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Earthenware with Incised Geometric Decoration in Metal Age Maluku, Indonesia: Origin, Evolution, and Possible Socio-cultural Meanings

Earthenware appeared in Maluku, Indonesia, at the beginning of the Neolithic period, around 3500 BP. Among the various characteristics of Early Neolithic earthenware, the most prevalent trait is the red slip, which indicates a distinctive cultural practice. However, some geometrically incised potsherds can also be found from this time period. These were discovered in the lower layers of the PA1 site on Ai Island in the Banda archipelago and continued into more recent periods. This study focuses on a comparative analysis of the quantitative shifts in both red-slipped and incised geometric potsherds found across the Banda Islands. The research seeks to understand how these distinct pottery characteristics evolved over time and how the distribution of incised geometric earthenware, which appears to be both thriving and geographically limited, may be indicative of broader socio-cultural dynamics. The study attempts to relate these changes to the social complexities that emerged in Maluku during the Late Metal Age. By exploring the relationship between material culture and social organization, this research aims to shed light on how the practice of pottery-making reflects the interplay between local traditions and the increasing complexity of society in this region.

Keywords: *earthenware; Metal Age; Banda Islands; Maluku; spice trade; social complexity.*