

# Ambon In The Spice Islands

24 July -1 August 1993

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Dedicated to

*Peter Sanders*

Intrepid Land, Air and Sea Companion



## FOREWORD

A visit to Ambon Island is a richly rewarding experience. The island sits as a jewel in the fabled Spice Islands of yester-year. Ambon Bay has incomparable beauty and Ambon City sits on its shores in a prime location. The city is one of Indonesia's most attractive centres and its neat and ordered layout can be viewed from several vantage points on the encircling mountain ranges.

Although not a great deal of English is spoken the people are hospitable and friendly, especially so to visitors from Australia. The local inhabitants regard Seram as their "mother country" but many of them have cultural ties to Catholic Portugal or Protestant Holland.

The friendly relationship to Australia stems from the fact that the Australian soldiers fought alongside the Ambonese against the Japanese during World War II. A legacy of that struggle is the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery. This beautifully maintained facility draws thousands of Australians to Ambon each year.

Ambon was once the entrepot for the Indonesian spice trade. Today it is moving towards the farming and harvesting of its rich marine resources. Indeed, the province of Maluku is a maritime farm more than it is an agricultural domain. With its natural beauty and its scenic beaches, it will, no doubt, also develop its vast tourist potential. When these assets are sensibly harnessed the province will lift its present standard of living. The 1990 per capita annual income of the Maluku inhabitants was \$260 (converted to 1995 exchange rate). The standard of living in Ambon is much higher than the average throughout Maluku and, being the administrative capital of the province, Ambon City is destined to play a leading role in the overall development of the region.

The following notes constitute a brief introduction to Ambon and the Spice Islands of Indonesia. It is written from the perspective of an Australian who made the discovery that he and all his compatriots will be accorded a very friendly welcome when they visit this jewel of the Indonesian archipelago.

Mark Smith



Fig. 1: Keith, Peter and Roly prior to departure from Darwin to Ambon.

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# Chapter One

***SPICES***

## THE ARAB SPICE MONOPOLY

The supply of spices to medieval Europe was, until the return of Magellan's sole surviving ship, a monopoly controlled very effectively by Arab traders. They shipped supplies of nutmeg and mace from the small, volcanic Banda Islands and cloves from Ternate, Tidore and a few islands off western Halmahera, and sold them to Venetian traders. These small islands were unknown to Europeans except as fables and yet they supplied these highly prized preservatives, medicines and magical ingredients for potions to, almost, every home in Europe.

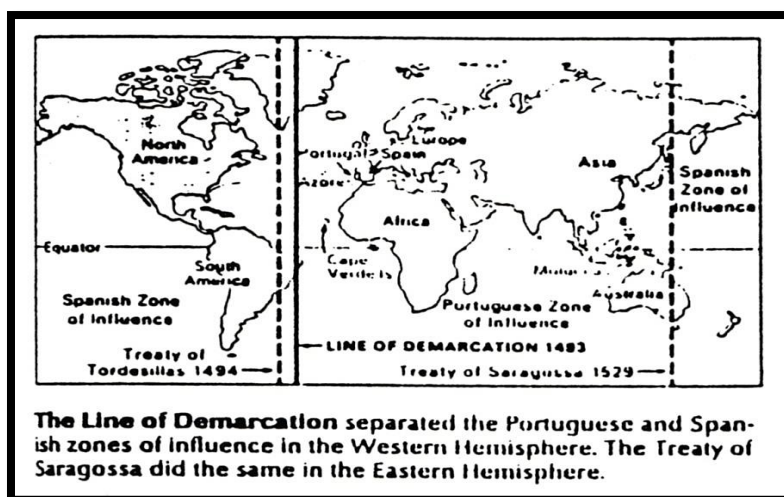
When Captain del Cano returned to Spain after his three-year, round-the-world voyage, with his one remaining ship's hold full of cloves it was accounted as booty more valuable than gold. Spain, at least, had located the exact source of supply. It would, however, be the Portuguese who would take possession of the spice trade over Spain.

In order to understand why that should be it is necessary to go back a few years before Magellan's death in 1521 AD.

## THE LINE OF DEMARCATION

In 1493 AD Pope Alexander VI indulged in a form of political cartography. He issued papal bulls which established a line of demarcation between Spanish and Portuguese colonial rights. It was a line of longitude which ran from pole to pole 100 leagues (563 kilometres) west of the Azores and Cape Verde Islands. Spain was permitted to occupy land west of the line while Portugal could claim territory east of the line which gave 'right' to Africa. There was to be no entitlement to lands already in the hands of a Christian ruler.

The edicts of Alexander VI did not suit either Spain or Portugal so, at a meeting in Tordesillas, in north west Spain, on 7 June 1494, an agreement was reached between the ambassadors of each country to move the line of demarcation a further 270 leagues further west. Since it was not easy to define longitude with any degree of exactitude this decision still did not eliminate the potential for conflict between Spain and Portugal. It did, however allow Portugal to claim Brazil and African lands. Spain could lay claim to most of South America and all of North America. However, problems were to arise when the line of demarcation was continued around the other side of the globe. This gave Portugal the right to claim land as far west as the Philippine Islands. The Treaty of Saragossa in 1529 AD gave greater definition to the line of demarcation as it applied to the other side of the globe.



Map 1

The line was set at 17° east of the Moluccas or Spice Islands thus giving Portugal 'treaty rights' to Africa, India, China, Indonesia, West Irian and New Holland. In later treaties Portugal traded its 'rights' to the Philippines and secured its claim to an extended portion of Brazil. It should be borne in mind, however, that what Spain and Portugal agreed to was not ratified by the Dutch, the English or the French and that the native occupants of these lands had never acquiesced in those treaty debates!

## THE SPICE ISLANDS

Today, the Spice Islands, once known as the Moluccas, form a province of the Indonesian Republic. This maritime province is now known as Maluku and covers an area of some 851,000 square kilometres which includes approximately 1,000 islands. Indonesia's present claim to sovereignty derives its legitimacy from its early association with the maritime empire of the Sriwijayan rulers of Sumatra and the Majapahit of East Java. However, neolithic remains and linguistic research demonstrates an ethnological relationship to other Indonesian groups that pre-date the Sriwijayan and Majapahit periods even though there are also aspects which are more New Guinean than Malayan. The Province of Maluku may be described as comprising four groupings of islands:

**i) Central Maluku**

This group includes the island of Ambon which is home to the capital, Ambon City, of Maluku and the other Lease (Lay-ah-say) Islands of Haruku, Saparua and Nusa Laut. Also included in this group is the mystical mother island of Seram with its traditional Alfuro people and its magnificent butterflies. Nearby, to the west of Seram is the rugged island of Buru.

**ii) The Banda Islands**

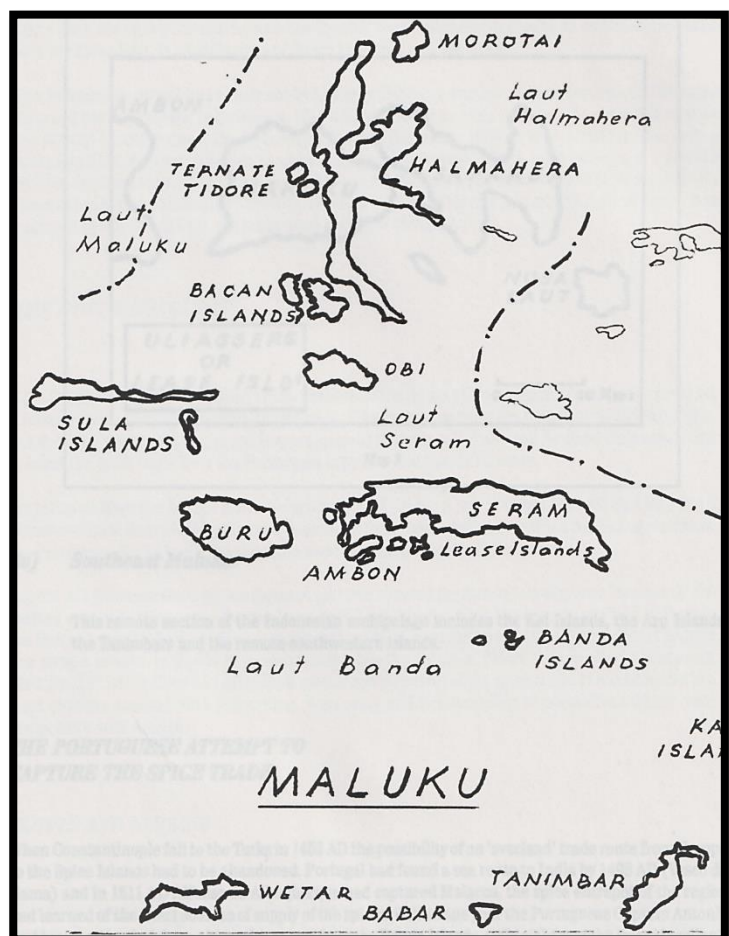
The Bandas are a cluster of ten volcanic islands situated 140 kilometres southeast of Ambon. They were once the original source of nutmeg and mace. Banda Neira is the most settled of the ten islands and Gunung Api is almost entirely a threatening volcano. Lontar is the largest of the Bandas and has several small villages living off the sale of its nutmeg groves.

**ii) North Maluku**

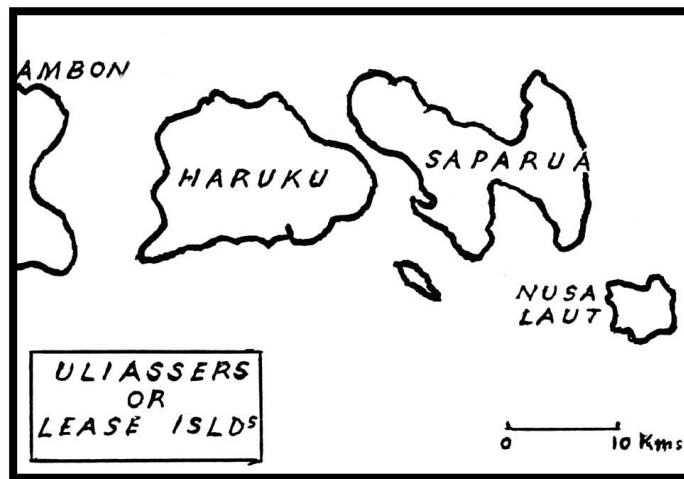
North Maluku encompasses the large four-fingered island of Halmahera, the World War II base island of Morotai, the forested island of Bacan and the twin volcanic islands of Tidore and Ternate which were recognised as the source of the world's supply of cloves. Ternate has a population of 50,000 people and has developed in a manner which has outstripped its former rival - Tidore.

**iv) Southeast Maluku**

This remote section of the Indonesian archipelago includes the Kei Islands, the Aru Islands, the Tanimbars and the remote southwestern islands.



Map 2



Map 3

### THE PORTUGUESE ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE THE SPICE TRADE

When Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453 AD the possibility of an 'overland' trade route from Europe to the Spice Islands had to be abandoned. Portugal had found a sea route to India by 1498 AD (Vasco da Gama) and in 1511 AD Alfonso de Albuquerque had captured Malacca, the spice entrepot of the region and learned of the exact sources of supply of the spices. Within one year the Portuguese Captain Antonio de Abreu had loaded three ships with spices from the Banda Islands. Only eight months later Magellan's Captain de Cano had loaded the "Victoria" with cloves from Ternate. Portugal had found the fabled Spice Islands from both an easterly and westerly direction.

Apart from one or two skirmishes with the Spanish the Portuguese proceeded to establish domination over the Spice Islands until the time of Dutch incursion into the region.

The Portuguese consolidated their control by establishing a number of forts throughout the region. They had built 'a Famosa' in Malacca in 1511 AD. In 1522 AD Antonio de Brito established 'Our Lady of the Rosary' of which was a fort in the royal town of Gamalama in Ternate. A small fort was built on Ambon in 1522 AD near Hitu but had to be relocated in Rumah Tiga. A third attempt to thwart the threatening Muslim competition was made by consolidating their presence in yet another fort known as "Nuestra Senhora da Anunciada" which was built in 1575 AD. This fort is in central Ambon City and was captured by the Dutch in 1605 AD and renamed "New Victoria".

### THE DUTCH CONQUEST

If the Dutch had heard of Pope Julius's ratification of the treaty of Saragossa in 1506 AD they never let it interfere with their own territorial ambitions. Whatever agreement the Catholic countries of Spain and Portugal held, it did not, in any respect, prevent Protestant Holland and England from conspiring to wrest the spice trade from the Portuguese suppliers and Spanish traders.

Cornelius de Houtman led the Dutch incursion in 1596 AD but it was not until 1605 AD that they had a permanent base from which to plan and implement their "take-over". Admiral van der Hagen overthrew the Portuguese Fort Anunciada at Ambon and renamed it "New Victoria".

In 1621 AD Governor General Jan Pieterszoon Coen secured the Banda Islands, thus "cornering" the nutmeg supply. In the process he murdered 15,000 inhabitants. After crushing an uprising in Ternate the Dutch decreed in 1650 AD that clove production would be exclusive to Ambon. The Sultan of Ternate was given a pension of £3,000 as compensation while the Sultan of Tidore only received a pension of £550. By 1681 AD Holland had gained the control and monopoly of the spice trade. It was achieved in a most ruthless manner with plundering, murdering and fire branding of plantations which were competitive with Ambon.

## **GLOVES AND NUTMEG**

It is difficult to believe that the tiny Banda Islands one time produced the entire world supply of nutmeg or that Ternate and Tidore did the same for cloves. It is also difficult in this day and age to understand why these two spices were so highly prized.

### **i) Cloves**

Cloves come from the tropical evergreen tree 'Eugenia aromatica'. The spice is formed in the flower buds which cluster at the end of twigs. The buds are nail-shaped. The English word "clove" comes from the French word "clou" meaning "nail". Once the "nails" are dried they may be used whole or ground. An average tree yields a few kilograms per year. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century the European market absorbed as much as 4,500 tons of cloves but the days of that European demand for Indonesian cloves have gone. Today almost all of the Indonesian clove production goes up in smoke! The popular Kretek cigarette contains up to 50 percent chopped cloves by weight and Indonesians smoke these cigarettes at the rate of 100 million per day! In fact, Indonesia imports cloves.

### **ii) Nutmeg**

The nutmeg tree is known botanically as 'Myristica fragans'. It is a tree which is grown in groves which are protected by tall Kanari trees. The hard aromatic nut is ground into the familiar spice. The bright red, waxy aril that covers the nut is even more valuable when it is changed to mace.



Fig. 2: Drying Cloves and Nutmeg at Hila



### iii) Spices Today

Today Zanzibar is the world's leading producer of cloves and clove oil. Other leading producers, apart from Indonesia, include Pamba, Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius and Reunion. The production of nutmeg has spread from Indonesia to the West Indies.



Fig. 3: Making Sago Cakes with Palm Sugar

# Chapter Two

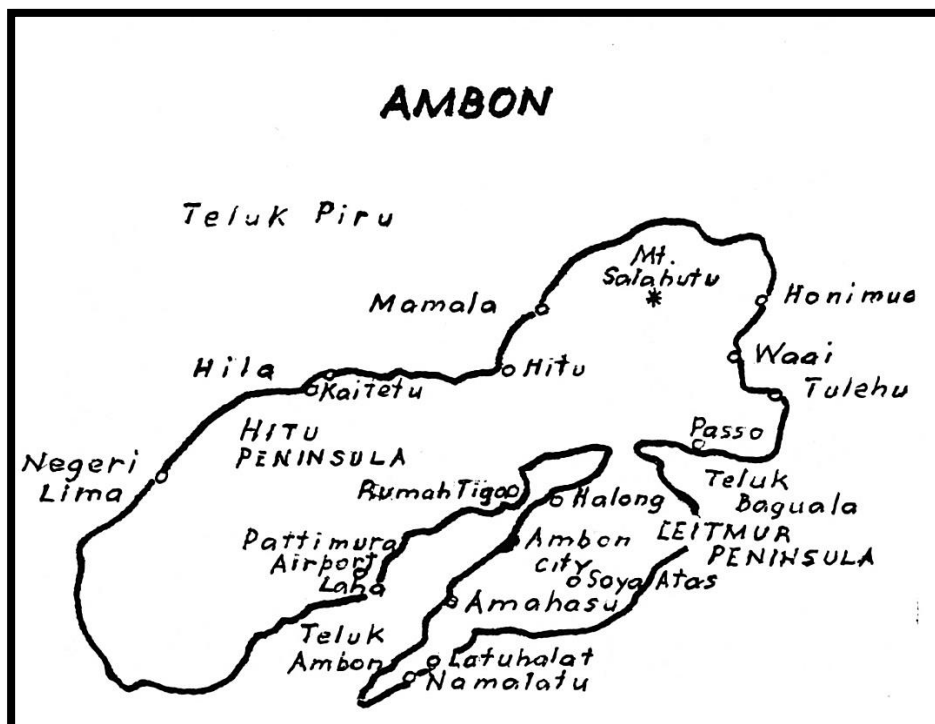
***AMBON***

## AMBON ISLAND

Ambon is a small island (777 square kilometres) in the Indonesian archipelago and it lies approximately 1,000 kilometres due north of Darwin. Indeed, Ambon City and Darwin are "sister cities" whose desire is to forge closer and closer relations. Ambon City is the capital of Ambon Island and Maluku Province. At one time Ambon was the centre of the Dutch clove monopoly and during the time of the Dutch East India Company it was referred to as "the Queen of the East".

## AMBON CITY

The capital city has a population of 275,000 people and is the administrative capital of the Province of Maluku. The present site was settled by the Portuguese in 1575 AD on land deeded to them by the Raja of Soya. The northern coast had already been partially settled but was too vulnerable to Muslim marauders.



The Ambonese regard Seram as their "motherland" and many, no doubt, have direct blood lines to the Alfuro indigenes, others have blended with the Portuguese, Spanish, English and Dutch. The Chinese presence on the island was well and truly established before the 1800's. Today Ambon is home to a great number of other Indonesian settlers from Java, Bali and Sulawesi etc.

## AMBONESE ADAT, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

### AMBONESE ADAT

Ambonese Adat refers to the sacred customary beliefs handed down through the ages. Even though there are few pure Animists and in spite of the loss of the indigenous language there are still customs and practices which reflect the ancient ways of the ancestors. Political and social organisation of yester-year is reflected in word usage, for example use of the term "Rajah" instead of "Sultan"; in the persistence of land titles held by the "dati", a corporation of patrilineally related kinsmen; in the ownership of sacred springs and sacred stones and the organization of villages into "uli".

Uli are brotherhoods of uniting villages, for example:



uli teru is a federation of three villages  
uli lima is a federation of five villages  
uli hitu is a federation of seven villages  
uli siwa is a federation of nine villages

An important term used for social organisation used by the Ambonese and Maluku peoples generally, is "Siwalima". Siwalima is the term used to refer to a federation of nine and five villages. The "siwa" group would bring to the union its own customs relating to dowries, initiation rituals, the location of sacred stones etc, and likewise the "lima" group. Once federated there would be an attempt to combine customs. In the case of a siwalima grouping or federation when a "baileo", or meeting house, was built it would feature nine front supporting poles and five on the side. Thus the architecture reflected the federation principles. Again, the rules of adat governing dedication of the building would also incorporate procedures from both the "siwa" and the "lima" group. The word "siwa" does not obviously mean "nine". "Sembilan" is the normal Indonesian word for "nine". "Siwa" is the name of an important Hindu god who, on the Hindu theological compass, occupies the position at the centre which is next position after the eight intercardinal directions, namely the ninth. It is thus possible that the earlier ulisiwa grouping was of Hindu origin.

There are several places to visit around Ambon where examples of 'adat' and animistic beliefs can still be researched:

**i) The Siwa Lima Museum**

The Siwa Lima Museum is at Taman Makmur Ambon on the slopes of Gunung Nona overlooking Batu Capeo on the outskirts of Ambon city. The museum houses a number of exhibits and artifacts of ethnographic interest from the province of Maluku. These include wood carvings of ancestral statues, 'magical' skulls from northern Buru, traditional ikat weaving, traditional living with samples of kitchenware, cutlery, pottery and ceramics, jewellery and personal adornment items. There are also weapons on display which include a chopping knife and shield, bows and arrows and spears. The museum also has a display of bird and animal life of the province. Birds of paradise, hornbills, cuscus, soasoa, iguana and so on, are displayed in a simulated forest environment. There is also a display of five hunting traps used to catch wild chicken, pig, deer, cuscus and parrots. There are displays which feature nutmeg, cloves, coconut, enau, eucalypt and sago palm. Musical instruments unique to the region are on display. These include brass gongs, drums, shell trumpets, bamboo flutes, the rebab or single stringed violin, the ukelele and the totobuang. The totobuang is similar to the Balinese gamelan but is in the diatonic and not the pentatonic scale.

**ii) The Sacred Eels of Waai**

Tourists can watch "the keeper" signal to the eels of Waai and feed them with chicken eggs. Waai is about twenty kilometres northeast of Ambon City. Legend has it that a raja hurled his spear from his home in the mountains. When the spear fell to earth it gouged out a hole which filled with water. Locals believe that the presence of eels and carp in the pool ensures protection from epidemics and calamities. When the eels disappeared in 1960 an epidemic struck the village. Once the ancestral spirits were appeased the eels returned and the epidemic abated. Waai also provides the tourist with performances of a seashell and bamboo flute orchestra and a rendition of a

"cakalele" or war dance. These performances must be paid for and booked in advance. Sago processing and gin distillation can also be seen in Waai.

iii) **The Mysterious Village of Soya Atas**

Soya Atas is a small village half way up the 950 metre Gunung Sirimau on the outskirts of Ambon City. It was a retreat for the last 32 Portuguese families of the Moluccas. Initially they were Catholics but were later converted to Protestantism. There is a church in the village and it was built in 1817 A D. Yet despite its Christian character the locals continue to enact the traditional "Cuci Negeri" or purification of the village ceremony. It is held on the second Friday of December. The ceremony rids the village of evil influences and ensures the fertility of the land for the coming year. Everybody engages in house and environmental cleaning programs.



Fig. 6: Siwa Lima Museum, Taman Makmur

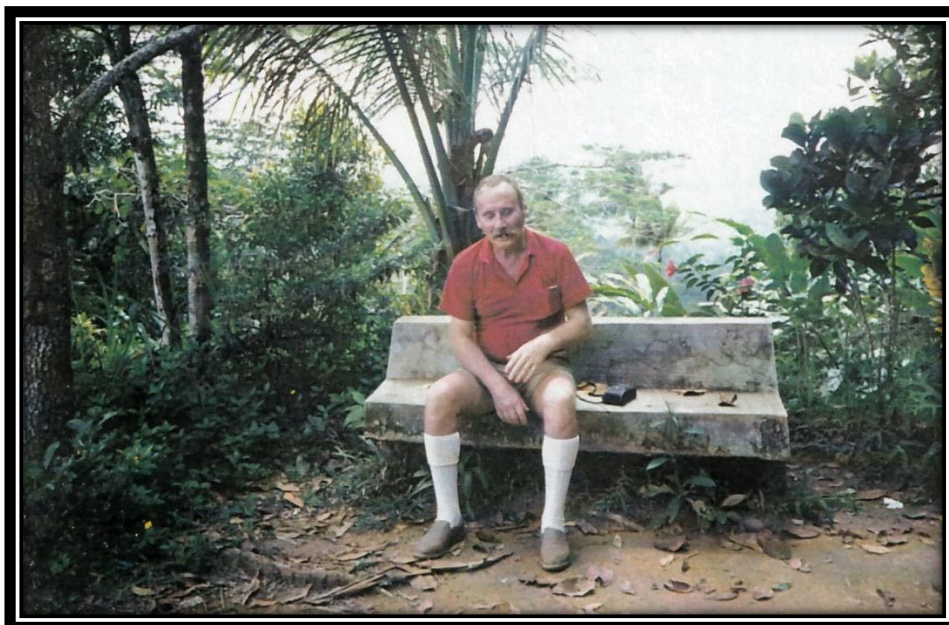


Fig. 7: Peter on Stone Throne on Gunung Sirimau looking at the 'Tempayan Setan' or 'Devil's Urn'

There is, however, something else for which the village is well known. It is the reputation that it has for 'kidnapping' people. The kidnapping is attributed to the alluring presence of the spirit of Nenek Luhu, a Soya princess, who drowned herself when her father, the Raja, refused permission for her to marry a Dutch official. She lures young children into the forest jungle where they get lost and perish to become the family that Nenek Luhu was denied. Older foreign men also may fall under her spell and become disoriented and trance-like. It is thought that in these instances the foreigner is a substitute for the Dutch suitor she was prevented from marrying.

Soya also provides an example of a traditional "baileo" or meeting house. This ritual meeting place contains ancient megaliths and stone seats for the elders. Further up the hill at the summit of Gunung Sirimau is a stone throne surrounded by croton shrubs. A sacred urn is nearby. It is known as "Tempayan Setan", or "Devil's Urn". It always contains some water. This "sacred" water can effect cures, bring wealth and help in the selection of a marriage partner.

**iv) The Crazy Bamboo Dance (Tart Bambu Gila)**

This dance is performed throughout the island but is a speciality in only a few places. It is held to be a traditional magical dance. The priest blows an 'influence' into the bamboo tubes which then acquire an independent movement which the dancers are unable to still. The village of Suli, near Natsepa, specialises in this dance. It may also be performed at the Honimua beach resort for a fee.

**v) The Mystical Ritual Called Sapulidi**

In Mamala village an annual flagellation ceremony is enacted by village boys armed with the central spine of a palm frond. They lacerate each other on the back until they draw blood. A "dukun" treats the open wounds with Mamala oil which is thought to be coconut oil. The wounds, when treated with this 'magical' oil, are 'miraculously' healed within the hour and this, naturally, does much to boost sales. A similar dance ceremony called the "Gombalele" is performed on the nearby island of Haruku. In this ceremony men are repeatedly stabbed with daggers or spears but afterwards there are no scars at all.

Perhaps the most enduring aspect of Ambonese Adat are the complicated set of inter-village alliances known as "pela". Now that Indonesia is a republic the rajahs and their councils no longer have visible authority but the power they possess in the lives of the Ambonese lies only just beneath the surface.

## **CHRISTIANITY**

Christianity in Ambon is very active today and approximately two thirds of the Ambonese people practice a Catholic or Protestant form of it. The other third are Muslim.

**i) Catholicism**

In 1538 AD three Ambonese villages had embraced the religion of the Portuguese traders and seamen who lived in their midst and who also sympathised with the Ambonese with their fear of Islamic incursion. By 1565 AD, after a visit of the famous missionary Francis Xavier the Catholic population had risen to 10,000. It only took another 30 years for this figure to double.

There is a statue of Francis Xavier in front of the Catholic Cathedral in Ambon. This missionary is known as Saint Fransiscus Xaverius. At the base of the statue a crab is

depicted with upright claws. The crab has handed Saint Francis' bible to him after "rescuing" it from the sea when the Saint was calming the sea between Ambon and Seram.



Fig. 8: Church Imanuel Hila 1780 AD

## ii) **Protestantism**

After the initial impetus given to Catholic Christianity by the Portuguese there began a swing to Protestant Christianity as the Dutch gained the ascendancy. Indeed, the first protestant missionary began the processes of conversion as early as 1614 AD in Ambon City.

The oldest surviving church building on the island of Ambon is to be found in the village of Hila which is on the north coast some 42 kilometres from Ambon city. The present building was erected in 1780 AD and is known as Church Imanuel. A broken headstone, or dedicatory stone, attests a date 1772 AD. The beautifully kept church was built by the Dutch reformed church and is faithfully attended to this day.

The largest Protestant church in Ambon City is named "Maranatha" and is a representative of the Maluku Protestant Christians. In 1960 the church declared "a year of conversion" and sought to eradicate all traces of animistic and magical practices from among its members. Some members surrendered magical objects which the elders donated to the Siwalima museum. Among these objects was a "perahu doti" in the shape of a small boat with a tiny ancestor statue in it. It was used to cast a spell over an enemy. A number of "command sticks" were also surrendered. These sticks were a symbol of the Raja's power and have an ancestor figure carved on the upper part. What the Raja commanded was, in effect, decreed by the ancestors and had to be obeyed.

Today Protestantism is firmly entrenched in Ambon. This is in no small part attributable to its vigour in establishing church schools. In 1871 AD these schools were secularised thus giving Ambon an educational system the envy of the islands of the archipelago.



Protestantism has proliferated into a number of different branches and sects among whom the Baptists and Pentacostalists figure prominently.



Fig. 9: 'Maranatha' – Maluku Protestant Church in Ambon City

## ISLAM

Islam made its appearance in Maluku before the arrival of the Portuguese. It established a tentative association in North Ambon as a stopping-off place for Arab spice traders, and seafarers from northern Java. A small mosque, Tua Wapauwe, was built near Hila in 1414 AD. It has probably been restored several times and is known as the Prasasti Mosque. Masjid Jame Uli Halawang is in central Hila but is of more recent origin.

The Muslims enjoyed greater confidence among the indigenous people than did the Christians. Muslims accorded respect to the Raja's and did not threaten Ambonese Adat in the way that Christianity did.

In the heart of Ambon City stand two mosques side by side. The older of the two, the Jame Mosque, should have been demolished when the new Al Fatah Mosque was completed. However, it was a fate too painful to execute and the Jame Mosque was spared and given a fresh coat of paint. Islam seems to co-exist with Christianity but prefers to cluster in enclaves. Whole villages, such as Mamala, can be found in Ambon where the population is almost 100 percent Muslim.

## **AMBON AS A TOURIST RESORT**

Ambon Island is almost two islands joined by a tiny neck of land. The bay which separates the two land masses, Hitu Peninsula and Lietimur Peninsula, is one of the prettiest in Indonesia. Its protected waters afforded safe anchorage for Dutch warships before World War II, but today it harbours marine research vessels, fishing trawlers and colourful pleasure craft. The annual Darwin-Ambon yacht race finishes in the bay and adds a touch of glamour to what otherwise is a naturally beautiful setting.

### **i) Beaches**

Ambon possesses many fine beaches, some of which are almost white coral rather than sandy.

- Namalatu Beach is about fourteen kilometres south of Ambon City at a village named Latuhalat. Its clear water is ideal for swimming, fishing, snorkelling and scuba diving. In the village artisans make clove models.
- Batu Konde Beach is about three kilometres away from Namalatu. Its coconut palm fringe provides a lush tropical setting.
- Amahusa is also south of the city (seven kilometres) and outrigger canoes can be hired to inspect the remains of a once beautiful reef.
- Natsepa Beach is seventeen kilometres to the north of the city. Its gentle slope makes it an ideal spot for young families.
- The Marthafons Cape extends into a beautiful beach and is opposite the fishing village of Galala from which it is possible to cross Ambon Bay at its narrowest point.
- Wayame Beach also lies across the bay from Ambon City and its beauty has inspired artists and poets for centuries.
- Liang Beach is on the north of the Hitu peninsula. This beach is a long, sandy stretch from which it is possible to gaze across the turquoise waters to the large Maluku Island of Seram which is only twenty kilometres away.

### **ii) Marine Gardens**

Although a number of coral reefs have been plundered for building materials Ambon still provides the experienced scuba diver with plenty of opportunities to view the islands beautiful sea gardens. Some favourite spots include the Namalahu sea garden, Taniung Setan (Satan's Cape). Latuhalat and Seri on the southern coast of the Leitmor are also frequently visited.

### **iii) Landscapes**

Ambon Island affords little flat land for residential and commercial development. Although it is rugged and volcanic its mountains are not very high. Gunung Nona is 700 metres high and provides a panoramic view of the city and the bay. Likewise, Gunung Sirimau at 950 metres affords pleasant views from Soya Atas village which is only 400 metres up the ridge. Mount Salahutu at 1,038 metres is Ambon's highest peak. There has been no volcanic activity on Ambon since 1842 AD but there are still hot springs, sulphur beds and earth tremors. Maluku, in general, however is renown for its geological fragility.

### **iv) Transport**

Ambon is serviced by air and sea and is a transport hub for the islands of Maluku

Province. The Island is not the largest in Maluku and transport about the Island can be done by bus or taxi especially about the coastline. It is, however, the becak which captures the attention of the visitor in the bustling city centre. The becak is a three-wheeled pushbike in which the passenger is cradled in a front seat and protected from the elements by a collapsible hood.

The 2,000 becaks come in three colours, namely red, white and yellow. All coloured becaks can ply their trade on Sundays but during the week the colours are alternated. If this did not happen the city traffic would be too congested.

v) **Accommodation and Dining**

There is a range of accommodation available in Ambon City and at beach resorts throughout the Island. Information concerning accommodation and dining is readily available at the Government Tourist Information Office.

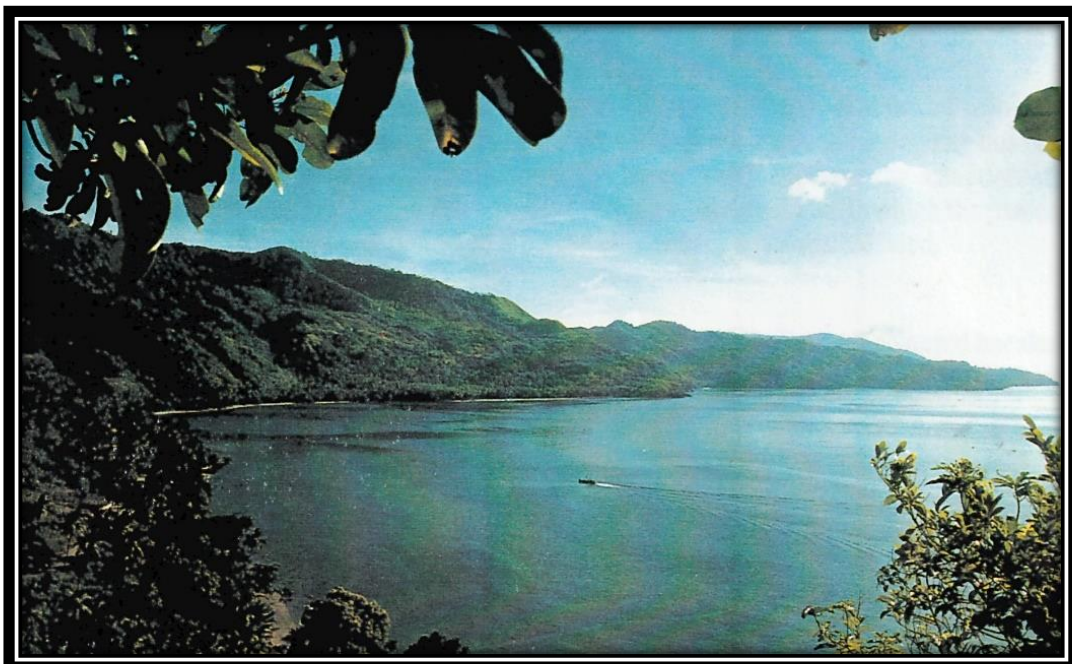


Fig. 10: Seascape of the Beautiful Teluk Ambon

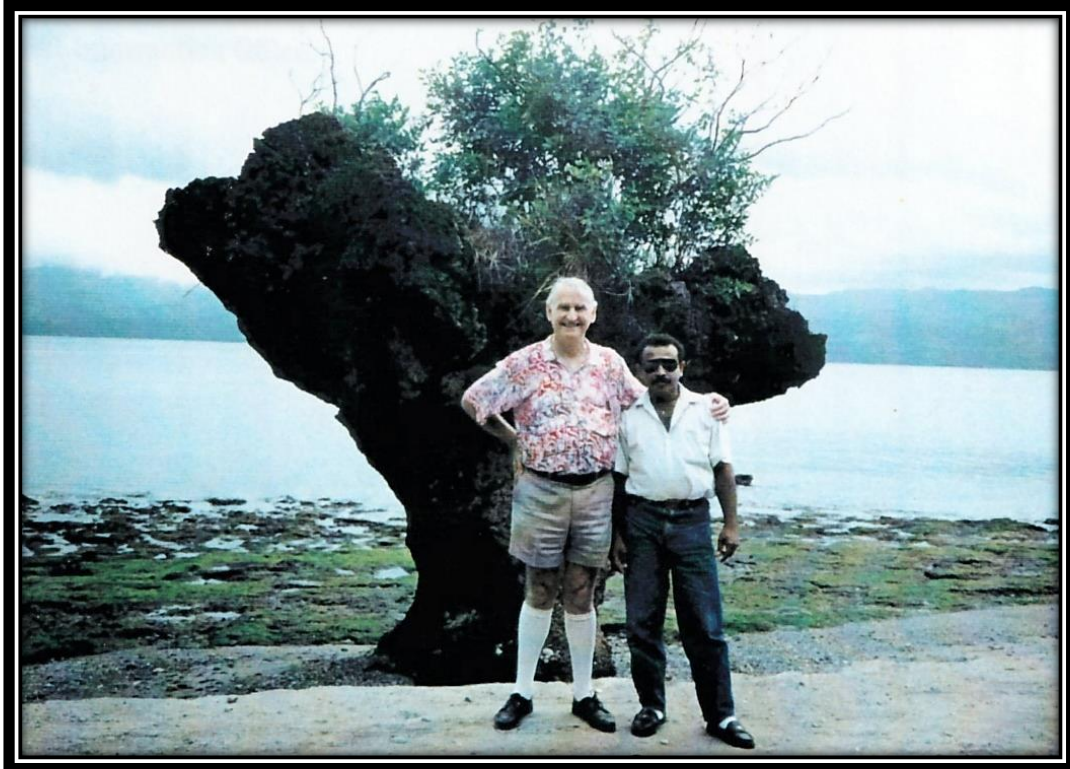


Fig. 11: Mark and Max Pose at Batu Capeo



# Chapter Three

## ***FORTS***

## **SEA LANES AND STRATEGIC PORTS**

It is not possible to travel throughout South East Asia without becoming aware of the importance of forts. The European conquest and subjugation of the Asian peoples began with the control of sea trading routes and the strategic trading ports along those routes. This is the reason why Penang, Malacca, Singapore, Batavia, Ujung Pandung, Manila, Hong Kong and Tainan assumed such importance for European commercial exploitation. Commercial exploitation was often followed by colonisation as trading opportunities expanded. Hand-in-hand with trade went the processes of acculturation and the activity of missionaries of the European religion. Whether the Europeans were Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch or English the pattern was similar. First a fort was established and garrisoned by a small body of armed marines. Later merchants, missionaries and diplomats assumed their respective roles.

There were two groups of players fighting over the division of spoils in the total process of European incursion. Catholic Portugal and Spain formed one group and Protestant Holland and England formed the other group. Portugal and Spain agreed to a "Line of Demarcation" which they modified from time to time. Holland and England settled on "Spheres of Influence". Holland established its Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (The VOC) better known as the East Indies Company and concentrated its efforts throughout the Indonesian archipelago. England, through its British East Indies Company, concentrated on India and the Straits settlements of Malaysia. On some occasions the interests of the two groups clashed and some Portuguese forts fell to Dutch or British interests but only rarely were there clashes within each group.

## **EUROPEAN FORTS IN THE MOLUCCAS**

The Spice Islands of the Moluccas were a great prize to be sought by European investors. The first country to locate the supply of cloves and nutmeg was Portugal and it did not take long to establish its first fort and send its first missionary. The Portuguese domination of the spice trade may be dated from 1522 AD with the building of Fort Nostra Senhora do Rosario (Fort Gamalama) at Ternate which is part of the Bandas. In 1580 AD Portugal was absorbed under the Spanish crown for the next 60 years.

During this period the Dutch captured some small forts built by the Portuguese in Ambon and, using them as a base, gradually acquired control of the Portuguese monopoly. In order to thwart the competing British interests the Dutch, in 1667, agreed to exchange New Amsterdam (the island of Manhattan) for sole rights to the Moluccan spices. However, they had effectively 'cornered' the spice trade in 1621 AD under the ruthless leadership of Jan Pieterszoon Coen.

The following list of Moluccan forts may not be definitive but for the historically minded visitor it provides a guide:

MOLUCCAN FORTS	
BANDA ISLANDS	NAME OF FORT
Ternate	Nostra Senhora do Rosario, known as Fort Gamalama (1522 AD) Fort San Pedro (1522 AD) Fort Oranje (1607 AD) Fort Keyu Merah (1518 AD) Fort Tbloko (1512 AD)
Neira	Fort Nassau (1609 AD) Fort Belgica (1611 AD)
Lontar	Fort Hollandia Fort Concordia
Ai	Fort Revenge
LEASE ISLANDS	NAME OF FORT
Ambon	Fort Kapalaha Fort Amsterdam Fort "Hative" (near Ruma Tiga) Fort Negeri Lima Nuestra Senhora Anunciada (under Dutch rule, known as New Victoria), (1575 AD)
Haruku	Fort Nieuw Hoorn (Pelau) Fort Nieuw Zeeland (Pelau)
Saparua	Fort Duurstede
Nusa Laut	Fort Beverwijk
Buru	Fort Defensie (Namilea)



Fig. 19: View of Waisisal Beach from Fort Duurstede, Saparua Island (1676 AD)



Fig. 12: Gateway of Old Portuguese 'Fort Neustra Senhora Anuciada' (1575 AD)  
Renamed 'New Victoria' by the Dutch in 1605 AD



Fig. 13: View from Fort Amsterdam, a Restored Dutch Fort near Hila



## AMBONESE FORTS

The forts built on Ambon Island have at different times been under the control of the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British (for six years) and the Japanese during world War II.

- i) **Fort Kapalaha** lies in ruins about five kilometres from Mamala on the north coast. The Portuguese were given permission to erect a small fort in 1522 AD at the mouth of a small river that flowed to the sea between Hitu town and Mamala. It was captured by the Dutch in 1646 AD.
- ii) **Fort "Hative"**, after being expelled from Fort Kapalaha the Portuguese relocated to Hative which is near the present day village of Rumah Tiga. They remained at Fort Hative until 1569 AD.
- iii) **Fort Neustra Senhora da. Anunciada**, following a period of success in converting southern Ambonese to Catholic Christianity the Portuguese had little difficulty in relocating in the midst of the Batu Merah villages which is now in the heart of Ambon City. Fort Senhora da Anunciada was built in 1575 AD and the gateway and some of the original walls remain. The Dutch captured the fort and renamed it **New Victoria** in 1605 AD and rebuilt it in 1775 AD. The triangle entablature of the gate features a sailing ship carved as a relief.

The walls are in the grounds of an army base and permission has to be obtained before taking photographs. The fortress remains are located in Jalan Slamet Riyadi, Ambon City.

- iv) **Fort Amsterdam** is a Dutch fort located near Hila on the north coast of the island. Its high walls were built on top of an earlier Portuguese fortification, which had wooden palisades. The high central tower has been restored and grounds improvements have made a visit to this fort an experience of great interest.

## FORT DUURSTED IN SAPARUA

The following excerpt is taken from an information pamphlet entitled:

*Sejarah Singkat  
Benteng Duurstede  
di Saparua*

The translation from Indonesian to English was done by Marcus C Sanders:

### *"A Brief History of Fort Duurstede in Saparua"*

*"Fort Daurstede was built for the first time in 1676 AD by Arnold do Vlamingh Van Oudshoorn and was then rebuilt by Governor Nicholas Schagen, Governor of Amboina in 1690 AD. The first stone was laid down by Governor Schagen's son, Jan Paul Schagen and was finished in 1691 AD.*

*The architect was Architect Carle. It was given the name Duurstede by Governor Nicholas Schagen as fitting the name of his place of birth.*

*The fort was built atop coral rock as high as twenty feet and was called "Hot Frekadeltetie" by old Dutch people. In order to enter the fort, you must via a ladder and climb as many as 24 rungs and enter via a door opposite. The fort is surrounded by a concrete wall as high as 4.5 metres and one metre thick.*

*The fort is 6,000 metres square.*

*The fort has three guard posts. In front of the fort is a well which was, until recently called "The Death Well" because there were several Dutch soldiers who were in the process of fetching water from the well who were held up and killed by Pattimura's troops."*

### **SOME FORTS OF INDONESIA**

Indonesia has a number of forts apart from those in Maluku:

- Fort Rotterdam (1634, 1667) is located at Ujung Pandang
- Fort Speelwijk is located at Banten in Java
- Fort de Kock (1825) is located at Bukittingi in Sumatra
- Fort Concordia is located at Kupang, West Timor
- Fort Marlborough (1709 - 1719) was built by the British East India Company and was the most formidable ever built by the British. It has given its name to Yogyakarta's main street where it is located.

### **SOME FORTS OF SOUTH EAST ASIA**

- Fort A Famosa (1511) (Malacca)
- Fort St John (Malacca)
- Fort Cornwallis (Penang)
- Fort Altenberg (Selangor)
- Fort Margherita (Kuching)
- Fort Santiago (Manila)
- Fort Zeelandia (Tainan)
- The Citadel of Sao Paulo de Monte (Macao)
- Guia Fortress (Macao)
- Sentosa (Singapore)
- Fort Dundas (Melville Island, Northern Territory, Australia)
- Victoria (Northern Territory, Australia)
- Palmerston (Northern Territory, Australia)

## **Chapter Four**

### ***AMBON HONOURS ITS HEROES***

## **MENURUT AGAMA DAN MENURUT ADAT**

The Ambonese people are said to live "menurut agama dan menurut adat", which translates "according to religion and according to adat". Another way of saying this is that they respect their ancestors and the glorious dead.

## **IN SEARCH OF PATTIMURA**

There is more than a touch of irony in the above sub-heading. The irony stems from the fact that it is impossible not to run into Pattimura. From the moment of arrival at the airport Pattimura is there to greet you! The airport at Ambon is named in his honour and so is the Island's university. One of the main streets in Ambon City is Jalan Raya Pattimura and there is an imposing statue of this 19th century Moluccan patriot in the grounds of the government administrative buildings. Who then is Pattimura?

## **THOMAS MATULESSY**

Actually the name "Pattimura" is an honorific. It means "Generous Hearted One" and was conferred on the leader of a rebel band of 1,000 Alfur headhunters who sought to overthrow Dutch domination in 1817 AD. The name of the rebel leader was Thomas Matulesy. He had been a former sergeant major in the British Army during the period of the Napoleonic wars when Britain took over the administration of the Moluccas. He temporarily captured the Dutch held Fort Duurstede on Saparua and killed all the occupants except the son of the commander. This act of "generosity" earned him the title "Pattimura".

## **THE REBELLION OF 1817**

The details of Pattimura's attack on Fort Duurstede are outlined in the brochure "Sejarah Singkat Benteng Duurstede di Saparua" which is obtainable at the restored fort. The following account is an English translation by Marcus C Sanders:

### *"The Course of the War"*

*"Since early dawn on the 16th May 1817, Pattimura's troops had already surrounded the Fort waiting for the elite troops so as to attack, and at 10.00 am the situation was becoming more tense, hot and crucial.*

*After half a day at three in the afternoon the attack was started by Pattimura's commandos. At the same time the Dutch troops began to deliver resistance confronting the raging of the people and the battle, ending in President Van den Berg being shot.*

*The Dutch troops began to lose their grip. There were many who ran outside in order to surrender; however they were killed. Even those who held out met with the same fate.*

*Fort Duurstede was fully controlled by Pattimura's troops. All the inhabitants of the fort were killed, including the wife of the President. However one of Ian den Berg's sons was still given the chance to take shelter by Pattimura. The small child was given over to Salmon Pattiwael Patih of Negeri Tiouw and escaped from the raging's of Pattimura's army.*

*After the fort was secured, Pattimura ordered that all cannons be railed down so that they could not be used again. He himself was of the opinion Duurstede was not a strategic area for a defence fortification.*



*Within the same year; on the 3rd August at 6.00 pm this fort was taken and occupied by the Dutch troops again, with ease, under the leadership of Overste de Groot and Lieutenant Ellinghuyzen. After some fierce battles and the death of many people on either side Pattimura and his followers were captured.*

*In order to remember Pattimura's heroism Fort Duurstede has been maintained as a historic monument.*

*The fort was restored in 1977. "*

Pattimura's brief moment of glory came to an end when his 1,000 native supporters were overcome by 15,000 natives under the leadership of the Dutch. The monument to Pattimura in Ambon City was erected on the spot where he was executed by hanging on the gallows. He bid his executioners farewell with the parting words "Have a pleasant stay here gentlemen".



Fig. 14: Memorial Statue to Pattimura in Ambon City

### **MARTHA CHRISTINA TIAHAHU**

Standing atop Karang Panjang Hill and overlooking Ambon City is a memorial statue to a Moluccan woman who is honoured as a freedom fighter. Martha Tiahahu supported her father in his resistance to Dutch rule. When her father was captured and executed, she boldly continued the struggle on the small island of Nusa Laut. Eventually she was captured and sent into exile in Java. While on board the ship she was told the news of her father's execution and, as if she wanted to share in his heroic death, she refused food and died. She was buried in the Banda Sea on 2 January 1818. Her heroic life is commemorated each year on the anniversary of her death by a ceremony at the site of the statue and afterwards flowers are cast into the sea.



Fig. 15: Memorial Statue to Martha Christina Tiahahu  
Overlooking Amon City

### THE DOOLAN MEMORIAL

An unimposing rectangular store block with a plaque commemorates the heroic deeds of an Australian, Doolan. He died while covering the retreat in February 1942. The Doolan Memorial is on Jalan Kayadou in the Kudamati district near the hospital. The Japanese forbade the local people to bury his body but this directive was ignored. He was buried under a "gandaria" tree where his tombstone is now located.

### THE AUSTRALIAN "GULL FORCE"

The 2/21st Battalion of the Australian Army was known as "*Gull Force*". It consisted of 1,100 men who were sent to Ambon to join the 2,600 Dutch and Ambonese troops to defend the island against an expected Japanese invasion. Incidentally, "*Sparrow Force*" (1,400 soldiers) was deployed to Timor and "*Lark Force*" (1,400 soldiers) was deployed in the Rabaul area of New Britain. These three specially trained companies were intended for the middle east but with the threat of Japanese invasion imminent it was decided to use them as fore-warriors.

*Gull Force* left Darwin in December 1941 and sailed to Ambon in three Dutch ships. The war with Japan had commenced nine days before *Gull Force* arrived in Ambon. The overall Dutch commander Lt Col J Kapiz divided the Australian forces and over 300 were sent to defend the Laha airfield and the remainder were positioned south of Ambon at Amahasu.

On 31st January the Japanese invasion of 42,000 struck in force. Over half the Australians were killed in close combat. Those who surrendered were mercilessly killed by beheading or firing squad. A total of 309 Australians died in the defence of the Laha airfield. Nine wounded men escaped in an Ambonese prau and eventually reached Australia. Another three men joined the other Australians over the bay.

The situation around Amahasu was just as disastrous as that at Laha airfield. The Dutch surrendered on 1st February and on 3rd February the remaining 800 Australian troops surrendered and were placed in the barracks at Tantui. At first the conditions of imprisonment were fair but following the escape of seven Australians, six weeks after the surrender, the

prisoners began to suffer the horrors of brutalization and bashing at the hands of the Japanese naval guards.

In October 1942, 263 Australians and 233 Dutchmen were transferred to Haicho, Hainan. At the end of the war 182 prisoners of the Australian internees on Hainan survived. Of the 582 Australians who remained in Ambon only 121 lived to reach Australia. Thus, *Gull Force* had in total, a one-third survival rate.



Fig. 16: The Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery  
on the site of Tantui Barracks, Ambon

### THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES CEMETERY

The Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery is located about two kilometres from the administrative heart of the town and on the site of the Tantui Barracks. Next to the Commonwealth Cemetery is an Indonesian Cemetery which contains the remains of the Indonesian heroes who gave their lives during the Ambonese rebellion 1950 - 56.

The Commonwealth Cemetery is actually an allied cemetery. It contains the remains of Australian, Dutch, English, New Zealand and Indian service men who died in Ambon or nearby Indonesian islands. It is one of the best maintained war cemeteries in Indonesia. Australian homage is paid annually on the 23rd April just prior to Anzac Day celebrations.

The beautifully kept gardens feature a covered, but open, central memorial which has a masonry altar upon which the following words are engraved:

*"Here are recorded the names of the officers and men who died in the regions of the Celebes and Molucca Islands on land at sea and in the air but to whom the fortune of war denied the known and honoured burial given to their comrades in death."*

There are more than 2,000 engraved markers which identify the deceased's name, branch of service and a simple epitaph. A separate section is reserved for the Indian Hindu and Muslim interred. The noted Photographer and War Correspondent, Damien Parer, is buried in the



cemetery. Perhaps more heart-rending than the young age of the deceased is the observation that quite a number died not long before the Japanese surrender. There are a number of headstones commemorating the crew members who lost their lives on the ill-fated British ship the "Exeter".



Fig. 17: Engraved Marker of Noted Australian War Photographer, Damien Parer



Fig. 18: Looking Back at Tulehu, Ambon, on Departure for Saparua by Boat

# Chapter Five

## ***A VISIT TO SAPARUA ISLAND***

## **SAPARUA TOWN**

Saparua, Haruku, Nusa Laut together with Ambon comprise the Lease Island group once known as the Uliassers. Saparua is the second most populous island after Ambon with a population of 45,000 people. Saparua Town is not far from where the boats from Tulehu, Ambon, dock. It is a bustling marketing centre on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Local produce such as sago paste, red palm sugar, taro, yams, rice and millet are on sale with the home grown, buton - native varieties of manioc, potatoes, tomatoes, pineapple, pawpaw, tobacco, water cress and the seasonal durian, coconut, mango, mangosteen and breadfruit. There is always an ample supply of smoked fish which might be small tuna or snapper.

## **THE PATTIMURA MUSEUM**

The Pattimura Museum is in Haria village. It contains the dress and uniform of the local hero, Pattimura, who died in 1817 AD. It is actually in a modest homestead and the visitor is required to sign the Visitor's Book with an almost reverential awe.

## **SAGO**

The Saparuaans, along with all the inhabitants of the Moluccas are greatly dependent on the sago palm. There are a great number of these trees in Saparua and it is not difficult to witness the extraction of sago starch from the pith of a palm tree.

The sago tree (*Metroxylon* spp), is harvested just as the tree is about to flower and die! This is usually when the tree is 15 years of age! Today, part of the process of starch production, is done with simple mechanisation. Once the bark is stripped off the trunk-like stem the operator scours out the pithy fibres. He may do this with a motorised wire brush. This fibrous matter is then washed with running water in a sloping trough. The non-fibrous starch is collected in a cone-shaped goti, or container, as wet sago flour. One tree can produce 400 - 600 kilograms of wet sago flour. This amount of flour could provide enough sago cakes to last a family a year! The fibrous left-overs are useful for pig and chicken fodder. The outer bark is useful for house walls while the wooden stem is cut into small sections for firewood. The palm fronds are used for roof thatching. The sago palm is thus a most useful and versatile tree.

## **SAGO CAKES**

Sago cakes made with a little palm sugar and grated coconut are considered a delicacy in Saparua. It is possible to view a woman baking sago cakes over an open fire. Her haunched position and the intense heat made her occupation something of an ordeal. To the western taste buds the sago cake is somewhat bland and fibrous. It is said to be more palatable when spread with butter as a scone is spread.

## **FORT DUURSTED**

Fort Duurstede is Saparua's most important man-made attraction. It was built by the Dutch in 1676 AD and captured by Pattimura in 1817 AD. It was restored by the Indonesian government in 1977 AD as a memorial to Pattimura and overlooks the beautiful Waisisal Beach.

## **SAPARUA MUSEUM**

There is a museum not far from Fort Duurstede. It depicts a number of miniature models of the history of Pattimura's storming of the Fort.



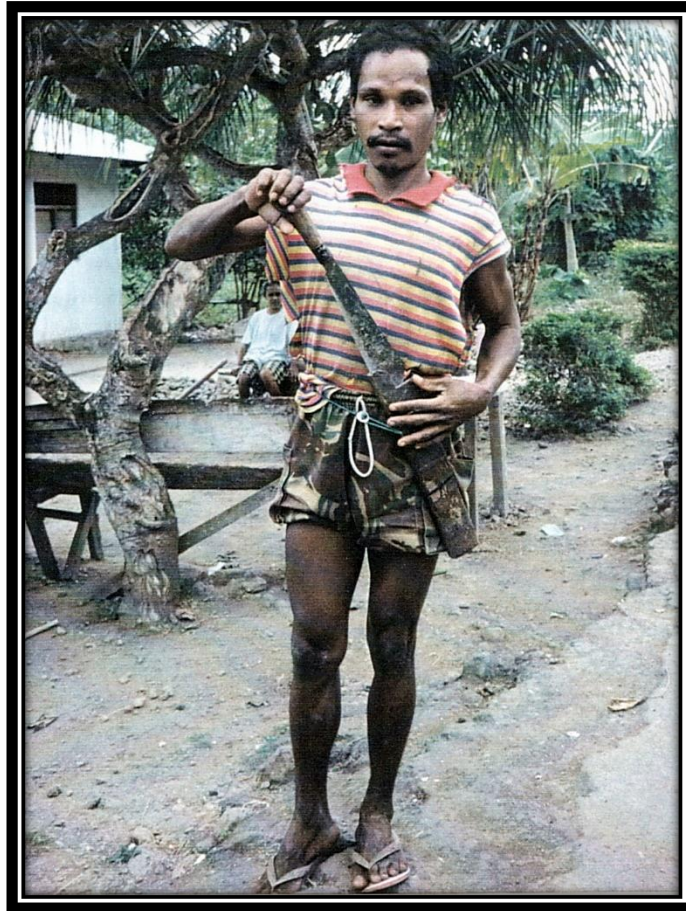


Fig. 20: Ambonese Field Worker with Machete for Cutting Sago and Bananas

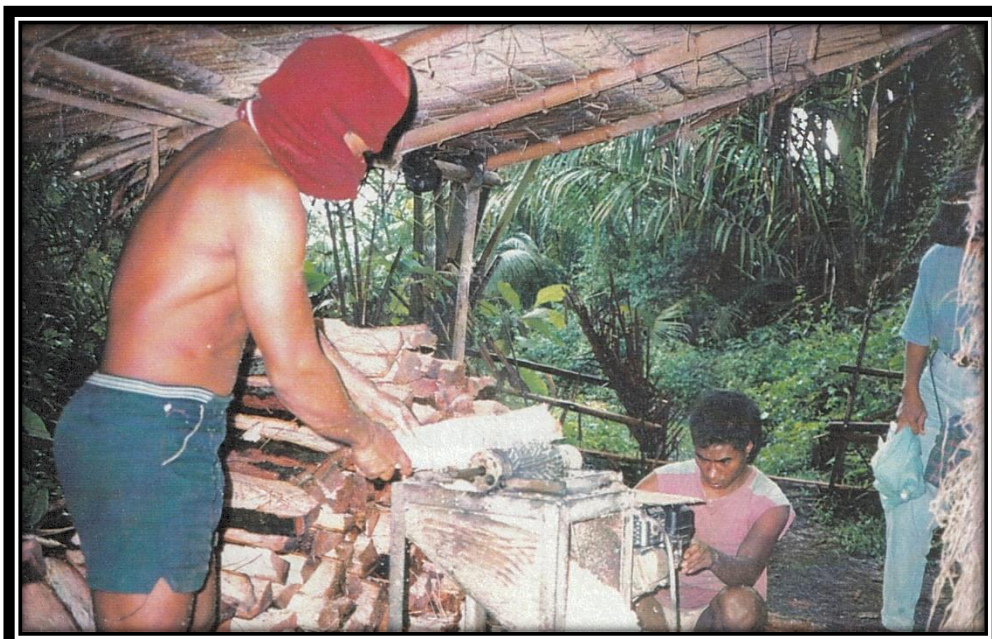


Fig. 21: Mechanised Method of Scouring Sago Pith from Sago Palm Slats



### **A SAPARUAN FOUNDRY**

Metal tools and implements are fairly prized possessions in Saparua and the Smithy is an important person in a culture which is not much above a subsistence level. The Smithy with his hearth, bellows, anvil and hammers forges machete blades, axe heads, farm implements and horse shoes.



Fig.22: Inside a Sapparuan Iron Foundry

### **POTTERY-MAKING AT OUW VILLAGE**

The Ouw village is nine kilometres southeast of Saparua town. The pottery making is not done with the advantage of spinning wheel or a kiln. The bowls are shaped by hand and 'fired' in an open fire.



Fig. 23: Pottery Making at Ouw Village, Saparua



### **MAHU VILLAGE RESORT**

There is not much overnight accommodation on Saparua. Mr AS Tomasoa operates a four bungalow lodge near Kampung Mahu. This is used by tourists who wish to undertake fishing and scuba-diving excursions.



Fig. 24: Sago Thatched Roof and Sago-Palm Walled Homes at a Saparuan Village

### **A SAPARUAN CEMETERY**

There is a cemetery adjacent to the foundry. It differs from the typical western cemetery in that each grave is protected from the rain by a corrugated iron roof atop four poles. This gives the appearance of a mini village.



Fig.25: Saparuan Cemetery where they are Protected by Corrugated Iron

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## Post-Script

### **A possible explanation of "New Victoria" fort 1605 at Ambon**

Maurice of Nassau, William I's second son (the first, Philip William, became prince of Orange and remained loyal to Spain), who was named stadtholder of Holland and Zeeland and became the commander of the republic's armies. The decades immediately after 1587 were marked by a series of military triumphs over the Spanish forces under Alessandro Farnese, duke di Parma e Piacenza. Maurice recaptured the Dutch territories north of the great rivers and extended them southward into much of Brabant and enough of Flanders to cut off Antwerp from the sea. These victories are recorded in the historical memory of the Dutch as 'the closing of the garden,' the territory that became the republic of the United Provinces and then (with a few additions) the modern Kingdom of the Netherlands. These victories were accompanied by England's and France's diplomatic recognition of the States General as the government of an independent state.

### **Massacre at Ambon from my SE Asia notes**

The British East India Company began establishing trading posts in India in 1600 and the Malacca Straits shortly afterwards. In 1615 the BEIC established a trading station on Ambon Island close to a Dutch post. A few years later, the British attacked the Dutch at Batavia (Jakarta). The Dutch settlement at Ambon, suspecting that the British were about to attack, raided and overcame the British East Indian Company factory at Ambon in 1623. Ten British traders were tortured and killed. After this massacre, the British made a decision that trading conditions in Southeast Asia were too competitive and bound up in political treaty obligations and so concentrated on building up its interests in India, apart from a trading post in remote Bencoolen in West Sumatra. It was content to leave regional trade within Southeast Asia to English individuals who were only interested in trade.