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From History to Architecture: Speelwijk Fort: A Symbol of Dutch Dominance Over Banten

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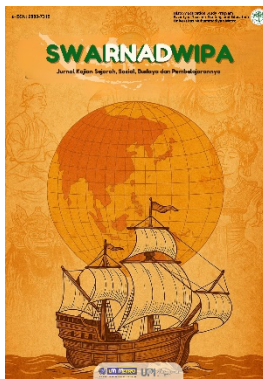
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Abstract

This article examines the historical establishment of Fort Speelwijk as a symbol of Dutch and Banten Sultanate relations. The study aims to explore cultural acculturation and shifts in governance arising from their interaction. This research uses the historical method, including heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Built in Dutch architectural style by Hendrik Lucaz Cardeel and named after Governor-General Cornelis Janszoon Speelman, the fort functioned as the VOC's representative office in Banten. The findings reveal cultural acculturation in construction techniques, including brick and coral stone reinforced with lime, reflecting the local concept of "Gawe Kuta Baluwarti Bata Kalawan Kawis." Economically, the VOC's tax imposition led to rising commodity prices, burdening locals and weakening the Sultanate's economic sovereignty. Additionally, the study explores local myths surrounding the fort, such as the story of Catharina Maria Van Doorn. After its 1994 restoration, Fort Speelwijk emerged as a prominent historical and educational tourism site.

Keywords: Fort Speelwijk, Banten Sultanate, VOC, cultural acculturation, colonial history

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INTRODUCTION

The Speelwijk Fortress, standing tall to the north of the Great Mosque of Banten, seems to serve as a silent witness and spokesperson of the colonial era. This fortress was originally built as a defense system during the golden age of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (1651–

1682), when the Sultanate of Banten was at its peak. However, when the fortress fell into Dutch hands, its function and control system changed drastically.

The arrival of the VOC (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*) in Banten in the 17th century (Aizid Rizen, 2024) triggered deep political tensions. Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa emerged as the most steadfast figure in opposing the VOC by launching various forms of resistance. Unfortunately, the VOC retaliated with a trade blockade and a cunning divide-and-conquer strategy between Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa and his son, Sultan Haji. This provocation successfully sparked a civil war, which was ultimately won by Sultan Haji with the help of the VOC. Ironically, this victory became a turning point that favored the Dutch. As a consequence of their assistance, the VOC forced Sultan Haji to cede Cirebon, the monopoly over pepper trade, the Priangan region, and a large sum of money. The Speelwijk Fortress, once standing amidst the narrative of the glory of the Sultanate of Banten, ultimately became a symbol of decline due to colonial domination.

After the defeat of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa and his imprisonment in Batavia, the Speelwijk Fortress completely fell into Dutch hands in 1685. The fortress was then named Speelwijk, referring to the name of Governor-General Cornelis Janszoon Speelman (1681–1684) (Muhammad Anis, 2021), as well as the district of birth of its designer, Hendrik Lucaz Cardeel. Under Dutch control, the fortress became the Batavia representative office in Banten, equipped with various facilities such as a prison, customs payment area, barracks, church, and watchtower. Its strategic location, near the trade canals, made it the center of economic control and defense for the Dutch in the region. Although the construction was not fully authorized by Sultan Haji, the project continued because at that time, the Sultanate of Banten had lost its sovereignty and lacked the power to resist colonial domination. However, in 1810, the fortress was abandoned by the Dutch due to escalating political tensions between them and the Sultanate of Banten, as well as the dissolution of the VOC.

Previous studies related to the Speelwijk Fortress generally focus more on the history of its establishment. In his book, Muhammad Anis (2016) specifically discusses the process of the fortress's construction and interprets it as a symbol of Dutch colonial dominance. Nevertheless, a deeper understanding of the material aspects and internal functions of the fortress still requires further exploration. One interesting aspect to examine is the building materials used in the construction, which still included brick and coral. This aligns with the defense construction concept known since the reign of Sultan Maulana Yusuf, namely "Gawe Kuta Baluwarti Bata Kalawan Kawis" (Wibowo, 2018). To explore further the possibility of cultural acculturation in the structure and function of the fortress, an interview was conducted with one of the staff members of the Cultural Preservation Hall, Mr. Mulangkara. In the interview, he explained that the prison system applied in the fortress at the time was a form of Dutch dominance over the legal system of the Sultanate of Banten and even became the precursor to the modern legal system now applied in Indonesia.

The discussion of the history of a site cannot be separated from the culture of the region where the site is located. In the context of the Speelwijk Fortress, cultural acculturation marks an important sign of the interaction between local culture and the European culture brought by the Dutch. This interaction is reflected not only in the architecture but also in the governance system. Although Indonesia's current legal system adopts several principles from Dutch law, its implementation is still based on Pancasila as the foundation of the state.

This article aims to unravel the history of the establishment of the Speelwijk Fortress, examine its role as a reflection of the relationship between the Dutch and the Sultanate of Banten, and analyze the forms of cultural acculturation that occurred during its construction. Using historical methods that include heuristic stages, source criticism, interpretation, and

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historiography, this study seeks to reveal the impact of this cultural acculturation, including the shift in the governance system that emerged as a result of colonial interaction.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses historical research methods that include several stages, beginning with heuristics or source collection (Sukmana, 2021). At this stage, the researcher gathers various sources containing information about the early establishment of the Speelwijk Fortress and the process of its takeover and control by the Dutch. These sources include books that discuss the reign of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, the Sultan of Banten known for his fierce opposition to the presence of the Dutch. Additionally, articles and scholarly journals are used to review the impact of the Dutch during Sultan Ageng's rule, including the divide-and-conquer political strategy they applied between Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa and his son, Sultan Haji. To deepen and verify the information related to the Speelwijk Fortress, the researcher also conducted an interview with Mr. Mulangkara, a 54-year-old staff member of the Banten Cultural Heritage Conservation Office (BPCB). From this interview, important information was obtained regarding the materials used in the construction of the fortress, the layout of the sections within the fortress and their functions, as well as validation of the data previously obtained from books and journals.

Once all sources are collected, the next stage in the historical research method is source criticism (M. Dien Madjid, Johan Wahyudi, 2014). In this stage, all sources are classified and analyzed critically to filter out what is truly relevant and suitable for the needs of the research. The sources that pass the selection process are then interpreted, meaning their content is linked to historical facts to form a comprehensive understanding. The final stage in writing history is historiography (Wasino and Hartatik, 2018), which is the process of assembling the results of interpretation into a narrative that is coherent chronologically and historically accurate. In this stage, the researcher compiles all the information into a complete historical account of the Speelwijk Fortress, so that it can be presented clearly and easily understood by the readers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

History and Function of Speelwijk Fortress

Speelwijk Fortress is one of the heritage sites of the Sultanate of Banten, located to the north of the Great Mosque of Banten (Dinas Pariwisata Daerah, 2018). Initially, the fortress was built as a defense fort by Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa during his reign (1651–1682). The designer of this fortress was a Muslim Chinese named Prince Cakradana, who was known as an architect and the treasurer of the Sultanate of Banten at that time (Rifqiwati et al., 2023). Construction of the fortress began in 1682, but the same year, it fell into Dutch hands after internal conflicts and colonial intervention (I.G. N. Anom, Sri Sugiyanti, Hadniwati Hasibuan, 1996). Subsequently, in 1685, Speelwijk Fortress was officially operated under full Dutch control.

The arrival of the Dutch in Banten in the 17th century (Ikot Sholehat, M. Hum, 2019) was a concerning moment for Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. He was known as a Sultan who fiercely opposed the Dutch presence, especially after the formation of the VOC trading company. As a form of resistance, Sultan Ageng launched several attacks on the VOC's positions in Batavia and surrounding areas, aiming to pressure the VOC to respect the Sultanate of Banten (Danil Fajarudin, "Historical Review of the Relationship Between Lampung and Banten in Politics and Economics During the Development of Lampung

Society in the 16th-18th Century,” 2020). However, this effort was retaliated by the VOC through a blockade of Banten's trade ships, which eventually led to escalating political tensions between both sides.

The VOC not only blockaded Banten's trade ships but also employed a divide-and-conquer strategy between Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa and his son, Sultan Haji (Muzhiat and Mansurnoor, 2020). Sultan Abu Nasr Abdul Kahar, known as Sultan Haji, was appointed by his father to handle domestic affairs, while foreign affairs were managed by Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa with the assistance of his other son, Prince Arya Purbaya. This division of governmental responsibilities was noticed by the Dutch representative in Banten, W. Caeff, who then approached and incited Sultan Haji (between Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa and VOC and Sultan Haji and Herlina, 2024). Due to the VOC's provocation, Sultan Haji began to suspect his father and brother, fearing that he would not be able to ascend the throne as long as Prince Arya Purbaya, Sultan Ageng's son, remained in the picture. This fear eventually led to a conspiracy between Sultan Haji and the VOC to seize the throne of Banten, especially after Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa spent more time in the Tirtayasa Palace (between Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa and VOC and Sultan Haji and Herlina, 2024). Influenced by the Dutch, Sultan Haji sought their help to quickly claim the throne.

In line with the VOC's plan, Sultan Haji eventually requested their assistance to confront his father. This moment became a golden opportunity for the VOC, which quickly took advantage of the situation by imposing a series of harsh terms on Banten. First, Banten was required to cede the Cirebon region to the VOC; second, the VOC was granted a monopoly over the pepper trade in Banten, displacing Persian, Indian, and Chinese traders; third, Banten was obliged to pay a fine of 600,000 ringgit for violating the agreement; and fourth, Banten's forces in the coastal areas and Priangan region were to be withdrawn immediately (Siregar, 2023).

With Dutch assistance, Sultan Haji finally succeeded in weakening the Sultanate of Banten. The civil war between father and son even resulted in the destruction of the Surosowan Palace, built by their ancestors (Anwar, 2022). Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, feeling cornered, retreated to Tirtayasa, but VOC forces continued to assault his territory. Eventually, Sultan Ageng was forced to flee inland for his safety, accompanied by Arya Purbaya and Sheikh Yusuf al-Makasari, a mufti in the Sultanate of Banten personally chosen by Sultan Ageng. Before being appointed mufti in Banten, Sheikh Yusuf had studied for 20 years in the Holy Land.

Sheikh Yusuf's arrival in Banten was a direct command from Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, a caliph and Islamic leader in the Sultanate of Banten. Sultan Ageng called Sheikh Yusuf to undertake a special mission as an Islamic educator and mufti (judge) in the Sultanate (Rahmatullah and Suhaeni, 2021). The relationship between Sheikh Yusuf and Sultan Ageng had long been established, even before Sultan Ageng ascended the throne. When Sheikh Yusuf was about to pursue his 20-year studies in Mecca, he stopped by Banten and formed a close friendship with Sultan Ageng. After completing his studies in the Holy Land, Sheikh Yusuf returned to his homeland and met his friend, who was now the Sultan of Banten. Additionally, Sheikh Yusuf's connection with the Sultanate grew even closer when he married Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa's daughter. As a mark of respect for his closeness and expertise, Sheikh Yusuf was appointed mufti or royal advisor by Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa himself.

When the Dutch East India Company (VOC) fought and captured Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, the famous ruler of the Sultanate of Banten, Sheikh al-Makassari immediately took his place, leading the Banten forces in guerrilla warfare. He fought against the VOC forces in the forests of Banten, West Java, and surrounding areas for nearly two years (Rosyadi, 2020). In 1683, Sultan Ageng was betrayed and ambushed while in hiding. He

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was captured without much resistance and quickly taken to Batavia, where he was imprisoned by the VOC until his death in 1692.

The guerrilla war continued under Sheikh Yusuf, Prince Purbaya, and Prince Kidul in the Tangerang area, confronting the Van Happel forces (Hamid, 1994). Utilizing difficult-to-reach terrains such as forests, swamps, and mountains, the three led the resistance using ambush and infiltration strategies into Dutch posts. However, the larger and better-equipped VOC forces eventually pushed the resistance back. The Dutch continued to tighten their control by launching intensive manhunts against the fighters.

On September 25, 1683, the VOC launched a massive assault on Padaherang. As a result of this attack, Prince Kidul and many Banten and Makassar nobles died in battle. Sheikh Yusuf's wife and daughter were captured by the VOC, while Sheikh Yusuf and his forces managed to escape to the Banjar region (Rahmatullah and Suhaeni, 2021). Sheikh Yusuf and his forces continued their guerrilla struggle by moving around until they arrived at Mandala, Sukapura. The Dutch, having difficulty capturing Sheikh Yusuf, launched a strategy of infiltration by disguising themselves as Muslims. Van Happel succeeded in deceiving the guards and infiltrated the core group of Sheikh Yusuf's followers.

He entered a place called Karang with Sheikh Yusuf's daughter, Asma, who had previously been captured by the Dutch VOC. Van Happel then apologized for his arrival in such a manner and persuaded Sheikh Yusuf to negotiate with the VOC, using false promises. His daughter, who had been coached by Van Happel, also persuaded her father, and eventually, Sheikh Yusuf accepted his daughter's request (Rahmatullah and Suhaeni, 2021). After leaving hiding and joining Van Happel's group on their way to Cirebon, Sheikh Yusuf was declared a prisoner of war. On December 14, 1683, Sheikh Yusuf was taken to Batavia, marking the end of his direct guerrilla struggle.

Prince Arya Purbaya and his 800 troops moved to the southern Bogor area near Cikalong, while in Jakarta, a resistance led by Untung Suropati, a Balinese nobleman who had been kidnapped and enslaved by the Dutch, took place. Due to his romantic involvement with his master's daughter, Suzane, Untung Suropati was forced to flee to avoid punishment. In his escape, he hid around Batavia and resisted the Dutch. Van Happel attempted to deal with this by gently negotiating with Untung Suropati, enticing him to join the Dutch by offering him the rank of lieutenant if he approached Prince Purbaya (Indriani, 2018). Untung Suropati then met Prince Purbaya, and at the same time, Dutch forces led by Kuffeler arrogantly ordered Prince Purbaya to submit to them. Feeling insulted, Untung Suropati and his forces attacked and defeated the Dutch, forcing Kuffeler to flee to Tanjungpura with Prince Sake, Purbaya's brother, as a hostage. Through this deceit, Prince Purbaya eventually surrendered himself in Batavia on February 6, 1684, and was imprisoned there until his death (Ny. Ratnawati Anhar, 2012).

After Sultan Ageng lost power, the defense fortress of the Sultanate of Banten, located north of the Great Mosque, was seized and renamed Speelwijk. The name was derived from Dutch Governor-General Cornelis Janszoon Speelman, while the term "Wijk" refers to a district in the Netherlands that is the birthplace of the fortress's designer, Hendrik Lucaz Cardeel (Laksmi, 2017). Since Sultan Ageng's imprisonment in Batavia, the fortress was completely under Dutch control in 1685 and became the Batavia representative office in Banten (Mr. Mulangkara, 2025).

Once all power was in their hands, the VOC began to carry out their mission systematically. They started by taking control of Cirebon and then monopolizing the pepper trade, especially from Lampung, which was a major supplier of pepper to Banten. The trade routes along the coast were gradually dominated by the Dutch. This marked the beginning

of Banten's downfall, a situation that Sultan Haji himself began to feel. In the process of building Speelwijk Fortress, the VOC did not get permission from Sultan Haji because he was disheartened by his father's imprisonment by the Dutch in Batavia and saw firsthand how Banten's power was now under the shadow of Dutch domination. However, Sultan Haji could only refuse without being able to take further action, as by that time, Banten had lost its sovereignty and no longer had the military or political strength to resist the VOC's power.



Source: Author Team Documentation, May 2025

Figure 1. *Customs payment room.*



Source: Author Team Documentation, May 2025

Figure 2. *Kanal Buatan, tempat berhentinya kapal dagang luar Banten.*

Speelwijk Fortress was not only used as a military defense fort but also as an official VOC trading office tasked with controlling the flow of trade at Karangantu Port. To the south of the fortress, there was a room for retribution or a customs payment area for traders wishing to do business in Banten. This shows that Speelwijk Fortress was a strategic point in the trade monopoly system implemented by the Dutch in Banten (Amalia, n.d.). Every trading ship wishing to trade in Banten had to first dock at the fortress port to pay taxes to

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the Dutch. The tax imposed by the VOC was added to the price of goods, which caused an increase in the prices of commodities entering Banten. As a result, the people of Banten suffered economically, and the economic sovereignty of the Sultanate of Banten was further eroded. The artificial canal, about five meters deep, located next to the fortress room, served as the docking place for trading ships, where representatives from each ship would disembark to pay taxes. This tax policy had a significant impact on trading activities, as many traders felt uncomfortable and eventually chose to move to other ports like Batavia (Mr. Mulangkara, 2025).



Source: Author Team Documentation, May 2025

Figure 3. Temporary detention cell, as a place for interrogating perpetrators of violations.



Source: Author Team Documentation, May 2025

Figure 3. Corridor in the prison cell.

Additionally, Speelwijk Fortress also housed a temporary detention room used to hold individuals who committed violations. Offenders would be interrogated in this room and were usually detained for a week. If the violation was considered serious, they would be transferred to Batavia for further legal proceedings. However, if the violation was deemed minor, they would be released under certain conditions, typically involving a mandatory contribution to forced labor at that time (Mr. Mulangkara, 2025). According to

Mr. Mulangkara, one of the Sultans of Banten, Sultan Aliyuddin II, was once temporarily detained in this cell before being taken to Batavia (Mr. Mulangkara, 2025).



Source: Author Team Documentation, May 2025

Figure 5. *Bastion, a place to monitor the enemy from above the fort.*



Source: Author Team Documentation, May 2025

Figure 6. *Fort windows, where cannons are placed, as a means of combat.*

Judging by its layout, each corner of Fort Speelwijk features a protruding structure, commonly known as a bastion. This bastion served as a security observation area and was equipped with shooting windows and watchtowers. The presence of bastions is a characteristic feature of forts built by the Dutch. A similar feature can also be found at Fort

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Oranje in Ternate, which was established on May 26, 1697. The fort has bastions at all four corners, serving the same purpose: to monitor the presence of enemies and to mount cannons in the fort's windows (Endah Harisun, 2022).



Source: Author Team Documentation, May 2025

Figure 7. *Ruins of barracks and Dutch residences in the fort.*

Inside Fort Speelwijk, there are ruins of buildings believed to be barracks or living quarters for Dutch soldiers. According to information from Mr. Mulangkara, around 272 people inhabited this fort, divided into three groups: sailors, officers, and soldiers and employees (Mr. Mulangkara, 2025).

During the administration of Daendels around 1810, the Dutch began to abandon the fort for two main reasons: first, political tensions with the Sultanate of Banten; and second, the dissolution of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) on December 29, 1799 (Ken Supriyono, 2022). After restoration in 1994, Fort Speelwijk began to function as a historical tourist site. Today, the fort serves as an important resource that captures colonial architecture and the legacy of Dutch colonization in Banten.

Acculturation of Culture and Myth in Architecture



Source: Processed from Google Earth, May 28, 2025.

Figure 8. Location of Speelwinjk Fort.

Fort Speelwijk is located in Kampung Pamarican, Kasemen District, Serang City, Banten. The fort is situated right by the sea and the canals, which serve as trade routes to the Banten region, covering an area of approximately 2 hectares. According to our source, Mr. Mulangkara, "when it was built, the fort was located right on the shoreline because the primary reason for its construction was as a defense fort to control the port" (Mr. Mulangkara, 2025). From this explanation, it can be concluded that one of the reasons the Dutch took over and utilized Fort Speelwijk was due to its very strategic location. With this position, the Dutch could control trade routes, monitor security, and anticipate enemy attacks directly from the top of the fort.

The architecture of Fort Speelwijk features distinct European-style buildings, influenced by its designer, Hendrik Lucaz Cardeel, who was from Europe. A similar architectural style can also be seen in the tower of the Great Mosque of Banten, which, when closely observed, resembles a European-style lighthouse more than a typical mosque tower. Strong speculation suggests that this tower, along with Fort Speelwijk and the Surosovan Palace, was designed by the same architect, Hendrik Lucaz Cardeel (Martien de Vletter, 2009). Besides showing the influence of European architectural culture, the presence of these buildings also represents the dominance of Dutch power in Banten at that time.

To the east of Fort Speelwijk lies the Dutch cemetery known as Kerkhof, which contains around 83 graves. These graves vary in shape, reflecting the different social statuses of the individuals buried there. The larger and more luxurious the tomb, the higher the social status of the person. This indicates that a social hierarchy was maintained even after death.

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Source: Author Team Documentation, May 2025

Figure 9. *Tomb of Hugo Pieter Faure, VOC General.*

One of the most prominent graves in the Kerkhof cemetery area is the tomb of Hugo Pieter Faure (1717–1763), a VOC general who was once prominent in his time (Muhammad Anis, 2021). In addition to him, most of the people buried at this site were fort commanders with the rank of colonel. Another unique feature is seen in the architecture of the fort doors, which are designed shorter than the average height of a person. According to Mr. Mulangkara (2025), this design was intentionally made so that anyone entering the room would automatically bow their head. This movement is interpreted as a form of respect, as the room was typically inhabited by high-ranking officials such as generals or colonels.



Source: Author Team Documentation, May 2025

Figure 10. *Speelwijk Fortress Walls.*

The discussion of a cultural heritage site is certainly inseparable from the process of acculturation, both in social life and in physical forms such as the Speelwijk Fortress building. Acculturation is a social process that occurs when a group of people with their own culture interacts and accepts elements of foreign culture, so that these elements can be assimilated and integrated into their own culture without losing the identity of the original culture (Syafitri et al., 2023). Acculturation is a cultural contact that takes place in a two-way process (Nafisah et al., 2021). The beauty of tourism is not only created from local culture that absorbs foreign influences, but also occurs when these foreign elements adapt and integrate local elements.

Supported by the fortress's location near the Cibanten River, the choice of building materials for Speelwijk Fortress was greatly influenced by the surrounding environment. The primary materials used were bricks and coral stones, selected to protect the fort from corrosion due to seawater, which could slowly erode its surface. To bind the bricks and coral stones, a mixture of lime and water was used, stirred until well integrated, making the structure solid and durable. This use of material aligns with the concept of fortress construction that existed since the Sultanate of Banten under Sultan Maulana Yusuf, known as the "Gawe Kuta Baluwarti Bata Kalawan Kawis" concept (Wibowo, 2018). Speelwijk Fortress represents an interesting example of cultural acculturation, as although its design is distinctly European and was created by a Dutch architect, the fortress still retains the traditional concepts inherited from the Sultanate of Banten.

In the interview with Mr. Mulangkara, he explained that the legal system in Banten was initially based on Islamic teachings. However, after the arrival of the Dutch, they adopted the prison system as part of the legal framework implemented in Banten. From this explanation, it can be concluded that cultural acculturation occurred in the form of the legal or defense systems. Mr. Mulangkara also added that not only Banten, but the entire archipelago also adopted this legal system, which is still applied while maintaining Pancasila as the foundation for legal establishment (Mr. Mulangkara, 2025).



Source: Author Team Documentation, May 2025

Figure 11. *Tomb Catharina Maria Van Doorn.*

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In addition to cultural acculturation, this fortress is also surrounded by a myth closely related to the Bastion and the grave located directly in front of the fort. According to Atmazaki, "A myth is something that is believed to exist and has become deeply rooted in society, thus influencing the behavior of the people" (Viora, 2018). The function of the Bastion itself was not only as a monitoring post and ammunition storage (Drs. H. Tri Hatmadji, 2019), but also as a silent witness to a love story. The fort, with its guest rooms, clearly became a center of dynamic social activity, which sparked the growth of seeds of love, such as the story of a Dutch girl and a Dutch commander. This concept of love aligns with the thinking of Paul Tillich, a German existentialist philosopher, who viewed love as a force inseparable from human existence (Adhea Tsabitah Sulistiyo and Syihabuddin Syihabuddin, 2022).

The myth circulating in the community associates the Bastion with a grave believed to be that of Catharina Maria Van Doorn, the newlywed of Commander Jan Van Doorn. When the commander was assigned to Batavia and Europe, before his departure, he left a message for Maria: "Wait for me in the middle of the month." This middle of the month coincided with the full moon, and Maria always waited for her husband's return near the Bastion tower. However, the commander never returned or communicated his return. Maria's longing grew cold without the embrace of the commander, and eventually, her overwhelming longing made her fall ill and pass away. Now, the myth says that every 15th of the month, or during the full moon, the figure of Catharina Maria Van Doorn can still be seen waiting for her partner near the Bastion. Behind the history of Dutch domination over Banten, the story of Catharina's tragic love as the wife of a Dutch commander is hidden, showing that love does not choose whom it will settle with.

The Relationship Between Banten and the Dutch

Speelwijk Fortress was a Dutch colonial military fort established in 1684 in the Sultanate of Banten as a symbol of the VOC's presence in Banten (Pawitro, 2014). The existence of this fort indicates the relationship between the Sultanate of Banten and the Dutch, encompassing both political and economic aspects. Economically, the Dutch, through the VOC, sought to dominate the strategically important spice trade routes in Banten, which was one of the main ports in the archipelago at the time. Banten was known as a hub for international trade, frequented by merchants from Arabia, India, China, and Europe.

The Dutch presence had a significant impact on trade regulations, including the implementation of trade monopolies that disadvantaged local merchants and weakened the economic sovereignty of the Sultanate. Meanwhile, in the political realm, the Dutch employed a divide-and-rule strategy by supporting certain factions within the palace, such as when they sided with Sultan Haji in his conflict against his father, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. This intervention deepened the internal crisis and paved the way for the VOC's dominance over Banten (Mulyanto, 2022, p. 221).

The preservation of Speelwijk Fortress is a shared responsibility between the government, the community, and cultural institutions. The Banten Cultural Heritage Conservation Office (BPCB) actively protects the fort from vandalism and conducts regular maintenance, including cleaning the moss and conserving materials without altering their authenticity. Restoration is also carried out with concrete evidence to return the structure to its original form. This fortress holds great potential as an educational tourist destination due to its strategic location and proximity to other historical sites. Community participation

through historical tours and social media campaigns is crucial, while local economic activities around the fort need to be regulated to prevent damage to the beauty and integrity of the historical structure.

CONCLUSION

Speelwijk Fortress is a silent witness to the narrative of the transfer of power from Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa to his son, Sultan Haji. This period of transition also marked the beginning of the decline of the Sultanate of Banten, where the Dutch began to intervene in the governance of the sultanate. Through a divide-and-rule strategy, the Dutch supported Sultan Haji in ascending the throne to replace his father, but as a result, the Sultanate of Banten suffered greatly, with the Sultan left with no real authority. The sovereignty of Banten was ultimately lost completely. The establishment of Speelwijk Fortress stands as strong evidence of Dutch domination during the reign of Sultan Haji. The presence of the Dutch also brought cultural acculturation, both in the governance system and in the construction of the fortress. Today, Speelwijk Fortress serves as a cultural heritage site that functions as an educational resource and historical tourist destination for students and the public who wish to learn more about the history of the Sultanate of Banten.

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