

Shipping and Trading Activities of Butonese in the Archipelago During the 17th and 18th Centuries: Patterns, Networks, and Commodities

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the shipping and trading activities of the Butonese in the Archipelago in 17th and 18th centuries with the main focus on patterns, networks and commodities. Using the historical method which consists of four stages, namely: heuristics, criticism, interpretation and historiography. The results of the analysis show that Butonese is one of the maritime ethnic groups that is quite active in shipping and trading activities in the archipelago. It is also thick with maritime nuances which is characterized by its geographical environment consisting of islands and is also marked by the use of the boat metaphor to describe the existence of their kingdom. The shipping pattern follows the monsoon wind pattern which is parallel to the types of commodities traded between the West and East Regions which are symbiotic in nature. The shipping network covers eastern regions of the archipelago such as Maluku, Nusa Tenggara and Sulawesi, as well as western areas such as Java, Sumatra and Singapore. Meanwhile, the commodities traded include spices, marine products, agricultural and forest products as well as handicrafts such as clothing, household utensils, weapons, and most importantly slaves. The main challenge faced by Buton was the intervention of various external forces who wanted to exert influence in Buton such as the VOC, Gowa, and Ternate in order to control shipping and trading routes between the West and East Regions. Another disturbance is the intensive pirate power operating in line with the development of shipping and trading activities in the sea waters of Buton

Keywords: Buton, Shipping, Trading, Network, Commodities

I. INTRODUCTION

The Sultanate of Buton is one of the Islamic kingdoms in the Eastern Region of the Archipelago. Its role is quite large, but its existence seems to be drowned out by

the greatness of the Kingdom of Gowa and Ternate. Because it is often considered as the neglected island in the history. Its emergence is closely related to the development of shipping and trading, which can be traced archaeologically to

the fifth century. Since the seventeenth century Buton has played a role as one of the links in the shipping and trading network in the Eastern Region of the Archipelago. The political, economic, and cultural developments that occur in this area are basically the result of two factors, namely internal factors in the form of local genius who are more adaptive and cohesive in facing internal challenges and external factors in the form of systemic interactions with the outside for a long time. .

Buton's history cannot be separated from the maritime aspect. Not only in terms of geography, but also in terms of culture and mentality of the people. The sea and boats, which are known as "*dwi Tunggal*" in the maritime world, play a very important role in opening Buton's relations with the outside world. In addition, the strategic location and long-forged maritime spirit are also a combination of two very decisive factors in trade on this maritime continent. Likewise, the influence of external powers such as Gowa, Temate, VOC, and Pirates cannot be ruled out in analyzing the historical development of Buton in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The Butonese are a maritime ethnic group that plays an important role in shipping and trading activities in the archipelago can hardly be disputed. Southon[1] mentions the Butonese as one of "the six principal maritime ethnic groups in Indonesia (Bajau, Bugis, Makassarrese, **Butonese** [thick from the author], Mandarese, and Madurese)". Fox[2] mentions "Butonese with the Bugis and Makassarrese populations make up the three dominant sailing populations of eastern Indonesia" and the three are united under the acronym "BBM; Bugis-

Buton-Makassar". According to Fox, the three ethnic groups together constitute "one of the most dynamic and expansive forces in the region". Even among the existing maritime ethnic groups, Hughes[3] mentions "Butonese as a group are probably the most wide ranging of the six maritime tribes in Indonesia (Bajau, Bugis, Makassarrese, Butonese, Mandarese, and Madurese).

II. BUTONESE AND THE MARITIME WORLD

The Sultanate of Buton is located in the southeastern part of the island of Sulawesi. Its territory includes Buton Island, Muna, Kabaena, Kadatuang, Siompu, small islands in the Tiworo Strait. The Tukang Besi Islands (Wangi-Wangi, Kaledupa, Tomia, Binongko), as well as Rumbia and Poleang which are located on the mainland of Southeast Sulawesi[4]. Buton also claimed control over Wawoni Island, which was located north of Buton Island, but was never recognized by the Dutch[5]. Thus the area of the Sultanate of Buton actually includes a strategic maritime area because it is flanked by several important sea waters, including the Banda Sea, Flores Sea, and Bone Bay sea waters.

Naturally, Buton sea waters are quite safe for shipping lanes because they are outside the path of typhoons such as those that often cross the eastern part of the Philippines, the South China Sea, the Japanese Archipelago, and the northern part of the Bay of Bengal. Likewise, the sea currents that are very feared in cross-sea expeditions are almost not found in these sea waters, except in the form of surface currents to the south of the Tukang Besi Islands. This is in contrast to the situation

in the waters east of the Japanese archipelago where strong ocean currents often appear due to sharp temperature differences during the change of seasons and are the path of typhoons.

The craft of making boats has long been known as a boat, which is shown by the discovery of a boat-shaped tombstone in the Kombeli area (East Buton) and a picture of a boat in one of the caves on Muna Island. This assumption is also reinforced by the existence of a number of myths which still exists as a tradition in Butonese community, such as the myth of the Lakambaibunga boat and the myth of the Wasalamata and Wasalabhose boats. In further developments, the boat is often used as a metaphor to describe social organization which is seen as a network of interdependent and complementary interactions, as is often found in maritime communities in Southeast Asia.[6]

Furthermore, the boat metaphor is then used to see the existence of the Sultanate of Buton in the midst of tug-of-war and threats from outside forces in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Sultanate of Buton is perceived as a double outrigger boat. The core area of the Sultanate of Buton is assumed to be the body of the boat, while the four autonomous regions located in the marginal zones are perceived as outriggers which in the Wolio language are called *bharata*. The areas that are perceived as *bharata* are: (1) Muna-Tiworo in the west called *Pale Matanayo*. These two *bharatas* are tasked with protecting the Kingdom from the threat of Gowa, and (2) Kaledupa-Kolisusu called *Pale Matanayo* in charge of protecting the Buton Kingdom from the threat of Ternate[7][8].

After the Bongaya Agreement between Gowa and VOC on November 18, 1667, Buton was declared free from threats of Gowa and Ternate, so that political and security conditions became more secure and stable. Here the boat metaphor is again used. With this stable condition, the Sultanate of Buton is perceived as a boat anchored with two anchors at the bow and two anchors at the stern, as described in the following *kabanti* verses (poems) "*Ajonga Malusa*"[9]:

- *Kaapaaka karana tongko indapo* (Because at the time doesn't exist yet)
- *Tee Walanda ipiya yitu* (With the Dutch some time ago)
- *Adika timbu tajagani Taranate* (In the east season we guard Ternate)
- *Tajagani Gowa tongkona adika bara* (Protecting Gowa in the west season)
- *Samatangkana loji imatanaeo* (After the strength of the fortress in the east) (and)
- *Amarasomo kota I sukanaeo* (strong fortress in the west)
- *Amatangkamo mboorena lipu siy* (Then the strong position of this country)
- *Akosaromo labu rope labu wana* (So it is called anchored in the bow anchored in the stern)

Labu rope labu wana which means 'anchored bow, anchored stern' is an expression to describe the strong position of Buton – after the Bongaya Agreement between Gowa and VOC – which has been freed from the threat of Gowa in the west and Ternate in the east. This expression is actually a reflection of the Butonese habit of anchoring boats using two anchor units at the bow called the *dhanda* and two anchors at the stern called the *talengko*. By

fixing two anchors at the bow and two anchors at the stern, the boat's position becomes more stable, not easily shaken by wind and waves. Where the bow of the boat is directed when it is anchored depends on the season. During the west season, the bow of the boat will be directed to the west, and during the east season the bow will be directed to the east.

III. BUTON SHIPPING PATTERNS IN THE CONTEXT OF ARCHIPELAGO SHIPPING

Since ancient times, the Archipelago has become a crossing point for the sea traffic network that connects the Eastern with the Western continent. This is closely related to the pattern of changing monsoons, namely the west monsoon which lasts from November to March and the east monsoon which lasts from May to October[10]. The regularity of the wind direction in these waters can also guarantee the certainty of sea traffic patterns as also happens in the Indian Ocean which connects the Indonesian Archipelago with India, Persia, Arabia and so on[6].

The existence of these two monsoons has created the assumption that the pattern of commercial shipping in the archipelago takes place between the western and eastern regions. At the time of the east monsoon, traders from the east sailed to the west region, bringing with them various marine products, agricultural products and forest products. Then with the west monsoon they returned to the Eastern Region with various manufactured commodities[11]. This sailing pattern, by Dick is called as "an east-west axis"[12].

However, based on the results of the latest research, it has been found that the "an east-west axis" pattern is formed not only because of the monsoon wind factor, but also the different types of commodities produced by the two regions but are complementary[13] (La Malihu, 1998). These commodity differences have encouraged the establishment of a symbiotic east-west trade relationship. Commodities brought from the Eastern Region are certain to be sold in the Western Region, and vice versa, so that trade between the two regions becomes lively and dynamic.

According to Hall, around the 14th century, five maritime trade zones in Southeast Asia had been formed[14]. One of them is the Java Sea trade zone which includes the Nusa Tenggara Islands, the Maluku Islands, Sulawesi, the west coast of Kalimantan, Java and the southern part of Sumatra. At the beginning of its formation, this trading network was under the hegemony of Majapahit. However, after Majapahit collapsed, in the second half of the 16th century this position became increasingly important after Malacca fell to the Portuguese in 1511, which was followed by the exodus of Malay traders to seek new trading colonies, especially in important ports on the southern coast of the island of Borneo and the west coast of the peninsula, south of Sulawesi Island. Makassar quickly turned into an international port city because of its open-door politics. This new development has caused Buton's sea waters to become crowded. Tome Pires (1512-1515) noted that Malacca traders who had trade relations with Maluku had pioneered new routes without going through the ports on the north coast of Java, but directly through the Malacca route – the southern

coast of Kalimantan – Makassar – Buton – Maluku. The Portuguese themselves considered that the shortest trip between Makassar and Maluku was through the waters of Buton[15].

The shipping line from Makassar to Maluku is divided into three routes, namely: (1) Makassar – Tiworo Strait – Wawonii Buton – Bungku (Tombuku) – Banggai – Ternate; (2) Makassar – Baubau Lohia (Muna) – Wawonii – onwards Bungku – Banggai – Ternate route; and (3) Makassar – Baubau – Wakatobi (p.p. Tukang Besi) – Buru – Ambon – Banda route[16]. Commercial ships can choose one of the three routes according to wind conditions and destination. According to Leirissa[17] in maritime trade contacts in the Eastern Region there are two sea routes connecting East Seram and Bali. One of them is Seram Island – Buru Island – Buton Island – then cross to the south via Bonerate Island to Timor Island or Sumbawa and so on to Bali.

Later the Butonese traders also "played" in this commercial voyage. Buton itself has the port city of Baubau which is quite adequate for a stopover for ships sailing between the west and east regions. Located in the western part of the island and protected by the southern tip of Muna Island, ships anchored in the waters of Baubau are protected by the west and east winds. When Pieter Both (the first Governor-General of the VOC) visited Buton in 1613, he praised these waters by saying "Hier is eenzeer schoone reede"[18], which means 'here is a safe and very quiet place to dock'.

In the categorization of ports by Leong Sau Heng[19], Baubau can be included in a collecting center which is located close to international shipping lanes or long distance sea trade. As a collecting center,

Baubau receives goods from feeder points (places providing supplies) to be sent to the big port of Makassar. Moreover, Buton, especially in the Tukang Besi Islands, has also produced cloves and nutmeg. However, after the Speelman-Simbata agreement dated January 31, 1667, according to article 1, all clove and nutmeg trees had to be cut down and as compensation the VOC would pay 100 ringgit per year to the Sultan of Buton[8].

The development of Baubau as an international port has influenced the bureaucratic structure of the government. The number of positions in the bureaucratic structure of the Sultanate of Buton increased with the position of Sabandara (Syahbandar) who was in charge of taking care of loading and unloading of goods and customs, and Jurubasa (interpreter) who acted as a liaison between the Sultanate and foreign traders. These two sets of positions have strengthened Baubau's position as an international port.[9]

In the development after the Bongaya agreement, the shipping lanes underwent changes. Because with the subjugation of Makassar, the VOC began to impose its monopoly on the eastern part of the archipelago. Foreign traders, including traders from South Sulawesi, were not allowed to make commercial shipping to the eastern region, especially Maluku, so that commercial shipping on this maritime continent began to fade. Moreover, at the same time new commodities began to appear, namely tea (a leading product of China) and marine products (sea cucumbers, jelly, shellfish, shark fins, etc.), which could quickly become "prima donna" in commercial shipping in Southeast Asia.

Buton itself is slowly being suppressed and its freedom is restricted. Although in article 2 of the Speelman-Simbata Agreement, Buton is still allowed to accept traders who bring rice and other food ingredients from Batavia, Java, Patani, Johor, and Palembang, but all of this is accompanied by the condition that the traders who come must be friends of the Company and Ternate[14]. Meanwhile, traders from Makassar are not allowed to enter Buton, unless they bring a certificate and seal from the Company in Makassar. This is a challenge for Buton who wants free trade.

IV. SHIPPING NETWORK, COMMODITIES AND VOC MONOPOLY

Buton's involvement in the shipping and trading network of the archipelago has been mentioned in several records of foreign travelers, which was later confirmed by the discovery of Chinese ceramics in archaeological excavations in this area.

Buton's first contact with the VOC can be seen from reports of voyages between 1595-1610. Buton is described as an island located to the east of Makassar, where sago is found and a place for making clothes known as *toneti* and highly sought after by the Seramites, which are bought at very high prices. It is also easy to find good and profitable iron which is sold in Ambon, Banda, and Seram. In addition, many slaves were also sold at very cheap prices[15].

Another trading network involving Buton was pioneered by Ambonese traders, although the volume was small. According to Roelofs[20]. Ambonese traders with boats measuring 16 to 24

tons had long received slaves, knives, and traders from the Banggai, Buton, and Selayar Islands.

Likewise, Tiele[21] reveals that Malay traders in Makassar who sailed to Ambon in December, January and February 1638 also visited Buton, where they sold cloth in exchange for slaves. It seems that the Buton trade network has long been integrated with other parts of a wider scope as described by Scribe[11] below:

With the eastern monsoon they go to the straits of Malacca, Sumatra, Palembang, Borneo, Patani, Siam, and a hundred other places too many to tell. With the western monsoon they went to Bali, Bantam, Bima, Solor, Timor, Alor, Selayar, Buton, Buru, Banggai, Mindanao, the Moluccas, Ambon, and Banda, which has now been taken from them. Also to the islands of Kai, Aru, Ceram, and other place too many relate where they do business in bartering goods and make at least two or three hundred percent profit before they return home

The inclusion of Buton in such a wide trading network indicates that Buton adheres to the principle of free trade. This was against the VOC monopoly principle, so the VOC tried to limit Buton's trade. In the Scott-Laelangi Agreement dated January 5, 1613, the restrictions on Buton trade were stated, among other things, such as: (1) the requirement to use VOC currency in trade transactions in Buton; (2) monitoring the price of daily basic needs; (3) prohibition of trading with other nations; and (4) granting freedom of trade and tax exemption for Company traders in Buton. Even in the agreement dated August 29, 1613, Buton was not allowed to trade outside its territory, if it was done it would be labeled as an act of smuggling and the perpetrators could be

punished. In addition, the Company also issued a "follow-up" policy in the form of imposing a sailing pass on Butonese sailors in order to prevent "smuggling".

However, this policy was not able to control Buton's trading activities which had long been integrated with other parts of the archipelago. In fact, hatred arose against the Dutch, so that in 1635 (1) the murder of the crew of the VOC ship, Van de Fluit Velzen, in Wawoni; and (2) the burning of the Seker Jan2 ship in the port of Buton where seven of its crew were killed and eight others imprisoned[22].

Buton's "rebellion" against the VOC monopoly rule was then shown by the following actions: (1) continued to accept the presence of foreign traders; and (2) continue to carry out trading activities outside its territory. In his letter to the Governor General in Batavia in April 1635, the Governor of Ambon, Van den Heuvel, complained about the arrival of Bugis boats in Buton that traded rice and gold[23]. Similarly, Malay traders in Makassar who sailed to Ambon with 25 to 40 boats, always stopped at Buton to exchange their wares for slaves[24].

According to Fox[2] slaves are indeed "the most important items" in the Buton trade. Governor General Jan Pieter zoon Coen who visited Buton in 1613 in his report also mentioned the slave trade in Buton.

According to Anthony Reid[24] the slaves were imported from several islands in the Eastern Region, including the Philippines. In the Dagb Register of the port of Batavia, it is reported that there is a regular export of slaves by Buton every year. In the east monsoon of 1670, for example, four Butonese boats entered the port of Batavia with 135 male and female

slaves. The slaves were sold for 4,481 ringgit, or about 35 ringgit per slave. During the western season of that year, 15 Butonese boats left Batavia taking home 290 ringgit in cash along with a number of merchandise, such as cloth, iron, opium and wine[23].

In 1671 it was also recorded that 15 Butonese boats entered the port of Batavia with 346 slaves who were sold at a price of 9,577 ringgit, or about 26 ringgit per slave. In the west season the boats returned to Buton with 100 ringgit in cash, cloth, iron, nails, elephant tusks, copper bowls, rice, boards, and salt[23].

The large number of slave trade seems to have also disturbed the minds of the VOC officials, so that in 1701 an ordinance was issued to limit the quota for the slave trade. Buton was allowed to send only 50 to 60 slaves to Batavia each year. In addition, there was a tendency for the VOC to buy slaves directly in Buton. In 1702 the VOC is said to have exchanged 50 to 60 slaves in Buton for some cloth. Then in 1705 the VOC also bought 50 slaves in Buton for 2222 ringgit, or about 37 ringgit per slave.[23]

However, the restrictions in the ordinance were not able to stop the slave trade activities carried out by Buton, because Buton continued to send slaves to Batavia in large numbers. In 1718, for example, Buton is said to have sent 200 slaves to Batavia. When this was discovered, Buton received a stern warning that finally he was only allowed to send about 24 slaves in 1720. Even then, the VOC only bought it at a price of between 25 and 35 ringgit slaves.[25]

In 1685 Buton revived its trade with Gorontalo. Through this "dark" trade network, Gorontalo received supplies of

weapons from Butonese traders. In November 1730 it was reported that Butonese trade with Gorontalo was being carried out outside the "official" VOC route. In that incident, 18 Butonese sailors in Gorontalo were Previously, in February VOC officers had also found a number of weapons; 38 kris, 10 swords, 10 machetes, 1 ancient sword, 1 rifle, 3 chemicals, 1 7 iron bullets, 6 shields, 15 javelins, and 1 knife[18].

The weapons were piled up with other items to trick the VOC officers. Apparently the VOC officials were worried not only about "smuggling" but suspected that the supply of weapons was intended for pirates. Apart from slaves and weapons, Buton also traded various commodities. Ligtoet notes several types of Butonese exports such as: sea cucumbers, turtle shells, coffee, wax, agar agar, bingkuru roots, sogabast (?), *karoro* (material for sails), *balasari* (?), pearls, buffalo skins, shark fins, and coarse cotton ; while the imports are: rice, opium, iron, pottery, European yarn, and textiles.[4] The Butonese traders directly marketed their export commodities to various ports such as Makassar, Surabaya, Batavia, and later also Singapore. From there they brought home a number of imported goods as mentioned above.

V. EXTERNAL FORCE DISTURBANCE

Buton's strategic position in the shipping and trading network of the archipelago has invited external powers to come into play. Buton then became an arena for the struggle for influence between Gowa, VOC and Ternate, in order to control shipping lanes between the west and east, as Schoorl said that: Until 1667, the Kingdom of Buton was like a

shuttlecock in a game between Makassar, Ternate and VOC.[23] Buton lay at a struggle point on the route from Java and Makassar to the Moluccas, the heart of the Indonesian space productions.

According to Ligtoet. in 1580 Ternate had tried to conquer Buton to Islam, but Buton had embraced Islam.[4] Ternate also has a permanent dispute with Buton over Wawoni Island and Binongko Island. Meanwhile, Gowa, after conquering the interior of Sulawesi, also targeted Buton to be included in the scope of its maritime power. Because of this, Gowa was recorded as attacking Buton three times, namely in 1626, 1637, and 1655. However, Gowa never succeeded in realizing his dream until the signing of the Bongaya Agreement on November 18, 1677. It was the VOC who was then most successful in instilling its influence in Buton through a series of agreements. which is sometimes followed by a military invasion when deemed necessary. Some of the agreements made clearly show the dominance of the VOC over Buton, both politically and economically. The VOC positioned itself as an "ally" as well as a "protector", and placed Buton as a strategic monopoly area.

VI. FINAL NOTES

The increasing flow of trade in the waters of Buton has also invited the presence of pirates. This reminds us of the theorem of Braudel[26] which tries to link pirate activities with the conjuncture at a certain time. The greater the trading volume, the more intense the piracy activity. Braudel succeeded in proving a correlation between increased pirate activity and the state of prosperity in the Mediterranean. In this context A.B.

Lapian[27] has also succeeded in proving Braudel's theorem in the twentieth century Sulawesi Sea Region. Through intensive and in-depth research, Baraudel's theorem may also be proven in the sea waters of Buton in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.

The relocation of the center of the Buton kingdom to a hill (where the present fortress of the Buton Palace is located) is said to have something to do with pirate disturbances.[8] Even during the reign of King Mulae, Buton had difficulty dealing with the pirates led by Labontio. Then during the late xvii century until the early XIX century Buton was attacked by pirates five times, namely in 1794, 1797, 1822, 1836, 1838.[23] [8] In the attack in 1822 (during the reign of Sultan Anharuddin) pirates had occupied the Pasarwajodi area of East Buton.

If Braudel and Lapian succeeded in finding a correlation between increased pirate activity and conjuncture, it is also interesting to examine whether there is a correlation between increased pirate activity and the discovery of hundreds of forts in the former territory of the Sultanate of Buton[13]. Because for the local community, pirates are a source of scary threats. The trauma to these pirates still lingers, so parents often say the words: "*jaga o-Tobelo yitu*" ('Be careful, there are Tobelo') to scare their naughty children. Tobelo is actually only a small area in North Maluku, but in general it is used to refer to a group of forces who in the academic world are called pirates.

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