

Commercial activities and development of the towns in the west side of Banda Sea Indonesia, early twentieth century

by La Ode Rabani

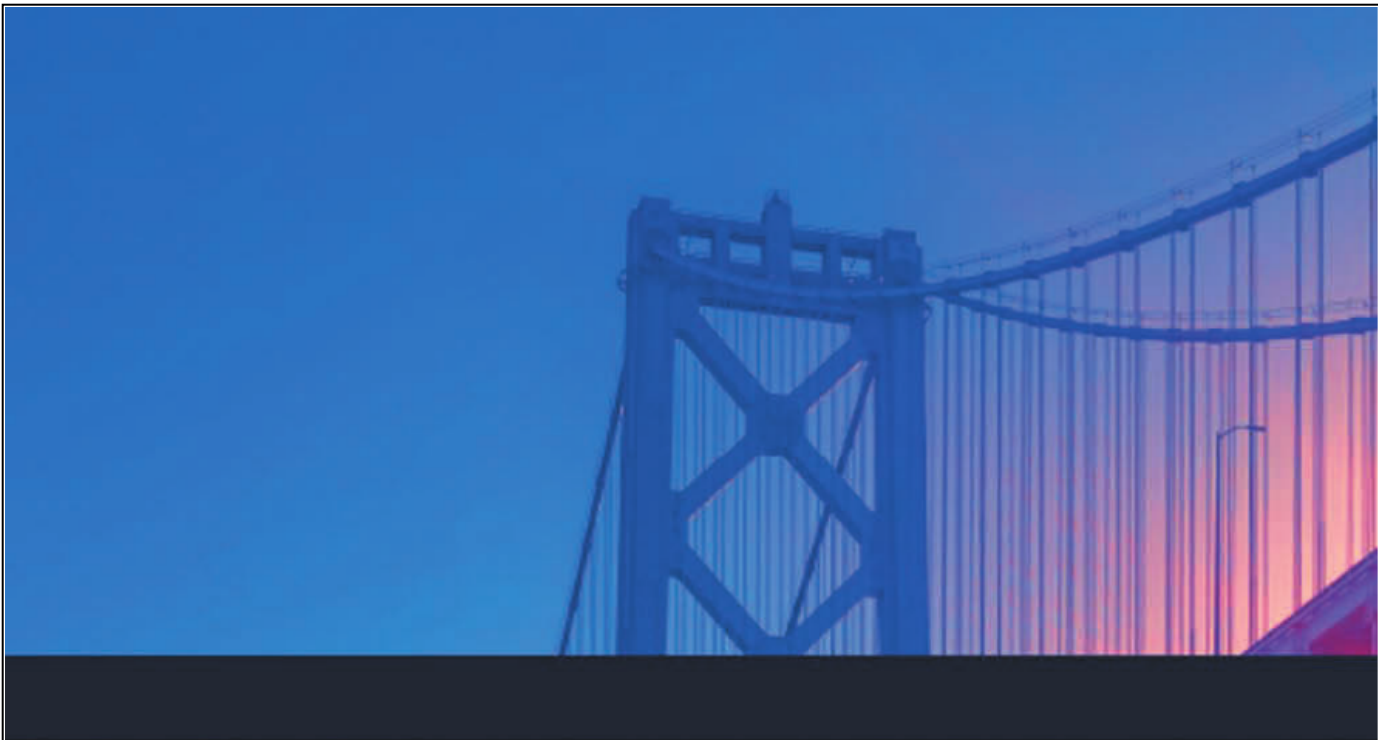
Submission date: 08-Apr-2022 10:57AM (UTC+0800)

Submission ID: 1804879046

File name: Prosiding_Internasional_COMERCIAL_ACTIVITIES.pdf (233.62K)

Word count: 4374

Character count: 23361



URBAN STUDIES: BORDER AND MOBILITY

Edited by

Thor Kerr, Bekisizwe Ndimande, Jan Van der Putten,
Daniel F. Johnson-Mardones, Diah Ariani Arimbi and
Yuni Sari Amalia



PROCEEDINGS OF THE 4TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON URBAN STUDIES
(ICUS 2017), UNIVERSITAS AIRLANGGA, SURABAYA, INDONESIA, 8–9 DECEMBER 2017

Urban Studies: Border and Mobility

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ROUTLEDGE

Routledge

Taylor & Francis Group

LONDON AND NEW YORK

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Typeset by V Publishing Solutions Pvt Ltd., Chennai, India

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Published by: CRC Press/Balkema
Schipholweg 107C, 2316 XC Leiden, The Netherlands
e-mail: Pub.NL@taylorandfrancis.com
www.crcpress.com – www.taylorandfrancis.com

ISBN: 978-1-138-58034-3 (Hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-429-50741-0 (eBook)

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Commercial activities and development of the towns in the west side of Banda Sea Indonesia, early twentieth century

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ABSTRACT: This article analyses why cities developed on the west side of the Banda Sea in the early 20th century. These cities are Baubau, Raha, Kendari, Bungku, Kolonodale, and Luwuk. The six cities are on the east coast of Sulawesi island. Four factors support the development of the cities namely: communities' and governments' active trading and shipping activities; secondly, the geographical factor in the global spice trade route encouraging integration between cities on the western side of the Banda Sea with other cities; thirdly, the city's economic base being driven by people living in a strong maritime tradition; fourthly, inter-regional connectivity that can only be done by sea. Thus, the character of the city leads to the typology of a new city, the maritime city. The study of maritime cities in Indonesia is very important because it has a vast sea with thousands of islands.

Keywords: commodities, integration of the sea trade networking, maritime town, development, and west side of Banda Sea

1 INTRODUCTION

The State of Indonesia is a country that has a large area of sea. Lapien said that the sea has a liaison role between one island and another (Lapien, 2002). Elaborating further into his statement, the sea not only connects islands but also connects human beings.

The history of Indonesian trade as proposed by J.C. van Leur is that commerce and shipping in the archipelago took place between islands and connected each other. This relationship brings consequences for the interplay of cultural and social aspects. The community kinship relationship between one island and another is also strong, so it is not surprising that communities come from other islands to several islands like in Sulawesi and other big islands (Leur, 1953). For example, on the Island of Sulawesi, there are settlements of Malays (Makassar city), Javanese people, and Bugis, Butonese, and Bajo people on the north and east coasts of Sulawesi Island. Their existence proves the inter-island relationship is intensive.

Intensive inter-island relations involving many communities are one of the characteristics of the ongoing process of a region's urbanity. The areas of the encounter are often characterised by an ever-expanding morphological concentration of people and settlements, as well as increasing population growth. Such an area usually becomes a city when the needs of its citizens are fulfilled (W.F. Wertheim, 1999),¹ at least when it is near clean water sources. The question is what kind of cities are formed by activities that use the sea as the main (connecting) road?

To answer that question, this paper describes the development of cities in the growing and developing east coast of Sulawesi Island or when viewed from the perspective of maritime history, the west side of Banda Sea is the geographical space of this study. It was at the beginning of the twentieth century when cities in Indonesia and the east Sulawesi coast showed their established urban properties. The discussion begins by describing the geographic area of research (space of town) on the east coast of Sulawesi Island that stretches along the west

1. Wertheim says that the nineteenth century was the earliest period of cities in Indonesia showing its urban nature.

side of the Banda Sea, then, identifying the urban areas and economic activities taking place on the eastern coast of Sulawesi Island, and the final part of the paper discusses the tendencies of certain city typologies such as what grows and develops in geographical spaces such as the eastern coast of Sulawesi Island.

2 THE CONTEXT OF GEOGRAPHY OF THE WEST SIDE OF BANDA: HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

In August 2015, the researcher travelled overland from the city of Luwuk to Kolonodale (now the capital of North Morowali) (Poelinggomang: 2008)² and collected information from various sources. It was concluded that there were no roads connecting Luwuk and Kolonodale. Travel overland to Kolonodale is only possible through Baturube. The City Planning Agency of Banggai Regency, Luwuk City, confirmed that it was, indeed, true that there were no roads to Kolonodale. This means that the sea is still functioning as a liaison that is relied upon between one town and another through the media of motorboats or other sea transportation. The eastern coastal areas of Sulawesi referred to in this paper include Luwuk, Kolonodale, Bungku, Kendari, Muna, and Buton in Southeast Sulawesi, as well as the surrounding islands.

The particular areas that have not developed into “big towns”, will be seen as supporters of the “big city” region on the east coast of Sulawesi. The western side of the Banda Sea stretched from the eastern coast of Sulawesi Island to the Maluku Islands (as a spice producer). Furthermore, Bitung as a copra producer is connected to the Sulu Sea in the Philippines as one of the centres of sea cucumbers. The above commercial activity centre is attached to the Port of Makassar which has been used as a “free port” since 1847 by the Dutch colonial government to compete with British controlled Singapore (Poelinggomang 2002, p.hlm. 27).

Slowly the control of power of traders was consolidated by the Dutch colonial government. Previously, the market was always free with traders who were under British control, without taxes. When the Dutch colonial government imposed a free-port policy, it turned into a taxed trade as a result of the half-hearted free trade liberalisation. The Dutch monopolised the spice trade in the port of Makassar, taxes on the arms trade, and tax obligations for boats (Poelinggomang, 2002).

In its development, the policy affected the surrounding area, particularly commodity producers with traders entering the port of Makassar. The taxation and monopoly system on commodity trading in the “free port” of Makassar by the Netherlands had implications for the strengthening of new economic centres on the East coast of Sulawesi in line with the exploitation of forest, plantation and mining commodities.

The above conditions seem to be the turning point in strengthening trading activities on the East coast of East Sulawesi.³ Early identification and information derived from the Dutch Colonial government reports in the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century recognised that the area was very fertile and could develop into a plantation area, especially in Banggai, Kolodale, and Bungku. Buton was relatively infertile, but, in the 1920s, found asphalt to support the economic development of rulers and communities in the region. Muna became the producer of kapok, tea, rattan, and pearl. Kendari produced sea Lola, Teripang, and fish from Bajo and Bugis fishers (Ligtvoet, 1878). The Bugis merchants became a container and then traded products such as sea cucumbers and Lola. There were products sold to Makassar, some of which were sold to Chinese traders (Sutherland and Nas, 1985). The product surplus that occurred in some parts of East Sulawesi required transportation. Transportation facilities were filled by people who live on Buton island and in the surrounding districts.

2. Kolonodale is a small town in the bay of Tolo, the west side of the Banda Sea.

3. The cities included in this paper are the cities of Luwuk, Kolonodale, Bungku, Kendari, Muna, and Baubau. The discussion of these cities will not be considered one by one but will be discussed as a unity which is bound by the same maritime activity.

3 TRADE AND SHIPPING COMMUNITIES ON THE EAST COAST OF SULAWESI ISLAND

Commerce activities and shipping in the archipelago has been going on for a long time and was done inter-island. J.C. van Leur, in his dissertation at the University of Leiden (1934), found that the shipping and trading activities carried out by the people of Nusantara actively occurred long before the presence of the Europeans (Leur, 1934). European trade and freight companies were unable to shut down shipping and trading activities in the archipelago. Malay, Javanese, Madurese, Bugis, Makassar, Mandar, Buton, and Bajau traders intensively traded and did shipping in some parts of Indonesia, particularly in Sulawesi, the Maluku Islands and beyond.

There was an increase in trade and commodity transportation to the world market from the archipelago in the 20th century by the Europeans (UK) and also the Dutch. Dutch shipping companies that transport products such as KPM served as the backbone for transporting commodities to the world market in Asia, Africa, and Europe.⁴ These ships also transported passengers to West Asia such as Muslims for the hajj and Westerners to Indonesia, encouraged by tourist books and travel literature (Majid, 2008).

There were two severe disruptions to the world trade in the early twentieth century: World War I and the economic crisis in 1930. Before World War I, the Dutch shipping companies that began operations in the late nineteenth century were keen to open trade routes in various regions in the archipelago (*Handelsvereniging Makassar Jaarverslag over 1921*, 1921).

Based on the historical record, shipping and trading on the east coast of Sulawesi has lasted for a long time. Despite this, it has failed to catch the attention of researchers. One of the causes of the lack of interest of researchers in the area is the ability of language and access to limited sources of history. Also, researchers focus on large historical sections, such as the Dutch empire or history in Indonesia.

The report on piracy activities on the intensive west side of the Banda Sea was an early indication that there was productive activity on the west side of the Banda Sea, reflected in the colonial government (Netherlands) report contained in several BKI numbers in the **late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries** (Peterson 2015). This **and** the engagement in intensive activities with local communities had an impact on the slow changes towards modernity in the European mind, yet fast in responding to global change. Two colonial government posts in Buton and Kendari bay, up to the end of the 19th century and the first years of the twentieth century, had not been able to overcome the piracy in the region.

The turnover of trading value in this illegal economy was much more profitable because of the highest market prices, lack of taxes, and the traders having the opportunity to sell at the highest rate. Such an economic system could flourish on the east coast of Sulawesi for three reasons, namely adequate navigation capabilities and the abundance of islands scattered in the region, making it shelters and hiding places from a variety of distractions. Also, the limited vessels and patrols owned by the Dutch colonial government and the vastness of the territory to be controlled was an obstacle to the enforcement of policies in colonial trade.

Therefore, unofficial trade and voyages occurred widely from the beginning of the twentieth century, especially on the eastern coast of Sulawesi and surrounding islands. The signing of Korte Verklaring (1918) implied that the Dutch colonial government had most recently conquered the western region of the Banda sea and its surroundings through *pax-Neerlandica* (Velthoen 2002). The situation indicated the limitation and high rejection of a Dutch Colonial presence on the west side of Banda. With the recognition of the Dutch colonial government as rulers by the local kingdoms on the west side of the Banda Sea through the short agreement of 1918, the territorial administrative arrangement was also made by the government, primarily by forming Afdeling East Sulawesi in 1911–1924. In 1925–1942, Afdeling Buton and Laiwoei were formed again. The agreement for these areas, as is universal in the colonial government bureaucratic system, is to facilitate monitoring and taxation in new areas by government employees, usually the controllers.

4. KPM operates in the transport of passengers and commodities towards the end of the 19th century by routes to port and harbour areas and the commodities export.

Commodity data and trade potentials reported by controller employees as contained in the memory of the handover of the position (*memorie van over gave*) can be said to vary. These commodities are mostly marketed to British merchants and or bought by Arabs and Chinese for further trade in Singapore.

The traders of the eastern coast of the island of Sulawesi, in addition to having local commodity produce, also buy merchandise from other areas for trading such as from the islands of Maluku, Halmahera, Jailoli, Galela, the Kei Islands and the Arafura Sea as well as in Nusa Tenggara, Iron Ore Islands, and in the waters of Northern Australia. The commodities were collected and traded to areas that offered favourable prices such as Singapore, Makassar, and Java.

The influence of trade and sailing on the east coast of Sulawesi in this article is seen from a social and economic viewpoint. Both sides are connected to the developmental context of towns on the eastern coast of Sulawesi Island that grows and develops in line with trading activities and shipping connectivity. Both commercial activities intensify into areas that are economically profitable. Economically, the eastern coast of Sulawesi produces the commodities needed by the global market, especially spices and marine products.

The eastern coastal community of Sulawesi was a haven for the survival of the people because it met basic needs such as clothing, food, and shelter. The west side of the Banda Sea had fertile soil that can develop farming and plantation systems. With the availability of fertile land, the community could maintain its survival with abundant food. History also notes that the west side of the Banda Sea became a destination for the Sultanate of Buton, Bone, and Laiwoei kingdoms when the situation at the local level was volatile, especially during the Makassar War and the Dutch war against Bone in the 1820s. The Mori Kingdom, located in the Gulf of Tolo, also experienced an impact from the chaos in its neighboring country, particularly in terms of the influx of residents from outside its territory. As a result, the population of the Mori Kingdom became heterogeneous and developed residential community space. That is, part of the process which turned the area into a town is in progress. That's what underlies the development of cities on the east coast of Sulawesi.

4 DEVELOPMENT OF CITIES ON THE EASTERN COAST OF SULAWESI ISLAND

The growing and developing cities **on the east coast of Sulawesi** Island are **the** cities of Luwuk, Kolonodale, Bungku, Kendari, and Baubau. The development of Luwuk city towards more modernity began when the colonial government built the road and port infrastructure in Lalong bay. As a fertile area, Luwuk became a source of rice, copra, wood, candlenut, cocoa, and sea cucumber. These commodities made Luwuk a city which developed with a colonial design, along with the towns of Baubau, Kendari, and Kolonodale. Growing cities on the east coast of Sulawesi are areas that historically have had local authorities at the same level as the kingdom. The town of Baubau flourished in the territory of the Sultanate of Buton (Zuhdi, Ohorella and Said, 1996). The city of Kendari thrived in the realm of Laiwoei (Melamba, Salahuddin and Janu, 2011). Bungku and Kolonodale cities thrived in the Mori kingdoms (Poelinggomang, 2008), and the town of Luwuk grew in the territory of Banggai (Bosscher and Matthijssen, 1854).

These cities are in one geographical area that is interconnected. In certain circumstances, they are dependent on one another. The city of Kendari, in the 1830s, became the post of the Dutch colonial government post under J.N. Vosmaer. The town centered on the bay side of Kendari was meant to control pirate activity in the waters and become a trading post. The consequence of the function was that then Kendari was developed into a city that met the needs of its citizens, Europeans, and traders. Kendari port was built, and the road network was also developed to economically profitable areas, especially to Wawotobi as a rice centre.

The above description gives a strong indication that the mainland (producer) of commodities did not mean anything in that period (early 20th century) if not connected to the eastern coast of Sulawesi as a place that moved the commodities to the global market. The bustling towns were Baubau, Luwuk, and Kendari (Vosmaer, 1839; Velthoen, 2010). These towns are crowded because, in addition to being navigable by overseas shipping companies, KPM also had a safe berth. The three towns are located in the bay to provide security and care for the merchants.

Some of the cities on the east coast of Sulawesi have relatively low accessibility levels, especially in terms of shipping and trading. Those towns are Bungku and Kolonodale. Both cities in the early period of the 20th century were highly dependent on other cities that had adequate shipping and trading infrastructures. The people of Buton, Bugis, Makassar, Madura, Mandar, and Bajau became connectors between towns on the east coast of Sulawesi. Various commodities produced by cities on the east coast of Sulawesi are transported and marketed to other cities. The implications of the presence of other communities on the eastern shore of Sulawesi, especially in areas with relatively low accessibility encourage more extensive city development and, at the same time, introduce new things within the social space.

Commodities, boats, and traders are significant contributors to spur the pace of development in cities on the eastern coast of Sulawesi. The colonial government contributed to the design and layout of the town and some of its infrastructure (Liebner, 2004) The exchanges involving local people and coupled with government intervention by controlling economic resources as well as politically controlling a region helped spur more focused urban development, although it did not go as expected. Trade and shipping that went beyond the control of the government continued until near the end of the colonial period. Not all trading ran through official channels. Both lines continued to contribute to the development of the city because local rules still bound personal ones agreed with local authorities, often undocumented, only from recurring (tradition) memories and habits. Thus, it appears that cities on the eastern coast of Sulawesi experience significant developments when trading and shipping activities are strengthening and, at the same time, the colonial government is developing new sectors of the economy, namely commodity trading.

5 CONCLUSION: TYPOLOGY OF A MARITIME TOWN FOR INDONESIA ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE BANDA SEA

This working paper finds substantial maritime activity as factors affecting the development of cities on the eastern coast of Sulawesi. The sea conducts commodity trading and socio-economic relations. The sea and shipping became the primary medium connecting communities with ports and markets, especially in terms of commodity exchange. Items are traded by traders to meet the needs of the townspeople. These things can only be acquired by sea and ship in the cities on the east coast of Sulawesi.

The people in those cities also rely on sea access for mobility. Indonesia, which has a large area, has presented some typology and characteristics of the city, such as central cities, royal cities, colonial cities, port cities, and coastal cities. Three typologies of the towns that I have mentioned last are still under debate, even though they are conceptually evident. The researcher's perspective on the three typologies of the city becomes the determinant by which a city's characteristic is appropriate for the city area studied.

The context of cities on the eastern coast of Sulawesi Island, as the preliminary findings of this research show, leads to the typology of a maritime town. The maritime city is growing because of the dominance of maritime activities that affect the development of the town. Almost all the connectivity that supports the development of the town is generally mediated by the sea. The maritime town seems to be a binder or fusion of some typologies of coastal cities, port cities, and coastal cities. The concept of the maritime town has not been known in Indonesia, perhaps because of the abundance of fertile land making the nation more agrarian. Therefore, in a particular period, a city may have different characteristics in each phase of its development. The east coast cities of Sulawesi are evidently maritime cities in terms of typology.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Bambang Purwanto, M.A, my supervisor for substantive discussions during the process of writing this article as part of my dissertation at Gadjah Mada University. Prof. Bambang Purwanto is a professor in history at Gadjah Mada University,

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