

Understanding Behind Shipwrecks: filling the missing gap of local history

Dr. Widya Nayati¹

Abstract

Archaeological evidence of contact and exchange can be found in many sites in Indonesia. Different areas of the Archipelago experienced different levels of socioeconomic complexity because of many factors including local resource distribution and topography, which in turn affected the nature of contact with foreign traders. Contacts between resource-providing areas and outsiders who sought these resources have affected the development of local cultures. Buddhist, Islamic and Christian ideas and material culture were intensively and widely distributed in the Indonesian Archipelago from the seventh century onward. Archaeological data supported the activities of the contact, such as Hindu and Buddhist temples, Chinese temples, Mosques, Churches, forts, ceramics, beads, statues (made from stone and metals), and shipwrecks. While historical data gives information on the varieties of Indonesian commodities. Hundreds of shipwrecks are believed to be within Indonesia seas. However, the study of shipwrecks—especially in Indonesia—is always as a single object and usually only discusses the artifacts found from the shipwreck.

Based on the information above, there are many data which could be helpful in understanding the past from shipwrecks. How would it be if the ship had reached the local harbour? Who would buy the artifacts? What would have happened with the locals if they used the artifacts? Is there any tangible artifacts and intangible culture which could be related to the development of the harbours or the local kingdom? Is there any 'missing link' of the local history which is found from the shipwreck? This paper will analyse the effect of shipwrecks and understanding the role of local history behind the shipwreck. This paper will study the correlation of shipwrecks found in the Batam and Cirebon regions of Indonesia with the history of those two places.

Keywords: shipwreck, Development of settlements, tangible and intangible culture, Cirebon, Batam Island, Indonesia

Introduction

The development of trading centres in the Indonesian Archipelago has been significant since early in the first millennium Anno Domini (A.D.)² when Javanese, Chinese, Malay and west Asians traded in many ports in the Indonesian Archipelago (van Leur 1955; Meilink-Roelofs 1962; Wolters 1967). Then, all commodities came to Melaka. The Indonesian Archipelago itself was legendary initially for forest, sea and spice products (Corteseo 1944; van Leur 1955; Meilink-Roelofs 1962). The trade later developed to include inter local and international products, such as ceramics, beads, coins, gongs, jewellery, metal goods, and precious stones (Corteseo 1944; van Leur 1955; Meilink-Roelofs 1962; Wolters 1967). The exchange in luxury items could possibly have taken place in the coastal, hinterland or ecotone areas, by land (track) and river (Nayati

¹ M.A, widyanayati@yahoo.com

² A Georgian Calendar designation that starts at year one from the birth of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

2005). In the harbors, the elites controlled the trading activity as they had accumulated the necessary resources (Junker 1990; Nayati, 2005). Such land trading was closely interconnected with sea/inter island trading (Nayati 2005) and trading activity in this region has developed and is intertwined with other systems over a long period. However, evidence shows that changes of trading patterns have occurred as responses to internal, inter-regional, and international contacts (Nayati 2005).

Artifacts have been found in the capital kingdom and their settlements both on the coastal area and in land areas (Nayati 1994; Nayati 2005), while intangible cultural influences were interacting with local people (Reid 1984; 1993; Jungker 1990; Nayati 1994; Nayati 2005). Those introduced cultures became interrelated with local cultures, thereby influencing such aspects as language, daily activities, costume, ceremony, politics, and technology (Jungker 1990; Reid 1984; Reid 1993; Nayati 2005). It can be said that understanding the maritime archaeology of this region is not as simple as recording local and non local artifacts, but should be seen as a contact of land to land culture using both land and sea transportation. Such contact involves time, energy, space, and adaptation which could open many other possibilities. So, any interpretation of the scope of maritime archaeology must encompass wider and deeper considerations which can open the way to seeing and understanding the many possibilities generated by the wider cultural contact.

Historical documents can help interpret the maritime archaeology. Some documents describe the ships, the dates, the shift of trading activities from one market to another depending on the supply of local products, the fluctuating prices, and the influence of local rulers on the trading activities. The documents also provide a record of each centre by illustrations, sketches and maps. However these data are only recorded for the Complex Entrepots and Fort Regulated sites, where the document writers stayed for longer periods and even established settlements, such as in Banten, Batavia (Jakarta), west coast of Sumatra, and Banda (Cortesao 1944; Nayati 1994; Nayati 2005). By contrast, there are almost no comparable data about the development of the Direct Exchange sites or about the people, culture and trade to be found in such sites (Nayati 1994). Consequently archaeological evidence can throw further light on these changes by comparing the material culture and archaeological remains across different periods, even though not all historical information is supported by material culture or vice versa (Nayati 1994).

The archaeological and historical data have already revealed much about the successes of shipping and trading activity in the past. Trading activity by sea and river was risky and full of danger, not only because of pirates but also weather. Hundreds of shipwrecks are believed to lie within Indonesia and its waters. It is believed that there are around 500 sites where ships have sunk within the Indonesian seas, yet, less from data recorded by Nigel Pickford (1994: 155).



Figure 1. Shipwrecks in Sumatra and Java (Pickford 1994: 155).

The discovery, investigation and removal of shipwrecks in the Indonesian sea has been done many times. Nevertheless, the study of shipwrecks is always a single object and usually only discusses the artifacts found from a particular wreck. In Indonesian case, the findings from such an action is normally just a "finding" without any further interpretation what it may reveal about the role of local history to the world or vice versa. There are many data from the wreck which could help in a wider understanding of the past. In this paper, I will focus on one site and ask what might have happened in Cirebon and in Batam if the ship had not sunk? Is there any "missing link" of the local history which can be found from this shipwreck?

In the history of Indonesia, Batam does not seem to rate any special mention (Cortesao 1944; Meilink-Roelofs 1962; Kartodirdjo, *et al.* 1975; Reid 1993). It interprets that Batam, an island in the strait of Malacca, could have acted as a stop-over harbor as Malacca had both important Complex Entrepots and Fort Regulated sites, while direct trading sites were located in Sumatra and Java. It can be assumed that Bantam could play an important role whenever the trading ships/junks were attacked by pirates, or ran into weather problems—as Batam island is located in the monsoon area. While Cirebon did not rate mention in as many historical journals as the Banten kingdom, Batavia city, and Gresik (Cortesao, 1944; Meilink-Roelofs, 1962; Kartodirdjo, *et al.* 1975; Tjandrasmita 2009), both are located on the north Java sea and Cirebon was an important Islamic kingdom from the 15th to the late 19th century (Sulendraningrat 1972; Kartodirdjo, *et al.* 1975; Sulendraningrat 1985).

Trading Activity within the Indonesian Archipelago: filling some missing link in local history

It is difficult to specify the nature of the connections among producers, traders, agents, and consumers in pre-modern society (Nayati 2005). Many different scenarios are possible as an individual can act as producer, as consumer, as agent, and as trader at the same time (Nayati 2005). Goods were distributed and redistributed both in simple and complex societies, both through reciprocity and centralized movement, variables which are related to socio-cultural life (Nayati 2005). These may each have positive and negative gains for the actors – socially and in terms of real wealth.

Archaeological artifacts have not been found to confirm the whole range of recorded trading activities. Archaeological evidence can provide some information about commodities arriving in trading sites but little about the local commodities taken out from these markets (Nayati 1994; Nayati 2005). Yet archaeological data can give clues about the local activities that lead to an understanding and explanation of the past by drawing on both historical and archaeological studies (Nayati 1994). However, there are still many questions on trade remaining, such as how the local people—both coastal and in the hinterland— were affected by the international trading network, and what kind of socioeconomic structures and networks they developed to support their involvement (Jungker 1990; Nayati 2005). Related to the questions of this nature that arise, Jesse Ransley (2005) argues that maritime archaeology is a complex discipline. We should be aware about the many possibilities generated for interpreting the past, as the data are unique and the development of culture may differ and is not always linear between one place and the next.

Case Study of Cirebon and Batam

For a start, not all sea trading was successful. Pickford (1994) in his study of locations of wrecks does not mention any shipwreck along the north Java Sea including Cirebon but does refer to some spots in Batam. There are reports of underwater research activity there (H Harun). These activities were undertaken by the people in Jakarta during the Suharto era and Haji Harun said that all materials found have been brought to Jakarta. Equally, in 2004 to 2005 there was research conducted on a shipwreck located on 05°14' 30" and 108° 58' 25", which is 60-70 miles north of Cirebon.

Table 1. Types of artifacts found in Cirebon Shipwreck
 (Source: *PT ParadigmaPutera Sejahtera* (Setyawan 2009)—with modification.)

No	Type of Artifacts	Total
1	Metal (Gold, Silver, Iron, bronze, copper, Tin)	15.215
2	Precious stones	2.607
3	Earthenware	35.819
4	Ceramics	256.943
5	Glass beads	1.475
6	Container made from Glass	1.591
7	Upstream Kris	1
8	Ivory	59
9	Bones and tooth	281
10	Horn	10
11	Spices	28
12	Woods (part of the ship)	19
13	Others	114

Cirebon

Based on the artifacts found from the Cirebon shipwreck, it should be asked – if there could also be any commodities which were destroyed by sea water. This question must be addressed as ships could stopover in many ports before (almost) reaching Cirebon harbor and this implies that these ships possibly bought other commodities, though not from China. Researchers have interpreted that the shipwreck - based on the ceramics and glassware - is dated to the 10th century (Setiawan 2009). Yet such a date should be questioned as the first Cirebon king came to power in 1478 (Sulendraningrat 1972; Sulendraningrat 1985; Panzuri 1994; Tjandrasasmita 2009). Before this time, Cirebon was just a small fishing village under the local merchant Ki GedeTapa (Sulendraningrat 1972; Sulendraningrat 1985; Panzuri 1994). This village then became crowded as many people settled there and this growing population was supported by the surrounding area, especially with rice and sea products (Panzuri 1994). According to local history Ki GedeTapa was replaced by his son who built a new kingdom named Pakungwati, and used the name Pangeran Cakrabuana (Sulendraningrat 1972; Sulendraningrat 1985; Tjandrasasmita 2009). He was in turn replaced by his cousin, named Syarif Hidayatullah or Sunan GunungJati (Sulendraningrat 1972; Sulendraningrat 1985; Tjandrasasmita 2009). In 1677 Kraton Cirebon (formally Pakungwati) was then divided into three kingdoms: Kraton Kasepuhan, Kraton Kanoman and Keprabonan, which has a centre of learning (Sulendraningrat 1972; Sulendraningrat 1985; Tjandrasasmita, 2009). Between 1798-1803 Kraton Kanoman was further divided into two kingdoms: Kraton Kanoman and Kasultanan Kacirebonan (Sulendraningrat 1972; Sulendraningrat 1985).

Interestingly, the most intriguing point is the amount of ceramics found from the Cirebon shipwreck. If all these commodities were to be sold in Cirebon market, what would the Cirebon kingdom look like? Certainly, there are ceramics used in the interior of the palace of Sunan Gunung Jati and the sultan's graveyard (Figure 2). Gunung Jati is believed to have married Chinese women, but if there were at least 271.000 ceramics, mostly bowls to be sold in Cirebon,

the people of Cirebon would seem to have been practicing a Chinese life style. Yet, based on the personal survey, only one Chinese temple is known to have been located nearby the central market of the kraton in Cirebon.

If those artifacts were to be exchanged in Cirebon how did they collect all the commodities to the harbor? And if so, where did they store these commodities from outside Cirebon and from the local area come from? And, most intriguing of all, what was Cirebon's most popular trade commodity, as there are no precise historical data on this for Cirebon? Yet We have to interpret more that Cirebon had developed a powerful political and social organization which could organize the accumulation of local commodities to be exchanged with international commodities. If so, the history of Cirebon is not to be restricted to an account of the succession from father to son/cousin. Cirebon must have been a rich country with great social and political organization; it must have included many non local inhabitants but it was all controlled by the kingdom.



Figure 2. Ceramics at Gunung Jati Graveyard
(<http://theoengbinangproject.com/2010/11/wisata-gunung-jati/>)

Batam

In contrast, while shipwrecks in Batam have not yet been covered scientifically, yet there are more than 100 Chinese temples in the area. Only 20 of these Chinese temples are legal (Ah Cui). A personal survey of the Chinese temples on Batam island has found that many temples have been relocated because of the developments on the island. Some hilly areas have been leveled, and new settlements built—especially shop house—along the main road, although old Chinese temples remain located in the bay (see Figure 3; the original location of the Chinese temples). Moreover, there are some Chinese ceramics dated between Ming and Qing dynasty and beads on the main altar.

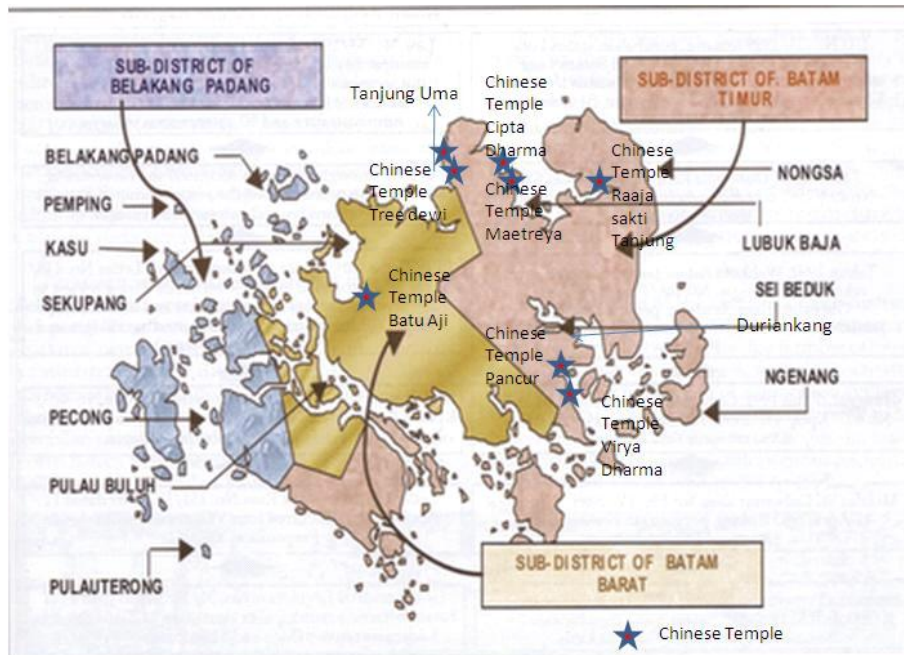


Figure 3. Location of Old Chinese Temples in Batam Island (sources: *BAPPEKO Batam* (1995-1998), <http://pn-batam.go.id/profil-daerah/45-pemerintahan-kota-batam/81-sejarah-pulau-batam.html>)

In Bantam, based on the personal survey on July 2011, there are three groups of temples: firstly, temples used for *Toa Pe Kong* (ancestor) and *Santikong*; secondly, temples for Kwan Im; and thirdly, temples with Buddha statues. This can be interpreted as that the first settlers placed their ancestors and *santikong* in their temples as Tao followers and their clan continues to venerate their grandparents' temples. Their duties are to renovate and rebuild it better than before. If they have to move the temple, they have to move the *Toa Pe Kong* and *Santikong* with them. Interviewed with Ah Chui informed that when renovations or rebuilding of the old temples are still to still maintain the traditional shape. Any reshaping can only be done in unimportant parts of the temple, while any new buildings must be built outside the original temples.

Base on the same survey, there are several Chinese temples with *Toa Pe Kong* and *Santikong* located in the strategic bay of Batam. It can be assumed that these temples have been built by the Chinese who originally stopped over in Batam temporarily, possibly because of bad weather or pirates and or trade matters. They could safely anchor in Batam bay—as Batam has many safe bays. It assumed that some Chinese continued living in Batam. This assumption is supported by information from Ah Cui's that people in Batu Ampar were Chinese who worked as fishermen and merchants. Moreover there were 13 Chinese families who lived in Batu Ampar, a settlement with a trading center, namely A Chui, Tok Riri, AngTeng Hiang, A Ti Pincang (An Kai Lai), Tan Ching Long, Tan Pa Long, Pen Kiang, Cui Siang, Lao Ho, Qi Bak, Bak Ti, Tio Seng, Po Lim and Po Chin. The oldest Chinese temple was originally in Batu Ampar, but then moved to Nagoya because a factory was built in Batu Ampar. Moreover, Ah Cui a local Malay fishermen living in Tanjung Uma and adjacent areas — noted this is

the case especially along the coastal area. Based on personal survey on the 24th of July 2011, in Tanjung Uma an old mosque has been renovated and became a masjid Jami' named Al Mukminin.

The history of Batam should be expanded to include the existence of the Chinese and their settlements and history during the 1950s, when the Chinese and Malay of Batam worked in rubber plantations and planted pepper and gambier (Ah Cui). These plantations no longer exist as all the forest has been cut down and replaced with shop houses, factories and malls. Based on interviewed with several people in Batam from 21th to 25 of July 2011, it can be concluded that Batam people do not forget their history.

Much of the history of local Batam is still missing. However, from the location of the Chinese temples we can understand a little more about the past of Batam. Clearly it was not under firm local control as it was not a kingdom, as the Chinese were free to choose where they settled and where they built their temples. It assumed that the Chinese visited Batam because it was located near trading activity, and a safe haven from bad weather and pirates. Thus this location could have then become a silent trading place where the merchants met the producers from Sumatra and other places in Asia before reaching the major trading centre of Malacca.

Conclusion

The difference in the commercial functions of Cirebon and Batam influenced the spread of Chinese in those places. In Cirebon, a the Complex Entrepots--Chinese were located in a Chinese settlement called Pecinan, near the market and Kraton, however in Batam—a Direct trading sites—Chinese lives spread in the island. Yet any analysis of trading activities must also take account of the reality that trading is not just confined to the exchange of goods but also involves and influences culture (Nayati 2005; Nayati 2009). The different types of trading sites between Batam and Cirebon seems affected to the development of traders—especially the Chinese.

People now living in Batam and Cirebon are often not aware of the richness of their own history and culture. Knowledge merely about their local culture and the role of their local histories provides only an inadequate understanding of their true culture. As people who live in coastal areas, the inhabitants of Batam and Cirebon are largely unaware of the significance of their location in relation to both land and sea. Yet it should be the role of education to make people aware that their local histories are developed and influenced from both land and other resources from the sea, and vice versa. However, their culture and histories are not complete as much information could still be hidden under the land surface and underwater. The findings of recent archaeological and historical data should be anticipated in augmenting the riches of the past, local, national, and international, as local history is strongly correlated with world history, especially in relation to trading activity. This data does not always come exclusively from researchers but should, where possible, involve the local community. Therefore, researchers – especially in Indonesia - have a duty to

inform the communities who live surrounding the historical sites about their findings so the local people will better appreciate the importance of their own past for the wider world.

Archaeological findings from shipwrecks both in Batam and Cirebon can fill out their local history. Ceramics from the shipwreck in Cirebon dated on the 10th century, nonetheless, there are ceramics in Cirebon—including on the wall—are dated on the 15th onwards. Moreover the historical data of Islamic kingdom of Cirebon is dated on the 15th century. So, the artifacts and the ships are not only data for the shipwreck itself but raise wider issues such as where did the ships come from, what kinds of artifacts were found in the wrecks, how accurately is the dating of the artifacts and ships, and then those shipwreck data should be related with the situation on the land, in this case the island of Batam and the kingdom of Cirebon.

Data from shipwrecks is not extensive, but it can help in filling in the local history of the nearby land area. It is important for gaining a better understanding of the local people's role (and their ancestors' roles) in the wider world. Each place in the world is intertwined and inter-correlated. Why should we think our place is better than others if their lives and cultures, like ours, have been supported and developed in conjunction with other cultures (including other commodities)?

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