





Existence and Cultural Influence of Malay Peoples in the Banda Islands of the Central Moluccas from the 16th to the 19th Century

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Abstract. A significant contribution to the advancement of civilization in the Nusantara (Indonesian Archipelago) has been made by the Malay people, one of the ethnic groups. Particularly in Southeast Asia, the Malay language has been widely used since the 16th and 17th centuries. Malay language was also used in official correspondence, agreements made between kings or other regional leaders, and also in daily use conversations of trading activities. The Malay people's primary trading center was the Banda Islands. These islands were renowned for producing spice, specifically nutmeg. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, these islands were the site of trade activities that involved Malay, Middle Eastern, Chinese, Turkish, and local traders. Traders from Seram, Kei, Papua, Makassar, Java, Bugis, and other ethnic groups also conducted trading activities on these islands. The existence of enclave villages in the form of toponymic and archaeological remains served as evidence of the cultural heritage of the Malay trading community. Some evidences of the influences of the arrival of ethnic Malay traders were found by tracing down the historical sources and archaeological remains. Malay culture has been presented in this region. These data were recorded in the toponymic information for the villages' names, the names of nutmeg smoking factories, and also in the naming of other objects. The remain of mosques and tombs are also enduring archaeological evidence in these islands. Material evidence of the presence of the Malay population and their cultural influences will offer more detail information about the diaspora and the role of local Nusantara traders in trade in the Maluku region, particularly on Banda Islands.

Keywords: Banda · Cemetery · Mosque · Malay · Toponymy · Trade

1 Introduction

By end of the 16th century, the demand for commodities from Asia was the primary contribution to the profit enjoyed by European traders. The wealth of the Malay area lied in the spices, especially cloves, nutmeg, and peppercorn. Throughout most of the 16th century, the Portuguese monopolized the main spice route by using the trading wind to sail from the Cape of Hope (Tanjung Harapan) to Malacca. Lisbon was the center of

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spices in the West. Malacca received its supply from Javanese traders who collected it directly from the Maluku Islands. The supply of spices was abundant and inexpensive. However, for Europeans, prices of spices in Europe needed to be maintained at a high level. For this reason, they had to monopolize the spice supply.

The conquest of the people of Malacca by the Portuguese in 1511 did not end the trading in Malay region. The fall of Malacca strengthened the trading center and its network, such as those in Aceh, Makassar, Sulu, Ternate, Tidore, and waterfront cities along the northern shore of Java. The Javanese through Sulawesi even expanded the Malay network not only in Southeast Asia but also towards the northern coast of Australia. Towards early 16th century, the centralized Malay network started to spread to the trading centers in almost all of the Southeast Asia region [1].

Malay had a long tradition and culture to accommodate and assimilate its trading system and the new commercial organization that had been introduced by foreign traders. In the mean time, the Arab traders spread the Islamic culture to the inhabitants of the coastal area of Nusantara at the time, around three centuries prior to the arrival of the European traders. The Chinese traders had apparently made their journey to Java to procure textile in the 1st century BC. The Arab traders had made a far stronger and broader commercial presence compared to the previous traders. It was said that the Arabic system provided a strong base for the Dutch commercial expansion [2]. Subsequently, when Serrão arrived in Banda in 1512, he obtained nutmeg and offered textile commodity for clothing. At the time, nutmeg was brought to the market of Lisbon, and the Portuguese enjoyed a profit of at least 1,000 percent. Normally these spices had been bought locally by Malay and Chinese traders and was brought to the Persian Gulf and was taken by the *cafilahs* to the Mediterania and distributed through Constantinopel, Genoa, or Venezia. Although the Portuguese in Banda had enjoyed the trading profit margin for almost one century, the Portuguese traders in the Maluku waters decided to reside in the Ternate area. In 1529 Portuguese built a fort in Neira but deserted the project unfinished. For the supply of the Banda cloves and nutmeg, the Portuguese relied on the regional traders who brought these spices to Ternate and Tidore [3].

Banda Islands was the place of origin of nutmeg trees (*Myristica Fragrans*) that generates nutmeg as spice and the highly invaluable *fuli*, a spice used for seasoning, preservation, and medical herb. When the first European, namely the Portuguese arrived there in 1512, they found an established community of traders in Banda. They handled nutmeg and other products in the region of Maluku, such as cloves and slaves. They also revealed that they had embraced the Islamic religion. Its social organization was led by a traditional leader known as *Orang Kaya* (the rich person) who conducted the trading negotiations with external parties up to the 16th century, without any disturbance, with the Portuguese as their main European consumers. However, when the Dutch came there for the first time in 1599, followed by the British in 1601, what happened next was competition and struggle of trading monopoly in this region that led to the bloody massacre of the local leaders, battles between the British and Dutch traders, and the wars against the local people. While the British operated its trading post in the islands of Run and Ai in 1602, the Dutch negotiated for a “non-cancellable monopoly” with the people of Banda regarding the nutmeg trading [4]. Nevertheless, there was an indication that *Orang Kaya* never had any real intention of giving away the monopoly as they were

dependent of continued trading with other Asian traders in bringing in food, clothing and other items of daily need. They were not aware that the Dutch took the agreement seriously [5].

2 Base of Study

As often mentioned in historical sources, the Malay had been traders. Their trading activities spanned from the western point that was centralized in Malacca to the eastern point in Maluku as the production source of spices. Of the products they bought from Javanese, Malay and Turkish traders were weapons and ammunition to protect them from the return of the Portuguese. The main slavery trading in the eastern islands involved the inhabitants of the Seram island, the experience of the people of Banda and their trading contacts were major factors in the transformation of Seram Laut into another commercial center in the east in the 17th century. These islands were regularly by Makassarese, Malay, Javanese and Bantenese traders. In 1632, an Ambonese inhabitant reported having seen one of the islands in Seram Laut being attacked by a ship with around eighty crew, eight of them were Malay, six were Makassarese, and the remaining from Bantam, Japara, dan Bukit. In early 16th century, Tom Pires recorded that Javanese and Malay traders stopped in Sumbawa and Birna to obtain the local textile for the market in Maluku. Rough textile from Cambay and finer varieties from Coromandel were equally appreciated. Finer textile was used for special events, while rough textile was imported for daily wear. Maluku made their own textile from tree bark by soaking it and beat it with a hammer on a sheet of wood. In this manner, the tree bark is stretched and made thin, long, or wide by combining the pieces. Textile was also made of cotton and from the bark of other bush trees that was made into thread and used particularly to decorate barkcloth [6].

Not all Malay were working as traders. Some were also working as slaves and plantation workers. When the Dutch started to have their full domination after the 1621 incident, to have the monopoly of nutmeg, VOC made a policy of importing manpower from various places. After their last conquest in Banda in 1621, slaves were imported from Gujarat, Malabar, Coromandel, the Malay Peninsula, Java, Kalimantan, the coastal area of China, and Buton. Some were brought from Maluku, Kai, and Aru, in addition to the Spanish prisoners from Java and Makassar [7].

Another role that was held by the Malay people was as language disseminators. The Malay language originated from Sumatera and was distributed through trading in the Strait of Malacca that became a principal trading area. The Javanese language was quite complex but was important in social life. In the colonial era, the Dutch used Malay language as their legal and administration language. Class hierarchy was apparently too difficult for traders to learn and use. The Malay people disseminated the Malay language as a *lingua franca* in conducting trading in numerous ports, that made foreigners learn the language for trading and legal purposes. Eventually the Malay language became the official language of the Republic of Indonesia.

In addition to being language disseminators, the Malay people also had their role as disseminators of the Islam teaching. They often lived and resided in areas where the population had not had any religion, although they had their own faith. Ricklefs recorded that Islam was introduced in numerous places by the people of Nusantara, particularly

the Moslem Malay and Javanese people who travelled to the eastern parts of Indonesia and conquered places that had no religion. On the encounter with Europe in Maluku, the Moslem Malay and Javanese traders proved their capability of competing in spice trading [4]. Not all islands received equal attention from the Islamic traders. They were sporadic in this regard as indicated in a study [8], in the pre-Islam diet practice, especially the presence of pork in the local diet that continued in several villages, while some other villages indicated lack of pork in their diet [9]. It shows that Islam had not had a strong influence in an area with an indication of pork consumption.

The Malay people in Banda took part in the Council of Custom. This council often held their gatherings in a location that was often known as *Ortatang*. As outsiders, the Malay people could maintain their neutral stand. People who gathered in Ortatang also accommodated the groups that were found in the Banda society, namely the *Ulilima* and *Ulisiwa* groups. It was also a confirmation of the assumption that the Ortatang area was the place of the Malay community who stood in the center between two largest groups in this area, namely the Ulisiwa and Ulilima people [10].

3 Research Materials and Methods

This research was conducted by tracing down the archaeological data sourced from research in previous years. Research material was also obtained from the results of tracing down historical sources, especially those related to pictorial map data. This study used a historical-archaeological approach by analyzing data from the two sources, until it reached to the data interpretation process. Support from related literature sources is also carried out to strengthen the interpretation of the results of this study.

4 Data and Discussion

4.1 The Use of Malay Language for Communication

Communication among traders plays an important role. The Malay language was believed to have been used as the communication language among traders that came from various places. It led to the appearance of interpreters as a new specialized profession in a port or kingdom. In the case with Banda, it led to the use of a language known as *Melayu Banda*. The military conquest in Banda Islands in 1621 by the Dutch East Indies Company, VOC (*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*) resulted in a more radical change. The transfer of the majority of the population of the islands that was followed by the implementation of a new plantation system, '*sistem pekebun-pala*' that brought in manpower from various places had reduced the use of the local indigenous Banda language. The use of Malay language had made significant influence in the change of language use. Then came what was known as the typical *Melayu Banda* [11].

In the first protestant church that was built in the city of Neira in the 1600s, the religious services that were performed in the 17th century used Dutch for the morning service and Malay language for the afternoon service. The church was mentioned by François Valentijn as "very spacious inside, with beautiful lighting, and benches, as well as a pulpit with a shape that resembled the indigenous traditional house of Banda with

European or Dutch style façade and columns [12]. The use of Malay language was not only limited to the daily conversation. The language was also used in correspondence by the local rulers, the king, or by the VOC rulers. Some of the letters from Banda or vice versa, used Malay language in Arabic characters. Malay language was also confirmed as being used in official and legal correspondence, and for the correspondence of church institutions, such as: *Kerkenraad* (Church Congregation) *Gereformeerd* (Calvinist) Batavia, that catered for the Dutch, Portugese, and Malay speaking congregations (established in 1621) [13].

4.2 The Naming of Places (Toponymy)

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, particularly the Portugese, the first Europeans that came to Banda, Banda Islands was not a quiet area. It had been an area of regional spice trading activities. Records also mentioned the presence of foreign traders in the port area. Of the six islands known in this area, the most important and renowned names were Neira (often pronounced as Neira and Nera) and Banda as the largest island. Banda Island produced a lot of spices and had 4 ports, namely: *Celamon* (*Calamon*), *Olutatam*, *Lontar* (*Bomtar*), *Komber* (*Comber*). Other islands that did not have any port sent their products to the main islands [14, 15].

Neira Island in an older map was a known name. However, due to the shift from the name of the island in the Gelderland Map that mentioned Banda Besar as merely “Banda” and the Island of Neira as “Pule Potac”, both names of these islands, Banda and Neira seemed to indicate the increase of trading and political domination of the two cities (see Fig. 1). It could also indicate the disappearance of the indigenous identity against the domination of the Malay and Javanese people. There was also another place



Fig. 1. The names of places of Nera, Ortattan, and Comber on the map of 1600s (Source: Claesz, 1601 [23])

known by the name of Ortattan as a place of meeting of the Council of Custom to settle issues among villages, and to distribute nutmeg harvest yield. It was an indication of a settlement political function, and constituted an important aspect of political structure in the precolonial Banda Based on the journal written by Gelderland (and several other historical chronicles) it was the place where *Orang Kaya* from various independent settlement areas gathers to discuss issues among villages. It was also an important trading site that was furnished with a port master (*syahbandar*). The above mentioned maps also provided several names of places that later disappeared from records, and perhaps under older names or languages that were later changed into the Malay language [16].

Nera Island was once an important port city and administrative city during the reigning era of VOC. The name Nera from the language perspective can also be linked with the word *nira* in the Malay language. In *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* the word *Nira* is defined as a sweet juice tapped from the flowers of *enau*, coconut, etc. [17]. This tapped sweet juice would then be used to make brown sugar or locally known as ‘*gula jawa*’ or ‘*gula merah*’. This sugar product is hardly ever mentioned in historical sources or European chronicles. The reason would perhaps because formerly brown sugar made from *enau* or *aren* tree (*Arenga pinnata*, *Arecaceae* family), and coconut sugar made of coconut trees (*Cocos nucifera*) was a commodity that was made to meet the need of the local people. Furthermore, this area had not been known for the mayang or enau trees, and instead was known for the numerous coconut trees that was often mentioned as the local resources of Banda at the time.

It is also of interest to link it with Lonthor, the name of a place in Banda Island and was also a substitute name for the Banda Island. The name could also be linked with the word *Lontar*, the name of a type of palm tree. *Siwalan* or *tal* or *lontar* tree (*Borassus flabellifer*) can also be tapped the juice of to make sugar. The word *lontar* originated from Sanskrit that has been adopted into Javanese language and subsequently into Indonesian. As such, both names of islands, *Nera* and *Lontar* had historical as well as etimological connections.

Lontar tree adapted easily and could be used in producing paper, sugar, syrup, and construction materials. The leaf of lontar was also popularly used as a media for writing or as an ancient paper [18]. The name *Nera* and *Lontar* could possibly be related to the arrival and influence of the Malay and Javanese people. The *nira* juice tapping technology could have been introduced by the Malay or Javanese people to Banda Islands.

Another naming of place is *Campong Timur* in the Ay Island. The use of the term *Campong* or *Kampung* is also closely connected with the term that is often used in the Malay community [19].

4.3 Construction of Worship House

An indication of the Malay people’s influence was also the construction of worship houses or mosques for the Islamic people. One of them was known as “*masjid kayu*”. Initially the mosque could have been made entirely of wood. Presently known by the name of Al-Mukhlisin, it is located in Kampung Baru, *Kecamatan* (subdistrict) Banda, and has been renovated completely without leaving any trace of the old construction. There was a stone with an inscription in the Arabic and Latin characters and language

in the mosque. The brief inscription informs of the number of the year and name of the mosque. It is assumed that the inscription constituted the establishment inscription or the renovation inscription of the mosque. The inscription was initially placed above the *mihrab* curve, however after the renovation it was moved to the external wall on the south. The inscription stone contains a picture of an animal in the middle, and slightly curved texts on the left and right sides written in the Arabic and Latin characters, namely the verse 29 Rajab on the right side, and verses 13 – 7 in the Arabic characters that start with an arrow mark. Underneath is a text of '*al-masjid al-jami*' and on the right side is a number in the Arabic character of the year 1889, and a text on the left side in the Latin character of the year 1889. Below the text of '*al-masjid al-jami*' is a picture of two fish in a stylized shape with tails intertwined. The picture of fish is flanked on the right and left sides by floral decorations.

The Al-Quran manuscript was also stored in the version that used European paper (Paris, France) with watermark in the form of a shield decorated with the picture of two animals and floral tassels on the right and left sides. This type of paper was made in 1674. Several chapters on the final part were gone. The manuscript was written in the Arabic characters and language in black ink. The al-Fatihah chapter became the start of the manuscript, while the *Hal ata 'ala al-insan* was the last chapter written in the manuscript. There was no pagination. Based on information gathered from informants around the mosque, the al-Quran manuscript also originated from Lonthor (see Fig. 2). Other findings that were housed in the mosque consisted of a drum, a shield, and a washing container (*padasan*).

Another archeological evidence of an Islamic worship house is the mosque in the village of Lonthor that is known as *Masjid Kota Marak*. The use of the term "*marak*"



Fig. 2. The Al-Quran stored at Jami Al-Mukhlisin Mosque, Kampung Baru (Source: Sarjiyanto, 2011)

indicates that the location had used to be busy or '*marak*' in the Malay language. The complete shape of the mosque is not known as only four foundation stones are left of the construction. The four stones indicate a plan of a square building of 330 x 310 cm. There is a well on the south side of the location of the mosque that is referred to by the local people as *perigi*, a word adopted from the Malay language. This well had a square plan with walls made of bricks. It does not contain any water at present due to the inexistence of the water spring. The size of the well at the moment indicates a depth of 180 cm, and the width of the wellhead of 120 x 130 cm.

Furthermore, indications were also found of Islam being embraced by some of the Banda people in Lonthor since at least the 15th century. As such, it can be concluded that the Banda Islands prior to the arrival of the European colonials had been quite developed. At least there had been moslem traders' activities from the 15th century to the 16th century based on historical sources and tombstones. There were quite numerous evidences from tombstones inscribed with the dates.

4.4 The Use of Malay Terms or Words

The first term that was most renowned in the Malay culture was the term *Orang Kaya* which means a person who controlled trading activities and owned a ship, money, slaves, and other prestigious objects, and had influence and power. A person referred to as *Orang Kaya* was sometimes put on a parallel status of *Raja* (see Fig. 3). Both *Raja* as well as *Orang Kaya* are terms adopted from the Malay language. The use grew broader partly due to the Malay language being used as the main language of trading. Evidence in Maluku of the use of Malay language in the communication with the external parties in early 1514 was found in two Malay letters from Ternate that were translated to Portugese. Oral Malay language could possibly have been used as the trading language several centuries prior to the arrival of the Europeans. The term *Orang Kaya* had a different treatment when referred to traditional leaders (leaders) of the category of 'respected people' that had received the authority by manipulating the resources in manners that had been approved by the local influential people who worked as brokers in the trading of commodities and with foreign traders [3].

With regard to terms, the use of the word '*datuk*' is found in cemetery sites in the Banda Islands. The term '*datuk*' is often used among the Malay people to refer to old men, grandfathers, or the eldest man in a family. The word is also used for their ancestors. In several areas, it becomes an honorary title given to a person who is considered the highest and most honored one. In Sumatera, it is sometimes used to distinguish the aristocratic status of a person. Furthermore, Malay was sometimes seen as identical with Islam as both were strongly connected. Cemeteries in Banda Islands indicate the presence of other communities as occupants of the area aside from the Banda people that were divided in two large groups, the Ulisiwa and Ulilima people who embraced the belief and worship of the ancestors.

A tomb of a datuk that was renowned in the area was that of Datuk Nira Bati Watro. It was located in the north of the village of Kampung Baru, on Neira Island. There were numerous ancient tombs in this location that had not been completely identified as a lot of them were mixed with or replaced with the new ones. The tomb of Datuk Nira Bati Watro was located in the middle of a new public cemetery, is provided with a graveyard



Fig. 3. The description by the Turkish traders (A); Male *Orang Kaya* of Banda (B); and female *Orang Kaya* of Banda (C) each with their own slave (Source: Claesz, 1601 [23])

made of wood and a fence made of wooden railing. Inside the graveyard is a sign of the burying of three individuals, namely the tomb of Datuk Nira Bati Watro located on the westernmost side, the tomb of Datuk Nira Ahmad at the center, and the tomb of Datuk Nira Mahmud on the east side. The tomb of Datuk Nira Bati Watro is marked with two tombstones made of coral that is in a broken state (see Fig. 4). The tombstone is decorated with carving in the shape of triangles that circle the sides of the tomb (see Fig. 5). The tomb of Datuk Nira Ahmad also consists of a tomb for the head and another for the feet. The tombstones were made of corals that were broken as well. The tomb is decorated with triangles. The tomb of Datuk Nira Mahmud is only marked with an unshaped stone. Information about the tomb of Datuk Nira Bati Watro was obtained from Mughtars Thalib, 64 years, a retired Head of the Religious Affairs Office of Banda. According to his father, Abdul Ghafar Thalib, Datuk Nira Bati Watro had been known as an Islamic preacher that had come from Sumatera and had been the first preacher that taught Islam in Banda.

An ancient cemetery complex was located on the west side of the cemetery complex of the tomb of Datuk Nira Bati Watro. The main tomb was known as that of Sayid Abdurrahman bin Alwi al-Attas that was located on the east side of the cemetery complex. Several parts of the tomb have been modified with the use of new materials made of stone and covered by ceramics. The tombstone is made of natural stone that resembled menhir. The name inscribed on the tombstone indicates an Arab from the clan of Al-Attas [20, 21]. In addition to the tomb connected to the title of ‘*datuk*’, there were other tombs that serve as evidences of Islam dissemination in Banda. Among them were tombs of officers referred to as ‘*kapiten*’, and a tomb that had been used for Syaikh Malik Ibrahim in Lonthor, Banda Besar Island.



Fig. 4. Graveyard of Datuk Nira Bati Watro, the Islamic preacher (Source: Sarjiyanto, 2011)



Fig. 5. The tombstone of Datuk Nirat Bati Watro embellished with tendrils and triangles (Source: Sarjiyanto, 2011)

The public cemetery complex of the people of Neira – Banda also include Islamic tombs of various ethnic groups. Among those of the Arab ethnic group, some clans could be identified, including: Assegaf, Ba'alawi, Ba'adillah, etc. Other tombs were those with typical characteristics of the Acehnese tombs (see Fig. 6), and some that indicate typical Banteneese tombs. Those of the typical Banteneese characteristics were development of the types of tombs of Demak – Troloyo. These two types of tombs is distinguished by the plants attached on the left and right sides of the tombs and resemble a pair of wings.



Fig. 6. The development of Acehnese tombs stone, 18th–19th Centuries (Source: Sarjiyanto, 2011)

Essentially the typical Bantenese tomb adopted the model of the gateway that was found in Surosowan. The finding of the typical Demak–Troloyo tomb in the cemetery indicates the Javanese influence in Banda.

Another Islamic cemetery complex is found in Desa Nusantara that is often known as the growing cemetery and the prince cemetery. The main tomb based on the shape resembles those in Ternate. Some ancient tombs are found in another island in the village of Lonthor that had flat or square shapes embellished with tendril and or triangle carving and Arabic calligraphy in kufic style. Arabic text or inscription were placed inside a circle and some were made on a straight line. The ancient tombs in Lonthor indicate typical tombs of Demak – Troloyo that were characterized by the inscription in Arabic characters of the kufic style. Other tombs had inscriptions of the number of year, the oldest were of 1027 H and 1618 M, and some inscribed tombstones from the 15th–16th centuries AD.

The use of Malay words or terms are also recorded in the use of names of nutmeg processing or smoking factories that are more popularly known by the name of *perk* (from a Dutch word of *perken* that means plantation). Numerous names of nutmeg plantations and smoking factory areas generally used Dutch terms or words. Nevertheless, some of them used local words, for instance, Perk Lautaka (from the name of an old village of Labetacca), Perk Kumbir (from the name of the village of Comber). Some names of nutmeg plantations used Malay words such as Perk Ortatang (from the name of the village of *Ortattan* or *Orang Datang*); in addition to *Perk Babi Mandi*, *Perk Mangku Batu* (*Bangko Batoe*).

The name *Perk Ortatang* as a variant of the name *Ordatang* can be seen in the map of Van Neck of 1599, one of the first European maps in the Banda Islands. Variants of the name that can be found in the map and the text include: *Orontatte*, *Ortattan*, *Orlatten*, *Ortatta*, *Ortetan*, and *Orang Datang* [19]. The location of Ordatang can be found in the map made by Valentijn who was in charge in Banda Islands in 1687–1688 who provided the latest possible date (*aterminus ante quem*) for the mourning in Ordatang

(Orontatte) in 1687. As such, *Ordatang* was developed in the following years, after Coen had implemented the *pekebun-pala perken* system. Yet, it could have been developed earlier. No details are available on the word *perk*, as the location was described by Albert Bickmore who visited the islands in 1865 [22]. Despite the location being unattractive in the access to water and possibly food, the place was probably chosen due to its strategic location to watch the arrivals of people from a height. Another explanation would be that “*orang datang*” refers to newcomers or “*pendatang baru*”, the slaves or workers of the nutmeg plantations. It could also be the people’s etymology that was later developed after the pre-colonial villages had been forgotten. There would be a connection between the beginning of nutmeg processing factories and the pre-colonial villages in some regards [9].

At a glance, the naming of *Perk Babi Mandi (Babij Mandie)* and *Perk Mangku Batu (Bangko Batoe)* would also be of some interest. First: both names use words that were adopted from the Malay language. Second: the word *Babi Mandi* would remind us of the pre-colonial life before the arrival of Europeans and Islam. With the arrival of Islam to Banda, *babi* (pigs) began to decrease as part of the source of nutrition of the people of Banda. *Bangko Batu* that means Stone Table would remind us of *Batu Pamali* that was used as part of the ritual of the local people of Banda or Central Maluku in general prior to the arrival of Islam, among the people of the Ulisiwa and Ulilima groups. *Batu Pamali* is a material symbol for the people of Maluku. In addition to *Baileo*, *Batu Pamali* was also included in the microcosmic part of the locations of the traditional Maluku communities. *Batu Pamali* is the foundation or base stone where a traditional community was founded and was always placed besides the house of *Baileo*, to represent the presence of the ancestors (*Tete Nene Moyang*) in the life of the people. In several traditional communities of Maluku, *Batu Pamali* is owned collectively, even by the traditional communities whose members embrace different religions.

5 Conclusion

In terms of culture, Maluku is quite diverse as it is in ethnic groups, being inhabited by communities that speak hundreds of languages. In terms of religion, although Islam initially had reached the islands that constituted sultanates (Ternate, Tidore, Banda), the sultans rules a population that comprised diverse ethnic groups with the majority comprising non-Moslems turning into Christianity during the Dutch era. As such, despite the Malay ethnic group having their influence culturally and religiously in Maluku, diversity of the local culture and religion remained the same. The Malay people did not dominate in terms of change. Other ethnic groups from other places in Nusantara, those from Java, Makassar, Bugis, or other ethnic groups in the vicinity of Maluku also had their shares in the changes that had taken place. Historical situations, conditions, pressure of power, also played their roles in this case.

In this regard, historical approach would be appropriate and relevant in understanding a cultural identity since the subject is assumed to have a different identity in a different time frame. Identity keeps on moving, is shaped and transformed continuously. The struggle that is continued by the generation that lives in the nutmeg plantations of Banda Islands to improve their welfare and understand their past is a form of representation

of their identities. It is an attempt to recover their freedom from cultural oppression in a certain course of time due to the European imperialism with all the impacts. The pluralism in the society has been aspired for. There should not be any absolute domination by any group in political, ideological, cultural or ethnical groups.

The Malay culture thrived due to the strengthening and developed due to the interaction with the cultures of other ethnic groups. Efforts to accentuate various cultural similarities in a community that comprises various external cultural influences would serve as a strong bond in pursuing integration and building a collective identity. Another effort that can be made is by maintaining the room for differences and appreciate differences in culture while believing in the right to live and the equal opportunity for expression for every existing group of culture.

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