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

Mostert, T.

Citation

Mostert, T. (2023, March 28). *Spice War: Ternate, Makassar, the Dutch East India Company and the struggle for the Ambon Islands (c. 1600-1656)*.

Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3589588>

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VIII. REVOLT (1634-1637)

Since open hostilities with Makassar had commenced in 1616, the spice wars had been largely fought around Seram and in the Lease Islands, despite being subject to various power dynamics in the wider region. In 1634, this would change. Just as the Dutch decided to make open war against Gowa, some of their former alliances in the region were collapsing in a cascade that would ultimately pit even the Company's Christian subjects and allies in the Ambon region against them. Although aspects of this tumultuous period have been studied, they have often been considered from a limited regional perspective.⁵⁰³ Taking a wider view allows us to see how developments in various areas interlock, forming one large regional conflict in which the VOC, its allies, and its enemies all participated.

OLD ENEMIES, OLD FRIENDS: MAKASSAR AND BUTON

In Batavia in late 1634, Van den Heuvel was able to convince the governor-general and other members of the Council of the Indies of the soundness of his proposal that the Company should blockade Makassar. In their letter to the directors of 15 December 1634, they announced their decision to send a blockading fleet there with the turning of the monsoon. In this way, what had been a low-level conflict over the past eighteen years escalated into a full-blown war.

The Council's reasoning on this decision came straight out of Van den Heuvel's earlier report.⁵⁰⁴ That said, recent developments had made the need to take action all the more urgent: Makassar and Malay traders had reportedly been bragging that the kimelaha had sent an envoy to Makassar and that the sultan had promised to send forty war vessels to their aid. Judging by the *Makassar Annals*, this was more than just hearsay: they report how an 'envoy from Maluku named Uthman' came to Makassar in August 1633 and stayed some three weeks. Two

503 The crisis on and around Ambon, for instance, is the subject of Knaap, 'War and revolt'. Schoorl, 'Het eeuwigdurende verbond' gives an overview of events at Buton. Stapel, *Het Bongaais verdrag*, 26-34, gives a brief account of the blockades of Makassar.

504 Van den Heuvel, a Council of the Indies himself, actually co-wrote and co-signed this particular General Letter. Brouwer, Van Diemen, Vlack, Van der Burch and Van den Heuvel to Directors, 15 dec. 1633, in: *Generale Missiven*, I, 393-432, esp. 402pp. In a somewhat bewildering insight into the way in which the General Letter came about, the passages about Ambon do not seem to have been notably influenced by Van den Heuvel's report but seem to rely on Gijssels' own letters, and largely follow his judgement, in the same general letter that announced his replacement.

days before his departure, a royal banner was ‘ritually bloodied’ – a ceremony performed in preparation for war.⁵⁰⁵ Makassar fleets were also once again raiding in the Buton Strait. Earlier that year, Sultan La Elangi of Buton had died and been succeeded by his eldest son La Balawo. Although he was partial to the VOC, La Balawo was considered a weak ruler and detested by a Makassar-backed court faction. Makassar fleets kept the pressure on.⁵⁰⁶ By blockading Makassar, the VOC hoped to address the root of all these problems.

The blockading fleet, which comprised six ships commanded by Gijsbert van Lodensteyn, left Batavia on the 10th of January 1634. Sailing via Banjarmasin on Borneo, where it used force in an unsuccessful attempt to drive the Makasars out of the pepper trade, the fleet arrived before Makassar on the night of the 12th of February. As it turned out, they were a bit late: Van Lodensteyn had hoped to preempt the entire trading season, but soon learned that two Portuguese ships had already arrived at Makassar, bringing two cast-iron cannon, forty chests full of muskets, and 4.000 pounds of gunpowder. Worse still, the sultan had already got wind of the Dutch fleet three weeks in advance. Accordingly, twelve junks (one of which had been outfitted by the sultan himself and reportedly carried trade goods valued at no less than 70.000 or 80.000 reals of eight) had hurriedly left for the Ambon islands. The prisoners who divulged this information also told the Dutch that several more trading junks were waiting in the rivers and some thirty swift rowing vessels, outfitted by the sultan and armed for war, were apparently bound for Hoamoal. Sure enough, the rumours Company officials had heard seemed to be well-founded.⁵⁰⁷

To make matters worse, these vessels then managed to run the blockade. On the 15th of March, they made a dash for open water, keeping out of reach of the VOC ships by taking advantage of the early morning offshore wind and shallow waters behind the coastal reefs. The Dutch vainly fired some cannonballs after

505 Cummings, *Makassar Annals*, 44. In spite of the Annals stating ‘Maluku’ rather than Luhu Hoamoal or another name specific to Western Seram, the timing makes it more than likely that this refers to the kimelaha’s envoy. Cummings’ interpretation of the ritual bloodying of the banner being an unrelated event and having to do with the coming Dutch blockade, which had not even been decided upon at that time, seems unlikely. Of course the plot slightly thickens because Hitu had reportedly also sent an envoy of its own around that time, purportedly only to present the credentials of the new Kapitan Hitu – see last chapter.

506 General letter by Brouwer e.a., 15 dec. 1633, in: *Generale Missiven*, I, pp. 393-432, esp. pp. 404-405; Schoorl, ‘Het ‘eeuwige’ verbond’, pp. 30-31.

507 *Dagh-register Batavia*, II, p. 312 (27 May 1634).

them. Worried about the havoc that the fleet might wreak in the Ambon quarter, Van Lodensteyn called the fleet's council together. They resolved to lift the blockade to pursue the Makasar ships, which they hoped to catch before they went through the Buton Strait. When the Dutch fleet arrived there one week later, however, the Makasar ships were nowhere to be found. Lodensteyn decided to wait and see if any more Makasar warships turned up. None did. Attempting to continue on to Amboina as ordered, Lodensteyn's fleet was then confronted with unseasonably strong easterly winds. Only some ships made it through the Strait; Lodensteyn himself had to fall back to Buton with six of the yachts and two sloops. After tarrying there for some time, he finally decided to sail back to Makassar and continue the blockade.⁵⁰⁸

Even if Lodensteyn was unable to catch any Makasar ships in the Buton Strait, they were there all the same, as one VOC ship discovered. Although the *Batavia* had been sent out to join the blockade in early March, it seems to have been in a poor condition to sail, and did not make it to Makassar ending up at Buton instead. On 30 March, just a couple of days after Van den Heuvel sailed further up the Strait, it found a fleet of 'some 200 or 300' Makasar vessels of all sizes roaming about. The crew learned that the fleet 'had plundered and conquered the land of Buton and made the king their tributary and vassal'. Worried that the Makasars were also planning to attack their ship, its crew decided to try and evade the fleet and simply sailed back to Batavia, bringing these bad tidings with them.⁵⁰⁹ Indeed, the *Makassar Annals* confirm that Buton's allegiance shifted around this time. They report how on 8 March 1634, 'a manuscript arrived from Buton commemorating their oath at Bau-Bau'.⁵¹⁰ Although the sources do not specify who wrote the manuscript in question, it is certain that Sultan La Balawo was deposed later that year. He was succeeded by Sultan La Buke of the Kumbewaha family, who belonged to a faction more well-disposed to Makass-

508 Governor-General Brouwer to Directors, 15 August 1634, printed in Tiele Heeres, *Bonnstoffen*, II, pp. 254-255.

509 *Dagh-register Batavia*, II, 295-296 (28 April 1634.) Interestingly, Van den Heuvel had an audience with the sultan of Buton only a couple of days earlier. The Sultan, who had hidden outside Baubau, leaving the rule of the town to the brother of the late Sultan as a steward, returned to the kraton to receive him and complained about the incessant Makasar attacks. (Van den Heuvel to Brouwer, 30 May 1634, VOC 1114, esp. fol. 311v-312r.) It is interesting to note that neither he nor Lodensteyn seems to have noticed that Buton had already reconfirmed its vassalage to Makassar.

510 Cummings, *Makassar Annals*, 47. The original oath, presumably, is the one of 1626 described above

ar.⁵¹¹ The VOC thus lost an important ally in a crucial location and Ternate one of its tributaries.

For all the mishaps, the blockade at least succeeded in catching traders and blocking trade to Makassar. Before its wild goose chase to Buton, the fleet had caught several trading junks and pursued a small Portuguese vessel. Ultimately, its crew saw no choice but to abandon ship and ignite the powder chamber. After the Dutch ships returned from Buton, news of the renewed blockade seemed to have spread, for fewer ships ran into it. Interestingly, though, a small Japanese craft was caught in July. Its crew told the Dutch that they believed they would be left alone given that they were Japanese. Upon his return in September, Lodensteyn reported that, to his knowledge, no cloves had been brought into Makassar that year and he had learned that some forty trading junks had been penned in by the blockade.⁵¹²

Importantly, the blockade did not apply to the Danes and English, who, as official European allies, were free to sail to and from Makassar at will. Of course, this was to the detriment of its effectiveness. In any case, the English were thoroughly unimpressed with the blockade. Their records scarcely mention it and indicate that the rhythms of trade and the selling and gifting of weapons seem to have continued more or less as usual.⁵¹³

The sultan of Gowa was less dismissive of the blockade. Lodensteyn learned from the Danes that the sultan had mobilised 40.000 troops and that some 17.000 labourers were busy improving and extending Makassar's already impressive defences. The sultan had even acted against the so-called 'English island', a small island situated right in front of the Makassar roads, which threatened to become a real liability if the Dutch occupied and fortified it. To avert this eventuality, he had it forcefully evacuated, dug up, and thrown into the sea.⁵¹⁴ Large

511 Schoorl, *Het 'eeuwige' verbond*, 31. Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen*, II, lxxvii and, following his judgment, Stapel, *Bongaais verdrag*, 28, claim that the Makasars stayed their attacks on Buton out of fear of the Dutch blockade in late 1633 and early 1634. I have not been able to find this in the documents, and it seems unlikely, considering that the vessels roaming around Buton must have already been there at the start of the VOC's blockade.

512 *Dagh-Register Batavia*, II, p. 383 (5 september 1634).

513 IOR G/10/1, 60-63.

514 The 'English island' is indicated in a map from the Gijssels collection, as being roughly opposite the European lodges towards the north of Makassar. See *Badische Landesbibliothek K. 478*, fol. 29 (available online through atlasofmutualheritage.nl.) The Makassar Annals confirm its demolition in late May 1634 and identify it as Laelae. The

fleets of war galleys waited in the rivers, ready to come to the aid of returning Makassar ships if necessary.⁵¹⁵ Although the sources paint an ambiguous picture of how effective the blockade was during that first year, it clearly had Makassar up in arms.

‘THAT HITUESE RASCAL’ ARRESTED

A month after the fleet set sail for Makassar, Van den Heuvel left for his new post. His instructions stipulated that he should first join the blockade of Makassar and inform himself as to its operation and effectiveness. After that, he was to continue to Ambon, stopping at Buton to pay the sultan a visit on the way.

Although his fellow council members were clearly enthusiastic about his idea of blockading Makassar, Van den Heuvel’s orders give the impression that not all the proposals in his report were so well-received. More than once, the instructions state that ‘as you consistently took part in our council meetings [...] there is no need to give long and broad accounts of our reasons here’.⁵¹⁶ Those meetings must have been the scene of heated discussions: in many cases Van den Heuvel’s instructions flew in the face of the suggestions that he put forward in his report. Indeed, they often seemed more in line with Gijssels’ policies. For instance, Van den Heuvel was instructed to continue extirpating cloves in areas that the VOC could not control. What is more, he was told to carry on nurturing good relations not only with the Company’s subjects in Ambon and Lease, but also with the Alfurs, whose friendship and assistance were deemed valuable assets ‘even if their power should be but one fourth of what Gijssels boasts it to be’.⁵¹⁷ As to the Hituese: although they could not be trusted, maintaining their friendship was in Company’s interest for now, if only ‘to avoid having a powerful enemy on Ambonese soil’.⁵¹⁸

The governor-general and Council were certainly unhappy about how the new Kapitan Hitu, Kakiali, had been appointed; they had been presented with a *fait accompli* and were also concerned that Kakiali did not seem to have the backing of all the Hituese families. Kakiali asked the VOC to endorse him in

island has since come back from oblivion and is to be found right across from Pantai Losari.

515 *Dagh-Register Batavia*, II, 13 July 1634, pp. 353-354.

516 Instructions for Antonie van den Heuvel, 15 February 1634, in: VOC 1114, fol. 214v pp, this quote from 215r.

517 *Ibid.*, 221r.

518 *Ibid.*, 222v.

his new capacity, but the governor-general and Council chose to withhold their approval until 'he had been able to prove himself faithful and friendly to the Company'.⁵¹⁹ The instructions certainly did not encourage Van den Heuvel to act on his own earlier suggestions that Kakiali should simply be arrested and Hitu annexed. Rather, they impressed upon him that he was to cultivate the few good relationships that the Company still enjoyed in the islands, refrain from doing anything rash, and wait to see how the blockade of Makassar would affect the situation. His orders even contained a glimmer of optimism regarding a new envoy from the sultan of Ternate who had arrived in the islands towards the end of Gijssels' governorship and claimed to be willing to take the two kimelahas back to Ternate under certain conditions.

These pleas for prudence were lost on Van den Heuvel. After going to Makassar to see how the blockade was proceeding, joining the chase after the war vessels that broke through, visiting the new sultan of Buton, and fighting the early and vehement monsoon, he finally arrived at Castle Victoria on the 27th of April. He did not like what he found:

Upon my arrival here, due to the bad proceedings of the Ternaten kimelahas Luhu and Leliato, as well as the perfidious actions of the Sadaha [the envoy from Ternate] and the new kimelaha Fakiri, and furthermore and specifically the conspiracies, treacheries and horrible machinations of that Hituese rascal, the haughty Kakiali, I found the state of Amboina to be in very dire straits.

Although Van den Heuvel does not come across as someone who would make many friends in the islands, it is only fair to point out that the situation had indeed dramatically deteriorated in the months before his arrival. An envoy from Ternate had arrived in the region in January. He carried a letter from the sultan, explaining that the visit aimed to ease the various tensions that had arisen, take kimelahas Leliato and Luhu back to Ternate to account for their actions, and ensure that foreign traders stayed out of the region. In negotiations that followed, however, the envoy started making additional demands. Most prominently, he proposed that most of the region – including the northern half of Ambon, the Lease Islands, and all of Seram – should be 'restituted' to the sultan of Ternate. Gijssels could obviously not agree to this, and he was left to wonder whether the sultan was double-dealing or the envoy who had been 'corrupted' by the

519 Ibid., 224v.

kimelaha.⁵²⁰ In addition, forty-three Makasar war junks arrived in the islands around this time. They carried 2.000 well-armed men and even twenty ‘white Portuguese’, who built fortifications for themselves in Kambelo.⁵²¹ It was Gijssels’ impression that the Makasars, the two kimelaha, and Kapitan Hitu were all preparing an attack on the VOC-controlled part of Ambon. Kakiali had his belongings transported to the mountains, where he built new fortifications, and Gijssels mobilised the VOC’s troops. The entire region seemed to be headed for war.

Van den Heuvel had his own preferred remedy for the situation and went straight to work. In the first days after his arrival, he persuaded the Council of Amboina to agree that he should go out to Hitu and duly left on the 8th of May. He hoped he could deceive Kakiali, by playing the guileless and ill-informed new governor, who was unaware of the recent troubles. Acting surprised that his ‘old brother’ Kakiali did not come out to greet him, Van den Heuvel hoped, might do the trick of getting him on board his ship.

Van den Heuvel’s letter describing the events contain histrionic passages, in which he describes undertaking this difficult and risky mission with a heavy heart. He was doubtless aware that arresting Kakiali directly contradicted his instructions and might cost him his career if things went awry. The letter is vague as to how the arrest proceeded; Van den Heuvel remarks only that he went out to Hitu on the 8th of May and made the arrest on the 20th.

Other sources fill in the gap, though, informing us that Van den Heuvel went to Hila to convene a general meeting of the Hituese leaders, to which Kakiali was invited. He initially refused to come, which led Van den Heuvel to suppose that the new Kapitan Hitu was unpopular with many of the Hituese leaders. He took particular care to reinforce the VOC’s relations with the orangkaya on Hitu’s east side. They were loyal to the perdana Tanihitumesen, whose family was

520 General letter by Brouwer e.a., August 1634. This part is not included in the published version or Tiele-Heeres, so see VOC 1111, fol. 39r.

521 It is tempting to suppose that these are the same war vessels that ran the blockade at Makassar, but they are probably not. There is no letter of Gijssels detailing these events (one imagines he informed the Council personally after his return to Batavia), and the general letter and dagh-register are frustratingly sparing with dates about this episode. All the same, the context implies these ships arrived somewhere in mid-March – too early for those ships to have already reached Hoamoal. Not that it ultimately matters – large Makasar warfleets were roaming both the north coast of Sulawesi and the Buton Strait at the time, and vessels had also departed to the Ambon region before the arrival of the blockade. General letter of 15 August 1634, published in Tiele Heeres, *Bouwstoffen*, II, pp. 256-257.

the old rival of the Nusatapi, from whose ranks the Kapitan Hitu traditionally came, and constituted the main opposition to Kakiali. The Ternaten envoy was also present and Van den Heuvel, in response to the envoy's earlier demand to 'restore' much of the region to Ternate, made a show of asking the various Amboinese leaders whether they had ever been vassals of the Ternaten sultan. They all laughingly denied that they had. When Van den Heuvel insisted that Kakiali should join the meeting, he finally showed up but, apparently smelling a rat, brought 250 warriors with him.

Van den Heuvel's chance came when the negotiation circus subsequently crossed to Lesiela on Hoamoal. Kakiali, Van den Heuvel, and the Ternaten envoy travelled there with their respective hongis to negotiate with the two kimmelaha over the situation in Hoamoal. Van den Heuvel had the good fortune to arrive there at exactly the same time as Kakiali and his associates, and cordially invited him on board his kora-kora. This time Kakiali took the bait, whereupon he and his three accompanying orangkaya were promptly arrested. Van den Heuvel had hoped to proceed quietly – according to Rumphius, he might have wanted to repeat the same trick with the Ternaten envoy and the two kimmelaha. The other Hituese kora-kora noticed the scuffle, however. They raised the alarm and hurried back to Hitu, with Van den Heuvel's hongis in hot pursuit and firing on them. Needless to say, this also concluded the negotiations with the envoy from the sultan, who subsequently left the two kimmelaha to rule, captured the Lahunese orangkaya who remained loyal to the Dutch, whom he brought back with him to Ternate as hostages.⁵²²

Van den Heuvel omitted these rather crucial details from his initial reports to Batavia, presumably concerned that blowing up the negotiations with the Ternaten envoy, arresting Kakiali, and ending up in a naval skirmish with Hitu was not, to put it mildly, entirely in line with his instructions. Still, he relished the prospect of holding a great public trial before the entire Amboina Council, in which Kakiali would be arraigned for a long list of offences related to conspiring to attack the Company with the other Muslim polities of the region; directly trading with Makassar and enlisting their help against the Dutch; and ordering the death of the two Dutch soldiers and several inhabitants of the village of

522 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', I, 112pp. As a sidenote, it is interesting to notice that Tiele-Heeres simply skips all the letters by Van den Heuvel, noting that Rumphius and Valentijn basically relay the same information. This is emphatically incorrect: Rumphius and Valentijn are significantly *more* informative than Van den Heuvel's letters, for reasons discussed below.

Elpaputih the previous year. And Van den Heuvel congratulated himself on his bold and decisive action, and its resounding success:

By removing that harmful character, we have brought about the Company's greatest conceivable good fortune and advantage in securing and confirming its state in these quarters, as well as damaging and diminishing the kimelaha and his adherents, for which praise be to God Almighty alone.⁵²³

Following Kakiali's arrest, Van den Heuvel drank a *matakau* with the various Hituese leaders to confirm a new treaty. It stipulated that the function of Kapitän Hitu was abolished; Hitu would fall under the direct control of the Governor of Amboina (although the *perdanas* and the *raja* would remain in place); the inhabitants of Hitu would be free but not forced to become Christian; and effectively the Hituese would share the same duties and rights as the Ambonese under direct Company rule.⁵²⁴ Van den Heuvel felt that, for all practical purposes, he had brought Hitu under the VOC's control.

Although the *raja* and representatives of each of the four major Hituese families signed the treaty, Van den Heuvel noted that some of the followers of the locked-up *orangkaya* had retreated to the mountain forts in Hitu's interior. Nevertheless, he was confident that, with the help of the Company's new subjects, these would soon see reason and return to their coastal settlements.⁵²⁵

His next letter was less cheerful. As he was writing it in mid-July, he could see the situation in Hitu quickly unravelling.

'THEREFORE, IT IS BETTER IF WE FIGHT THEM': FALLOUT IN HITU

In the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu*, Rijali describes how, in the wake of Kakiali's arrest, the Hituese *orangkaya* were baffled by the antics of both the Company and the Ternaten envoy, who had captured the Lahunese leaders. They called a meeting at which the two *kimelaha* were present and to which Muslim *ulisiwa* communities were invited. The discussions over how they should proceed were apparently heated: some wanted to honour the new treaty with the Company and hope for

523 VOC 1114, fol. 309v.

524 Treaty of 28 May 1634, in: *Corpus Diplomaticum*, III, 262-266.

525 Van den Heuvel to Governor-General, 30 May 1634, in: VOC 1114, 309v. For the Nusatapi family, Baros, an uncle of Kakiali, signed. Along with another uncle, Bulan, he was a detractor of Kakiali's collision course with the Dutch, and had therefore fallen out with him.

the best, others to fight, and still others to refer the matter to the sultan of Ternate. In Rijali's account of the meeting, the kimelaha ultimately had the final word: 'The orangkaya are right, but the actions of the Hollanders are to the detriment of the religion of God's Messenger, and in contravention of the decisions of His Majesty, because they show no respect to his Majesty, Sultan Hamzah – victor thanks be to God, the King, shadow of God on earth. Therefore, it is better if we fight them'.⁵²⁶ Although Rijali himself felt that war with the Company was unwise and reckless, most of the Hituese leaders agreed with the kimelaha. Arms and gunpowder were stockpiled.

Despite the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* being our only source about this meeting, we can probably safely accept the general gist of the account it provides: although Kakiali had not been popular with all the Hituese, his sudden arrest disrupted Hitu's established political structure and aroused such suspicion towards the Company's intentions that the Hituese could only turn to the kimelaha. The latter, unsurprisingly, advocated taking up arms against the Dutch.

All this became apparent precisely as Van den Heuvel was penning a letter to Batavia in mid-July. At the start of the letter, he admitted that the situation was not as favourable as he had hoped; none of the communities that had fled to the mountains had returned. There had been some skirmishes. Attempts to bring those who had retreated to the mountains down by force had been thwarted by monsoon rains. Still, Van den Heuvel stressed how much worse everything might have been with Kakiali still at large. Ironically, he hoped that the Alfurs might be of great help in the situation in Hitu, having personally visited Kamarian on Seram's southwest coast to talk to their leaders. Meanwhile, he had been able to extract confessions from Kakiali – using torture, if we are to go by Rumphius' assertion.⁵²⁷

Just as he concluded his letter, all manner of worrying news came pouring in, leading him to write a rather distressed post-scriptum. He had just learned that, before his departure, the Ternaten envoy had landed 400 well-armed 'Malays' on Hituese soil to assist the enemies of the Dutch in their struggle. 300 other fol-

526 Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu*, 171.

527 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche historie', I, 119. The transcripts of the interrogations, which were sent along to Batavia, are not present in the Nationaal Archief. As Rumphius had access to the documents in Ambon, and considering the Company's proceedings in similar cases (see e.g. Clulow, *Amboina, 1623*), this assertion seems plausible. For Van den Heuvel's own descriptions: Van den Heuvel to Governor-General, 15 July 1634, in: VOC 1114, 398v.

lowers of the kimelaha were also reported to have arrived on the island. The population of all the remaining Hituese settlements had fled to the mountain forts, some having sided against the Dutch, others simply afraid. 'That which we have always feared, has now come to pass', Van den Heuvel wrote, 'and all the Muslim settlements have deserted us'. He made special mention of the Hituese wife of Wouter van Serouij, the resident at the Company's lodge in Ureng. When the lodge was evacuated, Van Serouij's wife defected to the Hituese, taking 150 rials of eight, other valuables, and, perhaps worst of all, vital intelligence with her. Van den Heuvel beseeched the governor-general to send reinforcements and called upon higher powers for help, ordering weekly public prayer days 'to pray to God that he might turn his wrath away from these lands.'⁵²⁸ It may be that Van den Heuvel had succeeded in making the political constellation in the islands simpler, but not in the way he had imagined. Rather, he had done exactly what his superiors had warned him to avoid at all cost: he had brought the Spice Wars to the shores of Ambon proper.

'ALL GONE UP IN SMOKE': CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN BATAVIA

Back in Batavia, the bad news pouring in was not limited to Ambon. The ships that had been blockading Makassar returned to Batavia in early September, many of their crew sick and dying with beriberi and edema, including Gijsbert van Lodensteyn himself. Many suspected that there was more to the raging diseases than met the eye and that the Makasars had succeeded in poisoning the wells on the small islands in the Makassar Strait, where the Company ships went for their drinking water.⁵²⁹

Lodensteyn suggested that the next blockading fleet should leave as soon as possible, for Makasar ships could easily depart as soon as October or November and simply wait somewhere secure along the way before continuing to the Ambon region (the Tiworo Strait, for example, now had a Makasar fortress). In fact, the only real way to mount an effective blockade was to post ships year-round, keeping a little distance from the Makasar roads only from November up until late February, when bad weather and onshore winds made a closer blockade hazardous. He also recommended stationing at least one ship permanently in Buton.

528 Van den Heuvel to Governor-General, 15 July 1634, in: VOC 1114, 402r.

529 L.C.D. van Dijk and G.W. Vreede. *Nee'rlands vroegste betrekkingen met Borneo, den Solo-Archipel, Cambodja, Siam en Cochinchina: een nagelaten werk*. Amsterdam: J.H. Scheltema, 1862, 23n.

Two weeks later, the governor-general duly sent new ships to blockade Makassar, although they were first to detour all the way around Borneo. This time the fleet was commanded by Harmen Gerritsen; Van Lodensteyn was too sick and would die in Batavia shortly afterwards.⁵³⁰ It soon became even clearer that the blockade was not doing much good. In December 1634, the governor-general and council gloomily wrote to the directors that Makassar trade and influence were only growing. The Portuguese and Spanish were selling lavish quantities of weapons to them, as well as to Tidore, ‘in contravention of the old ... laws of not being allowed to sell weapons to unbelievers... but the Pope has dispensed them from it’). Although the blockade had kept Portuguese ships out of Makassar, it had played into the hands of the Danes and the English, who could still sail to and fro at will and had no qualms about selling weapons and ammunition either. Cloves were still amply available in Makassar – the Gowans had simply built a road across the peninsula to its eastern side, where small boats were now unloading Makassar vessels along the shallow coast. As to the possibilities for mounting a blockade there, Brouwer and the Council of the Indies despondently wrote that ‘the many creeks on the east side... make it almost impossible to occupy’.⁵³¹

Perhaps worse still, by now it had dawned on Brouwer and the members of his council that ‘the hoped-for great advantages of apprehending and locking up Kakiali have all gone up in smoke’. This not only applied to the Ambon region. Sultan Hamzah had been deeply offended by the turn things had taken whilst his envoy Sadaha had been in the islands, and made a point of emphasising the damage it had done to his faith in the Dutch.⁵³²

In exasperation, Brouwer, who was otherwise so combative, suggested that the problem might be unsolvable in Asia, but could be solved in Europe instead. Ultimately, the heart of the problem was cloves’ huge arbitrage potential. Given that the Dutch were forcibly and artificially keeping their buying prices low whilst the prices were so high in Europe, other European powers in Makassar could actually pay three times what the Dutch offered and still turn a profit in

530 The detour was meant to investigate whether this provided a viable and less monsoon-dependent route to the eastern archipelago. Gerritsen’s instructions, 17 sept 1634: VOC 859, p. 3-9. Reinforcements were sent out later that same month to join the fleet before Makassar. In April 1635, the blockade was further reinforced by ships under the command of Gerrit Thomasz Pool. Stapel, *Bongaais Verdrag*, 27-28.

531 General letter by Brouwer e.a., 27 December 1634, in: Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwtoffen*, II, 261-262.

532 Ibid., 265-266.

Europe. Meanwhile, the Company was sitting on an enormous hoard of cloves back in the Netherlands. Just lower prices in Europe, Brouwer tactfully suggested, and you pull out the rug from underneath the entire circus:

It would reduce the trade of the Makasars to nothing; bridle the faithless clove smugglers; make us less hated with all our neighbours so that we would have fewer enemies; Batavia would be more inviting to the commerce of all foreigners so that even the Makasars themselves would come to us; we could reduce our naval forces and our garrisons; the need to build more new forts would cease.⁵³³

Meanwhile, evidence of Gijssels' private trade was not forthcoming. As Brouwer put it, 'Van den Heuvel has sent us a remarkable load of testimonies and declarations, containing, however, too much yarn and too little proof of substantial wrongdoings, which he seeks to demonstrate with curious phrasings rather than with substantial proof'.⁵³⁴ In fact, Brouwer received more and more complaints about Van den Heuvel's own behaviour during his tour as commissioner, not to mention his rather underwhelming performance as governor of Amboina so far. Brouwer decided to recall him – ostensibly because he needed a trained jurist in the Council of Justice in Batavia, but more likely to prevent him from making an even bigger mess in the eastern archipelago.⁵³⁵ He sent two people to replace him: Jochum Roelofsen van Deutecom had a largely military background, which Brouwer felt might come in handy, what with the present situation in the Amboina Quarter. Initially, however, Van Deutecom was to share command with Artus Gijssels, who was sent back out to Amboina, now in the capacity of commissioner to inspect the eastern quarters.

533 Ibid, 262-263. His words were, in fact, heeded: partly in response to his suggestion, the meeting of the directors resolved to pay dividends in cloves in 1635 and 1636, with the aim to bring down the market price. It worked: prices dropped sharply from 5,40 to 3,28 guilders per pound in 1635. See Van Dam, *Beschrijvinge*, 1.1, 420; Glamann, *Dutch Asiatic Trade*, 95; Directors to Brouwer, 13 Sept. 1635, in VOC 316, specifically fol. 85r; copy resolutions of the directors, August 1635, point 8, in VOC 101, fol. 139r.

534 General letter of 17 December 1634, in: Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen*, II, 267.

535 Brouwer was stuck with Van den Heuvel because he had been instructed from the Netherlands to make him Council of the Indies, and could not gratuitously ignore those orders even in the face of Van den Heuvel's bungling. Blussé, 'Spitsvinnighe Warvogels', esp. 161-162.

THE PLOT ON AMBON THICKENS

Van den Heuvel seems to have been at least temporarily humbled by the mess that he had on his hands. Under the leadership of the *perdana* Tanahitumesen, the easternmost Hituese settlements had remained loyal to the Company, as had the Muslim *ulisiwa* communities on the southwest side of the peninsula, who were officially subjects of the Company. Nevertheless, Van den Heuvel judged their loyalty ‘brittle and cautious’⁵³⁶ – if not because they were suspicious of the Company’s intentions, then out of concern that the Company would not be able to protect them from their neighbours. The arrest of Kakiali also played into old rivalries between the four most prominent Hituese families. These tensions were only worsened by the old raja’s death and conflict over the custody of his successor, who was still a minor. The situation devolved into what amounted to a civil war fought with outside allies. Those Hituese who had fled to the interior and resolved to fight the Dutch soon found a new leader in an *orangkaya* named Patiwani, of the Tuban family. They sought support from the *kimelaha* and their allies, attacking Hituese who remained loyal to the Dutch and trying to break their ranks by any means necessary, variously wooing, threatening, and assaulting them. Faced with these threats, settlements that had thrown in their lot with the Company looked to it for protection.

Given that not all of the Company’s ships had been able to reach Ambon due to the abnormal monsoon that season, the VOC was spread very thin just at this moment of crisis. The *kimelaha*, meanwhile, were spreading rumours that Batavia had fallen to Mataram and the VOC had lost all its ships in fighting the Chinese.⁵³⁷ That said, the VOC’s remaining allies were loath to switch sides if they could avoid it, for they were all-too-aware of how the Ternatens and Malays were domineering and harassing the Hituese around Ureng and Asilulu who had thrown in their lot with them.⁵³⁸

That was small comfort to the Dutch, however. With barely enough troops to

536 Van den Heuvel to Brouwer, 28 July 1634, VOC 1114, specifically 409v.

537 The latter, interestingly, had at least some basis in fact: in October 1633, the VOC had suffered its worst naval defeat yet at Liaoluo Bay, where it lost four of its nine ships in an engagement with a Chinese fleet. It is interesting that this defeat was a moral boost to other enemies of the Company 3000 kilometres away. See Andrade, *Lost Colony*, 45–53.

538 Van den Heuvel states they were ‘verheert ende vermeestert’ (28 July 1634, VOC 1114, 408r.) Rumphius states they were ‘getravaljeerd’ (Rumphius, ‘De Ambonsche historie’, I, 119.)

protect the VOC's subjects and loyal Hituese against frequent attacks,⁵³⁹ Van den Heuvel's hands were tied. The only way he could actually retake the offensive was by making use of the hongi once again. This was trickier than ever. Now openly working with the kimelaha and the Hituese under Patiواني, Ihamahu was able to prevent the villages on Saparua from sending their kora-kora to join the hongi.⁵⁴⁰ As the kimelaha were once again out and about with their own hongi, Van den Heuvel had to excuse Suli and Wai from participating, so they would be able to defend against a possible sea raid like the one they had faced the year before.⁵⁴¹ For similar reasons, the rest of the Dutch subjects and allies were less than enthusiastic about taking part. Already fed up with the Company's over-reliance on the hongi, they were now more concerned than ever about what might happen whilst they were away.⁵⁴²

All the same, in mid-August Van den Heuvel brought the hongi together as well as he could and attempted to take the fight to the Hituese. After bad weather initially confined the fleet to Ambon Bay, it was able to make it out to the Hituese coast by the 25th, proceeding straight to Ureng. A last negotiation attempt went nowhere, so the VOC sent its troops and allies inland to collect the clove harvest and eradicate the trees. The Ambonese participants were apparently dragging their heels, unhappy with this business of clove harvesting in hostile territory and particularly annoyed they had to share their earnings with the 115 Company soldiers protecting them. They 'barely collected 20 bahar, where they could have easily collected 100', Van den Heuvel complained.⁵⁴³ The entire force ascended the steep cliff to Ureng proper to cut the abundant clove trees there. It turned out, though, that the cliff was guarded by a brick fortification manned by several hundred Hituese firing swivel guns and muskets. Four Dutch soldiers were wounded in attempting to take the position; according to Van den Heuvel, the Ambonese allies beat a hasty and disorderly retreat, after which the

539 Throughout the year the rebels were attacking villages loyal to the VOC, trying to win them over to their side, fortifying positions to cut off various VOC-allied settlements from one another, etc. Especially worth mentioning is that the VOC had sent a force to their allies around Hitulama on the 19th of August, which was subsequently forced to retreat back to Ambon when faced with an overwhelming Hituese force. For an overview see Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', I, 119-122; Rijali, *Historie van Hitu*, 61; Dagh-register, II (1631-1634), 390 and 397pp.

540 Gijssels to Brouwer, 22 Aug 1634 in VOC 1114, fol. 423.

541 Gijssels to Brouwer, 18 Sept 1634 in VOC 1114, fol. 494v.

542 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', I, 121.

543 Van den Heuvel to Brouwer, 18 Sept 1634 in VOC 1114, fol. 490r.

outnumbered Dutch soldiers saw no option but to follow suit. Van den Heuvel saw no option but to abandon his campaign of harvesting and tree-eradication, not only because the Ambonese could not be induced to go back up to Ureng, but also because he worried that a defeat of VOC troops would tip the balance and cause the entire Hituese peninsula to abandon them.⁵⁴⁴ The rest of the campaign was of a more diplomatic nature. Van den Heuvel tried to reason with the various communities along the coast, telling them how he had come to an agreement with Kakiali, whom he would happily release if the Hituese paid their debts to the Company, demolished and abandoned their mountain fortifications, and returned to the coast. To convince the local leaders, he even had a yacht bring Kakiali to Ureng so they could hear it from him. Many of the villages on the west coast still loyal to the Company welcomed this news, which convinced the inhabitants of Henahelu, near Ureng, to make their peace with the VOC. Nevertheless, the rebels under Patiwani would have none of it. Installed in their fortified headquarters in Wawani, they no longer cared about the Company or Kakiali, and openly considered the Dutch enemies. The villages on the east coast, for their part, they were loyal to the *perdana* Tanahitumesen and had never been well-disposed towards Kakiali. Hence, the Company found that its high-profile captive was largely irrelevant and their attempts to use him as leverage were not very effective.⁵⁴⁵ Having achieved precious little, but concerned that he would also lose the goodwill and loyalty of the VOC's subjects and allies if he kept the *hong*i assembled for much longer, Van den Heuvel returned to the castle on the 23rd of September. Organising a big feast for the *orangkaya* who had participated, he lavished sums of money on them in recognition of their service.⁵⁴⁶ The only small military success he was able to achieve over the subsequent months came in October, when he was able to land 300 Alfurs from Sumite on Hitu. Their headhunting made it very difficult for the rebel Hituese to keep the inland forts supplied for the month or so that the Alfurs were willing to stay. Although the Alfurs promised to send Van den Heuvel another group of warriors in December, they did not materialise. Van den Heuvel noted with concern that he could do nothing as Malay warriors of the *kimelaha* established a beachhead near Wawani. In January, the Ambelauese and Burunese killed off the Compa-

544 Van den Heuvel to Brouwer, 18 Sept 1634 in VOC 1114, fol. 489v – 490v.

545 *Dagh-Register*, II, 1631-1634, 399-401; Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', I, 120-121.

546 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', I, 121.

ny's small five-man garrison on Ambelau. To the attackers, it was abundantly clear that the Company could not retaliate.⁵⁴⁷

Aware that the governor-general and his fellow council members were probably none too impressed by his performance as governor, Van den Heuvel's letters became increasingly apologist. He took care to explain to Batavia that he really had had no choice but to arrest Kakiali and that he could not reasonably be expected to have altered how events had unfolded since then.⁵⁴⁸ He wrote a letter of a different tone to the directors in the Netherlands, lashing out at supposed enemies in Batavia who wanted to tarnish his reputation.⁵⁴⁹ In trying to absolve himself, however, he also gave some poignant insights into why the situation was so precarious:

While, my lord, in former times, a small force of ours could achieve great things, back then these people were not equipped with sidearms, cannon, swivel guns and muskets, and not proficient in handling such weapons. Nowadays, on the other hand, the Hituese alone have more and better muskets than the General Company possesses in all of Amboina, and handle them far more skillfully [than they used to].⁵⁵⁰

Even allowing for some poetic license – Van den Heuvel was, after all, casting about for ways to defend his performance – his statement is consistent with what we know about developments in the region. Decades of exposure to firearms and the continuous influx of weapons and ammunition from Makassar and elsewhere were leaving their mark on warfare and with it the balance of power in the region.

THE FAILED SIEGE OF LUSIELA

Before departing from Ambon in May the previous year, Gijsels had sneeringly told Van den Heuvel that he would see him again in eight months. As the seven-ship fleet returning him to Ambon dropped anchor on the 6th of January 1635, he must have felt some satisfaction. There was little time to gloat, however. After informing Van den Heuvel of their commission and setting some things in

547 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', I, 122.

548 Van den Heuvel to Brouwer, 18 Sept 1634 in VOC 1114, fol. 493v.

549 Van den Heuvel to directors, 17 Sept 1634 in VOC 1115, fol. 909-913.

550 Gijsels to Brouwer, 18 Sept 1634 in VOC 1114, fol. 495r.

order in Ambon, Gijssels and Van Deutecom quickly set about preparing for the campaign they had been tasked with. They should proceed to the headquarters of the two kimelaha in Lesiela, conquer it, and preferably capture the kimelaha. Given that capturing Kakiali clearly had not done the trick, the Company now once again focused on the kimelaha as the main troublemakers. A fast yacht was sent to Banda to draw an additional 150 soldiers from the garrison there, reinforcing the 400 that they had brought along from Batavia. The hongi had assembled by 17 January and, after some bad weather and various logistical matters, first sailed past Lesiela for reconnaissance by the 23rd. Gijssels and Van Deutecom had arrived quite early in the season and no foreign traders had yet arrived in the islands. All the same, they found that the kimelaha and their people were quite ready for them, for they came under heavy fire from muskets and large guns as they passed the coast. After some more ships arrived from Ambon, the entire force was assembled on the 28th. It comprised some 700 European soldiers, seven ships, and at least 1.600 Ambonese on more than eighteen kora-kora. The forces disembarked.

Van Deutecom and Gijssels' instructions specified that they should bring down Lesiela with a 'formal siege, enscongements, the placement of heavy guns and the use of heavy grenades fired by the mortars, and not with a surprise attack', on the assumption that this would cause fewer casualties.⁵⁵¹ They duly set at their task, selecting a spot slightly south of the kimelaha's fortifications, clearing the vegetation there, and building a makeshift wooden fortification of their own. From this position, they slowly dug siege works along the shore in the direction of the lowest fortifications around Lesiela. Meanwhile, Gijssels went off to Sumite to inform the Alfurs of the siege and see if he could enlist their help.

Trying to besiege an uphill fortification from below on the shore, however, proved less than ideal. The vegetation around their provisional fort was dense, providing excellent cover for the kimelaha's troops to make constant hit-and-run attacks on soldiers trying to fetch drinking water or sago, or working on the Dutch siege works. Dutch counterattacks were stymied by both the forest, which shielded the defenders, and enemy fire, their opponents being amply equipped with muskets. These troops reportedly included some 400 Makasars and even a Castilian. With great difficulty, a battery was eventually erected and the Dutch started bringing up their *kartouwe* siege guns and mortars to fire stones, fire-bombs, and grenades into the enemy town and fortifications. This did not turn

551 Instructions for Van Deutecom, 4 December 1634, in: VOC 857, fol. 33r.

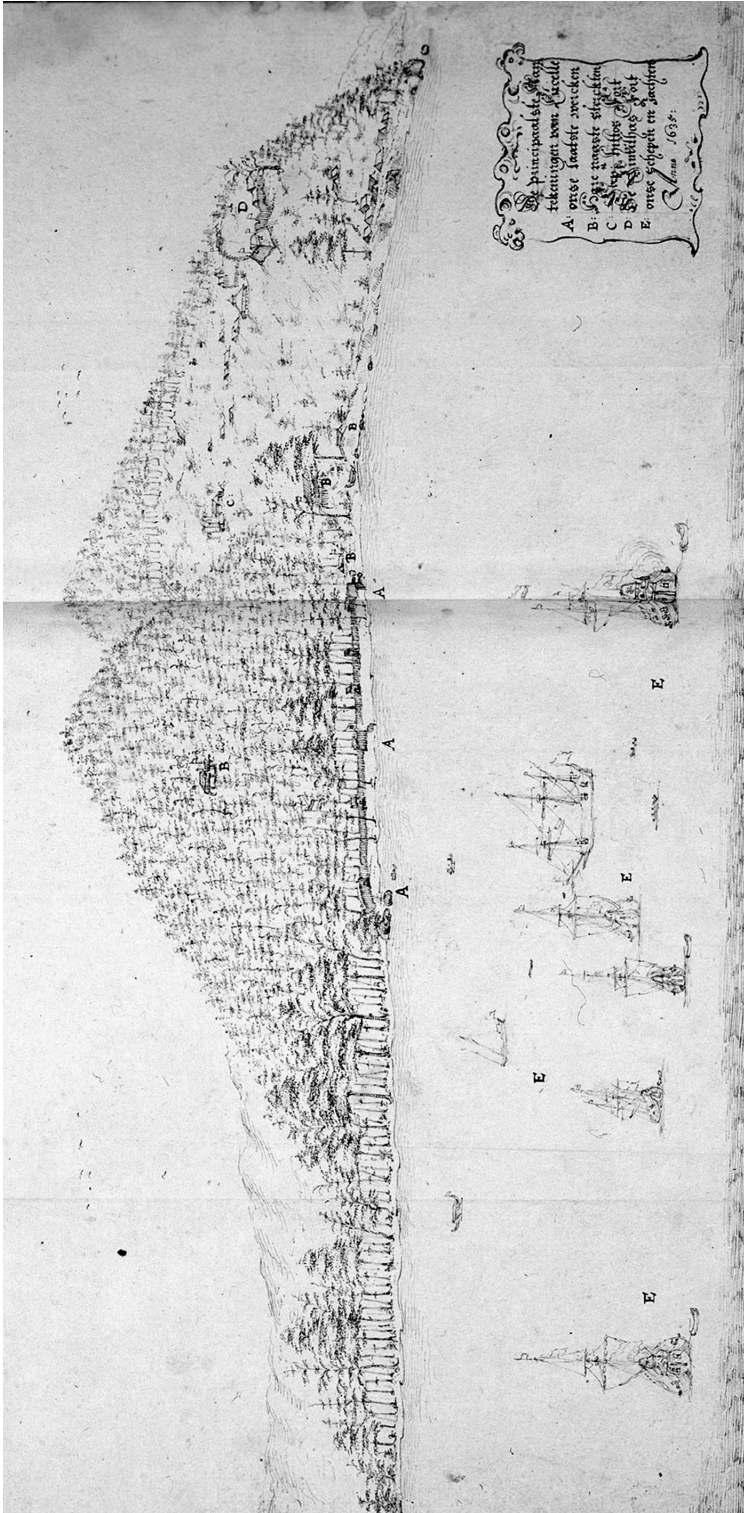


Fig 8.1 Siege of Lesiela, 1635. This drawing depicts the Dutch forts and siege works (A), which we see extending far to the north (right) from the original landing spot. These positions end in a battery, which fired on the various indigenous fortifications (B, C) and, most prominently, the kimelaha's fort (D) with limited success. In the dense forest behind the Dutch fortifications, the kimelaha's forces had complete freedom of movement. Detail from anonymous drawing in Badische Landesbibliothek, K477, fol. 19.

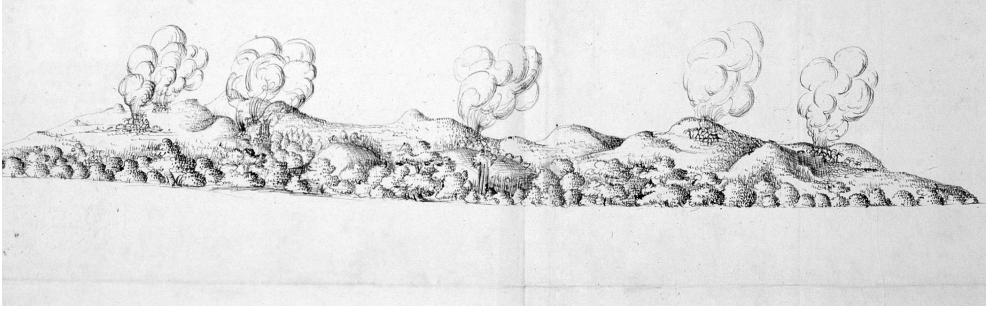


Fig 8.2 Burning villages around the Bend of Kaibobo, March 1635. Gijssels writes about how he destroyed a total of fifteen villages (four of which were previously unknown) and some 1.000 clove trees in the area. Detail of anonymous drawing in in Badische Landesbibliothek, K476, fol. 161.

the tables, however. The kimelaha's fortifications commanded the hill and hit the Dutch battery at least as often as the other way around. A stalemate ensued, which worked to the advantage of the kimelaha as time wore on. Already well-armed and supported by several hundred Makasar and Malay warriors at the outset of the attack, his ranks swelled with some two thousand followers in February as news of the siege spread.

The campaign dragged on into March and disease started spreading amongst the Company's troops and allies. Kept from returning to their villages to wither and die in the protracted siege, the Ambonese in particular became increasingly discontented. On the 17th of March, Gijssels and Van Deutecom decided that one yacht, the kora-kora, 120 soldiers, and most of the Ambonese would be sent on a different mission: to see to some unfinished business with the villages and clove trees around the bend of Kaibobo. Although it was ultimately extremely successful, this campaign further thinned the troops engaged in the siege.⁵⁵² The kimelaha took heart and started extending his own fortifications. Meanwhile, the season began turning. The coast became a lee shore, making it difficult to keep the fleet anchored before Lesiela. There was no sign of the Alfurs. Given that the Company forces had been unable to control access to Lesiela and were now increasingly closed in themselves, it started to look more and more as if the kimelaha was besieging them rather than the other way around. With morale low, the troops sick and dying, and the kimelaha advancing on his position, Van Deutecom decided to break off the siege on the last day of March. By the

⁵⁵² Badische Landesbibliothek K476, fol. 158-165.

2nd of April, the entire force was on its way back to Castle Victoria.⁵⁵³ Brouwer was furious when he heard about the outcome, noting how foolish it was to try and besiege the fortress from the shore below.⁵⁵⁴ We may wonder, though, what other options the besiegers would have had, instructed to lay a formal siege and dependent on their ships for supplies and reinforcements, while the Seramese interior was the power base of the kimelaha. In the wake of the failed siege, stories circulated in Makassar about the 'great overthrow' that the Dutch had suffered in the Ambon islands.⁵⁵⁵

ONE HONGI TOO MANY

Until this point, Van Deutecom, Gijssels, and Van den Heuvel had officially formed a three-man council jointly responsible for Ambon. Only after Gijssels and Van Deutecom's return was the governorship of Ambon officially transferred. Van den Heuvel was sent back to Batavia. Gijssels commenced his tour as commissioner through Ambon and Banda, first stopping at Hitu to try and mend the situation there. On his own assessment, he was only partially and provisionally successful in doing so. One measure would certainly prove unhelpful in this respect: Gijssels single-handedly nominated the perdana Tanihitumesen as provisional Kapitan Hitu. This meant that the VOC would have at least a well-disposed Hituese representative to deal with as the crisis dragged on. Nevertheless, Gijssels' unilateral decision would only exacerbate antagonisms within Hitu and was widely perceived as an intervention in Hituese affairs that the Company had no right to make.⁵⁵⁶

553 Journal of the siege in: VOC 1118, fol. 236-259. It is interesting to note that Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', I, 123pp, is uncharacteristically poor on detail here, and gets dates wrong. This applies to the governorship of Van Deutecom more generally, on which Rumphius is rather brief and also remarks that Van Deutecom 'hardly kept note of his first two years as governor, as he was a military man not raised with the pen' (Ibid., 124). This might indicate that Rumphius did not have access to the extensive journal Van Deutecom kept of his entire governorship: VOC 1124, fol. 100-240.

554 Brouwer to directors, 4 January 1636, in: Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen*, II, 280.

555 In January 1636 EIC officials in Bantam wrote to England that 'the clove traders of Macassar have on the Island of Amboyna given the Dutch a great overthrow, where they say were slayne 400 Dutch soldiers, with whose arms and buffcoats Macasser seemes to glitter.' Although some of the details seem to be off here (the island of Amboyna rather than Seram, and the arms and armour obtained are not reflected in the Dutch sources), the siege of Lusiela is almost certainly the event referred to. Bantam presidency to court of directors, 31 Jan 1636, in: IOR E/3/15, fol. 153.

556 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', I, 123-124.

After leaving Hitu, Gijssels sailed around the north and east side of Seram, stopping to shore up the relations with Seram Laut. Since his own campaign there two years previously, the region had become an important trading partner with Banda, mostly providing sago, given that Banda did not produce any staple foods. After this visit, Gijssels continued to Banda.

Van Deutecom now governed Ambon on his own. His instructions stipulated that he continue the earlier extirpation policies: destroying clove trees belonging to communities that did business with foreign traders. Meanwhile, he was to ensure that the Hituese under Patiواني were unable to coordinate or combine forces with the kimelaha, as well as to stop any clove traders that did make it to Hoamoal. He duly sent ships to patrol the coasts of Hitu and Hoamoal. For the continued extirpation of clove trees and suppression of the Hituese rebellion, he needed his indigenous subjects and allies, like his predecessors.

Van Deutecom assembled the hongis for the first time on the last day of August. He was to lead them on what should have been a great venture against Hatuhaha on the north coast of Haruku. In many respects, this settlement was to Haruku what Ihamahu was to Saparua: the centre of the independent Muslim northern half of the island. The VOC had once been more closely affiliated with Hatuhaha than with Ihamahu; Hatuhaha had signed a treaty with the VOC promising to participate in the hongis and deliver cloves exclusively to the Dutch. More recently, however, the relationship had become more complicated as a result of the various conflicts in the region, with Hatuhaha often opting to align with fellow Muslim communities.⁵⁵⁷ Since the campaigns that culminated in the siege of Ihamahu two years earlier, mutual trust and goodwill between Hatuhaha and the Company had broken down completely. Hatuhaha's inhabitants had largely deserted the town proper and retreated to their inland strongholds. As far as Company officials were concerned, they were also selling their cloves to the wrong people.⁵⁵⁸

As a consequence, Hatuhaha was the target of Van Deutecom's first large campaign after the siege of Lesiela. He went all out: a day of fasting and prayer was organised. Around this time, he also received reports that a high ranking Ternaten official was held at Hatuhaha against his will, which provided an additional justification. The sultan of Ternate and the Company were still allies, after all; ostensibly, then, Van Deutecom was merely campaigning to 'keep the King's

557 Treaty of 13 March 1609, in: *Corpus Diplomaticum*, I, 58-59.

558 Knaap 'War and Revolt', 5-6.

justice'. On the 30th of August, an impressive force of twenty-four kora-kora, four sloops and five yachts set out for Hatuhaha under the command of the governor himself.⁵⁵⁹

The situation they encountered was not what they had expected. As they made their way to Hatuhaha, the kora-kora from Haruku joined their fleet, bringing a letter from 'the envoy of the King of Ternate' who was apparently at Hatuhaha. Although the letter was in Arabic, which no one in the fleet could read, it was accompanied by 'a peace banner'. The people delivering the letter explained that Hatuhaha's leadership had no idea what they had done to anger the Company and that the letter called for negotiations.⁵⁶⁰

Arriving at Hatuhaha the next day, they indeed found an envoy from Ternate present. Far from being a prisoner, he claimed to be there in an attempt to resolve issues amongst all those places currently selling their cloves to foreign traders and to admonish them to sell to the Company from now on. The envoy pleaded with Van Deutecom, impressing upon him that it would be very counterproductive to make war with Hatuhaha at this time. Remarkably, some of the island's Christian inhabitants seconded his entreaties. The Christians living in Kariu were particularly insistent that Van Deutecom heed the envoy's call for restraint. Given that their village was situated very close to the Muslim communities, they expected to be the target of Hatuhaha's subsequent retribution. Nonplussed, Van Deutecom backed down.⁵⁶¹

Subsequent events at Kapahaha, where the fleet moved next, were also characterized by a lack of opportunity for military action. Kapahaha was a mountain stronghold on the eastern side of Hitu, in the area largely controlled by the perdana Tanihitumesen, and the occupiers of the fort itself had also been on the side of the Company until recently. Now, however, they had now broken off contact with them.⁵⁶²

559 Deutecom's journal, 22 and 23 August, in: VOC 1124, fol. 165v – 166v. The report originated with perdana Tanahitumesen, who was at Hatuhaha at the time, for reasons unclear to Deutecom (and to me). Also see Deutecom to Governor-General, 19 Sept. 1635, this section published in Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen*, II, 276-279, esp. 279.

560 Deutecom's journal, 1 Sept., in: VOC 1124, fol. 168r.

561 *Ibid.*, 2 and 3 Sept, 168v- 169r. It is worth noting that the raja of Hatuhaha was apparently not present at the time, and drinking a matakau to confirm the newfound understanding was therefore postponed.

562 They were led by Telukibesi, who was of the Tanihitumesen family and had initially tended towards the Company, but as opposed to the perdana Tanahitumesen, had subsequently opted to take his distance from them, and appears to have attempted a

Acting against Kapahaha proved difficult, however, for it was situated on a formidable natural fortification. It was not possible to exact revenge on the clove trees situated downhill from the settlement because they belonged not to Kapahaha but to the Hituese allies of the Dutch. Accordingly, Van Deutecom the military man once again found himself enmeshed in stalling tactics negotiations that lasted for days. Eventually he received two hostages and a promise that the inhabitants of Kapahaha would come down to the coast after the clove harvest. Even further east along the coast, Liang was admonished for selling cloves to the kimehala during the initial phase of the revolt. Like the other settlements, however, it was otherwise left unharmed. Without having done much in terms of fighting, the hongis disbanded on the 10th of September.

It was reconvened on the last day of October. The kimelaha was out and about with a fleet of his own and Van Deutecom was concerned that it might visit or assist the Hituese. He sent out his allies to prevent this. As it turned out, the kimelaha's ships were not present at Hitu. Rather, they were active at Hutu-Haloi on the Seramese coast, as well as Hatuhaha and Ihamahu. Van Deutecom left two of his senior officers to lead the expedition to these places. Upon the kora-kora's return on the 16th of November, he was pleased to note that the Company's allies had managed to capture eight kora-kora and several other ships, and burn several more on the spot.⁵⁶³

Only two weeks later, he called together the hongis for a third time. First and foremost, he hoped to use it in its ceremonial capacity in a tour of the Christian regions of the Lease Islands. Such tours were always occasion for Christian marriages and baptisms in the presence of the governor himself. Part of the fleet, however, would subsequently move out to destroy a recently discovered nutmeg plantation towards eastern Seram.

As the fleet was gathering at Passo, the gateway to the Lease Islands on the east side of Ambon, Van Deutecom decided to give another small feast for the orangkaya, to acknowledge their service in the hongis. At the feast itself, though, he got a small taste of the discontent that was brewing amongst the Ambonese about the Company's all-too-frequent use of their services: the raja of Soja, a settlement in the interior of Leitimor, 'started his usual talk he is prone to when

middle course between Patiwani on the one hand, and the perdana Tanihitumesen on the other. See Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', I, 141; Ridjali, *Historie van Hitu*, 63, 173.

563 Deutecom's Journal, 31 Oct – 16 Nov 1635, in VOC 1124 fol. 179r-181v.

drunk' and swore at the various former governors. He seems to have harboured particular resentment about the expedition to eastern Seram two years earlier, for he bemoaned the fact 'that when they were at Seram Laut at the time, they had been promised mountains of gold, but when the gold was distributed, they were not given their due part'.⁵⁶⁴ Van Deutecom immediately dismissed the trouble-maker from the meeting, but was mollified by the other orangkaya, who insisted that he not be punished in any way. He was, however, excused from partaking in this expedition.

In Van Deutecom's eyes, the subsequent expedition was a resounding success. Hundreds were baptised and dozens of marriages were concluded as the hongi made various calls on the three islands. By the 4th of December, the tour was completed, at least officially; whilst part of the fleet went back to Ambon with the governor, making as much of a racket and drawing as much attention as possible, thirteen kora-kora quietly stole off in a different direction under cover of darkness. They returned on the 22nd, having gone all the way to eastern Seram. They had located the nutmeg at Terfulo, destroyed some 1500 trees, and burnt down the nearby settlements of Kilmuri, Kilbon, and Selou. Thirty vessels found on the shore had been destroyed and no losses had been sustained. Van Deutecom duly organised a feast to thank the participants and seemed quite content with the outcome. If he was aware of any trouble, he did not record it in his journal.

NEW ENEMIES AND ELUSIVE ALLIES AROUND SULAWESI

Meanwhile, the blockade of Makassar had continued over most of 1635. What its commanders – first Harman Gerritsz and then, following his death during the mission, Thomas Gerritsz. Pool – were up to in this period is not known in any detail. Although the *Makassar Annals* allude to a skirmish at Galesong (directly to the south of Makassar) in June,⁵⁶⁵ the Dutch sources are curiously quiet.⁵⁶⁶

What is clear, though, is that Brouwer was not particularly impressed with the results of the blockade and that, by now, the directors in the Netherlands

564 Deutecom's Journal, 26 Nov 1635, in VOC 1124, fol. 183r.

565 Entry for 13 June 1635: 'the Dutch fired up at Galesong; the karaeng [Ala'uddin] over-nighted at Bebaq [north of Galesong]'. Cummings, *Makassar Annals*, 49.

566 1635 is a year for which the Dagh-Register Batavia has not have been preserved, and the Generale Missiven of late 1635 and early 1636, while filled with Brouwer's complaints about the policy towards Makassar, curiously does not contain any information about the final blockade.

had also communicated their displeasure about it. Just a few weeks before he was already set to return to Batavia, Pool was instructed to break off the blockade and continue to Borneo on a different mission.⁵⁶⁷ The blockading fleet thus sailed away in mid-September of 1635. No new one would be sent out.

Meanwhile, the relationship between Brouwer and the directors in the Netherlands rapidly deteriorated due to mutual misunderstandings and differences of opinion over which strategy the Company should follow. The directors were thoroughly annoyed for a number of reasons, particularly because Brouwer had managed to get himself embroiled in simultaneous conflicts with Mataram, Bantam, and Makassar. They were not convinced that Makassar posed much of a threat. The directors had apparently given credence to the sultan's claims that only traders used his port, over which he had no control. In a thunderous passage in what was to be his last general letter, Brouwer hammered home the point that the realities of the situation were quite different:

It is certain that the Makasar aspires to enlarge his state at the cost of the Dutch, spurred on and astutely advised by the Spanish, Portuguese, English and Danes. As a consequence, he is now so well established, that he is making all the Indian princes of the surrounding lands his tributaries. Buton, Buru, Sula, Banggai, Manado, Tobungku and various other places are now under his rule. All of Selayar, Calauro, Flores, Sumbawa and Bima are now his tributaries. He has taken the entire east coast of Borneo from the king of Martapura. The mighty Bugis of Sulawesi's interior are also his tributaries... In order to secure the clove trade for himself, he sends great assistance to kimmelaha Luhu, hoping that this will propel him further still, and he is therefore the most harmful enemy the Company has in all of the Indies, the mighty giant among all its rivals and foes.⁵⁶⁸

While painting a harrowing picture of Gowa's increasing power, Brouwer also mentioned a people that the Company had apparently become aware of only

567 His instructions for this new mission, dated 5 September 1635, in: VOC 857, fol. 547r-v. The correspondence and journals with respect to it: VOC 1118, from fol. 491 onwards.

568 General letter of 4 January 1636, this passage included in: Tiele-Heeres, *Bouwstoffen*, II, 281-282. I have taken the liberty of translating 'giant' where the original has 'Christ-offel'. All geographical names modernized, except Calauro, which appears as a large island directly to the east of Selayar in 17th century maps. Such an island does not exist,

recently: the Bugis, one of the main ethnic groups of South Sulawesi. Several of their polities on the peninsula had a long history of conflict with Gowa. In the late sixteenth century, the main opposition to the expansion of Gowa's power over the peninsula had come from an alliance of the three main Bugis states named the *Tellumpocco*. It was ultimately defeated during Gowa's 'Wars of Islamisation' and the Bugis polities had all become part of the Gowa-Tallo state structure by 1611.⁵⁶⁹

Although ostensibly things had been peaceful since that time, VOC officials in Batavia noticed that something was brewing in South Sulawesi just as their conflict with Gowa was escalating. From 1634 onwards, increasing awareness of the Bugis led to the Dutch to wonder whether they might be willing to declare open war on Makassar, if offered assistance. The various fleets setting out to Makassar and Buton were therefore instructed to see if they could make contact with them.⁵⁷⁰

Van den Heuvel was the first to claim success. In April 1635, in his final letter as governor, he informed Governor-General Brouwer that his earlier efforts at Buton had borne fruit. The previous November, he had received word from Buton that envoys of 'the King of the Bugis' (presumably the *Arumpon*, the leader of Bone, the largest and most belligerent of the Bugis states) would like to come to an agreement on the possibility of joining forces against Makassar. He complained, however, that his fellow members on the secret council (i.e. Van Deutecom and Gijssels), would not allow him to stop at Buton on his way back to Batavia to see if he could make contact with the envoys.⁵⁷¹

Gerrit Thomasz. Pool, who had risen through the ranks from ship's master to fleet commander over the course of the two successive blockades of Makassar, was then sent out to try. Having just returned from his earlier mission to Borneo, he sailed out from Batavia again in early January of 1636, with six yachts and various instructions. Pool was to first sail to Pulau Laut off the coast of Borneo and destroy any and all Makasar vessels he ran into. He was then to continue to Makassar itself, not to blockade it this time, but to exchange Portuguese captives

although the name might be connected to Kalao island, a small island to the southeast of Selayar.

569 Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*, Ch. I; J. Noorduyt. *Een achttiende-eeuwse kroniek van Wadjo : Buginese historiografie*. The Hague: Smits, 1955, pp. 73-117.

570 Van Dijk, *Borneo*, p. 28.

571 Van den Heuvel to Governor-General Brouwer, 27 April 1635, in: *Bowustoffen*, II, pp. 275-276.

for Dutch prisoners who had been taken in Buton and were presumed to have been subsequently brought to Makassar. As it turned out, the Dutch captives were not there and Pool had to limit himself to releasing the Portuguese in exchange for the agreed ransom. In the next leg of his mission, he was to continue to the east coast of the peninsula, where the Bugis supposedly resided, and see if he could come to an agreement with them.⁵⁷²

The fleet arrived before the coast on the 25th of February, dropping anchor and flying a white flag. Soon enough, the crew noticed a small armed force assembling on the shoreline. Contact was made and, after an exchange of hostages, a high-ranking envoy ventured to Pool's ship. It turned out they were at Bulo-Bulo, a Bugis polity directly to Bone's south. An envoy explained that Bulo-Bulo and Bone were currently at peace with Gowa, but that they would happily join the Dutch in fighting them if the latter could deliver weapons. In exchange, they would deliver several shiploads worth of rice every year. The envoy also said he would be happy to arrange a meeting with the *Arumpone*.⁵⁷³

The son of the *Arumpone* (or so the Dutch were informed) duly made his appearance on the shoreline with his retinue three days later. Pool sent his own delegation ashore: a commissioner named Steven Barentsz, accompanied by a merchant named Roelof Gerritsen and six more people. He cautioned Barentsz to be careful. Barentsz, however, was confident that these people meant no harm and did not want to provoke them. As soon as they had rowed ashore, Barentsz ordered that the weapons should be left behind under the boat.⁵⁷⁴

It turned out that Pool's warning was quite justified. As soon as the unarmed group approached the Bugis delegation, they were all massacred. Pool witnessed the killing from the deck of the yacht, but was unable to intervene or even to avenge the deaths, for the delegation melted away into the coconut groves on the shore, no major settlements were in the area, and the shallow coastal waters made it impossible to come in any closer with the yachts. Outraged, puzzled, but powerless, he left the coast and sailed on to Buton.⁵⁷⁵

Pool had no idea what had gone wrong, but in hindsight we can make an informed guess. It would seem that, with only limited knowledge of the Bugis at his disposal, Pool simply sought out the wrong crowd. Although Bugis, Bu-

572 Journal of Gerrit Thomas Pool, 24 January – 16 April 1636 in: VOC 1121, pp. 818-842.

573 Ibid., pp. 827-828.

574 Ibid., pp. 829-830.

575 Ibid., pp. 830-831.

lo-Bulo was actually rather concerned about Bonese expansionism (as were some of Bone's other Bugis neighbours). Accordingly, it was closely allied with Gowa through every subsequent conflict up to and including the Makassar War. Although it certainly seems possible that Bone was already considering expanding its power in the peninsula and had been feeling out Dutch support in good faith, Bulo-Bulo was not in on the game and apparently took the opportunity to nip this attempted alliance in the bud. The *Makassar Annals* drily note that 'the Dutch hoped to turn the people of Bulo-Bulo, and pledged that in 300 days and nights we [i.e. Gowa] would be attacked, but they were killed by the people of Bulo-Bulo'.⁵⁷⁶

Pool continued to Buton, where the prevailing attitude towards the Dutch had appreciably changed over the past few years. Even when Sultan La Balawo had still officially been on the throne (but anxiously spent most of his time outside Baubau), a freeburgher's yacht from Batavia had been attacked and plundered whilst anchored at Buton, apparently on the initiative of a local orangkaya. Many more attacks had followed since La Balawo had been deposed. On his way back to the Ambon region in 1635, Gijssels reported that the Butonese had intended to attack him. The Butonese took two more freeburgher's ships that year, one of which, called *Velsen*, had been wrecked on a reef at Wowoni (an island directly to the north of Buton) in late 1635. When its owner, a man named Van Vliet, rowed to Baubau for help, the Butonese sultan sent an official to the wrecksite – who then proceeded to massacre the survivors and take the weapons and cargo. Van Vliet himself was subsequently killed at Baubau.

Pool's task at Buton was to see if he could free the surviving Dutchmen who had been taken during these events and were still held there. Not trusting the sultan when he was invited ashore, Pool resorted to rather back-handed methods. As the ship was being resupplied by local people, he waited for a moment when a great many were on board, and then sprang his trap, killing thirty-six and capturing seventy-six alive. He then threatened to kill those too if the Dutch captives were not immediately released. This had the desired effect. The Dutch were brought to the shore and exchanged for the seventy-six Butonese hostages.

576 Cummings, *Makassar Annals*, 50. For background information on the relation between Bulo-Bulo, Bone and Gowa, see David Bulbeck. 'The Landscape Of The Makassar War.' *Canberra Anthropology*, 13:1 (1990): 78-99, esp pp. 80-83; Andaya, *The heritage of Arung Palakka*, esp. pp. 85-86.

Pool continued on his way, stopping briefly at Ambon in the last days of March. He might have noticed that the situation there was also rather tense.⁵⁷⁷

AN EMPTY CHURCH

Governor Van Deutecom had become aware that something was afoot on the 22nd of February. It was the eve of the commemoration of the conquest of Castle Victoria, thirty-one years earlier. A day of thanks and prayer was going to be held to mark the occasion. The Ambonese Christians were expected to attend service in the large church in Kota Ambon the following day. Instead, word reached Van Deutecom that night that the orangkaya of the Christian villages of Soya, Puta, and Amahusu had disappeared into the interior with some of their people. Come the next day, the church remained largely empty.

Bewildered, Van Deutecom decided to go ahead with at least some of the commemorations, firing five cannon shots from the walls of Castle Victoria, 'as we are told that this is done every year ... and we did not want to diverge from the custom'.⁵⁷⁸ But most of the day was spent trying to figure out what on earth was going on. To that end, Van Deutecom called a meeting of the orangkaya.

During this and several subsequent meetings held over the next few days, the orangkaya were more than happy to divulge why the Ambonese Christians had not come to church and some had taken to the hills. They told Van Deutecom bluntly that the people were afraid that the planned celebrations were a ruse and that whoever showed up in church would have been put in chains and deported to Batavia. One of the preachers, Jacobus Vertregt, had recently held a census amongst the Ambonese Christians. Although it seems that Vertregt took this initiative so as to be able to organise churches and schools more efficiently, in the Ambonese's eyes, the counting of their men, women, and children augured ill. As later inquiries brought to light, a whole plethora of rumours had been making the rounds: that the ship *Buren*, which had arrived in Ambon in late January, had brought casks full of chains, manacles, and nooses. That the Makasars, Danes, English, Portuguese, and their allies were on the verge of staging a massive assault on the Ambon region, from which the Dutch would be unable to protect

577 Ibid., pp. 831-842. Pool went on to Banda, and from there, was sent on an exploration of the region to the east. He would end up being hacked to pieces, with his own sabre, no less, by Papuans on New Guinea's south coast. The deep and narrow bay nearby, subsequently baptized 'murderer's river' by the Dutch, is the present-day Etna Bay. *Dagh-register Batavia*, 1636, pp. 225-226.

578 Deutecom's Journal, 23 Feb 1636, in VOC 1124, fol. 195r.

them. Even as Van Deutecom and the orangkaya were having these meetings, an increasing number of Ambonese Christians left their settlements and made their way into Leitimor's interior. The villages gradually emptied.⁵⁷⁹

The real breaking point was reached in early April. Despite the awkward situation of the population having largely absconded, Van Deutecom desperately attempted to see if he could still get the Ambonese to man their kora-kora for a tour of the honggi, on which the Company was still heavily reliant. At first, the orangkaya stated they would be willing to participate if Dutch crews were limited to an absolute minimum and even started readying some of their kora-kora. Then they thought better of it, however, and the kora-kora remained in the water unmanned. Aware that this constituted a definitive break with the Dutch, those communities who had fled now started fortifying themselves and blocking roads into the interior.⁵⁸⁰

Meanwhile, the trouble spread beyond Leitimor. The Muslim villages on Hitu's southwest coast that fell under the direct rule of Castle Victoria, which the Hituese had already pressured to abandon the Dutch in the preceding period, now did just that and threw in with the Hituese rebels. An exception was Larlike, which was guarded by a Company blockhouse. This fortification was soon besieged by the Hituese and their allies from Hoamoal. The Christian villages in the Lease Islands, for their part, retired to their inland strongholds, with those on Haruku and Nussa Laut soon siding with the kimelaha, who jumped at the occasion. The blockhouse at Oma on Haruku was also besieged by the Company's former allies, who were joined by warriors from Hoamoal and commanded by kimelaha Leliato himself. He had Hoamoal all to himself at the time, given that kimelaha Luhu had heeded the sultan's call to return to Ternate to account for the kimelaha's behaviour and the rumours that they were in cahoots with Makassar.

With the Christian villages on Leitimor having abandoned the Company, most of those on Hitu siding with the Hituese rebels, and many of the Christians on the Lease Islands now openly hostile to the Company and siding with the kimelaha, the precarious system with which the Company had exercised control

579 Knaap, 'War and Revolt' lists the villages in the immediate vicinity of Kota Ambon whose population fled: Kilang, Ema, Urimesen, Soya and Halong. Slightly further away, Hutumuri, Wai and Suli similarly fled. Some villages did not participate in the flight, most prominently including Nusaniwe, Latuhalat, Hatiwe, Tawiri, Mardika and Baguale.

580 Knaap, 'War and Revolt', pp. 8-9.

over the region had now entirely collapsed. And Company officials did not even fully grasp how it happened. What had gone wrong? Arend Gardenijs, who had recently arrived as the new director in Ambon when the revolt started, was commissioned to investigate. His subsequent report is the fullest account we have of the origins and course of the revolt.

Interestingly, he started his investigation on the assumption that all these stories about the census and the associated rumours were a bunch of hogwash. He 'strongly suspected that something else was hidden underneath'.⁵⁸¹ Through speaking to those orangkaya who had not absconded or at least retained some level of contact with the Company, he unearthed all sorts of grievances. Most had to do with the hongis. Over the past few years, the hongis had become an ever-more important instrument in the incessant wars in the region, and was called upon not only too frequently but, in the eyes of the orangkaya, pointlessly too. Although Gardenijs does not provide details on this, recall that, traditionally, although a ruler did not compensate participants in the hongis, the latter were able to enslave captives, collect heads, and take loot. Over the past few years, the hongis had increasingly been employed to eradicate trees; simply sit by to exert the threat of force whilst governors conducted negotiations; and other activities of no immediate benefit to the orangkaya and their people.

These expeditions could last for weeks, the rowing often continuing day and night. The rowers were constantly wet and exhausted, to the detriment of their health. In addition, the expeditions' frequency kept the men from performing duties (such as tending gardens) back home. The orangkaya explained to Gardenijs that hongis obligations therefore caused rowers and their families economic hardship. In addition, as we have seen, when the men were away, the kimelaha tended to target undefended villages with a hongis of his own.

The worst point of injury, however, was how the men were treated on such expeditions. The Dutch officers were often harsh and rude, 'calling them dogs, beasts, black devils, pigs and more such unreasonable verbal abuse, kicking them, throwing shoes at them, hitting them with rattans, and, on several expeditions, kicking over their food with their feet and trampling on it'.⁵⁸² On the two most recent expeditions, some of the Company personnel had really crossed the line. The men had been made to row three days and nights straight, without even being given time to eat. The orangkaya of the villages of Wai and Baguala had

581 Gardenijs, 'Cort Verhael' in: Knaap ed., *Memories van overgave*, 142.

582 Ibid., 143.

been put in chains after their kora-kora had been unable to keep up for a short while. Secretary Pieter Melchiorzoon and *fiscaal* Cornelis Faber were named as being particularly cruel and rude, the former having hit one of the rowers on the head with a stick on the last expedition, causing a large wound. The frequent expeditions were bad enough; being insulted in this way made them unbearable.

On their return voyage from the last expedition to eastern Seram, some of the men on the hongi had discussed whether they should seek immediate retribution, killing those responsible and throwing them overboard. Cooler heads prevailed, however, and the aggrieved orangkaya bided their time. After their return, they started planning how to stand up to the Company, involving the Hituese in the process. Hearing of the trouble brewing, the kimelaha offered help to whoever defied the Company. The orangkaya of Ambon swore an oath to form a bloc against the Dutch governor, sealing it with a *matakau*.⁵⁸³

According to Gardenijs, the bad treatment meted out by the Dutch during the hongi was the only real reason that the Ambonese turned against the Company, whereas concerns about the census and rumours of deportation were merely ‘idle talk, hogwash and frivolous embellished pretexts’.⁵⁸⁴ One wonders whether this assessment is fully justified. It seems as likely that the census did raise concerns, for the Ambonese quite justifiably understood it to be an instrument of control. The census was initiated during a period of unprecedented political instability in Ambon: Hitu was still up in arms and a whole host of Hituese orangkaya, including the perdana Tanihitumesen, had travelled to Batavia in September of 1635 to intercede on Kakiali’s behalf with the governor-general. According to Rumphius, the Christian orangkaya were also uneasy because of Kakiali’s arrest – might they be next? It seems likely that the unravelling of the relationship with Hitu and consequent destabilisation of the region created a sense of insecurity in the Christian regions, although Gardenijs does not mention this as a specific grievance or concern.⁵⁸⁵ As we have seen in previous chapters, rumours

583 Ibid., 144.

584 Ibid., 142.

585 Note though, that Rumphius states that Kakiali was deported to Batavia in September 1635, and that this specifically added to the unease of the Christian orangkaya. This is incorrect: Gijssels brought a host of Hituese orangkaya with him to Batavia to plead with the governor-general, but Kakiali remained in Ambon. It was only after the outbreak of the revolt that Kakiali was sent to Batavia, departing on the ship *Leiden* in late May, and arriving in Batavia on the 22nd of June 1636. Knaap, ‘War and revolt’, 5; *Dagh-register Batavia*, 22 June 1636, in *Dagh-register Batavia*, 1636 (published 1899), 145; Cf. Rumphius, ‘De Ambonsche Historie’, I, 125.

and anxieties could become powerful forces under such circumstances, and not just for the Dutch. (Also, at the risk of stating the obvious, mass deportation by the Company was not entirely unprecedented in the wider region.) Rather than there being one, 'real' reason hiding beneath a series of pretexts, then, it seems plausible that an entire cluster of anxieties and frustrations reached critical mass in early 1636.

The rest of the year was chaotic and precarious, with the Company fully on the defensive. Although some of the villages remained on good terms with the Company or soon came back into the fold, others remained hostile. It seems that most felt they were stuck between the Company and the kimelaha; by and large, they tried to remain safe whilst not committing to either party. As a consequence, many seem to have refrained from selling cloves to anyone, keeping them in storage until the conflict went one way or the other. The Dutch outposts at Oma and on Nusa Laut remained under siege. By the end of the year, the kimelaha once again went out with his honggi to put pressure on the Lease Islands and the Dutch outposts there. The Company was in no position to counter his efforts.⁵⁸⁶

All in all, the Company's fortunes in Ambon looked bleaker than ever as 1636 drew to a close. How to remedy the situation? Gardenijs had already given his view in his report a few months before:

We hope that a sufficient force, with an extraordinarily experienced person, vested with great authority and absolute power, [will serve] to unreservedly quell and allay all the risen misunderstandings, the mutiny and the uprising of the Ambonese Christian subjects of the Dutch state; to punish some of the ringleaders to serve as a deterrent and example to the others; and to pardon the respective offences of the others and reconcile with them.⁵⁸⁷

As it turned out, the highest-ranking Company official in Asia was more than willing to act on this advice.

586 Knaap, 'War and revolt', 10-11. For more details on the course of the conflict in these months, also see Van Deutecom's journal in VOC 1124, fol. 100-240; *Dagh-register Batavia*, 1636, passim, esp. 134pp and 230pp.

587 Gardenijs, 'Cort Verhael' in: Knaap ed., *Memories van overgave*, 153.

VAN DIEMEN'S INTERVENTION

Meanwhile, back in the Netherlands, the directors observed the situation in and around Ambon with annoyance. They had not even received news of Kakiali's arrest and its fallout as they were writing to Governor-General Brouwer in April 1635. Of far more immediate concern to them was the fact that the English continued introducing inordinate quantities of cloves into the European market. They could only conclude that the Company's efforts at eradication had not yet achieved the desired result. They recommended staying the course, ordering that its officials 'incessantly and unsparingly continue eradicating the clove trees in the various quarters, sniffing out every nook and cranny'.⁵⁸⁸

They also appointed a new commander in chief to execute this policy, their relationship with Brouwer having become untenable over the previous period. Given that Brouwer's term ended in 1635, the directors could simply decree from the Netherlands that he was to be succeeded by Antonio van Diemen, who was already serving in Batavia in the capacity of director-general.⁵⁸⁹

Van Diemen started his term in January 1636, with the directors instructing him to continue the extirpation. Brouwer advised the same, adding that doing so required that 'any military force that can be spared elsewhere should be employed in Amboina'.⁵⁹⁰ In July, as the situation in Ambon steadily worsened, Gardenijs added his above recommendation that a 'sufficient force' be assembled, headed by someone 'vested with great authority and absolute power'.

But Van Diemen had no such force at his disposal during the first few months of 1636; unusual weather in the Netherlands had kept the VOC fleets from sailing out to Asia for months.⁵⁹¹ The so-called *Kermis* (Fair) Fleet of 1635, which

588 Directors to Governor-General, 21 April 1635, in VOC 316, fol. 67r. Also see Witteveen, *Antonio van Diemen*, 215, but note that the dates are slightly mixed up in this passage.

589 Witteveen, *Antonio van Diemen*, Ch.10 and 11.

590 Witteveen, *Antonio van Diemen*, 215-216.

591 See J. Bruijn, e.a. *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1979-1987, outgoing voyages 461.6 (departure 2 May 1635) through 479.2 (departure 4 May 1636). The letter of the Amsterdam chamber dated 19 December notes that the previous letter was sent 'met de Schepen Harderwijck en Swol dewelcke door contrarie windt tot op dato niet en hebben connen uijtloopen', and that reinforcements and trade goods would be regrettably delayed as a consequence. The letter from 17 April of the next year notes that the ships carrying these letters had finally been able to set sail in January. VOC 316, esp. fol. 104r-v, 110r. Additionally, in the General letter of 28 dec 1636, Van Diemen complains that the soldiers and sailors were poorly fed while

usually set sail in late August and early September, was unable to venture into the North Sea at all. The Christmas Fleet did not make it out until mid-January. As a consequence, the ships informing Van Diemen of his appointment would be the last to reach Asia for some ten months. Van Diemen had to sit on his hands. From late July onwards, however, the delayed ships started arriving in quick succession, with the Easter fleet of 1636, which was able to set sail on schedule, hot on their heels. Things started to look up in November 1636 and the Council of the Indies decided to start preparing for a large expedition to Amboina. Heeding Gardenijs's advice, Van Diemen decided to lead it himself.⁵⁹²

The expeditionary force set out on the 30th of December, once many of the ships that had been sent out to Taiwan, Japan, and mainland Southeast Asia had returned. It consisted of seventeen ships carrying 2,070 people, of which 905 were European soldiers. Having learned the lessons of the attempted 'formal siege' of Lesiela two years earlier, Van Diemen intended to sail straight there, without making any calls along the way. Exploiting the element of surprise, he meant to take the town immediately by storm. Three weeks later, on the 19th of January, the fleet dropped anchor off Lesiela. From their ships, the Dutch noted that their arrival caused a lively bustle: it seemed that the inhabitants of the settlements around the fort were packing and fleeing into the interior.⁵⁹³

Early the next morning, the troops rowed to shore under sporadic fire from the fortifications. Local informants (including the perdana Tanihitumesen, who was returning to the Ambon region on the expedition fleet) had informed the Dutch of the various paths leading uphill.⁵⁹⁴ The Company troops landed and

the ships waited for months near Texel, leading to a higher death rate than normal. *Generale Missiven*, I, 555-556.

592 General letter of 28 December 1636, in: VOC 1119, p. 197-198. (Note that this passage is not fully recorded in the published version.) Artus Gijssels, it is interesting to note, eagerly offered his service for the expedition. Although Van Diemen did remark that his knowledge would be valuable, Gijssels, much to his apparent chagrin, was to stay in Batavia, together with fellow Council of the Indies and former governor of Ambon Philip Lucasz, to run things there while Van Diemen was away.

593 This and much of what follows based on Knaap, 'War and Revolt'. Gerrit Knaap was so kind to share with me parts of his main primary source for this article, the transcription of Van Diemen's journal of the expedition. The transcription was originally made by Mrs. J. Steendijk-Kuypers, who rediscovered the manuscript in the Westfries Archief and transcribed it. The original manuscript can be found in the Westfries Archief, Oud Archief Enkhuizen, inv. nr. 1150. (Note that Knaap refers to it as inv. 399, but the archive has re-inventoried since then.)

594 The other informants were Abdulrahman, an orangkaya from Luhu who remained in

went straight up towards Lesiela. Although under increasingly heavy fire from the various smaller fortifications to the south, as well as the mosque and different houses near the main fort, the Company troops had the advantage of forest cover. Where possible and necessary, they fired back. After a difficult climb, the advance guard reached the main fortifications. According to Van Diemen's report, they comprised a relatively small ('yet very strong') fort of whitewashed coral stone, which was equipped with five loopholes for guns, and a larger fort further up. The two structures were connected by means of a curtain wall with ramparts. The entire length of the linked fortifications was defended with swivel guns, harquebuses, and some heavier cannon, which subjected the Company troops to heavy fire as they came into view.⁵⁹⁵

The advance guard immediately became embroiled in a furious firefight with defenders manning the smaller lower fort, as Company slaves in the main force brought up siege ladders. When the ladders were employed, the troops discovered that they were too high, making it easy for the defenders to push them back. Several ladders broke in the stalled attempt to scale the walls; most of the Company's casualties were suffered at this stage of the attack. The remaining ladders were cut to size on the spot, making them drastically more effective. Soon the defenders broke and ran, abandoning not only the smaller fort where the fighting had taken place, but also the larger one. In one morning Van Diemen had been able to conquer the fort, which had earlier withstood a two-month 'formal siege' and a reputation of being unassailable.

Of the Company troops, ten men had been killed and thirty-eight wounded, eight so heavy that they perished shortly afterwards. The number of dead on the kimelaha's side could not be ascertained, but the fleeing defenders left behind two bodies, which the Dutch found in the deserted fort. As the Dutch would learn from captives, two high-ranking Ternatens had also perished during the attack. Kimelaha Leliato had reportedly fled across Hoamoal towards Kambelo. The stocks of weapons and supplies found in and around the fort testify to the wider dynamics of the conflict: amongst the two dozen or so cannon and the mostly five- and six-pound cannonballs found inside, there was one 'large and good Makasar gun'. The twenty barrels of gunpowder found in a cave near the

league with the Company. Knaap, 'War and revolt', 11-12.

595 Enkhuizen 1150, 21-26. The manuscript mentions a 'portrait' of these fortifications, which, however, is not known to have survived, and the two separate but connected fortifications cannot be recognized in the drawing from Gijssels's earlier siege (see above.)

larger fort were marked with a letter 'g' and had their content noted down using English measurements. Furthermore, an impressive 33.500 pounds of cloves, which the defenders had also left behind, were distributed as booty amongst Company soldiers.⁵⁹⁶

Over the next few days, the fort was largely demolished and, as per usual, the surrounding clove plantations destroyed. Some 6.500 trees were axed, ring-barked, or otherwise destroyed. By the 27th, Van Diemen was ready to move out, leaving five ships and 400 soldiers at Lesiela to demolish the remaining sections of the fortification. He arrived before Victoria Castle three days later. To Van Deutecom, the arrival of the impressive fleet in the Bay of Ambon must have been a sight for sore eyes. Van Diemen had sent a sloop ahead to Ambon to inform him of his arrival. Following Van Diemen's instructions, Van Deutecom informed the various orangkaya that if they wanted to reconcile themselves with the Company, this would be the right moment to show their colours.⁵⁹⁷

Van Diemen spent most of February on Ambon. In Gerrit Knaap's words, he played 'the powerful but generous overlord' to the Christian orangkaya of Leitimor, trying to build up mutual trust once again. He was less conciliatory towards the Muslim settlements: on the 6th of February, Van Deutecom was sent out to western Hitu to punish those villages responsible for attacking Larike over the previous years. The fortifications at Wakasihuh and Tapi, two of the Muslim settlements supposedly ruled by the Company, were taken and demolished. Hitu proper, however, was ignored for now.

On Leitimor, meanwhile, it took until the end of February before the Leitimorese orangkaya (who had frantically been discussing amongst themselves how to proceed) were persuaded to suspend their mistrust of the Dutch and come down to meet with the governor-general in person. On the 25th of February, they finally met with Van Diemen. After they had explained their grievances and reasons for breaking with the Company, Van Diemen issued a general pardon, stating that it was all 'buried in the darkness of the sea'. The details of how the mutual relationship would be shaped for years to come was kept for later; first, the situation in the rest of the islands needed to be restored and Van Diemen's

596 *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1637, 174 (6 May 1637).

597 The proceedings of Van Diemen on Ambon and in the Lease islands have been described more extensively and thoroughly elsewhere. I therefore describe these events in broad strokes here, and refer to Knaap, 'War and revolt' and Witteveen, *Antonio van Diemen*, Ch. 16 for more details. The following passages rely on these sources: specific references have been added where additional sources have been consulted.

fleet, manned with a thousand soldiers, left for Haruku the very next day. In the spirit of the newly restored relationship between the Leitimorese and the Company, three kora-kora immediately went along with Van Diemen's ten ships, with five more following suit after the necessary preparations.

Van Diemen's actions on Haruku followed much the same pattern as they had on Ambon. He reconciled with the Christian inhabitants by being generous and forgiving, even where they had taken up arms against the Company. He went on the offensive against the Muslims, however, only pardoning them after settling the score first. Several Muslim strongholds were taken, although Van Diemen's forces were repelled at Alaka, a formidable fort perched on an inaccessible hill, reportedly defended by a thousand men. (The element of surprise that had enabled Van Diemen to take Lesiela relatively easily was now lost.) Alfurs from Sumite, with whom the Company's relationship had also markedly improved with Van Diemen's arrival, were brought over from the Seram mainland. Some 400 of them were stalking the interior of the island by mid-March. Clove trees, coconut palms, and other economically useful trees were destroyed. By March 22nd, Hatuhaha sent a delegation asking for forgiveness and suing for peace.

The Christian villages in Saparua had not openly joined the revolt. In fact, some had actively resisted the kimelaha's attempts to expand his power there. Van Diemen could therefore afford to be amiable in his visit to Saparua, which was intended mainly to reaffirm the existing friendship. Having seen what had happened on Haruku and being presented with an ultimatum, the people of Ihamahu also rushed to make peace with the Company, which they did on April 7. In the following days, the Christian inhabitants of Nusa Laut (who had also taken up arms against the Company) did the same and were forgiven. Van Diemen then departed the islands, once again relegating further negotiations to the *landdag*, the large general meeting he was planning. After circling back to Lesiela to pick up the troops left there, he went to see what he could do about Hitu. He had Kakiali brought up and allowed him to speak to the rebel orangkaya. This appeared to have the desired effect: the orangkaya sent a delegation to meet with Van Diemen and promised to come to the great *landdag* that Van Diemen was preparing. In the meantime, Kakiali was taken back into Van Diemen's custody – his official release was to be a solemn occasion on the *landdag*.

A great general assembly of the various leaders of the region, the *landdag* was the first of its kind since 1621. Over several sessions, the grievances that led to the revolt of the Christians of Ambon and the Lease Islands were addressed.

Amongst many other responses, Van Diemen limited services on the honggi to a mere five weeks a year: a marked improvement on its all-too-frequent use over the past few years. Should the honggi be required for longer, the VOC would pay for its services. Instructions for VOC personnel were drawn up, forbidding the maltreatment of those serving on the honggi, in addition to other rules.

Delegates from Hitu were still not forthcoming, however. In their earlier meeting, the Hituese orangkaya had stressed that their main grievances were Kakiali's captivity and deportation, as well as the VOC's unilateral appointment of a new Kapitan Hitu. Accordingly, Van Diemen grudgingly released Kakiali to see whether this would break the stalemate. It did. Kakiali went up to Wawani and returned at the head of a delegation of 100 Hituese leaders eleven days later. In the subsequent meeting, Kakiali was reinstated as Kapitan Hitu and the old monopoly provisions were reaffirmed, as was Hitu's independence, which had practically been abolished in the earlier treaty drawn up by Van den Heuvel. The Hituese's status as friends, rather than subjects, of the sultan of Ternate was also reaffirmed. After three harrowing years of captivity, Kakiali was back in the saddle as Kapitan Hitu. (The perdana Tanihitumesen, who had been Kapitan Hitu in the meantime, was placated with a new title: *orangkaya tua* or senior orangkaya.) Thus, the Company's relationship with Hitu was restored – at least outwardly. Van Diemen would later write to the directors that although the Hituese's twisting and turning had tried his patience and done little to restore his faith in the alliance, he would 'punish these perfidious crooks in due time'.⁵⁹⁸ If we are to go by Rumphius' assertion, Kakiali harboured similar feelings towards the Dutch, resolving to 'wash away the rust of the chain on his leg with Dutch blood'.⁵⁹⁹ He too was biding his time.

THINGS LEFT UNRESOLVED IN HOAMOAL

With sufficient military force and the prestige that came with his position, Van Diemen had been able to restore the situation on Ambon and in the Lease Islands. He had been less successful with regard to Hoamoal, however. Although he had of course driven Leliato from Lesiela, thus dealing the kimelaha a significant moral blow, the latter was still at large and had not really been induced to any kind of *entente* with the Dutch.

In their attempts to effect a rapprochement with the kimelaha, the Dutch

598 Generale missive, 9 december 1637, in: *Generale Missiven*, I, 612.

599 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', I, 149.

received some assistance from Ternate, where Sultan Hamzah, none too happy about Dutch policy towards him and his domains, had been following events in and around Ambon with particular ire. Although he seems to have been genuinely concerned about the overtures that the kimelaha were apparently making to the Makasars, he considered the Dutch less than helpful in maintaining control over the region. It seems that kimelaha Luhu, who heeded the call to return to Ternate in late 1635, was largely able to absolve himself and convince the sultan that the Company's policy in the region was the real problem. Hamzah was particularly incensed that the Company had had the nerve to single-handedly appoint a new Kapitan Hitu, for he increasingly felt that he had, or at least should have, sovereignty over all the Muslim areas in the Ambon islands.

Upon subsequently learning that Van Diemen was preparing to come to the Ambon region in person 'to punish the stubbornness there', Hamzah immediately sent his brother Kaicili Sibori there as an envoy. Kaicili Sibori was the Kapita Laut, the commander of the fleet of Ternate, an office that had earlier been held by Kaicili Ali.⁶⁰⁰ In two letters, one to his subjects and another to the governor-general, Hamzah explained that Kaicili Sibori, unlike any of his earlier envoys, was fully empowered to act in the sultan's name, 'as if I myself had come in person'.⁶⁰¹

Ostensibly concerned for his subjects, Hamzah impressed upon the governor-general that he should not punish the people on Hoamoal for the misdeeds of their leader (i.e. kimelaha Leliato), who was solely to blame. He implored the Dutch to desist from any course of action that might cause bloodshed, if Sibori delivered the message in time. Sibori would use his wide-ranging mandate to get the various rulers of Hoamoal to finally do his bidding and to recall Leliato to Ternate, for the sultan preferred to handle his unruly subordinate himself. Once Van Diemen had wrapped up his affairs in Ambon, he added delicately, it would be really nice if he could then come to Ternate with at least some of his force. The war against Spain was once again in full swing there and the sultan could certainly use a little more help from his supposed allies than he had been getting.⁶⁰² In a separate letter to kimelaha Leliato and the rulers of Seram, Hamzah told them they should heed everything Kaicili Sibori and the governor-general decid-

600 The exact family relation to the sultan is unclear. See Fraassen, 'Ternate, de Molukken en de Indische archipel', II, p. 446 and 451.

601 Dagh-register Batavia, 6 May 1637, in: *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1637, 189-190.

602 Both letters in: Dagh-register, 6 May 1637, in: *Dagh-Register*, 1637, 189-192.

ed. What is more, if they truly recognised him as their sultan, they were all to come to Ternate.

Kaicili Sibori arrived at Lesiela only after it had been taken and destroyed. Van Diemen found the envoy there in mid-April, when he returned to pick up his soldiers and complete the destruction of the fortresses. Whilst Van Diemen set affairs in order, Kaicili Sibori summoned Leliato to Luhu on the east coast to accept the letter from the sultan. Leliato was wary, however. Kaicili Sibori came to Luhu accompanied by some Dutch ships and Leliato suspected a ruse to arrest him. Another overture was subsequently made, but Leliato never actually accepted the letter. Kaicili Sibori then travelled to the *landdag*, helping straighten things out whilst tactfully evading Van Diemen's attempts to elicit a concrete statement on who ultimately held sovereignty over Hatuhaha and Ihamahu.⁶⁰³

Kimelaha Leliato, however, was apparently in no mood to listen to anyone's claims about sovereignty. Van Diemen, who still had other business to attend to in the eastern archipelago, decided not to pursue him to Kambelo and took a large part of his forces with him as he prepared to leave the Ambon region. Ultimately, it would take Hamzah personally coming to the Ambon region to resolve that situation, as we will see in the next chapter. Tragically, though, in resolving one conflict, he would reignite another.

BUTON: PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND A FAILED SIEGE

After wrapping up affairs in Ambon, Van Diemen did not sail on to Ternate, Sultan Hamzah's passive-aggressive invitation notwithstanding. He still had some other business to attend to in the eastern archipelago. Aware that the conflicts with the kimelaha and with the sultan of Gowa were mutually reinforcing, and that it would therefore be virtually impossible to solve the problems in Ambon whilst the Company remained at war with the Gowan sultan and his tributaries, he set sail for Buton and Makassar to see if he could work out some kind of deal.

⁶⁰⁴

The Butonese capital Baubau came into view on the 13th of June.⁶⁰⁵ A group of Butonese appeared on the shore as the fleet anchored. Calling to the nearest ship, they asked whether the Dutch had come with such a large force to make

⁶⁰³ Knaap, 'War and Revolt', 18.

⁶⁰⁴ The journal of this part of the expedition is included entirely in *Dagh-register Batavia*, 1637, 272-279.

⁶⁰⁵ Note that Dutch sources did not generally use the name Baubau but referred to it as the town of Buton.

war or peace. The ship's master shouted back that the governor-general 'knew no better than that he had come to make peace with the King of Buton'. Soon enough, the Butonese planted a white flag on the shore to indicate where negotiations were to take place. A Dutch launch cautiously rowed out, hostages were exchanged, and a Butonese orangkaya came aboard the governor-general's ship, informing him that the sultan was very much inclined to make peace. Van Diemen replied that he was too, but not before justice had been done. In terms of the loss of life, he was more than ready to call it even. Before there could be any peace, however, the goods stolen from the various freeburghers' yachts would have to be restituted. This went especially for the cannon that the *Velsen* had carried, for these were only loaned to its owner so that the ship could defend itself and rightfully belonged to the 'Prince of Holland'. The envoy and his translator were then returned to the shore and the Dutch hostages were picked up. The latter reported that the Butonese had quietly been amassing some 500 or 600 warriors near the shoreline, where they waited in ambush.

As the rain poured the next morning, no white flag appeared on the Butonese shore. Instead, the Butonese were busy breaking down the houses directly on the shoreline. Some of the Dutch crew members claimed having seen a blood flag raised and then lowered again. Near noon, a white banner was finally raised and a launch was sent to the shore. It proceeded even more cautiously than on the day before. For a good half hour, its crew waited in vain before some Butonese appeared out of the undergrowth. Apparently surprised that the Dutch had still shown up to negotiate, they asked them what they wanted. The crew answered that they wanted to know the sultan's decision. Communication was difficult, though, because the translator through whom they had worked yesterday was absent 'on account of the rain'. After more waiting, the Butonese Kapita Laut, Sapati, who had led the Butonese delegation on the shore the evening before, finally appeared. He told them that, although the Butonese would have liked to make peace with the Dutch, they had no intention of restituting the spoils taken from the captured yachts. In fact, there was hardly anything they could return. The goods had been distributed, all but three of the cannon had been lost in the attempt to salvage them, and one of those had been sent to Makassar as a gift. The governor-general, he added, could do anything he saw fit in response, but the Butonese were not about to retribute anything or compensate the Dutch for the plundered goods. The Dutch delegation made its way back to the fleet.

Van Diemen responded immediately, firing a burst of cannon shot into a gathering of people on the shore whilst he set about preparing a landing. Soon,

some 400 troops disembarked and spent the rest of the afternoon destroying vessels and fish traps, and reconnoitring the area. The next day was also spent wreaking havoc along the shoreline and in reconnaissance.

All this laid the way for a full-scale attack on the town. The next morning, Van Diemen landed his full force: the 400 European soldiers he had at his disposal were reinforced with 180 armed sailors, one company of sixty Mardijkers and another of sixty Bandanese. This brought his total fighting force to 700 men. The strategy the Dutch followed was as straightforward as that executed at Lesiela several months earlier: straight up the hill to storm the town. The first three men who made it up the enemy walls were to be awarded considerable sums of money.

The town was formidably defended. Butonese tradition holds it that it was Sultan La Buke who had the Butonese kraton encircled by massive stone fortifications, at great cost to his people and him personally.⁶⁰⁶ The impressive final result can be marvelled at to this day. A massive wall some 2.400 meters long runs along the ridge of an extremely defensible platform, with bastions of various shapes at regular intervals. Interestingly, a comprehensive history of what is still the largest fort in Indonesia remains to be written.⁶⁰⁷

While the sources do not indicate the extent to which these fortifications were finished in 1637, it is clear that they were too much for the Dutch force that day.⁶⁰⁸ As the Company troops marched up, they met with no concerted opposition. On the other hand, the narrow paths, densely strewn with caltrops, as well

606 Schoorl, 'Het eeuwige verbond', 31.

607 Hasanuddin, 'Forts on Buton Island: centres of settlement, government and security in Southeast Sulawesi.' In: 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, 187-210; 'Laporan penelitian ekskavasi Situs Tirtatayasa, Banten & Benteng Wolio, Buton.' NPO Association of Asian Cultural Properties Cooperation / Pusat Penelitian dan Pengembangan Arkeologi Nasional, Indonesia, March 2007, esp. pp. 89–103. (Japanese and Indonesian, with English summary.) I thank Nadia Rinandi of the Pusat Dokumentasi Arsitektur (PDA) Jakarta for making this report available to me.

608 Butonese tradition also holds that La Buke would resign as Sultan as soon as the defences were completed. He did so in 1645. Schoorl, 'Het eeuwige verbond', 31. An earlier image of Buton, supposedly showing the situation in the 1630s, is included in Gijssels' personal archive in Badische Landesbibliothek, K478, but is too worn-down to make out the fortifications in any detail. Note that Hasanuddin, 'Forts on Buton Island', 187, states that the defensive works were *completed* in 1634, which strikes me as an error.

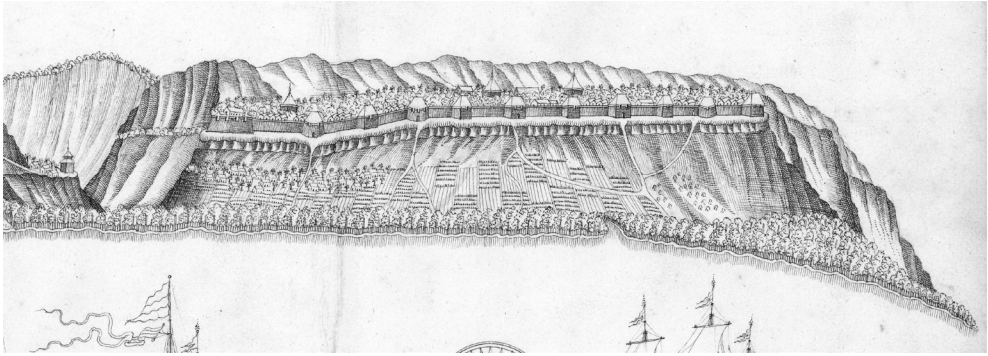


Fig 8.3 Bird's eye view of Baubau, (usually called the town of Buton in European sources), c. 1651. Pen drawing by Pierre du Bois, collection Nationaal Archief, The Hague, inv. nr. 4.VEL.1310.

as the fire from several small fortifications and an occasional charge by Butonese raiding parties, did not make the ascent easy. Upon finding themselves directly beneath the town, however, their hearts sank: 'Due to the awful steepness, they could see no way forward without suffering significant losses, as they could only make out two very devious and steep paths, above which the walls and the town were teeming with men'.⁶⁰⁹

While the officers deliberated on how to proceed, the Butonese mounted their first concerted counterattack. Emerging from the undergrowth and charging into the side of a column of armed sailors and Bandanese who were still making their way up the hill, the Butonese very nearly caused them to break and run. The officers saw no option but for the entire force to retreat back to the ships in as orderly a fashion as possible. Still under fire, the troops were back at the ships only two hours after the attack had begun. Van Diemen, who had stayed with the fleet, noted 'that the courage of our people was not as great now as before Lesiela'.⁶¹⁰ He decided simply to call off the attack and continue to Makassar.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the years 1634-1636, the system with which the Company tried to control the Ambon region and clove trade almost completely collapsed. After Kakiali's ascension and the subsequent escalation of tensions both within Hitu and between Hitu and the Company, the region seemed headed towards a crisis. Nevertheless, Van den Heuvel's subsequent mishandling of Kakiali's arrest and attempts to end

609 Dagh-register Batavia, 1637, 277.

610 Ibid.

Hituese independence made the situation that much worse. Later, the simultaneous blockade of Makassar, combined with several instances of unusual weather in both Asia and the Netherlands, forced Van den Heuvel and his successor Van Deutecom to handle the situation with little support from Batavia. This, in turn, forced them to rely heavily on the hongi in their attempts to deal with events in Hitu and the continuing conflict with the kimelaha, who were now openly coordinating their efforts with the Hituese under Patiwani. This strained relations with their own allies and subjects (which were already tense due to the escalating conflict with Hitu) to breaking point. In early 1636, they too literally took to the hills. It took a huge military intervention, led by the governor-general himself, to restore the VOC's control of the region.

Stepping back from Ambon to assume a broader vantage point shows how the crisis in Ambon region was inextricably intertwined with wider developments in the eastern archipelago in the eyes of the VOC, its allies, and its enemies. The decision to blockade Makassar was originally intended to improve the situation in Ambon. Apparently well-founded rumours that the sultan of Gowa had resolved to step up his involvement in Hoamoal made this seem all the more urgent. The fact that Makassar also continued expanding its power elsewhere in the region, bringing Buton into its sphere of influence by 1634, was of great concern to not only the Company but Ternate too. The Company required access to the Buton Strait to reach Ambon and Ternate and had always used it as a stopover and rendezvous as part of its activities in the region. For its part, Ternate saw its own sphere of influence decline, sending one envoy after another to the Ambon region to regain a modicum of control over Hoamoal.

Very much aware of the interconnectedness of Gowan expansion and the situation in the Ambon region, Van Diemen knew that the delicate peace he had just managed to bring about would not last if the Company remained at war with Gowa. As a consequence, his final goal before returning Batavia was to work out a peace deal with Makassar.