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Promise, pretence and pragmatism: governance and taxation in colonial Indonesia, 1870-1940

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Taxing within and beyond the state in Seram,
c. 1860-1920

Patih van Noniali

Kapala Saniri
van Sapolewa.



Orang Kaja van
Taniwel
(verbannen).

Orang Kaja van
Roemah Soal.

Figure 7.1. Alfurs chiefs on West Seram, ca. 1905.

Source: F.J.P. Sachse, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1907), 60.

This photo, taken around 1905 during a tour made by Major F.J.P. Sachse, 'civil-governor' of West Seram in 1903-1905, excellently symbolizes Dutch colonialism in 'stateless' spaces. We see the four village elders or chiefs of the *nagari* Nuniali, Sapalewa, Taniwel and Rumah Soal in West Seram (see map 7.1), who were appointed as indirect rulers in the Dutch colonial administration. They bore foreign titles such as '*patih*' and '*orangkaya*', wore European suits and hats, and were bestowed with *tongkat*, canes with a golden or silver knob, while the higher-ranking 'lords' are seated, to emphasize the differences in their newly acquired status. These new clothes, titles and paraphernalia, supposedly expressed new forms of power

and authority. As the restyled, spruce indirect rulers of Seram, they were supposedly icons of change, representing just governance, fair taxation and legalized, rightful rule. Supposedly, they heralded a new era of peace (*Pax Neerlandica*), social development and improvement, imbued with the tones of the forceful civilizational-missionary Dutch governmental colonialism of the early 1900s. But the men in this photo do seem to make a somewhat displaced impression. This is symbolic of their actual status and function, which, as this chapter will show, was at odds with the developmental agenda the colonial government pursued. Behind this contrived image of authority and stateliness stands the stark reality in contrast to what the photo attempts to establish. A reality of coercion rather than governmentality, of violence rather than peace and tranquillity (*rust en orde*) and of extortion rather than taxation.

This chapter is about the absolute limits of the colonial state. It discusses how colonial conquest on Seram was deployed as a project of replacing alleged forms of 'indigenous ritualism' and 'underdevelopment' with 'civilizational', moralizing governance. However, this process was structurally constrained by indigenous resilience and the government's own incapacity. Colonial officials brutally interfered in local society, and hoped that through indirect rule and administrative techniques of inscription and documentation they could "change the facts they took note of"¹, using documentation and archiving as "intricate technologies of rule in themselves" to reproduce the very state machines from which they derived.²

Herein, taxation was, once again, presented as perhaps the strongest and most fundamental form of governmental administration required to transform 'primitive subjects' into categorized, industrious and governable 'citizens.' Taxes were seen as a tool to extend the colonial frontier and underpin colonial ideas of social improvement. However, continuous resistance and evasion drove the state to the limits of its capacity, and the effect of documentation and administration remained limited to the paper on which it was written. In Seram, and comparable regions of Indonesia, many subjects, and especially those living in more peripheral, mountainous regions, often succeeded in remaining outside the scope of the colonial government. They refused to be governed, ruled, inspected, regulated, indoctrinated, sermonized, listed, checked off, estimated, appraised, censured and ordered about, and deliberately sought to escape the state.³ As Scott argues, avoidance of administrative techniques, village settlement, written culture, monotheism and centralized agriculture was important as a strategy to prevent the intrusion of state formation and to stay ungoverned in Southeast Asia; to remain unknown and unmapped was to remain untaxed.⁴ The result was coercion

1 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 47.

2 Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 20, 28.

3 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 183.

4 J. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009), 9, 70, 81-89, 183, 229-230.

by the appointed chiefs supported by the Dutch military, which was in fact the leading strategy that outbalanced governance, once again emphasizing the inability of the government to play by its own rules.

Geographically, we have again arrived in the Central Moluccas, back where started with the first case study on Ambon, but socio-politically the contrast could not be bigger. Seram shows the incongruities of colonial governance as clearly as possible, and illustrates how the Dutch colonial fiscal system worked only under the cover of indirect rule and standoffishness.

7.1 SERAM: A STATELESS SPACE

Seram is the largest island in the Central Moluccas (see map 3.1), and is referred to as the origin or mother island (*Nusa Ina*) in Moluccan cultures. Its mountainous layout provides unforgiving terrain to explorers, soldiers and state-builders alike. The majority of the interior of the island remained blank on European maps, and untouched by colonial rule until late in the nineteenth century, contrary to its coastal regions, the neighbouring islands of Ambon and the Lease and Banda islands, all of which had experienced the dark and profound consequences of Dutch spice-monopolism.⁵ Only the western side of the Island, in particular the peninsula of Huamual (Hoamoal), had experienced the influence of European colonialism and spice production, until it was violently destroyed and depopulated during the seventeenth century spice wars.⁶ The rest of the island was largely ignored until the second half of the nineteenth century, when local warfare and social upheaval in the interaction between various groups attracted Dutch attention. Seram was actively colonized only during the heyday of twentieth century aggressive Dutch imperialism. Especially under the reign of Van Heutsz, the ambiguous and often conflicting expansionist drive for political consolidation and quest for resources of the empire was further integrated into an active imperialist, ethical-civilizational agenda, signalling the end of independence for many parts of as yet uncolonized regions in Eastern Indonesia and the enforcement of Dutch authority and morality, with the hardest military means.⁷ Imperial motivations on Seram were largely characterized by moral concerns about resurging violence and

5 M.C. Boulan-Smit, "Traditional Territorial Categories and Constituent Institutions in West Seram: The Nili Ela of 'WELE Telu Batai and the Alune Hena of Ma'saman Uwei", in T. Reuters (ed.), *Sharing the Earth, Dividing the Land. Land and Territory in the Austronesian World* (Canberra, ANU Press, 2006), 157-177: 158.

6 See Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 55, 83-110; Knaap, *Kruidnagelen en Christenen*, 25-34, 37-39; Widjojo, *The Revolt of Prince Nuku*, 19-21; Van Fraassen, *Sociografie van de Minangkabause Samenleving*, 54-57; Lopian, *The Diversified Unity of Maluku-Kie-Raha: Its Historical Development*, 184; Alwi, *Sejarah Maluku*. See also: Van Fraassen, *Ternate*, I: 38-45.

7 P.M.H. Groen, "Soldaat en Bestuursman: Het Indische Leger en De Nederlandse Gezagsvestiging op Ceram, een Case Study", *Mededelingen Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis Landmachtstaf* 5 (1989): 203-244.

the desire for 'social improvement', while its perceived lack of commercial power and resources and the difficult terrain rendered it largely economically unattractive. Using military force, the Dutch would establish their colonial administration, paving the way to project their idealistic schemes of benevolent imperialism on Seram's societies and replace what they considered to be 'primitivism' with a 'civilized society' that both necessitated and reproduced tax payment as a tool for social reorganization.

Tastes of the non-state: views and ideas

Historically, an important distinction is made between Seram's coastal communities (or *nagari*), home to mixed communities of locals and migrants that had adapted to the influences of foreign trade, politics and religion, and the Alfurs or *Alifuru*, the much more secluded inhabitants of the mountainous, impenetrable and densely forested interiors.⁸ While the coastal communities had adopted 'governed' lifestyles of swidden agriculture, taxes and monotheism⁹, the Alfurs lived radically different lives. Seram's geographic conditions were unsuitable for large-scale rice cultivation, and a typical Southeast Asian *sawah*-based kingdom, with concordant forms of taxation and statecraft, had never emerged. Instead, the Alfurs were a heterogeneous, complex society many different ethnic groups ('tribes') and lived as peripatetic agriculturalists and hunters. Therefore, the Alfurs can be recognized as an insular example of the kind of mountainous and peripheral people who in Scott's vocabulary understood, 'the art of not being governed'; the deliberate strategies of avoiding fixed settlement and written records and administration to keep the development of states at bay and to remain untaxed and free of all of its other burdens.¹⁰ As put by a colonial official, the Alfurs were a 'primeval people', not 'stuck' in their *nagari*

8 Note that this was not an ethnic term, but rather a geographical-cultural distinction. Dutch sources often speak of 'mountain inhabitants' (*bergbewoners*) when addressing the Seramese Alfurs. 'Alfurs' was in fact used as a collective term for non-monotheist (animist) Indonesian peoples in the interiors of eastern Indonesian islands such as Sulawesi, Halmahera and Seram, but in modern-day language is still in use as the generic term for the collective people of interior Seram and some other Moluccan islands. See: Bartels, *In de Schaduw van de Berg Nunusaku*, 29, quoted from; W. Manuhutu, "Pacifiatie in Praktijk: De Expansie van het Nederlands Gezag op Ceram. 1900-1942", in J. van Goor (ed.), *Imperialisme in de Marge: De Afronding van Nederlands-Indië* (Utrecht: Hes, 1985), 267-315: 268-269.

9 Most 'colonial' authors oppose coastal inhabitants to the Alifuru, but Duyvendak emphasizes that there were no real cultural distinctions per se, and the contrast between *pebisir* and *hilir* on Seram should be seen only in light of interaction; the coastal inhabitants were just likelier to have been in touch with cultural influences from outside. Only after conversion and interference from outside were the interiors rendered as profoundly different cultural region. See: J.P. Duyvendak, *Het Kakean-Genootschap van Seran* (PhD thesis, Universiteit Leiden, 1926), 10; Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain*, 5-6.

10 Scott, *The Art of not Being Governed*; G. Benjamin, "On Being Tribal in the Malay World", in G. Benjamin and C. Chou (eds.), *Tribal Communities in the Malay World: Historical, Cultural and Social Perspectives* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2002), 7-76: 17.

(village) but “freely roaming around [...] their lands” as “‘semi-nomadic’ wanderers” which made it particularly difficult to administer them.¹¹ Hence, they were seen by colonial officials as archotypically ‘undisciplined’, ‘primitive’ and underdeveloped ‘lazy natives’, who evidently required the tutelary guidance of Dutch colonial governance to facilitate their participation in the global economy. Particularly their non-monotheistic beliefs and their habit of headhunting enhanced Dutch concern about fitting the Alfurs into their empire, and were seen as principle obstacles towards colonial attempts to ‘improve’ the Alfurs’ lifestyles and convinced many officials that for the time being the Alfurs were “insusceptible and unripe for modern governance.”¹² This also helped to keep alive the difference between the ‘civilized in the state and the non-civilized in non-state spaces’ which was important to the Dutch claim to sociocultural superiority and legitimisation of their rule. This explains the Dutch obsession with differentiating between invented colonial categories of ‘coastal-civilized’ monotheists versus ‘mountainous-animists’ ancestor-worshippers. Ultimately, it legitimized Dutch intervention in order to ‘protect’ the former against the latter, eventually inducing deeper colonial penetration into Seram’s heartlands. Consequently, as in earlier colonized areas, Seram was subjected to the colonial fiscal claim, and hence expected to fund its own colonization process, preferably through income taxes.

The *Alfurs* of course maintained their own concepts and narratives of identity and relations with the outside world. According to G. Benjamin, “The character of tribal society – in Asia especially – is shaped by the proximity of civilization”; tribal identity is defined not by social conditions, race or ethnicity, but by social action: the action of staying within geographic remote areas and living outside the state.¹³ According to Scott, ungoverned hill societies are best understood as representing a “reactive and purposeful statelessness of peoples who have adapted to a world of states while remaining outside their firm grasp.”¹⁴ Indeed, the Alfurs engaged with the world around them, as Seram was crossed by trading routes since long before European colonization, running from Ternate to the Southern Moluccas and from Papua to Sulawesi and Java.¹⁵ The Alfurs participated in commercial activities and followed the tides of violent colonial interventions and monopolization of indigenous trading systems. But as, contrary to some of the coastal migrant communities, the Alfurs were unrestrained by agriculture or any form of forced labour and cultivation, colonial officials thought the island had always preserved its “relatively pristine nature.”¹⁶

11 G. de Vries, *Bij de Berg-Alfoeren op West-Seram: Zeden, Gewoonten en Mythologie van een Oervolk* (Zutphen: Thieme, 1927), 125.

12 ANRI AS GB MGS 4111, herein: MGS 26-1-1891: DirBB to GG, 4-8-1890; ANRI AS GB Besl. 1522, herein Besl. 28-1-1890: RvI 13-11-1889, DirFin to GG, 9-11-1889.

13 Benjamin, “On Being Tribal”, 9, 10-11, 17.

14 Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 337.

15 Knaap, *Kruidnagelen en Christenen*, 67.

16 Duyvendak, *Het Kakean-Genootschap*, 1.

This independence has shaped the political relations between local chiefs and metropolitan governments ever since.¹⁷ The Seramese way of life must therefore be seen as successful in terms of self-preservation throughout history. A closer look at the indigenous situation on Seram in the mid-nineteenth century (before full colonization) helps us to properly comprehend the impact of the process of state-accustoming and normalization in the twentieth century.

Happy and careless lives: colonial stereotypes

Much of what is known of the lifestyles and political organization of the Alfurs has been made available through colonial reports and semi-anthropological works written by colonial officials. This knowledge was acquired only after Dutch military intervention and was therefore already slightly distorted by colonialism. The Alfurs were depicted by the Dutch as a “happy and carefree” people who “do not think of tomorrow”¹⁸, “hunters in the first place”, living in the “deep tranquillity of the forest” as “the Bohemians of the Moluccas.”¹⁹ Such *Rousseauian* depictions of carefree tribalism – a typical orientalist colonial genre²⁰ – are seemingly in conflict with the allegedly more ‘violent’, ‘anarchistic’, ‘tribal’ and ‘unhygienic’ aspects of the Alfurs’ lifestyles, also deriving from the same sources.²¹ In fact, both were considered symptoms of the same general ‘backwardness’ or ‘primitivity’, which the Dutch ascribed to various mountainous people in Indonesia.

The Alfurs maintained a sustenance economy based on hunting, gathering and small-scale sago-planting.²² Access to sago fields was regulated by familial relations, depending on marriage, age and social position, as were (property) relations within and among the interior Alfurs *nagari*. As in Ambon, these *nagari* consisted of various, relatively independent clans that adhered to *adat* leadership of a *nagari* chief (*kepala nagari*), who usually

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- 17 R. Ellen, “On the Contemporary Uses of Colonial History and the Legitimation of Political Status in Archipelagic Southeast Seram”, *JSAS* 28:1 (1997), 78-102: 83, 85-86.
 - 18 Sachse, *Het Eiland Seran*, 86-87. See also Nanlohy, “Bij de Berg Alfoeren van het Eiland Seran”, *De Christelijke Onderwijzer* 14/20 (1928), 173-174: 270, quoted in M.C. Boulan-Smit, *We, of the Banyan Tree: Traditions of Origin of the Alune of West Seram* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1998), 44. See also G.L. Tichelman, “De Onder-Afdeling Amahei (Seran)”, *TAG* 62 (1925), 653-724: 672.
 - 19 De Vries, *Bij de Berg-Alfoeren*, 17, 20.
 - 20 See for comparison: M. Gray and R. Law, “Images of Africa: The Depiction of Pre-colonial Africa in Creative Literature” (Paper presented at the Images of Africa Conference, University of Stirling, 1990).
 - 21 Sachse, *Het Eiland Seran*, 30, 32-35; Vries, *Bij de Berg-Alfoeren*, 81-82; Tichelman, “De Onder-Afdeling”, 674-675, 703-707. Quite striking is the semi-poetic prose on the Alfurs of De Vries of 1927. De Vries was chief for about 2,5 years at the bivouac in Hunitetu, and wrote about the Alfurs with a particular spark of ‘*Rousseauian admiration*.’
 - 22 Sago, as also mentioned in chapter 4, was typically depicted by colonial officials as an abundant crop that did not require much effort to maintain. One family could easily live of a sago palm for a year and use its produce at will. See W. Ruinen, “Sagopalmen en hunne Beteekenis voor de Molukken”, *IG* 43:1-2 (1921), 501-523, 598-622: 52-55.

claimed descent from a mythical village-founder and served as representative of the village to the outside world and as arbiter in matters of customary law and disputes among the villages' clans.²³ Social, familial and property relations within and among *nagari* were defined by marriage, age and religion and maintained by exchanging ceremonial gifts.²⁴ The Alfurs *nagari* interacted in various overarching political, semi-ethnic structures. In West Seram, two overarching, ethnically defined 'tribal' groups were recognized by the Dutch: the *Alune* (in the north-western part of West Seram) and the allegedly 'more primitive' *Wemale* (in the south-eastern part of West and Central Seram; see map 7.1).²⁵ They inhabited the basins of, respectively, the Eti, Sapalewa and Tala rivers, the three branch rivers flowing from the Nunusaku mountain, the mythical place of origin for all Moluccans, and were separated in social affairs.²⁶ These and other groups on Seram had close relationships characterized by interaction and exchange in shifting alliances of hostility and friendship, and did not live in strictly demarcated territories.²⁷ On West Seram, traditional communities of *nagari* were composed of several *luma inai* ('mother houses') consisting of specific genealogical units. Central Seram was populated over the course of the sixteenth to nineteenth century by immigrant groups of various cultural backgrounds. These developed into units called *ipan*, with claims to descent from as far away as Malacca or even the Arabian Peninsula.²⁸ *Soa*, the clan groups on Ternate and Ambon (see Chapter 4), did not exist on Seram until the colonial government started grouping *luma inai* under newly appointed *kepala soa* in the twentieth century (see below)²⁹, who were placed under direct supervision of familial, clan or provincial chiefs of various kinds.³⁰

23 Bartels, *In de Schaduuw van de Berg Nunusaku*, 76-77, 94-95, 98-88, 100-101.

24 Which, later on, was also used by twentieth century colonial officials to tie the tax system into. See *ibid.*, 94-95, 98-88, 100-101. See also: F.L. Cooley, *Altar and Throne in Central Moluccan Societies: A Study of the Relationship Between the Institutions of Religion and the Institutions of Local Government in a Traditional Society Undergoing Rapid Social Change* (PhD thesis, Yale University, 1962), 19-27.

25 Sachse also uses the name Makahala for the Alune, see: F.J.P. Sachse, *Gegevens uit de Nota Betreffende de Onderafdeeling West-Ceram*, ed. F.J.P. Sachse (Batavia: Encyclopaedisch Bureau, 1919), 30-31; Bartels, *In de Schaduuw van de Berg Nunusaku*, 37; De Vries, *Bij de Berg-Alfoeren*, 9-10; A.E. Jensen, *Die Drei Ströme: Züge aus dem Geistigen und Religiösen Leben der Wemale: Einem Primitiv-Volk in den Molukken* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1948).

26 Members of both were, for instance, not allowed to marry. G. Knaap, "The Saniri Tiga Air (Seram). An Account of its 'Discovery' and Interpretation Between About 1675 and 1950", *BKI* 149:2 (1993), 250-273, 252.

27 Duyvendak, *Het Kakean-Genootschap van Seran*, 14, 16-17. The other groups were called: Nusaweile, Huaolo, Warama and Manusela.

28 These formed larger political units that sometimes (alike in Ternate, Tidore, Bacan and Jailolo) merged into a four-unit or *Raja Empat*. Bartels, *In de Schaduuw van de Berg Nunusaku*, 76-77.

29 Boulan-Smit, *We, of the Banyan Tree* 56; W. Ruinen, "Ethnografische Gegevens van West-Ceram", *Mensch en Maatschappij* 5 (1929), 220-232.

30 See: Van Vollenhoven, *Het Adatrecht*, 401.

Alternatives to states: kakean and pela

Another constitutional division between *nagari* was defined through coinciding ancestral or origination groups or complexes called *Patasiwa* and *Patalima*. The organization of each pertained to similar but specific sociocultural devices, origin myths, rites, religion, and other distinctions of *adat*.³¹ The division relates to the organization of *nagari* into larger political bonds that engaged in persistent warfare, as *Patasiwa* and *Patalima* were considered to be each other's ritual nemesis, and followed geographic boundaries as well. A majority of the *Patasiwa* men were characterized by wearing tattoos on their chest in the shape of a black cross. They were called *Patasiwa Hitam* (black) while those who had no such tattoo were referred to as *Patasiwa Putih* (white).³²

These tattoos demonstrated membership of the so-called *kakean*, a masculine 'society' or 'brotherhood' on West Seram, into which all *Patasiwa Hitam* boys were initiated in a secluded ritual requisite to reach adulthood. The *kakean* acted as a regional association aiming to continue the honouring of common spiritual ancestors.³³ *Kakean* rites were secret and compromising them was regarded a serious violation of *adat*.³⁴ Headhunting as ritual murder was coordinated by the *kakean*, subjected to specific rules and important for men to acquire greater social status.³⁵ Though anyone from another blood-line could be attacked, no matter of what age or gender, specific forms of cognation protected against attacks. Such mechanisms had an important war and peacemaking function.³⁶ West Seram in particular was a deeply divided society of multiple groups of *nagari* that managed their own subsistence economies and engaged in shifting alliances to assist each other in matters of defence and economic aid when required.

31 See on these origination myths: Bartels, *In de Schaduw van de Berg Nunusaku*, 76-84.

32 This distinction is claimed to have emerged under influence of rivalry between Ternate and Tidore, *Patasiwa* adhering to Ternate and *Patalima* to Tidore. See: Van Hoëvell, *Ambon en Meer Bepaaldelijk de Oeliasers*, 153; Cooley, "Altar and Throne", 9, 11, 15-16; Duyvendak, *Het Kakean-Genootschap van Seran*, 76-83.

33 Boulan-Smit, *We, of the Banyan Tree*, 46; J.C. van Eerde, "Gegevens Betreffende de Onder-Afdeeling West-Ceram", *TAG* 37:4 (1920), 531-535: 553; Ruinen, "Ethnografische Gegevens van West-Ceram", 220-221. See also C. de Jong, "Kerk, Adat en Theologie. Een Korte Geschiedenis van Amahai, een Christelijke Negorij op Ceram, 1600-1935", in L. van Brussee-van der Zee et al. (eds.), *Balanceren op de Smalle Weg. Liber Amicorum voor Kees van Duin, Alle Hoekema en Sjouke Voolstra* (Zoetermeer: 2002), 313-332: 319-320 n338.

34 Sachse, *Het Eiland Seran*, 90; F.J.P. Sachse, *Seran* (Weltevreden: G. Kolff & Co., 1922), 33, 111.

35 Men were allowed to paint a symbol on their *cidako* (loin cloth), a black circle for the first head and concentric circles around the first one for every new head. However, most men would hunt little more than one, perhaps two heads in their lives, and a man that would hunt more than five would "be considered a hero of legendary allure." Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain*, 38. See also Van Hoëvell's report in: NA MinKol 1850-1900 4675, Vb. 25-2-1893 n44, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 14-9-1891; De Vries, *Bij de Berg-Alfoeren*, 58-59, 69.

36 Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain*, 38-41.

Pela, the *nagari* alliances that emerged on Ambon prior to Dutch colonialism (see Chapter 3), were of similar significance. Based on comparable ideas of 'blood-brotherhood', they also crossed religious boundaries and obliged the involved *nagari* to assist in each other's protection.³⁷ Though not common on Seram itself, there is evidence that some of Seram's *nagari* engaged in *pela* bonds with *nagari* on Ambon, possibly in response to encroaching colonial presence.³⁸ *Pela* existed prior to the arrival of Europeans, but evolved into defence-and-aid networks only under colonialism.³⁹ Although certainly not a coherent, integrated political force, these sorts of mutual economic and political alliances can be understood as structures alternative to larger, centralized political entities or tax-levying states. Political and social security was regulated on Seram not through social-contracts of taxation enforced by states, but through village-alliances and fusing political-ritual orders.

Important to bear in mind is that Seram, as encountered by the Dutch in the late nineteenth century, was the remnant of three centuries of fluctuating interaction, exchanges and war among and between the fluid *adat* communities of the interior and coastal areas, under increasing pressure from the encroaching Dutch presence. The growing function of *kakean*, warfare, headhunting and *pela* networks, coordinating politics and diffusing tensions was the result of such interaction and building tension. Colonial officials however worried increasingly about what they considered continuous local 'feuds', wars and headhunting campaigns. They argued that monitoring these in itself already cost the government valuable time and money as they caused instability in the region. Officials found themselves increasingly busy responding to affairs related to the alleged violent behaviour of the Alfurs⁴⁰, which ultimately provided justification for Dutch military intervention.

Before the 1860s however, except for repelling raids targeted at the coast and countering alleged piracy or occasional recruitment for *hong*i expeditions, the Dutch found little reason to engage with the Alfurs. At the time, Seram was formally administered as part of the 'Residency of Ambon', but except for a few, usually Indo-European *posthouders* ('post-holders', the guardians or custodians of small, sometimes fortified Dutch outposts),

37 *Pela* networks were also used on the offensive, when one village would attempt an attack on another village it would try to find allies and establish a *pela*. Bartels, *In de Schaduw van de Berg Nunusaku*, 29, 38-41.

38 According to Dutch officials these *pela* bonds were abused by *nagari* outside Seram to tap into Seram's *sago* reserves while the Alfurs, feeling 'honoured' to maintain *pela* bonds with *nagari* outside Seram, would likely never visit other islands and use the benefits of the bond. See: Van Hoëvell, *Ambon en Meer Bepaaldelijk de Oeliasers*, 157-159; Sachse, *Het Eiland Seram*, 116-117.

39 Van Hoëvell, *Ambon en Meer Bepaaldelijk de Oeliasers*, 157-159; Sachse, *Het Eiland Seram*, 116-117; Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain*, 131-134, 140-145, 162-163.

40 NA MinKol 1850-1900 4675 Vb. 25-2-1893 n44, herein: DirFin to GG, 6-12-1890. For the same argument, see Sachse, *Seram*, 144.

installed in Seram's coastal regions from the seventeenth century onward to maintain ties with coastal *nagari*, there were few foreigners present on the island. In fact, until the later 1910s, Seram was still seen as devoid of resources and economic opportunity.⁴¹ So what changed during and after the 1860s?

7.2 COAST VERSUS MOUNTAIN

As in the case of Aceh, crucial decisions about territorial expansion were "made in Batavia rather than The Hague, and for local *raison d'état*."⁴² Colonization of Seram related deeply to the idea of European superiority and the 'civilizing' effect of colonial rule. Because developmentalism served as the legitimizing narrative in the majority of the archipelago where the soil was rich, labour omnipresent and resources and opportunities abundant such as Java, Biliton or East Sumatra, the Dutch could not simply ignore other regions where economic opportunity was smaller. Basically, the Dutch had to prove to themselves that their empire was benevolent and responsible in every corner of the archipelago; blanks in the map were no longer accepted, and the white man's burden applied to all in the archipelago regardless of their economic assets. This sense of moral obligation was to be defended at any cost, all the more because civilizational colonialism did not accept social deviance or exceptions. It was, in other words, intolerant to any people living alternative lifestyles outside of the colonial state, because that endangered its myth of social progress. Hence, even the 'ungovernable' Alfurs were expected to be included in a self-funded mini-tax state under the 'edifying supervision' of Dutch fiscal governance.

Rumours of taxation

Around 1860, war began around the Elpaputih Bay on West Seram, caused when the *nagari* Tananahu allegedly refused to pay the *nagari* Sahalau a peace offering or *harta* (in this case meaning 'property' or gift as compensation) of gongs and ceramic dishes⁴³ to compensate for allegedly having compromised the secrets of the *kakean*.⁴⁴ This attracted the immediate atten-

41 Boulan-Smit, *We, of the Banyan Tree*, 43, 63. See also Ruinen, "Sagopalmen", 501-523; Tichelman, "De Onder-Afdeling Amahei", 690-692, 710; L. Rutten, "Ontwikkelingsmogelijkheden van het Eiland Ceram", *TAG* 38 (1920), 43-73: 43-74; Benjamin, "On Being Tribal", 8.

42 Anderson, "Language and Power", 97.

43 NA MinKol 1850-1900 4675, Vb. 25-2-1893 n44, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 14-9-1891. These *harta* became used as a compensation for hunted heads from the headhunter to the 'tribe' of which he murdered a member. A headhunting campaign could have been the response to the violation of *kakean* rules. See: Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain*, 54.

44 De Jong, "Kerk, Adat en Theologie", 313-321; Ruinen, "Ethnografische Gegevens van West-Ceram", 226-227.

tion of the Dutch, who saw in the war a confirmation of what they considered the Alfurs' 'habit' of routinized pillaging, warfare and headhunting. They considered the motivations for this war, claimed to be the result of *kakean* disputes, a "myth" instigated by a chief who had been removed and sought revenge by eliciting conflict among the Alfurs of West Seram.⁴⁵ Sachse, the above-mentioned 'civil-governor', believed the war to have been caused by constant disputes over the borders of *dusun* and fishing and hunting terrains.⁴⁶ But myths and facts were not easily separated in Seram. Moreover, the outburst of violence is also an excellent example of the point made above, that the encroaching presence of the Dutch cannot be ignored in the emerging tensions, which in 1865 culminated in a large revolt joined by all *Patajiwa nagari*. It is hardly a coincidence that this revolt concurred with the imposition of *nagari* tax in Ambon (see Chapter 4). According to Governor of the Moluccas, N.A. Th. Arriëns (in office 1864-1866), news of this was spread through *pela* networks, by people of various *nagari* who expressed concerns that soon the colonial government would impose similar taxes upon them.⁴⁷ The chief of *nagari* Nuniali wrote to the Assistant-Resident in Ambon "that his people were affected by the rumours that an office would be established, taxes would be levied, and *sawah* would be plotted" to establish some sort of coerced rice cultivation scheme.⁴⁸ According to Arriëns, this was among the most persistent fears of the Alfurs.⁴⁹ As the cultivation of rice had traditionally enabled Southeast-Asian kings to sustainably fix masses of people in a domain, so agrarian state-societies shaped by monoculture of rice-planting were easier to monitor and tax.⁵⁰ Hence the Alfurs rightfully associated rice-planting with the coming of the state and with techniques of methodical cadastral registration and taxation. They would go to great lengths to prevent that. The *kepala soa* of Tanunu declared that his people

"would flee into the mountains until the government would make peace [...] and attack all *nagari* on Seram if the government intended to erect settlements in Nuniali and Kaibobo [...]"⁵¹

Arriëns had little choice but to give in. Though Batavia claimed Seram as colonial territory after sending troops suppressing the revolt⁵² – Ministerial officials in The Hague even started emphasizing the importance of 'self-

45 ANRI AS GB MGS 4111, herein: MGS 3-6-1885: Res. Ambon to GG, 13-4-1885.

46 Sachse, *Het Eiland Seram*, 61.

47 NA MinKol 1850-1900 2126, Vb. 19-8-1868 n6, herein: GovMol to GG, 29-8-1866.

48 NA MinKol 1850-1900 1695, Vb. 23-12-1865 n10, herein: GovMol to GG, 12-10-1865.

49 NA MinKol 1850-1900 2126, Vb. 19-8-1868 n6, herein: GovMol to GG, 29-8-1866.

50 In other words, the means for a state to consolidate power and fiscal capacity was concentrating people who cultivated same crop: rice. See Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 74-83 and Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region*, 39-40 about the development of *mandala* in rice-cultivated lowlands across Southeast-Asia.

51 NA MinKol 1850-1900 1695, Vb. 23-12-1865 n10, herein: GovMol to GG, 12-10-1865.

52 P. Hagen, *Koloniale Oorlogen in Indonesië: Vijf Eeuwen Verzet tegen Vreemde Overheersing* (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 2018), 409.

funded governance' on the island – these troops were ill-prepared to control what happened in the interiors. Seram remained “an area where [...] the sheer rumour of taxation already provided sufficient ground for rebellion.”⁵³ Governor Arriëns advised countering these persistent ‘rumours’ by leaving the Alfurs untaxed for the time being and using “the softest means possible to re-establish awe and respect for Dutch authority.”⁵⁴

A circle of war and peace

The Dutch of course would not acknowledge that the Alfurs' resistance was targeted at the threat of state-formation itself. Instead, they attributed social unrest to the alleged violent nature of the Alfurs and the political interplay between coastal and mountainous nagari. Arriëns for instance accused the people in the coastal *nagari* of spreading lies and stirring up the mountainous Alfurs on West Seram. And according to Resident J.G.F. Riedel (in office 1880-1883),

“The Alfurs in the interior of Seram [...] live under the assumption that the coastal residents can rob them without punishment and with the knowledge of the European authorities. For this reason, they exercised their own vigilante justice by hunting heads. [...] Headhunting among the Alifuru on Ceram hence takes place as a form of revenge.”⁵⁵

The “sly coastal inhabitants”, Riedel asserted, had a monopoly on knowledge about the Alfurs as no maps of the interior existed yet and few people were willing to serve as coolies and guides out of fear of being headhunted. These coastal people subsequently misled the colonial government and sullied the Alfurs reputation in an attempt to gain Dutch support.⁵⁶ Undeniably, the coastal communities provided the government greater access to the Alfurs, and hence were to some extent a threat. Riedel advised the appointment of more *posthouders*, most of whom, he argued, were partly of local descent and therefore familiar with the Alfurs' culture, which would help to acquire knowledge of and enhance relations with the Alfurs.⁵⁷ But Riedel's successor, D. Heijting (in office 1883-1891), disagreed. He considered revenge only on rare occasions the source of violent uprisings. Rather, he deemed the wars an expression of a general greed and a circular yearning for violence inherent to the Alfurs' “untamed nature.” He sought the cause of the war in repercussions for not paying *harta*, resulting from “original quarrels that no-one knew the cause of anymore”, and frustrations

53 NA MinKol 1850-1900 2126, Vb. 19-8-1868 n6, herein: Nota A2.

54 NA MinKol 1850-1900 1695, Vb. 23-12-1865 n10, herein: GovMol to GG, 12-10-1865.

55 See Riedel's report on Seramese politics, in NA MinKol 1850-1900 4245, Vb. 19-3-1889 n61, herein: Former Res. Ambon to MinKol, 5-3-1889.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

over colonial impediments to organize *kakean* festivities.⁵⁸ These 'festivities' related to headhunting campaigns, that were held in retaliation for failure of payment of *harta*, which were often levied as compensation gifts for headhunting campaigns. This, Heijting argued, caused an endless circular development of headhunting and failed *harta* payment. A cycle, he agreed with Riedel, that could only be broken by appointing more Dutch officials, to induce the *saniri* and *nagari* chiefs to settle for peace.⁵⁹

Colonial Dutch observers typically considered the *kakean* a constant engine of war, and a central element in the resistance to colonial rule.⁶⁰ Sachse considered it the source of religious, socio-political and ritual fusion.⁶¹ Shrewd priests (the *mauweng*), he claimed, used *kakean* bonds to extend their influence and counter Christianization and the expansion of Dutch authority.⁶² He described the situation on Seram as one where

"murder and manslaughter were a daily business [...] the mountain Alfurs reigned with terror over the coasters and from time to time shoot at the boats of the *posthouders* [...] The governing strategy at the time was of continuous peace-making among the tribes [...] while the mountain inhabitants were appeased with gifts."⁶³

All of this, he added, happened "under the smoke of Ambon [...] without any consequences."⁶⁴ In the early twentieth century, the Dutch 'discovered' that the prominent elders of the *kakean* had the power to call together the *Saniri Tiga Air* ('Council of Three Rivers'; the Eti, Tala and Sapalewa), the most important inter-*nagari* council on Seram.⁶⁵ Only those initiated into the *kakean* were allowed to attend this *Saniri*. Initially, colonial officials stimulated organization of the *saniri* meetings because they provided rare occasions where a number of Alfur chiefs came together and could be monitored, but officials grew convinced that the *saniri* had become a 'vehicle for the *kakean*' through which "religious enmities turned into political feuds"

58 NA MinKol 1850-1900 4675, Vb. 25-2-1893 n44, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 14-2-1890; Manuhutu, "Pacifcatie in Praktijk", 280-282.

59 NA MinKol 1850-1900 4675, Vb. 25-2-1893 n44, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 14-2-1890.

60 G.W.W.C. baron van Hoëvell, "Bijschrift bij de Kaarten van Seran (Vulgo Seran)", TAG 13 (1896), 508-532: 516, 528-532; Sachse, *Het Eiland Seran*, 61, 95; Van Eerde, "Gegevens", 533-535; O.D. Tauern, *Patasiwa und Patalima: vom Molukkeneiland Seran und Seinen Bewohnern. Ein Beitrag zur Völkerkunde* (Leipzig: Voigtländer, 1918), 29-30, 152.

61 Sachse, *Het Eiland Seran*, 94-95.

62 Sachse, *Gegevens*, 104.

63 Ibid., 78.

64 Sachse, *Seran*, 78. See also De Vries, *Bij de Berg-Alfoeren op West-Seran*, 4.

65 Also known as *Saniri Waele Telu*. The importance of this *Saniri* was rooted in the fact that it was considered to represent the primordial ancestral groups deriving from the core place of origins of all Alfurs and other Moluccan ethnicities, the holy mountain of Nunusaku. The *saniri* meetings have been recorded since at least 1678. See Knaap, "The *Saniri Tiga Air* (Seram)", 251, 260-261.

(Sachse, 1922:138).⁶⁶ Both the *saniri* meetings and *kakean* festivities were henceforth actively opposed.⁶⁷ Headhunting was formally prohibited by the colonial government in 1864, but it would take until the twentieth century before the colonial government was strong enough on the spot to enforce this prohibition.⁶⁸

Dutch officials seem to have attempted to establish a separation between worldly, political and religious, spiritual power in a society that had no clear border between these things. *Harta* payment and headhunting campaigns were political instruments of war and peace, infused with an important religious-ritual dimension that reflected inter-*nagari* politics.⁶⁹ This was symbolized in the *baileo*, the meeting place of the intra-*nagari saniri* for political discussion and *adat* affairs. In earlier times, hunted heads were necessary for its sanctification.⁷⁰ Without enacting the accordant rituals, there was no common ground for politics to be organized. The Dutch were aware of this and often attempted to employ ritual for their own political structures across Indonesia. But in Seram, ritual opposed the colonial state. The intertwining of the *saniri* and *kakean* symbolized the need of the Alfurs to maintain unity despite numerous divisions under the growing threat of colonial expansion.⁷¹ Non-payment of *harta* and the increase of headhunting, signalled by colonial officials in the nineteenth century, may have provided mechanisms to channel local tensions and continue 'violence' to keep the state at bay.⁷² By adhering to the spiritual-political foundations of their society, as provided by the *kakean*, the Alfurs legitimized and explained what outsiders such as Dutchmen saw as 'mindless violence'. *Kakean* and *harta* offerings always provided legitimate causes for war – the 'Elpaputih war' was no exception – observed even more ardently and instrumentally, as a reply to Dutch intervention. This helped the Alfurs to sustain

66 Sachse, *Seran*, 138. See also Knaap, "The Saniri Tiga Air (Seram)", 263-264, 267; Manuhutu, "Pacifcatie in Praktijk", 278-280; Boulan-Smit, *We, of the Banyan Tree*, 46. In 1886, the *saniriri* was called together again to calm down tensions and arrange political stability See: Fraassen, *Ambon*, 568-572.

67 After 1906, a special permit had to be granted by the local colonial official for every *kakean* initiation ritual, each of which would require a number of heads to be hunted. See: NA MinKol 1850-1900 4675, Vb. 25-2-1893 n44, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 14-2-1890.

68 NA MinKol 1850-1900 1695, Vb. 23-12-1865 n10, herein: GovMol to GG, 23-1-1864.

69 Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain*, 36-42.

70 J.S. Aritonang and K.A. Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), 109.

71 Bartels, *In de Schaduuw van de Berg Nunusaku*, 40-43, 53-54. See for the influence of *mauweng* in *saniri* and the merging between *saniri* and *kakean* organization: Duyvendak, *Het Kakean-Genootschap van Seran*, 83-95 (esp. 87-88 and 94-95). Whether Duyvendak is right in his claims that "the unity of the *kakean* keeps the *saniri* together", that the "*Kakean* might have given rise to the *saniri*-bonds" and that "whoever is allowed entrance to the *kakean*-community, has also gained access to the *saniri*-council [...] gaining his civil-rights" (ibid., 94-95), is difficult to verify, and it seemed that most colonial officials and writers were not successful in finding what exactly bound them together, but it is assumable that both *saniri* and *kakean* interoperated on the same social-cultural plane of organization.

72 Bartels, *Guarding the Invisible Mountain*, 36-42.

and continue the social spiritual-political foundations of their society, and prevent the entry of states, from outside and within.⁷³ Hence, the social institutions that the Dutch tried to curtail were only more strongly adhered to when they started intervening in them.

The Dutch understood how politics and religion mixed, but missed how these bonds intensified as a result of their increasing presence. They were hypersensitive to anything that, in their narrow framework of social success, failed to meet their standards of 'modernity', to which the *kakean* was the very opposite. To them, the *kakean* was the pinnacle of Moluccan 'tribalism' and 'primitiveness' an institute hostile to "civilization and Christianity", standing in the way of colonial reform. They grew determined to banish it completely.⁷⁴ Colonial paradigms of indigenous violence and instability hang high over these convictions, and should be seen in context of the self-legitimizing need of colonial sovereignty for maintaining 'order, peace and tranquillity.' Around 1900, undergirded by fierce colonial competition in Southeast Asia, the Dutch felt compelled to extent their control over Indonesia's territories to round out their political sovereignty throughout the archipelago and to 'prove' their right to rule, by taking a firm stance against indigenous violence and proactively protecting their (future) subjects' general wellbeing and safety. Failure of the state to control 'illicit' or non-state-sanctioned violence in its proclaimed territory would disqualify its legitimacy and self-proclaimed right to impose its norms and institutions upon society, as the failure of indigenous rulers to do so was what disqualified them.⁷⁵ By remaining outside the state and performing headhunting the Alfurs not only disqualified themselves in Dutch eyes against European standards of civilization, but also posed a threat to the continuation of the Dutch empire. So ultimately, violence attracted instead of repelled the colonial state.

Colonial intervention, Heijting explained, required a far greater investment in local administrative and military power. To fund such expansion, taxes were needed, and, as the decentralization-dogma of colonial fiscal politics held that all people were supposed to carry the costs of their own colonization and administration process, these taxes needed to be levied locally. Still, as emphasized by both Directors Kuneman (Interior Administration)

73 Ibid., 38, 41.

74 *Verslag van het Beheer en den Staat der Oost-Indische Bezittingen* 1859, 16; Van Hoëvell, "Bijschrift", 516. See also Sachse, *Het Eiland Seran*, 95, cited in: Boulan-Smit, *We, of the Banyan Tree*, 46. See also Van Eerde, "Gegevens", 533-535, and Sachse, *Gegevens*, 103-112.

75 See M. Koskeniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law 1870-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 98-178, and G.W. Gong, *The Standard of "Civilization" in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984). The state's ability to control and curtail violence would, however, remain limited in practice, due to its relatively weak police force and apparatus of justice administration. See R.B. Cribb, "Misdaad, Geweld en Uitbuiting in Indonesië", in Bogaerts and Raben (eds.), *Van Indië tot Indonesië*, 31-48: 35-39; M. Bloembergen, *De Geschiedenis van de Politie*; Schulte Nordholt, *A Genealogy of Violence*.

and E.A. Rovers (Finances, in office 1887-1893) only the 'foreign *inlanders*' on coastal Seram were considered 'ready' to be taxed in such a 'modern way', and the Alfurs, certainly, were not.⁷⁶ The war in and around the Elpaputih Bay dragged on, and in 1884 *Posthouder* L.A. van Gent (in office 1882-1902) of Amahei (see map 7.1) reported that negotiations had failed and that Tanahu had again been attacked by 'mountain-Alfurs' of Sahuau.⁷⁷ After the *prahu* of the *posthouder* was shot and a Dutch flagpole taken down – an outright expression of "contempt" for colonial authority – the chief military commander in Batavia urged Governor General Van Rees to end 'unrest' between mountain and beach *nagari* on Seram and Buru once and for all by sending troops.⁷⁸ Instead, Van Rees, not a belligerent man, decided to transfer a sum of money to the *Posthouder* to settle the *kakean* dispute, but the Alfurs purposefully did not accept payment by a third party and the war continued.⁷⁹ Over the course of the 1880s and 90s successive Residents G.J. van der Tuuk (1879-1880), Riedel and Heijting wrote a number of proposals for government expansion and reform to be funded by taxes, none of which were approved.⁸⁰ All agreed that intervention was needed to ensure, as put by Director Kuneman, "diminishment of headhunting, so that through education and Christianity greater civilization and enlightenment would be introduced among the savage mountain tribes."⁸¹ But this would require the significant investment of a full-scale military intervention at a time when the military had its hands full in Aceh, and the battalions stationed in the Moluccas were busy subjecting the Tanimbar, Kei and Aru islands (see map 1.1 and 3.1).⁸² Introducing taxes, Resident G. Sieburgh (in office 1908-1910) feared, would only add fuel to the fire. He later attributed the failure to introduce taxation on Seram in 1880-1900, to what he called:

76 NA MinKol 1850-1900 4675, Vb. 25-2-1893 n44, herein: DirBB to GG, 4-8-1890, DirFin to GG, 6-12-1890, GG to MinKol, 23-10-1892 and RvI 26-12-1890.

77 ANRI AS GB MGS 4111, herein: MGS 5-2-1885: Res. Ambon to GG, 12-12-1884, Res. Ambon to Posthouder Amahei, 24-6-1884, Posthouder Amahei to Res. Ambon, 25-10-1883 and 15-11-1884, Besl. 14-2-1885: Res. Ambon to GG, 31-12-1884, Posthouder Amahei to Res. Ambon, 17-12-1884.

78 ANRI AS GB MGS 4111, herein: Besl. 14-2-1885: RvI 6-2-1885, 'Dep. Oorlog / Legercommandant' to GG 27-1-1885.

79 ANRI AS GB MGS 4111, herein: MGS 3-6-1885: RvI 6-5-1885, Res. Ambon to GG, 13-4-1885, MGS 29-7-1885. See also Fraassen, *Ambon*, 565-577.

80 See: NA MinKol 1850-1900 6391, Mailr. 1879 n674, herein: Res. Ambon to GG 5-10-1879; NA MinKol 1850-1900 6393, Mailr. 1880 n146, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 5-12-1870; NA MinKol 1850-1900 6405, Mailr. 1881 n349, herein: Res. Ambon 'Verslag over de stand van zaken [...]', 4-10-1880; NA MinKol 1850-1900 4675 Vb. 25-2-1893 n44, herein: Res. Ambon to GG 14-2-1890.

81 ANRI AS GB MGS 4111, herein: MGS 26-1-1-891: DirBB to GG, 4-8-1890.

82 NA MinKol OV 4675, Vb. 25-2-1893 n44, herein: DirBB to GG, 5-1-1892, DirFin to GG, 12-7-1892, RvI 29-7-1892 and GG to MinKol, 23-10-1892; NA MinKol 1850-1900 2787, Vb. 24-5-1875 n54 (geheim), herein: 'Legercommandant' to GG, 18-3-1875; NA MinKol 1850-1900 3447, Vb. 26-9-1881 n20, herein: RvI 10-11-1876; NA MinKol 1850-1900 6389, Mailr. 1879 n440/38, herein: Legercommandant to GG, 4-5-1879; NA MinKol 1850-1900 6447, Mailr. 1885 n81, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 31-12-1884.

“the potential unfavourable consequences of introducing taxes among a less civilized people, that would give rise to the idea that establishing deeper ties with a government would mean having to pay up.”⁸³

Major A.P. van de Siepkamp, army commander on Seram in the early 1900s, strongly condemned the policies of his predecessors, which he interpreted as, “compromise and pandering to popular needs”, fed by “a mentality that favoured ostensible peace over forceful governance.”⁸⁴ This was a pungent slur on the policy of G.W.W.C. baron van Hoëvell (Resident in 1891-1896), who believed in societal improvement through local political institutions rather than overthrowing the existing order using military violence. Van Hoëvell had allowed the *Saniri* to be organized once more in an attempt to gain a grip over the politics of the interiors and resettle relations with the Alfurs chiefs.⁸⁵ He believed that the imagined opposition between coast and mountain no longer offered a fruitful basis to counter the continuing violence and advised improving the ability of the local administration to monitor the coastal *nagari*, restrict the payment of *harta* and impose punishments for headhunting.⁸⁶ Newly appointed *controleurs*, funded by head taxes, would then establish and guard peace, order and healthcare to improve the relations among the *nagari* and ‘pacify’ the interiors. But the central government, whose ambitions always anticipated administrative feasibility, had grown impatient. Around 1900, when victory was proclaimed in the wars in Aceh and Southern Moluccas, troops were collected for a major expedition into the interior, heralding the end of the Alfurs’ relative autonomy.

7.3 HEAD TAXES FOR HEADHUNTERS

Enter the stranger-king

Warfare in the Seramese jungle was difficult and gruelling, so the Dutch used brief, targeted actions to coerce specific chiefs into cooperation. A series of military campaigns under the command of specially selected Aceh-veterans was dispatched to conquer the interiors of Seram in 1899-1904.⁸⁷

83 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 651, Vb. 19-6-1909 n31, herein: Res. Ambon to DirFin, 25-1-1909.

84 NA MinKol Pol. Verslag Buitengewesten, 377, herein ‘voorstel tot pacificatie Ceram door Civiel Gezaghebber Maj. V.d. Siepkamp.’

85 NA MinKol 1850-1900 OV 4675, Vb. 25-2-1893 n44, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 14-9-1891.

86 In 1888, nine Alfurs in the coastal *nagari* Kairatu were convicted by the *landraad* for headhunting. See: NA MinKol 1850-1900 4675, Vb. 25-2-1893n44, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 14-2-1890.

87 NA MinKol PVBbg 373 (Amboina 1899), herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 30-3-1899, Controleur Saparua to Res. Ambon, 27-3-1899, PVBbg 375 (Amboina 1903-1905): herein: Res. Van Assen to GG, 1-9-1903 and 7-10-1903.

Initially, it was difficult to find the right balance between violence and politics. Troops stationed at Piru were hardly able to resist the Alfurs' furious attacks, and Resident E. van Assen (in office 1900-1905) warned how 'policies of abstinence' would make the Alfurs overly courageous, while undue "chastisement with gunfire" would only increase animosity towards the coastal *nagari*, the perpetual "subjects of the Alfurs' aggression", and cause more raids.⁸⁸ Instead, Van Assen recommended directly contacting the Alfurs' chiefs and establish diplomatic relations. Covered by military escort, starting with an outpost in Piru to be manned by Sachse, the local government on West Seram would then carefully 'police' the Alfurs to enforce the prohibition on headhunting and once 'civilized' they would start paying head taxes to fund the administration.⁸⁹ In many cases, internal divisions provided such an opportunity to mediate in warring factions, opportunities from which the Dutch had largely refrained prior to the Elpaputih war. This complex variety and hierarchy in families, clans and factions, and the tensions among them provided an opportunity for colonial army and civil officials to enter as 'stranger-kings'.⁹⁰ And it was their 'deliberate blindness' that enabled them to ignore the majority of these hierarchies and break through established patterns of rule and the 'violent cycle' of retribution and revenge. Simultaneously, rather than a clear preference for non-statelessness, many societies in Indonesia favoured semi-incorporation of the quasi-state regime of the VOC and the twentieth-century colonial state alike, as this enabled the exertion of some influence over the society-state relationship, and provided chiefs with opportunities for social climbing, albeit, at the cost of much jealousy.⁹¹

Conquest, consolidation, and governmentality; the beginning of peace...

No longer under the radar of colonial surveillance, Seram was subjected to the same infamous Dutch utopian ambitions and attempts to improve society, as other regions before it. To the Dutch, subjugation would beget

88 As expressed two years later in similar vocabulary by Fock in the case of West Sumatra (see Chapter 5). NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 244, Vb. 6-6-1904 n3, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 13-11-1903: 'Nota betr. de organisatie van bestuur van het eiland Ceram en andere gedeelten van het gewest Amboina', Extract Besl. GG, 1-1-1904, Res. Ambon to GG, 2-9-1903. See also Hagen, *Koloniale Oorlogen in Indonesië*, 409.

89 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 244, Vb. 6-6-1904 n3, Res. Abmon to GG, 13-11-1903: Nota betr. de organisatie van bestuur van het eiland Ceram en andere gedeelten van het gewest Amboina, Extract Besl. GG, 1-1-1904; Res. Ambon to GG, 2-9-1903.

90 David Henley has argued how in North Sulawesi the VOC used similar strategies to intermediate and thereby rule by distance, provided by the constant state of 'warre' among groups in the highlands. D. Henley, "Conflict, Justice, and the Stranger-King. Indigenous Roots of Colonial Rule in Indonesia and Elsewhere", *MdAS* 38:1 (2004), 85-144.

91 D. Henley, *Jealousy and Justice: The Indigenous Roots of Colonial Rule in Northern Sulawesi* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 2002), 10-11, 89.

peace and tranquillity, and peace and tranquillity would bring socio-economic development. They believed that to bring 'better governance' and 'establish peace', they had to intervene in the identity of the Alfurs and change the conditions under which they lived, thus protecting them against their own 'violent inclinations'.⁹² This combined different inter-related methods of behavioural change: the appointment of an indirect ruling class, the reconstitution of life through resettlement and relocation of people into orderly village communities⁹³ (instead of 'village wandering'), the enhancement of productivity through the levying of labour services and taxes, and the curtailment of headhunting and warfare. The plan was, as usual, to appoint local chiefs as future self-governors in the regional bureaucracy, but unlike many other parts of Eastern Indonesia, Seram remained under direct governance. Dutch officials had little reliance on the governing capacities of Alfurs' chiefs. The Alfurs were considered so desperately in need of 'development', that only under direct, targeted practices of inscription, Christianization, military subjection, governance and taxes were they deemed likely to successfully become 'subject-citizens' of the colonial state.⁹⁴

Meanwhile, new government sponsored shipping connections from South Seram to other parts of the archipelago would activate commerce and trigger a cash flow to enable the imposition of income taxes on Seram which would help fund a growing number of soldiers and *controleurs*.⁹⁵ The latter would replace the *posthouders* – whose intellectual capacities and administrative abilities were often the subject of critical judgement by higher ranking officials⁹⁶ – in order to professionalize the civil administration on Seram. Van Assen calculated that their salaries could be fully funded by introducing Ambon's head tax to Seram and the Kei and Aru islands

92 Li, *The Will to Improve*, 15.

93 Village relocation and resettlement was a classic technique, practiced in many parts of the archipelago as a civilizational tool to break specific bonds between land and people to gain greater grip over their movements and behaviour. See for instance: Li, *The Will to Improve*, 72-78.

94 R.F. Ellen, "Pragmatism, Identity and the State: How the Nuaulu of Seram Have Re-Invented their Beliefs and Practices as 'Religion'", *Wacana: Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* 15:2 (2015), 254-285: 254, 255, 259.

95 Such a line had been in place with a cheap KPM ship, but this ship burned down and had to be replaced with a more expensive one. See; NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 244, Vb. 6-6-1904 n3, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 'Nota betreffende de organisatie van bestuur van het eiland Seram en andere gedeelten van het gewest Amboina', p. 7-8.

96 Whereas Heijting thought these *posthouders* were "children of the land, familiar with land and people and speaking the native local tongue", and hence better able to win the thrust of the "distrustful islanders" than Dutch administrators, Sachse's successor, Major Van Siepkamp, was especially critical, claiming that *posthouders* were of "limited development and intellect" and favoured their own interests over the government's which contributed to the diminishment of prestige of the European government. See: NA MinKol 1901-1953 PVBBg. 377, herein: 'Voorstel tot pacificatie Ceram door Civiel Gezaghebber Maj. v.d. Siepkamp.' See also Fraassen, *Ambon*, 472. See also Manuhutu, "Pacifcatie in Praktijk", 287-288; Sachse, *Het Eiland Seram*, 33.

(see table 7.1).⁹⁷ He considered that at least the coastal *nagari* to have been sufficiently influenced by “modern European governance”, to be “ready for taxation.”⁹⁸ But to forestall resistance he urged keeping the assessment moderate at a maximum of a guilder per person annually.

As we have seen in other case studies, improvement of archipelago-wide equity and justice was the primary purported motivation used by Dutch officials for the introduction of taxation. Including the Alfurs in carrying the burden of governance would alleviate the burden the administration of the Moluccas imposed upon ‘foreign *inlanders*’, Ambonese *dati*, and coastal *nagari*.⁹⁹ Potential revenue of the head tax had been calculated to sufficiently cover the administration of the Alfurs.¹⁰⁰ Note however, that the majority of revenue was to be collected at the smaller, better controller Kei and Aru islands, in essence part of the same Residency. Hence, the Alfurs still did not pay for ‘their own’ administration. The estimated total revenue of 48,393 guilders was deemed sufficient to fund the salaries of newly appointed officials, totalling 33,492 guilders; these were officials posted on Seram, but paid for by the inhabitants of the Kei and Aru islands.¹⁰¹ Additional revenue, Van Assen hoped, could be acquired by abolishing the prohibition on importing liquor so that “rather than foreign traders [...] the government would reap the profits [...] and benefits from alcohol sales.”¹⁰² After touring around the island and “consulting” (euphemism for negotiating) with various chiefs about potential popular acceptance of the head tax, he reported that as long as the assessment would not exceed a guilder per person, the tax would be accepted.¹⁰³ Both Batavia and The Hague agreed to Van Assen’s plan and reserved a budget for administrative expansion on Seram.¹⁰⁴

97 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 244, Vb. 6-6-1904 n3, herein: Res. Abmon to GG, 13-11-1903, Nota, 29-30.

98 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 244, Vb. 6-6-1904 n3, herein: Res. Abmon to GG, 13-11-1903, 30.

99 NA MinKol 1850-1900 OV 4675, Vb. 25-2-1893 n44, herein: DirFin to GG, 6-12-1890. For the same argument, see Sachse, *Seran*, 144.

100 NA MinKol 1850-1900 OV 4675, Vb. 25-2-1893 n44, herein: DirFin to GG, 6-12-1890.

101 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 244, Vb. 6-6-1904 n3, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 13-11-1903, 15, 31

102 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 244, Vb. 6-6-1904 n3, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 13-11-1903, 33. Controlling alcoholism was also among the many governmental mechanisms by which the government hoped to cure the social ‘deviance’ and improve the lifestyles of the Alfurs. Herein lies an integral paradox which we find in all forms of excises levied by a government to correct specific forms of behaviour; on the one hand, they supposedly prevent people from engaging in such behaviour, on the other hand, it is a revenue-source for state, hence giving states also an interest in this behaviour.

103 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 244, Vb. 6-6-1904 n3, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 13-11-1903, 32.

104 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 244, Vb. 6-6-1904 n3, herein: ‘A2 over voorstellen voor belasting invoering op Ceram’, GG to MinKol, 7-4-1904.

Table 7.1. Expected revenue of the had tax in Seram according to Van Assen.¹⁰⁵

District	Christian nagari	Islamic nagari	Interior (Alfurs) nagari	Total Revenue (at assessment of one guilder)
Wahai	305	1,189	-	1,494
Amahei	1,639	3,063	-	4,702
Kairatu	2,590	1,587	-	4,177
Waru	-	5,518	-	5,518
(Kei and Aru islands)	2,222	6,132	24,148	32,502
Total:	6,756	17,489	24,148	48,393

As in Aceh, the presence of the military had obviously had its effect on the ‘negotiations’ with the chiefs. And as in Aceh, officials reported satisfactory, undisrupted and full payment of taxes since their introduction, despite an occasional refusal which was usually dealt with by the military on patrol.¹⁰⁶ Sachse signalled enormous improvement:

“The mountainous Alfurs have abandoned their provocative, rash attitude and follow our orders quite well [...] the coastal population renounced its indolent attitude and *nagari* rebuilt [...] so that people stop wandering and the interiors are repopulated.”¹⁰⁷

... and the continuation of war

The threat of war however never faded. In 1904, in the *nagari* Tihulale on the South coast of West Seram, villagers refused to perform the *nagari* services that the government had introduced in various parts of Seram to carry out its infrastructural projects.¹⁰⁸ They assaulted the *kepala nagari* and hung the Dutch flag upside down during Van Assen’s visit. Order was restored by the military.¹⁰⁹ This rendered Van Assen unconvinced of his own plan to introduce head taxes in the interiors, and he advised limiting its use to coastal areas. The *Raad van Indië* admitted that colonial presence was still too weak to enforce tax payment, and ideally “undertaking military campaigns to enforce people to pay with military violence [...]” was averted.¹¹⁰ Yet, the council recommended the replacement of Van Assen as “his attitude confirmed the common impression that he did not possess

105 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 244, Vb. 6-6-1904 n3, herein: Res. Abmon to GG, 13-11-1903, 31.

106 For instance: Sachse, *Gegevens*, 69; Sachse, *Seram*, 144-145; Stbl. 1910 n15; NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 231, Vb. 21-3-1904 n4, herein: ‘Verslag’ Res. Ambon to GG, 20-4-1906, 20-5-1906 and 2-7-1906; NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 244, Vb. 6-6-1904 n3, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 2-9-1903.

107 Sachse, *Gegevens*, 74.

108 Ibid., 87-88, 89-91; Sachse, *Seram*, 85.

109 Sachse, *Gegevens*, 74.

110 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 354, Vb. 13-1-1906 n67, herein: RvI 10-3-1905.

the required leadership and strength to be regarded a capable governor."¹¹¹ Sachse was also replaced, as both he and Van Assen had refused to send a mobile brigade to Wahai, where peace had just been restored.¹¹² The government, however, had grown impatient. The central army commander was ordered to recruit a "solid captain, who had earned his spurs in Aceh" as civil Governor on West Seram and end "needless writing back and forth."¹¹³ This became the abovementioned Van de Siepkamp. Though impressed with the information acquired by Sachse and Van Assen on the Alfurs' 'tribal' organization¹¹⁴, he pointed out that the Patasiwa, "recognized the Dutch East Indies government only in name and in fact maintained a hostile attitude."¹¹⁵ Van de Siepkamp agreed that the rightful grudges of the Alfurs towards the coastal *nagari* had caused the feuds and raids, but also strongly believed in the primitive nature of the Alfurs as "physically agile, dynamic, distinctive, distrustful and mendacious" beings to be distrusted and disarmed to safely implement head taxes.¹¹⁶ A final series of military campaigns into the interiors of West Seram subjected the *nagari* Hunitetu, Rumah Soal, Tala, Sapalewa and Ahiolo.¹¹⁷ Following the example of Aceh, Seram was subsequently ruled by military officials conforming to the aggressive style of twentieth-century Dutch 'ethical-imperialism'.¹¹⁸ Instead of premeditated ideologies and ambitions of peaceful compliance, the Dutch ultimately resorted to militarism to counter resistance, all in the name of development. Violence, a trademark ascribed to the Alfurs, once again became the pivot of Dutch colonial rule. In 1915, when *kakean* rituals were (once more) prohibited, the response was a 'last desperate uprising'

111 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 354, Vb. 13-1-1906 n67, herein: RvI 10-3-1905.

112 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 444, Vb. 21-3-1907 n4, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 27-4-1905.

113 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 307, Vb. 25-4-1905 n28, herein: 1^e Gov. Sec. to Army Commander, 11-3-1905.

114 Van de Siepkamp claimed that only during Van Assen's and Sachse's terms, the 'tribal division' between *Patasiwa* and *Patalima* became known, but perhaps he had not yet read Riedel's *Sluik en Kroesharige Rassen* (1886) or the many other books that do mention these different terms.

115 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 444, Vb. 21-3-1907 n4, herein: 'Commandant van de mobiele colonne te Seram' to GG, date unknown.

116 Ibid.

117 Sachse, *Seran*, 166-181.

118 Ibid., 190; Boulan-Smit, *We, of the Banyan Tree*, 64-65. In 1882, Seram had been reorganized into four districts (Wahai, [later West Seram] under a civil governor and Kairatu, Amahei and Waru under a *posthouder*). In 1905, the governor of West Seram became governor of the whole island. Governance on Seram was appointed to military officials in times of revolt, alternated with civil governors (an Assistant-Resident) in times of peace, which was only during 1906-1907. To 'stimulate civilization', two parts of East Seram (Atiahu and Werinama) were put under jurisdiction of the Resident of Banda, who had so little influence over it that it was rendered to the resident of Ambon. See NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 244, Vb. 6-6-1904 n3, herein: Res. Ambon to GG; 'Nota betreffende de organisatie van bestuur van het eiland Seram en andere gedeelten van het gewest Amboina'; Sachse, *Seran*, 131-132.

in the area around Sapalewa. It was brutally quelled, while the involved people were forcefully moved closer to the coast.¹¹⁹

Violence in itself set the limits of governmentality. Colonization provoked complicated reactions to which officials responded by using their wide repertoire of frequently violent, interventionist tools. Sachse's reports in particular demonstrate the techniques the colonial army and government used to subject specific regions. Weapons were confiscated¹²⁰, 'rebels' (mostly unwilling chiefs) fined or imprisoned, people regrouped into newly created *soa*, *nagari* were relocated and *kakean* rituals prohibited.¹²¹ Inscription into colonial tax registers enforced a paper reality where "wandering Alfurs, unused to living in settlements", were to settle down in *kampung* or *nagari*.¹²² Smaller communities of related or allied hamlets, which were considered too small to effectively control and tax, were regrouped as much as possible into sizable *soa* and *nagari*.¹²³ But these measures had limited success. New 'kakean houses' were secretly constructed to continue initiation rituals, fearing that abandoning them after full conversion to Christianity¹²⁴ would only expedite inclusion into the colonial state's registration network. In the Alfurs' experience, conversion, disarmament, relocation, registration and taxation, were all components of the same colonial force, and behavioural change in any aspect of them, might empower the others.

As always, enforcement of rule was only possible through indirect rule. Chiefs that accepted Dutch supremacy, like so many Indonesian chiefs before them, soon found themselves trapped in contracts promising appealing salaries, a minimum of 8% collectors wages, and *kwarto* services from three to five men per month which, according to Sachse, when replaced by an additional five-guilder head tax would "incite the regent to devote himself to the hygienic care of the his subjects, to diminish the number of deaths and increase the number of marriages and births."¹²⁵ Appointed through the same instrumentation as elsewhere in the archipelago, copied from Ambon, they were to become the chiefs as displayed in the image of the beginning of

119 Sachse, *Seran*, 186.

120 See Sachse, *Het Eiland Seran*, 73 and Sachse, *Seran*, 178. Seram became a bustling paradise for gun traders or 'smugglers', as its challenging geography and rocky shorelines provided ample opportunity to evade Dutch surveillance. Frequently, people in a formally 'disarmed' regions were caught still in possession of one or more firearms. See NA MinKol PVBBg 377, 21-03-1907 nr. 4 1905-1906 herein: Mailr. 1110, pp. 3-10, and Mailr. 1267.

121 Sachse, *Gegevens*, 84-85, 86-95. Fines for chiefs were usually imposed in kind, for instance in damar or sago. See also Sachse, *Seran*, 95.

122 NA MinKol 1901-1953 1230, Vb. 14 Aug. 1914 no. 41, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 12-1-1914.

123 Ruinen, *Ethnografische Gegevens*, 228; Boulan-Smit, *We, of the Banyan Tree*, 57.

124 Missionary activities ever since the seventeenth century had attempted to convert local populations and counter headhunting and other 'barbaric' and 'superstitious' practices to reduce internal war and conflicts. Often, however, Christianity was included and integrated into existing socio-cultural expressions of religion. See: De Jong, "Kerk, Adat en Theologie", 323-324, 325-326.

125 Sachse, *Seran*, 134-135,

this chapter, elevated into *nagari* chiefs from their original position as congregated clans, into supposedly just rulers, leavened with bureaucratic authority as exponents of the wisdom of colonial improvement schemes, but in reality becoming the typical authoritarian indirect rulers, or Oriental despots, as despotic as anywhere else.¹²⁶ Obviously, as in the case of the Ambonese *raja*, Javanese village officials, Minangkabau family heads and the Acehnese *ulee-balang*, the Alfurs chiefs lost most of their traditional power and respect as their influence and wealth started depending on Dutch military support and the widening of the economic gap between the people and newly installed elites that emerged. Their appointment secured the entrance of the Dutch into Alfurs society, and with the chiefs in their pockets, the Dutch dared to commence introducing taxes. Prevalent, much repeated objections against taxation, such as that the Alfurs were fixated on barter trade, insufficiently monetized¹²⁷, unaccustomed to regularity, wholly economically undeveloped or just “insusceptible and unripe for governance”¹²⁸ were discarded, to allow for the imposition of taxes.¹²⁹ It appeared the ‘stranger-kings’ were no longer strangers, but now they represented a full-fledged state, and this state demanded change. In 1906 the coastal *nagari* were subjected to the head tax of 1891, which delivered 13,951.50 guilders in 1906 and 19,558 in 1907.¹³⁰

The political-fiscal consolidation of Seram was presented as the integration and transformation of ‘*hilir* people’ into a governed society of ‘civilized’ taxpayers according to the development theories of the colonial government.¹³¹ Rather hollow claims not reflective of the creative ways in which the colonised just as easily reversed matters and used these same state-tools as weapons against the state.

7.4 VEHICLE FOR CHANGE: THE TOTAL TAX EXPERIENCE

In 1905, Seram was considered sufficiently consolidated as a territory of the colonial state, and it was considered time to ‘consolidate’ its people as taxpaying members of a colonial society. The Alfurs were still considered to be living under conditions of ‘abundancy’, where *sago* and meat were produced and people only had to ‘hold out their hands’ for the provision of their daily needs. This, as argued by Van Assen’s successor, A.J. Quarles de Quarles (1905-1908), rendered them entirely unaccustomed to regular labour, unmonetized and untaxable.¹³² Hence, the Alfurs were to be

126 Sachse, *Het Eiland Seran*, 71-72.

127 Riedel mentions that in the later nineteenth century some copper money came in use: J.G.F. Riedel, *De Sluik- en Kroesharige Rassen tusschen Selebes en Papua* (’s Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1886), 27.

128 ANRI AS GB MGS 4111, herein: MGS 26-1-1891: DirBB to GG, 4-8-1890.

129 ANRI AS GB Besl. 1522, herein: Besl. 28-1-1890: RvI 13-11-1889, DirFin to GG 9-11-1889.

130 Stbl. 1906 n76; NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 231, Vb. 21-3-1904 n4, herein: Verslag Res. Ambon to GG, 20-4-1906, 20-5-1906 and 2-7-1906.

131 See Boulan-Smit, *We, of the Banyan Tree*, 68-69.

132 NA MinKol MvO 311 (Quarles de Quarles, 1908).

subjected to the colonial political-economy of development to solve 'unproductivity.' And land being abundant, unwillingness to labour was seen as the principle limitation to productivity.

Consolidation of a paper reality

In 1907, Quarles de Quarles observed that Seram, "though not yet an open book", had been steadily mapped. Relocation of villages, military assistance and greater insight in the Alfurs' society paved the way for new attempts and proposals for taxation. He wrote an ambitious new tax plan for interior Seram, the Tanimbar, Babar and Damar islands, in which he claimed that the introduction of head taxes in the interiors would prompt:

"even better acquaintance with land and people, as officials [...] would travel the regions for the assessments, dotting i's and crossing t's, establishing even closer relations between taxpaying people and our administration."¹³³

In a matter of years, he assured, the whole of Seram would be paying tax. He intended to subject *nagari* collectively to taxation, following the example of Ambon's *nagari* tax, to be paid either in money or in kind. De Quarles felt confident "that the consequences of their [the Alfurs] subjection to Dutch authority [...] came with taking part in public expenses" which he considered "...instrumental [...] to stimulate the Alfurs to take the products of their lands [...] to a market to be transformed into money."¹³⁴ Not everyone shared in this optimistic, classic expression of the argument that taxes had "educative cogency" and would be the instrument with which to monetize the Alfurs' economy and boost the project of taking on responsibility for self-development. Director of Finances J.P.C. Hartevelt, not a fan of De Quarles' "bold theories", believed that establishing taxation as a means of exerting influence over economic behaviour was "putting the cart before the horse"¹³⁵ and too precarious a strategy; failure to implement taxes, he contended, could be interpreted locally as the incompetence of the government, thereby undermining Dutch authority.¹³⁶ To the Director, taxes were a final 'administrative stage', only to be implemented in regions that were fully 'pacified'. Thus, the Damar, Tanimbar, Kei and Aru islands, considered to be sufficiently stabilized, were subjected to head taxes in 1908, while the interiors of Seram remained exempted.¹³⁷

133 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 587, Vb. 30-9-1908 n6, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 10-2-1908.

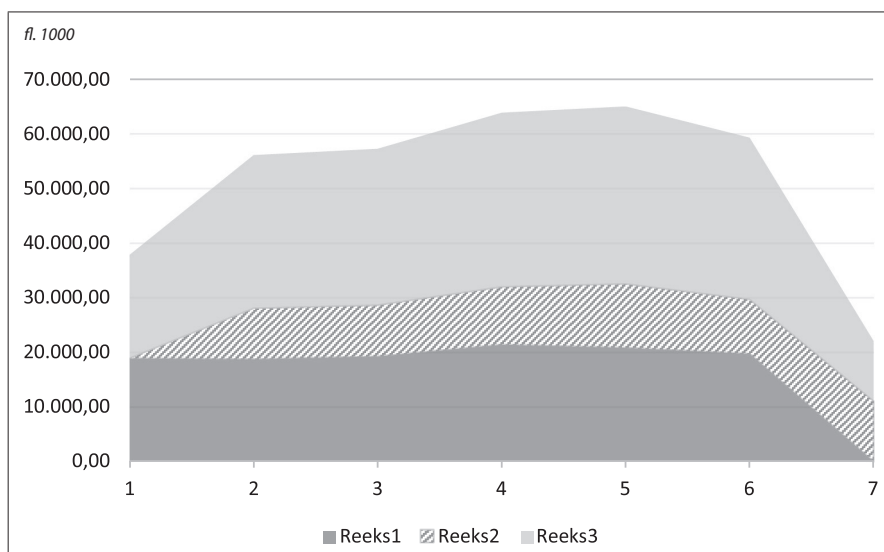
134 ANRI AS GB Besl. 1522, herein: Bestl. 5-5-1907: MGS 5-05-1907: Res. Ambon to GG, 11-9-1906.

135 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 587, Vb. 30-9-1908 n6, herein: DirFin to GG, 13-6-1908.

136 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 587, Vb. 30-9-1908 n6, herein: DirFin to GG, 13-6-1908. See the same in ANRI AS GB Besl. 1522, herein: Bestl. 5-5-1907: MGS 5-05-1907: DirFin to GG, 4-3-1907 and Res. Ambon to DirFin, 3-12-1906.

137 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 587, Vb. 30-9-1908 n6, herein: GG to MinKol, 7-7-1908; Stbl. 1908 n25.

Seen from the viewpoint of Batavia, Seram simply was not worth the trouble of risking further upheaval or squandering the budget, the greatest of colonial administrative sins. But as always, as time passed and office-holders changed, so did policy. When the progressive Governor-General A.W.F. Idenburg took office (in 1909-1916), De Quarles' successor, Sieburgh, who agreed that taxes had 'educative cogency', reissued the tax plan. As long as "excessive fiscalism" was avoided, he claimed, the Alfurs could be subjected to forms of 'gentle pressure' and would soon realize that tax-payment was good for them.¹³⁸ Sieburgh gained approval, and stealthily introduced a head tax of 2 to 7.50 guilders over the whole of Seram in 1910.¹³⁹ In Amahei and Wahei, the most densely populated districts, the head tax was replaced with the company tax of 1914, with a flexible rate of 0.40 guilders tax per 10 guilders in income. In 1914-1920, an average amount of 5.30 guilders per person was collected in Amahei and Wahai, and revenue showed steady growth until the Post-World War I recession (see graph 7.1).¹⁴⁰ After a series of short experiments in various parts of the Eastern provinces, the government concluded that the capacity for resistance had been minimized and the whole of Eastern Indonesia, including Seram, was incorporated in the unified income tax of 1920.¹⁴¹



Graph 7.1. Income tax revenue levied from indigenous peoples in Amahei and Wahai, 1914-1920.

138 NA MinKol MvO 312: G. Sieburgh, Ambiona, 1910, pp. 248-249.

139 Ibid.

140 Source: Sachse, *Seran*, 145. For Wahai in 1910 and Amahei in 1920 data is missing.

141 This even included parts of New-Guinee, after proclaimed successful experiments in the districts of Okabe and Kumbe. ANRI DepFin 357, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 18-6-1914: Ass-Res South New Guinea to Res. Ambon, 16-5-1914 and AdvBzBG to DirBB, 12-9-1914.

The practice of taxation and limitations of governmentality

The Dutch celebrated their intervention as a success. Through a couple of technological changes in the fabric of society and by imposing taxes, they claimed to have established social improvement. Local officials reported undisrupted full tax payment.¹⁴² The Alfurs, it was claimed, paid above the archipelago-wide average tax assessment of indigenous people in the Outer Islands.¹⁴³ De Quarles wrote of “eager, swift and timely tax payment.”¹⁴⁴ Sachse reported a significant reduction of arrears, and predicted how further institutionalization of corvée would help to counter alcoholism and instil greater obedience and respect.¹⁴⁵ The *controleur* of Amahei (1918-1922), G.L. Tichelman (whom we have met in Chapter 2 as the author of the article about tax gatherings in North Sumatra), celebrated the ‘educative effects’ taxation had had. He signified how the Alfurs easily met their tax assessments, by performing a few days of extra labour to earn cash, without experiencing a much higher burden.¹⁴⁶

At the same time, much resistance was still reported.¹⁴⁷ Sachse mentions that there was not yet a “politically favourable state, because of deeply rooted disillusion and dissatisfaction about the prohibition of *kakean* and *baileo*” (*baileo* were also prohibited because of the alleged strong connections between *saniri* and *kakean*).¹⁴⁸ He expected that “many years would likely pass before these feelings would disappear.”¹⁴⁹ The contradiction between these rather gloomy expectations and the more optimistic descriptions of the above, reflect how the various ambitions of officials themselves were already at odds with each other. They were tasked with ensuring order

142 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 231, Vb. 21-3-1904 n4, herein: Verslag Res. Ambon to GG, 20-4-1906, 20-5-1906 and 2-7-1906; NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 244, Vb. 6-6-1904 n3, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 2-9-1903.

143 Fievez de Malines van Ginkel, *Verslag*, 24-25, 28-29, 53-54.

144 NA MinKol MvO 311 de Quarles, 1908, pp. 135-138.

145 Sachse, *Seram*, 190; NA MinKol OV 444, Vb. 21-3-1907 n4, herein: Res. Abmon to GG, 20-5-1906. According to Sachse, “regular labour, supervision on hygiene and especially the prevention of opportunity to drink sago wine” by imposing corvée services was “definitely to the benefit of the people.” Sachse, *Gegevens*, 20 32-35, 37-38 (quote) and the same in Sachse, *Het Eiland Seram*, 85, also quoted in: Boulan-Smit, *We, of the Banyan Tree*, 54. Sometimes, tax and corvée conflicted; in 1915 work on the road between Murikau and Piru was temporarily suspended to enable the people to pay their taxes. See Sachse, *Gegevens*, 99.

146 NA Collectie 133 G.L. Tichelman, 1907-1940 7: MvO Amahei, 1922, pp. 290-298.

147 Resistance against taxation was reported in 1915 in Maneo and Amahei. See NA MinKol MvO 313: H.J.A. Raedt van Oldenbarnevelt, Amboina, 1915 in Van Fraassen, *Bronnen Betreffende De Midden-Molukken*, p. 394; MvO 314 (Van Drunen Littel, 1918) in Van Fraassen, *Bronnen Betreffende De Midden-Molukken*, p. 570.

148 Sachse, *Gegevens*, 101. For these prohibitions, see: Stbl. 1910 n15; Stbl. 1914 n132.

149 As quoted by the Resident of Ambon in NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 1230, Vb. 14-8-1914 n41, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 12-1-1914. See also: NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 812, Vb. 31-3-1911 n9. See for similar lines of argumentation: NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 949, Vb. 24-7-1912 n48, herein: Nota Ass-Res Seram, 20-6-1911.

and stability, finding local sources of revenue, covering the costs of local governance as well as exercising a governmental rationality and improving the human condition of the newly subjected populations. The only means by which they could carry out these wild ambitious and often conflicting instructions was through the power of indigenous chiefs, but awarding these chiefs canes, suits and titles was not the same as communicating the governmental agenda. Traveling on Seram was a burdensome and dangerous endeavour that few officials were willing to undertake, and all government outposts were located on, or near the coast. Hence, the entire execution of the integrated practice of taxation – population counts, drafting assessments lists, organizing tax gatherings, collecting taxes, etc. – was left to local chiefs. These chiefs cared little for the government's developmental agenda, as, like all chiefs in Indonesia, at the end of the day they were rewarded or punished according to the revenue they collected. Their selection was dependent on their fluency in Malay and their administrative skills, and not necessarily on their great governmental skills or their ties with local communities.¹⁵⁰ Uncompliant chiefs were replaced. Additionally, the system was founded on social structures and settlements 'invented' by the colonial governments, such as *soa*, rather than the origin groups (*luma inai*)¹⁵¹ and left entirely in the hands of elevated clan chiefs whose primary interest was to keep pleasing colonial officials with adequate tax funds and reports of stability and peace. The result, as recognized by Tichelman, inheritance lines were broken, chiefs replaced, social orders remodelled¹⁵², and the influence of traditional institutions such as *saniri*, *pela* and *kakean* was curtailed.¹⁵³

Obviously this elicited protest and the Alfurs ignored the new joint administration as much as possible and 'escaped' their designated villages on a regular basis in order to evade registration, tax assessments, forced conscription and coerced labour.¹⁵⁴ Resident H.J.A. Raedt van Oldenbarnevelt (1910-1915) mentions how forced settlement in *nagari* and construction of roads was experienced as such a restriction of freedom that many refused to be registered or reveal their names and took off into the forests.¹⁵⁵ The local army official had to use force to bring them back.¹⁵⁶

150 Ruinen, *Ethnografische Gegevens*, 228-229.

151 Boulan-Smit, *We, of the Banyan Tree*, 51.

152 Tichelman, *De Onder-Afdeling Amahei*, 696-698. See also Ruinen, *Ethnografische Gegevens*, 230-231. See also R. Ellen, *Nuauulu Religious Practices: the Frequency and Reproduction of Rituals in Moluccan Society* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014), 254.

153 De Vries, *Bij de Berg-Alfoeren op West-Seran*, 140; Sachse, *Gegevens*, 65-66; see also: R.F. Ellen, "Conundrums about Panjandrums: On the Use of Titles in the Relations of Political Subordination in the Moluccas and along the Papuan Coast", *Indonesia* 41 (1986), 47-62.

154 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 1230, Vb. 14-8-1914 n41, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 12-1-1914. See also Manuhutu, "Pacifcatie in Praktij", 298-299, and Tauern, *Patasiwa und Patalima*, 177.

155 Boulan-Smit, *We, of the Banyan Tree*, 53, 56.

156 NA MinKol 1901-1953 1230 Vb. 14-8-1914 n41, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 12-1-1914.

Other local strategies of resilience involved constructing 'fake', provisional, ramshackle houses on the beach and only inhabiting these when the government inspection occurred.¹⁵⁷ Only under the implicit threat of military violence were the Dutch able to enforce village inhabitancy and payment of tax. In august 1917, for instance, the *posthouder* in Kesula was assisted by an army brigade for tax collection, and reported that the "tax was paid without disruption."¹⁵⁸

The frames of colonial governance did not allow for the admittance of failure. Non-payment of taxes became the greatest of colonial crimes, interpreted as the full rejection of Dutch governance and schemes for improvement, for which the chiefs were held responsible. Hence, as in other parts of the archipelago, chiefs would think twice about failing to deliver, extorting as much as they could from their people – extortion was widely reported – to the satisfaction of the Dutch, underreporting on the latest population count, or renegotiating, thereby developing into true 'oriental despots.'¹⁵⁹ In the absence of Dutch administrative capacity, the role and behaviour of these chiefs started too look very like that of tax revenue farmers, the only difference being that they were formally appointed within the colonial administration. The only welfare development taking place, was that of the chiefs.

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, other interest groups emerged, testing the boundaries of the state. In the 1920s, when villagers in the *nagari* of Rutah refused to perform *nagari* services, it appeared the entire population had joined the anticolonial party *Insulinde*, under the impression that party-membership would remove their obligation to perform services and pay taxes.¹⁶⁰ People who paid their party contribution claimed they opted for alternative governance, and refused to pay taxes or perform services.¹⁶¹ According to Tichelman, this rendered "the small *nagari* man the

157 Manuhutu, "Pacifiatie in Praktijk", 277-278, 295.

158 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 2001, Vb. 7-6-1919 n50, herein: Ass-Res Ambon to Res. Ambon, 11-5-1918. Guns, however, were still widely available as full confiscation proved impossible, and officials always needed to remain very careful when heading on an inspection tour. See: NA MinKol PVBBg 377, herein: Mailr. 1110, pp. 3-10, and Mailr. 1267. See also Sachse, *Gegevens*, 87-88, 89-91; Sachse, *Seran*, 85 and Manuhutu, "Pacifiatie in Praktijk", 293.

159 NA MinKol MvO 314 (Van Drunen Littel, 1918) in Van Fraassen, *Bronnen Betreffende De Midden-Molukken*, p. 570; Sachse, *Seran*, 20, 32-28, 122-135; Sachse, *Gegevens*, 99; Sachse, *Het Eiland Seram*, 85.

160 The 'Indische Nationale Partij' (Indonesian Nationalist Party or PNI; *Partai Nasional Indonesia*) had made similar promises across the archipelago and also in various *nagari* on Seram. Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists*, 96.

161 These parties sought fair distribution of taxation, equality to the law and to some extend regional unification of rules and regulations in diminishment of corvée and taxes. See Anonymous, "10 Geboden der Sarekat Ambon", in *Mena Moeria* 1/6 (1922); see also NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 2441, Vb. 3-8-1922 n64, herein: Legercommandant to GG, 19-7-1920; NA MinKol 1901-1953 Mailr. 149, Mailr. 1920 n2713, herein: Res. Ambon to GG 20-8-1920; NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 2153, Vb. 16-7-1920 n69, herein: 'Kort verslag' Res. Ambon to GG 24-11-1919; NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 2406, Vb. 12-4-1922 n37, herein: Gezaghebber Amahei to Ass-Res Seram, 17-4-1920.

scapegoat of sly *Insulinde* leaders."¹⁶² The typical colonial reflex was to catch alleged 'instigators' ('*onruststoker*') and thus to restore colonial political order. But officials found an able competitor had appeared, challenging their authority over the Alfurs using issues of taxation. As elsewhere in Indonesia, the inability of the government to fulfil its promises of improved welfare and social development created a space for new players who sketched out plans for a more appealing future, developing a political awareness and activism that in the long term could not and would not be contained.¹⁶³

CONCLUSION

On Seram the Dutch encountered a puzzlingly complex society of a people that by all standards was beyond their scope of governance, taxation and development and embodied a challenging 'governmental problem' which the Dutch civilizing mission was designed to 'cure.' More than that, the Alfurs unbound, stateless lifestyle, animistic beliefs and practicing of head-hunting posed a threat to the continuation and internal order of the empire and its policies of progress and improvement, in which there was no room for exceptions or social deviance. Dutch colonial ideology was intolerant to strategies of social organization that discorded to its sacred formula of administrative governance, even though such strategies, as in the case of the Alfurs', were in fact quite successful in providing alternative models to statehood to keep administration and settled village life at bay.

Hence, the ingrained patterns of the Alfurs' ways to maintain public and spiritual order (as expressed in inter-village relations of war and peacemaking) were ignored and discarded as 'mindless' and 'perpetual violence', a 'dangerous fusion of politics and ritual' born out of 'vengeful' and 'barbaric', 'uneconomic' and 'self-destructive' behaviour, symptomatic of the imagined indigenous inability to reach or even strive for sociocultural progress, civilization and modern statecraft. In the initial unwillingness of the Alfurs to 'cooperate' the Dutch saw a clear confirmation of their hypothesis that they were still 'unready' to be governed and unfit to be conditioned by the beneficial effects of taxation and administration. Seen from within the parameters of the colonial 'truth regime', such 'native incapacity' legitimized military intervention and forceful conversion and reform.

Both the alleged aims and methods in the subsequent colonization process were governmental: to replace forest wandering, headhunting and loose social structures with the planned colonial system of village inhabitancy, administration and taxation, to thereby 'improve', 'correct' and discipline behaviour and 'optimize' the Alfurs' lives and economies and enable their integration into the colonial fiscal state and global economy. However,

162 NA MinKol 1901-1953 OV 2406, Vb. 12-4-1922 n37, herein: Gezaghebber Amahei to Ass-Res Seram, 17-4-1920.

163 NA MinKol 1901-1953 Mailr. 135, Mailr. 1920 n553, herein: Res. Ambon to GG, 22-4-1920.

while at first glance Dutch colonization of interior Seram seems, indeed, to have exemplified a process of registration and social reform, in reality it was a regime of oppression, extortion and military violence. Once again, the entire tax practice was placed in the hands of appointed chiefs. Entering as 'stranger-kings', the Dutch offered these chiefs various attractive new bases to enhance their power. This allowed the Dutch to keep their distance from local social hierarchy and administration. As in Ambon, Java, West Sumatra and Aceh, local leaders were elevated into governing elites under contracts as indirect rulers of empire, to enforce order and levy taxation and services and uphold the image of a supposedly almighty, unified, equitable tax state. They were invested with the power to provide information on which to base the tax assessments, and it was in their interest to extract the maximum, rather than to harness the educational functions of taxation and introduce social progress. The loyalty of these chiefs was pragmatic, the resultant form of governance equally so.

Figure 7.2, shows the aforementioned *controleur* Tichelman and his wife preparing for Queen's Day at Amahei (the 'W' stands for Queen Wilhelmina). Such photos of Tichelman, many of them taken in his backyard or close to his home, support the image which the government tried to portray of its administrators on Seram, leading an orderly life on what used to be the domain of violent headhunters, now a peaceful place, brought under the control of the strong, unified colonial state. Yet, Amahei was only a stone's throw away from Rutah, the village exemplified above, where people refused to perform their services in 1920, and joined political parties instead, symbolizing how the true authority of the Dutch government reached, perhaps, not much further than the *controleurs'* house. Erecting triumphal arches and celebrating Queen's Day expressed rule, but did not embody it, just as suiting-up indirect rulers and awarding them sceptres and titles was not a successful model of decreeing order or enhancing local development. Expressing the power of the state via symbolism, ritualism, and pomp and circumstance, elements attributed to the indigenous 'theatre state', were at the heart of colonial governance.¹⁶⁴

On Seram, the apex of Dutch imperial aspiration seemed to have coincided with the nadir of its administrative capacity. This was no coincidence. Seram is perhaps the clearest example addressed in this thesis of how much colonial fiscal systems benefited from keeping distance. State and society worked at cross purposes and interests, and the colonial government had met many rivals for influence over indigenous society, such as local ritual-political institutions like *kakean* or *pela* networks or, later on, nationalist parties. These were constrained by colonialism into a framework

164 To compare, as put by B. Cohn: "From the eighteenth century onward, European states increasingly made their power visible not only through ritual performance and dramatic display, but through the gradual extension of 'officialising' procedures that established and extended their capacity [...]" B. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 62.

that required mutual interaction and engagement. Resilience, desertion and migration became new techniques of escaping the state; violence as a means of resistance lost popularity as the Dutch had proven to be equally, or perhaps even more violent than the Alfurs. As a result, colonial governance and taxation became a process of deal-brokering, negotiation, improvisation and response and compromise, to astute strategies of evasion and resistance under the constantly looming threat of violence. The far-reaching ambitions of Dutch fiscal policies were not transmitted by handing out titles, sceptres and suits or celebrating Queen's Day, but depended on changing the living realities of popular resistance and the responses of chiefs and administrators on site. This should not be seen as just the failure of European models or of indigenous people to adapt to these, but rather as the creation of negotiated colonial governance in its own right. After all, it were the occupied, and not the occupiers, who determined how difficult it was to manage the colonial empire. The apparently powerless had that much power. Resultantly, taxation schemes and related practices were worked out by the interaction between Dutch colonizers and indigenous society through pragmatism and resourcefulness. The disruption of the Alfures' society by colonialism perhaps created as much anxiety as opportunity for both colonizers and colonized; to the government, the 'failure' of governmentality was easily absorbed in the reality of reliance on indigenous middlemen, while to the Alfurs, the limits of state administration and governmentality provided the opportunity to continue their much-preferred, stateless lifestyles.



Figure 7.2. G.L. Tichelman and his wife and notables preparing for Queen's Day in Amahei, ca. 1920.

Source: UBL, KITLV A185, 83518.