The Implications of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political Interactions for Ceramic Evolution on the Banda Islands, Maluku Province, Indonesia


Adviser: Peter V. Lape

Archaeologists usually assume that human societies are structured as a superorganism system in which various social, cultural, economic, and political sectors are intertwined and mutually influenced. Once force occurs in one sector, dynamic interactions will transmit the force and transform the related sectors through time. Ceramics is one case of the human craft production which archaeologists believe can be studied to reveal dynamic cultural-historical processes in human societies. Holding the perspective of system interaction, my dissertation aims to explore the long-term dynamic ceramic evolution on the Banda Islands. It attempts to examine and explain how and why ceramic evolution is related to several cultural-historical processes such as migration, cultural contact, trade, economic development, and socio-political inequality and conflicts. Based on previous historical and archaeological studies, I propose that these events have influence on Banda's earthenware manufacture and consumption. To verify the proposed hypotheses, I have analyzed variations in formal and technological attributes of the earthenware samples from archaeological sites in Banda. I examined the population changes of the selected features and their spatial distribution in temporal sequence. Although I found it difficult to evaluate the impact of economic development on ceramic specialization, the results of my research can agree that some changes in the ceramic features indeed associated with the proposed cultural-historical processes. The changes in ceramic forms, including lip curving, lip notching, and decorative designs, could be related to cultural contacts. The restricted distribution of decorated potsherds suggests a certain degree of social stratification. The contrasted distribution of potsherds of different tempers may indicate communal boundaries and social conflicts described in the early historical documents.