

Moloku Kie Raha Community and Their Old Manuscript Heritage

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Abstract: Moloku Kie Raha is a term to call four sovereigns in Maluku, also called *kolano*: Ternate, Tidore, Bacan, and Jailolo. As one of the most important point of shipping route during ‘silk road’ period, the presence of foreign people (Javanese, Chinese, Arab, and European) during 14th – 17th century who came bringing their own culture and language, and also interacting with local people, helped shaping the local writings. The objective of this research is to take data, preserve, and inform the existence and to know the view of Moloku Kie Raha society about their heritage of ancient manuscripts. This research is a codicological-anthropologic. It means that the old manuscripts will be reviewed codicologically, and the community as the owners will be approached anthropologically. The results of this research are to digitalize and make a list of the manuscripts and information about the view of its society.

Keywords: moloku kie raha, kolano, old manuscripts, philology, codicology.

1. Introduction

Maluku is an archipelago in the eastern part of Indonesia consisting of thousands of islands. The word Maluku basically comes from the word used by Arab traders to call that area as *jazirat al Muluk*, which means a country with many kings (Ricklefs, 1993: 24). Atjo (2009) and Amal (2010) state that what is called by Maluku at first was only the islands producing cloves, namely the islands located on the western part of Halmahera Island, which are Ternate, Tidore, Moti, Makian, and Bacan, whereas Muridan Widjojo (2013: 11) explains that the word Maluku comes from the word ‘Molucos’ used by the Portuguese to refer to five small islands: Ternate, Tidore, Mortir, Makian, and Kayoa. Currently, what is called as the Maluku Province is almost all islands located in the Eastern Part of Indonesia.

In *Ensiklopedi Indonesia* (Encyclopaedia of Indonesia, p. 2118), there is a traditional expression known in Maluku, which is *Moloku Kie Raha*. This expression is to refer to four area rulers (*kolano*) consisting of Ternate, Tidore, Bacan, and Jailolo. According to the local community, these four rulers, *kolano*, are siblings because they are the descendants of Jafar Shidik, a Javanese *ulama*, a religious figure, coming to Ternate in 1250 M/AD and marrying a Ternate princess. In his book entitled *Moloku Kie Raha dalam Perspektif Budaya dan Sejarah Masuknya Islam*, Ridwan Daro (2005) discusses Islamization in the area of Moloku Kie Raha. Out of these four *kolano*, according to Ricklefs (1993) and Poesponegoro (1990), the one that has a special place in the eyes of the world is Ternate because since the 14th century to the middle of the 17th century Ternate was already glorious in the international trading world, as a port city and the producer of spices. In the 16th century, the traders and travelers gathering in the cafes in Venice already talked about that island of spices.

Therefore, the European attempted to seek for the Maluku archipelago as the spice center. In 1512, Portuguese managed to become the first foreigners landing on the area of Maluku, particularly Ternate, Ambon, and Banda. Actually, long before the arrival of the Europeans to Maluku, the Javanese people had already made a contact with the people of Ternate. In *Negarakeragama*, the Javanese manuscript written in 1365 M/AD, the name Ternate was already mentioned as part of the ‘Maloko’ archipelago area. Hence, it can be assured that in the 14th century Ternate was already visited by the ships from Java Island (Christommy, 2004: 168).



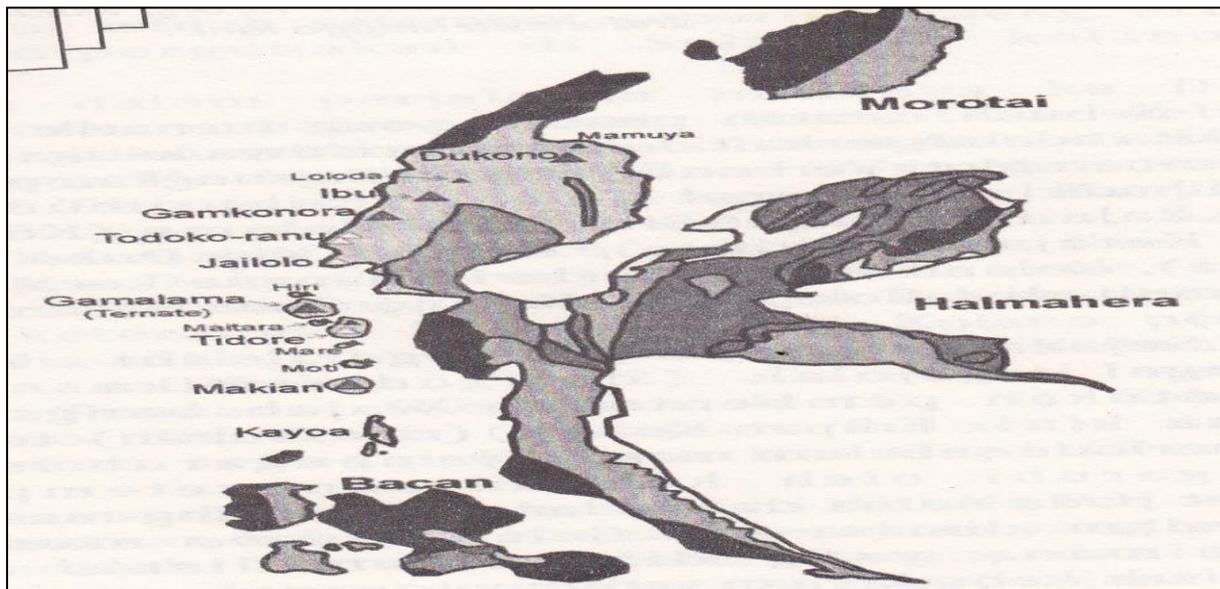


Figure 1: Research Location (Moloku Kie Raha)

As a crucial point in the maritime routes in the ‘silky road’ era, the presence of the Javanese, Chinese, Arabs, and Europeans in the 14th-17th centuries came and brought writing and languages in the interaction with the local culture so that this gave birth to the emergence of the local writing culture, one of whose products is ancient manuscripts. As stated by the clerk of the Ternate sultanate that since a long time ago, a palace had been a scriptorium, a place of writing and copying ancient manuscripts, such as *hikayat* (legends or stories), agreements, political documents, family tree, and folk tales related to the sultanate. Based on these things, several questions are asked: where are the ancient manuscripts of Moloku Kie Raha now and what is its content? Considering that nowadays many people no longer understand about ancient manuscripts, how is the view of the people of Moloku Kie Raha on their ancestors’ heritage?

From the review of various literature sources, many studies on Moloku Kie Raha are in connection with Islamization and its history. Among others are the writings written by Pudjiastuti (1997: 152) in *Ternate sebagai bandar di jalur sutra. Kumpulan makalah diskusi* which explains that Islamization in Ternate happened in the second half of the 14th century during the ruling period of the 12th King, Molomateya, but Ternate just became an Islamic kingdom during the period of King Muhrum that ruled the country from 1465 to 1486. The glory of Ternate as an Islamic kingdom had sufficient influence in political, cultural, and trading aspects and it also produced several pieces of writing, such as *Portugis di Ternate. Rangkaian Peristiwa dan Peperangan* (Atjo, 2009), *Ajaran Moral Adat dan Budaya Orang Ternate* (Ridwan Daro, 2015), and *Ternate, de Molukken en de Indonesische Archipel* (van Fraassen, 1987).

Besides about Ternate, the writing on *kolano* Tidore, Bacan, and Jailolo is, among others, *Pemberontakan Nuku Persekutuan Lintas Budaya di Maluku-Papua sekitar 1780-1810* (Muridan Widjojo, 2013), *Ternate dan Tidore: Masa Lalu Penuh Gejolak* (Hannah & Des Alwi, 1996), *Kesultanan Bacan dalam Sejarah* (Kamarullah, 2015), *Bacan and the early of North Maluku* (Lapian, 1994), *Masyarakat Halmahera dan Raja Jailolo studi tentang sejarah masyarakat Maluku Utara* (Leirissa, 1990), and “Sultan Jailolo: Melengkapi Kesempurnaan Moloku Kie Raha” in the book of *Moloku Kie Raha dalam Perspektif Budaya dan Sejarah Masuknya Islam* (Hidayatullah, 2005) and “Kesultanan Jailolo Sebagai Mata Rantai. Empat Kesultanan Besar Moloku Kie Raha dalam Membina Umat Manusia ke depan Melalui Pendekatan Adat, Budaya, dan Bangsa” in *Membina Umat Manusia ke depan Melalui Pendekatan Adat, Budaya, dan Bangsa*, written by Ridwan Daro (2005).

However, there are only two researches on old manuscripts of Moloku Kie Rah, two writings on Ternate old manuscripts. First, Mujizah (2014) discusses the letters of King Ternate, Abulhayat 2, and the letters of agreement of Ternate-the Netherlands as the collection of Perpustakaan RI and ANRI. His writing is entitled "Ternate, Perjanjian dan Belenggu masa lalu." Second, Priscila F. Limbong (2016) reviews the manuscripts of Ternate laws. Her research result is in a form of her dissertation entitled *Undang-Undang Ternate. Edisi Teks dan Wacana Kolonial abad XX*. Based on that, it can be discovered that the old manuscripts of Moloku Kie Raha have not been studied a great deal so this research is a breakthrough in the Indonesian Archipelago manuscript world. Along with the research problems aforementioned, the purposes of this research are to inform the existence of the old manuscripts of Moloku Kie Raha and to reveal their content so it can be discovered and researched further by public and scientific communities. In addition, it is also to discover the perspective of the community of Moloku Kie Raha nowadays on the old manuscripts of their ancestors. This research is codicological and anthropological because those old manuscripts of Moloku Kie Raha will be approached codicologically and anthropologically. It means that the old manuscripts will be reviewed codicologically, and the community as the owners will be approached anthropologically. The following is the explanation of the application of both approaches.

2. Old Manuscripts of Moloku Kie Raha

The exploration of the old manuscripts of Moloku Kie Raha was carried out in four *kolano*, namely Ternate, Tidore, Bacan, and Jailolo. The research was conducted by applying the codicological approach focusing on the physical appearance of the manuscripts. From this research, 67 old manuscripts of Moloku Kie Raha kept by 12 owners having a profession as the *imam* of a *masjid* (a mosque) and as *jogugu* (the prime minister of Tidore Sultanate) were managed to be recorded and digitalized.

The content of the manuscript quite varies, among others on *hikayat*, law, *tarekat* (method), handwritten al-Quran, *fiqih* (understanding), *khutbah* (preaches), prayers, dhikr (*zirk*), literature, *levo-levo* (charm), law of inheritance (*faraid*), *ratib* (continuous religious ritual), history, family tree, and astrology. The manuscript material mostly European paper coming from the 18th and 19th centuries, although there are also several manuscripts used blank paper and lined book paper. The condition of the manuscripts is mostly not good and is really apprehensive because they have not been maintained, they do not have covers, they are not complete, dirty, and moist. The thickness of the manuscripts varies; some can reach hundreds of pages, but some consist of one page only, like a letter and *levo-levo*. The texts were written in two kinds of alphabets, namely Arabic and *Jawi* (the Arabic-Malay alphabets) in Arabic and Malay languages. Most texts are arranged in a prose form, and only one text is written in verse (*syair debus*). The ink used to write the texts is mostly black, even though there are some texts also in brown or blue ink. The illumination on the manuscripts can only be found on two Quran manuscripts belonging to Ternate and Tidore *kedaton* (palace), in a form of *wedana* which is put on the front of the manuscript page, in a form of a beautiful and colourful tendril flower picture, while the illustration in a form of an animal or person picture is found on the *levo-levo* manuscripts.

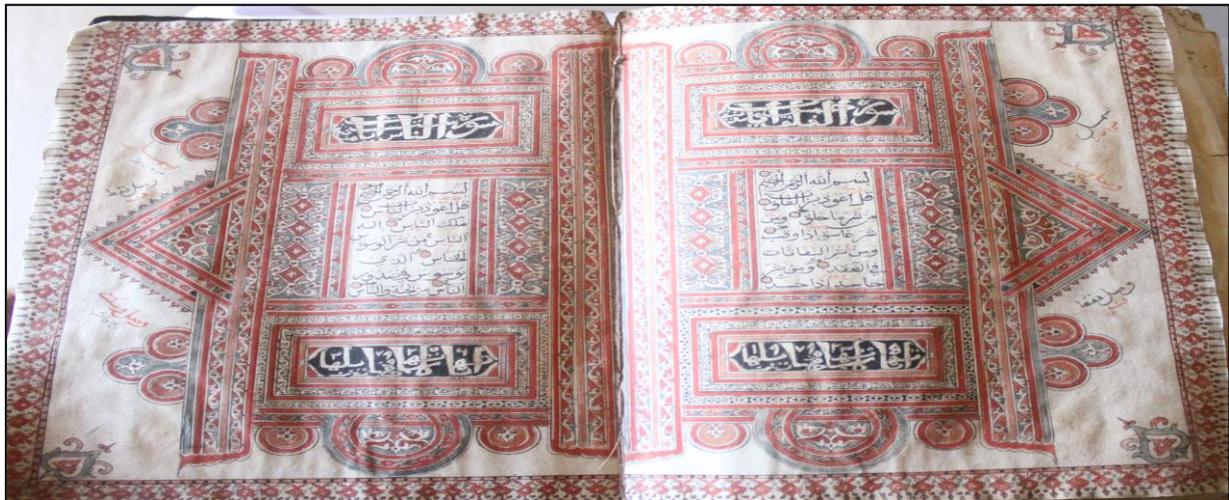


Figure 2: Hand written Quran, Ternate Palace Collection.

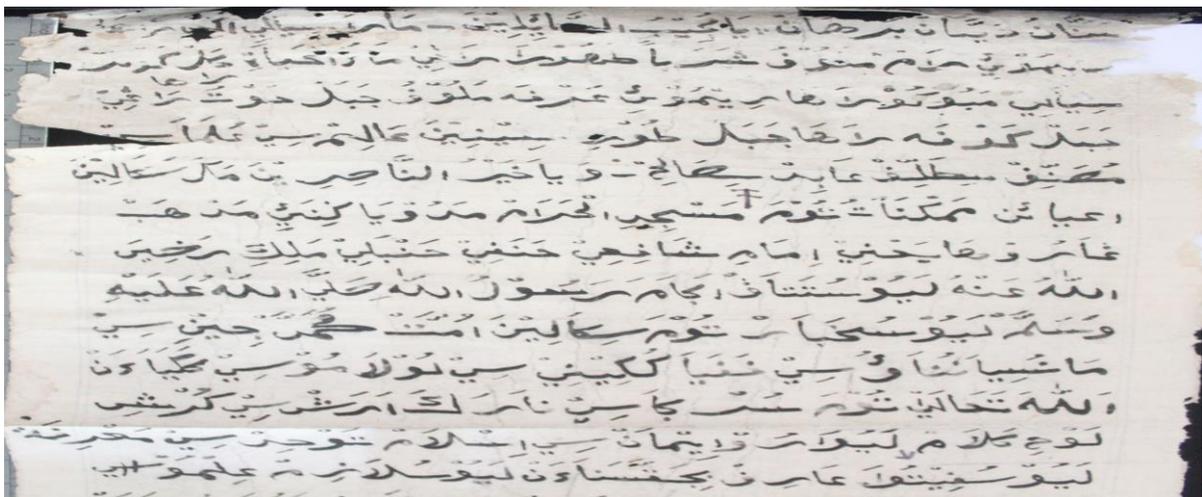


Figure 3: Rotulus manuscripts: Khutbah Idul Fitri, Fala Ijo Collection, Tidore.

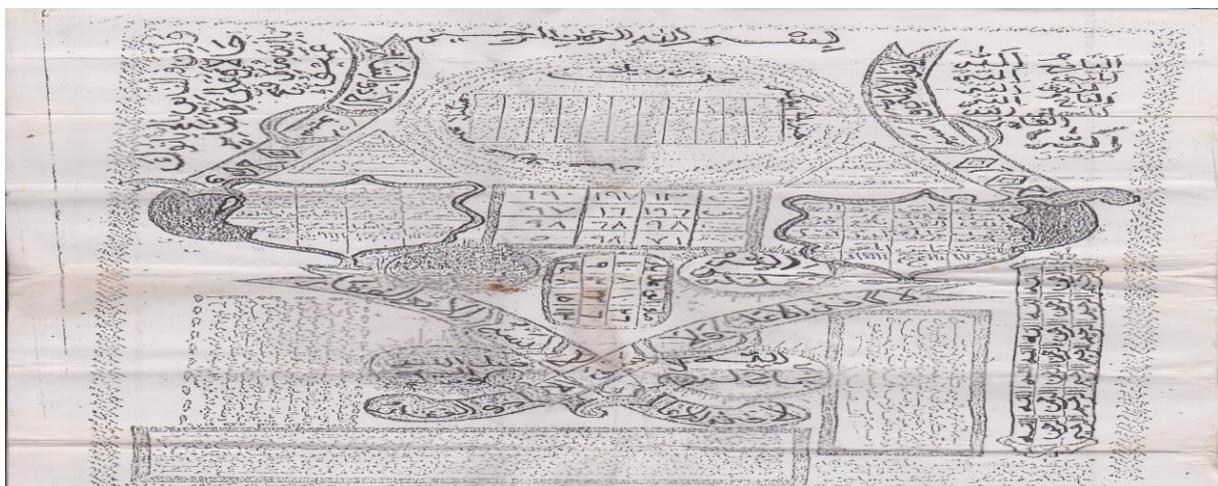


Figure 4: levo-levo Sangaji Gamkorona, collection of Jailolo.

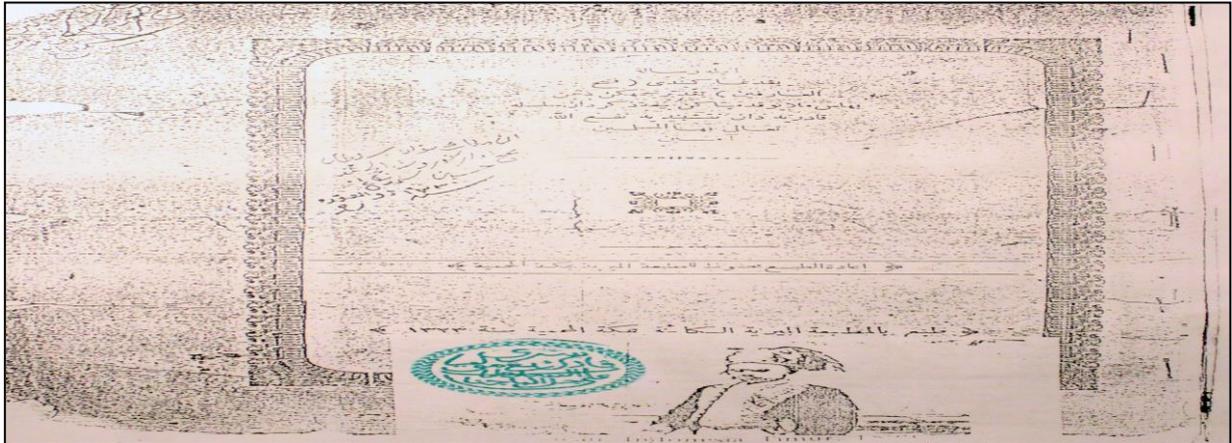


Figure 5: Dzikir manuscript, Tufail collection, Bacan.

3. The Perspective of the Community of Moloku Kie Raha on the Old Manuscripts

To discover the perspective of the community of Moloku Kie Raha on the old manuscripts that are the heritage of their ancestors, a number of community members living in the area of Moloku Kie Raha were interviewed and their behaviour were observed. The community members interviewed are the owners of the manuscripts and they were at least 50 years old at that time. The interview results are as follows:

3.1. Closed Mind

During the research in Ternate and Bacan, there was an impression that the manuscript owners were reluctant to inform the existence of their old manuscripts to be recorded and digitized. There were two reasons why they were not open towards the manuscripts. First, they did not dare to let the manuscripts out because they were afraid those manuscripts would be ‘harmed’. Second, they said that their knowledge could only be inherited from one generation to another orally so there would not be any written evidence.

3.2. Open mind

The opposite from what happened in Ternate and Bacan is that the owners of the manuscripts and the source persons in Tidore and Jailolo were very open. They understand the importance of preserving the manuscripts/ documents/ archives as the medium of historical and ancient cultural evidence of their ancestors. Therefore, besides giving permission for their collection to be recorded and digitized, they also told us all the owners of the manuscripts in Tidore and Jailolo.

4. Conclusion

From the research in the field, it can be discovered that there are numbers of old manuscripts of Moloku Kie Raha, more than the number which has been recorded. However, the recording of the data could not be conducted maximally due to many damaged manuscripts, such as being torn, not having covers, not in order and protruding pages, fading ink so that the texts cannot be read, being dirty and moist. Considering that the text content is diverse and there has been little research on the old manuscripts of Moloku Kie Raha, the researchers of manuscripts and ancient culture are needed to review those manuscripts. Thus, the texts written by their ancestors can be understood and taken advantage by the present community of Moloku Kie Raha. In connection to the point of view of the community of Moloku Kie Raha on the old manuscripts of their ancestors’ heritage, either the closed or the open mind, all depend on their understanding and knowledge on the importance of manuscript preservation for the next generations.

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