alkmaar in 1679. Jacob did well for himself, paying the highest level of tax on his house in the Tweede Thuynstraat in 1718. He served as *tolk* until 1727, when he was forced to resign after his daughter, "the Christian woman Dina Brugman" was found guilty of a crime by the VOC Council of Justice. One of his successors as translator was Cornelis Brugman who was arrested and banned for murder (and too independent an approach to policy making among the natives) in 1739; he was no doubt a relative. But the best known of the early Brugmans was Gerrit. His parents were the non-Christian woman Dadia and an unknown father, but he became a Brugman in 1728 when he was adopted and christened in Makassar by the well-off widow Geertruida Brugman. Gerrit was probably the illegitimate son of a European father (possibly a Brugman), who was saved from sinking into the *kampung* by a charitable woman.

He joined the VOC as a soldier in 1747 and within ten years had begun a successful career as translator, being 3rd *tolk* from 1755 to 1766; he then became the Chief Translator with the VOC rank of *boekhouder*. In 1776 Brugman led a force of 200 in a successful attack on the rebel

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44) European officials also often adopted aristocratic lifestyles, but very seldom developed the multi-generational ties that connected indigenous and *tolken* families. See i.a. L. Blussé, "The Caryatids of Batavia: Reproduction, Religion and Acculturation under the VOC." *Itinerario* 7 (1983): 57-85; J. G. Taylor, *Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

45) Typically, *mestizo* boys joined the VOC as adolescents, often as a *hooploper,* a sort of apprentice sailor, but most commonly as drummers (*tambur*), which could lead to appointment as a soldier.

Sangkilang.[46] In 1781 he was appointed Resident of Maros, where he remained until his death in 1784. He climbed his way successfully up the property owning ladder (including an impressive grave-site acquired in 1774) and was active in his sponsorship of Jacob Brugman (probably Jacob junior), who, together with his ex-sailor father-in-law, was a significant slave-supplier for the VOC in the 1770s. Gerrit married Petronella of Makassar (known as Tima in her earlier, Asian incarnation, and later as Petronella Bartels); in their joint will their main heir was Geertruida Brugman (daughter of Jacob) who received cash, slaves, and jewelry, while, according to custom, he freed fourteen other household slaves.[47] Although the two Brugmans were surpassed by the number of Volls (3) who held the position of chief translator in the eighteenth century, the combined tenures of Jacob and Gerrit (39 years) easily surpassed that of the Volls (20 years).

The first Voll to arrive in Makassar was Jan Jansz. Voll, from Alphen, who sailed from Texel as a VOC soldier on May 2, 1698.[48] After more than six months at sea he arrived in Batavia, and then in late 1699 or early 1700 he was transferred to Makassar, where he eventually rose to the rank of corporal. Before his departure he had arranged for the VOC to pay part of his wages to a woman in Amsterdam, but in 1715 he requested that the Company suspend these payments, because he had married in Makassar, and needed the money for his new family. He died on July 13, 1729, leaving behind a wife and children.[49] We know he had at least four sons. They married into local *mestizo* and Sulawesian families, and his descendents were to become—and remain until today—a vibrant element in Makassar's life and history.[50]

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46) "Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van Celebes (I)." *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië* II (1854): 162.

47) This data is compiled from many scattered references in the VOC Makassar archives. On Cornelis's arrest see the *Generale missiven, vol. 10*: 309 (1739).

48) Sutherland, "Mestizos as Middlemen" discusses the Volls, but this account has been edited and corrected here.

49) His career details are given in the VOC personnel records (*scheepssoldijboeken*) for the ship *'t Huis te Loo*, in NA, VOC 5449: 175.

50) We do not know who Jan Janz. Voll's wife was; she could have come from the small *mestizo* community or, as was more common at that time, she could have been a freed slave or local woman. We can reconstruct a partial genealogy of the Voll family up to the present time, thanks to the records of the VOC, and the painstaking work of the genealogists Van Treslong Prins, the CBG (*Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie*, The Hague), and Mr Albert Voll of Leiden. It is clear that, in the early centuries, the marriage patterns of the

Like many *mestizo* boys, Jan Hendrik Voll (b. c. 1710 d. 1779), son of Jan Jansz., entered Company service in 1727 as a drummer, and worked his way into a job as a sailor. The next step in his career was crucial: in 1733 he became Third Translator. He was certainly helped in this advance by the fact that in the same year he had had an illegitimate child by the non-Christian daughter of the *tolk* Salamon Jacobs, a locally-born man who had also made the transition from drummer to translator by 1730. Jacob's daughter was probably Jan Hendrik's common-law wife: lack of a marriage certificate was not unusual for young Makassar families, and perhaps a majority of first children were *voorkinderen* (children-in-advance). But Jan Hendrik married Jacoba van den Anker in 1738, and had a further five known children, including Jan Hendrik Jr.

From 1738 to 1749 Jan Hendrik Sr. was First or Chief *tolk*. Then, with the rank of Junior Merchant, he was appointed Resident of the district of Maros (1749-54) and went on to obtain the lucrative position of Harbormaster and served as a member of Makassar's governing council (*Raad van Politie*). This was a great achievement; some sources even credit him with reaching the highest rank of *Opperkoopman* ("Chief Merchant") in Makassar. As he rose he took his family with him: a striking number of Volls obtained VOC employment, confirming the power of patronage. His brother, Evert Jan, who had entered Company service as a soldier in 1736, became a lower *tolk* in the Bulukumba-Bantaeng district in 1748, where he prospered as a slave-supplier to the VOC, before becoming Chief Translator (1757) until his death in 1760 (his widow continued the slave-trading business). Evert Jansz. was succeeded as *oppertolk* by his nephew, Jan Hendrik Junior.

Jan Hendrik Jr. was directly hired for this coveted post, taking an unusually short step to reach such heights, thus seeming to confirm the family's claims to the position. By 1770 he had achieved the rank of *boekhouder* and the post of Resident of the out-lying island of Saleyer. But by 1780 the picture had changed dramatically. The clan patron, his father Jan Hendrik Sr., Chief Merchant and Harbormaster, died in 1779, weakening the family's access to office. Moreover, Jan Hendrik Sr. had not been universally popular, particularly with Batavia-oriented officialdom. Several Governors of Makassar had recorded their suspicion of his close ties

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Volls were similar to those of other well-established *mestizo* families: there is a history both of intermarriage between Makassar clans, and also with local Indonesian women, ranging from (ex)slaves to members of regional aristocracies.

with Sulawesi's princes. Cornelis Sinkelaar (Governor 1759-66), who had worked alongside Jan Hendrik Sr. since 1752, officially deplored the prevalence of unpermitted contact between Company officials (the context implies that this refers to Voll) and natives of high rank, and reiterated that interpreters had to be present at all meetings. It is doubtful if this would have made much difference in this particular instance, as the monitoring *tolk* would have been either Jan Hendrik Sr.'s brother or his son.

A later Makassar official was equally suspicious. Barend Reijke (second in command at Makassar since 1775, Governor 1780-9) was so displeased at the commercial collusion between the Harbormaster Jan Hendrik Sr., the first government clerk Jan Dirk van Clootwijk, the Buginese court translator La Passeere, and the Bone ruler that he successfully complained to the High Government in Batavia, which resulted in a fine and reprimand for Jan Hendrik. This provoked a furious reaction from the Bone king, who wrote stressing "his exceedingly great confidence" in Voll, and asked the governor to pardon him. Reijke had no inclination at all to grant the ruler's request, but was spared potential complications by the death of Jan Hendrik Sr.[51] Subsequently the Volls encountered unfavorable times. In 1780 Jan Hendrik Jr. was appointed Resident of remote Bima. But he was already gravely ill, and died the same year. The only members of the Voll family remaining in Company service reverted to the lower military ranks, or managed to survive within their bulwark of the translators' office. Within the small world of the Company service in Makassar the Volls had risen as a group, and when their patrons died they returned to the more typical, and marginal, *mestizo* role.

Brugmans and Volls held the position of chief translator for almost sixty years between 1705 and 1818. Another *mestizo* family with a *tolk* tradition was that of Muller (two terms, by one—or two—Willem Mullers, 1728-33, 1749-52), alongside individuals from the Deefhout, Bewers, and Banse families; all were part of an inter-connected complex of clans. Diederick Deefhout married the widowed Helena Voll, a granddaughter of the ancestral Jan Jansz. from Alphen, three years before his appointment as chief translator (1783-98), while another chief *tolk*, Hendrik Bewers (1798-1806), had married yet another granddaughter, Maria

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[51] BL, OIOC, Mackenzie Collection, Pr. 67 2. The same file records Rijke's critical comments on two other officials from established *mestizo* clans: the Resident of Maros, Gerrit Brugman, and the Chief Interpreter Diederick Deefhout. Career details are drawn from the muster-rolls and the VOC *Naamboekjes.*

Dorothea Voll, in 1752.[52] Throughout the long eighteenth century members of this extended kin-group formed an essential link between the Asian communities and Dutch officials. Their ties of marriage, descent, and friendship were not merely functional to their role as VOC *tolk*, but also formed the very fabric of their personal lives and social world.

The eighteenth century seems to have been a period of considerable stability in Makassar, with the VOC providing political guarantees while an alliance between Chinese, Malays, and Bugis benefited from the expanding trade with China. Only the *mestizo*s seem to have struggled, unable to compete effectively with the Asian traders, except in the institutionalized supply of slaves to Batavia.[53] But in the course of the 1700s, even in this niche business, they were increasingly under pressure from Company officials seeking access to VOC slave supply quotas in order to boost their personal fortunes. The *mestizo*s were vulnerable because of that very intermediate position which also made them so useful. Although essential, they remained marginal to Dutch concerns, and also to the strengthening Asian networks. Indeed, Chinese and European transnational economic interests were destined to grow stronger during the 1800s, and as both communities tightened their bonds with their overseas homelands, *mestizo*s and *creole*s became increasingly isolated in their parochial world.

## The Nineteenth Century

In the early nineteenth century external factors intervened to break open the ossified hierarchies of VOC Makassar.[54] Since the Fourth Anglo-Dutch war of 1780-4 the Company's weakness had been apparent to all, but after it was taken over by the Dutch state in 1795 sheer inertia seems to have kept routines going. It was not until the British occupation of Makassar, between 1812 and 1816, that it became clear how detached from The Netherlands the port had become. The powerful Buginese state

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52) Peter Christiaans of the *Centrale Bureau voor Genealogie*, The Hague has compiled invaluable databases of genealogical material; see also issues of *De Indische Navorscher*, the newsletter on Dutch East Indies European genealogy.

53) Knaap and Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*.

54) E. L. Poelinggomang, *Makassar abad XIX: Studi tentang kebijakan perdagangan maritim* (Jakarta: KPG, 2002). Bosma and Raben, *Being 'Dutch'*: Ch. 3, note both increasing provincialism and expanding local economic opportunity in the post-VOC Indies.

of Bone had been expanding quietly, nibbling away at Dutch authority, and then seemed to gain the upper hand in an armed conflict with the English in 1814. Their incoming regime was uncertain, and dependent on help from the settled communities. Indeed, during the British interregnum, and for some years thereafter, Makassar was largely governed by its established *mestizo* elite. Although the abolition of the slave trade had removed one of their main sources of income, the British newcomers' desire for stability and need for local knowledge gave some *mestizo*s unprecedented access to higher office.

As was the case elsewhere in the Indies, economic horizons in Makassar widened in the years between 1790 and 1820. The end of VOC restrictions permitted the granting of private lands,[55] the development of cash crops, and the expansion of trade.[56] These opportunities became particularly attractive after 1847 when Makassar was made a free port (until 1906), as the Indies government sought, in vain, to re-orient commerce from British Singapore (est. 1819) to Batavia. In the course of the nineteenth century the colonial state's enforcement of its boundaries[57] and strengthening of its bureaucracy was paralleled by countervailing trends of economic integration into trans-regional commercial systems and immigration. The long-term effects were reflected in the population statistics. If in 1730 the foreign-born inhabitants of Makassar had included a couple of hundred Europeans (excluding soldiers and sailors) and maybe thirty Chinese, in 1860 there were 714 Europeans and 3,002 Chinese; for South Celebes as a whole the figures were 1,093 and 2,105 respectively in 1856, rising to 1,140 and 4,138 for 1865.[58]

Tension between the newly established colonial state's ambitions and its ability to implement them characterized the period between the Dutch return in 1816 and the final victory over rebellious Buginese Bone in 1860. The new Dutch regime, epitomized in Governor General G. A. G. P. Baron van der Capellen (1815-25), intended to create a stronger, more modern bureaucratic state. But ambitions were checked by uprisings and

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55) H. v. Dissel Szn. *De particuliere landerijen in het gewest Celebes en onderhoorigheden* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1885).

56) Bosma and Raben, *Being 'Dutch'*.

57) Ethnic lines will be discussed below; on geo-political and economic frontiers see E. Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

58) ANRI, Mak; for Celebes, *Koloniaal verslag van 1. Nederlandsch (Oost-) Indië, 2. Suriname, 3. Curacao* (Den Haag: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1868-1924).

wars, including clashes with Bone, which felt that the defeat by the British had cancelled Dutch treaty rights to South Sulawesi.[59] In the meantime, the reformers concentrated their attention on Makassar itself, but even here theory was easier to change than practice. Van der Capellen appointed a special Commission, comprising J. H. Tobias from Batavia and the new Makassar Governor and Military Commander Colonel J. D. van Schelle (1821-5), to advise on the reform of Makassar's administration. They arrived there in 1821, and one of their early priorities was an overhaul of the translators' office. [60]

The returning Dutch had not been happy about the prominent role the *mestizo*s had achieved, and by the 1820s the first steps toward ethnic purification of the administration had been taken. Although the use of the term "pauper" to describe impoverished Europeans living too close to the native level only became common currency in the later nineteenth century,[61] the attitudes which it typified had already begun to assert themselves much earlier. The *mestizo*s were increasingly seen as a social problem, and as unsuited to the demands of modern administration. The old informal ties between "natives" and "officials," as exemplified in the role of the *tolks*, were also regarded as inappropriate. The Makassar Annual Reports (*jaarverslagen*) reveal this trend quite clearly. In 1818 the governor complained about the difficulty of finding adequate translators since the *inlandse kinderen* ("native children") or *mestizo*s had an inadequate grasp of Dutch. A series of new regulations were passed with the aim of professionalizing Makassar's administration.[62]

In January 1821 the Makassar *oppertolk* was dismissed.[63] Van Schelle admitted that the man had a good knowledge of languages and native affairs, but he was old, and even worse, poor. Recent administrative reforms had stripped him of many traditional perquisites, with only a

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59) H. W. van den Doel, *De stille macht. Het Europese binnenlands bestuur op Java en Madura, 1808-1942* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1994).

60) See also J. Campo, "Discourse without Discussion: Representations of Piracy in Colonial Indonesia, 1816-1825." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34 (2003): 199-214; G. A. G. Ph. van der Capellen, "Het journaal van den Baron van der Capellen op zijne reis door de Molukko's" *Tijdschrift voor Nederlansch Indië* 17 (1855): 374-5.

61) Bosma and Raben, *Being 'Dutch'*: Ch. 7.

62) ANRI, Mak 13: "de inlandse kinderen met de taal slegtbekend zijn het is moeilijk tolken te vinden." For the regulations see the *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1816-1948).

63) This was probably, but not certainly, Johannes Deefhout.

limited rise in salary in inadequate compensation. As a result the *oppertolk*, a kinsman of the Gowa ruler, was completely dependent on the Makassarese court's financial support, and hence had lost all semblance of impartiality. Van Schelle emphasized that the strategic importance of the position required the appointment of a capable man, but none was available. The outstanding candidate was the *mestizo* J. D. Mesman, the Resident of Maros, who had already displayed diplomatic and military skills under the British, for which he had been rewarded with extensive estates. He also enjoyed Van Schelle's complete trust, and acted as his chief advisor on native affairs.[64] But Mesman was unwilling to take a step down from the rank of Resident: he would only be interested in a totally restructured post with high status and an appropriate title such as Commissioner or Secretary for Native Affairs. Such a post, wrote the Governor, was urgently needed.

Batavia rejected the Governor's suggestion as too expensive and unnecessary,[65] but he restated his arguments a year later, emphasizing that the knowledge of native law and administration essential to effective Dutch control was not readily available in Makassar, "certainly not in the lesser class of people who speak the native languages." Only a new and prestigious post would attract a man able to do justice to the office's weight and power, a man capable of negotiating on behalf of the government. At the same time, he urged the creation of a cadre of qualified and reliable translators, by appointing "Dutch born" youngsters to study local languages through attachment as *eleves* or apprentices in government service. Unsurprisingly, he was supported by the Commissioners for Makassar (of which he was one), and in 1824 the new position of (Adjunct) Secretary for Native Affairs was announced.[66] This official was to take over many of the old *oppertolk*'s duties, including supervision of the lower translators, and the reception, housing, and feeding of Asian embassies and rulers. The

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64) Mesman's father was a naval officer from Vlissingen. His *mestizo* mother was the daughter of the slave Sara of Buton; family tradition held that Mesman's parents-in-law were an English officer and a princess from the northern state of Sidenreng; whether or not there was a royal connection, Mesman certainly had good ties with the British, who rewarded him for outstanding service during the wars with Bone by granting him extensive estates. His mother's second husband was Jan Adrian Voll. See also Bosma and Raben, *Being 'Dutch'*: 146-50.

65) Government decision (*Besluit*) 19 February 1822 no. 23.

66) Initially, in the 1830s and 1840s, this was the "Adjunct *Secretaris*" for Native Affairs, later *Secretaris*.

Secretary's pay was set at 400 guilders (c. 160 rds.), while the *oppertolk*, renamed "Chief Translator and Master of Ceremonies" went from 100 to 150 guilders (40 to 60 rds.) per month. The aim was to raise the status of the post, and to completely eliminate "contact between the chief translator and the lower class of the native population in matters of justice and police."[67] J. D. Mesman was duly appointed and remained in office until 1839. He was succeeded by J. C. Vetter (1839-50), another man from an established local clan; no suitable Dutchmen could be found.

However, a decisive break came with the appointment of the Dutch official P. C. Wijnmalen in 1850. He was supported by a *mestizo* staff, notably a sworn translator for Buginese and Makassarese (W. L. Mesman), and a first *tolk* (J. A. J. Voll, see below). This pattern remained in existence throughout the later nineteenth century: the Secretaries were generally European officials with experience in rural areas in the lower ranks of the career hierarchy (as *gezaghebber* or *Controleur 3de Kl.*). Acting as secretary was a valued stepping stone in the territorial civil service, and some went on to reach very high ranks, such as J. A. Bakkers (Secretary for Native Affairs 1857-9, Governor 1865-77). The Secretary's *mestizo* staff continued to deal with the "lower class of the native population." This division of labor was most apparent in the outlying districts and the less affluent urban wards, where links between Asian societies and an increasingly European political system were maintained at the highest levels by white men, while the lower ranks were filled by *mestizo* petty officials, established Asian community leaders, and Malay clerks.[68] The 1855 report noted that locally-born Europeans remained very useful in the administration, but they required supervision, as they tended to abuse their positions to their own advantage.[69] Family obligations were often cited as a negative influence on *mestizo* performance.

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67) Details of policy shifts in nineteenth-century Makassar are to be found in the series of annual reports kept in the ANRI. On the new role of the Chief Translator, however, see the report of the Commissioners Van Schelle and Tobias, in the NA, VOC, Schneither Collection: 126, 127. The specific exclusion of police matters reflected the concern of the Commissioners that while it might have been possible for the old *oppertolk* to be involved in arrests, which sometimes involved physical fighting, it would be quite inappropriate for the new Secretary to risk his prestige in this way.

68) In the twentieth century, in the offices themselves, clerical positions which had once provided *mestizo*s with jobs, were increasingly staffed by educated Indonesians, often from the Christian minority.

69) ANRI, Mak, Political Report, 1/1.

Nonetheless, two members of old *tolk* families were appointed as Secretaries for Native Affairs. Although we have no details as to the educational background of Johannes Andries Jacob Voll (b. 1816, d. 1872) we do know something of his career. His father was a government clerk, and he himself climbed slowly through the ranks after 1843, serving as first translator and interpreter for Buginese and Makassarese in Makasassar (1848-51) before spending four years in Saleyar; he then returned to Makassar, first as clerk (1864) and then as Secretary (1864-8). J. A. G. Brugman (Secretary 1884-9), who had completed the translator's training course in Makassar (see below), was a much more colorful figure. Like his ancestor Gerrit, Hendrik Voll Sr., and other *tolken*, he was able to achieve diplomatic and military success, not only because of his considerable personal abilities, but also because he enjoyed the trust of noble Makassarese and Buginese. He was also well liked by Makassar's governors—he was fortunate in that his career coincided with the tenure of broad-minded men, including Bakkers—and the press. His work was crowned with royal recognition, when he was made an officer in the Order of Oranje Nassau, and given the specially created appointment as "Resident for Native Affairs and Peripatetic Official." Other Brugmans and some Mesmans also achieved success, being well-educated enough to escape the usual *mestizo cul-de-sac*. Johannes Willem Mesman, for example, grandson of Johannes David, had a successful career in the wider Dutch East Indies bureaucracy.[70] But most *mestizo*s remained clustered in the lower administrative levels.

Almost all nineteenth-century translators continued to come from the *mestizo* clans. The names of Muller, Deefhout, and Brugman recurred, while the Trouwerbachs became prominent.[71] Volls and Trouwerbachs had been intermarrying since the first Trauerbag soldier arrived from Hanover in 1733. Matthijs Trouwerbach, son of a soldier and the native woman Tjinoo, was a translator in Makassar in 1807, and became Chief Translator (and Master of Ceremonies) there in 1837.[72] Hendrik Theodorus Gratius Trouwerbach, son of Adriana Voll, followed in his footsteps in 1843. In

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[70] Bosma and Raben, *Being 'Dutch'*: 144-50, 180-3 on the Mesman family; on Brugman 179-81. See also various numbers of the *Indische Navorscher*.

[71] In 1816 the Chief Translator was Alexander Muller, succeeded by Johan Deefhout in 1818; Frederik Brugman was his junior translator, two years later the post was held by Hendrik Mulder.

[72] This despite the fact that in 1813, when he was *tolk* on the island of Selayar, he was found guilty of extortion and corruption; ANRI, Mak 330/1 gives a detailed account of a

the 1840s Volls and Trouwerbachs alternated as translators in Maros or the northern districts, where their families comprised a large part of the (often impoverished) European population.

During the second half of the nineteenth century the changing regional balance of power opened the way to accelerated political and bureaucratic reform. The growing military might of the Netherlands Indies increasingly ensured the security of the Dutch settlement; this was confirmed by the 1860 defeat of Bone and its reduction to vassal status. Diplomatic skills and close personal ties with indigenous aristocratic families which had been fundamental to the status of the more important *mestizo* families became increasingly irrelevant, as Makassar's administration was slowly integrated into a Batavia and ultimately Netherlands-centered system. New regulations and a stress on professional qualifications were intended to create an administration closer to European norms and staffed by trained careerists. The cultural accommodation and localization of the earlier centuries were increasingly regarded with distaste.[73]

Since the mid-nineteenth century native Christians had been excluded from the European category, although they could apply for equal status providing they met specific cultural criteria: being able to speak and write Dutch, possessing a family name, and having been educated in European morals and ideas. With the passing of the "Government Regulation" of 1854 a fundamental division between "Europeans" and "Natives" was introduced; Chinese were equated with natives.[74] What was later to be described as "the plural society," with different communities interacting only in the economic sphere,[75] was emerging, albeit initially only in the bigger cities of Java. Although in fact Dutch society in the Indies became steadily more European in the course of the nineteenth century, there was also a growing and often emotional emphasis on race and division. In 1868, for example, the lawyer editor of the Makassar newspaper, *Dagblad van Celebes*, was sentenced to a year's imprisonment because of his aggressive criticism of government discrimination against Indo-Europeans, who were often victims of crude racial prejudice.[76]

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classic case of how the manipulation of local noble factions could generate bribes from all sides.

73) These shifts are central themes in Bosma and Raben, *Being 'Dutch'*: Ch. 6 and 7.

74) *Ibid.*: Ch. 6, particularly 205-11. Sutherland, "Mestizos as Middlemen."

75) J. S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study in Plural Economy* (Cambridge New York: Cambridge University Press, 1944).

76) Sutherland, "Mestizos as Middlemen"; Bosma and Raben, *Being 'Dutch'*.

During the nineteenth century Makassar's annual reports reveal a growing if usually implicit distinction between two categories of locally-born "Europeans," although both were of mixed Asian and European descent. The *creole*s tended to be relatively successful businessmen, while the *mestizo*s were a cause for concern because of their poverty and failure to live according to Dutch norms. By the 1870s the distinction had become more explicit: *creole*s were involved in trade and shipping, and were reluctant to enter government service, because of the poor prospects, while most *mestizo*s worked as *beambten* or petty officials. Their lack of education and unwillingness to be separated from their homes and families ensured they would remain in the lowest ranks. Once again, the solution was sought in the creation of a cadre of well-trained and truly European officials with knowledge of local languages, although now the emphasis was on formal schooling rather than on the informal apprenticeship of the old *eleves*.[77]

Around 1863 the Makassar government began to plan the establishment of a Training College (*kweekschool*) specifically intended to educate teachers and translators. But it was 1876 before the school could welcome its first batch of students: fifteen aspirant officials, twelve trainee teachers, and seven Europeans seeking qualification as *tolk*.[78] The need for translators was considered urgent because after 1860 neighboring territories had been acquired from Bone,[79] and expanding direct rule required new links to the rural populations. The Minister of Colonies reported to the parliament in The Hague in 1878 that despite the long presence of the Dutch in South Sulawesi there was little trust between the populace and the officials. Echoing comments made by the first Governor of Makassar in the late seventeenth century, the Minister attributed political difficulties primarily to the fact that "most officials have an inadequate knowledge of local languages, and so have to make use of translators, who, whether out

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77) Bosma and Raben, *Being 'Dutch'*: Ch. 6.

78) H. van den Brink, *Dr Benjamin Frederik Matthes: Zijn leven en arbeid in dienst van het Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap* (Amsterdam: Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap, 1943): 94-120, 454-7.

79) In 1861 the Eastern Districts (*Oosterdistricten*) of Sinjai, Kajang, and Old Bulukumba were taken over, while the Southern Districts were expanded by Binamu and Bangkala in 1863, and Sanrabone in 1867. See also P. J. Kooreman, "De feitelijke toestand in het gouvernementsgebied van Celebes en onderhoorigheden." *Indische Gids* I-II (1883): 167-204, 358-84, 482-98, 637-55, 135-69, 346-58.

of ignorance or to serve their own interests, do not always honestly report what is said or intended."[80]

We can get some idea of what these general trends mean if we consider the nineteenth-century Volls, who, as Europeans, were relatively well documented, especially insofar as they worked within the expanding colonial state. In the previous section I summarized the family's eighteenth-century rise and fall within the VOC hierarchy. But this decline was only in terms of official rank: as a clan they thrived throughout the nineteenth century. The lists of adult male European inhabitants, published annually in the *Government Almanac*, show that the Volls were typically the largest family in the region. The lists, with their (incomplete) data on births, marriages, and deaths, also illustrate how the *mestizo*s intermarried, and formed a close-knit extended community. Of the 193 adult males in 1833, 7 were Volls (exceeded only by the allied Trouwerbachs, with 8 males). By 1843, of the total 242, the Volls were top with 8 Makassar males (plus 2 in Maros); in 1852, of 307, the Volls provided 8 in Makassar and 4 in Maros. Data in the *Almanacs* and the 1866 *Jaarboekje Celebes* suggest that in the early nineteenth century the Volls were relatively unimportant in government, but by the latter part of the century they were more frequently found in administration, as they profited from increased Dutch control of the out-lying areas, particularly in the old northern district of Maros where they were well established. In Maros the Collector of Rural Incomes, the translator, and the agent of the Orphan chamber were Volls, as were the translators in Segeri and Camba (the latter combining the job with that of First Clerk), while the Bima clerk and translator was also a Voll.[81]

For local populations and the young Dutchmen who administered them, these petty officials were indispensable, representing and explaining each side to the other. But they were, geographically and institutionally, far further from the center of power than their forebears. In this they typified the effects of nineteenth-century reform and racism on the Makassar *mestizo*s.

There had always been a distinction between the leading local dynasties and those poorer members of the community, or family, who, in the course of the nineteenth century, came to be called "paupers." Cultural

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80) *Koloniaal verslag*. The Minister repeats the comments in the 1877 Makassar General Report, ANRI, Mak 10/9.

81) Sutherland, "Mestizos as Middlemen."

and class divisions were apparent in VOC times, in everything from access to appointments to the price paid for a pew in the church; the *tolk* dynasties clearly belonged to the upper levels. But even within these extended clans there was considerable differentiation, ranging from poor relatives, particularly in more rural areas such as Maros or Bima, to those able to maintain their knowledge of Dutch and a more European life-style in the towns. As the emphasis on qualifications and Western culture increased, admittance to the higher levels of administration and society became more selective. This may well have sharpened awareness of social and class difference within families, increasing an emphasis on whiteness of skin, and the lines drawn between different sets of kin, such as the still-heard comment that someone is from "the slave side." The change, however, was not so much in that there was a completely new awareness of hierarchy, but that increasing institutionalization, and the growing number of officials who retained their Dutch assumptions and prejudices, made divisions both sharper and less permeable.

Despite its growing power and prestige, the emerging colonial state was only one aspect of Makassar: overseas trade and shipping had always been central to its prosperity. Three events in particular transformed Makassar's nineteenth-century maritime horizons. The first was the foundation of Singapore by the British in 1819, the second was the arrival of steam shipping in 1842, and the third was the abolition of most customs' duties in 1847. The second of these led to the establishment of regular connections between Batavia, Surabaya, and Makassar and, by 1876, a network of steam vessels linking smaller ports along the Straits of Makassar.[82] Since the main link with world markets was through Singapore, rather than Batavia, Chinese economic growth was spectacular, until it was partially choked by a combination of market forces and Dutch discrimination.[83] Expansion also enabled entrepreneurial *creole* clans to prosper. Mesmans, Weijergangs, and De Graafs were prominent in shipping and trade, while

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82) *Koloniaal verslag* (1877): 24; see also J. N. F. M. Campo, *Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij: Stoomvaart en staatsvorming in de Indonesische Archipel 1888-1914* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1992).

83) Chinese dynamism was grudgingly admired but also feared. In 1860 the Makassar annual report concluded that the Chinese from China and Singapore could be considered equal to Europeans, and actually surpassed them in both access to capital and entrepreneurship: ANRI, Mak 1/6.

Mullers and Brugmans also led commercial houses in the late 1860s.[84] The interior of South Sulawesi, a source of forest products and new cash crops such as coffee, had become increasingly productive and export-oriented after the defeat of Bone in 1860, leading to more contact with Dutch Makassar, although full political "pacification" was only to occur in the twentieth century. Families with relatively good personal connections to the inland benefited.

The old clans, including the Volls, retained links of kinship and commerce with the Bugis and Makassarese kingdoms and local indigenous families. Consequently it was natural that nineteenth-century scholars interested in Sulawesi should turn to the *mestizo*s for help. In 1856 the naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace's main support came from his friend, "a Dutch gentleman in Celebes," the English-speaking Willem Leendert Mesman.[85] When, in the same year, the Dutch Bible translator, Benjamin Matthes, traveled through a still-perilous South Sulawesi in order to deepen his knowledge of Buginese, his journey was only possible because he was accompanied by "Daeng SiYampe," a man with close ties to the Buginese aristocracy. When the expedition returned to Makassar, Daeng SiYampe reverted to his other identity, that of Willem Voll. But despite his crucial mediating role, as a *mestizo* Voll was treated with little respect by local colonial officials, a fact that infuriated Matthes.[86] Later, W. H. Brugman, the Second Commissioner for Native Affairs in Makassar, was commended for his assistance to the famous Swiss researchers, the Sarasin brothers, whom he accompanied on their explorations of Sulawesi's "unknown" interior between 1895 and 1902.[87]

## Conclusion

As is almost inevitable given the nature of the sources, the translator families I have discussed here have been contextualized within the developing European apparatus of control. The early nineteenth-century Dutch colonial administration, like the VOC, lacked the organizational and war-

84) E. L. Poelinggomang, *Makassar abad XIX*. Businesses and ships were listed annually in the *Regeerings-Almanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1865-1942).
85) A. R. Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago* (New York: Dover, 1962).
86) Van den Brink, *Dr Benjamin Frederik Matthes*: 178-220. Matthes was also assisted in the interior by the Arab trading partner of the Weijergang house.
87) *Koloniaal verslag* 1895, 1896, 1903.

making capacity to discipline society and enforce frontiers. But by the mid-nineteenth century Makassar's horizons were shifting. The port, its shippers, and merchants were increasingly incorporated into a predominantly Anglo-Chinese commercial system, part of an emerging world economy, while at the same time the Dutch colonial state struggled to impose a countervailing orientation to Batavia. New technologies, such as steam-engines, an expanding bureaucracy, and military victories heralded the formal triumph of European priorities and norms. Conformity to these became a prerequisite for entry into the institutions that determined access to jobs and status. Some *mestizo*s were able to meet the new standards in education, language use, and ways of life, but most were unable—or unwilling—to do so.

On a global level, the long nineteenth century was characterized by European hegemony, commercial integration, and social trends toward corporate organizational forms, uniformity, and a harsher emphasis on religious and cultural boundaries.[88] The Europeanization of the upper levels of Makassar's administration (including the crucial position of *tolk*) was symptomatic of this, as was the growing scale of immigration and long-distance trade. The intensely local qualities that had defined the Makassar *mestizo*s over almost two centuries had become a liability: they were too parochial for the Dutch colonial state and regional commercial networks, but, paradoxically, they were also culturally too syncretic. Economic opportunities were increasingly seized by immigrants with better international connections, be they Chinese or European, although some *creole* shipping and trading companies did well—Weijergang's was a frequently noted example.

Makassar's bureaucratic elite was consistent in its belief that the *mestizo*s were doomed to poverty by their lack of education and their strong attachment to place and family. Their usefulness had lain in their ability to mediate between Asian rulers, merchants, and subjects on the one hand, and, on the other, a Dutch hierarchy essentially unable to come to grips with local societies. During the 1800s the *mestizo*s remained indispensable to the daily processes of interpretation and representation that helped create acquiescence to the colonial regime. However, after 1860, as negotiation gradually began to give way to an increasingly unilateral accommodation, the space between systems which was the natural arena of the *mestizo tolken* contracted. Once the colonial state was confident

88) C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

enough to impose communication on its own terms, and Malay-speaking Dutchmen were regarded as experts on native affairs, it became easier to side-line the *mestizo*s. They lost official access to high-level Sulawesians, and their dialogue with the Dutch had more to do with office-bound routine than state policy. Their intermediate position had always meant that their loyalty and integrity could be suspect, and their acceptance was usually grudging.

If, on the one hand, the translators' decreased scope and status meant that they were no longer suspected of treacherous alliances with alien powers, it also ensured that they were often seen as little more than clerks, respectable representatives of a group increasingly regarded as a problematic underclass. Routine skills, not enterprise, became highly valued. It is therefore not surprising that the last time a *tolk* moved in the highest political circles was in the late nineteenth century, in the final decades of military pacification. J. A. G. Brugman displayed daring and diplomatic flair worthy of his predecessors, but—as had always been the case—senior Dutch colleagues were resentful and mistrustful of his privileged access to the native nobility.[89]

By the end of the nineteenth century *creole*s, *mestizo*s, and paupers seemed intrinsically marginal to Dutch Makassar's economy and politics. But this limited point of view—essentially that of the administration—is indicative of the restricted reach of white knowledge and Batavia-based politics. Even in the towns, the colonial state remained irrelevant to many aspects of life as it was lived by Chinese, *creole*s, and Sulawesians.

Emphasis on their role as translators might be taken to mean that Makassar's *tolken* moved in a bi-polar world, but in reality each individual was at the center of ramified networks of personal relationships. Their horizons would have been populated by family, business partners, friends, allies, and competitors, with all of whom their ties would have been less one-dimensional than those suggested by Company labels. Connections were often conceptualized in terms of kinship—blood, affective, and instrumental—rather than in formal designations. Families in Makassar were anything but neatly bounded and homogenous, they sprawled across the religious, cultural, political, and bureaucratic categories that shape our sources and theoretically organized society and government.

Within the personalized world of South Sulawesi, alliances based on ties of blood and friendship, inherited over generations, could mean that

89) Bosma and Raben, *Being 'Dutch'*: 179-81, 212.

a *mestizo* clerk, in Dutch eyes a nobody, was on intimate terms with a Bugis prince or Makassarese noble. This ambiguity reminds us that despite the undeniable impact of large-scale and long-term structural changes, "history" is experienced personally and locally. State consolidation and further integration into the global economy had transformed the powerful *tolken* of the eighteenth century into the petty officials of the late 1800s, but the translator families were woven so closely into the fabric of Makassar that official titles cannot capture their significance. By attempting to locate their changing roles in local society, as well as in the colonial administration, we can perhaps begin to appreciate the plurality of perspectives that was so typical of early emporia and empires.

## Archival Collections

ANRI, ARM Indonesian National Archives, Annual Reports Makassar, Jakarta
ANRI, Mak Indonesian National Archives, Residency Archive of Makassar, Jakarta
BL, OIOC British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections, London
NA, VOC Nationaal Archief, Collections of documents of the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, The Hague

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*behoort te weten van Choromandel, Pegu, Arracan, Bengale, Mocha, Persien, Malacca, Sumatra, Ceylon, Malabar, Celebes of Macassar, China, Japan, Tayouan of Formosa, Tonkin, Cambodia, Siam, Borneo, Bali, Kaap der Goede Hoop en van Mauritius*... Den Haag: H.C. Susan.

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