Indonesian and Malaysian History from Dutch Sources: Reconstructing the Straits of Malacca's Past

by

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Dutch colonial presence in the Malay Archipelago began with the capture in 1619 of Batavia and the establishment there of a commercial and administrative centre for the Netherlands East India Company (VOC). The VOC was established in 1602 to conduct trade, and it was granted the power to make wars and sign treaties just as if it were a sovereign state. The Dutch consolidated their position in the Archipelago by first expelling the English from Amboina in 1623 and then seizing Malacca from the Portuguese in 1641. From Batavia the VOC gradually extended its influence over Java and other parts of the Malay Archipelago. The VOC through conquests or alliances of peace with local rulers became a major power in the Archipelago. The main purpose of the VOC in Southeast Asia was trade and it sought to maximize profits through imposing trade monopoly and the control of commodity production and supply.

However the VOC, due largely to corruption among officials and maladministration, went into decay towards the end of the eighteenth century. In 1796 the Company's directors were dismissed and in 1800 the Company dissolved. The interests of the VOC in Southeast Asia were then taken over by the Dutch Government. The territories of what is today Indonesia eventually were placed under the Ministry of Colonies in the

Hague. This marked a different phase in Dutch colonial history and, except for a short interval between 1811 and 1816, what is today Indonesia was ruled by the Hague through Batavia.

During the period of VOC rule the Court of Directors (usually referred to as the Heeren Zeventien or 17 Gentlemen) in Amsterdam was the supreme ruling body. However, given the distance, many of the powers, including that of making wars and signing treaties, were vested upon the Governor-general in Batavia. The Governor-general was assisted by a Council. Both the Governor general and the Council members were appointed by a Court of Directors in Amsterdam. Outside of Batavia in the comptoir or outposts, governors and residents headed the local administration. The governor or the resident was usually assisted by a council although in the smaller or less important districts, the main Dutch presence was merely that of a factory with a merchant or trading official in charge. In the immediate years following the takeover by the Hague, the Dutch administrative structure in Indonesia remained largely the same.

In the course of administrating the vast territory of the Malay Archipelago Dutch officials conducted correspondence and kept minutes and record of all council proceedings and decisions. Much of these deliberations concerned themselves with trade and, in later years, broad economic and administrative matters. Today these volumes of papers form a very large corpus of records which prove invaluable to historians and other scholars. The records contain a wealth of information and from these a substantial and significant part of the history of Indonesia from the beginning of the 17th century until the mid 20th century can be reconstructed.[1]

The Dutch records are important in at least three aspects. Firstly, for most of this period of Indonesian and Malaysian history there is a lack of indigenous records. Where early indigenous records once existed much had since been lost. Climatic conditions in this region in particular have not been favourable for the preservation of manuscripts. Even the surviving oral tradition such as the hikayats and the various court writings are not extensive and there are major gaps for much of the period. These works are certainly helpful in providing some important insights and explanations but by themselves often prove inadequate for modern historical analysis. For many of the regions, Dutch records provide the only and, certainly in most cases, the principal continuous documentation upon which the history of the area could be written. Secondly, as the Dutch were the single major power throughout most of the Archipelago, it is only from the Dutch records that a broad and coherent history of the region as an identifiable entity is possible. Since the Dutch were engaged in trade or diplomatic relations with all the local states it is largely from Dutch records that some assessment of the

overall power equilibrium as well as of changing power balance in the region could be made. Thirdly, although trade and other economic issues preoccupied the Dutch, much of the correspondence and reports in fact contain a wealth of other details from which the historian is able to recover a picture of the culture and society of the past in the region. The local hikayats, on the other hand, tend to devote more attention to court events. In short then, there is no other body of records that offers a coherence, a continuity and a comprehensiveness for the research into the history of Indonesia than Dutch records of the period when the Dutch were in the region.

II:

The rest of this paper will confine itself to considering the value of the VOC records for reconstructing the history of the Straits of Malacca region. The availability of data in the VOC records for this area is of considerable importance because the Straits of Malacca area was once the centre of Malay economic and political power. The Malacca Sultanate, at the zenith of her power, gained the reputation as a prosperous international emporium. This resulted in Malacca becoming the target of Western designs. The capture of Malacca was the main objective of first the Portuguese and then the VOC upon their first arrival in the region.

But although Malacca had the reputation of being a commercial emporium and had long been sought by the Dutch, yet when she was taken, it was Batavia that the VOC decided to develop and to make the place its headquarters. Batavia was closer to the economically rich areas in Java and east Indonesia, and the Sunda Straits provided safe and easy access to Europe.

Malacca never regained the trading prosperity such as had been seen in the days of the Sultanate. Once Malacca was no longer ruled by the Malay sultans, she lost the *daulat* or the legitimacy to command tribute or trade from the surrounding Malay areas. More significantly, during the Malacca Sultanate years there was only one political power dominant over the entire Straits, but with her decline there now emerged several new and competing centres such as Aceh, Johor-Riau, Siak, and later Selangor. Within this fragmented political and economic order, Malacca under the Dutch was reduced to being one of several players.

Malacca's role was further curtailed by the VOC to ensure that Malacca should not rival Batavia. The VOC ruled, for instance, that Chinese ships whose visits to Malacca in the past had been a major component of the trade there should now proceed only to Batavia. This was despite the fact that many Chinese ships preferred Malacca rather than the longer trip to Java. Furthermore, when it came to dealing with indigenous powers, the VOC's

decisions did not always favour Malacca. For example, when at the beginning of the 18th Century, Malacca expressed concern that her commercial interests were harmed by the growth of Johor, Batavia took a sanguine response. Batavia saw advantages in allowing a strong Johor which could ensure security to ships passing through the Straits to Java.

The shift in importance from Malacca to Batavia, however, was only within the framework of Dutch colonial interests. More broadly, the Straits of Malacca remained important especially within Malay and indigenous consciousness. There was a continuous search by the Malays for a new Malayo-Muslim centre, one that could possibly dominate the Straits and to help regain the political unity that once existed under the Malacca Sultanate. In the course of this attempt towards a new political equilibrium, the Dutch came also to be inevitably drawn into.

For the Dutch, Malacca was still essential and considered worth defending. Despite the greatly reduced importance of Malacca in the Straits trade, there was still expectation by the VOC that through Malacca, it could collect Straits goods. Tin supplied by Perak, in particular, was of great demand to Batavia. Malacca was also convenient to the class of freeburghers who carried out a sizable volume of private trade such as with Siak across the Straits. Furthermore, Malacca continued to be useful as a station providing provisions to the steady traffic of passing ships. But most important of all, maintaining Malacca was simply to prevent other European powers from establishing a base in the Straits that could threaten Dutch interests.

The administration of Malacca was subordinated to the Governor-general. The Governor and the Council reported regularly to Batavia and this consisted of a general letter accompanied by resolutions and proceedings of the Council, reports from missions, and correspondence with surrounding local rulers. What is particularly useful in the general letter from the governor is the section entitled inlandse zaaken or native affairs. This is a summary of observations on political and economic affairs drawn from reports of officials and merchants as well as from correspondence with the local rulers of neighbouring states. From time to time there was included among the various papers a list of arrivals and departure of ships. Similar reports were sent regularly to Batavia by governors and residents from comptoir elsewhere such as Palembang, Makasar, and the West Coast of Sumatra. These correspondence were discussed and, depending on the Council's decision at Batavia, acted upon and copies then forwarded to Amsterdam as accompanying papers when the Governor-general submitted his general letter on the performance of the Company in the East Indies. Today, all these papers are placed together as the Overgekomen briefen Uit Batavia (Letters and appendices written to the Netherlands by Governor-general and Council) and

located at the Rijksarchief at the Hague. Within this collection are Batavia's Uitgaande Briefboeken (Letters from Batavia). The records are arranged with the papers and correspondence from one place generally placed together within one (sometimes two) volume. The papers of Malacca therefore provide a convenient and useful record of the VOC in the Straits of Malacca. The general letters from Batavia to Amsterdam of the earlier years have been edited and published by W.Ph.Coolhaas.[2]

III:

There are at least three distinct approaches in the use of these materials. The first is to allow the sources to determine the focus of the study. Since these are largely records of Dutch administration, they lent themselves well to those scholars interested in studying the history of the Dutch in the region. The earlier works tend to fall within this category such as Clive Day's *The Policy and Administration of the Dutch in Java*. While these can be properly classified as the studies of the Dutch presence in Southeast Asia, they nevertheless form an essential element within Indonesian and Malaysian history.

Secondly, the sources allow research into relations between the VOC and the different states. So much of the records consist of correspondence and reports covering the VOC in diplomatic and economic contact with the indigenous powers. One of the most important study to have come out of such type of research based on the VOC documents is Dianne Lewis' recent publication entitled *Jan Compagnie in the Straits of Malacca, 1641-1798*.[3] The book traced the establishment of Dutch power in Malacca and how the VOC conducted relations with the states along the Straits of Malacca. From sources that are not easy to work with, the author carefully traced the changing political configuration of the Straits and succeeded in making sense out of the complex and, at times, complicated picture of court intrigues, shifting alliances, and trade competition. The study is neatly structured to allow a coherent unfolding of each phase of the Straits history and to explain how the Dutch in this continuous fragmentation of political power had some part to play in the survival or decline of one or the other indigenous state. When Malacca sided with Johor at the end of the 17th Century, the influence of the Acehnese in the Straits region was effectively contained. Then as Johor gained ascendancy in the southern stretch of the Straits, Malacca by trading with the newly-arrived Bugis in effect allowed the latter access to food and arms supplies and enabling them thereby to emerge as a power to balance the Malays. Indeed by the 1720s the Bugis were challenging the Malays.

In the ensuing Malay-Bugis rivalry, the VOC was reluctant to be drawn into any dispute that could be costly. Already Batavia was anxious that

Malacca should raise enough revenue to meet her own expenditures. Malacca was regularly reminded by Batavia to remain neutral. Malacca was placed in a difficult position by this instruction particularly if she was to improve her revenue through trade. To back the activities of the freeburghers and to guard the monopoly of the tin trade, Malacca could not entirely avoid being drawn into the politics and power struggle in the region.

Dianne Lewis' study showed how Malacca, despite her reduced status and weakened role, created some impact upon the course of subsequent events. Indeed, the very presence of the Dutch in Malacca effectively prevented the re-emergence of a centralized Malay power. At least three major indigenous power had ambition to gain dominance in the Straits but neither the Acehnese, the Malays in Johor or Siak, or the Bugis could quite re-create that political order of the Malacca Sultanate. The power balance in the Straits was always evenly poised, and Malacca either as an ally or opponent, did influence the outcome of the contest among the indigenous states and ensuring that no one from among them dominated.

What is significant about Dianne Lewis' study is that from largely Dutch sources she substantiated the rejection by van Leur of past writings which portrayed 18th Century Asian society as "effete and decaying". The author argued that van Leur's interpretation has some validity since her own study reveals that during the years of Dutch presence in Malacca, there continued to exist local states with vibrant economy and whose rulers dealt confidently with the Dutch. Malacca with inadequate troops and few armed ships was mostly on the defensive when dealing with the indigenous states even when her interests were disadvantaged.

Thirdly, recent scholarship has used the VOC sources to write history from the indigenous perspective. While unable to avoid entirely all references to the Dutch presence, these studies by setting the VOC in the context of regional politics and economics, offer considerable new insight into the nature of the states which Batavia or Malacca were in contact with. Indeed because the Dutch had to anticipate the moves of their friends and foes, officials devoted considerable attention to monitoring the internal politics of the Malay states. Through these reports, and balancing them through the use of traditional historical works such as the hikayat and the syair, it has been possible to offer a history of the local states from an indigenous perspective. This indigenous perspective entails not only balancing what may have been the pro-western bias but, more importantly, giving due coverage to the activities, the thinking, and the institutions of local societies.

The VOC records of Malacca contain vast amount of data that are still little used for the study of the early history of places such as Siak, Selangor Rembau, and Nanning. Dutch intelligence gathering was important to the

efficient and profitable commercial functioning of the Company. Attention was paid to regions which were strategic either because of their geographical location or because of their supply of highly-valued goods. Or attention could be on individuals or states which the Dutch considered as troublesome or potentially dangerous, and consequently the political trends in particular regions had to be watched closely.

One place where the Dutch in Malacca were increasingly concerned in the early years of the 18th Century was Selangor and therefore much could be gathered from a voluminous series of correspondence, reports and deliberations in the Malacca Council. Part of the voluminous records arose out of Dutch apprehension at the growing influence of Bugis from about the middle of the 18th century. Dutch concern at the rise of the Bugis as a power was shared by other indigenous states. This led some of these states to look to the Dutch as an ally. Kedah, Siak, and Perak sought alliances with Malacca. Siak, backed at times by Kedah or Trengganu continued with plans to defeat the Bugis at Riau and Selangor. Dutch anxiety seemed justified when in 1757 Malacca came under attack from the Bugis. In retaliation a force was sent against the Bugis at Linggi. Linggi was one of the first places settled by the Bugis. Her importance was due to the tin export while the Linggi River provided passage into Sungei Ujong and Rembau. The Bugis were defeated and in 1758 entered into a treaty whereby Klang, Linggi and Rembau were obliged to deliver all their tin to Malacca at an agreed price.[4]

Dutch concern was the control of trade in the Straits of Malacca especially tin. To gain such a control, all passing ships were required to obtain a pass from the Dutch. In addition, the Dutch entered into treaty agreements with various states for the regular delivery of tin at fixed prices such as in the case with Rembau. Nanning to the north of Malacca had, on the other hand, to deliver an annual supply of rice and when this was slow in coming the Malay Kapitan was usually dispatched to make enquiries.

Over the years however such strategic alliances began to be less effective as the Dutch soon discovered. Selangor loomed large as a threat and in her general letter of 14 September 1765 to Batavia, Malacca reported that the state had become a sanctuary to piratical activities in the region. Many of the reported piratical happenings were attributed to Malay chiefs at different places who were dissatisfied with the tin contracts signed with the Dutch. In Perak, for example, a number of the anak rajas and orang-besar were unhappy that under the 1746 treaty, tin had to be delivered to the Dutch at prices which were below what could be obtained from elsewhere. Similar feelings were expressed at Linggi and Rembau. These sentiments of dissatisfaction are evident in the Malacca letter of the September 1765 in which

the governor reported that both places were not observing fully the terms of the 1758 treaty.

It became increasingly clear that the rise of Kuala Selangor as an alternative port and where higher prices were paid for tin fuelled growing dissatisfaction among Malay chiefs. Even though the Dutch eventually responded by offering higher tin prices, these continued to be lower than that paid in Kuala Selangor. In the 1760s the Dutch were paying 34 Spanish rial per bahar of 375 lbs while at Kuala Selangor 38 Spanish rial were offered. When the Dutch raised this to 36 Spanish rial, tin purchases at Kuala Selangor were transacted at 39 Spanish rial. The Dutch claimed that Kuala Selangor was able to offer such attractive prices because the Bugis sold tin to English traders at 45 Spanish rial per bahar. [5]

By the 1770s the Dutch began to take a more serious view of what they regarded as the "mischievous" role of Selangor. The Dutch claimed that Selangor was actively encouraging and aiding tin-producing areas to send their tin to Kuala Selangor. Dutch reports referred to Selangor people travelling to Perak, Linggi, and Rembau where they collected tin to be brought back and sold to the English traders.[6]

Dutch officials held Raja Ibrahim[7] the son of Sultan Salehudin as the person mainly responsible for Selangor's scheme to divert the tin trade from Malacca. Thus among the VOC materials were complaints regularly made by the Dutch to Sultan Salehudin about the "piratical" activities of Raja Ibrahim. These letters and reports noted, for instance, that in 1778 Raja Ibrahim was involved in deploying a fleet of ships to Larut to take away large quantities of tin to Selangor. There was a complaint that on another occasion, Perak tin were transported overland to Selangor to evade Dutch patrolling ships. Raja Ibrahim was suspected of actively encouraging some Perak chiefs to violate the contract made with the Dutch.

What further alarmed the Dutch was that Rembau was beginning not to send all its tin to Malacca. In 1764 Malacca wrote to Raja Hadil, the Yam Tuan Muda there, reminding him of the treaty agreements. In November 1764, Malacca sent one of her officials, J.H.Dinkgreef, with a small troop detachment to find out the situation in Rembau. The contingent sailed up the Linggi River in the Company cruiser, the *Pare de Amour*. For a while regular supply resumed. But soon afterwards, tin delivery from Rembau once again declined and in 1776 another series of letters were exchanged between Rembau and Malacca. Raja Hadil writing to Malacca on 13 April 1776 defended Rembau's position by pointing out that it was the Dutch who were not honouring the terms of the treaty. He reminded Malacca that there had

been an agreement that a price of 38 Spanish rial be paid for each bahar of 375 lbs but in fact the Dutch were paying only 34 Spanish rial.[8]

The Dutch decided on tough measures against Rembau. Dutch reports had earlier also noted that Raja Ahmad, another son of Sultan Salehudin, had settled at Kampong Simpang at the upper reaches of the Linggi River from where he made purchases of tin-ore.[9] In January 1777, the Malacca Council proposed cutting off of the salt and cloth trade to Rembau. It is not certain whether this was actually enforced. However towards the end of the year, Malacca dispatched two armed cruisers, the *Charlotta Christine* and the *Ciceroa* to sail up the Linggi River to maintain watch. The instructions given to P. Streffen, the commanding officer, was to stop all boats along the Linggi River transporting tin-ore illegally.[10] Rembau was informed about the stationing of the cruisers. The patrolling of the Linggi River continued until early 1778.

The situation in Rembau eased slightly when the Malacca authorities decided in 1778 to raise the price of tin by 2 Spanish rial per bahar. What further helped the situation for the Dutch was that later that year, Raja Hadil passed away and reports suggest a period of political uncertainties in Rembau. In the uncertain Rembau situation Raja Hadil's youngest son, Raja Hasil wrote to the Dutch declaring that he was no longer associated with the Selangor tin trade and expressed regret for his past role.[11] Raja Hasil was probably hoping to obtain Dutch support. Soon after, Raja Ahmad was reported to have left Rembau, suggesting that the side which had supported Selangor had lost out.

Through these correspondence and reports of Dutch officials, the intricacies of court politics could be drawn out and a richer and more authentic history of the Malay states established. There are the letters from Raja Hadil, Raja Hasil, Sultan Sallehudin, and Raja Ibrahim. These plus other contemporary observations help reconstruct the Malay past with a greater degree of reliability and accuracy. It is through Barbara Andaya's study of the records, for example, that there is clearly established that Raja Lumu became the first ruler of Selangor and that he arranged himself to be formally installed by the Sultan of Perak in 1766 with the title of Sultan Salehudin.[12] Furthermore it is from the Dutch records that there is documentary evidence that Sultan Salehudin passed away in 1782. This is because on 19 September 1782, Sultan (formerly Raja) Ibrahim wrote to the Dutch notifying them of the death of his father and that he was the new ruler.

The letters of the local rulers are an important historical source within the large body of Dutch records. They serve to balance the accounts and the arguments of Dutch officials. Through these correspondence, the indigenous

side of the story can be retrieved. When accused of not honouring the terms of the tin contracts, the local rulers pointed out in these letters that it was in fact the Dutch who had failed to do so in the first place. These letters offer a perspective and a dimension of the situation quite different from that given by the Europeans. These correspondence are usually placed as appendix to the general letters. Those attached to the VOC collection at the Rijksarchief are mostly translated copies. It is possible that some of the original copies written in Malay are in the Hague but placed under different collections while a majority could be in the Jakarta Archives. Taken together, they should be accepted as part of indigenous sources.

Even in regions where the Dutch were, in the early years, peripheral such as in the west coast of Sumatra, their traders and officials provided valuable notes on events and about conditions of places where they, in fact, had minimal commercial contact. These descriptions supplement and indeed sometimes help verify non-Dutch accounts. Aceh's history of the 18th century, which is sparsely documented, has benefitted from observations made by the Dutch resident at Padang who in turn received intelligence reports from the small Dutch factory at Barus further to the pepper-rich north. In the mid-18th century, Dutch officials at Padang and Barus complained to Batavia of Acehnese piracy off the west coast of Sumatra led by a Panglima Laut. There were at the same time also references in British records at Benkulen and Madras of a Panglima Laut. Reports of these incidents were frequent at a time when the rulers of Aceh announced their determination to collect taxes from coastal dependencies along the Sumatran west coast. In 1760 an Acehnese Panglima Laut was reported to have joined forces with a French fleet to capture Tapanuli and Natal, two places held by the British. Later, the Panglima Laut withdrew to Tapus, a short distance from Barus. In June 1771, the Dutch resident there alerted Padang that increased Acehnese military activity had been detected in nearby districts. The Panglima Laut with 5 ships and about 200 armed men soon afterwards mounted a blockade of the waters north of Barus.[13] In late July, Barus was attacked during which one Dutch and three Bugis soldiers were killed. The Acehnese shortly withdrew to Tapus. Padang on being notified immediately sent reinforcements and supplies to Barus.

There is nothing in the Acehnese nor the British accounts about what happened to the Panglima Laut and it is only in an October 1772 Dutch report from Barus that there is mention of his arrest by the Sultan.[14] Accounts in 1772 reported that the Acehnese sultanate had decided to have him detained. This could be because his behaviour had become excessive or that he had become too powerful and had therefore emerged as a threat to the Sultan. This episode illustrates how Dutch sources, providing details of

events observed from their particular vantage points, helped fill gaps that are in other accounts. A more in-depth and multi-dimensional perspective is in this way created.

Nowhere is this more true than in the story of the founding of Penang. The account of Penang's founding has so far been seen largely from the British point of view. Yet events in Selangor and the escalating crisis between the Dutch and the Bugis in Selangor towards the end of the 18th Century had a major part in shaping British policy that led to the establishment of Penang and Singapore. The Dutch concern about Selangor was not only the latter's encouragement of tin smuggling but also her ties with English traders such as Francis Light and James Scott.[15] In March 1775 Malacca received a report from J.A.Hensel, the commander of the Dutch military garrison in Perak that the Selangor Sultan had appealed to the British in Madras for assistance. Expecting an attack from Kedah and Siak, the Sultan had not only offered to supply all of Selangor's tin to the English but also agreed to Madras establishing a factory in his state.[16]

In a period of mounting rivalry for influence in the region between the Dutch and the English, the posture of Selangor was naturally monitored closely by Malacca. For Selangor on the other hand, commercial and strategic considerations persuaded her ruler to seek close relations with the British. Sultan Ibrahim was confronted not only by Malacca, which he regarded as a commercial rival, but also the hostility of Kedah and Siak. For the British the urgency was to have a base in the Straits of Malacca, and they regarded Selangor and Riau as useful allies against the Dutch.[17]

Given Dutch nervousness over the growing Bugis contact with the British, the VOC decided to act decisively against Riau and Kuala Selangor. In 1784, following the outbreak of war in Europe between the Dutch and the British, Batavia backed by Dutch naval reinforcements from Europe attacked Riau and Selangor. Riau was taken and Selangor forced to sign a peace treaty. The destruction of Bugis power in Riau and the attack on Selangor, as it turned out, marked the beginning of the end for the Dutch in Malacca. Now that Riau was no longer available and Kuala Selangor appeared to come under increased Dutch influence, an alternative base in the Straits of Malacca was urgently required by the British. Thus denied of a friendly port with the defeat of the Bugis, the British signed a treaty with Kedah in August 1786 allowing the establishment of a settlement in Penang. Soon afterwards, the British founded Singapore as a second base in the vicinity of Riau. The Dutch protested strongly at the British move but in the end sought consolation in the idea that a British base in the Straits provided the security to Batavia that Malacca had previously helped ensure.

IV:

Finally, the VOC records provide a mass of data on trade that helps in writing the economic history of the region. Detailed trade figures such as the types and quantities of commodity exchanged as well as of prices and their fluctuations are given in the regular reports. Perhaps one of the most important set of data that is now beginning to be used in a systematic manner are the shipping lists. Referred to sometimes as the *boomsboeken* they were, with slight variations, entitled in the registers of the archival volumes as "Aankomende en vertrekken particuliere kieln (Arrival and departure of private vessels). Such lists were compiled and kept not only in Malacca but also at Batavia and other major Dutch outposts such as Padang, Makassar, Ambon and Palembang. Such lists were submitted each year along with the general letter to the Governor-general. In these lists the arrival and departure of all vessels were carefully noted. The time-frame dealt with in the lists varied. Some contained six month's shipping activities while others might be of a sixteenth-month span. In most other cases, they covered a calendar year.

Every non-Company vessel, whether registered in Malacca or elsewhere, was entered into the list on the day it arrived or departed from the port. For each entry the name of the captain, his place of domicile, the type and size of the vessel, the name of the ship, its last port of call, the number of sailing days from its previous departure point, the type and size of armaments on board the vessel, the list of cargoes, and the number of crew members were all noted. Some entries also named the ports visited by the vessel enroute to Malacca and the port it was next heading to. Where applicable the name of the vessel's owner was recorded and some idea as to his status was mentioned.

Examples of two entries from the 1761 list are given below:[18]

Departure:

4 January

Nachoda Brahima, Malaya, Malacca, banting, 9 crewmen. To Assahan
- 4 koyang salt
- 10 corge iron parang
- 1 corge Sarase cloth

26 January

Nachoda Dul Kahar, Malay, Malacca, baluk, 9 crewmen. To Barubara
- 4 koyang salt
- 10 corge iron parang
- other trivial goods

The registers of content of the VOC volumes indicate that separate lists were prepared for different categories of vessels. Until 1763, for instance,

there was an annual list of all VOC ships calling at Malacca. There were also separate lists for vessels owned by the free burghers of the East Indies and the movements of these ships were similarly noted. In Padang in west Sumatra and probably elsewhere as well, the entries on the arrival and departure of Chinese ships were kept apart.

The lists are a convenient register to check the movements of ships, principal merchants, and types of goods traded in the entire Malay Archipelago during the period of the VOC. The lists in their present form are admittedly not easy to use. Some ordering of the information is needed before they become meaningful. The task is daunting because each list contains several hundred entries and for the whole period of Dutch administration there could be more than a hundred of such lists. Attention need also to be given to lists compiled in all the Dutch outposts. Analyzed together they allow cross-checking and comparison as well as in determining the shipping schedule and trading pattern of all trading vessels.[19] To be considered also are the lists that record the Company and the Chinese ships.

Once the materials in all the lists are properly organized into categories such as (a) the port of departure (b) the type of vessels (c) list of cargoes carried and (d) the name and nationality or place of domicile of the ship's captain, the interpretation of the data could be facilitated. Thus from these the historian will not only be able to identify ports with growing or declining trade with Malacca but also ascertain their changing economic and political status. A study of the lists will also make known the full range of boats and ships, and through this to gain some idea of changing use of shipping and their construction. For instance the Bugis padewakang was not referred to in the 1761 list but appeared frequently in the 1782 list. [20]

The lists allow historians to analyze the changing pattern of production and distribution of the essential commodities in the Malay Archipelago.[21] Take the trade in salt and rice for instance. By examining the shipping and merchant groups involved as well as tracing the trade routes of the salt and rice trade, it is possible to establish the sources and form of control of these two commodities. Merely from the lists of two years, that of 1761 and 1782, it is evident that some of the ships involved in the rice trade also carried salt. Major merchant groups carried rice from Kedah and Java to Malacca and these were consumed locally or resold to small traders coming from the neighbouring Straits ports. In the case of salt, large quantities of the commodity imported from Java, sometime in ships that carried rice, were then bought by Siak traders. As it turned out this corresponded with the large quantities of dried and salted fish exported from Siak to Malacca. It is evident that salt was an important import to Siak particularly because of her fishing

industry. Such an exercise might further show the nature of commercial relations between local rulers and indigenous traders, that between rulers and foreign merchants including the Chinese, and between merchants and Dutch officials.

Finally, the lists provide data to help identify the different groups and classes of traders in the Malay Archipelago. There has been a tendency to see them as undifferentiated and to describe all Southeast Asian trade as small and pedlar-type. The shipping lists certainly indicate a broad range in the size and activities of traders. In measurable terms, the small trader handling a small amount of goods in a *banting* was different from the merchant who sent several large *brigantins* under the charge of nakhodas on long trading voyages. Again, the trader who delivered agricultural or jungle goods produced from his own region to Malacca could be classified quite distinctly from the merchant who was not an agricultural producer but one who depended solely on purchasing and selling. Within this range, it is possible to place Dulla Poete, a Malacca Malaya who was in the list and obviously a prominent local trader. The records show that his boats traded in Selangor and in Siak. Since he did not make those trips himself, he was more likely a merchant and a ship-owner. To both those places, Dulla Poete sold salt and Javanese cloth which he bought in Malacca. Recent studies carried out on the shipping lists are able to plot out a trend showing the growing number and importance of Malay traders during the 18th Century. What is important is that the Dutch records provide empirical data which are quantifiable and measurable to substantiate what may have been previously general assumptions.

V:

There is no doubt therefore that Dutch sources are invaluable and in many cases indispensable for research into Indonesian and Malaysian history. By way of conclusion, one would then have to ask the question regarding the present state of historical research in Malaysia in which Dutch sources are consulted. As a whole it must be admitted that much more research here using Dutch records could have been carried out. The present lack is because there is unfamiliarity with the language and with the sources. Another explanation is that historians here tend to rely on British sources such as the Straits Settlements Factory Records and the Sumatra Factory Records which are deposited at the India Office in London. British sources are rich only for the period from the beginning of the 19th Century. But for the 17th and 18th Centuries British records are not particularly helpful.

The studies by Barbara Andaya on *Perak: The Abode of Grace* and Leonard Andaya on *The Kingdom of Johor 1641-1728* are two examples of how the history of two Malay states could be reconstructed very largely from Dutch sources.[22] These have been complemented by Dianne Lewis' book. But as stated in this paper there are the other states in the region such as Siak, Kedah, Selangor, Trengganu, Rembau and Nanning whose interactions with the VOC have left a significant volume of records, and these possibly are the only historical sources available from which part of their early history could be reconstructed

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