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Changing Settlement Patterns in East Sumba, Indonesia: From a Historical Anthropological Perspective

KOIKE Makoto

Abstract

This study examines the historical transformation of settlement patterns in East Sumba, Indonesia, integrating Dutch colonial sources with ethnographic findings from a historical anthropological perspective. Focusing on the construction and decline of fortified settlements (*paraingu*), this study explores the ways in which ecological conditions, intergroup conflicts, colonial forces, and indigenous rituals have shaped Sumbanese settlement systems. Archaeological evidence indicates that the earliest Sumbanese settlements were located in ecologically favorable environments near estuaries and rivers. These locations were advantageous for both intra- and inter-island trade. Over time, increasing population pressure and intensified conflicts led to the relocation of settlements to defensible hilltop locations. These fortified settlements, which were widely observed across the islands of Wallacea, were residential and ritual centers that prioritized security over everyday convenience. Since the sixteenth century, the arrival of European powers has intensified violence from external forces, particularly slave raids, throughout the islands. Dutch historical accounts portray the change in settlement patterns in East Sumba from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. During the colonial period, a dual settlement system emerged: a central village (*paraingu*) functioned as a political and ceremonial center, while daily life during the rainy season took place in dispersed hamlets (*kotaku*) and garden huts (*uma la oka*), which were located in more productive environments. Ethnographic research on Parai Wunga (the central village of Wunga) illustrates this settlement pattern and its transformation. Parai Wunga continued to serve as a ritual center where major ceremonies were performed during the dry season. However, since the 1980s, economic constraints, Christianization, and the decline of ritual participation have led to the gradual abandonment

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of Parai Wunga. The historical trajectory of settlement patterns in East Sumba reveals a shift from ecologically adaptive habitation to defensive fortification and back again to ecologically and economically adapted settlements. This transformation highlights the significance of viewing settlements as historically contingent systems influenced by broader sociocultural and political factors.

1 Introduction

My previous paper, "Introduction to the Ethnohistory of Sumba, Eastern Indonesia: The Oral Traditions and the Anthropological Findings," written in Japanese (Koike 2024), discussed when and where the ancestors of the Sumbanese landed, as well as how they spread across the island. After settling near estuaries and along rivers suitable for food production and trade, the early Sumbanese were followed by local rulers who built fortified settlements on hilltops due to population growth and fierce conflicts between villages. The need for fortification grew even greater when raiders from other islands began to attack coastal settlements. Focusing on the construction and abandonment of *paraingu* (central villages), I aim to elucidate changes in settlement patterns using Dutch historical sources. Subsequently, based on the findings of my own research in East Sumba, I will clarify the significance of *paraingu* as ceremonial centers. From a historical anthropological perspective, I intend to integrate Dutch historical sources with my ethnographic findings.

The island of Sumba is administratively divided into four regencies (kabupaten in Indonesian) of the East Nusa Tenggara Province located in eastern Indonesia. The regency of East Sumba is mostly dry and hilly land and is one of the most sparsely populated and impoverished regions in Indonesia. Irrigated rice fields are found only in a few areas of East Sumba, and maize and cassava are the important subsistence crops. Apart from dryland cultivation, the main economic activity of the Sumbanese is the breeding of cattle and horses, which are particularly important in ceremonial exchanges. I carried out an anthropological fieldwork in East Sumba, especially, the central village of Wunga (Parai Wunga) from 1985 to 1988. The village is located about 10 km inland from the Cape Haharu in the north central Sumba. According to the local histories which are generally told in Sumba, Haharu is the famous landing place of the mythical ancestors of the Sumbanese.

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Local Societies of East Nusa Tenggara,” which was funded by the same project. The two participants from Sumba, Rambu L. K. R. Nugrohowardhani and Stepanus Makambombu, discussed agricultural problems faced by the present Sumbanese society and the importance of indigenous knowledge to solve them (Koike and Morita (eds) 2025). Clearly, Sumbanese indigenous knowledge is deeply intertwined with customs (*huri* in Kambera¹⁾ and adat in Indonesian) and beliefs in *marapu* (deified ancestors), both of which have been cultivated throughout the Sumbanese people’s long history. Understanding the historical background of settlement patterns is essential for addressing the themes of Sumbanese customs and beliefs.

2 Outline of the Early History of Sumba

Due to space limitations, I will provide a concise history of Sumba spanning over two thousand years, from the arrival of the early Sumbanese to the Dutch colonial period. I will only address the factors that significantly affected the settlement pattern.

An archaeologist, P. Bellwood, paints a grand picture of human history as follows. “Genes, language, and culture,” that is, “Asians,” Austronesian languages, and Neolithic agricultural techniques, spread almost as a single entity from Taiwan to the islands of Southeast Asia and further west to Madagascar in Africa and east to Easter Island in the South Pacific (Bellwood 2017: 86; Bellwood 2022: 269–270).

A research team led by an anthropologist, J. S. Lansing, published a paper titled “Coevolution of Languages and Genes on the Island of Sumba, Eastern Indonesia (Lansing et al. 2007),” to elucidate when and where the early Sumbanese arrived at the island and how the linguistic and genetic diversity was formed over Sumba.

Broader regional studies support the initial settlement of Southeast Asia/Oceania by foraging societies by 40,000 to 45,000 BP. Languages of the geographically expansive Austronesian family occupy much of the Indonesian archipelago, except in far eastern Indonesia, where diverse and unrelated Papuan languages dominate. Recent syntheses place the Neolithic transition, considered to mark the arrival of Austronesian colonists in the vicinity of Sumba, at between 4,000 and 3,500 years ago. At that time, small numbers of farmers speaking an Austronesian language likely came into contact with an indigenous population of foragers speaking aboriginal [non-Austronesian] languages

1) Kambera is the language spoken generally in East Sumba, but there are some local dialects including the Haharu dialect.

(Lansing et al. 2007: 16022; [] is my incertion).

The paper hypothesizes that, after settling near Wunga, the ancestral Austronesian population on Sumba moved southward and then expanded across the island. Moreover, it discusses that “Given the linguistic and genetic picture detailed previously, we hypothesize that this expansion must have involved a high degree of contact and intermarriage with the aboriginal population in successive stages” (Lansing et al. 2007: 16025). It insists that the research result is concordant with oral history suggesting an origin near the village of Wunga. The source referred is a book written by an anthropologist, J. Hoskins (1993) who did a research in Kodi, West Sumba. “All West Sumbanese trace their descent from the ancestors who landed at Sasar, with the exception of the few hundred descendants of an earlier population, called the “Lombo” people in Laura and the “Karendi” in Balaghar” (Hoskins 1993: 32). It is certain that the Cape Haharu (Sasar) plays a special role in the Sumbanese mythological world. Moreover, considering where the ancestors of the Sumbanese came from, the most likely possibility is the Flores Island. The Cape Haharu is the closest point to Nanga Bere, West Manggarai of Flores (only about 44 km in a straight line) and serves as a landmark for those sailing across the Savu Sea²⁾. However, it must be considered whether all the ancestors of the Sumbanese landed around the Cape Haharu (possibly at the mouth of the Kadahang River), or whether some groups continued sailing and dispersed along the north coast areas. My investigation of various versions of the Sumbanese origin myths suggests that Haharu area is one of several landing sites of the early Sumbanese (Koike 2024).

The research results by Lansing et al. (2007) discuss the migration of the Sumbanese based on molecular anthropology and linguistic analysis, completely ignoring the recent advances in archaeological excavations on Sumba. It is necessary to examine the ecological environment and way of life of the early Sumbanese based on the latest research findings by the Indonesian archaeologists. The two articles written by Handini et al. (2018, 2023) show that the Melolo and Lambanapu sites in the coastal areas of northeastern Sumba were likely to be the earliest settlements established by the Sumbanese before spreading across Sumba³⁾. The Melolo site located in the Umalulu sub-regency was first investigated

2) Considering the linguistic affinity between the Bima language spoken in eastern Sumbawa and the Sumbanese languages (Gasser 2014), it is possible to hypothesize that the ancestors of the Sumbanese migrated eastward from Sumbawa along the southern coast of Flores, then turned south to reach Sumba. Current research findings cannot provide a definitive conclusion regarding the origin of the Sumbanese ancestors.

3) Though Handini et al. (2023) refers to the site of Mborobakung (usually pronounced Mburu

in the 1920s, which is known for its jar burial site (Bellwood 2017: 329). Meanwhile, the Lambanapu site located near the city of Waingapu has been researched since the 1980s (Handini et al. 2018). The two sites are located not far from the rivers, which is important considering the early history of the Sumbanese. “The Lambanapu and Melolo sites are very likely the early settlements before later generations spread to other areas of Sumba. The distribution that took place over time eventually made the entire island area inhabited as we see it now” (Handini et al. 2023: 5). This statement is supported by the result of dating chronology: a human bone fragment in the context of the jar graves at the Melolo site dated 3141–2782 cal (calibrated age) BP and organic soil samples from the Lambanapu site dated 2700–2352 cal BP (Handini et al. 2023: 5).

Three important findings from the investigation at the two sites, especially Lambanapu, are crucial for understanding the early history of the Sumbanese (Handini et al. 2018, 2023). Firstly, “a high degree of contact and intermarriage with the aboriginal population” stated by Lansing et al. (2007: 16025) is supported by the archaeological finding that “the skeletons at the Lambanapu and Melolo sites have a Mongolid character mixed with Australomelanesid” (Handini et al. 2023: 7). Secondly, the ancestors of the Sumbanese who lived in Lambanapu inhabited an ecological environment where they could easily obtain not only land-based resources but also marine resources. This is also evident from the discovery of sea shells along with terrestrial fauna remains at the site (Handini et al. 2018: 76). Thirdly, the presence of beads (*manik-manik* in Indonesian) and metal objects found as grave goods at the Lambanapu site indicates that these items were acquired through maritime trade. Within the Archipelago (*Nusantara* in Indonesian), Sumba seems isolated, yet as early as around 2,000 years ago, the Sumbanese had already acquired numerous goods through trade networks with the outside world (Handini et al. 2018: 76–79).

The conclusion of the paper states as follows:

The early inhabitants of Sumba Island chose the location for their dwelling and burial sites, which were in a valley with a river or on the edge of the sea, of course, considered wisely. Apart from promising a suitable living environment with good food sources, the

Mbaku in Wunga) near the Kadahang river, no research findings are discussed. In an interview, Handini told “The Lambanapu site was inhabited around 2,600 years ago. Meanwhile, the Mborombaku site is relatively younger, dating back to around 1,300 BP” (originally in Indonesian). And her team discovered Fujian celadon ceramics from the Yuan Dynasty dating to the thirteenth century.

Retrieved from <https://www.brin.go.id/news/119632/brin-ungkap-pulau-sumba-dihuni-manusia-sejak-2800-tahun-lalu>

position of these sites is strategic for establishing relationships with other communities in other places, including outside the island and inland. The relationship with the outside world is evidenced by the influence of metal culture, including megalithic elements, which were getting stronger at that time. The findings of early metal artifacts found in the context of tomb traditions that had developed in the past prove that the neolithic culture on the island was continuous with the paleometallic (early metal) culture (Handini et al. 2023: 11).

As the aforementioned archaeological research results (Handini et al., 2018, 2023) revealed, the earliest Sumbanese settlements were located near river mouths or along rivers, including the Melolo and Lambanapu sites, and were considered relatively suitable living environments. These locations were advantageous not only for intra-island trade, but also for trade with other islands. However, establishing main settlements in easily accessible areas likely made them vulnerable to attack. Though the exact time cannot be determined, local rulers began building their fortified settlements on hilltops and in other inaccessible areas. To understand the emergence of these settlements, we must examine fortification in a broader context.

3 Fortification in Wallacea

Forts and Fortifications in Wallacea (O'Connor, McWilliam, and Brockwell 2020) is a volume that focuses on the widespread fortified settlements throughout the Wallacean islands, from Timor-Leste to South Sulawesi. It discusses the main factors of initial fortification building from archaeological and ethnohistorical perspectives. The results of the investigation are indispensable for discussions about fortifications in East Sumba. First, the authors define “fortified settlements” as follows:

In discussing the concept of ‘fortified settlements’, we are referring in the main to strategically located, piled stone structures within a broadly similar set of constituent and locational characteristics (see Lape 2006). Most of the fortified settlements we have observed are located in inaccessible places: on hilltops or cliff sites with precipitous drop-offs on one or more sides and masked by dense vegetation. Sections of the forts typically feature massive stone walls up to 4 m high and 1 m thick, which demarcate the defensive perimeters of the structures. From an archaeological perspective, these steeply incised crags look uninviting for human habitation, and lack in situ water

sources and arable land where crops might be cultivated (O'Connor, McWilliam and Brockwell 2020: 1).

These characteristics they describe above are almost common to those of the fortified settlements (*paraingu*) in East Sumba I discuss in the following sections. The volume includes abundant research results of fortification in Wallacea including Timor-Leste, islands of southern Maluku, Sumba, South Sulawesi, and Buton and Wakatobi Islands in Southeast Sulawesi. I focus on the fortified settlement of Macapainara in the far eastern district of Lautem, Timor-Leste to discuss the archaeological findings of fortification in greater detail (O'Connor et al. 2020a).

The Macapainara site located 175 m above sea level and approximately 2 km in from the northern coastline is an extensive fortified settlement complex. Although the settlement is no longer occupied, families living in the coastal village of Com identify it as their ancestral homeland. Excavations were carried out within the walls in order to assess the nature and chronology of occupation in 2008 (O'Connor et al. 2020a: 13). The research presents valuable data to discuss fortification.

Our survey and excavation results from Macapainara indicate that the fortified structure was occupied for domestic living and was also the site of ritual and symbolic activities. Oral accounts of the ethnohistories of the area indicate that a significant population formerly lived within the settlement. Certainly, the diversity and quantity of earthenware and tradeware suggests cooking and consumption of food and the storage of perishables and water. [...]

Based on current evidence from the radiocarbon dates, Macapainara was occupied during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries AD. Most of the glass, glass beads and tradewares can also be dated to this period, although the tradewares would also allow for initial occupation as early as the sixteenth century. The sixteenth to nineteenth centuries coincide with the advent and expansion of European colonial activities in the region, and mesh well with local *ratu*⁴⁾ oral history which recounts the occupation at Macapainara as a time when local raiding was rife and they were engaged in slaving and the sandalwood trade (O'Connor et al. 2020a: 39).

This statement regards the fortified settlement as not only a living space but also a

4) The Fataluku community living in Lautem are speaking non-Austronesian language. The word *ratu* means "clan, ruler" in Fataluku and is actually Austronesian in origin (Heston 2023: 8).

ritual center. Inside the settlements, there exists several graves where the villagers of Com regularly visit to perform rituals. This ceremonial character of the settlements is common to the fortification in East Sumba. However, as the last sentence of the above quotation indicates, considering the historical backgrounds of fortification, many researchers link the construction of defensive settlements to intergroup conflict.

In 2008, archaeologists Peter Lape and C.-Y. Chao proposed a climate change model to account for the emergence of fortified settlements. They argue that during the late Holocene (post-AD 1000), processes of fortification were driven by severe and rapid climatic events associated with the El Niño Southern Oscillation effect. People built forts to protect themselves against others who were suffering food shortages (McWilliam 2020: 135). Against this model, McWilliam has proposed a sociohistorical model based on the multidisciplinary investigations. His conclusion is as follows:

But we do not see evidence that these environmental stress factors are causally implicated in the emergence of fortified stone structures in Timor. To the contrary, the weight of evidence points to an enthusiastic process of defensive fortification emerging in eastern Timor well after the high point of the great El Niño warming that had peaked by the beginning of the fifteenth century (AD 1400). The drivers of that later process, I propose, were fundamentally social ones and intimately linked with the transformative changes that accompanied the advent of European colonialism and the development of aggressive Muslim maritime trade in the eastern Indonesian archipelago. Guns, sandalwood, slaves and new forms of sustenance provided a novel and potent mix created by globalised mercantile forces that combined to produce a social climate fostering conflict and favouring defensive residence. I do not discount the possibility that climatic factors may have contributed to these pressures, and future archaeological and ethnohistorical investigations will seek to expand the available evidence in this regard, but to date the weight of argument looks to be in favour of social drivers (McWilliam 2020: 149).

I agree with McWilliam's model. Sumba actually experienced terrible intergroup conflicts and slave raids between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. However, it is plausible that Sumbanese local rulers initiated the construction of fortified settlements prior to the arrival of European colonialists. Historical linguist A. Schapper discusses fortified settlements that were widespread in southern Maluku from historical and linguistic perspectives, and makes a very important point:

The villages fortified by these stone walls existed within the context of a highly fragmented political landscape in which the many small polities were in a state of near perpetual warfare with one another. The protecting stone walls occupied an important place in society, offering substantial protection against indigenous forces (Schapper 2020: 237).

My hypothesis is that the construction of fortified settlements across Wallacea was not driven by specific external factors. Instead, internal factors, such as land disputes and conflicts over livestock theft, which existed before the arrival of the Portuguese and Dutch, led to violent clashes. As a result, settlements moved from favorable riverfront locations to inaccessible places, such as hilltops and cliff sites, where fortifications were built. Even settlements with enhanced defensive elements served as living spaces and ritual centers. Since the sixteenth century, the arrival of European ships had intensified violence from external forces, especially slave raids throughout the islands including Sumba. This likely led to the construction of larger, more fortified settlements in more inaccessible locations. In the following sections, I will focus on the historical changes in fortifications in East Sumba.

4 History of Fortification in East Sumba

After the general discussions on fortification in Wallacea, I will address some cases of fortification that existed in East Sumba. In West Sumba, many fortified settlements remain on hilltops or cliffs where ancestral houses are built and calendrical ceremonies are held every year. Though a joint team from The Australian National University and the Universitas Gadjah Mada surveyed six fortified sites in West Sumba in 2009, only brief descriptions were reported (O'Connor et al., 2020b: 250–253). In contrast, most of the fortified settlements (*paraingu*) in East Sumba have been abandoned. Since no archaeological research has been conducted on these sites, the only reliable data concerning fortification are Dutch historical materials, oral histories compiled by Kapita (1976a, 1976b), and the anthropological report by Forth (1981).

First, I write a historical background of the island of Sumba since the European contact. Compared to neighboring islands such as Timor, Sumba has been relatively unaffected by overseas trade. According to Fox who discussed ecological change in eastern Indonesia, “Sumba, dubbed the “Sandalwood Island” by European mapmakers, actually had only an inferior supply of this wood and never attracted the trade that Timor did (Fox 1977: 61).” The Dutch first appeared in the area around Sumba in 1613 (Fox 1977: 63), and since then,

they had engaged in a power struggle with the Portuguese mainly based on the island of Timor (Fox 1977: 61-73). Dutch knowledge of Sumba remained limited until the early eighteenth century (Roo van Alderwerelt 1906: 192). The Dutch were slower to establish official relations with the people of Sumba than with the surrounding islands including Timor, Rote, and Savu. In 1751 van der Burgh, the Dutch upper chief (opperhoofd in Dutch) stationed in Kupang on Timor, visited Sumba and concluded contracts with kings of eight native states (de koningen van acht provintiën of landschappen in Dutch) and presented them with flags and canes with the mark of East India Company (VOC). However, the validity of the contracts were questioned (Roo van Alderwerelt 1906: 195-197). In 1756 the first formal contracts were concluded by Paravicini with eight regents (regenten in Dutch) on Sumba (Roo van Alderwerelt 1906: 189-201). The texts were consisting of 30 articles, but its basic principle was to establish the authority of the East India Company in the Timor area, and the signing rulers were obliged to refuse trade with other powers including not only the Portuguese but also Indonesian from other islands (Fox 1977: 7).

The records of the East India Company states that the main commodities exported from Sumba were sandalwood and slaves. According to a report on Sumba in 1759 (Leupe 1879: 225), "it seems that the upper chief (Opperhoofd in Dutch) regarded this island merely as a prime source of slaves for the Company." The slave trade is a crucial issue that cannot be ignored when considering the history of Sumba. The slave trade was primarily conducted by the Makassar-Ende people⁵⁾, who were based in Ende of central Flores. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, despite crackdowns by the Company, they frequently attacked the Sumbanese on the northern coast of Sumba to capture inhabitants. Furthermore, taking advantage of conflicts among Sumba's chiefs, the Makassar-Ende people provided them with military force, muskets, and ammunition in exchange for slaves. Some settled along the coast and consolidated their power. The slave raids were so severe that they actually led to a decline in the population on the northern coastal area. However, with the official prohibition of the slave trade in the Dutch East Indies in 1860 and the consolidation of Dutch rule in the region, finally the slave trade by Makassar-Ende people came to an end by the late nineteenth century (Needham 1983: 20-32).

Kapita, a local historian from East Sumba who had access to both Dutch-language sources and Sumbanese oral histories, described the situation on Sumba from the seventeenth to eighteenth century as follows:

5) Generally, the word "Makassaren" is used in the Dutch sources, but Kapita (1976a, 1976b) refers to them as "Ende." Roo van Alderwerelt (1906: 195-196) regards them as "a mixture of Makassarese and the inhabitants of Flores".

From the Europeans the people of Sumba obtained gunpowder, small cannons and muskets, particularly among the nobility and the wealthy. The presence of these firearms served as a catalyst for wars, *kabihu* (clan) against *kabihu*, *kotaku* (hamlet) against *kotaku*, and *paraingu* (domain) against *paraingu*. Those who lost the war were made into slaves, and others were sold to other places. At the same time, similar events were occurring in Flores, so the people of *Endi-Ambarai*, *Tonggi-Mari* (Ende people) needed to come to Sumba, both to fight the Sumbanese and to serve as mercenaries for the Sumbanese nobility who wished to fight their enemies. It was these people from Flores who became known as the “*Tau Nggundungu*” (Ende Mountain); they were scattered nearly throughout the entire island. They brought slaves from Flores to sell on Sumba, and took slaves from Sumba to sell on Flores, Bima, and as far as Bali.

In the same century, it could almost be said that the entire world was obsessed with buying and selling slaves; the most notorious example in history was the capture and selling of African slaves by Europeans to the Americas. At that time, there was no safety left anywhere on Sumba; villages that had once been scattered were forced to gather within a *paraingu* situated on hilltops with stone fortifications and thick and sharp thorns. Anyone leaving the village had to go in a group fully armed with weapons; even to fetch water required an armed escort (Kapita 1976a: 27–28, originally in Indonesian).

Kapita's description supports McWilliam's sociohistorical model discussed in the previous section. The Sumbanese word *paraingu* appearing in the above citation is a very important concept to understand the social history of Sumba. It means not only a native political unit, which Forth (1981: 3) calls a domain, but also a fortified settlement that forms its sociopolitical and ritual center where ancestral houses (*uma*) of clans (*kabihu*) constituting a domain are built.

Under the Dutch colonial government which started in the early nineteenth century after the company formally dissolved in 1799, in East Sumba existed *paraingu*, which were typical fortified settlements, including Hamba Paraingu (in the present village of Hambapraing, Kanatang sub-regency), Parai Umalulu (in the present Umalulu sub-regency)⁶⁾, Parai Yawangu (in the present Rindi sub-regency) researched by Forth (1981), and Parai Wunga on which I focus in the following section. The earliest ethnographic report on the fortification on Sumba was written by S. Roos (1872), the first Dutch administrator stationed as a

6) Kapita wrote in detail the history and the constituting houses of Parai Umalulu (1976b: 77–174).

controller (controleur in Dutch) on Sumba from 1866 to 1873. He conducted an inspection tour and visited some fortified settlements across Sumba. His report provides the detailed account of Hamba Paraingu:

At the Nanga Mihi River, we turn left and almost immediately climb the mountain, as if we were on a road that can only be described as terrible.

The most common and, I must assume, also the shortest route to Hamba Paraingu (originally Sampareeiigoe) is a footpath with large stones scattered here and there, which are strewn with countless sharp, uneven, and loose small stones. Not only is the climb difficult, but we also have to keep a tight rein on the horses to prevent us from falling. The journey cannot be called pleasant. Trees are scarce. The grass grows between, or rather, on the stones, quite luxuriantly.

At a certain height, one has a view of the sea, which is quite beautiful. The boats (originally prauwen) in the sea seem like toys.

Finally, we arrive at a plain, which is quite extensive, but consists mainly of stony ground; there are not many trees or plants to be seen. Presumably, this plain lies about 650 feet above sea level.

Hamba Paraingu is located at one end of the plain, precisely where deep valleys with steep walls border the plain.

These walls provide the central village (hoofd-negorij in Dutch)⁷⁾ with considerable protection against an enemy invasion, but where natural barriers are insufficient, walls built of loosely stacked large stones, which is more than a man's height and about four feet thick, reinforce the fort.

There is a story connected with this wall, about which I can say no more than that the Raja of Larentuka (eastern Flores) is told to have built it⁸⁾.

In the central village there are 28 large and spacious houses scattered irregularly. Behind the Raja's house are graves, of which only that of the grandfather of the present ruler attracts attention because of its striking size and the little masonry that the Endenese have added to it.

In the village there are about 25 coconut trees, a tamarind tree, and a few sea hibiscus trees (originally waroe).

Outside the central village, about 70 houses are scattered at considerable distances.

In the valleys at the foot of the mountain there are a few maize fields, while at a

7) "hoofd-negorij" refers to *paraingu* in Kambara.

8) Any other oral history of the Raja of Larentuka on Sumba is not available.

considerable distance from the village, a brother of the Raja lives and there are still a few large gardens.

Drinking water is drawn from springs, which requires descending and climbing.

The poor suitability of the soil for cultivation causes both the Raja and many of the people of Taimanu⁹⁾ to live on the beach.

The ruler is named Umbu Nggaba, of whom we have already mentioned under Taimanu.

Two of his brothers, Umbu Buku and Umbu Hina, live in Hamba Paraingu, the former within the central village, the latter outside it.

Umbu Buku, the Raja's representative, is very friendly with the inspector and is often seen in Kambaniru¹⁰⁾.

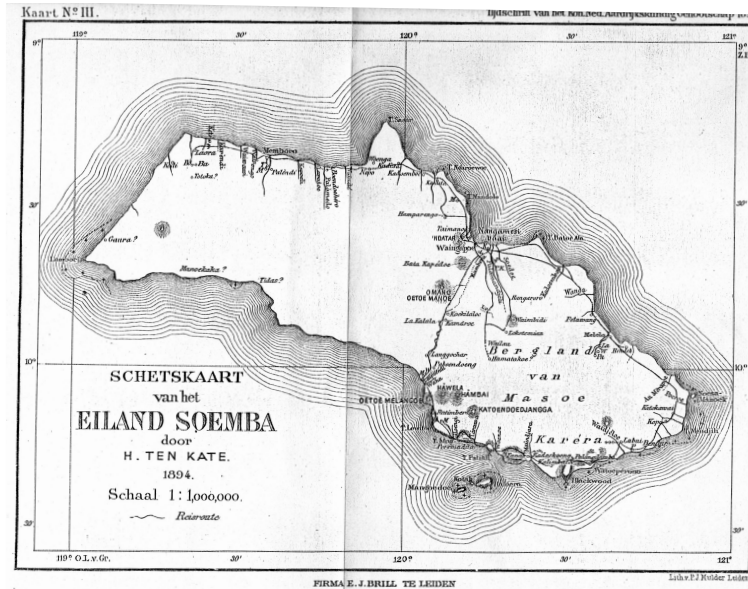
The number of houses belonging to the state (*rijk* in Dutch) of Hamba Paraingu can be estimated at approximately 100, and the distance from the central village to Kambaniru is 21-23 km (14 à 15 *paal* in Dutch) (Roos 1872: 98-99).

Roos's report provides valuable and vivid information on the fortification of Hamba Paraingu and the Sumbanese settlement pattern. Hamba Paraingu was located in an inaccessible location and protected by high stone walls. Its elevated site made it difficult for the inhabitants to fetch water and to get arable fields. These characteristics accord with those depicted in the volume *Forts and fortifications in Wallacea* (O'Connor, McWilliam and Brockwell (eds) 2020). The other important point is the relation between Hamba Paraingu and *kotaku*, that is, hamlet subsidiary to the *paraingu*. Taimanu located near the beach is one of the *kotaku* under the authority of the Raja of Hamba Paraingu, Umbu Nggaba. His younger brother, Umbu Hina lived in another *kotaku* outside the *paraingu*. It is thought that many houses outside it formed several *kotaku*. These settlements were clearly located in areas that offered a much better living environment than the *paraingu*. Taimanu, a hamlet near the mouth of the river, was an ideal place for trading, though it was vulnerable to attacks by the Endenese arriving by boat. When the risk of attack by the Endenese or Sumbanese enemies increased, it is believed that all the villagers of Hamba Paraingu gathered in the *paraingu*.

Kate, a Dutch physical anthropologist, visited Sumba during his expedition in the Timor

9) Taimanu is located in the eastern part of the Kanatang sub-regency and near the center of Waingapu city, the capital of East Sumba regency.

10) Kambaniru is the area in the east of Waingapu, the present capitol of the East Sumba regency. Roos used to live there.



Map 1. Sumba (Kate 1894)

area in the early 1890s. Though his main concern was to collect systematic data on human populations by taking anthropometrical measurements (Sysling 2019), he wrote a valuable ethnographic report on Sumba. His description of Hamba Paraingu as follows:

We left the camp at 7:45 and headed for Hamba Paraingu (originally Samparengo or Hamparengo). We followed the beach westward for an hour, when Sinto shot a gray heron, and then turned left at the Nangamisi, an insignificant little river, into the grassy hills along a very rough path that climbed steeply. The soil here consists of white limestone. Around half past nine we reached Hamba Paraingu, whose peculiar location on a plateau (approximately 335 m) on the edge of a couple of steep precipices reminded me somewhat of Constantine. Heavy, high walls of stacked stones, equipped with a bench and heavy gate doors, surround this village (originally kampong), which is partially reinforced by a second, inner wall. Hamba Paraingu has about 30 houses, most of which are large and all of the type shown in plate 5, fig. 11. However, the house of the raja, who happens to be absent (?)¹¹⁾, is an exception due to its extraordinary size and unusual building materials. It contains several compartments, while the outer walls consist partly of large pieces of buffalo hide. Seen from the inside, the frosted glass appears to have a reddish sheen. Despite the absence of the ruler of Hamba Paraingu,

11) Kate suspected the Raja went out on purpose to avoid seeing him.

we were allowed to view the interior of his palace (originally “paleis”), as far as this was possible in the twilight. Some women, wives and relatives of the raja and female slaves, welcomed us with respect. Here too, as in Taimanu, a number of copper gongs hung under the front gallery of the royal residence, including a couple of very large ones (Kate 1894: 554–555).

The following day, Kate and his assistants moved to Mondu (the present village of Mondu) in the northwestern of Hamba Paraingu. They visited two hamlets, La Mondu and Laonatang¹²⁾, on top hills. Contrast to Hamba Paraingu, the fields along the river of Kanatangu were fertile with maize, millet, cassava, breadfruit, papaya, banana, coconut trees, and sugar cane growing. Both villages, about 40–106 meters above sea level, are surrounded by dense opuntia (a genus of cactus) hedges, which also line the narrow paths leading to the villages. He reports that “La Mondu has about ten houses, Laonatang eight or nine. The dolmen-like gravestones are also similar to those seen elsewhere. Only in Laonatang is there also a huge tomb of a *maràmba* (nobleman), built of heavy stones, with round columns at the four corners. It is over 11.5 meters high and forms an elongated square” (Kate 1894: 556). These two hamlets were *kotaku* within the domain of Hamba Paraingu.

During my long-term research in East Sumba, Hamba Paraingu had been totally abandoned. Most of the villagers have their houses along the main road that runs east to west across the plateau. In 1988 I interviewed with an aged man, a member of the Karunggu Wacu clan, about what Hamba Paraingu used to be. In addition to its geographical location mentioned by Roos and Kate, it was heavily protected by a double stone wall. Moreover, cannons were positioned on either side of the main gate (*pindu bakulu*) facing north. There were twenty-six houses inside the *paraingu* which was constituted by eleven patrilineal clans (*kabihu*). The *maràmba* clan, Ana Maari, had five houses including Uma Ratu, the most sacred house in which important ceremonies were held. Ana Maari was supported by four commoner clans (*kabihu*), Karunggu Wacu, Ngeuru, Kombulu, and Palamidu, among which Karunggu Wacu was the most prominent. The highest religious leaders (*ratu*), whose presence was requisite for holding collective ceremonies were selected from Karunggu Wacu. It had seven houses, one of which was Uma Andungu (Skull Post House). The name reflected its association with the post (*andungu*) on which enemy skulls were placed. Also, in front of Uma Ngguki of Karunggu Wacu a stone altar (*katoda paraingu*) was placed to prevent ritually the entry of harmful forces to the *paraingu*. Roos (1872: 99) wrote, “In

12) Laonatang possibly refers to Prai Natang in the north of Mondu.

the central village there are 28 large and spacious houses scattered irregularly.” However, the houses of Ana Maari and the four prominent clans were located in the central part, while the houses of the other clans were located in the peripheral areas. From a Dutch perspective, which differs from the Sumbanese perspective, the ethnographic reports by the Dutch officer and anthropologist in the nineteenth century overlooked many points that are important for understanding the social and ritual significance of *paraingu*.

Following a campaign of pacification begun in 1906 in the interior of East Sumba, the Dutch colonial government established an effective administration in 1912. As the Dutch colonial rule became established in East Sumba, the number of fortified settlements declined. Heyden, a civil commissioner posted in the subdistrict of Central Sumba (de Onderafdeling Midden-Soemba in Dutch)¹³⁾, accurately described this change in a handover memorandum (Memorie van Overgave in Dutch) he compiled in 1915.

These settlements (originally kampongs), which have been a defining feature of Central Sumba for the past twenty or thirty years, a time when people lived in constant turmoil and could not be sure of their own safety, will all eventually disappear. Already, the inhabitants of these mountain settlements spend most of the year in the farmland (originally ladangs), where they erect temporary dwellings near rivers and springs, thus avoiding the inconvenience of having to climb up and down the steep ridges several times a day.

In addition to these mountain settlements, one finds hamlets (originally negorijen) built on the plains, which originally consisted of a few garden huts that were gradually replaced by permanent dwellings. These plots of farmland are sometimes located close to the settlements and at other times at great distances from them. It should also be noted that a large number of the settlements indicated on the sketch maps do not appear on the attached settlements lists, which can be explained by the fact that in the registration system introduced by the then civil commissioner (Civiel Gezaghebber in Dutch) Lieutenant Reynders in 1909, many smaller hamlets were administratively merged with the larger ones (Heyden 1915: 37).

In the above sentences, “mountain settlement” and “hamlet” refer to *paraingu* and *kotaku* respectively in Kambara. Also, “garden hut” corresponds to *uma la oka* (hut in farmland).

13) In the period of Heyden, the district of Central Sumba was constituted by Kambara, Lewa, Tabundungu, Kanatangu, Kapunduku, and Napu, which are included into the present East Sumba Regency, and Horu dan Lakoka, which are included into the present Central Sumba Regency.

In the 1930s, Dutch cultural anthropologist, C. Nooteboom, carried out an ethnographic research in East Sumba and wrote the first anthropological book in the region (Nooteboom 1940). It contains reliable data on the Sumbanese culture and society. Nooteboom provides similar description of changing settlement patterns as Heyden did:

These ancestral villages (*stam dorpen* in Dutch) are residential communities (*woongemeenschappen* in Dutch) located at hard-to-reach and easily defensible points on hilltops or in places surrounded by precipices. In earlier times, they were fortified by constructing ring walls several meters thick made of stacked coral stone and wide hedges of sharp-thorned cacti. They were not intended for permanent residence but served as the center of the community, which gathered there only on special occasions. For daily life, the *praingu* are usually very inconveniently located, far from the gardens and pastures and far from the water. In normal times, very few people live there. A few people, whose task is to guard the houses and the sanctuaries, return there every evening to spend the night. The others live in the garden houses and near the pastures. They come to the *praingu* only to make sacrifices. In the past, they came there in times of war, when an enemy ruler (*een vijandig vorst* in Dutch) was preparing to attack. Unlike the garden houses located in the valleys, which were very vulnerable, the *praingu* could be easily defended. Moreover, everyone gathered in the village, so that the attack could be repelled with maximum resistance. The *praingu* contained the graves of deceased villagers, and the sacred objects of the various *kabihu* belonging to the *praingu* were kept there, so that everything worth protecting was gathered in the ancestral village (Nooteboom 1940: 25).

Nooteboom identifies dual settlement system, that is, living at hamlets in the rainy season and gathering at *paraingu* for ceremonies held in dry season. This type of settlement pattern is the same as the findings during my anthropological research in Wunga.

5 Parai Wunga in Transition

Focusing on Parai Wunga, this section aims to clarify the relation between *paraingu* and other settlements and the significance of *paraingu* as a ceremonial center. The central village of Wunga (Parai Wunga) is located in a forest on a mountainside, hidden by trees; even if someone were to approach the base of the mountain, they would find it difficult to spot the houses. Being far from farmland and rivers, the location is entirely unsuitable as a

place to live, and life in the central village is fraught with great difficulties. To fetch water every day, the women of Wunga must walk more than an hour round-trip to the spring during the dry season. The village was once entirely surrounded by stone walls, but these walls have almost collapsed except both sides of the main gate (*pindu bākulu*). Ascending the path through the forest from the foot of the mountain, one comes to the gate. During my fieldwork from 1985 to 1988, there existed thirteen ancestral houses (*uma marapu*) in Parai Wunga. In front of each house were ancestral graves; in particular, the graves of the nobility (*maramba*) were megalithic ones which are peculiar to Sumba. Near the center of the village was a ceremonial site named *katoda paraingu*, where purification rituals were performed with the aim of purifying not only the central village but the entire domain. Within the village, there used to be a livestock enclosure made of stone walls, but the walls are now quite damaged.

At first glance, Parai Wunga appeared to be a haphazard cluster of thirteen houses. However, actually, the houses in the village were built along an east-west axis that intersects at right angles with the north-south axis running up and down the south-facing slope of the mountain. The entire village is divided into three sections, eastern, central, and western, which are respectively called *kiku* (tail), *padua*, (center), and *kambata* (fragment). *Kiku* and *kambata* are terms commonly used to describe the spatial division of villages, with *kiku* referring to the “downstream end” and *kambata* to the “upstream end.” Relationship of inferiority and superiority has been noted in the *kiku/kambata* opposition (Forth 1981: 53–54). This duality applies to the central village of Wunga. In the *kambata* section, there were three houses belonging to the noble clan Tula Paraingu and one house belonging to the commoner clan Wai Moru. In the *padua* section, there were two houses belonging to the commoner clans. The four houses in *kambata* and the two houses in *padua* faced east. In *kiku*, there were a house belonging to the noble clan Ana Maaaru¹⁴⁾, four houses belonging to commoner clans, and Uma Ratu (House of Priest)¹⁵⁾ which served as the ritual center of the whole village. The seven ancestral houses located in *kiku* faced west.

In 1986, I had the opportunity to research the ritual procedures of the Great Festival (*mangajingu bākulu*)¹⁶⁾ whose main purpose was to pray for agricultural fertility to the

14) Ana Maaru in the Haharu dialect refers to Ana Maari in the Kanatangu.

15) The term *ratu* is an important but complex concept for understanding Sumbanese rituals. It is stated that the *ratu* are the highest ritual authorities and contrast markedly with the noble rulers (*maramba*) who possess temporal power (Forth 1981: 236–237).

16) Every year, usually from October to November, just before the planting season, a ceremony of *manganjingu* (offering) should be held in a less grand scale according to the custom and tradition (*horu*) of Parai Wunga.

Table 1. Ancestral Houses in Parai Wunga

	Section	Name of Uma (House)	kabihu (clan)
1	kambata	Uma Tula Paraingu (House of Tula Paraingu)	Tula Paraingu
2		Uma Bakulu (Great House)	Tula Paraingu
3		Uma Mananga (House of River-mouth)	Tula Paraingu
4		Uma Wai Moru (House of Wai Moru)	Wai Moru
5	padua	Uma Dai Kambata (House of Kambata Protection)	Haru Kondu
6		Uma Rua (House of Rua)	Rua
7	kiku	Uma Pahoka (House of Pahoka)	Pahoka
8		Uma Haru Kondu Mau Mahu (House of Haru Kondu Shadow of Salt)	Haru Kondu
9		Uma Makatempa (House of Collection)	Ana Maaru
10		Uma Rumbu Wulangu (House of Rumbu Wulangu)	Rumbu Wulangu
11		Uma Bohu (House of Bohu)	Bohu
12		Uma Matolangu (House of Matolangu)	Matolangu
13		Uma Ratu (House of Ratu)	Ratu
	Houses that did not exist in 1985		
14		Uma Wai Moru Wacu Patonggulu (House of Wai Moru Piled Stones)	Wai Moru
15		Uma Wai Jelu (House of Wai Jelu)	Wai Jelu
16		Uma Makata Jiangu Jangga (High House of Makata Jiangu)	Makata Jiangu
17		Uma Makata Jiangu Wawa (Low House of Makata Jiangu)	Makata Jiangu
18		Uma Pahoka Majangga (High House of Pahoka)	Pahoka
19		Uma Ana Lingu (House of Ana Lingu)	Ana Lingu
20		Uma Wacu Patonggulu (House of Wacu Patonggulu)	Wacu Patonggulu

marapu (deified ancestors) of each House (*uma*) in Parai Wunga. Customs prescribed that the Festival be performed once every four years. In the performance of the Great Festival, it showed ritual functions and characteristics of each house. There existed two clans that had noble members (*maramba*), Tula Paraingu and Ana Maaru. The head of Tula Paraingu was called the Chief of Wunga (*maramba wunga*; Raja Wunga in Indonesian), and he played a leading part in the enactment of the Festival. Uma Tula Paraingu, one of its three houses, served as a meeting place for the village elders to discuss ritual procedures. Another house, Uma Mananga (The House of River-mouth) was concerned with the rites to pray for sufficient rainfall in the coming rainy season at the Altar of River-mouth (*katoda mananga*), in which a group of ritual functionaries visited during the Festival. The other noble clan, Ana Maaru, had only one house, Uma Makatempa (the House of Collection) which ranked second only to the Uma Ratu (House of Priest) in the ceremonial hierarchy. The Uma Makatempa served as the place for arranging the offerings and for performing the divination that preceded the ritual at the Uma Ratu. The “walking *ratu*” (*ratu halaku*), usually called just a *ratu*, was chosen from commoners of the clan Ana Maaru. Among the ritual functionaries in Parai Wunga, this *ratu* played the leading and most active part during the performance of the Festival. He must preside over all the ritual procedures within and beyond the central village and had the privileged task of singing special ritual songs (*tanggu lodu*). His function contrasted with that of the “sitting *ratu*” (*ratu mandidingu*) chosen from Uma Pahoka of a commoner clan Pahoka, who must remain in the Uma Makatempa to guard it while the rites were enacted. Along with the two *ratu*, other ritual functionaries were necessary for the enactment of the Festival. When the villagers left the *paraingu* for ritual purposes, a man titled *wai hanata wuta lolu nggenggu* (wipe out dewdrops and spider’s threads) should always walk at the head of the procession. He was from Uma Makata Jiangu of a commoner



Plate 1. The Renovation of Uma Ratu in 1986

clan Makata Jiangu¹⁷⁾. In the actual ritual procedures concerned with the renovation of Uma Ratu, two functionaries titled *heriku* (sweeper) played leading parts. One is chosen from Uma Rumbu Wulangu and the other from Uma Wai Moru. They were told to have special powers to “cool down” the “hot and dangerous” (*mbana*) conditions to enact the Festival successfully.

On October 24, the first invocations (*hamayangu*) were made at Uma Dai Kambata (House of Kambata Protection), one of the thirteen houses in Parai Wunga. Then, the villagers conducted invocations at each ancestral house and sacred place located outside the *paraingu*, one after the other. The climax of the Great Festival was the rites at the Uma Ratu, which had grander ritual procedures and a larger scale than the other houses. Following the custom, the Uma Wai Moru conducted the final invocations on November 29, bringing the Great Festival to a close.

During the rainy season, when people were busy with farm work, most villagers of the central village lived in the outlying *kotaku* (hamlets) belonging to the central village or in *uma la oka* (huts in farmland), leaving only a few aged people behind to look after the ancestral houses. However, in the dry season it was time for ceremonies held in the *paraingu*, villagers gathered to live there for a while. This dual pattern of settlement had continued since the colonial times, as Nooteboom described (Nooteboom 1940: 25).

In 1990, the Great Festival was carried out on a much smaller scale than in 1986 (Tangara Wulang, 1991). Not only did the number of participants decrease significantly, but the renovation of Uma Ratu was not conducted according to the ritual specialists’ prescriptions in 1986. On July 28, 2010, seven houses burned down, leaving five in the *kiku* section. Even before the fire, the Uma Ratu had already collapsed, leaving only a few posts standing. The last time I visited Parai Wunga in August, 2024, only three houses, Uma Tula Paraingu¹⁸⁾, Uma Dai Kambata, and Uma Haru Kondu Mau Mahu, remained, all of which were seriously damaged. Because most families lived permanently at dwellings near cultivated fields and only a few aged lived in Parai Wunga, the ancestral houses were very easily damaged.

In the official villages (*desa*) of Wunga and Kadahang, which were formerly part of Parai Wung, 48.7 percent of the population identified as Christian in 2023 (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Sumba Timur 2024: 53). Protestant Church teachings prohibit congregants from participating in *marapu* rituals. Some criticized the festival, calling it old-fashioned and

17) According to the aged informant, two houses of the clan Makata Jiangu in Parai Wunga were abandoned in the 1940s. The *marapu* possessions (*tanggu marapu*) of the two houses were stored inside the peaks of the Uma Dai Kambata and Uma Haru Kondu Mau Mahu respectively.

18) The Uma Tula Paraingu were rebuilt with government assistance.

uneconomical. In addition to Christian villagers, most *marapu* followers have been reluctant to contribute sacrificial animals and rice to the festival in Parai Wunga because of their less favorable economy, though they sometimes organize or attend invocations (*hamayangu*) at funerals and small rites to cure the sick. The unsuitability of Parai Wunga as a place for living and economic activities, combined with religious change, has led to its abandonment.

6 Conclusion

From a perspective of historical anthropology, this paper examines the historical transformation of settlement patterns in East Sumba, integrating Dutch colonial sources and ethnographic findings. The analysis demonstrates that Sumbanese settlements were historically dynamic and shaped by the interplay of ecological conditions, intergroup conflicts, colonial forces, and indigenous rituals.

In the earliest phase of the Sumbanese history, archaeological evidence indicates that settlements were located in ecologically favorable environments such as river mouths and coastal areas, where subsistence and trade activities were possible. However, as the population increased and conflicts intensified, local rulers began constructing fortified settlements on hilltops. Current findings of archaeological research cannot determine the exact time of this change. These fortified settlements prioritized defense over daily convenience.

Examining fortification throughout the islands of Wallacea (O'Connor, McWilliam and Brockwell (eds) 2020) supports the view that these defensive settlements were fundamentally shaped by sociohistorical factors, particularly terrible internal conflicts over farmland and livestock. Since the sixteenth century, the arrival of European powers had intensified violence from external forces, especially, slave raids throughout the islands.

A key finding of this study of East Sumba is the emergence of dual settlement system under these conditions. Fortified settlements served as centers for political and ritual activities, while the everyday lives of villagers were sustained in dispersed hamlets (*kotaku*) and garden huts (*uma la oka*) located in more favorable environments. A Dutch colonial report by Roos (1872) vividly portrays this settlement pattern from the late nineteenth century. However, signs of change appeared in the pattern in the early twentieth century when Dutch pacification reduced the need for fortified settlements. As ethnographic accounts by Nooteboom (1940) note, villagers increasingly built permanent dwellings near farmland.

The case of Parai Wunga illustrates this transformation most clearly. Parai Wunga

was once a fortified and ritually central village. It gradually lost its residential function, retaining only its ceremonial significance. However, recent changes, including conversions to Christianity, have led to a decline in ritual participation and the progressive abandonment of Parai Wunga as a ritual center.

The historical trajectory of settlement patterns in East Sumba reveals a shift from ecologically adaptive habitation to defensive fortification and back again to ecologically and economically adapted settlements. This transformation highlights the importance of viewing settlements as historically contingent systems shaped by broader socio-cultural and political factors, including internal conflicts, external trade, slave raids, and indigenous ritual practices, rather than as fixed spatial units.

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