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Master's Thesis

***To Reap without Sowing:*
The Dutch East India Company and the Rice Economy of Java, 1743-1800**

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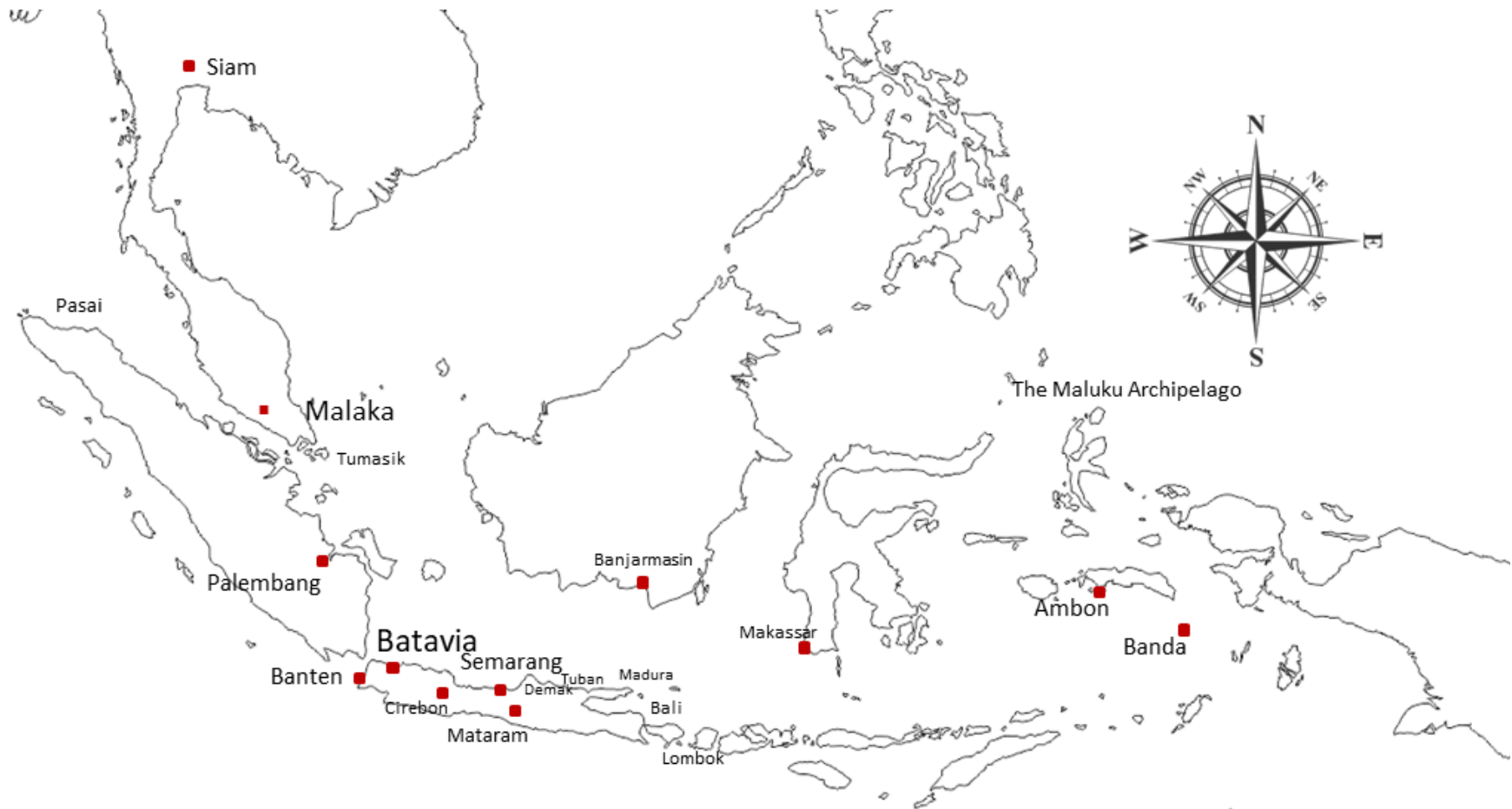
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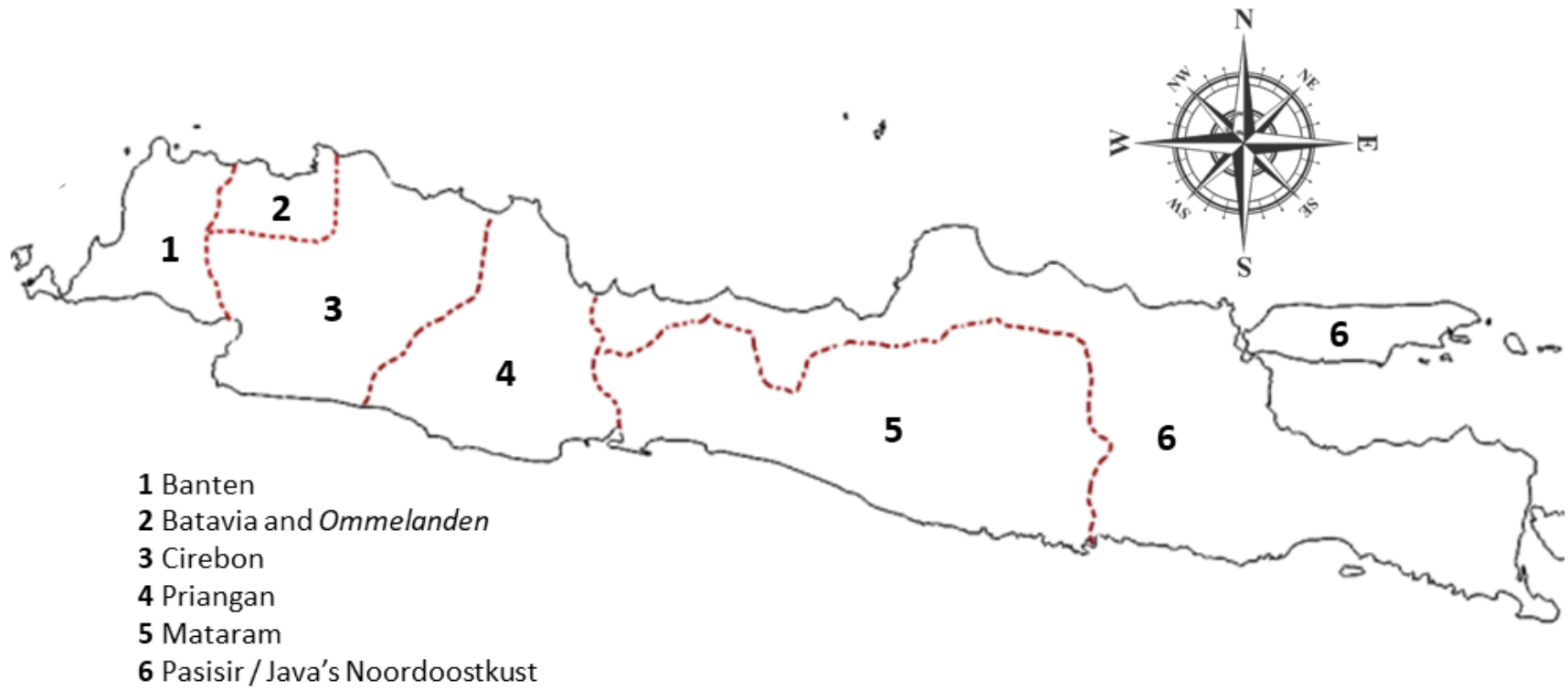
List of Units and Measures

- Jung* : Unit of land width equal to about 600² feet.
- Cacah* : Unit to measure taxpayer in Java. One cacah means a piece of land cultivated by a family of farmer which could consist about 5 to 20 persons.
- Lb* : Dutch pound (0.465 kg)
- Pikul* : A man's load, approximately 62.5 kg
- Koyang* : Measure of weight for rice equal to 28 *pikul* or 3500 lb.
- Last* : 24.5 *pikul* or 3100 lb.
- Guilder* : (or *Gulden* or *Florin*) The accounting currency of Holland and the VOC. 1 guilder equivalent to 20 *stuiver*.
- Dutch Guilder*: Heavy money; with light money they are the currency formed to adjust discrepancy in parities between gold, silver, and copper in Europe and Asia. 1 Dutch guilder equivalent to 25 *stuivers* or 48 *rds*.
- Indian Guilder*: Light money. Light money compared to Dutch Guilder is about 4:5. 1 Indian Guilder equivalent to 20 *stuivers* or 60 *rds*.
- Stuiver* : A Dutch currency unit also used by the VOC in Asia.
- Rijksdaaler (rds)*: The dutch equivalent of the German Imperial Reichsthaler; as a rule of thumb it was worth 2,5 Dutch guilders or 50 *stuiver* heavy money.

Map of the Indonesian Archipelago



Map of Java



Introduction

It is not exaggerating to say that the story of rice was the story of Java's economy. Rice was Java's primary source of food cum main export commodity. As the main commodity, studies about rice in Java could not be considered as limited, but mostly it concentrated on two periods, first, the classical period from before 10th to 16th century; second, the colonial period to the independence of Indonesia. Just like the economy of Java in the classical period rice grew from a commodity for self-consumption to a large scale export commodity. This promising story went to the opposite direction since the colonial period. In this modern period, rice suddenly became the symbol of subsistent life, poverty, and defeat of the Javanese by colonial exploitation. For anyone living in modern Indonesia, who witness regular rice import and poverty among farmers, it is hard to imagine that rice was once such a lucrative export commodity.

Unfortunately, study about rice in the period that connected those two contrasting period, which could answer why the problem happened, is still scarce. The period in between was the period when the Dutch East India Company (hereafter VOC) dominated the Indonesian archipelago. For the classical period, there are Jan Wisseman Christie, Setten van Der Meer, and David Henley.¹ In the later period, there are Clifford Geertz, Jan Luiten van Zanden, and Robert Cribb.² It was rather hard to mention names like this for the VOC period. The implication of this scarcity was clear, to fully blame this period as the source of the deterioration, like what has been done by studies not focusing on this period. Nevertheless, it is academically unfair to stay satisfied with such conjecture when the source for this period is already highly accessible.

Historical Background and Research Question

One does not familiar with VOC might wonder what has the Northwestern European trading company who came for Asian luxury products to do with rice. The massive distance from the Netherlands to the source of the spices required them to have a second base in Asia. It was

¹ Jan Wisseman Christie, "Water and Rice in Early Java and Bali," in Peter Boomgaard (ed.) *A World of Water: Rain, Rivers and Seas in Southeast Asian Histories*, (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007) p. 235-258; N.C. van Setten van der Meer, *Sawah Cultivation in ancient Java: Aspects of development during the Indo-Javanese period, 5th to 15th century* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1979); David Henley, "Rizification Revisited: Re-examining the rise of rice in Indonesia, with special reference to Sulawesi," in Peter Boomgaard (ed.) *A World of Water: Rain, Rivers and Seas in Southeast Asian Histories*, (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007) p. 107-138.

² Clifford Geertz, *Involusi Pertanian: Proses Perubahan Ekologi di Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Bhatara Karya Aksara, 1983); Jan Luiten van Zanden, "On the Efficiency of Markets for Agricultural Products: Rice Prices and Capital Markets in Java 1823-1853", *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 64, No. 4, (2004) p. 1028-1055; Robert Cribb, "The External Rice Trade of the Indonesian Republic, 1946-1947" in Alicia Shrikker and Jeroen Touwen, *Promises and Predicaments: Trade and Entrepreneurship in Colonial and Independent Indonesia in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2015) p. 181-197.

Batavia, founded in 1602 on the shore of Jacatra, in Northwestern Java. At first, the company had no plan to build a settlement. When the Dutch first arrived at this harbor town, they were happy enough when granted by the local ruler a permission to build a stone house within a walled compound, neighboring a Chinese settlement that had been existed earlier.³ All changed when in 1618, Wijaya Krama, the ruler of Jacatra welcomed the Dutch's forever rival, the England's East India Company to have a piece of land and some privileges as well. Knowing that news, Jan Pieterszoon Coen, a man of second highest position of Dutch Company in Asia, decided to take down Jacatra.⁴ By 1620, Jacatra had become a Dutch settlement named Batavia and the Council of Aldermen was founded due to the city's rapid growth.⁵ In supporting the city, arms, ammunition and equipment were imported from the Netherlands, but for food, that option was too expensive.⁶

The need of food left the VOC with no option besides being dependent on rice from its neighbor, Java under the sultanate of Mataram. At first, the company attempted to cut the price by establishing trading post in some of Mataram's ports, Gresik and Jepara, so that they could purchase it directly from the producing region. Later, the company tried to get rice delivery as the exchange of their military support in most of the internal conflicts in Java. In 1678, they got a license of posting in Jepara, Surabaya, Rembang, Demak, and Tegal which were coastal towns and rice granaries of Java; from an agreement in 1705 VOC received 800 *koyangs* rice as annual delivery; the treaty of 1733 granted them with 1000 *koyangs* rice.⁷

On 1743, the VOC solidified their power in Java by receiving the ceding of the *pasisir*⁸ from Mataram. Java's Noordoostkust, the name VOC gave to *pasisir*, was on a different level with any other states the VOC ever subdued in Java. If in Banten and Cirebon VOC only placing resident on the side of their ruler, in Java's Noordoostkust they had a governor in Semarang and a *gezaghebber* (secondary governor) in Surabaya on the top of their residents in every city.⁹ In 1750s, the VOC became the strongest power in Java because of the partition of Mataram into Surakarta, Yogyakarta, and Mangkunegara. Since then, even though VOC's domination over those ex-Mataram states remained indirect, the company experienced no notable challenge to their authority. The *pasisir* also produce a substantial amount of Java's rice and was the home of all functioning ports in the island. It means that rice was finally produced under an area in which the company was the authority. Even when the rice wasn't produced within the company's area, for

³ Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983) p. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶ Gerrit Knaap, *Shallow Waters, Rising Tide: Shipping and Trade in Java around 1775* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996) p. 13.

⁷ M.C. Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern 1200-2008* (Jakarta: Serambi, 2008) p. 189, 197.

⁸ *Pasisir* is Java's coastal area. It came from Mataram concept of division of power. They called the subjugated area in the coastal as *pasisir*.

⁹ Mason C. Hoadley, *Selective Judicial Competence : The Cirebon-Priangan Legal Administration, 1680-1792* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994) p. 3-4; Kwee Hui Kian, *The Political Economy of Java's Northeast Coast, c. 1740-1800: Elite Synergy* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

example in the ex-Mataram states, it was still had to pass through one of the ports in there to be exported. In other words, even in the case which the company has no right over the production, it always had power over the trade.

The main question of this study is to what extent the VOC contributed to the downgrading of Java's rice economy. Imagining that VOC was in such urgent need of rice and now with a power in hand, VOC must have extracted rice from there, and this might be the cause of the degradation. However, there are some striking plot holes about this speculation. First, rice economy of Java has been built for the whole classical period, how can it be destroyed only within 6 decades of VOC's rule? Second, Java used to be the biggest rice exporter in Southeast Asia, how can it collapsed when only asked to feed Batavia? Therefore, a close up scrutinize is needed. It will be conducted firstly by studying what kind of rice policy the VOC had, how the implementation was, and what was its impact for Java. After that, the result will be compared with the policy and the condition of Javanese rice-cultivating society from the previous period to be able to measure the extent.

Previous Study

For the VOC period, the historiographical trend revolves around high-valued products traded by VOC. This trend was started by Kristof Glamann who in 1981 did a study on the Dutch Asian Trade seeing high valued commodities ranging from pepper to tea based on the records of the *Hereen XVII*.¹⁰ In the new millennium, a new generation of historians specially trained on the archive of the company in a program called TANAP produced comprehensive commodity history of the company and its Asian business partners, and yet it still focused on luxury products. The dissertation of Yong Liu's (2006) was on tea in China, Hong Anh Tuan's (2006) was on Silk in Vietnam, and Ryuto Shimada's (2006) was on Japanese Copper.¹¹ That food-grain was not of a less importance for the early modern period has been noticed by Sinnappah Arasaratnam in 1988, but his work was on rice trade in Eastern India.¹² The most recent study that included Java from Els Jacob about the company's trade in Asia still emphasized on Coffee and Sugar.¹³ This existing trend illustrated as if Java's rice economy disappeared under the VOC while in fact, its heyday in

¹⁰ Kristof Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic Trade 1620 - 1740* ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1981) . *Hereen XVII* was the central management board of the company which had seventeen members made up of directors of the six shareholder chambers; See J.R. Bruijn, F.S. Gaastra, I. Schöffer, A. C. J. Vermeulen, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries, Introductory Volume* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987) p. 15.

¹¹ Yong Liu, *The Dutch East India Company's Tea Trade with China, 1757-1781* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Hong Anh Tuan, *Silk for Silver: Dutch-Vietnamese Relations, 1637-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Ryuto Shimada, *The Intra-Asian Trade in Japanese Copper By the Dutch East India Company During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

¹² Sinnappah Arasaratnam, "The Rice Trade in Eastern India, 1650-1740," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1988) p. 531-549.

¹³ Els Jacob, *Merchants in Asia: The Trade of the Dutch East India Company during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: CWNS Publications, 2006).

the 16th century was just few years behind. When VOC started to venture in the archipelago, rice producers were still producing massively and the market were still demanding.

Though no one has done a specific study of Java's rice for VOC period, some have included it as a part of their study which was set on other focus. Those studies could be divided into three streams, with one extreme pretty contrasting the other. The first was of the classical stream, concluding the VOC, with its monopoly and obligatory delivery, as the main disruptor of the balance of rice economy of Java. According to them, the VOC obstructed the existing system and extract it in an unsustainable way only for their own benefit. The supporter of this was N.C. Setten van Der Meer, Clifford Geertz, Bernard Vlekke, and D.H. Burger.¹⁴

The second stream was those who said that the rice power of Java was preserved because the VOC left most of it to the hands of the private. This stream is in different extreme with what used to be widely accepted about VOC period, because VOC's neglect leads, they claimed, to signs of prosperity. This theory was supported by Knaap, J.C. van Leur, Denys Lombard, and Kwee Hui Kian.¹⁵ The third stream thinks that rice was naturally involuntional, with or without VOC. Rice could not be managed in large scale, because growing rice in that scale would not yield more than in small scale. Increasing harvest could only be attempted by increasing labor input, so at one point the growth of population would surpass the productivity. This was proposed by Peter Boomgaard.¹⁶

Since the VOC was a state like institution, I think the simplest and most promising way in solving the problem is by looking at its policies and comparing it with the policy before the VOC. The study of VOC's policy can only be done by scrutinizing VOC documents. Though some study already did a longue durée review, combining it with the policy study is what absent from them. The study from Setten van der Meer and Geertz were obviously out of this range because they focused more to a different period. Setten van der Meer focused on the earlier period, and draw the conclusion about VOC's disruption by seeing how some elements of rice cultivations is more well preserved in Bali, a region where the VOC was absent.¹⁷ Geertz on the contrary was focusing on the later period, and admitted himself that his explanation about earlier period was more of a

¹⁴ N.C. Setten van der Meer, *Sawah Cultivation*; Clifford Geertz, *Involusi Pertanian*; Bernard H. M. Vlekke, *Nusantara: sejarah Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia KPG : Freedom Institute ; Balai Pustaka, 2008); D.H. Burger, *Sedjarah Ekonomis Sosiologis Indonesia Jilid I*, (Djakarta: Prandja Paramita d/h J.B. Wolters, 1960).

¹⁵ Gerrit Knaap, *Shallow Waters*; J. C. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (The Hague: Van Hoeve, 1967); Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya 3, Warisan Kerajaan-Kerajaan Konsentris*, (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2005); Kwee Hui Kian, *The Political Economy*.

¹⁶ Peter Boomgaard, "The non-agricultural Side of an Agricultural Economy Java, 1500-1900," in Paul Alexander and P. Boomgaard (eds.), *In the Shadow of Agriculture: Non-Farm Activities in the Javanese Economy, Past and Present* (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 1991); Peter Boomgaard, "The Javanese Rice Economy 800-1800" in Hayami Akira, Yoshihiro Tsubouchi (eds.) *Economic and Demographic Development in Rice Producing Societies: Some Aspects of East Asian Economic History, 1500-1900*, Workshop on Economic and Demographic Development in Rice Producing Societies, (Tokyo: 1989).

¹⁷ Setten van der Meer, *Sawah Cultivation*, p. vii.

reflection.¹⁸ Burger and Vlekke conducted their study before the availability of VOC sources. Studies from Lombard and Boomgaard used partially VOC documents and provide a groundbreaking finding about the development of rice economy, but they were more of a *longue durée* survey paying little attention to the VOC as an institution. That's why their conclusion was also contrasting to each other. The study from Kwee and Knaap were those who provide the institution element and also utilize VOC document. Nevertheless, rice was not their main focus. Even though they give clues about how was the rice policy under the VOC, it did not answer to how it was affecting the development of Java's rice economy.

Knowing how deep VOC's contribution towards the grim future of Java's rice economy is the main aim of this study. The second is to contribute thoughts on the debate about the economy of Java. As mentioned in the opening, one that was flourishing during the classical period but turned grim in the modern period was not only rice, but also Java's economy in general. In seeing this problem, early studies oftentimes blamed VOC for taking off Java's commerciality, the cause of prosperity in the previous period. The theory came from an understanding that VOC based their policies on local's feudal system which come back to life after Sultan Agung subjugated coastal polities in 1625.¹⁹ This view has been challenged. Firstly by H.J. De Graaf in the 1970's who pointed out that the subjugation did not result in a long term obedience of the subjugated. Instead, Mataram making peace by letting the coast lived a fairly independent life, so that the trade-oriented coastal power from the 15th and 16th century to some extent was preserved.²⁰ This suggestion was taken further by Luc Nagtegaal in 1996 and Kwee in 2002.²¹ Both studied *pasisir*, the region lack of attention in De Graaf period. Indeed, their studies managed to proof De Graaf's prophecy. In their study, *Pasisir* showed a spirit in maintaining their economic interest.²² While in a way these studies shed helpful light towards how Javanese coped with challenge for VOC, and gave hope about how the Javanese was not as helpless as regarded by earlier studies, it also complicated the question of why the economy of Java was collapsing in the modern period. Put it in a simple way, if the Javanese stayed commercial and dared to maintain what they had, why did they then became so poor?

Method, Structure, and Statement

¹⁸ Geertz, *Involusi Pertanian*, p. 73-74.

¹⁹ Vlekke, *Nusantara*, p. 246; Burger, *Sedjarah Ekonomis*, p. 79.

²⁰ H.J. De Graaf, "De Regenten van Semarang ten tijde van de VOC, 1682-1809," *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde*, Vol. 134, Issue 2, p. 296-309.

²¹ Luc Nagtegaal, *Riding the Dutch Tiger: The Dutch East Indies Company and the Northeast Coast of Java 1680-1743*, (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996); Kwee, *The Political Economy*.

²² *Ibid.*

This study will measure VOC's involvement in the deterioration of rice economy with a study of their policy. VOC's rice policy and the impact for the Javanese subject will be examined, and then, to measure how impactful was that actually, a comparison is made with the previous period. With that question in mind, I consult a variety of sources consisted of General Resolutions of Batavia Castle 1613-1810, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek*, *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, maps, report and correspondence from the series *Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren* (OBP), the figures from the database of *Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia* (BGB), as well as secondary sources.

As I have mentioned in the beginning of the introduction, the sources for this period is highly accessible. *Plakaatboek* and *Generale Missiven* (for 1610-1767) are published and accessible online. The full series of *Plakaatboek* could be found in the digital collections of Leiden University Libraries whereas *Generale Missiven* is on the website of Huygens ING.²³ The most important source for this study, BGB, is also made available by Huygens ING. It is not through a digitization, but a database of figures in the BGB aided with useful search and filter tool.²⁴ The scan of BGB folios is also available online at the website of the Dutch National Archive with access number 1.04.18.02.²⁵ The website is also the home of the rest of the sources used in this study from the correspondences, reports, maps, unpublished part of *Generale Missiven*, and *Kopie Resolutie*—which is actually also available in *Sejarah Nusantara* but the resolution of the copy is much better—.²⁶ All of those sources are under access number 1.04.02. Diving in the VOC archive is made possible only by the guide and cataloging from archive reconstructions in TANAP and *Realia*.²⁷ Lastly, beside the maps from the VOC archive, I use also some maps from the website of Atlas of Mutual Heritage.²⁸

There was an increasing concern towards the reliability of historical source lately. Sources that conventionally regarded as information provider started to be examined with suspicion, because the way the information was created could actually tell more about, or even instead, of the content of the source.²⁹ However, I do not think the in depth source critic was necessary for this topic. Firstly, because since the beginning, this study focuses on the VOC's side and requires VOC's policy as stated in their documents. Secondly, it deals with uncontroversial daily object. Even when we are in doubt about VOC's figure, there is no other kind of source to contest with.

²³ “Digital Collections”, <https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/>; “Huygens ING”, <https://www.huygens.knaw.nl/>.

²⁴ “Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia,” <https://bgb.huygens.knaw.nl/>.

²⁵ “The National Archives of the Netherlands,” <https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/>.

²⁶ “Sejarah Nusantara,” <https://www.sejarah-nusantara.anri.go.id/>; Correspondences, reports and maps used came from OBP. *Kopie Resolutie* and OBP are both under the “Ingekomen Stukken uit Indie” of Heren XVII and Kamer Amsterdam. “Inventaris van het archief van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), 1602-1795,” <https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/1.04.02/>.

²⁷ “TANAP,” <http://www.tanap.nl/>; *Realia* was a summary of the meeting of VOC's high government in Batavia that has been collected and categorized into 2050 subjects; See “*Realia*,” <https://www.sejarah-nusantara.anri.go.id/realia/>.

²⁸ “Atlas of Mutual Heritage,” <https://www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl/>.

²⁹ Maria Pia Donato, “Introduction: Archives, Record Keeping and Imperial Governance, 1500-1800.” *Journal of Early Modern History* 22, no. 5 (2018) p.313-314.

The record of the *syahbandar* specifically deals with indigenous shipping, as used by Knaap, is only available for the years around 1775, which is why due to the limited year, the accessibility, and time constrains, is not consulted in this research. The most important source critic in this study is not to examine whether a source is right or wrong by compare it with more sources, but to use it accordingly to their genre.

In this study, the first chapter is carrying the function to overview the rice policies before the VOC. The period consists of Indo-Javanese period (9th to 15th), the coastal cities (15th-16th), and Mataram before VOC (1590-1743). The periodization is based on the different style of polity they practiced. Because there were already a lot of studies about the economy of Java from the antiquities to the modern period, the chapter basically just direct it to a certain focus which is examining their vision of rice, their rice policies, and the prosperity of the population as an indicator of the impact of the policy. Chapter one, therefore, provides models of rice management which in the conclusion is being compared with that of the VOC.

Chapter two, the core of this study, is an examination of VOC's rice policy. The method of this chapter starts with selecting and processing figures from the BGB database. BGB record is financial overviews of the circulated goods between the Dutch republic and the VOC's empire in Asia, as well as among the different regional possessions and trading factories of the empire.³⁰ The database contains the statistics of VOC's trading activity in 55 years of 18th century. As many other commodity under VOC's range, there is data about rice exports inside. The data is published online, which is a great help, but it is not so ready to use yet. For rice, several weight units are used consecutively. In the 1780s there is also a change of value units from Indian Guilders to Dutch Guilders. So the first task after all the needed data had been collected was to make the units agree for the whole period. Guide to convert the units is provided by previous study, particularly Knaap, who extracted the information directly from primary sources.³¹ When I see an odd number, seemed too big or too small, which likely was caused by human errors in the input process, I check it with the scanned folio. Only then, the math to produce data that become the backbone of this chapter, namely the trend, price, average supply, and amount per destinations, could be carried.

Basically it is possible to get the statistical data of VOC's rice trade for the whole chosen period of 1743-1800 in BGB and look for the explanation of the 60 years in the other sources. However, because of my time and skill constrains, it is impossible at this stage. The strategy is therefore choosing three sub-periods to represent the whole period according to the trend I got from the quantification towards the data from BGB. The first is around 1743, which cover almost to 1751 as the period of establishment. It is when the vision was formulated and some experimental policies were carried. The second is some years around 1764, when the rice export of VOC from

³⁰ "Introduction to the database of Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia," https://bgb.huygens.knaw.nl/?page_id=40

³¹ Knaap, "Appendix 2: Measures and Weights," *Shallow Waters*, p. 189-193; but also Peter Borschberg (ed.), "Glossary of Non-Geographic Terms, Currencies, Measures and Commodities", in *Journal, Memorials and Letters of Cornelis Matelieff De Jonge : Security, Diplomacy and Commerce in 17th-century Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2015) p. 457-525.

Java's Noordoostkust was dropping after have been continuously growing for a decade. Lastly, it is around the year 1781, when the rice export was the highest throughout the six decades. For the three sub-periods, all kind of sources mentioned above were consulted evenly.

In a study of policy, we have to sharply distinguish the policy and the implementation, especially when dealing with sources. For the policy and policy making, sources used are General Resolutions and *Plakaatboek*. *Plakaatboek*, which is now a published collection of VOC ordinances, is easier to read. However, General Resolutions, minutes of the meeting in which rules in the *plakaatboek* was decided, usually also provided a background story. For the implementation, the sources consulted are those from report genre such as *Generale Missiven* as well as report and correspondence from the OBP. The case of these two sources is also the same, while *Generale Missiven* gave us an easy access to the bigger picture documents from OBP provided the details. Lastly, the figures from BGB, besides provided the big picture that raise questions, is also useful as an indicator of the success of a policy. After all, genre-wise BGB is also a report.

The last chapter will explain the impact those policies caused for Java, particularly its economy, population, and landscape. Ideally, sources used for this chapter should be reports from local perspective. However, it was not the custom of Javanese state at that time to keep detailed social and economic statistic.³² Some published and translated Javanese sources have been consulted, which from them I expect some kind of descriptive reports, but there is no such document.³³ Therefore, the hole has to be covered by a 'reading against the grain' towards the VOC sources, supplemented by secondary sources. By reading against the grain, I mean using the sources which in chapter two telling what has been done by the VOC, to tell in the chapter three about what has been taken by VOC from Java's rice economy. The most important secondary source for this chapter is Peter Carey's 'Waiting for the Just King' which used an extensive amount of reports from the late 18th and early 19th century, often from the English eyes, because it could gave another perspective besides the Dutch.³⁴ If the second chapter only featured the rice policy of VOC, this chapter complemented it with the story of the policy's subject, so when combined, both could construct a study of rice economy of Java during the VOC period.

With the method had been explained, this thesis arrived in a conclusion that the VOC contributed significantly to the downgrading of the rice economy of Java because they aspired to reap without sowing. Their contribution was not by being an absolute tyrant who killed 100% commerciality of Java, but simply by asking obligatory rice delivery to feed its settlement, only

³² M.C. Ricklefs, *Some Statistical Evidence, on Javanese Social, Economic and Demographic History in the Later Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (1986) p. 1.

³³ Peter Carey and Mason C. Hoadley, *The Archive of Yogyakarta: An Edition of Javanese Reports, Letters and Land Grants from the Yogyakarta Court Dated between A.J. 1698 and A.J. 1740 (1772-1813) Taken from Materials in the British Library and the India Office Library (London)*. Vol. II: *Documents Relating to Economic and Agrarian Affairs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Sri Margana, *Kraton Surakarta dan Yogyakarta, 1769-1874* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2004).

³⁴ Peter Carey, "Waiting for the 'Just King': The Agrarian World of South-Central Java from Giyanti (1755) to the Java War (1825-1830)," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1986) p. 59-137.

for almost nothing. While to some extent rice economy went just as normal, half of Java's income was gone. Less income means the population had to work twice as hard for the same result. This cut their time and resources for agricultural or economic advancement, the key of success in the previous period. Therefore, put in larger context, this study shows that Javanese never lost its commerciality, but VOC's extraction indeed took away the balance. In the colonial period, when economic exploitation was even more systemized, things only became worse.

Chapter I

Rice Policy in Java Before 1743

The main quest of this study is to answer to what extent the VOC contributed to the degradation of rice economy of Java, as seen from the policies. Before embarked further to what has the VOC done, it is essential to see what has been done by earlier powers ever existed in Java. This chapter will provide first, descriptions about the prior systems to compare with that of the VOC, and second, the *longue-durée* overview of how the global condition has influenced Java's rice economy.

The political economy of Java, which mostly included discussion about its rice economy, had been the subject of many studies, but not with the rice policy specifically. Among them there was J.C. Van Leur, B. Schrieke, Anthony Reid, Vincent Houben, and Peter Boomgaard.¹ All basically tell a rather similar story, that Java was building up during the Indo-Java period, on its heyday on the Muslim coastal cities period, and collapsing when the West came. From all of them, only Boomgaard paid close attention to rice. Even so, Boomgaard centered his discussion on the export. This study, instead, will discuss the policy regarding more aspects of rice economy, not only the export.

The study of rice policy in this chapter will revolve around these questions: 1) influenced by the contemporary situation they faced, what was the vision of each polity towards rice and 2) to what extent they took care of the rice economy. To make it easier to measure, I have chosen four indicators for the second questions which are scale of the cultivation, physical and non-physical innovation, amount of the surplus, and prosperity of the aggregate population. Because these early periods were understood as the successful time for Java's rice, the first three indicators used to define their success and their attempt to reach it. The last was to measure if the success was only benefitted certain social class or also the aggregate population. The result shows that even though the vision of each polities were different, rice was always on the top of their concern, thus they always put great effort in handling the rice economy.

¹ J.C. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (The Hague: Van Hoeve, 1967); B. Schrieke, *1300-1500: Javanese Trade and The Rise of Islam in The Archipelago, in Indonesian Sociological Studies* (The Hague, Van Hoeve, 1955); Anthony Reid, "The Pre-Colonial Economy of Indonesia", in *Conference on Indonesian Economic History in the Dutch Colonial Period* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1983); Vincent Houben, "Java and the Java Sea: Historical Perspective," in *Looking in Odd Mirrors: Java and the Java Sea* (Leiden: Rijksuniversiteit, 1992) p. 212-240; Peter Boomgaard, "The Javanese Rice Economy 800-1800," in Hayami Akira, Yoshihiro Tsubouchi (eds.) *Economic and Demographic Development in Rice Producing Societies: Some Aspects of East Asian Economic History, 1500-1900*, Workshop on Economic and Demographic Development in Rice Producing Societies, (Tokyo: 1989) p. 317-344.

Indo-Javanese Kingdoms, 9th -15th Centuries: Rice as the State's Asset

Indo-Javanese kingdoms are the first large scale polities in Java. During this period, rice made its way to become an export commodity. However, this period featured also the kingdom of Old Mataram which hasn't been doing export yet, so what was actually its vision? Be it for export or for the building of religious building as in Old Mataram, rice was always under the possession of the state. That way, great amount of rice surplus could be accumulated, even experienced a growing significance from being only directed to religious expenditure to be a means of control in tributary trade with the outside world.

Powerful Indo-Javanese kingdoms practiced wet rice (*sawah*) method and founded in Java's most fertile area.² Irrigation, the infrastructure crucial for wet rice cultivation was actually practiced long before the adoption of Indian kingship by local ruler, when Java was inhabited by small groups of people in a size of a village, under the lead of a *rakai*.³ The technology within this level was not complicated thus could be performed by a village. This claim did not mean that people in all over Java only practiced wet cultivation. The villages were highly dispersed and part of them was located in a place impossible for wet rice cultivation, thus they practiced the dry land rice cultivation.⁴ It used to be widely agreed that dry cultivation (*ladang*) was the ancient stage of rice cultivation method, so at a certain level, the method of every society will evolve into wet cultivation. Peter Boomgaard and Michael Dove had proven that though dry land rice were indeed the older technique for rice cultivation, it was not necessarily worse. Their defense was first, those techniques applied in different type of land; and second, dry land cultivation required less work.⁵ For a society lived in an area where a construction of wet rice bed was impossible, the consequence would only be an incapability to develop the community into a more complicated civilization, since the limited yield of dry cultivation resulted in no surplus. Food insufficiency was just happened in the colonial times, when modern medicine was introduced and the population increased.⁶ In the village where it was possible, they did simple engineering of the soil and water to attempt wet rice cultivation. In the end, these village communities who practiced wet rice cultivation had a more productive rice field. Some of them who coincidentally inhabited a very fertile area -as in the narrowest neck of Java- had rice fields which were even more productive.⁷ The ruler of these villages then aimed for a greater surplus by starting to subjugate the surrounding villages.

² Indo-Javanese kingdom is Javanese state established with the help of Indian kingship which give the ruler a divine legitimation. See N.C. van Setten van der Meer, *Sawah Cultivation in ancient Java: Aspects of development during the Indo-Javanese period, 5th to 15th century* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1979) p. 77-79.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 21; Boomgaard, *Rice Economy*, p. 318.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 318-319.

⁵ Peter Boomgaard, "From Riches to Rags? Rice Production and Trade in Asia, Particularly Indonesia, 1500-1950," in Greg Bankoff, P. Boomgaard (ed.) , *A History of Natural Resources in Asia: The Wealth of Nature* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p. 118.

⁶ W.M.S. Russel, "Population, Swidden Farming and the Tropical Environment", *Population and Environment: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, (1988) p. 84.

⁷ Clifford Geertz, *Involusi Pertanian: Proses Perubahan Ekologi di Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Bharata, 1983), 41-42.

Indian kingship appeared to be of great importance at this subjugation phase. *Rakai* used to be a leader of only a small village community. Problem might have not arisen yet when the *rakai* was only conquering his neighboring village, but as some strong *rakai* emerged in an area, they need more than just troops to attack. Indian kingship appeared as a helping hand to legitimize the position of a strong *rakai*.⁸ In Indian kingship, ruler was a God himself. The divine ruler concept in Indian kingship was easy to be introduced to the subject because since the beginning supernatural power were already deeply rooted in older Javanese belief.⁹

Since rice surplus had been the power enabling a village to rise into a state, once the state was formed, the ruler insisted on keeping rice under state's control. Adoption of Indian kingship had turned a large amount of Javanese villages into a formal religious state. This made the surplus was primarily allocated for the construction of grand religious buildings. Old Mataram who built Borobudur and Prambanan was on this phase.¹⁰ Having a court (*kraton*) was now also became a great importance.¹¹ In realizing those ideals, the ruler expanded rice production so more surplus could be accumulated. One of the ways was by relocating far away villages which previously probably practicing dry land rice cultivation, to an area nearby the court capital.¹² As a consequence, the community within the state also grew larger. In organizing such huge community, many new functions in the state's bureaucratic body was founded, especially those with agricultural-related function.¹³ Lastly, as what imposed in Ankor, Pagan, Sukothai, and Pakuwan, they started to build a greater scale of irrigation.¹⁴ 255 inscriptions from this period of time were found in Java and mostly they talked about agricultural advancement.¹⁵

In the 10th century, there was a shift of Indo-Javanese political center from Central Java to East Java. The most well-known reason was a series of severe natural disaster.¹⁶ This made a lot of sense since the area was cramped by active volcanoes and before the restorations in the 19th century, their remains, grand temples of Borobudur and Prambanan, were buried under layers of volcanic regolith. But more importantly, the shift was a sign of a changing orientation among the Indo-Javanese states to be a rice exporter.¹⁷ The new location in the East Java was at the river bank of Brantas, which provide them much closer access to the coast than the long Solo

⁸ Setten van der Meer, *Sawah Cultivation*, p. 75.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁰ Supratikno Rahardjo, *Peradaban Jawa: Dari Mataram Kuno sampai Majapahit Akhir* (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2011) p. 364.

¹¹ Setten van der Meer, *Sawah Cultivation*, p.76.

¹² Boomgaard, *From Riches*, p. 188-189.

¹³ Rahardjo, *Peradaban Jawa*, p. 267.

¹⁴ André Wink, *Al-Hind, the Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) p. 67-68.

¹⁵ Rahardjo, *Peradaban Jawa*, p. 135; Setten van der Meer, *Sawah Cultivation*, p. xi.

¹⁶ Namely Robert Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Indonesia*, p. 86; Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya 3, Warisan Kerajaan-Kerajaan Konsentris*, (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2005) p. 15; and many Indonesian writers.

¹⁷ Chinese historical notes of T'ang dynasty from the year 618 to 906 mentioned that at that time Java's was still known for producing tortoise-shell, gold and silver, rhinoceros-horns, and ivory. Only in the similar notes of Sung dynasty (960-1279), Java was mentioned as a rice producer. See W.P. Groeneveldt, *Historical Notes on Indonesia and Malaya Compiled from Chinese Sources* (Jakarta: Bhratara, 1960) p. 13-16.

River.¹⁸ Inscriptions made after 10th century mentioned trade regulations and foreign visitors, topics hardly found in the inscriptions of the earlier times.¹⁹ At this stage also, the extensification of wet rice field stopped and the surplus bearing was pushed with intensification instead.²⁰ In the East Java period, irrigation infrastructures in a much larger scale were built.²¹ Land opening was the easiest attempt to increase rice production. Aiming greater surplus by intensifications means those states already developed a complicated science of rice cultivation.

During the East Java period, the accumulated surplus was not directed to the constructions of religious building anymore, but towards a more consumptive attitude. Either way, it was still a state's asset. The ruler, started to develop interest towards luxury products from abroad. This desire according to Tilman Schiel provoked the ruler to claim that all land and the labor of all people did not belong to a certain social class was at their disposal.²² Before this, there was actually individual property right that could be inherited.²³ The ruler's desire also inspired military expansions. In the 14th century, the ruling state, Majapahit, subjugated 28 states in the archipelago.²⁴ The subjugations enabling Majapahit to collect many lucrative products from all over the archipelago, most importantly spices, in exchange of their rice, which would attract more foreigners to Java. Their way to Java was even smoother after the Javanese established their control over the Malaka strait in 1377 with the subjugation of Palembang, Tumasik (now Singapore) and Pasai.²⁵ The subjugation of Palembang was also a stepping stone for a greater aim of the Javanese: Malaka. In Malaka, Javanese hindu traders who already mastered the spice of the archipelago met the Muslim Gujarati. Since then they learned about the importance of Muslim community in Indian Ocean. They started to adopt Islam, established a greater Javanese community in Malaka whose leader's authority was contesting that of the sultan of Malaka, and brought more economic opportunity to ports in Java, so that Gresik, Surabaya, and Jepara came to life.²⁶

The trade was started with so to say a tributary exchange forcefully enforced by Java's ruler, but it laid the foundation for a trading network which later benefitted a larger part of society. Because of the network, emerged a distinct group: traders. They were the motor of the rapid change of Java to be a more commercial place.²⁷ The nobility also involved in trade even though not directly, through investment and policy making. As the trading activity increasing,

¹⁸ Houben, *Java and the Java Sea*, p.16.

¹⁹ Rahardjo, *Peradaban Jawa*, p. 263.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Tilman Schiel, "Majapahit and Modern Java: Rethinking the Concept of 'Dual Economy,'" in *Third Bielefeld Colloquium on Southeast Asia "The Interpretative Study of Java"* (Bielefeld, University of Bielefeld, 1982) p. 15.

²³ Boomgaard, *Rice Economy*, p. 321.

²⁴ 28 surrounding states, grondvielt

²⁵ Schrieke, *Javanese Trade*, p. 27.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25-26.

²⁷ Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Pengantar Sejarah Indonesia Baru: 1500-1900, dari Emporium ke Imperium* Jilid I (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1987) p. 19-20.

the ruler was also benefitted by the tax.²⁸ Because the growing trading activity stimulated by muslim network in the Indian Ocean, the growing number of Muslim immigrant and even new believers among the population was inevitable.²⁹ The prosperity resulted from this flourishing trade were also visible among most of the populations. There were chances to accumulate individual wealth which could be seen in people's beautiful houses and dresses.³⁰ Nonetheless, though the Hindu state remained accommodative towards them, the rising importance of trading activity than the cultivation itself started to shift the power from inland court to the coastal province.

Kingdoms in the Indo-Java period were not only states responsible in deciding their vision towards rice. In fact, rice itself was the prime cause of their existence. Because since the beginning rice was the foundation in which a state could be built, when the institution was getting bigger with the help of Indian Kingship, they aimed to keep it that way, and even extend it for example by subjugating more free communities to plant rice for the state. Consequently, for the first time in Java, surplus mounted in a great quantity and this resulted in advancement of technology, the creation of primal trading network with outside world, and the prosperity of the predominated wet rice-cultivating population.

Coastal Cities, 15th-16th Centuries: Rice as the Merchant's Power

Within a rather short period, Java was governed with a completely different style of polity it usually being least associated with. Indo-Javanese kingdoms were feudal society, as well as Mataram which we will discuss shortly, but these coastal polities were cities promoting free trade. As could be guessed, their vision towards rice was to be a lucrative commodity anyone could get profit from. However, since they were cities barely attached to the hinterland, how deep they get involved in rice production? At a glance it might seem that these coastal cities had no contribution in the production phase, but actually, promoting free trade economy alone was enough to stimulate competitiveness among the cultivators in the hinterland which resulted in a keep growing surplus, and surely, growing sale at the coast.

At the dusk of the Indo-Java period, when Majapahit was started to crumble down, in *pasisir*, the number of trader was increasing, constituting the majority of populations, and started to change the whole Java. Their activity was a fruitful source of income for the coastal ruler, so they began to develop the state towards the directions that would be favorable for the traders. The rulers themselves were also a trader. Indonesian historian Sartono Kartodirdjo said, in early 16th century, Adipati Tuban was just feudal in fashion, but he was already a third generation

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.22.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20-21.

³⁰ Rahardjo, *Peradaban Jawa*, p. 361-363.

muslim in their family, and he himself conducted trade.³¹ Tuban remains put a loyal act to Majapahit, but in practice, they were pretty independent.³² When Malaka and the strait has become Java's protectorate, more traders from Indian Ocean were coming and resulted in the rise of other port cities. The center of power then started to shift to the coast which regarded rice no more as a state possession, but a promising commodity highly wanted by starving traders from far away, as well as by wealthy places too busy to take care of their own food production such as Malaka and the Malukus.

Muslims became a major economic player in the Indian Ocean world since the Mediterranean trade deteriorated.³³ In the 10th century, the trading network expanded to the sea and included Southeast Asia.³⁴ In Islam, there is a concept of imagined community called as *umma*, which told that all Muslims in the world are a community.³⁵ In trade this became the trust guarantee. This is why adoption of Islam or an official conversion to Islam of a society was crucial to be included in the network. From at least the 13th to 16th century, almost all trading polities from East Africa to the Malukus officially embraced Islam.³⁶ Besides, there is also a theory from Sartono Kartodirdjo that in early modern trade, the buyers was always being looked up.³⁷ The sellers, depended their income on the buyer's expenditure, tended to see them with adoration. Hence Islam was adopted because of both, pragmatic need and a simple admiration. Either way, it tightened and enlivened the trading network.

The most visible improvement in infrastructure happened during this period was the rise of permanent coastal cities. Before 15th century, when the core of Java's political activity was still in the hinterlands, Tuban was the only one port in Java, which originated from a fishing village.³⁸ By 16th century it already became a busy port city with brick wall and about a thousand multiethnic inhabitants.³⁹ Similar pattern was found in all over Indian Ocean. Muslim trader connection and the adoption of Islam in some insignificant harbor had turned them into a prominent one. Mogadishu and Hormuz was once a small non-permanent dwelling. After the adoption of Islam which led to the growing trading activity, it became a city.⁴⁰ In Java's north

³¹ Adipati was royal title for the ruler of Tuban. Kartodirdjo, *Pengantar Sejarah*, p. 18.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Kirti N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: University Press, 1985) p. 39.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.49.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.42.

³⁶ Europeans even called Indian Ocean the "Arab Lake" because being a Muslim here was of a great privilege. Engseng Ho, *The Graves Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean, California World History Library 3* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) p. 100.

³⁷ Kartodirdjo, *Pengantar Sejarah*, p. 21.

³⁸ Tome Pires, as cited by Wink, *Al-Hind 3*, p. 230, 234 and Kartodirdjo, *Pengantar Sejarah*, p. 17.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴⁰ Wink, *Al-Hind 3*, p. 181, 191-192.

coast, new port cities beside Tuban started to emerge. Many of the newly established port city even was founded by a Muslim foreigners.⁴¹

Even though islam was a foreign element, it did not grew as an attached body of Java. Instead, it was immersed and even contributed elements to the growing Javanese identity, as historian M.C. Ricklefs proposed: not that those foreigners Islamized Java, but they were Javanized.⁴² Vincent Houben argues, in the 16th century, Javanese was not anymore an identity referring to people of a Javanese blood, but to just anyone coming from Java.⁴³ This time, the separation of the *pasisir* and hinterland has not existed yet. I think, even though the characteristic of coastal Muslim cities and the Indo-Javanese kingdoms seemed of a resemblance with that of the hinterland and the *pasisir* in 18th century, they were not two different entities grew side by side in the 16th century. In the 16th century, the hinterland Indo-Javanese kingdoms were almost completely vanished. The center of politics then moved to the coastal area. There were some exceptional case, such as Blambangan, who still maintain a Hindu status until 18th century, but they did not contest the authorities in the *pasisir*.⁴⁴ On the contrary, it was a Muslim of Majapahit blood, Raden Patah, who established Demak, the greatest coastal power in Java.⁴⁵

During the coastal cities period, the business inward with the hinterland and outward with the outside world was a free trade.⁴⁶ Cultivators and traders had the liberty to mind the comparative cost in deciding what to plant or sell. Therefore, unlike when rice business was a state monopoly under the indo-Javanese states, transactions were driven by market force. This is the period when according to Anthony Reid Java was the greatest rice exporter in Southeast Asia.⁴⁷ Hence, the exports were primarily instigated by pure high demand from outside. It remained unclear how the business was managed with hinterland during this period.⁴⁸ However, with all the information at our disposal now, we can assume it went towards a favorable direction. Local rice production would probably still benefitted from the infrastructure made in Indo-Javanese era, since there was no long destructive war in the shift of the two powers. As the island now grew into the largest exporter in Southeast Asia, the surplus probably also much larger than before. Even though coastal state had no interest in a deep intervention in the hinterland, the surplus grew because the competition was wide open in a free trade. The success

⁴¹ The founder of Gresik was a Muslim Chinese from Canton, the founder of Demak was a son of Majapahit King and a Muslim Princess from Campa, the founder of Cirebon, Sunan Gunungjati, was of a Muslim Egyptian descendant. See M.C. Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern 1200-2008* (Jakarta: Serambi, 2008) p. 70, 71, 75.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴³ Houben, *Java and the Java Sea*, p. 19.

⁴⁴ Sri Margana, "Java's Last Frontier: The Struggle for Hegemony of Blambangan, c. 1763-1813," *Dissertation*, Leiden University, 2007.

⁴⁵ Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia*, p. 70.

⁴⁶ Houben, *Java and the Java Sea*, p. 19.

⁴⁷ Anthony Reid, *Asia Tenggara dalam Kurun Niaga Jilid I: Tanah di Bawah Angin* (Jakarta: Obor, 2014) p. 26.

⁴⁸ Most of the sources for this period were foreigner's reports. See Boomgaard, *Rice Economy*, p. 326.

of the system could be seen in the prosperity of the three dominant ethnicities: the Javanese, the Arabs, and the Chinese, as written in a Chinese report from Ming Dynasty.⁴⁹

There is an explanation why Java's rice was such in high demand during this period of Indian Ocean stimulus. First because rice was the staple food of the Indian Ocean world and second, the trading network even spread further the fondness toward rice. Rice was planted in the coastal area involved in the Indian Ocean trading world. According to K.N. Chaudhuri, rice-eating people in Asia were fanatical in their adherence to food habits.⁵⁰ This made important for them to eat the same thing they had at home wherever they stopped to pile up their ransom. Rice in Java might be from a different kind with what was grown in Bengal and China, but since those people stopped regularly in Java, they developed familiarity to Java's rice. Rice was also suitable for the ocean trade here because wheat were much easier to be spoiled in such heat and humidity.⁵¹ The explanation for the second cause follows Sartono's theory, that the buyers will be the trend setter for the seller. When Majapahit subjugated Maluku, they ate sago not rice, but now they were one of Java's most important rice buyers. This choice partially pushed by their adoration towards the buyers of their spice, which were mostly the Javanese. Not least importantly, such consumptive behavior in changing their food preference was also pushed by the prosperity from the spice trade.⁵² Because of the popularity of rice during this period, even non-eating rice places such as Nias specifically endeavored rice cultivation for export.⁵³

In the Muslim coastal cities period, rice was the merchant's power. At a glance it might seem that these polities did not do much in organizing the rice economy. The notion appears because during this period, the type of dominating polities has shifted. Coastal polities desired no strong control over the hinterland. Their main motive was only to benefit as much as possible through trade. Because the type of state was shifting, we could count the shift as an innovation in rice economy. During this period, the system practiced was a free trade economy. The hinterland, which was already facilitated with agricultural innovations from the Indo-Javanese era, was eager to compete in aiming a greater profit. Therefore even though state did not mingle much with agricultural business, its busy ports which welcomed demands from many places were enough in stimulating the growth of cultivation scale, surplus, as well as the prosperity of the aggregate population.

⁴⁹ Groeneveldt, *Historical Notes*, p. 49, 52.

⁵⁰ Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation*, p. 25.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.29.

⁵² Not only eating rice, the wealthy merchant class in Maluku suddenly felt the urge to adopt many elements of Muslim-Javanese lifestyle. Beside started to eat rice, they also started to invite teacher from Java to teach their children about Islam and Muslim-Javanese culture; There is a complete two and a half page citation of 'Thorough Account of Ambon' written in 1621 in B. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological*, p. 33-35.

⁵³ Boomgaard, *From Riches*, p. 191.

Mataram, 1584-1743: An Attempt to Bring Rice Back to the State

While it is common to call Indo-Javanese kingdoms or muslim coastal cities as a successful manager of Java's rice, it is very uncommon to do the same to Mataram. Instead, its actions during the course of 17th century to 1743 were more commonly identified as the destructions of Java's rice economy.⁵⁴ This sub-chapter argued that Mataram's controversial actions were actually driven by a specific vision to restore the more protected system as in the Indo-Javanese era, to spare Java from the economic destructions caused by VOC's spice monopoly.

Mataram was often associated with the destruction of rice economy of Java particularly because of its unfavorable decisions towards the coastal regions. From the 1584 to 1630, Mataram under Senapati and Sultan Agung waging wars in all over Java to bring the whole island under its power. Most of the victims were coastal polities such as Demak, Kediri, Gresik, Sidayu, and Surabaya.⁵⁵ After subjugated, Mataram tried to impose to them an inward oriented state system, which drastically contrasting their free trade principal. This caused trading communities to leave Java for a more supportive environment, mostly Banjarmasin and Makassar, and this is why the position of Java as the food supplier in the spice trade route was replaced by Makassar.⁵⁶ Mataram's system degraded the position of coastal *bupati* who used to be a ruler *cum* trader into only a provincial administrator.⁵⁷ During his reign, Amangkurat I oftentimes ban rice export.⁵⁸ At a glance all of this might seem as a destruction of the once flourishing rice trade as well as its engine, the coastal economy.

Nevertheless, the picture will be different if we also looked at what happened outside Java. Rice trade that used to be the power of Java's coastal cities was built upon the spice trade. Java was the food caterer in the spice route, but spice route was falling apart since VOC established spice monopoly in Maluku in the early 17th century.⁵⁹ Actually, a century earlier, with Malaka conquered by the Portuguese in 1511, which dried out 50% of the trade there because Muslim traders avoided it ever since, the important Java-Malaka rice export has already been troubled.⁶⁰ In a bigger scale, the intrusion of the Portuguese, and then the Dutch and the British, made the fair trade of the Indian Ocean started to crumble down. The entire favorable situation promoting the growth of free trade of rice in the 16th century has changed towards the opposite direction.

⁵⁴ D.H. Burger, *Sedjarah Ekonomis Sosiologis Indonesia Jilid I* (Jakarta: Prandja Paramita d/h J.B. Wolters, 1960), hlm. 79.

⁵⁵ Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia*, p. 79-89.

⁵⁶ Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Pengantar Sejarah*, p. 69-70.

⁵⁷ Peter Carey, "Waiting for the 'Just King': The Agrarian World of South-Central Java from Giyanti (1755) to the Java War (1825-1830)," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1986) p. 74.

⁵⁸ Luc Nagtegaal, *Riding the Dutch Tiger: The Dutch East Indies Company and the Northeast Coast of Java 1680-1743*, *Verhandelingen van Het Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde 171* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996) p. 18.

⁵⁹ Kartodirdjo, *Pengantar Sejarah*, p. 71.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Seeing how the situation has changed, it is logical to regard Mataram's agendas as attempts of isolation to save itself. This pattern could be found in many other places within the Indian Ocean trading world, such as Japan and Burma, in around the same time.⁶¹ It was an isolation plan instead of just a vigorous territorial expansion as could be seen in several proofs as follows. First, during its longest peaceful period under Amangkurat I, Amangkurat finally got himself a tittle, Kalifatullah, which was a combination of Islam teaching and Indian kingship.⁶² Kalifatullah means the trustee of God in the mortal world. It was slightly different with Indian kingship which regarded ruler as the God himself, because Mataram embraced Islam and in Islam teaching it was a great sin to equalize God with any beings. However, both were practically the same thing since ruler was still the master of all land and labor in his territory.⁶³ By imposing this tittle, Amangkurat tried to reregulate the state economy in Majapahit's way which was more secluded than that of the coastal cities. Secondly, Mataram's tradition was filled with an adoration of agrarian elements and despise of oceanic-trade element.⁶⁴ Third, Mataram was a state with strong military power and strong warrior class was a sign of feudal state.⁶⁵ Lastly, in every contract Mataram made with the VOC, *pasisir* was always the victim.⁶⁶ If Mataram was still aiming for supremacy in trade, it would take more action at least to protect the infrastructure and trading community of the *pasisir*.

Unfortunately, Mataram's subjugation of the *pasisir* was an over ambitious plan. Sultan Agung managed to conquer almost the whole Java, but it was impossible for his successor to maintain it. For the coastal powers, the change imposed by Mataram was far too grounded. They were too powerful to surrender, but not strong enough to endeavor independence. Coastal powers were only cities with wealth from the trade but very limited natural and human resources. This is why every potent rebellion was always initiated by Madura, who has the human resources, and ended up draw the support from the coastal powers. Because of the power contestations, Mataram's period was highly unstable. It was almost one and a half centuries of wars. This is why, even though Mataram has an ambitious vision towards the rice economy, by sending it back as state's asset, it hasn't been yet put into practice. Because they were busy with wars, of course the developments of infrastructure as well as a surplus growth and prosperity which require stable times were absent. Hence, I did not agree with Boomgaard who accused

⁶¹ Anthony Reid, *Asia Tenggara dalam Kurun Niaga Jilid II: Jaringan Perdagangan Global*, (Jakarta: Obor, 2011) p. 352, 354.

⁶² Soemarsaid Martono, *Negara dan Usaha Bina-Negara di Jawa Masa Lampau: Studi Tentang Masa Mataram II Abad XVI sampai XIX* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1985) p. 34.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Javanese myth regarded ocean as a dangerous sphere cramped with evil spirits. For example the legend of the Rara Kidul, or the Goddess of the Southern Sea.

⁶⁵ Setten van der Meer, *Sawah Cultivation*, p. 7.

⁶⁶ In 1688, 1705, to 1733, gradually Mataram gave up Sumenep, Pamekasan, Cirebon, Semarang, Tegal, Batang, Demak, and Pekalongan to the company. See Kwee Hui Kian, *The Political Economy of Java's Northeast Coast, c. 1740-1800: Elite Synergy*, TANAP Monographs on the History of Asian-European Interaction ; Vol. 3. (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 36, 39-40.

Mataram's lack of agricultural innovation was a form of neglect.⁶⁷ However, even though the total isolation did not happen, until 1743 Mataram still managed to partially secure Java and imposed its 'protectionist' rice policy on it.⁶⁸

Conclusion

Rice was since the beginning the power house of the establishment of a state in Java. Being the cause of such impactful change, rice was always treated as priority by any kind of polities ever existed in Java. Even though their vision in directing rice production and trade is different, the three types of polity studied in this chapter were all deeply committed to rice economy from increasing surplus to concerning the prosperity of its cultivator. This occurs too even for Mataram, the state notorious for destructing Java's rice economy.

This chapter could also be seen as a chronological story of how rice grew from being an inner circle consumption of a village, to its heyday as an international trading commodity, to be pulled back as internal consumption. The Indian kingship stimulated the birth of big states which enable accumulation of surplus in large scale, as well as plenty advancement in agricultural technology still in use until nowadays. It also opened up opportunity for rice export with its naval expeditions to outer islands. The Muslim coastal cities contributed vast trading network, implemented of free trade and promoted fondness toward rice. Unfortunately, the promising Indian Ocean trade network and spice trade, upon which the rice trade of Java was built, was deteriorating with the intrusion of the Portuguese, the British, and the Dutch. This situation influenced Mataram to develop an isolation plan which brought rice back under the protection of a state. When Mataram investment towards the isolation plan destroyed infrastructure and system inherited from the coastal policies period, the VOC continuously forced rice to flow outwards by increasing the obligatory rice deliveries in every treaty when they won the war.

⁶⁷ Boomgaard, *Rice Economy*, p. 341.

⁶⁸ Protectionism is widely understood as a system limiting cash flow outside the country by banning import and pushing export. Here, I call banning rice export as protectionism because the asset wasn't cash, the asset was rice itself, therefore, limiting rice flow outside was an act to protect state's asset.

Chapter II

VOC's Rice Policy in Java

From 1743 until its downfall at the end of the century, the VOC was eligible for the *pasisir* area stretched from Brebes in the west to Banyuwangi in the east, including Madura Island. This was the peak of their intervention in the island. Never before, they were as powerful as this in Java. Since the *pasisir* was also where the most of the rice-producing area in Java was located, this event also opened up opportunity for the VOC to control Java's rice economy.

In some part of their study, Kwee Hui Kian and Gerrit Knaap had provided rough sketches about how the company barely touched the rice economy of Java, but that was not the case after we get a bigger picture. Kwee argues that rice trade was the field in which the company's limited power most pronounced.¹ Knaap, by using the local harbormaster's record, pointed out that even within this period, when VOC's presence was the strongest in Java, about 50% of rice trade survived in the hand of private traders.² Thereby, it seemed that he also indicated the same thing: the company had only insignificant intervention in Java's rice economy.

This chapter revisited the question with a specific study on VOC's policy and its implementation regarding some key factors in rice economy: the collection, the distribution, and the incidental policies in the time of crisis. The result reconfirms that VOC's intervention was rather slim, but it did not mean that the company abandoned the opportunity. The insignificant intervention was a deliberate strategy in taking as much benefit as they could from the rice economy of Java.

VOC Conquered Java: VOC, *Pasisir*, and Mataram around 1743

In 1743, VOC managed to end more-than-a-century-long dispute with Mataram with a victory. Mataram had to give up the *pasisir* area and deliver 5000 *koyangs* of rice from the region annually. Since then, *pasisir* became VOC's province, Java's Noordoostkust. The success caused by the company's ability in mapping the power constellation.³ Since the early 17th century, the company's strategy in dealing with Mataram was corrupted by their utopic imagination of

¹ Kwee Hui Kian, *The Political Economy of Java's Northeast Coast, c. 1740-1800: Elite Synergy*, TANAP Monographs on the History of Asian-European Interaction ; Vol. 3. (Leiden: Brill, 2006) p.65.

² Gerrit Knaap, *Shallow Waters, Rising Tide: Shipping and Trade in Java around 1775* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996) p. 110.

³ Kwee, *The Political Economy*.

Javanese state.⁴ They used to think that Javanese state was a harmonious place where the power of a ruler was unquestionable for any of his subject, while in fact, it was more of a decentralized state where the *bupatis* of *pasisir* hold a fairly absolute power in each of their region despite the existence of the Mataram ruler. The century-long dispute ended because the company finally realized that siding with Mataram ruler did not guarantee them to receive the obedience of everyone in the realm, especially the autonomous *bupatis*.

It was a-century-long dispute because it was started with the establishment of Batavia in the early 17th century. The event coincided to happen in the same period with Sultan Agung's expansion plan to unite Java. Batavia, however, managed to defend itself, but not with the other states in Java. Thanks to the violent expansion, Sultan Agung succeeded to bring most parts of Java under his reign. As a result of the violent expansion, successors of Sultan Agung inherited the conflict of an unwanted unity, especially from those in the *pasisir*. They were after all the descendants of flourishing coastal cities in 16th century who were forced to give up their economic freedom to Mataram's feudal system. The unwanted unity gave birth to many rebellions and succession wars. As VOC's headquarter in Batavia grew larger, its position turned from the rebel itself into an emergency contact for putting down those upheavals. The company was always invited by the parties involved in an internal Mataram conflict to give military support. In exchange for the support, Mataram was levied with all kinds of concession and ceding of its parts. Nevertheless, Mataram usually managed to escape from its responsibility to pay all the war debts, re-stabilized itself, and sparked another conflict where they would once again require VOC's military support. This pattern eventually stopped in 1743.

The corrupted imagination that Javanese state was an absolute centralized power could be seen in some of the company's earlier involvement in internal Mataram's conflict. In 1676, a prince of Madura, Trunajaya, rebelled against Mataram to liberate Madura which was ceded by the former ruler, Sultan Agung, in 1624. At that time, both Mataram and Trunajaya sent a letter to the company and invited them to provide a military support in exchange of many benefits in future if the company could help them attain victory. Between those two, the company chose to side with Mataram.⁵ Again, the company chose Mataram on the conflict in 1703 when the reigning ruler of Mataram, Amangkurat III, was facing a rebellion from the collaborating Surapati, Cakraningrat II, and the family of prince Puger.⁶ Turns out, siding with Mataram in those two events rewarded no success. Every time the conflict solved, it was very easy for Mataram to refuse paying the debt or being tardy about the fulfillment. These unpleasant experiences to be 'deceived' by the ruler of Mataram made the company sided with the rebel, Cakraningrat, in the conflict of 1740-1743. That decision turned out to be the right one.

⁴ Luc Nagtegaal, *Riding the Dutch Tiger: The Dutch East Indies Company and the Northeast Coast of Java 1680-1743*, (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996) p. 9-10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁶ M.C.Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern 1200-2008* (Jakarta: Serambi, 2008) p. 186.

After 1743, there were still some conflicts in Java. Chief of them were rebellions against VOC and Mataram put by princes of Mataram and Cakraningrat of Madura in 1740s. Those acts indeed disrupted the company's acquisition of products, but they were insignificant compared to what had happened before 1743. Also, in any conflict happened after 1743, VOC managed to never be kicked out of the power constellation like before. On the contrary, VOC was the one who resolved most of the conflicts by not losing anything substantial for them. The resolution of these series of conflicts that ended in 1750s was to put Mangkubumi and Mangkunegara, the most rebellious princes of Mataram as priorities by dividing the Mataram kingdom into three, each for the Susuhunan and the two princes. The Susuhunan still had some area and govern it under the name Surakarta, Mangkubumi led some part of territory named Yogyakarta, and Mangkunegara led Mangkunegaran. Since then, peace was preserved until early 19th century. Even those rulers of the Mataram trinity, since the partition, thought more about avoiding conflict every time a potential trigger came.⁷

Because of the experience in dealing with Java's internal conflict in the past century, the VOC learned a valuable lesson, that Java was not one solid power as they used to imagine. Principally, coastal polities in *pasisir* were traders, while Mataram, who tried to pull them to the center, was a feudal state. After VOC won the war in 1743, they granted *pasisir*'s wish to be released from Mataram, they granted Mataram ruler's wish to be left alone as a feudal sovereign, and they granted the rebel's wish with some territory. This distribution of power preserved peace for more than half a century and placed the company as the strongest power in Java.

The Significance of Java's Noordoostkust

Java's Noordoostkust was the largest rice producing area in Java, but not the only one. Rice was also produced in other parts of Java. However, VOC's acquisition of Java's Noordoostkust was a milestone in their long struggle of securing rice supply from Java. This part will explain why it was such a milestone by using maps. For this period, rice field was always become an important feature of map of Java circulated in the Netherlands, especially an overview map came inside a book about the East Indies.

When VOC came to Java in the early 17th century, rice producing area of Java consisted of Surabaya plain, the heartland of Mataram, Jepara, Tegal and Pemalang Plain, and some area in west Java under Cirebon.⁸ More or less, all of these regions were the territory of Mataram. Even

⁷ The Javanese used to believe there will be a change of regime in every turn of a century. The belief tended to psychologically influence people and sharpened political conflicts that happened around the turning of a century. After 1755, the Javanese tended to be calmer in facing the turning century. None of the ex-Mataram rulers stood up to start an act of rebellion; For more see M.C. Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi 1749-1792: Sejarah Pembagian Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Matabangsa, 2002) p. 293-295.

⁸ Anthony Reid, *The Pre-Colonial Economy of Indonesia*, Conference on Indonesian Economic History in the Dutch Colonial Period (1983) p. 4.

when the rice field was under Cirebon, Cirebon was still the vassalage of Mataram. Because of that, VOC attempted to approach Mataram to secure some rice supply for the rapidly growing inhabitants of Batavia. Since its earliest establishment, rice was always VOC's main concern of Java. When they started to build Batavia, military supply was imported from the Netherlands, but for food, that option was too costly. VOC, who just came and knew nothing about how the rice economy worked, had to buy it from traders who came to Batavia with a high price. The company's first achievement was the establishment of a post in Jepara in 1613, designated specifically to procure rice. Jepara was Java's main port at that time, and also surrounded by rice fields.⁹ This step made possible for VOC to obtain at least part of their rice consumption in a cheaper way.

During the course of 17th century, the VOC accomplished quite some development in acquiring more rice from Java. First of all, they did it by accepting invitation to give military support to the never-ending internal conflict of Mataram in exchange for some rice delivery and permission to build some posts close to Mataram's rice-producing areas so that they could buy rice for a lower price. In 1678, they got a license of posting in Jepara, Surabaya, Rembang, Demak, and Tegal which were coastal towns and rice granaries of Java; from an agreement in 1705 VOC received 800 *koyangs* rice as annual delivery; the treaty of 1733 granted them with 1000 *koyangs* rice.¹⁰ On the top of that, when the company succeeded in bringing Cirebon under its protection in 1680s, they also get an annual delivery from Cirebon.¹¹

The attempt the company had actually done in creating their own supply without interfering other state's business happened only in Batavia's environs or known as Ommelanden¹². There is a map from 1678 captured Batavia and its surroundings including some parts of Banten and Cirebon territory, which shows rice field in the area. The rice fields were located in southern part of Batavia's environs and in Karawang. In the Batavia's environs, there are two areas of rice field. One was in the southern part, in between Grogol River and Krukut River, and the other was in the southeastern part, stretched along the stream of the Great River of Batavia. In the illustration, the rice field was quite big. The two combined must have constituted an area as wide as the populated part of Batavia. However, the one in Karawang was far larger. The map described Karawang as a village of 1000 *cacah* led by a man named Singa Perbangsa. It was pretty close to Batavia, but actually a part of Cirebon. Even though this map was made more to illustrate than to give the exact width measurement of the features showed, we can pick at least these conclusions from it. First, this map showed the development of rice field in Ommelanden. Second, it recognized that there was a far larger rice producer area in the realm, which most likely was known for the VOC because they used to import rice from there.

⁹ Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern*, p. 84.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 189, 197.

¹¹ Mason C. Hoadley, *Selective Judicial Competence : The Cirebon-Priangan Legal Administration, 1680-1792* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994) p. 3-4.

¹² From Dutch; Literally means 'the surroundings'.

Map 1. Rice fields in around Batavia in 1678. Rice field in the Ommelanden was the one within the small red circle and the one in Karawang was within the big circle.



Source: NA: 4. VEL, 1160, “Map of a part of Java, from the 17th century.”

At first, Batavia was not designed for producing rice. However, approaching the end of 17th century, the government felt a rising urge in being self-sufficient in food. At least there were three causes of this. First, it was the growing population. The growth came to an immense rate, as Jean Gelman Taylor illustrated, “Coen says that there were 2000 in Batavia in 1620, and another source has it that the inhabitants totaled 8000 just four years later”.¹³ Second, it was the hardship of getting more rice while they keep needed more. Even though rice was always mentioned as the main component in every treaty made with Mataram, their promise was hardly reliable. Third, it was supported by the signing of peace treaty with Banten in 1684. Because of that, the Ommelanden became safer so the VOC allowed people to buy great amount of land there.¹⁴ Rich Europeans took this opportunity at the earliest. After the land became their property, they rent it to other people who would utilize it into several purposes ranging from rice cultivation, sugar plantation, mulberry plantation, to fish pond.¹⁵ Those people could pay the rent

¹³ Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983) p. 15.

¹⁴ Bondan Kanumoyoso, “Beyond the City Wall: Society and Economic Development in the Ommelanden of Batavia, 1684-1740,” *Dissertation*, Leiden University, 2011, p. 94.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

in produce, in money, or immediately sell their produce to the estate's owner.¹⁶ Either way, the rice would be added to the supply of Batavia.

Even though throughout the 17th century the VOC managed to secure some obligatory annual delivery from Cirebon and Mataram, established some post to purchase rice for a cheaper price, as well as developing their own rice field in the Ommelanden, their supply was still far from enough. The company still had to purchase rice from other places such from Bengal and Siam. Some published maps of 18th showed that rice appeared to be grown in Banten, Batavia environs, Cirebon, Tegal-Pemalang, the hinterland Mataram, Jepara-Rembang, and Surabaya plain.¹⁷ Despite the VOC added the Batavia's environs and secure some supply from Cirebon, until 1743, most of those areas were still under the Mataram.

It is true that these maps were made to illustrate rather than to give exact information of an area. We have to be careful in using it because of these flaws. First, these maps showed there was no considerable change in between 1720 to 1770 while in fact it should. Peter Carey and Kwee Hui Kian had proven that there was a growing acreage of wet rice field in the second half of 18th century. The maps also captured the rice field in Ommelanden and Banten as the widest, while in fact, the more reliable map from VOC in 1668 captured it as a very small area and Banten actually imported rice very frequently from Batavia throughout the 18th century. One map from Valentijn's book even showed that Madura was filled by rice field, while in fact, Madura was a dry area whose yield was only half as much as Java for the same wide of land.¹⁸ Throughout the 18th century, Madura frequently imported rice from Java.¹⁹

However, if we exclude the measurement element, this map did mention the correct rice producer in Java. Cirebon, Tegal, Pekalongan, Semarang, Jepara, Rembang, Juwana, Demak, Gresik, and Surabaya were confirmed by the BGB record because they were also the rice exporter from Java. The hinterland part which located at the heart of Mataram was not mentioned in BGB because the export transaction only happened in the coastal area. Logically, the export from this area also included in the coastal record. To estimate the distribution of acreage, we can look at Clifford Geertz calculations as an illustration. On 20th century, rice production in Java constituted by 25% wet rice field in hinterland Java (*kejawen*), 35% in North coast (*pasisir*), 15% in western Java (*pasundan*), and 15% from scattered dry land.²⁰ Seeing the comparison of those two areas in the map, and that the growing acreage happened both in the coastal and in hinterland, very likely, in the 18th century rice producing area in the hinterland compared to the *pasisir* was also around that wide.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁷ <https://www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl/>

¹⁸ Kuntowijoyo, "Social Change in Agrarian Society: Madura 1850-1940," *Dissertation*, Columbia University, 1980, P. 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

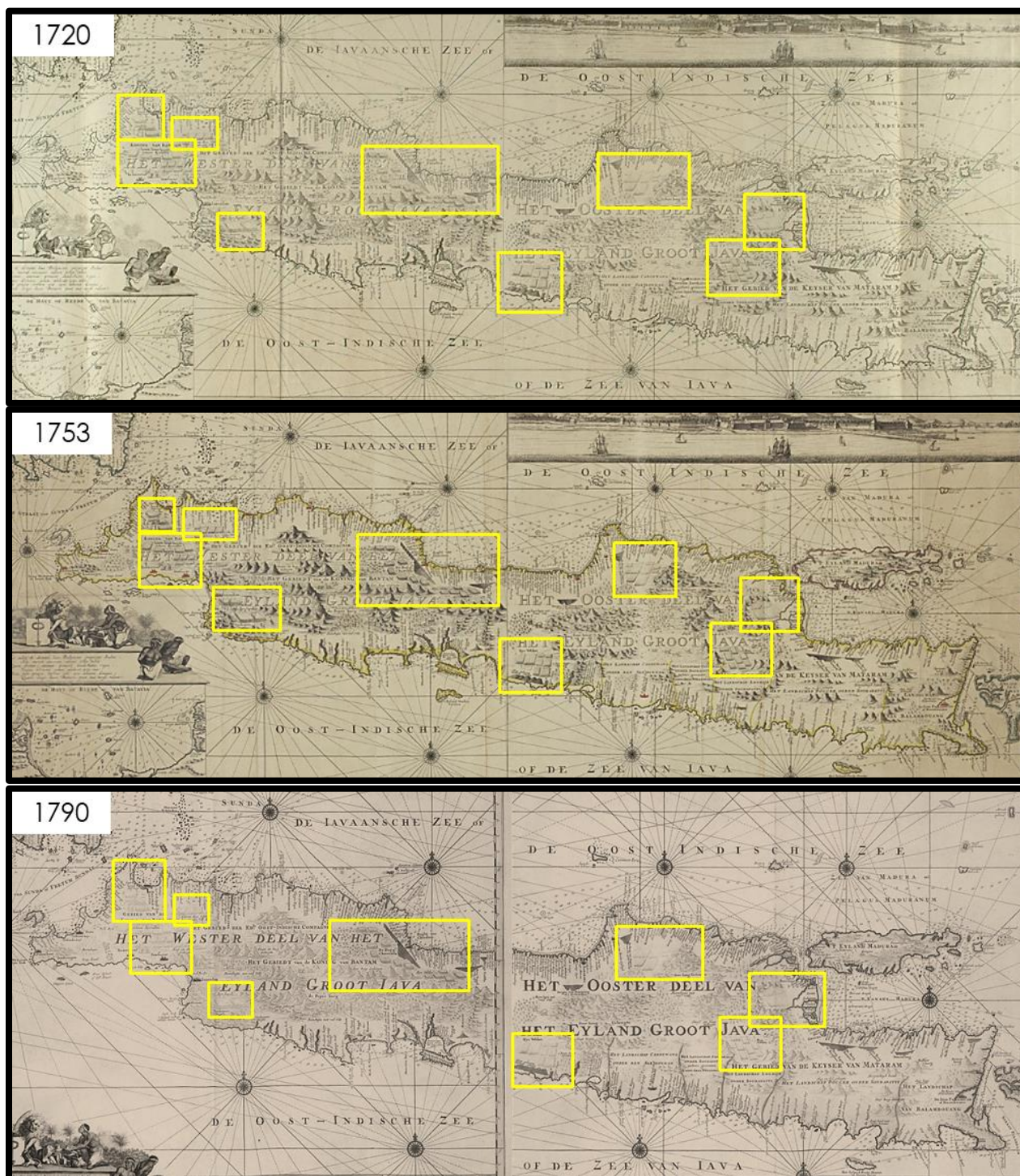
²⁰ Clifford Geertz, *Involusi Pertanian: Proses Perubahan Ekologi di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Bhatara, 1983) p. 46.

Map 2. Rice fields in Madura in the year 1724 from *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* by François Valentyn.



Source: “Atlas of Mutual Heritage”, <https://www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl/>.

Map 3. Rice fields in Java, 1720-1790



Source: "Atlas of Mutual Heritage", <https://www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl/>.

The company's acquisition of *pasisir* in 1743 means it looted more than 50% of Mataram's rice producing area. If we include all rice producing area it had required and built since the 17th century, the company now possessed about 50% rice producing area in Java. Taking into account Java's Noordoostkust's position, even when the rice was produced outside the area, it was still had to pass through one of the ports in which now the VOC was the authority to be able to be exported. The company's access to farm tax from rice export was even still accompanied with the 5000 *koyangs* obligatory delivery which would be sold to the company at a very minimum price. The level of intervention in Java's Noordoostkust, therefore, was a game changer to the map of company's rice supply.

VOC's Vision towards Rice

Only one month after the treaty of November 11th 1743 which ended the war, the company had started formulating some serious plan to regulate their part of Java. Even though VOC's position in Java was never as this strong and their new territory, Java's Noordoostkust, was the largest rice producer in Java, they treated rice in a careful way. They did not make changes and instead of re-regulated everything to increase productivity, they chose to only getting obligatory delivery by using the existing system. It was not a decision taken after a series of trials and errors. It was their vision since the very beginning.

In general, VOC's trade regulation in the Java's Noordoostkust was aimed to protect the interest of Batavia and to make profit. They did the protection by making all export trade of products beside rice from ports in Java go to Batavia first before reaching their destinations.²¹ To make profit, they aspired to readjust the toll tariff for all kinds of produce originated from Java and auctioned the *syahbandar*-ships along the coast.²² *Syahbandar* was a Persian term for harbor master commonly used in all over Indian Ocean.²³ They did a pretty lucrative job consisted of issuing trading passes and being intermediaries between ruler and foreign merchants. People who were interested in auctioning for the *syahbandar* seat were invited to Batavia on January 1744. Before that, the lease was given temporarily to the current holder for three months.²⁴

Those regulations, even though could give the company a lot of profit, was radical and risky. Because rice was Java's main commodity, and the value was much higher than any other products, the company could not afford to experiment with such things in rice case. For rice, their plan was much simpler, only to secure as much as they could with low price. The 5000 *koyangs* annual delivery from Java at 10 *rijksdaler* (hereafter *rd*s) per *koyang* mentioned in the

²¹ J.E. Schooneveld-Oosterling, (ed.), *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, Deel 11: 1743-1750*, (The Hague: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 1997) p. 94.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Borschberg Matelief and Peter Borschberg, *Journal, Memorials and Letters of Cornelis Matelieff De Jonge : Security, Diplomacy and Commerce in 17th-century Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2015) p. 515.

²⁴ Schooneveld-Oosterling, *Generale missiven 11*, p. 94.

treaty was already a great achievement.²⁵ Thus, total export ban on rice was considered unnecessary. It was the only commodity under the company's concern could freely flow into the network of private traders.²⁶ The toll price for rice also experienced no readjustment.²⁷

Now that they had contract of steady rice supply, they immediately stopped supply from elsewhere which might cost them more. Before the 1743 treaty, the VOC had to purchase rice from many places: from Java, from Siam, from Bengal. Suddenly, on November 12th 1743, just a day after the 1743 treaty, the person in charge of the ship Oosterhout that arrived at Batavia had to apologize because they brought in 509 *lasts* of purchased rice from Bengal.²⁸ At that very early stage, the company already warned them to never purchase rice from there again. A year later, the execution of this plan become clearer as on October 1744, appeared a notice to prohibit ships from other countries to bring rice in and to pay for more than 40 *rds* per *koyang*.²⁹ That was still lower than the average price before 1743 which was 50 *rds*. Even in many cases, the VOC were forced to pay higher. All the rice collected was planned to be sent to VOC's settlements, especially the important ones such as Batavia, Ambon and Banda. On the same Generale Missiven from December 1743, the Gouvernour General already requested a direct rice shipping route from Java's Noordoostkust to Ambon, while other destinations should pass Batavia first.³⁰

If rice was Java's main commodity, why the VOC did not monetize it like coffee and spices? After a series of wars for more than a century, the factor of production must have a lot of trouble, but the market was still there. In the previous chapter, we have discussed that the prosperity in 16th century in the archipelago caused a consumerism which crowned rice as a fashionable staple food. Thus, the company could invest in the production and added rice as its source of income. Actually, in 1746, the company once attempted a monopsony. It was caused by reports of tardy deliveries and of cases where *bupatis* stocked rice for their own before fulfilled company's quota which popped up in many places after 1745.³¹ The idea was to turn the company as the sole buyer and seller of rice in Java. As compensation for their lost privilege, the *bupatis* were turned into *syahbandars* or the person in charge of collecting tax in the harbour. Anyone wanted to buy rice from Java then would be only have one destination, the company.³² This idea was implemented, but got a very harsh respond from the *bupatis*.

Apparently, there are reasons behind why the company chose to leave rice. They were the company's limited funding and their food security problem. Limited funding was caused by

²⁵ J.K.J. de Jonge, *De opkomst van het Nederlandsch gezag over Java: verzameling van onuitgegeven stukken uit het Oud-koloniaalarchief* ('s Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1877) p. 443.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Schooneveld-Oosterling, *Generale missiven 11*, p. 66.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 122.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 66.

³¹ It happened in Pekalongan, Demak, Madura, Gresik, Tuban and Rembang; each was described in Kwee, *The Political Economy*, p. 50.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

those draining wars they just finished.³³ At the mid-18th century, even though they secured victory in Java, there were barely money left for them to take economic potential of Java to further level like what they had done with Spices in Maluku and Coffee in Priangan.³⁴ Compared to those projects, the approach the company did to rice was very frugal. Even their monopsony plan was also failed because they could not compensate the *bupatis* well.³⁵ They treated those little kings as his employees wanting no more than a moderate salary. While investment in rice cultivation was budget-wise impossible, VOC was also shadowed by food problems. In the 18th century, the company totally turned into an empire. They acquired more territories and their personnel were growing rapidly in number.³⁶ Before having their hands on supply from Java, VOC settlements everywhere had to buy rice for a high price. They tried to develop their own food producing area such as in the vicinity of Batavia and Ceylon, but it was not enough.³⁷ Therefore, when they finally had a secure supply for a low price, they would secure their need of food first.

The Collection

VOC's intervention concentrated on the top, and it was very clear when we position it side by side with the whole scheme of local rice economy. The lowest rank company's administrator who was delegated to control rice supply was a resident. The resident was in the same level of *bupati*, which was the highest rank of local administrator. To make sure that their plan went well, the company allocated a great amount of money to guarantee the prosperity of the key player such as the *bupati* and their officers. Judged from the amount of rice they collected and the price for the period of 1743-1800, those policies more or less were well implemented.

Even though in Java private property right was acknowledged by the existence of landowning farmers, in general all lands belong to the ruler.³⁸ Therefore, whoever utilized a

³³ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di bawah Mangkubumi*, p. 59.

³⁴ Spice and Coffee project were expensive. Spice monopoly in Maluku was attempted through years of bloody wars. Once they settled the monopoly, they kept the production low to make the price stay high in Europe. In clove case for example, they did it by concentrating the growing in Ambon and destroyed clove trees in other islands. Coffee was started by some high-rank company official who has background as student of flora and fauna. It was developed through many trials and errors before hit the success. See Els Jacob, *Merchants in Asia: The Trade of the Dutch East India Company during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: CWNS Publications, 2006) p. 15, 266.

³⁵ Kwee, *The Political Economy*, p. 53.

³⁶ As an illustration, in Batavia alone, number of company personnel grew from around 1200 in 1650 to around 6300 in 1750; See J.R. Bruijn, F.S. Gaastra, I. Schöffer, A. C. J. Vermeulen, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries, Introductory Volume* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987) p.120.

³⁷ Peter Boomgaard, "From Riches to Rags? Rice Production and Trade in Asia Particularly Indonesia, 1500-1950", in Gregg Bankoff and Peter Boomgaard (ed.), *A History of Natural Resources in Asia*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p. 197. Actually, VOC settlement seemed to be alienated from their surroundings. Export from Batavia to settlement usually included all kinds of primary needs, illustrating that VOC settlements failed to build connection with its environs even when its only for provisioning their primary needs.

³⁸ Peter Carey, "Waiting for the 'Just King': The Agrarian World of South-Central Java from Giyanti (1755) to the Java War (1825-1830)", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1986) p. 67.

piece of land in the realm, even though they cleared it themselves from a forest, still had to pay tax to the ruler as a license to use the land. This land tax was just one of several kind of coexistence tax such as house tax, tolls tax and market tax.³⁹ Nevertheless, the land tax was where rice flow out from the farmer to the ruler. Other taxes were usually farmed in smaller amount and in money form.⁴⁰ In claiming his right, the ruler utilized the service of many people in his bureaucratic system in which the *bupatis* were the highest rank official in the province located at the outer ring of the state (*mancanegara* and *pasisir*). We will discuss these layers deeper in the next chapter.

The *bupati* was the one who was responsible of transfer of rice from the local to the company's hand. This made them as the only recognized local official in the company's rice acquisition scheme. On the same level with *bupati*, the company placed a resident whose function was to control how everything went on the local government and receive delivery from the *bupati*. The resident from each region being part of Java's Noordoostkust such as Tegal, Demak, and Jepara then delivered it to Semarang and the company's office in Semarang then delivered it to Batavia. Ship from Batavia regularly fetched it. Traffic of ship fetching rice from Java's Noordoostkust amounted to averagely 20 journeys annually.⁴¹

As the only important local player in the company's scheme, the *bupati*'s prosperity was taken into account. In the 1743 treaty, for the 5000 *koyangs* of obligatory rice delivery, the company only paid 10 *rds* per *koyang*, with allowance for delivery at 2.5 *rds*.⁴² So in total, they were just willing to pay 12.5 *rds* per *koyang* rice. Within this amount, *bupatis* were allowed to take 4-5 *rds* as their share. To stimulate *bupatis*' punctual delivery, since 1746, the company was also willing to pay a down payment or half price of the rice in advance. After 1755, the price of the rice increased to about 16 *rds*. Though this research is not able to provide how much exactly the rising share of the *bupati*, the rise seemed to be very likely to happen. The data from the BGB recorded a rising supply of rice to VOC. That in a way indicated that those *bupatis* were happier about the new share. On the top of that, *bupatis* also occasionally received incentive, especially after they accomplished a timely and sufficient delivery.⁴³

Before the better agreement reached in 1755, the company's way in obtaining the "promised" rice was not sleek. One *koyang* was equal to 3250 to 3500 Dutch pounds (*lb*), or

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Nationaal Archief, The Hague (hereafter referred to as NA): Archives of the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia (hereafter referred to as BGB), 1.04.18.02, no. 10774 -10809, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1742-1801; All BGB archives were accessed through <https://bgb.huygens.knaw.nl/>.

⁴² This policy was first mentioned as one of the article in the treaty of 1743. On 1748, the rate was confirmed to be still in use; see Schooneveld-Oosterling, *Generale missiven 11*, p. 632.

⁴³ J. A. van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek, 1602-1811*, Vijfde Deel 1602-1642, Vol. 1. 17 vols. (Batavia: Batavia Landsdrukkerij, 1885) p. 519.

about 1750 kg. That makes 5000 *koyangs* a great quantity, about 8750 tons. In making sure the delivery went well, the company had no deeper grip in the local administration than the resident. On this early stage, it seemed like the Javanese again being sluggish in keeping their promise. As a response, the company needed to involve coercion for the success of their extraction.⁴⁴ It was proven to be effective for the gain in year 1745 increased by this method.⁴⁵ However, coercive approach guaranteed no long-lasting increase.

Besides *bupatis*, the company also really took a good care of their officials. If the company did not put their prosperity into priority, the chance for these personnel to commit corruption or illicit trading was huge. None of the company's official was left out from getting some share of this rice profit. Being the key connector, resident's share was the highest. From every *koyangs* weighed as 3500 *lb* they received from the *bupati*, they just had to pass 3400 *lb* to Semarang. In private line, one *koyang* of rice was even fewer than that of the company's line. It weighed only 3250 *lb*. The 250 *lb* gap from company's official standard was directed to give bonuses to the company official in Java's Noordoostkust. All sorts of position from the *gezaghebber* of Surabaya, the commander, junior merchants, bookkeepers, and clerks received a share ranging from 36 *rds* to 2 *rds* for every 100 *koyang* rice went through their toll.⁴⁶

The company's rice collection policy seemed to be well implemented. The first sign of the good implementation was the increase in the rice import from Java's Noordoostkust to Batavia after 1743. In yearbook of 1742-43, the total quantity of rice imported by VOC from Java's Noordoostkust was 8191750 *lb* or 2340.5 *koyangs*. In the 1750-51 it was drastically escalated to 13,162,800 *lb* or 3760.8 *koyangs*. The second sign was the sharply decreased price, even though the quantity increased about 70%. In 1750-1751, the VOC only had to pay 44726.12 *rds*, which only the half of the price in 1742-1743. That makes the rice price fell dramatically from 34,9 *rds* per *koyang* to 11,9 *rds* per *koyang*.

Table 1. Comparison between 1742-1743 and 1750-1751

	1742-1743	1750-1751
Total quantity (<i>koyang</i>)	2340.5	3760.8
Total value (<i>rds</i>)	81775,6	44726.12
Price (<i>rds/koyang</i>)	34,9	11,9

Source: NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10774, 10775, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1742-43, 1750-51.

⁴⁴ Schooneveld-Oosterling, *Generale missiven 11*, p. 317.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Van der Chijs, *Plakaatboek 5*, p. 519-520.

It might look striking, but we also had to put in consideration that there were some years in between 1743 and 1750. The BGB record was available only for 55 years in the whole 18th century. In between 1743 and 1750 lied the second longest missing sequence. If we were able to see the whole picture, we might be able to capture a fluctuation. As an illustration, on November 1743, a month after the treaty, the 10+2.5 *rds* plan has not been fully implemented yet. In Tegal, the VOC still bought rice for 15 *rds*.⁴⁷ Moreover, when we recalled from earlier in this chapter, there were reports of tardy deliveries, coercive approach being used, and an attempt to transform the whole system into monopsony. The period between 1743 and 1750 was actually where the trial and error was. This data from 1743 to 1750 was the starting point and the result when they system had more or less been settled.

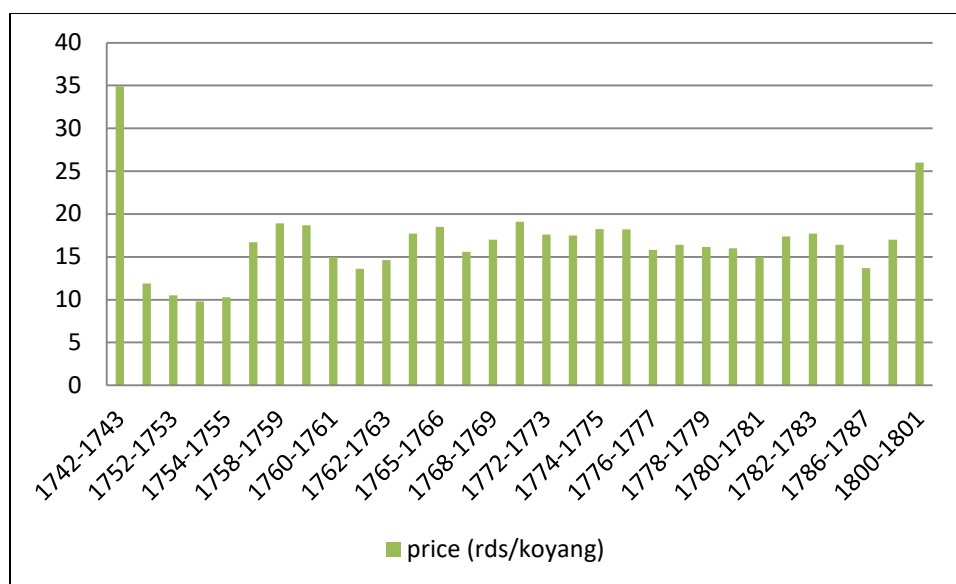
The price in 1751 might be the price that was desired by the VOC, but it was not the case for the locals. It was just maintainable until 1755. This strikingly low price very likely contributed to the rebellion of Mangkunegara, Mangkubumi, and Cakraningrat. The low price could have been suppressed landless farmer in *pasisir* and provoked them to join the rebel princes. After that, the average price had to be increased by 30%. Only after it was increased up to 16,7 *rds* per *koyang*, the price became quite stable until the end of the century. This finding echoed Kwee Hui Kian's proposition that the period of 1743-1755 was a period of consolidation of power in Java's Noordoostkust.⁴⁸ During the 1740's, it was only the company who decided the price unilaterally. The Mataram ruler didn't really have a choice since the price was decided when they surrendered. Since *bupatis* also had no voice in the agreement, it's plausible that those *bupatis* showed their disagreement by being tardy. When each of the power holder's favor had been reformulated in 1755, the delivery was much more stable.

The impression of a more stable system too appeared in the figure of the total quantity VOC imported from Java's Noordoostkust. From 1743 to 1755, the VOC was just able to secure averagely 2715 *koyangs* while in the following year until the end of the century they managed to secure 4900 *koyangs*, almost precisely as promised in the treaty.

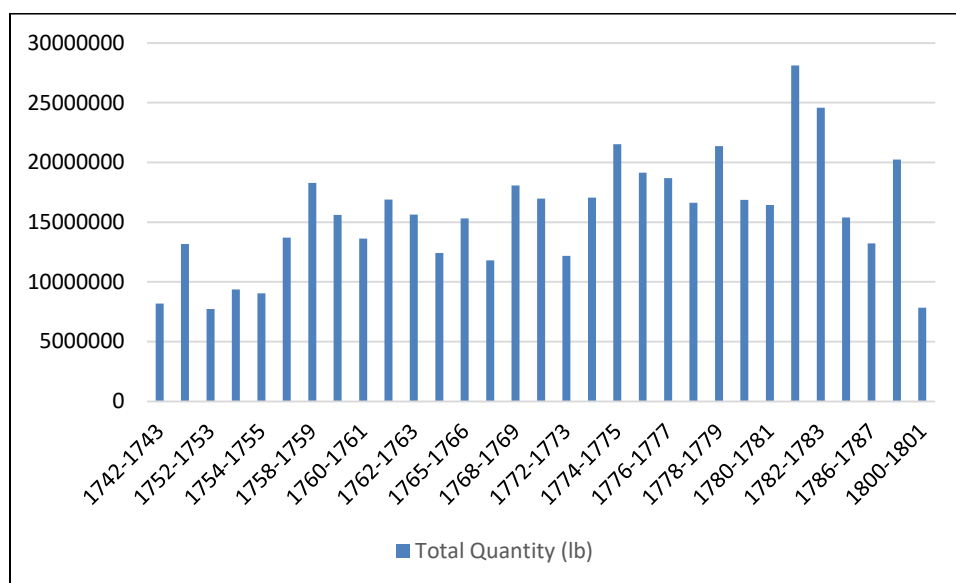
VOC's rice collection policy reflected its vision in taking advantage by preserving the initial system. They only placed their supervisor, their resident, on the same level as *bupati* which was the highest local administrator. The low price was rather an influential change because it cut the income of Javanese bureaucrats under the *bupati*. For this radical change, the company had to adapt it to a higher rate. After they adapted the price and indulged the key player such as the *bupati* and their personnel, rice flew incredibly smooth to company's warehouses.

⁴⁷ NA: Archives of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (hereafter referred to as VOC), 1.04.02, no. 7849, Letter from Semarang's secretary to the Governor General, 24 November 1743, Java's Noordoostkust, p. 41-52.

⁴⁸ Kwee, *The Political Economy*, p. 220-223.

Chart 1. Price of VOC's rice export from Java's Noordoostkust 1743-1800

Source: NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10774 -10809, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1742-1801.

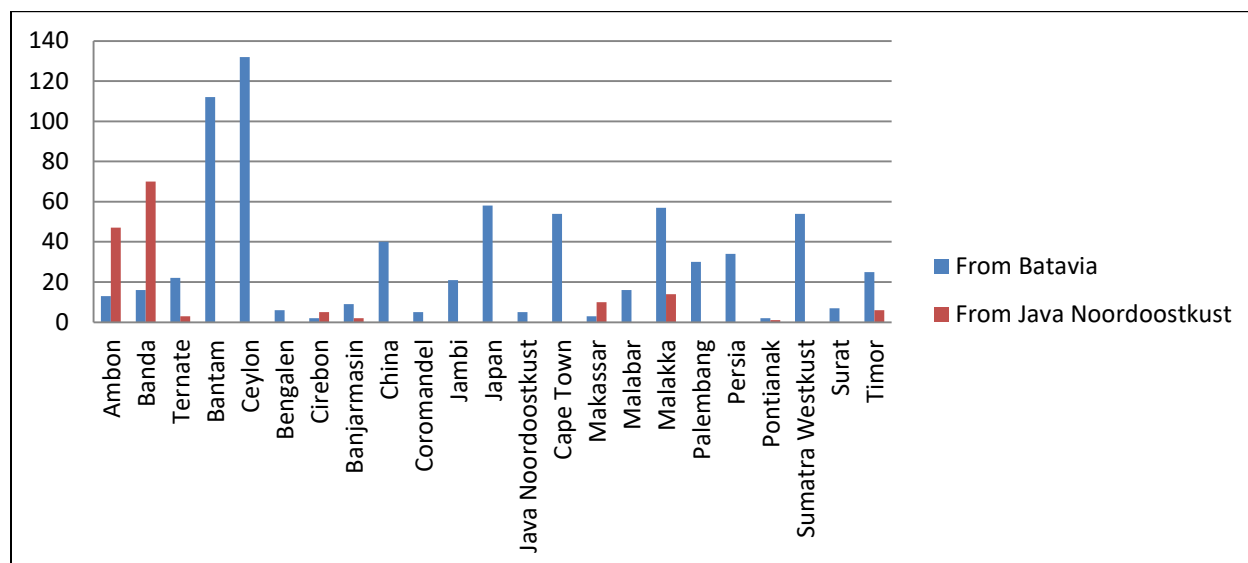
Chart 2. Quantity of VOC's rice export from Java's Noordoostkust 1743-1800

Source: NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10774 -10809, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1742-1801.

The Distribution

According to its vision, VOC wanted to keep rice only to supply its settlements. Which settlement were they? Did by that the company automatically spares the old market for non-VOC traders? Distribution is the process of transporting products from a manufacturer, storing them, and selling them to different customers and this part will explain how the VOC guide the journey the rice had to go through to reach its consumer.⁴⁹

Chart 3. VOC's rice export by voyage 1743-1800



Source: NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10774 -10809, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1742-1801.

In general, the VOC managed rice export with two routes, one started from Batavia and one from Java's Noordoostkust. Destinations to the west of Java would have to follow the Batavia routes while those in the east follow the Java's Noordoostkust route. From 1743 to 1800, there were 908 voyages coming from ports in north coast of Java to Batavia bringing almost exclusively rice. This rice was destined to be partly consumed in Batavia, and mostly re-exported again to VOC's overseas settlements. In addition to that, there were 47 direct voyages from Java's Noordoostkust destined for Ambon and 70 destined for Banda. There were also noticeable records of shipping from Java's Noordoostkust to Malakka, but unlike Batavia, Ambon and Banda, this pattern was far from constant. Malakka was regarded as important to be supplied only in around 1780.⁵⁰ Batavia, Ambon and Banda therefore were VOC's main concern, while the other settlements were of the second priority. Batavia got this privilege because it was the head quarter, where the number of company's personnel was the biggest in Asia. Ambon and Banda

⁴⁹ "Distribution," <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/distribution>.

⁵⁰ NA: VOC, 1.04.02, no. 7895, Letter from the Governor of Semarang Johannes Siberg to the Governor General Willem Arnold Alting, 28 April 1781, Java's Noordoostkust, book 4, p.1-7.

got the honor because they were the core producer of VOC's most important commodity, the spices.

We could understand why Batavia has always been really anxious about rice by prioritizing it in every contract they made with states in Java the time we see the chart 3. Batavia's export destinations, which in other words settlements dependent on Batavia for its food supply, were ranging from Nagasaki in the northeast, to Cape of Good Hope in the southwest. This pattern has been going on since the earliest BGB record.⁵¹ In bearing such burden, there was only one other port that helped Batavia. It was Coromandel. Throughout the 18th century, Coromandel-Ceylon appeared as VOC's independent rice route which reduced Batavia's burden to feed Ceylon.⁵² One strange feature of the chart was the significance of Banten. In handling this, it is essential to remember that this record was counted by voyage. While most voyages carried at least 50 *koyangs*, voyage Java's Noordoostkust-Batavia could even carry up to 300 *koyangs*, those which directed to Banten was mostly done by small boat with a load of averagely 3 *koyangs* rice. The shipping only happened very frequently because distance-wise Batavia and Banten was very close to each other. Banten was also an ex-emporium who only started to develop their own supply of rice when they began to losing grip in pepper trade in 1630.⁵³

Because the overseas settlements were of the second priority, Batavia was only taking the responsibility to secure the supply quantity, not to also push the price to be low. Even though they got rice from Java's Noordoostkust at averagely 16 *rd*s, the export price to other settlement must be no less than 30 *rd*s. This was decided because the high government of Batavia basically wanted every settlement to bear their own burden.⁵⁴ It was only Banda and Ambon which were exempted from such policy. On 1743, when the average import price to Batavia was 34, 9 *rd*s per *koyang*, the price of rice imported from Semarang to Ambon was as high as 40 *rd*s per *koyang*. In 1751, it decreased significantly, but still doubled the price in Batavia. After 1755, the price for Java's Noordoostkust-Ambon was quite stable in 22.5 *rd*s per *koyang*, only about 35% higher than the price for Batavia which, given the difference in distance, could be considered as the same.

While the company took care of rice supply for its settlement, they did not completely ignore the old customer of Java. Places in which VOC's presence was mild such as Jambi, Palembang and Banjarmasin were still able to purchase rice from VOC, though not in a great amount. The majority of their demand therefore was supplied by non-VOC traders from Java. However, this was not a steady pattern. In the time of crisis, which we will discuss further shortly, supply to them could be banned completely, through VOC's or non-VOC's line.

⁵¹ NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10751, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1700-01.

⁵² Found in almost every surviving record, see resources.huygens.knaw.nl/boekhoudergeneraalbatavia.

⁵³ Anthony Reid, *Asia Tenggara dalam Kurun Niaga Jilid II: Jaringan Perdagangan Global*, (Jakarta: Obor, 2011) p. 345.

⁵⁴ Van der Chijs, *Plakaatboek* 5, p. 170.

VOC's rice export destinations were ranked according to their importance for the company. The first rank, who got a subsidized price and direct export were Batavia, Ambon, and Banda. The second were the company's important settlements in Asia such as the Cape, Ceylon, and Nagasaki. They got an almost steady supply and stable moderate price. Java's rice market from the earlier period, those located closely and did not required much effort to reach, were put outside the priority, supplied only rarely, and surely embargoed in the time of crisis. When we see it from a wider point of view, feeding the settlements was actually more profitable for the VOC, because only that way the empire could grow without spending much on food as before. Java's rice was therefore a free capital.

Risk Mitigation

What has been explained in subchapters about collection and distribution are the policies and the implementation when everything went well. However, the VOC often had to adjust its policy to deal with uncertainties and unfavorable conditions. Their main risk mitigation was embargo and inspections. Exploration towards VOC's risk mitigation in rice economy added more evidence to their slim but effective intervention.

Batavia, Banda and Ambon appeared as the priority not only because they got first-hand price and direct supply, but also because the company was eager to embargo rice export to anywhere else beside them in a time of crisis. Even Ceylon and the Cape did not get this level of priority. It was only Batavia, Banda and Ambon which mentioned in the General Resolutions or *Plakaatboek* talked about mitigating an event of rice shortage. Even though private trade in rice was allowed, the VOC was able to forbid private export when they thought it's necessary. After 1743, the VOC was also the holder of coastal *syahbandaries* which they took over from the Susuhunan of Mataram for 20,000 *rds* per year. Since VOC was the one who hired the *syahbandar*, and the *syahbandar* functioned as a toll gate keeper in each harbor, the VOC could use them as an instrument to limit export.

One important event of shortage happened in around 1764-1765. During these years, the growing rice export from Java's Noordoostkust that has been going for about a decade suddenly stopped. The cause was climate factor. In the year 1763, the wet season came late. When the first batch of paddy in district Surabaya had to be planted in January or February, there was not enough moisture in the soil. The same case also happened in the next batch started to be planted in around August. The drought caused almost significant decrease of the yield. The district of Surabaya which used to deliver 1000 *koyangs* per year could only send 229 *koyangs* up to November 1763. Because of this, the *gezagheber* of Java's Oosthoek⁵⁵, Hendrik Breton, wrote a

⁵⁵ The province of Java's Noordoostkust was of a great immensity so the VOC had to place a second head office in Surabaya. The head office of Surabaya was led by a greatest man in charge (*gezaghebber*) cum senior merchant in the eastern part of Java's Noordoostkust called as Java's Oesthoek.

special report to the governor general. He first explained the unusual schedule of rain of that year which he said related to the insufficient harvest and delivery. He then deployed the *bupati* of Surabaya and the *bupati's* eldest son to inspect the fields. This deployment confirmed that fields were affected by drought, but that deployment of *bupati* for doing inspection was the only thing Breton did in tackling this shortage problem. Until the next harvest on January to February of the following year, Surabaya only managed to send 240 *koyangs* more, so in total, it was only about half of its designated portion.⁵⁶

Climate factor leading to bad harvest was in many cases a made-up excuse.⁵⁷ However, the 1763 drought was confirmed by many sources. The first source was the report from Hendrik Breton which we just discussed.⁵⁸ Second, the rice scarcity was also mentioned in *Generale Missiven* from 1764. In 1764, Ambon was badly lacked in rice so that ships sending food supply there had to be loaded with sago. The first cause was of course the bad harvest in Java and the second was a shipwreck. It was a ship named *Zeelelie* which destined for Ambon and brought 880 *lasts* of rice in addition to other loads.⁵⁹ Because of these incidents, in 1765, the high government in Batavia announced that exporting rice from Java's Noordoostkust to places beside Batavia, Ambon, and Banda was highly forbidden.⁶⁰ In the VOC's rice line, the policy seemed to be practiced neatly. From the BGB record, there was no export to other places than those three in the year 1765.⁶¹

In the non-VOC line, the policy also seemed to be quite well implemented. In 1765, Palembang, whose rice supply was also affected by the drought in Java, sent a request to Batavia to grant them a pass, so that they could sell tin to Java and procure more rice. For the amount of tin they had in the meantime, they claimed to be able to purchase as much as 360 *koyangs* rice.⁶² From this story, we could see that the VOC's obstruction in private trade actually worked quite well because without the pass from the company, Palembang could not conduct trade with Java even though they have the resource to do so. The story ended with the VOC declined this request and instead sell to them only 100 *koyangs* rice for as expensive as 50 *rds* per *koyang*.⁶³

The VOC was really careful towards the threat to their supply. Decision to embargo other export destinations beside Batavia, Ambon and Banda appeared very frequently in the

⁵⁶ NA: VOC, 1.04.02, no. 3093, Respond of Senior Merchant and *gezagheber* of Surabaya, Hendrik Breton, to the Governor General regarding rice delivery from Surabaya, 30 March 1764, Java's Noordoostkust book 3, p. 55-63.

⁵⁷ Kwee, *The Political Economy*, p. 50.

⁵⁸ NA: VOC, 1.04.02, no. 3093, Respond of Senior Merchant and *gezagheber* of Surabaya, Hendrik Breton, to the Governor General regarding rice delivery from Surabaya, 30 March 1764, p. 55-63.

⁵⁹ H.K. s'Jacob (ed.), *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, Deel 14: 1761-1767* (Amsterdam: Huygens ING (KNAW), 2017) p. 541.

⁶⁰ NA: VOC, 1.04.02, no. 795, Copy of resolutions of the Governor General and the councils, 25 October 1765, book 3, p. 119-121.

⁶¹ NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10787, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1765-1766.

⁶² NA: VOC, 1.04.02, no. 795, Copy of resolutions of the Governor General and the councils, 25 October 1765, book 3, p. 119-121.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Resolutions throughout the period under study.⁶⁴ On 1781, they saw Malaka's economy grew at the beginning of the year. Therefore, they were about to attempt more export there and even encouraged private traders to do the same. The decision was made on March 1781.⁶⁵ On April, it was reported to be successfully implemented in Semarang, Surabaya and Gresik, so that the company wanted to encourage more private traders to participate.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, the decision had to be altered to a totally different direction when they sensed troubled supply in June. In July, they again banned the export except to Batavia, Ambon and Banda.⁶⁷

The event of 1781 also told us about how the company basically did nothing besides collecting the delivery. They did not invest in infrastructure or expanding the rice field to increase production even though they extracted 5000 *koyangs* of surplus each year. When the hard time came, what they could do was just protecting their priority destinations and embargoing other places. They let states with adequate purchasing power as Palembang, took care of their own starve. The embargo in 1781 was actually nothing more than the company's paranoia. Instead of shortage, what happened in 1781 was actually the highest record of rice export from Java's Noordoostkust for the second half of 18th century.⁶⁸

VOC's motto to put as minimal effort as they could in managing rice of Java again pronounced through how they dealt with crises. They had no control over production, as could be seen in the embargo that switched on and off frequently. The interval between changes were only a few months, as in the case of 1781, when they change from encouraging private traders to be involved in rice export to Malaka to totally banning private exports only from March to July. Their cluelessness about Java's rice production was also reflected in how they had no idea about the surprising rise in production in 1781. When a drought lasted for more than a year that it was so devastating for everybody, the furthest they could do was just an inspections. However unprepared these policies might seemed, surprisingly as in the good times, their risk mitigations turned out to be also well implemented. Their embargo did starved Palembang in 1765.

Conclusion

VOC's involvement in Java's rice economy was limited but they managed to maximize their gain out of it by securing a great amount of extraordinarily cheap rice supply for more than 50

⁶⁴ "Rijst en Rijstmarkt" in *Realia*, https://www.sejarah-nusantara.anri.go.id/realia_search/?subject=Rijst%20en%20Rijstmarkt&q=

⁶⁵ NA: VOC, 1.04.02, no. 811, Copy of resolutions of the Governor General and the councils, 13 March 1781, book 1, p. 245.

⁶⁶ NA: VOC, 1.04.02, no. 7895, Letter from the Governor of Semarang Johannes Siberg to the Governor General Willem Arnold Alting, 28 April 1781, Java's Noordoostkust, book 4, p.1-7.

⁶⁷ NA: VOC, 1.04.02, no. 811, Copy of resolutions of the Governor General and the councils, 13 March 1781, book 1, p. 245.

⁶⁸ NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10796, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1781-1782.

years. Therefore, the limitation was not an inability to intervene further, but more of a carefully calculated strategy resulted in a great implementation.

From the structural point of view, VOC's power was only concentrated in the top rank of the government. The deepest it could go in monitoring the supply from Java was in the resident level, which was on the same level as *bupati*, or the highest local administrator in the realm. They also gave up their monopsony plan and kept on using rice only to feed their settlement instead of catering every demand to gain more profit. In the bad times, the way they could do to keep the balance was just by embargoing places outside their priority. They never did production expansion or investment in infrastructure. In the middle of the year in which the rice they collected was the highest throughout the period, which was in 1781, the VOC was still panicking about insufficient supply.

Even though their intervention was minimal, the VOC held the key factor. They realized that Java consisted of several decentralized powers instead of being governed by one absolute centralized power. The company also managed to master how to balance those powers within their first decade of ruling Java's Noordoostkust. Since then, they realized that it was not necessary for them to control the whole Java to be successful in getting what they needed from the island. VOC's minimal intervention to the local rice economy, therefore, was more of their attempt in preserving the existing system, so that they did not need to build everything from scratch. With this approach, they only needed to pour money for indulging the key players, such as *bupatis* and their officers. Though that might cost them a lot, it was still way more economical than remodeling the whole rice economy.

Chapter III

The Implications of VOC's Rice Policy

Exploration of VOC's rice policy in the previous chapter have brought us to a conclusion that the VOC's alteration to the existing system of rice economy of Java was minimal, but they managed to get what they want stably until their fall in around the end of the century. This left us with question about how did actually changes imposed by VOC affected Java. In the first chapter, overview towards the previous polities in Java comprised their rice policy and the impact. This chapter, therefore, wrote to provide a balanced variable to compare with in the conclusion. Was the impact slim as the change itself? Or was it impactful since the VOC managed to get what they want stably for the whole half century?

Even though the study about economic and social state of Java in the second half of 18th century was still scarce, almost all agreed upon one thing: Java in the second half of 18th century was all about being prosper. Peter Carey argued that European reporters, whom notes were his main sources, all agreed that Java was rather prosper around this time. He pointed out, especially, the growing acreage of cultivated land and increased trading activity as the sign.¹ Denys Lombard also agreed to Carey. In addition, he connected Carey's finding with Pigeaud's theory of Renaissance of Mataram by arguing that the prosperity was an inevitable occurrence since it also provoked the vigorous cultural production.² Previously, Pigeaud and his exponents identified the cause of the Renaissance was the Dutch political detention towards the ex-Mataram states.³ Lombard, therefore, complemented it with an economic point of view, making it and the prosperity of Java into strong arguments to counter. The most recent among all, study from Kwee Hui Kian, also pointed out that Javanese nobility's strong stance in contending their rights has resulted in a prosperous situation.⁴

It was easy to conclude that Java in the second half of the 18th century was prosperous, that all classic arguments such as from historian Bernard H.M. Vlekke and D.H. Burgers which

¹ Peter Carey, "Waiting for the 'Just King': The Agrarian World of South-Central Java from Giyanti (1755) to the Java War (1825-1830)," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1986) p. 88.

² Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya 3, Warisan Kerajaan-Kerajaan Konsentris*, (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2005) p. 50.

³ According to Sri Margana, Pigeaud's most important intellectual contribution was the 'renaissance of Javanese literature'. Exponents of this theory were namely Poerbatjaraka, Soebardi, Darsiti Soeratman, Simuh, Drewes, Uhlenbeck and Margana himself. Sri Margana, *Pujangga Jawa dan Bayang-Bayang Kolonial* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2004) p. 46-49, 70.

⁴ Kwee Hui Kian, *The Political Economy of Java's Northeast Coast, c. 1740-1800: Elite Synergy*, TANAP Monographs on the History of Asian-European Interaction ; Vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2006) p. 226-227.

regarded VOC period as all about exploitation and impoverishment was an outdated interpretation, if rice economy of Java was being preserved by VOC's limited intervention.⁵

However, we have learnt in chapter two that VOC's careful approach managed to drain so much. This chapter mostly utilized the VOC sources to see the non-VOC dimension to contribute a new sight to this debate. Problems discussed in this chapter consisted of the decreased income, the disruption on the export market, and the characteristics often regarded as signs of prosperity such as increasing acreage of rice field, population, and attention to art and culture. The result shows that even though VOC's rice policy did not look detrimental, for the Javanese it was a heavy extraction. The explanation that connected such extensive extraction was the resilience of Java's human and natural resources in second half of 18th century. Though it did not cause an immediate damage, VOC's extraction already led to a rapid growth of population and massive land-opening, characteristics which when intensified in 19th century, dragged Java to poverty.

Extracted Surplus

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, VOC turned a blind eye to the whole system of rice economy in Java. In the company's rice collections policies, the scheme only implicated three parties, the cultivators, the *bupati* as tax collector, and the company's personnel.⁶ While for the VOC this resulted in a stable rice delivery, what was the impact for the Javanese? By dismissing the compensation for layers of local officials and bought rice for a very low price, the rice surplus of Java was heavily extracted for nothing.

There were several key agents connected the farmers to the *bupati*. For their service they might have been rewarded with tax-free rice field (*bengkok*), but their share in the delivered rice was just as important as the *bengkok*. From the bottom, the producer mostly consisted of landless farmer. They cultivated the land of the landowning farmers in exchange of living allowance. Landowning farmers had to deliver 3/5 of their harvested rice as tax to the tax farmer in their village called as *bekel*. The *bupati* usually had some junior member of the families who were in charge of managing tax farming from some villages. These junior member also get about 1/5 of the delivered rice. After that then the tax could be delivered to the *bupati* which also took 2/5 share of it before transferred it to the ruler.⁷ Those persons in charge could make the chain even

⁵ D.H. Burger, *Sedjarah Ekonomis Sosiologis Indonesia Jilid I*, (Jakarta: Prandja Paramita d/h J.B. Wolters, 1960) p. 79; Bernard H. M. Vlekke, *Nusantara: sejarah Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia KPG : Freedom Institute ; Balai Pustaka, 2008): 246.

⁶ J. A. van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek, 1602-1811*, Vijfde Deel 1602-1642, Vol. 1. 17 vols. (Batavia: Batavia Landsdrukkerij, 1885) p. 519-520; J.E. Schooneveld-Oosterling, (ed.), *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, Deel 11: 1743-1750*, (The Hague: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 1997), p. 632.

⁷ Carey, *Waiting for the Just King*, p. 76-78.

longer by leasing their farming rights it to somebody else. Since the 17th century, there were already many cases of leasing tax farming rights to the Chinese, even as small as in the village level.⁸ In the year 1796, on the eastern part of Java's Noordoostkust, from Losari to Sidayu, as many as 1134 out of 8585 villages were leased.⁹ Looking at the multilayer brokerage, actually the company's supervision up to the *bupati* level was just pretty much in the surface.

What makes company's policy very detrimental to Java's rice economy was their decision to ignore this multilayer rice brokerage. With the 4-5 *rd*s share of the Bupati, or even when it increased after the price stabilized in 1755, the company only allocated less than 10 *rd*s to be the true price of rice and the brokerage expenditure up to one exact level below the *bupati*.¹⁰ Because of this, very likely, the farmers accepted none at all from the VOC's rice line. We could even imagine a bigger impact as we know that the VOC line was responsible about 45% of Java's total annual rice surplus. The earliest who predicted Java's annual rice surplus was Van Leur in 1962, estimating it to be 12000 koyangs.¹¹ Boomgaard, much later in 1989, did a similar effort. Complementing Van Leur's, he provided several approaches but the result was not significantly different. According to Boomgaard, the surplus was 20000 tons, which also made 5000 koyang or 8750 tons also about 45% of the surplus.¹² Beside estimations from the two historians, we had to put one more variable to the equation. Van Leur and Boomgaard count the surplus of the whole Java, while the VOC asked 5000 *koyangs* only from Java's Noordoostkust who contributed only about 35% of Java's total rice producing area.¹³ Thus, while VOC extraction still cut less than a half of Java's income from rice, it surely cut more than 50% *pasisir*'s income from rice.

Before the VOC, share of rice of the local officials and the yields from their reward rice field in *pasisir* would fill the local market. Local market functioned both as the supplier of local consumption and also an indirect supplier for export. Some experienced exporter could go as deep as to the local market to collect rice in a low price to be exported.¹⁴ Because of the lost share under the VOC, large accumulation of rice below the *bupati* level was not possible anymore. Non-VOC export was very likely could only be done in *bupati* level from the remained quantity after they had delivered 5000 *koyangs* to VOC.

⁸ Nagtegaal, *Riding the Dutch Tiger*, p. 105.

⁹ Kwee, *The Political Economy*, p. 73.

¹⁰ Schooneveld-Oosterling, *Generale missiven 11*. p. 632.

¹¹ Peter Boomgaard, "The Javanese Rice Economy 800-1800" in Hayami Akira, Yoshihiro Tsubouchi (eds.) *Economic and Demographic Development in Rice Producing Societies: Some Aspects of East Asian Economic History, 1500-1900*, Workshop on Economic and Demographic Development in Rice Producing Societies, (Tokyo: 1989) p.331.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 331-333.

¹³ Clifford Geertz, *Involusi Pertanian: Proses Perubahan Ekologi di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Bhatara, 1983) p. 46.

¹⁴ Kwee, *The Political Economy*, p. 25.

Chart 4. Rice economy of *pasisir* before 1743

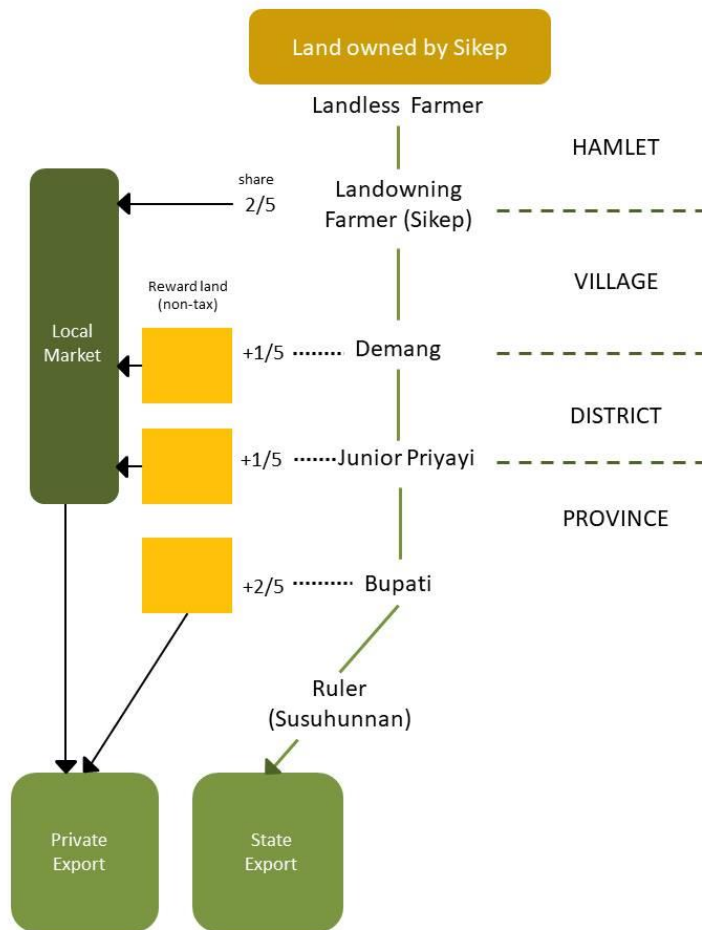
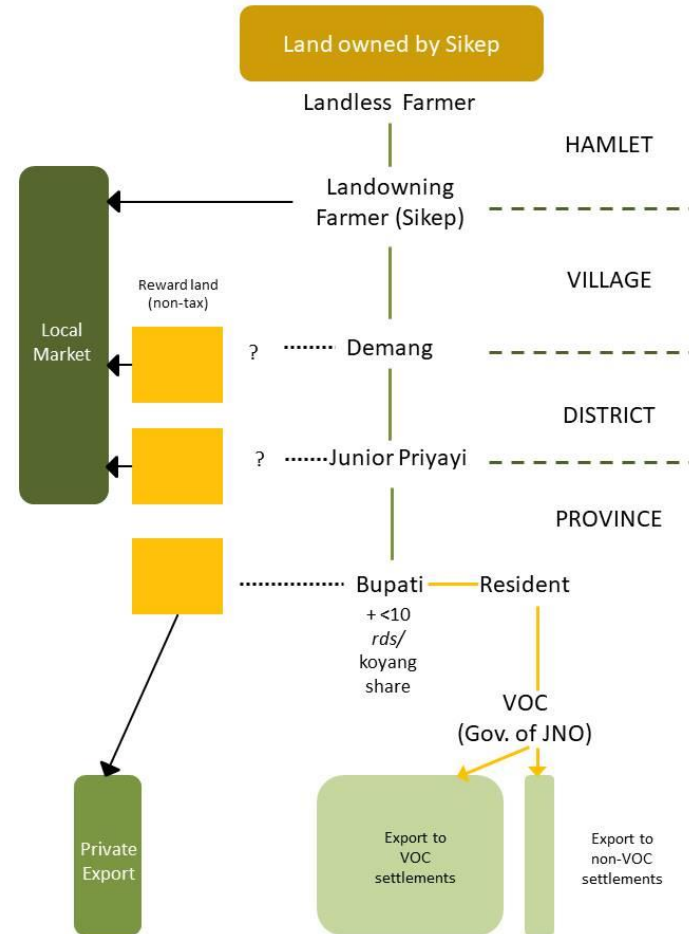
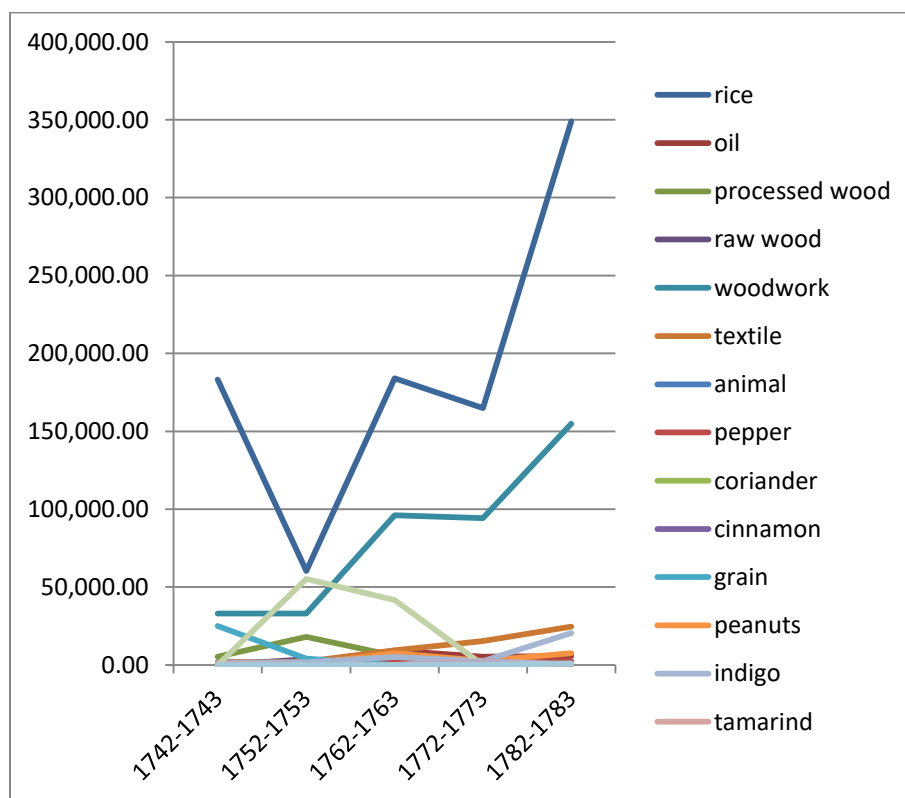


Chart 5. Rice economy of *pasisir* under the VOC



So, how impactful was the diminishing income from rice? Since rice was Java's most important commodity, we could also say that the diminishing income from rice stands for the diminishing total income of Java. In other words, with the same factor of productions involved, Java now could only gain much less of their income compared to before VOC's intervention, still more than half of the initial income in ex-Mataram states, but much less than a half in *pasisir*. The prominence of rice in Java's economy was confirmed by this chart about VOC's export from Java Noordoostkust in the second half of 18th century. In this chart, 5 years in 5 different decades were chosen to represent the whole period. In reading this chart, we have to bear in mind that the company indeed restricted private trade, but it did not result in their total death. The only study talked about non-VOC trades in Java during the VOC era, from Gerrit Knaap, demonstrated many assuring evidences of their liveliness, even shared about 60% of the total turnover of trade in Java.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Knaap's was not yet a strong proposal to illustrate the whole second half of 18th century, because it used materials from around 1775, which means it did not cover hard times when the private trade was banned. Considering the crisis times, this chart at least give a more representative picture of the whole Java's economy.

Chart 6. Value of VOC's export from Java's Noordoostkust 1742-1783



¹⁵ Gerrit Knaap, *Shallow Waters, Rising Tide: Shipping and Trade in Java around 1775* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996) p. 173.

Sources: NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10744, 10777, 10785, 10791, 10797, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1752-53, 1762-63, 1772-73, 1782-83.

On this chart, we can see the importance of rice as it contributed the biggest value. Other commodities known to be as important such as indigo, timber, and textile were still valued far below rice. Moreover, after 1743 the price of rice was plunged.¹⁶ If we put the price variable into equation, by simulating as if the price was just as high as before 1743, the value of rice for the year 1752-1753 to 1782-1783 could reach at least two-fold of its current number. This fact strengthened rice's cultivation and trade as Java's main economy. So when half of rice surplus was extracted for almost nothing, the total income of Java also experienced a significant decrease.

For half a century of its rule in Java's Noordoostkust, VOC managed to drain 4900 koyangs annually, which was almost equal to half of the island's total surplus. In making sure that this scheme would go as planned, they indulged the *bupatis* but ignoring the rest of the system. Rice economy of Java was a gigantic machine composed by thousands of Javanese from cultivators, landowners, intermediaries, administrators, ruler, to traders who shipped it to the overseas consumer. Because the VOC replaced the ruler and *bupatis*, whom they collaborated with, were of a complete function from being the highest level of administrator, the ruler figure in the *pasisir*¹⁷, and had their loyalists to make everything went smooth, it worked. But, VOC's ignorance over the rest of the scheme was like leaving them to work for nothing. Since rice was Java's number one commodity, this undeniably cut a considerable amount of Java's income. Because their rice exploitation was concentrated on *pasisir*, the income lost there was even heavier. This study estimates more than 50%.

Disrupted Export Market

Within the island, it might seem that the VOC did nothing influential towards the rice economy besides extracting half of its surplus. The contrasting occurrence happened outside the island. Java was an exporter, so the island was only responsible for production. Half of the economy located outside, comprising layers of traders connected Java with its actual market overseas. Regarding this other half of the economy, even though the VOC did not aim to master all Java's

¹⁶ NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10774, 10775, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1742-43, 1750-51.

¹⁷ In *pasisir*, *bupati*'s authority was more present than that of the actual ruler in the court capital. See Luc Nagtegaal, *Riding the Dutch Tiger: The Dutch East Indies Company and the Northeast Coast of Java 1680-1743*, Verhandelingen van Het Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde 171 (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996) p. 9-10; H.J. De Graaf, "De Regenten van Semarang ten tijde van de VOC, 1682-1809", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 134, no. 2/3, (1978) p. 296.

rice markets, their policies still disrupted it a lot. The disruption inevitably hindered Java from generating more income with its remaining rice.

Until before the coming of the VOC, Java's rice had been functioning as the connector of the spice trade in between Maluku and Malaka. Both Maluku and Malaka were short in rice. Javanese traders, therefore, fetched spices in Maluku in exchange of their rice. They also provided spices for traders from far away so that they did not need to venture further to the spice island themselves. Even when traders wanted to venture to Maluku themselves, they needed to stop in Java to restock their ransom, which surely also included rice. Java was also a rice provider for Malaka, from which they got luxuries product from far away such as Chinese porcelain and Indian cloth in turn.¹⁸ These luxuries were in high demand among Javanese's traders and ruler who got rich from all of these rice businesses.¹⁹

Under the VOC, Ambon, Banda, which were two of the Maluku islands, and Malaka stayed a loyal consumer of Javanese rice, but the transaction, especially for Ambon and Banda, was now hardly profitable for Java. Malaka was still open for non-VOC rice trade, but as we know, with all the embargoes and trade restrictions, the freedom of non-VOC trade was to some extent artificial. We shall shortly be back to the non-VOC rice trade, but first we have to dive deeper to the case of Banda and Ambon. Banda and Ambon were substantial markets before the VOC came. This claim however, is hard to measure in number, but it can be proven with the story of Islamization in Maluku. Java's most important sultanate, Demak, was a rice exporter *cum* center of Islamic studies. The relation once built upon frequent rice transactions was then paved the way for Islam to reach Maluku in the 16th century.²⁰ From the previous sub-chapter about the extraction, we can conclude that the VOC's line of rice trade gave almost none to the Javanese. That makes the Javanese now had no income from Ambon and Banda. Even when private trade was still allowed to be directed to those destinations, the chance was minimal because they had to compete with VOC's pressed price. The rice price VOC applied in Ambon and Banda was a first-hand price. Because of this, VOC's acquisition of these important markets was inevitably a great loss for Java's rice economy.

Even though on the paper VOC claimed they approved non-VOC rice trade from Java, it could only happened under a condition, that 5000 *koyangs* rice supply to the company had been firstly fulfilled. To be able to control when non-VOC traders allowed exporting rice from Java, the VOC issued trading pass. In the time of crisis, the VOC would not give any pass. Because of that, rice transactions between private traders from Java and overseas customers were in fact very much restrained. It has long been a *passé* to conclude that the VOC completely dominated the whole territory within their two centuries career in the archipelago. VOC's strongest

¹⁸ J.C. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (The Hague: Van Hoeve, 1967) p. 128.

¹⁹ Boomgaard, *Rice Economy*, p. 322.

²⁰ Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade*, p. 143

existence occurred only in Banten, Cirebon, Batavia, and Java's Noordoostkust.²¹ Besides that, the company might have trading posts and some monopoly contracts here and there, but many states remained a thriving power. As many states did not produce rice, they actually made a potential market for the private traders, but VOC's policies hindered the mutualism, first by taking half of the surplus for its settlement, and second by embargoing those markets during the bad harvests.

As an example, we could look at Palembang and Banjarmasin. According to Ricklefs, Palembang was one of powerful states in the western part of the archipelago at that time, economically and politically.²² After being liberated from Mataram in the late 17th century, Palembang was more economically advanced. Their income was generated from tin export. However just like its ancient predecessor, Sriwijaya, Palembang had no sufficient rice-producing hinterland.²³ Intensive rice cultivation involving permanently irrigated field was just started there under the British in the 19th century.²⁴ This made Palembang a loyal customer to Java and in the 18th century to Siam.²⁵ Their need of rice was probably also one of determining factors in its prior subjugation to Mataram. Under the VOC, they still bought rice from Java regularly both through VOC and non-VOC line. On the drought crisis in 1763-1764, the Sultan of Palembang reported that his warehouse was almost empty.²⁶ This indicated that they could not buy rice from VOC and private traders. Therefore, the sultan requested an exceptional pass despite the company's embargo, so that they could exchange their tin with rice from private traders in Java again.²⁷ The company at the end disapproved the pass but selling Palembang 100 koyangs from their stock for an exceptionally expensive price and under a condition that during good times, Palembang should buy rice from the company instead of Siam.²⁸ Likewise, the BGB record also hinted that Banjarmasin experienced restrictions in buying rice from Java. Before the VOC, they were also prominent importer of Java's rice. It was even more clearly in Banjarmasin case, since their relation with Java in the Majapahit era was shaped by Banjarmasin's dependence of Java's rice.²⁹ Within the six decades of VOC's domination in Java's Noordoostkust, there were only 11 VOC voyages bringing rice to Banjarmasin.³⁰

²¹ Knaap, *Shallow Waters*, p. 11.

²² M.C. Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern 1200-2008* (Jakarta: Serambi, 2008) p. 143.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Jurg Schneider, *From upland to irrigated rice; The development of wet-rice agriculture in Rejang Musi, Southwest Sumatra* (Berlin: Reimer, 1995) p. 40-41

²⁵ NA: VOC, 1.04.02, no. 795, Copy of resolutions of the Governor General and the councils, 25 October 1765, book 3, p. 119-121.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Ann Kumar, "Sailing the Map: A re-examination of constructs of Javanese-ness in the light of new evidence", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, Vol. 34, No. 98 (2006), p. 23.

³⁰ NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10774 -10809, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1742-1801.

Though VOC's rice export ignored local potential market, if we concentrated more on the development of the network, rice from Java actually traveled further and in greater quantity in this period. At a glance, this seemed contrasting one of Gerrit Knaap's conclusions, which said VOC's intervention dwarfed Javanese trade, turned it into short distance trade carried mostly by small ships.³¹ The rice VOC collected from Java's Noordoostkust, after gathered in Batavia, was exported to many of VOC's settlements. The most frequent, 132 shipping within six decades, was to Ceylon. Ceylon was then followed by Japan with 58 shipping, Cape Town 54 shipping, and China 36 shipping.³² Beside those dominant destinations, there were also some with less than 15 shipping such as Bengal, Malabar, Coromandel, and Surat.³³ In fact, it did not go against Knaap. Knaap's focus was more on the survivability of non-VOC trade. For the non-VOC, which mostly consisted of the Javanese, this new destinations brought no profit. VOC's export to those far away destinations delegated Dutch ships and relied upon VOC personnel so when they collapsed, the network could not be inherited by the locals.

When there was a new promising market, VOC's restrictions made Java failed to respond. This happened in the case of demand from Ming China. The event Anthony Reid claimed to be the stimulation for second phase of Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia, failed to stimulate Java's rice export.³⁴ According to Reid and Atsushi Ota, rice was in fact one of the desired product by the prosperous and populous Ming China.³⁵ Nonetheless, instead of Java, China mostly get the rice from Manila, Saigon, Bangkok, Bali, and Lombok.³⁶ Bali and Lombok were indeed produced rice, but before 18th century, they mostly exported their rice to Java, for then Java became the outlet for their rice to reach further destinations since most people knew Java better as rice producer than them.³⁷ The Chinese demand carried by mostly experienced Chinese traders who already knew well the map of products in the archipelago.³⁸ They knew how to avoid VOC's high price and unstable private rice supply from Java. The VOC did conduct some export to its post in Canton, but seeing from the small volume, only averagely 6 koyangs per voyage, very likely, that was merely destined for the consumption of VOC's personnel.³⁹

³¹ Knaap, *Shallow Waters*, p. 177.

³² NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10774 -10809, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1742-1801.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Anthony Reid, "New Phase of Commercial Expansion in Southeast Asia, 1760-1850", *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: responses to modernity in the diverse states of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1750-1900* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997) p. 70

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Atsushi Ota, "Transformation of the Maritime world in the Indonesian Archipelago, 1500-1800." In Christian Buchet (ed.), *The Sea in History, Vol. 3: The Early Modern World* (Suffolk and Rochester: Boydell & Brewer, 2017) p. 587.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Armando Cortesão, *Suma Oriental of Tome Pires Volume I* (New York: Routledge, 2010) p. 197.

³⁸ Reid, *New Phase*, p. 70-71.

³⁹ NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10774 -10809, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1742-1801.

Even though had to deal with VOC's disruption of their market, indigenous traders did not gone at all. Instead, they adapted themselves by compressing their trading capacity. From an intra-Asian trade indigenous trade shrunk to only intra-insular by maximum, and that in the place of big vessels, indigenous trade now was dominated by small boats.⁴⁰ However, once VOC's restrictions lifted, it seemed that however small their scale was, these traders immediately ready to bounce back. In the 1780s, the VOC was busy with the Anglo-Dutch war so they mobilized big vessels they usually used in transporting rice from Java's Noordoostkust to Batavia for the war.⁴¹ This was then ended with their complete shutdown in 1796. The BGB had no surviving record for the important decade of 1790s, disabling us to see how this important shift affected the rice trade. However, the record somehow managed to be produced until 1801. Though the two last available records were only from the year 1789-1790 and 1800-1801, we can still get some clue about how the lifting up of VOC's restrictions impacted Java's rice trade. Those two sources reveals that in 1800-1801, rice shipping from *Java's Noordoostkust* was replaced by smaller indigenous ships with average value of load less than 5000 Dutch guilders and its intensity of shipping increased by three-fold.⁴² The destinations were also different than the previous decade. In this year, rice from Java was exported to none of VOC settlements beside Batavia. Instead, it was exported to some used to be neglected local destinations such as Banjarmasin, Timor, and Pamanukan.⁴³ This finding confirmed Van Leur's conjecture about the reviving Asian trade for a short period in the early 19th century because the constructions of big-capacity vessels by Chinese in Batavia he brought up from Van Hogendorp's report was likely to be the respond to the disappearance of VOC ships.⁴⁴

Table 2. Comparison between 1789-90 and 1800-01

	1789-1790	1800-1801
Vessels*	32 large Dutch Ships, 6 small Dutch ships, 1 indigenous ship	16 large Dutch ships, 39 small Dutch ships, 61 indigenous ships
Destinations	Batavia, Ceylon, Banten, Ambon, Cape Town, Timor, Makassar, Banda, Ternate, Malaka, Malabar	Batavia, Pamanukan, Cirebon, Banten, Timor, Banjarmasin
Voyages	39	116

⁴⁰ NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10809, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1800-01; confirmed Gerrit Knaap, *ShallowWaters*, p. 177.

⁴¹ Kwee, *The Political Economy*, p229.

⁴² NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10809, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1800-01.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade*, p. 283.

*) Large Dutch ships = value of load > 5000 Dutch guilders
 Small Dutch ships = value of load <5000 Dutch guilders
 Counted by voyages, so some ships were used more than once

Source: NA: BGB, 1.04.18.02, no. 10800, 10809, General ledger held by the Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia brought for the Zeeland chamber, 1789-90, 1800-01.

VOC's aim to concentrate only in supplying their settlements turned out also disrupted Java's rice market. The disruption happened in three ways. First, by acquiring Maluku, one of Java's most important rice export destination. Second, they mobilized the surplus for far away markets that brought no profit or enhancement for the Javanese traders. Lastly, the company limited the non-VOC export so that the loyal customers started to reach other supplier as in Palembang reaching Siam and so that new customers relied on other supplier as in China depended on Bali and Lombok. These disruptions in export market made it harder for the Javanese to acquire profit with the remained rice on their hand.

False signs of prosperity

“There are few countries where the mass of the population are so well fed as on Java. There are only few of the natives who can't obtain their *kati* of rice a day with fish, greens, and salt, if not other articles to season their meal... Famine is unknown and although partial failures of crop may occur, they are seldom so extensive as to be general felt by the whole community.”

(Raffles, 1817:99)

As mentioned in the introductory part of this chapter, most existing studies agreed with that remark from Raffles that Java was prosperous in this period. It provoked a question. If up to this point all signs pointed more clearly to poverty, how can this prosperity happened? Instead of signs of prosperity, this part argued that the growing acreage of rice field, growing population, and the growing attention to art and culture which often synonymized with prosperity were also signs of poverty, depend on where it happened.

The most common explanation behind Java's prosperity in the late 18th century was the preserved peace.⁴⁵ As what has been discussed in the second chapter, the peace happened because each powerful party in Java finally realized that this way they could get more money than by acquiring vast territory through an expensive war. Because of the peace, the *bupatis* in the *pasisir* and *apanage* holders in the ex-Mataram states got a chance to widen their arable land

⁴⁵ Carey, Kwee, Lombard, and Ricklefs emphasized on the peace factor. See Peter Carey, *Waiting for the just King*; Kwee, *The Political Economy*; Lombard, *Nusa Jawa 3*; Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi, 1749-1792: Sejarah Pembagian Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Matabangsa, 2002).

which later provoked population growth.⁴⁶ In *pasisir* it was mostly for rice, but in the ex-Mataram states the call came from cash-crops.⁴⁷ The cash-crops cultivation was an even more promising opportunity than rice because it was continued until the 19th and 20th century.⁴⁸ Peter Carey identified this prosperity as one of the push-factors of the Java War. The prosperous and strongly established nobility in Java refused to be controlled by the colonial state.⁴⁹ Their prosperity made them brave enough to start a war. Denys Lombard connected prosperity with the massive production of art and culture in this period, also known as Renaissance of Mataram.⁵⁰ He said it was evident that this scale of work had to be supported by an adequate funding.⁵¹ Nevertheless, these studies failed to distinguished different conditions experienced by different parts of Java.

It seemed to me that the prosperity theory was south-central Java centric. Carey is an expert in Yogyakarta, particularly in Diponegoro. His paper *Waiting for the Just King* which could be regarded as the most comprehensive study of the social-economy of late 18th century Java was built upon an effort to know the root of Diponegoro's movements in early 19th century.⁵² His sources therefore consisted mostly by reports of Europeans who were in the ex-Mataram states such as Raffles, Crawfurd, van Ijsseldijk, and M. Waterloo.⁵³ Lombard, though talking about Java in general, mostly cited Carey's studies.⁵⁴ The situation seemed to be different in *pasisir* area. Since 1743, from the region which hosted about 35% of Java's rice-producing area was sucked 50% of total Java's rice surplus. The extraction might not yet bring them to a crisis level in this period, but it hindered them to be as prosper as their comrades in the ex-Mataram states. Kwee Hui Kian, though at a glance seemed to be a supporter of the prosperity theory, concluded prosperity in *pasisir* under one condition, that it seemingly took place on the top layer of society.⁵⁵

The increasing acreage of cultivated land functioned differently in ex-Mataram states and in *pasisir*. The growing acreage was provable because in the early 19th century, the land of

⁴⁶ Carey, *Waiting for the Just King*, p. 91-103.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Vincent J.H. Houben, *Keraton dan Kompeni: Surakarta dan Yogyakarta, 1830-1870* (Yogyakarta: Bentang, 2002).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18-25.

⁵⁰ Renaissance of Mataram often referred specifically to massive production of the new, and revivalism of the classic in Javanese literature. However, Lombard did not specifically point at that. His chapter titled "Renaissance of Mataram" was referring to all kinds of classical Javanese element from before 14th century, which was revived again in Mataram since the late 16th century without specifying on art and culture. Identifying Renaissance of Mataram as all movements in art and culture within my period is my decision because literature was also a part of art and culture and further than that, there were evident activities in art and culture further than literature.

⁵¹ Lombard, *Nusa Jawa 3*, p. 50.

⁵² Carey, *Waiting for the Just King*, p. 65-67.

⁵³ Van Ijsseldijk was the resident of Yogyakarta from 1783 to 1789; Matthias Waterloo was the resident of Yogyakarta from 1803 to 1808; Raffles visited the ex-Mataram states in 1811 with the company of John Crawfurd who was also the resident of Yogyakarta since 1811.

⁵⁴ Lombard, *Nusa Jawa 3*, p. 47-50.

⁵⁵ Kwee, *The Political Economy*, p. 200.

landowner farmers grew five-fold within these sixty years.⁵⁶ However, though it might lead to a growing income in the ex-Mataram states, in *pasisir*, it had to first compensate the lost income caused by VOC's rice extraction and market disruption. According to interviews Crawford did to some landowning farmers in Kedu and Pacitan, which was part of ex-Mataram states, the family felt grateful because their life was much better than their fellow in the company's territory. Under the company, because of the obligatory rice delivery, the people were not free to plant anything they want, so they could not respond to the growing demand of cash crops.⁵⁷ The *bupatis*, in order to meet the company's requirement and generate more money by private trading, pushed the farmer to plant rice.⁵⁸ The landowning farmer was the executor of this command because they were the ones who were in immediate contact with the source of labor: the landless farmer. The increasing acreage of arable land of an established landowning farmer meant increasing tax for them to pay. By this of course those landowning farmers, as well as every layer of bureaucrat above them up to *bupati*, would get a chance to compensate their decreased income.

The opening of new rice field in the second half of the 18th century was advance in quantity but not in quality. Rouffaer noted that the land was mostly cleared and turned into rice field with a family based labor.⁵⁹ For me, this hinted a use of a simple technology, because that way, there was no need of person with some sort of special competence. This guess, nonetheless, echoed Boomgaard's finding that rice field at this time grew towards less productive area because the expansion was uncalculated.⁶⁰ Actually, according to Boomgaard, since the beginning, rice cultivation was possible to be carried by small amount of labor so the state's intervention was not really needed, as long as it only aimed for personal consumption. However, great amount of labor force and technological advancement were crucial when what aimed was export-scale productivity.⁶¹ Majapahit were eager in agricultural investment because they aimed for surplus to be exported.⁶² When we put Setten van Der Meer into the discussion, who proposed that Java's rice cultivation technology experience no advancement, and instead tended to be degraded in the VOC era, this family based expansion could be one of the reasons.⁶³

⁵⁶ Carey, *Waiting for the Just King*, p. 85.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ This according to Carey, was a strong counter argument to Wittfogel's thesis of hydraulic society. Different from Wittfogel's posits on the central role of state in rice business management, these farmers in late 18th century Java depended more on their own little groups in carrying such tasks. *Ibid.*, p.87-88.

⁶⁰ Boomgaard, *Rice Economy*, p.341.

⁶¹ Wet rice field was actually a human modified system which would yield much and more stably but also required a much bigger amount of manpower than dry land cultivation. When compared in math, dry land cultivation actually required lesser factors of productions in yielding the same amount of rice. Thus, while wet rice cultivation boosts the production, it also boosts a need of labor in a much higher speed. *Ibid.*

⁶² Rahardjo, *Peradaban Jawa*, p.358.

⁶³ Setten van der Meer, *Sawah Cultivation*, p. vii.

Increased cultivated land instead caused massive deforestation. There was a growing attention to deforestation in the early 19th century.⁶⁴

For the landless farmer in *pasisir*, the most prevailing effect of the command to cultivate more land was the increased work load. The population was increased because among landless farmer, procreation was seen as a way of getting more help with the work. Children were regarded as a substantial labor contributor at that time. When the pressure started to feel unbearable, they would escape it by open their own land, work in the ports, be an outlaw, or move to neighboring district with a nicer ruler.⁶⁵ The case of marginal employment and moving into a nicer district seemed to be the most chosen in the *pasisir*. First, because *pasisir* was where the trading spots where manual labors were in high demand. Secondly, even though the population of Java was reported everywhere to be increasing, compared to the width of the island it was still far from populous. Therefore, manpower was still a more important production factor than land. In the time of bad harvest, or simply when to them was burdened excessive work load, it was possible for an entire village to disappear and joined other districts under a more favorable requirements.⁶⁶

The limited manpower caused Javanese nobles both in ex-Mataram states and *pasisir* started to accessorize themselves with lavish attributes and customs like never before. Even though was driven by different motives, the agriculture economy grew rapidly both in ex-Mataram states and in *pasisir* during this period. Thus, every head of region, be it a state, a regency, or a district, suddenly needed to convince people that they were capable in ensuring their welfare by showing that they were rich. In local sources from 1636, it was already mentioned that nobles functioned as the flower of the eye for the commoners.⁶⁷ In the early nineteenth century, this was taken into the next level. A work from Yasadipura II, *Sasana Sunu*, detailed every regime of a *priyayi* (nobles) and acted as a guide for every *priyayi* in Java.⁶⁸ At this time, hierarchy in Javanese language started to be strictly implemented.⁶⁹ Further than only governing way of life, crucial need of legitimation also expressed in literature with a massive production of the new and reproduction of the classical Javanese text.⁷⁰ All in all, these are what Lombard called as Renaissance of Mataram.

Instead of signs of prosperity, growing acreage of cultivated area and population were actually patterns further in the 19th century led to poverty. During these few last decades of 18th

⁶⁴ Massive deforestation which appeared in many European's reports was in Jambu (border between ex-Mataram and pasisir), Grobogan (pasisir), and pacitan (ex-Mataram). Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa 3*, p. 47.

⁶⁵ Carey, *Waiting for the Just King*, p. 83.

⁶⁶ Kwee, *The Political Economy*, p. 145-146.

⁶⁷ "Peraturan nama-nama gelar atau pangkat bagi keluarga patih raja dan para pejabat lainnya seperti wadana, kaliwon, panewu, mantra, dan pejabat lain sederajat" dalam Sri Margana, *Kraton Surakarta dan Yogyakarta, 1769-1874* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2004) p. 14.

⁶⁸ Ann Kumar, *Sailing the Map*, p. 24; additionally, legitimation was also done by marriage; Kwee Hui Kian, *The Political Economy*, p. 146, 148.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Sri Margana, *Pujangga Jawa dalam Bayang-Bayang Kolonial* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2004) p. 45-49.

century, *pasisir*'s population was increasing at an annual rate of 1%.⁷¹ Though it was not as rapidly as in 19th century, it was much higher than Asian and global average which were only 0.4 and 0.5%.⁷² As the population grew, more of the green area was cleared to feed them. In the late 19th century, land lease for cash-crops cultivation in the ex-Mataram states had grown into land lease for gigantic plantation. The obligatory deliveries in the *pasisir* were intensified through the Cultivation System. The bureaucracy was taken over by the colonial government, and to be able to really manage a system processing the whole territory, it was rationalized. Further on, they also needed to build infrastructure for the sake of the business. The cost for the swelling bureaucracy and infrastructure burdened the common Javanese with more taxes.⁷³ Opening a new land was no more a choice since Java had been cramped by plantations. Running away was harder as most landless Javanese were now "formally employed" by plantations.⁷⁴ The only escape ways left, being a marginal labor and being a criminal became more popular. Lastly, for the Javanese with lands, it became impossible to expand when their family wouldn't stop grew in number. Seeing from this point of view, Clifford Geert's "agricultural involution" seems to be still very relevant.

Second half of the 18th century gave a different story to the *pasisir* and the ex-Mataram states. The *pasisir*, whose main economy was rice export, was exploited a lot by the seemed-to-be-insignificant VOC's rice policy. Because of the VOC, their income was severely decreased. Therefore, it is strange to see increasing population, acreage of rice field and cultural activity as signs of prosperity in *pasisir*. The growing population and increasing rice field might lead to increasing income in the ex-Mataram states, but they were only ways to compensate the diminishing income for the *pasisir*. The enterprising attention towards art and culture, also in a way, rather than the effect of the more money possessed by the nobles, was a helping instrument for them to collect more money.

Conclusion

In general, VOC might contributed only a little change to the existing system of rice economy in Java but the impact of their insignificant intervention was serious. Since rice was Java's most important commodity, VOC's extraction over half surplus and their rice traffic alteration

⁷¹ M.C. Ricklefs, *Some Statistical Evidence, on Javanese Social, Economic and Demographic History in the Later Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (1986) p. 30.

⁷² 19th century Java's annual population growth rate was about 1.25 to 1.6 %; Peter Boomgaard, *Children of the Colonial State: Population Growth and Economic Development in Java, 1795-1880* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1989) p. 1-2.

⁷³ In the early 20th century, from about the average cash income f39 of a commoner Javanese, f16 had to be spared for tax. J.S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939) p. 234.

⁷⁴ Landless farmer which composed about 40% of the population were the source of plantation workers in the late 19th century. See Hiroyoshi Kano, *Indonesian Exports, Peasant Agriculture and the World Economy 1850-2000: Economic Structures in a Southeast Asian State* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008) p.299, 302.

decreased a considerable amount of Java's income. What often mentioned as signs of prosperity was actually the strategy to compensate the diminished income.

The income decreased because VOC extracted 5000 *koyangs* of rice, which constituted about 45% of the total surplus of Java without proper compensation and disrupted the export market. Even worse, the 45% of surplus was extracted from *pasisir* only, which owned just 35% of total rice producing area in Java. This made the lost income from rice in *pasisir* was more than 50%. Though non-VOC was still allowed in trading rice, there were many constraints about this policy namely: the 5000 *koyangs* obligatory supply had to be fulfilled first; it was banned during the time of crisis; and the VOC also disrupted the overseas markets. It acquired Banda and Ambon; limited supply to Java's loyal customers such as Palembang, Banjarmasin, and Malaka; and closed the opportunity for Java to acquire new customers such as China. The unstable supply of rice in non-VOC line also shrunk rice trade from Java into short distance trade carried by small vessels.

The claim stating Java was prosperous applied only at certain location. Many of the data illustrating a well fed society and grand court capitals were actually reports about the ex-Mataram states, particularly Yogyakarta. Different with the *pasisir*, at this time they did not have the obligatory delivery of 5000 *koyangs* rice and already started to involve in the lucrative cash-crops. The case became a bit tricky if the prosperity was connected to the increasing acreage of land, increasing population, and increasing attention to art and culture for these all could be found in the *pasisir* as well. In the ex-Mataram states, the opening of new land and increasing population might be resulted in a growing income since they did not have to make up the 50% lost income as in the *pasisir*. In the *pasisir*, they were more of a strategy to compensate the loss. Even the growing attention to art and culture, instead of a lavish lifestyle from the prosperity, was more of a tool to convince the commoners to stay with their current ruler so that they would not escape somewhere else when the work load increased. Rather than signs of prosperity, growing acreage and population even though have yet hit the dangerous level, actually already invested a lot for many crises that came later in the 19th century.

Conclusion

While as *homo economicus* human always wanted to get as much as they can with the slightest endeavor, it is the very law of nature to give only what one has sown. Even thousands years ago, when our ancestors were still foraging, it was not really only a reaping without sowing. The seeds of fruits they ate would grow into a new plant within years, and at that time the low population density still allow nature to rejuvenate that way. As the population grew, human had to work hard so that they could sustain the nature while fulfilling their needs. Constant exploitation will only lead to an unsustainable future. If I was asked what has been done by VOC to the rice economy of Java in short, the answer is they skipped the hard work, they reap without ever sown.

This study confirmed what has been proposed by Gerrit Knaap and Kwee Hui Kian, that seen from their policies, VOC's intervention to the rice economy of Java was insignificant. Even though they secured the chance to control rice economy of Java, they primarily just ask 5000 *koyangs* of rice delivery annually to be sent to their settlement, for as long as their authority valid, and barely change the system besides placing their residents on the side of *bupati* to receive the rice and monitor the rice flow. It looked like a missed opportunity because VOC's control over *pasisir* was in fact was a serious deal. By this, they now possessed over 50% of rice producing area in Java. In addition to the insignificant intervention, rice was even the only commodity under VOC's concern which was allowed to be traded by non-VOC.

However, VOC's minimal intervention was a deliberate decision to get rice as much and as cheap as they could. They did not change the system because it was cheaper that way. Since the war ended in 1743 made VOC learnt a valuable lesson about how to balance the powers in Java, they managed to get what they want, stably, throughout their reign. As long as VOC kept the influential players which were *pasisir's* *bupatis*, rulers of ex-Mataram states, and the Chinese satisfied, VOC's favor would be done smoothly. Hence, from the 5000 *koyangs* the VOC asked, delivery from 1755 to 1800 reached the average of 4900 *koyangs*, only 100 *koyangs* short. The figure is even more impressive when we put Java's total rice surplus as context. 5000 *koyangs* made about 45% of it. For that amount of rice, VOC managed to make the power holder agreed upon a very low price, which was 12,5 *rd*s/ *koyang*, only one fourth of the price before 1743. This price experienced adjustments in 1743-1755, but the raise after 1755 was not high. They only made it into 16 *rd*s. Just as the quantity, this 16 *rd*s, which was about one third of the normal price, was maintained until the end of the century. With this approach, their only expenditure would be to indulge the key players, and it undeniably way more economical than reconstruct the whole system.

VOC's decision not to reconstruct the rice economy might also be driven by its unfavorable financial condition in the mid-18th century. VOC had records of success in

managing agricultural production in Priangan and Maluku. Considering rice as the main commodity of Java and that now it was in their hand, it was actually possible to make another agricultural project. Instead, VOC's hands did not touch rice any further. They did not invest in agricultural advancement, so the increase or decrease of production was completely off their hands. When there were signs of shortage, they will immediately canceled licenses of non-VOC exporter and embargoed places besides Batavia, Ambon, and Banda. How VOC had no control over the production was reflected in how often they issued embargoes. When there was a shortage, such as in 1763, the furthest the VOC could go was to conduct inspection. Another proof that they did not invested at all in the production was when they completely unaware of the raising supply in mid-1781 so that they still issued embargo in the middle of the year. This also affects how the VOC directed the rice from *pasisir*. If they aimed to monetize rice as in the case of coffee and spices, they would have to invest because hereby they aimed for a larger surplus. With this approach they only directed rice to their settlements instead of selling it to everyone capable to pay. While at a glance this plan might seem not profitable, it also could be seen as a free capital for the VOC Empire, so that the profit they made could be sent directly to the Netherlands without being cut too much for operational cost.

While seen from their policy the VOC was unambitious about regulating rice in Java, this study does not agree to conclude that Java was prosperous because of this fact as Lombard, Kwee, Knaap, and van Leur. Despite the insignificance, the impact of VOC's rice policy was devastating for the Javanese, especially in the *pasisir*. In the treaty of 1743, the 5000 *koyangs* of rice asked came only from *pasisir*. Even though *pasisir* was the most important rice producing area, the amount it produced was still only about 35 % of total Java's production. So, if 5000 *koyangs* of rice was half of Java's surplus, it was definitely more than 50% for the *pasisir*. Therefore, the non-VOC traders permitted to sell rice did not sell rice from *pasisir*. Most likely, they sold hinterland's rice because hinterland was the second largest rice producer in Java and in the second half of 18th century, even though they started to make room for cash crops, rice was still their main export. Moreover, from the 16 *koyangs* price VOC paid, about more than one third was allocated to be the commission of *bupati* alone. The rest supposed to be the cultivator's price according to the company, when there's actually a multilayer bureaucrat ready to claim their share too, so the cultivator most likely received none at all. In short, VOC rice extraction drained more than 50% of *pasisir*'s income.

VOC might saw the permission for non-VOC traders to still sell rice as a compensation so the rice economy of Java still have a bit of rejuvenation chance. In practice, it was far from enough because the permissive policy was canceled in a time of shortage. The remaining market has also been changed. Those used to be the most important, Malaka and Maluku, were now under VOC's hands. While the rice extracted by VOC was exported to VOC's settlement, mostly Batavia, Ambon, Banda, but also quite regular to Ceylon, Nagasaki, the Cape, and Canton, the usual nearby market such as Banjarmasin and Palembang was neglected. They could buy from the non-VOC traders, also from VOC when the supply was good, but in crisis time, they would

be completely ignored. This unstable supply in the side of non-VOC rice trader caused the popularity of Java as rice exporter went down, so that their position was replaced by Makassar, Lombok, and Bali.

The burden which was levied to the *pasisir* made the ex-Mataram states more economically free. They could start being involved in cash crops cultivation and fulfilling the non-VOC quota of rice export. This is why many contemporary reports and studies using it concluded second half of 18th century as a prosperous time in Java. However, it is misleading to use it to represent the whole Java. The *pasisir* who bear the continuous extraction of 5000 koyangs rice clearly had a different fortune than the hinterland states. This is why in *pasisir* the increase in rice surplus was acquired through frugal and ineffective family-based extensification, which was the method used in the Indo-Javanese period before they moved to East Java in 10th century. Because of this reckless extensification, the population and deforestation of Java increased rapidly. In the same time, surplus also did not rise equally rapid because their rice field reached unproductive area. Those are the hard work Javanese rice cultivator in *pasisir* had to do for the result harvested by VOC.

Before VOC, though rice was managed by various style of polity, all paid just as much attention to the welfare of people and nature, as to the surplus and profit. The Indo-Javanese state might implemented state monopoly and erased individual property rights, but the rulers also took their subject's prosperity as duty. When they aimed for an increased surplus they invest more through agricultural project, territorial expansion through subjugation, territorial expansion through opening forest, and improvement of the bureaucracy to be more accommodative and effective. The coastal cities, though seemed did not involve much in the hinterland business, implemented a free trade that provoked advancement through competition. In Mataram period, as a response to the disintegration of Indian Ocean trade, they attempted to move the political center to the hinterland, and turned rice once again to be a state's asset as in Indo-Javanese era. Unfortunately, this did not work and instead caused many wars that did not allow Mataram to develop their agriculture.

Did this study then, just side with Bernard Vlekke and D.H. Burger and invert back the development in the historiography of Java's economy during the VOC period into a story of devastating exploitation? This study did agreed more to the classical stream, but instead of a conjecture, it is based on the exploration towards VOC's sources. Because of that, this study also able to confirm that the second stream, the one that emphasized on local agent's viability and prosperity was correct to some extent. Instead of inverting, this study just brings another unavoidable case of exploitation to the historiography. At the same time, it also urges any study of indigenous economy during the VOC period, whether it argues that VOC exploited or the indigenous strived, to be sensitive to the variety of experience in different places, as in the approach proposed by G.J. Resink. In his piece *Indonesia's History between the Myths*, Resink pointed out that local experience about VOC's dominance varied and it is important to be critical

towards the variation because if not we believe in a myth instead of history. In this study, even a single island Java was living several degrees of domination and independence at once.

This study goes with the first stream in exposing exploitation, not in agreeing that the exploitation immediately taken away Java's commerciality. The problem that made them poor was limited income because of the extraction. With workload as heavy and income as low as in *pasisir*, they lost their chance to try their luck in cash crops and to organized a well-calculated advancement. This is why I did not agree with Boomgaard that rice was immune to the economy of scale and inherently involutional, at least up to the point we reach in this study. The game changing agricultural advancement of the Indo-Javanese period, or the commercial advancement of the Coastal Cities period, was attained through a well-directed surplus. The deterioration in rice economy of Java, especially *pasisir*, was caused by the absence of chance to recover from the one and a half century long Mataram's wars and to grow. In ex-Mataram states, where the balance of income and work was better, there were signs of prosperities. There, ordinary people were trying to cultivate cash crops on their own while the nobility rented their land to European and Chinese planters. In the sea, even though VOC's trading restriction crippled Java's export trade into a much smaller scale, those Javanese boats were vividly active in taking over VOC's ships role once the restrictions was lifted in the 1790s. These adaptive behaviors outside the *pasisir* vividly showed commerciality.

However, I am deeply aware that this conclusion was more of a preliminary discussion than a reliable finding. Because of the time constrains, I consciously left a great amount of source untouched. The findings would be much more reliable if it was supported by a full exploration of sources under the period instead of several chosen sample years. For that more complete picture, further research is necessary.

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