Extremes in the Archipelago: Trade and Economic Development in the Outer Islands of Indonesia, 1900-1942, Jeroen Touwen

Reed L. Wadley
ils parvinrent, en prenant modèle sur la communauté chinoise, à créer les conditions politiques d’une intégration dans l’Indonésie indépendante dont, ironie du sort, les peranakan (Chinois nés en Indonésie et assimilés) furent invités à s’inspirer dans les années 1950.

Commercants, le plus souvent aisés, les premiers arrivants s’assimilèrent d’autant plus facilement que le prestige religieux dont ils jouissaient leur permit de contracter d’avantageux mariages. Les enfants de ces unions mixtes étaient alors désignés par le terme de muwallad (métis) par opposition aux aqhab, purs arabes. A ce clivage s’en ajoutait un autre. Celui distinguant du reste de la communauté les halawi, membres de familles hadrami censées descendre du prophète. Eux seuls pouvaient porter les titres de sayyid (seigneur) et de habib (bien-aimé) ; la coutume voulait qu’on leur baisât les mains et leur filles avaient interdiction formelle d’épouser un membre des classes inférieures.

Par une exploitation fine et rigoureuse de son corpus, Natalie Mobini-Kesheh montre l’évolution de cette identité hadrami dans les Indes néerlandaises. Organisée, jusqu’au début du XXe siècle autour de l’islam, elle fut ensuite marquée par le « sentiment d’une arabité distincte et supérieure aux musulmans indigènes » (p. 31), favorisé par la structure politico-juridique néerlandaise. Sur le modèle des Chinois, avec qui ils partageaient la catégorie « Étrangers orientaux » de la nomenclature coloniale, ils fondèrent en 1901 la Jam'iyyah Khair (« Société Bénévole »). Mais l’unité autour de cette arabité ne dura que quelques années. En 1914, un courant réformiste, regroupé autour d’Ahmad Bin Mohammad Surkati – un ouléma soudanais que les responsables de la Jam’iyyah Khair avaient fait venir de La Mecque – fonda l’association al-Irshad. L’enjeu du conflit résidait dans la place à accorder aux sayyid au sein de la communauté hadrami des Indes néerlandaises. Devait-on y maintenir l’ancienne stratification sociale ou bien, ainsi que l’affirmait Sukartli, lui substituer une élite fondée sur le mérite et autoriser une certaine mixité sociale des mariages ? Ce fut cette seconde attitude qui finalement prévalut. A travers la cinquantaine d’écoles qu’ouvrit al-Irshad au cours des deux décennies suivantes, réformisme religieux et modernisme social se répandirent au sein de la communauté hadrami. Une rupture se produisit alors entre émigrés de première génération, généralement commerçants, très attachés à leur identité arabe, et leurs enfants, muwallad. Ces derniers, formés au sein des établissements d’al-Irshad, étaient plus souvent enseignants ou membres des professions libérales et avaient fait de l’Indonésie leur patrie. Cette nouvelle opposition fut décrite, en 1934, par Abdurahman Baswedan dans une série d’articles intitulés « Peranakan dan totok Arab » (« Descendants d’Arabes et Arabes de souche ») et parus dans le journal sino-malais Matahari. Par analogie au cas des Chinois de l’Archipel, Abdurahman lançait une réflexion qui conduisit à la fondation de la Persatuan Arab Indonesia (PAI, Union des Arabes d’Indonésie), ouverte à tout Arabe né dans les Indes néerlandaises.

Afirmant que l’Indonésie, et non le Hadramout, était leur patrie, les militants de la PAI se lancèrent dans le combat nationaliste, aux côtés d’Indonésiens d’abord assez mal disposés à leur égard. Cette lutte leur permit de mettre fin à une quête identitaire longue de plusieurs décennies. En 1940, avec l’entrée de la PAI au sein de la Fédération politique d’Indonésie (Gaboengan Politik Indonesia, GAPI), les Hadrami, après avoir été avant tout musulmans, puis Arabes, devaient indonésiens.

• Extremes in the Archipelago: Trade and Economic Development in the Outer Islands of Indonesia, 1900-1942,

By Reed L. WADLEY*

Extremes in the Archipelago is not an easy read, but it is a highly detailed and useful one, and will no doubt serve as a primary reference in future work on the economic history of Indonesia’s so-called Outer Islands (i.e., all those islands besides Java). With a focus on the development of export trade and its economic effects during the late Dutch colonial period, the book examines the differences among the Outer Islands in their integration with the world economy. (While one might quibble over the value of perpetuating the excessively Java-centric “Outer Islands” category, that is certainly the way Dutch colonial officialdom conceptualized and reported on things.) In the introductory chapter, Touwen outlines the historiographic and theoretical background of the book, pointing out,
for instance, the importance of examining critically the notion of economic dualism (i.e., the purported differences between largely European estate enterprises and indigenous smallholder efforts to compete in export crops).

In Chapter 2, the author concentrates on how to cluster the islands in order to make comparison more fruitful, given the wide differences between them (e.g., eastern Sumatra with its extensive estates and oil production versus New Guinea with its difficult, isolating terrain). His criteria logically revolve around the nature of the export economy: Cluster I (consisting of East Sumatra, Southeast Kalimantan, and Palembang) had substantial European and indigenous export production; Cluster II (West Sumatra, Aceh, Jambi, Lampung, West Kalimantan, Manado, and South Sulawesi), strong indigenous but weak European export production; Cluster III (Bangka, Belitung, and Riau), low export performance by indigenous producers but strong performance by Europeans; and Cluster IV (Tapanuli, Bengkulu, Maluku, Bali, Timor, and New Guinea), both weak indigenous and European export production.

There is much to recommend to this clustering, though one does find Touwen's summaries of each province to be somewhat overgeneralized. For example, on West Kalimantan, he asserts, “The indigenous groups, spread throughout the inland forest, occasionally had traditional tribal feuds, but did not cause the colonial government any serious problems” (p. 83). This might suggest to a naive reader that Dayak peoples did not live in (actually adjacent to) forests of their own making (i.e., agroforests), and that their conflicts were not occasionally the result of colonial policies. For example, widespread rebellions with millenarian tones in the Ketungau basin between 1908 and 1916 had more to do with high taxes imposed by Malay overlords kept in power by Dutch policy; if these had been little other than “traditional feuds,” the provincial authorities would likely not have sent in the colonial military to suppress them. Readers will no doubt find other such overly broad generalizations in the summaries of their own favorite provinces.

Chapter 3 concerns the expansion of the European export-oriented activities with an emphasis on estate agriculture and mining industries, as well as their effects on the local economy. The focus here is on East Sumatran-dominated estate agriculture, petroleum and coal production in Sumatra and Kalimantan, tin mining on Bangka and Belitung, infrastructural development (e.g., roads and railways) generally around points of concentration of European enterprises, the influx of capital imports where European production had expanded, and the explosion of large-scale labor migration. Chapter 4 examines foreign and interregional exports from areas with substantial indigenous export production (i.e., Clusters I and II). Touwen shows the dynamic quality of this production, its flexibility in cash-crop cultivation, and its response to overseas market opportunities and the abrupt changes brought by the Great Depression. Here, export-oriented crops like coffee, pepper, rubber, and copra form the focus, with attention given to colonial policies that affected smallholder production (e.g., the rubber restriction), the mentality of smallholders, and the Chinese-dominated trade and credit networks that fed on and facilitated native export production.

The focus of Chapter 5 is on the areas peripheral to the expanding export economy (i.e., Cluster IV). Here, Touwen asks how bleak the economic picture in these places really was as colonial officials tended to complain about economic stagnation, and he demonstrates a good deal of variation. The Sumatran provinces of Tapanuli and Bengkulu were advantaged, for example, by their relative proximity to areas of expansion in East Sumatra and Palembang, while most areas of eastern Indonesia were disadvantaged in their isolation from such centers of growth. Then, in Chapter 6, Touwen discusses colonial economic policy and the profound effect that the Ethical Policy had on policy direction. He points out the conflict that officials met with in trying to balance competing interests – strong European company lobbies, a concern for expanding basic subsistence production, and smallholder concerns for autonomy and fair trade in the face of official ambivalence. This chapter is particularly interesting because the policies and supporting bureaucracies (e.g., agricultural extension) became those of independent Indonesia. The seventh and last chapter provides a clear summary of the main findings and analyses, with some attention to how the dynamics of this period contributed to the emerging post-WWII national economy.
Touwen also provides four useful appendices, the first being a summary of his methods to reconstruct population figures, which was necessary given the widely varying quality of colonial census data. Tables summarize the data on various populations, such as indigenous people, Chinese, European, and urban, and he is careful to note deficiencies in the data. The second appendix outlines his procedure to computerize the various statistics on trade, which sometimes used different systems of calculating imported and exported goods. In the third appendix, Touwen specifies the procedure for comparing commodity prices over time adjusted for inflation, and the fourth appendix provides tables and figures of statistics related to the content of the book; these range from general foreign trade statistics to reconstructed tin prices.

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**Power and Prowess: The Origins of Brooke Kingship in Sarawak,**

By Reed L. WADLEY*

James Brooke’s amazing career as Rajah of Sarawak has been explored in a number of biographies and histories, during his life and well beyond it. All of them generally confirm and reconfirm a set of widely accepted facts about Brooke’s life: For Brooke’s help in putting down a rebellion against his rule, a grateful Brunei sultan gave him the governorship of Sarawak. In consolidating his power, Brooke sought to end Malay exploitation of the Bidayuh Dayak, though he sought also to govern indirectly, making use of existing Malay hierarchies. The British Royal Navy was essential to Brooke’s expansion of power against Iban and Malays who threatened British trade interests, and Brooke had to deal with three attempts to topple him, one by Chinese antimony miners in 1857 and two by jealous Malay nobles who plotted against him. The first heir to Brooke’s throne, his nephew Brooke Johnson, became mentally unstable and could not ascend to the throne; Johnson’s younger brother, Charles, stepped up and took his place, eventually becoming the second Rajah in 1868.

In Power and Prowess, John Walker goes back to the primary sources and shows systematically that “facts” are “at best, misrepresentations” (p. xix): Brooke seized power with the help and support of those whose rebellion he had helped put down; the Bidayuh resisted Brooke’s attempts to extract taxes and corvée labor from them; Brooke held power directly, and his careful manipulation of native ritual and symbol helped secure his rule more firmly than naval expeditions alone allowed; the alleged Malay plotters were victims of local power struggles, and Brooke’s heir was not mad so much as intent on preserving Sarawak’s independence from the threat Brooke imposed through his repeatedly unsuccessful attempts to cede Sarawak to a European power.

Walker’s dismantling of built-up myth about Brooke is a considerable contribution to Sarawak history, but treating this book as consisting of just that would itself be a serious misrepresentation. Power and Prowess is much more: Walker carefully examines the culturally specific bases of power in nineteenth-century Sarawak, how local actors perceived how power worked and whence it derived, how they perceived Brooke to be a ritual center, and how they acted on those concepts for their own locally motivated purposes. He also shows that Brooke was an astute observer of indigenous culture, manipulating ritual and symbol in his favor. In doing so, Walker moves us away from the traditional tack of Sarawak history, namely the emphasis on colonial history as European, toward colonial history as locally perceived, interpreted, and experienced.

In Chapter One, Walker describes the three ethnic groups that confronted the ambitious Brooke in his state-building efforts – Malays, Iban, and Bidayuh (formerly known as Land Dayak). Of particular focus is the cultural and ideological bases of political power, namely the notion that political power is tied inextricably to natural and supernatural conditions. “Power” is not merely a social, political, or economic thing, but flows fundamentally from spiritual prowess and health. This prowess (Walker chooses to use the Malay term, semangat) must be protected and enhanced; it is a thing that inattention may diminish, resulting in misfortune and disaster. Thus, a leader’s success

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