

Conquest of the Banda Islands by the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (1609–1621)

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Abstract

The conquest of the Banda Islands by the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) between 1609 and 1621 began with the arrival of the VOC in the Banda Islands in 1609, which marked the beginning of a systematic attempt to take control of the spice trade, especially nutmeg. The purpose of this study is to analyse the steps taken by the VOC in controlling the Banda Islands, explain the impact of the VOC conquest on the people of the Banda Islands and the spice trade network, and examine the historical actor roles, such as Jan Pieterszoon Coen, in this event. This study uses historical methods with a qualitative approach, as well as a historical-descriptive design, to reconstruct past events. The findings of this study show that the VOC implemented aggressive military strategies, including fortifications and massacres of local populations, as occurred in the Battle of Banda Neira Island, the Battle of Ay Island, the Battle of Rhun Island, and the Battle of Lontor Island. The impact of this conquest was severe, causing a drastic depopulation in the Banda Islands at the time, so that an estimated 90 percent of the indigenous population of the Banda Islands died. The VOC then repopulated the population with slaves to maintain plantation productivity in the Banda Islands.

Keywords: Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, Battle of Banda Neira Island, Battle of Ay Island, Battle of Rhun Island, Battle of Lontor Island

Penaklukan Kepulauan Banda oleh Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (1609–1621)

Abstrak

Penaklukan Kepulauan Banda oleh Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) antara tahun 1609 dan 1621 dimulai dengan kedatangan VOC di Kepulauan Banda pada tahun 1609, yang menandai awal dari upaya sistematis untuk menguasai perdagangan rempah-rempah, terutama pala. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis langkah-langkah yang diambil oleh VOC dalam menguasai Kepulauan Banda, menjelaskan dampak penaklukan VOC terhadap masyarakat Kepulauan Banda dan jaringan perdagangan rempah-rempah, serta mengkaji peran aktor kunci seperti Jan Pieterszoon Coen dalam peristiwa ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode sejarah dengan pendekatan kualitatif, serta desain historis-deskriptif untuk merekonstruksi peristiwa masa lalu. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa VOC menerapkan strategi militer yang agresif, termasuk pembangunan benteng dan pembantaian penduduk lokal, seperti yang terjadi dalam Pertempuran Pulau Banda Neira, Pertempuran Pulau Ay, Pertempuran Pulau Rhun, dan Pertempuran Pulau Lontor. Dampak dari penaklukan ini sangat parah, menyebabkan depopulasi yang drastis di Kepulauan Banda pada masa itu, sehingga diperkirakan 90 persen penduduk asli Kepulauan Banda tewas. VOC kemudian mengisi kembali populasi dengan budak untuk mempertahankan produktivitas perkebunan di Kepulauan Banda.

Kata Kunci: Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, Pertempuran Pulau Banda Neira, Pertempuran Pulau Ay, Pertempuran Pulau Rhun, Pertempuran Pulau Lontor

Introduction

The Banda Islands, famous for their wealth of spices, especially nutmeg, became one of the most congested areas in the world in the early 17th century. The arrival of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) in the Banda Islands in 1609 marked the beginning of armed conflict as well as systematic efforts to control the spice trade (Lailiyah et al., 2021: p.510). As a Dutch trading company that had privileges from the Dutch government, the VOC not only focused on controlling the trade but also sought to eliminate competition from other European traders as well as the local population. The period between 1609 and 1621 was a very important phase in the conquest of the Banda Islands, which was marked by violence, massacres, and the strengthening of Dutch colonial dominance in the Nusantara (Asmi, 2019: p.3).

Previous research on the conquest of the VOC in the Banda Islands has been extensively researched by previous researchers, including: (1) Maritime culture of Maluku and its relationship in the spice trade during the VOC period of 1605-1799 by Natalya Claire Pessy and Leli Yulifar (2025); (2) The Banda Genocide Incident in 1621 as a true historiographic reflection by Muhammad Farid (2024); (3) The Period of VOC Rule in the Banda Islands by Rosmaida Sinaga, Juan Vito Simanjuntak, Ocha Primalia Tondang, and Suci Larasati (2024); (4) The Exodus of the Banda people in the Key Islands in the XVII Century in the collective memory of the people of Banda Eli and Banda Elat by Megawati Abdin, Kasman Renyaan, and Rahma Temarwut (2024), and; (5) Shifting the historical narrative of the Banda Islands by Joëlla van Donkersgoed (2023). However, these studies have not examined the resistance of the Banda people from the perspective of local socio-political dynamics, such as the battle of Banda Neira Island, the battle of Ay Island, the battle of Rhun Island, and the battle of Lontor Island. This research aims to complement historical studies with a multidimensional approach, which integrates military, economic, and social perspectives. Therefore, the objectives of this study are: (1) Analysing the steps taken by the VOC in controlling the Banda Islands (1609–1621); (2) Explain the impact of the VOC conquest on the Banda people and the spice trade network, as well as; (3) Examine the role of actors in these events, such as Jan Pieterszoon Coen.

The conquest of the Banda Islands by the VOC raises important questions about how the VOC's conquest of the Banda Islands between 1609–1621 was carried out, as well as its impact on the local community. This research aims to uncover the strategies implemented by the VOC, as well as the forms of resistance carried out by the people of the Banda Islands in the face of early Dutch colonialism. This study provides an in-depth analysis of the phase of the conquest of the Banda Islands (1609–1621) by the VOC, including the massacre of 1621 which became the turning point of the VOC's power in the Banda Islands. An interdisciplinary approach is applied to connect colonial policies with local narratives that are often marginalized in traditional historiography (Mudiyono & Wasino, 2015: p.38). This research is very important to understand the roots of the violence caused by Dutch colonialism and its long-term impact on the people of the Banda Islands. These findings can serve as a reflection for studies of imperialism, the resistance of local communities, and the transformation of the global trading system in the 17th century (Fatimah et al., 2016: p.52).

Conceptually, this research focuses on three main elements, namely the colonial strategy of the VOC, the resistance of the local community in the Banda Islands, and the impact of conquest on social life in the Banda Islands. The theory of economic imperialism (Hobson, 1902: p.15) was applied to understand the motivation of the VOC in controlling the spice trade, while the theory of structural violence (Galtung, 1969: p.167) explained the VOC's repressive actions such as massacre and slavery as a means to maintain the VOC's dominance in the Banda Islands. In addition, the concept of resistance studies (Scott, 1985: p.7) was used to analyse the various forms of resistance of the people of the Banda Islands, both openly through battle and covertly through the violation of monopoly agreements. Global trade network theory (Wallerstein, 2011: p.xii) is also the basis for exploring the transformation of the spice trading system after the conquest, including the shift from the local network of Banda Islands communities to VOC monopoly control. In a social context, depopulation and diaspora theory (Manning, 2005: p.23) helps explain the demographic impact of the violence perpetrated by the VOC, such as the replacement of the original population with slaves in the Banda Islands. A historical-descriptive approach is used to reconstruct events

chronologically, while content analysis from primary and secondary sources ensures the validity of constructed narratives (Naila & Witasari, 2024: 29).

Methods

This study applies a historical method with a qualitative approach to analyse the conquest of the Banda Islands by the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) in the period 1609–1621. The design of this research is historical-descriptive, with the aim of reconstructing past events based on primary sources such as archives and travel records of Europeans, as well as secondary sources in the form of relevant literature (Kuntowijoyo, 2018: p.69). The subjects of the study include the main actors, such as the VOC and the Banda Islands people, while the object is the process of conquest and its impact. The research background is focused on the Banda Islands as a strategic spice trade centre (Ritiau et al., 2019: p.2). This research begins with a heuristic, which is the process of searching for and collecting historical sources, both primary and secondary (books, journals, and previous studies) (Mahanum, 2021: p.3). After the data is collected, source criticism is carried out, which includes external criticism (assessing the physical authenticity of the document) and internal criticism (analysing the credibility of the document's content) (Izzah, 2013: p.272). The next stage is interpretation, in which researchers connect historical facts logically and contextually to avoid bias (Susanto, 2016: p.23). This process is followed by historiography, which is the preparation of historical narratives based on verified findings (Dasfordate, 2023: p.37). Data analysis uses a qualitative approach with narrative-chronological methods and content analysis to uncover the motives, strategies, and consequences of the conquest (Faizin & Haerussaleh, 2020: p.143). With this approach, this study seeks to provide a deep understanding of the power, economic, and social dynamics during the VOC occupation in the Banda Islands.

Results and Discussion

Before the Conquest of the Banda Islands by the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC)

The Banda Islands are in the southern part of the Maluku Islands, in the eastern region of the Nusantara. By the end of the 16th century, nutmeg and mace could only be found in the Banda Islands, so Europeans wanted to control the trade in these commodities in order to make significant profits. The Banda Islands themselves have become part of a large trade network in Southeast Asia, and traders from Java often visit the islands to trade Javanese rice and Indian textiles for nutmeg and mace. They also introduced Islam to the region. Politically, the Banda Islands consist of a collection of villages. These villages were led by wealthy people (community leaders or respected individuals) who gathered on Banda Neira Island to avoid inter-village conflicts and agree on trade agreements (van Ittersum, 2016: p.460).



Figure 1. Map showing the islands of the Banda Islands
(Source: Map Lab, 2013)

In the early 16th century, the Portuguese arrived in the Banda Islands. The wealthy in the Banda archipelago resisted the Portuguese attempts to entrench their power. They never allowed the Portuguese to establish trading posts or fortifications. The resistance of the Banda islanders also stopped the Portuguese missionaries' efforts to spread Catholicism. It was the resistance of the rich of the Banda Islands that made it impossible for foreign nations to enforce the monopoly of the spice trade in the Banda Islands at that time, while in other Maluku regions (such as in the Sultanates of Ternate and Tidore), Europeans were able to convince the local rulers to grant monopoly rights and allow the establishment of fortifications (Villiers, 1981: pp. 723-730).

The situation in the Banda Islands became crowded with the arrival of the Dutch at the end of the 16th century. On May 1, 1598, a fleet led by Admiral Jacob Corneliszoon van Neck sailed from the city of Texel, Dutch. This expedition funded by several *voorcompagnieën* (which literally means "pre-company") involved Jacob van Heemskerck, who was previously known for twice attempting to search for the Northeast Passage through the Arctic Ocean and successfully surviving the winter on the island of Novaya Zemlya, Russia (Masselman, 1963: pp. 110-111). In 1599, Jacob van Heemskerck sailed to the Banda Islands, marking the first arrival of the Dutch in the Nusantara (Loth, 1995: p.16). The people of Banda welcomed the arrival of the Dutch in the hope that they could help expel the Portuguese (Villiers, 1981: p.749). Jacob van Heemskerck then managed to buy nutmeg and mace from Banda Islands (Masselman, 1963: p.116). He was even allowed to establish a small trading post on Lontor Island (Villiers, 1981: p.794).

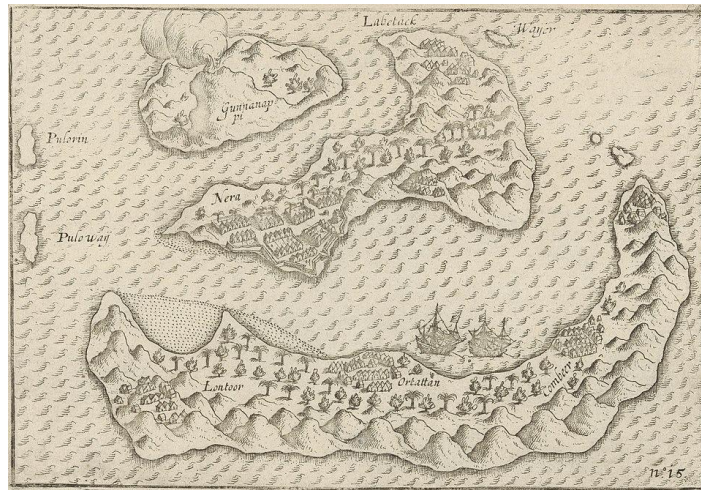


Figure 2. Map showing the islands of the Banda Islands created by Jacob Cornelisz Banjaert (Source: Rijksmuseum, 1599)

In 1602, the trade association of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) was officially established. The VOC was the result of the merger of several *voorcompagnieën*. The company obtained exclusive rights from the Dutch government to conduct trade in Asia. In addition, the VOC also had the right to establish agreements with other countries and establish fortifications and trading posts (Masselman, 1963: p.144).

The Process of Conquest of the Banda Islands by the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC)

1. Battle of Banda Neira Island

Although at first the relationship between the people of the Banda Islands and the Netherlands went well, it was not long before the people of Banda Islands began to realize that the arrival of the Dutch was actually more detrimental than the Portuguese (Loth, 1995: p.16). In early April 1609, a VOC fleet led by Pieter Willemszoon Verhoeff arrived on the island of Banda Neira and attempted to force the construction of a fort (Boxer & Dillen., 1972: p.128). In addition, the VOC also wanted to monopolize the spice trade, so they demanded that the people of the Banda Islands only sell spices to the Dutch (Rozendaal, 2019: p.127). On the other hand, the people of the Banda Islands are highly dependent on trade with other countries because they need to import food and other important commodities (Loth, 1995: p.17). The people of the

Banda Islands also do not want to lose their economic freedom, as they want to sell spices to bidders at the highest prices, regardless of whether the bidders are from Java, Britain, or Portugal. Intense negotiations took place between the Dutch and the people of the Banda Islands (Rozendaal, 2019: p.127). However, Pieter Willemszoon Verhoeff ignored the objections of the wealthy of the Banda Islands and began the construction of the fort (Burnet, 2013: p.102).

In late May 1609, the leaders of the Banda Islands invited Pieter Willemszoon Verhoeff and two other commanders into the forest, where they were murdered (Rozendaal, 2019: p.128). Some of the VOC Soldiers were also massacred by the inhabitants of the Banda Islands, with a total of 46 Dutch killed (Loth, 1995: p.17). This event was witnessed by one of the members of the expedition who later became the Governor General of the VOC, namely Jan Pieterszoon Coen (Burnet, 2013: p.103). In retaliation, the Dutch army looted several villages belonging to the people of the Banda Islands and destroyed their ships. In August 1609, the Dutch and the people of the Banda Islands reached an agreement on a peace treaty. This agreement benefited the Dutch, as the Banda people had to recognize the Dutch monopoly in the spice trade (Rozendaal, 2019: p.128). In the same year, the Dutch established Fort Nassau on Banda Neira Island to control the nutmeg trade (Hanna, 1987: p.27).

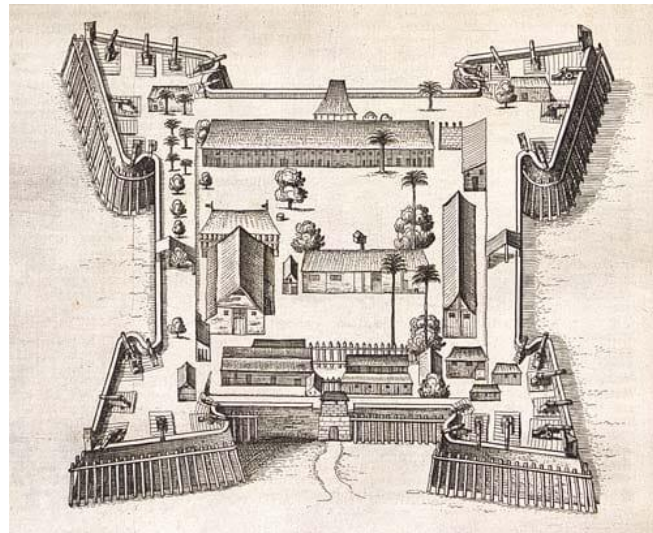


Figure 3. Fort Nassau on Banda Neira Island, Banda Islands
(Source: Huygens Instituut, 1646)

Despite having signed an agreement guaranteeing a Dutch monopoly, the people of the Banda Islands ignored the provisions in the agreement (Loth, 1995: p.17). This was due to the fact that the people of the Banda Islands began to trade with the British (at more favourable prices) as well as Malay, Javanese, and Makassar traders (who sold spices from the Banda Islands to the Portuguese) (Molhuysen & Blok, 1918: p.1147). It is unclear whether the wealthy in the Banda Islands did not understand the content of the treaties made under the Western legal system, or whether they were reluctant to abide by them because they reduced their economic freedom. Despite this, this situation made them considered untrustworthy partners in the eyes of the Dutch (Loth, 1995: p.17).

Meanwhile, Piet Hein took over the position of Pieter Willemszoon Verhoeff as commander of the Dutch fleet. After the completion of the construction of Fort Nassau on Banda Neira Island, the Dutch fleet moved towards Ternate in the north. The Sultan of Ternate had given permission to the Dutch to rebuild a fort that had been damaged on the island of Ternate. The name of the fort was later changed to Fort Oranje in 1609. This fort served as the de facto capital of the VOC until the transfer of the capital to Batavia (now Jakarta) on the island of Java in 1619. The VOC was involved in conflicts with Sultanate of Ternate and Sultanate of Tidore. In March 1610, Piet Hein arrived in Ambon. After going through a long negotiation process from March to November 1610, he managed to buy cloves from Ambon. Furthermore, in early 1611, he carried out military expeditions to Lontor and Rhun Islands in the Banda Islands. Piet Hein was then assigned to

build the Belgica Fortress on the island of Banda Neira. In 1610, the VOC also launched an attack on Ay Island, but the attack was unsuccessful (Rozendaal, 2019: p.129).

2. *Battle of Ay Island*

The VOC could not accept the fact that the people of the Banda Islands were constantly ignoring the monopoly imposed by the Dutch, so the company's board of directors, Heeren XVII, decided in 1614 that the VOC should conquer the entire Banda Islands, even though this could result in destruction for the natives and financial losses (Loth, 1995: p.17). To realize the plan, VOC Governor-General Gerard Reynst led his troops towards Ay Island on May 14, 1615 (Molhuysen & Blok, 1918: p.1147). Ay Island at that time was under British protection (Burnet, 2013: p.104). Initially, the VOC managed to control the forts owned by the people of Ay Island, but the Dutch soldiers were too quick to plunder (Molhuysen & Blok, 1918: p.1147). The British had retreated to Rhun Island, regrouped forces, and then launched a surprise attack at night that killed 200 Dutch soldiers and recaptured the island of Ay (Burnet, 2013: p.105). Gerard Reynst then decided to withdraw from Ay Island. He planned to first stop the British attempt to obtain cloves in Ambon, and conquer Ay Island afterwards. However, Gerard Reynst died of illness in December 1615 (Molhuysen & Blok, 1918: p.1148).

Meanwhile, the inhabitants of the Banda Islands asked for help from the British to protect themselves from Dutch attacks. According to Ian Burnet (2013: p.104), they sent envoys to the British trading post in Banten and brought the following letters.

(..) Therefore, we all want to reach an agreement with the King of England, because today the Dutch are using all means to colonize our land and destroy our religion. Thus, all of us in the Banda Islands really hate the faces of these Dutch people, the children of prostitutes, because they are adept at lying and doing evil and trying to defeat the country of the Banda Islands. (...) If the King of England, out of affection for us, was willing to protect our country and religion with gunpowder and cannon bullets, then we could go to war against the Dutch. With God's help, we will sell all the spices produced by our land (the Banda Islands) only to the King of England.

In April 1616, the VOC fleet led by Jan Dirkszoon Lam carried 263 soldiers. Despite facing very strong resistance, they managed to conquer Ay Island. Jan Dirkszoon Lam decided to massacre the islanders and kill all the natives who resisted, while 400 other citizens (including women and children) drowned while attempting to flee to Rhun Island (Loth, 1995: p.17). This incident forced the wealthy people of Banda on other islands to sign treaties in favour of the Dutch. Jan Dirkszoon Lam then ordered the construction of Fort der Wrake on Ay Island as a warning of the consequences if the Banda Islanders dared to violate the treaty with the Dutch. However, this action still could not guarantee the Dutch monopoly on the nutmeg and mace trade (den Heijer, 2006: p.45). Despite initially feeling intimidated, the people of Lontor Island eventually continued to trade with their trading partners, including the British who had established their presence on Rhun and Nailaka Islands (Loth, 1995: p.17).

3. *Battle of Rhun Island*

In December 1616, the English merchant Nathaniel Courthope arrived on Rhun Island with 39 men and established a fort on the island (van Ittersum, 2016: p.417). He succeeded in convincing the inhabitants of Rhun Island to sign a treaty declaring that the people of Rhun Island recognized the English King James I as the sovereign holder of the island. The Dutch then besieged the British fortress. With the support of the locals, the British were able to hold out for several years, but in the end, Nathaniel Courthope was killed in the battle in 1620 and the English fortress fell to the Dutch. The British were forced to leave Rhun Island (Burnet, 2013: p.105). After taking control of Rhun Island, the Dutch killed and enslaved all adult males on the island, while women and children were exiled. The Dutch also cut down all the nutmeg trees on Rhun Island so that the island would be worthless. In addition, the Dutch allowed cattle to roam freely on Rhun Island to be used as a source of food. In 1638, the British again attempted to visit Rhun Island, so VOC officials regularly visited the island annually to check if the English had secretly established their presence

on the island. This annual visit was only stopped after the British relinquished their claim to Rhun Island in 1667 (Loth, 1995: pp. 18-19).

4. *Battle of Lontor Island (Banda Besar Island)*

As a witness in the murder of Pieter Willemszoon Verhoeff, Jan Pieterszoon Coen holds a grudge against the people of the Banda Islands (Burnet, 2013: p.103). On October 26, 1620, Jan Pieterszoon Coen sent a letter to Heeren XVII that read: "In order to deal with this problem properly, the Banda Islands need to be reconquered and inhabited by other tribes." (Straver, 2018: p.90). Subsequently, Heeren XVII gave instructions to Jan Pieterszoon Coen to conquer the Banda Islands and expel the local leaders from the area (Burnet, 2013: p.103).

The VOC fleet led by Jan Pieterszoon Coen sailed from Batavia in late 1620 (Loth, 1995: p.18). This fleet first arrived on the island of Ambon, and there Jan Pieterszoon Coen's fleet was reinforced by a number of troops and ships. Jan Pieterszoon Coen's fleet then sailed to Banda Neira Island (Burnet, 2013: p.105). The fleet consisted of 19 ships, 1,655 European troops, and 286 mercenaries (Loth, 1995: p.18).

On 21 February 1621, Jan Pieterszoon Coen's fleet arrived at Fort Nassau, where his fleet was reinforced by 250 local soldiers and 36 ships. After failing to recruit English from Rhun and Ay Islands, Jan Pieterszoon Coen began sending scouts to the coast of Lontor Island. The reconnaissance took two days. The scouts found suitable places to survive on the south coast and in the hilly area, but they failed to find the coastal base of Lontor Island. On March 7, 1621, a convoy of VOC scouts landed on the island (Corn, 1998: p.165).

On March 11, 1621, Jan Pieterszoon Coen ordered a very aggressive attack. He divided his army into several groups that attacked various locations on Lontor Island. The invaders quickly managed to capture the villages on Lontor Island. At the end of the day, they also managed to control the lowlands in the north and the cape in the south of Lontor Island. The locals of Lontor Island fled to the hills located in the centre of the island, while VOC forces tried to chase them. On March 12, 1621, the VOC managed to control the entire island of Lontor, recording 6 people killed and 27 injured (Loth, 1995: p.18).

On April 21, 1621, the Dutch tortured the local rulers on Lontor Island and succeeded in taking control of the island (Corn, 1998: p.169). Jan Pieterszoon Coen captured at least 789 people from Lontor Island to be enslaved (Loth, 1995: p.18). A total of 24 local rulers of Lontor Island were executed and beheaded by VOC mercenaries on May 8, 1621 (Straver, 2018: p.90). However, these actions were not able to dampen the resistance of the people of Lontor Island, so Jan Pieterszoon Coen ordered his troops to sweep the island and destroy the villages so that the people of Lontor Island would surrender (Corn, 1998: p.170). Fierce battles ensued in the next few months. After witnessing the devastation wrought by the Dutch, many of the inhabitants of Lontor Island chose to starve to death or jump off a cliff rather than surrender (Loth, 1995: p.18).

The Impact of the Conquest of the Banda Islands by the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC)

According to Jan Pieterszoon Coen, about 2,500 people died from starvation and suffering caused by the war, many women and children were captured, and no more than 300 people managed to escape (Corn, 1998: p.170). Historian Hans Straver (2018) concluded that the population of Lontor Island at that time ranged from 4,500 to 5,000 people. Of these, 50 to 100 people died in battle, 1,700 were enslaved, as well as 2,500 died of starvation and disease, while the number of people who died from jumping off cliffs is uncertain. He also noted that hundreds of residents fled to nearby islands, such as Kei Islands and Seram Island (Straver, 2018: pp. 90-91).

After this conquest, the VOC controlled the entire Banda Islands. As a result of the Dutch actions, the Banda Islands experienced depopulation. Overall, the Banda Islands were estimated to have a population of about 15,000 people before they were conquered by the VOC. Of these, only 1,000 survived (Corn, 1998: p.170). Archaeologist Peter Lape (2000: p.139) even estimates that as a result of this conquest, 90 percent of the population of the Banda Islands was killed, enslaved, or deported.

The VOC then repopulated the population of the Banda Islands with the aim of maintaining the productivity of the archipelago. Most of the people placed in the Banda Islands were slaves imported from

various regions of the Nusantara, India, and China. These slaves further functioned as labour for Dutch plantation owners known as *perkeniers* (Loth, 1995: p.24). The natives were also enslaved and ordered to teach the newcomers how to cultivate nutmeg and mace (van Zanden, 1993: p.77). The treatment of slaves was very bad. The number of the indigenous people of Banda decreased to just 100 in 1681, and every year 200 slaves had to be imported to ensure the slave population remained stable at 4,000 (van Zanden, 1993: p.77). Although the Dutch did not prioritize efforts to Christianize their slaves, they forced all Europeans in the Banda Islands to follow the Dutch Reformed Church (one of the Calvinist churches), while Catholicism (introduced by the Jesuits from Portugal in the 16th century) was outlawed and all Catholics were forced to become Calvinists. Slaves were allowed to convert to Islam and animism, but they were invited and sometimes even forced to join the Dutch Reformed Church (Loth, 1995: p.25).

After successfully controlling the Banda Islands, the first policy issued by the VOC was to make the Banda Islands the main centre of spice production. From this policy, the term "*perken*" or plantation emerged. Plantation is used as a term for the division of productive land for nutmeg plants. The division of plantations in the VOC policy was about 625 *roeden* (12-13 hectares per plot) led by the *perkeniers*, where each *perkeniers* consisted of 25 slaves. The owners of these lands are not indigenous people, but Europeans who have capital (Mansyur, 2011: p.20).

The government system in the Banda Islands established by the VOC since the 17th century is a village system. The highest position was held by the village chief (the Rich) who were probably natives of the Banda Islands (Indigenous) who supported the Dutch government. In the social structure of the people of the Banda Islands, the first position is filled by the Rich (*Orang Kaya*) known as *Orang Lima* (Farid & Thalib, 2018: p.56). Indirectly, the VOC was involved in the social structure of the Banda Islands community to ensure that the rich in the Banda Islands supported it by giving awards in the form of gold-coloured sticks as a symbol of power in the Banda Islands system of government as well as letters containing praise for achievements in the production of spices, especially nutmeg (Mansyur, 2011: p.20).

Nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*) originating from the Banda Islands played a very important role in the economic and political strategy of the VOC in the 17th century, due to the main factors, namely its very high economic value in Europe and geographical limitations in its production. Nutmeg and mace at that time could only grow well in the Banda Islands, making them a rare commodity with enormous demand. According to Giles Milton (Milton, 2000: p.45), nutmeg is valued on par with gold in the European market because it is considered a panacea for various disease outbreaks such as bubonic plague, as well as being a status symbol for the European elite. The VOC, through the Oktroi Rights granted by the Dutch Government, sought to monopolize the spice trade in order to dominate the global market and weaken its competitors, such as the Portuguese and the British (Ricklefs, 2001: p.72).

Financially, the profits made from the nutmeg monopoly in the Banda Islands ranged from 400-600% per year (Ellen, 2003: p.91), which was used to fund the military and colonial expansion of the VOC in Asia. In addition, nutmeg also functioned as a political tool to control sea trade routes, especially after the VOC succeeded in capturing Batavia (now Jakarta) in 1619. However, attempts to maintain this monopoly resulted in extreme actions, including genocide in 1621, as the people of Banda refused to abandon traditional trade with other parties. Thus, nutmeg is not just a commodity, but also a pillar that supports the hegemony of the VOC that justifies colonial violence (Hanna, 1987: p.444).

To ensure the safety of nutmeg commodity assets, the VOC implemented a policy similar to that implemented by the Portuguese and Spain earlier, namely by carrying out hongi voyages or *Hongi Tongh* expeditions. The hongi voyage is a form of surveillance of nutmeg and clove producing areas in Maluku, including the Banda Islands by utilizing a fleet of ships equipped with weapons. This shows that the VOC sought to control and monopolize the economy of the Banda people. Another policy taken by the VOC was the establishment of the Loji, which functioned as an office as well as a warehouse to collect spices and ammunition (Mansyur, 2011: p.22).

The events of the mass massacre and expulsion of the indigenous people of the Banda Islands by the VOC in 1621 can be considered a serious human rights violation, even meeting the definition of genocide according to the 1948 UN Genocide Convention. According to Vincent C. Loth (1995: p.50), Governor General Jan Pieterszoon Coen's policies, which included the execution of about 40-50 wealthy people (local

elites), mass murder, slavery, and deportation of the population, were not only aimed at controlling the nutmeg monopoly, but also at destroying the social and cultural identity of the people of the Banda Islands. Leonard Blussé (1999: p.78) asserts that the VOC's actions were systematic, with the number of victims reaching 90% of the original population (about 14.000 people), which clearly violated the right to life (Article 3 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and the right to protection from discrimination (Article 7). In addition, the forced labour on nutmeg plantations, as explained by Richard B. Allen (2017: p.295), is a violation of the anti-slavery convention. This structural violence, if analysed through the structural violence theory of Johan Galtung (1969: p.7), shows how colonialism can trigger the systemic destruction of a community.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the conquest of the Banda Islands by the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) between 1609 and 1621 was a period marked by violence, massacres, and the strengthening of Dutch colonial dominance in the Nusantara, which significantly changed the socio-political and economic landscape of the Banda Islands. The VOC's strategy in controlling the Banda Islands included attempts to monopolize the spice trade, fortifications, and brutal military actions, including mass massacres and enslavement of the local population that led to drastic depopulation in the Banda Islands. The persistent resistance of the people of the Banda Islands, although ultimately unsuccessful in stopping the power of the VOC, demonstrated their desire to maintain economic freedom and resist foreign domination. This event also highlighted the central role of figures such as Jan Pieterszoon Coen in the implementation of the VOC's cruel policies.

By theoretical implication, this study enriches the study of colonial history through a multidimensional approach that combines military, economic, and social perspectives, as well as links colonial policies to local narratives that are often overlooked in traditional historiography. The practical implications of this study are a deeper understanding of the roots of the violence caused by Dutch colonialism and its long-term impact on the people of the Banda Islands. These findings may serve as important reflections for the study of imperialism, the resistance of local communities, and the transformation of the global trading system in the 17th century. Although this study has provided an in-depth analysis, its limitation lies in the lack of a more specific examination of the local socio-political dynamics from the perspective of the resistance of the Banda Islands people. Therefore, further research recommendations can be focused on further excavation of local sources that may provide more detailed insights into the resistance strategies and organization of the Banda Islands community in dealing with the VOC, as well as comparative analysis with studies of colonial resistance in other regions to identify patterns and differences. Thus, it is recommended to use the results of this study as a comparative material so that this research can be more complex.

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