Navigating Polyvocal Heritage in a Postcolonial Cultural Landscape

Banda Islands, Indonesia

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Introduction

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Introduction

"This is surely a blessing from above!" exclaimed Hilmar Farid, Director General of Culture in Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia at the opening of the first International Conference on Banda Studies organized by the University of Banda Naira. After six weeks of drought, heavy rains are pounding on the roof of Rumah Makatita – formerly known as the Oude Harmonie on the island Banda Neira. This former colonial building was the central location for the conference on the Banda Islands. Researchers from around the world came together from a wide range of disciplines to discuss these special islands: arts, history, anthropology, archaeology, marine science, and more. The conference is one of the signs of a renewed interest in the Banda Islands, alongside the revived efforts to nominate it as a World Heritage site and the bestseller *The Nutmeg's Curse* by Amitav Ghosh (Ghosh, 2021).

The Banda Islands as a particularly blessed land is a recurring feature for all who visit and study this remote archipelago in the Maluku province of the Republic of Indonesia. They are a central axis within the so-called Spice Islands: the native source for the spices nutmeg and mace. As such, they developed into a flourishing intercultural multireligious trade hub for inter-Asian trade. When European merchants arrived, they were adopted within the existing system and the Bandanese peoples therefore resisted the claim of the Dutch East India Company to impose a monopoly on the trade of their spices. Their resistance led to the Bandanese Genocide, however the Bandanese society has been resilient, and their cultural traditions continue to this day.

This book aims to describe the complexity and polyvocality of the histories and heritages of these islands. The plurality lies in the multitude of human stakeholders who lay claim to its interpretation and narration, as well as the more-than-human agents who continue to influence the landscape and society. In order to acknowledge this complex web of meanings and its ability to be in constant flux, I will argue for an interpretation of the Banda Islands as a cultural landscape. As such, both the natural and cultural, the tangible and intangible, and the human and more-than-human elements can be acknowledged as vital parts of this heritage. Through the specific example of Fort Nassau, the site of the Bandanese Massacre, I will attest that even such violent colonial sites can play a role in empowering the local community in their efforts toward cultural preservation and support their perspective of the past.

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This book will present the findings from my doctoral research about the cultural heritage management of Fort Nassau on the Banda Islands (2020) as well as insights gained from the contents of the manuscript *Hikayat Lonthoir*, which I transcribed for the National Maritime Museum in Amsterdam (2021), and (archaeological) fieldwork conducted together with Peter Lape at locations from this manuscript (2024). Contrary to previous works about the Banda Islands, which were written from a primarily Eurocentric perspective, I will use my research to center the local approach and narratives on their the cultural heritage and history.

About matters of history

The first part of this book is devoted to the histories of the Banda Islands. I am using the plural form for histories, as I believe that the reality of the past is complex in its many facets and perspectives. Regretfully, dominant historical narratives have overtaken the representation of the past through a simplified version from a singular (white Eurocentric male) perspective. The development of postcolonial criticism has largely contributed to an understanding that history (as we have known it) is a construction based on patriarchal, elitist (colonial) structures, which also influences our approach and understanding of cultural heritage. Acknowledging that the past exists in multiple shades, rather than a dichotomy of fact and fiction, creates a challenge for every discipline dealing with history. Rather than regarding polyvocalities as a challenge to the scientific basis of history, I attest that embracing those uncertainties in the historical narrative opens the way toward a more inclusive representation of the past and more inclusive heritage management approaches (Van Donkersgoed, 2024).

In the past as well as the present, the history of the Banda Islands is often utilized to either justify or criticize the Dutch colonial presence in the archipelago. Therefore, the history of the Banda Islands is often recollected from the perspective of the colonizer and not from the perspective of the colonized community. In the case of Indonesia, this power imbalance is described in the work by Regis Stella on the representation of the people of Papua New Guinea as follows:

> But while there are competing representations, and each culture has its own representational modes, it is the representations produced by members of politically powerful, dominant groups that become accepted as 'true'.
>
> (Stella, 2007, p. 2)

As such, the history of the Banda Islands as it is told and visualized by the former colonizers and other European traders is considered "true". This colonial power dynamic and perspective still informs how the local, national, and international publics regard history and value the past. Consequently, the contemporary view of Bandanese history is based on historical accounts that were written by Dutch colonials. As Ann Stoler wrote: "Dutch colonial archival documents serve less as stories for a colonial history than as active, generative substances with histories, as

documents with itineraries of their own" (Stoler, 2009, p. 1). In other words, many of these documents were written to exalt the Dutch occupation of the Banda Islands and justify their presence there.

Based on these biased historical presentations, historical sites are assessed to determine whether they can be designated as heritage. Therefore, despite the problematic nature of many historical accounts, I will utilize these colonial narrations to describe historical events since these continue to be used to argue for heritage values on the Banda Islands. However, I will also use other sources to amplify the polyvocality of Bandanese history and heritage and place local voices at the forefront. Moreover, I focus especially on those events that are of importance to the Bandanese community nowadays, as it is from this history and its continuing cultural practices that they derive their pride and sense of belonging.

Since these histories are instilled with a (political) agenda, it is nearly impossible to write about the history of the Banda Islands in an objective manner. Indonesian scholar Muhammad Farid described the Bandanese history as scattered glass pieces, *sejarah yang berserak*, which must be gathered and pieced together in order to get a complete impression of the past (Farid, 2017). In his article concerning the modern retelling of the Bandanese history, he argues that no particular source of history should be given superiority, as this leads to conflict and sorrow. He rather argues that people should gather the various stories and listen to each version with patience and maturity. As there is no perfect representation of the past of the Banda Islands, he argues that the information from older people should be used alongside historical sources and modern tales to retell the history in our modern time. Thus, acknowledging that histories are plural allows for the space to embrace other notions of historical knowledge.

Heritage sites derive their value from both historical accounts and contemporary narratives, shaped by multiple agents who construct and reinterpret history to serve specific audiences. Russell Staiff highlights how heritage is socially constructed through stories that blend historical facts, local narrations, and national agendas, emphasizing that "[…] the use of stories to interpret underscores the social nature of all heritage(s)" (Staiff, 2014, p. 96). This social nature suggests that heritage evolves alongside societal needs and power structures, aligning with the principles of public history, where history is seen as a form of knowledge shaped by various actors within their historical and cultural contexts (Keane, 2017). Similarly, Nancy Florida (1995) examines how Javanese writers were conscious of the fact that they were writing within the context of their present, and each time a text is read, a text obtains a new interpretation and therefore a new meaning (Florida, 1995, pp. 396–399). Just as past writings continue to influence the present, heritage narratives are continually revisited, reinterpreted, and rewritten to reflect contemporary values. This book builds on these ideas, arguing that heritage sites and cultural landscapes are inherently dynamic, with their meanings adapting as society evolves.

Therefore, heritage values are not determined in a vacuum but informed by prior research. Past interpretations of Bandanese history and heritage not only inform national and international (academic) audiences but also instruct the current

Bandanese residents to think about history and their heritage in a particular way. This section therefore gives an overview of previous publications that have a special focus on the Banda Islands. Particular consideration is given to those that are currently widely read and therefore play an active role in the formation of the historical narrative that is being told about the Banda Islands. This includes research from the fields of history, anthropology, linguistics, and non-academic sources such as memoirs and popular history books.

The most referenced Dutch historical account of the Banda Islands was written by Francois Valentijn in 1856. His massive five-volume series called *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* includes descriptions of several areas in contemporary Indonesia, Japan, China, Mauritius, and South Africa (Valentijn, 1858). The illustration on the title page of the first volume is a good visualization of the perspective in which this account of the Banda Islands is written. The print depicts the personification of Society[1] as a white woman guarded by the Dutch lion, surrounded by representations of the Lands of the East,[2] who are offering their treasures to the enthroned lady. According to the accompanying text, the lion of the Netherlands is there to attack anyone who dares to disturb her trade. This image alludes to the perspective of the writer, as he wrote the historical account with the aim of justifying the position of the Dutch colonizers in their eastern territories. Although his account is historically biased, Valentijn provides valuable information in his detailed descriptions of the Banda Islands, its historical sites, the history, and its people.

In fact, most publications about the history of the Banda Islands were written from the perspective of the Dutch colonizer and emphasized their part – history literally starts at the arrival of European traders. A prime example is the historical narrative by Willard Hanna (Hanna, 1978). As the primary English-written account about the full Bandanese history, this book was reprinted and edited by Des Alwi in 1991 and consequently widely distributed among the residents and visitors of the Banda Islands (Hanna, 1991). Besides the importance of his work in the current historical perception of the Banda Islands, Hanna's work is significant as it also deals with more recent episodes of history, including the lives of the plantation owners, the exile of revolutionary leaders Mohammad Hatta and Sutan Sjahrir to the Banda Islands, the Second World War and its (after)effects on the Bandanese community and heritage, the revival of heritage by Des Alwi, and the state of affairs during the late 1970s.

Besides the widely read and quoted works of Valentijn and Hanna, this book draws upon more recent work by an interdisciplinary group of scholars. First is the archaeologist Peter Lape, who started his career by researching the arrival of Islam on the Banda Islands through a series of excavations (Lape, 2000, 2005; Peterson & Lape, 2015). Another major work involving the Banda Islands was written by Roy Ellen, who focused on the social organization of the Moluccan trading network including the role the Banda Islands played in the circulation of the spices nutmeg and mace (Ellen, 2003). More important for the understanding of the *adat* and current social practices on the Banda Islands is the research by anthropologist Phillip Winn (Winn, 1999, 2005, 2010, 2014). The main difference between his work and my research is that his fieldwork was mostly conducted on the island Banda Besar,

where the village Lonthoir is located, and he described the role of heritage during the time that the prominent influencer Des Alwi was still alive. His findings, therefore, differ slightly from the information I gathered since my fieldwork was mainly conducted on Banda Neira and after the death of Des Alwi. For the continuing Bandanese practices of the Bandanese diaspora on the Kei Islands, I have relied on the work by anthropological linguist Timo Kaartinen (Kaartinen, 2010, 2013). Most recently, Amritav Gosh's bestseller has brought renewed attention to the Banda Islands (Ghosh, 2021). His work on the more-than-human agency of nutmeg has placed the Banda Islands within a global and environmental context.

On the Banda Islands, an important reference work is the collection of books by Des Alwi. One of his historical works, Sejarah: Banda Naira, draws from his study of Dutch historical accounts as well as oral history (Alwi & Farid, 2006). Written in Indonesian, this account is widely read by the Bandanese residents and distributed throughout the Indonesian archipelago. Alongside this book, he has authored several books with his memoirs, which describe his youth on the Banda Islands, the arrival of the revolutionaries Mohammad Hatta and Sutan Sjahrir, and the Japanese occupation (Alwi, 2008, 2010). Although the memoirs of Des Alwi were edited by Barbara Harvey, they retain an anecdotal style that informs the reader about Des Alwi's personal memories and the stories he collected throughout his lifetime.

The tradition of oral histories is strong within the Moluccas, which is a fluid way of transmitting knowledge about the past that is dependent on the listener as well as the narrator, the chosen subject, and the location (Farid & Sadée, 2023, p. 301). While being exiled on the Banda Islands, nationalist Sjahrir enjoyed listening to the stories told by an old fisherman (Sjahrir, 1949, pp. 153–154). He explained that most of the lore and legend originated from Lonthoir, which was the main hub before the Europeans moved the center to Neira. He writes that they kept written chronicles in a book (referred to as *Hikayat*) that was regarded as sacred, only to be read from during celebrations. Thus, the stories of Lonthoir were known throughout the islands, as they had been passed on orally. According to Sjahrir, these stories were regarded as the history of the islands – not as lore or myth, and they were connected to the strong *adat* (customary law) that persisted in the community. In 1922, one of the traditional leaders of the village of Lonthoir, Mohammad Saleh Neirabatij, compiled a selection of these sacred stories to be transcribed by a copyist. These stories represent the surviving fragments of the original *Hikayat* and likely include narratives chosen for a general (European) audience. He titled this document *Hikayat Lonthoir*, and it narrates the history of the islands from the time of Noah's flood until the Dutch colonial era.

Until recently, the manuscript was considered lost among academics, and its contents were only known through the biased summaries by Ph. Van Ronkel (van Ronkel, 1945). From the onset, Van Ronkel attacks the importance of this manuscript and relegates it to the realm of unreliable myths (van Ronkel, 1945, p. 123). Furthermore, he describes that the 84-page folioformat was written with "would-be literary sophistication" (van Ronkel, 1945, p. 124) in a mix of high Malay, low Malay, Bible Malay, Spanish, Portuguese, and Moluccan phrases and words. Van Ronkel describes the style and content of the *Hikayat Lonthoir* in derogatory terms,

aimed to discredit the writer and describe the manuscript as a curiosity rather than a valuable insight and source providing a local perspective. The biases that led to the translation and summary of the *Hikayat* become particularly clear after he has summarized the narration about the origins of the islands from the time of Noah and the birth of the legendary siblings. He wrote:

> It continues with the internal history of the little kingdoms of the islands, which is not that interesting for *us* but which is of course very important for the inhabitants of those lands. […] While reading, *we* feel the need for variation, something new, despite how important those uniformly described events may have been for the community concerned. Well, the new thing is about to happen: the arrival of the Portuguese!
>
> (emphasis added: Van Ronkel, 1945, p. 128)

Not only does Van Ronkel juxtapose himself and his (white) reader audience with the Bandanese peoples by using words like "us" and "we", but he also assumes that his audience will have the same attitude toward the local history of the islands: that it is negligible and should be dismissed as mere myth and legends. On top of that, he points out (with an enthusiastic exclamation mark) when the manuscript becomes interesting for him (and his supposed audience): with the arrival of the first Europeans. Despite its limited content, Van Ronkel's article has been of interest to a myriad of researchers and generated interest in the original.[3]

Based on the information provided in van Ronkel's article, Hans Straver has published his analysis of the rationale for the *Hikayat Lonthoir* by comparing it to a Dutch romanticized poem about Egeron and Adeka set in Banda Neira (Straver, 2016). He deduced, based on the ill depiction of the Portuguese and the favorable historical alliance between the Dutch and Lontor (Lonthoir), that this manuscript was written to enforce the position of the village Lonthoir as a loyal subject under Dutch rule (Straver, 2016, p. 17). He argues that this contradicts historical colonial documents, which claim that Lontor fiercely resisted the Dutch conquest for a monopoly on nutmeg. I want to note though that it is difficult to disentangle these Dutch colonial accounts, since the name Lontor (or Lonthoir) can either refer to the village or to the entire island Banda Besar, which contained many more (rivaling) villages. For example, the Bandanese peoples who left Banda Besar in 1621 and settled in the Kei Islands – known as the original Bandanese, *Banda asli* – were part of the opposition against the Dutch intrusion.

Throughout my doctoral research on local heritage management and interpretation in the Banda Islands, I sought to locate this manuscript as a counterbalance to the many colonial documents on the archipelago's history. It was not until late 2020, during preparations for the *I Love Banda* photo exhibit by Isabelle Boon at the National Maritime Museum in Amsterdam, that curator Diederick Wildeman recalled an uncatalogued manuscript in the Warnsinck collection related to the Banda Islands (Boon, 2019, 2021). With the museum's support, I transcribed the text into modern Indonesian and wrote English summaries to raise awareness about this historical source, empower the Bandanese perspective, and foster

broader discussions (Het Scheepvaartmuseum, 2021). The transcribed version has since been reworked into a digital and limited printed form by Amalia Pulungan (Neirabatij 2021).

Recent provenance research reveals that this manuscript was part of a series of written accounts for a European audience and was gifted to Professor Warnsinck in 1926, four years after Neirabatij signed it (Wildeman, 2021).

While analyzing the manuscript, it struck me that from this 84-page folio, only 14 pages were set during the times of European presence. The focus of the manuscript is therefore on the islands' history and their protagonists, aiming to gain recognition for its long history that had been narrated from generation to generation by forcibly writing it down in a format that could be recognized by the colonizer (van Donkersgoed, 2023). I use the word "forcibly", since the writing style indicates that the *Hikayat Lonthoir* contains the local narratives that had been passed on by spoken rather than written word. The unease to fit their narrated past within the European conception of history is clear from the sparse mention of dates in the document. The only moments when dates are mentioned are within those pages about the interactions with European agents – otherwise, the time indications are relative ("in the time when a legendary person lived"). Van Ronkel speculates that the original narration of the stories was in Arabic, and that this prose was modernized and translated into plain Malay in order to be understandable for Neirabatij's (colonial) superior. He calls this "*an act of talking down to a white man*" (van Ronkel, 1945, p. 130). In short, the manuscript can be understood as an act to transform the rich oral history of the islands into a more understandable (or acceptable) form for the colonial reader. Therefore, I argue that, rather than devaluating the *Hikayat Lonthoir* as "false" for its historical inaccuracies or literary inconsistency, this manuscript provides us with an insight into how the Bandanese author wanted their islands to be represented in history (van Donkersgoed, 2023; Van Donkersgoed, 2024).

Moreover, it is important to note that the text was written during Dutch colonial rule and that Neirabatij (may) have had to censor his narration of the atrocities that had been committed by the Dutch colonists against the Bandanese people. Especially if the manuscript was indeed to strengthen their ties to Dutch colonial government officials, as Straver asserts (Straver, 2016, p. 17). The hesitation to emphasize the violent acts of the Dutch against the Bandanese is clear since only 14% of the *Hikayat* is set during colonial rule and the Dutch actors are described in less detail. For example, throughout the text, the Dutch Governor Generals are described as "Coen", while the historical events described span a longer timespan than his presence on the islands. The lack of dedication assigned to identify the various Dutch agents is contrary to the need to identify each individual local actor, which affirms that the manuscript was written to centralize them and not the Dutch, who appear as a conglomerate Other.

Thus, the importance of the *Hikayat* lies not in its historical accuracy, which is a debatable concept for any historical source, as every document is produced with a certain agenda and objective in mind. Rather, its importance lies in the stories that are told from a local perspective, and the insights it provides into what elements

are important to them. For example, a noticeable feature of the document is its emphasis on the Islamic religion, its arrival on the islands, and how it has shaped society. As such, I believe that the *Hikayat* offers a multitude of different directions of inquiries and studies, such as religion (arrival of Islam to Maluku), history of enslavement (story about Agastoe), and women's history (female heroines Cilu Bintang, who ordered Islam to be spread, Boij Tamang, and Boij Ratan). It also offers a way to narrate the history of the Banda Islands from a local perspective, describe their ties to nature, and assess how cultural traditions have been resilient against colonial rule (van Donkersgoed & Farid, 2022). It is my hope that the digitally available Indonesian transliteration and the English summary in this book will contribute to a renewed (scholarly) interest in the cultural and religious history of the Banda Islands.

Plurality of the Bandanese peoples

Besides the local community, who deem certain sites of local, cultural, or historical importance, the designation of heritage is a process that involves a wide variety of agents who articulate what the heritage values are. These acts of defining the heritage value of a place are a constant process that develops to suit the needs of the social, cultural, natural, and economic environment in which heritage is located. This research discusses the various heritage values that designate Fort Nassau and the Banda Islands as a heritage site. These values are maintained by the local community, and together with historical documents, these inform the provincial and (inter)national stakeholders to create a certain image for the heritage site with an aim to increase tourism.

The notion of a stakeholder was initially introduced in heritage management identify and involve those people who are concerned with the heritage at stake. (Rico, 2017, p. 38). However, as Trinidad Rico argues, the act of identifying a stakeholder is an act of creating the stakeholder, delimitating who is and who is not included in the conversation about how, why, and whether a site or cultural practice should be preserved. The act of identifying stakeholders, therefore, is an important step toward discovering how and by whom heritage value is constructed, as well as for which purpose these values are appreciated by diverse agents. Besides this aspect of gaining knowledge about this process, these stakeholders (albeit variably) influenced how heritage was managed in the past, how it is presented in the present, and how it will continue to be used in the future.

Rather than talking about stakeholders, the term "community" is often used to describe people who have a particular local interest. The ambiguous nature of the term "community" has been well-researched by Benedict Anderson, who describes that:

> […] all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.
>
> (Anderson, 2006, p. 6)

When I refer to the local Bandanese community, I use it as an amorphous term to describe the residents of the Banda Islands, including those who only seasonally reside on the islands and those who have businesses on the islands. In general, the local community consists of individuals who identify as contemporary Bandanese people, regardless of indigeneity or residency. Moreover, the local community includes adolescents who moved to other regions in pursuit of better jobs. These Bandanese young adults still feel part of the community and are engaged through community projects during their annual returns. The community at large, including former residents of the Banda Islands, keeps in touch through the Facebook-groups on which news is shared about recent deaths, events, and other kinds of community chatter. It is therefore truly an "imagined community", as it is merely in the minds of people that it is determined whether you are part of the community, rather than on the basis of residence, origin, or race.

Especially in the case of the Banda Islands, where many original residents were murdered, enslaved, or left to other regions, inclusion in the Bandanese community does not derive from one's ancestry but rather is tied to whether one was born on the islands and participates in Bandanese society. Moreover, the society on the islands has been multicultural for centuries, including Arab and Chinese traders that had settled there long before the Dutch colonial incursion (Hanna, 1978; Lape, 2000; Thalib & Raman, 2015). Therefore, when I refer to Bandanese people, in a historical context, I refer to those that settled on the Banda Islands, traded there, and acted as spokespeople. When the first European traders arrived, the Bandanese people were willing to include them in the spice trade alongside other trade relations. However, the intention of the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*: VOC) was to gain exclusive rights to the trade to maximize profits for their stakeholders. To accomplish this goal, the VOC violently took control of the islands and practically depopulated the islands through murder, starvation, enslavement, and deportation. The structural violence against the Bandanese peoples spans the start of the 17th century, a period I will refer to as the Bandanese Genocide. A significant moment within the genocide was the massacre of the village leaders at Fort Nassau in 1621, which I will refer to as the Bandanese Massacre.

During the Bandanese Genocide, some groups of Bandanese people decided to leave the islands for neighboring archipelagos, where they settled new villages and continued to resist. Only a fraction of the native population remained (or was brought back) on the islands to teach the newly imported enslaved population how to produce nutmeg. These events are not only of importance to the current demography of the Bandanese residents, which is a mix of Indonesian, Chinese, Arab, and European ancestry, but also resulted in the tangible and intangible heritage that is present on these islands. Despite the depopulation and immigration of non-local enslaved laborers, the traditions of the original Bandanese residents continue. The practiced traditions and oral history are therefore not so much tied to ancestry, but tied to the land and the spirits that dwell there (Kaartinen, 2010; Winn, 2005).

The historical events as described in the first part of this book still play an important part in the identity of the contemporary local community and the Bandanese

diaspora. A particular focal diasporic group is the *Banda asli*, whose origins can be traced to the Bandanese who left the islands during the Bandanese Genocide. In their villages Banda Eli and Banda Elat on the Kei Islands, they have preserved the cultural traditions of their forefathers through ancestral songs, pottery making, oral history, and the Bandanese language (Kaartinen, 2010, 2013). Based on their continued traditions, these Bandanese refer to themselves as *Banda asli*, original Bandanese, a status that is also acknowledged by the current Bandanese residents. A second recent diasporic group of Bandanese resides on the island Ambon, which consists of Christian Bandanese who fled the religious conflict on the islands in the mid-1990s. Both these groups feel strongly connected to the heritage on the Banda Islands and identify themselves as Bandanese.

However, this does not mean that the current inhabitants of the Banda Islands do not perceive themselves as Bandanese. On the contrary, they are fiercely proud that they were born on the islands and identify as Bandanese. In an interview in 2008, Des Alwi said that everyone who is born on the Banda Islands is Bandanese (Michell, 2008). According to him, this inclusive definition arose during the discrimination policies of the Dutch against the *Eurasians* (those of mixed blood). These children were regarded as Bandanese, and intermarriage soon resulted in the effect that the next generations were unable to speak Dutch. Therefore, they became Bandanese in looks, language, and behavior.

Local identity on the Banda Islands is closely tied to traditional villages, known as *desa adat*, which are led by leaders of their traditions, called *kepala adat*. These *kepala adat* are important knowledge bearers and are identified by Bandanese residents as central figures in heritage interpretation and management. The overarching system of these traditions, called *adat*, is a broad and flexible term encompassing customs and practices rooted in the precolonial past (Winn, 1999, p. 91). *Adat* not only dictates how traditional events should be observed but also governs social conduct through social regulations. Disregarding *adat* or being disrespectful toward things that concern *adat* can have dire consequences. *Adat* is an important element of social and cultural structure on the Banda Islands, and it pertains to the continuation of intangible heritage practices and the conduct of people near historical sites. Therefore, I regard *adat* as an essential component of heritage management, as it shapes local identity, assigns cultural value to sites, and serves as a traditional governance system.

The stakeholder group encompassing the local community of heritage sites, mostly referring to indigenous peoples and local residents, was previously undervalued and ignored in conservation practices. However, within the past decades the field of heritage management has increasingly encouraged the participation of this stakeholder group in the decision-making process and the ongoing management activities. Notably, this focus on the role of local communities in the conservation of heritage sites has been well-received by the Indonesian UNESCO office in Jakarta and the personnel dealing with Indonesian World Heritage sites in the Ministry of Education and Culture.[4] During my meetings with the department in charge of the Indonesian World Heritage sites, they often emphasized that the success of a heritage management plan depends on the active participation and involvement of local communities.

Alongside the local community and diasporas, the Banda Islands have a stake holder group in the form of the oldest non-governmental institution of the island: Heritage and Culture Foundation Banda (*Yayasan Warisan dan Budaya Banda*: Yayasan). The foundation was established by Des Alwi, an adoptive son of Indonesian revolutionaries who returned to the Banda Islands after a career as a diplomat. He used his political contacts to improve the infrastructure on the islands, and he set himself the task of "rescuing" the heritage on the Banda Islands by investing his own money (and that of investors) to buy and restore old buildings. To legitimize his efforts, he occupied a high-ranking position in the adat hierarchy and studied historical documents. Even though Des Alwi passed away in 2010, decisions concerning heritage on the islands are still made in the "spirit of Des", either by Bandanese residents that remember him fondly or by his relatives who run the heritage foundation.

Several governmental institutions have stakes in the heritage of the Banda Islands, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. The local government consists of elected village heads (*kepala desa*), under the authority of the *camat*, who oversees the entire district. The regional office *Balai Arkeologi* in Ambon manages archaeological and anthropological research, while restoration and conservation fall under the provincial office in Ternate, *Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya* (BPCB). The national government, the most empowered stakeholder, enforces policies through various ministries, focusing on the social and economic benefits of heritage tourism. The Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Natural Resources (*Maritim*) oversees the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fishery (*KKP*) and the Ministry of Tourism (*Kemenpar*), which in 2014 established the protected marine park *TWP Taman Laut Banda, Banda Sea Park*. The Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture (*PMK*) oversees the Ministry of Education and Culture (*DIKBUD*), which manages Indonesia's World Heritage site nominations through the Indonesian National Commission for UNESCO. Additionally, organizations like the Coral Triangle Center (CTC) and Banda Sea e.V., a German foundation led by marine biologists and diving instructors, contribute to marine biodiversity conservation and awareness initiatives.

Polyvocality in history and heritage

The polyvocality of the Banda Islands is thus shaped by the multitude of narrations concerning its past and the myriads of different stakeholders. These voices and stories coexist, sometimes in opposition, at other times confirming seemingly opposing sides. My interest in polyvocality stems from my understanding of history through the lens of postcolonial criticism. History, as traditionally constructed, is rooted in patriarchal and elitist (often colonial) structures, which also influence our approach to and understanding of cultural heritage. Recognizing that the past exists in multiple shades – rather than as a simple dichotomy of fact and fiction – poses a challenge for every discipline engaged with history. However, rather than viewing polyvocality as a threat to the scientific foundations of history,[5] I argue that embracing these

uncertainties allows for a more inclusive representation of the past and fosters more holistic heritage management approaches (Van Donkersgoed, 2024).

Polyvocality and multivocality are terms often used interchangeably to describe the diversity of voices and perspectives in interpreting the past. Multivocality, particularly in archaeology, has been utilized as a means to empower underrepresented groups in their understanding and interpretation of the archaeological past (Hodder, 1999). The origins of this term lie in the postmodern critique of scientific objectivity and the increasing recognition of marginalized voices in historical and archaeological narratives (Habu et al., 2008, p. 3). In this context, multivocality refers to the plurality of actors and their interpretations of archaeological remains rather than a plurality of sources (intangible, sensorial, spiritual, natural, cultural, etc.). In other words, it still maintains a central (material) focus from which multiple perspectives radiate.

Within new museumology, multivocality and polyvocality are used interchangeably with the aim to represent multiple (historical) voices (Mason et al., 2013; Sitzia, 2023, p. 53). Typically, one event or topic is centralized while presenting multiple angles to reflect different voices. However, in this book I aim to cast a wider net – not only by seeking a plurality of voices on a singular topic but also by broadening our understanding of that topic as inherently plural. Polyvocality, in this sense, encompasses greater complexity, going beyond merely presenting multiple interpretations from different actors. Instead, it fosters a deeper and more intricate understanding of how the subject and its interpreters are interwoven in a continuous dialogue.

Sitzia identified three approaches in which multivocality is achieved within (historical) narrations: antagonist, cosmopolitan, and agonistic (Sitzia, 2023). The antagonistic approach frames historical actors in binary opposition – heroes vs. villains – reinforcing moral judgments. However, in this book I intentionally move away from both the villainous colonial oppressor and the powerless colonial victim. The cosmopolitan approach, on the other hand, avoids moral binaries and instead focuses on suffering, often portraying victims as passive. However, such an approach risks depoliticizing historical injustices. Rather than subscribing to a cosmopolitan framework that centers on suffering without political critique, I adopt an agonistic approach, which contextualizes social and political conflicts while maintaining the complexity of historical relationships. Agonistic memory argues for an approach that acknowledges conflict as an integral part of memory-making, rather than seeking reconciliation through sanitized narratives (Cento Bull et al., 2019, pp. 615–616). Therefore, it is necessary to accept conflict (or uncertainty) when creating a truly polyvocal and agonistic narrative – one that embraces tension rather than suppressing it.

A powerful metaphor for polyvocality is weaving, particularly the *ikat* technique, where patterns emerge not only from the final design but also from the interwoven threads. This approach parallels Hodder's notion of entanglement, which suggests that meaning is constructed through complex, interconnected relationships

(Hodder, 2013). Instead of focusing solely on the dominant motifs of history, we should also attend to the underlying strands that shape the whole – intertwining perspectives, voices, and (im) material traces. An essential tool for practicing polyvocality is active listening, as proposed by Winter and Lavis (2020). They argue that listening is not merely passive reception but an engaged, contextualized act that fosters ethical research (Winter & Lavis, 2020). By applying active listening to historical narratives and heritage interpretation, we can create a more inclusive and ethically grounded approach to storytelling, allowing diverse voices to be heard without reducing them to a singular, authoritative perspective.

A significant step in embracing uncertainties about the past is validating alternative sources of historical knowledge on an equal footing with traditionally valued forms, such as archival materials produced by elites.[6] Relying solely on these traditional sources results in a partial reconstruction of the past, perpetuating the political and societal agendas of those who created them. I refer to this form of historical representation as the "objectified singular past", as it seeks to distill the past into a single narrative constructed from dominant perspectives based on sources validated by the same elite. My aim is not to devalue these sources; they have been and remain important in shaping both academic and public conceptions of history. As Russell Staiff noted, heritage sites are shaped by stories that blend historical facts, local narratives, and national histories curated to suit particular public audiences (Staiff, 2014, p. 96). By embracing diverse historical knowledges, we can better address the complexity of the past and its significance in the present.

The advantage of the objectified singular past is that it rests on a body of historical material widely regarded as factual evidence. This dominance and authority are aptly described by de Sousa Santos: "Dominant politics become epistemological when it is able to make a credible claim that the only valid knowledge available is the one that ratifies its own dominance" (Santos, 2014, p. vii). Archival materials such as reports, letters, photographs, and other forms of written documentation are revered as credible accounts of the past, while other kinds of records such as oral histories, songs, and stories are regarded with suspicion.[7] Fortunately, steps have been made, notably in the fields of social history, ethnohistory, and critical heritage studies, to elevate this latter group of knowledges. I will refer to this group as the narrated past, as these are (hi)stories that have been passed on from generation to generation with the purpose of transferring knowledge for the future. This distinction is not strictly demarcated, as archival material was also produced to inform future generations, and written accounts have been made from oral traditions. The distinction I am aiming for therefore lies more in the credibility that is afforded to the two kinds of knowledges and how validating the narrated past may empower marginalized voices.

Despite growing recognition of oral traditions in decolonial history, mainstream historians often prioritize written records over living knowledge, reinforcing elitist and colonial biases, yet successful scholarly practices, such as studies on Native oral traditions in the U.S. (van de Logt, 2018; Miller & Riding In, 2011), demonstrate

the value of integrating non-bibliographic approaches. The uncertainty that arises between the narrated past and the objectified singular past can be defined by the tension that is created by the discomfort when these sources do not align with one another. It is uncertain because it goes against the grain of our scientific foundations that claim that there is a (read *one*) truth. This idea of singularity was already challenged by Walter Benjamin, who philosophized that history is not homogenous and is starkly influenced by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*][8] (Benjamin, 2005, sec. XIV). So, if we frame uncertainty this way, we can acknowledge that history is not the reality of the past but instead how contemporary societies curate, preserve, and represent the past. Among historians, this might lead to criticisms regarding this presentist point of view, as expressed by two presidents of the American History Association (Sweet, 2022). However, I argue that when we accept that the reality of the past cannot be reduced to a singular truth, we can grow to become more comfortable with the idea that multiple truths can coexist alongside each other.

Moreover, as historian Koselleck stated: "History becomes visible only through the lens of the present" (Koselleck, 2002, p. 12). Thus, those who deal with the past (in history or heritage) need to address their positionality[9] in order to recognize how it informs the way histories are written. Besides this self-reflexivity, Koselleck's work inspires us to continue to work toward a history that is plural, embracing polyvocality by including multiple temporalities and perspectives (Olsen & Koselleck, 2014). This approach echoes the way Indonesian scholars Muhammad Farid described the history of the Banda Islands as scattered glass, with each piece reflecting something different (Farid 2017). Likewise, he argues that no piece should be given precedence over the other, but rather that we need to collect all perspectives in the retelling of the Bandanese histories. In other words, denying the polyvocality of the past not only creates an imperfect result, but it could lead to conflict and sorrow.

Regarding the processes of the production and consumption of history, Na Li has argued that we are moving toward a culture of "prosumption" (Li, 2024, pp. 241–243). Through new technologies, the processes of production and consumption of history are merging, making academics and the public alike "prosumers" of history. The heritage and tourism industry is particularly active as prosumers of history, rapidly constructing, interpreting, and disseminating historical knowledge about sites to fit their purposes and needs. Beyond the possible adverse effects, such as misinformation or the continuing focus on colonial sources to justify their histories, the process of prosuming also enables people to question authoritative written histories through other mediums and by adding to the body of knowledge(s) to show the polyvocality of the past.

Heritage and tourism in Indonesia

To understand how we appreciate and manage heritage today, it is essential to recognize the history of heritage management, which was shaped by UNESCO's formation in 1945 and its efforts to protect cultural sites post-World War II, including the 1954 Hague Convention and the 1972 World Heritage Convention. While

these frameworks raised global awareness of tangible heritage conservation, their Euro-American origins, focus on monumental heritage, and the divide between cultural and natural heritage have been critiqued by scholars like Laura-Jane Smith, who termed the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), and Rodney Harrison, who describes the *discursive turn* that sets itself against the AHD (Harrison, 2012; Smith, 2010). He notes that a disadvantage of the *discursive turn,* resulted in the neglect of the actual effects tangible heritage creates through the interactions with people in our contemporary world. To address this concern, Harrison promotes a *dialogical model* that regards heritage "as emerging from the relationship between people, objects, places, and practices" (Harrison, 2012, p. 4). This model does not

> […] distinguish or prioritize what is 'natural' or 'cultural', but is instead concerned with the various ways in which humans and non-humans are linked by chains of *connectivity* and work together to keep the past alive in the present for the future.
>
> (Harrison, 2012, pp. 4–5)

These recent commentaries on heritage studies inspired my position within the field. Even though I understand the criticisms that are made about the functioning of UNESCO, the top-down power dynamic it enforces, and the elitist political roots that underlie its strategies, I argue that the current system can be used as a tool of empowerment for local communities. Steps have already been taken to enable bottom-up involvement in heritage management and allow for a perspective on heritage that is not merely focused on the monumental and tangible, but also includes the socioeconomic aspect of heritage. I, therefore, align myself with the dialogical approach as proposed by Harrison and attempt through this research to show how implementing a cultural landscape approach uses the system to empower the local community and encompass all heritage aspects in conservation efforts.

As heritage values are created through the dialogical exchange between humans, their natural environment, and the cultural sites in them, the cultural landscape is informed and shaped through this process. In his report to the United Nations Research Institute for Social Research, Marcus Colchester critically reviews these interactions regarding the role of communities in nature conservation efforts (Colchester, 1994). He states that indigenous people face four major problems that are inherent to the classical conservation approach:

> In the first place, mainstream conservationists have put the preservation of nature above the interests of human beings. Secondly, their view of nature has been shaped by a cultural notion of wilderness sharply at odds with the cosmovision of most indigenous peoples. Thirdly, conservationists have sought authority for their regulation of human interactions with nature in the power of the state. And last but by no means least, conservationists' perceptions of indigenous peoples have been tinged with the same prejudices that confront indigenous peoples everywhere. The result, as we have seen,

> is that indigenous peoples have suffered a four-fold marginalization due to conservationist impositions.
>
> (Colchester, 1994, p. 57)

Besides his observations on the unequal power relations and how the idea of wilderness has been used to reduce the impact of local communities, Colchester continues to write that many indigenous communities are quite aware of the outside pressures on their lands, both political and environmental, and that in the increasingly global market economy they need to adapt new mechanisms to control and use their resources (Colchester, 1994, pp. 57–58). He therefore claims that conservationists, social scientists and development advisors should take the role of advisor in order to assist indigenous managers to navigate the global market, rather than act as directors themselves. Likewise, I regard my role as a facilitator advocating for a cultural landscape approach to empower the Bandanese community in managing *their* natural and cultural assets. Through this approach, provincial, national, and international stakeholders can provide the funds, tools, and vocabulary to enact local management goals into policy.

In an effort to address the issues as raised by Colchester and like-minded scholars, the global trendsetter in conservation policy, UNESCO, adopted the concept of cultural landscapes as a legitimate category for the World Heritage List in 1992 (UNESCO, 2017). This action increased the interest in defining heritage places as cultural landscapes, which are created through the interaction of humans with their environment. By acknowledging the active role people play in the management and valuation of cultural landscapes, the implementation of cultural landscapes also increased recognition of the values created by local communities and indigenous people (Rössler, 2005, p. 40). In other words, because of the validation of the concept of cultural landscape by UNESCO, communities currently have a legal precedent to refer to in their efforts to protect their sacred or valued landscape.

Cultural landscapes, a central focus of this research, offer an approach that empowers local communities to manage their heritage by transcending the modernist dichotomy between culture and nature, recognizing the ongoing dialogue between these aspects. Defined by UNESCO as "combined works of nature and man" (World Heritage Convention, 1972), cultural landscapes illustrate the evolution of human society and settlement, shaped by both natural and social forces over time. This definition emphasizes their dynamic, non-static nature, acknowledging the continuous process of human-environment interaction and the fluidity of heritage, also known as the *living heritage approach* (Poulios, 2014). Cultural landscapes, therefore, are not static products but evolving processes, allowing for more sustainable, community-driven heritage management and offering opportunities for contemporary reinterpretation. By framing heritage as an ongoing process, this approach allows for multiple narratives to coexist and ensures that heritage sites maintain their relevance and use-value in the present, rather than being frozen in a single historical moment.

The concept of cultural landscapes has particular traction in Indonesia, where the word *saujana* embodies the interconnectedness between culture and nature. This

concept is prominently addressed in the Indonesia Heritage Charter from 2003, whose first preamble describes the heritage of Indonesia as "the legacy of nature, culture, and *saujana*, the weave of the two" (ICOMOS, 2003, Line 1). This concept has been particularly applied to the Bali cultural landscape, which encompasses the traditional water management system called *subak* and its philosophical and religious implications. In 2012, this cultural landscape was enlisted on the UNESCO World Heritage List after a lengthy process.[10] Since then, the site has not only been used as a prime example of cultural landscapes within heritage studies but also functions within the World Heritage office of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture as a cautionary tale. Former head of this department, Yunus Arbi, emphasized that the implementation of cultural landscapes can be an effective tool in Indonesia, as it can be used to empower local communities in the management of the heritage landscapes, rather than implement a top-down management of an enclosed heritage site.[11] However, he cautions that the cultural landscape approach needs to be legalized and implemented at an early stage in order for sustainable management through effective local empowerment to thrive.

To anticipate the early implementation of this inclusive approach and smoothen the process to nominate potential World Heritage sites, the Ministry of Education and Culture revisited their Tentative List in 2014. During this meeting, the Banda Islands archipelago was re-designated as a cultural landscape heritage site, and following this new designation, it was re-listed on the Tentative List in 2015.[12] In preparation for the reframing of the site, local, provincial, and national stakeholders agreed that the main focus of the heritage narrative should be the maritime history and culture of the Banda Islands.[13] By presenting the archipelago as a trading center and ecological treasure house, the nomination not only encompass both the natural and cultural heritage values, but it also mediates the negative colonial history of the islands. Moreover, it tied in with the political ambitions of the previous Indonesian president Joko Widodo, whose focus was to develop the maritime strengths of Indonesia.

The development of an Indonesian identity is closely related to the selection, preservation and promotion of certain heritage sites. Heritage is thus not only used to strengthen an internal historical narrative, but also to portray the country in a certain way to the outside world through tourism. These efforts are connected to the national awakening in the early 20th century and further reiterated during Suharto's authoritarian regime in the New Order era (1966–1998), which was followed by democratic reform until the present day (Sidi, 2020, pp. 74–75). Many monuments commemorate the recent history of resistance against Dutch colonialism as a defining historical moment that connects the entire Indonesian archipelago. Alongside creating unity through this history, there is an acknowledgment and celebration of the rich cultural diversity in the archipelago. In Chapter 5 I will discuss these political motives for the focus on certain histories and heritages in further detail.

Methodology and positionality

The research presented in this book is rooted in the experiences, observations, and interactions I had while conducting fieldwork in Indonesia and the Netherlands.

Research is not created in a vacuum, but rather informed by the researcher's position and cocreated with the people they engage with. Throughout my work, I aim to be transparent about the dialogical processes, which generated this research. For example, the start of my research was strongly influenced by Tanya des Alwi, who requested assistance from Rutgers University to nominate the Banda Islands for the UNESCO World Heritage List. Her father, Des Alwi, was a powerful figure on the Banda Islands, and she wanted to continue his legacy to preserve and promote the heritage of the islands. Through her personal and political network, many doors opened during the first visits of my fieldwork. However, it reinforced my position as an academic outsider, and it was not until I became inseparable with my assistant Ayu and resided in the guesthouse of Ibu Vera in a non-touristic neighborhood that I was able to step outside of the bubble. During my doctoral studies, I was able to visit the Banda Islands seven times in the period of late 2014–2019.[14] After my PhD defense and the COVID pandemic, I have been able to return to the islands in 2023 with the facsimile of the *Hikayat Lonthoir* and in 2024 to contribute to the archaeological field school led by Peter Lape.

My positionality[15] as a Dutch female researcher from a well-regarded American university had both its advantages and challenges. On the one hand, my background allowed me to engage with a wide range of political agencies and participate in events that might have been inaccessible to local individuals. On the other hand, my nationality may have shaped responses regarding the Dutch colonial past. Interestingly, during my time in the Maluku province of Indonesia, my Dutch nationality often served as a point of connection rather than a source of tension; many locals have (distant) family in the Netherlands, the local language contains many Dutch words, and the tourism industry benefits from Dutch visitors. These points often sparked meaningful conversations and opened doors for further engagement. However, they did not seem to hesitate using words like "genocide" when discussing the violent Dutch invasion in the Banda Islands, and they were very clear about their dislike of Jan Pieterszoon Coen.[16] When I asked about their attitude, they answered that atrocities "happened a long time ago" and that current Dutch visitors are nice and bring in money through tourism. The dislike for Dutch colonialism thus appears separate from the benefits derived from Dutch connections nowadays.

Throughout the fieldwork periods, I spent considerable time familiarizing myself with the local customs, building relationships with various members of the local community, and having informal conversations near heritage sites. However, the danger of ethnographic work remains the unequal power relation between researcher and informant (Fabian & Bunzl, 2002). It is essential to acknowledge that research is dialogical, that research data is created through the interchange of researcher and informant – influenced by the researcher's positionality as well as the informants' expectations. For example, my research was mostly conducted on the island Neira, which is the most frequently visited island in the archipelago by foreigners and government officials. Therefore, my informants have been exposed more to modern ideas of management and tourism than residents on the other islands. I therefore acknowledge that both my positionality and the geographical focus on Neira may have affected the contents of this research.

Participant observation was a core methodology used during the fieldwork, with an emphasis on active listening (Jorgensen, 2020; Winter & Lavis, 2020). However, due to my position as an academic, I was confronted on multiple occasions with the imposed role as the expert – while the local people were regarded as "non-experts". One moment that remains particularly vivid underscored this dynamic. During a conversation with a high-ranking Indonesian officer, I was asked to identify the heritage values of the Banda Islands. I responded that they needed to ask the community members, not me. All I can say is what I have learned from them. To this, the officer replied that they wanted my answer because I am the expert. Moments like these kept arising, as I was given a platform to speak (or a seat at the table) where local people would not have access. Moreover, community members literally started asking me to use my position to represent their interests. Therefore, although I do not (want to) claim the position of an expert, I have been using my position and privileges to act as a facilitator to raise their concerns.

During my fieldwork I met with local, provincial, national, and international stakeholders concerned with the heritage on the Banda Islands. I selected persons with representative functions for my targeted interviews, and during my stay I used the snowball-technique to identify other Bandanese that were pointed out to me as having particular knowledge or opinions about heritage on Banda. In the end, I conducted formal interviews with *kepala desa*s, *kepala adat*s, teachers, students, leaders of the fisherman cooperation, tourism facilitators, Bandanese residents, and local historians. Besides these interviews with residents of the Banda Islands, I conducted interviews with the Bandanese diaspora living in Banda Suli on Ambon and the traditional leaders of the village Banda Ely on the Kei Islands. Moreover, I conducted interviews with the leaders of the archaeological center in Ternate and Ambon. Both of these institutions are actively engaged in the management of the heritage resources on the Banda Islands. Lastly, I conducted formal and informal interviews with the president and vice-president of the UNESCO office in Jakarta and the leaders and policymakers of the World Heritage office in the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Besides the targeted interviews, I engaged with the local community through participant observation while staying on the island Banda Neira. While residing with a small family in a residential area, I was introduced to the neighbors and family friends and included in social gatherings such as weddings, funeral prayers, breaking of the fast during Ramadan, prayers to bless people going on pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), a bachelorette evening to prepare the bride for the wedding, and a celebration for children who had finished their initial studies of the Quran (*Khatamal Qu'ran*). Observing these religious events was insightful as religion plays a central role in the lives of the Bandanese residents and therefore informs their interpretation of their cultural history and natural environment. Islam is not only a central part of contemporary life, but it also acts as a red thread in the oral history and traditions of the Bandanese. As the anthropologist Phillip Winn explains, the Bandanese people believe that God made the Banda Islands a blessed land (Winn, 2005). During my own fieldwork I collected similar testimonies, such as the conviction that God gave the Bandanese nutmeg to profit from, and now that the price

of nutmeg has dropped, God has sent tuna for them to catch and sell.[17] Besides intimate family gatherings, I was invited to be an observer of the ritual *adat* practices at several *desa adat*s, including the opening ceremonies of the *desa adat*s that enable the performance of the *Cakalele* dance and the opening and closing of the *sasi*-restrictions.[18]

Participant observation was crucial to understanding the cultural landscape of the Banda Islands, as it allowed me to access cultural events by building relationships and demonstrating my goodwill through assistance where possible. As Denis Byrne argues, "[w]hen faced with a landscape of others, we traveling archaeologists need to ask whether we maintain a scholarly distance or allow ourselves to be drawn in subjectively and emotionally" (Byrne, 2009, p. xii). In my case, it was impossible to gain an understanding of the cultural landscape and *adat* without letting myself be drawn in. This active participation was requested on several occasions, as people would ask me "Do you believe?" before describing the rituals, sacred places, oral histories or showing me the ritual house and its objects.

My answer to the question was always "yes", accompanied by the visible goosebumps on my arms—an embodied testament to my honesty and vulnerability. Acknowledging this emotional subjectivity might be regarded as unacademic by some, however, it allowed me as a researcher to engage with modes of knowledge that were (and are) beyond my Western academic upbringing. Feminist Tiffany Page has coined the term "vulnerable writing", pertaining to researchers who are willing to engage with modalities of not-knowing (Page, 2017, p. 14).[19] Particular in the case of (historical) knowledge production in a transnational context, the acknowledgement of our own fragility can expose the fragility of knowledge production and open up new avenues of knowledge through the embrace of uncertainties.

In addition to my participant observation in the Banda Islands, I have actively engaged with the local community through participative practices, including community mapping and cocreating museum exhibits. After my doctoral defense, I organized an online roundtable series with an international working group to raise awareness in 2021 about the Bandanese Genocide (Glow, 2019). This series led to an effort to reconnect the current Bandanese residents and the Bandanese people on the Kei Islands who left the islands in 1621. In 2020, the photography exhibition *I Love Banda* by Isabelle Boon in the National Maritime Museum in Amsterdam led to the rediscovery of a century-old manuscript from the Banda Islands. I was funded to make this document, the *Hikayat Lonthoir*, more accessible through transcription and English summaries, on the promise that the museum would create facsimiles that I would bring to the various Bandanese communities. The research and reception of the *Hikayat* has been a major influence for this book. Moreover, it motivated activities during the archaeological fieldschool led by Peter Lape, including excavations on sites mentioned in the Hikayat as well as the support of the creation of a mini-museum in Lonthoir.

Chapter outline

This introduction aimed to sketch the theoretical and methodological context for this book, which presents the research that I have conducted about heritage in the

Banda Islands. This book is further divided as a triptych, each part with an overarching argument that is developed over three chapters.

Part 1 describes the histories of the Banda Islands in three chapters, one focused on the precolonial history, the second on the colonial occupation, and the third on its recent history. The aim is to innovate the way in which the history of the Banda Islands is presented and narrated, as it centralizes the Bandanese heroes and communities as the main actors, rather than the European traders and colonists. From this bottom-up perspective, this section unravels the history of the Banda Islands from the flood of Noah as described in non-European historical sources such as the *Hikayat Lonthoir* until the current local ambition to become a UNESCO World Heritage site. The focus lies on the historical events and stories that are of importance to the Bandanese peoples and thus continue to inform heritage and tourism practices.

Chapter 1 deals with the legendary past of the Banda Islands (up to 1620). This chapter is based on the *Hikayat Lonthoir* as well as the knowledge that is retained by a *Banda asli* community on the Kei Islands who left the islands during the Bandanese Genocide. These stories start at the Flood of Noah, describe the birth of 7 legendary siblings, the journey to Mecca and introduction of Islam, the exchange with the Majapahit kingdom, and the exchanges with European merchants. Chapter 2 describes the Verhoeven Ambush (1609) and the Bandanese Massacre (1621) and sketches the main events during Dutch occupation. This chapter will draw more from European sources; however, through a decolonial reading and with the use of oral histories, I will aim to describe this time period in such a way as it has impacted the Bandanese society. I will describe the implementation of the *perken* system, on which enslaved peoples worked for Dutch *perkeniers* to produce spices. The third chapter deals with the Independence War up until the present times, for which I will rely on the memoirs of Des Alwi, a prominent Bandanese businessman and history enthusiast. During the Second World War, several prominent Indonesian revolutionaries were exiled to the Banda Islands by the Dutch colonial government. Most prominent among them is Mohammad Hatta, Indonesia's first vice-president, who adopted Des Alwi and his siblings. Thus, Des Alwi's first-hand account provides a local perspective of the war-time and the developments after the war when he aimed to restore the cultural heritage on the Banda Islands using his political network. His family are still influential and supporters of the UNESCO World Heritage nomination of the Banda Islands to preserve their cultural and natural heritage.

After sketching the history of the Banda Islands, the second part of this book will focus on the cultural landscape approach and the Banda Islands as a cultural landscape. In this part, I will first discuss in depth the theoretical framework of the cultural landscapes as a non-Eurocentric cultural heritage approach. As it was adopted by heritage scholars to defy the culture-nature divide in heritage management, it particularly resonates well with non-Western approaches to heritage as a holistic approach that embraces the tangible and intangible elements of a heritage site, as well as the natural and cultural aspects. Moreover, it supports the stewardship of local communities as it acknowledges that heritage cannot be frozen in time but needs to be able to change alongside its community. Chapter 5 elaborates on heritage management in Indonesia, and how the Banda Islands fit within the national political

scheme. Chapter 6 applies these concepts to the case study of the Banda Islands. I will discuss several ways in which the heritage is currently managed and the local aspirations for the future of Bandanese heritage management in the face of a World Heritage nomination. I will argue that the cultural landscape approach allows for the heritages of the Banda Islands to be described in all their complexity, emphasizing the local meaning-making of places and showcasing the entanglements of nature-culture, tangible-intangible elements, and the past–present.

The third part will build upon the first two parts in order to focus on one heritage site in particular: Fort Nassau. Chapter 7 delves into the history of this colonial fort, exploring not only the brutal events of the Bandanese Massacre but also its long and varied history, including its functions and meanings from its construction to the present day. After describing the historical importance, Chapter 8 will present the significance of the site through its sensorial, social, military, and natural landscapes. Building upon Part 2 of this book, this chapter situates Fort Nassau within the larger cultural landscape. Chapter 9 will discuss the ongoing restoration and meaning-making activities at Fort Nassau, as a symbol of Bandanese resistance and resilience.

The three parts build up to the conclusion, in which I argue for a bottom-up approach to heritage management by adopting a cultural landscape framework for the Banda Islands. Moreover, I call for the potential to disrupt Eurocentric practices of heritage management and historical narratives of this archipelago through polyvocality in an effort to empower local communities and their perspectives.

Notes

1 In the original Dutch text, the word *Maatschappij* is used, which I translated into Society.
2 In the original Dutch text, the word *Oosterlanden* is used, which I translated into Lands of the East.
3 Inquiries among fellow researchers of this archipelago merely showed that there was an interest in the manuscript, but that the whereabouts were unknown (Kaartinen, 2013; Lape, 2000; Manuhutu, 2000)
4 An example of how they implement this vision is the workshop titled "Enhancing Community Engagement in the Conservation and Management of the World Heritage site of Sangiran Early Man Site", which was organized together with UNESCO delegates on May 9 and 10, 2017. The objective of this workshop was to equip the participating representatives of the local community with knowledge of the current UNESCO nomination dossier, the reasons for the protection of the site and how the community could benefit by taking part in the conservation. The aim was to encourage them to be more involved, and at the end of the workshop the participants were expected to provide recommendations on how to improve the draft of the heritage management plan for the Sangiran Early Man site to engage the community further.
5 See van de Logt (2018, 6–11) for an overview of the skepticism regarding the historical value of oral traditions since the 19th century.
6 The move toward acknowledging traditional sources of knowledges is a big theme within (critical) heritage studies, a field that has been embracing immaterial heritages and traditional practices in an effort to counteract (colonial) institutionalized structures. See, for example, Byrne (1991), Smith (2010), Harrison (2012).

7 See, for example, the debate surrounding the Kennewick man between Western science and Native American knowledge traditions (Thomas 2002).
8 *Jetztzeit* is also translated as "here-and-now" (Benjamin 2005, sec. XIV) and the "now-time" (Benjamin 2006, 395).
9 Regarding my own positionality, as a first-generation white Dutch woman from a small rural village, my research is guided by my desire to empower the voices of marginalized groups including lower-class and local communities.
10 Y. Arbi, personal communication, January 2, 2020; UNESCO, 2012.
11 Y. Arbi, personal communication, January 2, 2020.
12 UNESCO (2015).
13 Fieldnotes 2014, 2015.
14 My fieldwork comprised seven visits to the Banda Islands, a total of 128 days in the Banda archipelago and 201 days in Indonesia. This research consisted of both participant observation and targeted interviews, which were conducted with an exemption by the Rutgers' Institutional Review Board, on the premise that the information gathered during my fieldwork would be published anonymously. No names of my informants are therefore mentioned, unless I use their statements which already have been published elsewhere. I have made one exception for Yunus Arbi, who sent me a letter containing information we discussed during my fieldwork, and who has given me explicit permission to use this information.
15 I acknowledge that research is a dialogical process and that my personal background influences the research results. As Qin explains: "[…] positionality is the practice of a researcher delineating his or her own position in relation to the study, with the implication that this position may influence aspects of the study, such as the data collected or the way in which it is interpreted" (Qin, 2016).
16 Also known as the "Butcher of Banda" – the general who ordered the massacre of 44 village leaders at Fort Nassau, and subsequently raided the islands, killed or enslaved and deported the peoples until the islands were almost depopulated.
17 Fieldnotes June 5, 2016.
18 *Adat* and *Sasi* will be discussed at length in Chapter 6.
19 My thanks goes to Vinícius Borges Garcia Fonseca who introduced me to this term during the Public History Summerschool in Wroclaw, 2025.

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Introduction

"This is surely a blessing from above!" exclaimed Hilmar Farid, Director General of Culture in Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia at the opening of the first International Conference on Banda Studies organized by the University of Banda Naira. After six weeks of drought, heavy rains are pounding on the roof of Rumah Makatita – formerly known as the Oude Harmonie on the island Banda Neira. This former colonial building was the central location for the conference on the Banda Islands. Researchers from around the world came together from a wide range of disciplines to discuss these special islands: arts, history, anthropology, archaeology, marine science, and more. The conference is one of the signs of a renewed interest in the Banda Islands, alongside the revived efforts to nominate it as a World Heritage site and the bestseller *The Nutmeg's Curse* by Amitav Ghosh (Ghosh, 2021).

The Banda Islands as a particularly blessed land is a recurring feature for all who visit and study this remote archipelago in the Maluku province of the Republic of Indonesia. They are a central axis within the so-called Spice Islands: the native source for the spices nutmeg and mace. As such, they developed into a flourishing intercultural multireligious trade hub for inter-Asian trade. When European merchants arrived, they were adopted within the existing system and the Bandanese peoples therefore resisted the claim of the Dutch East India Company to impose a monopoly on the trade of their spices. Their resistance led to the Bandanese Genocide, however the Bandanese society has been resilient, and their cultural traditions continue to this day.

This book aims to describe the complexity and polyvocality of the histories and heritages of these islands. The plurality lies in the multitude of human stakeholders who lay claim to its interpretation and narration, as well as the more-than-human agents who continue to influence the landscape and society. In order to acknowledge this complex web of meanings and its ability to be in constant flux, I will argue for an interpretation of the Banda Islands as a cultural landscape. As such, both the natural and cultural, the tangible and intangible, and the human and more-than-human elements can be acknowledged as vital parts of this heritage. Through the specific example of Fort Nassau, the site of the Bandanese Massacre, I will attest that even such violent colonial sites can play a role in empowering the local community in their efforts toward cultural preservation and support their perspective of the past.

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This book will present the findings from my doctoral research about the cultural heritage management of Fort Nassau on the Banda Islands (2020) as well as insights gained from the contents of the manuscript *Hikayat Lonthoir*, which I transcribed for the National Maritime Museum in Amsterdam (2021), and (archaeological) fieldwork conducted together with Peter Lape at locations from this manuscript (2024). Contrary to previous works about the Banda Islands, which were written from a primarily Eurocentric perspective, I will use my research to center the local approach and narratives on their the cultural heritage and history.

About matters of history

The first part of this book is devoted to the histories of the Banda Islands. I am using the plural form for histories, as I believe that the reality of the past is complex in its many facets and perspectives. Regretfully, dominant historical narratives have overtaken the representation of the past through a simplified version from a singular (white Eurocentric male) perspective. The development of postcolonial criticism has largely contributed to an understanding that history (as we have known it) is a construction based on patriarchal, elitist (colonial) structures, which also influences our approach and understanding of cultural heritage. Acknowledging that the past exists in multiple shades, rather than a dichotomy of fact and fiction, creates a challenge for every discipline dealing with history. Rather than regarding polyvocalities as a challenge to the scientific basis of history, I attest that embracing those uncertainties in the historical narrative opens the way toward a more inclusive representation of the past and more inclusive heritage management approaches (Van Donkersgoed, 2024).

In the past as well as the present, the history of the Banda Islands is often utilized to either justify or criticize the Dutch colonial presence in the archipelago. Therefore, the history of the Banda Islands is often recollected from the perspective of the colonizer and not from the perspective of the colonized community. In the case of Indonesia, this power imbalance is described in the work by Regis Stella on the representation of the people of Papua New Guinea as follows:

> But while there are competing representations, and each culture has its own representational modes, it is the representations produced by members of politically powerful, dominant groups that become accepted as 'true'.
>
> (Stella, 2007, p. 2)

As such, the history of the Banda Islands as it is told and visualized by the former colonizers and other European traders is considered "true". This colonial power dynamic and perspective still informs how the local, national, and international publics regard history and value the past. Consequently, the contemporary view of Bandanese history is based on historical accounts that were written by Dutch colonials. As Ann Stoler wrote: "Dutch colonial archival documents serve less as stories for a colonial history than as active, generative substances with histories, as

documents with itineraries of their own" (Stoler, 2009, p. 1). In other words, many of these documents were written to exalt the Dutch occupation of the Banda Islands and justify their presence there.

Based on these biased historical presentations, historical sites are assessed to determine whether they can be designated as heritage. Therefore, despite the problematic nature of many historical accounts, I will utilize these colonial narrations to describe historical events since these continue to be used to argue for heritage values on the Banda Islands. However, I will also use other sources to amplify the polyvocality of Bandanese history and heritage and place local voices at the forefront. Moreover, I focus especially on those events that are of importance to the Bandanese community nowadays, as it is from this history and its continuing cultural practices that they derive their pride and sense of belonging.

Since these histories are instilled with a (political) agenda, it is nearly impossible to write about the history of the Banda Islands in an objective manner. Indonesian scholar Muhammad Farid described the Bandanese history as scattered glass pieces, *sejarah yang berserak*, which must be gathered and pieced together in order to get a complete impression of the past (Farid, 2017). In his article concerning the modern retelling of the Bandanese history, he argues that no particular source of history should be given superiority, as this leads to conflict and sorrow. He rather argues that people should gather the various stories and listen to each version with patience and maturity. As there is no perfect representation of the past of the Banda Islands, he argues that the information from older people should be used alongside historical sources and modern tales to retell the history in our modern time. Thus, acknowledging that histories are plural allows for the space to embrace other notions of historical knowledge.

Heritage sites derive their value from both historical accounts and contemporary narratives, shaped by multiple agents who construct and reinterpret history to serve specific audiences. Russell Staiff highlights how heritage is socially constructed through stories that blend historical facts, local narrations, and national agendas, emphasizing that "[…] the use of stories to interpret underscores the social nature of all heritage(s)" (Staiff, 2014, p. 96). This social nature suggests that heritage evolves alongside societal needs and power structures, aligning with the principles of public history, where history is seen as a form of knowledge shaped by various actors within their historical and cultural contexts (Keane, 2017). Similarly, Nancy Florida (1995) examines how Javanese writers were conscious of the fact that they were writing within the context of their present, and each time a text is read, a text obtains a new interpretation and therefore a new meaning (Florida, 1995, pp. 396–399). Just as past writings continue to influence the present, heritage narratives are continually revisited, reinterpreted, and rewritten to reflect contemporary values. This book builds on these ideas, arguing that heritage sites and cultural landscapes are inherently dynamic, with their meanings adapting as society evolves.

Therefore, heritage values are not determined in a vacuum but informed by prior research. Past interpretations of Bandanese history and heritage not only inform national and international (academic) audiences but also instruct the current

Bandanese residents to think about history and their heritage in a particular way. This section therefore gives an overview of previous publications that have a special focus on the Banda Islands. Particular consideration is given to those that are currently widely read and therefore play an active role in the formation of the historical narrative that is being told about the Banda Islands. This includes research from the fields of history, anthropology, linguistics, and non-academic sources such as memoirs and popular history books.

The most referenced Dutch historical account of the Banda Islands was written by Francois Valentijn in 1856. His massive five-volume series called *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* includes descriptions of several areas in contemporary Indonesia, Japan, China, Mauritius, and South Africa (Valentijn, 1858). The illustration on the title page of the first volume is a good visualization of the perspective in which this account of the Banda Islands is written. The print depicts the personification of Society[1] as a white woman guarded by the Dutch lion, surrounded by representations of the Lands of the East,[2] who are offering their treasures to the enthroned lady. According to the accompanying text, the lion of the Netherlands is there to attack anyone who dares to disturb her trade. This image alludes to the perspective of the writer, as he wrote the historical account with the aim of justifying the position of the Dutch colonizers in their eastern territories. Although his account is historically biased, Valentijn provides valuable information in his detailed descriptions of the Banda Islands, its historical sites, the history, and its people.

In fact, most publications about the history of the Banda Islands were written from the perspective of the Dutch colonizer and emphasized their part – history literally starts at the arrival of European traders. A prime example is the historical narrative by Willard Hanna (Hanna, 1978). As the primary English-written account about the full Bandanese history, this book was reprinted and edited by Des Alwi in 1991 and consequently widely distributed among the residents and visitors of the Banda Islands (Hanna, 1991). Besides the importance of his work in the current historical perception of the Banda Islands, Hanna's work is significant as it also deals with more recent episodes of history, including the lives of the plantation owners, the exile of revolutionary leaders Mohammad Hatta and Sutan Sjahrir to the Banda Islands, the Second World War and its (after)effects on the Bandanese community and heritage, the revival of heritage by Des Alwi, and the state of affairs during the late 1970s.

Besides the widely read and quoted works of Valentijn and Hanna, this book draws upon more recent work by an interdisciplinary group of scholars. First is the archaeologist Peter Lape, who started his career by researching the arrival of Islam on the Banda Islands through a series of excavations (Lape, 2000, 2005; Peterson & Lape, 2015). Another major work involving the Banda Islands was written by Roy Ellen, who focused on the social organization of the Moluccan trading network including the role the Banda Islands played in the circulation of the spices nutmeg and mace (Ellen, 2003). More important for the understanding of the *adat* and current social practices on the Banda Islands is the research by anthropologist Phillip Winn (Winn, 1999, 2005, 2010, 2014). The main difference between his work and my research is that his fieldwork was mostly conducted on the island Banda Besar,

where the village Lonthoir is located, and he described the role of heritage during the time that the prominent influencer Des Alwi was still alive. His findings, therefore, differ slightly from the information I gathered since my fieldwork was mainly conducted on Banda Neira and after the death of Des Alwi. For the continuing Bandanese practices of the Bandanese diaspora on the Kei Islands, I have relied on the work by anthropological linguist Timo Kaartinen (Kaartinen, 2010, 2013). Most recently, Amritav Gosh's bestseller has brought renewed attention to the Banda Islands (Ghosh, 2021). His work on the more-than-human agency of nutmeg has placed the Banda Islands within a global and environmental context.

On the Banda Islands, an important reference work is the collection of books by Des Alwi. One of his historical works, Sejarah: Banda Naira, draws from his study of Dutch historical accounts as well as oral history (Alwi & Farid, 2006). Written in Indonesian, this account is widely read by the Bandanese residents and distributed throughout the Indonesian archipelago. Alongside this book, he has authored several books with his memoirs, which describe his youth on the Banda Islands, the arrival of the revolutionaries Mohammad Hatta and Sutan Sjahrir, and the Japanese occupation (Alwi, 2008, 2010). Although the memoirs of Des Alwi were edited by Barbara Harvey, they retain an anecdotal style that informs the reader about Des Alwi's personal memories and the stories he collected throughout his lifetime.

The tradition of oral histories is strong within the Moluccas, which is a fluid way of transmitting knowledge about the past that is dependent on the listener as well as the narrator, the chosen subject, and the location (Farid & Sadée, 2023, p. 301). While being exiled on the Banda Islands, nationalist Sjahrir enjoyed listening to the stories told by an old fisherman (Sjahrir, 1949, pp. 153–154). He explained that most of the lore and legend originated from Lonthoir, which was the main hub before the Europeans moved the center to Neira. He writes that they kept written chronicles in a book (referred to as *Hikayat*) that was regarded as sacred, only to be read from during celebrations. Thus, the stories of Lonthoir were known throughout the islands, as they had been passed on orally. According to Sjahrir, these stories were regarded as the history of the islands – not as lore or myth, and they were connected to the strong *adat* (customary law) that persisted in the community. In 1922, one of the traditional leaders of the village of Lonthoir, Mohammad Saleh Neirabatij, compiled a selection of these sacred stories to be transcribed by a copyist. These stories represent the surviving fragments of the original *Hikayat* and likely include narratives chosen for a general (European) audience. He titled this document *Hikayat Lonthoir*, and it narrates the history of the islands from the time of Noah's flood until the Dutch colonial era.

Until recently, the manuscript was considered lost among academics, and its contents were only known through the biased summaries by Ph. Van Ronkel (van Ronkel, 1945). From the onset, Van Ronkel attacks the importance of this manuscript and relegates it to the realm of unreliable myths (van Ronkel, 1945, p. 123). Furthermore, he describes that the 84-page folioformat was written with "would-be literary sophistication" (van Ronkel, 1945, p. 124) in a mix of high Malay, low Malay, Bible Malay, Spanish, Portuguese, and Moluccan phrases and words. Van Ronkel describes the style and content of the *Hikayat Lonthoir* in derogatory terms,

aimed to discredit the writer and describe the manuscript as a curiosity rather than a valuable insight and source providing a local perspective. The biases that led to the translation and summary of the *Hikayat* become particularly clear after he has summarized the narration about the origins of the islands from the time of Noah and the birth of the legendary siblings. He wrote:

> It continues with the internal history of the little kingdoms of the islands, which is not that interesting for *us* but which is of course very important for the inhabitants of those lands. […] While reading, *we* feel the need for variation, something new, despite how important those uniformly described events may have been for the community concerned. Well, the new thing is about to happen: the arrival of the Portuguese!
>
> (emphasis added: Van Ronkel, 1945, p. 128)

Not only does Van Ronkel juxtapose himself and his (white) reader audience with the Bandanese peoples by using words like "us" and "we", but he also assumes that his audience will have the same attitude toward the local history of the islands: that it is negligible and should be dismissed as mere myth and legends. On top of that, he points out (with an enthusiastic exclamation mark) when the manuscript becomes interesting for him (and his supposed audience): with the arrival of the first Europeans. Despite its limited content, Van Ronkel's article has been of interest to a myriad of researchers and generated interest in the original.[3]

Based on the information provided in van Ronkel's article, Hans Straver has published his analysis of the rationale for the *Hikayat Lonthoir* by comparing it to a Dutch romanticized poem about Egeron and Adeka set in Banda Neira (Straver, 2016). He deduced, based on the ill depiction of the Portuguese and the favorable historical alliance between the Dutch and Lontor (Lonthoir), that this manuscript was written to enforce the position of the village Lonthoir as a loyal subject under Dutch rule (Straver, 2016, p. 17). He argues that this contradicts historical colonial documents, which claim that Lontor fiercely resisted the Dutch conquest for a monopoly on nutmeg. I want to note though that it is difficult to disentangle these Dutch colonial accounts, since the name Lontor (or Lonthoir) can either refer to the village or to the entire island Banda Besar, which contained many more (rivaling) villages. For example, the Bandanese peoples who left Banda Besar in 1621 and settled in the Kei Islands – known as the original Bandanese, *Banda asli* – were part of the opposition against the Dutch intrusion.

Throughout my doctoral research on local heritage management and interpretation in the Banda Islands, I sought to locate this manuscript as a counterbalance to the many colonial documents on the archipelago's history. It was not until late 2020, during preparations for the *I Love Banda* photo exhibit by Isabelle Boon at the National Maritime Museum in Amsterdam, that curator Diederick Wildeman recalled an uncatalogued manuscript in the Warnsinck collection related to the Banda Islands (Boon, 2019, 2021). With the museum's support, I transcribed the text into modern Indonesian and wrote English summaries to raise awareness about this historical source, empower the Bandanese perspective, and foster

broader discussions (Het Scheepvaartmuseum, 2021). The transcribed version has since been reworked into a digital and limited printed form by Amalia Pulungan (Neirabatij 2021).

Recent provenance research reveals that this manuscript was part of a series of written accounts for a European audience and was gifted to Professor Warnsinck in 1926, four years after Neirabatij signed it (Wildeman, 2021).

While analyzing the manuscript, it struck me that from this 84-page folio, only 14 pages were set during the times of European presence. The focus of the manuscript is therefore on the islands' history and their protagonists, aiming to gain recognition for its long history that had been narrated from generation to generation by forcibly writing it down in a format that could be recognized by the colonizer (van Donkersgoed, 2023). I use the word "forcibly", since the writing style indicates that the *Hikayat Lonthoir* contains the local narratives that had been passed on by spoken rather than written word. The unease to fit their narrated past within the European conception of history is clear from the sparse mention of dates in the document. The only moments when dates are mentioned are within those pages about the interactions with European agents – otherwise, the time indications are relative ("in the time when a legendary person lived"). Van Ronkel speculates that the original narration of the stories was in Arabic, and that this prose was modernized and translated into plain Malay in order to be understandable for Neirabatij's (colonial) superior. He calls this "*an act of talking down to a white man*" (van Ronkel, 1945, p. 130). In short, the manuscript can be understood as an act to transform the rich oral history of the islands into a more understandable (or acceptable) form for the colonial reader. Therefore, I argue that, rather than devaluating the *Hikayat Lonthoir* as "false" for its historical inaccuracies or literary inconsistency, this manuscript provides us with an insight into how the Bandanese author wanted their islands to be represented in history (van Donkersgoed, 2023; Van Donkersgoed, 2024).

Moreover, it is important to note that the text was written during Dutch colonial rule and that Neirabatij (may) have had to censor his narration of the atrocities that had been committed by the Dutch colonists against the Bandanese people. Especially if the manuscript was indeed to strengthen their ties to Dutch colonial government officials, as Straver asserts (Straver, 2016, p. 17). The hesitation to emphasize the violent acts of the Dutch against the Bandanese is clear since only 14% of the *Hikayat* is set during colonial rule and the Dutch actors are described in less detail. For example, throughout the text, the Dutch Governor Generals are described as "Coen", while the historical events described span a longer timespan than his presence on the islands. The lack of dedication assigned to identify the various Dutch agents is contrary to the need to identify each individual local actor, which affirms that the manuscript was written to centralize them and not the Dutch, who appear as a conglomerate Other.

Thus, the importance of the *Hikayat* lies not in its historical accuracy, which is a debatable concept for any historical source, as every document is produced with a certain agenda and objective in mind. Rather, its importance lies in the stories that are told from a local perspective, and the insights it provides into what elements

are important to them. For example, a noticeable feature of the document is its emphasis on the Islamic religion, its arrival on the islands, and how it has shaped society. As such, I believe that the *Hikayat* offers a multitude of different directions of inquiries and studies, such as religion (arrival of Islam to Maluku), history of enslavement (story about Agastoe), and women's history (female heroines Cilu Bintang, who ordered Islam to be spread, Boij Tamang, and Boij Ratan). It also offers a way to narrate the history of the Banda Islands from a local perspective, describe their ties to nature, and assess how cultural traditions have been resilient against colonial rule (van Donkersgoed & Farid, 2022). It is my hope that the digitally available Indonesian transliteration and the English summary in this book will contribute to a renewed (scholarly) interest in the cultural and religious history of the Banda Islands.

Plurality of the Bandanese peoples

Besides the local community, who deem certain sites of local, cultural, or historical importance, the designation of heritage is a process that involves a wide variety of agents who articulate what the heritage values are. These acts of defining the heritage value of a place are a constant process that develops to suit the needs of the social, cultural, natural, and economic environment in which heritage is located. This research discusses the various heritage values that designate Fort Nassau and the Banda Islands as a heritage site. These values are maintained by the local community, and together with historical documents, these inform the provincial and (inter)national stakeholders to create a certain image for the heritage site with an aim to increase tourism.

The notion of a stakeholder was initially introduced in heritage management identify and involve those people who are concerned with the heritage at stake. (Rico, 2017, p. 38). However, as Trinidad Rico argues, the act of identifying a stakeholder is an act of creating the stakeholder, delimitating who is and who is not included in the conversation about how, why, and whether a site or cultural practice should be preserved. The act of identifying stakeholders, therefore, is an important step toward discovering how and by whom heritage value is constructed, as well as for which purpose these values are appreciated by diverse agents. Besides this aspect of gaining knowledge about this process, these stakeholders (albeit variably) influenced how heritage was managed in the past, how it is presented in the present, and how it will continue to be used in the future.

Rather than talking about stakeholders, the term "community" is often used to describe people who have a particular local interest. The ambiguous nature of the term "community" has been well-researched by Benedict Anderson, who describes that:

> […] all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.
>
> (Anderson, 2006, p. 6)

When I refer to the local Bandanese community, I use it as an amorphous term to describe the residents of the Banda Islands, including those who only seasonally reside on the islands and those who have businesses on the islands. In general, the local community consists of individuals who identify as contemporary Bandanese people, regardless of indigeneity or residency. Moreover, the local community includes adolescents who moved to other regions in pursuit of better jobs. These Bandanese young adults still feel part of the community and are engaged through community projects during their annual returns. The community at large, including former residents of the Banda Islands, keeps in touch through the Facebook-groups on which news is shared about recent deaths, events, and other kinds of community chatter. It is therefore truly an "imagined community", as it is merely in the minds of people that it is determined whether you are part of the community, rather than on the basis of residence, origin, or race.

Especially in the case of the Banda Islands, where many original residents were murdered, enslaved, or left to other regions, inclusion in the Bandanese community does not derive from one's ancestry but rather is tied to whether one was born on the islands and participates in Bandanese society. Moreover, the society on the islands has been multicultural for centuries, including Arab and Chinese traders that had settled there long before the Dutch colonial incursion (Hanna, 1978; Lape, 2000; Thalib & Raman, 2015). Therefore, when I refer to Bandanese people, in a historical context, I refer to those that settled on the Banda Islands, traded there, and acted as spokespeople. When the first European traders arrived, the Bandanese people were willing to include them in the spice trade alongside other trade relations. However, the intention of the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*: VOC) was to gain exclusive rights to the trade to maximize profits for their stakeholders. To accomplish this goal, the VOC violently took control of the islands and practically depopulated the islands through murder, starvation, enslavement, and deportation. The structural violence against the Bandanese peoples spans the start of the 17th century, a period I will refer to as the Bandanese Genocide. A significant moment within the genocide was the massacre of the village leaders at Fort Nassau in 1621, which I will refer to as the Bandanese Massacre.

During the Bandanese Genocide, some groups of Bandanese people decided to leave the islands for neighboring archipelagos, where they settled new villages and continued to resist. Only a fraction of the native population remained (or was brought back) on the islands to teach the newly imported enslaved population how to produce nutmeg. These events are not only of importance to the current demography of the Bandanese residents, which is a mix of Indonesian, Chinese, Arab, and European ancestry, but also resulted in the tangible and intangible heritage that is present on these islands. Despite the depopulation and immigration of non-local enslaved laborers, the traditions of the original Bandanese residents continue. The practiced traditions and oral history are therefore not so much tied to ancestry, but tied to the land and the spirits that dwell there (Kaartinen, 2010; Winn, 2005).

The historical events as described in the first part of this book still play an important part in the identity of the contemporary local community and the Bandanese

diaspora. A particular focal diasporic group is the *Banda asli*, whose origins can be traced to the Bandanese who left the islands during the Bandanese Genocide. In their villages Banda Eli and Banda Elat on the Kei Islands, they have preserved the cultural traditions of their forefathers through ancestral songs, pottery making, oral history, and the Bandanese language (Kaartinen, 2010, 2013). Based on their continued traditions, these Bandanese refer to themselves as *Banda asli*, original Bandanese, a status that is also acknowledged by the current Bandanese residents. A second recent diasporic group of Bandanese resides on the island Ambon, which consists of Christian Bandanese who fled the religious conflict on the islands in the mid-1990s. Both these groups feel strongly connected to the heritage on the Banda Islands and identify themselves as Bandanese.

However, this does not mean that the current inhabitants of the Banda Islands do not perceive themselves as Bandanese. On the contrary, they are fiercely proud that they were born on the islands and identify as Bandanese. In an interview in 2008, Des Alwi said that everyone who is born on the Banda Islands is Bandanese (Michell, 2008). According to him, this inclusive definition arose during the discrimination policies of the Dutch against the *Eurasians* (those of mixed blood). These children were regarded as Bandanese, and intermarriage soon resulted in the effect that the next generations were unable to speak Dutch. Therefore, they became Bandanese in looks, language, and behavior.

Local identity on the Banda Islands is closely tied to traditional villages, known as *desa adat*, which are led by leaders of their traditions, called *kepala adat*. These *kepala adat* are important knowledge bearers and are identified by Bandanese residents as central figures in heritage interpretation and management. The overarching system of these traditions, called *adat*, is a broad and flexible term encompassing customs and practices rooted in the precolonial past (Winn, 1999, p. 91). *Adat* not only dictates how traditional events should be observed but also governs social conduct through social regulations. Disregarding *adat* or being disrespectful toward things that concern *adat* can have dire consequences. *Adat* is an important element of social and cultural structure on the Banda Islands, and it pertains to the continuation of intangible heritage practices and the conduct of people near historical sites. Therefore, I regard *adat* as an essential component of heritage management, as it shapes local identity, assigns cultural value to sites, and serves as a traditional governance system.

The stakeholder group encompassing the local community of heritage sites, mostly referring to indigenous peoples and local residents, was previously undervalued and ignored in conservation practices. However, within the past decades the field of heritage management has increasingly encouraged the participation of this stakeholder group in the decision-making process and the ongoing management activities. Notably, this focus on the role of local communities in the conservation of heritage sites has been well-received by the Indonesian UNESCO office in Jakarta and the personnel dealing with Indonesian World Heritage sites in the Ministry of Education and Culture.[4] During my meetings with the department in charge of the Indonesian World Heritage sites, they often emphasized that the success of a heritage management plan depends on the active participation and involvement of local communities.

Alongside the local community and diasporas, the Banda Islands have a stake holder group in the form of the oldest non-governmental institution of the island: Heritage and Culture Foundation Banda (*Yayasan Warisan dan Budaya Banda*: Yayasan). The foundation was established by Des Alwi, an adoptive son of Indonesian revolutionaries who returned to the Banda Islands after a career as a diplomat. He used his political contacts to improve the infrastructure on the islands, and he set himself the task of "rescuing" the heritage on the Banda Islands by investing his own money (and that of investors) to buy and restore old buildings. To legitimize his efforts, he occupied a high-ranking position in the adat hierarchy and studied historical documents. Even though Des Alwi passed away in 2010, decisions concerning heritage on the islands are still made in the "spirit of Des", either by Bandanese residents that remember him fondly or by his relatives who run the heritage foundation.

Several governmental institutions have stakes in the heritage of the Banda Islands, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. The local government consists of elected village heads (*kepala desa*), under the authority of the *camat*, who oversees the entire district. The regional office *Balai Arkeologi* in Ambon manages archaeological and anthropological research, while restoration and conservation fall under the provincial office in Ternate, *Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya* (BPCB). The national government, the most empowered stakeholder, enforces policies through various ministries, focusing on the social and economic benefits of heritage tourism. The Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Natural Resources (*Maritim*) oversees the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fishery (*KKP*) and the Ministry of Tourism (*Kemenpar*), which in 2014 established the protected marine park *TWP Taman Laut Banda, Banda Sea Park*. The Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture (*PMK*) oversees the Ministry of Education and Culture (*DIKBUD*), which manages Indonesia's World Heritage site nominations through the Indonesian National Commission for UNESCO. Additionally, organizations like the Coral Triangle Center (CTC) and Banda Sea e.V., a German foundation led by marine biologists and diving instructors, contribute to marine biodiversity conservation and awareness initiatives.

Polyvocality in history and heritage

The polyvocality of the Banda Islands is thus shaped by the multitude of narrations concerning its past and the myriads of different stakeholders. These voices and stories coexist, sometimes in opposition, at other times confirming seemingly opposing sides. My interest in polyvocality stems from my understanding of history through the lens of postcolonial criticism. History, as traditionally constructed, is rooted in patriarchal and elitist (often colonial) structures, which also influence our approach to and understanding of cultural heritage. Recognizing that the past exists in multiple shades – rather than as a simple dichotomy of fact and fiction – poses a challenge for every discipline engaged with history. However, rather than viewing polyvocality as a threat to the scientific foundations of history,[5] I argue that embracing these

uncertainties allows for a more inclusive representation of the past and fosters more holistic heritage management approaches (Van Donkersgoed, 2024).

Polyvocality and multivocality are terms often used interchangeably to describe the diversity of voices and perspectives in interpreting the past. Multivocality, particularly in archaeology, has been utilized as a means to empower underrepresented groups in their understanding and interpretation of the archaeological past (Hodder, 1999). The origins of this term lie in the postmodern critique of scientific objectivity and the increasing recognition of marginalized voices in historical and archaeological narratives (Habu et al., 2008, p. 3). In this context, multivocality refers to the plurality of actors and their interpretations of archaeological remains rather than a plurality of sources (intangible, sensorial, spiritual, natural, cultural, etc.). In other words, it still maintains a central (material) focus from which multiple perspectives radiate.

Within new museumology, multivocality and polyvocality are used interchangeably with the aim to represent multiple (historical) voices (Mason et al., 2013; Sitzia, 2023, p. 53). Typically, one event or topic is centralized while presenting multiple angles to reflect different voices. However, in this book I aim to cast a wider net – not only by seeking a plurality of voices on a singular topic but also by broadening our understanding of that topic as inherently plural. Polyvocality, in this sense, encompasses greater complexity, going beyond merely presenting multiple interpretations from different actors. Instead, it fosters a deeper and more intricate understanding of how the subject and its interpreters are interwoven in a continuous dialogue.

Sitzia identified three approaches in which multivocality is achieved within (historical) narrations: antagonist, cosmopolitan, and agonistic (Sitzia, 2023). The antagonistic approach frames historical actors in binary opposition – heroes vs. villains – reinforcing moral judgments. However, in this book I intentionally move away from both the villainous colonial oppressor and the powerless colonial victim. The cosmopolitan approach, on the other hand, avoids moral binaries and instead focuses on suffering, often portraying victims as passive. However, such an approach risks depoliticizing historical injustices. Rather than subscribing to a cosmopolitan framework that centers on suffering without political critique, I adopt an agonistic approach, which contextualizes social and political conflicts while maintaining the complexity of historical relationships. Agonistic memory argues for an approach that acknowledges conflict as an integral part of memory-making, rather than seeking reconciliation through sanitized narratives (Cento Bull et al., 2019, pp. 615–616). Therefore, it is necessary to accept conflict (or uncertainty) when creating a truly polyvocal and agonistic narrative – one that embraces tension rather than suppressing it.

A powerful metaphor for polyvocality is weaving, particularly the *ikat* technique, where patterns emerge not only from the final design but also from the interwoven threads. This approach parallels Hodder's notion of entanglement, which suggests that meaning is constructed through complex, interconnected relationships

(Hodder, 2013). Instead of focusing solely on the dominant motifs of history, we should also attend to the underlying strands that shape the whole – intertwining perspectives, voices, and (im) material traces. An essential tool for practicing polyvocality is active listening, as proposed by Winter and Lavis (2020). They argue that listening is not merely passive reception but an engaged, contextualized act that fosters ethical research (Winter & Lavis, 2020). By applying active listening to historical narratives and heritage interpretation, we can create a more inclusive and ethically grounded approach to storytelling, allowing diverse voices to be heard without reducing them to a singular, authoritative perspective.

A significant step in embracing uncertainties about the past is validating alternative sources of historical knowledge on an equal footing with traditionally valued forms, such as archival materials produced by elites.[6] Relying solely on these traditional sources results in a partial reconstruction of the past, perpetuating the political and societal agendas of those who created them. I refer to this form of historical representation as the "objectified singular past", as it seeks to distill the past into a single narrative constructed from dominant perspectives based on sources validated by the same elite. My aim is not to devalue these sources; they have been and remain important in shaping both academic and public conceptions of history. As Russell Staiff noted, heritage sites are shaped by stories that blend historical facts, local narratives, and national histories curated to suit particular public audiences (Staiff, 2014, p. 96). By embracing diverse historical knowledges, we can better address the complexity of the past and its significance in the present.

The advantage of the objectified singular past is that it rests on a body of historical material widely regarded as factual evidence. This dominance and authority are aptly described by de Sousa Santos: "Dominant politics become epistemological when it is able to make a credible claim that the only valid knowledge available is the one that ratifies its own dominance" (Santos, 2014, p. vii). Archival materials such as reports, letters, photographs, and other forms of written documentation are revered as credible accounts of the past, while other kinds of records such as oral histories, songs, and stories are regarded with suspicion.[7] Fortunately, steps have been made, notably in the fields of social history, ethnohistory, and critical heritage studies, to elevate this latter group of knowledges. I will refer to this group as the narrated past, as these are (hi)stories that have been passed on from generation to generation with the purpose of transferring knowledge for the future. This distinction is not strictly demarcated, as archival material was also produced to inform future generations, and written accounts have been made from oral traditions. The distinction I am aiming for therefore lies more in the credibility that is afforded to the two kinds of knowledges and how validating the narrated past may empower marginalized voices.

Despite growing recognition of oral traditions in decolonial history, mainstream historians often prioritize written records over living knowledge, reinforcing elitist and colonial biases, yet successful scholarly practices, such as studies on Native oral traditions in the U.S. (van de Logt, 2018; Miller & Riding In, 2011), demonstrate

the value of integrating non-bibliographic approaches. The uncertainty that arises between the narrated past and the objectified singular past can be defined by the tension that is created by the discomfort when these sources do not align with one another. It is uncertain because it goes against the grain of our scientific foundations that claim that there is a (read *one*) truth. This idea of singularity was already challenged by Walter Benjamin, who philosophized that history is not homogenous and is starkly influenced by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*][8] (Benjamin, 2005, sec. XIV). So, if we frame uncertainty this way, we can acknowledge that history is not the reality of the past but instead how contemporary societies curate, preserve, and represent the past. Among historians, this might lead to criticisms regarding this presentist point of view, as expressed by two presidents of the American History Association (Sweet, 2022). However, I argue that when we accept that the reality of the past cannot be reduced to a singular truth, we can grow to become more comfortable with the idea that multiple truths can coexist alongside each other.

Moreover, as historian Koselleck stated: "History becomes visible only through the lens of the present" (Koselleck, 2002, p. 12). Thus, those who deal with the past (in history or heritage) need to address their positionality[9] in order to recognize how it informs the way histories are written. Besides this self-reflexivity, Koselleck's work inspires us to continue to work toward a history that is plural, embracing polyvocality by including multiple temporalities and perspectives (Olsen & Koselleck, 2014). This approach echoes the way Indonesian scholars Muhammad Farid described the history of the Banda Islands as scattered glass, with each piece reflecting something different (Farid 2017). Likewise, he argues that no piece should be given precedence over the other, but rather that we need to collect all perspectives in the retelling of the Bandanese histories. In other words, denying the polyvocality of the past not only creates an imperfect result, but it could lead to conflict and sorrow.

Regarding the processes of the production and consumption of history, Na Li has argued that we are moving toward a culture of "prosumption" (Li, 2024, pp. 241–243). Through new technologies, the processes of production and consumption of history are merging, making academics and the public alike "prosumers" of history. The heritage and tourism industry is particularly active as prosumers of history, rapidly constructing, interpreting, and disseminating historical knowledge about sites to fit their purposes and needs. Beyond the possible adverse effects, such as misinformation or the continuing focus on colonial sources to justify their histories, the process of prosuming also enables people to question authoritative written histories through other mediums and by adding to the body of knowledge(s) to show the polyvocality of the past.

Heritage and tourism in Indonesia

To understand how we appreciate and manage heritage today, it is essential to recognize the history of heritage management, which was shaped by UNESCO's formation in 1945 and its efforts to protect cultural sites post-World War II, including the 1954 Hague Convention and the 1972 World Heritage Convention. While

these frameworks raised global awareness of tangible heritage conservation, their Euro-American origins, focus on monumental heritage, and the divide between cultural and natural heritage have been critiqued by scholars like Laura-Jane Smith, who termed the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), and Rodney Harrison, who describes the *discursive turn* that sets itself against the AHD (Harrison, 2012; Smith, 2010). He notes that a disadvantage of the *discursive turn,* resulted in the neglect of the actual effects tangible heritage creates through the interactions with people in our contemporary world. To address this concern, Harrison promotes a *dialogical model* that regards heritage "as emerging from the relationship between people, objects, places, and practices" (Harrison, 2012, p. 4). This model does not

> […] distinguish or prioritize what is 'natural' or 'cultural', but is instead concerned with the various ways in which humans and non-humans are linked by chains of *connectivity* and work together to keep the past alive in the present for the future.
>
> (Harrison, 2012, pp. 4–5)

These recent commentaries on heritage studies inspired my position within the field. Even though I understand the criticisms that are made about the functioning of UNESCO, the top-down power dynamic it enforces, and the elitist political roots that underlie its strategies, I argue that the current system can be used as a tool of empowerment for local communities. Steps have already been taken to enable bottom-up involvement in heritage management and allow for a perspective on heritage that is not merely focused on the monumental and tangible, but also includes the socioeconomic aspect of heritage. I, therefore, align myself with the dialogical approach as proposed by Harrison and attempt through this research to show how implementing a cultural landscape approach uses the system to empower the local community and encompass all heritage aspects in conservation efforts.

As heritage values are created through the dialogical exchange between humans, their natural environment, and the cultural sites in them, the cultural landscape is informed and shaped through this process. In his report to the United Nations Research Institute for Social Research, Marcus Colchester critically reviews these interactions regarding the role of communities in nature conservation efforts (Colchester, 1994). He states that indigenous people face four major problems that are inherent to the classical conservation approach:

> In the first place, mainstream conservationists have put the preservation of nature above the interests of human beings. Secondly, their view of nature has been shaped by a cultural notion of wilderness sharply at odds with the cosmovision of most indigenous peoples. Thirdly, conservationists have sought authority for their regulation of human interactions with nature in the power of the state. And last but by no means least, conservationists' perceptions of indigenous peoples have been tinged with the same prejudices that confront indigenous peoples everywhere. The result, as we have seen,

> is that indigenous peoples have suffered a four-fold marginalization due to conservationist impositions.
>
> (Colchester, 1994, p. 57)

Besides his observations on the unequal power relations and how the idea of wilderness has been used to reduce the impact of local communities, Colchester continues to write that many indigenous communities are quite aware of the outside pressures on their lands, both political and environmental, and that in the increasingly global market economy they need to adapt new mechanisms to control and use their resources (Colchester, 1994, pp. 57–58). He therefore claims that conservationists, social scientists and development advisors should take the role of advisor in order to assist indigenous managers to navigate the global market, rather than act as directors themselves. Likewise, I regard my role as a facilitator advocating for a cultural landscape approach to empower the Bandanese community in managing *their* natural and cultural assets. Through this approach, provincial, national, and international stakeholders can provide the funds, tools, and vocabulary to enact local management goals into policy.

In an effort to address the issues as raised by Colchester and like-minded scholars, the global trendsetter in conservation policy, UNESCO, adopted the concept of cultural landscapes as a legitimate category for the World Heritage List in 1992 (UNESCO, 2017). This action increased the interest in defining heritage places as cultural landscapes, which are created through the interaction of humans with their environment. By acknowledging the active role people play in the management and valuation of cultural landscapes, the implementation of cultural landscapes also increased recognition of the values created by local communities and indigenous people (Rössler, 2005, p. 40). In other words, because of the validation of the concept of cultural landscape by UNESCO, communities currently have a legal precedent to refer to in their efforts to protect their sacred or valued landscape.

Cultural landscapes, a central focus of this research, offer an approach that empowers local communities to manage their heritage by transcending the modernist dichotomy between culture and nature, recognizing the ongoing dialogue between these aspects. Defined by UNESCO as "combined works of nature and man" (World Heritage Convention, 1972), cultural landscapes illustrate the evolution of human society and settlement, shaped by both natural and social forces over time. This definition emphasizes their dynamic, non-static nature, acknowledging the continuous process of human-environment interaction and the fluidity of heritage, also known as the *living heritage approach* (Poulios, 2014). Cultural landscapes, therefore, are not static products but evolving processes, allowing for more sustainable, community-driven heritage management and offering opportunities for contemporary reinterpretation. By framing heritage as an ongoing process, this approach allows for multiple narratives to coexist and ensures that heritage sites maintain their relevance and use-value in the present, rather than being frozen in a single historical moment.

The concept of cultural landscapes has particular traction in Indonesia, where the word *saujana* embodies the interconnectedness between culture and nature. This

concept is prominently addressed in the Indonesia Heritage Charter from 2003, whose first preamble describes the heritage of Indonesia as "the legacy of nature, culture, and *saujana*, the weave of the two" (ICOMOS, 2003, Line 1). This concept has been particularly applied to the Bali cultural landscape, which encompasses the traditional water management system called *subak* and its philosophical and religious implications. In 2012, this cultural landscape was enlisted on the UNESCO World Heritage List after a lengthy process.[10] Since then, the site has not only been used as a prime example of cultural landscapes within heritage studies but also functions within the World Heritage office of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture as a cautionary tale. Former head of this department, Yunus Arbi, emphasized that the implementation of cultural landscapes can be an effective tool in Indonesia, as it can be used to empower local communities in the management of the heritage landscapes, rather than implement a top-down management of an enclosed heritage site.[11] However, he cautions that the cultural landscape approach needs to be legalized and implemented at an early stage in order for sustainable management through effective local empowerment to thrive.

To anticipate the early implementation of this inclusive approach and smoothen the process to nominate potential World Heritage sites, the Ministry of Education and Culture revisited their Tentative List in 2014. During this meeting, the Banda Islands archipelago was re-designated as a cultural landscape heritage site, and following this new designation, it was re-listed on the Tentative List in 2015.[12] In preparation for the reframing of the site, local, provincial, and national stakeholders agreed that the main focus of the heritage narrative should be the maritime history and culture of the Banda Islands.[13] By presenting the archipelago as a trading center and ecological treasure house, the nomination not only encompass both the natural and cultural heritage values, but it also mediates the negative colonial history of the islands. Moreover, it tied in with the political ambitions of the previous Indonesian president Joko Widodo, whose focus was to develop the maritime strengths of Indonesia.

The development of an Indonesian identity is closely related to the selection, preservation and promotion of certain heritage sites. Heritage is thus not only used to strengthen an internal historical narrative, but also to portray the country in a certain way to the outside world through tourism. These efforts are connected to the national awakening in the early 20th century and further reiterated during Suharto's authoritarian regime in the New Order era (1966–1998), which was followed by democratic reform until the present day (Sidi, 2020, pp. 74–75). Many monuments commemorate the recent history of resistance against Dutch colonialism as a defining historical moment that connects the entire Indonesian archipelago. Alongside creating unity through this history, there is an acknowledgment and celebration of the rich cultural diversity in the archipelago. In Chapter 5 I will discuss these political motives for the focus on certain histories and heritages in further detail.

Methodology and positionality

The research presented in this book is rooted in the experiences, observations, and interactions I had while conducting fieldwork in Indonesia and the Netherlands.

Research is not created in a vacuum, but rather informed by the researcher's position and cocreated with the people they engage with. Throughout my work, I aim to be transparent about the dialogical processes, which generated this research. For example, the start of my research was strongly influenced by Tanya des Alwi, who requested assistance from Rutgers University to nominate the Banda Islands for the UNESCO World Heritage List. Her father, Des Alwi, was a powerful figure on the Banda Islands, and she wanted to continue his legacy to preserve and promote the heritage of the islands. Through her personal and political network, many doors opened during the first visits of my fieldwork. However, it reinforced my position as an academic outsider, and it was not until I became inseparable with my assistant Ayu and resided in the guesthouse of Ibu Vera in a non-touristic neighborhood that I was able to step outside of the bubble. During my doctoral studies, I was able to visit the Banda Islands seven times in the period of late 2014–2019.[14] After my PhD defense and the COVID pandemic, I have been able to return to the islands in 2023 with the facsimile of the *Hikayat Lonthoir* and in 2024 to contribute to the archaeological field school led by Peter Lape.

My positionality[15] as a Dutch female researcher from a well-regarded American university had both its advantages and challenges. On the one hand, my background allowed me to engage with a wide range of political agencies and participate in events that might have been inaccessible to local individuals. On the other hand, my nationality may have shaped responses regarding the Dutch colonial past. Interestingly, during my time in the Maluku province of Indonesia, my Dutch nationality often served as a point of connection rather than a source of tension; many locals have (distant) family in the Netherlands, the local language contains many Dutch words, and the tourism industry benefits from Dutch visitors. These points often sparked meaningful conversations and opened doors for further engagement. However, they did not seem to hesitate using words like "genocide" when discussing the violent Dutch invasion in the Banda Islands, and they were very clear about their dislike of Jan Pieterszoon Coen.[16] When I asked about their attitude, they answered that atrocities "happened a long time ago" and that current Dutch visitors are nice and bring in money through tourism. The dislike for Dutch colonialism thus appears separate from the benefits derived from Dutch connections nowadays.

Throughout the fieldwork periods, I spent considerable time familiarizing myself with the local customs, building relationships with various members of the local community, and having informal conversations near heritage sites. However, the danger of ethnographic work remains the unequal power relation between researcher and informant (Fabian & Bunzl, 2002). It is essential to acknowledge that research is dialogical, that research data is created through the interchange of researcher and informant – influenced by the researcher's positionality as well as the informants' expectations. For example, my research was mostly conducted on the island Neira, which is the most frequently visited island in the archipelago by foreigners and government officials. Therefore, my informants have been exposed more to modern ideas of management and tourism than residents on the other islands. I therefore acknowledge that both my positionality and the geographical focus on Neira may have affected the contents of this research.

Participant observation was a core methodology used during the fieldwork, with an emphasis on active listening (Jorgensen, 2020; Winter & Lavis, 2020). However, due to my position as an academic, I was confronted on multiple occasions with the imposed role as the expert – while the local people were regarded as "non-experts". One moment that remains particularly vivid underscored this dynamic. During a conversation with a high-ranking Indonesian officer, I was asked to identify the heritage values of the Banda Islands. I responded that they needed to ask the community members, not me. All I can say is what I have learned from them. To this, the officer replied that they wanted my answer because I am the expert. Moments like these kept arising, as I was given a platform to speak (or a seat at the table) where local people would not have access. Moreover, community members literally started asking me to use my position to represent their interests. Therefore, although I do not (want to) claim the position of an expert, I have been using my position and privileges to act as a facilitator to raise their concerns.

During my fieldwork I met with local, provincial, national, and international stakeholders concerned with the heritage on the Banda Islands. I selected persons with representative functions for my targeted interviews, and during my stay I used the snowball-technique to identify other Bandanese that were pointed out to me as having particular knowledge or opinions about heritage on Banda. In the end, I conducted formal interviews with *kepala desa*s, *kepala adat*s, teachers, students, leaders of the fisherman cooperation, tourism facilitators, Bandanese residents, and local historians. Besides these interviews with residents of the Banda Islands, I conducted interviews with the Bandanese diaspora living in Banda Suli on Ambon and the traditional leaders of the village Banda Ely on the Kei Islands. Moreover, I conducted interviews with the leaders of the archaeological center in Ternate and Ambon. Both of these institutions are actively engaged in the management of the heritage resources on the Banda Islands. Lastly, I conducted formal and informal interviews with the president and vice-president of the UNESCO office in Jakarta and the leaders and policymakers of the World Heritage office in the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Besides the targeted interviews, I engaged with the local community through participant observation while staying on the island Banda Neira. While residing with a small family in a residential area, I was introduced to the neighbors and family friends and included in social gatherings such as weddings, funeral prayers, breaking of the fast during Ramadan, prayers to bless people going on pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), a bachelorette evening to prepare the bride for the wedding, and a celebration for children who had finished their initial studies of the Quran (*Khatamal Qu'ran*). Observing these religious events was insightful as religion plays a central role in the lives of the Bandanese residents and therefore informs their interpretation of their cultural history and natural environment. Islam is not only a central part of contemporary life, but it also acts as a red thread in the oral history and traditions of the Bandanese. As the anthropologist Phillip Winn explains, the Bandanese people believe that God made the Banda Islands a blessed land (Winn, 2005). During my own fieldwork I collected similar testimonies, such as the conviction that God gave the Bandanese nutmeg to profit from, and now that the price

of nutmeg has dropped, God has sent tuna for them to catch and sell.[17] Besides intimate family gatherings, I was invited to be an observer of the ritual *adat* practices at several *desa adat*s, including the opening ceremonies of the *desa adat*s that enable the performance of the *Cakalele* dance and the opening and closing of the *sasi*-restrictions.[18]

Participant observation was crucial to understanding the cultural landscape of the Banda Islands, as it allowed me to access cultural events by building relationships and demonstrating my goodwill through assistance where possible. As Denis Byrne argues, "[w]hen faced with a landscape of others, we traveling archaeologists need to ask whether we maintain a scholarly distance or allow ourselves to be drawn in subjectively and emotionally" (Byrne, 2009, p. xii). In my case, it was impossible to gain an understanding of the cultural landscape and *adat* without letting myself be drawn in. This active participation was requested on several occasions, as people would ask me "Do you believe?" before describing the rituals, sacred places, oral histories or showing me the ritual house and its objects.

My answer to the question was always "yes", accompanied by the visible goosebumps on my arms—an embodied testament to my honesty and vulnerability. Acknowledging this emotional subjectivity might be regarded as unacademic by some, however, it allowed me as a researcher to engage with modes of knowledge that were (and are) beyond my Western academic upbringing. Feminist Tiffany Page has coined the term "vulnerable writing", pertaining to researchers who are willing to engage with modalities of not-knowing (Page, 2017, p. 14).[19] Particular in the case of (historical) knowledge production in a transnational context, the acknowledgement of our own fragility can expose the fragility of knowledge production and open up new avenues of knowledge through the embrace of uncertainties.

In addition to my participant observation in the Banda Islands, I have actively engaged with the local community through participative practices, including community mapping and cocreating museum exhibits. After my doctoral defense, I organized an online roundtable series with an international working group to raise awareness in 2021 about the Bandanese Genocide (Glow, 2019). This series led to an effort to reconnect the current Bandanese residents and the Bandanese people on the Kei Islands who left the islands in 1621. In 2020, the photography exhibition *I Love Banda* by Isabelle Boon in the National Maritime Museum in Amsterdam led to the rediscovery of a century-old manuscript from the Banda Islands. I was funded to make this document, the *Hikayat Lonthoir*, more accessible through transcription and English summaries, on the promise that the museum would create facsimiles that I would bring to the various Bandanese communities. The research and reception of the *Hikayat* has been a major influence for this book. Moreover, it motivated activities during the archaeological fieldschool led by Peter Lape, including excavations on sites mentioned in the Hikayat as well as the support of the creation of a mini-museum in Lonthoir.

Chapter outline

This introduction aimed to sketch the theoretical and methodological context for this book, which presents the research that I have conducted about heritage in the

Banda Islands. This book is further divided as a triptych, each part with an overarching argument that is developed over three chapters.

Part 1 describes the histories of the Banda Islands in three chapters, one focused on the precolonial history, the second on the colonial occupation, and the third on its recent history. The aim is to innovate the way in which the history of the Banda Islands is presented and narrated, as it centralizes the Bandanese heroes and communities as the main actors, rather than the European traders and colonists. From this bottom-up perspective, this section unravels the history of the Banda Islands from the flood of Noah as described in non-European historical sources such as the *Hikayat Lonthoir* until the current local ambition to become a UNESCO World Heritage site. The focus lies on the historical events and stories that are of importance to the Bandanese peoples and thus continue to inform heritage and tourism practices.

Chapter 1 deals with the legendary past of the Banda Islands (up to 1620). This chapter is based on the *Hikayat Lonthoir* as well as the knowledge that is retained by a *Banda asli* community on the Kei Islands who left the islands during the Bandanese Genocide. These stories start at the Flood of Noah, describe the birth of 7 legendary siblings, the journey to Mecca and introduction of Islam, the exchange with the Majapahit kingdom, and the exchanges with European merchants. Chapter 2 describes the Verhoeven Ambush (1609) and the Bandanese Massacre (1621) and sketches the main events during Dutch occupation. This chapter will draw more from European sources; however, through a decolonial reading and with the use of oral histories, I will aim to describe this time period in such a way as it has impacted the Bandanese society. I will describe the implementation of the *perken* system, on which enslaved peoples worked for Dutch *perkeniers* to produce spices. The third chapter deals with the Independence War up until the present times, for which I will rely on the memoirs of Des Alwi, a prominent Bandanese businessman and history enthusiast. During the Second World War, several prominent Indonesian revolutionaries were exiled to the Banda Islands by the Dutch colonial government. Most prominent among them is Mohammad Hatta, Indonesia's first vice-president, who adopted Des Alwi and his siblings. Thus, Des Alwi's first-hand account provides a local perspective of the war-time and the developments after the war when he aimed to restore the cultural heritage on the Banda Islands using his political network. His family are still influential and supporters of the UNESCO World Heritage nomination of the Banda Islands to preserve their cultural and natural heritage.

After sketching the history of the Banda Islands, the second part of this book will focus on the cultural landscape approach and the Banda Islands as a cultural landscape. In this part, I will first discuss in depth the theoretical framework of the cultural landscapes as a non-Eurocentric cultural heritage approach. As it was adopted by heritage scholars to defy the culture-nature divide in heritage management, it particularly resonates well with non-Western approaches to heritage as a holistic approach that embraces the tangible and intangible elements of a heritage site, as well as the natural and cultural aspects. Moreover, it supports the stewardship of local communities as it acknowledges that heritage cannot be frozen in time but needs to be able to change alongside its community. Chapter 5 elaborates on heritage management in Indonesia, and how the Banda Islands fit within the national political

scheme. Chapter 6 applies these concepts to the case study of the Banda Islands. I will discuss several ways in which the heritage is currently managed and the local aspirations for the future of Bandanese heritage management in the face of a World Heritage nomination. I will argue that the cultural landscape approach allows for the heritages of the Banda Islands to be described in all their complexity, emphasizing the local meaning-making of places and showcasing the entanglements of nature-culture, tangible-intangible elements, and the past–present.

The third part will build upon the first two parts in order to focus on one heritage site in particular: Fort Nassau. Chapter 7 delves into the history of this colonial fort, exploring not only the brutal events of the Bandanese Massacre but also its long and varied history, including its functions and meanings from its construction to the present day. After describing the historical importance, Chapter 8 will present the significance of the site through its sensorial, social, military, and natural landscapes. Building upon Part 2 of this book, this chapter situates Fort Nassau within the larger cultural landscape. Chapter 9 will discuss the ongoing restoration and meaning-making activities at Fort Nassau, as a symbol of Bandanese resistance and resilience.

The three parts build up to the conclusion, in which I argue for a bottom-up approach to heritage management by adopting a cultural landscape framework for the Banda Islands. Moreover, I call for the potential to disrupt Eurocentric practices of heritage management and historical narratives of this archipelago through polyvocality in an effort to empower local communities and their perspectives.

Notes

1 In the original Dutch text, the word *Maatschappij* is used, which I translated into Society.
2 In the original Dutch text, the word *Oosterlanden* is used, which I translated into Lands of the East.
3 Inquiries among fellow researchers of this archipelago merely showed that there was an interest in the manuscript, but that the whereabouts were unknown (Kaartinen, 2013; Lape, 2000; Manuhutu, 2000)
4 An example of how they implement this vision is the workshop titled "Enhancing Community Engagement in the Conservation and Management of the World Heritage site of Sangiran Early Man Site", which was organized together with UNESCO delegates on May 9 and 10, 2017. The objective of this workshop was to equip the participating representatives of the local community with knowledge of the current UNESCO nomination dossier, the reasons for the protection of the site and how the community could benefit by taking part in the conservation. The aim was to encourage them to be more involved, and at the end of the workshop the participants were expected to provide recommendations on how to improve the draft of the heritage management plan for the Sangiran Early Man site to engage the community further.
5 See van de Logt (2018, 6–11) for an overview of the skepticism regarding the historical value of oral traditions since the 19th century.
6 The move toward acknowledging traditional sources of knowledges is a big theme within (critical) heritage studies, a field that has been embracing immaterial heritages and traditional practices in an effort to counteract (colonial) institutionalized structures. See, for example, Byrne (1991), Smith (2010), Harrison (2012).

7 See, for example, the debate surrounding the Kennewick man between Western science and Native American knowledge traditions (Thomas 2002).
8 *Jetztzeit* is also translated as "here-and-now" (Benjamin 2005, sec. XIV) and the "now-time" (Benjamin 2006, 395).
9 Regarding my own positionality, as a first-generation white Dutch woman from a small rural village, my research is guided by my desire to empower the voices of marginalized groups including lower-class and local communities.
10 Y. Arbi, personal communication, January 2, 2020; UNESCO, 2012.
11 Y. Arbi, personal communication, January 2, 2020.
12 UNESCO (2015).
13 Fieldnotes 2014, 2015.
14 My fieldwork comprised seven visits to the Banda Islands, a total of 128 days in the Banda archipelago and 201 days in Indonesia. This research consisted of both participant observation and targeted interviews, which were conducted with an exemption by the Rutgers' Institutional Review Board, on the premise that the information gathered during my fieldwork would be published anonymously. No names of my informants are therefore mentioned, unless I use their statements which already have been published elsewhere. I have made one exception for Yunus Arbi, who sent me a letter containing information we discussed during my fieldwork, and who has given me explicit permission to use this information.
15 I acknowledge that research is a dialogical process and that my personal background influences the research results. As Qin explains: "[…] positionality is the practice of a researcher delineating his or her own position in relation to the study, with the implication that this position may influence aspects of the study, such as the data collected or the way in which it is interpreted" (Qin, 2016).
16 Also known as the "Butcher of Banda" – the general who ordered the massacre of 44 village leaders at Fort Nassau, and subsequently raided the islands, killed or enslaved and deported the peoples until the islands were almost depopulated.
17 Fieldnotes June 5, 2016.
18 *Adat* and *Sasi* will be discussed at length in Chapter 6.
19 My thanks goes to Vinícius Borges Garcia Fonseca who introduced me to this term during the Public History Summerschool in Wroclaw, 2025.

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