
“PIRATES OR ENTREPRENEURS?” THE MIGRATION AND TRADE OF SEA PEOPLE IN SOUTHWEST KALIMANTAN, C. 1770–1820

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There seems to be a consensus among historians that the Dutch conquest of Riau, the capital of the Sultanate of Johor, in 1784, was a watershed in the history of the Malay world. With the fall of Riau, the extensive network of Riau-centered trade, which had spread throughout maritime Southeast Asia from the 1760s, collapsed and dispersed. Afterward, the Sultanate of Johor was fragmented and subjected to incessant conflicts.¹ Terengganu, in the Malay Peninsula, and Siak, in East Sumatra, emerged as alternative ports, although they functioned on a much smaller scale than Riau had done.² Turning to the situation in Kalimantan, scholars still seem to assume that it languished in decline and confusion until Pontianak and Sambas received Dutch private capital for the investment in mining and agriculture in the late nineteenth century.³ Importantly, this “dark period” in the Malay world, especially in Kalimantan,

¹ Carl A. Trocki, *Prince of Pirates: The Temenggongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore, 1784–1885* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1979), p. 27; and Reinout Vos, *Gentle Janus, Merchant Prince: The VOC and the Tightrope of Diplomacy in the Malay World, 1740–1800* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1993), pp. 179–82.

² Barbara Watson Andaya, *To Live as Brothers: Southeast Sumatra in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1993), pp. 222–26; and Timothy P. Barnard, *Multiple Centres of Authority: Society and Environment in Siak and Eastern Sumatra, 1674–1827* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2003), pp. 162–68.

³ P. J. Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling, geografisch, statistisch, historisch, voorafgegaan door eene algemeene schets des ganschen eilands* (Zaltbommel: Joh. Noman en Zoon, 1854–56), I, pp. 279, 360; Baron van Lijnden, “Bijdragen tot de kennis van Borneo,” *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 15,1 (1853): 171–200; Graham Irwin, *Nineteenth-Century Borneo: A Study in Diplomatic Rivalry* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1955), pp. 24–25; and Thomas J. Lindblad, “The Outer Islands in the Nineteenth Century: Contest for the

occurred in the midst of the boom in India–Sino–Southeast-Asian trade, which thrived from the mid-eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. Several ports in Southeast Asia, among them Jolo (in the Sulu Sultanate), Saigon (in Nguyễn Vietnam), and Bangkok (in Rattanakosin Siam), were expanding as a result of the upsurge in trade.⁴ Is it to be understood that Kalimantan shrank into a complete backwater, left behind by this trade boom?

Scholars describing the “dark period” in Kalimantan have focused on declining indigenous states and the establishment of Dutch authority. They discuss trade stagnation that occurred under incompetent rulers or an inefficient early colonial government. And they point to rampant piracy as a sign of declining trade and weakening states. The southwest coast of Kalimantan was just such a region, notorious both for its economic stagnation and widespread piracy during this “dark period.”⁵ The resulting paradox is this: If trade was in a terminal decline anyway, how does one explain the intensification of piracy, since such a dangerous activity would hardly have been pursued without expectations of substantial economic gain? Rampant piracy may, indeed, be a sign of “failed states,” but it is also a sign of the existence of economic opportunities. In fact, previous studies have focused almost exclusively on state centers. It is true that piracy damaged the trade in the principal ports of state centers, but that does not rule out the possibility that trade developed and thrived in alternative ports, coastal areas at which the pirates also called.

This paper focuses on small ports in Southwest Kalimantan, in order to examine how they functioned and what role they played in regional trade, and to document how so-called pirates ran their economic activities. I begin my examination around 1770, when the emergence of Pontianak introduced a new dimension into the regional economy, and I end my study around 1820, when the Dutch launched their colonial rule. Contemporary European sources note that during this period a number of migrants set up their communities in the coastal areas of Southwest Kalimantan.

Periphery,” in *The Emergence of A National Economy: An Economic History of Indonesia, 1800-2000*, ed. Howard Dick, Vincent J. H. Houben, J. Thomas Lindblad, and Thee Kian Wie (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin; Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), p. 97. J. van Goor and Mary Somers Heidhues have intensively examined the early Pontianak sultanate, focusing on its relationship with the Dutch, but they argued that trade in Pontianak remained stagnant. See J. van Goor, “A Madman in the City of Ghosts: Nicholaas Kloek in Pontianak,” in *All of One Company: The VOC in Biographical Perspective*, ed. Leonard Blussé et al. (Utrecht: HES, 1986), pp. 196–211; J. van Goor, “Seapower, Trade, and State Formation: Pontianak and the Dutch,” in *Trading Companies in Asia, 1600–1830*, ed. J. van Goor (Utrecht: HES, 1986), pp. 98–100; and Mary Somers Heidhues, “The First Two Sultans of Pontianak,” *Archipel* 56 (1998): 285.

⁴ Anthony Reid, “A New Phase of Commercial Expansion in Southeast Asia, 1760–1850,” in *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1750–1900*, ed. Anthony Reid (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press, 1997), pp. 57–81.

⁵ Northwest Kalimantan, which was also notorious for prevailing piracy and well-known for Chinese gold-mining communities, is beyond the scope of this study. Nicholas Tarling and Mary Somers Heidhues studied those topics in great detail. See Nicholas Tarling, *Piracy and Politics in the Malay World* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1963); and Mary Somers Heidhues, *Goldiggers, Farmers, and Traders in the “Chinese Districts” of West Kalimantan, Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2003). On the other hand, the local economy and social formation in Southwest Kalimantan have been neglected since Veth’s standard work, published in 1854–56 (Veth, *Borneo’s Westerafdeeling*). J. N. E. M. à Campo studied Dutch reports on nineteenth-century piracy in Kalimantan (including its southwestern region) in detail. See J. N. F. M. à Campo, “Zeeroof: Bestuurlijke beeldvorming en beleid,” in *Zeeroof en Zeeroofbestrijding in de Indische Archipel (19de eeuw)*, ed. G. Teitler, A. M. C. van Dissel, and J. N. F. M. à Campo (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2005), pp. 41–59.

Although Europeans often called them pirates, in fact they were engaged in various profitable activities, among them trade, fishing, and cultivation, supplemented by occasional raids on traders, fishermen, and the villagers.

In this article, I pay special attention to the maritime migrant communities, calling them “Sea People.” “Sea People” refers to those who lived in the coastal areas, maintaining their seafaring lifestyle and autonomy to a certain degree. Most, but not necessarily all, of them were migrants residing in their distinct settlements. They were within the political reach of states and settled under state rulers’ approval, but they were not completely politically integrated, maintaining privileges in certain activities, such as settlement in certain places and plundering. My use of the term “Sea People” encompasses a larger category than the Orang Laut (literally, “Sea People”), a group of Malays who share some degree of identity connected to their choice to live on boats rather than on land. Their shifting historical role in Malay states has been thoroughly studied,⁶ but other groups characterized by their maritime activities also deserve scholarly attention. Contemporary European records reveal, with careful reading, that Sea People played an important role in Southwest Kalimantan’s regional economy, interregional trade, and local politics. I shall argue that, because of the activities of Sea People, Southwest Kalimantan continued to be an active participant in interregional markets, and was, in fact, a player in the booming India–Sino–Southeast-Asian trade.

After a brief summary of the early history of Southwest Kalimantan, I examine the evolution in trading apparent in Sukadana and Pontianak, the two principal ports, using available economic data from 1778 to 1820. My point is that the trade in this period was not simply declining; it was changing in character, becoming strongly connected to the India–Sino–Southeast-Asian trade. I go on to show what role the Sea People played in that transformation, focusing on their economic activities, such as trade and the collection of marine products. I also examine social aspects of the Sea People, such as their community formation, relationships with state rulers, and culture. I will argue that the ethnically mixed Sea People in Southwest Kalimantan remained distinct groups because of their mobility and seafaring life, and maintained a particular culture. I will also argue that they contributed to the interregional trade and influenced the course of local political conflicts. In this way, my paper attempts to re-examine the state-centered history of Southwest Kalimantan from the perspective of “a history of people.”

Early History

Sukadana is the oldest dynasty of Southwest Kalimantan. According to the legendary chronology, Prawi Jaya, a prince of Majapahit, was the founder of Sukadana. After arriving in West Kalimantan, he successfully obtained support from the indigenous Dayak people by virtue of his noble descent. Later, he established a town

⁶ Andaya, *To Live as Brothers*, pp. 222–24; Timothy P. Barnard, “Celates, Rayat-Laut, Pirates: The Orang Laut and Their Decline in History,” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (hereafter *JMBRAS*) 80,2 (2007): 33–49; Leonard Y. Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree: Trade and Ethnicity in the Straits of Melaka* (Honolulu: Hawai’i University Press, 2008), pp. 173–201; and Adrian B. Lapijan, *Orang Laut, Bajak Laut, Raja Laut: Sejarah Kawasan Laut Sulawesi Abad XIX* (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2009), pp. 77–115.

called Sukadana, where he had himself enthroned as *Raja* (king or ruler).⁷ Sukadana gradually developed, first through participation in coastal trade, and later through trade with its hinterlands, promoted by the rulers who succeeded him.⁸ Trade in gold and diamonds, which became major exports of Sukadana, commenced in the reign of the sixth ruler, Panembahan Bandala (“Panembahan” is a title lower than sultan).⁹ The seventh ruler, Panembahan di Baru-Sungi Matan,¹⁰ moved the capital to Matan, upstream on the Matan River, probably to avoid pirate attacks, a common occurrence in other kingdoms in West Kalimantan. From that time on, the sultanate was called the Sultanate of Matan, although the name Sukadana was still sometimes used as the name of the state as well as of the town. Around 1550 CE, the Panembahan accepted Islam in Matan, introduced by Arabs who came through Palembang.¹¹ It is not clear, however, to what extent Islam penetrated the local society during the early period.¹²

After repeated wars and alliances with neighboring rivals, Sukadana grew into a strong kingdom toward the beginning of the seventeenth century. Its control of Landak, the only exporter of diamonds, must have spurred its growth. The Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, VOC) and British traders visited Sukadana in the early seventeenth century in order to obtain its diamonds, among other products. Although the Dutch occasionally visited and established factories, in the seventeenth century their regular contact did not last long.¹³ Landak attempted to discard the yoke of Sukadana around 1660, in order to regain control of its diamond trade. It enlisted the help of the kingdom of Banten in its attempted coup. As a result of the intervention of Banten in 1661, Landak became its dependency, but Sukadana offered only a token acceptance of the Banten overlordship. Sukadana pursued this loose tributary relationship until Banten ceded its rights to these two places to the VOC in 1778. These outside influences, however, counted for little, and neither Banten’s overlordship nor its cession to the VOC had any significant influence on the real politics in Kalimantan.¹⁴

⁷ E. Netscher, “Kroniek van Sambas en van Soekadana in het oorspronkelijk Maleisch, voorzien van de vertaling en aantekeningen,” *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 15,1 (1853): 14–15; Georg Müller, “Proeve eener geschiedenis van een gedeelte der west-kust van Borneo,” *De Indische Bijl* 1 (1843): 324–26; and Veth, *Borneo’s Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 186–88.

⁸ Müller, “Proeve,” pp. 326–27; D. J. van den Dungen Gronovius, “Bijdrage tot de kennis der binnenlandsche rijken van het westelijk gedeelte van Borneo,” *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* 11,1 (1849): 355–56; Netscher, “Kroniek,” p. 14; and Veth, *Borneo’s Wester-afdeeling*, I, 188–89.

⁹ Veth, *Borneo’s Wester-afdeeling*, I, p. 191.

¹⁰ The name “Sungi” in all likelihood derives from Malay “*sungai*” (literally, “river” or “stream”). “Sungi” may have obtained its corrupted form in Southwest Kalimantan, because “Sungi” frequently appears in personal and place names in this region.

¹¹ Veth, *Borneo’s Wester-afdeeling*, I, p. 193; and Müller, “Proeve,” pp. 332–33.

¹² As I discuss later, the Dayak in the inland region were not predominantly Muslim in the early 1820s. The penetration of Islam may have been limited to the court circle and to society’s upper echelon in the capital during the early period.

¹³ Wyndham Beawes, *Lex Mercatoria: A Complete Code of Commercial Law* [...], sixth edition (London: P. C. Rivington, 1813 [1754]), 246; W. H. Treacher, *British Borneo: Sketches of Brunai, Sarawak, Labuan, and North Borneo* (Singapore: Government Printing Department, 1891), p. 4; Müller, “Proeve,” pp. 327–38; and Veth, *Borneo’s Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 199–212.

¹⁴ Although Veth stated that, according to Valentijn’s description, the overlordship of Banten was established in 1699 (Veth, *Borneo’s Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 233–34), my data on Banten shows it was established in 1661, which agrees with Van Goor’s discussion, too. See Ota Atsushi, *Changes of Regime and*



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Social Dynamics in West Java: Society, State, and the Outer World of Banten, 1750–1830 (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2006), p. 13; and Van Goor, “Seapower,” p. 88.

Sukadana strengthened its relationship with the Bugis in Riau and northwest Kalimantan in the early eighteenth century. In 1725, Pangeran Agung, a nephew of the previous sultan, raised a revolt against the tenth ruler, Sultan Mahomet Zain al-Din. Zain al-Din fled to Kotaringin and asked help from the Sultan of Banjarmasin and the Bugis in Sulawesi, in return for permitting their settlement in his territory. Responding to this call were the four Bugis princes: Opu Daeng Menambun, Opu Daeng Merewa, Opu Daeng Cellak, and Opu Daeng Parani, four of the famous five Bugis brothers who later created effective Bugis diaspora governments in and near the Malay Peninsula and northwest Kalimantan. They had roamed through the Malay world after their conflicts with the ruler of their homeland, Bone. With the Bugis' military assistance, Zain al-Din defeated his rival and returned to Matan in 1727. In gratitude, Zain al-Din installed Opu Daeng Menambun as ruler of Mempawah and its subject territories and gave him the title of Pangeran Emas Seri Negara. Menambun also later married one of Zain al-Din's daughters. Daeng Marewa and Cellak went to Riau and the former took the title of Raja Muda (viceroy) in the kingdom of Johor, with a permanent base in Riau. Later Daeng Cellak replaced Daeng Marewa as Raja Muda.¹⁵ As a consequence of this series of events, Sukadana became an important part of the Bugis network, which soon rapidly expanded to the whole of maritime Southeast Asia.¹⁶

During the reign of the eleventh ruler, Sultan Mangkurat (1736–?), Sukadana and Matan began to receive waves of migrants. Although it is not clear where they came from in the early period,¹⁷ we know that during the reign of the thirteenth ruler, Sultan Endra Laya (?–1790), a number of migrants came from Riau. Various Malay chiefs also settled in Sukadana, and among them the most influential was Gusti Bandar, from Pulau Payong, in the Riau Archipelago. After Gusti Bandar settled in Sukadana with his followers in 1768, these Malay migrants opened up new rice fields and contributed to the development of the region. One of his daughters married the crown prince, later Sultan Mohammed Jamaluddin. Raja Ali, a son of Raja Haji, the Bugis Raja Muda in Riau, also frequently sojourned in Sukadana beginning in 1779.¹⁸ Groups of Arabs, who were engaged in the trade between Sukadana and the upstream region of the Kapuas

¹⁵ This description is based on Andaya, who examined contemporary Dutch sources (Leonard Y. Andaya, "The Bugis-Makassar Diasporas," *JMBRAS* 68,1 [1995]: 127). The Johor chronicle *Tuhfat al-Nafis* reported that the five Bugis brothers came from Luwu, in North Sulawesi (Raja Ali Haji Ibn Ahmad, *The Precious Gift [Tuhfat al-Nafis]*, an annotated translation by Virginia Matheson and Barbara Watson Andaya [Kuala Lumpur, etc.: Oxford University Press, 1982], pp. 43–46). On the other hand, Müller stated that Opu Daeng Marewa went to Mempawah, where he was held in great respect, and that Opu Daeng Cellak and Dain Parani went to Johor and Riau, where they were granted ruling positions (Müller, "Proeve," pp. 338–41). For those three brothers, the *Tuhfat* and a nineteenth-century Dutch source also agree with Andaya's discussion. See *Tuhfat*, pp. 29–30; Nationaal Archief (National Archives of the Netherlands), het Archief van het Ministerie van Koloniën (hereafter MK) 359 (107): 7, Memorie van der Commissaris J. H. Tobias, May 8, 1822. See also Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 235–41; and Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers*, p. 29.

¹⁶ The first Bugis brother, Opu Daeng Parani, was eventually based in Siantan, while the fifth brother, Opu Daeng Kemasi, married a sister of the Sultan of Sambas and was given the title Pangeran Mangkubumi. Andaya, "The Bugis-Makassar Diasporas," p. 127.

¹⁷ Müller, "Proeve," p. 342; and Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, p. 244.

¹⁸ Nationaal Archief, het Archief van de Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (hereafter VOC) 3534: 1471r–1472r, W. A. Palm in Pontianak to Governor-General and the East Indies Council in Batavia (hereafter Batavia), July 25, 1779; VOC 3581: [no pagination], W. M. Stuart and J. Klaagman in Pontianak to Batavia, September 26, 1780.

River, settled along the Mendau River. Hoping to attract more foreign migrants, the sultan even provided the land on the Bay of Sukadana for their settlements.¹⁹

During the 1760s and 1770s, Sukadana experienced much commercial development, to which the above-mentioned foreign migrants no doubt contributed. Bugis migrants from Riau especially must have strengthened the link between the two ports. Riau, one of the most important trade hubs in Southeast Asia since the 1760s, functioned as a distribution center for Southeast Asian products intended for the China market. Tin, pepper, and marine products from Southeast Asia were increasingly sought-after products in eighteenth-century China, in the flourishing economy under the long Qianlong regime. Bugis were the principal traders transporting these products from various centers in Southeast Asia to Riau. Chinese traders and British country traders²⁰ purchased these products in Riau and carried them to Canton. In exchange, British country traders provided opium and arms, while Chinese junks carried tea, ceramics, ironmongery, and silk.²¹ British and other Europeans were eager to collect these Southeast Asian products in order to facilitate their tea trade in Canton. By providing these popular products to the China market, Europeans, who did not have attractive trade goods to offer the Chinese, attempted not to lose large amounts of silver in their tea trade.²²

The sultanate had strengthened and improved the port of Sukadana since the reign of the twelfth ruler, Sultan Giri Laya, although its capital was still at Matan. He had two rock dams built at the mouth of the Sukadana River, to hinder any pirate invasion. Besides Asian traders, British, French, and Portuguese traders also frequented Sukadana's port.²³ With the exception of a small amount of tin, it is not clear what else was exported out of Sukadana.²⁴ However, as the only major coastal port in West Kalimantan, Sukadana would have been the site for exporting precious upstream products, including diamonds.

During this boom period, the Sultanate of Pontianak was founded by Sharif Yusuf, or Sultan Abdurachman, a son of the Yemeni Arab Sayid Sharif Husein bin Ahmad Alkadri, who had first settled in Sukadana around 1730. In 1742, Abdurachman was born in Mempawah to Sharif Husein and a Dayak slave presented to him by Sultan Giri Laya of Sukadana. At the age of twenty-two, Abdurachman moved to Banjarmasin, where he succeeded in organizing a group to pursue the twin goals of trade and piracy, commanding a large, well-armed ship and a number of followers.

¹⁹ Müller, "Proeve," p. 343–45; and Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 272–73.

²⁰ "Country traders" are India-based traders who conducted trade between India and Southeast and East Asia with the permission of the British colonial government.

²¹ In addition, traders from Java, Bali, Borneo, Aceh, Siam, Cambodia, Annam, and Cochin China brought rice and foodstuffs, items that were always in demand in Riau, and in Malay coastal towns. See Dianne Lewis, "The Growth of the Country Trade to the Straits of Malacca, 1760–1777," *JMBRAS* 43,2 (1970): 116–18; Dianne Lewis, *Jan Compagnie in the Straits of Malacca, 1641–1795* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1995), pp. 87–88; Trocki, *Prince of Pirates*, pp. 17–25; and Vos, *Gentle Janus*, pp. 121–25.

²² Reid, "A New Phase," pp. 60–61.

²³ MK 359 (108): [no pagination], *Memorie van H. W. Muntinghe over Borneo*, Batavia, August 31, 1821; Müller, "Proeve," pp. 343–47; and Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 244, 273.

²⁴ J. C. M. Radermacher, "Beschrijving van het eiland Borneo, voorzoverre hetzelfde tot nu toe bekend is," *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (hereafter VBG) 2 (1780): 148.

Later he returned to Mempawah, but finding his father had died and the court members did not welcome him, Abdulrachman and his men quickly left Mempawah. He established his power base in the strategic location of Pontianak, at the mouth of the Kapuas River, in 1771. Raja Haji, the Bugis Raja Muda of Johor, who later led the state during its heyday (r. 1777–1784), contributed to the initial consolidation of Pontianak. He provided Abdulrachman with military assistance to sack the small kingdom of Sanggau, which lay upstream on the Kapuas River, and conferred on him the title of “Sultan.” Abdulrachman constructed a fort at Pulau Jambu, on the Kapuas, to block the southern route to the sea that favored Sukadana. J. van Goor concludes that this gave him final control of the Kapuas trade and probably weakened Sukadana.²⁵

Trade and Conflicts in Pontianak and Sukadana

Pontianak surpassed Sukadana to become the principal port in West Kalimantan in the early 1770s. Pontianak was the transshipment center for goods from the inland region (see Table 1) and, in exchange, it imported foreign goods and commodities.

It was the Bugis who dominated the collection of inland products during this period, including diamonds from Landak.²⁶ The Bugis also attempted to intervene in the gold trade, buying gold in Landak at higher prices than those bid by other traders, although the principal buyers of gold were the Chinese.²⁷ Gold mining started to boom in the inland regions such as Landak and Sanggau around 1780, and thousands of Chinese workers came on junks through Pontianak to travel farther upstream and to Mempawah.²⁸ Although no contemporaneous source tells us where these Chinese migrants came from during the early period, later sources claim that they were probably predominantly Hakka, followed by Cantonese, and a small number of Teochiu, originally from the upland and coastal regions of Guangdong.²⁹

²⁵ Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 249–57; Van Goor, “Seapower,” p. 97; and Somers Heidhues, “The First Two Sultans,” pp. 279–81.

²⁶ VOC 3524: 19, 22, Nicolaas Kloek in Pontianak to Batavia, August 31, 1778; VOC 3553: 92, W. A. Palm, W. H. Stuart, and J. Klaagman in Pontianak to Batavia, July 28, 1779; and VOC 3581: [no pagination], W. M. Stuart, and J. Klaagman in Pontianak to Batavia, September 26, 1780.

²⁷ VOC 3524: 19, 22, Nicolaas Kloek in Pontianak to Batavia, August 31, 1778; and VOC 3598: 30, 41–42, W. M. Stuart and J. Klaagman in Pontianak to Batavia, October 4, 1781. Somers Heidhues has speculated that the gold mines near Landak may have been worked by natives in the late 1770s, based on a Dutch report in Pontianak in 1778. Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers*, p. 61. However, a VOC record states that the Chinese were engaged in gold mining in Landak in 1778. VOC 3524: 16, Nicolaas Kloek in Pontianak to Batavia, August 31, 1778.

²⁸ VOC 3524: 24, Nicolaas Kloek in Pontianak to Batavia, August 31, 1778; VOC 3553: 58–59, Nicolas Kloek in Batulayang to Batavia, April 2, 1779; VOC 3586: [no pagination], March 16, 1780; and VOC 3598: 30, W. M. Stuart and J. Klaagman in Pontianak to Batavia, October 4, 1781.

²⁹ Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers*, pp. 63–65.

Table 1
Major Exports in Pontianak, 1778–80

Items	Annual Exports	Price/Unit	Remarks
• Mineral Resources			
Diamonds	15,000 SpR in value		
Gold (Chinese trade)	4,000 SpR in value		
Gold (Dutch trade)	3 <i>picols</i>	20 Rd / <i>picol</i>	
Iron	400 <i>picols</i>	24 rupees / <i>picol</i>	
• Forest Products			
Yellow wax		20 SpR / <i>picol</i>	
<u>Beeswax</u>		20–27 SpR / <i>Picol</i>	
<u>Camphor</u>			
• Agricultural Products			
<u>Pepper</u>			
Rice	4,500 pounds / 400 <i>koyang</i>	20–25SpR / <i>koyang</i>	Sultan's monopoly
• Marine Products			
Pearls			
• Others			
<u>Birds' nests</u>			Little importance
Salt	200–400 <i>koyang</i>	10–25 SpR / <i>koyang</i>	Sultan's monopoly

Notes:

SpR = Spanish Reals

Rd = *Rijksdaarder*

1 *picol* = 125 *Amsterdamse ponds* (about 62 kg)

1 *koyang* = 27–28 *picols*

Underlined items are those for the China market.

Sources: VOC 3524, 3553, 3581, 3586, and 3598 (see the text for details); and Radermacher, "Beschrijving," pp. 118–19

Chinese traders came every year, many from Canton, in three to eight junks per year.³⁰ They brought such Chinese products as silk, porcelain, ironware, and tobacco. They bartered these for camphor and pepper, and purchased gold and beeswax. Pepper was produced in gardens that were a four-hour walk from Pontianak.³¹ Traders also traveled to Pontianak from Cambodia, Siam, Malacca, Siak, Terengganu, and Makassar, bringing such commodities as textiles, porcelain, iron, steel, and copper.³² Javanese traders brought white and colored cotton yarn, as well as weapons, such as cannons and flintlocks.³³ Apart from these foreign vessels, numerous local ships visited Pontianak from Brunei, Sambas, and Mempawah. In the three months from November

³⁰ One of the Canton junks noted in a VOC source was forty feet in length and twenty feet in width. VOC 3586: [no pagination], W. M. Stuart in Pontianak to Batavia, March 15, 1780.

³¹ VOC 3524: 22, Nicolaas Kloek in Pontianak to Batavia, August 31, 1778; VOC 3553: 36–39, Nicolas Kloek in Batulayang to Batavia, February 17, 1779; VOC 3586: [no pagination], W. M. Stuart in Pontianak to Batavia, March 15, 1780; and VOC 3598: 32, W. M. Stuart and J. Klaagman in Pontianak to Batavia, October 4, 1781.

³² VOC 3524: 23–24, Nicolaas Kloek in Pontianak to Batavia, August 31, 1778.

³³ VOC 3553: 42–43, Nicolaas Kloek in Batulayang to Batavia, February 17, 1779.

1778 to January 1779, the Dutch observed 238 large and 500 small ships arriving at Pontianak, and 117 large and 625 small ships departing from there.³⁴

The principal exports of Pontianak were such mineral resources as diamonds and gold, followed by forest produce such as wax and camphor. While diamonds were sought after by European and Asian traders from various places (but not China), gold was mostly sold to Chinese traders, in addition to some amounts sold to Southeast Asian and British traders. However, this gold was not carried back to China to be sold. Chinese traders did not sell gold in China because, around 1810, such trade was not profitable. By comparison, wealthy local and Chinese populations in Southeast Asia demanded luxury items made from gold; trade there was profitable.³⁵

Marine products, the major export items to China in the later period, were not important until 1780. Pontianak imported Chinese products and other items from various places in Southeast Asia. It was the Dayaks and the so-called *bovenlanders* (literally, upland people, probably including the increasing Chinese population in the gold-mining areas) who demanded Chinese and Javanese household items.³⁶ Sultan Abdurachman did not impose taxes on traders, thereby hoping to attract them to his newly established port. Not without economic acumen, he placed rice and salt under his monopoly. Salt must have been one of the most important items needed in the inland regions, as he used it to trade for gold.³⁷

The trade in Pontianak dropped dramatically after 1779. Van Goor shows the decline in trade by noting fewer ships calling at Pontianak. The incoming and outgoing ships in Pontianak in 1778 and 1779 were, respectively, 344 and 354; in 1779 and 1780, the numbers dropped to 39 and 52; and arrivals and departures barely exceeded twenty in the eight years that followed.³⁸ As factors behind this trade decline, Van Goor suggests the unwillingness or inability of the sultan to pay the traders for their goods and the intervention of the Bugis from Mempawah in the gold trade. Van Goor admits, though, that the reason behind the decline is not very clear-cut.³⁹

Conflicts with neighboring rivals seem to offer a better reason for the decline in trade in Pontianak around 1780. Sultan Abdurachman was embroiled in constant conflict with Landak. In 1780, he attempted to remove Landak's influential ruler, Gusti Ussin, a nephew of the prince, to make way for himself to become the ruler with VOC approval. Angered by this intrigue, the Landak elite stated that they would declare a trade embargo and not bring their products to Pontianak. The VOC officials in Pontianak soon withdrew their support of Abdurachman in this matter and settled the

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 37–38; and VOC 3524: 24, Nicolaas Kloek in Pontianak to Batavia, August 31, 1778.

³⁵ Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers*, pp. 49–50; and John Leyden, "Sketch of Borneo," *VBG* 7 (1814): 52.

³⁶ VOC 3586: [no pagination], W. M. Stuart in Pontianak to Batavia, March 16, 1780.

³⁷ VOC 3524: 22–24, Nicolaas Kloek in Pontianak to Batavia, August 31, 1778; VOC 3553: 89, W. A. Palm, W. H. Stuart, and J. Klaagman in Pontianak to Batavia, July 28, 1779.

³⁸ Van Goor, "Seapower," p. 99. These numbers, probably tallied customarily from September 1778 to August 1779, are much smaller than the numbers of ships counted from November 1778 to January 1779 mentioned earlier. The author of the one-year record seems to have overlooked a part of the smaller ships included in the three-month record. In any case, it is clear that hundreds of ships had called at Pontianak annually until early 1779.

³⁹ Van Goor, "Seapower," pp. 98–100.

conflicts between the two parties.⁴⁰ Despite this repair, the damaged relationship with Landak would have affected the flow of its products to Pontianak.

Aside from Landak, Pontianak was also locked in strong rivalries with Sukadana and Mempawah. In 1778, the Malay chief in Sukadana, Gusti Bandar, attacked the Chinese in the gold-mining region upstream from Pontianak, probably to divert the flow of gold to Sukadana.⁴¹ Meanwhile, the people in the inland regions were irritated by the meager payments they received from the sultan and traders of Pontianak. The Dutch officials noted that such stinginess had caused the decline in trade in Javanese items upstream from Pontianak, and that people now mostly preferred to take their gold to Mempawah.⁴² This was made possible by using parallel rivers to reach the sea, and footpaths to connect to the rivers.⁴³ Dutch trade records, in fact, do show that Mempawah began to attract trading ships after 1781. The number of all incoming and outgoing ships in Mempawah increased from fifty in 1781–82 to 150 in 1782–83, although that traffic fluctuated considerably in the following years. The number of Chinese junks increased from six in 1780–81 to twelve and thirteen in the next two years; there are no records of the number of junks that arrived annually after 1783–84.⁴⁴ By the early 1780s, the export of inland products, once concentrated on Pontianak, was now dispersed, the bulk of it to Mempawah, and, probably, to a smaller degree, to Sukadana. This dispersal of trade annoyed the people in Pontianak, and their disgruntlement culminated in Pontianak's attack, allied with VOC, on those two ports in 1786.

The Dutch had been looking for a reason to attack Sukadana. In 1784, the VOC had finally attacked and conquered its long-time rival Riau with the help of the Dutch navy. Raja Haji died in the battle and his son, Raja Ali, who immediately assumed his father's title, Raja Muda, fled to Mempawah with his followers in 1785, and later moved to Pontianak. Finally, the new Raja Muda and his party settled near Sukadana. In addition to the Dutch fear of the young Raja Muda's influence over the Bugis, the Dutch were angered by his attacks on European ships from his bases in Mempawah and Sukadana, and they cast a jaundiced eye over his control of the flow of people and goods in the river traffic.⁴⁵ Early nineteenth-century European records noted that, in the memories of local people, Sukadana had flourished again after the arrival of Raja Ali and his followers following the Dutch conquest of Riau in 1784. In 1810, John Leyden noted that the growth of Sukadana aroused Dutch envy and irritation, a resentment that led to the Dutch attack on Sukadana.⁴⁶ Sultan Abdulrachman of

⁴⁰ VOC 3524: 19–20, Nicolaas Kloek in Pontianak to Batavia, August 31, 1778; VOC 3581: [no pagination], W. M. Stuart and J. Klaagman in Pontianak to Batavia, September 26, 1780.

⁴¹ VOC 3524: 16, Nicolaas Kloek in Pontianak to Batavia, August 31, 1778.

⁴² VOC 3598: 31–32, W. M. Stuart and J. Klaagman in Pontianak to Batavia, October 4, 1781.

⁴³ Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers*, pp. 52–53.

⁴⁴ Van Goor, "Seapower," p. 99.

⁴⁵ VOC 3534: 1481r–1481v, Nicolaas Kloek in Batulayang to Batavia, May 24, 1779; VOC 3581: [no pagination], W. M. Stuart and J. Klaagman in Pontianak to Batavia, September 26, 1780; VOC 4819: [no pagination], W. Silverster in Pontianak to Batavia, July 22, 1787.

⁴⁶ Leyden, "Sketch of Borneo," pp. 27–28. A German officer in the East Indian army, Georg Müller, also stated in 1822 that the new migrants under Raja Ali developed agriculture and stimulated trade with many places, especially Pontianak, the port from where industrious settlers relocated. Müller, "Proeve," p. 346.

Pontianak had successfully persuaded the VOC directors in Batavia to destroy their common enemies.

In 1786, the VOC army and Crown Prince Sharif Kassim of Pontianak, with his armed Malay ships and 400 Bugis men, attacked Sukadana, although the Pontianak soldiers did not take any part in the fighting. The inhabitants of Sukadana deserted their port town and escaped to Matan with the bulk of their property.⁴⁷ Sultan Endra Laya, who happened to be in Sukadana at that time, also fled to Matan, and went farther inland to the Dayak settlement of Gayong, on the upper reaches of the Pawan River. From this time, Gayong became the capital of the sultanate, but the sultanate was always called the Sultanate of Matan.⁴⁸

In 1797, the Dutch attempted to revive the still-deserted Sukadana by appointing Prince Pangeran Usup of Mempawah to the throne. Despite Dutch support, however, he was powerless to restore order to the lawless community, and Sukadana was generally considered to be a bandit lair.⁴⁹ Summarizing these circumstances, the Dutch colonial historian J. P. Veth stated that, after the 1786 Dutch attack, Sukadana and the other ports under Matan rule were deserted, and piracy was the only option open to the people who remained behind because they were poverty-stricken.⁵⁰

After 1779's trade decline, the first data on trade in Pontianak and Sukadana were collected by William Milburn, probably in the 1780s.⁵¹ It should be noted that Milburn no longer emphasized that Pontianak was an important exporter of diamonds and gold. The export of diamonds might have been dispersed to other neighboring ports. In the 1820s, the export of diamonds was recorded in Simpang, Mempawah, and the Karimata Islands.⁵² Considering Pontianak's conflicts with neighboring rivals and its weakened control of the trade of upstream products after 1779, we can surmise that the diamond exports may already have been dispersed in the 1780s. Moreover, the center of gold mining was now moving to Sambas and Mempawah.⁵³ Birds' nests and sea cucumbers now appeared as the principal items exported from Pontianak. In response

⁴⁷ British Library, European Manuscript E109, Mr. Burn's account of Pontianak, February 12, 1811, pp. 19–20; Leyden, "Sketch of Borneo," p. 28; Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, p. 274; Somers Heidhues, "The First Two Sultans," pp. 277, 284.

⁴⁸ VOC 4819: [no pagination], W. Silverster in Pontianak to Batavia, July 22, 1787; Müller, "Proeve," pp. 272, 348.

⁴⁹ Müller, "Proeve," p. 348; Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 360–61.

⁵⁰ Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 279, 360.

⁵¹ According to the author, an English East India Company employee, he collected the materials during his seven voyages to the East Indies and China over twenty-five years. See William Milburn, *Oriental Commerce, Containing a Geographical Description of the Principal Places in the East Indies, China, and Japan* [. . .] (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1999 [1813]), I, p. 1. Milburn mentions Dutch trade in Pontianak, so he must have collected that information before the Dutch withdrawal in 1791. However, the fact that the trade items he mentions differ significantly from those exchanged in 1778–80 (see Table 1) would imply that his data were collected after this period. Some scholars do not consider Milburn's trade figures to be reliable, because there's little information about his sources. At the same time, his information on Southwest Kalimantan, without figures, seems to agree with the general trend there.

⁵² Müller, "Proeve," pp. 268, 284; Anonymous, "Trade with the West Coast of Borneo," *Singapore Chronicle and Commercial Register* 147, November 5, 1829, no pagination.

⁵³ The local ruler of Landak was determined to limit gold production there, conscious of the fate of nearby gold mines, which had formerly been subject to the Sultan of Sambas, but fell under Chinese control. Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers*, pp. 51–68, 71–72.

to a growing Chinese demand, these products were being increasingly collected in many places in maritime Southeast Asia in the later part of the eighteenth century.⁵⁴ Milburn also noted that the Dutch imported Indian textiles to supply the natives, and that Indian opium, which was brought by British country traders and those coming from Penang, was another important commodity.⁵⁵ Therefore, Pontianak was changing from being an exporter of inland mineral resources to an exporter of edible tropical products for the China market. Through the import of Indian goods and commodities, Pontianak was strengthening its ties with Penang.

Milburn noted that Sukadana was an excellent opium market for country traders. British country traders must have preferred Sukadana, a “free” port outside the Dutch sphere of influence, to Pontianak. In return for their imports, they collected tin, pepper, and gold. Numbers of Chinese were settled in the area, and one or two of their junks arrived annually to collect gold, tin, and pepper.⁵⁶ Sukadana still functioned as an exporter of mineral resources, and it was now strongly connected to British country traders.

In 1791, the VOC, which had suffered from chronic financial problems, decided to withdraw from Pontianak, realizing that holding its post there did not generate any profit. This brought a new dimension to the trade in Pontianak.⁵⁷ An increasing number of British country traders visited the town, and John Leyden noted that country traders’ sales in Pontianak amounted to 210,000 Spanish dollars in 1810. As noted earlier, their major import items were Indian textiles and opium. Bugis also joined in this profitable trade in opium and textiles, probably bringing these goods from Penang.⁵⁸ In 1812, the British colonial official John Hunt, sent by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles as his commercial agent to Pontianak, reported that the major import commodities and goods were opium, iron, steel, salt, rice, hardware, cutlery, Indian textiles, Javanese textiles, gunpowder, and many kinds of Chinese products.⁵⁹ Indian and Javanese textiles were new, important trade items, which were brought to Pontianak only after 1780.

⁵⁴ Leonard Blussé, “In Praise of Commodities: An Essay on the Cross-Cultural Trade in Edible Bird’s-Nests,” in *Emporia, Commodities, and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, c. 1400–1750*, ed. Roderich Ptak and Dietmar Rothermund (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1991), pp. 317–35; and Heather Sutherland, “Trepang and Wangkang: The China Trade of Eighteenth Century Makassar, c.1720–1840s,” *Bijdragen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (hereafter *BKI*) 156,3 (2000): 451–72.

⁵⁵ Milburn, *Oriental Commerce*, II, p. 417.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 416–17.

⁵⁷ Profit from the VOC trade in Pontianak never exceeded its expenses. Van Goor, “Seapower,” p. 100; Somers Heidhues, “The First Two Sultans,” p. 285.

⁵⁸ The trade in opium amounted to ninety-five chests, and it was sold at an average of one thousand Spanish dollars per chest. Leyden, “Sketch of Borneo,” pp. 51–52.

⁵⁹ J. Hunt, “Sketch of Borneo, or Pulo Kalamantan, communicated by J. Hunt Esq. in 1812, to the Honorable Sir T. S. Raffles, late Lieut. Governor of Java,” in *Notices of the Indian Archipelago and Adjacent Countries* [...], ed. J. H. Moor (Singapore: n. p., 1837), appendix, p. 25; and Irwin, *Nineteenth-Century Borneo*, p. 26.

Table 2
Major Exports in Pontianak, 1810–12

Items	Annual Exports	Price/Unit
• Mineral Resources		
Diamonds		
Gold	3-4 picols	
Iron, steel (re-export)		
Tin, saltpeter (probably re-export)		
• Forest Products		
<u>Wax, Dago, Camphor, Rattans, Ebony</u>		
• Agricultural Products		
Rice	300 koyang	55–70 SpR/koyang
<u>Pepper, Cassia</u>		
• Marine Products		
<u>Sea cucumber</u>		
<u>Agar-agar</u>		
• Others		
<u>Birds' nests, Eaglewood*</u>		
Opium (re-export)		1,000 dollars/chest
Indian textiles (re-export)		

* I categorize Eaglewood with "Others," not in "Forest Products," because people collected it near the shores and carried it on boats.

Notes:

SpR = Spanish Reals

Underlined items are those for the China market.

Sources: Leyden, "Sketch of Borneo," pp. 51–52; and Hunt, "Sketch of Borneo," Appendix, p. 25

The export items in Pontianak noted by these two British men are shown in Table 2. Export items were becoming varied, and more strongly oriented towards the China market, including many kinds of marine and forest products. Eaglewood (*kaju garu*, a sort of aromatic tree) was highly valued among Chinese buyers. According to Georg Müller, in China people used it to burn, sometimes mixed with other aromatic trees and oil, as offerings and in other rituals. As eaglewood was found in very few places, it soon became an important export item in Southwest Kalimantan for the China market.⁶⁰ After 1787, gold was exported again, because the Mandor territory of Lanfang Kongsí (a mining cooperative) fell to Pontianak in 1787, and started to use Pontianak as its gateway.⁶¹ John Leyden noted that up to five junks visited Pontianak annually. Of them, two to three were small-size ships from Siam. Chinese junks brought China articles and took the sought-after marine and forest products back

⁶⁰ Müller, "Proeve," p. 255.

⁶¹ *Kongsí* is a type of traditional cooperative venture organized often for the mining industry in China and among the Chinese in Southeast Asia. The Lanfang Kongsí was established by Lo Fong Pak, from Meixian, Guangdong, along with his followers, in Mandor in 1777, and survived until 1884, when the Dutch authorities dismantled it. See Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers*, pp. 55–56, 64–65.

home. Although Chinese also purchased gold, they preferred the other primary products, as they often lost money when trading gold in China, as mentioned earlier.⁶²

In 1810, the population of Pontianak consisted of about 3,000 Malays, 1,000 Bugis, 100 Arabs, and about 10,000 Chinese, in addition to the considerable numbers of slaves of Javanese and other origins.⁶³ While the Arabs tended to devote themselves to trade, the Chinese were to be found engaged in diverse occupations and labor, such as retailing, cultivation, distilling arrack, producing sugar, searching for gold dust, and trading to the interior as well as along the coast. The Bugis chiefly applied themselves to trading, manufacturing Bugis cloth, and weaving raw silk into cloth. Using slaves for their own subsistence agriculture, they went to Penang, Java, and Bali to trade.⁶⁴ By this time the Chinese had become dominant in the trade with the inland regions, while the Bugis mostly concentrated on external trade.

Table 3, below, shows trade trends in Pontianak from 1819 to 1821, after the return of the Dutch in 1818.⁶⁵ Trade generally increased, although it experienced a small setback in 1821. The original sources no longer mentioned the export of diamonds and gold. The export of gold seems to have been outside Dutch control by this time. The large proportion of trade conducted by the mining cooperatives, or *kongsis*, which had become increasingly self-sufficient, bypassed the Dutch just as earlier they had bypassed local rulers.⁶⁶ Instead, the trade of edible tropical products (sea cucumbers and birds' nests) and textiles gained in importance. In the general framework of trade, those exported goods and commodities were re-exported from Pontianak to other ports. The strangely small amounts of exports shown in Table 3 would seem to indicate that these goods were re-exported without passing through Dutch customs. As I discuss below, it is obvious that the edible tropical products were brought in from neighboring kingdoms and re-exported to Singapore and other places, and that imported textiles were re-exported to various places in Southwest Kalimantan. I shall also explain the noticeable textile consumption there later.

⁶² Leyden, "Sketch of Borneo," pp. 48–52. Although Leyden noted that before this eight to fifteen junks visited Pontianak annually, it is not at all clear to what time period he is referring. Moreover, no other source confirms his information (for instance, the VOC factory in Pontianak recorded only three to eight junks every year during the time it was present in the area, from 1778 to 1791). It is possible that the subjugation of the Mandor territory of the Lanfang Kongsis to Pontianak in 1787, and the establishment of Lanfang Kongsis' trade settlement near the Pontianak port, may have increased the junk traffic temporarily.

⁶³ This Chinese population was much larger than that noted by the figures shown in later records, which indicate that Chinese amounted to only about one-third of the city's population. Somers Heidhues assumes that the original source may have included the Chinese in Mandor and the environs of Pontianak, who numbered "about 10,000." See Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers*, p. 68.

⁶⁴ Leyden, "Sketch of Borneo," pp. 48–52.

⁶⁵ For the re-establishment of the Dutch authorities in Pontianak, see P. H. van der Kemp, "De vestiging van het Nederlandsch gezag op Borneo's Wester-Afdeeling in 1818–1819," *BKI* 76 (1920): 117–61; and Somers Heidhues, "The First Two Sultans," pp. 289–93.

⁶⁶ To offset the losses of trade income, the Dutch attempted to raise revenue in Pontianak by collecting duties on imports and exports (probably on the items listed in Table 3), imposing a head tax on the Chinese population, auctioning off revenue farms (especially those selling opium, which was consumed mainly by Chinese workers), and monopolizing salt production. See Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers*, pp. 75, 78.

Table 3
Trade in Pontianak, 1819–21

	1819	1820	1821
Tax from incoming ships (Dutch guilders)	18,500	32,607	30,087
Tax from outgoing ships (Dutch guilders)	6,329	6,075	4,794
Incoming Chinese people	18	483	172
Outgoing Chinese people	45	219	176
Number of trade ships going to Java	44	55	60
Income from one-year trade pass (Dutch guilders)	523	1,168	1,324
Import of <u>birds' nests</u> (<i>picols</i>)	15	9	3
Export of <u>birds' nests</u> (<i>picols</i>)	10	12	8
Import of <u>sea cucumber</u> (<i>picols</i>)	185	153	60
Export of <u>sea cucumber</u> (<i>picols</i>)	95	22	5
Import of Javanese tobacco (<i>corges</i>)	86	142.5	178
Export of Javanese Chinese tobacco (<i>corges</i>)	467	304	1,070
Import of Javanese textiles (<i>corges</i>)	1,841	796	254
Import of Bugis textiles (<i>corges</i>)	92	154	443
Import of Coromandel textiles (<i>corges</i>)	629	1,014	776
Import of European textiles (<i>corges</i>)	42	19	56
Import of opium (<i>corges</i>)	10.0	24.5	16.25

Notes:

Corge is a measure of weight varying per goods and places

Underlined items are those for the China market.

Sources: MK 359 (139): no pagination, "Specificatiie opgave der ondervolgende respecten, Resident C. L. Hartman, Pontianak," March 9, 1822

In summary, the trade data from 1778 to 1821 show the following general trend: in the 1770s, Pontianak was an important exporter of diamonds and gold and an importer of Chinese and Javanese household items. The attacks on Mempawah and Sukadana in 1786 did not usher prosperity into Pontianak. Diamond exports seem to have dispersed to other neighboring ports, while gold exports passed into Chinese hands in Sambas and Mempawah. From the 1790s, the export items from Pontianak diversified and were more strongly oriented towards the China market. British country traders played an increasingly important role, bringing in Indian opium and textiles. The trade in textiles, especially Indian and Bugis cloths, boomed after around 1820. Why did trade change in this way? How were these changes related to the situations in the local societies? In the following sections, I explain that these trade developments were strongly connected to the migration and activities of Sea People in Southwest Kalimantan.

Sea People in Southwest Kalimantan: Settlements and Ethnic Backgrounds

In the early nineteenth century, Europeans noted that the entire Sukadana–Matan coast was completely occupied by local and foreign pirates.⁶⁷ A German officer in the East Indian army, Georg Müller, is one of those who wrote such a report. He was appointed inspector by Governor-General Van der Capellen in 1822, and collected information about the local society to prepare for Dutch authorities to arrive in Southwest Kalimantan in the following years.⁶⁸ As a strong admirer of the Dutch colonial mission, he emphasized the necessity of Dutch rule over Kalimantan to save the local population from misery. Nevertheless, because of his excellent fieldwork visiting *kampong* and talking with local people, his report contains precious nuggets of information about the local communities, economy, and politics.

The “pirates,” noted in the reports of Müller and other Europeans, were, in fact, Sea People, as I discuss in the following part. The Sea People, the only residents in the coastal areas of Southwest Kalimantan, were basically foreign migrants who established their communities on the coast. Their ethnic backgrounds were varied and considerably mixed. Among these was an important group called the Orang Laut that settled in Kampong Palembang, in Karimata Besar. The Orang Laut had migrated from Lingga under the leadership of Badin Galang. *Badin*, meaning *orang kaya-laut* (literally, “rich sea man” or “sea noble”), was a typical title of Orang Laut chiefs. His followers called themselves *Rayat*, deriving from Malay *rakyat* (“people”), a typical term of self-address for the Orang Laut in the Riau–Lingga region. They settled in a *kampong* that a Chinese community had deserted in 1808.⁶⁹

Another important group came from the Sulu Sultanate, which expanded the network of trade and migration across the frontier in the entire Malay–Indonesian Archipelago.⁷⁰ One large group was based in Sukadana Bay, under the most prominent pirate chief, Datu Camerang (or Raja Sabrang), a son of Raja Muda Padang, the brother of the Sultan of Sulu. In 1786, this group settled in the area where Gusti Bandar and his followers had once lived, immediately after the latter had retreated to Matan and other places when the Dutch attacked Sukadana. Datu Camerang placed a number of petty chiefs in the neighboring areas to establish and maintain his influence.⁷¹ Datu Camerang had spent years as the leader of a warrior group roaming the Kalimantan coasts before coming to Sukadana. Opportunistically, he had once served Sambas in its struggle against Pontianak, and the next year he had fought with Pontianak against Sambas. Although many of his followers came from Sulu, they were ethnically

⁶⁷ Leyden, “Sketch of Borneo,” p. 29; and Müller, “Proeve,” p. 352.

⁶⁸ C. L. Blume, “Toelichtingen aangaande de nasporingen op Borneo van G. Müller,” *De Indische Bijl* 1 (1843): 113–16. For more about Müller’s background, see Joseph N. F. M. à Campo, “Discourse without Discussion: Representation of Piracy in Colonial Indonesia, 1816–25,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34,2 (2003): 203; and À Campo, “Zeeroof,” pp. 49–54.

⁶⁹ Müller, “Proeve,” pp. 367–68; and Veth, *Borneo’s Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 362–63.

⁷⁰ For the Sulu network, see James Francis Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981).

⁷¹ Müller, “Proeve,” p. 357; and Veth, *Borneo’s Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 361–62.

heterogeneous. Among his commanders was Tuan Said, of Arab origin; Inisari, an *Orang Kaya* from Sulu; and others, of foreign origin.⁷²

Some groups of Sea People settled down in the settlements established by local rulers, such as Kedawangan, Ketapang, and Kubu. Sultan Endra Raya, of Matan, granted the land (fief) around Kedawangan to his son Pangeran Mangkurat Suma around 1790, when he abdicated in favor of Mangkurat Suma's half brother, Mohammed Jamaluddin. Malays were the first to reside in the estuary area in Kedawangan, while Dayaks lived upstream. However, by the time Müller visited Kedawangan in 1822, its two to three hundred residents in the *kampong* at the river mouth were all *Lanong*, or Iranun pirates from Sulu, although the ruler, Pangeran Cakra Negara, was still a member of the royal family, a half-brother of Panembahan of Matan.⁷³ It is not clear whether the ruler had invited the Iranun or if they had forcibly driven out the Malays. From Kedawangan, the Sulu residents set off on pirate forays during the monsoon season with a fleet of eight or nine ships.⁷⁴ Yet another Iranun migrant group settled down in the region of the Katapan River.⁷⁵ These Iranun pirates, based in Southwest Kalimantan, haunted the Karimata Islands and the coast of West Kalimantan.⁷⁶

Ketapang was established by Nachoda Kadar from Matan in 1816, on the order of Pangeran Daeng Celah, a great-grandson of the Bugis warrior Opu Daeng Merewa, and also the prime minister of the Sultanate of Matan. Migrants in Ketapang and nearby Bengadong were considerably mixed in terms of ethnicity. In 1822, the ruler of Ketapang was Pangeran Daeng Celah. Under him lived 294 able-bodied men in Kampong Ketapang and Bengadong, consisting of 140 Malays and Orang Bugit (Malay–Dayak ethnic mixture), sixty Bugis, two Arabs, twelve Chinese, and eighty slaves taken from various places. Bugis stayed in Ketapang only half a year, as they had their wives and children residing in other places.⁷⁷

Bengadong was a typical pirate lair. Pirate leaders of various origins settled in this *kampong*: for example, Nachoda Deika was from Brunei, while (Nachoda) Raga was a Bugis. Slaves were an important part of the *kampong*: slaves worked in the fields, cut wood, and fished. Müller observed that these slaves enjoyed a certain degree of freedom and were not confined. Owners encouraged their slaves to marry and have families. When the time was ripe, slaves, too, participated in piracy, sometimes fighting against others from their homelands.⁷⁸

⁷² Müller, "Proeve," p. 358.

⁷³ The Iranun were a Maranao-speaking group originally from Southwestern Mindanao. After the mid-1760s, they expanded to the Sulu Islands and from there to the entire Malay world, where they created an extensive network based on raiding and trading. See James Francis Warren, *Iranun and Balangingi: Globalization, Maritime Raiding, and the Birth of Ethnicity* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2002).

⁷⁴ Müller, "Proeve," pp. 247–48, 296; and Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, p. 359.

⁷⁵ Müller, "Proeve," p. 296.

⁷⁶ Leyden, "Sketch of Borneo," p. 29.

⁷⁷ Müller, "Proeve," pp. 295, 302.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 245–48.

Kubu was also a pirate base.⁷⁹ A relative (whose name is unknown) of Sultan Abdulrachman of Pontianak settled there with the sultan's permission. By 1822, Kubu had grown into a township with a population of 400 to 500 Malays, Arabs, and other foreigners, and it had virtually become an independent state. The ruler himself, now called the Sherif of Kubu, sent a pirate fleet to attack cargo ships going to or departing from Pontianak and Mempawah, and relieved them of their cargo and crews.⁸⁰

An interesting case is a group of Malays who came from Siak and settled in the Karimata Islands. Prince Raja Musa, a son of the dethroned king, was driven out of Siak with his followers as a result of internal conflicts that disrupted the sultanate, and after years of wandering as pirates, they settled in Karimata in 1765. Raja Musa himself resided in Kampong Srunai, on Karimata Besar, while one of his commanders established a community called Kampong Siak on Serutu Island. They exacted tolls under threat from passing ships.⁸¹

The Chinese were also a distinctive group. Although the Chinese were often engaged in piracy in many places in Southeast Asia,⁸² no record mentions their involvement in Southwest Kalimantan. In Kampong Palembang, along the Sungai Palembang, the largest river in Karimata Besar, seventy to eighty Chinese families lived, engaged in fishing and blacksmithing. Kampong Palembang was known as the place where the best turtles and their eggs could be collected. In 1808, for reasons unknown, these Chinese residents were relocated to the coast of Kalimantan, and the Orang Laut under Badin Galang occupied the deserted *kampong*.⁸³ A Dutch report of 1822 says that pirates had taken "thousands" of Chinese to Kalimantan, either as freemen or slaves, but the latter group had often bought their freedom by paying money.⁸⁴ Regardless of the Dutch report's reliability with respect to the actual number of relocated persons, in the pre-modern Indonesian archipelago it was not an unusual occurrence for a local ruler or a rebel leader to capture and place under his control a migrant community with a specialized skill, such as gunpowder-making.⁸⁵ The Chinese community in Karimata might have been forcibly taken because of their blacksmithing skills.

The preceding section gives some examples of the diversity of the ethnic background of Sea People. Most of them migrated and settled down after 1786, when the Dutch, allied with Pontianaik, attacked Sukadana, and this caused the original population to relocate to the interior. The leadership of the chiefs seems to have been a more important factor than ethnicity in forming their communities. Some groups chose

⁷⁹ "Kubu" is a Malay word that means a stockade or semi-permanent fortification made of wood and strengthened with earthwork, or elephant corrals strengthened in the same way. Kubu, a place name, found in several locations in the Malay world, may be related to these meanings.

⁸⁰ MK 359 (107): 8–9, *Memorie van den Commissaris J. H. Tobias*, May 8, 1822; and Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, p. 352.

⁸¹ Müller, "Proeve," pp. 365–66, 371–72; and Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 265–66.

⁸² For example, see Ota Atsushi, "The Business of Violence: Piracy around Riau, Lingga, and Singapore, c.1820–1840," in *Elusive Pirates, Pervasive Smugglers: Historical Perspectives on Violence and Clandestine Trade in the Greater China Seas*, ed. Robert Antony (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010).

⁸³ Müller, "Proeve," pp. 366–67.

⁸⁴ MK 359 (107): 22, *Memorie van den Commissaris J. H. Tobias*, May 8, 1822.

⁸⁵ Ota, *Changes of Regime*, pp. 68–69.

deserted *kampong* in which to settle, while others chose new settlements established by the local elites. The Sea People must have chosen these types of settlements to match their occupations, such as agriculture, collection and trade of marine products, and raiding, as explained soon in the following section.

Life, Production, and Trade

The Sea People in Southwest Kalimantan were, in fact, engaged in a variety of activities. In Datu Camerang's base in Sukadana, some of his followers worked in the rice fields. They not only cultivated rice, but also fished and collected other products to provide food for their comrades. Datu Camerang maintained his fleet, consisting of twenty-four ships, on Panambangan Island, in Karimata. Datu Camerang resided on Panambangan, and his 900–1,000 pirate soldiers and blacksmiths also lived there. Hence, Panambangan was their raiding base, while their *kampong* in Sukadana was their base for procuring and growing food, although, from time to time, those in Sukadana also conducted raids on passing cargo vessels. The "pirates" under Datu Camerang in Panambangan were also engaged in fishery and collecting marine products, apart from going out on plundering tours.⁸⁶

The Karimata Islands were renowned for good food and fresh water, which is why the neighboring kingdoms of Sukadana, Simpang, and Matan were involved in a long competition for rights to them. Although the British and Dutch also attempted to exert their control on these islands in the nineteenth century, no ruler had effectively controlled them by the early 1820s.⁸⁷

The Karimata Islands were important for the production and collection of various kinds of marine and agricultural resources. The islands produced three to seven hundred *kattis* of turtles,⁸⁸ and the Chinese community in Kampong Palembang was known for turtle-hunting and collecting their eggs. Not only the above-mentioned "pirates" under Datu Camerang in Panambangan, but also the Orang Laut under Badin Galang in Karimata Besar, were engaged in fishery and collecting sea cucumbers and other marine products. Other people on the islands also fished and collected oysters and other shellfish, and cultivated vegetables and fruit. Shells and coral were burnt to produce lime.⁸⁹ The Sultan of Matan and the Panembahan of Simpang, both of whom were especially keen to promote the export of marine products, claimed rights to birds' nests collected in Karimata. Their military power and strong relationship with pirates might have been used to compel people to divide their harvest with these

⁸⁶ Müller, "Proeve," pp. 357–58, 369–70. Although Müller stated in one place that Datu Camerang was based in the islands near the Sambas River, probably "Sambas" is a misspelling of the Simpang or Sukadana River, because in another place he clearly mentioned that his base was in Panambangan.

⁸⁷ In the 1810s, Thomas Stamford Raffles, when he was Lieutenant-Governor of Java, attempted to enthrone Pangeran Adi Mangkurat, a son-in-law of the Sultan of Matan, as the king of Karimata, in order to counter any possible Dutch advancement. See Leyden, "Sketch of Borneo," pp. 26–27; and Müller, "Proeve," pp. 362–63. For the British interest in West Kalimantan, see Irwin, *Nineteenth-Century Borneo*, pp. 24–28; and Somers Heidhues, "The First Two Sultans," pp. 291–92.

⁸⁸ 1 *katti* (also *kati*, *catty*) = 1/100 *picol* (about 0.62 kg). John Crawford, *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands and Adjacent Countries* (Kuala Lumpur [etc.]: Oxford University Press, 1971 [1856]), p. 196.

⁸⁹ Müller, "Proeve," pp. 361–65, 370.

apparent leaders. People reported to these rulers that they collected nine *picols* a year, but the rulers believed that people in fact obtained twenty *picols*.⁹⁰

The coast south of Simpang produced eaglewood, binding rattan, iron, turtles, turtle shells and eggs, sea cucumbers, honey, wax, and many roots and barks for medicinal uses. Local residents, including those from the notorious pirate lair of Kampong Bengadong, collected these products. Müller observed that, as they worked as well as when they were on board ship, the eaglewood collectors from Simpang were heavily armed, just as a pirate would be.⁹¹ These collectors might, in fact, have been occasional pirates. Because eaglewood collectors had to prepare themselves against possible pirate attacks, it would be difficult for those without arms to collect and then protect this precious product.

In Kedawangan, while men practiced piracy, the women and children lived by collecting fish and tree leaves, and growing a small amount of rice. Usually, three to four women, their children, and one old slave lived together on a single boat. As their lives were based in their boat, children sometimes did not step on dry land for years. Raised to a life of robbery, according to Müller, they finally became pirates.⁹²

The Sea People on the Southwest coast of Kalimantan were also actively involved in trade. Karimata was not only a collecting place for marine products; it was also a base for trade with outsiders. Apart from fruit and vegetables consumed in Kalimantan, most of its products were sold on the outside market. Some of the edible marine products, such as *agar-agar* (a sort of edible seaweed) and sea cucumbers, were taken to Sambas, Pontianak, and Singapore to sell to Chinese traders. Red coral (*jangau*), collected on Serutu Island, was also sold to Chinese for medicinal purposes, while other corals, especially a fine sort called *klikap*, were made into lime for betel-chewing. Such household goods as salt, Java tobacco, and ordinary white cotton were brought from the west coast of Kalimantan.⁹³

Bengadong was an important place for trading booty. When the pirate season waned following the rainy monsoon, pirates from Bengadong and other places gathered at this *kampong*. Traders from Brunei, Riau, Lingga, Bilitung, Bangka, and the east coast of Sumatra were waiting there for the pirates' loot.⁹⁴

Among the local ports, Simpang, a vassal state of Matan, emerged as an important trade hub. When the twelfth ruler, Sultan Giri Laya, appointed Pangeran Kusuma Ningrat, the younger brother of the crown prince (later Sultan Endra Raya), Ratu (or prime minister) of Matan, the sultan granted Kusuma Ningrat a small area of land around Simpang, just a forty-five minute walk from Matan, as his fief. At that time, only a small number of people resided there, but when the Dutch and Pontianak attacked Sukadana in 1786, some Matan residents moved to Simpang, while others went to Gayong. Müller emphasized in 1822 that, after the 1786 attack on Sukadana, the western part of the kingdom of Simpang was deserted apart from pirates,

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 367.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 262–65.

⁹² Ibid., p. 296.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 284, 361–62, 367–70.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 297.

fishermen, and collectors of marine products.⁹⁵ However, Simpang, which now held more people than ever before, seems to have developed because of the activities of these Sea People.

Table 4
Major Exports in Simpang, 1822

Items	Annual Exports	Price/Unit	Remarks
• Mineral Resources			
Iron	60–70 <i>picols</i>		
• Forest Products			
<u>Wax</u>	100 <i>picols</i>	0.2–0.24 SpR/ <i>picol</i>	Equivalent to 2 Dutch Guilders
<u>Damar</u>	6.5 <i>kattis</i>	0.13 f./ <i>katti</i>	A sort of resin
<u>Nutmeg</u>			Wildly grown
<u>Rottan Segah</u>		7–8 SpR/100 <i>bossen</i>	Used for binding; 1 <i>bossen</i> = 50 pieces
<u>Laka wood</u>	400–600 <i>picols</i>	1–3 Gl./ <i>picol</i>	
<u>Kulit-Lawang</u> (bark), <u>Seraja wood</u> , and <u>Trankenang roots</u>			Used for medicines
<u>Morbau- and Gladan wood</u>			Used for shipbuilding
• Agricultural Products			
Sugar			Made from sugarcane and coconuts
<u>Minjak Kawang</u>			A fruit extract, substitute for oil
• Marine Products			
<u>Turtles</u>	15–20 <i>kattis</i>	4–20 SpR/ <i>katti</i>	Collected in Sukadana, Karimata
• Others			
<u>Birds' nests</u>	7–8 <i>picols</i>	250–800 SpR/ <i>picol</i>	Second or medium sort
<u>Bezoars</u>		3–4 piasters/ <i>picol</i>	Taken from monkeys or Pigs
<u>Eaglewood</u>	70–80 <i>picols</i>	50–120 SpR/ <i>picol</i> 10–25 SpR/ <i>picol</i>	First sort Coarse sort

Notes:

SpR = Spanish Real

f. = Dutch Guilder

Underlined items are those for the China market.

Source: Müller, "Proeve," pp. 262–65

Müller noted that the collection and trade of marine products were popular activities in Simpang. The ruler of Simpang at that time was Panembahan Surianingrat, a son of Pangeran Kusuma Ningrat, who was also the prime minister of Matan. Müller noted that a considerable part of the ruler's income derived from the marine-product trade. Although he traded on his own account, he also collected a part of the profit

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 260–61, 272–73; and Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, p. 245.

from other traders, “in lieu of tolls.” He imposed taxes on the Chinese, who were all engaged in trade, and also collected an impost on the sales of birds’ nests in Bengadong. The products of Simpang were diverse, and included such high-value items as eaglewood and birds’ nests (see Table 4, above).⁹⁶

Ships from Simpang took its major products to Kubu, Pontianak, Riau, Palembang, and Singapore. The Chinese were the principal buyers of the products in these ports. Major imports in Simpang included Chinese silk, porcelains, and household items, as well as Javanese tobacco. Salt was imported from Siam and Terengganu.⁹⁷ A group of Chinese created their *kampong* on an eminence near the river. There they also established a *kongsi*, where they bought and sold the cargo plundered by pirates—including slaves (captives).⁹⁸ Some of the plundered items were used in the community. Müller observed that each principal person anchored one or more plundered ships in front of his houses on the shore, probably for his use, in Simpang.⁹⁹

The Sultanate of Matan was also strongly oriented towards maritime trade, despite its inland location. All major rivers were navigable and connected the inland regions to the sea as well as to the inland regions of Sekadau, Simpang, Sukadana, and Kotaringin. The most sought-after items from Matan, for the China market, were birds’ nests, eaglewood, rattan for binding, turtles, sea cucumbers, and many medicinal roots and barks. Matan produced some of the best birds’ nests in the Archipelago, second only to those of Brunei. The Dayaks collected them and sold them cheaply to the Pangeran and other elites. The Pangeran sold fifty to sixty *kattis* of birds’ nests to the sultan, but managed to smuggle out 5 *picol* of the best sort. The sultan sold them at thirty to forty *piaster a katti*. By the time they were sold to Chinese traders in Sambas and Pontianak, they cost seventy to eighty-five *piaster a katti*. Collecting these products was not the sole preserve of the coastal Sea People, as some residents of Gayong also earned their livelihood by fishing from small boats and collecting such products as eaglewood, sea cucumbers, *agar-agar*, and turtle shells and eggs.¹⁰⁰

Gayong had been a small Dayak village until Sultan Endra Laya made it the capital of Matan. In 1822, its population consisted of five hundred Malays, forty Bugis, ten Arabs and people of Arab descent, three hundred Orang Bugits, and 250 Budaks (captured slaves). Influential Malays were usually members of the royal family, and some of them had fiefs in Dayak lands. A part of the Orang Bugit and Dayaks were under the authority of royal family members and other elites.¹⁰¹ Many members of the elite were poor, but some benefited from commerce with the Dayak and the external trade of local products. Gayong traders in a fleet of twelve to sixteen ships once used to go to Riau, Palembang, and Terengganu, but now most of them sailed to Singapore. The Sultan and the elite members maintained their trade and pirate ships in

⁹⁶ Müller, “Proeve,” p. 268; and Veth, *Borneo’s Wester-afdeeling*, I, p. 244.

⁹⁷ Salt came in quantity from these places, because it was of good quality and cheap. In Siam, salt was also exchanged for gold from Kalimantan. Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers*, pp. 50, 78–79.

⁹⁸ Calling a trade house a *kongsi* might mean that it was a sort of cooperative venture, although that is not clear from the source.

⁹⁹ MK 359 (107): 8–9, *Memorie van der Commissaris J. H. Tobias*, May 8, 1822; and Müller, “Proeve,” pp. 263–67, 278–79.

¹⁰⁰ Müller, “Proeve,” pp. 284–88.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 292–293, 306–308.

Bengadong. Some Gayong residents went to sea on these ships as sailors during the monsoon season. Sailors were allowed to conduct their private business, and, to ensure their profits, they often attacked foreign ships. In this manner, trade development co-existed with piracy. Back home, Gayong sailors sold imported items to Dayaks and obtained rice and forest products in return.¹⁰²

In short, the Sea People were actively engaged in the collection of marine products, cultivation, and external trade. It was they who collected products so sought after in China. John Leyden lamented the decline in trade in Pontianak, pointing out the diminishing number of incoming junks.¹⁰³ However, considering the lively trade at Simpang and Gayong, the level of trade throughout the entire area of Southwest Kalimantan seems, in fact, to have been maintained or even increased. The emergence of these ports shows that the trade that once centered on a few major ports was considerably dispersed during the period in question. The Sea People also carried trade products to additional local ports and to such international ports as Penang, Terengganu, and Singapore.

Relationship with Local Rulers

The Sea People were not politically isolated; they established various types of relationships with local rulers. Blood ties were an important measure employed by the chiefs of Sea People to secure their positions. The leader of the Orang Laut pirates on Karimata Besar, Badin Galang, created a marital relationship with the Panembahan of Simpang by marrying one of his own granddaughters to the Panembahan's son. This tie meant that his settlements were under the protection of the rulers of Simpang and Matan, of which the Panembahan was the prime minister. Badin Galang also extended such blood ties to other pirate leaders. Another of his granddaughters was married to an influential pirate chief, Uwan Smail, in Kedawangan.¹⁰⁴

Although Datu Camerang was based in Karimata and Sukadana, he cultivated the friendship of the Sultan of Brunei for years. By the early 1820s, he had migrated to Brunei. Brunei pirates were most active in Northwest and West Kalimantan, where they had a number of lairs in such places as Tampasuk, Sambas, Bengadong, Kedawangan, and Gayong. Brunei pirates earned a reputation of being the fiercest among all pirates, and their ships were described as the most strongly manned and heavily armed. Among such Brunei pirates, Datu Camerang soon won fame as one of the most influential chiefs, making use of his strong ties with the ruler. He lured a number of pirates to operate under his influence, while he drove away other pirates from Northwest Kalimantan. Starting his career as a pirate in Sulu, Datu Camerang had first roamed around Kalimantan, and later, after having settled in Sukadana for some thirty years, he finally established a base in Brunei.¹⁰⁵ He made an annual raiding trip along the west coast of Kalimantan.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 292–295.

¹⁰³ Leyden, "Sketch of Borneo," p. 51.

¹⁰⁴ Müller, "Proeve," pp. 297, 367–68; and Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 362–63.

¹⁰⁵ Hunt, "Sketch of Borneo," Appendix, p. 28; Müller, "Proeve," pp. 369–70; and Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 356–57, 365.

The Sea People often established a reciprocal relationship with local rulers, providing their maritime skills, including those used in sea battles and for plundering, in exchange for privileges. For example, the Malay and Bugis migrants in Pontianak were expected to fight in support of the ruler in wartime.¹⁰⁶ These Sea People confirmed their rights and obligations, including military assistance, with the ruler. They sometimes created written contracts, and one of these migrants was noted in a VOC record. The contract, which was concluded between Sultan Abdurachman of Pontianak and the Bugis and Malay chiefs in October 1776, stipulated: (1) the Bugis and Malays were free to choose other settlements in the sultanate and to leave the town of Pontianak; and (2) in the event of danger, Bugis and Malays should provide the sultan with help, and vice versa. The contract also detailed the agreements concerning the solution of potential disputes about slaves, women who had engaged in adultery, quarrels, and murders.¹⁰⁷

In exchange for the (possible) support from the Sea People, local rulers often provided them with the land on which to settle,¹⁰⁸ and some rulers married off their daughters to the chiefs of the Sea People (this promised protection and an alliance for mutual assistance). Datu Camerang, in fact, was able to expand his influence in Brunei thanks to support from the sultan, as mentioned earlier. When the Sea People found that the reward given by the local ruler for their service was not enough, they simply left his territory in search of a more favorable relationship with another ruler, just as Datu Camerang had done.

The military assistance from the Sea People was important for rulers, and as such it was rewarded, as was the Siak community in the Karimata Islands, a renowned warrior group. When Pontianak was at war with Sanggau in 1772, Sultan Abdurachman of Pontianak asked the Siak chief, Raja Musa, in Karimata Besar for help. Raja Musa led his soldiers to victory against Sanggau, but died in the battle. He was buried at Batu Layang, in the graveyard of the sultans of Pontianak. In the aftermath of this war, some of the Siak family settled in Pontianak, from where they set sail in search of plunder around Bangka, Belitung, and Sumatra.¹⁰⁹ The burial of Raja Musa in the sultans' graveyard in Pontianak, and the acceptance of his family members to settle down in Pontianak, seem to have been Abdurachman's token of gratitude to the Siak community.

The more obvious reward for the Siaks' military assistance was, in fact, given by the Dutch. When the Dutch were at war against Palembang in 1819, Dutch leaders called upon the Siak residents in Karimata for help. Raja Akil, the new leader of the Siak migrants in Karimata, responded favorably to this request and helped the Dutch. It is not clear whether Muslim Raja Akil was taking a risk when he sided with the infidel Dutch. It is clear, however, that the Dutch considered him to be very useful. After the victory, they granted Raja Akil the rank of *majoor* in gratitude for his contribution. By also granting other chiefs such titles as *kapitein* and *luitenant*, the

¹⁰⁶ Leyden, "Sketch of Borneo," pp. 53. The Malays and Bugis in Pontianak provided their own powder and shot, which they manufactured themselves.

¹⁰⁷ MK 359 (139): [no pagination], contract concluded between Abdul Rachman, Pangeran Pura Nagahang, the Bugis chiefs, and Malay chiefs, Pontianak, n.d.

¹⁰⁸ Müller, "Proeve," p. 343–45; and Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 272–73.

¹⁰⁹ Müller, "Proeve," pp. 365–66, 371–72; and Veth, *Borneo's Wester-afdeeling*, I, pp. 265–66.

Dutch made the Siak migrants their mercenary soldiers. Because of Raja Akil's continued cooperation with the Dutch and his widespread network of rulers and pirates in the Malay Archipelago, the Dutch finally appointed him the Ruler (*Regent*) of Karimata, and provided him with ships to keep the pirates in check.¹¹⁰ The Sea People's reciprocal relationship with rulers was thus extended to the Dutch. The Dutch willingly incorporated the Siak migrants—some of whom were pirates or who advanced piracy—into their system, to make up for the insufficient Dutch naval power and influence over local petty chiefs.

Plundering was an important skill that the Sea People provided. When they departed to engage in piracy from their "official" base, they made a complicated agreement with the local rulers. For example, in Bengadong, the Sea People were joined by Matan's rulers and elites, and those from neighboring kingdoms, in maintaining the pirates' ships and other resources. Matan's sultan and some elites kept six to eight large ships in Bengadong, ready for plundering voyages. Likewise, rulers and elites from other parts of Kalimantan kept eight to nine ships in Bengadong's port. When Bengadong-based pirates went on plundering raids on board Matan or other rulers' ships (on the seas around the Karimata Islands, Borneo, Bilitung, Riau, and Java), the rulers provided them with food and other necessities in return for a portion of the booty. Müller noted that deciding on how to share the booty did not occur without disagreement between pirate leaders and the rulers. This meant that the rulers were not able to exact as great a share as they wanted, but had to accede to the pirate leaders' wishes to a certain degree. The sultan told Müller that those involved in piracy, including himself, did not like to keep stolen items, and attempted to sell them quickly—an indication that local rulers collected the booty principally for economic purposes. They benefited from their investment and involvement in the pirate business. As a result, the power of the elites in Matan and other kingdoms grew, so that they were becoming almost completely independent of the sultan.¹¹¹

Fashion, Religion, and Identities

The Sea People in Southwest Kalimantan seem to have been creating a unique culture during the early nineteenth century. First and foremost, they were creating common fashions. Müller noted that people in Simpang were especially conscious about particular types of textiles for their clothing and adornments. Their preferences were quite cosmopolitan. Bugis textiles were especially popular with many different groups of Sea People. Men in general preferred Bugis textiles for their clothes and trousers. "Important" men and women wore European chintz with large flower patterns for men's jackets (*baadje*), women's jackets (*kebaya*), and bed clothes. They also used Chinese silk for decorative hangings, bed curtains, and head cloths. The Panembahan elaborated his personal fashion, adopting a part-Bugis and part-Arab style in his clothes, and using Chinese silk for his waistband. Relatively rich men used fine cloth imported from Java or Sulawesi for their head cloths and trousers, while ordinary men used relatively coarse, local cloth for the same purpose. Women

¹¹⁰ MK 2472, Register der handelingen en besluiten van de Gouverneur-Generaal "buiten rade," September 14, 1823, No. 1; and Müller, "Proeve," pp. 372–73.

¹¹¹ Müller, "Proeve," pp. 245–47.

generally wore one piece of *sarong* (large cloth) around their trunk, and another piece of *sarong* over the head or over the shoulders. The Dayaks used Indian *morris* (a type of cotton textile) for their clothing: red for men and black for women. These fashions were new, as the import of European, Indian, and Bugis textiles became prominent in Southwest Kalimantan only after the 1810s and boomed around 1820. Using the newly imported textiles, people created new fashions, appropriate to their gender, social status and wealth, regardless of their original ethnicities. Apart from imported cloth from Sulawesi, Bugis living in Pontianak wove Bugis textiles.¹¹²

In Bengadong, where residents were also considerably mixed ethnically, Müller noted that they lived in Bugis-style houses with a raised floor on poles, and the house of the Pangeran was decorated with chintz, which would have been either Indian or European, and other cloths of various colors.¹¹³

These fashions fueled the strong demand for imported textiles in Pontianak around 1820. The cosmopolitan fashion using various types of imported textiles seems to have been dominant among the Sea People in Southwest Kalimantan. Interestingly, Müller emphasized the difference between the Sea People and the Dayaks in fashions, whereas he hardly mentioned the ethnic differences in fashions among the Sea People.

In fact, local people in Southwest Kalimantan clearly distinguished the migrant Sea People from local Dayak and Orang Bugit, while any distinction among the Sea People was secondary. According to Müller, “those living in coasts,” who were “engaged in piracy [...] were called Malays (*Maleijers*),” although “they were mixed Malay, Javanese, Bugis, and others.”¹¹⁴ He distinguished the “Malays” (in fact, Sea People) from the Dayaks and Orang Bugit. Thus, according to Müller, local people viewed the Sea People as Malays, a single, large category, although they were actually ethnically mixed. Müller also noted that those “Malays” were pious Muslims. They were also called *Orang Slam* (literally, Islam people), a category that included a small number of Dayaks who converted to Islam.¹¹⁵ Being Muslim seems to have been a very important factor in the identity of the Sea People.

Islam seems to have been established among the Sea People in Southwest Kalimantan. For example, Haji Mohamad, who had once been to Mecca and Medina on the pilgrimage, was a famous *imam* in Gayong. He sometimes left his town in the inland area and conducted his prayers on a boat. Probably he did this for the convenience of the Sea People living along the shore.¹¹⁶

Yet there were some groups of Sea People who strongly maintained that their identity was connected to their place of origin. When Müller stayed in Simpang with Raja Akil in 1822, he found that his men often talked about Sultan Mahmud. Raja Akil explained that Mahmud was the legal successor to the throne of Siak, and the Siak migrants still recognized him as their sultan. Raja Akil also remarked that the

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 266–67, 276–78; and Leyden, “Sketch of Borneo,” p. 50.

¹¹³ Müller, “Proeve,” pp. 248–49. Müller actually wrote “... the house of the *Sultan* ...,” but it should be “... the house of the *Pangeran* ...” (emphasis added), as I’ve shown it here.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 305.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 306. Müller stated that Haji Mohamad went to pray on boats in order to steal from those aboard.

migrants' common lot as refugees still worked to unite the Siaks. Although the ethnicity of the soldiers in his fleet was mixed, Müller was impressed that Siak shipmasters still talked about their ancestors, even after having lived in exile for more than fifty years. They sang songs about their own ancestors and their leaders, and by so doing they kept alive the memory of the circumstances of their fall.¹¹⁷ The collective memories of hardships experienced outside the homeland could maintain or even strengthen the original identity in some groups of the Sea People.

Conclusion

The conventional view that argues that Southwest Kalimantan was in decline in the period 1770–1820 needs reconsideration. The decline of Pontianak's trade around 1780, the Pontianak-supported Dutch attack on Sukadana in 1786, and the Dutch withdrawal of 1791 did not necessarily damage trade in Southwest Kalimantan as a whole. The decline at Pontianak, in fact, meant the partial dispersion of its trade to Mempawah, Sukadana, and, later, to Simpang and other ports.

Since the early eighteenth century, Sukadana had received waves of Malay, Bugis, Iranun, and Chinese migrations from Riau, Sulu, other places in Southeast Asia, and China. After the 1786 attack on Sukadana, a growing number of migrants—the Sea People—set up settlements along the coasts of Southwest Kalimantan. Their engagement in the collection of marine products was an important factor in stimulating trade and making it profitable.¹¹⁸ Because of the Sea People's activities, Southwest Kalimantan was transformed from being an exporter of inland mineral resources (mainly diamonds and gold) to being an exporter of the marine and forest products much sought after in China. Ships both foreign and from Kalimantan carried these products to such outside ports as Penang, and later to Singapore. The main items that Chinese and Southeast Asian ships carried to Southwest Kalimantan were Chinese household goods, but from the mid-1780s British country traders also introduced Indian textiles and opium. This is how the Sea People connected Southwest Kalimantan to the wider, outer world.

The Sea People created reciprocal relationships with rulers, providing their naval power and some of the collected (and pirated) products, in exchange for the rulers' protection. Local kingdoms were anxious to establish such a relationship with the Sea People, and opened particular places for them to settle. The Sea People were entrepreneurs who responded to such economic opportunities to participate in the booming India–Sino–Southeast-Asian trade. Piracy was simply one of the economic activities in which the Sea People participated and by which they thrived.

The Sea People played multiple roles in Southwest Kalimantan's local economies, politics, and culture. Local kingdoms grew increasingly dependent on the economic activities of the Sea People, as the bulk of the kingdoms' income came from maritime

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 372–73.

¹¹⁸ Asian shippers' collection of marine products was, in fact, important in the development of trade and to empire-building in many places in Southeast Asia at the turn of the nineteenth century. For the case of the Sulu trade, see Warren, *The Sulu Zone*. For the cases of the British trade in Penang and Singapore, and the Sulu influence on North Borneo, see Eric Tagliacozzo, "A Necklace of Fins: Marine Goods Trading in Maritime Southeast Asia, 1780–1860," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 1,1 (2004): 23–48.

trade. Moreover, the Sea People's military power influenced the course of conflicts between local states. In the meantime, the Sea People were forming their own culture (linked to Islam), a seafaring lifestyle, and cosmopolitan fashion. In this manner, the Sea People were a major player in the history of Southwest Kalimantan.