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Hans Hägerdal

Held's History of Sumbawa

An Annotated Translation

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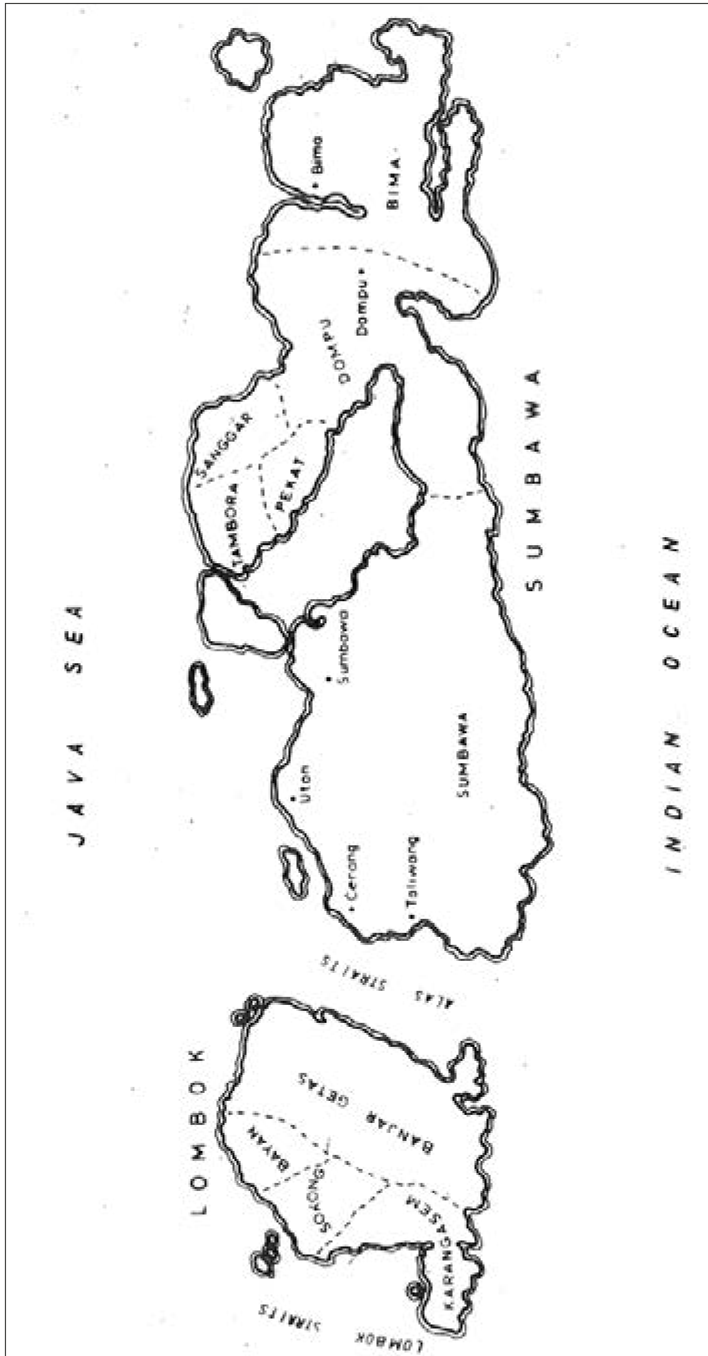
Map 1 Kingdoms in Sumbawa and Lombok in the 17th century



Source: L.Y. Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*, published on Martinus Nijhoff 1981

Translator's introduction

> Yearning and wondering, Kajsa and I had been looking at the sky-high Tambora volcano from our camp on Satunda. In the middle of the day it lay embedded in dense, white clouds and hidden for our gazes. Early in the morning however, and right before the sunset, the sight was clear and our eyes were drawn towards the jungle-clad mountainside, up to the barren top which made an uneven silhouette, sometimes in the bluest blue, sometimes in violet, purple or gold.
> – We will encamp high up there in a few weeks, I said to our boy Duruhama. From there Satunda will look like a small bubble on the sea!
> Duruhama shook his head, disapprovingly.
> – This is no good place, *tuan*. It is terribly cold on Tambora. And there are large, dangerous dogs – so large that their footprints are as those of tigers. When they bark, something in your ears is damaged, so you become completely deaf. And even worse are the forest people. They live in the trees and are no larger than children, and are mean and horribly ugly. Nay, *tuan*, it is better to stay here on Satunda!
> Had it only been true! How about catching a little forest troll, hairy and with a tail, or a cute puppy, large as a horse! However, vain hope; it is only the folk fantasy which – apart from the same pucks, goblins trolls and fairytale animals as back home – have also created a bunch of others on the Lesser Sunda Islands. Every mountain, every river and lake are populated by curious beings, and when you try to gather data about the animals of the islands, the islanders usually blend fancy with reality and tell about the most hideous fauna.[1]

Thus did the Swedish adventurer and cameraman Rolf Blomberg describe his experience with Sumbawa in the last waning days of the Dutch East Indies in 1941. Attracted by the dragons of nearby Komodo, Blomberg was one of the utter few outsiders to describe this sizable island, half the size of Belgium, for the general audience. His perspective might be typical of an educated Western traveller in late colonial Asia: a keen sense of observation coupled with a somewhat patronizing attitude to his 'boy' and the superstitions that permeated local culture. The two spots mentioned both loom large in the historiography of Sumbawa: the Tambora volcano due to the notorious eruption of 1815 with global consequences, and the picturesque

1 Blomberg, *Sydvart*, p. 88. Translation by the editor.

island Satunda (Satonda) as the place of origin of Bima, the leading kingdom on the island. A few months after the visit, the Imperial Japanese troops invaded the Western colonies in Southeast Asia. The Sumbawans were quick to overthrow the weak Dutch administration on their island and invite the Japanese authorities in the spring of 1942 – incidentally belying the passive image of them in Blomberg's account. While Blomberg was able to wait out the war unharmed on Java, most Europeans fared worse and were interned in camps. Among the tens of thousands of internees was a Dutch scholar and official who survived the ordeal and later on wrote the text that is translated and published here. But before we detail the life of Gerrit Jan Held, a few words about Sumbawa are called for.

Among the larger islands of Indonesia, Sumbawa has so far attracted relatively limited attention in spite of its obvious historical and ethnographic interest. Tucked in between the forces of Javanese culture, Makassarese influences, the impact of Islam, and the 'traditional' East Indonesian flow of life, Sumbawan civilization is the result of a centuries-long negotiation between religious, commercial, cultural and political forces with a larger Southeast Asian significance. While it might be less well-known than Bali, Lombok, Flores and Timor, the island is therefore a fascinating historical case that points to the processes that made Indonesia what it is today.[2] Geographically, Sumbawa lies close to the absolute centre of Indonesia, about halfway between Sabang and Merauke, a centrality that is reflected in the impact of the above-mentioned forces. It is also the very spot where two major groups of Austronesian languages meet; the language of West Sumbawa, Basa Semawa, is related to that of Lombok, while that of East Sumbawa, Nggahi Mbojo, has affinities with the languages of Sumba and Flores and is closer to Polynesian tongues than Malay and Javanese. The demographic centre of gravity is in the east with a population that was 50 per cent greater than the west in modern times.[3] From a historical point of view the two ethnic groups have had somewhat limited intercourse;

2 It has been argued that exactly this in-between-ness has made the island a neglected field with regard to Western scholarship on Indonesia. The position of Sumbawa was 'too' transitional between the eastern and western parts of the archipelago to catch much attention. It would have been too peripheral to interest those concerned with mainstream Indonesian culture, and too Islamic too attract students of East Indonesian cultures. Just, *Dou Donggo Social Organization*, p. 21.

3 Just, *Dou Donggo Social Organization*, p. 20. In c. 1986 there were 300,000 speakers of Basa Semawa, and 450,000 people speaking Nggahi Mbojo. There are (or were) also two minor highland languages in Bima which are distinct from Nggahi Mbojo: Kolonese and Wawonese. Just, *Dou Donggo Social Organization*, p. 46. An unrelated language was spoken in Tambora, a historical kingdom wiped out by the notorious volcanic eruption of 1815.

neither group had a name for the entire island, and it was only European cartographers in the early-modern era who established such a denomination by applying the name of the historical region in the west.

Sumbawa is around 15,448 square kilometres, and is therefore not a particularly small island.[4] It is the ninth island in Indonesia in terms of size. It is irregular in shape with the Saleh Bay as an inland sea in the middle, flanked to the north by the vast caldera of Mount Tambora, rising almost three kilometres into the sky. Like the other islands of the so-called Nusa Tenggara (Southeast Islands) group, Sumbawa is only partly fertile, although it has a tropical climate regulated by the monsoon. It has a periodically dry savannah climate and uneven rainfall. Especially during the easterly monsoon, from April to November, it makes an arid and barren impression. The lowlands are characterized by grass plains, while the highlands consist of forests and savannahs. The island lies to the east of the Wallace Line with a fauna that is a mixture between Asian and Australian features. It is suited to raise horses, a major export product for at least five centuries. Other Sumbawan products of note included rice, honey and sappanwood, a type of wood that was important for dyeing.[5]

Unlike in some other parts of eastern Indonesia, rice is a major commodity. Particularly in East Sumbawa, the harvests used to be plentiful enough to allow for export. The low population density – no more than about 20 people per square kilometre in the early twentieth century and substantially less in the early modern period – meant that there was plenty of land. This in turn favoured cultivation on *ladang* (dry rice fields) rather than the labour-intensive *sawah* (wet fields). The methods of cultivating the rice lands closely paralleled those of Java, with some variation.[6]

At the same time, Sumbawa lies somewhat outside the political centre of gravity of the sprawling archipelago. Like most regions in the East Indies, the island suffered its fair share of petty warfare, piracy and invasions, and it was deeply involved in political alliances and commercial networks. This is highlighted by the several splendid kettle drums from the ancient period that have been found on the adjacent island Sanghyang Api and that have

4 Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Indonesia*, p. 3. About 5,200 square miles including the nearby islands according to Goethals, *Kinship and Marriage in West Sumbawa*, p. 12; that would mean 13,500 square kilometres. Under the word 'Sumbawa', the English *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumbawa, accessed 16 February 2016) gives 15,214.13 square kilometres. The editor has no explanation for these discrepancies.

5 De Jong Boers, 'Sustainability and Time Perspective in Natural Resource Management', pp. 261-267.

6 Jasper, 'Het eiland Soembawa en zijn bevolking', p. 88.

parallels with various other regions in Southeast Asia.[7] Still, its traceable history shows fewer disruptions than many other parts of Indonesia. Apart from a Javanese invasion in 1357, little is known of violent altercations in the ancient period. Influences from ancient Java are clearly discernible in the form of images, inscriptions and traditions, though we still do not know a great deal about the social and cultural dynamics of this impact.[8] The Javanese poem *Deśawarnana* (1365) mentions Taliwang, Dompu, Sape, Sanghyang Api, Bima, Seran and Utan as places coming under the authority of the Majapahit Empire. The degree of actual Javanese control is debatable, but it is assumed that the Javanese introduced horses and irrigated rice cultivation.[9]

Historian Tony Reid has argued that Southeast Asia experienced an upsurge in trading activities from the fifteenth century until about 1680, the 'age of commerce', propelled by its strategic geographic location and its own valuable export products.[10] From what little evidence there is, Sumbawa was involved in the system of interlocking trade routes that linked various parts of maritime Asia; in fact, it was the only region in the Southeast Asian archipelago that specialized in cutting and exporting the valuable sappanwood. Other export products known from the early modern era include, rice, beeswax, honey, bird's nests, salt, cotton, and not least horses of excellent quality.[11] Premodern texts from Bali and Lombok refer to Bima, Kore (Sanggar), and West Sumbawa as places where good horses could be obtained.[12] Sumbawans were not among the more common skippers in the early modern ports of Java, but they were far from unknown.[13] Makassar in South Sulawesi was a vital partner in trading relations, both before and after the onset of Dutch suzerainty. When the Portuguese conquered Melaka in 1511, part of its trade moved to other places on Sumatra, Java and Sulawesi. Later on, in the seventeenth century, the trading centres on Java were afflicted by political troubles which altered the inter-island trade route. At this point Makassar became an important emporium, and soon a wide-reaching maritime empire. Traders from Makassar would go to Sumbawa to acquire Bima cloth, horses, buffaloes, genitri seed and sappanwood. From Makassar

7 Chambert-Loir, *Kerajaan Bima dalam sastra dan sejarah*, p. 239.

8 Hitchcock, *Islam and Identity in Eastern Indonesia*, pp. 30-31.

9 De Jong Boers, 'Mount Tambora in 1815', p. 39.

10 Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, I-II.

11 De Jong Boers, 'Mount Tambora in 1815', p. 39.

12 Chambert-Loir, 'Etat, cité, commerce', p. 101, referring to the Javano-Balinese text *Rangga Lawe*; Suparman, *Babad Lombok*, p. 349.

13 Knaap, *Shallow Waters, Rising Tide*, p. 209.

the Bima cloth was in turn exported to Spanish Manila, Pasir and Kutai (on Kalimantan) while the sappanwood found buyers in Portuguese Macau.[14]

In the course of the eighteenth century West Sumbawa exported increasing quantities of raw cotton, rice and other agricultural products to Makassar, receiving Indian cloth and earthenware in return. Bima in the east likewise exported rice, which was vital for faraway places such as Banda and, later on, Batavia. In the eighteenth century it also and increasingly provided South Sulawesi with maritime products.[15] The island was moreover a station in the intricate network of trade routes operated by the traders of East Ceram in Maluku who acquired slaves, massoi bark and other valuable items in the far east and sold them in the harbours of Sumbawa, Lombok, Bali and other places.[16] Indeed, the Bima Bay which enters about 20 kilometres into East Sumbawa from the north, forms one of the best natural harbours in the world, and it therefore not surprising that the rice- and sappan-producing Bima Kingdom held special importance in relations with the outer world.[17] Manggarai in East Flores and Sumba were claimed and at least partly dominated by Bima since the sixteenth or seventeenth century although these areas did not adopt the Muslim religion that was so fervently upheld by the elites of West and East Sumbawa. The Bimanese held a patronizing attitude to their eastern neighbours, reflected in the claim made by a commander in 1762 when speaking to Manggaraian chiefs: 'Know that if Bima is the soul, Manggarai is the body; and if Bima is the wind, Manggarai is the leaves of the tree.'[18] A darker side of the picture is the steady stream of slaves that went from these regions to Makassar and Sumbawa.[19] Unlike the situation today, premodern Southeast Asia was usually sparsely populated and Sumbawa was not an exception with maybe ten to twelve inhabitants per square kilometre; thus, human labour was a valuable item of trade or tribute.

Considering its commercial importance in the region it comes as no surprise that Bima has loomed large in the few historical studies which

14 Noorduyn, 'De handelsrelaties van het Makassarsche rijk', pp. 97, 104, 106, 114.

15 Knaap & Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*, pp. 141-142.

16 Widjojo, *The Revolt of Prince Nuku*, p. 135.

17 Just, *Dou Donggo Social Organization*, p. 17; Chambert-Loir, 'Etat, cité, commerce'.

18 Sjamsuddin, *Memori Pulau Sumbawa*, p. 63. One may compare a Bimanese history of Manggarai from c. 1819 which alleges that the Manggaraians 'were as devils who had no master to govern them until by Allah's omnipotence a *dewa-dewa* named Sang Bima, with his comrades came.' Sang Bima is the ancestor of the rulers of Bima, a culture hero who taught the Manggaraians to cut their hair and wear loincloths. From this time Manggarai and Sumba allegedly pledged allegiance to Bima. Lewis, *The Stranger-Kings of Sikka*, pp. 172-173.

19 Knaap & Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*, p. 142.

have been devoted to Sumbawa. Henri Chambert-Loir has characterized Bima as a remarkably structured kingdom, vertically as well as horizontally. Vertically, society was divided into two noble classes (*ruma* and *rato*) and a class of free people (*dou mardika*) while the numerous slaves, often originating from Manggarai and Sumba, did not have a legal status. Kinship was based on cognatic descent, meaning that it was counted on the father's as well as the mother's side and entailed cousin marriages. Presumably, this was due to strong cultural influences from South Sulawesi.[20] Horizontally, the population was divided into groups known as *dari* which are often likened to guilds since they were defined after professions. However, they can also be defined as endogamous groups deriving from clans. The system was kept in place by a relatively strong royal centre headed by the king or sultan and his vizier, Raja Bicara.[21] The actual handling of the affairs were not done by the sultan himself but rather by the Raja Bicara, who governed with the help of a council consisting of a large number of dignitaries with executive, legislative and religious functions. Their activities reached down to the village level, thus cementing the social stratification. It was a stable but not always dynamic society which took great care to document itself: the historiography of Bima is fairly extensive and varied although it has still not been fully utilized by researchers.[22]

West Sumbawa, or Sumbawa Proper, displays parallels with Bima as well as great differences. In a similar way one can discern a division between nobles, free men and slaves. Unlike many societies of eastern Indonesia, society was not based on clans; the kinship system as we know it was cognatic, where non-unilineal descent groups had great importance.[23] The king or sultan governed in cooperation with a council consisting of three ministers (*menteri*), five lords (*memanca*) and seven chiefs (*lelurah*).[24] The state was based on a strong aristocracy which possessed the agricultural land, and a network of religious figures, ulemas. While the ruler was the object of popular devotion and the focal figure of government, adat (body of customary rules) and law, his position was decidedly less stable than his counterpart in Bima. The kingdom was in fact a relatively loose federation of states whose lords (*datu*) had extensive autonomy: Taliwang, Serang and

20 Muhammad Adlin Sila, Jakarta, personal communication, February 2016.

21 Known also as Ruma Bicara, 'the lord who speaks'. The titleholders formed a sub-dynasty within the royal clan, similar to many Timorese kingdoms. Chambert-Loir & Salahuddin, *Bo' Sangaji Kai*', p. 609.

22 Chambert-Loir, 'Mythes et archives', pp. 220-221.

23 Goethals, *Kinship and Marriage in West Sumbawa*, p. 39.

24 Manca, *Sumbawa pada masa lalu*, p. 77.

Figure 1 A woman pounding grain in a highland village of West Sumbawa

Photo: Hans Hägerdal

Jarewe.[25] The known history of West Sumbawa is filled with power struggles among the nobility which allied with the Makassarese, Bugis, Balinese or Dutch, as the opportunity arose. Historical traditions from the Sumbawa Kingdom are much less precise than in Bima, although there was a body of writings in a Sulawesi-derived script.

25 Bongenaar, *De ontwikkeling van het zelfbesturend landschap in Nederlandsch-Indië*, I, pp. 680-681.

From political, cultural and economic perspectives Sumbawa was deeply involved with its neighbours. West Sumbawa, the land to which the term 'Sumbawa' originally applied, has a tongue related to the Sasak language of Lombok and had many historical affinities with its western neighbour. East Sumbawa, where an entirely different Austronesian language is spoken, was even more prone to political and commercial expansion and maintained strong interests on Flores and Sumba, possibly from the sixteenth century. But the island itself became a component and occasionally victim of the wider power game in the East Indian Archipelago. The local kingdoms came under the suzerainty of the Makassar Empire of South Sulawesi for a period in the seventeenth century, partly because of the abundance of rice that was produced in Bima.[26] It was a brief but significant period when Islam was established as the hegemonic creed, accompanied by Makassarese cultural influences. The royalty of Bima and Sumbawa Proper married princes and princesses from South Sulawesi with some regularity up to the mid-eighteenth century. As observed by modern anthropologists, religious practices do not seem to be much influenced by Java; the early missionaries rather came from the Malay world via Makassar.[27] The lively relations with Malay culture can be seen in the Arabic-derived Jawi script, which became common in East Sumbawa from the mid-seventeenth century.[28] Even more important was the arrival of lots of immigrants from Sulawesi during this period, which contributed to changes in marriage customs, clothing, architecture and so on. Meanwhile, increasing *sawah* cultivation meant that a larger population could be fed.[29] Historical methods do not allow secure counterfactual conclusions, but it is possible that the major archipelagic realms such as Aceh, Mataram and Makassar would have proceeded on the road towards expansion and political and cultural integration if early modern colonial forces, in particular the Dutch East India Company (VOC), had not interrupted the process. Historian Victor Lieberman has made a useful distinction between protected and vulnerable zones in Eurasian history, where the geographical features give protected zones a measure of safety against foreign invasion – Europe, Japan, mainland Southeast Asia – and therefore important preconditions for inner economic and political integration. On the other hand, the Middle East, India and China are vulnerable

26 Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies*, I, p. 67.

27 Damsté, 'Islam en Sirihpoean te Bima (Soembawa)'.

28 Sila, *Being Muslim in Bima of Sumbawa, Indonesia*, p. 28.

29 De Jong Boers, 'Mount Tambora in 1815', p. 39; Sila, *Being Muslim in Bima of Sumbawa, Indonesia*, p. 46.

zones that have repeatedly been the subject of military aggression.[30] Island Southeast Asia was largely a protected zone until European sea power was able to penetrate the region after 1511.

With Makassar's might broken through a succession of wars, the VOC took over its role as suzerain in 1667-1669. This circumstance enabled a number of minor polities in eastern Indonesia to pursue an autonomous existence under the contracts concluded with the Dutch. To these belonged the six princedoms of Sumbawa – Sumbawa Proper, Bima, Dompu, Tambora, Sanggar and Pekat. Their governance stabilized in forms that were not fundamentally changed until the early twentieth century. Still, the close ties that had been formed between the aristocracies of Sumbawa and South Sulawesi were not broken that easily. For a very long time after 1667 the Sumbawans had intense intercourse with their former suzerains, not always under peaceful circumstances. In the late seventeenth century dissatisfied elements from the Bugis and Makassarese lands used Sumbawa as a base for operations against European or indigenous enemies.[31] They sometimes turned to indiscriminate piracy and ravaged the coastal lands of the island. Nevertheless, the islanders were occasionally able to put the seaborne marauders to flight, as exemplified in a letter by a few indigenous lords to the VOC authorities:

> In this time [the Makassarese pirate princes] Karaeng Jarannika and Karaeng Pamolikang once again arrived at Kampu in order to strengthen their fortification. They asked Raja Kore to hand over all the Dompunese who were in his land. However, Raja Dompu would not allow it. For we had promised, all together, to fight the enemy in unison, so that Your Grace's men, Raja Tambora, Raja Dompu, Raja Kore, and Bumi Partiga [of Bima], took to the arms. There was mutual fighting, but Karaeng Jarannika and Karaeng Pamolikang were put to flight, retreating to their ships at night. However, Kare Kanjar and all the Makassarese with him, who had remained at Alas, were attacked by Tureli Barambon who got at them at Alas with some Tamborese and Dompunese. The men of Your Grace put trust in the power of the [Dutch East India] Company and overwhelmed their stockade where their wives and children had been left. Kare Kanjar and 30 of his men fell, and we also took 70 of their cannons, over which

30 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, II, p. 85.

31 Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*, pp. 280-281.

> victory we felt a great joy in our hearts, for we were first like stones sunk in the sea, but now we are like the wood that floats on the waves.[32]

Possibly inspired by the external threats, there were also local ambitions to unite the island under one rule, most notably by the Tambora Kingdom, in the last years of the seventeenth century. The violent and anti-Dutch struggle of the Tamborese in 1695-1697 has its given interest since it was the first known initiative to create an independent all-Sumbawan realm, although the resources of the small kingdom were soon exhausted.[33] The eighteenth century saw a higher degree of stability although it had its share of armed conflicts. The cultural ties between West Sumbawa and Lombok also played a role in engendering conflicts due to the expansionism of the Balinese Kingdom of Karangasem. Lombok was subordinated by the Balinese in the period 1676-1748, which led to an outdrawn up-and-down struggle with the West Sumbawan kingdom, lasting up to 1789.[34] The six princedoms carried on under varying fortunes, loosely supervised by the VOC authorities in Makassar and a minor outpost in Bima in the east.

At the very least, the attentiveness of the VOC employees ensured that an amount of archival sources about Sumbawa has survived – it is only from the mid-seventeenth century that we possess sufficient materials to write a detailed history of the island. The colonial archive contains regular reports, travel diaries, legal proceedings, economic figures, and copies and translations of correspondence with local rulers. Since the texts were intended for internal use rather than to be disseminated, and were often secret in nature, they were less prone to embellishments than the travel accounts and geographical descriptions that flourished in earlymodern Europe. The problems of the European materials are nevertheless formidable. They are naturally written from an outsider perspective, sometimes by employees with an outspoken hostile attitude to the local populations. The well-known thesis of Edward Said of the connection between elliptic power relations and the production of knowledge about the 'East' is certainly applicable here: the very mechanism of data output was intimately tied to the economic

32 VOC 1637, f. 85-86, Letter from those of Tambora and Kalongkong to Governor-General Willem van Outhoorn and his council, received 7 August 1700. This and all subsequent references to archival VOC documents are from Nationaal Archief, The Hague, 1.04.02.

33 Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*, p. 290; Coolhaas, *Generale missiven*, V, p. 838. Under more peaceful circumstances, the Queen of Sumbawa and the Sultan of Bima married in the late eighteenth century, creating a bond that covered most of the island. Noorduyn, *Bima en Sumbawa*, p. 23.

34 The process is treated in some detail in Hägerdal, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects*.

and political interests of the Company.[35] Fortunately there is a limited but important category of indigenous Sumbawan historical sources of some consequence, those from Bima being listed by S.W.R. Mulyadi and S. Maryam R. Salahuddin. They include genealogies, legends, royal chronicles, poetic texts, diaries and collections of documents, and they provide an 'inside' version of events from at least the seventeenth century.[36]

One event on Sumbawa did have a wider, even global, significance: the volcanic eruption of Mount Tambora on the north coast in April-June 1815. The result was enormous destruction and loss of human life on Sumbawa and the nearby islands, either through the eruption itself or the rain of ash that caused severe famines. Estimates of the number of victims are notoriously unreliable, but the Swiss naturalist Heinrich Zollinger has calculated that half of the island's pre-1815 population of 170,000 disappeared: 10,000 were killed by the eruption itself, 38,000 died from famine and sicknesses, and 36,000 escaped to other islands.[37] Of the three kingdoms in the vicinity of the volcano, Pepekat and Tambora were completely wiped out, while most inhabitants in the third, Sanggar, succumbed from the eruption or the hardships that followed. One of the relatively few survivors, the Raja of Sanggar himself, has left a unique eyewitness account of the devastating event:

> About 7 pm on the 10th of April [1815], three distinct columns of flame burst forth near the top of Tambora Mountain, all of them apparently within the verge of the crater, and after ascending separately to a very great height, their tops united in the air in a troubled confused manner. In a short time the whole mountain next Sanggar appeared like a body of liquid fire extending itself in every direction. The fire and columns of flame continued to rage with unabated fury until the darkness, caused by the quantity of falling matter, obscured it at about 8 pm. Stones at this time fell very thick at Sanggar – some of them as large as two fists, but generally not larger than walnuts; between 9 and 10 pm ashes began to fall, and soon after a violent whirlwind ensued, which blew down nearly

35 Said, *Orientalism*. For a discussion of the uses of VOC data in an East Indonesia context, see Hägerdal, 'The Colonial Official as Ethnographer'.

36 Mulyadi and Salahuddin, *Katalogus Naskah Melayu Bima*. There were three writing systems in operation on the island: the Bugis-Makassarese script, a system deriving from the last-mentioned, and the Jawi script which was used in the Malay world and became the dominant system in East Sumbawa until the introduction of Latin letters in modern times. The preserved Bima literature is written in Malay rather than Bimanese.

37 Zollinger, *Verslag van eene reis naar Bima en Soembawa*, p. 176.

> every house in the village of Sanggar, carrying the tops and light parts away with it. In the part of Sanggar adjoining Tambora, its effects were much more violent, tearing up by the roots the largest trees, and carrying them into the air together with men, houses, cattle, and whatever else came within its influence (this will account for the immense number of floating trees seen at sea). The sea rose nearly 12 feet higher than it had ever been known to be before, and completely spoiled the only small spots of rice lands in Sanggar – sweeping away houses and everything within its reach.[38]

The quantities of ashes that spread in the atmosphere caused the global 'year without summer' with severe socio-economic implications around the world.[39] Archaeologists are currently uncovering what has been termed an Indonesian Pompeii in the area buried by the eruption, and the results give telling evidence of life on Sumbawa before the onset of the modern world.

A further interesting theme in Sumbawan history is the islanders' efforts to come to terms with external and modernizing forces. The VOC was certainly external, but it was hardly 'modernizing' in a meaningful way. Being a commercial company with early colonial features, it was opposed to free trade and made great efforts to control inter-island shipping. Although it was not always successful, the economic policy had petrifying effects and contributed to a sense of continuity in the six kingdoms of Sumbawa. One may ask how the Sumbawan elites and commoners actually regarded their foreign suzerains. The strongly Muslim and nationalist writer M. Hilir Ismail, in his study of Bima, portrays every sultan since the seventeenth century as an upright Muslim inspired by hatred of the Dutch and trying to oppose them whenever he could.[40] This is not entirely borne out by the original materials. Apart from a brief uprising by the King of Tambora in 1695-1697 and chaotic conditions in the Sumbawa Kingdom around 1762-1766, there were no anti-colonial rebellions coming from the court centres. In the best of worlds the Company could even function as a 'stranger king' whose foreign character made it suitable to mediate in intra-island conflicts.[41] The court diaries from Bima published by Henri Chambert-

38 Witness account given to the British officer Owen Phillips, in De Jong Boers, 'Mount Tambora in 1815', pp. 40-41. Spellings somewhat modified.

39 De Jong Boers, 'Mount Tambora in 1815'; D'Arcy Wood, *Tambora*.

40 Ismail, *Peran kesultanan Bima dalam perjalanan sejarah Nusantara*.

41 For the 'stranger king' syndrome in Indonesian-Dutch relations, see Henley, *Jealousy and Justice*.

Loir actually suggest genial Dutch-Sumbawan relations for periods.[42] Most commoners on the island before 1900 probably never saw a European, and the internal legal framework and administration were entirely left to the indigenous rulers. It was important that the VOC did not interfere in an institution that increasingly permeated the identity of the local population: the Muslim religion. While the Dutch suzerains were *kafir* and presumably provoked an amount of resentment for that reason, this did not translate into anti-colonial resistance until the late colonial era, more than a century after the demise of the VOC (1799).

Here we should consider, first, the changing faces and strategies of European (and Japanese) colonialism, and second, the efforts of the postcolonial state to replace ostensibly feudal and outmoded structures with a modern bureaucratic framework. The Sumbawan princedoms – those that survived the Tambora disaster – were able to pursue their own ways with a minimum of European presence throughout the nineteenth century, but at the same time the noose was tightened through the development of the colonial state. As remarked by theorists of colonialism such as John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, colonialism was not merely a question of expansion of direct rule, but also of integrating territories and resources in one's own sphere of interest. Indirect forms of colonial domination might be tolerated until exceptional circumstances forced direct intervention.[43] This may be seen in the Sumbawan case. In the contracts concluded over time, the role of the Dutch was transformed from that of allied superior to sovereign power. This culminated in the inclusion of the Sumbawan princedoms as 'fiefs' in the colonial state in 1905, and the direct colonial handling of taxation, public works, legal responsibilities and so on. As elsewhere in colonial Southeast Asia, direct interference caused anti-colonial uprisings, quickly suppressed by military force. Early protest movements were socially conservative, led in an impressionistic way, poorly armed, and unsupported by the traditional rulers. The pattern is roughly the same as in contemporary Burma, Vietnam, Laos and Timor. In a way the protests pointed forward to revolutionary and post-revolutionary times: the collaboration of indigenous rulers with the foreign and non-Muslim Dutch lowered their status in the eyes of the people.[44]

42 Chambert-Loir, *Iman dan diplomasi*.

43 The thesis of Gallagher and Robinson has been discussed in an Indonesian setting by Ardhana, *Nusa Tenggara nach Einrichtung der Kolonialherrschaft 1915 bis 1950*, pp. 4-7.

44 Ardhana, *Nusa Tenggara nach Einrichtung der Kolonialherrschaft 1915 bis 1950*.

A new kind of intervention was the Japanese occupation in 1942 to 1945, which co-opted the two remaining sultans on the island. With one stroke the fragility of the colonial system was highlighted. A mutiny among soldiers and policemen paved the way for the invaders who were actually formally invited by the sultans. In Bima cheering crowds shouted *'Hidup Nippon!'* (Long live Japan!) and welcomed the soldiers with a gate of honour labelled with the Japanese year 2602 (Anno Jimmu Tenno).[45] The Dutch may have underestimated the resentment against colonial control even in areas with relatively few Western enterprises and initiatives disturbing the 'traditional' way of life. As in the rest of Indonesia, the Japanese period brought hardships and excesses, with forced *rumusha* labour and recruitment of comfort women, but also paved the way for nationalist sentiments. The new masters paid attention to basic education which the Dutch had not cared much about – some 99 per cent of the population was illiterate at their arrival.[46] After Sukarno's proclamation of independence (17 August 1945) and the formal Japanese capitulation (2 September), the republican-minded Sultan of Sumbawa formally took over the authority held by the Japanese *bunken-kanrikan*.[47] The stance of the Sultan of Bima was less emphatic but he claimed his land as a special territory within the Indonesian Republic.[48] The Dutch soon retook their positions on the island, however. Although Sumbawa was a comparatively tranquil part of the Dutch-directed pseudo-state Negara Indonesia Timur during the Indonesian National Revolution, incidents occurred, and the attachment to the traditional rulers decreased as they were forced to cooperate with the colonial authorities. A number of changes took place to make the hierarchical system of the sultanates more accountable and introduce a degree of popular participation in the political processes. But it was increasingly clear that the old elite lived on borrowed time. After the gaining of independence in 1949, the old forms of power were phased out as feudal remains and the sultanates were abolished in the late

45 Bongenaar, *De ontwikkeling van het zelfbesturend landschap van Nederlandsch-Indië*, II, p. 269.

46 *Sejarah Daerah Nusa Tenggara Barat*, pp. 176-177.

47 The *bunken-kanrikan* was the Japanese leader of a sub-district (Dutch *onderafdeling*).

48 Bongenaar, *De ontwikkeling van het zelfbesturend landschap van Nederlandsch-Indië*, II, p. 281; Tajib, *Sejarah Bima Dana Mbojo*, p. 342. The position of Sultan Bima is portrayed rather differently depending on the writer. Indonesian historiography has tended to describe him as a good anti-colonial nationalist, while others write that he tried to restrain republican agitation in his realm in the fall of 1945.

1950s, like hundreds of similar princedoms in the old Dutch possessions in Indonesia.

In spite of its obvious interest in the context of Indonesian historical processes, relatively little research has been undertaken about the past of Sumbawa. Indonesian history has often been scrutinized from the central perspective of Java or Batavia/Jakarta, and studies on colonial history were overly focused on Dutch dispositions until not so long ago. Since about the 1970s, historians and anthropologists with a historical perspective have discovered the great variety of the historical experience in the area now known as Indonesia. International research has highlighted the trajectories of indigenous polities of Sumatra, Sulawesi, Maluku, Timor and so on. In Indonesia itself, local studies were not encouraged during the over-centralized Orde Baru, the Suharto regime that held sway until 1998. Subsequently, however, local historical studies have received a boost here, too.[49]

For Sumbawa there is so far no comprehensive historical narrative in a Western language. The closest we get is *Bima en Sumbawa* (1987), a collection of hitherto unpublished Dutch texts by Albertus Ligtvoet and Gerrit Pieter Rouffaer, edited and commented by the late Jacobus Noorduyn, director of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV). These texts give a number of historical particulars about the principal sultanates (Sumbawa Proper and Bima) and about the antiquities of Bima. Although very useful, the notes are too fragmentary to serve as a historical survey and are written in a language that few people outside the Netherlands master. Two important studies of the sultanates were undertaken in late Suharto times. The Sumbawan nobleman Lalu Manca wrote *Sumbawa pada masa lalu* (1984, new edition 2011) which followed the vicissitudes of Sumbawa Proper (West Sumbawa) up to the eve of the Japanese occupation in which he had a role as the trustee of the sultan. Lalu Manca made use of a few Dutch sources, but built his study primarily on local materials such as chronicles (*buk*) and poetic-historical works (*syair*), presenting much information not found elsewhere. A similar effort was undertaken by the educationist and Golkar functionary H. Abdullah Tajib who, with his *Sejarah Bima Dana Mbojo* (1995), studied the history of Bima up to Indonesian independence in great detail. This study contained much that was new, utilizing local

49 Hägerdal, 'Eastern Indonesia and the Writing of History', pp. 91-92.

chronicles, documents and traditions.[50] Bima has also been the object of research by the anthropologist Michael Hitchcock, whose work *Islam and Identity in Eastern Indonesia* (1996) contains many historical references, and the French scholar Henri Chambert-Loir, who has published several historically significant Bimanese texts in Malay. Moreover, a number of works dealing with the so-called Southeastern Islands (Nusa Tenggara), the chain of islands from Lombok to Timor, have included discussions of Sumbawan political, social and economic history. To these belong the official standard work *Sejarah Daerah Nusa Tenggara Barat* (1977/78). The Balinese historian I Gde Parimartha has traced colonial expansion and economic structures in the area in *Perdagangan dan politik di Nusa Tenggara 1815-1915* (2002), where he makes some very useful remarks about trading connections that tied Sumbawa to the outer world. The period after 1915 has been similarly studied by another Balinese scholar, I Ketut Ardhana, in *Nusa Tenggara nach Einrichtung der Kolonialherrschaft 1915 bis 1950* (2000). The Tambora disaster has lately received considerable attention. The subject was briefly researched by Bernice de Jong Boers, and the wide-reaching global implications were later expanded by a host of scholars, including Clive Oppenheimer and Gillen D'Arcy Wood.[51]

There is, however, a narrative of Sumbawa's history that lay buried in a private home and later in an archive in the Netherlands for 60 long years due to the untimely demise of its author. This is Gerrit Jan Held's text 'Sumbawa; geschiedenis' from 1955, which is here translated under the title *History of Sumbawa*. Held may not belong to the more well-known Dutch Indologists, for the simple reason that his academic career was abruptly cut short before it had taken off in earnest. He can be seen as a not untypical example of the academics who were drawn to Oriental studies in the later days of the Dutch colonial state. Held was born on 1 July 1906 in Kampen, an old Hanseatic city on the banks of the IJssel River. In the interwar years Leiden was – as it still is – a major centre for Indology and colonial studies, and the young man commenced university studies in the field in 1926. Over the next five years, up to 1931, he studied languages,

50 Tajib seems to draw heavily on an unpublished manuscript by Abdullah Ahmad, 'Kerajaan Bima dan keberadaannya' (1992). A number of studies on Bima have surfaced in Bahasa Indonesia in the last decades, some of them highly derivative and adding little that is new about the pre-independence history, others containing certain new perspectives and data. Among these are Zuhdi and Wulandari, *Kerajaan tradisional di Indonesia: Bima*, and Ismail, *Peran kesultanan Bima dalam perjalanan sejarah Nusantara*.

51 De Jong Boers, 'Mount Tambora in 1815'; Oppenheimer, 'Climatic, Environmental and Human Consequences of the Largest Known Historic Eruption'; D'Arcy Wood, *Tambora*.

history, and anthropology, and later took up post-graduate studies. In 1936 he successfully defended his PhD thesis, *The Mahabharata: An Ethnological Study*. The high quality of this work was awarded with the *cum laude* ('with praise') label. In the meanwhile he married Bouwina H.G. Haan; the couple never had any children. (Much later, about five years after Held's death, Bouwina married another Dutch Indologist, the scholar of Sulawesi A.A. Cense.) In 1935 Held was employed by the Dutch Bible Society in New Guinea (Papua). His task was to provide the society with advice about local cultures which could be useful for conducting Bible translations and missionary work. Furthermore he was to carry out linguistic and ethnographic work and keep check on the prospects for missionary work on Bali, Java and Sulawesi. It was by no means an easy task; the society saw Papuan cultures in a negative light that contrasted with Held's scholarly curiosity, and relations with his employers deteriorated over time. In 1940 he took up work in the service of the government in Bandung as a *taalambtenaar* (language official). By this time the winds of war were already blowing across the world, and when the Japanese occupied the East Indies in 1942 Held shared the fate of so many of his compatriots. He joined the KNIL (Royal Dutch Indies Army) as an officer in the reserve and was taken prisoner. During the remainder of the war he was kept in a prisoner camp which he endured relatively well.

After the conclusion of the war Held was appointed professor at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in the Nooduniversiteit te Batavia, which later became Universitas Indonesia. While the Indonesian National Revolution unfolded he published a major ethnographic work on Papua, *Papoea's van Waropen* (1947), which contained materials about social structure, material culture, ritual and tradition.[52] With the Indonesian achievement of independence a new situation arose. American academics, motivated by political needs, showed an interest in conducting systematic studies of the new republic. Held suggested that American anthropologists start up fieldwork in northern Maluku, while he and his colleagues in the Institute of Language and Cultural Sciences would produce monographs about other parts of the island nation. It was now that he started to think of Sumbawa as a potentially interesting case. In 1950 he nevertheless returned to the Netherlands, frustrated by his cumbersome experience with Indonesia. An American colleague invited him to teach at Yale, an offer he gratefully accepted. After a moderately successful sojourn in

52 The KITLV Archive, Leiden, houses a collection of documents about Papua (Or. 521, KITLV-inventaris 173) by Held, donated by Bouwina in 1980.

the United States, he was notified that the Indonesians would be happy to receive him back to conduct anthropological research since his work stood in high regard.

In 1952 Held therefore came back to Indonesia – a somewhat unusual event since most of the old Dutch officials preferred to leave the country after independence. He now developed plans for a major anthropological investigation on Sumbawa, a region hitherto little treated in the Dutch colonial scholarly literature. In 1953 he carried out eight weeks of preliminary fieldwork on the island. In 1954 he stayed at Dompu between June and September, and, as the present text shows, he took a great interest in the history and culture of this neglected sultanate. In June-September 1955 he again spent time on Sumbawa, this time in Bima in the east.[53] For Held, Sumbawa displayed certain old Indonesian societal patterns in spite of its present Muslim profile, which made the island a fascinating field of study. Unfortunately, he was never given the opportunity to publish what he had found. Back in Jakarta he prepared to leave for the Netherlands again to take up a new academic position. Before departure, however, he expired after a heart attack on 28 September 1955. While Held was among the more prominent Dutch anthropologists of his time, his career was rather uneven. According to his colleague and friend J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong he was not an entirely easy person to get along with. He could be somewhat brusque and prickly in his communication with others, and hid his mindset under a cover of irony and light-hearted mockery. His reactions were often unexpected and even bewildering, although he could also be a strongly stimulating intellectual acquaintance. Nothing of this diminishes his status as a sharp, daring and devoted thinker whose early demise was a great loss for anthropological studies in the Netherland. Since 1980 his papers have rested at the KITLV in Leiden.[54] The Held collection encompasses 94 pieces in all, consisting of letters, copies of articles, and various texts in progress. His more important unfinished works on Sumbawa can be summarized as follows:

53 In his PhD thesis about the kinship system of Sumbawa, Peter Randall Goethals thanks Held '[f]or his important stimulation, and personal encouragement'. Goethals, *Kinship and Marriage in West Sumbawa*, p. iii.

54 This biographical sketch is based on a short account of his life authored by Bouwina and appended to his collection in KITLV, Leiden, H 1220: 1; and the obituary by J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, 'Herdenking van Gerrit Jan Held', pp. 343-354.

28. Geschiedenis.
29. Individu en verwantschap; Functionele groepen.
30. Politieke organisatie.
31. Rijksmythe en Structuur.
32. Individu en verwantschap (pp. 1-49). – Dari (pp. 53-73).
33. Dari (pp. 73-144).
34. Politieke organisatie (pp. 1-86).
35. Rijksmythe. – Structuur (pp. 1-188).
36. Tekstfragmenten.[55]

The present text, 'Sumbawa; geschiedenis', has been translated from Dutch into English. Some of the passages in the text contain multiple subordinate clauses, making them difficult to translate into readable English. I have therefore made slight changes in the syntax, often splitting longer sentences into shorter ones. Furthermore, the spelling of names has been modernized except in some older quotations. The original 'tj' is rendered as 'c', 'dj' as 'j', 'j' as 'y', 'oe' as 'u'. Geographical names have sometimes been altered in accordance with modern Indonesian usage: for example, Tallo' rather than Tello, Bungaya rather than Bongaai. The same goes for a few indigenous terms that occur over the pages: Arung instead of Aroe, Datu instead of Datoea. The original is typewritten and consists of 61 pages plus a number of additional pages. On the back sides of the manuscript sheets Held scribbled down extensive notes, clearly for his own use. These notes are hardly legible, however, so no attempt has been made to transcribe and translate them. In the original there is no real division of the text into chapters. For the sake of clarity I divided the work into six chapters. I also added a few headings within the chapters to avoid unnecessary confusion. The original, on the other hand, has numerous headings in the margins that indicate the subject of the following paragraph or paragraphs. These headings have been kept and put within brackets.

In spite of the relative lack of research on Sumbawa, our knowledge of the island has increased substantially since Held wrote his piece. Original

55 The list follows H 1220, KITLV-inventaris 36. I understand that there have been plans of publishing some of Held's anthropological field notes, although this does not yet seem to have materialized. Cf. Hitchcock, *Islam and Identity in Eastern Indonesia*, p. 18. At another place in the KITLV Archive a transcript of a Bima chronicle made by Held is found, Or. 505(a). This chronicle – or rather document compilation – *Bo' Sangaji Kai*, was much later published by Chambert-Loir and Salahuddin (1999). Strangely, Held does not seem to have been acquainted with the important Bimanese mytho-historical text *Ceritera asal bangsa jin dan segala dewa-dewa* (also published by Chambert-Loir, 1985).

sources have been published, such as the *Generale missiven* of the VOC and a number of indigenous Bimanese texts edited by Henri Chambert-Loir. Apart from the works mentioned above, academic studies of Lombok, Sulawesi, Flores, the Dutch colonial state and maritime Southeast Asia in general have relevance for our understanding of the Sumbawan past. I have therefore tried to bring the text up to date by adding detailed footnotes. Held's narrative is as good as his sources, and he was occasionally led astray by faulty data in older studies by Zollinger, Van Braam Morris, Jasper etc. For referential purposes it is therefore necessary that the reader consults the footnotes. While I have made some forays into unpublished materials – Dutch archival sources, local manuscripts in Bahasa Indonesia – it needs to be emphasized that there is much more to be done in terms of archival research. To a large extent the history of Sumbawa remains to be written by anyone with the time and patience to go through the archival bundles in The Hague and in Jakarta.

What, then, does the manuscript tell us of Sumbawa that we do not know from other published sources? The author took his information from a wide range of sources. Apart from Dutch standard works he used old travel accounts, *daghregister*s, contracts, and so on, but also archival and oral materials that he came across during his research. For example, Held repeatedly refers to a text by a certain Van der Velde with information about historical events, which the editor has not managed to track down in any bibliography or inventory. He also refers to texts with historical content that he found in Indonesia and which may now be lost. Many details which were still obscure at his time have been greatly clarified by recent research, but until now no satisfactory narrative of the whole history of Sumbawa has been published, which justifies the endeavour to make the Held text available to a broader audience.