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## Was Sumba a Subject of Bima? Navigating Sumba's Political Landscape 1674-1685

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## Was Sumba a Subject of Bima?

*Navigating Sumba's Political Landscape 1674-1685*

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Map of Sumba with surrounding islands and waters

# Introduction

## 1. Preface

In 1676, a VOC (*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*) official wrote the following to the Sultan of Bima about their perceived subject, the Southeast Asian island, Sumba: ‘We hope and wish, with wholehearted sincerity, that God the Lord will crown the righteous efforts with His assistance, so that the rebels may be compelled, to return to their rightful lord, and live peacefully under your highness's rule.’<sup>1</sup> In 1686, a different statement was made about the same topic: ‘It is well known to us that the late King of Bima, while alive, was earnest in his desire to place those from Mangarai and Sumba under his protection. However, it has been indicated to us to the contrary that he did not achieve this before his death...This suggests that the deceased King did not have control over such places where the people themselves recognized him as their enemy.’<sup>2</sup>

These two contradicting quotes bring into question the validity of Bima's claim regarding the subject status of Sumba. Was the claims of Bima exaggerated, or was Sumba indeed a subject of the Sultanate? To thoroughly investigate this, the research question becomes: To what extent was Sumba a subject of the Bima Sultanate in the late seventeenth century? This will be paired with other subquestions: firstly, it should be proven that Bima was a ruler over Sumba. Were they true rulers with a valid claim over Sumba, or was the claim based on nothing? If Bima was indeed a ruler over Sumba, how did this ruling manifest? What are some specific examples that showcase their rule over Sumba? And finally, what obstacles intervened in Bima's control over Sumba? The extent of Bima's power over Sumba will be revealed by answering these questions.

There is only one event during the seventeenth century that could help to answer these questions. A rebellion, which took place approximately between 1674 and 1685, saw Bima

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Wij hoopen en, winschen, van gantscher harten, dat Godt de heere de rechtwerdige wapmen met sijner hulpe bekronen sal, op dat alsoo de affvallige gedwongen worden, weder tot hunnen wettigen heer te koren, en de gerust in vrede onder u hoochheit te leven.’

Dutch National Archives The Hague (NL-HaNA), Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, 1602-1795 (1811), (VOC), inv.nr. 1319, ff. 95 r, Letter from Casteel Rotterdam, 11-07-1676.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Dat den overleden Coninck van Bima bij zijn Leven ijverigh, behertight heeft, om die van Mangeraij en somba onder zijn protectie testellen is ons ten vollen bekendt, maer dat hij het voor zijn doot daertoe al souw gebraght hebben...’

NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1452, ff. 42, Letter questioning Bima's claim, 27-04-1686.

trying to re-establish its hegemony over Sumba with the help of the VOC. This is the only event which showcases the political interplay of the three parties involved in great detail. The rationale of Sumba, Bima, and the VOC are displayed, giving an opportunity to learn about this unique event.

The question then becomes, why research this micro-history, and what makes it relevant? The imperative for researching this topic has to be explained in three distinct ways. This is because the necessity of this research is different for the main actors involved: Sumba, Bima, and the VOC. Sumba's history, particularly during the seventeenth century, remains a mystery. By filling this void, we enrich Sumba's historiography and carve out a unique place for Sumba in the political landscape of the seventeenth-century Southeast Asian area. Providing Sumba a voice in the historiography is a good reason to conduct this research. Besides that, the history of Sumba would also provide unique insights. Sumba is historiographically known as an island that endured many misfortunes, was threatened by constant slave raids, and had outsiders who claimed their lands with military prowess.<sup>3</sup> This is paired with the fragmented nature of their internal political structure, which led to endless fighting between the local villages.<sup>4</sup> The rebellion on Sumba showcases both the influence of outsiders and the fragmented nature; however, it also displays Sumba's shortlived autonomy during the seventeenth century despite the misfortunes it endured. This event gives a unique opportunity to further understand Sumbanese history, especially for the seventeenth century.

The existing research on Bima, is more extensive than Sumba's, which makes sense, as Bima was an important regional entity. That said, there are still questions that should be answered about Bima, which would help us better understand the region's political landscape. One of these questions is about Bima's claims. As shown before, even the VOC was unsure about the hegemony of Bima over Sumba, which is understandable as it is a complex topic. Just like the VOC, historians are also still determining the situation, and while answers are given, these seem inconclusive. As Hans Hagerdal mentioned, Bima loosely claimed Sumba, indicating that Sumba could be seen as unclaimed territory instead of an extension of the Bimanese empire.<sup>5</sup> This conclusion was more based on the fact that Bima tended to exaggerate their claims over different entities.<sup>6</sup> Comprehensive research on the extent of

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<sup>3</sup> R. Needham, *Sumba and the slave trade* (Oxford, 1983) 1.

<sup>4</sup> J. Hoskins, *The Play of Time: Kodi Perspectives on Calendars, History, and Exchange*, (Berkeley, 1997) 143, 162.

<sup>5</sup> H. Hagerdal, *Lords of the land, lords of the sea; Conflict and adaptation in early colonial Timor, 1600-1800*, (Leiden, 2012) 332.

<sup>6</sup> D. Geneviève and H. Hagerdal, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition on an Island of Indonesia* (Singapore, 2019) 159.

Bima's hegemony on Sumba has not been conducted. Researching the rebellion will definitively answer the extent of the subject-ruler relationship between Sumba and Bima. This will provide more context to the historiographical narrative, which states that Bima tended to exaggerate their claims.

The urgency of researching this topic regarding the VOC differs from Sumba and Bima. Historians have spent decades extensively researching the Company, and because of this, many subjects have been explored within the historiography. One topic was how the VOC formed their imperial web, which connected numerous territories to their empire. They flat-out colonized certain places, while others were only linked with the VOC through contractual agreements. The subject-ruler relation between Sumba and Bima provides a unique way for the VOC to try interjecting itself in a new area. As Bima claimed Sumba, Bima already formed a contractual agreement with the VOC, which meant the agreement should also be connected with Sumba. The rebellion will showcase how the VOC rationalized its position over Sumba, an island they knew little about but felt somewhat connected to.

## 2. Terminology

Before all the research questions can be answered, some terminology has to be explained, especially regarding the use of the word 'subject.' In historical writing, every word holds meaning, shaping the story as accurately as possible. Historians are tasked with creating a precise retelling of the past and an objective analysis of said past. The choice of words becomes crucial; this has been discussed in every historical discipline.

The first version of the research question was, 'What was the extent of power that Bima had over their vassal Sumba?' The research question was revised after reading historical debates about the word vassal. The medievalists had a decades-old discussion about the suzerain-vassal relationship, with insights that would help create an objective thesis. Susan Reynolds, a well-respected expert in medieval studies, discussed how we use language in history. In her book *Fiefs and Vassals*, she explained that historians should be careful with terms like 'vassalage.'<sup>7</sup> Reynolds stated that just calling someone a 'vassal' oversimplifies things. A vassal was more than just a servant of a lord. The same person had different relations with other parties; vassals were part of the local community and subject to the king, to name a few.<sup>8</sup> Using the label 'vassalage,' we might miss out on all these different layers of history.

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<sup>7</sup> S. D. Reynolds, *Fiefs and vassals*, (Oxford, 1994) 31.

<sup>8</sup> Reynolds, *Fiefs and vassals*, 46.

According to Reynolds, using these labels prevents historians from correctly analyzing the past. Vassals had to adhere to rules depending on where and when they lived. It's crucial to note that using the term 'vassal' in the same context as the Carolingers did in the eleventh century, and applying it to seventeenth-century Sumba, can potentially lead to a misrepresentation of the sources.

Instead, she provided two solutions to replacing the word vassal, the first being neutral words. By changing the terminology to subject ruler instead of vassal and suzerain, one can analyze the relationship without considering the numerous implications that the word vassal brings. A subject can be presented in various ways, with the primary requirement being that the subject must be under the authority of a ruler.<sup>9</sup> There is not necessarily a need for an oath, ritual, or even tribute as was the case with vassals. The relationship can display itself in forms beyond the discussed vassal terminology.

However, there is a place and a time to use exact words, such as vassal. This leads to Reynolds' second suggestion: use the words described in the sources. Does the source state that there is a vassal in question, then it is fair to use the word. That said, the use of the word should still be explained, as shown before, vassal can mean a different thing depending on the period and place. This is the case for the word vassal and all specific terminology.

Each historical relationship between subjects and rulers can be analyzed and appropriately represented using one of the proposed methods. Instead of equating it to vassalage, the focus can be on the meaning of the relationship. What did it truly mean to be subject to a certain ruler, how much freedom was given, or how much control did the ruler have? Understanding the social distance of each separate relationship should be the focus instead of placing it in a box with other similar cases.<sup>10</sup> Afterward, a comparative analysis can always be done, however, the framework must be established first.

While the medievalists had discussed this concept for decades, the same has yet to happen in the colonial history department. The word vassal has been used quite loosely in numerous works, including works that are essential for this thesis. Heather Sutherland stated that the Bugis 'incorporated vassals lost their own hereditary territory on conquest.'<sup>11</sup> She used the term 'vassal' because Barbara Sillars Harvey employed it in her work, which Sutherland referenced. Harvey described a scenario where a defeated ruler would be declared

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<sup>9</sup> Reynolds, *Fiefs and vassals*, 47.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, 34.

<sup>11</sup> H. Sutherland, *Seaways and Gatekeepers: Trade and State in the Eastern Archipelagos of Southeast Asia, c.1600–c.1906* (Singapore, 2021) 154.



a vassal (*palili*) by the victor and granted use of the land they previously controlled.<sup>12</sup> However, equating ‘palili’ with ‘vassal’ may be misleading as they were not necessarily equivalent. Harvey's explanation does not mention an oath or a formalized rite, nor does it clarify the specific role of the ruler in relation to the vassal. If ‘palili’ were to be interpreted as ‘vassal,’ it raises questions about what type of vassalage is being referred to.

Ironically enough, seventeenth-century Sumba would, according to the sources, fit the term ‘vassal.’ In these sources, there are mentions of Sumbanese swearing loyalty and paying tribute to the Sultanate of Bima.<sup>13</sup> While ‘vassalage’ might seem like the correct term, there will always be something that does not fit the terminology. An example is that the overlord should protect a vassal-overlord relationship. There is no evidence that Bima provided this to Sumba. This meant that the word vassal would not fit Sumba, as vassals received privileges from their overlords. Using the wrong terminology without clear evidence risks distorting the story with ideas from a different time.

Instead of forcing terms like ‘vassal,’ which might not fit, opting for words like ‘subject’ is more objective.<sup>14</sup> Words like ruler and subject or inferior and superior provide a nuanced analysis of power dynamics and social relationships without misrepresenting the sources. The sources stated that Sumba was an *onderdaan* of Bima, which fits with the proposed term of a subject. The objective should be to analyze these relationships on a case-by-case basis instead of having them fit into one overarching terminological concept.<sup>15</sup> Afterward, these cases can be compared, showcasing the similarities and differences while maintaining their unique elements.

### 3. Literature

It is crucial to delve into the existing historiography of Sumba, Bima, and the VOC, highlighting the significant gap in the present historical discussions. This lacuna underscores the urgency and importance of researching this topic, as it not only reveals what has not been explored but also how the research can enrich the established historiography.

As Sumba is where the event occurred, it is only logical to discuss it first. Regarding seventeenth-century Sumba, a dedicated historical work has yet to be written that solely focuses on the island in that period. This makes sense as only one event in the sources was

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<sup>12</sup> B. S. Harvey, *Tradition, Islam, and rebellion : South Sulawesi, 1950-1965* (Michigan, 1974) 22.

<sup>13</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 184, Arrival in Sumba, 22-07-1677.

<sup>14</sup> Reynolds, *Fiefs and vassals*, 31.

<sup>15</sup> B. Mischke, ‘C. Gantner / W. Pohl (Eds.), ‘After Charlemagne. Carolingian Italy and its Rulers’, *Historische Zeitschrift*, (Cambridge, 2020) 315, 97.

written down in detail, which is the rebellion in the late seventeenth century. Despite this lack of dedicated work to seventeenth-century Sumba, historians and other academics did discuss the island in their works.

These leading historians who specialized in the Lesser Sunda Islands primarily talked about Sumba in relation to other islands in the area. This became clear when the relationship between Bima and Sumba was discussed. It is a consensus among historians that Bima loosely claimed Sumba. This statement's basis is built upon Bima's claims regarding other islands. Hans Hägerdal, one of these historians, explained the complex relationship numerous times, stating how Sumba was perceived as a somewhat unclaimed territory with loose ties to Bima.<sup>16</sup> He further established it by asserting that Bima had vague claims over Sumba.<sup>17</sup> One thing that is missing from these statements is a comprehensive explanation. This is understandable, as it was never the goal of Hägerdal to research this topic in detail. However, it shows a lacuna in the existing historiography.

Analyzing the rebellion in the late seventeenth century would provide more context in that regard. This is also the case for other parts of the historiography; one statement about Sumba is that the political landscape could be considered fragmented. This statement has been proven when considering eighteenth and nineteenth-century Sumba. An article written in 1855, 'Beschrijving van het eiland Soemba of Sandelhout eiland,' established that Sumba consisted of numerous villages with their chiefs.<sup>18</sup> This fragmented nature was also further researched by anthropologists such as Hopkins, who mentioned that multiple raids were conducted among the different villages in Sumba.<sup>19</sup> There are examples of these regional feuds from direct account in the late eighteenth century.<sup>20</sup> It is then logical for historians such as Hägerdal to state that Sumba was more fragmented than their neighbors Savu.<sup>21</sup> However, as there are no studies done about the political landscape of Sumba during the seventeenth century, one can only speculate about the fragmented nature during that period. The rebellion can also add to the historiographical knowledge within this theme.

The historiography of the rebellion has to be mentioned. The event is not transcribed, which means it is only available in the archives. That said, historians did discuss the rebellion, referencing the works of Willem Phillipus Coolhaas. While Coolhaas gives an

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<sup>16</sup> Duggan and Hägerdal, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition*, 159.

<sup>17</sup> Hägerdal, *Lords of the land, lords of the sea*, 332.

<sup>18</sup> 'Beschrijving van het eiland Soemba of Sandelhout', *Tijdschrift Voor Nederlandsch Indië* 17 (The Hague, 1855) 277–312.

<sup>19</sup> Hoskins, 'The Play of Time: Kodi Perspectives', 162.

<sup>20</sup> J. de Roo Van Alderwerelt, 'Historische Aanteekeningen over Soemba, (Residentie Timor en Onderhoorigheden)' *Journal of Indonesian Linguistics and Anthropology* 48 (Batavia, 1906) 204–205.

<sup>21</sup> Duggan and Hägerdal, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition*, 177.

interesting insight into the rebellion, some short-sighted conclusions are made within this work. One of these is that the VOC refrained from participating during the rebellion.<sup>22</sup> Similar claims were made by Van Alderwerelt, who also mentioned that the VOC refrained from participating.<sup>23</sup> These findings from Coolhaas and Alderwerelt were referenced by more modern works, such as Sutherland, who concluded the same.<sup>24</sup> This thesis will showcase that the VOC had an active role in the attempted suppression of the rebellion. Setting this record straight will provide more context for the political happenings in this region. Giving a representative version of the event in the existing historiography.

The historiography of seventeenth-century Bima can best be explained in two different ways. During the early seventeenth century, Bima was under the oppression of Makassar domination, while during the late seventeenth century, they started to dominate different islands themselves. Noorduyt discussed the domination over Bima by the Makassars in great detail, giving a lot of context to the existing historiography.<sup>25</sup> Hägerdal discussed the claims that Bima made over other islands, showcasing the possible domination of the Bima, even though it was primarily exaggerated, as Hägerdal pointed out.<sup>26</sup>

Reports have been written about the later stages of Bimanese hegemony over Manggarai, mainly during the nineteenth century. This cannot be said about the historiography of the seventeenth century; there needs to be detailed information regarding the domination of Bima over their perceived subjects. The rebellion offers an opportunity to showcase how Bima conducted their domination in their claimed territory. This can then be compared to how the Makassars dominated Bima, which would showcase whether Bima was influenced by Makassar or not. The rebellion gives a detailed explanation, which includes rituals, punishments, and the rationale of the Bimanese population.

There has been a lot of dedicated work towards the history of the VOC, making the historiography quite vast. Numerous works have been written about how the VOC conducted their expansion in relation to Southeast Asian islands. The historiography focuses in this regard on multiple things, one subject being the political landscape. Depending on the situation on the island, the VOC had to decide how to approach certain entities. Hans

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<sup>22</sup> W. P. Coolhaas, *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie: 1675–1685* (The Hague, 1964–97) 60.

<sup>23</sup> Roo Van Alderwerelt, 'Historische Aanteekeningen over Soemba' 190-191.

<sup>24</sup> Hoskins, 'The Play of Time: Kodi Perspectives', 36.

<sup>25</sup> J. Noorduyt, 'Makassar and the islamization of Bima', *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 143 (Leiden, 1987).

<sup>26</sup> Duggan and Hägerdal, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition*, 159.

Hägerdal explained in detail the political landscape between Savu and the VOC during the seventeenth- and eighteenth centuries.<sup>27</sup> The same could be said about works on Makassar and other neighboring islands; the details about this political landscape will be discussed in the upcoming chapter.<sup>28</sup> What is important to understand is that depending on the situation, the VOC would have different strategies. The way VOC acted regarding Sumba is possibly unique in that they used Bima as an interlocutor.

Bima and the VOC had a contractual agreement, Carl Frederik Feddersen has researched the effects of this agreement extensively.<sup>29</sup> That said, it is unclear how this alliance affected the situation in Sumba. Because the VOC was linked with Bima, they might have seen an opportunity to approach Sumba, possibly for their ally Bima, for themselves, or both.

Understanding the rationale behind the actions of the VOC can provide new information in the historiography. Much research has been done on how the VOC approached different entities, which will be further discussed in the second chapter. However, I hypothesize that the VOC uniquely approached Sumba, compared to how they usually enlarged their political influence. The rebellion on Sumba would present a unique opportunity to understand this approach and compare it to others.

#### 4. Sources and Source Criticism

During the first half of the seventeenth century, the sources had no clear focus; Sumba was mentioned from time to time for different reasons. In July 1636, Sumba was mentioned regarding the treacherous currents that were present around the island.<sup>30</sup> By 1645, a letter mentioned enslaved people could be bought from the Portugese and Endenese on Sumba.<sup>31</sup> Then, in June 1656, another letter stated that the western villages in Sumba may be unfriendly towards the VOC, while the eastern ones were considered friendly.<sup>32</sup> This is what

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<sup>27</sup> Duggan and Hägerdal, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition*.

<sup>28</sup> Noorduyn, 'Makassar and the islamization of Bima'.

<sup>29</sup> C.F. Feddersen, Feddersen, C. F., *Principled Pragmatism: VOC Interaction with Makassar 1637-68, and the Nature of Company Diplomacy* (Agder, 2017).

<sup>30</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1119, ff. 713, First mention of Sumba, 06-07-1636.

<sup>31</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1181, ff. 593 r, Report to Governor-General on trade, slavery, and treaty breaches, 06-07-1636.

<sup>32</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1217, ff. 219 r, Report explaining the alliances on Sumba, 06-01-1656.

the archival sources about Sumba looked like until 1674; there was close to no cohesion because the VOC had little care and knowledge about the island.

This changed in 1674 when the VOC for the first time mentioned the ongoing rebellion on Sumba.<sup>33</sup> The Sultanate of Bima asked the VOC for assistance in this matter, and the VOC, being the ruler over Bima, felt obliged to help. Consequently, the VOC redirected considerable resources and attention towards Sumba, marking a pivotal moment in their engagement with the island. Substantial documentation about the rebellion has been written down, making it a practical case study. However, this event does have some problems for historical analysis.

The source material mentioned that the rebellion started several years ago; this was written in a letter from 1675.<sup>34</sup> That said, no precise date for the start of this rebellion has been mentioned. This leaves out context in the reasoning for both parties in the beginning stages of the uprising. Some motives are revealed, which will be discussed in chapter two.

Not only do the existing sources lack context about the start of the Sumbanese rebellion, but the same could be said about the end of the rebellion. The VOC was an active participant during the years 1675-1678. That said, the rebellion did not stop after 1678, but the VOC stopped getting involved, leading to a lack of information about what happened during the later stages of the event. There are some mentions regarding the developments after 1678, but these are scarce and lack a detailed description of the 1675-1678 period.

These are the problems with the event itself; however, the existing source material also has issues. A central criticism often leveled at VOC sources, shared by many historians, is that of Eurocentrism.<sup>35</sup> The VOC associates did not write their archival works with future historians in mind; they simply wrote what they perceived as significant. Consequently, the archival record is heavily skewed towards the viewpoint of the VOC, with minimal representation of the indigenous populace, especially concerning Sumba.

Beyond Eurocentrism, another challenge arises from what could be termed 'Bimacentrism.' The Sultanate of Bima was an ally of the VOC, which claimed overlordship on Sumba.<sup>36</sup> Because of this, archival sources often reflect Bima's perspective. This Bima-centric lens presents a skewed narrative about Sumba, silencing their agency. Having

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<sup>33</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1307, ff. 247 v, Sumba Rebellion Pacification report, 1675.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>35</sup> Schrikker e.a., *Nederlands kolonialisme van archief tot geschiedschrijving: Een gids voor onderzoekers*. (Leiden 2023) 36.

<sup>36</sup> Duggan and Hägerdal, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition*, 159.

not one but two dominant voices in the sources makes it even more challenging to find the agency of the Sumbanese within the sources.

The agenda-setting by Bima and the VOC, the fragmented archival works, and the presented selective memory make it challenging to create a narrative about Sumba. That said, this is not the first time historians have faced these challenges, after which dedicated strategies have been developed to give some agency back to the unheard. Reading against the grain is one of those strategies; the idea is to question the dominant narrative in the source material.<sup>37</sup> This can be done by noticing biases, omissions, or contradictions, which help you gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of marginalized groups or individuals whose voices may have been suppressed or overlooked in traditional historical accounts.

Besides that, Ann Laura Stoler's strategy will also be used, where one has to read along the archival grain.<sup>38</sup> This will help better understand the voices of the VOC and the Bima sultanate, giving a complete narrative of the events that will be discussed.

## 5. Methodology and Structure

The most significant contributor to this thesis's research of archival sources is the new technology introduced by the Huygens Institute called Globalise.<sup>39</sup> Their AI-powered technology managed to transcribe most of the available scanned 'received letters and documents' (*Overgekomen brieven en papieren*) from the National Dutch Archives, which consists of more than one hundred seventy thousand letters. The documents are divided among factories; thus, documents about Sumba can be found in the Timor category. Within this category, approximately two thousand letters are available, of which a small minority mentions Sumba.

Besides the transcriptions, Globalise allows for the search of text in the available transcriptions. This means that searching 'Sumba' would direct you to all the available folios that mention the word 'Sumba.' By searching Sumba in the different spelling forms used for the island, to name a few, Soemba, Somba, Sandelbos eiland, and Sandelbosch eiland, you will find all the results you are looking for. Beware that specific names are also used for different places; Somba could be the island Sumba or a different settlement on Gowa named Somba Opu.

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<sup>37</sup> Schrikker e.a., *Nederlands kolonialisme van archief tot geschiedschrijving* 138-143.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, 141.

<sup>39</sup> Huygens Institute - Globalise,- Huygens Institute & partners', *Globalise* (2024) <<https://globalise.huygens.knaw.nl/>>.

There are some problems with the technology, which will be resolved in a matter of time. One of them is that it is hard to determine in what year something is written, as it is not specified in the program. However, what is defined is the archive number. Using this number and looking it up on the National Archive website will provide you with the year the document was written.<sup>40</sup> Another problem is that the AI might badly transcribe the transcriptions. While there are apparent mistakes, it is safe to say that approximately eighty percent of the documents are often correctly transcribed. This should be enough to get a decent understanding of each document, even with the possible mistakes. That said, reading the sources as they are provided besides the transcribed document is always possible.

A different problem is that Globalise only transcribed the ‘received letters and documents’ (*Overgekomen brieven en papieren*), which contain an enormous amount of information. That said, it is only a small amount of the total available documents relating to the VOC. While Globalise does give a new way to find information about a topic quickly, there is still more information available in the archives, which is not touched by the program. As this thesis will focus on the documents provided by Globalise, it would mean that some context or even information will be missed. Although that is the case, the available letters still give a detailed explanation of the event in question, giving enough context to add a historiographical analysis.

One thing that has to be explained is why a rebellion has been chosen as an explanatory event and what methodologies are applied to make this event useful for answering the main research question. Rebellions are often a sign of a lack of control and would indicate a separation of subject and ruler. This separation, one could state, is not a good way to analyze the existence of a subject-ruler relation or to understand the extent of power a ruler had. The dynamic changes greatly during a rebellion compared to a period where the subject is obedient to the ruler. While this is true, the messiness of rebellions often showcases sides of the subject-ruler dynamic, which normally are less present. One of these was fragmentation among the subjects; often, you will see that some people are loyal to the ruler while others rebel. This would be a clear indicator of a subject ruler's loyalty, which is not always visible in less turbulent times. The best way to analyze this would be to combine the rebellion event with the more mundane circumstances to have an overview of how the subjects acted during different periods. That said, the more mundane circumstances of the relationship between Sumba and Bima do not exist in the sources. For this reason, only the

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<sup>40</sup> ‘Nationaal Archief’, *Nationaal Archief* (2024) <<https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/>>.

rebellion will be used to answer the research question, which should be adequate as long as the right methodology is applied to the understanding of rebels and rebellions.

One crucial part of understanding a rebellion is that rebels were rational actors who acted in a way that seemed reasonable. Their actions were calculated; even if the calculations were fatally wrong, there was still some logic behind them. Early modern historians have not argued this point; however, experts in other periods have. David Richards argued that a rational actor is visible even behind the most atrocious acts.<sup>41</sup> An example was how rebels in Sierre Leone would amputate the hands of women to deter voting or to punish people for the existing inequality.<sup>42</sup> While a layperson would describe the actions as crazy or insane, which is an understandable reaction. However, it removes agency for any analysis. Assuming that the actions were calculated makes it possible to find a meaningful explanation for specific situations.

The Sumbanese were constantly in danger from every direction. Numerous powerful entities performed raids on Sumba. The Sumbanese still decided to rebel against arguably the one of the more powerful empires, Bima. Bima was allied with the VOC, making them far superior in strength to Sumba. Going against this power difference would require proper planning on the side of Sumba and some kind of advantage they can gain over their ruler.

As far as I know, using a rebellion to understand the extent to which a ruler controlled a subject has not been done. However, there are frameworks created to understand why rebellions occurred. Understanding why the rebellions occurred will directly provide evidence about the extent to which the ruler controlled the subject these frameworks help us understand the rationale behind the actions of rebels.<sup>43</sup> Sartono Kartodirdjo's framework is one of these, which works in the following way: to understand rebellions, you must analyze five different aspects: the beliefs of the rebels, the leadership, the mobilization system, the organization system, and the rationale behind the action. Hans Hägerdal has also used this method in his article about rebellions in Timor.<sup>44</sup>

A different framework was provided in 1987 by William Brustein and Margaret Levi, which focused on the three following factors.<sup>45</sup> The context of the rebellion that triggered the situation could be, for example, taxation, pruning, or attacks. Afterward, the capacity for

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<sup>41</sup> K. Fogelberg and A. Thalmann, 'Amputation as a Strategy of Terror in Sierra Leone', *High Plains Applied Anthropologist* 24 (2004) 167.

<sup>42</sup> K. Mitton, *Rebels in a rotten state: Understanding atrocity in the Sierra Leone Civil war* (Oxford 2015) 9.

<sup>43</sup> S. Kartodirdjo, *Modern Indonesia; Tradition and transformation*. (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press. 1991) 1–99.

<sup>44</sup> H. Hägerdal, 'Rebellions or factionalism? Timorese forms of resistance in an early colonial context, 1650-1769', *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 163 (Leiden, 2008) 1–33.

<sup>45</sup> W. Brustein and M. Levi, 'The geography of rebellion', *Theory And Society* 16 (Dordrecht, 1987) 467–495.



collective action has to be analyzed, focussing on the rebels' institutions, mode of production, and ideological homogeneity. Finally, the opportunity and resources for collective action have to be analyzed. After applying this framework to the rebellious forces, one can look at the opportunities the rebels had. Mentioned opportunities relate to the instability of the ruling class, for example, successions or internal struggles. Other opportunities can manifest in the geography of the rebels, for example, being a difficult-to-reach mountainous group.

My hypothesis is that the framework of William Brustein and Margaret Levi will be more helpful in this situation as Sumba relied heavily on their geography. Geography is one of the leading factors in their framework, while it is absent in the Kartodirdjo framework. That being said, all the frameworks mentioned will be used to better understand the rebellion in question.

## 6. Structure

This research will consist of two chapters, the first chapter being about the three entities. The objective being to explain and add to the historiography of Sumba, Bima, and the VOC. For Sumba, the focus will be on the following elements: geography, political landscape, and trade. The explanation of Bima will primarily focus on the political landscape before the happenings of the rebellion in Sumba. The same will be done for the VOC, focusing on the political landscape in the vicinity of Sumba, and what the role was of the Company in the area during the seventeenth century.

The objective of this chapter is to help the reader get context for the rebellion; as Sumba had close to no historiographical representation, it deserves a comprehensive analysis. As Bima and the VOC were essential entities in this event, their position in the political landscape also deserves commentary. Explaining the political landscape, the entities had to deal with will help contextualize the rebellion.

The second chapter will give a detailed, chronological analysis of the rebellion that happened in Sumba. This chapter will focus on providing Sumba historiographical representation by retelling the event in four parts. After the retelling of each part, an analysis will be used to answer the research questions. This means establishing whether Sumba was truly a subject of Bima. Understanding the obstacles that Bima had to face relating to the suppression of the rebellion. Finally, an analysis of the ways Bima levied their power over Sumba. Besides trying to answer the research question the analysis will also showcase how the information adds to the existing historiography. Finding out these elements should

provide enough context to answer the main research question in the conclusion, which is, to what extent did Bima rule over Sumba? This will signify what this meant to the political landscape of the three entities involved.

# The Three Entities

## 1. Sumba

### 1.1. Geography

This chapter will utilize both sources and literature in order to explain different elements of Sumba's seventeenth-century history. As there is a limited amount of mention about the seventeenth century Sumba in the literature, the sources will be leading. That said, the literature is still important as the sources can display that there is a continuation in the historiography. However, the first topic discussed in this chapter is the geographical landscape of Sumba, as this was one of the defining factors that influenced large parts of its history, especially in the seventeenth century.

Water emerges as a recurring theme when examining the geography of seventeenth-century colonial history. Seas, rivers, and straits were vital for daily navigation between various locations. European powers capitalized on this geography to explore, dominate, and trade with diverse entities. While these powers greatly benefited from waterways, they could also pose obstacles, as seen with the waters north of Sumba. The surrounding waters of Sumba continued to play a significant role, not merely as trade routes or instruments of dominance, but rather as barriers to be navigated for both the locals and outsiders. Understanding the waters surrounding Sumba, especially in the north of Sumba, will add a different lens to the historiography of geographical Southeast Asian history.

Three significant waters are north of Sumba: the Sumba Strait, Sape Strait, and the Savu Sea. The Sumba Strait is a treacherous strait that challenges sailing towards Sumba. One of the main reasons why this strait was seen as treacherous was its currents. Climatologists studied the waters surrounding Sumba extensively, including the workings of the currents.<sup>46</sup> The current on the upper part of the strait goes eastwards from March till November; then it switches to the northwest in the three remaining months. That said, the middle part of the strait does not follow the same trend; during March and April, the currents go towards the north or northwest, making the upper current and the middle current perpendicular. In the other months, it goes relatively parallel, strengthening the currents. The lower current of the strait goes in the opposite direction towards the west.

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<sup>46</sup> A. Bayhaqi e.a., 'The Variability of Indonesian Throughflow in Sumba Strait and Its Linkage to the Climate Events', *American Journal Of Applied Sciences* 16 (Jakarta, 2019) 125.

The Sape Strait, located between the islands of Komodo and Sumbawa, could also be considered treacherous; sadly, no similar studies have been done to map out how the currents move. However, climatologists do state that strong tidal currents represent the Sape Strait.<sup>47</sup> These are effects of the moon phases; a full moon gives an intensely high tide, which amplifies the currents. That said, the coastal currents of the Sape Strait are also strong, especially when there are smaller islands in the way.<sup>48</sup> Climatologists also talked about a different phenomenon that signifies the dangers of the Sape Strait: internal and internal solitary waves.<sup>49</sup> Seawater consists of two waves, one noticeable as it appears on the upper water. However, second waves also appear underwater, called internal waves. The Strong currents and rough topography of the Sape Strait create strong internal waves. These travel upwards towards the Flores Sea, creating internal solitary waves.<sup>50</sup> These waves can create unexpected currents, which act differently from those in the upper waters. A situation can occur where a ship travels with the upper current to the south, but an unexpected internal wave can sweep the ship away if the boat is low enough.

Some letters showcase the troubles of the VOC with these currents; in 1636, it mentioned, 'Because of the encountered great calm and contrary currents, we only arrived around the 29th at Sumba.'<sup>51</sup> Another example is: 'The continuous calm and eastern currents have delayed and misled us so much that we only arrived here on the evening of the 19th.'<sup>52</sup> Portraying the delay of ships because of these natural phenomena. While currents affect the ship's maneuverability, the combination of currents and winds makes it dangerous.

While water as an obstacle is not often discussed in historiography, the same cannot be said about monsoons. The VOC and other entities planned their travels so that they could utilize the monsoons or avoid them if necessary. The shipping schedules in South Sulawesi and the Flores Sea were heavily influenced by monsoons, vessels from Batavia typically arrived in March and departed in April.<sup>53</sup> During the other months, certain voyages could best

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<sup>47</sup> U. Kraemer, 'The Sape Strait – Brockmann Consult'

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>49</sup> I. W. G. A. Karang, Chonnaniyah en T. Osawa, 'Internal solitary wave observations in the Flores Sea using the Himawari-8 geostationary satellite', *International Journal Of Remote Sensing* 41 (Denpasar, 2019) 5726.

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>51</sup> 'Groote stilte en contrarie stromen niet voor den 29en d. o omtrent sumba gecomen sijnde', NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1119, ff. 713, First mention of Sumba, 06-07-1636.

<sup>52</sup> 'De Continuele stilte, en oosteluke stroomen hebben ons in dier voegen geretardeert en misleijt dat maar eerst den 19:en deses savonts hier aanlande' NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 12, Letter explaining the delay, 27-04-1677.

<sup>53</sup> G. Von Kispal-Van Deijk, 'Ubiquitous but Elusive: The Chinese of Makassar in VOC Times', *Journal Of Asian History* 47 (Munich, 2013) 95.

be avoided, this was also the case with Sumba or even more so, as both monsoons could best be avoided.

The sources mention the winds or monsoons several times in the sources. That is why VOC or Bima had to wait months before they could venture toward Sumba, which affected how they could control the island. One reason why Sumba's climate is significantly affected is its exposure to two distinct monsoons: the Asian monsoon and the Australian monsoon. Monsoons represent shifts in wind patterns that bring about alternating dry and rainy seasons.<sup>54</sup> These shifts occur due to temperature differentials between the land and water as the seasons transition. The Asian monsoon is created by winds directed toward the southeast; these winds carry warm and moist air, which cools down and makes the monsoon, changing the direction of the wind to the northwest. This happens from December till March, making the rainy season. The Australian monsoon is created by winds directed toward the northwest; these winds carry warm and dry air, which cools down and makes the monsoon, changing the direction of the wind to the southeast. This happens from June till September, making the dry season.<sup>55</sup>

The effects of these monsoons are also mentioned in the sources; for example, the Sultan of Bima advised the VOC in 1675 the following: 'He (Sultan of Bima) informed us that it was not possible to undertake the journey at this time of the year but that it should be done in the last months of the western monsoon, in March or April.'<sup>56</sup> This showcases how monsoons can delay missions for quite a long time, even when the distance between the two islands is relatively small. In 1687, similar advice was given: 'And for some time there, the reason was that the journey to Sumba and the coast of Ende could not be undertaken, also the monsoon had progressed too far to reach the former place.'<sup>57</sup>

All these factors combined made it safe to travel to Sumba only during specific periods of the year. The sources also indicated this, where the Bima delegates mentioned that traveling to Sumba at the end of April was optimal. The currents during the end of April and the beginning of May are parallel.<sup>58</sup> The dry monsoon starts in June, which means that April

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<sup>54</sup> R.Y. Setiawan and A. Habibi, 'SST cooling in the Indonesian seas', *Ilmu Kelautan* 15 (Semarang, 2010) 42.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>56</sup> 'Die ons daar op diende dat in dese tijt des Jaars de reijs niet te winnen waare maar in het laaste van de wester Monson, in de maande maart off april' NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1311, ff. 237, Sultan of Bima planning the voyage, 06-08-1677.

<sup>57</sup> 'En nog een lange wijl daar naar oorsaak is geweest dat de Reijse naar sumba en de cust van Ende niet heeft kunnen ondernomen werden, ook was 't mousson te verre verlopen om de eerst genoemde plaats aan te doen', NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1452, ff. 374, Explaining the dangers of the Sumba Strait, 06-11-1687.

<sup>58</sup> Bayhaqi, 'The Variability of Indonesian Throughflow', 125.

and May would be a transition phase, making the winds easier to sail in.<sup>59</sup> The straits are also relatively narrow and filled with reefs, which could damage the larger ships of the VOC; the troubles with the reefs were also mentioned: ‘...Since it is somewhat too narrow for our vessels and the reefs somewhat too dangerous’.<sup>60</sup> The maximum depth of the Sape Strait is, for example, no more than two hundred meters.<sup>61</sup>

It is established that the waters surrounding Sumba can be treacherous; it is also essential to understand the island itself. An early seventeenth-century source indicated that there were few places they could safely anchor, ‘...Namely, that there is nowhere outside anchorage, except in some rivers, of which Pandowawi, as reported, is the largest and deepest.’<sup>62</sup> This is because Sumba is a mountainous island. Later, they found better places to anchor, especially in the southern parts of the island. That said, during the seventeenth century, they still needed to gain that knowledge, making Sumba relatively less approachable. To travel from the Sultanate of Bima towards Sumba, they had to pass through varying currents, accompanied by potential monsoons and little places that could be used as anchorage. This was an obstacle for the Bimanese governing body, as they could only send large armies toward Sumba in April or May. This also made it possible for the Sumbanese populace to predict when the Bimanese would arrive.

Exploring the geographical challenges around Sumba offers a valuable perspective on Southeast Asian history. It helps us understand how various regions had unique experiences amidst maritime landscape. Focusing on local geographical factors emphasizes how these conditions shaped historical events and outcomes.

## 1.2. Internal Politics

The seventeenth-century sources and literature related to the internal political situation of Sumba are relatively scarce. The sources make it clear that the VOC did not know a lot about Sumba, this is displayed whenever they talk about the internal structure of the island. There is contradictory information in these sources as, for example, the number of villages in Sumba,

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<sup>59</sup> Setiawan and Habibi, ‘SST cooling in the Indonesian seas’, 42.

<sup>60</sup> ‘Daar het voor onse boodems wat te engh, en om de rutsen wat te gevaarlijck is, en sij hun vaartuijgen door gaans op de wal diese niet als int oversteeken verlaaten haalen’ NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 172, Letter from Adriaan van Daalen about the departure, 21-04-1677.

<sup>61</sup> U. Kraemer, ‘The Sape Strait – Brockmann Consult’

<[<sup>62</sup> ‘Dat mede ten deele zoo hebbe bevonden, dat'er nergens buijten om ancker gront is, als in eenige revieren, van welcke gemelde Pandowawi de grootste en diepste zijnde.’ NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1320, ff. 245 r, Description Sumba, 06-07-1676.](https://www.brockmann-consult.de/the-sape-strait/#:~:text=In%20addition%2C%20Sape%20Strait%20is,to%20south%20at%20low%20tide.>.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

one letter states there were sixty, while another said ninety.<sup>63</sup> This impreciseness is further shown when they talk about the population, stating that there are two thousand able-bodied men, which should be an understatement with sixty to ninety villages.<sup>64</sup> While the information is not precise, it does indicate that there is a fragmented society in Sumba, this will be especially clear when contextual information is added from the existing literature.

In the literature, Sumba is portrayed as a fragmented island with numerous villages. These were small communities, each ruled by its chief.<sup>65</sup> There are no specific details about how these communities operated during the seventeenth century, but there is some information about them from the early nineteenth century. The most important communities were the high nobles, after which the lower communities were the low nobles and, finally, the commoners.<sup>66</sup> These communities lived alongside each other, but there was still a clear hierarchical distinction. These clans had their leaders, and the hierarchy was based on strength.

This fragmentation led to an unstable society. At the same time, there is no proof of any internal warfare in the seventeenth century, and it is unthinkable that it would not happen in such a society. For example, these occurred in the late nineteenth century, when villages would murder, feud, and raid each other consistently.<sup>67</sup> In the late eighteenth century, a Dutch official named Beynon also mentioned that Sumba was under constant regional warfare.<sup>68</sup> The chiefs had little authority, and because of that, there was constant warfare; members of villages would kill members of other villages, after which the relatives of the victims would take revenge. This way, a perpetual cycle of warfare is created. The villages in the lowlands even had special *headhunting* raids, highly ritualized assaults where they offered the heads of their enemy to skull tree.<sup>69</sup> There was never a ruler who could bring the disintegrated society together; the chiefs would always fight each other for the available resources in Sumba.<sup>70</sup>

Their fragmented society made the island an easy target for raiders.<sup>71</sup> Structured entities that could amass a functioning army could often dominate the island. The incohesive structure of the Sumbanese society, with the additional constant regional warfare, made the

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<sup>63</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1320, ff. 245 r, Description Sumba, 06-07-1676.

<sup>64</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1319, ff. 285, Report about Sumba, 24-11-1675.

<sup>65</sup> 'Beschrijving van het eiland Soemba of Sandelhout', 281.

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem, 280.

<sup>67</sup> Hoskins, 'The Play of Time: Kodi Perspectives', 162.

<sup>68</sup> Roo Van Alderwerelt, 'Historische Aanteekeningen over Soemba', 204-205.

<sup>69</sup> J. Hoskins, 'On losing and getting a head: warfare, exchange, and alliance in a changing Sumba, 1888-1988', *American Ethnologist* 16 (Arlington, 1989) 421 and 426.

<sup>70</sup> J. A. C. Vel, 'Tribal Battle in a Remote Island: Crisis and Violence in Sumba (Eastern Indonesia)', *Indonesia* 72 (New York, 2001) 148.

<sup>71</sup> Hägerdal, *Lords of the land*, 177.

island an easy target for raiders. This phenomenon was well documented during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as mentioned before when the Dutch, Makaresse, and Endenese raided the island consistently.<sup>72</sup>

Another reason the Sumbanese were often raided by their neighboring country was their religious affinity. A large part of Sumba was neither Christian nor Islamic.<sup>73</sup> Other neighboring countries were usually Christian or Islamic; for example, Flores was Christian, while Bima was Islamic. Enslaving one's own was prohibited by both religions, making Sumba an accessible island for slavers to conduct raids.

The final part of internal politics that has to be discussed is the presence of the Portuguese. While Bima and the VOC conducted their business on Sumba in the Western part of Sumba, In the eastern part of Sumba, the Portuguese started establishing themselves; they were recognized as sovereigns in that part in 1726 by the VOC.<sup>74</sup>

### 1.3. Resources and Slavery

Another factor that affected Sumba's political status was the natural resources it offered. The amount of valuable resources could provide a reason for the ruler to suppress a rebellion. It could also give the subjects a reason to rebel, as owning the means to these resources could lead to self-regulation.<sup>75</sup> Knowledge about the resources that were available in Sumba during the seventeenth century was relatively scarce; the VOC tried to organize numerous expeditions to discover the resources in Sumba.<sup>76</sup>

The main commodity that could be retrieved from Sumba during the seventeenth century was sandalwood, known for its fragrance. Sandalwood was an essential product for the VOC's trading network. Iron was bought in Japan; these were transformed to *parangs* in Solor, which were exported toward Timor to buy sandalwood, brought to Batavia, and sold to the Chinese for silk, used to buy silver in Japan.<sup>77</sup> The tree from which this wood is derived was relatively rare in inland Asia, but plenty was on the islands of Timor and Sumba. A letter stated that the sandalwood on Sumba was of better quality than Timor's.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Needham, *Sumba and the slave trade*, 20.

<sup>73</sup> Duggan and Hägerdal, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition*, 177.

<sup>74</sup> Hoskins, 'The Play of Time: Kodi Perspectives', 38.

<sup>75</sup> Brustein and Levi, 'The geography of rebellion', 470.

<sup>76</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1319, ff. 204, Order to map out Sumba, 07-08-1675.

<sup>77</sup> A. G. De Roever, *De jacht op sandelhout : de VOC en de tweedeling van Timor in de zeventiende eeuw* (Zutphen, 2002) 22.

<sup>78</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1394, ff. 268, Letter indicating the quality of the sandalwood, 29-07-1682.



That said, the VOC still focused on the sandalwood provided by Timor. There were some logistical reasons for this. Most of the sandalwood in Sumba grew high in the mountains, making gathering and transporting it challenging.<sup>79</sup> Besides that, the Bimanese official saw the sandalwood as their property; they did not want to provide it to the VOC for free. This presents a reason for the Bimanese to maintain their rule over Sumba, as the sandalwood provided a valuable commodity for the Bimanese.

In the historiography, other valuable commodities available in the seventeenth century, besides sandalwood, are relatively unknown. The anthropologist Janet Hoskins mentioned that there were sporadic trades for sandalwood during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>80</sup> However, other commodities were also mentioned in the sources. Two different commodities that were collected on Sumba were shell horns and cinnamon. Shell horns were a valuable commodity used as a valuta throughout numerous Asian places. This meant that the item could be used to buy other valuables in Asia; more importantly, shell horns were also used to purchase enslaved people in West Africa.<sup>81</sup> This showcased the item's importance, but the number of shells available from Sumba was most likely insignificant as it was not an often recurring commodity in the sources.<sup>82</sup>

There was an abundance of cinnamon on Sumba. The spice was seen as a valuable commodity and was often sent back to the Dutch Republic. Sumba had an abundance of this plant, as mentioned in a letter, and they could easily acquire one hundred pikul (6000 kg) of cinnamon from the coasts of Sumba.<sup>83</sup> This plant was one of the spices the VOC tried to monopolize in this region. The Bimanese demanded a quarter of the VOC's income on the commodity. Again, this displays how Sumba was an economically valuable subject for the Bimanese.

Finally, the trade of enslaved people was bought regularly from Sumba. The VOC did obtain enslaved people directly from the area during the seventeenth century, as indicated in a letter from 1680, where the ship *Negombo* sailed towards Sumba to acquire enslaved people.<sup>84</sup> Besides that, there are not many indications of the slave trade that was conducted in Sumba. However, one can assume that it did happen, as slave raids were a big problem in

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<sup>79</sup> De Roever, *De jacht op sandelhout*, 327.

<sup>80</sup> Hoskins, 'The Play of Time: Kodi Perspectives', 29.

<sup>81</sup> R. Raben, 'European periphery at the heart of the ocean: The Maldives, 17th-18th centuries' in: J. Everaert and J. Parmentier eds., *International Conference on Shipping, Factories and Colonization* (Brussel, 24-26 november 1994) 47.

<sup>82</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1307, ff. 247 v, Sumba Rebellion Pacification report, 1675.

<sup>83</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1276, ff. 938 v, Letter indicating the potential resources on Sumba, 17-04-1666.

<sup>84</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1414, ff. 160 v, VOC discussing the purchase of enslaved people on Sumba, 10-06-1680.

Sumba through the eighteenth century. There was also an instance where a raid was conducted on Sumba in the seventeenth century by Endenese raids, signifying it happened at least once, but most likely more often.<sup>85</sup> The Makassarese, Buginese, and Mandarese were also raiding Sumbawa and Flores, Sumba being nearby, most likely suffered the same faith.<sup>86</sup> During the eighteenth century, numerous entities continuously raided Sumba, including the previously mentioned Makaresse. By 1775, they were arriving year in and year out with more than 30 ships taking away many enslaved people.<sup>87</sup> The raiders in the early nineteenth century, especially the Endenese, would amplify the raids even more and had a monopoly on Sumba.<sup>88</sup>

These were the available commodities in Sumba; however, what were the Sumbanese interested in from the outsider? This is not an easy task to unravel, as there were almost no mentions of any trade with the Sumbanese in the seventeenth century. Because of the ongoing rebellion, the Bimanese even actively boycotted any trade with Sumba; this happened with the VOC and the Portuguese.<sup>89</sup> However, there was one mention where, most likely the Bimanese, stated that the Sumbanese were interested in cloth, red and black cloth, to be specific.<sup>90</sup>

## 2. Bima

The background information on Sumba focuses on geography, natural resources, and internal politics. For Bima, the focus will primarily be on the political landscape and the claims it made regarding its perceived subjects. Once the events relating to Sumba are discussed, this will help the reader better understand why Bima acted in a certain way.

Bima was a Sultanate located in Sumbawa, which lies northwest of Sumba. This island was divided into five other kingdoms: Pekat, Sanggar, Dompu, Tambora, and Bima. During the seventeenth century, Bima's hegemony extended only over a small part of Sumbawa. Nevertheless, the Bimanese Sultanate asserted multiple claims regarding their sovereignty over other islands. This is best seen in the Bimanese chronicles from the fifteenth century; Bima claimed Sumba, Savu, Manggarai, Solor, Rote, Raijua, and the entirety of

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<sup>85</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1180, ff. 583 v, VOC discussing the purchase of enslaved people on Sumba, 02-10-1645

<sup>86</sup> Needham, *Sumba and the slave trade*, 18.

<sup>87</sup> Roo Van Alderwerelt, 'Historische Aanteekeningen over Soemba' 185–316.

<sup>88</sup> Needham, *Sumba and the slave trade*, 21.

<sup>89</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1335, ff. 33, Different letter, merchant blocked from trading in Sumba, 21-04-1678

<sup>90</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 59, Report about potential trade with Sumba, 10-03-1677.

Sumbawa.<sup>91</sup> Most of these claims are probably fabricated; for the Solor Islands and Savu, there is no proof of any Bimanese influence. If the Bimanese ruled over the island, they had no lasting impact. Bima did not govern Rote and Raijua; no chronicle showcases proof besides the Bimanese one.<sup>92</sup> This is a different story for Sumba and Manggarai, where there is quite some evidence of Bimanese rule over the islands. The relationship between Bima and the claimed territories was that of an exploitative subject-ruler relationship. Before the details of the subject-ruler relation will be explained, it is important to understand what influenced Bima.

Before Bima had the chance to establish themselves as ruler, it was under the authority of Makassar. Makassar was located in modern-day Sulawesi, and during the early seventeenth century, it started to become one of the more powerful entities in the region. From 1605 until 1611, they took over the entirety of Sulawesi.<sup>93</sup> This process was done through arms, where they forcefully Islamized the region. Within these six years, they conquered the entire island of Sulawesi; however, their imperial tendencies did not stop there. Makassar continued to take over the non-Muslim nations surrounding Sulawesi; this is because, in Islam, non-Muslim nations were considered war territory.<sup>94</sup> Because of this, they decided to take over the entirety of Sumbawa, including Bima. Every kingdom on the island was eventually forced into Islam.

This meant that the political landscape of Bima changed, as it now became the subject of Makassar. Bima became an Islamic state and was exploited by Makassar, that is because Bima had the most unfavorable form of relationship that Makassar enforced on their subjects. Makassar had four different types of relationships with their subjects. Brother relationships were that of equals, where the subject had closely the same autonomy as the overlords of Makassar. This was followed by the younger brother-to-brother relationship, where the younger brother had to adhere to the will of the older one. Here, the subject's autonomy was still relatively large, but not as much as the previous relationship.<sup>95</sup> The third is the mother-child relationship, where the subject entirely controls the overlord. The subject has little autonomy. However, they are not necessarily abused. This was the case with the final relationship of slave and master. Bima was part of this relationship, where the slaves had to

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<sup>91</sup> Duggan and Hägerdal, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition*, 129.

<sup>92</sup> Duggan and Hägerdal, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition*, 129.

<sup>93</sup> Noorduyn, 'Makassar and the islamization of Bima', 316.

<sup>94</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>95</sup> Ibidem, 317.

pay tribute to their master. This relationship meant a lot of exploitation by the overlord towards their subjects.<sup>96</sup>

This relationship type will also be visible in the Sumba Bima relation, which will be further explained in the next chapter. That said, besides Sumba, Bima also had a subject-ruler relationship with Manggarai, which was also exploitative. During the nineteenth century, Bima forced their subjects to pay annual tributes. The local chiefs in Manggarai were forced to offer a certain amount of enslaved people to Bima.<sup>97</sup> Even though this happened during the nineteenth century, the amount of enslaved people Manggarai had to contribute was downsized compared to what it used to be.<sup>98</sup> While there is proof of an exploitative relation enforced by the Bimanese in the nineteenth century. The same cannot be said about the seventeenth century; while there is speculation, no documents from the source have been provided.

Another lacuna relating to Makassar's influence on Bima is Islamization; it is unclear whether Bima had the same goal of Islamization, at least for the seventeenth century, as there is proof of Bimanese Islamization during the nineteenth. Bima did actively try to Islamize Manggarai; once the Bimanese conquered parts of Manggarai, they attempted to convert the population; after part of the population refused to convert, the Bimanese chased them away.<sup>99</sup> The sources do not present clear-cut examples of the Islamization of Sumba during the seventeenth century. This could mean numerous things; it might be a case of the VOC simply not caring or understanding the Islamization that could have occurred. Besides that, it is possible that the Bimanese did not try to Islamize Sumba at that point, as their primary goal was to suppress the rebellion during the event of the rebellion.

While the influence of Makassar on Bima was quite prevalent, it is essential to understand that the VOC influenced Bima in their own way. The VOC came in contact with Bima in the middle of the seventeenth century. During this period, Bima was under the suppression of Makassar; the VOC allied with Bima and actively removed the Makassar and Bugis from the area. After removing the invaders, the VOC tried to establish a contractual agreement with Bima.

The agreement established the VOC's dominance over Bima, ensuring that Makassar would no longer interfere in the region. This allowed the VOC to control Bima's political and

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<sup>96</sup> Noorduyn, 'Makassar and the islamization of Bima', 317.

<sup>97</sup> J.P. Freijss, 'Reizen naar Mangarai en Lombok in 1854—1856', *Tijdschrift Voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 9 (Leiden, 1860) 451.

<sup>98</sup> Ibidem, 474

<sup>99</sup> H.B. Stapel, 'Het Manggëraische volk', *Tijdschrift Voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 56 (Leiden, 1914) 153.

economic affairs without competition or obstruction from Makassar, solidifying its influence and expanding its territorial control. The clear and absolute terms of the agreement stated that Bima was not allowed to trade with other European parties, giving the VOC control over their commodities.<sup>100</sup>

With this contract, the VOC could access the commodities Bima had to offer. Sappanwood is one of these commodities, and this wood could be used for the repair or creation of ships.<sup>101</sup> Sappanwood could also be turned into red dye, which was highly sought after in Europe. Bima also offered large amounts of cinnamon, especially during the late seventeenth century. The Sultan of Bima saw cinnamon as a weed that had to be removed from his sultanate. The VOC was more than willing to remove the valuable plant from his domain; however, the Sultan wanted a quarter of the yield, which he would sell himself.<sup>102</sup>

The contract indicates that trade with other European nations, mainly the Portuguese and the English, was prohibited. The fact that the Sultan sold his cinnamon showed that he did trade with other parties. He may have sold them to neighboring islands instead of the Europeans; however, some of these islands were interlinked with Europeans. As Bima had a contractual agreement with the VOC, the Endense were allied with the Portuguese. The Bimanese traded with the Endense and the Portuguese despite the contractual agreement.<sup>103</sup> This suggests that there was some existing independence or that the VOC was not that strict during the seventeenth century. The rebellion will showcase how the VOC conducted its business with its contractual allies. This will provide more context to the historiography of both Bima and the VOC.

### 3. VOC

The political landscape of the VOC in Southeast Asia is a subject of immense historical significance, offering insight into colonial strategies and their impact on regional dynamics. To fully grasp the nature of the VOC rule, it is essential to analyze the various domains under its control and the distinct approaches the VOC employed across different territories. By understanding these approaches, we can situate Sumba within a broader historiographical

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<sup>100</sup> Feddersen, *Principled Pragmatism*, 299.

<sup>101</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1328, ff. 195v, Letter talking about owed sappanwood, 27-04-1677.

<sup>102</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1319, ff. 39, Letter which among other things explains the deal regarding cinnamon, 1675.

<sup>103</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1307, ff. 147v, Letter stating that Bima allegedly traded with Endenese traders, 1674.

framework, elucidating how the VOC's governance strategies evolved and adapted to specific contexts.

In order to properly understand the character of the VOC within this region as rulers, the domains they ruled have to be analyzed. Within the Southeast Asia area, the VOC utilized different approaches to rule over different domains. By understanding these different approaches, it becomes possible to place Sumba within one of the frames that will be presented. It is important to state that these approaches of the VOC will not be presented in great detail; the objective is to provide a general description.

The VOC had three different kinds of monopolies that gave them this sense of control. They received the only trade rights in Asia from the Dutch government in Asia, giving them total control from within their own country. While receiving this monopoly was a start, the more important part was that this also became a reality within the Dutch-ruled areas, like it was in Batavia. Lastly, the VOC controlled different areas by conquering or negotiating a treaty.<sup>104</sup>

These different forms of obtained monopoly have certain characteristic elements that can be used for an analytical framework. The final monopoly form of by conquering or negotiating a treaty can be used for Sumba, as both the VOC and Sumba were active in conquest, with Sumba as the victim and the Company often as the instigator. To contextualize Sumba within this framework, it is instructive to examine case studies such as the VOC's interactions with Makassar, the Banda Islands, and Ambon. The VOC's role with these entities showcases both a conquering and negotiating mindset. While Makassar's story is more familiar, the experiences of the Banda Islands and Ambon, located to the west of Makassar, also provide valuable insights into the VOC's methods of establishing and maintaining control. By situating Sumba within these historical precedents, this study contributes to the broader historiography of Southeast Asian imperialism.

The Banda Islands and Ambon had important spices growing there: nutmeg and clover. These were resources that were quite valuable to the European market; the one that controlled these islands gained a lot of profit.<sup>105</sup> For this reason, it is no surprise that the VOC became more than interested in the area. The VOC quickly understood the importance of forming a monopoly around these spices and started to act in the early seventeenth century.

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<sup>104</sup> A. Weststeijn, 'The VOC as a Company-State: Debating Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Expansion', *Itinerario* 38 (Cambridge, 2014) 13–34.

<sup>105</sup> M. Howell, 'Into the East: European Merchants in Asian Markets During the Early Modern Period', in: *Across the Ocean: Nine Essays on Indo-Mediterranean Trade* (Leiden, 2015) 163.

The VOC took the first Ambon from the Portuguese in 1605; this was considered a conquest; however, not a single shot was fired.<sup>106</sup> With this, they established their first territory in the area. This was followed by a conquest of the Banda island from 1611 to 1621. Makassar was conquered in 1667 when the VOC formed a coalition with the local Bugis, who helped them take over the territories of Makassar.<sup>107</sup> Ambon became the headquarters of the VOC for nine years until Batavia took that position over. The conquest of the Banda islands led to a massacre of the population, dying of hunger or getting deported.<sup>108</sup> This population was then replaced with individuals from other surrounding islands, such as Sulawesi. With control over Ambon and Banda, the VOC established a monopoly on the mentioned spices.<sup>109</sup> However, Makassar was smuggling these spices, which the VOC saw as a threat. For this reason, they first tried to solve these problems with treaties. These were not as effective, after which they waged war against the Makassars in 1667. This eventually led to a peace treaty, which made Makassar the subject of the VOC.<sup>110</sup>

In addition to the previously explained Bimanese relationship to VOC, these examples should provide general descriptions of different ways to gain control in areas. On one end, there is a massacre like the one on the Banda islands, while on the other end, there are negotiated treaties that help the VOC control an area. By placing Sumba in the context of these historical examples, this study adds to the history of Southeast Asian expansionism, showing how complex and varied VOC rule was. This helps us better understand the VOC's political strategies and highlights the importance of studying different regions to get a full picture of the political landscape. The placement of Sumba in the political landscape will be done by using information from the event discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>106</sup> Weststeijn, 'The VOC as a Company-State', 14.

<sup>107</sup> Feddersen, *Principled Pragmatism*, 39.

<sup>108</sup> H. Straver, *Vaders en dochters: Molukse historie in de Nederlandse literatuur van de negentiende eeuw en haar weerklink in Indonesië* (Leiden, 2018) 90.

<sup>109</sup> Feddersen, *Principled Pragmatism*, 317.

<sup>110</sup> Ibidem, 42.

# A Rebellion on Sumba

The following event will be explained in chronological order, with the sources as a baseline. Each subchapter will first retell a part of the event, after which an analysis of this part will be conducted. This analysis will display what the event adds to the historiography and how it provides an answer to the research questions. There are two reasons for choosing a chronological retelling; firstly, it will encompass all the story's details and showcase the parties' rationale. This way, Bima's control over Sumba will be illustrated, including the claims that were made, the obstacles that Bima faced, and the governance that they enforced upon Sumba.

Presenting events chronologically serves multiple purposes, one of which is to guarantee that Sumba's presence is accurately reflected in historical records. By arranging events in chronological order, it provides Sumba with an opportunity to become a part of the historical narrative. This approach facilitates a thorough examination of the motivations and actions of the Sumbanese rebels. Additionally, it allows us to observe the reactions of the local population to this event, providing insight into their experiences and responses. Analyzing the entire event gives a comprehensive understanding of the occurrences and their underlying reasons.

This event has been sparsely mentioned in the literature; Hans Hägerdal mentioned that the Sumbanese turned away the Bimanese.<sup>111</sup> This is correct, although 'chasing away' would explain the narrative better. Willem Phillipus Coolhaas mentioned the event in his works, stating that the VOC decided not to send their people to stop the suppression.<sup>112</sup> While it is correct that the VOC said that, their actions were quite different. The VOC was a significant component in the first attempted suppression, and they were present in the second attempted suppression on Sumba. A similar statement has been given by Joan Karel Hendrik de Roo van Alderwerelts: 'The ruler of Bima can do as he likes in the areas that he controls, but the Company can give him no help; however, the authorities recognize that he must wage war on Sumba because he has enemies there.'<sup>113</sup> This quote was used by Janet Hoskins, who then stated that it is unknown how the situation was resolved.<sup>114</sup> This is fair, as the VOC does not mention the definitive outcome in the sources. That said, these statements miss much of

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<sup>111</sup> Hägerdal, *Lords of the land*, 177.

<sup>112</sup> Coolhaas, *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal*, 60.

<sup>113</sup> Roo Van Alderwerelt, 'Historische Aanteekeningen over Soemba', 190-191.

<sup>114</sup> Hoskins, 'The Play of Time: Kodi Perspectives', 36.



the context; however, that is understandable as this event was not the focus of their works.

The upcoming chapter will explore the event in four parts. Initially, it will delve into the preparations for the first attempt, shedding light on the plans of both the VOC and Bima relating to their effort to suppress the rebellion. Next, the chapter will examine the internal conflicts within Bima, illustrating the challenges they faced in suppressing the rebellion and why they lacked control over Sumba. Following that, the focus will shift to the second attempt by the Bimanese, offering substantial insights into their efforts, the submission of subjects, and the obstacles encountered. Finally, the aftermath will be briefly discussed, serving as a conclusion to the event.

### 1. Preparations for the Rebellion of Sumba

When precisely the rebellion started is unclear; however, the VOC knew about its existence in 1674.<sup>115</sup> Bimanese officials embarked on a journey to Sumba to collect their customary tribute. Upon arrival, part of the Sumbanese populace refused to comply with the tribute demands, after which a rebellion against the authority of the Sultanate supposedly started.<sup>116</sup> Such tribute payments were commonplace in the region; Bima, for instance, was obligated to pay annual tributes to Makassar during the period they were under their control.<sup>117</sup> These tributes consisted mainly of the products that Bima had to offer; the same would most likely be asked from Sumba. Moreover, it is plausible that the tribute included enslaved individuals, as Bima actively participated in the enslaving of the Sumbanese.<sup>118</sup>

Following the Sumbanese refusal, the Bimanese started to prepare for a countermeasure against the rebellious Sumbanese. In a decisive action, the Bimanese Sultan announced that he would either appear in person or send one of his prominent people with many Bimanese soldiers to the island of Sumba.<sup>119</sup> Concurrently, a prominent Bimanese official, Sabandar Codia Roboe, sought to secure resources for the venture by selling twenty-five enslaved people, sappanwood, and snakeskin to the VOC in Batavia.<sup>120</sup> These profits would fund the acquisition and outfitting of vessels on the coast of Java in preparation for an expedition to Sumba.<sup>121</sup> Here in Java, the VOC traded the mentioned sappanwood for

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<sup>115</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1307, ff. 247 v, Sumba Rebellion Pacification report, 1675.

<sup>116</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1319, ff. 285, Daily log Bima, 23-11-1675.

<sup>117</sup> Noorduyn, 'Makasar and the islamization of Bima', 317.

<sup>118</sup> Needham, *Sumba and the slave trade*, 14.

<sup>119</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1319, ff. 220, Exploratory Expedition Report Sumba, 11-08-1675.

<sup>120</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>121</sup> Ibidem, ff. 238, Sumba Expedition Funding Arrangements, 04-09-1675.

1,200 lb. of gunpowder, 372 lb. of lead, and 2,440 lb. of iron and nails.<sup>122</sup> Which should help Roboe in the matter of the rebellion on Sumba. He returned from Batavia with nine vessels ready to embark towards Sumba. Besides the Bimanese, the VOC also started to prepare to suppress the rebellion in Sumba.

VOC officials made their stance clear by aligning themselves with the Sultanate of Bima. They communicated their support to Sabandar Codia Roboe, assuring him of their assistance.<sup>123</sup> The VOC then asserted that Sumba was subject to the Sultan of Bima and that with the presence of VOC personnel and ships, obedience could be reinstated.<sup>124</sup> Plans were set to dispatch two ships under the *provinciaal fiscaal* (provisional fiscal) Adriaen van Dalen. Van Dalen would await the return of Captain Harman Egbertse from Timor, who was expected to bring 150 military personnel.<sup>125</sup> Besides that, eight well-armed VOC ships would venture towards Sumba after avenging a murder on Savu, an island south of Sumba.<sup>126</sup> This would mean that the VOC and Bima would attack the Sumbanese rebels from two different sides, the north and the south.

In exchange for their aid, the VOC officials expected something in return. They sought valuable resources from Sumba, sandalwood, shell horns, and cinnamon. The potential enslaved individuals were to be negotiated.<sup>127</sup> Sabandar Codia Roboe, while aware of the VOC's interest in trade, focused on facilitating a trading relationship between the VOC and Sumba. He recognized the potential benefits of such a partnership, so he took proactive measures to initiate a structured trade agreement. This involved establishing prices based on a set quantity of Guinean textiles and Salampores that the VOC could provide.<sup>128</sup> Based on the outcome of the rebellion and probably the trade, the VOC would be contemplating whether they would establish a trading post on the island.<sup>129</sup>

The analysis aims to provide new insights into the historiography by addressing key subquestions. These include determining whether Sumba was a subject of Bima, identifying the obstacles Bima faced, and understanding their methods of control over potential subjects.

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<sup>122</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1307, ff. 246r, Letter showcasing trading deals, 1674.

<sup>123</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1307, ff. 285, Daily log Bima, 23-11-1675.

<sup>124</sup> Ibidem, ff. 247 v, Sumba Rebellion Pacification report, 1675.

<sup>125</sup> Ibidem, ff. 254 v, Letter about events involving Bima, Dampo, and Sumbawa, 1675.

<sup>126</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1319, ff. 359, Important letter from VOC messenger, and daily log, 30-03-1676.

<sup>127</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1307, ff. 247 v, Sumba Rebellion Pacification report, 1675.

<sup>128</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1312, ff. 282, Letter about assessing the trade potential of the Company's textiles there, 1675.

<sup>129</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1307, ff. 47v, Letter explaining why the Company will refrain from building a tradingpost on Sumba, 1675.

By focusing on these aspects, the analysis will shed light on the VOC's involvement in the rebellion and its objectives in the region.

This part will start with the new insights provided by the existing historiography. One of the claims in the historiography was that the VOC had no interest in participating in this rebellion.<sup>130</sup> From this part alone, it becomes clear that the VOC was more than willing to participate in the suppression of the rebellion. The question then becomes, for what reason did the VOC help the Bimanese, as this is not entirely clear from the story. The objective of the VOC can best be explained with a sentence from a poem by Joost van den Vondel: 'Wherever profit leads us, to every sea and shore...'<sup>131</sup> History shows that the VOC had numerous ways to achieve these objectives. One way this would be achieved is by eliminating the antagonistic forces. This was done by employing their own forces or by using allied forces who also had a stake in the conflict. There are numerous examples of the latter; the Bugis were allied with the Company against the Makassars in 1666.<sup>132</sup> After winning this war, the Company became the ruler over the Makassars, and the Bugis got an autonomous state in Sulawesi.<sup>133</sup> One could argue that the Company did the same with Bima in this circumstance; however, there are some differences. The Company did not display an immediate need to establish a ruling position on Sumba. Smugglers would sell exclusive products on Makassar, which were reserved for the VOC.<sup>134</sup> These spices were monopolized by the VOC, which explains the reason the VOC waged war with Makassar. Sumba did not form a threat to the company's profit in any way, neither did it have crucial commodities that it could offer the VOC.

At this point in the event, the Company thought that sandalwood was on Sumba. While this item was important for the trading network, it was not as important as nutmeg. During the wars that the Company waged trying to become the dominant force on the Banda islands, they gained a monopoly on numerous spices, including nutmeg and mace.<sup>135</sup> The same could be done with Sumba, as they already had power over Timor, another major sandalwood producer, however, it did not seem that the same rationale was used for sandalwood as for the spices on the Banda islands.

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<sup>130</sup> Sutherland, *Seaways and Gatekeepers*, 195.

<sup>131</sup> C. Schnurmann, "Wherever profit leads us, to every sea and shore . . ." the VOC, the WIC, and Dutch methods of globalization in the seventeenth century', *Renaissance Studies* 17 (Oxford, 2003) 474.

<sup>132</sup> Feddersen, *Principled Pragmatism*, 43.

<sup>133</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>134</sup> H. Sutherland, 'Trade, court and company Makassar in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries', in: *Hof en handel: Aziatische vorsten en de VOC 1620-1720* (Leiden, 2005) 85–112.

<sup>135</sup> V. C. Loth, 'Pioneers and Perkeniers: The Banda Islands in the 18th Century', *Cakalele* (Nijmegen, 1995) 18.

This is why the Company probably helped Bima for multiple reasons; one could reasonably say that they were mildly interested in the potential resources that Sumba had to offer. Besides that, they likely also wanted to assist their ally in their troubles, as this could present them with certain opportunities. By suppressing the rebellion, Bima could become an effective ruler over the island. As the Company had a contractual agreement with Bima not to trade with European competitors, it would logically follow that Bima would sell the tradable items on Sumba to the Company. If the commodities on Sumba proved highly valuable, the VOC could still decide to create a factory on the island afterward.

The Company was also under the impression that there might have been Makassars on Sumba. As Bima chased the Makassars away from Bima, it would be a logical reason to do the same in the claimed territories of Bima, in this case Sumba. The Company also stated that this was a reason to investigate the situation.<sup>136</sup>

Besides the rationale of the VOC, the information provided about the trade also provides new insight. The commodities that Sumba had to offer, according to, most likely, Bimanese officials, were sandalwood, cinnamon, and shell horns. The existence of sandalwood on Sumba is well established in the literature; the same cannot be said about the other commodities.<sup>137</sup> The reason for this is, most likely, that Sumba had a limited amount of cinnamon and shell horns available, after which the VOC lost interest. However, the literature did establish that there were other commodities available in Sumba, may it be in a later period, such as bird eggs, some sea turtles, and cotton.<sup>138</sup> If there were enough valuable resources available, the VOC would, as mentioned, establish a trading post. Part of the trading network is also what the local population would like to buy. In this case, it was Guinean textiles and salampores, both of which were cloths.

The short mention of enslaved people can also be considered additional insight. It is well established that there were numerous slave raids on Sumba during the eighteenth century.<sup>139</sup> Now that the VOC stated enslaved people were to be negotiated, it is evident that there was likely an established practice of raiding or kidnapping people for slavery on Sumba. The Bimanese had to pay tribute consisting of enslaved people to Makassar whenever they were subjects of Makassar.<sup>140</sup> It would be logical, as Sumba had to pay tribute as well, that the Sumbanese were under a similar subject-ruler relationship.

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<sup>136</sup> Sutherland, *Seaways and Gatekeepers*, 197.

<sup>137</sup> De Roevert, *De jacht op sandelhout*, 327.

<sup>138</sup> 'Beschrijving van het eiland Soemba of Sandelhout', 300-302.

<sup>139</sup> Needham, *Sumba and the slave trade*, 1.

<sup>140</sup> Noorduyt, 'Makassar and the islamization of Bima', 137.

These additions to the historiography showcase add to the political landscape activities of the VOC, and to more information about Sumba. Especially regarding the commodities that they had to offer, and would like to receive. However, it is important to remember that the Sumbanese were not part of this discussion, all the information was provided through the Bimanese officials, showcasing their presence in the sources.

Now that the additions to the existing historiography are made clear, the event can be analyzed for the contextualization of the subquestions. There are indications of a subject-ruler relationship present in this part. The most obvious one is that both Bima and the VOC stated that Bima rightfully owned Sumba. This already showcases that two of the three parties involved clearly stated the existence of a subject-ruler relationship. The Sumbanese were not present during this part of the event, their perspective will be discussed later on.

The actions levied to proclaim this rule over Sumba have also been shown during this part of the event. The reason why Sumba rebelled in the first place was that they refused to pay tribute to Bima. These tributes serve as a means by which an overlord strengthens and showcases their authority over their subjects. Tributes showcase not only financial obligations but symbolize the submission and acknowledgment of hierarchical authority. This manifestation is also displayed in the language used for this event. The VOC and Bimanese talk about a rebellion, never mentioning a conquest or revenge. This implies that the story revolves more around handling troublesome locals than dealing with an outside enemy. This way, these entities reveal a discourse in the dynamics of the subject-ruler relationship.

Additionally, some of the challenges in controlling Sumba are evident from the preparation stage. If offering tribute can be seen as an indication of control by the ruler, then the refusal of one can be seen as an obstacle that the ruler had to face. As Brustein and Levi mentioned before, rebels should be approached as rational parties.<sup>141</sup> This refusal to pay homage was most likely based on a presented opportunity. This opportunity will showcase itself in the next part of the event.

## 2. Internal Troubles

After the preparations of both Bima and the VOC, trouble started to appear. The Sultan of Bima mentioned to the VOC officials who visited the island in August that a venture towards Sumba would be dangerous. The best course of action would be to leave for Sumba in March

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<sup>141</sup> Brustein and Levi, 'The geography of rebellion', 469.

or April when the western monsoon ends.<sup>142</sup> This meant the rebellion would continue for eight more months before the VOC and Bima could suppress it.

Eight months later, on the sixteenth of April, Sabandar Codia Roboe requested the Sultan of Bima to be relieved of his office after encountering opposition from *groot gouverneur* (Great Governor) Turisia Gampo. The disagreement stemmed from differing opinions on a naval expedition to Sumba. Turisia Gampo rejected Sabandar Codia Roboe's plan of sending fourteen vessels after he initially accepted it. The number of boats was reduced from fourteen to two vessels because of that.<sup>143</sup> However, Turisia Gampo was not done; together with his jurist son-in-law, Generalij Parada, he secretly ordered some of the Bimanese soldiers to abandon the expedition towards Sumba upon reaching the island of Komodo.<sup>144</sup> The soldiers would return under the pretext of being unable to proceed further.<sup>145</sup>

Only three days after this ordeal, Adriaan van Daalen, arrived from Makassar with three ships, increasing the number of VOC ships in Bima from two to five.<sup>146</sup> The Dutch were ready to leave in ten days, but the Bimanese officials postponed the mission. Eventually, after a discussion on the twenty-third of April, the number of Bimanese vessels increased from two to five, which would accompany Van Daalen toward Sumba.<sup>147</sup> Eventually, on the eighth of May, the combined fleet set sail for Sumba to attempt to suppress the rebellion.<sup>148</sup> This journey did not take long. On the nineteenth of May, a storm hit the fleet, forcing their return.<sup>149</sup>

The planned reinforcement from the south by eight VOC ships to assist the suppression in Sumba after they dealt with the murderers in Savu also encountered unforeseen challenges. The vessels dispatched from Savu towards Sumba were unaware of the internal strife in Bima. The VOC ships from Savu did not face adversary weather conditions, as the waters between Savu and Sumba were relatively calm and navigable.<sup>150</sup>

Despite these favorable conditions, the eight VOC ships still did not manage to reach Sumba. Several crew members fell ill, after which the VOC officials thought it would be unwise to venture further towards Sumba.<sup>151</sup> Logistically, it was also poorly planned, as the

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<sup>142</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1311, ff. 237, Sumba Travel Advisory Note, 06-8-1675.

<sup>143</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1319, ff. 363, Important letter from VOC messenger, and daily log, 30-03-1676.

<sup>144</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>145</sup> Ibidem, ff. 354, Letter explaining the internal troubles in Bima, 26-04-1676.

<sup>146</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1319, ff. 353.

<sup>147</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1320, ff. 235 r, Vessel increase Bimanese side, 15-05-1676.

<sup>148</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 18, dagregister reis naar Sumba, 08-05-1676.

<sup>149</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1320, ff. 244 r, Journey detailed, 11-07-1676.

<sup>150</sup> Duggan and Hägerdal, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition*, 177.

<sup>151</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1319, ff. 900 v, Letter explaining the illness of the VOC officials, 19-05-1676.

crew did not have enough provisions to cover an additional venture towards Sumba.<sup>152</sup> Because of this, they decided to abort the mission, leaving the residents of Sumba oblivious to the intended invasion of over two thousand soldiers from two different sides.

This part of the event gives insight into both the political landscape of Bima and the VOC. For Bima, the information is more on the specific side, providing a look at the internal struggles it had to face. It could be said that the Sultan was not the highest power, or at least that the rest of the officials also had an important say over the matter. Raboe and the great governor Turisia Gampo were the leading decision-makers in this matter. This is further displayed in a discussion that the great governor had with the sultan about the division of islands.<sup>153</sup> While details about this discussion are unknown, it indicates that the sultan's word was not absolute, and the court had some power.<sup>154</sup> The Sultan, not being the main decision maker within the sources, provides potential insight into the power structure of seventeenth-century Bima.

The same could be said about the VOC in regard to their ally, Bima. The VOC was ready to embark toward Sumba with five ships, but the Bimanese let them wait until their quarrel was solved. This could mean several things in regard to the power dynamics between Bima and the VOC. For one, the VOC did not have the authority to decide the course of action, as they were ready but still had to wait for permission from Bima. That said, it could also be the case that the VOC was dependent on Bima, as they did not know anything about Sumba yet. However, it is interesting that in the first part, it was a Bimanese official who established the price of the commodities on Sumba, and in this part, it was the Bimanese that decided what the course of action was. This information would indicate that Bima was on equal footing with the VOC. What the relationship between Bima and the VOC is not established in the literature besides the contractual agreement, but this gives insight into the relation outside the contractual bounds.

The final addition to the historiography is about the VOC ships that ventured from Savu towards Sumba. Hans Hagerdal described in detail what the VOC soldiers did in Savu. On the island of Savu, the Dimu people killed a VOC Commander, Johannes Wagenburgh, in 1673, after which the VOC started a large-scale expedition to avenge the commander.<sup>155</sup> 220 Dutch soldiers and a thousand Timorese auxiliaries ventured through Rote, Savu and the

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<sup>152</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1319, ff. 900 v, Letter explaining the illness of the VOC officials, 19-05-1676.

<sup>153</sup> Ibidem, ff. 353v, Letter mentioning among other things the disagreement between governor and sultan, 1676.

<sup>154</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1319, ff. 353, Important letter from VOC messenger, and daily log, 30-03-1676.

<sup>155</sup> Duggan and Hagerdal, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition*, 163.

Solor Islands, leaving a bloodbath.<sup>156</sup> According to Hägerdal, the soldiers became sick and decided to stop the expedition; there was no mention of a further expedition towards Sumba. This was also mentioned in the VOC sources; however, the historiography on this matter did not mention that the same expedition was planning to venture towards Sumba to support Bima. The additions of the letters stating that the VOC ships would arrive in Sumba at the end of April give new information about the event.<sup>157</sup> It is quite possible that the matter of the Sumbanese rebels was only seen as an additional objective. The VOC delegates from the south were clearly not prepared for the voyage towards Sumba, as their logistical planning displayed.

For the research questions, this story provides further contextualization; however, contextualization only manifests in the obstacles that Bima had to face. The first challenge the Bimanese faced in this matter was the unstable court environment. The great governor Turisia Gampo did everything he could to stop Sabandar Codia Roboe from reaching Sumba with adequate soldiers. This great governor was possibly a more powerful court member with better connections, for example, his lawyer son-in-law. This gave him an edge over Roboe, whose call for an invasion of Sumba got ignored.

Once the Bimanese court stopped fighting among each other and decided to leave for Sumba, it was already too late. The VOC and Bimanese fleet encountered a storm that stopped them from proceeding. Once again, this indicates the small window that the Bimanese could use to venture toward Sumba with an army. While there was a storm that stopped the army, the great governor Turisia Gampo also told some of his soldiers to come up with an excuse not to proceed with the mission. It might be a possibility that these soldiers were also an obstacle to the Bimanese's will to control Sumba.

From the first attempt, one would rightfully conclude that Bima had zero control over the island, as they could not even reach it because of the multiple explained examples. However, this is not the whole story, as there was a second attempt that did exemplify some type of control; the following part of the event will give most of the information needed to answer the research question.

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<sup>156</sup> Duggan and Hägerdal, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition*, 164.

<sup>157</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1319, ff. 359, Important letter from VOC messenger, and daily log, 30-03-1676.



### 3. Second Attempt

The initial venture towards Sumba was seen as a disgrace that had to be repaired.<sup>158</sup> Adriaan van Daalen collected the funds needed to try and rectify the situation the next year in May 1677. Preparations started to materialize in February, with new orders issued. This time, the objective was to explore the island of Sumba, but the VOC officials received additional orders to map out the island.<sup>159</sup> Besides that, the ship *De Parel* would contain various assortments of cloth, primarily black and red. These types of cloth were highly desirable by the inhabitants of Sumba, at least that is what the VOC officials were told.<sup>160</sup> Not only was the VOC preparing themselves, but Bima also displayed greater cooperation with their preparation. Contributing twenty vessels carrying thirteen hundred soldiers, a significant increase from their previous attempt.<sup>161</sup>

The VOC and the Bimanese left the sultanate and sailed towards Sumba on the sixth of April 1677.<sup>162</sup> The VOC decided to take a different route than the Bimanese toward Sumba to preserve their ships' safety. The Bimanese had smaller vessels that could sail along the coast of Ende. These smaller boats could be pulled ashore on the beach, but this was not a viable option with the bigger ships of the VOC. The same path was too narrow for the VOC, and it was invested with reefs.<sup>163</sup> Consequently, the VOC officials decided to take another path to reach a suitable anchorage point.

The Bimanese reached the island on the first of May.<sup>164</sup> It took the VOC ships a while to reach the island, departing Bima on April 6th but reaching Sumba on May 7th. This delay was attributed to the ships' path and the lack of favorable winds towards Sumba. Besides the calm seas, it also mentions that the boat was incapacitated.<sup>165</sup>

After the arrival of VOC ships at Sumba, the Bimanese soldiers had already fortified themselves. They used their boats to form a barricade against potential threats from the Sumbanese.<sup>166</sup> The Sumbanese were quite frightened once the VOC arrived. Numerous Sumbanese villages sent a messenger to pay respect to the outside forces. These representatives surrendered to the Bimanese by drinking water from the Bimanese kris knives

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<sup>158</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 188, Daalen reports; funds for Sumba expedition , 25-08-1677.

<sup>159</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 55, Memory Van Daalen , 10-03-1677.

<sup>160</sup> Ibidem, ff. 59.

<sup>161</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 115, Letter to Governor Joan Maatsuijcker , 18-04-1677.

<sup>162</sup> Ibidem, ff. 172, Letter from Adriaan van Daalen about the departure, 21-04-1677.

<sup>163</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 172, Letter from Adriaan van Daalen about the departure, 21-04-1677.

<sup>164</sup> Ibidem, ff. 184, Arrival in Sumba, 22-07-1677.

<sup>165</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>166</sup> Ibidem.

and performing other ceremonies that were not further explained.<sup>167</sup> After the ceremonies, the Bimanese imposed a punishment; the Sumbanese had to pay a two percent fine to the Sultan of Bima for all their inhabitants. Additionally, the rebellion leaders had to be handed over to the Bimanese.<sup>168</sup> The peace negotiations progressed swiftly each day, and if there was any stubborn resistance in distant places, the Bimanese would plan to force them into submission with the help of their allied villages.<sup>169</sup>

The VOC officials wanted to use these peaceful times to establish trade with the inhabitants. However, the Bimanese told them this would be impossible as the Sumbanese were not willing to part from their valuable resources. The Bimanese then suggested that the VOC officials leave Sumba, as establishing trade at that moment would have been impossible. While most of the Sumbanese were subdued during that period, they were still guarding themselves expensively.<sup>170</sup> Under these circumstances, trade would not be viable, after which the VOC sailed away on the 17th of May. During their departure, the residents of Mamboro (village on Sumba) waved and gestured to the VOC ships, asking them to visit.<sup>171</sup> The villagers proclaimed themselves faithful subjects of the Bimanese Sultan and presented the VOC officials with what they called sweetwood, which was cinnamon. After receiving some refreshments, they left Mamboro and reached Bima on the 23rd of May.

While the VOC left the scene, remaining rebels concealed themselves in the mountains, observing Bimanese movements.<sup>172</sup> Two Bimanese soldiers left their camp to fetch some firewood, after which eight Sumbanese rebels ambushed the two soldiers. The two soldiers had no chance and were killed in the attack. The Bimanese attempted to retaliate, but it was already too late. This attack caused panic at the Bimanese base, which made them reluctant to continue their assault.<sup>173</sup>

The anxiety was amplified when the non-rebelling Sumbanese population fled towards the Bimanese base.<sup>174</sup> Most likely, it was a tactic initiated by the rebelling force to create more chaos. The Bimanese army began to retreat and flee the island. They jumped in their boats, left their muskets behind, and retreated to Bima. Without accomplishing their goal, they reached Bima on the 30th of May in great disgrace.<sup>175</sup> Despite their large army, the

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<sup>167</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 184, Arrival in Sumba, 22-07-1677

<sup>168</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>169</sup> Ibidem..

<sup>170</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1328, ff. 211r, Letter explaining situation on Sumba, 10-07-1677.

<sup>171</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 184, Arrival in Sumba, 22-07-1677.

<sup>172</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>173</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>174</sup> Ibidem, ff 185.

<sup>175</sup> Ibidem.

Bimanese army did not manage to suppress the rebellious group. This severely diminished the standing of the Sultan and Bima as a whole. The soldiers who participated in the venture had to hand in their kris knife. If they were ever seen with a kris knife again, then they would be punished by death.<sup>176</sup> A kris knife stood for the symbol of courage, and they did not earn such a symbol after the act. The leader, Genelimonta, was dismissed from office and would be buried on the exit of a canal once he died. This was, most likely, a form of banishment showcasing that they were no longer fully part of the Sultanate.

Regarding the historiographical additions, this part contributes to all the parties involved. For the Company, this story displays how the political landscape can change. During the first attempt, the Company was willing to assist with the suppression of the rebellion, but in this second attempt, the VOC was standing by and focused on potential trade. This drastic change within the approach of the Company is rather unique, as the objective remained the same. This was especially odd because the Bimanese were now more willing to participate in the issue. The chances of success would have been higher if the VOC decided to send the previous forces to Sumba. However, an expedition towards Sumba was most likely not prioritized, as the Company was preoccupied with other matters, particularly the active war between the VOC and Gowa.<sup>177</sup>

In the Bimanese historiography, this part of the event showcases how Bima displayed its rule over their subjects. The rituals the Bimanese used to make their subjects submit. The subjects had to drink from the kris knives of the Bimanese; the use of kris knives in Southeast Asia is well-researched. It was prevalent in the Malay world, where a Portuguese viceroy noticed that everyone in Sumatra was wearing one with pride.<sup>178</sup> These daggers were also used as ceremonial gifts for special occasions, an example being the Balinese delegation receiving a kris knife from the Javanese emperor, which would be used to purify their realm.<sup>179</sup> Of course, the kris knives were also used for war ceremonies: the Makassars had a ceremony that probably was comparable to the Bimanese ceremony, as these entities had a history with each other. The Makassars would sprinkle their banners with blood, take an oath, and dip their kris knives in a water vessel, after which they started dancing around the banner with the knife.<sup>180</sup> This ceremony did not mention drinking water from the kris knives; that

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<sup>176</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 185, Arrival in Sumba, 22-07-1677.

<sup>177</sup> T. Gibson, 'Islamic Martyrdom and the Great Lord of the VOC, 1705–1988', in: *Islamic Narrative and Authority in Southeast Asia* (New York, 2007) 85–109.

<sup>178</sup> A.H. Hill, 'The Këris and other Malay weapons', *Journal Of The Malayan Branch Of The Royal Asiatic Society* 29 (Singapore, 1956) 47

<sup>179</sup> L. Pedersen, *The sphere of the Keris: power and people in a Balinese principedom* (Los Angeles, 2002) 1.

<sup>180</sup> M.W. Charney, *Southeast Asian Warfare, 1300-1900* (Boston, 2004) 9.

said, it is still likely that the Bimanese were inspired by their previous overlords regarding the ceremonies.

For Sumba, essentially every single part can be considered additional information to its existing historiography. One part that will be highlighted is that the Sumbanese were afraid once the VOC arrived. Even though there was no focus on this matter in the sources, it is still an interesting phenomenon. It seemed that once the VOC arrived, the Sumbanese started to submit to their rulers. Possibly the frightened reaction is based on their experiences with the Portuguese. These were already partly established in the east of the island; while we do not have much information regarding this, it is probable that they were the reason behind the frightened reaction.

For the three research questions, this part of the event provides a lot of context; as mentioned before, the Bimanese and the VOC already stated that Bima was the rightful ruler of Sumba. This part of the event also signifies the rationale of the Sumbanese in this matter. It cannot be said that there was a cohesive opinion on this matter. As mentioned in the literature, the Sumbanese society was fragmented; this is also shown in the sources, as there were multiple representatives who came and surrendered to the Bimanese. The Mambo village even stated it flat out towards the VOC delegates that sailed by. Combined with the claims made by the Bimanese and VOC, one can say that there is clear evidence that certain parts of Sumba were indeed subjected to Bima.

This was further displayed by how Bima levied their rule upon Sumba. By using rituals, they signified the inferior position of their subjects towards their superior. Having the representatives of numerous villages go through the oath signified their rule over said villages. However, the Bimanese did not stop there; by punishing every Sumbanese resident with a tax, they proclaimed themselves rulers of the whole island. This was further shown when they expected the allied villages to bring them the rebels, which would be punished by the Bimanese. Despite the perceived loyalty and the punishment, the rebellion continued, meaning that some villages submitted while others did not.

The rebels had different plans in mind, which indicates the challenges that the Bimanese had to face in trying to control the island. The actions the Bimanese tried to apply to their subject clearly did not affect the rebels. These rebels would attack the Bimanese once the VOC left the scene, displaying a rational decision in the action of the rebels. The fact that the VOC was no longer present, after which two Bimanese soldiers were killed, also signifies another obstacle, which maybe shows that the Bimanese would be more dependent on their allies than they thought. The literature also mentioned that the Sumbanese society could be

split into two major parts, the mountainous- and the lower Sumbanese.<sup>181</sup> As the rebels were looking from the mountains towards the Bimanese, one could say that the rebels were possibly from the mountainous area, while the submitted villages were from the lower parts of the area.

This well-functioning rebellious force was most likely the biggest challenge for the Bimanese in this matter. The rebels did not attack the fortified Bimanese and waited until some were out of position. Afterward, they did not charge the terrorized Bimanese soldiers; they amplified their panic by sending civilian Sumbanese to them in hordes. The goal was not to slay all the Bimanese soldiers but to eliminate the threat, chasing them away. Using the Kartodirdjo framework, the rebels' mobilization and organization systems are clearly shown, and the same can be said about the rationale behind their decisions.<sup>182</sup> Brustein's framework shows the geographical advantage; they used the mountains to assess the situation, which helped them spot a weakness.<sup>183</sup> The rebellion in Sumba remained unresolved, prompting the VOC to withdraw from direct involvement and let the Sultanate of Bima handle it themselves.

#### 4. Aftermath

After the failure, Bima stated that they would try again and send a fiercer attack towards Sumba.<sup>184</sup> During the same period, Van Daalen also inquired about what kind of assistance the VOC could provide in this matter.<sup>185</sup> However, this assistance of the VOC never materialized despite their perceived will. The same could be said for the fierce attack, as Bima tried a more diplomatic approach towards the rebellion by sending an embassy toward Sumba this time.<sup>186</sup> However, the embassy envoy of the Sultan returned without accomplishing their goal. Despite the continued failures, the Sultan promised to continue the hostilities, but the VOC feared that the results would not be any better, maybe even worse.<sup>187</sup> The VOC officials wanted to start trading in Sumba, but this was impossible due to the ongoing rebellion in Sumba.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Hoskins, 'The Play of Time: Kodi Perspectives', 177.

<sup>182</sup> Kartodirdjo, *Modern Indonesia*.

<sup>183</sup> Brustein and Levi, 'The geography of rebellion', 482.

<sup>184</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1335, ff. 10, Letter explaining among other things that Bima will attack Sumba again, 1678.

<sup>185</sup> Ibidem, ff. 288, Letter giving orders to Van Daalen, 1678.

<sup>186</sup> Ibidem, ff. 335, Report about an embassy toward Sumba, 02-07-1678.

<sup>187</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1346, ff. 5, Sumba stalemate; Biema's envoys return empty-handed, 11-09-1679.

<sup>188</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1335, ff. 287, Report about the Sumba trade, 04-07-1678.

The relationship between Bima and the VOC also started to get tense during this time. In 1678, a Portuguese captain named Pedro sought trading rights on Sumba, but his request was denied by the Sultan of Bima despite Pedro getting permission from the VOC. The VOC was unhappy with how their subjects conducted themselves. The Sultan of Bima then stated that the Bimanese were the rightful owners of Sumba and that the land of Sumba had traditionally belonged to him long before he ever traded or contracted with the East India Company.<sup>189</sup>

The more time passed, the less serious the VOC took Bima. In 1686, for example, the VOC suggested that the Sultan of Bima might have exaggerated his claim over Sumba and Manggarai. While the Sultan was alive, he did his best to protect Sumba and Manggarai, but this wish might never have been fulfilled.<sup>190</sup> From this point on, no information about the rebellion contact with Bima about Sumba has been discussed in the VOC archives. During the 1690s, the VOC took matters into their own hands and started to explore the island on their terms.

They tried to establish a trading partnership with the local Sumbanese rulers. However, the Portuguese were also interested in the island and the available sandalwood. It became a struggle for both European powerhouses to convince the island to their side. The VOC tried to persuade the Sumbanese population by becoming a mediator for their internal struggles, as they fought quite a bit with each other. This tactic did not bring the results they wished for, as sixty Sumbanese soldiers still died because of local quarrels despite the VOC's presence.<sup>191</sup> Besides trying to form political cohesion, the VOC also attempted to use the Savunese to persuade the Sumbanese to submit. The nobles from the two islands married each other often, creating a connection between them. VOC tried to ask the Savunese nobles to persuade the Sumbanese to ally with the VOC.<sup>192</sup> During the same period, the Portuguese applied their tactics, which comprised Christianising local Sumbanese residents and having them convince the Sumbanese population of a partnership with the Portuguese.<sup>193</sup> The Portuguese were more active in the region, as they had a fort in Sumba and actively participated in the war during 1718.<sup>194</sup>

The precise development during these years in Sumba is challenging to say; it seemed that both European powerhouses had chances to establish some kind of partnership with the

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<sup>189</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1335, ff. 203, Merchant blocked from trading in Sumba, 27-04-1678.

<sup>190</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1452, ff. 42, Letter questioning Bima's claim, 27-04-1686.

<sup>191</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1556, ff. 740, Letter explain tough process of the VOC officials, 18-07-1694.

<sup>192</sup> Ibidem, ff. 787, Letter from Timor about marriage, 24-07-1694.

<sup>193</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1535, ff. 740, Letter explaining tactics of the Portuguese in Sumba, 28-08-1693.

<sup>194</sup> R. Needham, *Mamboru : history and structure in a domain of northwestern Sumba* (Oxford, 1987) 5.

Sumbanese. That said, in 1726, the VOC, who eventually acknowledged that it was the Portuguese, became overlords of the eastern part of Sumba.<sup>195</sup>

In regard to the existing historiography, the final part provides information about the relationship between Bima and the VOC. It seemed that the situation started to deteriorate with respect to the Sumbanese cause. The exact reasoning is not mentioned in the sources, but it might be the case that they did not see Bima as a competent ally in this matter. This is further shown in the information provided in 1686, where the VOC officials stated that the Bimanese were never able to truly rule over their subjects. While this is important information, it is essential to understand that this letter was written ten years after the rebellion, which was the last time the VOC had direct contact with Bima about Sumba.

The fact that the VOC took matters into their own hands also showcases that they lacked trust in Bima's abilities. While that is a reasonable conclusion of the VOC, they were also unable to suppress the internal troubles within Sumba. In addition, a second adversary, the Portuguese, entered the scene. The political landscape switched from a Bima-VOC-centric one to a Portuguese-VOC-centric one. Because of this switch, there was most likely no conclusion from the sources regarding the Bimanese domination in Sumba.

Whether this event signifies a moment where the VOC changed their relationship with Bima is up to discussion. What is known is that Bima lost their importance in the area after the eruption of mount Tambora in 1815.<sup>196</sup> Whether they also lost their position after the rebellion has yet to be researched.

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<sup>195</sup> Needham, *Mambaru : history and structure*, 5.

<sup>196</sup> H. Chambert-Loir and R. Robson, 'State, City, Commerce: The Case of Bima', *Indonesia* 57 (1993) 80.

## Conclusion

This research contributes significant new insights into the existing historiography in several ways. The micro-history event of the Sumbanese rebellion in the late seventeenth century involved three primary parties: Sumba, Bima, and the VOC. Despite the absence of dedicated historiographical works on Sumba in the seventeenth century, this research provides a comprehensive representation of the island's political landscape during that era. This research displays that there is an existing continuity in regard to the historiography, which focuses on the later period. The historiography mentions numerous aspects of Sumba, one of them being the fragmented society, which is indicated by the number of villages with their chiefs.<sup>197</sup> This concept has also been shown in the sources of the seventeenth century.<sup>198</sup> The same could be said about the divide between mountainous- and lower Sumbanese communities.<sup>199</sup> While the sources did not provide a clear explanation of the fragmented nature, they do display that there were mountainous rebels.<sup>200</sup>

Besides its fragmented nature, Sumba was also portrayed as an island that had to deal with an endless struggle. This struggle manifested itself in two main ways: slave raids and domination. The sources showcase a similar story, where the Sumbanese were dominated by Bima and had to pay tribute to their rulers.<sup>201</sup> However, maybe even more important is that the event of the rebellion does not only showcase continuity but also a different side of Sumbanese history. The rebellion displayed that they were capable of vending outsiders that were more powerful, which gives a more balanced outlook on the existing historiographical narrative of Sumba.

While Bima received more attention in historiography, the focus was mainly on their conflicts with Makassar.<sup>202</sup> However, it is crucial to recognize Bima's pivotal role as the main instigator during the rebellion on Sumba. Understanding their involvement provides a complete picture of Bimanese activities in the late seventeenth century. There is still a significant amount of continuity, even though Bima's position changed from being a subject of Makassar to a ruler over Sumba. Bima received the lowest order in the subject-ruler relation from Makassar, meaning they had to pay tribute to Makassar.<sup>203</sup> A similar relation is

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<sup>197</sup> 'Beschrijving van het eiland Soemba of Sandelhout', 281.

<sup>198</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1319, ff. 285, Report about Sumba, 24-11-1675.

<sup>199</sup> Hoskins, 'The Play of Time: Kodi Perspectives', 177.

<sup>200</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 184, Arrival in Sumba, 22-07-1677.

<sup>201</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>202</sup> Noorduyn, 'Makasar and the islamization of Bima', 317.

<sup>203</sup> Ibidem 316.



visible regarding the subject-ruler relation of Bima and Sumba, where, as mentioned before, Sumba had to pay tribute to Bima. This relationship was also visible in the nineteenth century when Bima was ruling Mangarrai, which also had to pay tribute to Bima.<sup>204</sup> Displaying continuity in how Bima acted from the early seventeenth century towards the nineteenth century gives a clear picture of the political landscape.

Another aspect that displays the influence of Makassar over Bima in regards to ruling over a subject is their use of kris knives in rituals.<sup>205</sup> The sources also indicate that Bima used these knives to subdue the Sumbanese populace. While the ritual is different, it was most likely influenced by Makassar.<sup>206</sup> This event showcases a dominating side of their history during the seventeenth century. While the suppression failed, it still displayed the aspects of a ruling entity, providing more context to its political landscape.

In the case of the VOC, this event offers a fresh perspective on their political engagements. Although the VOC had previously utilized auxiliaries, mercenaries, and local populations, this event stands out due to the Company's alliance with Bima. Moreover, their subsequent support aimed at establishing Bima as active rulers of another entity, namely Sumba, presents a unique aspect of VOC's political activities during this period.

During the seventeenth century, the political landscape of the VOC showcased numerous ways to deal with problematic situations. In Makassar, the VOC utilized the oppressed Bugis against the Makassars.<sup>207</sup> To avenge a murder in Savu, the VOC would use auxiliaries from Timor as they were also affected by the situation.<sup>208</sup> Meanwhile, in the Banda islands, they used their own forces to enforce their rule and chase away the Portuguese.<sup>209</sup> These examples showcase how the VOC utilized different approaches for similar objectives.

This event displays a different, unique approach to the VOC; during this event, the VOC played more of a support role for Bimas. Bima set the tone of the event by deciding when to venture and what the VOC was allowed to do once they reached Sumba. The company's lack of leadership in an expedition with indigenous people gives a new perspective on the political landscape and the flexible nature of the company. They did not have enough knowledge about Sumba, so they became humble and accepted the knowledge given to them by the Bimanese officials. This changed later on once they received enough information about Sumba after their second venture together with Bima. However, it is an

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<sup>204</sup> Freijss, 'Reizen naar Mangarai en Lombok in 1854—1856', 451.

<sup>205</sup> Charney, *Southeast Asian Warfare, 1300-1900*, 9.

<sup>206</sup> NL-HaNA, VOC, inv.nr. 1327, ff. 182, Letter from Adriaan van Daalen about the departure, 21-04-1677.

<sup>207</sup> Feddersen, *Principled Pragmatism*, 39.

<sup>208</sup> Duggan and Hägerdal, *Savu: History and Oral Tradition*, 163.

<sup>209</sup> Loth, 'Pioneers and Perkeniers', 18.

interesting case study that displays VOC in a different role compared to the more dominating leading role.

The best way to further understand the provided insights is by focussing on the extent of the control that Bima levied over Sumba during the rebellion, which is the research question. This way, the political activities of all parties involved will be explained. Determining the extent of the control that Bima levied over Sumba is a complicated task. The sources are not particularly evident on this matter, as numerous contradictory statements have been made. An example is that the VOC called Bima the rightful owners of Sumba while also not being sure of their power over the island. Despite these apparent contradictions, there was an event in the 1670s that made it possible to analyze the extent of Bima's control over their subject. For this reason, the main research question was divided into three sub-research questions: Was Bima a ruler with a valid claim over Sumba? What actions showcase their rule and control over Sumba? And finally, what obstacles intervened in Bima's control over Sumba?

The best way to answer these questions is to provide an overview of the findings. The event was a rebellion initiated by a part of the Sumbanese population. Sumba had to pay an annual tribute, which presumably meant submitting enslaved people to their overlords. This was something that the Sumbanese did not accept around 1674, possibly earlier, after which they started to rebel. Bima decided to suppress this rebellion with their allies, the VOC. It should not have been a hard task. However, the VOC tried to help them twice without any results. The first attempt was sabotaged by a local dispute amongst the Bimanese nobility. This was the best chance that the Bimanese would get, as many VOC ships were ready to support their allies. However, the VOC ships reaching Sumba from the south would also not make it.

The second attempt to suppress the rebellion did manage to reach Sumba, and the VOC and the Bimanese met with the locals. These locals would then display loyalty toward their Bimanese overlords, and they did this by participating in a ritual and stating that they were the subordinates. However, some of the local villages did the opposite. They did not only rebel but managed to kill two Bimanese soldiers. This led to a chaotic circumstance, which was amplified because the Sumbanese rebels sent their civilians towards the Bimanese. The Bimanese were chased away and went back towards Bima in great disgrace. After this attempt, the VOC stopped providing direct support for this cause; because of this, sources about the event were scarce. While that is the case, the VOC did report on it from time to time. The Bimanese sent for a third attempt at an embassy, trying to resolve the matter

diplomatically. This was also unsuccessful. After this attempt, there was no other news on the matter.

By answering the research subquestions, numerous conclusions about the subject-ruler relationship between the two entities in question can be drawn. Firstly, it is undeniable that Bima's claim over Sumba had some merit. Some Sumbanese villages were under the suzerainty of Bima, and they said that themselves. This is also seen in the tribute that the Sumbanese had to pay, and while this did not happen, it still indicates a former relationship with the island. However, their claim that the entire island of Sumba was under their rule had never been realized in the seventeenth century. The rebels were able to chase the Bimanese away, indicating that the opposition was powerful enough to suppress the oppression of the outsiders.

The question of Bima's control over Sumba requires a multifaceted answer, as analyzing existing obstacles can quantify the level of control. The obstacle created by the rebels was extremely effective, as they managed to chase away the Bimanese rulers numerous times. The climate possibly affected the lack of control that Bima could enforce on Sumba; the currents and the monsoons made it so that Bima could only reach Sumba during a specific time of the year. This made Bima a predictable ruler, which allowed Sumba to rebel, as they knew when the soldiers of the rulers would be coming. The final relevant obstacle was the political landscape within Bima; being allied with the VOC should have given them a great opportunity to suppress the rebellion. That did not happen because of internal struggles within the Bimanese court, which delayed a golden opportunity for the Bimanese, as they had a large Dutch army willing to participate. Because of these obstacles, Bima's control over Sumba was quite limited.

That being said, Bima still had the chance to showcase its ruling over the Sumbanese populace in the second attempt at suppression. Giving proof that Bima was a ruler of part of Sumba. This is shown in the submissive rituals that they forced the Sumbanese representatives to perform. Besides these rituals, the Bimanese rulers punished the Sumbanese populace with a tax, signifying a ruler-subject relationship. When comparing how Bima ruled to other instances of ruler-subject relations, one could say that this was simply how Bima ruled.

Bima was a ruler of Sumba; Hans Hägerdal called it a loose claim; this can be correct depending on what that means.<sup>210</sup> The claims were valid; however, the way Bima ruled over

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<sup>210</sup> Hägerdal, *Lords of the land, lords of the sea*, 332.

their subjects was not as organized as others did with their subjects. The Bimanese ruled over some villages in Sumba and Manggarai and did not push to control the entire area. The Makassars did the opposite, trying to conquer and submit to their enemies until the kingdom was converted to Islam.

So, could you say that Bima's claim over Sumba would be valid? If the VOC were in this situation, they would most likely state that Sumba had not yet been entirely claimed. If it was the Makassars, they would most likely be convinced once the chiefs converted to Islam. However, Bima played by different rules, as they had their political narrative. It would be fair to say that as long as Bima received annual tribute from their subjects, they would consider it a valid part of their dominion.

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