

## **Crops, Shifted Center and Its Ecological Effect in Central Maluku**

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### **Abstrak**

Artikel ini menggambarkan tentang sejarah Kota dan Pulau Ambon yang menjadi pusat kekuasaan politik dan perdagangan dan korelasinya dengan kondisi lanskap dan geografi serta mobilitas populasi di abad 17. Artikel ini juga menggambarkan bahwa komoditas rempah menjadi salah satu alasan dari terciptanya Ambon sebagai pusat dari aktivitas ekonomi politik. Selain itu, tanaman rempah berhasil menciptakan jalinan relasi antar pulau serta mengatraksi para pekerja dari luar Maluku untuk tinggal dan menetap. Di akhir dari tulisan ini, perubahan pusat politik dan ekonomi tersebut, telah menciptakan berbagai perubahan pada ekologi dan lanskap kota dan Pulau Ambon hingga abad 20. Tulisan ini dihasilkan riset arsip yang dilakukan dari rentang 2015-2017 dari berbagai perpustakaan di Kota Ambon, khususnya Perpustakaan Rumphius dan Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya Maluku.

Kata Kunci: Sejarah Kota, Pulau Ambon, Pusat Kekuasaan Politik dan Perdagangan

### **Abstract**

This article describes the history of Ambon city and island which became the center of political power and trade and its correlation with landscape and geographical conditions as well as population mobility in the 17th century. In addition, the spice plants succeeded in creating inter-island relations and attracting workers from outside Maluku to stay and settle down. At the end of this paper, the change in the political and economic center has created various changes in the ecology and landscape of the city and Ambon Island until the 20th century. This paper is resulted from archival research conducted from 2015-2017 from various libraries in Ambon City, especially the Rumphius Library and the Maluku Cultural Values Preservation Center.

*Keywords: History of the City, Ambon Island, Center of Political Power and Trade*

### **Introduction and Research Question**

This paper discusses the exchanged materials, such as cloves, sago, timber, fish and sea cucumber, which can create the center of administration, interisland connections and encounters between migrants and native society. My project questions why Ambon Island becomes a center of administration; despite the fact the island has low fertility and vulnerability to any ecological crises? Why not Banda Island, which is the center of spice production, or why not Seram Island that has timber and agricultural land, as the center of Moluccas' government? Secondly what kind of exchanged commodities that allows the interdependency among islands and attracts the migrant to involve in the pattern of exchange? Thirdly, the patterns of migration and resettlement, urban infrastructure and capital investment have shifted environment and landscape of Ambon Island. These transformation raises question, what are the ecological effects after the coming of

massive migrations to Ambon Island? To answer these questions, I use two approaches: first is to see from *long-duree* history of Ambon and the dynamic ecological and demographic transformation over three centuries. The second approach, I use an ecological standpoint to look at the interaction between inhabitant of Ambon and the set of dynamic relations with the landscape and its environment.

### **1. Why Ambon Matters: The Shifted Center**

The town of Ambon, which is located in the Leitimor peninsula only comprises 310 km<sup>2</sup> or about 40% of the total area of the peninsula (Miller, 17). Unlike other islands in Indonesia that are based on agriculture, Ambon has different agrarian systems, which combines horticulture, fishing, gathering and trade. Ambon Island is located in the province of Maluku. The island consists of two peninsulas, Leihitu and Leitimor, which are separated by a narrow isthmus on either side. The town of Ambon is located at the Leitimor peninsula. The Leitimor peninsula is comparatively poorly bestowed with natural resources for agricultural production. Most of its soils have low fertility and moreover vulnerable to erosion, landslides and floods. Under these natural environmental conditions, the soils are mostly cultivated with tree crop gardens, such as sago palms and cash tree crops, such as clove, nutmeg, and coconuts.

The adjacent islands of Ambon, such as Buru and Seram, were the islands that had extensive plots of swampland. Sago palms were plenty in the swampland area. Therefore west Southeast Seram islands and mainland Seram Island still play a significant role in providing staple food to Ambon. However, as discussed by McNeil (2010), the areas of swampland were the hotbed of malaria and smallpox epidemics. Thus, it is perilous to live around the swampland area because of its an endemic place for mosquitoes that potentially lead to the spread of disease. Knaap shows that in the seventeenth to nineteenth century, Seram Island was sparsely populated due the high mortality caused by malaria disease. The depopulation of islands around Ambon was not only caused by wars, especially Hituese War, waged from 1641, 1646, 1651, and Hoamoalese War from 1656 to 1658, but also followed by severe epidemics, such as malaria that raged the area between 1656-1658 (Knaap, 1995: 239).

In a similar vein, wars were go hand in hand with famine and disease (McNeil, 2010: 188-190). Therefore, Ambon is the best island for a large population to live, specifically because Leitimor peninsula has small sago deficient spots, which means that Leitimor is not a swampy area and not populated by mosquitos. From the seventeenth to nineteenth century, Ambon was the center of administration that controlled spice-producing areas, such as Banda and Buru Island. The expression of processes of state formation was expressed through control of the supply of cloves and taxation, which aimed to cope with the anxieties engendered by VOC (Dutch East Indies Company) (Ellen, 1995: 229).

This paper explores the questions about why “the center of political controls” shifted from Ternate Island to Ambon Island in the seventeenth century. Why were the Dutch interested in Ambon Island? To answer the question, I explore some works that provide deep historical commentary about Ternate and Ambon during the fifteenth to seventeenth century. The demand of the world market for the spices had increased rapidly since the

sixteenth century by the coming of the Dutch, which mean that the Dutch increased the supply of spices and popularized the spices by creating a market in Europe. Global market in Western Europe required spices for household necessities, cosmetics, and drugs. The Kingdom of Tidore and Ternate became the center of the Moluccas world because of the dramatic increase of the price of spices and the abundance of clove production in the sixteenth century. The Makian Island, Batjan, Jailolo, Talai, Palisua, Sula, Mondona, Obi, Morotai, Halmahera, East Seram, Loloda, were the vassals of Ternate Kingdom (Andaya, 1993b: 82-98). The Gamrange island, Waigama, Raja Ampat in West Papua, some regions in the southeast Halmahera Islands such as Buli, Maba, Bicoli and Patani were the vassals of the Tidore court. Besides supplying clove and sago to the centre, some of the periphery areas, like Radja Ampat and Weda sent a gift in a type of tortoiseshell and the bird of paradise (Andaya, 1993b: 82). **See map 1.**



**Map 1**

Cloves and nutmeg became the medium through which exchange relations and social ties were established. The Moluccans used the clove harvest and its growth as the medium of exchange; the relationship between center and periphery was intended to be a mutual benefit. The periphery regions supplied sago, rice, and spices, slaves, to Ternate and Tidore court, while the center reciprocated by delivering foreign goods such as cloth, cotton, porcelain, weapon, and guns. The periphery considered the court to be the symbol of supremacy, prestige, wealth, and happiness. They considered the goods that were supplied from the court to be the object of power transmission. In addition, the court exchanged cloves and sago from periphery for the new titles and religion. The lord gave

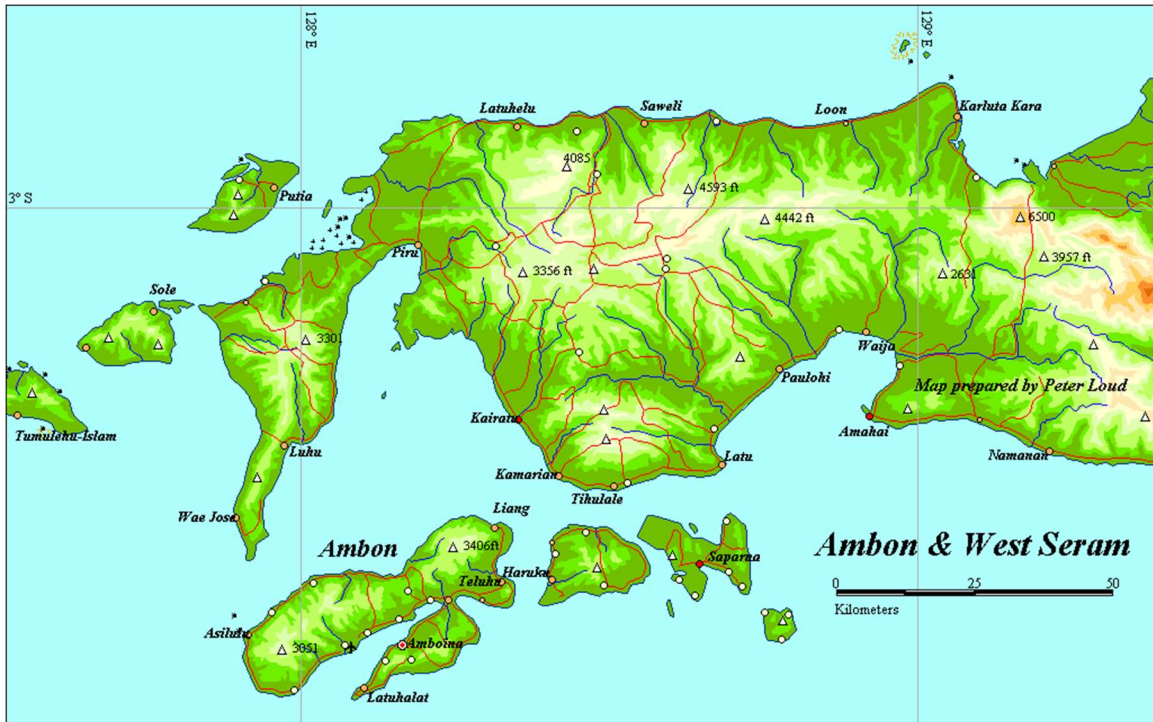
the titles to the chiefs in the periphery, such as *raja*, *kolano*, *jojau*, and many other local variations of titles (Andaya, 1993b: 108-109). Thus, the lord did not see their vassals as remote areas; they rather treated the vassal as the complement relation in reciprocating goods and security (Andaya, 1993a: 3, 17).

In pre- fifteenth century Ambon was not a center of trade. Most of the short trade was concentrated in many parts of the Leihitu peninsula instead of the Lei Timor peninsula, where the Ambon town is located (Ellen and Glover, 1974: 365-67)<sup>1</sup>. Ellen found that before fifteenth century, Ambon was not in the lists of long trade and short distance trade. Ambon originally was built as a fortress city. To make impenetrable by any offense, the Portuguese constructed brick walls and dug ditches around the perimeter of the town. The Portuguese built the stronghold city in 1576 after Sultan Baabullah expelled them from Ternate Island a year earlier in 1575. When the Dutch took over in 1605, they modified the fortress to be more in line with the standard fortresses common in Europe, which included a landing place for maritime power as well as military headquarters on the seashore.

Ambon became the central power of local government because of its advantageous natural terrain. The plain lowland located in the coastal areas was convenient to build a town, and since Ambon was on the coast, the fort was supported by naval power. On the contrary, mountains and hills in Seram Island and Hitu Peninsula were not suitable to be a center of political control not only because of their disadvantage in terrain, but these two rugged areas had only small quantities of sulfur earth to produce gunpowder for war (Knaap, 2003: 175). There were also not many forts to block intruders attacking from the mountains and hillside. To add, the heavy artillery stored in the coastal areas was not easy to haul up the narrow and steep paths of the hills and mountains. (Knaap, 2003: 175-76) As described, the development of Ambon Island was very much interconnected to the war and trade. To establish Ambon as a center of power, the VOC raided periphery areas. The Dutch recruited mercenaries from the indigenous people because the colonizers lacked the manpower for conquest and also they did not know the landscape in the periphery areas as well as the indigenous. This conjecture made by Gerrit J Knaap, is similar to two works that help to describe the technicalities of this conquest of indigenous folk. The first is James Scott (2011), which asserts that an emphasis in the early period of war was to catch people for slave labor rather than raiding the land. However, Knaap indicates that during the VOC raids, many villages were depopulated because of the massacre. **See map 2.**

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<sup>1</sup> Only above 17<sup>th</sup> century is the key period when the focus of center shifted to Ambon.



**Map 2**

The second work that may provide insight into this study is Jared Diamond (As a point of contrast to the descriptions of the conquest of Ambon made by Knapp, Diamond argues that the Spanish won against the Inca and Maya because the Spanish had a more advanced technology. According to Knaap the VOC won against the indigenous people in Seram Island and Hitu Peninsula because they recruited Ambonese mercenaries and trained them into the European soldier's disciplinary (Knaap, 2003: 186-88).

Following the conclusion of the wars in 1657, the Dutch started to develop Ambon to become a city of migrants. The companies and commerce sectors that served the VOC increased steadily from a few hundred to almost one thousand at the end of seventeenth century. The massive immigration of slave and prosperous Chinese communities to Ambon in 1650 contributed to huge economic growth (Knaap, 1992: 110-111). Their number became quite substantial by 1700. Chinese traders played a more important role than other ethnic groups since they not only owned ships, but they also served as moneylenders and were the biggest taxpayers for the VOC (Knaap, 1992: 116, 118). And as one would expect, the state gathered large revenues from general taxes that came from private shipping, exports and import duties, licenses for home construction, and miscellaneous tax collections from peddlers using market places (Knaap, 1992: 117).

Knaap shows surprising data that slaves made up a larger portion of Ambon in the seventeenth century than any other demographic: 52.3 percent of the total population were male slaves who were sent from Buton, Makassar and Bali (Knaap, 1992: 123-24). This finding reminds me of Marx who said: *without slavery, no Greek State, no Greek art and science; without slavery, no Roman Empire because economic development and the emergent of town need slavery.* Ambon became a diverse location, having a population

consisted of European settlers, Chinese peoples and the indigenous folk. Unlike J.S Furnivall who believed that the encounter between each ethnic groups and races only happened in the economic activities (1948), Knaap showed that encounters among races also occurred in various social interactions. The marriages between races were high in number. Many Chinese men married former slaves of Makassarese or Balinese, because of the lack of Chinese women in Ambon. Europeans also took partners from other races because of the lack in European women in the area (Knaap, 1992: 122, 126).

## 2. Interisland Connections

Ecological background and the production of natural resources have a significant impact to the pattern of inter-island connections. Different ecological backgrounds lead to the interdependency among islands. Leitimor peninsula depends on the extractive forest products, such as timber. It is used as material for houses and traditional dugout canoes, which are mainly used for fishing and ferrying. People in Leitimor peninsula also import firewood from the Southeast Seram islands, such as Geser, Kiltai and Keffing Islands that have mangrove swamps. Mangrove is excellent fuel for charcoal because when burned, the wood can last long and creates only little smoke (Ellen, 1985: 577). However, in the 1980s onwards, Ellen witnessed that the demand of timber for boat has declined since most of the sea transportation has been using motorboat (Ellen, 2003).

Ambon has a long deep history of dependency on natural resources from Seram Island<sup>2</sup>. Although Ambonese have transformed their diet from sago to rice, they still rely on Seram Island, because many migrants from Java Island have transformed the swampy areas into rice fields. As an exchange, Ambon Island send non-food items to Seram, such as ceramics, porcelain, liquor and clothes. Ellen noted that before spice was booming in the fifteenth century, Ambon Island had sent ceramics to Seram. The dominant land material in Ambon, which consist of limestone, granite, quartzite and basalt are suitable for making ceramics (Ellen1974, Ellen and Latinis, 2012)

Knaap remarks that there is a significant correlation between clove cropping and population growth. Several areas with plenty of clove cultivation tend to have demographic development, and the other way around (Knaap, 1995: 240). However, this premise could not apply generally to entire islands. Unlike Java Island that produces rice crops and might stimulate the growth of population, spice crops in Moluccas is unique because some islands that produce great number of clove trees per-capita do not necessarily have the greatest population density. Unlike rice, a crop that becomes Javanese diet, spices are not Moluccans staple food. Additionally, the growth of

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<sup>2</sup> In the early period, spice plantations played the most important single factor affecting to the deforestation Moluccan forests. The extraction of forest products for subsistence increased with the booming of spices for European and Asian markets. There has been a heavy denudation among Spice Islands because the land was cleared for cash crops, such as clove, nutmeg, cacao and coffee. As a result, Spice Islands depend on the larger islands that still produce basic resources, such as sago, timber and thatch.

population is various because each island has different experiences of migrations, natural disasters, epidemic diseases, political turmoil and resettlement after wars.

In Seram Island, adjacent to Ambon Island, land availability is mostly no longer used for cultivating subsistence crops, but for cash crops. As a consequence, this leads to the intensification of land use. Migrant labors are keen to cultivate crops for exchange in regional trade rather than for local subsistence (Ellen, 1979: 45-47). They are more responsive to see the opportunity in tree cash crops. When the prices of cloves boomed in the 1980-1990s, they cultivated cloves. The competition to cultivate clove trees between the migrants and the natives intensify the land use. *Kebun* (garden) that should be left fallow after a few years for restoring the soil fertility are exploited to cultivate cash crops. In addition, mono cropping of cloves has a risk in losing soil fertility and prevention of erosion. The sago production from Seram to Ambon has declined since people in Seram began to cut land for cash crop plantations. In Seram itself, many migrants from Java clear the swampy forest for rice agriculture, cash cropping, and the commercial lumber industry (Ellen, 1997: 189).

Migrants in Moluccas are hard workers and tend to be more successful economically than the natives themselves. To the native Moluccan, migrants are considered *pendatang*, which means stranger or newcomer. Therefore, the migrants, such as the Butonese or the Javanese, develop their mutual help when they are in an alienated geography. The elder migrants who live successfully in Moluccas help the younger migrants, who are their relatives or neighbors back in Buton or Java. The hatred and anxiety toward the migrants is because they are more responsive to the economic activities that have to do with cash money. In other words, the migrants are more responsive to plant cash crops rather than the native people. To the native, cash money leads to the competition, individualism and greediness. Additionally, the competition of land use creates many tensions and land dispute. Therefore, like the way Javanese consider Chinese as materialistic, the native Ambonese consider migrant Butonese to be “materialistic people” who exploit land and environment for cash money.

In the 1980s, because the migrants had no right to own land, they treated native Moluccans as their patrons to maintain social security. They worked for the Moluccans in the garden; in exchange for temporary housing from their Moluccan landlord (Beckmann, 2007: 117, 129). The Butonese only has the right to plant cloves on the Ambonese' land. They do not have the right to buy the land. However, Beckmann's findings are also quite out of date since recently many successful Butonese traders have been able to buy land from Moluccans. Butonese can change the landscape of the migrant an environment and the economic patterns. They change the rights on land and trees and cropping patterns (Hospes, 1994: 18).

In rural Ambon, clove and sago have two contrasting aspects. Cloves are cash crops, while sago is for private consumption. In the last 40 years, cloves have been only produced mainly for the Indonesian cigarette market. The Butonese migrants, who migrated from the rocky and barren areas of Southeast Sulawesi since the beginning of the twentieth century, have played important roles in the clove business. Butonese



migrants have become important traders and credit suppliers in the market of cloves and nutmeg. Hospes who did his research in Tulehu reported that Butonese migrants were very aware of the uncertainties and risks in clove production. They can adjust between risks and profit making in the pre-harvest agreements. The Butonese can predict the future of clove harvest by buying in advance the clove fruits (*beli buah*) and rent the trees (*sewa pohon*). They buy the fruits and rent the trees with lower price than the harvest results (Hospes, 1994: 20)

On the contrary, sago becomes the buffer of food security for the native Ambonese. Although Ambon has faced a rapid increase in population, there is no hunger period. Whenever people suffer food insecurities because of the flood, wars and the delaying rice supply from outside islands, sago can be a substitution for those crises. Ambonese also combines sago with fish and coconut as their diets. Both sago and coconuts are abundant on the islands. To harvest sago, people do not need high intensification of labor and technology. Instead, the non-mechanized of sago collections require broader social relations between relatives, neighbors and friends to process the harvest (Beckmann, 2008; Hospes, 1994). Sago palms also are not requiring capital intensive to maintain because the trees grow by themselves on the swamp to the ridge areas. Sago palms do not need fertilizers, and unlike rice agriculture, sago has no particular harvest season.

Hospes argues that the agro condition of sago shapes the system of debt in society. Unlike Javanese society, the Ambonese women have no loans or types of credit used as food security because they have sago that is available anytime to consume whenever they face food crises (Hospes, 1994: 15). However, Hospes does not describe the relations of Butonese with the sago. Unlike cloves, Sago cannot be monetized to the credit systems. Therefore, the Butonese seems do not seem interested in dealing with these palms.

### **3. Migrations and its Ecological Effects**

People who come to Ambon are spontaneous migrants, which is different from the type of migrants in Aru, Buru and Seram Island. Most of the migrants in these islands are called official migrants. They came to Ambon because of the state planning of development called *transmigrasi*. Ellen indicates that the numbers of spontaneous migrants are often more than double the numbers of official migrants (Ellen, 1997: 184)<sup>3</sup>. Knaap (1995: 233-4) noted that in 1673, 1683 and 1692, the average annual population growth in Ambon was 1.0 percent, which mostly was still because of natural increase, rather than migration. However, in the postcolonial era, the increase of population is largely because of migration rather than the high birth rate.

Beckmann reported that in the 1980s the price of cloves increased in the global market, which also led to increase of land disputes. The imprecise sharing arrangement led the conflict between Butonese migrants and the native Moluccans (Beckmann and Beckmann, 1994: 600; Beckmann, 2007). However, unlike rice cultivation that requires the substantial amount of cooperation, the cultivation of vegetables and beans demand

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<sup>3</sup> In 1989 for example, there were 25, 954 migrants from Java and other parts of the province settled in special spots on Seram Island (Ellen, 1997: 184)

less cooperative labor and could be done by a nuclear family. Therefore, a dispute regarding the land, crops and cloves is mostly in a small-scale conflict because the conflict is regarding the private property and does not involve many larger social groups.

The changes of agro-ecosystems and demography seem also to be a stimulus in the change of the property and social relationships. Especially in the coastal areas, pressure on the land is currently increasing. As a consequence, the Butonese are urged to intensify more land use by modernizing cropping techniques to raise productivity (Beckmann and Beckmann, 1994: 595). The ability of Butonese to own property led them to have equal rights. As a consequence, the Ambonese tends to hold the land property based on the custom rights.

Tensions between migrants and native are more intense because they both have similar livelihood orientations. Both native Moluccas and the migrants have no orientation to the sea working, rather they prefer to work on the land by cultivating vegetables and cash crops. In the tradition of *pela*<sup>4</sup> Dieter Bartels shows that the exchanged goods within *pela* rituals between two villagers are mostly about crops, such as sago, timber, which are exchanged with modern goods, such as cigarettes, liquor and porcelains (Bartels, 1997). Fish products are not exchanged commodities in the ritual of *pela*. On the other hand, the Butonese migrants mostly work as gardeners. Their aiming coming to Ambon Island is for working on the land. For Butonese migrants, fishing is only a side job during the fallow period of vegetable cultivations (Beckmann, 2007).

Three main causes that lead to environmental degradation along the bay area are urbanization, agriculture and shipping. Most of the discussion in this paper is about the urbanization that leads the environmental crises. Since 1980s, the population increased rapidly along the coming of migrants. Social insecurities emerged since the rapid population growth increased the pressure on the land and marine resource availabilities (Knaap, 1995: 237). The population density in Ambon Island increased and this worsened by the dependency of food resources from outside islands. Ambonese dwellers are dependent on crops that are imported from outside of the Island. Nowadays rice is very popular, however, all of the rice is imported and must be paid in cash money.

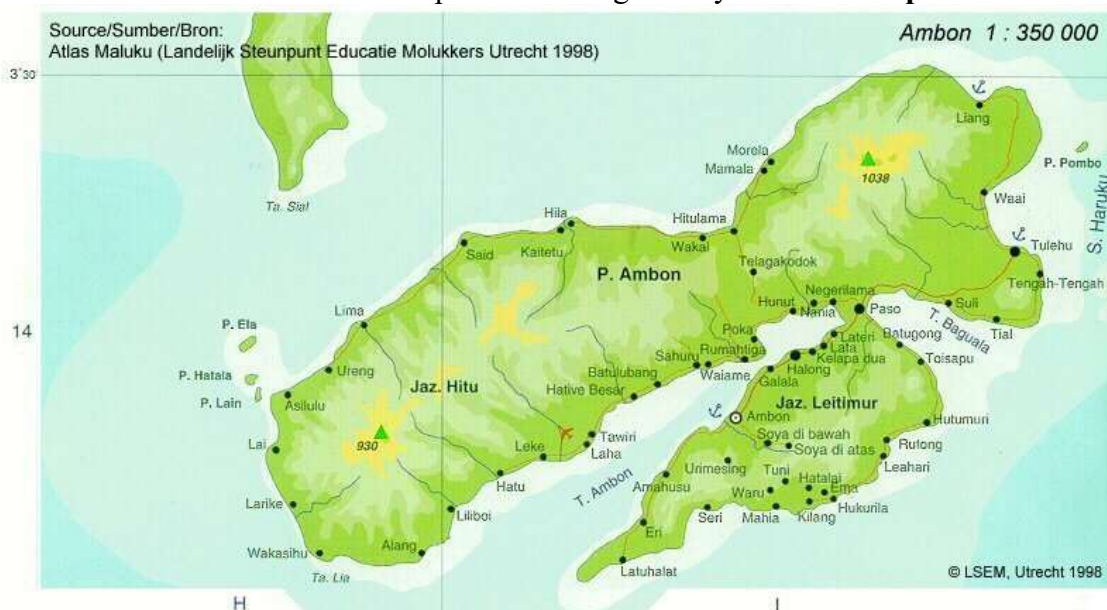
The poor Butonese migrants living in the areas above the city replaced most of the native plants with vegetables, fruits and ornamental imported plants from other regions. In every kampong, the Butonese have exploited the particular opportunities of natural resources, rivers and the sea (Hospes, 1994: 19). The customary land does not allow the Butonese to

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<sup>4</sup> *Pela* is not only for the peace treaty but also have economic advantages. It becomes an important factor in the exchange of goods and reciprocity (Bartels, 1977: 51). The mutual assistance of *pela* enables the people to have free access to goods and shelter (53). In the pre European period, the Ambonese who had *pela* pacts with Seramese were allowed to have access to the sago lands. This called *pela barang* (commodity *pela*) (Ibid, 142-144, 210-212) In the contemporary era, when the villagers need some building materials, such as timber or clay, for *baileu* (traditional house council), schools, churches, or mosques, which cannot be supplied from their own land, they will go to their *pela* village which has abundance material and they can take it without payment (ibid, 147-148).

cultivate perennial crops, such as cloves and nutmeg; except rent the trees or buy the fruits of the cloves. Therefore, besides working in the clove horticulture, the labors of immigrants from Buton also work in the ridge by cultivating annual crops.

The Butonese are also involved in the clove trade, in which they buy clove during harvesting time or buy it in advance, or rent the trees from the native. Specifically when the clove price declines, the Butonese mostly concentrate on cultivating crops in the ridge, fishing, or selling clothes. The Butonese migrants cultivate annual crops like tuberous plants and vegetables along the ridges. In the sub-urban areas, mostly Butonese migrants cultivate cash crops, such as carrots, cabbages, and green beans, which use lots fertilizers to stimulate the vegetable growth. Since the Butonese cultivate crops on the ridge, residual water from agriculture flowing down through the river and ending up in the sea creates sedimentation and pollution along the bay area. **See map 3**



**Map 3: Most of the Butonese migrants live in the ridge of the peninsula (Jaz Leitimur)**

Additionally, most of the poor people, both poor migrants and native Ambonese, live in the crowd kampong, and they have bad sanitation and lack of clean water supply. Poor people in the downtown kampongs suffer serious diseases, such as diarrhea and skin diseases. Frequent erosion, flooding and landslides exacerbate the environment, in which these disasters created sedimentation along the bay area. The kampongs are located along upper watershed areas. These locations have unstable lands and landslides threaten most of the times. People in the kampong also dump their household waste into rivers, which cause the river to clog and flood during the rainy seasons.

Miller indicates that there has been great degradation around Ambon Island since the 1970s. The water in the bay is severely polluted; the sea-grass bed and fish populations have declined. Likewise, there has been a great erosion and stream sedimentation in all watersheds since de-vegetation of mangroves, trees and other wetland vegetation along the Ambon Bay (Miller, 8). Ambon has a relatively high number of rainfall days. This

condition creates a naturally high rate of stream sedimentation. The increase of sedimentation leads to many damages, such as frequent flooding, depositing the thick layer of silt on the beach areas and smothering marine life (Miller, 1999: 22). Urban activities, such as shoreline alteration, land clearance, denudation, and solid waste disposal stimulate the increase of flooding during the rainy seasons, from July to December. There is no riparian forest as a buffer zone to protect from erosion and to prevent flooding. The shoreline in front of the town is also full of rubbish. Over time, the salinization on the local water and wells along the kampongs in the lowland areas has increased. In addition, changes in international markets and trades have led to the increased shipping and trade activities in port cities. The motorboats and ferry that cross Ambon not only add to the sea contamination, but floating debris also fouls their propellers.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have three key arguments. First, the history of accumulation is always hand in hand with the history of alienation, criminalization and domination. Therefore, in the first discussion of the paper, I discussed about the history of the creation of Leitimor Peninsula as a center of power. I also elaborate the history of an assemblage between human and non-human, which is replete with the narration of alienation and destruction.

The discussion of "why Ambon matters" shows that cloves that become a global commodity can influence the status of Ambon as a center of administration and politics. The exchange of cloves and sago allow people to accumulate capital and also create the interisland connections and relationship between the native and the migrants. The islanders that have a surplus of sago supply people living in the islands that less of sago supply because they only concentrate their land for cultivating cash crops, such as cloves. Sago and spices not only attracted the Dutch colony to come to Moluccas islands, but they also play a key role in the postcolonial era to pull migrants to do business with these crops.

Second center argument is I believe that the great transformation of accumulation and alienation leads to the feeling of precarity. I bring the emergence of fear to the more concrete discussions, which is connected to the material ecology. People are being threatened and live in uncertainty because of the ecological conditions and population pressures. Both the native and the migrants have a precarious feeling because of the increasingly limited of natural resources supply over time. The feeling of insecurity is not only because people live in the risky areas, such as polders or delta, which are closed by high tide attack, but also because of the population pressure the land and marine. Rapid population growth and urbanization activities have escalated economic competition and have increased the exploration of finite ecological resources. The ecological background and the socioeconomic structure have shaped the growth of anxious feelings among the natives and the migrants. The limits of the land, the condition of the soil, and population pressure increase the competition and anxiety among each competing ethnic group. Therefore, to cope with fear and precarious feelings, intergenerational migrants build cooperation and mutual support. Likewise, native people try to revive the idea of

“indigenuity” so that they can block migrants from having land and expanding their business.

Third argument, cloves and sago have mutual integration and have entanglement with humans. In the case of the Moluccans, in Eastern Indonesia, people have strong relations with cloves only as the commodity of the trade, but also as the tool and lubricant of social relationships and kinship. Clove and sago, as a material anchor provides grounding for a conceptual relationship among many traders in operating their accounting of time, number, abstract quantity, and imagination of space. The regular periods of clove harvesting and sago that can be harvested every day have shaped the pattern of interaction between peasants and traders. The existence of exchange commodities drives people to cease the conflict. The exchange value of material products, such as sago, cloves and fish incorporate between the native and the migrants. Commodities that are exchanged for other commodities cover the abstract quality of social relations. In other words, commodities, such as spices and sago, become the object that concretizes the multiplicities of social relations. Through market and trade, different clans and ethnics develop to be connected and interdependent one another. In other words, the law of supply and demand of commodity creates the interdependence between native and the migrants and interisland connections.

As a final conclusion, environmental crises have decentered Ambon city as a sustainable town to live in. The advances of urban infrastructure development have been unable to keep pace with the rapid urban population. This devastation of environment is caused by the situation of the population who live below the poverty line. Therefore, recently the government tries to open a new frontier in Seram Island as a new capital of Moluccas province. Ambon, as a center of trade and modern government that has attracted many migrants, will decline since people now move to Makariki, a new capital of Central Moluccas located in Seram Island.

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