

## Hegemony of Power Between Dutch and British Imperialism in Bima in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan gambaran tentang hegemoni dan perang dagang antara imperialisme Belanda dan Inggris di wilayah Bima. Penelitian ini bersifat deskriptif analisis dengan menggunakan metode sejarah, melalui beberapa tahapan kegiatan yang meliputi heuristik, kritik, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa faktor-faktor yang mendorong Belanda dan Inggris untuk menanamkan pengaruhnya di Bima secara garis besarnya adalah faktor geopolitik dan ekonomi. Persaingan Imperialisme Belanda dan Inggris di wilayah tersebut didominasi oleh pengaruh kekuasaan Inggris, sedangkan Belanda memperoleh kekuasaan territorial atas keseluruhan pulau Sumbawa. Oleh karena itu, hegemoni dan persaingan dagang tidak terjadi peperangan terbuka antara Belanda dan Inggris dalam perebutan kekuasaan di daerah tersebut sejak abad XVIII.

**Kata kunci:** hegemoni, perang dagang, imperialisme.

### Abstract

*This research is descriptive analysis using historical methods, through several stages of activities which include heuristic, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. This research aims to provide an overview of the hegemony and trade war between Dutch and British imperialism in the Bima region. The results of the study show that the factors that encourage the Dutch and British to plant their influence in Bima are generally geopolitical and economic factors. The Dutch-British imperialist rivalry in the region was dominated by the influence of British power while the Dutch gained territorial control over the entire island of Sumbawa. Therefore, hegemony and trade competition have not occurred in open wars between the Dutch and the British in the struggle for power in the area since the XVIII century.*

**Keywords:** hegemony, trade war, imperialism.

### INTRODUCTION

This study will view the Bima Regional Wasn't as a place where the Dutch and British will plant their influence. But the most influential is political and economic power because of its connection to the world of shipping and trade. The Bima region is in a position to support political power so that it is more dynamic than other regions (Haris et al. 2021). Stated that, "The unity of the territory formed by the waters of Bima is an economic unity,

but it can develop into a political unity if at any time a dynamic sea power appears".

The above view gives an idea that strategic power can be the center of prolonged conflict and competition, as has been proven in the Bima area which became a conflict between Belanda and the British. Although Dutch and British concerns have existed since 1805, the main motives of their inhabitants for the area are still unclear. After the Bima

population there were no significant efforts for the Dutch and British colonial expansion in the Bima area. The British did not seem to have enough to create hegemony over the Java regions. Attracting serious attention that only began to rise in 1805 and peaked in 1850, after both had gained a solid place in other areas. Bima was part of the area in instilling its influence on both the Dutch and the British until the beginning of 1850. Another interesting aspect studied is the competition between the two parties in acquiring districts in the Bima area. (Fahmi and Idham 2019).

The uniqueness of the history of the Bima area can also be traced to the attitude of the Dutch and British when both were faced with prolonged competition. The two have never been officially involved in the war (Wahid, Dana, and Mbojo 2019). Stating that "the contents of the Confention Of London (1814), the London Treaty (1824) and the Bima Treaty (1871) are indications that the Netherlands and Britain are more concerned with the means of diplomacy". This attitude is an anomaly when compared to several cases, including the competition between the Netherlands and Britain in North America. From the study of this study, the concept that the strategic area develops into a source of conflict both between political forces and between outsiders. Another aspect that this study shows is that not all imperialism

is viewed as bad for the development of a colony. Singapore's progress since it was opened by the British as a port in the 1819th century, at least has been an indication of that (Hamid, Hamid, and Hamid 2021).

A similar action was carried out by the Dutch with their willingness to give up their claims to areas in West Nusa Tenggara, even though they had instilled their influence in Bima. Therefore, it is necessary to describe the form or process of Dutch and British competition in the Bima area. The results of this study can be used as a comparison material for similar studies in other regions such as the competition of British and French imperialism in North Africa in the nineteenth century. This study also gives an indication that generally the areas around the Bima area will progress faster if the development is directed to the trade and industry sectors, which are related to the service and tourism sectors today.

Research on the development of Dutch and British imperialism in the Bima area has been carried out by Indonesian historians and foreigners as done (Haris, Zuhdi, and Wulandari 1997) which was published under the title "History of Kedah". Foodjus, his discussion of the history of Kedah in general from the pre-arrival of Islam to the VII to the Middle East in the XIX century. The section on Kedah's contact with the United Kingdom,

(Djoened, Poesponegoro, and Notosusanto 1975) shows that "Long before the British officially occupied the island of Penang (Keda Region) in 1786, there had been British attempts to control certain parts of the territory". However, the work ignores the motives or background of British imperialism to the Bima area and also the efforts to enforce it after the occupation of Penang. Nevertheless, the work can be used as a starting point for further study of Britain in the region, because it shows that in addition to the British are also ready to pay attention and have made efforts to obtain one of the benefits of the method.

## **METHODS**

The research is a historical research using a descriptive cauliative approach by analyzing history books related to the focus of the study. This research aims to find out the historical events that occurred in Bima in the XVIII century. The method carried out by this study in terms of data collection according to (Wisno E.S. Hartati 2018). There are four stages of historical research, including, (1) Heuristic, which is the first step in all historical writing, (2) Criticism, which is a very important step so that it is often said that the whole process of the historical method is referred to as Historical Criticism, (3) Interpretation, which includes the compilation of historical data and its presentation/narration (generally

in written form) within the boundaries of objective truth and its meaning or meaning, (4) Historiography is called Sintheses and Presentation (Sintheses and Writing).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Factors Driving the Competition Between Dutch and British Imperialism in Bima**

#### **a) Geopolitical Factors**

The Bima area has a position in the middle of shipping and trade traffic. As written by (Suwondo and Soebadio 1983) that "the Bima region holds the Key Positionon to control Asia-Europe trade". Because of its strategic location, the rulers of the region have always been the target of every political power that emerged, such as the Netherlands and Britain in the XVIII and XIX centuries. The various shipping routes that are formed, the Bima area is possible to develop as a trade center because it is crowded with traders from various regions. (Haris et al. 2021) that "the waters of Bima and the surrounding beaches were in a favorable position in the shipping and trade routes of the past. Bima's geographical position has become important when the shipping world was still dependent on the wind system. Due to the influence of its geographical location, in the archipelago there are two monsoon systems, namely the eastern monsoon and the westerly monsoon. In areas that run through the equator, the

wind system becomes more complicated. But it is advantageous for the shipping world because the seasonal winds will change direction when crossing north of the equator. The wind system gives traders an advantage, because they can travel in the opposite area of the monsoon wind system. For example, a trader from Makassar can reach Bima before October and November, then he can continue his journey.

The geographical advantage of the waters of the Bima area lies in its relatively safe water conditions, as quoted by (Suwondo and Soebadio 1983), That "Except in the path of the cyclone on the eastern edge of the region, the typhoon itself is not a major disturbance to the service which generally scares the strong currents at certain crossings. All of this becomes an ocean in Southeast Asia as a meeting place and a more crowded traffic and compared to the deeper, stormy Mediterranean Sea in the west. In addition, the abundant timber on the riverbanks is suitable for making boats". This attraction was one of the motives of the British to more seriously instill their influence in the Bima region in the XVIII and XIX centuries, especially for the sake of the Military to support its political expansion as discussed at the beginning of the second part.

#### **b) Economic factors**

The economic advantages of Bima are not limited to its strategic location, but it is

also a production area of some of the main trade commodities and the most important goods. Pepper is one of the important commodities in the XIX century which is widely produced on the islands of Lombok and Sumbawa. (Asiva Noor Rachmayani 2015) stated that in 1820 the Lombok area still produced more than half of Indonesia's pepper income. This view is reinforced by (Subari and Anwar 2024) that Lombok's pepper exports in 1811 and 1821 increased from 16,615 to 38,288 tons.

The increase in the yield of spices centered in the Bima region accompanied by rice plants. This plant began to be cultivated intensively in 1887. At the end of the XIX century, the number of areas planted with pepper and rice reached 50 areas and two hundred tons had been exported. Both pepper and rice are almost available and cultivated in all regions of the archipelago but most of them are found in Bima. Various other types of commodities have clear reserves such as coconut, wheat, coffee and soybeans. However, until the first decade of the twentieth century, it could not compete with pepper and rubber.

## **2. Power Hegemony Between Dutch and British Imperialism in Bima**

### **a) The Power of the Dutch in Bima**

Although the Dutch had instilled their influence earlier than the British in Bima, the Dutch did not succeed in making one

of the parts of the region that became one of the trading centers as the British had achieved in Singapore. Even to maintain its power, the Dutch had to fight hard because of resistance from local political forces in the region, as written (Rosdiana, 2022) That "In 1658, the Bima attacked a Dutch ship named Hoorn and killed up to nine people. Therefore, in May 1659, the Dutch began to besiege the areas with their ships so that the business was out of control." Until the middle of the XVIII century, the Dutch rule in Bima, silver was getting stronger and only received a challenge from the Bugis people of Makassar who at that time had a wide influence in the kingdoms of Johor and Selagor. "In 1756 the Bugis attacked Bima" (Muhammad 1997). The attack was thwarted thanks to the help of Trengganu.

As mentioned earlier, the influence and power of the Dutch in the Bima area was not too much compared to what the British did. In the 18th century, Belanda's territorial expansion outside Java was slightly ruled out when compared to the Dutch efforts over Java in the 18th century period. The Netherlands' serious concern for areas outside Java only peaked in Bad XIX, but the political events that occurred in Europe had forced the Dutch or British to take actions that were not in accordance with their wishes.

Bima's status then changed because it was returned to the Netherlands in 1818. As a consequence of the contents of the

Convention of London (1814). Dutch rule in the areas was then abolished with the agreement of the Treaty of London in 1824. This treaty affirmed the limits of influence of Dutch and British rule, Singapore to the north was British territory, while to the south, including Sumatra (except Aceh) was Dutch rule. With the contents of the Treaty of London, the Netherlands and Britain shared influence over the region in the Bima area, until the time when Aceh was made a boundary area for their respective territories.

#### **b) British Efforts to Control Areas in West Nusa Tenggara**

The British had attempted to control areas in West Nusa Tenggara more specifically the Bima area by sending missions to Denpasar Bali for the purpose of trade. However, the mission sent in 1764 was unsuccessful, the Balinese represented by (Reid 2014) reject all forms of plans of any foreign power in their regions. Meanwhile, East Nusa has been occupied by the British to get a place since 1686, giving little hope because it is too far from the main trading area. The clues to the success of the British to gain a strategic foothold in the surrounding areas or islands were obtained thanks to the services of Francis Ligh, a former British naval option. Ligh has extensive knowledge and views about the diverse Bima area.

The figure who succeeded in convincing the British dignitaries in India that the island of Penang in the western part of the Bima area was an adequate place for the British for the benefit of the naval fleet. For this purpose, the British took the means of *dilomsi*, (Ricklefs 2007) stated that "In September 1784 the British Company officials in India sent Thomas to Malay and begged Sultan Abdul Kahir to step on a land area in Malaya to establish a trading warehouse for the British Company. The application was not approved by Sultan Abdullah because it was feared that it would bring down business in the area".

### **3. The Competition of Dutch and British Imperialism in Bima**

#### **a) Dutch efforts to control Bima**

Efforts to expand Dutch power in Bima were only carried out intensively in the nineteenth century. The Dutch had long been in contact with Bima, but only a few areas where they had been a major force before. The area where the Dutch had previously established trading posts in 1800 and was only more empowered. Efforts to expand Dutch control over Bima had several reasons (Ricklefs 2007), fattening that "First, to protect other areas that may be controlled. Then the Dutch would feel compelled to conquer other regions that might support and arouse the resistance movement. Secondly, when the struggle with the

Europeans for the acquisition of colonies reached its peak in the nineteenth century, the Dutch felt obliged to establish their affairs in areas outside Java in order to prevent the intervention of other western powers, as well as in places that were initially of interest to the Dutch".

The Dutch succeeded in restoring power in Jambi in 1834 after the VOC post was abandoned in 1724. The Jambi Sultanate, the Dutch succeeded in taking advantage of the weakness of the Sultanate (Muhammad 1997) who asked for his help due to the increasing pirate distractions. The Dutch strengthened their monopoly in the kingdom of Bima which they had acquired since 1784 by sticking to the contents of the London Treaty. On October 23, 1830, Sultan Abdul Rahman approved the demands on his area. The treaty contained that the Sultan recognized the Dutch colonial command as the holder of supreme sovereignty (Subari and Anwar 2022).

The Dutch need to feel at war with the kingdom of Bima in order to provide security for foreign private rulers to invest their capital while preventing the entry of other foreign influences. As competition among European powers for its colonies increased, the British government decided that it would be better to let the Dutch control Lombok than other areas of the archipelago.

The result was the realization of the Bima Tract between the Netherlands and Britain in 1871. One of the contents of the deal was that Britain gave absolute freedom to the Netherlands to expand its power to Lombok, in exchange for the surrender of the golden coast in Africa by the British. This agreement was a cushion of Lombok's sovereignty which was recognized by both sides in the Bima traktak (1824), as well as an announcement that the Dutch wanted to control Lombok. Regarding the Dutch conquest of the Netherlands, it will be ruled out in this article. However, it is clear that a lot of cost, sacrifice and strategy as well as time are needed before the right formulation is found in ending the Lombok resistance in the early nineteenth century. Dutch colonial officials have admitted that the Dutch war in Lombok was the longest and hardest war ever experienced in its colonial history (Mawaddah 2017).

#### **b) British Efforts to Control Bima**

After controlling Dompu for some time, the British began to feel the need for defensive fortifications to protect their posts. In 1714 the fort was built and completed in 1720, (Sumerata 2014). Dompu is an area on Sumbawa Island that was not handed over to the Dutch, to fill the king's position in Dompu, the British appointed Rafles in 1818, who had held the position of chairman in Batavia. When he served as his chairman in Dompu,

Reffles still felt the need for the right place to be developed as a trading center. Dompu is a less strategic place because it is far from the main trading area so that it will keep the British away in its competition with the Dutch.

Thanks to a sharp and precise view, Reffles saw the east coast of Bima and the surrounding islands as a suitable place to be built as a trading city, as the previous one. And it can be understood that the British were willing to release Dompu to the Dutch as mandated by the Bima traktak (1824), with a guarantee of sovereignty over its colony. The British were able to offset the Dutch influence in Bima. Britain did not lose the territory which meant the surrender of Dompu to the Dutch, because it was proportional to its sovereignty in Singapore against the British.

The east coast of Bima is Sape which is of British concern. Reffles and he had sent a commission to send Sultan Badarudin to take over the Dutch office. The territory did not want foreign intervention in its territory so it refused the commission, which prompted the British to go military course, as it was written (Mubin and Kusumawati 2019), stated "The British fleet was ready to leave Batavia on March 20, 1812. Within a month, it could be captured after Fort Borang fell to the British on April 24".

The victory the British fired Sultan Badaruddin and was replaced by Ahmad

Najamiddin, then the British made an agreement with Ahmad Najamudin about the stump of the island of Bangka, and the exploitation of the island. Bangka Blitung Island became fully owned by the British, and became part of the Palembang residency. The Palembang Empire was not long controlled by the British because the area had to be returned to the Dutch. The surrender of the Netherlands could only be carried out on June 29, 1817. (Islam and Sunan 2020). The British tried to impose their influence on the northern tip of the Bima area on April 22, 1819. The Ingris agreed to an agreement called the Bima Parcel which included "the Sultanate of Bima does not allow Europeans to live in Bima and will not have contact with other countries without the consent of the British government to obtain the legitimacy of trading in Bima waters (Subari and Anwar 2024).

One of the contents of the Bima parcel also stated that "Britain will work hand in hand with Bima to destroy the Dutch in the area "(Fahmi and Idham 2019). The British move to control Bima seems to have to be abandoned because with the exit of the London Tract (1824), all Bima Parcels became null and void.

#### **4. Reasons for the Non-Occurrence of Open War between the Netherlands and Britain in Bima.**

##### **a) The unbalanced power of the Netherlands and Britain**

After experiencing a heyday in the seventeenth century, this trade association has been in decline. Various reasons can be proposed as data, First, the trade system that is not conducive, the Dutch company tightens the trade monopoly of selling its merchandise to the indigenous people too high and makes goods at as low prices as possible, thus encouraging an increase in trade smuggling which in essence harms this trade stick. Second, corruption among the employees themselves, the employees of the Dutch company are mostly not Dutch people who are considered only based on the oath of allegiance, and have encouraged them to take the rights of the company as private property. Third, fighting the kingdom in the archipelago and uniting its territories that have been seized. Fourth, wrong financial management, such as the old one under the pressure of the Dutch company which continues to distribute *Devide* every year to its shareholders despite experiencing losses. The other most important reason is the weakness of the navy and the merchant fleet of the Dutch company. (Haris, Zuhdi, and Wulandari 1997) stated that "the decline of the VOC was caused by its powerlessness in the maritime field compared to the British who were experiencing their navy".

Regarding the decline of the Dutch state has been described by (Amran, 1981:344) stated that "In the seventeenth

century, the Netherlands was a big voice in the world. On the contrary, in the eighteenth century, the century of decline, England had far left the Netherlands. Asterdam, which used to be the number one port of war, is more of a stock buying and selling activity. Sadly, the Dutch are that in the eighteenth century, the world of commerce, politics flourished rapidly and that radical changes.

Because of the decline that he experienced, it can be understood that the Dutch were more relenting in their competition with the British regarding the status of the colonies in the Bima Strait area and other areas. Based on the Peace of Paris (1784) England was given this guarantee and was not only an opportunity to break the Dutch monopoly but also for Britain to challenge the superiority of Dutch trade in the archipelago. When the British occupied Bima, there was no sign that the Dutch would take military action even though the population was a threat to power in the Bima area. Another aspect that shows that the helplessness of the Dutch in facing the British in the competition regarding the seizure of their colonies is about the content of the so-called kew letter. This letter comes from King William V who was taking refuge in the English city of Kew, because the Dutch state was being occupied by France in 1795 and contained an order to Dutch

officials in the archipelago to hand over their colonies to the British (Beno, Silen, and Yanti 2022). The Dutch officials basically objected to the order, but due to their natural incompetence, the Dutch officials chose to obey the order so that an open war between the British and the Dutch was avoided.

#### **b) The Influence of Diplomacy and the International Political Situation**

As happened in colonial history, the political situation in Europe often directly affected the policy regarding colonies. When Napoleon lost the war of the Coalition in 1814 and was deadlocked at the Congress of Vienna, the European nations had determined an important stance. "In this Congress, Britain concluded that France should be surrounded by powerful countries, so that it would not mess up again (Djoened, Poesponegoro, and Notosusanto 1975).

The Netherlands, which borders France directly, must be strengthened. Britain assured that the Netherlands would not be strong enough to return its rights in the sea that had been seized by the British. What was decided by the congress had brought Britain and the Netherlands into war, an indication of the political situation in Europe affecting their colonies. Holding the Vienna congress, the Netherlands and England agreed on the Confetion of London on August 13, 1814. As a realization, Britain handed over some of its colonies to the Dutch. The return of

the former Dutch colony from Britain is once again an indication that the political situation gives an advantage to the absence of an open war between the Netherlands and Britain in the Bima Strait area.

Britain's attitude was protested by officials, especially Reffles who served as the head of the regional government even though the government was in the right view, but the central government of London decided politics. The politics of Dutch-British diplomacy in the London Treaty, also closed the way for open war between them. As in the previous description, the *traktak* clearly defined the boundaries of their territory in the Bima Strait area and at the same time was a colonial exchange between them. Britain is superior in its guarantee of sovereignty, the *trakatak* explains that "Britain's trade with Bima should not be restricted, no matter what the state of Dutch political dominance there" (Ricklefs 2007).

In the London Parcel, the Dutch-British competition in the power struggle in the Bima Strait area entered its final stage. Bima, which was recognized as independent in the London *traktak*, was then canceled in the Sumatran *traktak*. Britain gave up the Dutch conquering Bima rather than the arrival of other powerful foreign nations. Thus the prolonged competition between the Dutch and the British in the fight for the Bima Strait area

could be ended and there would be an open war. The Dutch finally controlled the entire territory of Bima.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on some of the descriptions above, the author will conclude from several discussions in the following conclusions:

1. The factors that encouraged the Netherlands and Britain to plant their influence in the Bima Strait area were broadly two factors. First, geopolitical factors, namely the strategic location of the Bima Strait area in a cross position in the shipping and trade routes. Second, the economic factor is that the Bima Strait area has various types of natural products and the content of mining goods, especially silver, gold and other petroleum products that are scattered in the area.
2. The competition between Dutch and British imperialism in the Bima Strait area, the influence of Dutch power was very limited compared to what the British achieved. Dutch influence was limited to Bima, while the British managed to consolidate themselves after controlling penang, Singapore and the entire Bima Strait area in the late nineteenth century or early twentieth century, especially Bima. Britain was seen as exceeding the progress achieved by the Dutch, who consolidated themselves with the ruler of the island of Sumbawa thanks to the

opening of Singapore as a free port and a major trading center in Asia.

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