

CHAPTER TWO

1530–1670: A RACE BETWEEN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY?

It is as a matter of fact impossible to understand the spread of Islam in the archipelago unless one takes into account the antagonism between the Moslem traders and the Portuguese.¹

There is little doubt that the Schrieke theory of the race between Islam and Christianity is one of the most hotly debated theories concerning the spread of Islam and Christianity in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. Since the time Schrieke proposed his theory some other scholars have questioned its validity. One of the ardent critics of Schrieke's theory is Naguib al-Attas. He refuses to accept the argument put forward by this Dutch scholar that competition among Muslims and Christians had accelerated the spread of Islam, particularly between the eleventh and seventeenth centuries. Al-Attas is of the opinion that there is no continuation of the crusade between Islam and Christianity in the archipelago, since Islam did not regard Christianity as a serious contender. Furthermore, according to al-Attas, it is well known that it was only from the nineteenth century onwards that Christianity made any impact at all in the archipelago.²

Al-Attas could be right, since he is one of the scholars who propose that Islam had spread in the archipelago, albeit in limited numbers, since the first century of Islam (or the seventh century CE). The Portuguese had not arrived in the region during this period. But al-Attas seems to have misread Schrieke's theory, since the Dutch scholar proposes that the race between Islam and Christianity took place mostly in the sixteenth century, during which period the Portuguese attempted very seriously to gain the upper hand in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.

Taking into consideration recent studies on the spread of Islam and Christianity, one may be tempted to accept Schrieke's theory. One of such recent studies is Reid.³ Implicitly accepting the basic argument of Schrieke, Reid proposes that what was taking place during the same period, as put forward by Schrieke, was the polarisation between global religions and the rise of religious boundaries, particularly between Islam and Christianity. The increasingly sharper polarisation between the two religions basically resulted from the 'race

¹ Schrieke 1957-II:233.

² Al-Attas 1969,18:21–22.

³ Reid 1993:143–145.

between them' to win new converts. As Reid argues, in the sixteenth century large numbers of people, both rural and urban, were clearly converting to Islam, and identifying themselves as part of an international Islamic community. This explicit identification, according to Reid, can be attributed primarily to two factors: the direct and intense shipping links between Southeast Asia and the Red Sea area, and the sharper polarisation between the *Dar al-Islam* [Abode of Islam] and its enemies: *Dar al-Harb* or Abode of War.

Reflecting on the history of Islamisation in the archipelago, the Schrieke theory has a lot of truth, though as Meilink-Roelofs reminds us, the crusading motive on the part of the Portuguese must not be overemphasised.⁴ The theory, combined with other theories, in fact, can give us a better grasp of not only the history of Islamisation but also of Christianity in the archipelago. Not only that, the Schrieke theory remains relevant to subsequent and recent history of the two religions in Indonesia in particular. In fact, the contemporary period is witnessing the ever-heated competition between Islamic *dakwah* (preaching) and Christian missions in order to win new converts.⁵

The Race Theory: An Overview

To begin with, according to Schrieke, the Portuguese expansion in the archipelago must be viewed as a sequel to the Crusades in Europe and the Middle East. In his opinion, it was actually the lust for adventure and the ambition for nobility, combined with religious zeal, which were the driving forces setting the expansion of the Portuguese in motion. Following the expulsion of the Moors (Muslims) from the Iberian Peninsula, the Portuguese, after having gained a foothold in Ceuta on the north coast of Muslim Africa, proceeded to make further conquests along the west coast and finally rounded the Cape of Good Hope on their way to India and the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.⁶

Schrieke emphasises, more than any other factor, the crusading spirit in the following way:

Religious zeal, nourished in the tradition of the Crusades and the remembrance of the bitter struggle with the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula, certainly continued to be an essential motivation... The religious element remained a factor of significance in Spanish politics in later times as well. For the inhabitants of the [Iberian] peninsula a Mohammedan was a 'Moor', an object of abhorrence.⁷

⁴ Meilink-Roelofs 1962:117.

⁵ Hefner 1993.

⁶ Schrieke 1955-I:37; 1957-II:232-233.

⁷ Schrieke 1955-I:38.

Not only that, the Portuguese and the Spaniards, or the Europeans as a whole, harboured an antipathy and hatred for the Muslims and their faith, that they considered heathenism. Furthermore, according to Schrieke, in this way the Crusade ideal continued its influence. For a long time the Portuguese had in mind closing an alliance with the legendary Christian ruler Prester John, whose empire was thought to be located in India. With his help they hoped to be able to bring the Crusade against the Moors to a successful end in the heart of their own territory.⁸

Proposing this strong argument, Schrieke lists the harsh and violent encounters between Islam and Christianity. The conflicts between the two were clearly motivated not only by religion but also by political and economic interests. This can be seen clearly in the accounts given by Schrieke that when Constantinople had fallen (1204) the Abbasid Caliphate had succumbed before the Mongol hordes (1258) and Acre, the last stronghold of the Christians in Palestine, had been forced to submit to the Muslims (1291), then the centre of commercial activity shifted from the routes running from the Persian Gulf by way of Baghdad to the ports of Syria and Asia Minor. Another trade route, taken also by Muslims, was the sea route from the coast of Yemen through and along the Red Sea to Alexandria, in Egypt, whence the precious products of the archipelago and the Far East reached Europe by way of the Italian commercial towns. It was to that busy transit trade that Egypt owed its prosperity under the rule of the Mamluks (1250–1517).

The predominant Muslim position in the international trade was also represented by Muslim outposts along the southern coast of the Indian subcontinent. They included Randir, Surat, and Cambay (in Gujarat). In fact, they had been supposed to have not only played a significant role in Muslim international trade, but also in the spread of Islam, including supposedly in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. By the beginning of the sixteenth century Gujarati merchants dominated all the important trading centres in the Indian Ocean trade routes. The Gujarati merchants, mingled with the Arab and Persian traders, could be found in large numbers in Malacca and probably also in Pasai, northeast Sumatra.⁹

Thus, as Chaudhuri concludes, by all accounts the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were unusually prosperous in the history of the Indian Ocean trade. The vivid travel accounts of Ibn Battuta (1345–1346) about the Muslim trading centres extending from North Africa to the Far East, were later confirmed by travellers of the fifteenth century such as the Persian ambassadors 'Abd al-Razzaq, the Venetian Nicolo Conti, and the Genovan Santo Stefano. Based

⁸ Schrieke 1955-I:39.

⁹ Schrieke 1957-II:233–234.

on their accounts, the Portuguese policy makers created a grand plan to enter the lucrative trade. But, Chaudhuri maintains, the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean abruptly ended the system of peaceful oceanic navigation that was such a marked feature of the region.¹⁰

The south-western archipelago: the contest and international connections

The race for religion, trade, and power in the Indian Ocean region began in 1492 with Christopher Columbus' 'discovery', while in the service of Spain, of the so-called 'New World' after being disappointed by Portuguese royal patronage. Six years later, on 18 May 1498, the Portuguese Vasco da Gama entered the Indian Ocean with his small fleet, and was piloted across the open sea from East Africa by an Indian navigator. Finally they dropped anchor before Calicut, the Malabar emporium.

With the arrival of the Portuguese in India in 1498, as Schrieke points out, the two opposing parties, Christians and Muslims, stood poised for head-on collision. On the one hand there were Muslims who had for hundreds of years carried on an extensive and profitable trade as the unchallenged masters of the Indian Ocean. They believed that it was in their interest, commercial as well as religious, to exclude any possible rivals, particularly the *kafir* or unbelieving Europeans. On the other hand, there were the Christian Portuguese who looked upon the Muslims as their natural enemies. The Portuguese *conquistadores* made it no secret that their hostility against Muslims derived from the state of perpetual war between Christendom and Islam.¹¹

Having gained a stronghold in India, the Portuguese soon began to launch their sacred mission and put into practice "a privilege allowed them through an extraordinary blessing of God" to cleanse the earth of as many Muslims as possible. Therefore, as early as 1500, the Portuguese attacked all Muslim merchant vessels on the open seas, including the ships of the Mamluk Sultans of Egypt. They also seized, plundered and killed all crew and passengers of the 'Mecca ships', large Muslim merchant ships that also carried *haj* pilgrims.¹²

The Portuguese atrocities had not escaped the attention of Muslim historiographers. The Arab chronicles of Hadramawt, Yemen, for instance, referring to the Portuguese military campaigns in the early sixteenth century (1502–1503), recorded vividly, "In this year, in the month of *Rajab*, the vessels of the Franks [Arabic term for all Europeans] appeared at sea en route for India, Hormuz

¹⁰ Schrieke 1955-I:39.

¹¹ Schrieke 1957-II:233–234; Chaudhuri 1985:64.

¹² Schrieke 1957-II:234.

and those parts. They took about seven vessels, killing those on board and making some prisoners. This was their first action. May God curse them.”¹³

The violent attitude of the Portuguese created not only what Chaudhuri calls a ‘catastrophe’ for the commercial activities in the Indian Ocean, but also a religious rage on the part of the Mamluk Sultans and later, as we will see, the Ottoman Sultans as well. The Mamluk Sultans of Egypt, after receiving complaints from Muslim rulers of Gujarat and Southern Yemen, dispatched Fra Mauro, the prior of the monastery of Zion on Mount Sinai, to the Pope in Rome. Protesting the barbaric conduct of the Portuguese, the Sultan warned that he could take retaliatory measures against the Christian pilgrims in Palestine. The protest, which the Pope passed on to the Portuguese King Manuel, produced no change in Portuguese behaviour. In contrast, they intensified their zeal to destroy the Muslim trade as well as pursuing their passion for a trade monopoly by venturing farthest east to the Straits of Malacca and to Maluku or the Moluccas.¹⁴

This was the typical way of the Portuguese in their attempts to expand their realm in the archipelago. As Reid shows,¹⁵ the Portuguese as a rule targeted the harbour towns at which the whole of the Southeast Asian export trade appeared to be concentrated, and Malacca was such a city. Given the terror which the Portuguese had already spread everywhere in the Indian Ocean, it is no surprise that as soon as they made their first contact with Malacca in 1509, they met with the strong opposition of its population, consisting mainly of Javanese, South Indians, Gujaratis, Chams, Tagalogs and others.

Since the possession of Malacca was crucial for their monopoly, the Portuguese made no concessions. They were finally able to conquer the city in 1511, as Reid explains, for three reasons: firstly, because they concentrated on it an intensity of firepower unprecedented in the region ‘below the winds’; secondly, because of the element of surprise; and thirdly, because much of the city’s population quickly deserted the Sultan of Malacca. The Portuguese were also able to hold it, in spite of a dozen massive sieges conducted for instance by the Acehnese during the ensuing century, because they constructed a fort that was very difficult to breach.¹⁶ But it is important to note that from the conquest of Malacca onwards the Portuguese were involved in bitter and bloody struggles against the Muslim forces of the archipelago. This is particularly true since the Portuguese conquests were accompanied by vigorous missionary activities; and these stirred the Muslims to action in their turn.¹⁷

¹³ Cited in Serjeant 1963:43.

¹⁴ Chaudhuri 1985:63; Schrieke 1957-II:234–235.

¹⁵ Reid 1993:271.

¹⁶ Reid 1993:271–272.

¹⁷ Schrieke 1957-II:235.

The strongest and fiercest opponent of the Portuguese in the archipelago, no doubt, was the Acehese sultanate. After the Portuguese conquest of Malacca, Aceh had replaced Malacca as the major Muslim trade force in the Indian Ocean in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, and had established strong international relations with some Middle Eastern countries, particularly the Ottoman sultanate. Aceh eventually proved to be invincible to Portuguese encroachment and attacks. The Acehese on the other hand attacked the Portuguese in Malacca on several occasions (1537, 1539, 1547, 1568, 1573, and 1575) without much success.

The first open conflict and hostilities between the Portuguese and the Acehese in the Indian Ocean took place in 1526. An Acehese big ship destined for Jeddah was seized by the Portuguese in the Arabian Sea and its cargo was sold in Hormuz. Several years later, the Portuguese captured more Acehese ships, and plundered their valuable cargoes, off the coast of Arabia.¹⁸ The Portuguese were in a stronger position to be aggressive, since, as Ricklefs points out, they had reached a level of technological progress that would bring their nation into one of the most daring overseas adventures of all time. They began to use artillery aboard ship.¹⁹

Despite the more advanced armament of the Portuguese and their continued harassment and encroachment, Acehese ships were able to maintain their voyages across the Indian Ocean. Two Portuguese fleets sent in 1554 and 1555 to intercept Acehese ships were unsuccessful. Again, in 1559, the Portuguese failed to intercept and capture Acehese ships in the Red Sea. As a result, according to Venetian sources, in the years of 1565 and 1566, some fifty ships from the Kingdom of 'Ashi' [Aceh] in Sumatra arrived annually in the Red Sea.²⁰

The Portuguese terror in the Indian Ocean had come to the attention of, and became a matter of concern for, the Ottoman sultans. There is little doubt that Malay-Indonesian rulers, especially the Acehese, were well aware of the strong naval power of the Ottomans and its increasingly predominant position in the trade of the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century. Not only that, but also, given the fact that the Ottomans were co-religionists of the Muslim Acehese, it can reasonably be expected that they saw the Ottomans as their patrons. Therefore, it is very likely that there was some direct contact between the Acehese and Turkish traders in Indian Ocean harbours. In any case, with their presence in the region, the Ottomans brought for Malay-Indonesian rulers and traders new hopes of getting some support in their struggle against the Portuguese.

¹⁸ Meilink-Roelofs 1962:145; Azra 2004.

¹⁹ Ricklefs 1990:20.

²⁰ Meilink-Roelofs 1962:144, 363.

The possibility of Ottoman support for the Acehnese, and their intervention in the Indian Ocean, was a great concern for the Portuguese. As early as 1519, the Portuguese in Malacca were worried by rumours of the dispatch by the ‘Grand Turk’ of a Turkish fleet to help the Malaccan Muslims. According to Pigafetta, who reported the rumours, the Portuguese soon sent a fleet to the Red Sea to intercept the Turks. When the Portuguese spotted some Turkish galleys stranded on a beach near Aden, they destroyed them without delay.²¹

For their part, the Ottoman authorities seemed to be fully informed of the Portuguese encroachment in the Indian Ocean. In 1525, the famous Turkish admiral in the Red Sea, Salman Reis (d. 1528), warned the Sublime Porte of the Portuguese threat to the Ottoman possessions in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf region. After giving a detailed description of the Portuguese offensive in various Indian Ocean ports, he reported the Portuguese progress in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago and their danger to the Turkish spice trade. Salman Reis finally suggested the dispatch of Ottoman power thither:

They [the Portuguese] also control the port [Pasai] of the great island called Shamatirah [Sumatra]... situated onwards beyond the island of Ceylon afore-said. It is said there they [i.e. the Portuguese] have two hundred infidels. With two hundred infidels they also captured the port of Malacca opposite Sumatra... Apparently all the spices come from these islands. Now these spices go to Portugal. Formerly, before the Portuguese captured those ports... there used to be a great deal of revenue [of the Ottoman] from spices in Egypt and a great deal of goods available. It is said that the accursed Portuguese hold the aforementioned ports with [only] two thousand men. Therefore, when our ships are ready, and God willing, move against them, their total destruction will be inevitable, for one fortress is unable to support another and they are not able to put up united opposition.²²

There is a religious tone in the term ‘accursed’ Portuguese. Therefore, the religious motive was one of the most important motivations in the establishment of the closer links between the Acehnese sultanate and the Ottomans. An informal alliance between them had in fact existed by the end of the 1530s. Their relationship became certainly stronger with the increasing encroachment of the *kafir* Portuguese, who in 1521 had established a fort at neighbouring Pasai. The Acehnese Sultan ‘Ali al-Mughayat Shah (r. 1511–1530), however, expelled them from Pasai in 1524. When Sultan ‘Ala al-Din Ri‘ayat Shah al-Qahhar ascended the Acehnese throne in 1537, he felt an ever-growing need for Ottoman support.

The Portuguese on the other hand followed these Islamic connections against them very closely. Thus, Mendes Pinto, who was in the Straits of

²¹ Pigafetta 1968:19.

²² Cited in Ozbaran 1978:84.

Malacca region in the late 1530s, reported that Sultan al-Qahhar had already forged an alliance with 160 Turks, some Abyssinians, unnumbered Gujaratis, and some 200 Malabari mercenaries; and they had arrived in Aceh ready to fight for the Muslim cause. Not only that. Later, Pinto was also informed that additional Turkish forces, that consisted of some 300 soldiers, had arrived in Aceh and that the Acehnese sultan had signed a military and commercial pact, in Cairo, with the Grand Turk [Sulayman the Magnificent] through the Pasha of Egypt. In return for their military assistance the Ottomans were granted, by the Acehnese sultan, exclusive rights to a trading factory in Pasai.²³

Mutual animosity between the Portuguese and the Acehnese was long-lasting. According to al-Raniri, one of the most celebrated religious scholars in the Acehnese court in the seventeenth century, Sultan al-Qahhar sent a mission to Istanbul to meet the Sultan of 'Rum', a Malay term referring to the Ottoman sultans. In June 1562 an Acehnese ambassador was already in Istanbul asking for military support to fight the Portuguese.²⁴ It appears that the Acehnese envoy was among those who had escaped a Portuguese attack a year earlier, as described by the *Annals of al-Shihri*, known also as *Tarikh al-Hadramawt*. These annals are apparently the earliest Arabic source known reporting the presence and activities of Acehnese ships in the Red Sea and their battles against the Portuguese.²⁵

In 1565 another Acehnese envoy named Husayn made an appearance in Istanbul. It is likely that he was the one who brought a petition from Sultan al-Qahhar to Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent. In that petition, the Acehnese sultan addressed the Ottoman ruler as the Caliph of Islam and the Muslims. He then reported that the Portuguese had inflicted great difficulties on Muslim merchants and *haj* pilgrims on their way to Mecca and Arabian ports. Therefore, the military assistance of the Caliph was badly needed to save innocent Muslims who had continually been massacred by the infidel *Farangis* [Portuguese].²⁶

Sultan Sulayman could not himself help the Acehnese for he died in 1566. The Acehnese mission, however, won the support of Sultan Selim II (r. 1566–1574) who issued an imperial decree for a major military expedition to Aceh. Around September 1567, the Turkish admiral at Suez, Kurtoglu Hizir Reis, was instructed to sail to Aceh with a fleet of 15 galleys, and two barques with numerous master gunsmiths, soldiers, and artillery. The fleet, however, was diverted to Yemen to suppress a rebellion there, which lasted until 1571. It appears that only a small part of the Turkish force ever reached

²³ Pinto 1989:26–27, 28, 36–37, 46–47.

²⁴ Al-Raniri 1966:31–32.

²⁵ Serjeant 1963:10; Seljuq 1980:307.

²⁶ Farooqi 1988:215–216.

Aceh, and it seems that they had not taken part in a major Acehnese attack on Portuguese Malacca in 1568.²⁷

The failure of the 1568 expedition and the death of Sultan al-Qahhar in 1571 did not lessen the Acehnese desire to expel the Portuguese from the region. According to one Indonesian historian al-Qahhar's second successor, Sultan Mansur Shah (r. 1577–1588), renewed Aceh's political and military relations with the Ottoman Empire.²⁸ This is substantiated by Portuguese historical records. Jorge de Lemos, Viceregal Secretary to Goa, reported to Lisbon in 1585 that the ruler of Aceh had again been negotiating with the Ottoman caliph for military assistance to mount a new offensive against the Portuguese.²⁹

It is not necessary to provide further accounts on subsequent relations between the Acehnese and the Ottomans. What is clear is that the race between Muslims and Christians was evidently there, mostly of course involving trade and politics, but clearly also religion. And it is also clear that the Portuguese had almost no chance to spread Christianity, excepting in Malacca where the Portuguese were able to put down some trace of Christianity. More than that, the Portuguese fairly soon ceased to be such a revolutionary force in the west of the archipelago; and it is also evident that they failed to control the Asian trade. This is because they simply had to spend all their available resources to defend themselves from the formidable Acehnese attacks. While on the other hand for the Acehnese Muslims, supported by Islamic international connections, the continued encroachment of the Portuguese had only led to further consolidation of Islam.

The contest for the eastern archipelago

The contest for trade, politics, and religion between the Portuguese and Muslims soon moved to the eastern archipelago or precisely to the Moluccas, a name ultimately derived from the Arab traders' term for the region, *Jazirat al-Muluk* or the land of many kings. The Portuguese came initially to Ambon, then to Ternate, and later to the island of Tidore. It is necessary to recall that immediately after the capture of Malacca the Portuguese had dispatched an exploratory expedition from Malacca to the Moluccas under Francisco Serrão. This was followed between 1511 and 1522 by regular trading voyages. As Reid pointed out, the Portuguese moved quickly to the Moluccas once they discovered that it was the true source of cloves and nutmeg. After initially having harboured in Ambon, the Portuguese moved to Ternate, the main centre of

²⁷ Reid 2005:79–80.

²⁸ Zainuddin 1961:272–277.

²⁹ Boxer 1969:423.

the clove trade in the eastern archipelago. But, it is important to note that the Portuguese could never control more than a fraction of Moluccan cloves, let alone any other product, because of their involvement in the complex set of antagonisms and alliances.³⁰

It is important to point out, as Meilink-Roelofs makes clear, that Islam had penetrated the eastern archipelago region some fifty to eighty years before the coming of the Portuguese.³¹ According to De Graaf's assessment, Islam reached the Moluccas in the latter half of the fifteenth century. But he admits that there had been traces of Muslim influence already a century before that period. It seems that the first ruler in the Moluccas converting to Islam was the king of Ternate.³²

Before long, the Portuguese were entangled in bitter struggles not only among Muslim local rulers, but also against the Spaniards. The ruler of Muslim Ternate in particular warmly welcomed the Portuguese since he hoped that the Portuguese would not only buy their spices, but also help him in the fight against his rivals. Therefore the presence of the Portuguese, who were allowed by the Sultan of Ternate to build their central fort (1522), gave the inhabitants of Ternate island a certain amount of prestige *vis-a-vis* their neighbours.³³

Faced with the close political and economic alliances between the Portuguese and the Ternatans, the Sultan of Tidore associated himself with the Spaniards who had come to the Moluccas region after the death of Magellan (1521). The Spaniards not only bought the spices for a price eight times as much as the Portuguese paid, but more importantly provided also much sought prestige to the ruler of Tidore.

This naturally led to a struggle between the Portuguese and the Spaniards. The conflicts among the Europeans themselves further eroded their prestige in the eyes of native Muslims. The Portuguese and Spaniards seemed to have realized that conflicts and hostilities among them would be of great benefit only to the Muslims. Therefore, after the Spanish capitulation on Tidore, they signed the Treaty of Zaragoza (1529) that formally put an end to their conflicts with the Portuguese in the Moluccas. But in practice this did not work. There were repeated skirmishes among them until 1546. Only at the end of the sixteenth century, when Portugal became a part of the Spanish empire (1580), did the presence of the Spanish in the Philippines serve to buttress Portuguese authority in the Moluccas islands. But that came too late, because of political changes that had already taken place in Muslim power and politics.

³⁰ Reid 1993:272.

³¹ Meilink-Roelofs 1962:155.

³² De Graaf 1970:135–136.

³³ Meilink-Roelofs 1962:154–156; Reid 1993:272–273.

By the second half of the sixteenth century, the relationship between the Portuguese and the Sultan of Ternate had grown steadily worse. In the 1560s the Portuguese became increasingly irritated as Sultan Hairun of Ternate proved talented in manipulating them to advance his own authority and that of Islam. In 1570 the Portuguese treacherously murdered him. Hairun's son Baabullah used the outrage against this act to drive the Portuguese out of Ternate. Baabullah's victory over the Portuguese made him highly respected among the natives in the region, and in the years that followed most of the Moluccan islands came within his sphere of influence.³⁴

There is no doubt that the religious factor was evident in the contest for the eastern archipelago. Both Meilink-Roelofs and Reid conclude that the coming of the Portuguese and Spaniards had intensified the religious race between Muslims and Christians. As Reid maintains, in Eastern Indonesia as a whole Muslims and Christians were almost on a par in the mid-sixteenth century. The unstable *modus vivendi* between the Portuguese and the Sultanate of Ternate in the clove trade allowed Christian as well as Muslim missionaries to make some headway among the still largely animist people of the Moluccas.³⁵

The success of Sultan Baabullah of Ternate in expelling the Portuguese undoubtedly provided momentum for the further Islamisation in the Moluccas as a whole. The Sultan, for instance, compelled most of the Christian supporters of the Portuguese throughout the Moluccas to accept Islam as a sign of loyalty. Baabullah had already been an effective propagandist for Islam during his father's time. Now, after his victory, he was able to spread the Muslim faith through much of the Ambon area, to Buton, Selayar, some of the coastal kingdoms of east and north Sulawesi, and even to southern Mindanao. Reid points out that the Portuguese and Spaniards believed that this crusading Sultan introduced "a great number of Arabian and Persian false prophets into the Moluccas, and sent envoys and missionaries to Brunei, Mindanao, Java and Aceh to encourage the holy war."³⁶

As a result, during Baabullah's reign (1570–1583), and until the arrival of the Dutch in 1600, in spite of complicated religious loyalties, there was a stronger sense than ever since the arrival of Islam that the acceptance of Islam was an essential part of loyalty to the ruler of Ternate.

On the other hand, the hope of the Portuguese (as well as the Spaniards) for massive conversion to Christianity in the Moluccas did not materialise. As De Graaf pointed out, this proved an idle hope. Only very few were baptized during the sixteenth century. Even the great apostle of Asia, Francis Xavier, who was in the Moluccas in 1546–1547, was unable to loosen the hold of Islam

³⁴ Meilink-Roelofs 1962:159; Reid 1993:147.

³⁵ Reid 1993:147.

³⁶ Reid 1993:148.

there.³⁷ This failure had a lot to do with the erosion of the Portuguese image that had already suffered from the way in which many Portuguese behaved themselves towards the native Muslims, and from the corrupt administration of various Portuguese official representatives in the Moluccas.³⁸

Conclusion

As Reid concludes, the Portuguese period was a period during which polarisation and religious boundaries were clearly drawn. Only by the mid-seventeenth century was this sharp distinction between Islam and non-Islam fading. The major conflicts were no longer between crusading Catholics and Islam, but between the religiously neutral VOC and its allies on the one side and those who sought a freer system of trade on the other. Among both Muslims and Christians the age of crusades motivated by religious fervour was over.³⁹ Considering much contradicting evidence for later periods up until today, Reid's conclusion should be critically reassessed. But this is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss.

Azyumardi Azra

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³⁷ De Graaf 1970:135-136.

³⁸ Meilink-Roelofs 1962:155.

³⁹ Reid 1993:143-50.

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