Spice War: Ternate, Makassar, the Dutch East India Company and the struggle for the Ambon Islands (c. 1600-1656)

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VII. The War on Trees (1631-1634)

In Ambon, Company efforts to halt foreign trade and become the sole buyer of cloves continued unabated. From 1631 onwards, this task was up to the new governor, Artus Gijsels, who might be remembered from earlier chapters as the early Ambon *afficionado* who wrote various reports and, it is believed, several of the anonymous pamphlets of the early 1620s decrying company policy in the region. His writings remain important sources on the early history of the region, and contain some of the most poignant criticism of the monopolistic policies of the VOC in this early period. His pamphlets had not really affected Company policy though. By the time he returned to Asia, the 'usury' he had denounced in them had become solidly established practice.

Interestingly, Gijsels' own position on the matter would also change radically during his governorship: having once been an eloquent opponent of the VOC's policies in the region, he was to become perhaps their most fanatic enforcer yet. His personal archive contains a virtually complete set of reports on the campaigns he organised in order to do so. They describe in remarkable detail the appalling amount of force that was used to maintain Dutch control over the clove trade. Gijsels personally oversaw a significant number of the campaigns fought for this purpose. For instance, he spent a full third of the year 1633 on a kora-kora, sailing from one fight to the next. In his personal letters he airs a developing hatred for the Muslim inhabitants of the region, which certainly tallies with some of the disturbing details we find in his campaign reports.[389]

Gijsels' methods differed sharply from those of his predecessor. Whereas Lucasz had developed a strategy of attacking the foreign traders specifically, Gijsels aimed to ruin those villages that had dealings with foreign traders. Although Gijsels claimed that he was interested only in the traders, not in 'shedding the innocent blood' of the local population, he shed it generously nonetheless. Making unprecedented use of the *hongi*, he went headhunting, besieging and burning villages and towns that had dealings with Malay, Javanese, and Makasar traders or otherwise acted contrary to his wishes. In practice, the local population often proved elusive. Making use of the natural defences provided by the landscape,

389 For a general survey of the Gijsels archive and a more general assessment of Gijsels' career and character, see M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofsz. 'The Private Papers of Artus Gijsels as Source for the History of East Asia', *Journal of Southeast Asian history* 10 (1969): 540–559.

they could often simply disappear into the forest when the VOC and its local allies appeared. Gijsels therefore went after their livelihoods: in addition to burning villages and vessels and destroying spice trees, he also increasingly made an effort to eradicate all trees that had any value as a food source, in what Rumphius would later aptly call a 'war on trees'.[390] It is therefore during Gijsels' governorship, and in the documents that it generated, that we most clearly see the VOC developing a local type of warfare aimed primarily at destroying what Emmanuel Kreike has termed environmental infrastructure.[391]

Mopping up

In May 1631, just after Gijsels took office, some high-ranking VOC officials in Amboina, including *fiscaal* Joan Ottens, were still convinced of the soundness of the strategy that Lucasz had followed over the previous year. In his correspondence, Ottens stated that an expeditionary fleet such as that commanded by Anthonissen should be sent out yearly. At the same time, he took care to emphasise that this force should only be used to go after the traders: moving inland to destroy clove trees had only had an adverse effect in the past and it would be a dangerous game now. As Ottens was putting these thoughts down on paper, however, his superior Gijsels was writing up his own ideas on the matter. According to him, Hitu and the areas under direct Company control produced enough to satisfy the yearly amount required by the directors. (Based on experiences that were, by now, more than a decade old, Gijsels initially put a lot more stock in Hitu as an ally than his predecessor had, and did not consider them hostile.) Destroying the clove trees outside these areas, it followed, made a lot of economic sense.[392]

All the same, his first few expeditions were aimed at finishing what Lucasz had started. In June, he sent out about a dozen kora-kora and two VOC yachts on an expedition to Western Seram. They were to hunt for any remaining spice traders, as well as Papuan ships that were reportedly active in the area, buying cloves, raiding villages, taking captives, and trying to ransom them. The Papuans proved elusive and the fleet only managed to capture one small kora-kora of unknown origin and a Malay sampan loaded with cloves, which was thought to

390 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche historie', I, 97.
391 Kreike, *Scorched Earth,* introduction.
392 Gijsels to Specx, 23 May 1631, and Ottens to Specx, 22 May 1631, partially quoted in *Bouwstoffen,* II, 185-189.

come from Makassar. (The headhunting tendency of their Ambonese allies made it difficult to be sure in this case, as there was no-one left alive to interrogate).[393] Most of the expedition was spent chasing rumours and battling terrible weather, for the season had turned windy and rainy.[394]

Almost as soon as this fleet returned, Gijsels sent the two yachts out again. Along with two smaller vessels, they were to head for the Buton Strait and catch any returning spice traders that had managed to elude Lucasz' expeditions of the previous months. As virtually all shipping between Maluku and the western archipelago went through the northern mouth of the Buton Strait, this was the perfect bottleneck at which to control it.[395] On the 12th of July, four days after departure, the ships took position near a small island at the northern mouth of the Strait. They planned to patrol the area until the turning of the monsoon some three months later. Given that the Company had previously sent out similar fleets to catch spice traders in the Buton Strait and the Boquerones, it is worth describing its activities in more detail.

The report of the expedition paints a vivid picture of a precarious and violent three months. In setting themselves up, the Dutch sent a small contingent of men to collect water and firewood. These were immediately attacked by a group of men, who emerged from the forest, 'about twenty in number, with naked bodies, wearing nothing but a small loincloth to cover their manhood, using large and long swords and throwing spears freshly cut out of green wood'.[396] One sailor was hacked to death and decapitated. Noticing that something was amiss, the large ships fired their cannon and the assailants retreated. The Dutch were perplexed by this encounter, for they had visited this same spot several times over the last few years without running into trouble and they had no idea who had attacked them.

The next few weeks were spent spotting and chasing Asian vessels. These were not only spice traders: the Dutch saw a number of Makasar war vessels conveying

393 In case of the small kora-kora, one heavily wounded survivor claimed the ship had come from Boano, the island just north of Hoamoal, but judging by the sleek shape of the craft and the number of throwing spears on board, Westerman and Ottens were not so sure.

394 This expedition was commanded by Westerman and Ottens. See 'Journael van gedaene tochten', Badische Landesbibliothek, collection Artus Gijsels, K. 476, fol. 3-6.

395 Westerman was appointed commander of the fleet. See 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 7-12.

396 'Journael van gedaente tochten', fol. 7r

troops back from Banggai , which Kaicili Ali had retaken by then. They also learned about the developments there through some of their captives and the people living along the Strait.[397] The Dutch were usually only able to take a ship after it had been beached and the crews had escaped inland. The latter sometimes set fire to their vessels before taking off. Indeed, in the wake of one such incident, 'burned cloves, which had been washed out of the junk by the high tide, were drifting all around our ships and washing up on the beaches'.[398] On another occasion, four junks happened on the Dutch ships in the dead of night, the two flotillas only noticing each other once the junks were already sailing between the anchored Dutch ships. Shouting and confusion ensued, with the Company crews opening fire with their cannon and the crews of the junks reciprocating with their muskets. The Dutch ships lifted anchor to pursue the junks, but these escaped into the darkness.[399]

Over the three months that the ships spent in the Strait, they spotted some eighteen vessels and were able to capture ten. The expedition ended at the town of Buton on the 24th of October, where one of the yachts, *Mocha*, was sent on to Batavia with all the captured cloves as well as the governor's letters. The remaining three ships awaited the turning of the monsoon and set sail for Ambon on the 15th of November.[400]

Uli, Alfurs, and uphill battles: the siege of Tobo

Before these ships had even returned, Gijsels had already turned his attention to two villages on the south coast of Seram. This was not a clove-producing area; the expedition was meant to protect the production of nutmeg on the Banda islands. Several villages along the south coast of Seram, as well as on the Aru and Kei Islands, still housed significant numbers of Bandanese refugees and served as staging areas for raids on the Banda Islands. Gijsels' commission specifically mentioned these villages and instructed him to destroy their dwellings and ves-

397 One Chinese, who willingly gave himself up to the Dutch as he was unable to keep up with his Makasar companions due to a 'painful and rotten leg', was particularly helpful, as were the inhabitants of the village of Koroni, who were friendly to the Dutch, and informed them that thirteen such vessels had already come through the Strait before they had arrived. 'Journael van gedaente tochten',fol. 8r.

398 'Journael van gedaente tochten', fol. 8v.

399 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 8v-9r.

400 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 9r.

sels in order to keep Banda safe.[401] As the monsoon turned, bringing dry and more reliable weather, Gijsels personally set out from Ambon, assembled the *hongi*, and moved against the villages of Tobo and Werinama.

Gijsels was quite familiar with indigenous warfare in the islands – in fact, his descriptions of it in his *Grondig Verhaal van Amboyna*, written around 1621, remain one of our main sources on this topic.[402] In the book, he elaborately describes the seaborne headhunting raids that rival villages would visit upon one another, covering the divination practices preceding raids, the raids themselves (during which men, women, and children alike were fair game), and the festivities, rituals, and ceremonies that followed a kora-kora's return. Not sparing his readers the gory details, he described how heads were displayed on a stone near the *baileu* 'until the maggots crawled out of them' and how the raiders would sometimes bring back live captives. As the ship approached its village, the prisoners were

> tied and painted white. It also occurs that, if they have a bad war with each other, they put the captives at the front of the kora-kora, and then behead them as soon as the kora-kora touches the shoreline, throwing the body overboard and bringing the head onto land with the others.[403]

Gijsels goes on to describe how a king or lord could also call upon the villages to come out with their kora-kora to make war. They would then be obliged to join him without receiving any recompense, being responsible for their own weapons and provisions. Gijsels was impressed with the craftsmanship of the kora-kora and the weapons that the Ambonese wielded. Every kora-kora tended to have three Javanese-made swivel guns, which Gijsels described as being of abominable quality, and European-made muskets and halberds had also found their way to the Ambonese. Still, he was more impressed by their *assegai* (throwing spears), which were made out of wood, reed, and iron. He deemed them 'extremely nasty weapons'.[404]

Of course, the VOC had already started making use of the hongi during Gijsels' first stay in the Ambon Islands. Judging by his detailed descriptions,

401 Memorie for Artus Gijsels as the new governor of Ambon, 28 feb 1631, in: VOC 856 (unfol.), 12th unfoliated page.
402 See Knaap, 'Headhunting, Carnage and Armed Peace', esp. 169pp.
403 Gijsels, 'Grondig Verhaal van Amboyna', 432.
404 Ibid., 431-444, esp. 437.

Gijsels had some first-hand experience with it as well. Now, as governor, he was able to call the hongi together himself for the first time. The fleet set out from Castle Victoria on the 10th of November. Along the way, it made calls and sent out messengers, demanding that the various communities send their *kora-kora* to join the fleet. Eventually, the fleet grew to fifteen vessels.

In addition to being a fighting force, the hongi was also an instrument of displaying and confirming political power. As Gijsels made his way east, villages along the route rushed to present him with *hormat*: gifts meant to signal their deference. Although the *hormat* often consisted of livestock, fish, fruits, coconuts, and other useful foodstuffs for the campaign, some were more symbolic. As the fleet called at Hitu, for example, it was presented with an ornate arrangement of flowers.[405]

Meanwhile, it would seem that Gijsels' attitude towards Hitu was hardening, despite having been positive at the start of his governorship. While there, Gijsels told Hituese officials that the target of the expedition was Ihamahu. Aware that the villages they were now moving against were *ulilima,* and therefore part of the same league of polities as Hitu itself, he suspected that they might try to send a warning and was therefore deliberately spreading misinformation. The rivalries between *ulisiwa* and *ulilima* also worked to the VOC's advantage, however. As the Dutch progressed eastward, they passed *ulisiwa* villages with whom they otherwise had little contact. These included the village of Haya, which belonged to the *uslisiva* despite being Muslim. When Haya's orangkaya learned that the Dutch were moving against Tobo, he and his people joined the campaign, adding two vessels to the fleet and sending word to Tamilau, a nearby allied village. The people of Tamilau, in their turn, sent word to the Alfur polities in the interior, who also had an axe to grind with some of these *ulilima* coastal settlements.

Over the preceding years, various VOC officials had gradually warmed to the idea that the Alfurs of Seram might make formidable allies. In his 1627 report, Seys had already written that the Alfurs might be very valuable, even though they neither lived in clove-producing regions nor had ships with which to participate in the hongi fleets. What is more, they were excellent head-hunters, whose raiding parties could survive in the jungle for months and had a fearsome reputation throughout the region. Seys had contended that friendly relations should be maintained with these 'heathen' kingdoms, not least because the roughly three-thousand men belonging to these polities could be used as a

405 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 14r-v.

'scourge against the rebels'.[406] The interest in an alliance seemed to be mutual: just before Gijsels had become governor, the rajas of the Alfur kingdoms of Sahulahu and Sumite had opened relations with the Dutch, offering their services for the struggle against their mutual enemies.[407] Now, Gijsels could take them up on their offer.

It would take the Alfurs a few days to reach the coast. Meanwhile, the hongi, which by now consisted of fifteen vessels, approached Tobo. In the early hours of the 21st of November, Gijsels halted just short of the village to allow some straggling vessels to catch up and had the fleet row to shore. It arrived below the walls of Tobo at daybreak, to the dismay of the inhabitants, 'who were all woken up, startled, and apparently not entirely rested yet'.[408] In an attempt to negotiate with the Toboese, Gijsels made his way to the fortified village accompanied by 200 of his European soldiers and a host of Ambonese. However, chaos immediately ensued. The inhabitants shouted 'Sobat Ihu, sobat ihu!' (You are our lord, you are our lord!) Gijsels responded by asking them to come down from their fort, if that was the case. However, the Ambonese troops and the Toboese were shouting at one another, drowning out the attempt at negotiation. The Ambonese started taunting the village inhabitants by approaching the walls; the Toboese shot some arrows at them. Gijsels' troops responded by firing their muskets. The opportunity for negotiation having thus gone up in smoke, Gijsels prepared to storm the village.[409]

As we can see in the drawing included in Gijsels' report, Tobo was situated on a small coral platform near the coast, strategically located on a tiny outcrop from the shoreline. Obscured from view in the drawing is the river flowing immediately to the west of the platform, impeding any attack on the village from that side. The village could therefore only be feasibly approached from the east. Gijsels' drawing shows us the sharp, eroded coral limestone so typical of the

406 'geessel van de gerevolteerden'. Seys, 'Verhael van den tegenwoordigen staet inde quartieren van Amboyna ende omleggende plaetsen' etc, in: Commelin, *Begin ende Voortgangh*, II, voyage 15, p. 136.

407 Rumphius, *De Ambonse eilanden,* 197. Lucasz to Specx, 6 sept 1630, in VOC 1100, fol. 397v, mentions a visit of the 'king of the Alfurs', without further specification. The same visit is mentioned in Gijsels' instructions (28 feb 1631, VOC 856, 12th unfoliated page) and he had been specifically advised to further the relations with them and make use of their offer.

408 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 19r.

409 Ibid.

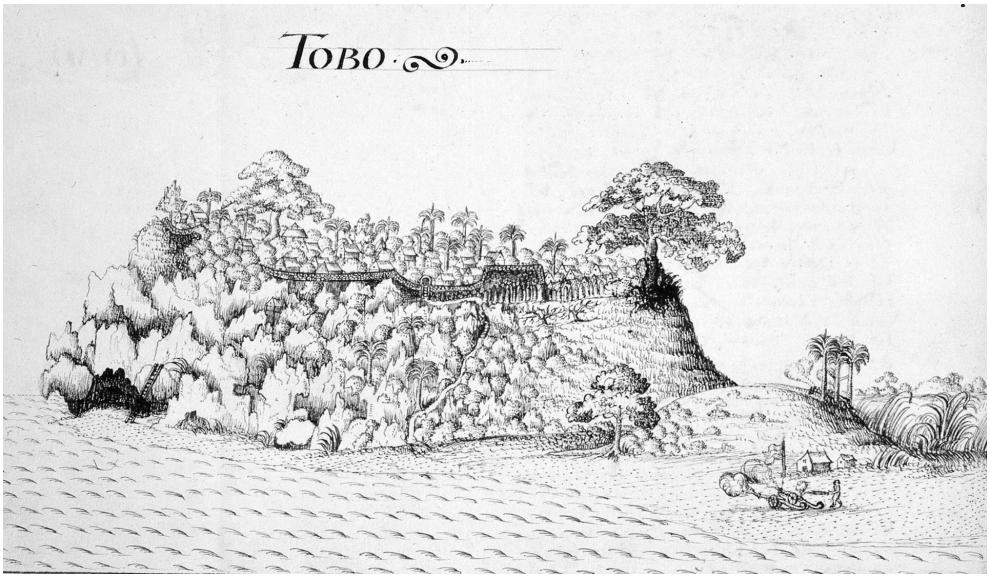


Fig 7.1 The village of Tobo. This anonymous drawing features some episodes from the siege, including the two cannon firing at the town, the siege ladder set against the rocks on the left side of the platform, and muskets being fired up at the town from the low hill in the background. Badische Landesbibliothek, K476, fol. 18.

region, which provided an excellent natural fortification. In addition, the settlement was defended by a wall following the contours of the platform.

The entire force landed. Two cannons were brought ashore and immediately opened fire on the settlement. The besieged responded by firing arrows and (sparingly) muskets, as well as throwing rocks, at anyone who came within range. After about an hour, Gijsels ordered attacks at several places aiming to take the village by storm. Although he had brought one siege ladder, most of the attackers simply clambered up the rocks. Meanwhile, he created 'false alarms' in an attempt to conceal where the real attacks were taking place. The besieged were not fooled; the soldiers and warriors climbing up the platform were subjected to such a hail of stones that they were forced to retreat. One of the Dutch officials, Joan Ottens, was hit on the head by a stone, such that he fell down and 'his skull lay bare'.[410]

His attempt to take the settlement having been stymied, Gijsels started preparing for a siege. He ordered the three forces he had stationed to the west, north, and east of the platform to strike camp, and had a broad path cut through the

410 Ibid.

vegetation between them. He had the kora-kora brought ashore, mostly to signal to the besieged that they were not going anywhere. Now aware that Tobo was better defended than he had expected, Gijsels sent one of the *orembay* rowing vessels to Banda for additional supplies.

Gijsels was worried. It seemed that Tobo was virtually unassailable and its inhabitants, well aware of this, would probably try to hold out to the last. According to his own report, Gijsels decided to lay siege anyway, as he expected reinforcements, in the form of some two-thousand Alfurs, to arrive from the Seram uplands in the coming days.

Sure enough, the next day around noon, 1180 Alfurs came marching down from the highlands. Led by the orangkaya from Ribut Hatumeten and Tamilahu,[411] they carried red banners and were armed with swords, shields, spears, and the occasional musket. Painted in dyes made from sago and coconut, Gijsels found them frightening to behold. He was impressed: whereas the Ambonese had struggled to bring some of the kora-kora on land, the Alfurs immediately set to work lifting them onto the high shoreline and quickly succeeded. That night, such a racket was heard from the camp they made that 'it was as if the forest was full of demons'. Not only had their arrival boosted the total number of besiegers to about three thousand; Gijsels had learned from one of their orangkaya that the Alfurs were particularly eager to take revenge on Tobo, which had previously been involved in attacks on them. Gijsels was happy to boost their morale even further: he and his companions unabashedly told the Alfurs that the Dutch were *ulisiwa* too! Upon being asked whether the Prince of Holland was therefore also *ulisiwa* and ate pork, they answered in the affirmative, which, according to Gijsels, seemed to please the Alfurs mightily. Their alliance seemed to be off to a good start.[412]

Over the next few days, the Dutch started erecting wooden siege works around the settlement. They also made various attempts to set Tobo on fire, both by using the cannon to lob fireballs over the walls, and having the Alfurs climb up the rocks to torch the buildings. None of these attempts were successful. All the same, the besieged called for negotiations almost every day. The first request came in the morning on the 23rd, after the Toboese had apparently gotten wind

411 Ribut was a village resorting under Hatumeten, and situated slightly inland from there, a good deal to the west from Tobo. Tumalehu was much nearer, and resorted under the Alfur kingdom of Sumite. Rumphius, *De Ambonse eilanden,* pp. 178, 199-200.

412 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 20r; Gijsels to Specx, 23 May 1632, in: *Bouwstoffen,* II, 196.

of the Alfurs' arrival. (Gijsels got the impression that the Toboese were far more scared of the Alfurs than of his own forces.) In any case, the negotiations went nowhere: claiming that their most prominent orangkaya were away, the Toboese felt they could not submit to the VOC's demands. At best, the negotiations gave them a few hours of respite from Dutch musket and cannon fire.[413]

Meanwhile, the Alfurs were making forays into the forests. On the 28th, they found a small inland village named Batolahu, which was affiliated with Tobo and was still occupied. The Alfurs immediately returned to the camp to make their report and then started preparing for a raid. Many of the Ambonese participated in the raiding party, which returned by the evening. The Dutch learned that their Ambonese allies had retreated after one of their orangkaya had been badly wounded. The Alfurs, for their part, brought back two captured children, two severed heads, and several limbs that they had cut from their victims. They proceeded to chop the latter up, mix them with vegetables, and cook the resulting mix in pieces of bamboo. A lively feast ensued, with *tifa* drums, dancing, and other merriments. Slightly disgusted with what was for dinner, Gijsels tried to rebuke the Alfurs for their 'horribly barbaric ways', but they were unfazed: their victims had got what they deserved for their earlier attacks on Ribut Hatumeten.[414]

In any case Gijsels was happy to use the raid and its aftermath to put further pressure on the besieged. The next day, he informed the Toboese that unless they surrendered now, there would be no quarter and they would all go the way of the inhabitants of Batolahu. (It seems the Dutch tactfully avoided mentioning that the attack had actually been largely repelled.) After days of cannon fire aimed at breaking morale rather than Tobo's defences, the prospect of being cut up apparently became too much for the besieged, who promised to come down.

The next day, the Dutch and the orangkaya of Tobo met on the shore below the village. A treaty was drawn up in which the inhabitants of Tobo pledged allegiance to the Dutch States-General and the Prince of Orange. They were required to send two children of prominent orangkaya to Castle Victoria as hostages and appear there with one or two vessels at least once a year. They promised to return runaway slaves in return for a reward. As subjects of the Dutch governor, the inhabitants were now free to sail to Ambon and Banda. Most importantly, the Toboese were no longer allowed to make war on any Dutch ally. Indeed, they

413 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 19v-21r.
414 'Journael van gedaene tochten' fol. 20v-21r.

were not to make war at all without explicit Dutch permission.[415] To seal the new agreement, a *matakau* was drunk. The latter was a ritual where an important oath was confirmed by drinking an alcoholic beverage by representatives of the two parties, which had been imbued with power by dipping weapons and other potent objects into the drink. Both parties then called upon higher powers to bring curse and doom down on them should they ever break their oath.[416] Furthermore, a Dutch flag was brought into the village.

As he would later write to Batavia, Gijsels felt that this was the best possible outcome under the circumstances. Considering Tobo's unexpected strength and the fact that a heavy rain shower had recently replenished their water supplies, he felt that a treaty was preferable to 'banging our heads against the wall' any longer.[417] Not all of their allies agreed: the Alfurs had come down to Tobo to wreak their revenge on its population, and were thoroughly annoyed that the opportunity had been snatched away from them. As the treaty was concluded, the inhabitants of Tobo could see smoke rising from the forest: Batolahu and another village were on fire. Four hundred newly arrived Alfurs, who later claimed that they had yet to hear about the treaty, had overrun the villages and burned them down. Gijsels could only profusely apologise to the outraged Toboese.[418]

The next day, the 1st of December, the Dutch organised a farewell feast to celebrate the conclusion of the treaty, after which the hongi and the Alfur allies went their separate ways. Arriving below Werinama the next day, and seeing that it was similarly perched on a high and extremely defensible position, Gijsels immediately abandoned his plans to attack it. The hongi continued on its way back to Ambon, calling at various villages to receive *hormat* and meet with various orangkaya. On the 7th of December, Gijsels was back at Castle Victoria. Despite

415 *Corpus Diplomaticum*, treaty CIV (30 November 1631), 252-254.

416 For one description of a *matakau,* see Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën,* IIIa, I, 10-11. Note that the exact performance of the ritual could differ: whereas Valentijn mentions various pre-gunpowder weapons, 17th century descriptions also mention bullets. Sometimes, drops of blood of the two parties went into the drink as well. Also note that Valentijn presents the ritual as something from ancient heathen times, which is incorrect: it was the staple of political bonds in Central Maluku, including those involving Muslims or Christians, throughout our period of study. For this reason, Company officials partook in *matakaus* quite regularly. The word means something akin to taboo or interdiction, and was also used more broadly for other forms of ritual protection.

417 Gijsels to Specx, 23 May 1632, in: *Bouwstoffen,* II, 198.

418 Gijsels to Specx, 23 May 1632, in: *Bouwstoffen,* II, 198; 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 21v-22r.

running into more serious opposition than expected, the Dutch and their allies had shown themselves to be a power to be reckoned with on the coast of Seram.

Although the siege of Tobo only lasted nine days, Gijsels had nonetheless been rather taken aback by the strength of the fortified towns along the Seramese coast. As it turned out, they were not the lightly defended places that had been described to him. That being said, he had had his first taste of cooperating with the Alfurs, who promised to be formidable allies. His policy also seems to have entailed getting himself involved in local rivalries to a far greater degree than any of his predecessors had. To further the Company's policies, he presented these divisions within a framework of existing rivalries between *ulisiwa* and *ulilima*, which had worked out rather well for him in this campaign. But this approach also had inherent risks. Playing up *ulilima/ulisiwa* antagonisms, and putting the Dutch firmly in the *ulisiwa* camp, might go to the detriment of their relationship with the *ulilima* inhabitants of Hoamoal and their kimelaha, not to mention their supposed allies in Hitu. Getting involved in the rivalries and rounds of mutual retaliation that characterised interactions amongst these groups might exacerbate tensions at a time when the Dutch were already embroiled in many conflicts in the region. In the short run, it would lead Gijsels to besiege a fortified town that presented a greater challenge than Tobo.

'Revenge against the fruit trees'

The Dutch East India Company had a rather complicated relationship with Ihamahu, a fortified Muslim town situated on the north side of Saparua. In 1621, during the large *landdag* meeting that was held in the wake of Coen's visit, Ihamahu had pledged allegiance to the VOC. Since then, however, it had been able to treat the Company with a large measure of indifference, never, for instance, sending kora-kora to join the Company's hongi fleets. Whereas the southern parts of the Lease Islands were *ulisiwa*, Christian and under Company rule, the northern parts were none of these things. Ihamahu, in particular, was in a position to sail its own course, 'aloof on its impregnable mountain',[419] the coral platform of Ulapalu, the best natural fortification one could wish for. As such, the town had recently become a refuge for people fleeing villages under Dutch control. Even some Christians had fled there, citing ill-treatment at the hands of their leaders. Ihamahu kept any Dutch delegates trying to negotiate their return at arm's length, to Gijsels' great frustration.

419 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche historie', I, 82.

This also made the town a great potential ally to those ill-disposed towards the Dutch. It would seem that the previous year's attack on Tobo was driving the Muslim communities closer together against what they saw as a common enemy. Kimelaha Luhu, who, we may remember, had been brought in to replace a thoroughly anti-Dutch colleague, had not warmed to the Dutch over the previous three years and took great offence to Gijsels' attack on Tobo. In the wake of the siege, he made his way to Ihamahu, aching to win its support in wresting the Lease Islands from Dutch control. He apparently received a warm welcome there and started off by forcing the Christians who had fled to Ihamahu to convert to Islam and swear off the Dutch. Their oath was subsequently sealed by collecting a Christian head in a raid on the nearby village of Itawaka. According to Gijsels, the kimelaha also gave his followers throughout the islands permission to capture and forcibly convert Christians in this manner. The kimelaha then brought together an impressive hongi, which Gijsels estimated consisted of 23 or 24 vessels (more than the Company could muster at the time), including ships from Ihamahu. Although it does not seem to have done much damage elsewhere, this *hongi* did burn down the same nearby village of Itawaka. For good measure, the expedition cut down some sago and coconut trees, as well as 360 clove trees owned by a local orangkaya called Pati Nai. The kimelaha knew whom to target: Pati Nai had been instrumental in brokering the Alfurs' arrival before Tobo.[420]

Gijsels felt that he had to curb this emerging threat in the Lease Islands urgently– but how? Ihamahu was unassailable and, in the opinion of Gijsels and his colleagues, might only be brought to surrender if it were starved out in a protracted siege. However, Gijsels thought he might try something different. If the kimelaha was going to fight this war by cutting down trees, so would he. Gijsels and his council resolved to send out an expedition to 'do all possible damage to the clove, coconut, sago and fruit trees of the people of Iha, as well as their vessels'.[421]

As in previous years, an expedition fleet under the command of Adriaan Anthonissen had been sent from Batavia to assist in the hunt for Asian clove traders and other military exploits. It had arrived late and in any case there were apparently few Makasar traders in the area. Anthonissen and Gijsels therefore decided

420 Gijsels to Specx, 23 May 1632, in VOC 1105, fol. 12r-13v. (This bit is not included in Bouwstoffen.)

421 Gijsels to Specx, 23 May 1632, in *Bouwstoffen,* II, 199.

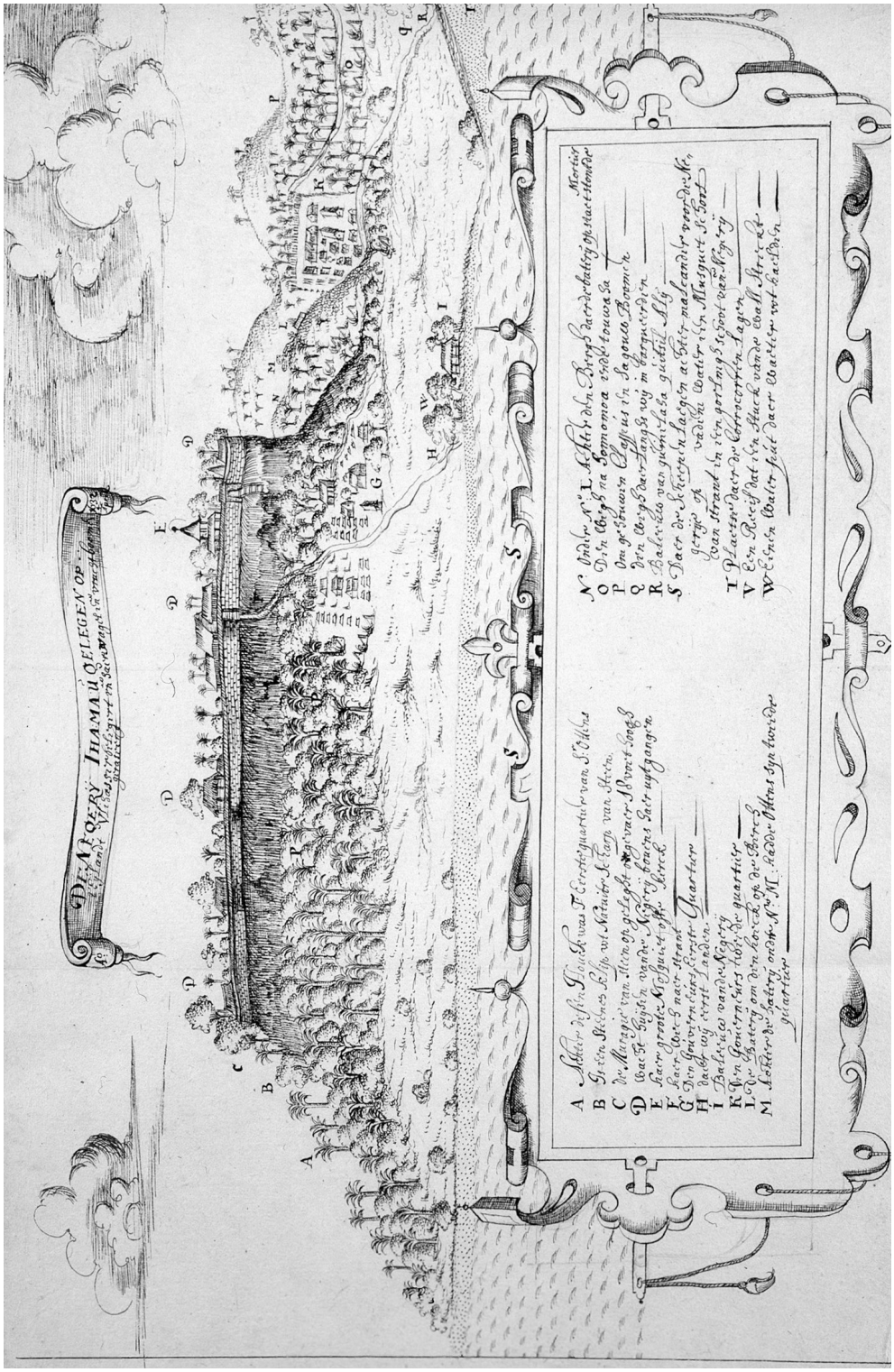
that the fleet could be used in the attack on Ihamahu, in addition to the *hongi*, which was once again assembled.

The Dutch ships left ahead of the hongi: given that the western monsoon had already passed and the rainy season was beginning, they would have to struggle with the wind. Whereas it would still have been easy to sail east a month or so earlier, the winds were now unsteady and becoming less favourable. In these circumstances, the kora-kora and uranbay had a clear advantage over the large sailing ships in that they had rowers. The European sailing ships, generally considered so superior in maritime warfare, were unwieldy and impractical when deployed in this island world in the wrong season. The first ships of the hongi – three kora-kora and one uranbay (a large war canoe), hailing from the villages closest to Kota Ambon, left from in front of the Dutch castle on the 8th of April, 1632. Two Dutch sloops and a launch rowed alongside them. As usual, as the fleet made its way around Ambon, it sent out messengers calling on various allied and tributary villages to ready their kora-kora and uranbay and join the fleet. The military campaign also once again doubled as an inspection tour, with Gijsels calling at places such as Ureng, where a new lodge was being built. When it arrived before Ihamahu in the early morning of the 13th of April, the hongi had grown to eleven kora-kora, two uranbay, and two sloops. More kora-kora would arrive over the next few days, eventually bringing the total number to sixteen. The total force assembled for the attack on Ihamahu counted 700 European soldiers and 2000 local allies.[422]

In a meeting of the officers and orangkaya on Gijsels' kora-kora, plans for the following day were made. It was decided that one of the yachts, the *Mocha*, would immediately be sent back to Ambon to fetch sago. Although the kora-kora had a lot of advantages in these circumstances, cargo capacity was not one of them, and the large crews of rowers consumed supplies rapidly. Normally, this

422 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 26r-v.

Fig. 7.2 (Next page) Anonymous pen drawing of the fortified town of Ihamahu on the island of Saparua during a siege by VOC forces and their local allies. Notable features mentioned in the legend in include the stone wall (C), described as 'some 18 feet high'; the batteries built on a hill adjacent to the town (L and N); and a treeless patch described as 'cut down coconut and sago trees' (P). From the private archive of governor Gijsels, now in the Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe, inv. nr. K476, fol. 27.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forced kora-kora to stop and replenish supplies quite frequently. The crews knew where they could find sago and fish and would simply stop there for a day or two to replenish themselves before continuing an expedition. However, this could become problematic in situations involving large concentrations of ships and manpower. In this case, the larger VOC vessels could run the supplies.

The next day, the eight companies of European soldiers and the Ambonese allies landed on the beach below the fortified hill. The well located nearby was secured and camps were established at various locations at the foot of the hill to isolate the town from its water supply and from the coast. After only about two hours, representatives from the town came down to parlay. Gijsels explained why they were here and that if they did not pledge their allegiance to the VOC and surrender the defectors, revenge would be taken on their fruit trees. The representatives went back up to make their report and confer. Gijsels told them to hurry. [423]

When the delegates had not returned after one-and-a-half hours, Gijsels proceeded to cut down the fruit-bearing trees close to his quarters. The next day, a large combined European-Ambonese force again went out to cut down trees; a total of 230 axes were distributed for the purpose. The lumberjack force went out whenever the weather permitted, and Gijsels incidentally provided some numbers relating to their exploits. The discovery of a garden of clove trees, for instance, merited a mention in the records for the 28th of April, when an estimated 1200 or 1300 clove trees were ringbarked and 'several thousands' of coconut palms were eradicated by either being chopped down outright or having their crown cut out. On the 29th of April, two companies of soldiers (i.e. some 150) and a good 300 local allies went out and eradicated some 800 clove trees.[424] The siege would ultimately last for a month and on all but seven days Gijsels' journal explicitly mentions that a force was sent into the woods to cut down trees. This gives us some impression of the havoc the Dutch were wreaking on the forests and groves, and, by implication, the economic wellbeing of the inhabitants of Ihamahu. The besieged, aware of this and still able to enter and leave the town at will, attempted to waylay these parties of tree killers, managing to headhunt several individuals over the course of the siege. Most of those who died on the side of the Company and its allies were ambushed and headhunted when straying from the camp.

Meanwhile, the rest of the force tried to besiege Ihamahu as best they could.

423 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 28r.

424 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 28r, 31r-32.

Initially, Gijsels set up camp just west of the town, near the beach. Another camp, under the command of Joan Ottens, was set up immediately to the north of the town. These two camps were mostly used as reconnaissance bases, however. Soon, after the trees and boats hidden onshore in their immediate vicinity had been destroyed, both camps were moved to the south of the city. This not only cut Ihamahu off from land routes to the rest of the island, but also established the attackers on higher terrain. Ihamahu was the highest point in a wide area and could not be hit by the VOC's cannon, either from the ships or from the shore. The slightly higher terrain to the south and southwest of the city had several small hills, which allowed the Dutch to set up a battery and attempt to fire into the town.

Their first attempts were less than impressive. After the hill was fortified and a single *steenstuk* was hoisted aloft there on the 20th of April, the constable attempted to fire several grenades and firebombs into the town. However, none of the projectiles made it over the walls. Gijsels ordered the battery to cease firing after a couple of shots. A *prinsenstuk* was brought up the next day. That evening it fired six balls that did make it into the town and 'caused great screaming'.[425] The Dutch sent two more cannonballs over the walls towards midnight. Another *prinsenstuk* was hoisted up the hill two days later and used to fire both barshot and regular cannonballs into Ihamahu. After this, the besiegers would sometimes fire a couple of cannonballs in the evenings. Interestingly, it seems that they used the cannon, not for any kind of sustained assault or to attempt to breach the walls, but largely to break morale. They were not particularly successful in this: during most of the barrages the besieged remained silent and the Dutch had the impression that the population had simply moved to the north side of the town, out of reach of the guns. For their part, the besieged were able to hit the Dutch positions with their swivel guns and muskets. In this way, they managed to wound and kill several Dutchmen, particularly before the siege works were completed.

Gijsels had one additional trump card. By the end of April, Alfurs began arriving from the mainland of Seram, having been shipped over by the Company's allies. By the 30th of April, a good 300 of these Alfurs had assembled near Ihamahu and set up camp near Gijsels' own. Gijsels believed that Alfurs had never previously come out to fight in the smaller islands. It was his impression that the inhabitants were more frightened of these 300 Alfurs than they would

425 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 30r.

have been if he had brought a thousand European soldiers.[426] In addition to their psychological effect, the Alfurs served a clear practical purpose in that they were exceedingly proficient in hunting down and destroying the raiding parties that were sent out from Ihamahu to ambush the Dutch and their allies. Gijsels paid them a *parang* for each hunted head they brought back.

In the end, Ihamahu lived up to its reputation for impregnability. The Dutch and their allies were becoming exhausted more quickly than the besieged, debilitated as they were by the diseases that inevitably came with the rainy season. What is more, Anthonissen's ships were supposed to return to Batavia with the turning of the monsoon. On the 4th of May, Gijsels called the officers together. He had all of them subscribe to a written resolution, which detailed his reasons for breaking off the siege. The allies' desire to return home was not listed, although this might well have played a role, if other campaigns are any indication. Indeed, being called away on long hongi expeditions was difficult for the men, who also had duties in their own communities.[427] In any case, that night, under cover of a barrage of grenades fired into Ihamahu, most of the munition and supplies were loaded back onto the ships. The next morning, the quarters were burned down and the troops boarded their vessels once more. The hongi dispersed. Now sailing with the wind, without stopping at villages along the way, Gijsels was back in Castle Victoria the next day.

Even though Ihamahu had not surrendered, Gijsels was mighty pleased with the results of the campaign. The goal of the expedition, after all, had not been to conquer the town, but to mete out punishment to its trees and vessels. In that, the expedition had been spectacularly successful. 'They will no longer be able to use their gardens', Gijsels gleefully wrote to the governor-general shortly after his return. 'Everything around the town has been consumed and cut down. I believe that when the townspeople come down, they will sit and weep together, wailing in such a way as has never been heard in Ambon before. This Iha used to be the pleasure garden of all of Amboyna and the most beautiful land that could be

426 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 32r; Gijsels to Specx, 23 May 1632, in *Bouwstoffen,* II, 200-201.

427 Gijsels was making unprecedented use of the hongi system, and the Ambonese already started to complain about the burden that this put on them, not only because it took the men away for protracted periods, but also because in case of the loss of a kora-kora, the community itself was liable to have a new one made. Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche historie', I, 89.

found, covered with valleys and forests such that it was a pleasure to behold'.[428] Gijsels did have a hunch that the Christian villages closest to Iha might be the targets of retaliation. Accordingly, he took care to leave them with a couple of soldiers, who could be missed until the next dry season.

All in all, Gijsels felt that he had found a way to strike the inhabitants of the Amboyna Quarter where it hurt. Scorched-earth tactics, which aimed at the inhabitants' trees and vessels, would become the staple of his subsequent campaigns.

Assessing Gijsels' evolving strategy: indigenous forts and environmental warfare

Surprisingly little research exists about indigenous forts in the Ambon Islands and most of the extant literature gives the impression that they did not amount to much.[429] This impression is reinforced by the surviving archaeological remains, which consist mostly of Dutch fortifications. By the end of the conflicts that are the topic of this study, the Dutch ordered the inhabitants to come down from their hillforts, which, in some cases, were also demolished. Dutch fortifications, by contrast, remained in use, often well into the nineteenth century or even beyond: Castle Victoria in Ambon, for instance, remains a military base to this very day.[430] Paradoxically, some of the Dutch forts in the region have now become a form of local heritage. Having been heavily restored, forts such as Duurstede on Saparua and Amsterdam on Ambon are now advertised as tourist attractions. Nearby indigenous forts, such as Benteng Kapahaha in Hitu and the old Ihamahu fortifications, are only remembered by the communities living right below them. Interestingly, the locations of these forts often have a strong cultural significance for these communities and some of the sites within them are still considered *kramat,* sacred.[431] In other cases, however, the cultural connection to such sites was severed at the end of the Great Hoamoal War, when entire

428 Gijsels to Specx, 23 May 1632, in *Bouwstoffen,* II, 201.

429 E.g. Knaap, 'Headhunting, carnage and armed peace in Amboina, 1500-1700', 178pp. Cf. Michael Charney. *Southeast Asian Warfare, 1300-1900*. Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp. 73-74, which asserts that, on the contrary, most warfare in Southeast Asia was siege warfare. I subscribe to his view and contend that it also applied to the Ambon region.

430 The early modern forts investigated as part of the Forts in Indonesia project were all incorporated into the Atlas of Mutual Heritage. For a quick overview of some of their histories, see atlasofmutualheritage.nl.

431 Personal visits to Ihamahu and Benteng Kapahaha, February 2019.

communities were forcibly resettled. It is only very recently that the forts have garnered attention from the local archaeological service: since 2018, the young archaeologist Muhammad Al Mujabuddawat has been surveying some of them, his interest having been piqued by some of the same drawings from the Gijsels archive that appear in this chapter.[432]

The presently available evidence and scholarship, while not allowing for a detailed history of the evolution of these fortifications, nonetheless paints a compelling general picture. As regards the wider region, various recent publications have suggested that there was a spree of fortification from the sixteenth century onwards. Many scholars believe it was caused by developing rivalries over access to the region amongst both Europeans and emerging local powers such as Makassar and Ternate, as well as the proliferation of gunpowder weapons. Although the forts were built in response to changes in the region and adopted know-how from other regions, in some ways they were simply an extension of existing building traditions.[433] European sources from the mid-sixteenth century concerning Ambon and Banda already noted that their populations maintained mountain hideouts, 'which in time of war serve as fortresses and are so difficult of ascent that to reach them one needs in many places to use one's hands to clamber up as much as one's feet'.[434]

Perhaps unsurprisingly in a region where intervillage warfare and headhunting were endemic, hilltop forts seem to have been common throughout the east-

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432 I met Mujab, as he is colloquially called, in February 2019 in the Balai Arkeologi Maluku, and we were both amazed that we had grown fascinated by the same topic at the same time, each in our separate ways. Mujab was kind enough to share his preliminary research report about the surveys he conducted at seven of these forts, from which I thankfully draw in this section. M. Mujabuddawat, 'Laporan Penelitian Arkeologi Menelusuri Jejak Benteng Tradisional di Pulau Seram dan Kepulauan Ambon Lease.' Ambon: Balai Arkeologi Maluku, unpublished 2018. I was able to return the favour by providing him with a number of seventeenth century images he was as yet unaware of.

433 Sue O'Connor, Andrew McWilliam, and Sally Brockwell eds., *Forts and Fortification in Wallacea: Archaeological and Ethnohistoric Investigations*, Terra Australis 53 (Acton: ANU Press, 2020), esp. Chs. 1, 6-10 and 12; Antoinette Schapper, 'Build the wall: village fortification, its timing and triggers in Southern Maluku, Indonesia,' *Indonesia and the Malay World* 47, no. 138 (2019): 220–51; M. Mujabuddawat, Laporan Penelitian etc., passim.

434 Quoted from John Villiers, John. 'Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century.' *Modern Asian studies* 15.4 (1981): 723–750, esp. pp. 727-728. Villiers additionally refers to a similar statement about Banda from Pires' *Suma Oriental,* written in the 1510s.

ern archipelago well before the early modern period. They subsequently proliferated and were adapted in response to gunpowder weapons and the encroachment of European and local powers. For instance, when the Dutch started wreaking havoc in Banda, which had had a great deal of direct contact with the wider archipelago in the early modern period, they were confronted with hilltop fortifications and fortified coastal towns with 'curtain walls and bastions flanking each other', defended with guns.[435] As we have seen, the Ternatens were able to use, extend, and improve upon existing Portuguese fortifications in the late sixteenth century. The Ambon Islands were certainly no exception.[436]

Judging by the descriptions and drawings, as well as the archaeological evidence, Ihamahu and Tobo had no bastions and the outer wall simply followed the edge of the platform. The former's walls were defended with swivel guns and muskets, rather than heavy ordnance; the latter with stones and arrows. Despite this, the VOC had real trouble conquering them with anything resembling European siege tactics. The same could be said of the VOC's broadside sailing vessels in the Ihamahu campaign. These ships proved cumbersome and were unable to use their cannon profitably because the town was simply too high up. The only way in which they could make themselves useful in the siege was by running supplies and blockading the coast.

Instead, Gijsels relied almost entirely on local allies and local tactics. In what we might consider a good example of culturally informed warfare, he drew on existing antagonisms by presenting the Dutch as *ulisiwa*; made use of the Alfurs of Seram's ferocious reputation and guerrilla tactics; and relied heavily on the hongi system.

Importantly, the tactic of destroying all tree and plant life that could sustain the human population, which would become the mainstay of Gijsels' campaigns and many of the subsequent conflicts, was not without precedence in the region. Indeed, Gijsels' approach was preceded by kimelaha Luhu's attack on Itiwaka, which also targeted clove, coconut, and sago trees. Of course, the VOC was no stranger to cutting down trees as part of its campaigns in the region, but the 1625 campaign specifically targeted clove trees (although the Dutch soldiers also occasionally cut down coconut groves when they came across them). It seems

435 J.A. van der Chijs. *De vestiging van het Nederlandsche gezag over de Banda-eilanden, (1599-1621)*. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1886, p. 127.

436 Also see the description of the stand-off at Kambelo in 1615, where an indigenous fort stood up to the Dutch: above, chapter V, paragraph 'A standoff'.

that the kimelaha's attack prompted Gijsels not only to dust off this tactic, but also to broaden it to deliberately target every type of tree and plant that could sustain the human population. It is important to realise that this Ambonese version of the scorched earth tactic seems to have come about due to a process of mutual interadoption, rather than being introduced by the VOC.[437]

That being said: the VOC certainly took the tactic to unprecedented extremes, not only at the siege of Ihamahu, but throughout the region in the following years. Gijsels' governorship was so rife with violence, and this violence has been so extensively documented, that a complete assessment or chronological narration are unfeasible here. Although the remainder of this chapter will look at some campaigns in detail, it will mostly describe the wider context within which we should see them.

A war enthusiast in Batavia

After his attack on Ihamahu, Gijsels stuck to his orders from Batavia and limited himself to attacks on trading vessels over the next few months. On occasion, these spilt over into raids to punish those settlements that had been welcoming to foreign traders. Asaudi was raided on the 23rd of August, for instance, with its livestock, supplies and trade goods taken. This expedition also took nine junks and conquered a makeshift fortification that the traders had erected on the island of Kelang. By contrast, a subsequent smaller expedition to Hoamoal and Buru, pursuing rumours of more traders arriving with the new monsoon, came up almost empty. It took only two kora-kora from North Seram, which were out raiding, but no traders were seen or caught.

Meanwhile, Gijsels had rapidly earned Governor-General Specx's disapproval. Gijsels deemed his predecessor Philip Lucasz an incompetent weakling and told the governor-general as much in his letters. He himself had big plans for the Ambon Islands and immediately to work executing them. They included refitting some of the VOC vessels to be more suited for warfare in the Ambon Islands, digging out the moat of Victoria Castle, and renovating fortifications such as the one at Hitu, all of which projects demanded money and manpower.

437 In addition, it would seem that in executing raids on each other, the various communities of Banda also cut down each other's nutmeg trees in the late sixteenth century. This kind of economic and environmental warfare, it seems, was not new to the region. See Peter Vanderford Lape. 'Contact and Conflict in the Banda Islands, Eastern Indonesia 11th-17th Centuries.' PhD. Diss. Brown University, Rhode Island, 2000, 66-67.

Specx felt that Gijsels was in way over his head. As he aptly summarised it in his general letter to the directors in Holland: 'Gijsels is impertinently complaining about various things… but we fear that compared to his own policies, those of Lucasz will compare rather favourably. He has initiated more changes than we believe he can satisfactorily complete, and is spending way too much'.[438]

In addition to apologising profusely and defending his policies, Gijsels continued to try and convince Specx that merely going after the junks was insufficient. The brisk attitude with which he had started his governorship was, however, rapidly melting away. Gijsels painted an alarming picture of the political situation in the islands, which recalled the pessimistic letters of his predecessors. Kimelaha Luhu had reportedly been betrothed to the daughter of the Kapitan Hitu. The Hituese were sheltering some of the Papuan raiders who had escaped from the VOC's campaign of the previous months and refused to turn them over. The Hoamoalese were ignoring written instructions from the Ternatan sultan to stop trading with the Makasars. Indeed, they flat-out denied that the sultan had demanded any such thing. At the same time, the kimelaha was sending gifts to the Alfur rulers to wean them from their alliance to the Dutch. (The gifts, Gijsels was relieved to report, had been refused.) All in all, Amboina was 'the most difficult governorate in all of the Indies', and the entire situation occasioned in Gijsels continuous 'doubts and a thousand fears'. Surely, all these 'Moors' had resolved to drive the Dutch from the region altogether, 'so that we should surely assume that they have numerous secret schemes'.[439] Barely one-and-a-half years into his governorship, Gijsels had become just as desperate and paranoid as his predecessors.

From Gijsels' perspective, the state of affairs in the islands called for extreme measures. To him, it was 'clear to see that from now on no other means should be used but the ultimate remedy, which is none other than to attack their cloves or their trees themselves. I therefore wish to maintain, contrary to the opinion

438 Specx, van der Burgh and Gardenijs to directors, 6 Jan 1632, published in *Generale Missiven*, I, 315. Some one-and-a-half years of the *Uitgaand Briefboek* of this period, from 1 March 1631 to 11 November 1632, have not been preserved, so that we cannot read the rebuke Specx gave Gijsels (unfortunately, as Specx was quite good at writing strongly-worded rebukes as we saw in the last chapter). We can, however, infer much of its contents from Gijsels' profuse apologies and defense of his policy in his letter of 23 May 1632, in VOC 1105, 5r –8r.

439 The original Dutch 'dienvolgende wij ons vastelijck ende seecker moeten inbeelden dat sij verscheijde secrete concepten hebben', breathes an atmosphere of paranoia that is lost in my translation. Gijsels to Specx, 10 September 1632, VOC 1105, 52v.

of many, that we will not find redress in patrolling with yachts and burning junks'.[440] He felt that such a campaign against the trees might best be aimed at the area around Kambelo, Lesidi, and Erangh. Although it would be difficult, costly, and last for at least two campaign seasons, it would certainly prove worthwhile.

Of course, Gijsels had not made a terribly good first impression on Governor-General Specx, who was none too happy with Gijsels' assertive (and costly) governing style. Specx had never been confirmed in his capacity as governor-general by the directors in the Netherlands, however. As it turned out, the directors preferred a different candidate. Just as Gijsels was writing down his plans for a sustained campaign of clove eradication, Specx was succeeded in Batavia by Hendrik Brouwer.

The latter was far more receptive to Gijsels' pleas.[441] He sent Anthonissen out to Ambon once again with a fleet of five yachts, with orders that had been lifted straight from Gijsels' letters. Gijsels and Anthonissen were not only to hunt for foreign ships, but also see to an attack on Seram Laut. This island lay all the way on the eastern side of Seram, in an area that the Dutch rarely visited. A local informant had told the Dutch that the Javanese and Makasar traders, in their perennial cat-and-mouse game with the Dutch patrols, had moved their main operation there. The traders had sailed to Seram Laut undetected during the western monsoon and were now awaiting the turning of the monsoon, which usually coincided with the end of the campaign season, before coming to western Seram to buy cloves. This news was doubly alarming to the VOC, for Seram Laut was also a good staging area for attacks on the Banda Islands.

Brouwer's instructions did not end there. If time permitted, Gijsels and Anthonissen were also to use the fleet to attack several villages on the coast of Western Seram, specifically those north of Kambelo that had not been touched by the 1625 campaign. The villages that Brouwer specified came right out of Gijsels' earlier letter. Gijsels was to destroy the clove trees in their vicinity, and should avoid coming to any kind of reconciliation with the inhabitants too readily as this would get in the way of his tree eradication efforts. Brouwer subsequently

440 'Extreme middelen' in Gijsels to Specx, 10 September 1632, VOC 1105, 52v. Subsequent quote from same letter, printed in Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen,* II, 206.

441 Once again, the letters to Gijsels have not been preserved, but Brouwer e.a. to directors, 1 December 1632, in: *Generale Missiven*, I, 357pp, combined with e.g. the orders for the Anthonissen fleet in VOC 856, fol 1r-2r, give us the necessary details about what they entailed.

defended this policy to the Gentlemen XVII back home by stating that there were currently 'more than too many cloves in the world anyway'.[442]

Gijsels went straight to work, but set his own priorities. On the 28th of February, he sent out the hongi to join Anthonissen's fleet, which had already left for the coast of Western Seram. The combined force would ultimately include seven yachts, four sloops and twenty-nine kora-kora. Gijsels was aware that his new policies would likely invite retaliation and that the kimelaha was also on the move with a hongi of his own. Accordingly, he evacuated the VOC lodge at Luhu before making straight for the islands west of Hoamoal. Masavoy, on Manipa, was the first target: it was burned and two junks hidden near the town were destroyed.

The fleet then went on to Kelang, a large and well-fortified town and shipbuilding centre situated on the island of the same name. Although Kelang was situated in a valley between two hills, and therefore more accessible than some of the hill settlements, the town was nonetheless formidable. It was here that the soldiers of the Nassau Fleet had suffered a reversal seven years previously. During this new assault, the initial defence was once again fierce; Makasar (poisonous) darts, as well as bullets from muskets and swivel guns, rained down on the Dutch attackers, resulting in several casualties. In the end, however, Gijsels managed to storm the town and the defenders abandoned the impressive stone walls surprisingly quickly. The Dutch and their allies took the town at the cost of four dead and some fifteen wounded. This came as a surprise, for Kelang was considered one of the most heavily fortified settlements in the region. Indeed, the attackers could attest to its defensibility, protected as it was by high stone walls with ramparts.[443]

Once inside, the Dutch marvelled at the size and beauty of the place, with its large central square lined with coconut palms and five or six large, well-made *baileus*. One was particularly impressive: 'recently made and extraordinarily large, [it was] made out of beautiful and good wood, about as long, wide and high as the church of Amboina. The roof was as much as three feet thick, and we could not have built such a *baileu* near the castle for 20.000 reals'.[444] In addition,

442 Brouwer e.a. to directors, 1 December 1632, in: *Generale Missiven*, I, 359. Furthermore, he was also instructed to attack Ihamahu again, should they still give any trouble.

443 The journal first mentions 4 dead, then 15 slightly further down. It is my impression that the latter number is a mistake, and the author mistakenly wrote down the number of wounded.

444 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 53r.

the Dutch found six unfinished kora-kora and a great number of smaller craft. This was the main reason that they had targeted the town: boatbuilding was a specialised skill in the region (as opposed to housebuilding, for instance) and Kelang was the main boatbuilding centre for the *ulilima* towns affiliated with the kimelaha. It was also known to supply replacement ships to foreign traders who had lost their craft to a Dutch patrol. The Dutch put the entire town and everything in it to the torch. The finished boats and kora-kora found outside the town were either destroyed or taken along with the fleet.

Two days later, while *en route* back to the coast of Hoamoal again, Gijsels invited all the officers and orangkaya to a feast on the ship *Leeuwinne*. He presented ten of the orangkaya with a Dutch sword, both as a reward for the successful attack on Kelang and to motivate them for what would transpire over the next few days. The next important target was Erang, on the coast of Hoamoal. An important producer of cloves, the town was known to sell its entire harvest to the Makasar and Javanese traders and had escaped the attention of the Nassau Fleet seven years earlier. After a few days of heavy rain, which made any kind of military action impossible, the attack began. Three of the large VOC yachts had been sent to Kambelo and Lesidi with minimal crews so as to create the impression that the attack would fall there. Covered by this diversion, the main force landed unopposed on the beaches of Erang in the early hours of the 16th of March.

Erang was situated on a hilltop that could be reached by two paths. Accordingly, Gijsels split his troops into two forces to climb them. Both forces encountered several fortifications. One was described as made out of wood filled with earth and having two demilunes (semi-circular bulwarks), 'from which [the defenders] would have been able to inflict great violence on us, had they not lacked the courage'.[445] The defenders only took a dozen or so pot shots at the Dutch-Ambonese force before abandoning the fortification as the Dutch returned fire. The Dutch pursued the fleeing defenders, passing two similar defensive works, which had also been abandoned, and reached the town unopposed. As soon as the Gijsels' force entered, the few people who were still there rushed out into the hills. Even without any defenders, the town's high position proved daunting to the Dutch soldiers, several of whom fainted on their way up.

Some of the defenders showed themselves from a small fortification sited higher up in the hills, out of range of the Company's gunfire. Carrying a blood flag, they shouted at the Dutch. Gijsels responded in kind by triumphantly pa-

445 'Journael van gedaene tochten' fol. 57r.

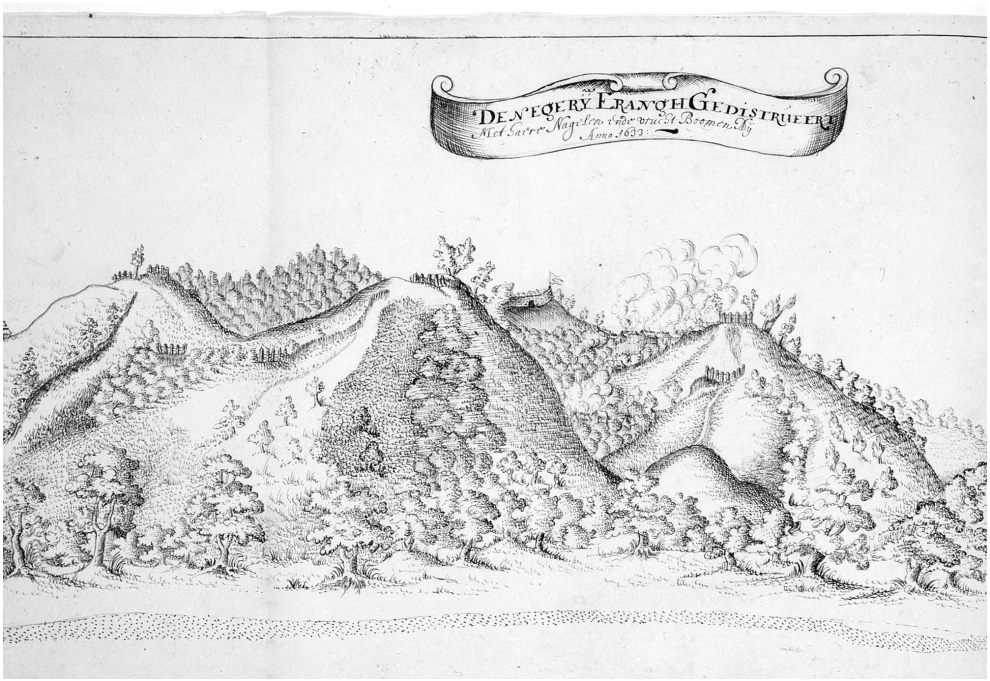

Fig 7.3. *De negerij Erangh gedistrueert met haer nagelen ende vrucht boomen Adij Anno 1633.* Anonymous drawing from Gijsels' expedition log, showing the various fortifications defending the two roads to Erangh. The town itself is shown going up in smoke just below the banderole. Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe, inv. nr. K476, fol. 56.

rading his troops on the highest part of the settlement. He then got about his business and searched the town, discovering some seventy-five bags of cloves, two swivel guns, and some other loot, which was brought down to the ships. He then had Erang and everything in it put to the torch.

That, however, was only a prelude to the attack's main objective: now that the town and its defenders were out of the way, the force took to the task of destroying the abundance of clove trees in the area. The expedition log notes with some annoyance how the large and old clove trees grew right up to the shoreline, which the Nassau Fleet, which had sailed closely along this coast seven years ago, could only have deliberately overlooked. The next three days were spent cutting and ringbarking the trees. The work was only interrupted by bad weather and the sago supplies running low. After a three-day resupply mission to a sago forest near Asaudi, the force returned to Erang and spent another four days eradicating clove and fruit trees.

On the 26th of March, Gijsels brought his entire force ashore again and

marched them into the hills in an attempt to destroy the villages of Tulon and Tabinato, which lay higher up and further inland. This would ensure that they could safely destroy the remaining clove trees in the wider area. This proved more difficult than anticipated: although Gijsels' troops were able to drive the defenders from several smaller fortifications, he did not feel that he could press on to confront the remaining fortifications and villages. One clove plantation, it turned out, was defended by a fortification hidden in the forest; the Dutch suffered two dead and eight wounded and had to retire, leaving the trees unharmed. The dead were buried the next day – a Sunday – in a hidden location to make sure they were not dug up and beheaded.

Another, more accessible clove plantation was found and destroyed the following day, but Gijsels began to sense that he had done about as much as he could. His forces had been on the move for a month and progress was slow and difficult due to the terrain, persistent resistance, and his allies' dwindling supplies. Rather than try to destroy the remaining villages and the surrounding plantations, groves, and orchards, he felt it was probably sensible to return to the castle and prepare for the next big expedition he had been instructed to undertake. On the 29th, he called together the officers and orangkaya and, after long deliberations, had them subscribe to a resolution to that effect. It noted that the mission had been somewhat successful, given that around Erang alone they had 'cut, ringbarked and razed […]around 5000 clove and 900 nutmeg trees, 400 coconut palms and much other fruitbearing vegetation all the way up to Hulon and Tabialo'. Despite the force being 'resolved to continue to the end… nothing more of note can be achieved here and [the governor-general] has strongly recommended us to undertake the expedition to Seram Laut, in order to secure our state in Banda.'[446]

And so the entire fleet set out for the Hituese coast the next day, in bad, windy weather that endangered the kora-kora. Without even returning to the bay of Ambon, preparations for the new expedition were made on the spot as soon as the vessels reached Hitu. Messengers and soldiers marched up and down the overland road from Hitu to Ambon, captured cloves were unloaded, and supplies brought on board.

The kimelaha had not been idle in the meantime. There had been reports that he was out and about with a hongi of his own, seventeen vessels strong. Indeed, the threat posed by this fleet had loomed in the background throughout

446 'Journael van gedaene tochten', 60v.

the recent expedition. It now turned out that, rather than strike at the Dutch force directly, the kimelaha had opted for a different tactic. On the 31st of March, Gijsels learned that he had attacked Wai, a Christian village under Dutch rule situated on the far eastern side of Ambon, extremely close to the Dutch base of power. Making his way there the next day, Gijsels found the village burned and got the full story. Two days earlier, an hour before dawn, four of the kimelaha's kora-kora had rowed up to Wai undetected and then attacked shouting 'Kimelaha, kimelaha! The governor has torched our towns and taken our kora-kora, now we will slay you all!' In a matter of half an hour, they had killed thirteen people, taken as many as forty-three captive, and torched the town. Gijsels was under the impression that they had been able to do so by bringing a couple of Alfurs of their own. Combined with the fact that Alfur support for the past campaign had not materialised despite being requested, this left him with a gnawing suspicion that the kimelaha might have driven a wedge in their alliance with the Company after all.[447]

A VOC yacht riding at anchor before Wai, which had been left there specifically to prevent such an attack, had noted that something was going on, fired its cannon into the darkness, and subsequently given chase to the kora-kora, but to no avail. While Gijsels was off fighting his war on trees, the kimelaha had been able to retaliate right in his backyard.

To the far side of Seram

In fact, Gijsels had also aimed to attack villages (in his case, those under the kimelaha) while their men were away on the hongi, for this would incite the men to return to defend their homes.[448] Clearly, two could play that game and before his new expedition could take off, Gijsels had to allow some of the orangkaya to return home. He took some additional defensive measures, sending some of the kora-kora off with extra soldiers for the Dutch posts on the Lease Islands and ordering a VOC yacht to patrol the waters between Hitu and Seram.

All the same, the expedition fleet was formidable. In addition to the hongi, it eventually consisted of ten yachts (two of which had come from Banda) and some additional sloops and other smaller vessels. It carried nine companies of European soldiers (probably at least 500 men) and what must have amounted

447 Letter to governor-general, 25 May 1633, partly published in: Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen,* II, 240-241.

448 'Journael van gedaene tochten', 50v.

to some 2000 local allies. Gijsels planted the rumour that they were going to attack Werinama, the fortified town that they had made plans to take two years ago. The force then made its way east – we might imagine with some reluctance amongst the local allies, who were likely concerned for their homes and families, and annoyed at having to campaign for such an unprecedentedly long time.

The island of Seram is the largest in the Amboina Quarter, stretching more than 300 kilometres from west to east. Dutch knowledge of the coast became more sketchy beyond Tobo.[449] Seram Laut, a little way out at sea from the easternmost point of Seram, was another 100 kilometres from there. Although the hongi received *hormats* and stopped to meet local orangkaya over the first two weeks, the expedition took on a different character as it made its way into less familiar territory. As the ships passed Tobo in the hours before dawn, great fires were burning there; presumably to warn the surrounding villages. Later that day, the hongi met up with the yachts, which had sailed ahead. Treaty or not, the large fleet understandably had the inhabitants of the coastal areas worried. When the combined fleet passed Kilbon slightly further east, they found that although its inhabitants had left a *hormat* of some food and a white flag on the shore, they themselves had fled the town for the mountains. The food was picked up and the fleet continued on its way.

On the morning of the 19th of April, Seram Laut came into view. Landing on it proved difficult, though. The island was surrounded by coral reefs on all sides, and the only approach for anything larger than the smallest vessels was on the west side, where the heavily fortified main settlements were located. The yachts and kora-kora therefore had to anchor quite far off the island, halfway between Seram Laut and Geser, a smaller, uninhabited island slightly to the west.

The inhabitants of Seram Laut immediately sent a boat with four delegates, flying a white flag. It turned out that they were old acquaintances; representatives of the island had come to Castle Victoria two years earlier, receiving a trading pass. The delegates told Gijsels of their surprise at the force's arrival; as far as they knew, they were friends with the Dutch. Gijsels noted that Kilwaru, a heavily fortified settlement built on a sandy peninsula on the west side of the island, was flying a Dutch flag to illustrate the point.[450] Unimpressed, he replied that they

449 Van Speult had also taken a hongi along Seram's south coast in 1622, all the way to Guli-Guli, but he had not made the crossing to Seram Laut, and in any case, the expedition had yielded little detailed information about the coast.

450 Such flags were handed out to communities putting themselves under Dutch protection through a treaty, as we saw above at the end of the siege of Tobo.

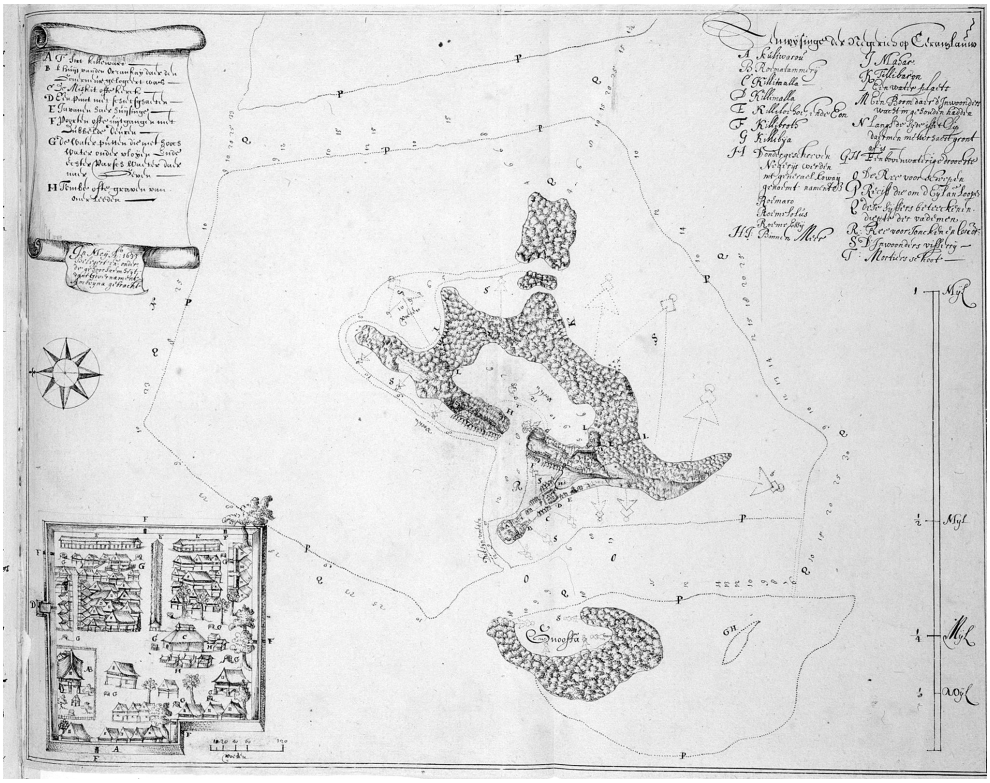

Fig 7.4 Map of the island of Seram Laut. To the lower left, an inset shows Kilwaru, the main settlement, and its fortifications. Each side of the town was about a hundred meters long, the northeastern side sporting a 'bastion with loopholes'. In the west (below) is the island of Geser (here called Gnoffa). Above Geser, we see the sandy peninsula with Kilwaru at its furthest end. To its east (i.e. above it) we see the rest of the island, with extensive fortifications on the hills flanking the entrance to the bay. Kilwaru exists to this day but is no longer linked to the main island, for the connecting land has since disappeared beneath the waves. The eastern half of the island (i.e. the upper part) has been drawn rather sketchily; it is much larger in reality. Karlsruhe, inv. nr. K476, fol. 69.

had come because of the foreign traders. Instead of sending the delegates back, he arrested them for interrogation.

His new captives informed him about the various settlements on the island and their defences. The island as a whole boasted some 3000 men capable of bearing arms and there were some 100 muskets and ten cannon. Seven Javanese junks, as well as one from Selayar (the island just south of Sulawesi, under Makasar control), were presently at the island, as was a sampan from Luhu,

which had brought cloves to sell to the traders. Having learned all this, Gijsels locked the delegates up on board one of the yachts. Meanwhile, additional reconnaissance with two sloops had established that Seram Saut had a large inlet whose mouth was defended by various stone fortifications. A square fort on the outer end of the sandy peninsula, its walls eleven-foot wide and eighteen-foot high, was especially daunting. All in all, Gijsels found the defences 'quite different from how they had been described to us by various people, and truly not a kitten to be handled without gloves'.[451]

By this time, both the traders and the inhabitants had brought all their vessels to safety in the inlet. As it was getting late, it was decided any kind of offensive would be postponed until the next day. Gijsels had the fleet spread out around the entire island to form a blockade and prevent any of the vessels from escaping.

To Gijsels' surprise, the next morning the entire force was able to land close to Kilwaru without facing any opposition. The entire sandy peninsula, with all its settlements, had been abandoned, with the inhabitants taking refuge in the fortifications higher up on the island. The Dutch forces occupied the various posts and structures on the small peninsula, which were all fortified to some degree. Kilwaru, which lay on the far end of the peninsula, was a veritable fortress. The Dutch noted that some of the other fortifications were in poor condition, showing signs of rushed and incomplete repairs. They brought cannon ashore, installing some near the mouth of the inlet both to prevent ships from moving freely through the bay and to fire at the fortifications higher up on the island, wearing the enemy down.[452]

As the guns were being hoisted into position, a rowing boat emerged from the inlet flying an improvised white flag. Its occupant, a man named Modim, came to negotiate. Not only did he bring a 'golden snake' to present to the governor; he also had a copy of a treaty between the inhabitants of Seram Laut and Governor Van Speult, made in December 1624. Indeed, several of the settlements along Seram's south coast had come to Castle Victoria at that time, making a treaty with Van Speult to establish friendly relations following a period of turmoil pre-

451 Gijsels to governor-general, 25 May 1633, as excerpted in Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen,* II, 242.

452 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 70r. The phrasing is interesting because it fits the general pattern of these campaigns of not using guns to breach the enemy's walls, but to merely use them to exert pressure on the occupants of a fortification by causing casualties, fires, and panic.

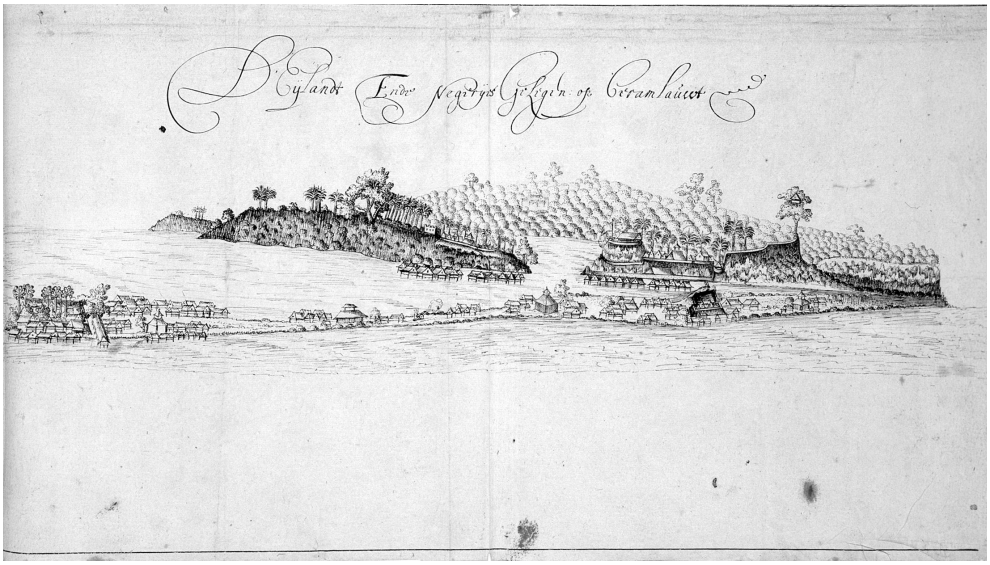

Fig 7.5 Bird's eye view of Seram Laut, showing the sandy peninsula with Kilwaru (visible on the left) and the other settlements. Several fortifications with right angles and rudimentary bastions dot the peninsula. The low hills behind on the main landmass are also extensively fortified to guard the inlet of the bay. These defensive structures, by contrast, are built with round walls following the contours of the landscape. They include an observation post in a very tall tree to the right. Karlsruhe, inv. nr. K476, fol 74.

cipitated by the Bandanese refugees.[453] In practice, contacts had been sparse since then. All the same, here was a Seram Laut representative brandishing a copy of a treaty with one of Gijsels' predecessors, insisting that Seram Laut and the Company were friends. Gijsels retorted that they were here because of the inhabitants' dealings with the foreign traders. If they were truly friends, he continued, they should come down from their forts and turn over the foreign traders and their weapons. Modim went back to the orangkaya, still in possession of the golden snake, which Gijsels had not accepted, accompanied by a VOC official named Roelof Gerrits. The two were back soon enough with the orangkaya's reply: they could only come down if the Dutch would go back to their ships. As things stood, the Javanese and Makasar traders threatened to run amok in the town should the inhabitants dare surrender to the Dutch.

453 The text of the treaty is included in *Corpus Diplomaticum*, p. 300, treaty LXXXIII (23 December 1624).

With the inhabitants unwilling (or rather, unable) to surrender, it came down to a siege. The low hill beyond the flat peninsula, which the Dutch had conquered, featured a fortification at both its foot and summit. The Dutch decided to breach the walls of the higher fortifications using their artillery and succeeded in doing so in a matter of hours. Its defenders abandoned the position. Gijsels had the reinforcements from Banda as well as some of the Mardijkers move around and climb the hill to take the abandoned fort. The defenders in the fort below now had the enemy both to their rear, up on the hill, and in front, on the sandy peninsula. Threatened from two sides, it soon fell too. The Dutch and their local allies now controlled the south side of the inlet entirely. The VOC's guns were trained on the fortifications on the other side of the water and launches with soldiers were sent out to fire at the houses built on poles in the shallow water below them.

Right around that time, Modim, the negotiator, appeared in a boat for a second time. In the confusion (or so the Dutch report took care to emphasise), he was shot, and he died that evening. Modim had brought the golden snake to offer Gijsels once again. Gijsels later retrieved it from a sailor who had stolen it after Modium was shot. Another *perahu* appeared, with two white flags, bringing two women and a man. They brought lavish gifts: more golden snakes, a *pinang* vessel, two women's gowns, and a white shroud. The latter two items were not gifts per se; rather more morbidly, they were meant for the burial of the negotiators should they too be shot.[454] They professed their willingness to come down from their fortifications, but once again told the VOC that they were not allowed to do so by the Makasar and Javanese traders. If the VOC would only cease fire and rein in its local allies (who were raiding and headhunting in the interior of the island) they would be happy to negotiate. This was agreed and the negotiations were set to take place on the coast of the inlet later that day.

Things would not, however, go as the Dutch hoped. The most senior VOC officials arrived at the agreed-upon time – Gijsels in his large *kora-kora*, Ottens, and Anthonissen in a launch. As soon as they dropped anchor, they were

454 For identification of these items, see Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën,* II, 1, 167 for the *pinang* vessel, 168 for the gowns ('oeti-oeti'). 170-171 describes various types of jewellery and mentions 'golden snakes', which, among other things, were used as hair ornaments, and of which Valentijn mentions that one only finds them among 'the first rulers of these lands.' (170). Their apparent royal status, and the fact that they are often offered in negotiations, suggests that they might have a symbolic significance, recognizing the recipient as a ruler, but I have been unable to confirm this.

treated to a hail of musket fire, arrows, spears, and stones. They cut the anchor ropes, rowed for their lives, and were fortunate to get away with only one man wounded. The shooting and fighting resumed, with Gijsels, angry, ordering his smaller vessels to raid the inlet and capture or destroy all the inhabitants' vessels. According to the report, an improbable number of craft were taken: six large kora-kora; seven junks and sampans; some forty uranbays; and 160 small vessels. Some of the vessels were taken from right beneath the walls of the remaining enemy forts. Meanwhile, the Ambonese allies returned from the interior with some seventeen hunted heads and around fifty captives. Interestingly, Gijsels and the other officers were rather displeased: these raids had apparently continued after the inhabitants had agreed to negotiate and Gijsels suspected that this might have been why the planned negotiations ended in bloodshed earlier that day. He berated the allies, telling them that targeting innocent women and children was unbecoming for self-professed Christians and that they should not take off on their own the next day.

Attempts at renewed negotiations over the next few days came to nothing; the foreign traders simply would not allow the local inhabitants to surrender, effectively keeping them hostage. Gijsels therefore kept on bombarding the fortifications, meaning to take them by storm. On the 23rd, guided by a prisoner who had professed his willingness to help the Dutch in exchange for his freedom and that of his family, the Dutch landed on the far side of the inlet and climbed up to the fort with all nine companies of European soldiers. Interrogations of prisoners had revealed that the besieged were out of gunpowder, but determined to fight the Dutch to the last all the same.

The VOC forces encountered some resistance on their way up, but managed to drive the defenders back and soon reached the main fortification. Once there, however, the fighting became much fiercer. Even though the defenders hardly fired their muskets and guns, confirming the suspicion they were out of gunpowder, they treated the VOC soldiers to such a hailstorm of stones, arrows, poisoned darts, and spears, that the latter retreated after about an hour of skirmishing. Fourteen of the attackers died and more than thirty were wounded. Quite a number of these causalities, it later turned out, had been caused by the VOC soldiers' own musket fire, misdirected in the confusion of the attack.

Gijsels simply continued the siege. On their side of the inlet, the VOC's forces hoisted ever-more cannon up to the conquered hillfort. There was a half *kartouwe*, typically used to fire twenty-four-pound cannonballs, as well as the regular guns, which lobbed grenades and firebombs over the walls. The Ambonese

allies freely roamed the interior of the island again, making it difficult for the besieged to escape or procure supplies. Now that negotiation had failed, Gijsels' Christian objections to targeting women and children seem to have vanished. Over the next couple of days, the number of captives taken by the allies would eventually tally up to around 350.[455] When the Dutch guns managed to set the settlement ablaze on the 27th of April, Gijsels attempted to bring the besieged to the negotiating table again. They agreed to meet for negotiations the next day, if the Dutch would but stop firing.

The orangkaya of Seram Laut and the main VOC officials met the next morning at the coast of the bay, where the path up to the besieged settlement began. According to his own report, Gijsels started by repeating his old mantra that the Dutch were not inclined to shed innocent blood. A new treaty was drawn up, in which the inhabitants submitted to the authority of the prince of Orange. Gijsels immediately added, however, that the inhabitants of Seram Laut would have to pay for their transgressions with an indemnity of fifty pounds of gold and 200 slaves. The orangkaya were apparently under enough pressure to submit to this demand, although they stressed that it would take time to fulfil these demands for their slaves were now scattered through the island. Gijsels had none of this, retorting that they had more than enough slaves. After further deliberation over the payment, the orangkaya of Seram Laut delivered a first, symbolic gift. In a procession carrying ten white flags, they brought the Dutch a *pinang* vessel filled with earth dug from the island and packed between two white cloths. They also presented three ornamented boxes and two lori parrots. Preparations were made for a *matakau* to be held.

The inhabitants were clearly struggling to fulfil the indemnity, however. On the day of the negotiations, they only managed to deliver eleven slaves, 'all of them young children', whom the Dutch took to their ships.[456] Although the inhabitants presented some 'gold chains of small value' the next day, they told the Dutch that it would be very difficult for them to meet the demands. Gijsels told them that they had agreed to the indemnity and must fulfil it in its entirety. To illustrate this point, he started firing the guns at the settlement again the next morning. A white flag was immediately raised over the settlement and the orangkaya asked if the Dutch would settle for half the number of slaves for now and accept some of the orangkaya's children as hostages to guarantee delivery of

455 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 75v.
456 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 75r.

the remaining half in the future. Gijsels accepted. Seventy-nine additional slaves and the equivalent of twenty-one pounds of gold were delivered over the next few days. Slowly realising that 'all in all, gold was not as plentiful here as some people had thought', Gijsels allowed the people to pay some of the indemnity in wood and *atap*, which could be put to good use in Banda. The rest would be paid later.[457]

Gijsels was also procuring slaves in another way: his Ambonese and Seramese allies took a total of 350 captives during the course of the siege. Gijsels convinced the allied orangkaya that his own soldiers, having borne the brunt of the fighting and been ordered not to partake in the raids, should be allotted half this human war booty.[458]

Meanwhile, further interrogations of the prisoners extensively confirmed that the Makasar and Javanese traders had rounded up all the women and children when the fleet had appeared. They had used the captives as collateral to force the inhabitants to fight and intended to stab them all to death and then run amok against the Dutch, if worst came to worst.[459] This echoes similar claims made during the standoff at Kambelo three years earlier and provides us with a valuable insight into the impact of the conflict on the general population of the region. Ever fearful of secret Muslim alliances and schemes, Gijsels and other high-ranking VOC personnel had assumed that the population of Seram Laut were in cahoots with traders from Makassar and Java. Rather, they seem to have been caught between two fires. Having become a party to this conflict, the population found itself stuck between traders threatening to kill them if they surrendered and the VOC making every effort to kill them as long as they held out. This double-bind resulted in an untold number of deaths, the loss of all the island's seagoing vessels, at least 450 people enslaved, and the additional loss of a significant amount of wealth in the form of gold.

Gijsels' forces prepared to depart. The task of drawing up the treaty with Seram Laut was left for later; for now Gijsels had other business to attend to. He first wished to confer with the governor-general and hoped to mount an attack on Werinama. Moreover, word reached him from Ambon that the hongi of the kimelaha was still on the move and had been spotted near Ambelau. By the 6th,

457 Four more pounds of gold were to be brought to Castle Victoria within six months, the other half of the indemnity could be paid the next monsoon. Ultimately, the rest of the debt would be annulled. Tiele Heeres, *Bouwstoffen* II, 267-268.

458 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 76r.

459 'Journael van gedaene tochten' fol. 75r.

Gijsels' ships had set sail. The contingent from Banda was to return there, while the rest of the fleet made its way to Werinama. Gijsels took the opportunity to cement relations with Keffing, an *ulisiwa* village on the mainland that had offered to help the Dutch in the aftermath of the campaign.[460] Gijsels marvelled at its fortifications, which were larger than those of Fort Victoria in Ambon. Built with coral stone and boasting three bastions, the fortifications were, however, open on one side where the settlement was protected by impenetrable mangrove and swampland. As the fleet made its way back west, Gijsels inventoried the villages, attending especially to their allegiances and strength. At every stop, the population was admonished to deliver any runaway slaves from Banda to Castle Victoria.

When the ships arrived before Werinama on the 11th of May, the force discovered that the town was deserted, the population and orangkaya having taken refuge in the mountains. The next day, the orangkaya came down to surrender, symbolically presenting a bowl filled with earth to the Dutch. Gijsels demanded they pay an indemnity of fifty slaves, whom the orangkaya promised to bring to the castle later. Hostages were delivered into Dutch custody and Gijsels had the orangkaya swear not to do the bidding of either the kimelaha or Kapitan Hitu (at this point he clearly had little faith in the VOC's oldest ally in the islands). They were to heed his orders only.

With the departure from Werinama, the campaign drew to a close. The various kora-kora of the hongi scattered and Gijsels had returned to Passo, at the eastern end of Ambon, by the 19th of May, along with many soldiers who had fallen ill during the campaign. He learned that the kimelaha had put the last one-and-a-half months to good use, attacking *ulisiwa* settlements, kidnapping more than sixty people, and killing Dutchmen where he could – out at sea or collecting firewood. Just before Gijsels returned from his expedition, Kimelaha Leliato had commanded a fleet of ten kora-kora to attack Alang and Liliboi, two Christian villages situated on the northern entrance of the Bay of Ambon, but had been repulsed by the defenders. The main body of the Gijsels' fleet had apparently just missed them as they made their way into Ambon Bay in bad

460 The people of Keffing, startled by the large fleet, had fled into the mountains when the fleet came out to Seram Laut, but had later been convinced to come back down by Pati Nai, who was sent to the mainland from the siege for that purpose.

weather. Two Dutch officials accidentally ran into his fleet shortly afterwards, however, making a narrow escape.[461]

Gijsels' efforts to hunt down the traders, wherever they moved their operations, seemed to be having little effect. While he was still at Seram Laut, he had received word from Castle Victoria that twenty junks had appeared from behind Buru, right when the Dutch were 'at their weakest'.[462] Six more arrived soon after, bringing 300 men armed with Japanese muskets. Word had it that they had established contact with the kimelaha, who was more than happy to allow them to trade, as long as half of the vessels would stay to assist him against the Dutch, with whom he had no intention of making peace. The traders then proceeded to Kelang to buy cloves and fortified their position there. Given the monsoon, an epidemic raging in Ambon, and the exhausting expedition to which he had just subjected his soldiers and allies, Gijsels felt powerless to do anything about this.[463] He could only express his 'amazement […] that these traders, in spite of the great damage they suffered both in ships and their goods, just kept on coming back', which led him to believe that they were directly sponsored by the Danes, English, and Portuguese. [464]

For Gijsels this was all the more confirmation that there was only one cure for this whole mess: continuing the eradication of all the clove trees in the areas in the kimelaha's sphere of influence. This required more ships and more soldiers. He readily admitted that, even with adequate means, this task would never be easy, for the mountains were inaccessible, roads bad, and the forests 'vast, rough and entirely inhospitable'.[465] Precisely for this reason, he insisted on the necessity to cultivate good relations with the Alfurs: 'The principal difficulty is that we lack guides and good black soldiers, who handle themselves in the forest far better than the Dutch, as the latter are badly encumbered with their heavy muskets, bandoleers and long sidearms, and will often collapse on the road with exhaustion as a result'.[466]

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461 Joan Ottens and Antonio van den Heuvel.

462 Letter to governor-general, 25 May 1633, partly published in: Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen*, 245; 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 76r.

463 Letter to governor-general, 12 June 1633, in VOC 1108, 671r-v.

464 Letter to governor-general, 25 May 1633, in VOC 1105, 628v-629r.

465 Letter to governor-General, 12 June 1633, VOC 1108, 673v-673r.

466 Letter to governor-General, 12 June 1633, partly published in: Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen,* II, 247. The full letter also gives more explanation about the failure of Alfur support to materialize. As it turned out, Alfurs from Samit and Saulau had in fact come to Hoamoal, but had missed the Dutch. VOC 1108, 673r-v.

In the meantime, Kimelaha Leliato, expecting that Gijsels' amphibious tree-cutting expeditions would become a recurrent practice, fortified his domains, evacuating smaller villages around the Bend of Kaibobo to his larger settlements at Loki and Lusiela. New clove trees were only planted inland and the roads leading to these areas were made impassable.[467] The war on trees was not over yet.

Gerard Advance and other critics

Not everyone within the ranks of VOC officials in Ambon agreed with Gijsels' tactics. His most vocal opponent, Joan Ottens, by now the *opperkoopman* of Hitu and Luhu, tactfully but persistently expressed his objections in his letters to Batavia. This was a delicate matter, for Ottens was outright contradicting the opinions of his direct superior. On one occasion, he found a creative way of tackling this problem by writing a remonstrance in the form of two separate letters, which discussed the matter from the perspective of two fictitious colleagues: a merchant called Gerard Advance, and a military officer called Captain Awe.[468]

Gerard Advance wrote the first letter. After giving an overview of the developments of the past few years, he roundly admitted that the kimelaha and his followers had acted 'faithlessly and shamefully'. What to do? Some, he said, proposed eradicating every last clove tree in the kimelaha's domains. These people, wrote Advance, should be reminded that, whereas the wars of the Greeks, Romans, and Hebrews were profitable, yielding money and land, the present conflicts in the Ambon Quarter were costly. The only prudent thing, he argued, was to go after the foreign traders, which would hurt precisely those who were involved in the illegal trade. He reminded the reader of the great success of 1631, when the Dutch had conquered so many of the foreign trading vessels and stranded and ruined so many traders, that the foreign merchants could not possibly continue their activities if the Dutch kept up the pressure over a few more seasons. He also pointed out that if only the Dutch would, like the foreign traders, bring a richer array of wares to the island (including sugar, salt, pepper, opium, several types of textiles, and, most importantly, slaves), they would re-

467 Letter to governor-General, 12 June 1633, partly published in: Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen,* II, 246.

468 'Geraert Avance' and 'Cappitteijn Ontsagh'.

move much of the impulse to trade with the outsiders and turn a nice profit in the process.[469]

As to military matters, he gladly yielded to his friend Captain Awe, who started off thunderously by asking whether, if failure to mete out due punishment gave rise to tyranny, the Company was getting exactly what it deserved in Amboyna? Of course it was! In regard to what Advance had said, Awe asked: should the Company, for a little profit in trade, suffer all the insults that it had in the islands? Would that lead anywhere? Of course not. He then proposed his own solution: open war with the kimelaha throughout the islands, and the destruction of every last clove tree in his domains. He subsequently imagined how such a campaign should be set up, totting up the impressive amount of ships and manpower it would require. Although Awe admitted that the venture would not be easy, the end justified the means. He topped off his letter with a generous dose of belligerent rhetoric. The real sting, it turned out, was in the tail: Captain Awe concluded by stating that he would leave the question of what should happen *after* such a campaign for another time and that his plan might still seem a little sketchy here and there. But given that his speech was rather slow, he would like to be excused from the duty of further elaboration for now.[470]

Although some people in Batavia might have chuckled over Ottens' remonstrance, it had little immediate effect. He wrote it in September 1632, right around the time that Brouwer stepped up as governor-general. As we have seen, the latter turned out to be even more of a war enthusiast with respect to Amboina than Gijsels himself.[471] Soon, however, Brouwer would lend a more receptive ear to another of Gijsels' critics.

At his departure from the Netherlands, Brouwer had been instructed to send out commissioners-general to the various Company trading posts. He duly did so upon his arrival in Batavia, sending Antonio van den Heuvel to Banda, Ambon, and Ternate to check the state of affairs in Company business there.

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469 Ottens, 'Slecht vertoogh ende remonstrantie…' in: VOC 1105, fol. 39v – 47r, esp. 39v-43r.

470 Ibid., esp. 43v-47r.

471 The directors in the Netherlands, for their part, tended to follow the judgment of the *Generale Missive* in most local matters to a surprising degree. Whereas, in October 1632, they had followed Specx's judgment about Gijsels' policies being less than satisfactory, and stated that the Company could not possibly hope to eradicate the clove trees everywhere, in September of the next year, following Brouwer's judgment, they fully endorsed this same policy. See letter of Gentlemen XVII to Governor-General, 7 October 1632 in: VOC 315 (unfol.) and: Ibid, 19 Sept 1633, in: VOC 316 (unfol.)

Van den Heuvel arrived in Ambon in mid-February, catching Gijsels just as he was preparing to leave on his hongi expedition to Hoamoal.[472] When Gijsels left, Van den Heuvel had ample time to form his own opinion about how things stood in the Amboyna Quarter. After going to Banda, briefly investigating the situation there, he returned to the coast of Seram, bringing two yachts with 200 additional troops for the attack on Seram Laut, experiencing the attack first-hand.[473] He then went to Ambon with the returning fleet, spending an additional month in and around Ambon before continuing on to Ternate with Ottens, who was to become the new president there, on the 19th of June.

No substantial documentation survives of Van den Heuvel's activities while on and around Ambon, but his final verdict on the situation was abundantly clear: on the 30th of August he submitted an absolutely damning report about Gijsels' policies. To begin with, he was very unimpressed by the support the local population was able to give in the wars in the islands. He remarked, for instance, that although the hongi was good for transporting European soldiers, local warriors could not be relied on, for they lacked the courage to attack and were only capable of 'looting, plundering and kidnapping once our soldiers have done the real work of defeating or chasing away the enemy, as I have seen with my own eyes'.[474]

He was particularly scathing about the Alfurs and the stock that Gijsels put in them, noting that the Alfur enthusiasts within Company ranks had been 'deceived by the faithlessness that is innate to all the Indian nations'; even though the Alfurs had been wooed with gifts, they had failed to show up during the Hoamoal campaign of early 1633. Some had apparently even switched sides and joined the kimelaha. What astounded Van den Heuvel the most, though, was that 'the abovementioned enthusiasts [*voorstellers*]… have never undertaken to have the regions, villages and homes of these Alfurs visited and inspected, so as to take stock of them in a well-founded manner'. Van den Heuvel had personally

472 Valentijn gives 10 March, and concludes that he arrived while Gijsels was already away. This is incorrect: Gijsels received Van den Heuvel's commission letter in a council meeting of 12 February, well before departing with the hongi. Resolutions of 12 February in VOC 1108, fol. 725r; Cf. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, II.2, 93.

473 Rumphius remarks that, even during the attack on Seram Laut, Van den Heuvel was already highly critical of Gijsels' handling of the attack. I have been unable to find this confirmed in any archival sources. Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche historie', I, 96-97.

474 Van den Heuvel, 'Den voortreffelijken, aansienlijcken ende vermaerden staet van Amboina…', 30 August 1633, published in Knaap ed., *Memories van overgave,* p. 95.

spoken to two of the Alfur rulers on their visit to Castle Victoria. They struck him as 'beggars rather than kings' and he was rather unimpressed with their excuses about why they had not come to the aid of the Dutch in March. To Van den Heuvel, the huge numbers of warriors – perhaps 10.000 – that Gijsels had mentioned in earlier letters seemed rather fanciful. Not only did he very much doubt that the Alfurs knew or could know their own numbers, given that they were scattered and unorganised. What is more, he noted what we might call differences in the concept of war between the VOC and the Alfurs. Rather than fielding organised armies and massed troops of any sort, the Alfurs' usual mode of warfare was the headhunting raid, undertaken with small bands, which was concluded once a few heads had been collected. All in all, the alliance with the Alfurs struck Van den Heuvel as a 'vain illusion', the grand designs that had been supposed possible with their help mere 'smoke in the wind'. Although the VOC should certainly remain friendly with the Alfurs' to prevent them from siding with the kimelaha, all in all he was rather sceptical about the prospect of the Alfurs winning the VOC any wars.[475]

Van den Heuvel's criticisms of Gijsels' policies did not end there. Along with several (unnamed) Company officials he had talked to in Ambon, he felt that the general policy of trying to win the monopoly by destroying the clove plantations in Hoamoal was entirely impracticable:

> The mountains are too steep, the inhabitants and the clove trees too many, the roads to the clove trees impassable and the settlements naturally strong and defended by an intrepid and resilient people, who are well-provided with cannon, swivel guns, muskets and other ammunitions of war. They protect their property and their clove plantations with amazing courage, and can do us great harm when we come to strike them, all the more so now that they have been alerted and warned that more such strikes are to expected in the future.[476]

In his eyes, the alternative strategy of going after the ships of the foreign traders was also doomed to fail: after all the successes, cloves were still flowing away to

475 Van den Heuvel, 'Den voortreffelijken, aansienlijcken ende vermaerden staet van Amboina…', 96-100.

476 Van den Heuvel, 'Den voortreffelijken, aansienlijcken ende vermaerden staet van Amboina…', 103.

Makassar and Java, and foreign traders whose ships had been destroyed could simply buy new ones in the islands. Once again, the fundamentals of the situation had to do with geography: 'The sea is too wide, they are more knowledgeable about how to navigate it than we are, they can be secretly warned about the number and whereabouts of our patrolling yachts from all corners. Also, the difficulties of the changing winds and currents are too great, so that we gain no advantage by patrolling'.[477] All this led Van den Heuvel to muse that it would have been better to remain at peace with the kimelaha. Appeasing him with a better assortment of trade goods (including a wider variety of textiles but also slaves) would also have provided an additional source of income for the Company. As Van den Heuvel was aware, however, that ship had sailed.[478]

Instead, Van den Heuvel proposed his own set of measures that would help solve this problem. One was to concentrate on attacking settlements on eastern Seram and build a redoubt there, for the threat that eastern Seram represented to Banda was a far more acute problem than the kimelaha. Another was to tackle the source of the problem and blockade Makassar every trade season. By ensuring that the Makasar fleets were unable to reach the Amboyna Quarter in the first place, the Dutch could avoid the wild goose chase of pursuing them through the labyrinth of islands and creeks of the Amboyna Quarter.

Another of his suggestions might strike us as more surprising: Van den Heuvel proscribed going after the VOC's 'secret enemy' first, by mounting a surprise attack on Hitu.

A change of power in Hitu

To understand Van den Heuvel's recommendation in its proper context, we need to back up and look at developments in Hitu. As we have seen, despite remembering Hitu fondly as the local ally from his first stint in the Ambon islands, Gijsels soon lost faith in them after becoming governor. Before long, he shared his predecessors' opinion that the Hituese were secretly selling their cloves to the foreign traders and were in cahoots with the kimelaha. In April 1633, the old Kapitan Hitu, Tepil, had finally passed away while Gijsels was on campaign in Seram Laut. With his death, the eastern archipelago had lost what the *Hikayat*

477 Ibid.

478 Van den Heuvel does continue to make a short inventory of best practices, should the Company still want to opt for a policy of extirpation or destroying the foreign ships. Ibid, 103-104.

Tanah Hitu described as 'he who reconciled the conflicts that occurred, be they in the land of Hitu or the land of Ambon, or among Muslims or Christians'.[479] This was the same Kapitan Hitu who had invited the Company to Ambon almost thirty years before. Soon discovering that the Dutch were rather unmanageable allies, Hitu had found itself mediating in their escalating conflicts with the various Muslim polities of the region. This had earned Tepil scorn and distrust from both sides and the conflicts had intensified all the same.

Tepil had never properly arranged the succession for the various roles he exercised, above all those of *perdana* (head) of the Nusatapi family and Kapitan Hitu. He had outlived both his eldest sons and, in any case, succession by the eldest son was not a foregone conclusion in Hitu.[480] Hence, when Gijsels returned from Seram Laut in May, he found that the scramble for Tepil's titles was already in full swing. The succession struggle for the title of Kapitan Hitu was both of the most immediate relevance to the Dutch and that over which they could exert the most influence. Kakiali, Tepil's third son, was no stranger to the Dutch, given that he already wielded a great deal of political responsibility in the capacity of *hukum* (magistrate). He immediately tried to enlist the support of the Dutch in succeeding his father as Kapitan Hitu. Acting on Gijsels' behalf, Evert Hulft tried to make Kakiali promise that he would join the Dutch in waging war on the kimelaha, but Kakiali was wiser than to agree to that. As already mentioned, Kakiali's sister was rumoured to be betrothed to the kimelaha.[481] The prospect of a marriage bond between the families of what was ostensibly still their ally and what was by now their sworn enemy was worrisome to the Dutch. All the same, Gijsels apparently preferred the devil he knew and soon decided to support Kakiali's claim, albeit without much enthusiasm: 'We do not trust him any more than the others', he wrote, 'so that we shall hope to have chosen the lesser of many evils'.[482]

With that in mind, Gijsels and Van den Heuvel, who was then wrapping up his affairs, went to Hitu in mid-June. There, they met the other *perdanas* for several days, finally getting them to approve Kakiali as the new Kapitan Hitu. They also made use of the occasion to reaffirm the treaty with the Hituese.[483] Gijsels

479 Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu,* 166-167.

480 For a slightly more elaborate explanation of the Hituese state and Tepil's various offices, see Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu*, 60-61.

481 Gijsels to Governor-General Brouwer, 26 May 1633, in: VOC 1108, fol. 629v.

482 Gijsels to Governor-General Brouwer, 15 June 1633, in: VOC 1108, fol. 675v.

483 *Corpus Diplomaticum*, CVII, treaty of 17 June 1633, 258pp.

made another futile attempt to win Kakiali for the war against the kimelaha. Although he told Kakiali in no uncertain terms that he would strongly disapprove of the marriage between his sister and the kimelaha, he had little hope that his objections would be heeded.

While the Dutch delegation was on its way back, they learned that two Dutch sailors had just been headhunted in the jungle near Hila. Rumour had it that the perpetrators were Luhunese, but they were never caught. The timing was not lost on the Dutch. The incident was interpreted as a bad omen at best, but many suspected that Kakiali himself had orchestrated the attack as a bloody inauguration of his reign.[484]

It is worth dwelling on Tepil's death and succession as a telling example of a 'changing of the guard' that had been taking place in the eastern archipelago more generally. The deaths Sultan Muzaffar in 1627 and Kaicili Ali in 1631 might be considered the beginning of a change in the leadership of the various polities of eastern Indonesia, as they were the first among a great many rulers and nobles who had sealed the original treaties with the Dutch, but were now passing away in quick succession. Tepil was not the only Dutch ally of the first hour to die in 1633: La Elangi of Buton, who had allied Buton to the VOC, would follow later that year. Although all of them had certainly had complicated relations with the Dutch over the past decades, they were now making way for a generation of rulers who were a lot less willing to give the Dutch any kind of benefit of the doubt. Kakiali was certainly no exception.

A change of power in Ambon

Kakiali's accession to his new function of Kapitan Hitu would have been the last events Van den Heuvel experienced first-hand before departing for Ternate. He was certainly under the impression that Kakiali had 'confirmed and sealed the new treaties with the blood of our soldiers'.[485] More generally, Van den Heuvel listed all the old grievances against Hitu: they were selling off the better part of their cloves to the foreign traders. They were secretly in cahoots with the kimelaha, the inhabitants of Boano, and other enemies of the Company. What is more, they had raided *ulisiwa* settlements loyal to the Dutch and had then hidden

484 Gijsels to Governor-General Brouwer, 25 June 1633, in: VOC 1108, fol. 682v-383r; Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche historie', I, 96.

485 Van den Heuvel, 'Den voortreffelijken, aansienlijcken ende vermaerden staet van Amboina…', 106.

behind their alliance with them, saying they had permission from the governor. All in all, Van den Heuvel felt that the so-called alliance with Hitu did the company more harm than good. By giving it up and turning on them, 'the Company would be liberated from being mortally wounded, day and night, by a harmful snake on the inside of its own body'.[486]

How to bring about the fall of Hitu, then? Van den Heuvel had it all figured out. With the VOC's forces at the ready, Kakiali, the *perdanas*, and other orangkaya of Hitu should be called to Castle Victoria under the pretence of some important meeting. Once they were all there, they should all be arrested or killed, and the Dutch and their allies should immediately move on the various Hituese settlements along the coast. Once these were destroyed, they should move inland, destroying Hituese gardens and settlements, and wreaking enough havoc to make the entire population flee to Hoamoal. Although the operation would be difficult and might take two years to complete, Van den Heuvel still felt it was worth the trouble. The campaign would certainly not threaten the supply of cloves (in any case, these were being overproduced) and it would probably yield ample cloves as war booty. Once the Company was rid of this 'venomous viper feeding from her bosom', the kimelaha would be weakened and more amenable and accordingly the situation in the Amboyna Quarter would become much more manageable.[487]

The question of where Van den Heuvel got his ideas and why he was so critical of Gijsels' policies is intriguing. His ideas about the futility of destroying the cloves in Hoamoal, and claim that good trade relations with the kimelaha would have been far preferable to the present war, seem to echo those of Ottens. The call for Hitu's destruction, however, cannot be found in Ottens' writings - if the latter felt that way about the region in which he was senior merchant, he never expressed it in his surviving letters to Batavia. The notion that Hitu was a Dutch ally in name only was nothing new, however; even the idea that politics in the region would become much more stable and manageable if Hitu were removed from the picture had been around for quite a while. Indeed, an earlier commissioner to the islands, Gillis Seys, advocated this position in 1627, albeit as something for the future.[488] Van den Heuvel now proposed it as a concrete policy to be acted upon in the present.

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486 Ibid.

487 Ibid., 106-107.

488 See above, chapter V, paragraph 'feigned friends?'

What is more, once back in Batavia, Van den Heuvel apparently started lobbying to have Gijsels replaced and be appointed as governor of Ambon himself. We can only guess at his reasons: as Rumphius muses, 'it would seem the Governor had some malicious friends at the Castle, or some factional strife was involved'.[489] It also seems that Van den Heuvel himself was something of an agitator: he had been fired from his post in Batavia on accusations of slander three years earlier and would ultimately end his own career by slandering the Council of the Indies.[490]

As yet oblivious to Van den Heuvel pulling the rug out from under him back in Batavia, Gijsels undeterredly pursued his own policies. He sent Hulft, his second-in-command, to Seram's north coast to cement relations with the Alfurs living there. He made plans to build a fort at the land bridge connecting Seram to Hoamoal so that the Alfurs could safely and easily join his campaigns in the area. Although several dozen foreign trading vessels were visiting the region once again, Gijsels was unable to act to deter them due to the raging epidemic and the necessity of giving his allies a break after almost three months of uninterrupted campaigning. He requested the smallest types of mortars from Batavia, 'because with [large] cannon, one can do little against those settlements situated high up which are still holding out', and linseed oil for firebombs, which had worked so marvellously in previous sieges. He tried to convince the governor-general of the great benefits of sago as campaign rations – perhaps was he interested in receiving some for use elsewhere in Asia? And could he please send armour for the soldiers with enough arm room to fire a musket? Frontal armour would suffice to protect the men against arrows, spears, and poisoned darts, no need for the heavy backplate. And some gifts for the Ambonese orangkaya would certainly help ensure that they continued feeling appreciated – 'bare metal morion helmets, or something like that' would do. Gijsels, all these requests notwithstanding, meanwhile sought to become less dependent on Batavia. Responding to the persistent complaints that he was spending too much money (a view that Brouwer had also come around to by now), he suggested that if the garrison could be enlarged just a little and he could occasionally make use of the return ships which

489 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche historie', I, 97.

490 For a tragicomic assessment of the career and character of Van den Heuvel and some of his contemporaries, see Leonard Blussé, 'Spitsvinnighe warvogels: vier juristen en de totstandkoming van de eerste politiewetten in Nederlands-Indië' in: J. Thomas Lindblad and Willem van der Molen eds., *Macht en majesteit: opstellen voor Cees Fasseur,* Semaian 22. Leiden:Universiteit Leiden, 2001, pp. 147-168.

came to Ambon anyway, he could manage with two yachts, two sloops, and his local allies, 'without whom we can achieve absolutely nothing here (even though there are some who believe that we could do without them)'.[491]

Then, as soon as circumstances allowed, Gijsels returned to the offensive with a vengeance. He spent the first two weeks of September campaigning around both sides of the bend of Kaibobo (the bay separating Seram from Hoamoal), burning villages loyal to the kimelaha (including several Alfur villages), taking or destroying newly built ships along the coast at Kaibobo (another boat-building centre used by the kimelaha), and cutting and ringbarking coconut groves and clove plantations.[492] Gijsels went out again in the last week of October, this time to Hoamoal's west coast. He aimed, amongst other things, to take some prisoners at Asaudi who might then be exchanged for the several dozen people from Wai still held by the kimelaha. As the fleet made its way to its destination, large fires were seen burning on various beaches and hilltops – Hoamoal's inhabitants were warning the settlements further up. Gijsels noted with concern that such fires were also burning in Hitu.

When the Dutch made it to Asaudi, which is situated directly along the coast, it was deserted, its population having retreated to the fortified settlement of Henatelo in the mountains. Gijsels pursued them into the interior and besieged the settlement. It would become one of the most horrifying sieges of the period. The Dutch built siege works and brought cannon up into the mountains, using them to lob firebombs and grenades into the town. As the rock on which the settlement was perched did not have a water supply, they closed it off to the surrounding region as well as they could. As Gijsels learned from prisoners in the course of the siege, Henatelo was not only filled with people from Asaudi, but overflowing with refugees from elsewhere too. These included, for instance, people from Serulau on the east coast, which he had destroyed during the previous month's campaign – a poignant illustration that, regardless of whether Gijsels' policies made sense from an economic point of view, the population of Hoamoal was certainly suffering as a result of his attritional tactics.

Ten days into the siege, reports reached Gijsels that perhaps half of the besieged had died of thirst. The sound of children wailing, as well as occasional

491 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche historie', I, 97-99. Gijsels to Governor-General, 25 September 1633, in VOC 1108, esp. 691r-697r. Quote at 691r. The remark about 'some who believe…' would appear to be a deliberate jab at Van den Heuvel.

492 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 93-102.

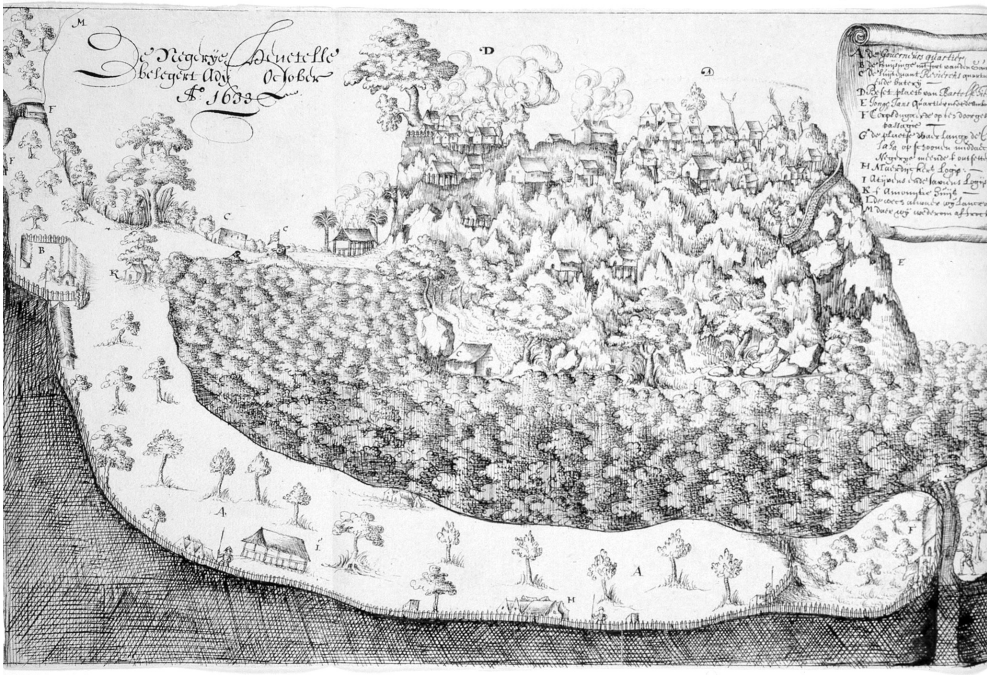

Fig. 7.6 The siege of Henatelo. Note the various quarters and siege works erected by Company troops all along a perimeter around the town, which is perched on the rocks and fortified with walls. The town is aflame, having been bombarded with Company firebombs. Karlsruhe, inv. nr. K476, fol 105.

violent outbursts amongst the besieged, made abundantly clear that the situation in the settlement was dire and morale was crumbling.

All the same, the besieged did not surrender, for an army of the kimelaha some 300 men strong was moving through the hills behind the Dutch lines, flying red and white flags, shouting encouragements to the besieged, looking for an opportunity. On the 7th of November, this army occupied and fortified the path down to the coast, cutting the Dutch off from their line of retreat and the sago forests on which they relied. Although the Dutch attempted to drive them away from both the fleet and their siege works around the town, they were repulsed with a ferocity that amazed them. Torrential rain started pouring down, making it difficult for the Dutch to use their firearms, and quenching the thirst of the besieged. Gijsels tried to rally the men for a last desperate storm attack on Henatelo, but now the morale of his own troops and allies was failing, and they openly defied his orders. He saw no other option but to retreat. His troops had to fight their way back to the fleet under constant attack from the kimelaha's troops

and the defenders, who had taken heart following the recent turn of events. The fleet made its way back to Ambon, though not before briefly touring the bays and estuaries north of Asaudi to look for hidden kora-kora in which some of the kimelaha's troops might have landed, and making a final effort to burn Asaudi down to the last building. Along the way, it halted at Lesidi-Lama, which had been selling too many of its cloves to the foreign traders for Gijsels' liking. The settlement, which was deserted, was burned and some 4.000 large clove trees ringbarked.[493]

Upon his return, Gijsels, already worried by the fires he had seen lit on Hitu, started receiving signs that trouble was brewing there. In December, a member of the Tanihitumesen family from Hitulama, as well as representatives from Luhu on the opposite coast, came to ask Gijsels whether he would please build a fort in their settlement. Apparently, this was to protect them against Kakiali, who was acting in an autocratic fashion, defying the representative character of the Hitu government and antagonising the other Hitu officials. Unwilling to go into detail at first, the representatives of the Tanihitumesen family ultimately told Gijsels that Kakiali, along with the kimelaha, had been sending gifts to both the Lord of Giri (on Java's east coast, see chapter XXX) and the sultan of Gowa. The former had received two *bahar* of cloves; the latter a *payung* with golden ornaments, accompanied by an official letter in a silver box. They claimed that the letter requested his aid in the coming war against the Dutch.[494] Although Gijsels was incredulous at first, he investigated the matter further and soon became convinced that Kakiali was in fact preparing for war. In any case, he was certainly bringing internal Hituese politics to a head. As a consequence, Gijsels promised to build the requested fortifications and started shoring up relations with those communities that were alarmed by Kakiali's attitude and opposed to war with the Dutch – most prominently the followers of the perdana Tanihitumesen. Regardless of Kakiali's true intentions with regard to the Dutch,

493 'Journael van gedaene tochten', fol. 103-113.

494 Saliently, the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* confirms that a delegation was sent to Makassar, but denies that its purpose was to plan an attack against the Dutch, and chides Gijsels for believing these accusations without properly investigating them. As Rijali wrote the *Hikayat* in Makassar for the Gowan chancellor, and was working closely with Kakiali in 1633, it seems unlikely that he would be mistaken or hiding the truth. Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu*, 167.

mutual antagonisms and suspicions quickly unravelled what was left of their working relationship.[495]

Back in Batavia, Van den Heuvel was meanwhile making his final moves in bringing about Gijsels' downfall. In addition to his damning report, he had, for good measure, also accused Gijsels of fraud and private trade.[496] If his aim was to get Gijsels recalled, this was an inspired choice: not only had Governor-General Brouwer been specifically instructed to crack down on private trade, but he took the matter very personally.[497] On the 15th of December, Brouwer and his Council wrote to the directors back home that 'we have decided to recall vice-governor Gijsels this year, so as to hold him to account for the many, extraordinary, gross, unbearable counts of private trade and selfish greed of which he is accused'.[498] Although Van den Heuvel had ostensibly requested to go back home with his wife and was set to become the vice-commander of the return fleet, they had been able to convince him to stay on a little longer and replace Gijsels as governor. Given the circumstances, one suspects that he took little convincing. Brouwer harboured concerns that Van den Heuvel was 'subject to many human defects and impertinences', but hoped that he would be able to keep these in check in his new capacity as governor.

And so Van den Heuvel was sent back out to Ambon in February 1634, arriving there on the 4th of May after a long stay at Makassar and Buton. He officially replaced Gijsels on the 8th. Finding that relations with Kapitan Hitu had much worsened since he had departed Ambon, he considered his earlier analysis and suggestions vindicated, and was now in a position to act on them.

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495 Gijsels' *Memorie van Overgave* of May 1634, in Knaap ed., *Memories van Overgave,* esp. 112pp.

496 Interestingly, the most elaborate enumeration of his supposed misdeeds is to be found in a letter from Brouwer to Gijsels himself, which shows that the accusations were far more extensive than just private sale of the '1000 pairs of silk stockings' [sijde cousens] that we find mentioned elsewhere. In addition, he had supposedly been selling textiles, gold and silver jewelry, copperware, had paid the tolls of the sultan of Ternate in textiles from his own private stock (letting the value flow into his own pockets from the Company coffers), ran a scheme in which he personally profited from the production of arrack in Ambon, and had falsely declared all kinds of expenses. Brouwer, Van Diemen Vlak en Van der Burgh to Gijsels, 31 January 1634, in: VOC 1114, fol. 203v-214v, esp. fol. 209r and v.

497 For a good sketch of Brouwer and his attitude to both private trade and war, see Menno Witteveen. *Antonio van Diemen: de opkomst van de VOC in Azië.* Amsterdam: Pallas, 2011, pp. 137-145.

498 General letter by Brouwer e.a.,15 December 1633, in: VOC 1108, p. 103.

It would not quite work out the way he had imagined.

Concluding remarks

All the governors of Ambon from the 1620s onwards faced the same impossible conundrum of having to enforce a clove monopoly in a large region that they were unable to control, and each tried to solve this problem in his own way. Van Speult, suddenly finding himself with a large force at his disposal, was the first to decide to take the fight into Hoamoal, destroying settlements and cutting down clove trees. Lucasz, like his predecessor Van Gorcum, was unsuccessful in making the subsequent peace work. Instead, he opted for patrolling the seas and hunting down the ships of foreign traders. Although this was spectacularly successful at times, it did not keep the traders from coming. Gijsels, in turn, took the strategy of the Nassau Fleet back out of the drawer, waging open war on the kimelaha, and anyone else dealing with the foreign traders. On the basis of the unprecedentedly rich documentation in Gijsels' private archive, this chapter has moved away from the big picture of the spice wars to give greater texture to the conflict, as well as to provide new insights into the everyday practices through which they were fought.

Based on these insights, it is my impression that Knaap's assertion that 'the great majority of these villages was not fortified' is due for revision.[499] Rather, the Ambon Islands seem to have part of a fortification spree that took shape throughout the eastern archipelago in this period. In all likelihood, many of the forts in the area predated the arrival of the Dutch, but fort-building was certainly spurred on by their arrival and the consequent conflicts in the region. Gijsels ran into fortifications wherever he turned, even when campaigning in areas thus far outside the Company's sphere of influence. He was often impressed with these indigenous fortresses, describing them in European terms as having ramparts, demilunes, bastions, and redoubts. Even those sites that lacked these features were usually situated to make the most of natural defences that abound in the region. If anything, the Dutch were often surprised by how easily the defenders surrendered their otherwise daunting fortifications, 'from which they would have been able to inflict great violence on us, had they not lacked the courage', as Gijsels remarked in his reports on more than one occasion. But perhaps courage is not quite the right word, for warfare in the region was traditionally all about hunting heads and enslaving people. The VOC's campaigns also became ever

499 Gerrit Knaap. 'Headhunting, carnage and armed peace',. 178 pp.

more 'indigenous' in this regard. In the light of this, it would seem sensible for the population of a given settlement to disappear into the shelter of the interior when there was a threat of being overrun.

Indeed, we see a quick and dramatic 'indigenisation' of the VOC's tactics and strategies in these years. Knaap's claim that 'in its campaigns the VOC made full use of naval artillery as well as of siege methods developed in Europe', and his remarks to the effect that the Dutch could transpose the lessons they had learned in the Eighty Years' War to Ambon, does not seem to hold up for Gijsels' campaigns.[500] Rather, we have seen that most of the indigenous forts (the Makasar forts of subsequent campaigns are a different story and will be discussed at length below) were beyond the reach of naval artillery; the large Dutch sailing vessels were impractical and cumbersome; and traditional European siege methods did not work when besieging coral platforms surrounded by jungle. We therefore see Gijsels rethinking – and in many cases indigenising – his strategies over the course of his governorship. He increasingly relied on the kora-kora rather than European ships. He used his understanding of local antagonisms to enlist indigenous support, most prominently that of the Alfurs of Seram's interior. Not only did these have an appreciable psychological effect on the Company's enemies, but their headhunting parties proved perfectly suited to cutting off the supply lines to besieged settlements. Most importantly, after coming to the realisation that the regional landscape and environment were perhaps his main obstacles, Gijsels concentrated his efforts on those. He destroyed not only the clove trees that were at the core of the conflict, but also other trees and plants providing sustenance to the inhabitants of the region, cutting and otherwise eradicating sago and coconut palms and 'other fruits of the soil'. The tactics employed by Gijsels therefore constitute a prime example of what Immanuel Kreike has recently termed environcide, while the process of interadoption by which they came about also demonstrates that there was nothing inherently European or innovative about these tactics – except, perhaps, for the massive scale and sustained way in which the VOC started applying them.

Honing in on the grim day-to-day unfolding of the conflicts has, I hope, also served to bring its human aspects into view. Gijsels and his contemporaries might have deliberated endlessly over whether the campaigns were good economic policy, but it is abundantly clear that they visited an incredible amount of suffering on the region's population. Entire areas saw their sources of food and

500 Ibid., 189.

income utterly destroyed; large towns, many boasting monumental buildings, were put to the torch; the people of Seram Laut were caught between well-armed traders from Java and Makassar, who threatened to kill them, and the Dutch and their allies, who actually killed and enslaved them; and the besieged settlement of Henatelo overflowed with refugees dying of thirst in droves.

Although the Dutch were neither capable of, nor interested in, recording the number of casualties they inflicted, Gijsels kept records of the number of trees he eradicated and seagoing vessels he destroyed. These provide at least some means of quantifying the damage he wrought. The records relating to the amount of clove and nutmeg trees cut are most detailed: the campaign reports on which this chapter is largely based record the destruction of a total of 22.000 fully grown clove trees and an additional 800 nutmeg trees. These data are incomplete; the results of the tree-cutting expedition in Ihamahu, for instance, were only recorded incidentally and the records of later campaigns also contain unquantifiable phrases such as 'countless young clove trees'. Nonetheless, they provide a rough indication of the total economic damage. A conservative estimate of their average annual yield of 39.600 kilograms (slightly over 145 *bahar*) of cloves, as well as 1.440 kilograms (some 5 *bahar*) of nutmeg and mace.[501] This destruction came in addition to the 65.000 clove trees that the Nassau Fleet had reportedly already destroyed in 1625, given that newly planted clove trees can take at least ten years to start yielding cloves. Even though the various production estimates here are imprecise and likely on the conservative side, we are still left with the conclusion that in the 1620s and 1630s in the Ambon region alone, the VOC destroyed over one-third of total global clove production capacity.[502]

501 It should be noted that these numbers are imprecise. Traditionally, the annual yield of a clove tree is supposed to be one *barot,* slightly over 5,4 kilograms. If we use the tables contained in Knaap, *Kruidnagelen en Christenen,* 231-239, we find that around 1673, some 171.000 fruit-yielding trees produced around 305.000 kilograms of cloves in an average year, just about 1,8 kilograms per tree. (A much lower number than the *barot*, and lower still than the number provided by Boelens e.a., *Natuur en Samenleving,* 66-67, which gives present-day yield as 15 kilograms of cloves per tree.) Making a sensible estimate is complicated by the fact that clove trees become more productive with age. The trees destroyed on Hoamoal in the campaigns between 1625 and 1633 would generally have been older and therefore more productive than the recently planted ones on Ambon and the Lease islands which effectively replaced them in the course of the seventeenth century, so that yield per tree would have been lower c. 1670. Still, to err on the side of caution, we will here take the 1,8 kilograms per tree as the basis for our calculations.

502 Once again assuming an average yield of 1,8 kilograms per tree, the 87.000 destroyed

The people to which Gijsels was accountable were less directly interested in keeping meticulous records on the destruction of food crops than clove trees. As a consequence, the data on those is more sketchy. The sources seldom record numbers; far more often, they simply remark that a coconut grove, sago forest, or 'other fruitbearing wood' was destroyed, without further specifics. Additionally, the violence displaced great numbers of people. Large numbers of seagoing vessels (both large and small) were destroyed, ostensibly to stop the clove trade, but this would also have had a significant impact on regional communities' ability to fish, produce sago, and transport food. Gijsels was deliberately, and successfully, targeting environmental infrastructure, disrupting the ability of sustain themselves in various, cumulative ways. Which would have had a significant and long-term impact on the people of the region.

trees recorded would represent an annual average yield of 156 metric tons. Cf. David Bulbeck, e.a. *Southeast Asian Exports Since the 14th Century : Cloves, Pepper, Coffee, and Sugar*. Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998, esp. table 2.8, which estimates total clove sales to the Netherlands to be some 200 metric tons in the 1630s, and the entire world supply some 400 metric tons.