

**The *Perkeniersstelsel*: Banda Plantation System in
Comparative Perspective, 1621-1640**



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Abstract

After the conquest of Banda in 1621, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) introduced the *perkeniersstelsel* to ensure a monopoly on nutmeg and mace. Due to the commercial nature of the spices and the use of slave production, the *perkeniersstelsel* is often compared to the Atlantic plantation system. This study traces the development of the *perkeniersstelsel* between 1621 and 1640 and compares it to the Atlantic plantation system. This study argues that although the VOC was attempting to develop the *perkeniersstelsel* in the direction of the Atlantic mode, Banda's unique environment and the VOC's weaknesses in accessing terrestrial resources led the system down its own path. Furthermore, it proposes that Banda slavery should be regarded as the first expansion of slavery into rural areas in Southeast Asia, rather than the first penetration of European slavery into Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Dutch, VOC, *perkeniersstelsel*, Banda, plantation, slavery

Map of the Banda Archipelago



(Source: Wikipedia, <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benutzer:Lencer>)

Map of the Maluku Archipelago



(Source: Wikipedia, <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benutzer:Lencer>)

List of Governor Banda, 1621-1640

Time	Governor
1621-1622	Martinus Sonck
1622-1623	Issac de Bruijne (president)
1623-1627	Willem Jansen
1627-1628	Pieter Vlack
1628	Jacob Schram (provisoneel president)
1628-1629	Jan Jansz Visscher (provisoneel president)
1629-1630	Arend Stevensz Gardenijs (provisoneel president)
1630-1633	Crijn van Raemburch
1633-1635	Cornelis Acoley
1635-1640	Cornelis Acoley

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Introduction

This thesis is about the plantation system in Dutch Banda, the *perkeniersstelsel*, and its slavery between 1621 and 1640. In this period, Banda was adapting its spice production to a brand-new production pattern developed by the Dutch ruler. By 1639, the *perkeniersstelsel* had proven itself to be a reliable system bringing profits to the Dutch maritime empire. Nutmeg and mace became the essential capital components for the Dutch overseas empire. They were part of the “Dutch Golden Age.”

This thesis puts forward two major arguments. First, the *perkeniersstelsel* was a highly interactive system with its contextual geopolitics. Building on the first argument, the second is that the *perkeniersstelsel* was a product of adapting European systems into the Southeast Asian environment.

These two arguments differ from the current historiography narrating that the *perkeniersstelsel* consisted of slave capitalist agribusiness and was thus comparable to the Atlantic plantation system. Such an analogy tends to lead the *perkeniersstelsel* to be perceived as having institutional characteristics similar to those of the Atlantic mode. For example, the basic form of the system is considered to be relatively static and lack of Asian plantations’ diversity. In addition, similarities include the lack of connection between the system and its surroundings, a European culture-dominated mode of operation, and ethnically stratified production relationships.

However, this parallel ignores a detailed and coherent empirical basis. Let us take Willard Hanna’s book, *Indonesian Banda*—a work on history of colonialism in Banda—as an example. In this book, Hanna describes in detail the conflict before

1621 between the indigenous and the Dutch, which was the cause for the subsequent conquest and the introduction of the *perkeniersstelsel*, as well as the gradual reform of that system after the VOC era, especially in terms of freehold rights.¹ However, on how the system works in the VOC era, he focuses on how the monopolistic nature of the VOC brought inconvenience and exploitation to all participants in the *perkeniersstelsel*, but not much on how the system developed. We know little about how people had managed to overcome these institutional disadvantages for more than a hundred years to sustain the supply of the oriental import market in Amsterdam. Moreover, were the disadvantages really “disadvantages” to the people of that time? Some recent studies of 17th-century Batavian sugar plantations remind us that the monopolistic nature of the VOC must be viewed with a careful historical perspective, because that nature did lead them to behave cruelly to Asians but did also sometimes benefit some of them. Some archival evidence shows that the monopolistic nature of the VOC protected Chinese sugar planters in the *Ommelanden* from the fluctuations of the market economy when Asian sugar prices fell in the late 17th century due to competition from the Atlantic sugar industry.²

Also, Vincent Loth, another scholar on the subject of the *perkeniersstelsel*, barely elaborates how the system worked since its implementation in his article, even though he is the first to explicitly suggest that the system should be comparable with the Atlantic mode. Rather than tracing the long-standing operation of the system, his argument is based on the institutional framework stipulated by Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587-1629, in office: 1618-1623, 1627-1629) and his fellows in 1621 for the spice production in Banda.³

¹ Willard Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978).

² Guanmian Xu, “The Making of Sino-Dutch Sugar Frontiers in Early Modern Asia: Connections and Comparisons, 1630s-1730s” (Leiden University: MA Thesis, 2017), 47-48.

³ Vincent Loth, “Pioneers and Perkeniers: The Banda Islands in the 17th Century,” in *CAKALELE*, 1995 (6): 13-35.

Recently, J. J. H. Berends examined the *perkeniersstelsel* from the perspective of slavery, which adds to our knowledge the system in terms of labor supply. By exploring the VOC archives, he notes that labor on the Banda plantations was provided primarily by the islands eastwards and sourced mainly from slavers outside the VOC. Berends' contribution has marked a shift in the theme of the historical study about Banda as researchers are transferring their focus from debating how the VOC monopolies constituted a negative factor in the local socio-economy to the dynamism and agency exhibited by contemporary local participants in coping with the factor. Nonetheless, the period he studies was in the 1690s, and we still know little about the early development of the system.⁴

Therefore, this thesis will discuss the operation of the *perkeniersstelsel* for the first 20 years of its operation starting in 1621. 1640 as the end of a period is based on a letter from Governor Banda to Batavia in 1639. In the letter, he noted that the plantation system in Banda had matured under the expectations of the Heren XVII. Banda Factory had stabilized spice supply to Patria and actively sought friendship with the eastern islanders to obtain more Papuan spice massoia and Timorese timber.⁵ This remark is reasonable to consider the year 1640 as the end of the early phase of the *perkeniersstelsel*, which resulted in that the Asian production environment and the European agricultural system were in balance after the years of continuous negotiation. We will trace the development of this system over these 20 years and examine the applicability of the Atlantic mode to the Banda plantation system from a historical perspective. However, before turning to the story of Banda, I will outline the Atlantic mode to elucidate why the *perkeniersstelsel* was considered corresponding to it.

⁴ J. J. H. Berends, "Slavery and the *perkeniersstelsel* on the Banda Islands in the 1690s" (Leiden University: MA thesis, 2020).

⁵ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1130, f. 890, Originele Banda's missive, September 3, 1639.

The Atlantic plantation system

The Atlantic plantation system is an extension of the European plantation system in the Atlantic colonies. Its production form was developed in the Mediterranean basin during the Crusades in the 11th century. This form added slave labor as a production factor on the basis of Muslim tropical crop plantations. By the 15th century, this system was brought to the Atlantic colonies by European colonizers. To create more tax revenue, the Iberian monarchs offered land grants to attract Europeans to cultivate the Atlantic colonies. Driven by land grants, many Europeans settled in the colonies and adopted the European plantation mode to produce lucrative commercial crops. At first, sugar was planted because there had been already a market in fifteenth-century Europe. Later, as the market developed, tobacco, cotton, cocoa, and coffee were added into the system.⁶

As commercial capitalism flourished in the 17th century, a trend began to emerge in the colonies towards a “plantation complex” that includes cultivating and processing in a single plantation. This plantation format placed agricultural production in a highly controlled, artificial environment. It was able to reduce any external potential risks from depreciation during transportation to interference by the surroundings. The sugar plantations in Barbados in the 1640s are acknowledged as a representative of this production format.⁷

⁶ Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3-16, 46-53. Trevor Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves: Plantation Societies in British America, 1650-1820* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2015), 1-22. Russell R. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 52.

⁷ Philip Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 73. Stuart B. Schwartz, *Tropical Babels: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2004).

In this sense, the production structure of a plantation complex is substantially akin to that of a modern enterprise, with its emphasis on boundaries that made economies of scale feasible and its management at the section level. Gradually, the mode of the plantation complex dominated the development of the Atlantic plantation economy. On the one hand, private ownership grew crucially in possessing the land and other production factors. On the other hand, labor discipline and quantitative management became necessary in the production process. These developments consequently empowered the planters, who were altogether white European males. On plantations, they were masters of slaves, land, and other means of production. In colonial society, they were esteemed as gentry, entrepreneurs, and custodians of local public morals.⁸

These features observed in the Atlantic plantation complex—which rationally combined capital, labor, land, and technology to achieve large-scale, profitable, export-oriented agricultural production—are considered equally applicable to the *perkeniersstelsel* in Banda. The strongest appeal to this applicability is made by Vincent Loth, whose arguments can be summarized as follows: First, the VOC occupied the islands by conquest, and immediately afterward provided the environment for what he calls “total colonization by a western power.” Second, the plantations in Banda used slaves as the primary labor force and produced a highly profitable cash crop, known as Banda nutmeg and its by-product mace, for export. Third, the production was organized in a European manner by the *perkeniers* (“gardeners” in Dutch) since they were mainly European immigrants. These *perkeniers* played a pioneering role in colonial development, as did their Atlantic counterparts, the planters in the New World.⁹

⁸ Richard S. Dunn & Gary B. Nash, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Williamsburg: Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 46-47.

⁹ Loth, “Pioneers and Perkeniers: The Banda Islands in the 17th Century,” 34.

Anthony Reid takes a similar view, arguing that the *perkeniersstelsel* was a European system because its mainstay of production was slaves. The slave mode of production was traditionally rare in commercial agriculture in Southeast Asia, whereas in Europe it had been one of the leading production modes. Reid further notes that the *perkeniersstelsel* was unique not only because it operated through a production mode to which Europeans were accustomed but also because it was the only case of successfully implementing the slave production mode in European colonies in Southeast Asia. He attributes this uniqueness to Europeans' more profound control over Banda, and brings it closer to Euro-Atlantic colonies in a social sense.¹⁰

However, anthropologist Philip Winn questions these claims according to modern ethnographic surveys indicating that the modern Bandanese, who are descendants of slaves, do not have the same traumatic collective memory of slavery as descendants of African slaves in the Caribbean. This is also the same for the Bandanese communities on the surrounding islands of the Banda Archipelago. More interestingly, contrary to the perception that Banda was a former colony which had experienced total European colonization, modern Banda has little European culture in its society and culture, compared to Ambon which was also had been colonized by the Dutch but under indirect rule. Instead, Bandanese culture in the pre-colonial era, which had used slaves as a cultural carrier, has been still preserved from generation to generation until today.¹¹ Such a cultural phenomenon hardly convinces that Banda had experienced "total European colonization."

Therefore, Winn contests the appropriateness of categorizing the *perkeniersstelsel* into the Atlantic system. He contends that the insignificance of

¹⁰ Anthony Reid, "Introduction: Slavery and Bondage in Southeast Asia," 23, Anthony Reid ed., *Slavery, Bondage, and Dependency in Southeast Asia* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1983), 2-43.

¹¹ For the comparison between Southeast Asian slavery with Atlantic and American slavery from a postcolonial perspective, see: Gert Oostindie, "History Brought Home: Post-colonial Migrations and the Dutch Rediscovery of Slavery," in Ulbe Bosma ed., *Post-colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 155-173.

European culture in modern Banda culture suggests that the VOC could hardly have developed Banda as a European enclave similar to the West Indies, as Reid and Loth suggest. To reconcile the contradiction between the results from the anthropological field research and historical arguments, Winn suggests to rethink and revise the historical context of Banda.¹²

Restrictions for Dutch expansion in Southeast Asia

Like other Europeans, the Dutch came to Southeast Asia basically for trade. In the age of mercantilism, the way to increase the profitability of trade was to keep costs as low as possible. The Portuguese had proven that the most convenient way to keep costs low was to collect goods through Asian merchants. However, even with the Portuguese experience, it took the Dutch some time to adopt this mode of trade. Despite their preference for monopoly, the lack of terrestrial resources forced them to accept Asian go-betweens eventually.¹³

The entanglement with the Chinese between 1610 and 1660 is often cited to show how the Dutch went from resistance to acceptance to this fact. They once had expelled the Chinese in Maluku in 1615 to secure the monopoly on cloves.¹⁴

¹² Philip Winn, "Slavery and Cultural Creativity in the Banda Islands," in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 2010 (41:3), 365-389. Philip Winn, "The Southeast Asian Exception and "Unforeseen Results?" : Unfree Labour in the Banda Islands," in Maria-Suzette Fernandes-Dias ed., *Legacies of Slavery: Comparative Perspectives* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 76-106.

¹³ Cátia Antunes, "Birthing Empire: The States General and the Chartering of the VOC and the WIC," 29, in René Koekkoek, Anne-Isabelle Richard and Arthur Weststeijn eds., *The Dutch Empire Between Ideas and Practice, 1600-2000* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 19-36.

¹⁴ H. T. Colenbrander, comp., *Jan Pietersz. Coen Beschreiden Omtrent Zijn Bedrijf in Indie*, IV ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1922), 306-307.

However, they soon became realized that it was nonviable to maintain the clove monopoly on their own. Moreover, driving out the Chinese caused them problems with supplies, which resulted in paying more for the clove trade.¹⁵ Likewise, from 1622 to 1625, the Dutch again drove out the Chinese on Formosa to monopolize the deerskins at a lower price but with evenly a disappointing upshot. Trade had to be conducted according to specific cultural rules, and the Dutch unquestionably lacked the relevant resources. Shortly, they found themselves unable to collect sufficient deerskins from the Formosans to ship to Japan before the end of the monsoon without the help from the Chinese.¹⁶ Conversely, when the Dutch finally had given up their obsession of bypassing the Chinese brokers, their trade started to take off. For example, their sugar trade with China only took off when they stopped trying to trade directly with Fujian Province in 1635 and instead collected sugar through Iquan (Zheng Zhilong, 1604-1661).¹⁷ Nevertheless, before adjusting to this reality, they had spent nearly fifteen years of time and money on fruitless wars and gift-giving primarily for more direct access to goods rather than the access to more goods.

When measuring the essence of the Dutch maritime empire, the lack of the Dutch in terrestrial resources is an issue that is often brought up.¹⁸ Admittedly, in terms of military technology, the Dutch was one of the few powers which was able to keep undefeated record at sea and build strong fortresses which were hardly to be

¹⁵ H. T. Colenbrander, comp., *Jan Pietersz. Coen Beschreiden Omtrent Zijn Bedrijf in Indie*, IV, 419-420. C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (London: Hutchinson, 1965), 97-99.

¹⁶ Hsin-hui Chiu, *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process' in Dutch Formosa, 1624-1662* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2008), 77-80.

¹⁷ Tonio Andrade, *How Taiwan became Chinese: Dutch, Spanish, and Han Colonization in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

¹⁸ Pieter C. Emmer & Jos J. L. Gommans, *The Dutch Overseas Empire, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 126-129. George Masselman, "Dutch Colonial Policy in the Seventeenth Century," 466-468, in *The Journal of Economic History*, 1961 (21:4), 455-468.

conquered on the Southeast Asian seas at the time.¹⁹ Thus, waging battle and winning remained a manageable task for the Dutch. The real problem was that after winning the battle, it seemed difficult for the Dutch as victors to sustain the fruits of their victory effectively. Gaining a trading post or acquiring a colony was a matter of force, but operating them was a matter of economy and governance which involved long-term issues of human resources and food supply. In this respect, the Dutch were often incompetent, as we can see that they never controlled the slave trade, either in Africa or in India.²⁰ Although the Dutch had held the ambition to monopolize trade and even intervene in production, they never had access to the terrestrial resources.²¹ Therefore, even though the Dutch won the battle, their merchant houses eventually reverted to cooperation with local intermediaries they had defeated.

However, in hindsight, it was this Asian environment that allowed the Dutch to build a commercial empire. J. L. Price noted that the VOC succeeded while the WIC failed because the New World was not as rich and diverse as Asia in terms of social resources for the Dutch to leverage. This prevented the Dutch from focusing on being a merchant in the New World. When the Dutch had to organize their own production on the land and import labor, people, and food, they would lose to the Iberians, English, and French, who had more advantage in the market of human resources. It was the reason that the Dutch could easily take Brazil from the Portuguese but failed to hold it for a long time. Thus, the Dutch achieved remarkable

¹⁹ Tristan Mostert, *Chain of Command : The Military System of the Dutch East India Company, 1655-1663* (S.I. : s.n., 2007). P. Brandon, "Masters of War: State, Capital, and Military Enterprise in the Dutch Cycle of Accumulation (1600-1795)" (University of Amsterdam: Ph.D. thesis, 2013), 83-86.

²⁰ Markus Vink, "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," in *Journal of World History*, 2003 (14:2), 131-177.

²¹ A representative example is the failure of the Dutch Mauritius in the sugar industry. See: Burton Benedict, "Slavery and Indenture in Mauritius and Seychelles," 137, in James L. Watson ed., *Asian and African System of Slavery* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 135-168.

success in Asia, whereas in the New World they merely played the roles of investor and forwarder.²²

There is no reason to think that the Dutch in the Banda archipelago would be outside of the above picture, especially considering that Banda had been an extremely dependent place on external supplies since pre-colonial times. However, the shadow cast by the historical event of the Dutch conquest of Banda in 1621 seems to hinder one from thinking about Dutch Banda in the general context of Dutch overseas expansion. The dominant view among scholars about Banda under Dutch rule is that the Dutch conquest wiped out the indigenous people, distributed the land on the archipelago to Europeans, and introduced slavery for spice production. The windfall from nutmeg and mace gave the Dutch a strong incentive to commit the above acts. Thus, the Dutch Banda became an exception in Dutch East India—a unique case of the Dutch total colonization in Asia. However, the historical basis for this view is only Coen's proposal for East India in 1621. There is no corresponding research to trace and evaluate the implementation and effect of the proposal. It was as if the spice production on the archipelago would have proceeded as Coen expected as soon as he had decided to do so. Virtually, Hanna already notes that the VOC could barely satisfy the *perkeniers* in terms of production factors (e.g., slaves) and daily necessities. However, this finding, which is in line with our current understanding of Dutch overseas colonization in general, has not prompted historians to reevaluate the “total colonization” perspective for Banda. Even Hanna himself does not further discuss this structural limitation, as if the dominated would rather passively endure prolonged economic exploitation than actively seek alternatives to the problem.

²² J. L. Price, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Macmillan Education, 1998). Wim Klooster, “An Overview of Dutch Trade with the Americas,” in Johannes Postma & Victor Enthoven eds., *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 365-384.

This neglect may be related to the way people talk about Banda. Most of the time, Banda is not an object of academic topic but of ethical inquiry. It involves the evaluations of Jan Pieterszoon Coen, and to a certain extent reflects the changes in the attitudes of the Dutch on overseas affairs in different periods. As Western imperialist competition abroad heated up in the 19th century, Coen's conquest of Banda was used to urge the Dutch government of the day to take a more aggressive and assertive stance toward its overseas colonies. By the 20th century, when decolonialism and anti-racism dominated the political scene, the conquest of Banda turned to be a target for critiques of white racism and colonialism.²³ We still know very little of what the VOC did there throughout nearly 180 years. Given the growing advocacy that Coen's actions should be understood in a historical context where he lived, this thesis will also approach the *perkeniersstelsel* in the same way.²⁴

Chapter outline

This thesis is organized into three chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter reviews current academic research on the Banda archipelago and its nutmeg circulation worldwide before the Dutch colonial era. It contextualizes Banda's nutmeg trade and its social situation before the Dutch arrival in 1599. The chapter also provides some new material from Chinese sources to challenge some established views.

The second chapter will analyze the *perkeniersstelsel* in terms of the systemic attributes and participants. From this chapter onwards, we will involve extensive use

²³ H. J. A. M. Schaapman, "Een standbeeld voor Jan Pietersz. Coen, te Hoorn," in *Verslagen der algemeene vergaderingen van het Indisch genootschap* (1887) 120-121. J.A. van der Chijs, *De Vestiging Van Het Nederlandsche Gezag over De Banda-eilanden, (1599-1621)* (Batavia: 's Hage: Albrecht ; Nijhoff, 1886), 14.

²⁴ For the most recent research related to Coen's biography, see: Jur van Goor, *Jan Pieterszoon Coen 1587-1629, Koopman-koning in Azië* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2015).

of the VOC archives. This chapter will investigate how the *perkeniersstelsel* operated in colonial reality after the VOC had established that system in 1621. Based on these investigations, this chapter will question the appropriateness of the historiographical analogy that considers the *perkeniersstelsel* as an Asian version of the Atlantic plantation system. It will point out how Banda's ecological and geographic constraints made it difficult for the VOC to develop the archipelago into an enclave economy while guaranteeing a spice monopoly. However, the enclave economy was an essential feature of the Atlantic mode, which ensured internal economic self-sufficiency and gave both overseas Europeans and Africans the ability to isolate themselves from their indigenous environment.

The last chapter will explore how the labor needs of the *perkeniersstelsel* were met. It will discuss not only the ethnic composition but also the types of the labor force. These discussions will reveal how Banda's environment and the VOC monopoly pull on each other, resulting in unique agricultural slavery in Dutch Banda. Besides, the situation of the Bandanese in the colony will also be brought up for discussion in this chapter. While it is true that the vast majority of them were enslaved during the colonial era, they were not all forced into slavery. In fact, the archives record numerous Bandanese who volunteered to become slaves under plantation owners, and even some of the Bandanese who had fled to the neighboring islands volunteered to return as slaves. Rather than subjecting them to harsher exploitation, their skills in spice production helped them form closer relationships with their holders than other slaves elsewhere.

The conclusion will summarize the comparative results in these three chapters. It will bring this thesis into dialogue with previous studies on the *perkeniersstelsel* by showing how this system should not be considered as a plantation system in the Atlantic mode. Since production factors must be obtained through the neighboring environment, Banda was highly intertwined with the surrounding political dynamics even during the colonial era. Therefore, Dutch Banda was not a static plantation

society isolating from its surroundings and focusing solely on serving the interests of Patria, as the VOC would expect it to be. As was generally the case with the VOC in Asia, the Dutch in Banda ultimately was contingent on local structures rather than exceptionally enabling him to create an alien system.

Source material

This thesis conducts its research through two sets of primary sources. The first is classical Chinese literature from the Han to the Ming dynasties, which constitutes the empirical basis for Chapter 1. Until now, studies of issues related to pre-colonial Banda have usually relied on Western literature, particularly Portuguese accounts. In contrast, the literature of China—the largest geopolitical body in Southeast Asia—has rarely been used. This thesis will bring Chinese sources into the current academic discussion of pre-colonial Bandanese society and the nutmeg trade.

The second set of primary source is the VOC archive, which informs the argumentation in Chapters 2 and 3. Primarily, this thesis will rely on the unpublished manuscripts, *Overgekomen brieven en papieren van de VOC*, in National Archives of the Netherlands (*Nationaal Archief*), inventoried in *het archief van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), 1602-1795(1811)*. Additionally, the thesis will refer to published primary source material, *Jan Pietersz. Coen beschreiden omtrent zijn bedrijf in Indie*, compiled by H. T. Colenbrander. These materials will serve to trace the execution of the *perkeniersstelsel* in the first two decades of the colonial era.²⁵

²⁵ I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Hsin Samuel Cha, who helped me to have a more comprehensive understanding of the VOC archives.

Chapter 1

Banda before the Dutch Arrival

To monopolize the nutmeg trade, the Dutch East India Company (*De Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, hereinafter referred to as the VOC) waged successive conquests in 1616, 1618, and 1621 on the three islands abundant in nutmeg of the Banda archipelago: Banda Neira, Pulau Aij, and Banda Besar. In the last conquest, the VOC destroyed the Orang Kaya, the elite group controlling the export of nutmeg, and established its dominance over the islands. Banda thus entered the colonial era.¹

These military actions aimed at disrupting the native social networks and were distinguished from those launched by the VOC elsewhere in Asia. Historically, in both East and West India, the VOC unfavorable in terms of terrestrial resources preferred to save costs by influencing the social networks established for the collection of goods. Thus, even if the VOC must have had to wage war, it tended to retain the established social networks of the conquered subjects to the possible greatest extent.² Such a tendency led to a mutually beneficial relationship between the VOC and local political entities. On the one hand, the Dutch received the goods in the most cost-effective way. On the other hand, the power of the most political entities within the

¹ For the details about these conquests, see: Willard A. Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978), 25-45.

² See: Gert Oostindie & Jessica V. Roitman eds., *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680-1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2014). William A. Pettigrew and David Veevers, eds., *The Corporation as a Protagonist in Global History, c. 1550-1750* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2019). Pieter C. Emmer & Jos J. L. Gommans, Marilyn Hedges trans., *The Dutch Overseas Empire, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

reach of the Dutch navy was retained and strengthened to various degrees.³ In Banda, however, violence was used not to harness established social networks, but to eradicate traditional production relations and to replace them with a new slave-based agricultural system, the *perkeniersstelsel*. For this reason, the conquest of Banda was blamed as a dark page in the history of Dutch overseas expansion. Scholars have argued that the VOC introduced the *perkeniersstelsel* because the lack of social stratification in Banda brought it to install spice production in a more centralized and hierarchical way. In other words, it was the uniqueness of Bandanese society that prompted the Dutch to adopt radical means to monopolize the Bandanese spice trade.⁴

Since the *perkeniersstelsel* was introduced to change the established structure of the Bandanese society, it is necessary to draw a general picture of the academic perception of Bandanese social characteristics and historical context. Then, by holding the general picture, we are able to assess the new agricultural system. This help us in Chapter 2 to assess the new agricultural system for overcoming the original social structure in the subsequent colonial era. However, it is important to first take an overlook of the nutmeg trade, for which all Europeans came to Banda. Therefore, the first part of this chapter will briefly review the history of the pre-colonial Banda nutmeg trade from being an occasional rare spice to a regularly traded international commodity. The second part will provide a synthesis of how the nutmeg production and overseas distribution operated in pre-colonial Banda society at that time, in the context of contemporary academic perspectives on pre-colonial Bandanese society.

³ See: Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women, and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1986). J. L. Price, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). Hui-kian Kwee, *The Political Economy of Java's North-East Coast, c. 1740–1800: Elite Synergy* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2006).

⁴ John Villiers, "Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century," in *Modern Asian Studies*, 1981(15:4), 723-750.

1.1 Banda's worldwide emergence

In the 16th century, the Banda archipelago was the only known source of commercial nutmeg in the world. Five out of the ten islands that make up the archipelago—i.e., Run, Aij, Rozengain (Hatta), Banda Besar (Lonthor), and Neira—produced spices and supplied them to consumers worldwide.⁵ By the 17th century, even though Dutch colonists gradually restricted Bandanese nutmeg production to the islands of Ai, Banda Besar, and Neira, it remained a firm monopoly on the supply of the world market until the mid-19th century when the British smuggled Bandanese nutmeg saplings to the Malay Peninsula and Grenada.⁶

Scholars have attempted to determine when the Bandanese nutmeg entered the world trade. Citing archaeological evidence from the Mediterranean, anthropologists claim that small quantities of nutmeg and mace had reached Europe from Banda along ancient trade routes as early as the second millennium BC. Such a cross-cultural trade brought an impact on the origin itself. Archaeological data show that, no later than the third century AD, the long-distance nutmeg trade had become significant enough and catalyzed the structural transformation of Bandanese society. Historians, who tend to be conservative in tracing a date, also hold an opinion that the cross-cultural trade of this rare fruit has an ancient origin. They believe that the ruling elites of the Roman and Han Chinese empires on both ends of Eurasia knew about the fruit as early as the first century AD and included it in their medical texts.⁷ Nonetheless, we are skeptical about the Chinese part for the following two reasons. The first is that more than two fruits shared the same Chinese terms (豆蔻, doukou) with nutmeg in China. Second,

⁵ Villier, “Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century,” 724-725.

⁶ Paul Spencer Sochaczewski, *An Inordinate Fondness for Beetles: Campfire Conversation with Alfred Russel Wallace on People and Nature Based on Common Travel in the Malay Archipelago, The Land of the Orangutan* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet Pte Ltd, 2012), 217.

⁷ For an overview for the achievements from historical and anthropological studies on nutmeg since the 20th century, see: Roy Ellen, *On the Edge of the Banda Zone: Past and Present in the Social Organization of a Moluccan Trading Network* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 4-7.

the fruit taken as the evidence of the nutmeg in the Han Empire lacked the most distinctive feature of Bandanese nutmeg: its scarlet aril which could be used as a spice. A more convincing candidate might be the doukou in *Ben Cao Shi Yi* (本草拾遺, “Supplemented Introduction for Herbal Medicine”), which was described as being born in a foreign land, brought by merchant ships, with dark red skin and a pungent flavor. This text was produced in Tang China in the eighth century, seven hundred years after the Han Dynasty.⁸ Arguably, Chinese sources do not seem to substantially support the claim that the cross-cultural trade of Bandanese nutmeg has such an ancient origin.

It was not until the Middle Ages that Bandanese nutmeg emerged in cross-cultural trade in a historical sense. Because only at this time, Latin, Greek, Arabic, and Chinese accounts simultaneously mentioned the most conspicuous feature of this fruit: its scarlet aril. Of these texts, only Arabic texts record that the fruit came from the “Spice Islands.” Therefore, the Arabs were considered to be the first to discover Bandanese spice and its origin in Malukan waters, although some oppose this claim.⁹ Roderich Ptak then argued that the Arabs might not have known where Maluku were. When he used the source materials provided by the Arabs to reconstruct the location of the “Spice Islands” they mentioned, it turned out to be located in what is now the Malay Peninsula.¹⁰ Here we supplement Park’s point with a twelfth-century report compiled by a Chinese official, Chau Jukua (趙汝适), who supervised the customs for Song Court. According to Chau's remark, when he asked the Arabs about the source

⁸ Chen Cangqi 陳藏器, *Ben Cao Shi Yi* 本草拾遺. In database “Chinese Text Project”: <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=327&searchu=%E8%82%89%E8%B1%86%E8%94%BB>

⁹ Sir Ghilleen Prance & Mark Nesbitt eds., *The Cultural History of Plants* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 166.

¹⁰ Roderich Ptak, “China and the Trade in Cloves, Circa 960-1435,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1993(113:1), 1-13.

of nutmeg, the Arabs replied that it was in Sumatra.¹¹ Given that the several important trans-shipment ports of the Srivijaya empire were in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra at the time, it was likely that the Arabs simply obtained nutmeg through this ancient imperial network.¹²

Regarding the question of who first discovered Banda as a nutmeg source, the Chinese were perhaps more entitled to this honor than the Arabs among the foreign consumers. A fourteenth-century travelogue *Daoyi Zhilüe* (島夷志略, “A Brief Account of Island Barbarians”), written by a Yuan Chinese sailor, clearly marked Banda (文誕) as the origin of nutmeg, where the nutmeg could be acquired by exchanging silk cloth, cotton cloth, gongs, and celadon wares with islanders. More than nutmeg, the travelogue also mentioned that one could acquire bark-skin products and black slaves (黑小廝) in Banda as well.¹³

This Chinese travelogue is noteworthy for following three points. First, rather than treating Maluku as a spice-producing in general, as other texts do, it precisely divided Banda from the clove-producing North Maluku (文老古).¹⁴ Second, Banda was the single spot in Southeast Asia marked as having black slaves in the travelogue. It might imply that Banda was a stateless community at that time. According to Jack

¹¹ Chau Jukua 趙汝适, *Zhu Fan Zhi* 諸蕃誌. In database “Chinese Text Project”: <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=520299&searchu=%E8%82%89%E8%B1%86%E8%94%BB>

¹² For the history of Srivijaya, see: Paul Michel Munoz, *Early Kingdoms of The Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2006).

¹³ Wang Dayuan 汪大淵, *Daoyi Zhilüe* 島夷志略. In database “Chinese Text Project”: <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=10575&searchu=%E8%82%89%E8%B1%86%E8%94%BB>

¹⁴ Even though the Chinese knew Banda’s location two centuries earlier than the Europeans, Anthony Reid believes that the number of Chinese who would visit there to purchase nutmeg was assuredly tiny. He deems that the Chinese would remain purchasing nutmeg and other Malukan products in Malacca, where Javanese and Malay traders who regularly traveled to Maluku to collect goods provided a steady supply of Malukan products to traders from South Asia and China. See: Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680: Volume 2, Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 4-5.

Goody's theory, a stateless community easily suffered slave raids due to the lack of social differentiation and the absence of a national organization. Such a community was incapable of organizing the entire inhabitants to fight against raiders.¹⁵ Thus, being the only spot where slaves could be acquired may hint that in the 14th century, the Bandanese society was still primitive compared to other island societies in Maritime Southeast Asia. More interestingly, this account suggests that the Bandanese were black-skinned, while the Bandanese seen by the Portuguese in the 15th century were white-skinned. These observations will respond to the discussion regarding the Bandanese society in the Orang Kaya era in the next section.

As a final point, it is surprising that the Chinese had a more precise understanding of the origins of nutmeg than the contemporary Arabs. Though nutmeg was also a high-priced imported commodity in China, it was not revered in Chinese culture as it was in India, Arabia, or Europe. In the absence of citable relevant studies, here we give two historical documents to support the idea that nutmeg lacked cultural influence in China. The first was *Chen Shi Xiang Pu* (陳氏香譜, "Chen's Collection of Aromatic Prescriptions"), a collection of aromatic prescriptions written in Song China. In this collection, there were 140 prescriptions for cloves, but not a single prescription for nutmeg.¹⁶ Four hundred years later, another similar collection was published in Ming China, *Xiang Sheng* (香乘, "Chou's Collection of Aromatic Prescriptions"), with 224 prescriptions for cloves, but only 5 for nutmeg.¹⁷ The marginal status of nutmeg in Chinese consumer culture is evident here. If such an expensive exotic object had no place in the scholar-gentry consumer culture (士人消費文化), it is even less likely that commoners would appreciate it.

¹⁵ Jack Goody, "Slavery in Time and Space," 24, in James L. Watson ed., *Asian and African System of Slavery* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 16-42.

¹⁶ Cheng Jang 陳敬, *Chen Shi Xiang Pu* 陳氏香譜. In database "Chinese Text Project": <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=757942>

¹⁷ Chou Jiazhou 周嘉胄, *Xiang Sheng* 香乘. In database "Chinese Text Project": <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=316018>

The discovery that nutmeg was insignificant in Chinese consumer culture leads us to question the applicability of Anthony Reid's argument in the Banda case. Reid points out that it was the Chinese purchasing power that ushered in an age of commerce in Southeast Asia in the 15th century. Driven by Chinese consumers, the exports of pepper in Java and Sumatra and spice in Maluku exploded for the first time. These developed into economic cultivation to meet the growing Chinese demand. Unfortunately, Reid's insight is inapplicable to the case of Bandanese spices in light of the fact that they are rarely present in Chinese consumer culture.

If not from China, where did the impetus for explosive growth of Bandanese nutmeg come from? In the absence of Asian data, a Portuguese source provides a reference on this question. It reports that at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries in Malacca, which was then the re-export center for Malukan goods in Southeast Asia, nutmeg was purchased mainly by two buyers: A South Asian merchant named Nina Suria Dewa and a Gresik Javanese merchant named Pate Yusuf. They respectively sent at least eight ships including three to four ships to Maluku each year to collect cloves, nutmeg, and mace during the early sixteenth century. The cloves and nutmeg collected by the South Asian merchant would be transported to Cambay for redistribution. Also, estimated by the Portuguese and Spanish, Banda in the 16th century exported about 6-7,000 bahar of nutmeg and 5-600 bahar of mace per year, which equals to about 1,925 tons of nutmeg and 165 tons of mace in the metric system we are familiar with today. With the average load of an ordinary junk at that time being about 260 tons, if we assume that half of these 12 junks should be used for cloves and only half for nutmeg and mace, they covered about 3/4 of Banda's annual output, and 1/2 of the output supplied the demand in the Indian Ocean.¹⁸ Our figure of 3/4 is undoubtedly underestimated, as the nutmeg was much heavier than cloves. On the other hand, the Portuguese, the exclusive brokers in the European nutmeg market

¹⁸ Armando Cortesão, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires, II* (London: Routledge, 2006), 447. For metric conversions, we refer to: Villiers, " Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century," 736-740.

at the time, could only gather about 200 quintals of nutmeg and 100 quintals of mace per year until the mid-1530s, which equated to about 20 tons of nutmeg and 10 tons of mace in modern metric units. In terms of Banda's total annual output, these figures were negligible. Thus, the driving force behind the boom of Bandanese nutmeg remained in fact Indian demand during the age of commerce.

Our speculation is supported by first-hand reports from the Dutch who stayed in Banda in the 17th century. In a letter dated August 20, 1618, Admiral Steven van der Hagen mentions that the VOC officials "collected and burned nutmeg and mace of poor quality to avoid the Bandanese from reselling them to the Javanese, Malays, and Chinese." For if this happened, "the English, Portuguese and Gujaratis would have had access to nutmeg, thus undermining the Dutch position in the European, the Coromandel and the Cambay market." This remark of Van der Hagen suggests that even in the 17th century, the main markets for Bandanese spices remained in Europe and India. The former had relied on the latter for gaining nutmeg until the Portuguese established direct trade relations with Maluku in the 16th century. It appeared that, in addition to Europe, the Dutch sought to monopolize the nutmeg market in India.¹⁹

Furthermore, the remark of van der Hagen reveals that the Chinese, like the Southeast Asians, played an intermediary role in the market of Bandanese spices. They collected nutmeg and mace from the Bandanese and then resold them to Europeans and Indians. It may explain why Bandanese spices rarely appear in Chinese literature related to consumption, even though Chinese seafarers knew specifically where Banda was located and what it could produce. In China, Bandanese spices attracted those who desired to earn foreign exchange with them, not those who desired to consume them.

Emboldened by the Indian and later European markets, the Chinese participated in the trade of Bandanese spices in Banda as early as around the 15th

¹⁹ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1068, f. 251b, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 6, July 10 and August 20, 1618.

century.²⁰ This fact comes from the records left by the Portuguese.²¹ In this way, the current view that the Chinese consciously confined their commercial activities to the belt from Brunei to Malacca seems to be reexamined, as the Chinese were not discouraged from crossing the Celebes Sea due to cost considerations.²² On the contrary, they visited Banda frequently and even developed an impressive intimacy with the Bandanese. Residency demonstrates this obvious intimacy. In Banda, the Chinese lived in coastal Bandanese villages, unlike Gujaratis, who have their quarter.²³

The Chinese image in Banda coincides with the way academics have summarized the habits of Chinese people doing business overseas. In Taiwan, Chinese deerskin collectors lived in the Formosan villages.²⁴ Likewise, in Malacca, Palembang, and Banten, the Chinese also used their connections with local families to collect spices and timber.²⁵ Although a great effort of collecting primary source remains to be done, it can be suggested that the pre-colonial history of the Bandanese nutmeg trade belongs to a chapter in the history of Chinese commercial expansion in

²⁰ We use the term “Chinese” based on descent rather than on nationality. As Villiers has noted, the majority of what most sixteenth-century Europeans referred to as Malays or Javanese were Sino-Muslim trading diaspora based in Malacca and East Java for business. See: Villiers, “Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century,” 735-736.

²¹ Armando Cortesão, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires, I* (London: Hakluyt Society, 2018), 206, 212. Pin-tsun Chang, “The First Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century,” in Roderich Ptak & Dietmar Rothermund eds., *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, c. 1400–1750* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991), 13-28.

²² Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680: Volume 2, Expansion and Crisis*, 4-5.

²³ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1080, f. 312, Kopie Banda’s missiven, August 30, 1623.

²⁴ Yung-ho Tsao, *Deerskin Trade in Contemporary Taiwan: The Academic Beginnings of Young Yung-ho Tsao* (Taipei: Yuan-Liou Publishing, 2011).

²⁵ Leonard Blussé, “Western Impact on Chinese Communities in Western Java at the Beginning of the 17th Century,” 30, in *Nampo-Bunka : Tenri Bulletin of South Asian Studies*, 1975 (2), 26-57. Barbara Watson Andaya, “Women and Economic Change: The Pepper Trade in Pre-Modern Southeast Asia,” 176-177, in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 1995 (38:2), 165-190.

Southeast Asia.²⁶ However, the Chinese role in the nutmeg trade was more international than that of other Southeast Asian commodities in the same period. It is because their involvement in this trade was rarely motivated by the desire to serve their homeland markets.

1.2 The Bandanese society in the Orang Kaya era

When the Portuguese arrived in Banda in 1512, they immediately noticed the uniqueness of Banda compared to the other island societies in Maluku. While the coastal villages had been extensively Islamized as a general social consequence of Islamization in Maluku, the monarchical hierarchy and the ensued social stratification had not yet been established in Banda.²⁷

Such a kingless society lack of hierarchical divisions was loosely led by an inter-island elite group called Orang Kaya for spice production and diplomatic affairs. Nonetheless, the Orang Kaya had no real overwhelming position or authority over the other Bandanese in the day-to-day affairs of the local community. The obedience of the Bandanese to the Orang Kaya was based on nothing more than friendship and respect. This was little different from their relationships with other foreign captains. In the eyes of the Portuguese, the Bandanese had no concept of nation, ownership, or class, nor did they have a sense of being ruled. These uninvited guests realized that this dispersed and unfettered social structure made it difficult to replicate their experience in the North Maluku, where they could obtain spices cheaply and steadily by convincing only a few leaders. Therefore, the Portuguese surrendered their

²⁶ John W. Chaffee, *The Muslim Merchants of Premodern China: The History of a Maritime Asian Trade Diaspora, 750-1400* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 269-276.

²⁷ Villiers, "Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century," 728-732.

attempts to establish direct trade relations with Banda after 1529 and instead obtained spices through Malay merchants.²⁸

Although the local spice economy was conducted in a distributed society, the Portuguese noticed a certain labor division between the interior and the coast. Harvesting and processing were done by the villages located in the interior highlands where nutmeg was grown. The Portuguese found that, unlike the coastal villages, the inland villages showed little sign of Islamization. Here, village chiefs organized the production, but the women did the actual work. Such a way of production was not dissimilar to the production mode of rural Southeast Asia illustrated by Anthony Reid.²⁹ After the production was completed, the inland communities give their products to the coastal communities for sale. The coastal Bandanese were proficient in navigation. They knew how to maneuver ships by the monsoon winds and build large cargo ships. These capabilities gave them trade autonomy that other Malukan islanders did not have. Starting from the Banda Sea, crossing the Java Sea westward, and finally reaching Malacca, the commercial center of the time, the Bandanese peddled their spices and continuously resold the local products exchanged at the previous port. Thus, in addition to being the supplier of nutmeg and mace, the Bandanese were also the distributor of other Southeast Asian goods, of which the most important were cloves. In maritime Southeast Asia, cloves played more critical role than nutmeg in inter-island exchanges for more diverse commodities. The Portuguese mentioned that Javanese and Malay traders would choose to trade cloves in Banda rather than spending an extra 15 days sailing north to Ternate or Tidor to obtain them. As a result, Banda gradually developed into an entrepôt between Maluku and Java.³⁰ Slave labor existed only in the port economy, as in much of Southeast

²⁸ Giles Milton, *Nathaniel's Nutmeg: Or the True and Incredible Adventures of the Spice Trader Who Changed the Course of History* (London: Sceptre, 1999), 5 and 7.

²⁹ Anthony Reid, "Introduction: Slavery and Bondage in Southeast Asia," 23, Anthony Reid, ed., *Slavery, Bondage, and Dependency in Southeast Asia* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1983), 2-43.

³⁰ Villiers, "Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century," 732-737.

Asia. The coastal Bandanese used slaves to transfer and manage cargo, and to steer ships. The Portuguese noted that the Bandanese often complained that their slaves were untrustworthy because when emergencies occurred, they always ran away instead of taking care of the cargo.³¹

However, the mere presence of international goods and the mastery of maritime technology were not enough to make Banda an entrepôt. Another critical factor, according to the Portuguese, was the appearance of the Bandanese. Unlike the dark skin and brown-colored curls of the islanders in the neighboring Ambon, Seram, and Kei, the Bandanese had a Chinese physique with white skin and dark hair. According to Portuguese records, almost all the *Shahbandars*, the harbormasters of Southeast Asian ports at the time, had the same physical features. The Portuguese believed that sharing physical features with the *Shahbandars* helped the Bandanese be able to participate in Southeast Asian trade extensively. Moreover, the *Shahbandars* often looked after Bandanese interests.³²

The absence of an Islamic monarchy, the wide gap in Islamization between the interior and the coast, the distinctly different physical characteristics of the Bandanese from the neighboring islanders, and the navigational skills possessed by the Bandanese not found in other Malukan islanders have attracted considerable scholarly attention. John Villiers argues that the unevenness of Islamization and the absence of a monarchy suggest that the Islamization in Banda in the 16th century remained rather superficial. He speculates that the regular trade of Bandanese spices might have started much later than that of Malukan cloves because Islam barely penetrated as deeply in Banda as it did in the North Maluku. In Southeast Asia, Muslim traders were attracted only to places that produced international goods. Islands like Kei and

³¹ Armando Cortesão, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires, I*, 212.

³² Villiers, "Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century," 733.

Seram, where only sago was produced, had almost no footprint left by Muslim traders.³³

Kenneth Hall's view is quite different. Synthesizing the current scholarship on the Shahbandars in Southeast Asia, he captures the Chinese appearance of the Bandanese and brings an anthropological perspective to the pre-colonial Bandanese society. The contrast between the inland and coastal communities, he argues, reflects not the degree of Islamization but the distinction in ethnic origin: the interior community was indigenous, while the coastal community with Chinese physical characteristics was the Sino-Muslim trading diaspora, not the first Bandanese on the archipelago to be influenced by or to intermarry with Muslim traders. From this perspective, Hall claims that the Orang Kaya, with their Chinese physical characteristics, were not the first group on the island to embrace Islam and derive commercial benefits from it, as Villiers suggests. Instead, they were the leaders of the Chinese Muslim diaspora living along the coast, representing the interests of their community and negotiating on spice production and foreign affairs.³⁴

If the coastal community was composed of foreigners, why were the indigenous willing to submit to foreigners in production activities and foreign affairs when there was no slavery or oppression? Hall explains that not all indigenous societies could withstand the dramatic transformations brought about by the age of commerce, especially those island societies that were more isolated in their location. For those societies that could not withstand the dramatic changes, the emergence of diaspora traders helped form an umbrella that kept them from being swallowed up by the tremendous pressures brought by the changing external environment. The reciprocity functioned as follows: the locals provided spices and other forest products requested by the diaspora merchants, who in turn supplied food, goods, and protection

³³ Villiers, "Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century," 731-732.

³⁴ Kenneth Hall, *A History of Early Southeast Asia Maritime Trade and Societal Development, 1000-1500* (Lanham and Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 316-317.

to the locals. It was the reciprocal relationship that created a social division of labor between the islanders in Banda and diaspora merchants in the eyes of the Portuguese.³⁵

Hall deduces that the lack of social stratification in Banda started when the diaspora helped to freeze the original social patterns. Thus, according to this line of thought, the indigenous society remained in a rather primitive stage when the diaspora arrived in Banda, unlike Cebu in the Philippines and the Sultanates in the North Maluku, where wealth concentration and social stratification had already occurred since the 15th century. In the indigenous societies of Cebu and the North Maluku, powerful chiefs and the landed aristocrats called “Pinate” emerged, firmly in control of production and social redistribution.³⁶ Such influential leaders were the social result of the eventual adaptation of indigenous societies to the significant transformations brought about by the age of commerce. In these places, the diaspora had to rely on the king, who was also an indigenous nobleman, to trade. In this context, the essential power of Islam was the tool they used to compete with local communalism. By providing the kings with better remuneration for wealth, medical services, military technology, and governmental systems, they strengthened the power of the monarchs on the one hand and enhanced their status in the local society on the other. In Banda, however, the diaspora was able to act as an agent of the indigenous community. Through parallel trade reciprocity rather than hierarchical power structures, they helped the indigenous maintain their original status of life and, with the permission of the indigenous, took a leading role in the affairs of the archipelago.³⁷

³⁵ Hall, *A History of Early Southeast Asia Maritime Trade and Societal Development, 1000-1500*, 318.

³⁶ Leonard Andaya, *The World of Maluku: Eastern Indonesia in the Early Modern Period* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 56-70. Hall, *A History of Early Southeast Asia Maritime Trade and Societal Development, 1000-1500*, 318.

³⁷ Hall, *A History of Early Southeast Asia Maritime Trade and Societal Development, 1000-1500*, 314-315.

Thus, in the opinion of Hall, the uneven development of Islam in Banda as seen by the sixteenth-century Portuguese was not because Islam had not yet spread in the inland, but because the coastal Muslims had no intention of spreading their religion to the inland in the first place. Aside from the fact that Banda had no local nobility with whom Muslim traders needed to compete culturally, the maintenance of established social patterns had initially been part of the social contract between the Muslim diaspora and the islanders. In short, Banda's distinctive face of Islamization was not the result of cultural transmission, but of community cooperation.

These are the general academic discussions on the dispersiveness of pre-colonial Bandanese society. Comprehensively, the current research in Southeast Asian anthropological studies on Austronesian hydrophilicity and food issues among Austronesian people seems to be more supportive of Hall's view that the Bandanese is a community living together in Banda rather than an ethnicity sharing a common bloodline and culture.

According to anthropological studies, Southeast Asian islanders belonging to Austronesian people mostly inhabited the chilly inner forested uplands rather than the hot and humid coastal areas where disease and piracy were prevalent. Coastal settlements were often formed by foreign immigrants who had mastered long-distance navigation skills, such as trading diasporas or European colonists. Their visits were often short-term and with a specific purpose, and therefore more motivated to endure such unsafe and unhealthy living conditions in coastal areas. This view is supported by aboriginal myths in Maritime Southeast Asia. In the myths, aboriginal ancestors originated in the mountains, where their descendants were born and where they grew up, lived, and died of old age for generations. In contrast, the sea often symbolized for enemies, strangers, and dangers.³⁸ This viewpoint challenges the prevailing stereotype that the Austronesian-speaking peoples are hydrophilic and have a natural habitat of

³⁸ Tania Murray Li, *Land's End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

damp areas. The indigenous habit recorded by the Dutch in seventeenth-century Formosa provides us with an example of the Austronesian fear of the sea. The Dutch noted that when a dispute occurred between the Chinese and the Formosan, the Chinese usually fled back to their ships moored on the beach because the Formosans were afraid to go near the water.³⁹ Formosa, which is now Taiwan, has been confirmed as the birthplace of Austronesian.⁴⁰ Another example of Austronesian alienation from the sea was also provided by the Dutch archives in 1639 in Tanimbar, an archipelago in the South Maluku. The Dutch were persuading the inhabitants to trade to Banda. However, the inhabitants said they would prefer the Dutch to have an office there since they knew little about navigation and did not know how to get to Banda.⁴¹ Briefly, these Austronesian ethnographies reinforce the argument that the coastal Bandanese were the trading diaspora since there was no corresponding technical skill in Maluku to cultivate the nautical technology they possessed.

The issue of food access also lends credence to the argument that indigenous islanders have aligned themselves with the diaspora to maintain their traditional way of life. Sago, the staple in Maluku, was usually grown in swampy areas near seas where it is disease-ridden and uninhabitable.⁴² Not only was the farming environment poor, but the processing was also relatively arduous and highly labor-intensive.⁴³

³⁹ Jiang Shusheng, trans., *De Dagregisters van het Kasteel Zeelandia*, Vol. 1 (Tainan: Tainan City Government,), 273.

⁴⁰ Peter Bellwood, "The Austronesian Dispersal and the Origin of Languages," in *Scientific American*, 1991 (265:1), 88-93

⁴¹ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1130, f. 890-892, Originele Banda's missiven, September 3, 1639. We should expect to find more examples like this if we keep tracing the Dutch expedition in Papua and the South Maluku after 1640.

⁴² Gerrit J. Knaap, "The Demography of Ambon in the Seventeenth Century: Evidence from Colonial Proto-Censuses," 235-236, in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Sep., 1995 (26:2), 227-241.

⁴³ As we will see in Chapter 3, what prompted those Banda who had fled to Seram in 1621 to return to Banda to harvest spices for the VOC was precisely because they thought it would be easier to help the Dutch collect spices than to process sago for the Seramese.

Under normal circumstances, an islander would have to take various risks just for food issues. He had to leave the forest and expose his body to gather sago on the shore without any shelter. While gathering sago, he also had to defend himself from pirates and human traffickers, who had been increasing as commerce flourished in Southeast Asia. Even if he escaped these uninvited guests, he might get sick or even die from working in an unhealthy swamp for a long time. In contrast, forging relationships with the diaspora by offering spices in exchange for food and protection helped the economically vulnerable indigenous community improve their ability to survive when the external stimuli increased dramatically.⁴⁴

In summary, Villiers sees the Bandanese society as an indigenous society that is being influenced by Chinese Islamic commercial culture. Since the Muslim traders came to Banda later than they did in the North Maluku, the society was not yet centralized and did not form social hierarchies. On the contrary, Hall considers that the Bandanese society was a compound society composed of both the Muslim diaspora and the indigenous. The indigenous actively sought the protection of Chinese Muslim traders to maintain the dispersed social pattern to which they had accustomed. Nutmeg and mace, which brought lucrative profits to the traders, were the most advantageous leverage they had.

In any case, the dispersity of the Bandanese society was detrimental to Europeans who were at a disadvantage in sheer exchanges, however. As Villiers comments, it was due to insurmountable social dispersity that the Portuguese abandoned their attempts to establish direct trade relations with Banda, while the Dutch resorted to violence for taking direct control of spice production.⁴⁵ Compared to the Portuguese, the Dutch had greater ambitions for the nutmeg trade, whose goal was to crowd out other distributors to monopolize the nutmeg market from Europe to

⁴⁴ Hall, *A History of Early Southeast Asia Maritime Trade and Societal Development, 1000-1500*, 316.

⁴⁵ Villiers, "Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century," 744, 749-750.

India. Therefore, an exclusive supply of production was necessary. In pursuit of this goal, they would have to centralize, territorialize, and hierarchize the production system they were about to implement in the new colony. It was with this expectation that the Dutch would implement the plantation system in Banda.

Conclusion

Until the 17th century, the principal consumers of Bandanese spices remained Indians, but Europeans grew in importance in the nutmeg consumption. On the supply side, both markets relied on Chinese Muslims who had fastened close relationships with the spice producers in Banda. However, unlike the general pattern of socio-economic development in Southeast Asia, close ties with Muslims did not set Banda on a path of social stratification and political centralization. Instead, they still produced spices on a socially dispersed basis, which was unfavorable to the European purchase of spices. The last way to change the rules of the game in their favor was to become the rule makers themselves. Therefore, the VOC, attempting to monopolize the spice market from India to Europe, consequently conquered Banda. By adopting Banda as its territory, the VOC claimed ownership of all nutmeg trees on the archipelago, and imposed an Europeanized agricultural system to manage them, which was called the *perkeniersstelsel*. Meanwhile, the Europeans were considered to be the most suitable managers of the new system and would operate with complete fidelity to the expectations of the VOC. Did the Dutch have the ability to sustain their vision? This is the topic we will discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

The *Perkeniersstelsel* and the *Perkeniers*, 1621–1640

Over the past few years, academics have begun to explore the traditions of Asian plantations, but the Banda plantations are the only ones excluded from the discussion. Willard Hanna and Vincent Loth consider Banda as a singular case among Asian plantations. Here, the VOC imposed its plantation system, which was governed through European ideas and customs. The VOC as a conqueror built a European society on top of that system. This absolute dominance allowed Banda plantations to operate in a similar way of Atlantic plantation enclaves, where colonial settlements were isolated from indigenous societies and maintained the mentality of being a European frontier.¹

Roy Ellen and Philip Winn refute this perspective. They argue that Banda did not cease to interact with neighboring islands and became a European colony. This can be proved by the Banda language and the cultural heritage of contemporary Pacific Island societies traced back to the mid-seventeenth century that still exist today. They conclude that plantation societies were established only for the historical purpose of incorporating Europeans into the trade structures that had already existed in the region since precolonial times.²

¹ Willard Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978). Vincent C. Loth, “Pioneers and Perkeniers: The Banda Islands in the 17th Century,” in *CAKALELE*, 1995(6): 13-35.

² Roy Ellen, *On the Edge of the Banda Zone: Past and Present in the Social Organization of a Moluccan Trading Network* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003). Philip Winn, “Slavery and cultural creativity in the Banda Islands,” in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 2010 (41:3), 365-389. Philip Winn, “The Southeast Asian Exception and “Unforeseen Results?”: Unfree Labour in the Banda Islands,” in Maria-Suzette Fernandes-Dias ed., *Legacies of Slavery: Comparative Perspectives* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 76-106.

How should we perceive the divergences between these two different groups of works that deal with the same issue? Is there only disagreement and no possibility of dialogue between historical archives and contemporary field data? If dialogue is possible, how can it lead us to reposition the *perkeniersstelsel* in the context of the global plantation system? This chapter illustrates the history in the first two decades of the *perkeniersstelsel* according to the VOC archives, and will reveal the setbacks and adjustments that are not yet widely known among academics working on this period. Most scholars on this topic posit the system's operation in the second half of the 17th century, while the early history of the system in the first half of the century is rarely touched upon. We believe that it is essential to understand the system's early operation because it is relevant to and determinant of the system's subsequent direction.

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section introduces the characteristics of both the *perkeniersstelsel* and its participants, the *perkeniers*, and also compares these characteristics from a global perspective of plantations. The second section illustrates the *perkeniersstelsel* system's development between 1621 and 1640 and the economic factors that governed its course. This chapter challenges the exceptionalism of the historiographical perspective on Banda's plantation system. It agrees with the anthropologists' view that European entry did not alter the role of Banda as a Malukan entrepôt from the precolonial era. However, this chapter rejects anthropologists' view of European colonizers' historical marginality. It argues that the European involvement shifted Banda from the Indonesian-Malay world's trade network to that of the Eastern Pacific Islands. Such a redirection was determined by the operational demands of the *perkeniersstelsel*.

2.1 Participants

On 5 April 1621, the VOC resolved to establish a new system for supplying spices on the Banda archipelago, the *perkeniersstelsel*.³ This system, of which name comes from a combination of the words *perkeniers* (gardeners) and *stelsel* (system), subdivided all the land with nutmeg trees into individual gardens or *perken*. It required gardeners, or the *perkeniers*, to take care of nutmeg trees and supply the VOC with spices. Anyone interested in this exclusive right of supplying spices had to rent a garden and pay a land tax and a production tax. This system operated much like the *pachtenstelsel* (the revenue farming system) introduced by the VOC in other colonies, except that taxes were paid to the VOC in spices rather than in money.⁴

Immediately after the execution of the 44 Orang Kaya on 18 May 1621 and the subsequent surrender of the rival Bandanese on Banda Besar, the work of land demarcation began.⁵ According to Hanna's survey, the VOC arranged a total of 68 gardens within the archipelago: 31 on Aij, 3 on Neira, and 34 on Banda Besar.⁶ The area of each perk was approximately 625 roeden (square rods). The initial demarcation ended in 1625, but by 1628 another was held. After the demarcation, similar events were held at intervals. Run was not involved in the demarcation as it was still in the hands of the English.⁷

³ V.I. van de Wall, *De Nederlandsche oudheden in de Molukken* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1928), 311.

⁴ For more about the *pachtenstelsel*, see: Howard Dick & John Butcher eds., *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming: Business Elites and the Emergence of the Modern State in Southeast Asia* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1993).

⁵ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1074, f. 258b, Originele Banda's missiven, May 6, July 13 and August 30, 1621.

⁶ Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands*, 60.

⁷ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1085, f. 117b, Originele Banda's missive September 9, 1625.

The VOC identified its relationship with the *perkeniers* in a manorial manner, treating and treated them as its tenant-vassals (*leenheeren*). Within such an institutional framework, the ownership of the gardens and woods therein belonged to the VOC, while the *perkeniers* were entitled to profit from the crops in their leased gardens that were not spices. In terms of obligations, the VOC was required to acquire the spices collected by the *perkeniers* at a fixed price and to make every effort to meet the *perkeniers*' needs for food, daily necessities, and slaves, while the *perkeniers* were not allowed to sell the spices to anyone other than the VOC.⁸

As for whom the ideal *perkeniers* would be, Jan Pieterszoon Coen, the promotor of the *perkeniersstelsel*, spoke in favor of Dutch and Indian freedmen. In his words, “the freedmen will be either Asian or Dutch, both of whom must be tied up and forced to do so by suitable conditions, concessions, liberties, and privileges.”⁹ Of course, as a Dutchman, Coen preferred his own compatriots between the two groups: “Many Dutchmen must be brought there to guarantee the state through them, to serve the principal offices, to be predecessors of other freedmen, and to govern the slaves in good order for their own profit.”¹⁰

Regardless of who would be the *perkeniers*, Coen would not allow the Bandanese to hold a place in the spice sector of the new society. He believed that the Bandanese were cunning and erratic and that the Company could never work well with them. He even proposed to “expel useless people like the Bandanese from Maluku to secure the island's spice production.” Many have thus criticized Coen's Banda blueprint as racist. Some critics even suspect that Coen's advocacy of the conquest of Banda was partly motivated by a personal grudge since he suffered an ambush by the Bandanese in 1616. However, in addition to Coen's racial

⁸ Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands*, 59-60.

⁹ H. T. Colenbrander, comp., *Jan Pietersz. Coen Beschreiden Omtrent Zijn Bedrijf in Indie*, IV ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1922), 602.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 602.

preoccupation, a further important consideration is that the Bandanese were in conflict with the VOC throughout the 1610s. Given this poor relationship in the past, Coen's reluctance to involve the Bandanese in the new agricultural system is understandable.

Leaving aside the controversy of whether the *perkeniersstelsel* was a racist system, factually speaking, from the beginning, the development of the archipelago's new society hardly followed Coen's plan. The VOC archives show that the Mardijkers (a Portuguese-descended creole people) from the Philippines and Maluku formed part of the first generation of the *perkeniers*. A report on 30 August 1621 by Governor Martinus Sonck revealed that the 31 *perkeniers* on Pulau Aij consisted of Dutch burghers and the Mardijkers. Some of these Mardijkers even enjoyed a certain prestige as they had engaged in the spice production there from the VOC occupation of Aij in 1618. Sonck also expressed confidence in developing spice operations in Banda Besar and Neira, where there were 100 newly arrived Dutchmen and Mardijkers, some of whom were wealthy enough to bring 300 slaves.¹¹

In addition, the archives show that by the early 1620s, some Bandanese were already involved in spice production as *perkeniers*, and one even became a consultant in the spice business for Banda Factory (hereinafter referred to as the Factory). A letter sent from Banda President Isaac de Bruijne on 30 August 1623 mentioned that the Banda council had made the smartest Bandanese *perkeniers*, which proved to be a beneficial practice. These Bandanese *perkeniers* "organized the indolent Bandanese in the colony to work," and they could "handle their own payment" and increase spice production without expanding the VOC's expenses.¹² In the same letter, de Bruijne also mentioned that he would commission an old Bandanese captain, who owned many slaves, to explain to the *Raad van Indië* (also known as the *Hoge Regering* or

¹¹ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1074, f. 258a-258b, Originele Banda's missiven, May 6, July 13 and August 30, 1621.

¹² NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1080, f. 310, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 16 and August 30, 1623.

High Government, hereinafter referred to as the High Government) the reasons of having the Factory for proposing an increase in the price of Banda spices.¹³

These examples tell us that Coen's plan neither succeeded in excluding the Bandanese from the *perkeniersstelsel* nor in ensuring European dominance on the system. From the very beginning, the ethnic composition of the *perkeniers* was diverse. Not only were Europeans and the Malukan Christians involved, but even the Bandanese who was initially banned from being *perkeniers* joined the ranks of them in less than two years. Therefore, the disparity between the VOC's discourse and its practice must be carefully considered when examining the Banda issue.

2.2 Systemic attributes

Last section has discussed whether the *perkeniersstelsel* was predominantly European in terms of its participants. We now will discuss whether it was a European system in its practice. As mentioned in the previous section, the system was designed to foster spice suppliers loyal to the VOC. Anyone who wanted to be a supplier had to rent a garden from the VOC to rightfully use the fruit trees therein for economic production. Of these, nutmeg and mace had to be sold to the VOC, while betel nut, coconut, and other fruits could be freely used by the tenant for brewing or for other economic purposes. Since a tenant was given the right only to use the garden, or more precisely, the fruit from the fruit trees therein, he had no right to decide which and how many fruit trees he could plant because those rights belonged only to the garden owner, the VOC.¹⁴ In the absence of an order to plant more or fewer trees from the VOC, all tenants could do was try to take care of the existing fruit trees and to harvest as many

¹³ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1080, f. 312-313, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 16 and August 30, 1623.

¹⁴ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1094, f. 364a-364b, Kopie Banda's missiven, April 25, 1628. NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1102, f. 378a, 380a, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 4, 1631.

fruits as possible. This setup explains why the VOC called tenants “gardeners”—because it saw them as caretakers, not owners, of the garden.

The *perkeniersstelsel* has attracted the attention of scholars with its combination of capitalism and feudalism, which are regarded as antithetical to each other in economics. On the one hand, the system managed nutmeg forests according to a plantation system, in which planters paid for production factors such as land and slaves and passed leases down from generation to generation as if they were private property. On the other hand, it governed the relationship between planters and the VOC in a manorial manner, because it allowed planters only to dissolve or transfer contractual relationships with the VOC with its consent.¹⁵ Nonetheless, in the interest of a stable supply of spices, the VOC rarely agreed to their contractual termination or assignment requests. Therefore, the planters whose spice business had been unproductive often absconded illegally to eliminate the contract.¹⁶ Additionally, the ownership of production means belonged to the VOC, and any private investment by planters was considered as payment for the right to use only the production factors.¹⁷ Thus, Willard Hanna criticizes the *perkeniersstelsel* for having both feudalistic and capitalistic economic characteristics that gave the VOC a great deal of room to maneuver. The VOC profited from this, while the *perkeniers* were caught up in rapidly changing and needlessly redundant policies.¹⁸

Noting this paradoxical combination as well, the researcher Vincent Loth dismisses it only as a fortuitous change that occurs when the European system was

¹⁵ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1115, f. 721a, Kopie Banda’s resolutien, April 12, 1635 to May 5, 1636.

¹⁶ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1080, f. 314, Kopie Banda’s missiven, May 16 and August 30, 1623. NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1094, f. 368b, Kopie Banda’s missiven, April 25, 1628. NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1102, f. 432a, Kopie Banda’s missiven, September 5, 1631. NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1115, f. 721a, Kopie Banda’s resolutien, April 12, 1635 to May 5, 1636.

¹⁷ Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands*, 59-60.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 61-63.

transplanted cross-culturally into Asian settings. He focused less on the feudal nature of the system and more on its comparability to the Euro-Atlantic plantation system, especially the similar historical context between the two. In his view, the VOC in Banda faced the same situation as the Iberians in the West Indies. The demise of indigenous societies led both the VOC and the Iberians to implement the European economic system without consultation with the locals, and permitted the greatest level of retention of the European component in the system. Additionally, they all had to develop a highly labor-intensive, export-oriented agricultural sector in a heavily depopulated society as soon as possible. As a result, like in the sugar plantations in the West Indies, Bandanese spice production also urgently required the importation of labor, capital, and technology from abroad. These similarities lead Loth to see the *perkeniersstelsel* in Banda as an Asian transplantation in the Atlantic plantation system, to which he called “a Caribbean cuckoo in an Asian nest.”¹⁹

However, not everyone is satisfied with Loth’s analysis. Philip Winn argues that it is premature to put the *perkeniersstelsel* into the Euro-Atlantic mode before clarifying whether Banda was “a VOC plantation venture, an agricultural settler colony, or an early trading settlement.”²⁰ He suggested that the system be positioned with more reference to the characteristics of the Southeast Asian agricultural system.

Indeed, the *perkeniersstelsel* was of Europe, as illustrated by the use of manorial ethics to discipline planters. It would hardly be of Southeast Asia because a dispersed, horizontal Southeast Asian agricultural system based on collective ownership by village communities was what the VOC was about to resist.²¹

¹⁹ Loth, “Pioneers and Perkeniers: The Banda Islands in the 17th Century,” 31-33.

²⁰ Winn, “Slavery and Cultural Creativity in the Banda Islands,” 372.

²¹ For a global perspective on the institutional characteristics of cash crop cultivation in Southeast Asia, see: Ulbe Bosma & Roger Knight, “Global Factory and Local Field: Convergence and Divergence in the International Cane-Sugar Industry, 1850-1940,” in *IRSH*, 2004 (49), 1-25.

However, it is difficult to agree that the system can be compared with the Euro-Atlantic system. The reason is that its production hardly followed the most distinctive feature of the Euro-Atlantic system, which was private ownership of the means of production.²² The sugar plantations in the West Indies were the ultimate expression of private ownership of the means of production. There, the predominantly white male planters took possession of the land, slaves, tools, and crops and, like an entrepreneur, directed a large group of slaves to manufacture sugar for him in a confined system. Of course, different crops had different requirements for the allocation of production factors. Therefore, diverse cultures developed in plantation societies. For example, tobacco plantations, which were much smaller in production scale than sugar plantations, required for fewer slaves, who tended to live together in separate ethnic communities outside the plantations to gain a sense of community. Nonetheless, this did not affect their status as chattel slaves, only that they formed striking caste social characteristics.²³ Moreover, different cultural backgrounds among planters led to different strategies in operating their plantations. For example, planters from mercantilist cultures, like Iberian and French, favored of making their plantations self-sufficient in terms of consumption, whereas English planters tended to adopt mono-economic farming and purchased consumer goods from the market.²⁴ However, whether a sugar or tobacco plantation or an Iberian or English plantation, private ownership was a fundamental feature in the Euro-Atlantic plantation system.

²² Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 6-7, 53-54.

²³ For a history of tobacco plantation societies in the Atlantic and North America, see: Charlotte Cosner, *The Golden Leaf: How Tobacco Shaped Cuba and the Atlantic World* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2015). Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

²⁴ Max Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 251, 253. Trevor Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves: Plantation Societies in British America, 1650-1820* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 18-20.

In that sense, the Euro-Atlantic plantation system is generally considered capitalist to some extent.

In contrast, the characteristics of private ownership of the means of production were absent in the *perkeniersstelsel*. In either production or distribution, the *perkeniers* were constantly subjected to the VOC. Although comparative interests determined how the *perkeniers* harvested their crops other than nutmeg, the particular circumstances of Banda made it impossible for the *perkeniers* to find a better buyer than the VOC. Nutmeg and its by-product mace were compulsorily sold to the VOC and, according to G. L. Tichelman's research, the purchase price of Bandanese spices remained unchanged throughout the 17th century, despite the rise and fall of the popularity of spices in the Amsterdam market.²⁵ Thus, the *perkeniers* could not expect to obtain as much profit leverage from their product as the plantation owners in the Atlantic did when prices increased. For fruits other than spices, the *perkeniers* were theoretically free to trade with whomever they wanted. In practice, however, they had little opportunity to sell to traders from Sulawesi and Java throughout the 17th century, as the VOC often closed off imports and exports to prevent spice smuggling, cash outflow, and Islamic infiltration.²⁶ Only the islands east of the Banda Sea, which had no interest in spices and no monetary economy, were allowed to be regular trading partners for those on Banda. The *perkeniers* could not expect much profit from exports with the eastern islanders, so they still preferred to sell their products internally to VOC personnel, i.e., clerks, soldiers, and sailors who came to anchor during the transshipment of spices.²⁷ As a result, these products ended up being sold within the price-regulated urban economy rather than in the export trade where the *perkeniers* were free to bargain as long as they paid their taxes afterward.

²⁵ G. L. Tichelman, "Banda. De Nootmuskaat, de Perken en de Perkeniers," 3, in *De Stem van Ambon*, 1959(13:2), 1-5.

²⁶ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1127, f. 271a, Kopie Banda's missiven, August 28, 1638.

²⁷ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1105, f. 101b, Kopie Banda's resolutien, April 12, 1635 to May 5, 1636. NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1115, f. 722b, Kopie Banda's resolutien, April 12, 1635 to May 5, 1636.

In this way, the *perkeniersstelsel* appeared to resemble the manorial system in seventeenth-century Central Europe, in which tenants and peasants yielded grains for the European market in absence of privatization and capitalization. However, a closer inspection shows that the two systems were constructed very differently. The Central European manorial system was a system in which yeomen voluntarily became vassals of nobility in exchange for protection. Therefore, in Central Europe, a nobleman's manor was a collection of land owned by these vassals. Under the shelter of the nobleman, the vassals could participate in the market economy with lower risk and transaction costs and, if necessary, with the financial support of their lord. As the manor owner, the nobleman could share the vassals' monetary income by claiming taxes and servitude from them.²⁸ Nevertheless, the vassals retained their original ownership of the land.²⁹ If the vassals wanted to terminate the relationship with their lord, leaving with their land was technically possible.³⁰ The opposite can be seen from the *perkeniersstelsel*: as vassals, the *perkeniers* bore the risk and transaction costs for their lord, the VOC.

Banda stands out even more when considering that the plantation system the VOC adopted in other colonies was similar to that used in the Atlantic. Although the VOC also had monopolies on sugar in Taiwan and Batavia, it followed the Atlantic plantation mode by giving land titles to persuade the Chinese to develop sugar plantations for the VOC.³¹ The planters there were autonomously configured the crop mix of their plantations to yield other agricultural products not monopolized by the

²⁸ Peter Toumanoff, "The Development of the Peasant Commune in Russia," 180, in *The Journal of Economic History*, Mar., 1981(41:1), 179-184.

²⁹ Tracy K. Dennison, *The Institutional Framework of Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 143-148.

³⁰ See: Jerome Blum, *Lord and Peasant in Russian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961). Alessandro Stanziani, "Rights and Bondage in Russian Serfdom," in Alessandro Stanziani ed., *Labour, Coercion, and Economic Growth in Eurasia, 17th-20th Centuries* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2013), 215-235.

³¹ Guanmian Xu, "The Making of Sino-Dutch Sugar Frontiers in Early Modern Asia: Connections and Comparisons, 1630s-1730s" (Leiden University MA Thesis, 2017).

VOC to increase income while maintaining a supply of sugar.³² The location of these colonies on a major trade route provided a favorable market for these unmonopolized crops. By contrast, Banda became geographically peripheral once it was not allowed to trade with Makassar in the West and East Java in the South.

To sum up, it is challenging to place the *perkeniersstelsel* in the global plantation system from an institutional comparison perspective. It is not a typical plantation system because it contains the characteristics of both the manor system and the plantation system in terms of either institutional arrangements or practices. Therefore, we propose to consider that system as a product with a specific historical context. The values of nutmeg and mace in the international market, the commercial character of VOC, and the insular environment of Banda have combined to shape the system. However, continuing to analyze the *perkeniersstelsel* with the Atlantic mode will certainly be futile. It is because that the lack of ownership and the low contact with the market fundamentally distinguish the *perkeniersstelsel* from the Atlantic plantation system. In the next section, we will further discuss the first two decades *perkeniersstelsel* development. We will see that the system once again departed from the Atlantic mode because it ultimately failed to achieve the “enclavization” that characterized the Atlantic plantations.

2.3 Development of the *perkeniersstelsel* in 1621-1640

The *perkeniersstelsel* aimed to replace the Orang Kaya with colonizers as the spice supplier for the VOC. However, when the system was proposed, questions were already raised about the extent to which the costs incurred by the system could be passed on to the colonizers. For Heren XVII, colonization was synonymous with the

³² Dutch Ambon’s clove cultivation system is excluded because it was not established by the VOC, but by the Portuguese. See: Gerrit J. Knaap, *Kruidnagelen en christenen: De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie en de bevolking van Ambon 1656-1696* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1987), 12.

costly expansion of forts, garrisons, and staffing. Coen, the most vocal advocate of the *perkeniersstelsel*, argued that success depended on how committed the directors were to attracting people to emigrate to Banda. More immigrants meant more taxpayers, whose tax revenues could help spread out the above-mentioned costs. If the VOC was to attract immigrants, it had to regularly provide food and slaves to Banda. For Coen, the VOC had an unshirkable responsibility in this endeavor. If the Javanese, Malays, and Keling (from the Coromandel coast) were permitted to bring food and slaves to trade with the colonizers, they might be able to obtain nutmeg and mace and resell them to the Portuguese and other Muslim traders.³³ As mentioned in the previous chapter, these two merchant groups were the primary intermediaries in the European and Indian nutmeg markets at that time. If the VOC were to monopolize the nutmeg business in both markets, it would have to cut off any access those groups had to nutmeg. Therefore, Coen believed that food and slaves had to be provided by the VOC itself, and he had great confidence in the VOC's transportation capabilities.

Predictably, the VOC failed to provide sufficient amounts of either of these supplies. On August 30, 1623, President de Bruijne requested 2,000 slaves and two years' worth of rations for Banda.³⁴ However, in 1624, only 444 slaves were brought by ships from Edam and Amsterdam, which were one-fifth of what had been requested, and the rations provided were very inadequate, according to Willem Jansen, the Banda governor.³⁵ Throughout the 1620s, the VOC provided Banda with

³³ H. T. Colenbrander, comp., *Jan Pietersz. Coen Beschreiden Omtrent Zijn Bedrijf in Indie*, IV, 603. Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands*, 59-60.

³⁴ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1080, f. 308a, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 16 and August 30, 1623.

³⁵ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1083, f. 374a - 374b, Kopie Banda's missiven, April 11, May 23 and August 24, 1624.

fewer than seven hundred slaves in total, and the rations it shipped were never enough to meet the needs on Banda.³⁶

Interestingly, Banda does not seem to have suffered from a labor shortage, despite the inability of the VOC to provide enough slaves. The Banda Factory estimated that at each of the 68 plantations on Banda, only 25 workers and one supervisor were needed to produce nutmeg and mace at full capacity. In other words, for spice production, Banda would need at least 1,700 workers and 68 supervisors, or approximately 1,770 souls.³⁷ This figure was met almost as soon as Banda became colonized. In 1621, there were approximately 1800 souls on Banda, including burghers, freedmen, and slaves.³⁸ The figure continued to increase afterward, reaching 3478 in 1624 and 4,100-4,200 in late 1628. By mid-1631, the slave population alone numbered 2,351.³⁹

How can we explain how Banda reached more than half of the expected population without sufficient slaves supplied by the VOC? Although little information is available on personnel outside the Company, reports from Banda in 1621 and 1623 hint at the origin of the part of the population: Private slaves who moved to Banda with their masters. According to Governor Sonck's report in 1621, many German burghers and Mardijkers who emigrated to Banda were wealthy slave owners with

³⁶ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1083, f. 374a, Kopie Banda's missiven, April 11, May 23 and August 24, 1624. H. T. Colenbrander comp., *Jan Pietersz. Coen Beschreiden Omtrent Zijn Bedrijf in Indië*, V ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1923), 452, 460.

³⁷ Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands*, 60.

³⁸ H. T. Colenbrander, comp., *Jan Pietersz. Coen Beschreiden Omtrent Zijn Bedrijf in Indie*, VI ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1934), 244.

³⁹ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1083, f. 374a, Kopie Banda's missiven, April 11, May 23 and August 24, 1624. NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1102, f. 375b, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 4, 1631. H. T. Colenbrander, comp., *Jan Pietersz. Coen Beschreiden Omtrent Zijn Bedrijf in Indie*, V, 127.

two or three hundred slaves.⁴⁰ In 1623, President de Bruijne mentioned the escape of a tenant in Aij. The tenant came from the Philippines and owned more than thirty slaves. In July of that year, he fled with two female slaves, and the Factory had to take possession the slaves he left behind, which added to the Factory's ration burden.⁴¹

Part of the population was immigrants from neighboring islands, such as the Bandanese who fled to Seram during the 1621 conquest. They returned to Banda in 1622 because they could not obtain enough food in Seram.⁴² Governor Sonck granted them the status of freedmen, as they requested. Other Bandanese came from Pulau Run, which was still under English control. They could not obtain enough food from their spice trade with the English, so they decided to join the Dutch in 1623 and moved to Lonthor, where President de Bruijne built quarters for them on the eastern side of the fort.⁴³ Some of these Bandanese were hired by the Factory, while the others were enslaved by the *perkeniers*. All of them continued to collect spices—at which they were skilled—in exchange for food.⁴⁴

We could not find any information in the Banda governor's reports about Asian merchants supplying slaves to Banda. Despite Coen's recommendation to prohibit other Asian merchants from coming to Banda to trade to avoid spice smuggling, merchants with permits from the High Government in Batavia came to Banda to exchange arak for Dutch cheese, silver coinage, and other goods.

⁴⁰ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1074, f. 258b, Originele Banda's missiven, May 6, July 13, August 30.

⁴¹ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1080, f. 314, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 16 and August 30, 1623.

⁴² NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1076, f. 174a-174b, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 14, 1622.

⁴³ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1080, f. 313, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 16 and August 30, 1623.

⁴⁴ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1076, f. 172b, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 14, 1622.

Nonetheless, they did not bring slaves to the trade, although they had been asked by President de Bruijne to do so at one point.⁴⁵

Overall, in terms of productivity, Banda did not have a “shortage of productive labor due to conquest,” as previous scholars have suggested.⁴⁶ As mentioned earlier, when colonization began, the total population on Banda immediately provided sufficient productivity to run the *perkeniersstelsel*. By 1624, the population had doubled. Although the slave exodus grew after that point, as we will see later, the total population in 1628 was still 700 more than that in 1624. Banda governors’ mentions of poor harvests in their letters to Batavia also indicate the productivity on the islands. Throughout the 1620s, there were no spice deficits, except for the deficit in 1625, which was, however, not due to a labor shortage but to labor deployment. In that year, no one contracted the newly subdivided land. The Factory directed a large team of slaves to harvest the spices on its own, which led to inefficiency.⁴⁷ In the 1630s, spice production resulted in surplus, and the Factory had to consider emptying the spice trees in some of the *perken*.⁴⁸

However, much of Banda’s population came from non-VOC sources. Since the company provided very little labor and few long-distance traders transported slaves to Banda, the *perkeniers* and burghers had to use their individual and often local networks to meet their workforce needs. They were quite effective in obtaining and replacing laborers, as evidenced by the population figures. Here, the *perkeniersstelsel* once again does not mirror the Atlantic mode. The colonizers of the West Indies mainly imported labor from Africa, nearly 7,000 kilometers away under

⁴⁵ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1080, f. 311, Kopie Banda’s missiven, May 16 and August 30, 1623.

⁴⁶ Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands*, 59.

⁴⁷ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1085, f. 110a, 118a, Kopie Banda’s missiven, September 9, 1625.

⁴⁸ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1115, f. 721b, Kopie Banda’s resolutien, April 12, 1635 to May 5, 1636.

the intermediary of European chartered companies, rather than directly from their surrounding areas.

Thus, in terms of labor, Banda could make do without the help of the VOC, but in terms of provision, it was stuck. Since precolonial times, the archipelago had required food importation due to its low ability to produce grain. By trading spices, the Orang Kaya acquired sago from Seram in the North and rice from East Java in the South and Makassar in the West.⁴⁹ Sovereignty transfer from the Orang Kaya to the VOC in 1621 thwarted such exchanges of spice and food, as these former trading partners had become commercial enemies all at once. Due to its alliance with the Ternate Sultan, the VOC became the enemy of the Makassar Sultan, who allied with the Portuguese.⁵⁰ Seram became the frontline of anti-VOC strongholds after receiving numerous exiled Bandanese, who however continued to return to the Banda coast to loot and sometimes even smuggle nutmeg saplings.⁵¹ The East Javanese rice merchants did not want to trade in Banda because the VOC insisted that they could trade only in silver coinage and goods other than spices, but all the rice merchants desired were spices.⁵² The lack of natural conditions and external subsidies made Banda's food issue terribly intractable.

Slaves were the most affected by food shortages. When food shortages occurred, masters or companies lowered their slaves' food rations, sometimes for several days. Thus, whenever there was a shortage of food, the slave communities would riot. According to President de Bruijne's report of August 30, 1623, many starving slaves who had gone out fishing with their Dutch masters took the

⁴⁹ John Villiers, "Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century," in *Modern Asian Studies*, 1981(15:4), 723-750.

⁵⁰ For the detail about this history, see: Gerrit J. Knaap, "De Ambonse Eilanden tussen Twee Mogendheden: De VOC en Ternate, 1605-1656," in E. Locher-Scholten & P. Rietbergen eds., *Hof en Handel: Aziatische Vorsten en de VOC 1620-1720* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004), 35-58.

⁵¹ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1121, f. 1214, Originele Banda's missiven, September 12, 1636.

⁵² NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1085, f. 117a, Kopie Banda's missiven, September 9, 1625.

opportunity to stab or throw the latter overboard and sailed their fishing boats to Seram, which was rich in sago. Moreover, more than a hundred Bandanese furiously told de Bruijne that they would no longer produce spices for either the Factory or the *perkeniers* because there was no food. Additionally, some slaves built boats in the forest under the guise of collecting spices, making ready to escape Banda. President de Bruijne warned that “planting has just started shortly, and shipments of provisions are lacking... I do not know if Batavia already wants to abandon these plantations on Banda, but it will take much effort to restart on Banda at a later date.”⁵³

For slave owners, food shortages led to increased production costs. In a society economically based on slavery, the cost of production was almost equal to that of managing slaves. When food shortages led to higher food prices, the cost of providing for slaves increased accordingly. When slaves fled because they were dissatisfied with food rations, the slave owners had to replenish their labor force to maintain productivity, which led to additional costs. Sometimes these costs included the lives of slave owners if the slaves expressed their discontent through violence, as President de Bruijne mentioned in his report. Between 1623 and 1625, several Mardijker *perkeniers* left their slaves behind and absconded alone because high food prices made it impossible for them to supply slaves and pay VOC taxes at the same time.⁵⁴ The tenants abandoned the *perken* in Selamma, Wijer, and Denner on Lonthor and the *perken* on Aij one after another.⁵⁵ No one rented any of the newly divided *perken*.⁵⁶ The VOC tried to persuade the Malukan Christians from the North to settle on Banda to produce spices, but the Christians said they preferred to emigrate to Batavia because Banda was “a very unhealthy place, with no food and the air [was]

⁵³ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1080, f. 309-311, Kopie Banda’s missiven, May 16 and August 30, 1623.

⁵⁴ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1088, f. 273b, Kopie Banda’s resolutien, April 12, 1635 to May 5, 1636.

⁵⁵ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1094, f. 364b, Kopie Banda’s missiven, April 25, 1628.

⁵⁶ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1083, f. 375a, Kopie Banda’s missiven, April 11, May 23 and August, 1624.

bad.”⁵⁷ The food shortage not only raised production costs but also reduced the willingness of the foreign population to emigrate. This contrasts to at least 200 slaveholders who had previously been willing to become burghers on Banda and engaged in spice production in 1621, when Batavia had not yet demonstrated its poor supply capacity.

Thus, between 1623 and 1627, when food shortages were at their worst, the spices were supplied simultaneously through producers other than the *perkeniers*. The Factory used everything it could to persuade people to produce spices for them, including, for example, debt bondage to attract the Bandanese with rice and Europeans with silver coinage and wine.⁵⁸ In this way, the financial expenses of the Factory increased dramatically because it now not only lost taxes from the production but also had to pay for the factors of production itself. In addition, this mode of production was less efficient because the Factory must spend time recruiting laborers. As a result, a spice shortage occurred in 1624 because the Factory could not recruit enough laborers to harvest the ripe fruits before the rainy season.

To solve the food problem and prevent the plantation system from disintegrating as a result, the Factory turned its hopes to the islands in the southeastern Banda Sea, Kei and Aru. In 1624, the Factory’s officials brought back 138,000 pieces of sago from Kei and invited the islanders trade in Banda.⁵⁹ After collecting 500,000 pieces of sago from Aru and Kei in 1625, Governor Jansen formally proposed establishing trade relations with the eastern islands. He suggested the High Government to provide a ship for Banda’s regular trade with the eastern

⁵⁷ H. T. Colenbrander, comp., *Jan Pietersz. Coen Beschreiden Omtrent Zijn Bedrijf in Indie*, VI, 423.

⁵⁸ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1083, f. 374a-374b, Kopie Banda’s missiven, April 11, May 23 and August, 1624. NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1085, f. 116a-117b, Kopie Banda’s missiven, September 9, 1625. NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1094, f. 109b-110a, Kopie Banda’s missiven, April 25, 1628.

⁵⁹ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1083, f. 375a, Kopie Banda’s missiven, April 11, May 23 and August, 1624.

islands.⁶⁰ After that, the Kei and Aru islanders brought sago and timber to Banda annually. As Factory business increasingly involved southeastern Malukan waters, more sago-producing islands were added to the Bandanese food supply chain, including Tanimbar in 1629 and Couwer and Thoor in 1636.⁶¹ After the mid-1630s, the food reserves on Banda were so large that they could sometimes be used to alleviate food shortages in Ambon.⁶²

For the VOC, the advantage of having trade relations with the eastern islands was that there was no risk of spice smuggling or currency outflow. The islanders had little interest in nutmeg and mace or only interest in raw nutmeg with no spice value. Therefore, trading with them would not incur the risk of spices being smuggled. Furthermore, transactions with them were conducted on a barter basis, so their regular trade visits would not cause any currency outflow problems for Banda.⁶³ Even more importantly, Bandanese exchange with the eastern islands was established from this point. Although the Bandanese may have visited these islands in the precolonial era, there is no indication that they had regular trade relations with the islands. This result is not surprising since their nutmeg market was oriented westward.

Admittedly, the Factory sometimes complained to the High Government that trading with the eastern islanders resulted in a fiscal deficit. For example, in his letter to Batavia on May 29, 1635, Governor Cornelis Acoley reluctantly said that they had to “do business at a loss...exchanging expensive cloth with the people of the islands for something with no value,... just to gain their friendship and ensure that they

⁶⁰ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1094, f. 114a, Kopie Banda’s missiven, April 25, 1628.

⁶¹ H. T. Colenbrander, comp., *Jan Pietersz. Coen Beschreiden Omtrent Zijn Bedrijf in Indie*, V, 123, 127, 461.

⁶² NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1118, f. 398b, Kopie Banda’s resolutien, May 2, 1634 to April 21, 1635. NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1121, f. 1206, Originele Banda’s missive, September 12, 1636.

⁶³ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1085, f. 114a, 116a-117a, Originele Banda’s missive September 9, 1625.

would be willing to bring sago here again next year to fill the bellies of the slaves.” He lamented that such money-losing deals would only increase as more and more of the neighboring islands were attracted to the Indian cloth sold by the Factory. Even Seram, a former enemy of the VOC, put aside its animosity towards Banda and sought trade relations because of its desire for the cloth.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, Acoley acknowledged the strategic and socioeconomic necessity of such trade. His report to Amsterdam Kamer on August 28, 1638, noted that “they brought sago, with which they saved Banda from hunger. Thus, Banda had nothing to fear, no enemies nor hunger.”⁶⁵ After all, it would be unwise not to ally with neighboring islands while facing an inability to hire more soldiers and simultaneously growing hostility in Sulawesi. That Seram turned enemies into friends after 1635 perfectly demonstrated the value of this deficit trade. Additionally, the inexhaustible supplies of sago fundamentally ensured the proper functioning of the *perkeniersstelsel*. Abundant and affordable sago periodically filled the warehouse of the slave owners, stabilized the productivity of the slave economy, and significantly reduced the cost of spice production. Although the Factory sometimes suspected that Islamic forces from Makassar were infiltrating Banda slave society, there were no master-slave problems on Banda plantations in the 1630s similar to those that had occurred in the 1620s, such as collective escapes or the murder of masters over unsatisfactory rations.

Due to its natural environment, Banda was forced to solve its food problems through trade. In this way, it was unfeasible to develop enclaves such as those formed by the Atlantic plantations. In the Atlantic, plantations were mostly located on fertile soil, and owners usually set aside enough land for slaves to cultivate and feed themselves. Thus, the highly self-sufficient Atlantic plantations barely interacted with

⁶⁴ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1121, f. 1205, 1217, Originele Banda’s missive, September 12, 1636.

⁶⁵ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1126, f. 349a, Originele Banda’s missive, August 28, 1638.

the surrounding indigenous environment. In Atlantic plantation culture, Europeans and slaves could survive nowhere but on the plantations. Beyond the plantations was portrayed as an unsafe, unexplored, uncivilized area filled with bandits, cannibalistic natives, and dangerous groups of former slaves.⁶⁶ In contrast, in Banda, the surrounding indigenous environment provided the labor and food needed for the *perken*. To operate the plantation well, the *perkeniers* had to interact with their surroundings. Governor Acoley mentioned in a report to Batavia on September 12, 1636, that the *perken* that tended to produce the most spices were often held by widows and “blacks.” On the contrary, the European burghers were often strapped for cash and often had to rent slaves from the Factory during the harvest season to have the workforce necessary to complete spice production.⁶⁷

Conclusion

Coen’s vision of Banda plantation society provides a scholarly view of Banda spice plantation characteristics. However, this use of data underestimates the gap between discourse and practice. To examine this gap, we have made extensive use of the letters sent by the Banda Factory that contain first-hand accounts of the governors’ observations of the plantation’s development in the early colonial era. Based on these reports, we can see how the reality of the colony failed to realize Coen’s commands.

The *perkeniersstelsel* had several notable characteristics: the monopoly of the VOC on spices, the shortage of terrestrial resources for the VOC, and the difficulty of

⁶⁶ David Watts, “The Caribbean Environment and Early Settlement,” 35-38, in Pieter C. Emmer & German Carrera Damas eds., *General History of the Caribbean Volume II: New Societies: The Caribbean in the Long Sixteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 29-42. Pieter C. Emmer & Jos J. L. Gommans, *The Dutch Overseas Empire, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 148.

⁶⁷ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1121, f. 1213, Originele Banda’s missive, September 12, 1636.

the Banda's natural environment to be self-sufficient. These factors made it unfeasible for Bandanese plantations to operate on a private and a corporate basis, two essential elements of the Atlantic plantations. Therefore, the *perkeniersstelsel* cannot be classified as following the Atlantic mode.

This comparison confirms the view of Ellen and Winn that colonial Banda was not a static, plantation society sequester from its surroundings. Europeans' arrival did not destroy Banda's role as an entrepôt but rather perpetuated it. However, it must be recognized that the VOC did not passively inherit the Banda-centered Indonesian-Malay world trade network operated by the Orang Kaya but created another Pacific network, also centered on Banda, according to its own needs.

Chapter 3

Human labor in the *Perkeniersstelsel*, 1621-1640

Slavery is considered a necessary component of the Atlantic plantation production mode, and its institutional roots can be traced back to Greco-Roman chattel slavery.¹ As Eric Hobsbawm points out, it was not until the 17th century, when slaves became the primary labor force on Atlantic plantations, that Atlantic colonies began to create markets for European manufacturing.² In Southeast Asia, by contrast, the workforce of the colonial agriculture was smallholders, as exemplified by the pepper plantations in Palembang and Jambi in the 17th century.³

Unlike the Atlantic slaves exploited by planters for the fruits of their labor, Southeast Asian peasants were autonomous in commodity production in order to accumulate household income. Since the production was neither exploitative nor coercive, maintaining a violent apparatus to discipline and monitor peasant producers was unnecessary. The market offered dispersed, egalitarian Southeast Asian countryside constantly sufficient incentives to achieve productivity comparable to that of centralized, hierarchical Atlantic plantations. As a result, slave production barely made its way into rural Southeast Asia, and the slave economy remained an urban phenomenon in Southeast Asia until the colonial era. Most of these slaves worked as bonded slaves to accumulate monetary income.

¹ Judy Bieber, 'Introduction,' in Judy Bieber ed., *Plantation Societies in the Era of European Expansion* (Hampshire: Variorum, 1997), p. xvi.

² Eric Hobsbawm, "The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century," in Trevor Aston ed., *Crisis in Europe, 1560–1660* (New York: Basic Books, 1965).

³ Barbara Andaya & Leonard Andaya, *A History of Early Modern Southeast Asia, 1400-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 98, 195.

The failure of slave-based plantation agriculture to reach rural Southeast Asia has often been used to illustrate the limits of European colonialism in Southeast Asia. As Reid notes, the Europeans failed to impose their traditions on the Southeast Asians because the Southeast Asians “always asserted themselves.” Only when Europeans succumbed and learned to exploit Southeast Asian cultural structures did they have the chance to achieve their ends.⁴

However, Reid excludes Banda from the general case of Southeast Asia mentioned above. Citing data from Willard Hanna, he argues that the genocidal conquest of the Dutch destroyed the local society to the extent that Banda had to supplement its working population by regularly importing slaves to maintain spice production. Nonetheless, Reid argues that the conquest also gave the Europeans the opportunity for total domination. With no longer a local society with which to compromise, the Dutch could establish an agricultural system here in the manner to which they were accustomed—just as other Europeans had done in the West Indies.⁵

Philip Winn argues against Reid’s view. He questions the Dutch’s ability to sequester Banda from Southeast Asian culture and establish a society dominated by European ideas, as many contemporary ethnographies reveal that pre-colonial customs and language have continued to the present through plantation slavery. In contrast, little of the colonial culture remains. Second, if the *perkeniersstelsel* was Atlantic, Winn queries why post-colonial Banda did not exhibit the dilemmas akin to those in post-colonial America, where traumatic memories of enslavement have been a sociopolitical problem. On the contrary, nearly three centuries of Dutch colonial rule

⁴ Anthony Reid, “Introduction: Slavery and Bondage in Southeast Asian History,” 14, in Anthony Reid ed., *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983), 1-43.

⁵ Reid, “Introduction: Slavery and Bondage in Southeast Asian History,” 23.

left little traumatic memory in neither the Banda archipelago nor Bandanese overseas communities dating back to the 1621 Dutch conquest.⁶

Winn's doubts are supported by the social distribution of religions in post-colonial Ambon, where most of the Christian families' ancestors were slaves. Some sources also indicate that even at the zenith of Dutch power in Maluku, Christianity was still considered as a slave religion by local dignitaries who refused to allow their children to attend church schools. In contrast, Banda, which is supposed to be a Christian society because almost all of the islanders' ancestors were slaves, still has Islam as its main religion nowadays.⁷

This chapter will use historical sources from the 17th century to support Winn's insight. It will reveal that the Dutch could hardly insulate Banda from the influence of neighboring Southeast Asia. To transform this archipelago that once depended on being an entrepôt to feed its population into an agricultural enclave, the Dutch had to first invest logistically in food and human resources.⁸ However, the VOC investors were notoriously stingy in this regard. Thus, the passive position in terms of access to food and labor prevented the *perkeniersstelsel* from forming clear producer boundaries. On the contrary, in the Atlantic plantation system, well-defined producer boundaries were one of the essential features. It was because production activities would become controllable and measurable only when producers worked

⁶ Philip Winn, "Slavery and Cultural Creativity in the Banda Islands," 365-367, in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 2010 (41:3), 365-389.

⁷ See: Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, "Ambon, a Spicy Hub: Connectivity at the Fringe of the Indian Ocean," in Burkhard Schnepel & Edward A. Alpers eds., *Connectivity in Motion: Island Hubs in the Indian Ocean World* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 421-446. Karel Steenbrink, "The Arrival of Protestantism and the Consolidation of Christianity in the Moluccas 1605-1800," 113-114, in Jan Sihar Aritonang & Karel Steenbrink eds., *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2008), 99-133

⁸ The Maluku archipelago where there was no spice trade, usually have a relatively small population. See: Gerrit J. Knaap, "The Demography of Ambon in the Seventeenth Century: Evidence from Colonial Proto-Censuses," 239-240, in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 1995 (26:2), 227-241.

within a clearly defined space. Thus, Atlantic planters preferred to use slaves rather than indentured labor as producers and choose Africans rather than American indigenous as slaves, because both of the latter options inevitably blurring the boundaries of the plantation.

At the same time, as this chapter will also point out, even when little progress was made, the VOC Factory in Banda still tried to steer Banda into an Atlantic-style agricultural enclave, as evidenced by the unsuccessful policy of ousting Bandanese slaves to the VOC headquarter in Batavia in the 1630s. The promulgation of this policy challenged the image of the Dutch as we know them in Asia. We tend to believe that the utilitarian Dutch would have been more willing than other Europeans to abandon their adherence to culture for economic motives. However, in our story, the Dutch did the exact opposite. They tried to drive out the Bandanese, who were more productive than all other laborers, to cling to the accustomed plantation system. This observation will give us a more three-dimensional view of the Dutch colonists.

Before discussing the labor environment of the *perkeniersstelsel*, this chapter will first review the Dutch conquest of Banda in 1621. For academics, this conquest is an important event in Banda's demographic history as it destroyed the indigenous population and thus began the slave importation in Banda. In a way, the *perkeniersstelsel* is considered Atlantic precisely because it shares a similar initiation context with Atlantic slavery, that is, the local inhabitants were wiped out by European conquest and disease, so the colonists imported labor overseas to work on plantation agriculture. However, after reviewing the VOC archives, we tend to consider the view that "the Bandanese was almost exterminated by the Dutch conquest" is still arguable.

3.1 Were the Bandanese exterminated?

In his work published in 1978, Willard Hanna criticized how the Dutch conquest of Banda in 1621 had a devastating effect on the local community. “Some few Bandanese reached Seram, Kei, Aru, but of the original population of perhaps fifteen thousand persons, no more than about a thousand seem to have survived within the archipelago.”⁹ This passage has become a classic citation in studies on Banda to demonstrate the Dutch’s destructive impact on indigenous societies and the reasons why Banda agriculture towards slave production began to move toward slave production.¹⁰

However, a closer look reveals that there are several problems with the passage. First, Hanna did not provide the figure for the surviving islanders he mentioned with a source. Even if we put aside the lack of data sources, Hanna’s figures were obviously intercepted from the texts of different periods. The figure for the original population was reported when the VOC arrived in Banda in 1599, while the figure for the survival can be judged to have been submitted after 1621.¹¹ During these two decades, Banda had undergone tremendous changes. At the end of the 16th century, Banda was a free port, where merchants from different cultures gathered. Therefore, we have no way of knowing how much of this “original population” of 15,000 were residents, not merchants stranded with the monsoon. Moreover, since the VOC blockaded Banda from the sea since the early 17th century, the possibility of a

⁹ Willard A. Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and its aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands* (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1978), 55.

¹⁰ In addition to Reid and Winn, we here give three other examples: Vincent C. Loth, “Pioneers and Perkeniers: The Banda Islands in the 17th Century,” 14, in *CAKALELE*, 1995(6): 13-35. Peter V. Lape, “Political Dynamics and Religious Change in the Late Pre-Colonial Banda Islands, Eastern Indonesia,” 139, in *World Archaeology*, Jun., 2000 (32:1), 138-155. Alison Game, “Violence on the Fringes: The Virginia (1622) and Amboyna (1623) Massacres.” 515, in *History*, 2014 (99:36), 505-529.

¹¹ J. C. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society* (The Hague: W. Van Hoeve, 1955), 128.

gradual population decline after the naval blockade should not be excluded. The Portuguese noted that without nutmeg, Banda would have been a place with unbearable living conditions.¹² The Sulu people made similar comments about Banda, telling the Dutch that Banda was uninhabitable.¹³

Not only was Banda as the observation object changing, but the VOC as the observation subject was also switching in viewing perspective from a merchant in 1599 to a ruler after 1621. It remains a question that how accurately the VOC had grasped the size of the local population before it started to count the population like a ruler counting the number of his subjects. Considering that it was still a newcomer in 1599 and had to rely on interpreters to obtain all the information, we are skeptical about its ability to estimate the population.

Since the source of Hanna's figures is unknown, we quote figures from two other reports on the Bandanese survivors to further discuss the situation of the indigenous society after the 1621 conquest. These figures were attached to two letters sent from Banda to Amsterdam on May 6 and July 13, 1621. The letters were sent by Governor Martinus Sonck, who was in charge of chasing the remaining islanders after the conquest.

According to Governor Sonck's estimation in the first letter, the figure for the remaining islanders was no more than 2,000. He optimistically reported to the directors in Amsterdam that "with the further inspection of [our] enemies, i.e., the Bandanese, there should be no more than 2,000 of them left on the island." However, in the second letter, Governor Sonck started to suspect that there might be more Bandanese on Lonthor than previously estimated, as the further inland the army went,

¹² Garcia da Orta, *Conde de Ficalho, Colóquios dos simples e drogas da India* (Lisbon: Impr. Nacional, 1891), 82. Cited from: John Villiers, "Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century," 744, in *Modern Asian Studies*, 1981(15:4), 723-750.

¹³ H. T. Colenbrander, comp., *Jan Pietersz. Coen Beschreiden Omtrent Zijn Bedrijf in Indie*, VI ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1934), 423.

the more Bandanese showed up. He complained that informants' estimates of the Bandanese varied widely, this led to inefficiencies in chasing. "The envoys, allies and defectors," who were leaders of Bandanese villages of Salamma, Waijer, Ouwendender, and Lomber located in the eastern Banda Besar,¹⁴ "all have very different views on how many Bandanese are currently left on the island (Banda Besar)." Considering the increasing number of soldiers lost in the battles with the islanders, he turned to "accept the suggestion of the envoy," who appears in the VOC archives under the name Hittoe Kapitein and "[did something] to force the Bandanese to escape on their own."¹⁵

In the above excerpts, two points are worth noting. First of all, the figure for the Bandanese survivors reported by Sonck greatly exceeds that by Hanna. Sonck could not have whitewashed his figure because he did not have to. His letter to Batavia dated May 14, 1622, proves our assertion. In this letter, Sonck complained that some officials were dissatisfied with his performance in the battles with the Bandanese and considered him as "one of the people who stayed home and was not actively involved in the chases." To defend himself, he wrote with great details about the "feats" he did, such as how many people he killed and how many castles on mountains and possessions in villages he had seized.¹⁶ Looking at the context, if the letter did have a problem with inflated numbers, it would be the number of deaths, not the number of survivors, that would be inflated.

The second point is that Sonck changed the strategy of dealing with the hostile Bandanese. It can be seen that the Dutch did want to catch them all initially. However, as the battle progressed, they thought it more practical to drive the enemy out, as their military disadvantage had become increasingly visible when they moved further from

¹⁴ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1073, f. 47a, Kopie Banda's resolutien, January 12 to May 1, 1621.

¹⁵ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1074, f. 252a, Originele Banda's missiven, May 6, July 13 and August 30, 1621.

¹⁶ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1076, f. 178b, Kopie Banda's missive, May 14, 1622.

the sea. Indeed, Dutch sources from the same period show that once the Bandanese entered the mountains, they knew how to use the terrain to fight against the Dutch. If the situation were unfavorable to them, they would immediately escape with boats hidden in the mountains.¹⁷ Besides, the Bandanese had muskets, and many VOC sailors and soldiers even sold weapons to them privately.¹⁸ Thus, the accepted view that the Dutch conquest of Banda in 1621 was an unequal military conflict seems to be only part of the whole story.

Meanwhile, we can also see that local intermediaries—the vast majority of whom were the Bandanese and the Moluccan—played a crucial role in shaping the strategy. This point is not different from the Dutch reliance on local intermediaries elsewhere in Asia. On the one hand, it suggests that there was no consensus among indigenous communities on how to respond to the Dutch menaces, as some chose to work with them rather than against them. On the other hand, it reveals the passivity and dependency of the VOC in obtaining information. As an outsider, the VOC was virtually incapable of verifying the information provided by Asian informants. Unexpected developments often caught them off guard and compelled them to revise or even abandon previous resolutions. Therefore, any programs and resolutions that were documented need to be followed up continuously. There is probably never a clear answer to how many Bandanese were captured or killed during the 1621 conquest. The Dutch did treat Orang Kaya in an extremely brutal manner, but in the VOC archives, either Coen's confession or Sonck's report shows that no more than two thousand Bandanese were killed and captured (Coen: 1200, Sonck: 1615).¹⁹

¹⁷ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1074, f. 252a, Originele Banda's missiven, May 6, July 13 and August 30, 1621.

¹⁸ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1073, f. 45b, Kopie Banda's resolutien, January 12, to May 1, 1621.

¹⁹ For Coen's number, see: NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1073, f. 13b-14a, Originele Banda's missive May 6, 1621. For Sonck's number, see: NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1073, f. 51a, Kopie Banda's resolutien, January 12 to May 1, 1621. NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1074, f. 258a, Originele Banda's missiven, May 6, July 13 and August 30, 1621.

Predictably, this figure is bound to be unsatisfactory, as it is far from the number of deaths currently accepted by academics. What is certain, however, is that by July 1621, the new VOC strategy had been practiced to expel rather than to pursue the hostile Bandanese. During this period, some Bandanese fled to Seram and Makassar, while others chose to stay and cooperate with the VOC.

More interestingly, by 1622, some of the Bandanese fleeing to Seram during the 1621 conquest returned to Banda because they had been tired of the hardships of producing sago.²⁰ Additionally, in 1623, some of the Run Bandanese also allied themselves with the Dutch because the English failed to supply sufficient food, and they even took the initiative to move to Banda Besar.²¹ These Bandanese who rejoined the Dutch were all given the legal status of freedmen in the colony, and the Factory built an exceptional residential area in Banda Besar to accommodate those Run Bandanese.²² These post-1621 developments and Sonck's report of the 1621 conquest seem not to support the current academic view that the 1621 conquest was a massacre or a genocide.

3.2 Non-tenant producers in the 1620s

The Dutch presence in the 1610s and the conquest of 1621 did bring population fluctuations to Banda, but local spice production seemed not to have suffered much. During the first 20 years of the colonial period, the main problem of spice production in most cases was overproduction.²³ Only in 1623 and 1624 did the factory fail to

²⁰ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1076, f. 174a-174b, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 14, 1622.

²¹ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1076, f. 172b-173a, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 14, 1622.

²² NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1080, f. 313, Kopie Banda's missiven, August 30 and May 16, 1623.

²³ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1115, f. 721b, Kopie Banda's missive, April 8, 1633.

collect enough spices due to loss of tenants and climatic factors. Neither of these shortages related to a lack of labor.²⁴

However, this does not mean that the unimpaired productivity of spice sectors could be attributed to agricultural slavery introduced by the European suzerain. Despite Coen's claim that only through slave producers could the spice production be fully subservient to the VOC, it is extremely unlikely that the number of slaves in Banda in the 1620s was sufficient to allow the mode of slave production to dominate at that time. Although data on the slave population were not available until the 1630s, the flow of money from the Factory shows that the 1620s experienced a continuous slave shortage. In 1624 and 1627, after verifying the accounts from Banda, the High Government commanded the Factory several times to stop spending money to hire freedmen and burghers for constructing fortification and warehouses, and to "spend the money only to buy spices and leave construction sites to the slaves." However, the Factory replied that the difficulty of recruiting slaves from the burghers entailed the employment of paid laborers.²⁵

The letter from Governor Pieter Vlack, dated April 25, 1628, also suggested that up to that time, the labor regime of the spice sector had not been dominated by slavery. According to his report, several *perken* on Aij and Banda Besar were still covered with vines and weeds by then.²⁶ Neatness and tidiness were the hallmarks of a garden with slave guards as only the mode of slave production allowed the long-term maintenance of the *perken* to be afforded when private ownership was absent. Thus, these unattended *perken* imply that they only had workers to collect spices at some times. Besides, the workers left once they had finished collecting, with no further obligation to look after the plants inside.

²⁴ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1094, f. 364a, Kopie Banda's missive, April 25, 1628.

²⁵ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1085, f. 108a-110a, Kopie Banda's missive, May 11, 1625.

²⁶ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1094, f. 364a, Kopie Banda's missive, April 25, 1628.

It is unclear what mechanism these workers entered *perken*, as they were rarely mentioned in letters sent from the Factory to the High Government. They might have been contractors organized by freed slaves who agreed with the Factory to continue producing spices after their masters fled. They might also have been retired European soldiers and sailors who worked as jobbers and subsisted in this way until they found decent occupation. Until more information is available, we refer to them here as “non-tenant producers.” It was their involvement in the spice sector that enabled Banda to have a good supply of spices despite the shortage of slaves in the 1620s.

Extrapolating from the total population in 1621 and the volume of spices exported in 1622, it is likely that non-tenant producers were engaged in spice production from the beginning of the colonial era. Theoretically, the performance of productivity in one year would be verified in the following year when the ships were loaded, and 1622 was a year of ample supply of spices. According to the report of 1622, Banda loaded the nutmeg (“nut” in archives) and mace (“foil” in archives) with 52,320 cattij and 6,695 cattij on the ship *Seewolff*, and 20,000 cattij and 5,600 cattij on the ship *Amsterdam*. In total, there were 72,320 cattij of nutmeg, and 12,295 cattij of mace were loaded.²⁷ We compare the shipments of 1622 with that of 1638, when the slave-based plantation system was already stabilized. The total shipments in 1638 were 18,321 cattij of mace and 53,790 cattij of nutmeg, with the result that the figures for nutmeg in 1622 was more than that in 1628.²⁸ However, the total population in 1621 was only 1,900, which was less than the number of slaves in 1637. President Issac de Bruijne estimated that approximately 2,000 workers were needed in spice production.²⁹ Although the number of slaves in 1621 is missing, they must certainly have been less than 1,800 in 1621. It suggests that in addition to purchasing spices

²⁷ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1076, f. 176b-177a, Kopie Banda’s missive, May 14, 1622.

²⁸ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1127, f. 276b-277a, Kopie Banda’s missive, August, 28, 1638.

²⁹ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1074, f. 250a, Originele Banda’s missiven, May 6, July 13 and August 30, 1621.

from the *perkeniers*, the slaveholders, the Factory must have purchased a considerable large quantities of spices from non-tenant producers (see Figure 1).

	freedmen	slaves	total
1621	<100	unknown	1900
1624	unknown	unknown	3486
1628	unknown	unknown	4100-4200
1631	unknown	2351	unknown
1636	unknown	2190	unknown
1637	1260	2106	3366
1638	unknown	2199	3934

Figure 1 Banda's population in 1621-1638

Source: NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1074, f. 258b, Kopie Banda's missiven, July 13, 1621. NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1083, f. 374a, Kopie Banda's missiven, April 11, May 23 and August 24, 1624. NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1102, f. 375b, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 4, 1631. Generale Missiven, Vol-I: 1610-1635, p.121 (February, 1, 1623). NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1127, f. 277b, Kopie Banda's missiven, August 28, 1638. (The figures for the total is net of the VOC servants.)

This comparison leads to reservations about Hanna's claim that the slave mode of production was introduced to bring about a revival in spice production because the mode of slave production did not exhibit a higher level of productivity than that of mixed-labor production.

The simple production methods of Bandanese spices provide room for non-tenant producers to participate in the spice economy. The harvesting and processing of nutmeg is not a task that involves complex skills and instruments. All that is needed is a long bamboo fork, a basket, a knife to separate the aril from the seed, an oven to dry the spices, and a patient worker who knows how to climb trees. Even a child can handle this kind of work with ease. The archives show that Bandanese schoolchildren were among the non-tenant producers in spice production in the late 1620s. At that time, the Factory often took nutmeg harvesting as a penalty for the undisciplined schoolchildren. That penalty could soon be abused by the Factory because several

priests serving in Banda protested to the High Government in 1631 against the Factory's mistreatment of Bandanese children. They condemned the Factory to have the children work in the *perken* instead of studying in school.³⁰

In contrast, it is unattainable to find examples of the Atlantic mode where young children were used as labor and non-tenant producers were appreciably involved. In a sense, slavery became the dominant mode of labor on Atlantic plantations because sugar, tobacco, and cotton productions were arduous and physically demanding. The production process often required the operation of large equipment. Therefore, it was difficult for minors to be physically capable of and for free laborers to be attracted to these jobs.³¹

As it stands, there is no indication that the post-conquest agricultural environment was one of population loss and low productivity, necessitating the revitalization of spice production through slave production mode. As mentioned earlier, the indigenous society did experience demographic attrition and fluctuations, but it is an overstatement to say that they were on the verge of extinction. Besides, the fluctuations in population had little impact on production. The amount of freight transported in 1622 is an illustration. It was not significantly different from the amount in 1638, but the former had less than two-thirds of the human resources of the latter, and its productivity was not achieved by slavery.

Furthermore, there is no evidence that the VOC insisted on slavery for reasons of comparative advantage in terms of production efficiency. In 1623, when the Factory learned that more than 30 slaves had been left in the *perken* on Aij because their Filipino masters had fled, the Factory immediately freed them as free men and asked them to continue to provide spices in that status. In the debate over whether to

³⁰ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1080, f. 313, Kopie Banda's missiven, August 30 and May 16, 1623.

³¹ David Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change Since 1492* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 188.

free the slaves or take them over, the Factory merely focused on whether there was extra money to support the slaves rather than whether the shift in the legal status of the laborers would lead to a decrease in productivity.³²

The transformation of the labor regime of the Bandanese spice sector from mixed labor to slavery was the result of an artificial intervention, or more precisely, the intervention of the VOC. Initially, the slavery-based plantation system was introduced because the VOC thought that would help bring the entire spice production under its command. However, what determined the Dutch to stick to this production mode was the issue of cost. They realized that dealing with individual freedmen or burghers for spices was more costly than with the *perkeniers*, as the former was not conducive to costs and risk transfer. In a letter dated May 12, 1626, Governor Willem Jansen complained that even though the spices were sufficiently collected year by year, the directors could never expect to import the spices at low prices because most of the spices by far were exchanged from burghers freemen instead of handing over from tenants. Due to the lack of tenants, he had to work very hard for several years to exchange wine, arak, meat, and rice for spices with the residents.³³

Nonetheless, spice production in Banda was ultimately dominated by slave production that stabilized on the eve of 1640, according to the report of then-Governor Cornelis Acoley.³⁴ Such a result was shaped by the intervention of the Factory, unlike the plantation system in West Indies where objective labor conditions determined the slave production mode.³⁵

³² NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1080, f. 310-314, Kopie Banda's missiven, August 30 and May 16, 1623.

³³ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1088, f. 259a-259b, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 12, 1626.

³⁴ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1130, f. 890, Origineel Banda's missiven, September 3, 1639.

³⁵ Barbara L. Solow, "Slavery and Colonization," 36-37, in Barbara L. Solow ed., *Slavery the Rise of the Atlantic System* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 21-42. Gijs Kruijtzter, "European Migration in the Dutch Sphere," 108-111, in Gert Oostindie ed., *Dutch Colonialism, Migration and Cultural Heritage: Past and Present* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2008), 95-154.

It was to reduce the cost that the Factory decided to allow the Bandanese to be the *perkeniers* in 1623. Until then, the Bandanese were excluded from qualifying as the *perkeniers* and could only supply spices to the Dutch as freedmen. Governor Sonck paid each Bandanese freedman “a ration of twenty reales each in exchange for going into the forest to collect at least ten reales of spices.”³⁶ By 1623, the Factory resolved to make the Bandanese eligible for tenancy as well. President de Bruijne explained the purpose of the resolution because it was too expensive to buy spices separately from each Bandanese. If the “smartest few of the Bandanese” were allowed to become tenants, the Factory would only have to pay the tenants and then let them handle the wages of the other Bandanese.³⁷ Furthermore, after the food supply on the archipelago was settled in 1628, the Factory asked the High Government to relax the loan criteria and allow those who wanted to become the *perkeniers* to defer payment.³⁸ Meanwhile, the Factory also agreed to give more concessions to the *perkeniers*. For example, instead of importing arak from Batavia, the Factory bought “touwack,” a liquor brewed from the perken-grown coconuts, for the soldiers and staff.³⁹

The Dutch intervention was effective because the local system of village production in Banda was never to return, in contrast to Taiwan and Ommeladen. In both colonies, the VOC also tried to implement a plantation system based on slave production, but eventually, slave producers there were still unable to replace traditional smallholder producers and contract workers.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, slave production soon posed a new problem for the VOC. Slavery in Banda did not create an adversarial master-slave relationship as it did in the New World. The relationship

³⁶ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1076, f. 172b-173a, Kopie Banda’s missiven, May 14, 1622.

³⁷ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1080, f. 310, Kopie Banda’s missiven, August 30 and May 16, 1623.

³⁸ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1094, f. 369a, Kopie Banda’s missive, April 25, 1628.

³⁹ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1094, f. 365a-365b, Kopie Banda’s missive, April 25, 1628.

⁴⁰ Guanmian Xu, “The Making of Sino-Dutch Sugar Frontiers in Early Modern Asia: Connections and Comparisons, 1630s-1730s” (Leiden University MA Thesis, 2017), 4.

between slaves and planters was so close that sometimes slaves could even exert cultural influence on the planters. As a result, the VOC began to fear that the planters would ally themselves with the slaves against them.

3.3 Dominant local slaves and marginal foreign slaves

As with other port economies in Southeast Asia, slave labor had been an integral part of Banda Neira, the anchorage of foreign vessels in the Banda archipelago, as early as pre-colonial times. The Portuguese noted that Bandanese would purchase Mardijkers or other Christian captives from the North Maluku and subject them to slave sailors or porters. If these Christian captives were unfortunate enough not to find a buyer, they would be horribly tortured by the sultan, such as having their noses cut off or their hands and feet chopped off.⁴¹

It was not until the colonial era that slavery became an agricultural phenomenon in Banda. It was rare in Southeast Asia and even among other European colonies in Southeast Asia during the same period. In Ambon during the same period, although sovereignty had passed from the Portuguese to the Dutch, clove production was still based on a village economy. Slaves had no place in agricultural production and continued to serve the port economy.⁴² Only in Banda did slaves succeed in entering the agricultural sector, where they took root and gradually became the spices' primary producers since the 1630s.

⁴¹ Villiers, "Trade and Society in the Banda Islands in the Sixteenth Century," 729.

⁴² Gerrit J. Knaap, "A City of Migrants: Kota Ambon at the End of the Seventeenth Century," in *Indonesia*, Apr., 1991 (51), 105-128.

In the past, scholars have generally agreed that the slaves in Banda were imported primarily by the VOC.⁴³ However, J. J. H. Berends' analysis through the ethnic origin of the local slave population suggests that by the end of the 17th century, the *perkeniers* had acquired slaves from neighboring islands through other private channels.⁴⁴ Here, we will further point out that the pattern of chiefly relying on private channels rather than VOC supplies as a labor source had been in place since colonial times. Before the High Government sent the first slaves to supply Banda in 1624, the *perkeniers* had already possessed slaves. We know that from the letter dated August 30, 1621, Governor Sonck expected the spice business to prosper because some Mardijkers and European burghers in Banda owned two or even three hundred slaves.⁴⁵

The *perkeniers* relied on private sources to obtain slaves, both because the VOC could hardly provide enough slaves instantly and because most of the slaves provided by the VOC barely satisfied their expectations. Numerically, between 1621 and 1640, only 1024 slaves from Batavia arrived at Banda alive, most of whom were purchased from Arakan, Bengal, and Malabar.⁴⁶ Only around a thousand slaves had been officially replenished in twenty years, a number that is utterly insignificant for sustaining a slave economy. Moreover, not every slave had a market in Banda. For example, the relatively abundant supply of Malabar slaves had almost no market in Banda. In a letter dated May 4, 1631, Governor Crijn van Raemburch stated that the *perkeniers* disliked Malabar slaves because they were expensive, prone to disease and

⁴³ Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and its aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands*, 61. Reid, "Introduction: Slavery and Bondage in Southeast Asian History," 23.

⁴⁴ J. J. H. Berends, "Slavery and the *perkeniersstelsel* on the Banda Islands in the 1690s" (Leiden University: MA thesis, 2020), 51.

⁴⁵ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1074, f. 258b, Originele Banda's missiven, May 6, July 13 and August 30, 1621.

⁴⁶ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1083, f. 374a, Kopie Banda's missiven, April 11, May 23 and August 24, 1624. H. T. Colenbrander comp., *Jan Pietersz. Coen Beschreiden Omtrent Zijn Bedrijf in Indië*, V ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1923), 452, 460. NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1102, f. 375a, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 4, 1631.

death, and less than half as capable of working as the Bandanese.⁴⁷ In 1638, the Factory asked the High Government not to send any more South Asian slaves because the *perkeniers* had little interest in South Asian slaves and other slaves sent from Batavia, “from whom we barely made any money.”⁴⁸

Thus, Markus Vink’s argument that South Asia was the source of labor for the VOC colonies in Southeast Asia until the defeat of Makassar by the Dutch in 1660 does not seem to apply to Banda’s case.⁴⁹ It was principally because South Asian slaves had no market in Banda. The *perkeniers* preferred local slaves, especially the Bandanese. These slaves were born locally and had developed resistance to local infectious diseases. They might be also cheaper than South Asian slaves.⁵⁰ All of these indicate that in addition to the supply of the VOC, there was another local market for human resources, given that the *perkeniers* had some options in labor, unlike the Atlantic planters who depended on the supply of slave traders.⁵¹

Bandanese slaves’ physical advantages garnered them the favor of the *perkeniers*. For *perkeniers*, owning Bandanese slaves meant fewer fixed expenses and higher productivity, which helped create a closer relationship between the two parties. To a certain extent, spice production’s simplicity also provided an objective environment for forming this intimate bond. The nutmeg is a fruit that can be picked all year round, unlike sugar cane or other Atlantic cash crops, which involves a time-sensitive process of sowing and harvesting. According to the VOC archives in the early seventeenth century, in the absence of any natural disaster, a nutmeg tree could

⁴⁷ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1102, f. 375b, Kopie Banda’s missiven, May 4, 1631.

⁴⁸ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1102, f. 375b, Kopie Banda’s missiven, August 28, 1638.

⁴⁹ Markus Vink, ““The World’s Oldest Trade”: Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century,” 140-141, in *Journal of World History*, Jun., 2003 (14:2), 131-177.

⁵⁰ F. W. Stapel comp., *Pieter van Dam’s Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie, Deel 2.1* (’s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1931), 177.

⁵¹ Pieter C. Emmer & Jos J. L. Gommans, *The Dutch Overseas Empire, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 152-154.

continue to bear fruit in all seasons for up to a hundred years.⁵² Besides, processing the fruit into spices is not very laborious, which was why some freedmen were not averse to making some extra money by helping the VOC produce spices. Some Bandanese in 1622 gave up settling in Seram and returning to Banda because it was much more strenuous to process sago for Seramese than to produce spices for the *perkeniers*.

The Factory was surprised by such an outcome as the Banda was welcomed by the *perkeniers*. From an administrators' perspective, the Factory would have preferred the slave population in the colony to consist primarily of foreign slaves, as they lacked local roots and were easy to control like the South Asian slaves. In reality, the enslavement of indigenous people, such as the Spanish Empire's enslavement of the Incas for silver mining, is a rare case in pre-modern empires' history. In most cases, for either the European overseas empires or the Indo-Islamic empires, the enclave economy was the optimal mechanism to fill their wallets as quickly as possible. They tended to import slaves from outside through war and purchase, and forced these slaves to work straight for their benefit in a delimited space under their direct command. As for the rural areas surrounding the enclaves, they rarely interfered unless there was an emergency mobilization for war. The imperialists and colonialists never considered the boundless and elusive rural communities to be their ideal labor source because there were too many cultural practices and social relations that they hardly realized and controlled. By contrast, it was easier to control a deracinated group not locally rooted.⁵³

Likewise, the Bandanese were not considered by the Factory to be an ideal workforce. After 1630, as the plantation system recovered due to the resolution of the food problem, the Factory began planning to ship Bandanese slaves to Batavia in

⁵² NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1115, f. 711b, Kopie Banda's missiven, September, 1633.

⁵³ See: André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World, Volume 1, Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam 7th-11th Centuries* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991).

exchange for South Asian slaves, lest the increasingly Islamized Bandanese would become Makassar's Trojan horse in the colony.

From this point of view, it seems the current academic interpretation that the 789 Bandanese captives were repatriated to Banda because the VOC saw their expertise in spice production seems not close enough to capture what the VOC had in mind. A more appropriate explanation might be that the VOC looked at the number of captives rather than the ethnicity to which they belonged. In most cases, the Factory faced a surplus of spice production rather than a shortage, so a single worker's productivity would bring much less marginal benefit to acquirers than to planters.⁵⁴ The latter needed to compete for a share of acquisitions to make more money, but the former barely had this concern. Thus, the productivity gap between South Asian and Bandanese slaves was essential to the *perkeniers* but made no difference to the Factory. Even if the Factory were aware that there was a discrepancy between the Bandanese and other origins of slaves, that would mean little to it.

Thus, once the Factory decided to use slavery as a method of spice production, the ethnic composition of the slave population emerged as a political issue. In a letter dated September 5, 1631, Governor Raemburch expressed his concern about possible subversion on the plantation because the Factory had recently discovered that several *Mardijker* planters had "married in the Moorish manner and renounced Christianity" under the influence of Banda slaves. For this, the Factory found five Banda suspects, the sons of Oranghaj Ymay who would be sent to Batavia. Raemburch saw this as an ominous sign that "the Moorish power from the West" was extending its tentacles to Banda.⁵⁵ Another letter dated September 10, 1633, stated that Jacob Ones, first mate of the ship *Gouden Leeuw*, was found to have purchased 30-35 sockles of mace from several burghers and attempted to smuggle the mace to Makassar. Raemburch

⁵⁴ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1102, f. 375b, Kopie Banda's missiven, May 4, 1631.

⁵⁵ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1102, f. 435a, Kopie Banda's missive, September 5, 1631.

believed that “some Bandanese slaves played a role in this crime.”⁵⁶ In a letter dated September 12, 1636, Governor Cornelis Acoley reported that they had destroyed the nutmeg groves found in Seram the previous year. He suspected that some Bandanese slaves were privately helping the Seram smuggle nutmeg saplings. To prevent a similar incident from happening again, he suggested that the plan to replace the Bandanese with South Asian slaves had to be stepped up. Otherwise, “As long as the Bandanese remain on the island, Your lord will never receive the expected prosperity”⁵⁷

These excerpts distinctly illustrate the Dutch fear of the Bandanese. On the one hand, the *Mardijker* planters were indeed being influenced by their Bandanese slaves. The *Mardijkers* in Banda were almost all from the North Malukan Portuguese communities, so they had no language barrier in communication with the Bandanese. On the other hand, as the Factory continued to find spices and nutmeg saplings being smuggled into the hands of the enemy, the Bandanese thus were looked more suspicious as spice producers with a similar cultural background to the enemy.

With these concerns in mind, the Factory began to develop a plan to drive the Bandanese out of the colony. The plan was divided into two parts, the first of which was to prevent the Bandanese slave women from forming families with Christians, whether with Europeans or *Mardijkers*. To this end, a statute enacted in 1622 prohibiting Christian burghers’ marriage to non-Christian female slaves was republished in 1634. However, there were very different considerations behind the same statute. The purpose of the 1622 statute was to convert Bandanese slaves to Christianity through marriage to burghers. By contrast, the 1634 statute denied marriage between a Christian burgher and a female slave directly and made it a crime

⁵⁶ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1115, f. 714a-714b, Kopie Banda’s missive, September 10, 1633.

⁵⁷ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1121, f. 1214, Kopie Banda’s missive, September 12, 1636.

of adultery.⁵⁸ On August 16, 1634, Christoffel Rodrigo, son of the *Mardijker* Zatan, was convicted of adultery for marrying his Bandanese slave. The Factory sentenced Rodrigo to be executed with a sword and confiscated his property.⁵⁹ It is clear from this example that the Factory no longer expected marriage to be an approach to Christianize the colony as it had in 1622. Instead, it became increasingly suspicious that the Bandanese were using marriage with their masters to find ways to bring Christians into the Islamic fold.

The second part of the plan was to isolate the Bandanese slaves from production to prevent them from handling nutmeg. This was done by collecting Bandanese slaves and exchanging them for South Asian slaves in Batavia at the same accounting value, and then distributing the exchanged slaves to the slave owners who surrendered their Bandanese slaves. However, this plan was soon resisted by slave owners who were unwilling to exchange Bandanese slaves for South Asian slaves. In a letter dated May 4, 1631, Governor Raemburch advised to Governor-general Jacques Specx that if the High Government indeed wanted to detach the “increasingly Moorish” Bandanese from the plantations in the colony, the first step would be to “provide the planters with the slaves they want.” Otherwise, “the burghers [would] not give up their Bandanese slaves.”⁶⁰ Raemburch also made suggestions as to which source of slaves should be offered. He argued that the Butonese would be the competent substitute for the Bandanese and would help persuade the slave owners to accept the offer of the slave exchange. However, if only South Asian slaves were available, then the Bengalis and the Arakanese were acceptable.

Unfortunately, the better alternative slave suggested by Raemburch was not yet sufficient in supplies: The Arakanese and Bengalese sources for slaves remained

⁵⁸ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1118, f. 384a, Kopie Banda’s resolutien, May 2, 1634 to April 21, 1635.

⁵⁹ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1118, f. 397b, Kopie Banda’s resolutien, May 2, 1634 to April 21, 1635.

⁶⁰ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1102, f. 375b, Kopie Banda’s missiven, May 4, 1631.

scarce. The Southeast Asian sources did not come into hands until the VOC defeated the Makassar in the 1660s.⁶¹ Without the capacity to provide slaves comparable to the Bandanese, the scheme could hardly receive a positive response from slave owners. In view of this, the Factory reduced the scope of exchanges after 1633 by narrowing the Bandanese slaves to be exchanged to those who were “convicted and suspected of rebellion.” In case a burghers’ slaves were criminals, he could not avoid surrendering their slaves to the Factory.⁶² In a letter dated September 10, 1634, Governor Acoley stated that despite the slaveholders’ incessant complaints, “The exchange of slaves was necessary because it made the Bandanese more obedient.” Acoley was also confident that the Factory could afford to continue the policy subsequently to “rinse out the inhabitants of Banda” and “free Banda from evil creatures such as the Moors,” as long as the High Government “[did] not shirk its support for [the Factory].”⁶³

It was not until 1639 that the Factory ended the plan of slave exchange. Governor Acoley explained the reasons for termination in the letter dated September 3, 1639. On the one hand, slaveholders were, after all, reluctant to hand over their Bandanese slaves “in exchange for any slaves from Batavia.” Whenever the exchange was executed, it led to “arguments and unrest.”⁶⁴ On the other hand, the slave exchange depended on a back and forth between the two sides, and the High Government did not do well on its side. The Factory either received insufficient slaves or none at all. The result was that the slave exchange morphed into a one-sided supply of slaves from Banda to Batavia. To improve the exchange, the Factory changed its practice for one time in 1636. It waited to receive slaves from Batavia before loading the Bandanese slaves on board, but the High Government still failed to deliver the

⁶¹ Vink, ““The World’s Oldest Trade”: Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century,” 144.

⁶² NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1115, f. 726b, Kopie Banda’s missive, April 8, 1633.

⁶³ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1115, f. 668a, Kopie Banda’s missive, September 10, 1634.

⁶⁴ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1130, f. 896, Kopie Banda’s missive, September 3, 1639.

slaves requested by the Factory.⁶⁵ Consequently, the Factory had to again and again “return to their masters the slaves they had worked so hard to collect,” which meant that all the Factory’s year-long negotiations to persuade slave owners to exchange slaves were instantly nullified. It thus appears that the VOC did attempt for a time to sequester Banda from its indigenous environment in line with European institutional traditions, but historical conditions limited it from succeeding, as illustrated by the failure of the slave exchange program in the 1630s.

Conclusion

The *perkeniersstelsel* is considered an Asian version of the Euro-Atlantic system partly because the scholars argue that its slavery is of a European institution. They supposed that its slavery served the same purpose as Atlantic slavery in terms of commodity agriculture, that it was also intended to address the shortage of indigenous labor, and that it was also by European colonists as slave labor suppliers. However, these arguments lack a solid empirical basis.

First of all, the archives do not support the idea that the Bandanese were nearly wiped out during the conquest. Over the course of the conquest, some indigenous villages turned to cooperate with the Dutch. Meanwhile, the Dutch were changing strategic goals. After the conquest, some Bandanese fled overseas or cooperating with other Europeans allied with the Dutch and returned to spice production. We can see that the Bandanese people were highly mobile in either will or action. Therefore, it is somewhat hasty to imagine that the Bandanese were homogeneous and defenseless against Europeans.

⁶⁵ NL-HaNa, VOC, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1121, f. 1214, Kopie Banda’s missive, September 12, 1636.

Second, slave production was not incorporated into the *perkeniersstelsel* from the beginning. As discussed in chapter 2, the *perkeniersstelsel* was a supplier-oriented system. In this system, the VOC was primarily concerned with fostering subordinate suppliers with no clear idea of the production relationships involved. As a result, Bandanese spice production remained in a dispersed system during the first decade in Dutch Banda. Most of these producers were not tenants but rather itinerant workers who had no long-term obligations to care for the *perken*. However, experience gradually led the VOC to learn that slavery was more beneficial than any other production form. On the eve of the 1630s, the VOC embarked on consolidating the mode of slave production by deliberately supporting the *perkeniers*.

Once slavery was established as the primary mode of production, the composition of the slave population had to be controlled. To clarify production boundaries for maximum control of production, the Atlantic colonists did not want plantation slaves to have a local background. Although the VOC had similar intentions, it had difficulty doing so in Banda because there was no market for the South Asian slaves it delivered to Banda, and the *perkeniers* were unwilling to go along with its policies regarding the slave population.

From the beginning of the colonial era, the tenant mainly recruited slaves themselves rather than purchased from the VOC. Such a situation remained virtually unchanged even when the VOC started importing slaves from South Asia. They were not interested in slaves from the South Asian line while preferred to obtain local slaves through means other than the VOC. The governor believed that the tenants' preference for local slaves was because they were easier to survive locally, cheaper, and more capable of working than South Asian slaves. However, the archives give us more answers than this materialistic interpretation, as some slaves could culturally influence their masters.

A similar situation could hardly happen on Atlantic plantations. There, slaves were dehumanized as countable factors of production, and there were insurmountable

social barriers between them and their master class. In contrast, slavery in Dutch Banda developed more along the lines of Southeast Asian slave culture. Most slaves had the opportunity to be emancipated and integrated into mainstream society, and they were not deliberately separated from their master class in life and culture. It may partially be attributed to that many of the tenants were Malukan Mardijkers and the Malukans culturally and linguistically similar to slaves, and therefore they did not form classes along racial lines as they did on Atlantic plantations. The introduction of slavery in Dutch Banda agriculture was indeed epoch-making, but it was not so much the first penetration of European slavery into Southeast Asia as it was the first expansion of Southeast Asian slavery into rural areas.

Conclusion

For the first twenty years of its rule over Banda, the VOC was attempting to place the *perkeniersstelsel* within the framework of the European plantation system. Its efforts were rewarded materially but not culturally. On the material side, the VOC financially supported planters and slaveholders from 1628 onwards, this eventually succeeded in turning slavery into the dominant labor regime of the Bandanese spice sector in the 1630s. The cost of the spices was finally kept as low as possible on the eve of 1640.

Nonetheless, the VOC was unable to operate the *perkeniersstelsel* on the cultural trajectory of the European system. Although the new system was expected to operate in a European enclave, the tenants of the *perken* were partially composed of Malukans from 1621 onwards. The food shortages that began in 1622 further loosened the cultural boundaries that the VOC wanted to impose on Banda. To reduce the purchase price, the VOC in 1623 had to revoke the resolution of not allowing the Bandanese to lease the *perken*. Meanwhile, the VOC strived to establish trade relations with the eastern islands to make them the breadbasket of Banda. Normal trade relations between the two sides were eventually stabilized after 1630 on the pattern of the eastern islanders sending their ships to Banda, which gradually brought Banda back to its pre-colonial role as an entrepôt, rather than the enclave the VOC had expected it to be.

Although the food problem was solved, the VOC had to feel anxious about Banda's re-engagement with its surroundings. Fearing the cultural influence of the indigenous slaves on their Christian masters and their possible collusion with other islands, the VOC embarked on exchanging the Bandanese slaves for the Indian slaves of Batavia. Unfortunately, this policy was not supported by the slaveholder. The VOC had to cease the policy in 1638.

In a field such as institution history, which particularly requires long-term track, it is somewhat presumptuous to summarize an institution with a history of nearly two hundred and fifty years by merely twenty years of development. Even so, we have presented as general a picture as possible of the *perkeniersstelsel* in Banda during the early colonial period. To solve Banda's dependence on offshore supplies, the VOC had two paths to follow: either continue with the traditional Malukan and Southeast Asian network or use its developing trade network to provide resources for the plantations. The VOC failed to do the latter, and therefore had to adopt the former.

Dependent on established trade networks to access production factors led *perkeniersstelsel* to form an open agricultural society as opposed to the closed Atlantic mode. First, Dutch burghers did not have a monopoly on the planter or the *perkenier* class, which also included Mardijkers and Filipinos, Malays, and other Southeast Asians. In most cases, Southeast Asian planters were more productive than the European because their linguistic and cultural advantages gave them an edge in taking advantage of existing trade networks. Secondly, the labor force of the *perkeniersstelsel* has a strong regional dimension, where the indigenous were even considered the best workforce by the planters. When the VOC sought to relocate the Bandanese to Batavia to reduce the local interference on production, planters stood up several times for them.

The agricultural and commercial characteristics of nutmeg also shaped the distinctive structure of the *perkeniersstelsel*, which barely corresponded to the Atlantic mode. On the agricultural side, nutmeg was grown without a well-defined crop harvest cycle, and the production scarcely involved complex skills and technical tools. Therefore, vertical labor stratification and horizontal task division throughout the process, from planting to processing, was unnecessary. This low-intensity labor environment fostered a more intimate relationship between planters and slaves on the one hand, and on the other hand, allowed slave labor and free labor to coexist in a

complementary rather than mutually exclusive relationship in the plantation space, where any ethnic groups were possible to meet as laborers on an equal footing.

On the commercial side, since nutmeg and mace were circulated by the state rather than private enterprises, the planters were limited in access to complete land rights and distribution channels. Therefore, they relied on the VOC in terms of capital accumulation. The result was a mutually compromising and tolerant relationship established in the *perkeniersstelsel*, which contrasted with the emphasis of the Atlantic mode on dualistic order and various spatial “boundaries”—between European and indigenous cultures, between forced and free labor, and between “whites” and “blacks.” It was a scenario that unpredictably, at least for Coen, became the basis for the spice production in Dutch Banda.

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