

# COMMODITIES AND CULTURES: THE DIFFUSION OF MALAY IN EAST INDONESIA

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## Abstract

The trading network of eastern Indonesia extends from the prehistoric era through the early modern period. The emergence of the Malay language is a key component in that network. Indeed, the importance of linking cultural diffusion to international commodity markets is clear. The dispersal of the Malay language was not the spinoff of a diaspora phenomenon. It was the realization that Malay could be used for diverse purposes that accelerated the spread of Malay. Just as commodities and people travelled through the maritime routes of Indonesia, the Malay language and the idea of language and power moved at incredible speed.

**Keywords:** Commodities, Malay, East Indonesia, Cultural Diffusion

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Southeast Asian archipelago has been the stage for maritime activity on a large scale for tens of thousands of years. Indeed, “the largest maritime migration yet undertaken” took place in what is now eastern Indonesia 65,000 years ago (Clarkson et al. 2017:306). Archaeology and history tell us that east Indonesian exports have been in the international markets of China, the Middle East and Europe for 1500-2000 years. Clearly, the maritime movement of goods and peoples did not begin in Reid’s (1988) “belated” Age of Commerce. Nonetheless the Age of Commerce marks the starting point for more comprehensive historical documentation of not only peoples and products but also cultures, societies and ideologies. Although there are strong indications of the maritime routes and products of earlier eras, it is from the beginning of the early modern era in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that observers, ranging from ruthless admirals and petty merchants to highly educated priests and domineers, noted the use of Malay in diverse ports and territories in island Southeast Asia. However, precisely because of the value of the commodities traded there, most of the oldest evidence of the role of Malay in the archipelago comes from eastern Indonesia, whether in the form of Malay wordlists written down by Italian travellers and Dutch clerks or in diplomatic letters written by indigenous court officials. In very few other areas in Southeast Asia, can we find significant documentation about Malay from this early era?

As the European interaction with Malay shifted from “discovery” to appropriation and manipulation, the role of Malay expanded and deepened. Indeed, throughout the colonial period Malay thrived as the pre-eminent coastal language of the eastern islands. Another noteworthy

characteristic of the diffusion of Malay in eastern Indonesia is the fact that it was not based on the movement of ethnic Malays but rather the movement of the idea of the Malay language. With few exceptions, the dispersal of the Malay language was not a spinoff of the migrations of a Malay diaspora. Rather it was the realization that this one language could be used everywhere for a wide array of purposes that accelerated the spread of Malay. Just as commodities (in particular, spices) and people travelled through the maritime routes of eastern Indonesia, cultural goods, such as language and the idea of language (and power), moved sometimes at incredible speed. This paper will explore briefly:

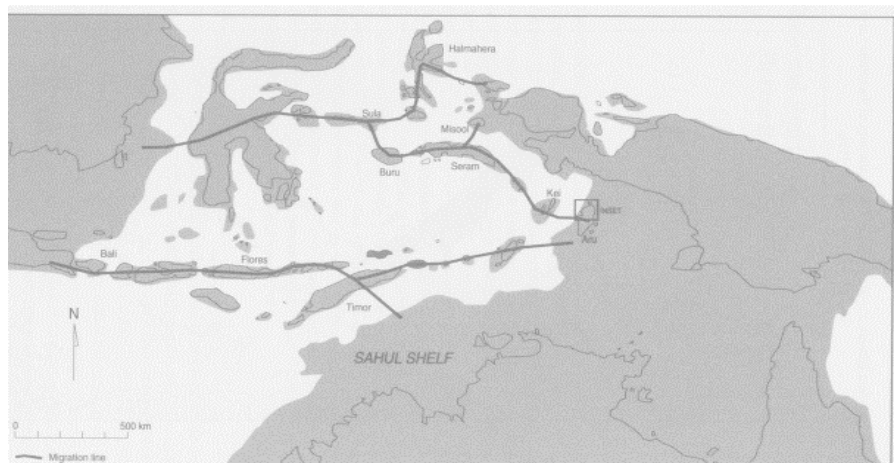
- a. Prehistoric maritime movements in East Indonesia;
- b. Pre-Modern era diffusion of commodities; and,
- c. Early modern documentation of commodities and cultures.

In the conclusion, we will consider the shift of Malay away from the profile Reid (1988) suggested to the deracinated, supraethnic role Malay now plays in eastern Indonesia, indeed in the Indonesian nation-state.

## 2. PREHISTORIC MARITIME MOVEMENTS IN EAST INDONESIA

Moving through Asia, 40,000-65,000 years ago (Clarkson et al. 2017), groups of Australo-Melanesians travelled by land and sea to settle in Indonesia, the Philippines, New Guinea and Australia. Sea levels were significantly lower in that era, thus land bridges and prehistoric land-masses facilitated their migration. Nonetheless, these pioneers undertook many crossings from island to island despite their limited sea-faring technology. As can be seen from Birdsell's (1977) map, the islands of contemporary eastern Indonesia formed a geographic transition zone between Asia and Papua-Australia. See Map 1.

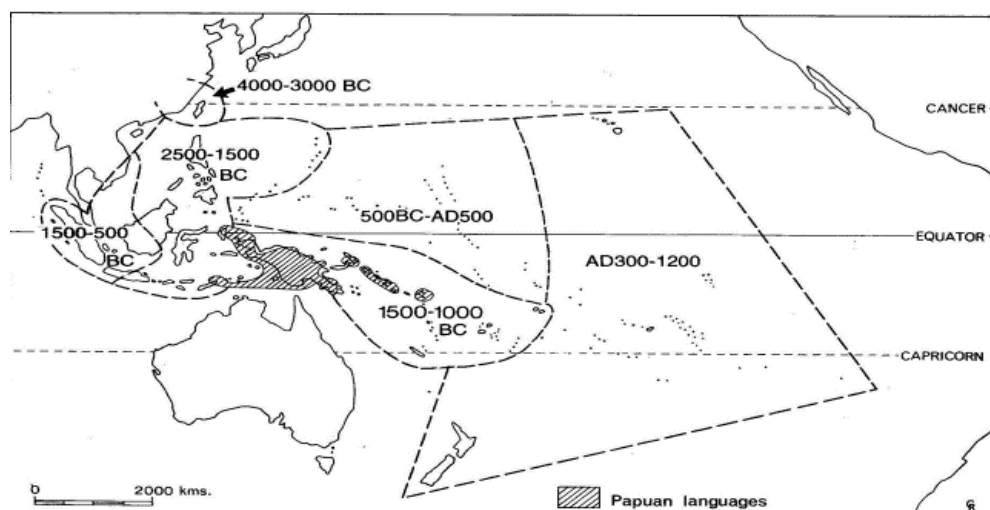
**Map1: The Australo-Melanesian migration routes (Birdsell 1977)**



As Clarkson et al. (2017:306) recently emphasized: “This event was remarkable on many fronts, as it represented the largest maritime migration yet undertaken and the settlement of the driest

continent on Earth [Australia], and required adaptation to vastly different flora and fauna.” Thus, Indonesia has a tradition of maritime movements dating back tens of thousands of years. Moreover, four thousand years later, another major migration of settlers left Asia and travelled to island Southeast Asia, the Pacific and eventually Madagascar. With much higher sea levels and receding land masses, these Austronesian groups faced the more expansive sea-crossings of their era with their advanced sailing technologies (Collins 2019). These farmer-seamen sailed from their homeland in Taiwan and reached Indonesian islands already settled by Australo-Melanesian groups, who in most areas were apparently assimilated into the larger Austronesian group—based on currently available DNA studies (Bellwood 1997; Lipson, M. et al. 2014). Map 2 summarizes the Austronesian movements in an approximate time frame.

**Map 2: Stages in the Austronesian migration from Taiwan (Bellwood 1997:118)**



Collins (2019) summarized the geographic and demographic implications of the movements of these two distinct prehistoric groups, as follows:

“As (Bellwood 1997:74-81) observed, the islands of today’s eastern Indonesia not only formed a geographical transition from Asia to Papua, Australia and the Pacific, they also comprise a transition zone between Austronesian (“Mongoloid”) and Australo-Melanesian populations. The two races of the two major waves of migration meet especially in Maluku, Nusa Tenggara Timur and Papua. In addition to the time depth of settlement from 40,000 years ago, this convergence of two races and two language families accounts for the tremendous language diversity in east Indonesia.”

Language diversity suggests, indeed indicates, cultural and societal diversity as well. Furthermore, in this very early setting of emerging assimilation and divergence, archaeologists have uncovered strong evidence of long-distance maritime trade; see Bellwood (1997:224-227). On the edge of the eastern islands near the shores of northwest Borneo, the local population not only produced distinctive pottery but also numerous small hand tools, such as sharp-edged

scrapers and burins. These tools were made from obsidian, a mineral-like silicon rock formed by the cooling of molten lava, widely used in the prehistoric world. However, no source of obsidian has been found in Borneo. In fact, the fragments and blades of obsidian found in northwest Borneo have been linked to the volcanoes of New Britain in north-eastern most Papua-New Guinea, approximately 4,000 km away. Refer to Map 3.

**Map 3: An overview of the trade connections between northern Borneo and easternmost New Guinea 3,000 years ago**



In 1987, when Bellwood (1997:224) conducted his pioneering research by excavating “in the rock shelter of Bukit Tengkorak—formed amongst tumbled boulders on the rim of an extinct volcano near Sempron in southeaster Sabah”, the material culture of the Austronesian groups who had moved southward was thought to have undergone attenuation. But the discovery at the Bukit Tengkorak site of obsidian, pottery stoves..., and shell ornament manufacture [as well as an “agate prismatic blade industry” and an incised, lidded pottery vessel] indicate that the Bukit Tengkorak people were adept seafarers—and perhaps traders” (Bellwood 1997:227). Referring to the remarkable discovery of obsidian from New Britain in the rock shelter of Bukit Tengkorak in Sabah, Chin (1998) emphasized:

“This connection, over a distance of about 3500 km, not only represents the longest traded obsidian in the world for this time period but shows the existence of long-distance sea trading networks which extended in a westward direction from Melanesia to as far as Borneo in Southeast Asia.”

Bellwood’s (1997:224) perspective was broader. He noted that this obsidian from New Britain found in Sabah was the obsidian from the same New Guinea source also dated at 1000 BC, found in Fiji—“making it perhaps the most widely distributed material in the Neolithic world.”

In the context of this Forum, this three-thousand-year old maritime-oriented tradition with long distance trade in a valuable commodity marks the antiquity of island Southeast Asia’s

“maritime-based groups with impressive mobility and long distance trade links” (Bellwood 1989:155). This mobility and these cultural links can be seen in the pottery of Kalumpang in West Sulawesi and also in Uattamdi, Kayoa Island (North Maluku) with a pottery assemblage clearly closely related to Bukit Tengkorak indicating “close ethnic connection across this northeast corner of Island Southeast Asia at ca. 1000 BC” (Bellwood 1997:229). Borneo, Sulawesi and Maluku were connected in a maritime linkage that persisted into the era of the spice trade Below we will explore later long distance trade links in East Indonesia.

### 3. PRE-MODERN ERA DIFFUSION OF COMMODITIES

In 644 AD, a foreign delegation arrived in the capital of China, Chang'an (contemporary Xi'an). They presented valuable tribute to the imperial ruler of China's Tang dynasty. “More spectacular ... was the cockatoo with ten long pink feathers on its crown, surely the elegant rose-crested cockatoo of Ceram and Amboina, the gift of an island nation far over the sea, five months from Canton, probably one of the Moluccas” (Schafer 1963:101-102). Indeed, the *Cacatuamoluccensis*, can be found only in Central Maluku. That a record of the appearance of this specific bird appears in the imperial archive of the Tang dynasty almost 1400 years ago demonstrates the existence of a communication and economic network linking Central Maluku to the interconnected global system of culture and commerce. The link was not a fluke because in 647AD another rose-crested cockatoo was presented to the Tang emperor.

The mid-seventh century documentation of the arrival of this spectacular avian denizen of Central Maluku was soon followed by a description of a well-known commodity from those same islands. Fewer than one hundred years after the cockatoo's appearance in Chang'an, the Tang dynasty pharmacologist, “Ch'enTs'ang-ch'i was the first Chinese to describe the nutmeg, which he called ‘fleshy cardamom’.”Ch'en wrote that the spice “... was brought up to T'ang in the great argosies and that it was a native to Qaqola” (Schafer 1963:185).<sup>1</sup> This near simultaneity of the appearance of Seram's cockatoos and Ch'enTs'ang-ch'i's description suggests that in the mid-seventh century nutmeg had begun to make its appearance in China.

**Map 4: Maluku in the center of East Indonesia**





“Nutmeg and mace<sup>2</sup> come from the *Myristica fragrans* tree that originally grew only on the Banda islands of Maluku” (Howard 2102:124). Ellen and Glover (1974:375) have written about prehistoric trading networks involving pottery and the Banda islands as well as Ambon and islands to the west of Banda: “Ambon-Lease with its long historical tradition as a focal point of a trading network must be a likely center [for a prehistoric or protohistoric pottery trading network]”. Indeed, there is now archaeological evidence (Lape et al. 2018) of nutmeg residue dated at perhaps 3500 years ago in the (cooking?) pottery of Pulau Ai, in the Banda islands.

Nonetheless, centuries passed before this aromatic seed became a global commodity. “Nutmeg came to Europe [Byzantium] about the sixth century, through trading Arabs...” (Burkill 1966:1550). In that period, nutmeg was probably traded through entre pots in India. “India must have gotten its supplies of the true nutmeg from Java...” (Burkill 1966:1550).<sup>3</sup> We can summarize that apparently in the seventh century nutmeg appeared in global trade (China, Europe, India) at roughly the same time, and commanded a very high price. In Gorgan (present-day Iran), in 1012 Avicenna (Ibn Sina) prescribed treatment with nutmeg in his medical treatise *al-Qānūn fī l-ṭibb* (Toussaint-Samat 1992:513). At roughly the same time of the international trade in nutmeg, other local trading networks and settlements sprang up in Central Maluku. An American archaeologist, K. Latinis (2002:236, 215) wrote about a walled settlement not far from the coast of the Piru Bay (Seram):

As the Hatusua site’s dates are early (7th-10th century), this may indicate an early trade relation which later decreased or disappeared... The similar assemblages from the Tomu and Hatusua sites hint at the existence of a localized trade sphere or at least an important interaction and identity sphere in the Piru Bay area which certainly seemed to exist in historic times, but obviously having roots in at least the protohistoric period (dating as early as the 7th-10th centuries according to radiocarbon data).

Probably the emergence of nutmeg as a global commodity impacted the already existing local trading networks among the islands. The establishment of walled settlements apparently points to shifts in social organization as well.

Besides cockatoos, nutmeg and mace, another important East Indonesian commodity has been part of the global economic network for an even longer time. The small volcanic islands of North Maluku, Ternate, Tidore, Moti, Makian and Bacan are known to be the botanical homeland of the clove tree, *Syzygium aromaticum*; until the sixteenth century these islands were the only source for this most valuable spice. The dried flower bud of the *Syzygium aromaticum* tree, clove, “is one of the most valuable spices that has been used for centuries as food preservative and for many medicinal purposes. ... This plant represents one of the richest sources of phenolic compounds such as eugenol, eugenol acetate and gallic acid ... The antioxidant and antimicrobial activity of clove is higher than many fruits, vegetables and other spices...” (Cortés-Rojas et al. 2014:90).

This modern, technical assessment of the medicinal efficacy of clove matches ancient and medieval uses of clove. Many sources report that courtiers of the Han dynasty (202 BC to 190 AD) were enjoined to chew clove before presuming to serve in the emperor’s presence (Burkill

1966; Toussaint-Samat 2012). In the Tang dynasty cloves were used in complex incenses and perfumes; cloves served to delay inebriation, to kill insects, to drive off evil spirits, to cure piles, to enhance sexual pleasure, to reduce the pain of tooth aches (Schafer 1963:171-172; Burkill 1966:979). Before 100AD clove was already traded in Alexandria, Egypt. “In the fourth century AD it was quite well known in the Mediterranean and in the eighth throughout Europe” (Burkill 1966:977).

There were two main maritime routes for the shipment of clove. One route was from North Maluku through the southern Philippines and along to coast of northern Borneo to the major transit centres of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. The alternative route left north Maluku and travelled south through Central Maluku and along the northern shores of the Lesser Sunda islands to the ports of northern Java and to southern Sumatra. During the Sung dynasty (960-1279), for example, “most cloves arriving in Sung China probably left the Moluccas by way of Java” (Ptak 1993:8). However during the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) “it is very likely that in Yuan times most cloves were shipped to China by way of the Sulu zone and northern Borneo” (Ptak 1993:8-9).

Because of the role of Javanese ports, such as Kediri (Vlekke 1965:53), Tuban and Surabaya (Hall 1985:329), Java was often assumed to be the source of clove, nutmeg and mace. Marco Polo (who never visited Java) wrote in 1296:

“The Island [Java] is of surpassing wealth, producing black pepper, nutmegs, spikenard, galingale, cubebs, cloves, and all other kinds of spices. This Island is also frequented by a vast amount of shipping, and by merchants who buy and sell costly goods from which they reap great profit.”<sup>4</sup>

Marco Polo had probably received this incorrect information in China because in 1225 Chau Ju-kua had “stated that Java produced cloves” (Burkill 1966:977). Nonetheless, this perception indicates the close Maluku-Java links and a principle maritime route between the spice-producing centres of East Indonesia and the port and cities of Java’s north coast. Moreover, Ellen and Glover (1974:353) wrote that “regular [Javanese] commercial contacts with the Moluccas...may have begun about the twelfth century AD. On the other hand, from the perspective of the Javanese state these spice-trading centers in Central Maluku may have been considered components of their administration subject to their authority. In the Nagarakrtagama (1365)<sup>5</sup> of the Majapahit era, Wandan, Ambwan, Seran and Muar, that is Banda, Ambon, Seram Laut (Geser-Gorom) and Hoamoal (the westernmost peninsula of Seram), are all listed in Pupuh XIV. Fraasen (1976) discussed these locations and their connections to Java.”<sup>6</sup>

By the sixteenth century, nutmeg, mace and clove were integral components of global culture: clove in French recipes (Toussaint-Samat 1992), nutmeg in Avicenna’s (Ibn Sina) medical prescriptions (1012, Gorgan in present-day Iran). “During the Black Death [14<sup>th</sup> century], nutmeg commanded hysterical prices because desperate people believed it might ward off plague” (Thring 2010). As Howard (2012:124) expatiated “Clove, nutmeg and mace were three

of the most important spices in the medieval world and no spices have influenced world history as much as these three.”

#### 4. EARLY MODERN DOCUMENTATION OF COMMODITIES AND CULTURES

Two years after Magellan’s fleet had left Spain and sailed across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the survivors anchored off the shore of Tidore (North Maluku) on the eighth of November 1521. Among these survivors was an Italian patrician of Vicenza, Antonio Pigafetta, a volunteer member of the crew. Pigafetta maintained a journal throughout the voyage and, after spending six weeks in Tidore, he assembled in that journal an Italian-Malay vocabulary of more than 450 words arranged, like so many 16<sup>th</sup> century European dictionaries, according to semantic fields. This is not only the first dictionary of Malay, but also the first documentation of Malay in East Indonesia. As noted, Pigafetta spent six weeks (8/11/1521- 21/12/1521) in Tidore, a part of the botanical homeland of clove, and one of the major ports for the shipment of the spice to international markets.

To that point, Magellan’s ships indeed had crossed through the Philippines (where Magellan died in a skirmish with the Filipinos) and sailed to Brunei, then back along the coast of Borneo through the Sulu Sea to Maluku. Having passed through part of one of the major maritime routes for the transport of clove, that is the northern route, on the twenty-first of December the remaining ship of Magellan’s fleet, the *Victoria*, sailed south from Tidore along the other maritime route, the southern route, through the straits that separate Lembata and Alor and past the Lesser Sunda Islands and Java into the Indian Ocean.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the world’s first circumnavigation of the globe included the navigation of both of the ancient maritime routes of the spice trade.

By 1555 Pigafetta’s narrative of the voyage had appeared in French, Italian, English and Latin editions (Collins 2001, Collins 2018, Collins 2022, Bausani 1960). But before that, two letters written in Malay (1521, 1522) had arrived in Europe addressed to the king of Portugal (Blagden 1931-1932). These two letters, sent by Sultan Abu Hayat, ruler of Ternate, Tidore’s rival in the region, were composed in Arabic script and are recognized as the oldest surviving Malay letters in the world. It is remarkable that the oldest dictionary of Malay and the oldest letters in Malay, composed within 10 kilometres of each other in North Maluku, should have burst on the scene in Europe almost simultaneously. These remarkable, milestone documents in the history of the Malay language were written 3,000 kilometres away from Sriwijaya and the Straits of Melaka.

Just a few years later, in 1536 Antonio Galvão arrived in Ternate to administer Portuguese interests there (Amal 2016:78). In his lengthy treatise, *Historia das Molucas* (1544), Galvão (Jacobs 1971:75) wrote about the use and status of Malay in North Maluku in the early sixteenth century:

"At present the Malayan language has come into vogue; and most of them speak it and avail themselves of it throughout the whole region where it is like Latin in Europe"

The letters and dictionary written in North Maluku and Galvão’s contemporary assessment of the role and distribution of Malay in that region were matched by almost simultaneous reports



from Central Maluku. In September, 1545, the famous Basque missionary, Francis Xavier, arrived in Melaka, then already thirty years under Portuguese control. Schurhammer (1980:30-31), Xavier's biographer, reported that:

Since Malay was understood on the islands, Master Francis spent all the time left over from his apostolic labors in studying this language....He had no written or printed works to assist him in learning it, and it was written by the Mohammedans in Arabic characters.

In February 1546, Xavier disembarked on the shore of Ambon Bay and, in May 1546, Xavier (Schurhammer 1980:135) wrote: "The Malayan language, which is spoken in Malacca, is very common in these parts." He then proceeded to use Malay as the only language of proselytization in Ambon and the nearby islands, including Seram, and later in North Maluku, including Ternate and Morotai.<sup>8</sup>

Within a few decades after the arrival of Europeans, the widespread diffusion of the Malay language from one end of the archipelago to the other was well understood and informed both colonial policies and praxis from a very early stage. Collins (2003:261) summarized the situation in Central Maluku:

Precisely because of the bewildering number of languages named and known in central Maluku, the earliest Christian missionaries, Roman Catholics under the aegis of the Portuguese, made an early decision to use Malay in their proselytizing efforts, especially after the arrival of Francis Xavier in Ambon [in 1546]. At the end of the sixteenth century, no fewer than 600 children were studying in two church schools in Ambon; their lessons were taught in Malay (Jacobs 1985:11).

We should note that in 1545 while Xavier was in Melaka, studying Malay and translating prayers into that language, he was planning to go to Sulawesi (not Maluku) because two Bugis rulers had asked for a priest. However, he changed his plans and sailed to Maluku (Schurhammer 1980). This stands out as a strong indication of the role of the Malay language in the early sixteenth century not only in North and Central Maluku but also in Sulawesi—truly a well-established language of trade, religion and politics in East Indonesia.

Unlike some regions of the western part of the archipelago, for example Sumatra and Java, no written Malay texts, carved in stone or inscribed on gold leaf, have ever been found in East Indonesia.<sup>9</sup> Although there is solid evidence of the sourcing and transportation of the region's specific commodities, especially clove, nutmeg and mace (as well as rose-crested cockatoos!), that took place 1500-2000 years ago—an export industry that connected East Indonesia to the global trade network, apparently there are no data about the language(s) of that era and no discussions about language in the written sources of the pre-Modern era about the Malay language in East Indonesia.

Yet, in the sixteenth century the very first Europeans to reach East Indonesia and write about languages and societies there all remarked on the widespread use of Malay, for example the statement that Malay functioned like Latin in Europe (Galvão 1546). Malay was "up and running" well before any westerners appeared. If Malay was diffused throughout North and

Central Maluku (and other areas as well) with diverse social functions, we can surmise that Malay had been in use perhaps centuries earlier for trade and general communication. Certainly the many uses of Malay in the sixteenth century, as Xavier (1546) reported (“Malayan... very common in these parts”) as well as for administration and diplomacy (“Latin” and the Ternate letters) could not have developed in only a few years.

Malay flourished in the ports and along the coasts of the spice producing and exporting areas of Maluku. There were no language schools and no government officials requiring the use of Malay every Wednesday. However, not only are there diplomatic letters and documentation by eye witnesses of the extensive use of the Malay language in East Indonesia, in the world’s nutmeg center, Banda, at least one hikayat (historical text) was produced apparently in the late sixteenth century by a Bandanese woman! Written in Malay, this manuscript relates the history and legends of Banda (van Ronkel 1945). Van Ronkel had at his disposal a Latin-script version of this literary work found in 1926. However, “[a] hand-written [version] in Malay in Arabic script was collected in Banda Eli (Collins and Kaartinen (1998:545). The manuscript specified MboibilaSteri as the original author; see also T. Kaartinen (2013).

The structure of Banda society was described in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century by A. Gijssels, the Chief Merchant of Ambon (1615-1619); see Leupe (1855:74-75). The complex interactions of the numerous rajahs, the forty orang kayas and the local inhabitants suggests a complex ruling oligarchy still subject to the opinions of the assembled inhabitants. The system of duality and tenuous balance was also observed in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and even then reflected a centuries-old system of social organization. In this fluid social and political setting, supporting a population of 15,000, in 1609 there were 1500 Javanese merchants (Schrieke 1955:24). By the end of the sixteenth century, and probably earlier, the Bandanese had embraced Islam (Aveling 1967:359).

The clove producing islands of North Maluku had even earlier become Muslim sultanates. On the north Shore of Ambon Island, Hitu, an entrepot handling the spice products of North Maluku and Banda as well as supplying food supplies to the ships transporting these goods had also embraced Islam, as had the ports of Java’s north coast. As the sixteenth century unfolded, commerce, communication, cultural models (such as literature) and religion linked Maluku to Java in a maritime network that influenced the development of political systems in both these regions.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The complex social and economic system of Banda outlined above was obliterated in the mass genocide of 1621, carried out by the Dutch trading company. The VOC reduced the population of Banda from 15,000 to fewer than 1000 (Hanna 1978). A few Bandanese who had fled to the Kei islands 300 km away survived in two refugee villages, Banda Eli (mentioned above) and Banda Elat. The nutmeg groves of the Banda islands were parcelled out to Europeans and the VOC shipped boat loads of slaves to work on the new plantations. Later the VOC destroyed the clove trees of North Maluku; the sultans received a yearly stipend. Wars were waged in the early and mid-seventeenth century against Hitu and the western peninsula of Seram, Hoamoal.

Entire islands, including Boano, Kelang and Ambelau, were depopulated by forced removal under the aegis of the VOC (Knaap 1992, 2004). Clove was permitted to be grown only on Ambon and a few small adjacent islands; the local villagers became serfs under the effective control of the VOC. The produce and the routes of this ancient maritime network were completely controlled by that armed Dutch trading company. Reid (1988) presented a profile of the role of the Malay language in the “Age of Commerce, 1450-1680”. He summarized the role of the Malay language and its link to identity--precisely during this period which he named the “Age of Commerce” (1450-1680):

The Malay language thereby became the main language of trade throughout Southeast Asia. The cosmopolitan trading cities came to be classified as Malay because they spoke that language and professed Islam, even when their forebears may have been Javanese, Mon, Indian, Chinese or Filipino.

But even in the sixteenth century Malay was also the language of Christianity. The seventeenth century saw a proliferation of Christian materials printed in Malay for use in Maluku and one port city of Java, Jayakarta-become-Batavia (Collins 2018). Ships still sailed the ancient maritime routes; clove and nutmeg continued to appear in the global market place, but the underpinnings, structure and agents of the maritime network had changed. And with those changes, by the eighteenth century when Malay had become the first language of Christian farmers and clove-serfs in Central Maluku, the role of Malay as an identity marker (Reid 1988) had shifted dramatically. The Malay language had begun the process of deracination that today has produced a supraethnic Malay, renamed Indonesian in 1928 that now dominates the societies of eastern Indonesia, indeed the Indonesian nation-state.

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