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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.

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XIV. A BROADER CONFLICT (1652-1655)

The name 'Great Hoamoal War' suggests that it was primarily fought in and around Hoamoal, and, as we have seen in the last chapter, that is largely accurate for its first two years. Its second phase, however, would turn the entire eastern archipelago into a theatre of war. Not only would Makassar itself and Buton once again become pivotal in the conflict; it would also involve Bima, Timor and Sulawesi's east coast, would reach eastern Seram, and would bring Company ships and troops to places that, as far as De Vlaming was aware, had never visited by Company ships before. This, perhaps, makes this phase of the conflict the clearest illustration of the degree to which the wars in Ambons were tied up with the region at large.

'I DAENG RI BULEKANG WENT EAST TO AMBON': MAKASAR INTERVENTION

Even in the wake of De Vlaming's ostensibly successful visit to Makassar, and assurances from the Gowan court that they would stay out of the conflict, the possibility of Makasar intervention remained a nagging concern for VOC officials. As De Vlaming had gone back out to the Ambon region in February 1652, one of the ships in his fleet had therefore passed by Makassar to inform itself of the situation there. The news it brought was only partially reassuring. While Sultan Malikussaid and Chancellor Pattingalloang were ostensibly committed to maintaining their peace with the Company, the ripples caused by the conflict around Ternate and Ambon also certainly reached Makassar's shores.

For instance, a small vessel bringing thirteen representatives of the people of Ambelau had come to Makassar to ask the sultan for help – the Dutch, so they explained, had converted their ruler, Sultan Mandarsyah, to Christianity and sought to convert all of them as well, and they needed help to stand up to them. Chancellor Pattingalloang had refused their request, but had also refused the Dutch request to turn the representatives over, and had sent them away, complete with the four *bahar* of cloves they had brought with them. A vessel from Seram Laut had also arrived, with a request for advice – they had been approached by kimelaha Majira to join his cause, what should they do? Pattingalloang later reassured the Dutch resident that he had told them to stay neutral, although there was no way to be sure. Meanwhile, some of the large spice traders of old, most prominently a Malay by the name of Paduka Raja, were clamouring for permission to once again sail out east with armed fleets. Pattingalloang had told them that, while they were free people, if they sailed for the Ambon region, they might

as well take their belongings with them as they would no longer be welcome in Makassar. No spice hunting fleets had ultimately sailed for the Ambon region.⁸⁵⁷ All the same, it was clear that both from within and outside Makassar, there was mounting pressure on the Gowan court to intervene in the conflict.

One small boat, though, had actually sailed out from Makassar to the Ambon region, and had De Vlaming particularly worried. Last November, imam Rijali, the author of the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* now living in exile in Makassar, had reportedly sent out a small sampan, manned with some of his family members and fellow exiles, towards Buru. Later, as De Vlaming had arrived at Buru, he had learned from interrogated captives that the vessel had in fact arrived in the region, led by none other than Telisema, a son of the late Kapitan Hitu. Its crew consisted of more than forty men, who had gone around inquiring about the state of defence of various places in the Ambon region as well as the production of cloves. They were supposed to report back about all this, ostensibly in preparation for a possible Makasar intervention in the region.⁸⁵⁸

In the wake of all this, Majira arrived in Makassar for help, together with an envoy of Manilha. He apparently arrived when the Dutch resident had just left for Batavia at the end of the season, probably somewhere in October. Interestingly, the Gowan court itself subsequently informed Batavia of their arrival, delivering a letter by way of catholic missionaries. The letter, itself a sign of good will, apparently also alluded to punishing the Majira and the Ternaten envoy, reassuring the governor-general and council that the sultan was committed to keeping the peace with the Company. All the same, a delegation, led by Jacob Hustaert, was quickly assembled and dispatched to Makassar so see that Majira and the delegates were indeed properly 'punished', or delivered to the Company.⁸⁵⁹

When Hustaert arrived before Makassar on the first of February 1653, however, the facts on the ground had changed in the meantime. While no exact details are known, it is clear that, after the rather cool initial reception, Majira

857 Journal De Vlaming, 21 February 1652, in: VOC 1193, fol. 335r-336v.

858 Journal De Vlaming, 21 February resp. 23 March 1652, in: VOC 1193, fol. 336v-337r, 362v-363r; .

859 Governor-General Reiniersz to Sultan Malukussaid, 16 January 1653 in: VOC 876, p. 988-995; Instructions for Jacob Hustaert, 16 January 1653, in: VOC 876, p. 974-987. It should be noted that the delegation was also sent out to resolve a conflict over two ships owned by Francisco Vieira, which the VOC had captured after the war with the Portuguese had recently formally resumed. The exact sequence of events is difficult to establish as both the Dagb-register Batavia and some of the correspondence for this period is missing.

and the delegates were able to win the sultan and chancellor for their cause. The *Makassar Annals* note how on the 21st of November 1652, 'people mustered around the manuscript from Ternate', apparently a royal letter from Manilha whom the Makasar leadership now considered the true sultan. Eight days later, the *Annals* inform, 'I Daeng ri Bulekang', a naval commander, 'went east to Ambon'.⁸⁶⁰ He had, Hustaert learned, done so at the head of a fleet of 30 vessels, bringing some 1500 armed men, as well as kimelaha Majira, and was to call at various Makasar tributaries around the coast of Sulawesi and Bima to levy more ships and troops, before continuing to the Ambon region. In addition, Malay clove traders had also once again set out to the region.⁸⁶¹

As far as Hustaert was concerned, this, then, precluded any further need for negotiation. He refused to come to land, did not have resident Evert Buijs take up his position in the Dutch lodge again, and continued on to Buton. He did wonder how this could have happened – and felt that perhaps, the Portuguese were somehow to blame. The war with Portugal had recently resumed, and the Company had captured two ships of the Portuguese Francisco Vieira, which were apparently partly owned by Chancellor Pattingalloang. Had this soured relations? Had Vieira been inciting them?⁸⁶² While all of this might have played a role, we should be warned against interpreting the turn of events as solely an extension of developments between Europeans: the Gowan court could well have perceived these requests as its ultimate chance to get a foot back in the door in the Ambon region and its clove trade, and might also been genuinely compelled to come to the aid of fellow Muslims who felt they faced an existential threat from Christian adversaries.

In his final letter to Hustaert before the departure of the Company ships, Sultan Malukissaid took care to emphasize that the fleet and the traders leaving for Amboina were not in contravention of the 1637 treaty made with Van Diemen, and that, as far as he was concerned, they therefore did not constitute an

860 Cummings, *Makassar Annals*, 77. I Daeng ri Bulekang had been sent east at the head of a fleet several times before – his names comes up in relation to an attack on Buton in 1639 as well the Makasar intervention in 1642. (Cummings, *Makassar Annals*, 55; Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', I, p. 189.) While he remains otherwise elusive in Makasar documents, the scattered VOC references tend to describe him as admiral or head of the fleet. With thanks to Lance Nolde (California State University Channel Islands) for sharing some insights on this matter.

861 Dagh-register Batavia, 22 May 1653, 65-66.

862 Ibid.

act of war.⁸⁶³ Even so, as Hustaert subsequently made it to Buton, it certainly looked like war to him: a worried Butonese sultan informed him that Gowa had threatened him, as well as all the polities around the coast, that they should break their bonds with the Company and send ships and men to join the fleet to Ambon, or face war with Gowa.⁸⁶⁴

All in all, this Makasar intervention in Ambon followed the pattern of its earlier intervention in 1642 in important ways. Initially, the Gowan court did not appear to be particularly eager to heed the calls for assistance, and did so only after repeated requests, as well as informing itself well of the situations in the islands. It required the personal visit of two high-ranking officials from the region, the kimelaha and a delegate of what Gowa would probably have come to consider the rightful Ternaten sultan, to finally convince them. In all probability, it also required a deal with Majira that was very beneficial to Gowa.⁸⁶⁵ Much like in 1642, the Gowan court also once again tried to see how far it could push the provision in the 1637 treaty that Gowan ships caught in Ambon waters were not of and by itself a cause for war, even though their active involvement was clear for all to see. There was, however, also a crucial difference with the earlier intervention. Whereas the expeditionary force of 1642 was not strong enough to constitute a genuine threat to the Company in the Ambon region, suggesting that the attack was cut short or, in any case, never fully materialized as intended, this intervention would turn out to be more substantial and more sustained, causing an open war between the Company and Makassar and posing a far greater and more durable threat to the Company in the Ambon Islands.

STAND-OFF AT ASAUDI

For now, however, De Vlaming was still oblivious to all that, and was briskly going about his campaign of punishment and destruction. He had gotten off to a rather unsettling start. Returning to the Hituese coast after the conquests at Hoamoal, he had proceeded to rather extravagantly execute a number of the orangkaya who had been involved in the attack on the Company post at Nusate-lo, and since been found and arrested. He invited the Ambonese orangkaya to

863 Ibid., 67.

864 Ibid., 68.

865 No exact information has been handed down to us, but rumour in the Ambon region later had it that Majira had agreed that all areas that they would jointly conquer would henceforth be ruled by Gowa, with Majira himself only ruling those areas that already fell under his rule. Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', I, 36.

witness the spectacle of retribution and violence:

Some were thrown over the side off the ship with their hands bound, and whoever wanted to was free to beat them to death with sticks, roasting spits and swords... Soldiers, assisted by the sailors, eagerly hacked away, spurred on by feelings of righteous vengeance... Others, who had been the ringleaders, had their tongues cut out and their limb bones subsequently broken.⁸⁶⁶

That being dealt with, De Vlaming moved his campaigns of destruction beyond the Ambon region proper, mounting an expedition to the Sula Islands in October. While the Sula Islands, to the northwest of the Ambon region, had been a bone of contention between Ternate and Makassar over previous decades, they had as yet largely remained outside the scope of direct military action by the Company. They would, however, become an important theatre in the subsequent phase of the Hoamoal War. Most of the communities in the islands had joined the revolt in Ternate and supported that in the Ambon region. As the region was populous and a major producer of sago and other staple foods, De Vlaming saw this as an important potential power base for his enemies and mounted an expedition there, raiding settlements, destroying sago groves, and successfully arresting Sula's kimelaha and a number of dignitaries.

He then continued these campaigns of destruction closer to home. Some of his troops scoured Manipa again for any remaining patches of sago or other trees providing sustenance. These troops happened upon the fortifications in the interior which Majira had erected. An expeditionary force was promptly sent, which succeeded in conquering the fortifications, scattering Majira's followers through the scarred forests of the island, where food was sparse. De Vlaming also continued his efforts to win control over the island of Boano by intervening in a local power struggle there – which mainly led to most of the population fleeing.⁸⁶⁷ Meanwhile, the trials and executions continued, albeit in a slightly less extravagant fashion than before. In January 1653, the first of a series of special war tribunals was held, which proceeded to try and execute a number of high-ranking *orangkaya* for their role in the revolt, including the kimelaha of the Sula Islands and his dignitaries, as well as a number of *orangkaya* from Ihamahu.⁸⁶⁸

866 Bor, *Amboinse oorlogen*, 109-110.

867 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 40-47.

868 Normally, such trials were presided over by the *Landraad*. A special tribunal was neces-

While De Vlaming was, by then, aware that Majira had made for Makassar,⁸⁶⁹ he was as yet oblivious to the latter's success in securing Makassar support. On 4 February, however, a ship from Batavia arrived, with news that Batavia was awash in rumours that Makassar was going to intervene in the Ambon region.⁸⁷⁰ These rumours seemed to be confirmed just a few days later, when he learned that five Makasar vessels had arrived at Buru's south coast, and fortified themselves a little way up the Waysama river.

As soon as the news reached him, he assembled a force of 200 soldiers and went out there to destroy it. Sure enough, they found the Makasar fort, which was very much in character with what we know about Makasar fort-building in the region more generally: sturdily built, situated along a navigable river, and fiercely defended, with the Dutch suffering a number of dead and wounded during their first charge. However, it also had a characteristic weakness: situated along a navigable waterway, it was lower than some of the surrounding terrain. Company troops were able to occupy a nearby hill and fire into the fort from there, making it indefensible. The Makasars evacuated it and fled inland.⁸⁷¹

These five vessels were only the first arrivals of a much larger force, as was brought home to De Vlaming just a few days later, in the form of a message from Hustaert. As soon as the latter had learned about the Makassar war fleet having departed in late November, he had sent his fastest ship directly to Ambon to inform De Vlaming and the governor, albeit without much hope that the ship would reach the Ambon Islands before the Makasar fleet itself. As it turned out,

sary because many of the arrested dignitaries were Ternatens, and Sultan Mandarsyah found it unacceptable that the Ambonese orangkaya should try high-ranking Ternatens. The tribunal therefore only consisted of Company officials.

While all of the episodes mentioned are interesting and worthy of further study, I regretfully gloss over them here. For a slightly more extensive overview, see Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 39-49.

869 He had learned this from the interrogation of a Burunese prisoner in October 1652: see *Journal De Vlaming*, 15 October 1652, in: VOC 1199, 575v-577r.

870 *Journal De Vlaming*, 4 February 1652, in: VOC 1199, fol. 655v-656r.

871 They initially took refuge in a nearby Burunese village. De Vlaming and Verheijden, hesitant to precipitate a war in this region of Buru as well, tried to negotiate with the inhabitants to see if they would be willing to deliver the Makasars to them. Their attempts initially looked promising, but the villagers turned out to have prepared an ambush from which Verheijden and his men made a narrow escape. *Journal De Vlaming*, 17-27 Feb 1653, in VOC 1199, fol. 658r-665r.

it did, as the Makasar vessels had spent time levying more troops and vessels at the various Gowan tributaries.⁸⁷²

De Vlaming sent out ships to look out for the Makasar fleet. One of them soon reported back that a fleet led by the kimelaha himself was in the Sula Islands. De Vlaming was just preparing to head out there to meet it, when more reports came in from elsewhere: a large fleet had been spotted directly to the north of Buru. De Vlaming's ships, concerned that the Makasars might be headed for Hitu, tried to block their passage there. However, the Makasar vessels, some 40 in total, made their way to Hoamoal instead, sailing into the river mouth at Asaudi.

Company vessels only arrived at the scene some four days later, on 31 March, by which time the Makasars had fortified themselves. Seeing himself faced with the entrenched positions, and with only a small number of soldiers at his disposal, De Vlaming, much like Demmer ten years earlier, decided to try and see if he could simply persuade the Makasars to leave. He had them informed that, as they could see, there were no more cloves available at Hoamoal, what with the population having largely fled and most of the trees destroyed. The Company, however, would be happy to buy their rice from them to cover the loss, on the condition that they then went on their way. Also much like ten years before, the Makasars were not interested: the fleet's leader, I Daeng ri Bulekang, pointed out that they had not come to trade, but to see if their fellow Muslims, who were reportedly being forced to convert to Christianity, needed help. That answer was not to the liking of De Vlaming, who struck the white flag from his yacht, had the blood flag hoisted, and opened fire on the Makasar defences.

Such military muscle-flexing notwithstanding, De Vlaming felt he was ill-equipped to stand up to the Makasar force, well-entrenched and consisting of some 2000 men, even after some more Company reinforcements arrived on the scene over the next few days. He instead opted to isolate them by building three small fortifications of his own, keeping the Makasars holed up where they were. During the fort-building efforts over the next few days, some skirmishes with the Makasars took place, leading to casualties on both sides, and the destruction of one small Makasar fortification and seven of their vessels, but not to a major engagement. Satisfied that the Makasars were properly isolated for now, and hoping their provisions would run out in due time, De Vlaming left the

872 Journal De Vlaming, 28 February 1653, in: VOC 1199, fol. 665v – 667r.

area on 12 April, leaving major Verheijden in charge there.⁸⁷³ Notwithstanding some subsequent attempts at negotiation, skirmishes and some reshuffling of the Dutch siege works, the situation around Asaudi would remain at a stand-off for the next months.

STUCK IN A HARD PLACE

De Vlaming, meanwhile, tried to go back to what he was doing before. After some more trials, convictions and executions in Castle Victoria, including the above-mentioned Christian orangkaya Joan Paijs, who was condemned to be quartered,⁸⁷⁴ he prepared to go on campaign again. He meant to find and defeat Majira, who was suspected to be on his way at the head of another Makasar-sent fleet. He also wanted to see to matters in Ternate, where by then, the revolt against Mandarsyah had abated. After Kalamata, the third of the royal brothers who had joined the revolt earlier, switched his allegiance back to Mandarsyah, the support of Manilha had started unravelling. When Mandarsyah, governor Van den Boogaerde and the sultan of Bacan had appeared before the fort at Hal-mahera with two VOC yachts and twelve kora-kora in January, the rebels there had decided to surrender and negotiate. Two of the most prominent original instigators of the coup, however, Kaicili Saidi and hukum Laulata, had decided to abscond before it came to that. They were later to resurface in Hoamoal.⁸⁷⁵

De Vlaming's expedition faced a generous amount of misfortune. After sailing past Buru with its two yachts and two sloops, raiding the settlements along its west coast once more, the small flotilla continued to the Sula islands, but was faced with unseasonably adverse weather. De Vlaming, bent on continuing and making it to Ternate, decided to go on ahead with the two rowing sloops and the 100 or so soldiers, but the rough seas forced him to make landfall. He had lost sight of the yachts, which were ultimately forced back by the adverse winds. De Vlaming himself was pinned down where he was due to the rough seas, and thus forced to make a long and unplanned stopover in the Sula islands. Under the circumstances, nothing much came of looking for Majira, although

873 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 53-54; Journal De Vlaming, 31 March – 12 April 1653, in: VOC 1199, fol. 677v – 683r.

874 Paijs's supposed treason seems to have become somewhat of an obsession for Company officials over the preceding two years. They now found it satisfactorily proven that he had wanted to establish himself as the leader of the Christian areas of the Ambon region, that his Christianity was insincere, and that he had been colluding with Majira.

875 General letter of 19 January 1654, in *Generale Missiven*, II, 674.

De Vlaming did go out of his way to destroy an old and apparently abandoned clove plantation which was discovered there to his surprise. When De Vlaming and his soldiers ultimately made it to Ternate in Mid-August, two months after they had left from Ambon, they had been presumed dead.⁸⁷⁶

Getting down to business after finally arriving, De Vlaming pardoned many of those who had earlier joined the revolt against Mandarsyah, in an effort to come to some working relationship with the Ternaten elite again. His main goal, however, was to see if he could get the war with Tidore to resume, in spite of the peace between Spain and the Dutch Republic. In his estimation, the revolt in Ambon and the Makasar intervention made this imperative, as Tidore was taking advantage of the revolt in the Ambon region, extending its power, partly at the cost of Ternate, and had become a channel for illicit clove trade towards Makassar. All of this, he felt, was also a threat to the situation in the Ambon region. He was able to get the Ternatens to commit to resuming the war. De Vlaming hoped that Tidore might be conquered outright – the Spanish governor there, in an interesting and complicated gambit, was warned to leave well enough alone. Much to De Vlaming's delight, he was also able to persuade the rulers of Bacan and Moti to have their cloves eradicated 'voluntarily' – although these regions had joined in the earlier revolt and he was therefore technically entitled to simply destroy the trees without compensation, he felt that under the circumstances, that was probably imprudent. The local leaders received one-time fees and yearly stipends for their cooperation.⁸⁷⁷

De Vlaming was very much aware that any war against Tidore would probably go nowhere unless the VOC was willing and able to really assist its ally this time. He had therefore intended to stay in Ternate for a while longer with what little soldiers he had. The situation in the Ambon region, however, got in the way of plans – before he had even arrived in Ternate after his long sojourn in Sula, a sloop from Ambon had brought word that Majira had appeared in the Ambon region with a fleet of twelve vessels not long after De Vlaming had left, and had established himself on Boano. In addition, the Company forces at Asaudi were worn so thin by death and disease, that it was becoming impossible to maintain

876 Journal De Vlaming, 17 June – 11 August 1653, in: VOC 1199, fol. 730-760.

877 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 59-62; Report De Vlaming, October 1653 in: VOC 1198, fol. 468-476.

the siege of the Makasars there.⁸⁷⁸ He therefore grudgingly prepared a ship to sail to Ambon again only a week after his arrival.

Having hurried back to Asaudi, he found the situation slightly less critical, as governor Van der Beeck had meanwhile been able to procure 120 soldiers from Banda as emergency reinforcements, along with fresh provisions. This was, however, a stop-gap measure, as the garrisons at Banda were now severely diminished just at a time that Makassar once again became a threat to the region, and these soldiers therefore needed to be returned soon. Overseeing the situation, De Vlaming felt it was probably a good idea to make use of the last of the eastern monsoon to sail back to Batavia, to 'accurately inform your Honours of the situation here, not only in writing but also personally.'⁸⁷⁹ Twelve days later, he was on his way.

In the report he prepared *en route*, nothing remained of the outright enthusiasm that he had felt two years earlier. While he had considered the war an invaluable opportunity at the time, he could now only see it as an unsolvable quandary and an outright threat to the Company's position in the eastern archipelago. The big game changer was, of course, the Makasar intervention. Even though he had been able to hole up their expeditionary force at Asaudi for now, Makasar involvement had dramatically widened the scope of the conflict and reinforced the ranks of the Company's enemies, while De Vlaming's own forces had been dwindling. At his departure from the Ambon region, only 745 soldiers remained there, including the 120 from Banda that would soon have to be sent back. As to the rest, the 'better part was unfit for any military exploit, yes scarcely able to be stationed in our fortifications and defend them', as poor provisions and two consecutive seasons of fighting had taken their toll.⁸⁸⁰

It was not just that the force at Asaudi tied up part of his precious scarce and exhausted troops. Makassar intervention, he tried to hammer home throughout the report, had turned the entire eastern archipelago into an even bigger imbroglio than it already was. It had an impact on the balance in North Maluku as well, making it urgent to resume the war against Tidore. In addition, it threatened to unravel Ternaten control over many areas along Sulawesi's east side, most importantly Buton. Visiting it on his way to Makassar, he found the sultan shared his concerns, not only because of the threat of outright conquest by

878 Journal De Vlaming, 15 August 1653, in: VOC 1199, fol. 762r-763r.

879 Report by De Vlaming, [7] October 1653, in: VOC 1198, fol. 461-489.

880 Report by De Vlaming, [7] October 1653, in: VOC 1198, fol. 473r and 485v-486r.

Makassar, but also because the better part of his own elite was rather more taken to Makassar than the VOC, and apparently plotting to oust him and switch allegiance.⁸⁸¹

De Vlaming also doubted that the Makasar force now holed up at Asaudi would be the last, and a call at Makassar on his way to Batavia did little to allay his worries. While his delegates were hospitably received, and Karaeng Pattin-galloang tried to absolve himself of all responsibility of the expeditionary force at Asaudi, the sultan and chancellor declined to send delegates along to Batavia, and word in Makassar had it that a new expeditionary fleet was already in preparation, which would consist of over a hundred vessels carrying some five thousand armed men.⁸⁸² If this would turn out to be even nearly accurate, it would pose an unprecedented threat to the Company's position throughout the eastern archipelago.

De Vlaming therefore hoped to convince the governor-general and council to take some immediate concrete measures. First, he wanted the Company to ignore the Makasar smoke screens about the 1637 treaty and the court not being responsible, and recognize that the Company was now at war with Gowa. Second, he recommended to immediately dispatch all and any vessels they could spare to the area around Buton and perhaps even build a fort there, both to protect Buton from Makasar intervention and to try and prevent any Makasar fleets from reaching the Ambon region. And third, he needed troops – preferably some 1000 or 1200, but at the very least, 600, to undertake the necessary military action both around Ternate, Ambon, and beyond, and with which he meant to return to the eastern archipelago as soon as possible.⁸⁸³

THE STRUGGLE FOR SAGO

De Vlaming was back on his way to the eastern quarter one month after his arrival in Batavia, at the head of an impressive fleet of nine Company ships and four smaller vessels. The ships, however, carried only 500 soldiers. This was all that governor-general Johan Maatsuyker, who had succeeded Reiniersz after the latter's death in May 1653, could spare at the time, promising to send more

881 Journal De Vlaming, 30 September – 1 October 1653, in: VOC 1199, fol. 781v-782r.

882 Before heading there himself, De Vlaming had also sent Evert Buijs, the former resident at Makassar, there as his representative for negotiations in July. He was received in much the same way as De Vlaming himself on his subsequent visit in October. For a brief overview, see Stapel, *Bongaais verdrag*, 48-49.

883 Report by De Vlaming, [7] October 1653, in: VOC 1198, fol. 470v and 473v.

troops as they became available.⁸⁸⁴

Calling at Makassar, De Vlaming learned that a Makasar fleet, described as consisting of ninety vessels, had already set out. He wasted no time and made straight for Buton, fearing the Makasars might have already conquered it, but to his relief, found that they had had other priorities. As he arrived at Buton, part of the Makasar fleet, reportedly forty vessels, had already passed through the Tiworo Strait to the north, but had ignored the sultanate and continued its journey east. De Vlaming went straight on to Ambon himself, finding that the Makasar vessels had not yet been sighted in the islands when he arrived on 29 December.⁸⁸⁵ During his absence, governor Van der Beeck had tried to strike a blow in the newly resumed war against Tidore by taking the hongis all the way to Raja Ampat—subjects of the sultan of Tidore, the Papuan inhabitants of these islands had been organising raids on the Ambon region as well. The campaign had been largely ineffective, however. Meanwhile, the low number of soldiers, added to the concern about the arrival of the Makasars, had prompted Van der Beeck to abandon and destroy the siege works at Asaudi and recall the troops to Ambon.⁸⁸⁶ He was not alone in considering it a real possibility that Castle Victoria itself might be attacked, and scrambled to fortify the nearby hill of Batu Merah,

884 Instructions for De Vlaming, 7 November 1653, in: VOC 807, esp. fol. 452v. The war in Ambon was not the only military campaign that the Company had to fight – the war with the Portuguese had also resumed, and the Company was involved in a major campaign to wrest Ceylon from their control. While the directors were trying to ramp up the number of soldiers sent to Asia to facilitate the waging of these two simultaneous wars, their efforts were hindered by the Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654), which, while hardly giving the Company any trouble in Asia itself, hindered the shipping to and from Europe. Knaap and Den Heijer, *Oorlogen Overzee*, 91pp; Mostert, 'Chain of command', 42pp.

Incidentally, one of the soldiers on board the fleet was Rumphius, who in his own works tends to be reticent about his person and personal experiences, and who is tantalizingly elusive in the VOC documents of this period as well. All the same, he would have had first-hand experience of many of the subsequent events he describes in the *Ambonsche Historie*.

885 For a slightly more extensive overview, including an engagement between some of the slower Company ships and a Makasar flotilla, see Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 65-69.

886 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 65. Of particular concern was the Batu Merah (red mountain) directly to the northeast of Ambon town, which De Vlaming had considered at particular risk of enemy occupation, which would be an immediate threat to Ambon town itself. Van der Beeck had therefore had a small fort erected there in November.

from which it would be possible to fire into the castle. De Vlaming, sharing such concerns, would subsequently initiate major repairs and renovations of the fort, employing large numbers of local corvée labourers to entirely revamp it over the following two years.⁸⁸⁷

Van der Beeck himself, meanwhile, had asked to be relieved of his duty as governor, not only to see to some personal matters but also because he did not feel up to the task of governing the Ambon region in the present circumstances, particularly during the periods that De Vlaming was away. His request was granted, but no successor was appointed for now: the governor-general and council felt that superintendent De Vlaming and senior merchant Simon Cos could probably handle the government of the region for now.⁸⁸⁸

The Makasar ships came in in several smaller batches over the course of January. Twenty vessels in the river at Rumaite, on Buru's southeast coast, were discovered first.⁸⁸⁹ Another fleet of seventeen vessels, both Makasar and local, was subsequently sighted at Fukuweu, on Sula Bessi, one of the Sula Islands, in late January.⁸⁹⁰ More vessels, 38 in total, were subsequently reported to have arrived at several places all around Buru, hiding in the various river mouths.

On the one hand, the scattered way in which the Makasar forces arrived meant that they were initially less of a threat. On the other, however, it made De Vlaming's strategy of containing them wherever they landed, untenable – he simply lacked the necessary ships to do so effectively.⁸⁹¹ While Company ships were able to prevent the Makasar vessels at Buru from making it to Asaudi by guarding the narrow passages around the nearby island of Pulau Babi, the Makasars could otherwise move through the region relatively unopposed. By early March, many had made their way to various places on Hoamoal and its immediately adjacent islands, with a substantial number having congregated up

887 Rumphius, 'De Ambonse Historie', II, pp. 65, 69, 74, 82, 94-95. V.I. van de Wall. *De Nederlandsche oudheden in de Molukken*. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1928, pp. 129-174.

888 Governor-general and council Batavia to governor and council Ambon, 7 November 1653, in: VOC 877, esp. fol. 460.

889 Journal De Vlaming, 2 January 1654, in: VOC 1205, fol. 812.

890 Journal De Vlaming, 12 February 1654, in: VOC 1205, fol. 837r-v.

891 At Rumaite, the Makasars were able to run the blockade on the 25th of February. They made their way to Kajeli on Buru's east coast to join other Makasar ships, and made it to Hoamoal from there, running into the Air Merah. A blockade by Company ships there was soon lifted as the ships were needed elsewhere, which allowed the ships to make for Kahuli. Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 70.

the Air Merah river on Hoamoal's west coast, where Company ships subsequently did try to close them in.

The dynamic between the Makasars and the Company in subsequent months would largely revolve around access to food – especially sago. Even the year before, hunger had been taking hold of the Makasars at Asaudi. Company troops had made every effort to destroy whatever food sources they could in the region at large. Vessels from Makassar, apart from the war fleets, had not been spotted around Hoamoal, so no additional rice had apparently been brought in. In the previous season, many of the communities in the region who had not surrendered to the Dutch, had come flocking to the protection of the Makasar forces and fortifications at Asaudi, so that, by now, it also housed a substantial number of men, women and children from the region itself.⁸⁹² Keeping this large concentration of people fed with the Company siege works right on their doorstep, had turned out to be difficult the previous year, and hunger had made itself felt by September 1653. Even though the Company force had retreated since then, the situation had not apparently much improved by March 1654. As De Vlaming learned from captives, both Majira and his Burunese colleague kimelaha Hasi, who were both in Asaudi at the time, were casting their eyes around for a nearby sago-producing area to move to with some of their following, to take some of the pressure off Asaudi.⁸⁹³

For their part, Company officials, in their attempts to destroy all and any food in the region, had the sago groves in the direct vicinity of Luhu destroyed. Luhu, it bears reminding, was where those Hoamoalese who had surrendered to the Company had been resettled. The Company also had defensive walls erected around the settlement on the land side, concerned that it would be vulnerable to attack.

892 One captive spoke of 1500 Makasars and 4000 additional local people. It should be noted, however, that the number of Makasars he mentioned is very high in comparison to some other numbers from the period. *Journal De Vlaming*, 10 September 1653, in: VOC 1199, fol. 773v. Cf. Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 63, which implies a number of less than 1000 Makasars and Malays at Asaudi in October 1653.

893 *Journal De Vlaming*, 14 March 1654, in: VOC 1205, fol. 869v-870r. The areas they had apparently initially cast their eyes on were, according to the captives, Manipa and Luhu – which amused and surprised De Vlaming, as he had made every effort to destroy all food sources at Manipa over the past three years, and doubted they would find much. As to Luhu, the VOC was just then making an effort to destroy the sago in that area as well precisely for this reason. Cf. Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 71.

Sure enough, on 27 March, some 1000 warriors led by none other than kimelaha Majira, marching overland over the old road from Kambelo, stormed Luhu in a fierce attack, washing over the new outer defences and coming right up to the Company fort, burning, capturing and killing as they went. The fort itself held and the Company's cannon were ultimately able to drive off the attackers, but the town was reduced to ashes. Even Livinus Bor, not otherwise ostensibly the epitome of compassion, described the scene as one 'that would have moved even a diamond heart.'⁸⁹⁴ In the wake of the attack, the town of Luhu was effectively dissolved: although the Company would still maintain its fort there, the surviving town population was resettled to Ambon.⁸⁹⁵

Higher up along Hoamoal's east coast were some sago-producing areas that had thus far escaped the Company's campaigns of destruction. Makasar forces and ships, concerned about securing a steady food supply for themselves and those at Asaudi, now made their way there. In mid-April, officials in Castle Victoria first received reports of a combined Makasar-Ambon force established itself at Laala, and erecting fortifications there.

De Vlaming let them be for now, as he had his hands full with another project aimed at starving out Asaudi: he had ordered the construction of a series of wooden fortifications, connected by palisades, all the way across the land bridge connecting Hoamoal to the rest of Seram. To cover the four kilometres distance, eighteen small fortifications had been built with the help of local labour.⁸⁹⁶ The defensive line effectively cut off those at Asaudi from any food supplies on the Seramese mainland, and, in particular, from the Alfur community at Tanuno, directly to the east of the land bridge, with which they had been in contact. It did, however, need to be permanently manned with at least 300 European soldiers, which were already in short supply.⁸⁹⁷

Around the same time, De Vlaming called off his blockades of the Air Merah river, and at Sula Bessi – while this would allow the Makasars more freedom of movement, his ships and men were simply needed elsewhere. He also decided to send word to Ternate, instructing governor to try and come to a truce with Tidore again – it did not look like he would be able to come and assist him there

894 Bor, *Amboinse oorlogen*, 223.

895 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 72.

896 Four kilometres is my estimate: the land bridge is slightly more than three kilometres as the crow flies on its narrowest point, but the exact location and shape of the line of forts has not been preserved.

897 Journal De Vlaming, 27 May 1754 in: VOC 1205, fol. 921r-922r.

this season; in fact, he could well use some soldiers from there in the Ambon region!⁸⁹⁸

After the Company ships had lifted these blockades, many of the Makasar vessels seem to have either made their way to the east coast of Hoamoal or to Asaudi, leaving Hoamoal's west coast otherwise effectively deserted. While Makasars, and what Hoamoalese inhabitants still remained, came flocking to the safety of Asaudi, the fortifications there were also extended and improved.

On the east coast, Laala was meanwhile also becoming a true fort, and was likewise drawing in a larger population seeking its safety. In early July, De Vlaming learned that a combined Makasar-Ambonese force had also fortified another sago-producing area at the mouth of the Kahuli river, only slightly over three kilometres east of the Company fort at Luhu. De Vlaming felt that it was probably not gratuitously built so close to what was now the last Company stronghold on Hoamoal proper,⁸⁹⁹ and felt that his enemies probably not only sought sago there, but also their new '*sedem belli*', seat of war.⁹⁰⁰ Verheijden was instructed to assemble a force from the garrisons at Luhu and the defensive line up at the land bridge, and drive the Makasars away. The attack took place in late July. The Makasars had built a fortification on each side of the river, surrounded by alluvial plain - uncharacteristically flat terrain for Hoamoal, and precisely what made the area so rich in sago. Approaching the two fortifications both overland from Luhu and with several small seagoing craft, Verheijden was able to storm both of them, killing some 120 Makasar and Hoamoalese warriors; the rest, apparently only some sixty men, was able to get away. On the Company side, there were fourteen dead but as many as sixty wounded, including most of the officers.⁹⁰¹

De Vlaming was meanwhile preparing a greater military campaign, meaning to finally force a breakthrough and win the war, by conquering Asaudi itself. He sent out orders to assemble the hongis. He gathered all the ships he had available, and scraped together all able-bodied European soldiers from the various garrisons. He ordered some additional troops to be sent from Banda and Ternate. He had even invited Sultan Mandarsyah join the campaign and bring some of his own kora-kora, to bolster both the strength and the prestige of the besieging

898 Bor, *Amboinse oorlogen*, 230; Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 75.

899 De Vlaming had had the fort at Kambelo abandoned and demolished in January, as it was too vulnerable to a siege and no longer served any clear purpose now that the surrounding area was almost completely empty.

900 Journal De Vlaming, 2 July 1654, in: VOC 1205, fol. 938v.

901 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 75.

force. He had siege equipment prepared, and had a day of fasting and prayer held. By the 29th of August, his forces lay assembled at the Hituese coast, ready to make for Asaudi. They were truly impressive: 45 kora-kora, eight large ships and 15 smaller vessels, carrying some 750 armed Europeans, and an unnamed number of indigenous troops.⁹⁰²

Sultan Mandarsyah himself had not arrived yet as De Vlaming arrived before Asaudi on the 9th of September – which was just as well, as De Vlaming's resolve and confidence instantly evaporated once there. Inspecting the enemy fortifications from the heights of the small island of Nussanitu, just opposite Asaudi, he found them 'very different from how he had imagined them.'⁹⁰³ What he saw was an intricate system of seven fortifications covering both the coast and the hills and cliffs around them, well-stocked with cannon. The salt marshes in the area further added to the defensibility of the fortifications. Any kind of landing was extremely hazardous, if not to say impossible.⁹⁰⁴

An attempt to negotiate with the Makasars was made the same day. They were once again offered free passage, and as far as De Vlaming was concerned they could 'take with them any Ambonese rebels as they liked' – he just wanted them out of the picture. The result, however, was much the same as with his many earlier negotiation attempts – the Makasars were not interested, and did not even allow De Vlaming's delegate to land.⁹⁰⁵

Annoyed, De Vlaming turned the fleet around and made for Hoamoal's east coast. He might not be able to evict the main Makasar force, but he might take their bread basket away from them.

LAALA: A 'PROPER SIEGE'...

The fleet reassembled before Laala a week later, finding the river mouth there guarded by a massive and sprawling, if 'curiously shaped', fort.⁹⁰⁶ A long rectangular fort with several square bastions guarded the sea side in a way character-

902 Preparations: Journal De Vlaming, 20 August – 6 September, in: VOC 1205, fol. 987-988. Numbers of ships from Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 76; number of soldiers from De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 16 September 1654, in: VOC 1204, p. 674

903 Journal De Vlaming, 9 September 1654, in: VOC 1205, fol. 993r-v.

904 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 76, provides a description which is more detailed than anything found in the journals and letters from De Vlaming – possibly because Rumphius was almost certainly there.

905 Journal De Vlaming, 9 September 1654, in: VOC 1205, fol. 993r-994r.

906 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 77 calls the fort 'van een wonderlijk fatsoen'.

istic of the Makasar forts in the region. What made the fort unusual was that on the land side, another rectangularly shaped piece had been built transversely onto it, with additional bastions to guard the walls there, so that the entire structure was shaped like a T. Curiously shaped or not, the fort was daunting, and was reportedly guarded by at least 300 Makasar and 300 Hoamoalese warriors.⁹⁰⁷

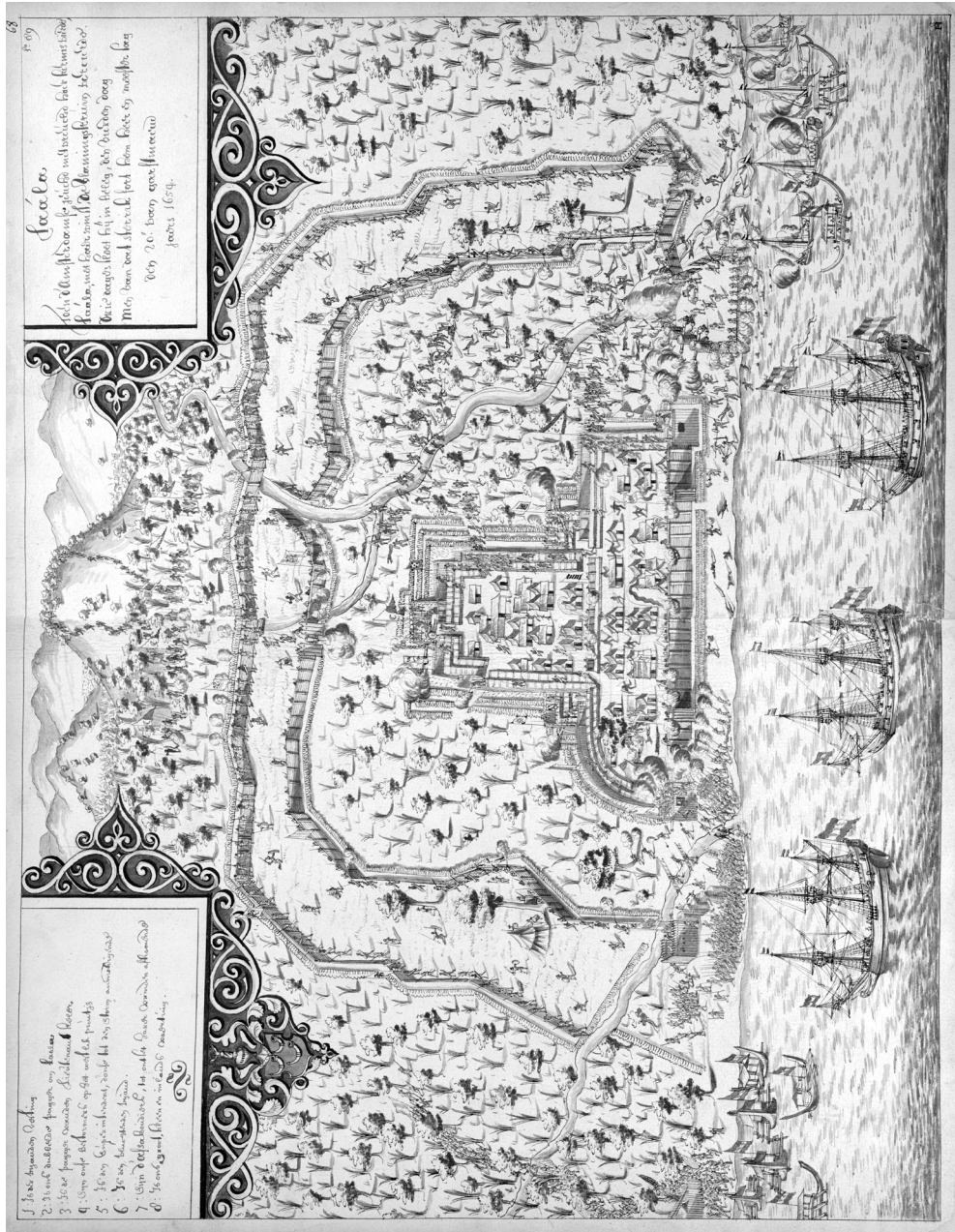
De Vlaming's troops landed on the 16th of September, set up camps around the fort, and cut down the undergrowth in their immediate vicinity. The first shouted interactions with the Makasars and Ambonese within the fort made clear that the latter had no intention of surrendering.⁹⁰⁸

Much like the Kahuli river mouth, this area was rich in sago because it was a flat alluvial plain – far less forbidding terrain than most of the Ambon region. In addition, with 750 European soldiers as well as an impressive (if unknown) number of local allies at his disposal, De Vlaming for once had numerical superiority over the besieged. Under the circumstances, he and his officers felt it was best to tackle the daunting fortifications and the zealous and well-prepared garrison not by an outright storm attack, but by first wearing down the enemy by means of a siege. While, over the course of the previous decades, the Company had conducted a number of sieges in the region, the siege of Laala would prove unusual in that the flat terrain and the large number of soldiers, warriors and

907 Runphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 77-79; Bor, *Amboinse oorlogen*, 235-240, both give comparatively elaborate descriptions of this siege. Additional details from VOC documents annotated below

908 Journal De Vlaming, 16 September 1654, in: VOC 1205, fol. 1002v-1003r.

Fig 14.1 (Next page) The siege of Laala, as depicted in the manuscript version of Bor's *Amboinse Oorlogen* in Brussels. In the middle, the T-shaped fort housing the settlement, surrounded by two lines of siege works on the land side and ships and kora-kora on the sea side. To the right, the battery on the east side from which Company artillery fired into the settlement. Above, a relief force from Asaudi marching down from the hills but unable to break through to the settlement. On the left, the storm attack on the bastion. Collection Koninklijke Bibliotheek Brussel, Ms. 17982, fol. 68. The drawing would have been based on a now-lost original, but Cf. the drawing by Johannes Vingboons in *Atlas Van der Hem* 40:17, collection Austrian National Library, which has virtually the same composition except for the slightly different perspective.



workers available allowed for the use of what might have been considered proper siege tactics back in the Dutch Republic at the time.

On the day of the landing, a battery was erected on the northeast side of Laala. Over subsequent days, it was to be used mainly for firing mortars, fire-bombs and grenades into Laala, rather than breaching the defences. On the first night of bombardments, the besiegers saw the glow of the fire they had caused – apparently in a warehouse, as the air filled with the smell of burning cloves.⁹⁰⁹ The construction of the siege works around the entire perimeter of the fort commenced the next day – a double line of wooden parapets behind a ditch, one facing towards the fort and the other facing outwards, as De Vlaming and his officers expected that a relief force from Asaudi was certain to arrive sooner or later.

Sure enough, the next day, the Company had to contend with several attacks. From the besieged town, a sortie was made towards the west on its as yet incomplete siege works. Company troops were able to drive them back with several musket volleys, the only casualty on the Company apparently the result of friendly fire. Right around the same time, a force from Asaudi was spotted coming down into the plain from the hills. Company soldiers went out to intercept them and succeeded in driving them back into the interior. When the same force was spotted coming down again the next day, De Vlaming no longer saw a point in sending out soldiers: the double line of siege works was, by then, completed, thanks to the massive amount of labour that the indigenous allies provided.⁹¹⁰

How to proceed from there, though? Now that the besieged were completely isolated, the Company could simply send parties into the surrounding area to destroy the sago. This would take time, however, as the sago palms in the region were abundant. De Vlaming did not like the prospect of having so many of his precious few soldiers occupied in the siege for so long. Hoping that he had worn down the besieged enough by a few days of bombardment and fires, he decided to storm the town the next day.⁹¹¹

150 European soldiers were designated for the purpose. The officers who were to command the attack were assigned by lottery – as De Vlaming would later claim, there were too many enthusiastic volunteers. While a furious barrage on the wooden bastion on the southwest side of the fort forced the defenders to keep their heads down, the attackers moved in with siege ladders, and managed to

909 Journal De Vlaming, 17 September 1654, in: VOC 1205, fol. 1005r.

910 Journal De Vlaming, 18-19 September 1654, in: VOC 1205, fol. 1007v-1008r; 1009v.

911 Journal De Vlaming, 19 September 1654, in: VOC 1205, fol. 1010r-v.

conquer the bastion. They had hoped to use it as an elevated position from which to fire into the rest of the town, but as it turned out, the bastion was hollow save for narrow walkways, not providing the attackers much place to stand. As De Vlaming's journal put it, it was as if the attackers found themselves in a cellar – one which was vigorously attacked by the fort's defenders. To get out of their indefensible position, they stormed into the settlement, ending up in a fierce firefight around a nearby waringin tree. Soon, the defenders broke and ran.⁹¹²

The only problem was that, with the siege works and the sea surrounding them on all sides, they had nowhere to run to.

...AND IMPROPER CONDUCT

In the immediate wake of the Great Hoamoal War, Livinus Bor would sit down at his new station in Batavia to write his history of the conflict. As we have seen, he tried to glorify the brave and capable handling of the war by his former commander, but also felt compelled to defend him against criticism which was apparently making the rounds in Batavia. Interspersing his narrative of the war itself are extensive passages addressing the question of whether the Company's conduct in the conflict was justified. Making use of the notion of 'just war' and measuring the Company's actions along that yardstick, Bor argued that it was permitted to destroy the livelihood of the enemy, and that, considering the circumstances, the Dutch had actually showed quite some restraint against the defenders and inhabitants of conquered towns and forts. The Company's actions had almost invariably been justifiable and proportional, and certainly always understandable.⁹¹³

The conquest of Laala figured quite prominently in his reasoning. As the clearest example of some of the practices that the Company and its allies had developed in the course of the conflict, it took up a central place in his descriptions of, and justifications for, the conduct of the war.

To begin with, it appears that by the time Laala fell, taking prisoners was no longer on the Company's repertoire. Although I have found no detailed descriptions of the immediate aftermath of any of the conquests, it is telling that at Kahuli, only two prisoners were made, which are described as having been spared 'on account of their youth and innocence.' The rest of the garrison, De Vlaming

912 Journal De Vlaming, 9 September 1654, in: VOC 1205, fol. 1010v-1011r.

913 Bor, *Amboinse oorlogen*, 54-60.

informed his superiors, had been 'killed and cut to pieces.'⁹¹⁴ The passage seems to imply that even those who had surrendered or were found wounded were killed, although the phrasing is tantalizingly vague.

It is less doubtful what happened at Laala, however. The fleeing defenders ran straight into the muskets and spears of those still manning the siege works. Some tried to escape by swimming, while being fired at from the ships. In total, 700 men were killed and an estimated 60 got away swimming. Not a single man capable of bearing arms was taken prisoner. Squirming to reconcile these actions with the notion of just war, Bor inadvertently provided some details unknown from the Company sources. As he explained, when the main force moved into the fort, the 'soldiers started felling, as it was unsafe for us to leave even one arm-bearing person alive, because during our storm attack, those from Asaudi, some seven or eight banners strong, had come bearing down on our works.'⁹¹⁵ Elsewhere in his book, however, Bor, also divulged that, rather than a desperate measure under extreme circumstances, killing all the enemy men had become standard practice during the conflict. He explained that, while it is proper to stop killing once victory is secured, in this particular war, leaving rebels capable of bearing arms alive was 'dangerous, and one would certainly live to regret it.'⁹¹⁶ Besides, they were all guilty of the revolt anyway, from the highest to the lowest, and deserved no better.

Women and children, of course, were another matter, and Bor apparently felt a particular obligation to account for the death of one high-ranking woman who was at Laala when it fell: Majira's sister. Whereas De Vlaming also casually mentioned her as among the high-ranking dead, he did not feel that he needed to explain anything about the circumstances, and merely observed that they were 'all perfect scoundrels, whom I would have wished to have perished long before all these troubles.'⁹¹⁷ Bor, for his part, recognizing that killing women and children was not in line with the proper conduct of war, did feel a need to explain it, in the process informing us that she was 'killed *after being captured* at Laala' (my italics). The way he saw it, it was an eye for an eye: many women, including Verheijden's sister, had likewise been killed at Manipa and other Company posts,

914 'nedergermaect ende in stucken gehouden.' De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 16 September 1654, in: VOC 1204, p. 666.

915 Bor, *Amboinse oorlogen*, 57-58.

916 Bor, *Amboinse oorlogen*, 239-240.

917 Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 27 September 1654, in: VOC 1204, p 701.

after all – an argument that, one imagines, would have convinced few contemporary legal scholars.⁹¹⁸

As to the rest of the women and children: all of these were taken by the soldiers as spoils of war, that is to say, they were enslaved. De Vlaming was aware of the 400 taken by his own soldiers, but added that his Ambonese allies had taken an unknown additional number.⁹¹⁹ Bor, in this case, did not see any need for justifications, except by remarking that it was meant to ‘encourage the soldier to similar bravery in the future.’⁹²⁰ Of course, slavery was a common practice in the Company’s empire, and one sanctioned by contemporary European legal scholarship. Legal arguments aside, enslaving captives had long been a central aspect of indigenous warfare in the region, and one in which the Company had participated for at least two decades.⁹²¹

Of course, over those same decades, the conflicts in the region had been characterized by deep mutual resentment, paranoia, headhunting, subterfuge, assassinations, executions and environmental destruction. Still, the image that emanates from the sources of how the war was conducted at this stage, with its brutal public executions, the slaying and often literal cutting to pieces of any male captives, and the casual enslavement of the rest of the population, seem to suggest that it had still managed to turn a corner towards a new shade of dark. It also gives occasion to consider Bor’s book in a different light: while it initially reads like an unsavoury glorification of violence, the way in which he is far more preoccupied with violence perpetrated by the Company than by anything the Makasars and Hoamoalese were doing, hints at an internal struggle to make sense of some of these horrors he had been part of. After the fall of Laala, there would still be a few more.

THE WIDER WAR

In the wake of the conquest of Laala, once the hundreds of bodies scattered through what remained of the settlement had been burned or thrown into the sea, Sultan Mandarsyah, who had by then arrived in the region, visited its remnants, accompanied by his brother Kalamata and the sultan of Jailolo – ‘to see’, as Rumphius saw it, ‘the trouble that sir De Vlaming went through to subdue

918 Bor, *Amboinse oorlogen*, 58.

919 Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 27 September 1654, in: VOC 1204, p 700.

920 Bor, *Amboinse oorlogen*, 240.

921 See e.g. chapter VII, paragraph ‘To the far side of Seram’.

their rebels.⁹²² Finding the sago forests in the region even more extensive than expected, De Vlaming left soldiers and indigenous troops to undertake the tedious task of eradicating them all. He allowed the hongi to disband. As for him: he went on his way to Batavia by way of Buton and Makassar.

While such trips had of course been a recurring phenomenon, this one was of a slightly different nature. De Vlaming was convinced that the Makasars and Hoamoalese at Asaudi were now in an increasingly precarious situation. He had severely disrupted their food supply in the recent campaigns, and had recently learned from a defector that tensions within Asaudi itself were rising. The Hoamoalese, worn down by hunger and fatigue, were reportedly just about ready to sue for terms with the Company. This outraged the Makasar leaders, who had put so much effort into these campaigns but now saw their prize, direct control over parts of the region, threatened. Harsh threats and insults had been exchanged, with the Makasars threatening to just take what food they needed from their allies instead of paying for it, and the Hoamoalese accusing the Makasars of having just ‘bummed about’ (*gepannekoekt*) instead of seriously trying to conquer the region. Furious, the Makasars had deposed Majira and replaced him with his half-brother Labodi.⁹²³

All in all, De Vlaming was confident that the resistance at Asaudi would probably collapse of its own accord sooner rather than later – if he could make sure that the Makasars would be unable to send another fleet with soldiers and supplies there. Over the subsequent months, this became the central goal of his campaign, as he shifted focus to Buton as a strategic chokepoint, Makasar itself, and its various tributaries throughout the eastern archipelago.⁹²⁴

De Vlaming had brought Mandarsyah and his entourage, ships and troops with him to Buton, which, after all, was a subsidiary to Ternate. Mandarsyah was left there both to guard the place and see if he could bring the internal Butonese unrest, with so many nobles apparently plotting against the sultan, to an end. De Vlaming himself hoped to be back to assist him shortly, but for now, quickly continued to Makassar, which was, by then, blockaded by some Compa-

922 Rumphius, ‘De Ambonsche Historie’, 80.

923 Journal De Vlaming, 18 September 1654, in: VOC 1205, fol 1008r-1009v.

924 Interestingly, this specific wider aspect and phase of the conflict has been relatively well-studied in comparison to the rest of the Great Hoamoal War, as part of various studies which focus on different regions, such as Solor, Timor, Buton and the Tiworo Strait. Hans Hagerdal, *Lords of the Land, lord of the Sea*; De Roever, *Sandelbout*; Schoorl, ‘Het eeuwige verbond’; Jennifer Gaynor, *Intertidal histories*.

ny ships. He himself had dispatched three ships and two sloops from Amboina in early August, to sail to Timor, Solor and Bima, and finally to Makassar. Besides various other errands, it was to look out for Makasar activity at all its destinations. At Bima, also a tributary to Makassar, commander Gerrit Roos was to see if the local ruler could be convinced to abandon Makassar and ally itself with the Company instead. It was then to continue to Makassar and block the roadstead as best he could with his small fleet until De Vlaming himself arrived. The fleet had achieved precious little in this regard – in fact, a fleet of 40 Makasar vessels had recently visited Bima for provisions, undoubtedly to then ‘sail to Amboina or Banda and torment the Dutch in their possessions there,’ De Vlaming and Roos suspected. The ruler of Bima, bound to the royal family of Gowa by marriage, had not been receptive to the Company’s overtures.⁹²⁵ The blockade at Gowa had likewise not been particularly effective, due to the limited number of ships and the daunting system of Makasar forts providing cover directly along the coast. De Vlaming decided to break it up and instead sent Roos back to Bima with the better part of the ships, to blockade it, thus cutting Makassar off from one of its tributaries and potential staging and supply points. Roos was then to continue to Buton and build two small forts along the Strait, guarding it from passing Makasars and protecting the sultanate. De Vlaming himself headed to Batavia in two sloops.

As he sailed there and wrote his report as per usual, ordering his thoughts and making plans for the next season, he was, all in all, once again quite optimistic. Some good news was that Sultan Malikussaid and Chancellor Pattingalloang had both recently died in quick succession. As De Vlaming knew from first-hand experience, they had been intimidatingly well-informed and capable, and their successors were young and inexperienced. Hopefully this would lead to less effective government, or, even better, some coup or civil war.⁹²⁶ It was, in that respect, a promising sign that while he had been at Buton, ‘a fleet of ten junks... sent by the Bugis kings’, had arrived there to inform about the alliance between Ternate, Buton and the VOC, and whether they might not join it, as they ‘had long been tired of the overbearing rule of the Makasars.’⁹²⁷

925 Journal De Vlaming, 17 October 1654, in VOC 1205, fol. 1030. For the specifics of the marriage see Cummings, *Makassar Annals*, 66.

926 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 6 November 1654, in: VOC 1204, p. 746.

927 Quoted from Rumphius, ‘De Ambonsche Historie’, II, 81. For further details, including the telling fact that these Bugis were the first to inform De Vlaming of the

As De Vlaming saw it, all these conflicts the Company was involved in were intimately connected, even beyond the eastern archipelago. He suspected that the Portuguese were supporting and encouraging the Makasar intervention in the Ambon region, not in the last place to divert Company resources away from their campaigns against the Portuguese in Ceylon and India. He was very much aware that Makasar intervention did not only hinge on Makassar itself, but also on its allies and tributaries in the region. The Sula islands to the Ambon region's northwest, the Bajo people along the Tiworo Strait near Buton, Timor and Bima towards the south, various polities and islands along Sulawesi's east coast... all did their part in providing passage, supplies and military power for the Makasars. If the Makasars were to be kept out of the Ambon islands, these regions were key to making that happen.

His ideas about how to proceed were all geared towards that goal. The Buton Strait should be permanently guarded with ships and fortifications. The Tiworo Strait should be raided, and the Company should try and conquer Makassar's various tributaries on Sulawesi's east coast and within the islands of Maluku – all of which were rightfully within the sphere of influence of Ternate anyway. An expeditionary force could be sent to Timor, to finally drive the Portuguese away from there, and to make sure that it was not used as a staging area, as De Vlaming was well aware that some of its communities were affiliated with Gowa. Bima should once again be blockaded. Should the new sultan of Makassar, pressured by all these measures, be willing to once again make peace, the Company should only do so on the condition that the Makasars 'should never again be allowed to show themselves east of Sulawesi.'⁹²⁸ Until that time, the Company would have to be prepared to invest in a continuous military presence in the Buton Strait, at Bima and other places – but could perhaps, in due time, cut back on the garrisons in Banda, Ambon and Ternate, which would become a lot quieter and safer when the Makasars were kept at arm's length.⁹²⁹

Subsequently making his way back east in November after a brief stay in Batavia, De Vlaming was in a position to personally put his new strategy into

death of Pattingalloang, see Journal De Vlaming, 10 October 1654, in VOC 1205, fol. 1027r-1028v.

928 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 6 November 1654, in: VOC 1204, p. 742-743.

929 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 6 November 1654, in: VOC 1204, p. 735-748.

practice. Passing by Bima and arriving in Buton,⁹³⁰ he found that commander Roos had by then built two Company forts on the shore below the Butonese capital, just as he had been ordered to. Less expected was the fact that the Butonese sultan, Mardan Ali, had meanwhile been deposed and was facing death by strangulation, with the blessing of the Ternaten sultan Mandarsyah. As it turned out, the Butonese sultan had not just been unpopular due to his affiliation with the Company; he had also been molesting the wives of some of the other Butonese leaders. De Vlaming found these actions by Mandarsyah rather rash and noted with some regret that the old sultan had been well-disposed towards the Company, as had some other Butonese leaders who were likewise evicted and in some cases killed during the change of power. The new sultan who Mandarsyah confirmed, Malik Sirullah, was, however, also well-disposed towards the Company and, it seemed, a whole lot less unpopular than his predecessor, so De Vlaming acquiesced.⁹³¹

The sojourn at Buton was also used to target one of the staging areas of Makasar fleets bound for the east: Tiworo. In early January 1655, Roos and De Vlaming, their forces buttressed by the Ternatens still at Buton, staged an attack into the Tiworo Strait with their small craft, attacking the villages and the Makasar-built fort there. The attack came at a bad moment for the inhabitants there, as many of the men were away for war or hunting buffalo, and the Company's troops and allies were able to raid and plunder without much opposition. As per De Vlaming's usual conduct of the war, some 200 men were killed, and the women and children, some 300, were, as Bor formulated it, 'given to the soldiery as war booty'.⁹³² De Vlaming saw vindicated his assertion that Tiworo was an important staging area for Makasar fleets: some 50 vessels, loaded with rice, cloth and other provisions and trade goods, were pulled up on the riverbed near the fort. They were all immediately put to the torch, drawing the comment from Bor that the war booty would have been far greater still had the Company not been so hasty with its use of fire.⁹³³

Further vindication came just three days later, when an additional Makasar fleet of fifty vessels was spotted coming through the Tiworo Strait. The force

930 The stop in Bima was merely meant to see if the fleet under Roos was still there and whether there happened to be a Makassar fleet. As neither was the case, De Vlaming went on his way almost as soon as he had arrived there.

931 Schoorl, 'Het eeuwige verbond', 42-43.

932 Bor, *Amboinse Oorlogen*, 262.

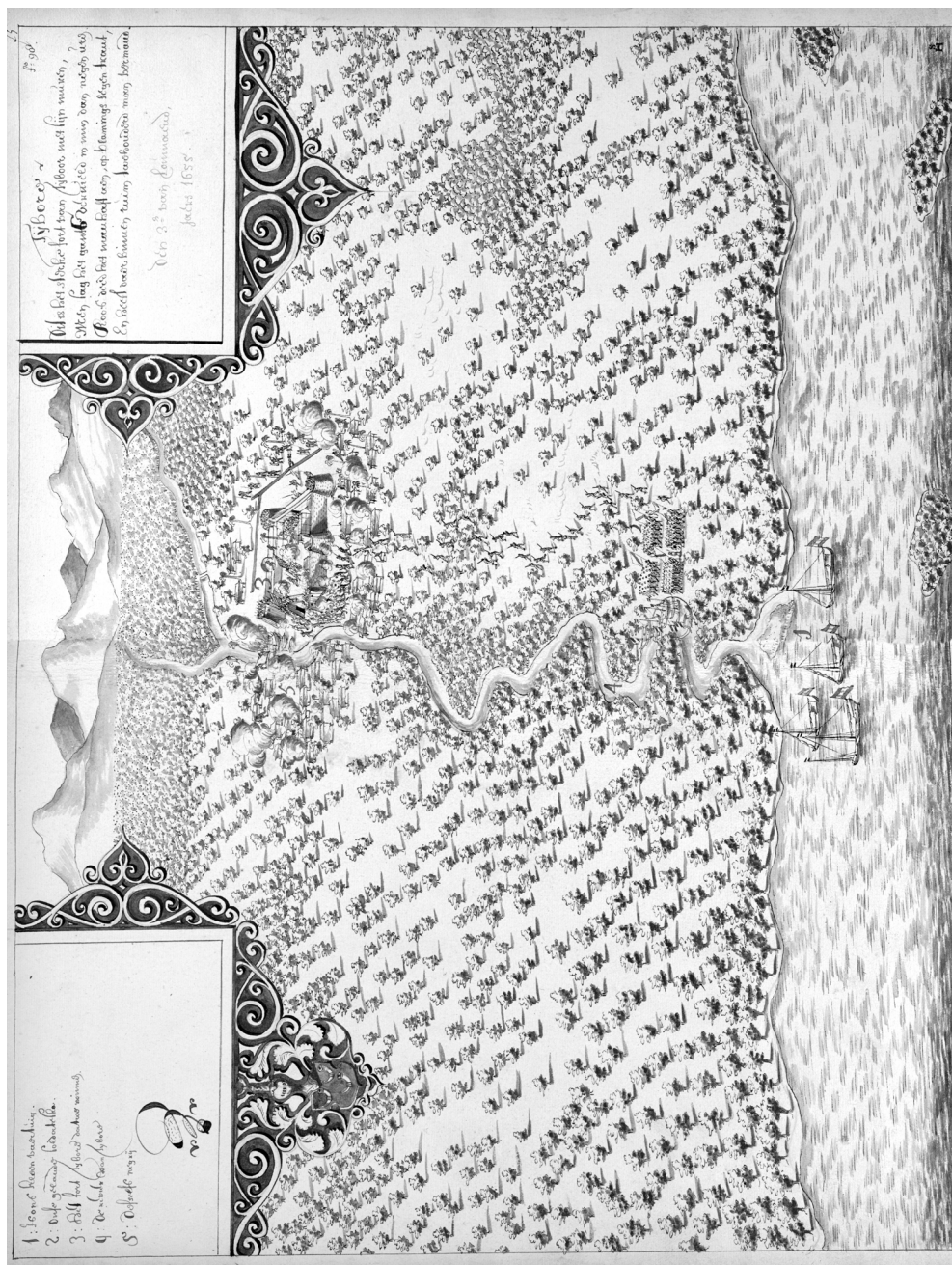
933 Gaynor, *Intertidal histories*, 71-76; Bor, *Amboinse oorlogen*, 262.

was so strong that the Ternaten and Company vessels found it prudent not to engage and instead blocked the eastern exit of the Strait instead. It prompted De Vlaming to muse that, had the Makasars arrived only three days earlier, the Company would have had a whole different kind of fight on its hands.⁹³⁴ The Makasar fleet proceeded to barricade the river and entrench itself there, and De Vlaming, who had intended to leave some vessels to patrol and block the northern entrance of the Buton Strait anyway, now had one extra reason to do so. He himself continued to see if he could dissolve or destroy Makasar power beyond the Strait, bringing Sultan Mandarsyah (the 'rightful ruler' of all these areas, after all), with him.

His first stop was Tobungku, a polity on the east coast of Sulawesi just north of the Buton Strait, which we have already come across as a bone of contention between Gowa and Ternate over the past three decades. Arriving there, he found that its population had absconded to the mountains, already having learned about what had happened at Tiworo and worried that they might be treated in the same way. Contacts, however, were soon established. The exchange which subsequently took place is insightful with regard to the general nature of politics in the region. The leaders informed the Company that they were happy to return to friendship with the Company and the protection of Ternate. They had simply had no choice but to switch allegiance to the Makasars, as Ternate had failed to protect them and the Makasars had just kept on coming. As a peace offering, they delivered two Dutch sailors who had been captured by the Makasars in a confrontation in the Buton Strait earlier. Additionally, they offered to assist the fleet during the rest of the campaign by serving as guides higher up on the coast,

934 Gaynor, *Intertidal histories*, 76-77.

Fig 14.2 (Next page) The attack on the village and fort at Tiworo, 3 January 1655. Below, the small craft of the Company force in the Tiworo Strait. Slightly above, the soldiers, who approached the fort and settlement overland with the help of local guides. Above, the village, fort and vessels at Tiworo captured, burned and destroyed. Although no original on which this drawing was based is known, and its reliability is therefore uncertain, it is interesting to note that the fort, as depicted here, has a clear Makasar signature. Collection Koninklijke Bibliotheek Brussel, Ms. 17982, fol. 75.



an area relatively unknown to the Company.⁹³⁵ Thus, Tobungku switched its allegiance back to Ternate – for now. ‘Although they have now publicly declared themselves to be enemies of the Makasars, it seems likely that, now that we have left, they will once again reconcile themselves with them, as they are the strongest’, he subsequently mused to the governor-general.⁹³⁶

The rest of the tour through the region was less conciliatory – the *negeri* of Batui slightly further north, which was affiliated with the raja of Gapi and recognized the Makasars as its overlords, was destroyed outright, and the fields in the area, mostly producing yams, destroyed to prevent Makasar fleets from taking in provisions. Subsequently passing by the Banggai and Sula Islands, De Vlaming found to his surprise that he had been beaten to it – only a part of the Ternaten *hongi* had been at Buton, and the rest, led by Mandarsyah’s *gogogu* or chancellor, had meanwhile also toured through the region to reassert Ternaten dominance. Gapi (now known as Peleng, the largest of the Banggai Islands), had been attacked, and the Sula Islands had been entirely brought back under Ternaten control.⁹³⁷ While at Gapi, De Vlaming, to his consternation, did find a small cluster of 128 clove trees, which had never been known to grow here. He immediately eradicated them.⁹³⁸

All in all, the attempts to curb Makasar access to, influence in, and manpower and provisions from, the wider eastern archipelago seemed to be bearing some fruit. Even if this would prove to be temporary, it might be enough to break the resistance at Asaudi – if nothing else went wrong in the meantime.

FALL-OUT WITHIN THE TERNATEN RANKS

As De Vlaming arrived in the Ambon region on 22 February, he was confident that before long, he would be able to break the resistance at Asaudi, and with it, hopefully end the entire war. His first order of business was to cut them off even more. Last year, he had cut them off from a supply of food overland. Now, to isolate them entirely and also prevent the foraging expeditions they were periodically organising, he decided to once again blockade the shore in front of Asaudi. Five Company ships, accompanied by sixteen smaller vessels, took position, announcing their arrival by a fierce bombardment of the coast, which was able to

935 De Vlaming to Jacob Hustaert (Ternate), 2 February 1655, in: VOC 1211, p. 109-110.

936 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 21 April 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 299.

937 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 21 April 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 300-301.

938 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 6 May 1655, in: VOC 1211, p. 415.

destroy a number of Makasar vessels on the shore.⁹³⁹

All in all, De Vlaming felt he had those at Asaudi by the throat now. In April, however, just as he was preparing to move in for the final conquest, several unexpected events diverted his attention. Makasar ships had been sighted at Eastern Seram – De Vlaming speculated that, his efforts notwithstanding, a Makasar fleet had been able to reach the region via Timor or Solor after all. Their presence had also apparently persuaded some of the communities there to switch their allegiance, as a number of merchants from Ambon and Banda had been killed in several places there. Just two weeks later, he learned that the Makasar fleet still holed up in the Tiworo Strait had been able to slip past the blockade in a very thick fog, and that a sizeable number of Makasar vessels was therefore now at large east of the Buton Strait. The worst news, however, came from much closer – at Buru. There, another attempt to oust Mandarsyah from power was taking place.

In his continuing efforts to return various areas to Ternaten control, De Vlaming had invited Mandarsyah, who was still in the Sula Islands, to meet him at Buru, to see if kimelaha Hassi and his followers could likewise be brought back into the fold. Mandarsyah duly arrived in early April – but things did not go as expected. Mandarsyah's brother Kalamata, the devout Muslim, who was also still on the fleet, had been building a coalition to support his own claim to the throne. He apparently meant to use the sojourn for the negotiations at Kajeli, on the east side of Buru, to spring his trap and kill Mandarsyah outright. In his eagerness, however, Kalamata already killed a close associate of the sultan before getting around to Mandarsyah himself. The latter was warned of what had happened, and made a run for it with three small vessels, seeking refuge in Castle Victoria. The Ternatens in the fleet at Kajeli proceeded to proclaim Kalamata their sultan.⁹⁴⁰ De Vlaming, who had promised Mandarsyah to meet him at Buru but had failed to do so, now quickly made his way to Kajeli.

In the exchange between the two that followed, both De Vlaming and Kalamata initially took a conciliatory tone. The latter stated that Mandarsyah's unpopularity was also due to a host of other reasons that had little to do with the Company or the present conflict, and that he himself would be loyal to the

939 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 6 May 1655, in: VOC 1211, p. 439; Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 85.

940 Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, I.2, 315-317; De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 21 April 1655, in: VOC 1211, p. 301-302.

Company if it was willing to recognize him as the new sultan. De Vlaming played along, stating that the Company, after all, was just a friend of the Ternatens, and far be it from him to choose their sultan for them. This has led some authors to state that De Vlaming, tired with Mandarsyah's unpopularity among the Ternaten leadership and all the problems that it caused, was just about ready to drop Mandarsyah, but was ultimately prevented from doing so by the harsh stance that Kalamata subsequently took – the latter ultimately told De Vlaming that there was little to negotiate about until Mandarsyah was delivered into his hands, no doubt so that he could finish the job. This was something De Vlaming could not agree to.⁹⁴¹

De Vlaming's considerations as documented in his letters paint a slightly different picture. While De Vlaming roundly admitted that sultan Mandarsyah could be very rude and impatient with members of the Ternaten leadership, and that this certainly did not help his popularity, he felt that Mandarsyah's strong dependence on the Company was actually at the heart of the matter, just as it had been four years ago. Additionally, there was the future succession to consider. The year before, Mandarsyah had had a son, which, in clear recognition of his loyalty to his Dutch 'ally and protector', he had named Kaicili Amsterdam. His birth had, so De Vlaming believed, given more urgency to Kalamata's ambitions for the throne, as he felt that the Company would certainly want this son to succeed his father in time. De Vlaming, for his part, was bent on preserving Kaicili Amsterdam as a viable successor to the Ternaten throne. All this meant that allowing Kalamata to become sultan was out of the question to De Vlaming, and he 'was of firm intention ... to do the utmost to maintain Mandarsyah in his station.' To do so, however, would require 'feigning, and outwardly show ourselves quite differently from our inner resolutions.'⁹⁴²

We have no sources documenting Kalamata's considerations, but regardless, he found himself on the same side as the enemies of the Company. He soon brought his fleet upriver at Kajeli, where ten Makasar vessels were also hiding, and barricaded himself there with them. As to kimelaha Hassi: the Company strongly suspected that he had been in on the plot all along, and that his earlier promise to swear loyalty to Mandarsyah, and turn over the Makasar vessels and their crews into the bargain, had been part of the ruse. In practice then, this

941 Andaya, *The World of Maluku*, 165.

942 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 6 May 1655, in: VOC 1211, p. 430-431.

latest attempted coup meant that Kalamata, and a good part of the Ternaten leadership and military forces, were now on the side of the Company's enemies. The besieged at Asaudi certainly felt that way, and responded to the news with cheering, and firing their guns in celebration.

De Vlaming, for his part, was deeply frustrated. 'If it were not for these new Makasar reinforcements, and this fall-out that the Ternatens have wreaked, we would, God willing, have seen our work here come to a good ending by now', he complained.⁹⁴³ On the upside though, Kalamata's coup had not been entirely successful, as Mandarsyah was still alive. The Company now only had to make sure that it did not spark any unrest in Ternate itself. A small fort was built at the mouth of the river at Kajeli, and a Company ship was left there, to prevent anyone from leaving – Kalamata could pretend to be the Ternaten sultan up some river at Buru if we wanted. De Vlaming meant to make sure that no-one in North Maluku subscribed to his claim. He prepared to sail to Ternate, with Mandarsyah, and a sizable military force.

As annoyed as De Vlaming might have been, this *impromptu* expedition did come with a silver lining. In the opinion of both De Vlaming and the Ternaten governor Hustaert, the renewed Ternaten unrest made it both necessary and possible to eradicate all cloves at Makian – either by convincing the orangkaya to do so 'voltuntarily', or by doing it for them. With this, the clove extirpation policy of which De Vlaming had been the main architect would be completed in North Maluku.

'NOW COME TO AN END': CLOVE ERADICATION IN NORTH MALUKU

In preparation for his expedition to Ternate, De Vlaming collected most of the soldiers from the ships at Asaudi, only leaving a small number, 'mostly crippled' there to maintain the blockade. He used the opportunity to see if he the besieged were now, perhaps, finally more willing to negotiate. They were not. An attempt to open secret separate negotiations with the Hoamoalese there, offering them amnesty in return for their surrender and their assistance against the Makasars, also got no response. De Vlaming speculated that the Hoamoalese probably smelled a rat, expecting that 'we would stop whistling once we had all the birds caught under our net, and would then settle the score once and for all.' He had to admit, though, that 'that was really not entirely unjustified or untrue', as there were those among the besieged he had every intention to 'horribly punish, to

943 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 6 May 1655, in: VOC 1211, p. 441.

fulfil Gods righteous punishment, and as an example to others' once he got his hands on them one way or the other.⁹⁴⁴

Efforts to put the besieged under further pressure had meanwhile continued. In late May, the *hongi*, led by Simon Cos, had sailed to various sago-producing areas on Seram's north coast where the besieged had reportedly been procuring food. The regions got the standard treatment of the destruction of their trees and vessels, while the crew restocked their own sago supplies into the bargain.⁹⁴⁵ As it happened, De Vlaming himself unwittingly dealt a major blow against Makasar morale on the 26th of May while at Asaudi. That day he led a small military action up the river there to attempt and destroy Makasar vessels. This ultimately drew out a Makasar sortie, and led to a skirmish with some casualties on both sides. While this was a relatively minor encounter, De Vlaming would later learn that the highest Makasar commander at Asaudi, Karaeng Buta Tua, was among the dead.⁹⁴⁶

Otherwise, Asaudi would have to wait until after the expedition. On 3 June, De Vlaming sent sixty soldiers ahead in a yacht straight from the blockade to Ternate, to make sure there were enough soldiers there in case of any eventualities. After making some final preparations for his own departure at Castle Victoria, he followed two weeks later, on a fleet of five ships, seven smaller vessels, five hundred European soldiers and an additional five hundred Ambonese warriors.⁹⁴⁷

After stopping underway at the island of Obilatu, just east of Obi, to eradicate a cluster of some one thousand clove trees discovered there earlier, the fleet arrived at Makian on the 24th.⁹⁴⁸ De Vlaming hoped to convince the *orangkaya*

944 De Vlaming to Hustaert (Ternate), in VOC 1211, 1 June 1655 in: VOC 1211, p. 526-527.

945 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 14 June 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 568-569.

946 De Vlaming does not mention the death of Karaeng Buta Tua, or even the skirmish, which seems to have been relatively minor, in his correspondence immediately following his sojourn at Asaudi. It is only two months later, after the fall of Asaudi, that he had apparently become aware of it. See e.g. De Vlaming to the sultan of Buton, 9 August 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 686. Karaeng Buta Tua had come to Makassar as the head of the fleet of 1654. After his death, Daeng ri Bulekang would become the supreme Makasar commander in Asaudi.

947 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 9 August 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 643.

948 More strictly speaking, the fleet anchored on the coast of Halmahera just opposite Makian, and invited the Makianese *orangkaya* to come there.

to eradicate their cloves 'voluntarily'. While he felt he was more than justified to do it forcefully, as many of the Makian leaders were currently up the river at Kajeli with Kalamata, and therefore in revolt against their rightful sultan, he was juggling too many things at the time already, and much preferred simply striking a deal. The Makianese orangkaya, finding themselves negotiating on board of a sizeable and well-armed fleet, prudently agreed, and immediately named their price: 2500 rials of eight yearly. Should the latter surrender and reconcile themselves with the Company within the year, then the yearly stipend should be doubled to 5000. De Vlaming, not expecting that the situation at Kajeli would be solved through negotiation, and really loath to land his troops at Makian to do the work himself (in addition to him being anxious to tend to other business, Makian also had a rather miasmal reputation), agreed.

Even without the extra 2500 rials in case of reconciliation at Kajeli, this was quite a sum, and De Vlaming went out of his way to explain to the governor-general and council why he had agreed to it. His insights into the rationale and implications of this policy of extirpation, of which he was the original architect, are insightful. Besides all the usual arguments about not having to garrison these places as heavily anymore in the future, and the risks of smuggling now forever removed, he was also acutely aware of how these policies disenfranchised the leaders in the region, which he readily stated was part of the point:

[Makian was always] a proud and brave nation, and could clearly always rely on its spices (desired by the entire world, as it were), which has now come to an end. From now on, these people can be ruled at our discretion, as we could, at the slightest reluctance, cease the aforementioned stipends, which is now their only means of support.⁹⁴⁹

Without the cloves, he added, Makian was just an unhealthy place with a dangerous volcano, to be 'shunned and despised'. It was therefore no longer any trouble for the Company, but the Company did owe it to the population to support them under that circumstance.⁹⁵⁰

An additional point to take pause at is that Makian was the island where, according to local tradition, clove cultivation had originated. The Makianese themselves, under the oversight of commissioners appointed by De Vlaming,

949 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 9 August 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 646.

950 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 9 August 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 649.

now set to work eradicating it from its purported original habitat, and with it, from most of North Maluku – but not all. Spanish Ternate and Tidore still produced a small amount, and, as Company officials increasingly learned over this period, clusters of clove trees were growing in places they had never even visited before.

De Vlaming himself continued to Ternate with the better part of the fleet, arriving there only two days later. In consultation with governor Hustaert, a ceremony was organised in Castle Oranje. The joint orangkaya from the region appeared before Mandarsyah and all professed their loyalty to him. As to six of them who Mandarsyah did not consider loyal and a threat to his position: he had them singled out and *krissed* that same day, with the tacit approval of De Vlaming and Hustaert.⁹⁵¹

When news of the events at Kajeli had first reached Ternate, Hustaert had noted a lack of shock or surprise among the Ternaten leadership, which led him to suspect that many of them might have been in on it or, at the very least, did not exactly disapprove. However, with Kalamata holed up at Kajeli, and Mandarsyah alive and back in Ternate, readily executing detractors and with an intimidating Company fleet at his back, no-one felt any particular urgency to air their disaffection with Mandarsyah at this time. Confident that the latter's position was secure for now, and anxious to get back to the Ambon region, De Vlaming left again on the 5th of July. He picked up the rest of the fleet near Makian along the way, where the extirpation efforts were meanwhile making progress. By the 22nd, he was back in the Ambon region, and was happy to learn that in spite of the earlier reports, no Makasar fleets had arrived there. The situation within Asaudi had meanwhile become even more desperate. It was just about time, he felt, to storm Asaudi.

THE FALL OF ASAUDI AND THE PURSUIT OF THE SURVIVORS

As Company officials were well aware, the besieged were by now on their last legs. Two years of efforts to cut them off from all and any supplies and reinforcements had taken their toll. No new Makasar reinforcements had made it to Asaudi this season, and the number of Makasars in Asaudi was now estimated to number only about one thousand – a fraction of the thousands that had reportedly arrived in the region over the previous two years. The relations between the

951 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 9 August 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 653-654.

Hoamoalese and the Makasars inside the fort had become difficult, with accusations and threats being exchanged. All the same, Asaudi, with its large number of defenders and extensive fortifications, was still a daunting target. So De Vlaming and his officers made their preparations carefully.

The only surviving bird's eye view of these fortifications and the attack, from one of the manuscript copies of Livinus Bor's *Amboinse oorlogen*, will help us better understand the fortifications, and the considerations of De Vlaming in organising his attack. This image would have been copied from a now-lost original, so that we should not overly rely on the image in terms of exact proportions and distances. Nevertheless, it corresponds to the present-day geography at Asaudi, and it significantly aids our understanding of the attack, and the defences it faced.⁹⁵²

As the bird's eye view shows, the entire coastline of Asaudi was guarded by a system of rectangular fortifications. The hills, both those along the coast to the immediate north of the bay and those inland towards the east, were likewise fortified, guarded by hilltop forts and some smaller lower fortifications towards the shore to prevent landings. Whereas we are not well-informed about the exact development of the forts, De Vlaming's journal provides the important insight that one of the hill-forts had been specifically built, and was occupied by, those who had earlier fled from the island of Boano.⁹⁵³ The shape of the various forts as depicted, and this particular insight from the archive, seem to suggest that the fortifications at Asaudi largely followed the pattern we have come to know in the region at large: the rectangular forts along the shore would have been Makasar-built, while some of the Hoamoalese communities flocking to Asaudi appear to

952 While the drawing was probably made in the Netherlands, based on a now-lost original, and some of the other drawings in the same volume are problematic in that they clearly depict another episode than purported, what we do know is that De Vlaming did in fact have a map of the fortifications at Asaudi made. The letter of 9 August 1655 in which he informed the Governor-General and Council of the fall of Asaudi (surviving in copy in VOC 1211, p. 642-673) makes references to a map which had originally accompanied it (from p. 659 onwards, with the numbers referring to the map here left open). We furthermore know of the existence of such a map as De Vlaming, in a rather back-handed diplomatic gift, would later present a copy of it, along with the dagger of Malim Bugis, one of the high-ranking commanders on the Makasar fleets, to the Gowan court who had been killed in the wake of the fall of Asaudi. The gift was understandably refused. Valentijn *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, II.2, 201. Also note that an original, albeit badly damaged, map of the earlier blockade of Asaudi in 1653, from De Vlaming's reports, survives in the Nationaal Archief: 4.VEL 1351.

953 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 9 August 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 662.

have built their own fortifications, making use of the surrounding hills providing natural defences. The result was a system of fortifications which made it very difficult to land either in the bay itself or towards its immediate north. To the south, outside the bird's eye view towards the right, was a wetland area which made the approach from that side difficult as well.

De Vlaming's plan to tackle these defences had four main spearpoints. First, the small rocky island of Nussanitu just off the coast (marked F in the bird's eye view) was some 600 to 1000 meters from the various Makasar shoreline fortifications. De Vlaming had a battery set up there, which offered an elevated position from which it was possible to see and fire into the forts. Second, De Vlaming had his hopes set on the fortifications below what is nowadays called the Gunung Asaude, the high rock directly at the coast (marked E, towards the left of the bird's eye view.) The small fortifications at its foothill, if conquered, would likewise provide an elevated position from which to fire into the main Makasar forts. Third, the evening before the attack, the indigenous troops had been landed at the bay of Peisela just to the north of Asaudi. As soon as they heard the clamour of the main attack, they should march the roughly three-and-a-half kilometres overland to Asaudi, passing behind the fortified hills, and either make as much noise as they could or simply join in the attack from that side, creating a diversion and adding to the confusion among the besieged (marked G.).

Fourth, De Vlaming had prepared what we might call two instant forts, to be erected during the landing, right on the shore within range of the main Makasar fortifications. The landing troops there brought large screens of tarred canvas that had been prepared in advance. More than two meters high, they would obscure the Company musketeers from view, while a narrow strip cut out of them allowed the soldiers to aim and fire their muskets. The screens could be put up quickly with poles and a wooden framework. Behind them, wooden barrels would be placed to provide some cover for the gunners who would operate some small cannon from there. These makeshift fortifications, to be quickly erected as the troops landed in the dark before dawn, were to provide a base from which to subsequently storm the main fortifications.⁹⁵⁴

The plan was put into effect in the early hours of the 29th of July. Some fifty

954 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 9 August 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 658-659. John Verbeeck. *'Onder faveur van 't Canon': VOC-artillerie, 1602-1796: technologische vernieuwingen, logistiek en beleid*. Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2022, p. 71 remarks that the use of wooden barrels filled with earth was a regular siege VOC method, as a substitute for the use of gabions during sieges in Europe.

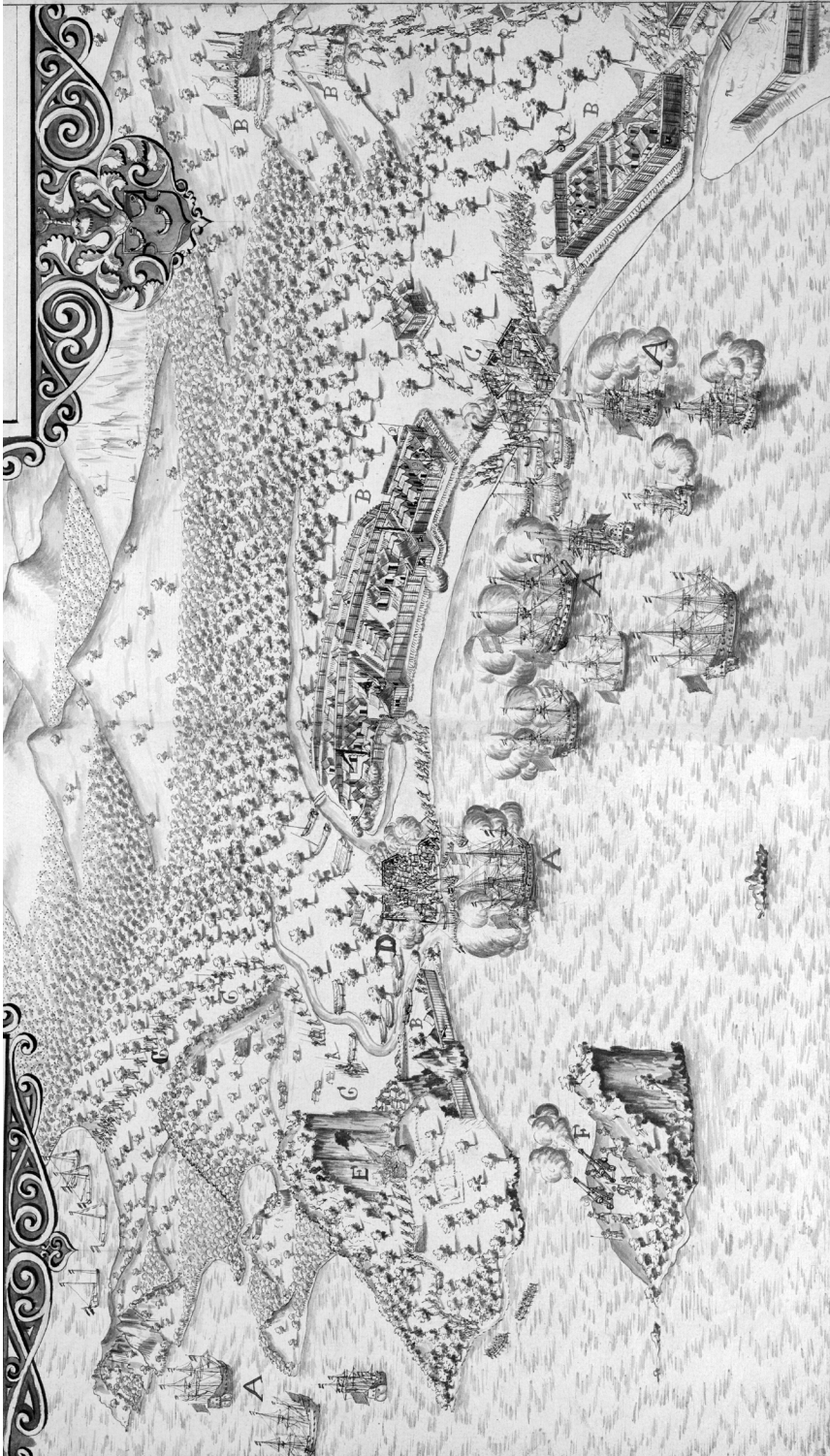


Fig 14.3 The coastline fortifications at Asaudi and the attack on them by the Company and their allies on 29 July 1655. Collection Koninklijke Bibliotheek Brussel, Ms. 17982, fol. 82.

troops quietly made their way to the hill north of Asaudi in two sloops, while two groups of some 400 soldiers each quietly landed slightly further south to erect their makeshift fortifications. The surviving accounts make no mention of the latter being seriously challenged as they built up their makeshift siege works. The former, for their part, succeeded in capturing the small fortifications at the foot of the hill, which were hardly defended at all, before daybreak.

At dawn, then, the defenders not only found two siege works right at their doorsteps, but also found that the hill commanding the bay was now in the hands of Company troops – a fact that was delicately brought home to them, if we are to take Rumphius' word for it, by a Dutch trumpeter playing the *Wilhelmus*, the present-day Dutch national anthem, from there. De Vlaming himself had by then made his way to the southernmost of the two siege works, and commanded a storm attack on the southwestern Makasar fort. To the surprise of the attacking troops, the Makasar defence broke almost instantly, and the defenders made for the forts in the hills, with Company troops in pursuit. These forts likewise fell. Seeing this, the troops in the main Makasar fort just to the north, decided to abandon it before it was even stormed, likewise making for the hills. The indigenous troops, meanwhile marching to Asaudi through the interior, had a similar effect on the various hill fortifications in that area: they were all abandoned, with the exception of the one housing the people from Boano, which surrendered and sued for terms.⁹⁵⁵

Now, with the main seat of resistance broken, the people from Boano were not the only ones trying to once again come to terms with the Company. Just days after the conquest, the imam of Hulong came down to the Company troops at Asaudi to inform them that most of the defenders had made their way to a mountain hideout at Kalike, slightly to inland towards the south. He was happy to guide them to it. Another two weeks later, the people of Kelang approached and delivered the head of Majira's brother, kimelaha Dagga, who had been their ruler.⁹⁵⁶ Even some Makasars came back out to Asaudi to surrender in the wake of the attack. The majority, however, had fled to Kalike, and De Vlaming went in pursuit with a force of some 700 men, half of the force European, half indigenous, in the hope of capturing it in a surprise attack. He was particularly keen

955 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 9 August 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 662-663.

956 De Vlaming to lieutenant Willem Brent, 21 August 1655, in: VOC 1211, fol. 708. De Vlaming, incidentally remarks that he would rather have gotten him alive to use as bait to draw out Majira.

on getting at Kaicili Ali, after all one of the original leaders of the coup against Mandarsyah, and a prominent leader of the fight against the Company in Hoamoal over the past years. The imam of Hulong assured De Vlaming that he was there and personally went along to assist in his capture.

Even though the troops managed to conquer Kalike in the early morning of 5 August, the attack was only a partial success. De Vlaming had hoped to kill or capture a great many Makasars and Hoamoalese, but all save about twenty were able to escape into the forest. He did succeed in capturing Kaicili Saidi, but in the struggle to overpower him, a Company soldier delivered him a heavy sword blow to the leg. By the time De Vlaming got to him, it was clear that Kaicili Saidi was bleeding out.

In his subsequent report to Batavia, De Vlaming made no secret of his annoyance that he had only caught Kaicili Ali as he was dying. He had hoped 'to catch him alive and well, to send him to his lord and King [i.e. Sultan Mandarsyah in Ternate], and serve as a vivid example there.' Feeling that simply bleeding out was too light a punishment for Saidi, he turned him over to his soldiers, who proceeded to 'hastily maltreat him such that he no longer looked like a human being, and finally, having been robbed of his head and several other body parts, threw him down from the mountain into a deep ravine', as he informed his superiors.⁹⁵⁷

If we are to take Bor's word for it, though, De Vlaming first took the opportunity to personally take out some feelings of vengeance in a way that he did not find necessary to report to Batavia. Arriving at the dying Ternaten prince, he mockingly asked him in Malay: 'Lord Kapitan Laut, are you asleep right now? How is that?', and stabbed him through the mouth three times with a pike, before turning him over to his soldiers to finish the job.⁹⁵⁸

INGLORIOUS END IN ALFUR TERRITORY

Over the next few days, Company troops scoured the surrounding region for survivors, finding and killing some 200 of them in the woods. De Vlaming then continued to the line of forts up at the land bridge: he had a hunch that the remaining Makasars and Hoamoalese, running out of places to run to in Hoamoal proper, would try to break through the line and make their way east

957 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 9 August 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 671-672.

958 'Jow Kapitan Laut, tidur sekarang? Bagaimana?' Bor, *Amboinse oorlogen*, 299.

to look for less hostile territory on Seram. To prevent them escaping beyond his reach, he instructed the officers to extend the palisades some way into sea itself, while he made for Hitu to collect some additional troops to garrison the forts. Just as he was away, however, his hunch was confirmed: on the night following 10 August, some 600 Makasars and Hoamoalese men but also women and children, did indeed make it past the defensive line at its southernmost fortification, called Zeeburg, wading and swimming. Company troops were able to kill some ten of them, but the rest made it through in the darkness. Discovering what had happened upon his return, De Vlaming was so furious that he had the officer responsible for keeping guard put into irons.⁹⁵⁹

But where were they headed? To keep out of the way of the Company, their most likely route would be some way through the interior and then to Seram's north coast. This would eventually bring them to Lisebata, a Muslim and *ulilima* settlement with a largely immigrant population, which had openly supported Majira in an earlier phase of the war.⁹⁶⁰ It seemed a reasonable assumption that that was their destination for now. From the land bridge to Lisebata, it was some 50 kilometres as the crow flies.⁹⁶¹ However, the terrain that the 600 or so men, women and children would have to pass through, likely having to forage for food as they went, was craggy, mountainous and heavily forested. It was also the home region of the *ulisiwa* Alfurs allied to the Company.

As far as the sources inform us, Alfur involvement in the Hoamoal War had been relatively limited until now, certainly compared to some of the earlier periods. They had played a crucial role, however, around the land bridge. After the completion of line of forts there, the Alfurs of Tanuno, now cut off from the besieged at Asaudi with whom they had been doing business, had switched their allegiance to the Company. Joined by bands from other areas, they had been hunting down the Hoamoalese and Makasars, allowed and actively encouraged by the VOC to pass the line of fortifications into Hoamoal itself. The Company, as always, offered rewards and provided additional provisions. As a result, the besieged at Asaudi had 'scarcely dared to put one foot into the forest' during the

959 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 30 September 1655 in: VOC 1211, 801.

960 Rumphius, *Ambonse eilanden*, 154-161; Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 28.

961 Note that the community of Lisabata moved several times over the course of this period. While it was much further east in later times, at the time of the war it was near the present-day settlement of Subu, until 1667. Rumphius, *Ambonse eilanden*, 156.

last few months of the siege.⁹⁶² As he had been preparing for the final assault on Asaudi, De Vlaming had sent word to the line of fortifications to urge as many of the Alfurs to enter Hoamoal, to hunt down those who would inevitably flee into the interior after its fall.⁹⁶³

Now, those refugees had fled to the home turf of the Alfurs, not only chased by the latter's headhunting bands, but also by search parties sent out by the Company both over land and along the coast. Details of how the vast majority of them were ultimately killed or captured are frustratingly scarce in the preserved sources.⁹⁶⁴ What is clear, however, is that they were caught by a combination of Company troops and Alfurs before they ever reached Lisabata.⁹⁶⁵ By the 24th, they had all been killed or captured. Among the casualties were the three highest surviving Makasar military leaders and many of the orangkaya from Hoamoal and their family members, including Majira's wife.⁹⁶⁶ De Vlaming estimated that, all in all, since the fall of Asaudi, some 1100 or 1200 refugees had been killed, and some 280 captured.⁹⁶⁷

962 De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 6 May 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 445-446. Also see *ibid.* p. 441, noting that some 50 heads had been hunted over the previous period.

963 De Vlaming to *vaandrig* Claes Buntén, 25 July 1655, in VOC 1211, p. 621-623.

964 Neither De Vlaming nor any high-ranking VOC officials were present, and De Vlaming only summarily noted how the entire group had been massacred. Bor and Rumphius are similarly brief on the matter. Rumphius mentions Hatupatola, just west of Lisabata, as the site where the survivors were massacred, Bor merely notes that it was 'near Lisebata'. A drawing in the Brussels manuscript copy of Bor, *Amboinse oorlogen* supposedly depicting the final skirmish should be viewed with extreme caution, as it is unlikely that a drawing or map was made at the battle and there is no similar drawing in the The Hague copy of the manuscript. It is therefore likely that this was an addition to the second manuscript, possibly made in the Netherlands and with an unknown amount of poetic license.

965 If they had arrived there, it might not have helped them much anyway. In the wake of the fall of Asaudi, the people of Lisabata had sent a vessel there to make terms with the Company, and they were now in fact cooperating in the hunt for the survivors of the siege. De Vlaming to Simon Cos, 14 August 1655, in: VOC 1211, fol. 692-693.

966 De Vlaming mentions: I Daeng ri Bulekang, Malim Bugis and Karasela (the three highest remaining Makasar leaders), many of the 'pangauwen', i.e. leaders of the individual Makasar ships, the kipati of Kambelo and his wife, Majira's wife and another of his consorts, and 'many other leaders, both Ambonese and Makasar.' Made captive were Karaeng Tabiyei (brother of I Daeng ri Bulekang) and Daeng Mayena, (family member of Raja Lubu, 'one of the most prominent Bugis kings'). De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 30 September 1655 in: VOC 1211, 801-802.

967 Note, though, that De Vlaming himself considers this no more than a rough estimate.

The only leaders who escaped being killed or captured by the Dutch and their allies were those who had not been at Asaudi when it fell. Kalamata, still at Kajeli, eventually managed to escape from the island, and after some fruitless attempts to set up a new base of power in the Sula islands, ultimately found his way to Makassar. Majira, for his part, was also on Buru, further west at Waisama, and subsequently managed to entirely disappear off the radar for a while, to ultimately also resurface at Makassar. Both joined the ranks of the spice war exiles who had been arriving in Makassar for decades.⁹⁶⁸

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Much like many of the earlier conflicts in the region, the Hoamoal War was environmental in crucial ways. While De Vlaming's extensive documentation of the conflict lacks the rigorous book-keeping of the destruction of trees and crops that Gijssels employed two decades earlier, his reasoning and tactics about the conduct of the war were very similar, and it is clear that, over the five years that the conflict was fought, he was able to inflict massive amounts of damage both on clove and food production in the region. The crucial role of food production, and how it was tied up with the landscape of the region, is especially clearly illustrated by the struggle over access to sago between the Company and the coalition of forces opposing it. More than any of the earlier governors of the region, De Vlaming seems to have targeted sago-producing areas, even before his opponents specifically tried to secure and fortify them, and certainly after that.

What furthermore distinguishes the phase of the war described in this chapter is the scope of the use of such tactics. Whereas they had occasionally been employed outside the Ambon Islands over the course of the Spice Wars,⁹⁶⁹ De Vlaming made bringing environmental destruction to what he considered important enemy supply points and staging areas outside the Dutch sphere of influence a central point of his strategy. Even before the Makasar intervention, he mounted an expedition to the Sula Islands to render them useless as a base for the Company's adversaries. After he had been able to provisionally contain the first wave Makasar intervention forces at Asaudi, his subsequent efforts to deny any further Makasar forces access to the region by blockading and attacking stra-

The irregular warfare in the forests, and, for instance, some of the Alfur bands loath to turn over the heads they hunted, made a reliable estimate difficult. De Vlaming to Governor-General and Council, 30 September 1655 in: VOC 1211, 803.

968 Rumphius, 'De Ambonsche Historie', II, 95-110.

969 For instance in Buton in 1638 (see chapter IX, paragraph 'Waiting for the king').

tegic staging areas, also involved a fair amount of destruction of food stores and crops. Fleets were sent to Seram's north coast, an area usually outside the scope of Company activities, to destroy the sago there.

We have seen the same wider scope in terms of the eradication of cloves, specifically. De Vlaming, with his broad sway of powers as superintendent over Maluku, Ambon and Banda, felt that the conflict provided both the opportunity, and created the necessity, for eradicating cloves from North Maluku, and was able to effectuate this over the course of the war, overwhelmingly by persuading the various polities of North Maluku to do so 'voluntarily' – although that is perhaps not quite the term. Whereas, on the one hand, the communities were offered stipends to compensate for the loss of income, De Vlaming also made clear that in case of refusal, it was more than prepared to do it for them by force – per the new treaty with Mandarsyah, and considering that the various polities in North Maluku were all involved in the revolt in one way or another, the Company had every right to. Pressured by this, and aware of the manner in which clove eradication was proceeding in the Ambon region, the leaders saw little choice but to oblige, and cloves were largely eradicated from North Maluku, their original habitat, over the course of only a few years. This extirpation of cloves in North Maluku has only been studied only superficially before, and this chapter has only added a few lines to what is still a sketchy picture. As a topic of great import, it certainly deserves further study in the future.

De Vlaming's tactics certainly made their mark - when the dust started to settle in the final months of 1655, the Company was, uniquely, facing a shortage of cloves. Hoamoal and its adjacent islands, which had been the theatre of one war after another over the last three decades, were not only robbed of their cloves trees and their sources of food like never before, but over the course of the war, had also been largely stripped of their population. De Vlaming and his fellow Company officials now moved to impose a new order over the islands to make sure they remained that way.

