



Tracing The Footsteps of Early Global Encounters: Unveiling the Historical Archaeology of Early Modern Ambon-Lease Islands

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of the historical archaeology of early modern Ambon-Lease Islands. This study focuses specifically on the 16th-17th centuries, a period marked by intense competition among European powers, including the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, and English, for control over the lucrative spice trade in the Far East. The Ambon-Lease Islands, known for their abundant spice resources, played a crucial role in this global economic network and became a site of significant cultural and political exchanges. This research uses historical documents, cartographic records, and archaeological fieldwork to reconstruct life's material and social aspects during this period on the Ambon-Lease Islands. By examining the material remains left behind by European communities, including fortifications, trading posts, and religious artefacts, the study seeks to unravel the complexities of early global encounters and their impact on local societies. This study investigates the nature of indigenous-European interactions, exploring questions of trade, cultural assimilation, resistance, and power dynamics. It seeks to understand how the arrival of European colonisers influenced local economies, social structures, and belief systems. Analysing European-style material culture and its integration with local traditions will shed light on cultural hybridity and negotiation processes. The findings of this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the Ambon-Lease Islands' role in the global spice trade and the broader context of European colonialism in Southeast Asia. By examining the archaeological evidence within the historical framework of the 16th and 17th centuries, this study aims to uncover the layers of history and illuminate the dynamic interactions that shaped the cultural landscape of the Ambon-Lease Islands during this transformative period of early global exploration and trade.

Keywords: *Ambon-Lease Islands, historical archaeology, spice trade, trade networks*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ambon's multiculturalism is formed from the contact of various cultures that integrate and coexist over a long period. Since the 13th century, travellers and traders from China have visited Maluku. It is not impossible that they also stopped in Ambon and Banda. If Maluku and Banda attracted traders because of their role as producers of cloves and nutmeg, Ambon has become a transit port for merchants who want to travel to Maluku and Banda. The growing popularity of Ambon has encouraged the formation of political institutions there, such as the Tanah Hitu Kingdom. Gradually, due to trade with traders from Java (Tuban, Gresik, and Jepara) in the second half of the 15th century, various kingdoms there became Islamic kingdoms and allied with several Islamic kingdoms in the archipelago. Still working on the Islamisation process in the Spice Islands, the Portuguese arrived in the early 16th century. The local people initially accepted the arrival of the Portuguese, but gradually, due to differences in interests, the people of the Spice Islands united to expel the Portuguese. Their presence was followed by the Dutch in the late 16th century, who replaced the Portuguese in 1605 [1].

The presence of the three global nebulae (Asian, Portuguese, and Dutch) did not make the original culture fade but seemed to enrich the culture of the Spice Islands. In the Asian Nebula, the Ambon people came into contact

with noble Asian cultures such as Chinese and Islamic. While in the Portuguese and Dutch Nebula, they are acquainted with European Cultures such as Catholic and Christian Cultures. These three nebulae were formed due to the spice trade. Spices can be understood as any of a wide variety of strongly flavoured or aromatic vegetable substances obtained from tropical plants, generally used as food accompaniments or for other purposes related to their fragrance and preservative qualities. Rare and fine spices come from Asia. In the 14th century, Francesco Balducci Pegolotti identified spices as having 188 types. However, many ingredients that were once classified as spices are no longer. Spices are generally small, durable, valuable, and hard to find. Spices include pepper, cloves, nutmeg, and ginger [2]. The spice trade in modern times still relies on maritime shipping routes and is conducted between islands. Shipping in the archipelago is highly dependent on the monsoon winds. Westerly winds occur from December to February, allowing ships to sail east. However, from September to November, the east wind blows and allows ships from the east to sail to the west [3]. Therefore, buying and selling between one person on one island and another person on another island has created connectivity, which can be referred to as a network or nebula. There are three main drivers of connectivity: migration, trade and colonisation. These three are key to understanding the process of globalisation in modern times [4].

Much literature has been written on the history of the political economy and culture of the Spice Islands. Timme [5], Hanna dan Alwi [6], Alwi [7], and Clulow [8] attempt to explain the logical consequences of local and global political contestation maps from the feud between Ternate and Tidore, the bloody clashes between Ternate and Portugal; to the Ambon massacre. The booming spice trade also influenced the development of port cities in the spice islands. The interaction between the local population and foreign traders has enriched the local cultural repertoire. Abdurachman [9], Franca [10], and Castro [11] carefully and meticulously look at the cultural crossover between the Portuguese and Nusantara, which is reflected in the social facts left behind. The clash of cultures and religions due to social plurality and economic interests in Ambon is also a unique study, as studied by Gerrit Knaap [12] and De Graaf [13]. In addition, Amal [14], [15], Villiers [16], Raman & Bau [17], Van Hoeffell [18], Thalib & Raman [19], Thalib [20], Hanna [21], Alwi [22], Loupatty [23], Basman [24], Keuning [25], Sahusilawane [26], Usmany [3], Utomo [27], and Raman [28] have studied ports and trade in Ambon have studied harbours and trade in Maluku, Ambon and Banda well. Many historians have not paid attention to the cross-culture in the Spice Islands, especially in Ambon.

2. OBJECTIVES

The study of cultural history occupies a vital position in nation-building in general and sowing the values of openness, collaboration, and tolerance. In this study, the author realizes that the meeting between cultures reflects cultural exchange. Therefore, the meeting of cultures produces a cosmopolitan culture manifested in material culture [29].

4. METHODS

By analysing archaeological sites, artefacts and historical records, this research provides a glimpse into the fascinating past of the Ambon-Sulawesi islands. Archaeological excavations at various sites, including settlements, forts and trading centres, have uncovered many artefacts. These range from weaponry to personal items and religious artefacts. Through detailed analysis and interpretation, these artefacts contribute to our understanding of the daily

lives, socio-economic structures and cultural practices of the people who inhabited the islands of Ambon-Sulawesi in the past.

In addition to physical remains, historical records such as maps, reports, and travel logs are invaluable sources of information. These records provide insights into the interactions between different communities, the impact of colonial powers, and the dynamics of the trade networks that connected the islands of Ambon-Sulawesi with distant regions. Combining these historical sources with archaeological data allows a comprehensive examination of the region's past.

5. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Ambon-Lease is indeed a migrant area. It was not only Asians who visited Ambon-Lease but also Europeans. It is not wrong that the people of Ambon-Lease are also familiar with colonial Architecture. Colonial buildings can usually be seen in forts and churches. In Ambon-Hila, there is Fort Amsterdam. Historically, the alliance between Hitu and the Dutch to expel the Portuguese from Ambon gave the Dutch the opportunity to build their fort in Hila, known as Fort Amsterdam. The main building of the fort was first built by the Portuguese, led by Fransisco Serrao, in 1512 and served as a trading lodge. Naturally, it was later referred to as a lodge because the word lodge comes from the Portuguese word "Loja", which means shop [30]. After the Dutch took control of the island in 1605, they took over the lodge and turned it into a defence fort. Fort Amsterdam is shaped like a turtle, with two defences, one towards the North-East and the other towards the South-West. Between the two defences, there is a connecting path (Rampat), which is located in the North to West area (towards the coast).

The construction of this fort building is like a house, so the Dutch called it Blok Huis. The building is square, with the lower area larger (256 m²) than the upper area (234 m²) so that the building looks trapezium-shaped [31]. Blokhuis consists of 3 floors. The first floor, with a red brick floor, serves as a sleeping place for soldiers, a weapons warehouse, and a food warehouse; the second floor, with an ironwood floor, serves as a meeting place for officers; The third floor, with an ironwood floor, serves as a monitoring post and at the end of the building there is a lookout tower. The roof of the Blokhuis building uses a hanging crest roof shape that resembles a pyramid roof, which functions as a circulation of sunlight and wind [31].

In addition, the walls and roof of the building are designed separately to maximise natural lighting and ventilation. The door handles on the Blokhuis building are semicircular, while the windows consist of two shapes, semicircular and square shapes [31]. In Ambon-Hitulama, there is Fort Enkkhuizen or Fort Lyden. The fort was originally a fortification built by Wybrand van Waerwyck in 1599. The fort was proper not only as an initial position for attacking the Portuguese and suppressing local rebellions. The fort's construction was realised when Waerwijck built a simple fort in 1656. Although the fort was initially called Fort Enkhuisen, De Vlaming van Oudshoorn changed it to Fort Lyden, with an area of 13 m². A sergeant with 20 soldiers guarded the fort. The fort was once guarded by a lieutenant in 1817 during an emergency. However, the lieutenant was later recalled when it was safe. The fort was given up in 1824, and only the foundation of the fort remains, which is used as a foundation for houses [32].

In Ambon-Passo, there is Rumah Bongkah or Blokhuis Middelburg. The name of this blockhouse is taken from the capital city of Zeeland province, Middelburg. The building was constructed in two stages, Middelburg I in 1626-1674 and Middelburg II in 1686. The shape of the house is a rectangular block with a size of 10 x 10m. To climb

the second floor, a staircase is used on the west side wall. This floor is used for living and has six windows. Blokhuis Middelburg was occupied by 20 Dutch soldiers under the leadership of a sergeant and functioned as a place to collect taxes from the community on plantation products, trade, and fishing products [33].

In Ambon-Larike, there is Fort Rotterdam. According to Mansyur [34], Fort Rotterdam became a Dutch legacy that strengthened Larike's position as the VOC's trade and defence centre in Ambon. Fort Rotterdam was established by Governor Aert Gijssels in 1633. The fort could be reinforced with a sergeant's guard and 30 men. Interestingly, De Vlaming Van Oudshoorn, one of the Governors-General of the Dutch East Indies (1691-1704), was born in this fort in 1656. The fort almost fell in mid-1817. Fortunately, Major Meyer and his troops were able to repel the rebels. Today, Fort Rotterdam remains only three sides of the fort wall and a piece of the perimeter wall [35].

In Ambon-Uring, there is Fort Uring. Fort Uring was initially named Fort Vlissingen. Governor Ottens built it to protect fishermen from pirate attacks and control shipping lanes. The fort had three bulwarks equipped with three small cannons and guarded by 40 soldiers. The fort was destroyed during a war between the Dutch and Ternate in 1651. The fort was then taken over by the Wai Putih (Seram) people. The Dutch later recaptured the fort under the leadership of De Vlaming. The fort was abandoned by the Dutch during the 18th century and burnt down by Papuans in 1762 [36], [37].

In Ambon-Seith, Fort Ceith was initially established by the Hitu people, who were assisted by troops from Makassar. The Dutch then took over the fort and made it the centre of VOC operations in 1643. They then rebuilt the fort with stone. The fort and Seith Village were destroyed when a severe earthquake struck in mid-1674. After 1697, the Dutch concentrated on Ambon City as their centre of activity and withdrew their troops outside Ambon. The shape and plan of the fort can no longer be described. This is due to the destroyed condition of the fort. Currently, only the foundation remains, and some of the materials of these forts can be found in the yards of people's houses [38].

In Ambon-Lima, there is Fort Haarlem or Fort Van Der Capellen. This fort is in a damaged condition, and inside the fort, there are vegetables and ginger plants. Based on the remains of the building, Fort Van Harlem consisted of three floors, but the rest of the floor is no longer found except for the remains attached to the wall as the roof of the fort has collapsed, but the division of the rooms is still clearly visible. Fort Van Harlem is rectangular with gothic-style architecture built in 1655 by Van der Capellen. The shape or existing spaces, especially the tiny holes in each fort wall, indicate that the Van Harlem fort was used as an enemy reconnaissance site [39].

In Ambon-Honipopu, there is Fort Victoria. At first, it was a fort built by the Portuguese. They started building Fort Nossa Senhora de Anunciada in 1575. The locals called it Kota Laha or the City "di dalam teluk" [40]. The fort is now in ruins, with only burnt stone remaining. After Laha Town fell to the Dutch, the Dutch immediately renamed it. The fort was named Fort Victoria. Fort Victoria is now in Honipopu Village, west of Mardika Market, in Ambon City [13].

In addition to the various colonial forts, both built by the Portuguese and later captured and repaired by the Dutch, Ambon also has another colonial relic: the church. In Ambon-Hila, this church is unique in that it has a bronze church bell with the inscription 1675 and a stone inscription indicating the year the church was built. This stone is located under the church's pulpit, which is said to have been a Dutch graveyard in the early 19th century [41].

In Ambon-Hutumuri, there is the Hutumuri Old Church. This church was built around 1832 by Dutch missionaries. Hutumuri Old Church has a unique building construction and is still well maintained. Until now, this church is still used by residents for services. Unfortunately, the church has been restored, and some parts have been replaced with new materials without considering sound restoration principles [42]. In addition, there are also three Dutch graves. One of the tombstones has an inscription that can explain that the buried person is Dutch. The other two tombs are unknown because the inscriptions have been lost [42].

In Ambon-Soya, there is the Soya Old Church. The church is a triangular building made of plastered bricks. The windows and doors have the same shape, made of wood and glass. Inside the church, there is a special seat for the King of Soya and rows of chairs for the congregation [43].

6. CONCLUSION

Ambon's position on the Nusantara spice route has made it a home for migrants. Since at least the 15th century, Ambon has been a place of residence for Nusantara traders and travellers. Their presence has made Ambon an island with a diverse and cosmopolitan population. The presence of colonial rulers, such as the Portuguese and Dutch, also enriched Ambon's architectural diversity. European-influenced buildings are commonly referred to as colonial architecture. Fortresses and churches are clear examples of colonial architecture in Ambon.

7. COMPETING INTEREST STATEMENT

This article is free from any conflict of interest regarding the data collection, analysis, and publication process itself. Either replicate or modify the previous sentence for this part.

8. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The first author is responsible for composing a theoretical framework and analyzing the narrative; the second and third authors are responsible for analyzing and translating the narrative; and the fourth author is responsible for gathering literature and data.

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