

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF HYBRIDIZATION
IN BANTENESE AND DUTCH COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS:
FOOD AND FOODWAYS IN THE
SULTANATE OF BANTEN, JAVA, 17TH-EARLY 19TH CENTURY**

ABSTRACT

The constant mutability of cultures as they meet and mix provides an ongoing laboratory in which to explore human dynamics. In this dissertation, I analyze the process and results of one indigenous-colonial encounter in Dutch Indonesia, using archaeological evidence from Banten, Java that illuminates interactions between Bantenese elites and Dutch East India Company (VOC) soldiers in the 17th to early 19th century. Banten, a global trade center and the focal point of Dutch expansion in Asia, had a cosmopolitan and multinational society of long standing, already apparent when the Dutch arrived in 1596. My research shows that a kind of “reverse” colonialism occurred here. Bantenese cultural influences penetrated more deeply into Dutch culture than the other way around, so that colonial Dutch culture took on a new, hybridized identity.

Utensils and vessels necessary for preparing and serving meals from excavations in the indigenous Sultan’s Surosowan Palace, its surrounding Fort Diamond manned by VOC soldiers, and the Dutch headquarters at Fort Speelwijk provide the evidence. Petrographic and archaeological study indicate that the Dutch used locally produced Bantenese-style cooking vessels and lids, rather than import European tripod pots to accommodate their traditional open-fire cooking. Local Banten continued to use cooking

stoves without tripod vessels, maintaining their culinary habits. VOC archives revealed a change in Dutch staple food from bread to rice. Hired male cooks and local women who prepared home meals (as wives and concubines) acted as cultural conduits, while vibrant local manufacturing and trade made local goods readily available. Thus Dutch cooking became hybridized with locally available vessels and ingredients.

The Banten results differed from the Dutch Cape Colony in South Africa but were similar to the Dejima trading post in Japan where the Dutch relied on local products. I conclude that proximity and daily interactions with the host society were crucial for shaping Dutch responses to the new environments and creating hybrid culture, instead of replicating their homeland. This study places Banten on the global map of cross-cultural interactions and colonial discourse; I hope to stimulate other researchers to test my hypotheses and build on these interpretations.