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CHAPTER

2

# The organisation of production in the pre-colonial Southeast Asian port city

Much of the writing on Asian port cities in recent years, including the present volume, has been devoted to understanding the functioning and role of European colonial port cities—'beachheads of an exogenous system ... peripheral but nevertheless revolutionary'.<sup>1</sup> These colonial ports in Asia were indeed revolutionary, chiefly because they became in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the channel through which the industrial revolution and finance capitalism began to transform Asia. They first undermined and finally overwhelmed the older cities which had always been at the centre of Asian life. To understand how and to what extent they did so, it is necessary to understand how the traditional Asian port city functioned, and how it related to the political and cultural life of its surroundings. One of the neglected aspects of this prominence of the port city in Southeast Asia is the extent of industrial activity carried on in them which, in producing for both local and overseas markets, significantly added to commercial and maritime entrepot functions. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the organisation of this production.

In Southeast Asia, that meeting place of oceans and waterways, by contrast to most other regions of Asia where inland cities held the supremacy, the port city was a much more dominant element, as maritime trade had always been prominent. Indeed, international shipping was never more central in the

economic life of Southeast Asia than in the period of this study, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which happen to be relatively well documented. Nevertheless, the port city of the 'exogenous beachhead' type was almost unknown until introduced by Europeans. Then, it borrowed not so much from Asian precedents but from the longstanding tradition of Phoenician, Greek and Venetian trading colonies in the Mediterranean and German ones in northern Europe which stood politically independent from their surroundings. In Southeast Asia traders from other parts of the region, China, India or Arabia, did not set up politically separate or autonomous 'Javanese' or 'Chinese' cities, even in trading ports where their communities formed a virtual majority. Even if such communities enjoyed a large degree of internal self-government, local rulers always retained ultimate power. Moreover, local patterns of state-forming appear to have been sufficiently flexible to integrate the elite of each foreign community. In consequence, the syncretic urban cultures which resulted from this incorporation did not cease to extend themselves to a significant dependent hinterland. A sharp distinction between 'port city' and 'administrative city' cannot therefore be made in Southeast Asia until the colonial era. Southeast Asian languages did not normally distinguish the concepts of state and city. States were defined in terms of their urban centres, which in most cases were also ports. Nakhon Sithammarat (Ligor) was not a port of Siam, or Pahang a port of Melaka; rather these were seen as city-states (*negeri*) with their own kings (*raja*) who were tributary to other kings in Siam (Ayutthaya) or Melaka.

Southeast Asia is permeated by water. Even those capitals far inland (very few in our period), like Pegu or Ava (in modern Burma), Pnompheh (Cambodia), or Ayutthaya (Siam), were great river ports accessible to large vessels. In the island world the important states of the period were all (with the partial exception of central Java) centred in port cities—Pasai, Melaka, Aceh, Palembang, Patani, Brunei, Manila, Makassar, Ternate, Banten, Demak, Grisek/Surabaya.

Despite the pre-eminence of maritime relations, the published literature sheds little light on the economic functions of indigenous Southeast Asian cities. In part this is a function of the sources. Royal inscriptions and chronicles are primarily concerned to show the all-pervading role of the court as the centre of the city, and there have been no sources remotely comparable to the Geniza documents of Cairo to reflect the economic activities of the middle and lower classes. The sources which do exist, however, notably the reports of foreign (especially Dutch) traders, have not been used as they might to fill in the gaps. Part of the reason for this is the academic preoccupation with establishing the 'uniqueness' of the independent, economically dynamic European port city. In emphasising the dichotomy between East and West, scholars from Weber to Braudel have encouraged a stereotype of the 'traditional' Asian city as 'enormous, parasitic, soft and luxurious'.<sup>2</sup> While we now know enough about Japanese and Middle Eastern cities to make such a broad dichotomy untenable, Southeast Asian historians cannot be said to have shaken it off. In two stimulating recent monographs, Wolters and O'Connor have given new life to the old assumption that the market had a small place in the Southeast Asian city.<sup>3</sup>



*The other city of life in the port city: beggars shown in front of a depiction of the city of Aceh, north Sumatra, Indonesia.*

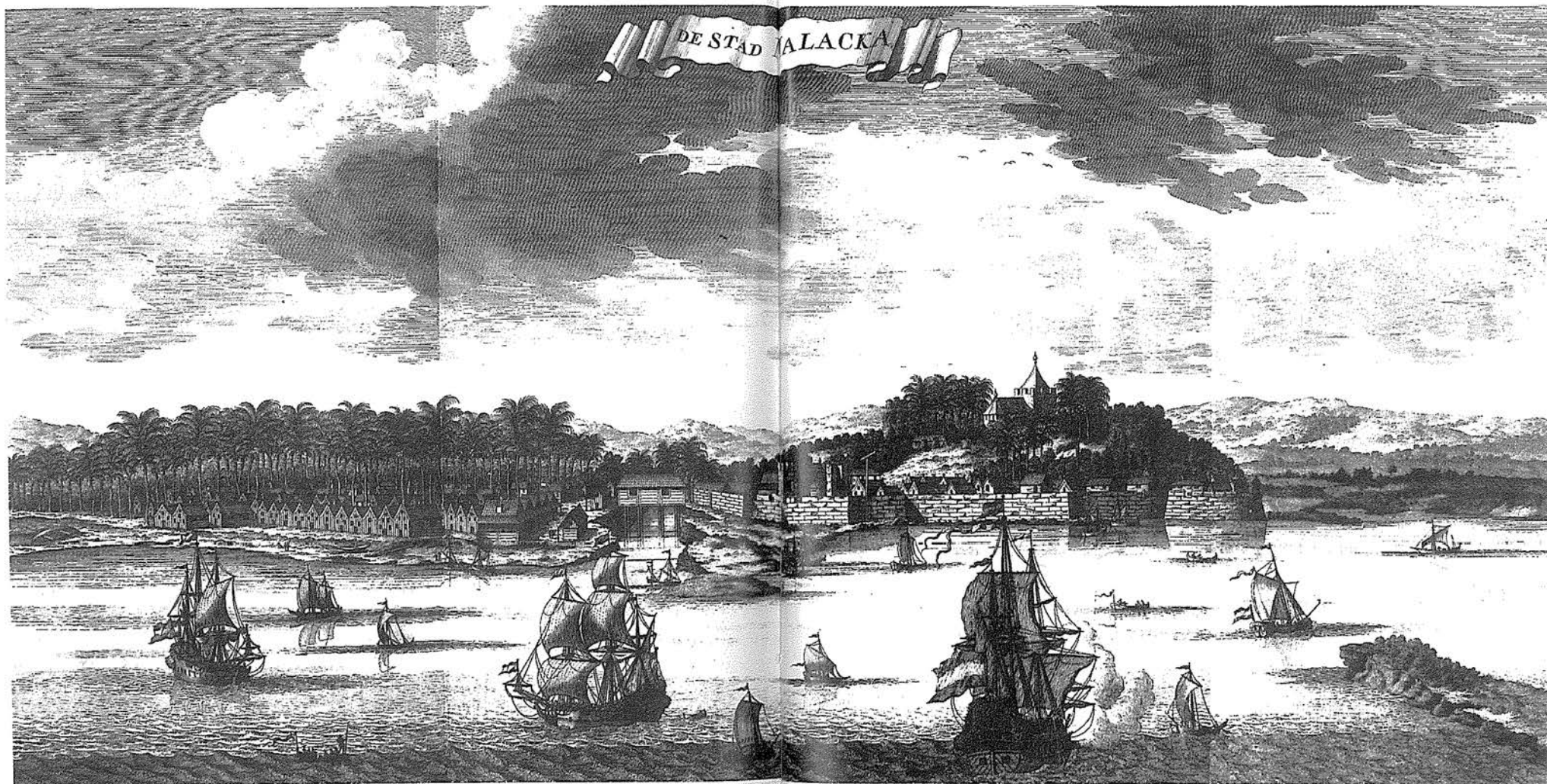
*From Isaak Commelin *Begin ende Voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlandsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie* Amsterdam, 1646. Courtesy of Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.*

As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>4</sup> Southeast Asian cities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were relatively large in relation to the total population of the region. The capitals of Siam (Ayutthaya), Aceh, Melaka, Banten or Makassar at their peak certainly contained more than 10 percent of the populations they ruled over—a bigger percentage than inhabited the cities of pre-industrial Europe, although still smaller than the 15 percent of contemporary India. Most of these cities were not 'parasitic' in the sense that they drew their livelihood from a subject rural population by tribute. On the contrary, the bulk of the food supply of Pasai and Melaka around 1500, and of Aceh, Patani, Pahang and Banten around 1600, was obtained by purchase in the international market. About thirty rice junks a year supplied Melaka from Siam, about twenty from Pegu and another fifty to sixty from Java,<sup>5</sup> providing a total of perhaps 5000 tonnes or enough to feed almost 50 000 citizens from these long-distance imports alone. Patani, Pahang and Brunei were supplied from Siam and Cambodia, while Central Java was the source of rice for urban centres such as Banten, Jambi, Palembang and Banjarmasin.

Not only rice was imported by these large cities, but most other essentials as well. Banten for example obtained its dried fish from Banjarmasin, its palm-sugar and salt from Javanese ports controlled by Mataram (much of the salt subsequently re-exported to Sumatra), its coconuts and coconut oil from Balambangan, its honey from as far afield as Timor and Palembang.<sup>6</sup> Aceh, which obtained most of its rice from Pegu, Bengal, Arakan and Sumatran ports, welcomed in just two months of 1642 twelve Javanese junks laden with 'salt, sugar, peas, beans and other goods'.<sup>7</sup>

The needs of these urban populations, not only for foodstuffs but also for clothing (imported on a massive scale from India) and other consumer goods, were paid for in cash on the international market. How did the cities earn the wherewithal to do so? The answer lies only to a small extent in the role of tribute from a subject population. Most of these cities prospered not by exporting royal goods delivered as tribute from the hinterland, but by re-exporting trade goods already brought in from elsewhere by sea. Melaka at its height around 1500 was perhaps an extreme case as one of the world's leading entrepot ports of the time, with total trade estimated by Tomé Pires at about 2.4 million cruzados, of which only a few exports originated in its own territories.<sup>8</sup> After Melaka's fall in 1511, this lucrative intermediate trade between India, China and the 'spice islands' during the next century or so was divided between a number of ports such as Patani, Johor, Banten and Aceh. The 'value added' to goods in this kind of trade was very high. Goods bought in Melaka for one cruzado could be sold in the Moluccas for cloves which would fetch ten or more cruzados on return to Melaka. The ruling elite of these cities took their percentage of the profits of this trade through obligatory gifts and port duties, but also benefited directly as financiers of much of the trade.

In addition, port cities such as Aceh, Banten, Patani and Banjarmasin were the point of international sale for pepper produced in extensive areas subject to their authority. As rulers frequently controlled the terms on which such



*Melaka, Malaysia, in the fifteenth century one of the world's greatest trading cities. As a quiet eighteenth-century Dutch outpost Melaka here shows many of the features of the European-ruled port city: the dominating fort, dwellings outside it and warehouses in between the two.*

*From Francois Valentijn Oud en Nieuw Oost Indien Dordrecht, 1724-26. Courtesy of Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.*

produce was sold, forcing foreign buyers and domestic sellers to deal through the ruler or his agent, large fortunes were made through handling such goods. The Acehnese Governor (*Panglima*) of Periaman, for example, left an inheritance which included 4000 Spanish dollars at his death in 1662, derived from his percentage of the pepper being exported from this minor Acehnese port alone.<sup>9</sup> The Acehnese ruler, reckoned by Van Leur to control a quarter to a third of the pepper passing through his capital,<sup>10</sup> was incomparably richer. Whether and on what forms these rulers actively entered the market, must remain a question for future research.

Entrepot and export trade of this type required some labour input from the port cities involved. Goods had to be loaded and unloaded in the port, carried to warehouses and to the market where they were sold. The warehouses of the king and the merchants had to be built, as did fortifications and public buildings. Obviously, a sizeable labour force was required for these tasks. But the larger port cities did not only contain large numbers of unskilled workers, as they unquestionably were centres of production as well as redistribution. There was a tradition in Southeast Asia for craftsmen to reside in specialised rural villages, the location of which was determined either by proximity to raw materials, like the iron-working villages of Turawan in Minangkabau, Karimata in West Borneo and Banggai in eastern Sulawesi, or by the poverty of the soil which forced people into non-agricultural specialisation, like the boat-builders and cloth-weavers of the Bira Peninsula in South Sulawesi. Nevertheless, the concentration of wealthy consumers in the big cities, the demand of the royal court itself for specialised manufactures and the convenience of these entrepot centres for export, ensured that major manufacturing activities would also concentrate in the suburbs of these cities. Perhaps the best-known example of this urban production is the fine ceramic ware produced in northern Thai cities for export throughout Southeast Asia in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. The main kilns have been located just outside the walls of Sukhothai, the most important Thai capital of the period and Si Satchanalai (Suwankhulok), another city about fifty kilometres to its north.<sup>11</sup> Everyday essentials like tools and utensils were also produced in the cities.

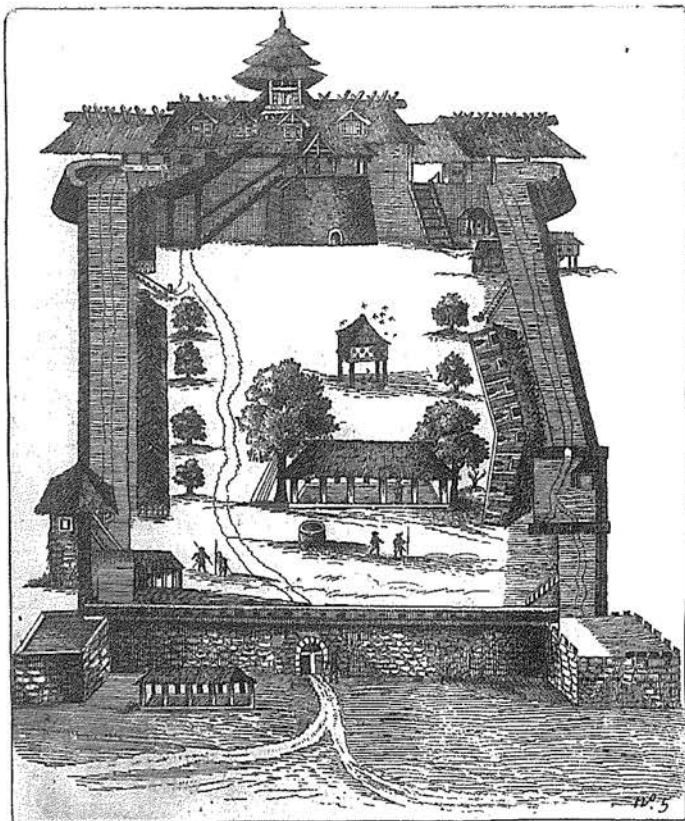
Of Aceh in 1599, John Davis noted, 'Off mechanical Artesmen, they have gold-smithes, Gun-founders, Ship-wrights, Taylors, Weavers, Hatters, Pot-makers and Aquavitaie stillers . . . , Cutlers and Smiths'.<sup>12</sup> Of Ayutthaya in the 1630s, Schouten wrote that 'The Siamers, who live in Towns and populous places are either Courtiers, Officers, Merchants, Watermen, Fishermen, Tradesmen or Artificers, each one containing himself in his vocation'<sup>13</sup> while Van Vliet confirmed that the townspeople 'earn their living by trade, court services, navigating . . . fishery and industries and handicraft by making of ingeniously worked gold and silver objects'.<sup>14</sup> Grisek, one of Java's leading port cities before it was absorbed into nearby Surabaya around 1600, developed a major bronze industry, exporting gongs and gamelan sets to the whole archipelago.<sup>15</sup> Even though Java produced little copper of its own, these Grisek gongs were produced at a substantially cheaper price than the 'Chinese'-styled

gongs made in Patani, another major city and port of the period.<sup>16</sup> In 1857, when the industry was rapidly declining as a result of competition from cheaper European ironwork, 230 copper and bronze workers were still employed in Surabaya which was 'far less important' even at that time than Grisek.<sup>17</sup>

Aceh was also an importer of most raw materials, tin coming from Perak and copper and lead from the Siamese port of Tenasserim, yet it, too, was able to export (or perhaps re-export from Java) manufactured 'copper basins' to Bengal in the 1630s.<sup>18</sup> Along with Sungai Puar in West Sumatra, Grisek in Java and Nagara in Borneo, Aceh remained one of the major exporters of finished bronze and copper articles—betel-sets, water-vessels, basins and vases—into the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Another Southeast Asian manufacture exported to distant consumers was the Javanese *kris*. Iron had to be imported to Java to make them, but Tomé Pires nevertheless assures us that *krises* and swords were made relatively cheaply there and were much appreciated as trade goods in Bengal.<sup>20</sup>

Just as in rural areas there were specialised villages occupied almost exclusively with pottery, ironwork, boatbuilding, stoneware or whatever, so in the great cities specialist settlements clustered around the suburbs. When Symes passed the ancient Burmese capital of Pagan on his journey up the Irrawaddy in 1795, he noticed one whole street full of lacquer shops and another 'occupied by blacksmiths' shops, furnished with bill-hooks, spike-nails, adzes, etc'.<sup>21</sup> Later, as he approached the bustling new capital of Amerapura, the villages became much more closely packed together and 'each . . . was for the most part inhabited with one particular class of people, professing some separate trade, or following some peculiar occupation'.<sup>22</sup> In nineteenth century Surabaya (as presumably for centuries before) each manufacture had its own *kampung* or quarter—copperworkers in Kranggan, ivory and bone workers in Bubutan, leatherworkers and shoemakers in Tukangan, furniture-makers in Tambak-gringsing, *songket*-weavers in Ampel, *pelangi* (scarf) dyers in Kemayoran, and so forth.<sup>23</sup>

Southeast Asia's cities certainly were production centres and so were its port cities. When we turn to an examination of how their production was organised and paid for, however, we must sift the small amount of evidence with considerable care to find clues. The first and clearest point that can be made is that free wage labour was expensive and hard to find, especially among the indigenous population. When the Dutch in Aceh were desperate for labour to construct their warehouse in 1642, they could obtain only Chinese carpenters, at what they regarded as an exorbitant rate, and captive 'black Portuguese' as labourers. Even these were controlled by royal officials and were not always available. Deprived of their services, the Dutch factor went one day to the *kuala* (river-mouth, i.e. the port) to look for labour but found only workers who were 'old and clapped-out, and also at such high prices that I returned empty-handed'.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the English needing rowers to get their vessel up the Jambi river in 1615 could find only Chinese and these at the exorbitant price of a shilling a day plus food.<sup>25</sup> This is about the same labour cost that Crawford



The castle of Ambon, eastern Indonesia, in 1607, the first Dutch base in the Indies. Originally taken from the Portuguese, this fort was the Dutch gateway to the spice trade of Maluka (Moluccas). From Isaak Commelin *Begin ende Voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlandsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie* Amsterdam, 1646. Courtesy of Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

found outrageously high in Bangkok as late as in 1822.<sup>26</sup>

Table 2.1 demonstrates just how expensive it was for Europeans to engage indigenous or Chinese workers in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Southeast Asia. To calculate the real cost of urban labour, the daily wage paid by foreigners in various cities is also expressed in terms of the amount of rice this sum would buy in the same city.<sup>27</sup> The measure of rice is the *gantang*, equivalent to c. 3.1 kg of rice, or about five times the daily needs of an adult worker.

TABLE 2.1

Comparison of the rice needs of workers in various cities

Location	Daily Wage	Rice equivalent in <i>gantangs</i>	Number of daily needs covered
Ayutthaya, 1655	1 <i>fuang</i> (Thai labourer)	8	40
Martaban, 1512	1 <i>viss</i> (caulker)	130	650
	.05 <i>viss</i> (labourer) (craftsman)	6.5	32.5
Melaka, 1520	(slave labourer)	4	20
		0.54	2.7
Aceh, 1642	1.5 <i>mas</i> (Chinese carpenter)	4.5	22.5
	0.75 <i>mas</i> (slave labourer)	2.2	11
	1 <i>mas</i> (Acehnese thatcher)	3	15
Jambi, 1615	12 pence (Chinese)	3	15
Banten, 1596	1000 cash (slaves)	3	15
Manila, 1590	1 <i>real</i> (Chinese)	12	60

In this list, the Portuguese wage rates in Melaka are exceptional in constituting payments to 'slaves' of the Portuguese themselves, though the same source notes that rope-makers (paid the equivalent of two *gantang* rice a day) were not paid when not working 'as they belong to Indian merchants'.<sup>28</sup> All other workers, whether Chinese or hired slaves, received at least ten times a subsistence wage and frequently many times this amount. Why, even at such high wages, was it very difficult to find indigenous labour?

The answer is that there was no free wage market in the Southeast Asian city, except in so far as it was provided by Chinese immigrants and traders—'hard workers and very greedy for money'.<sup>29</sup> Labour, especially manual labour, was associated in these cities with servitude and anybody who could afford to do so bought or hired a slave to do it for him. In Banten, 'the Javans are generally exceeding proud; although extreme poor, by reason that no one amongst a hundredth of them will work'.<sup>30</sup> In Melaka, 'all is chivalry with them and this goes to such an extent that you will not find a native Malay, however poor he be, who will lift on his back his own things or those of another, however much he be paid for it; all their work is done by slaves'.<sup>31</sup> In Aceh, 'they send their slaves for what they want and the poorer sort, who do not have a slave of their own, will yet hire one to carry a *mas* worth of rice for them, though not a hundred paces from their own homes, scorning to do it themselves'.<sup>32</sup> In Makassar, Speelman thought that the object of the saving of the 'ordinary man' was to accumulate a sum 'which will eventually serve to buy a male or

female slave in order to be free from labour themselves'.<sup>33</sup>

The high cost of labour, therefore, was not a free wage but in most cases the cost of hiring slaves from the king or some wealthy citizen. Speaking of Siam and Aceh in particular, Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim noted, 'It is their custom to rent slaves. They pay the slave a sum of money, which he gives to his master and then they use the slave that day for whatever work they wish'.<sup>34</sup> The Malay law code, first written in the cosmopolitan city of Melaka, provides for various situations which may arise when slaves are hired (*di-upah*) or borrowed (*di-pinjam*), but there is no mention in it of wages.<sup>35</sup>

There was a similar absence of 'free wage labour' in the sexual marketplace, though port cities had their own means of filling the demands of visiting male traders. Freelance prostitution for a fee is never mentioned by travellers. The basic pattern was a temporary marriage, with a negotiated payment analogous to the bride price required in all Southeast Asian marriages. As described by a Dutch captain in Patani, foreigners upon arrival in the port were able to choose from women who came and presented themselves,

provided they agree what he shall pay for certain months. Once they agree about the money (which does not amount to much for so great a convenience), she comes to his house and serves him by day as his maidservant and by night as his wedded wife. He is then not able to consort with other women or he will be in grave trouble with his wife, while she is similarly wholly forbidden to converse with other men, but the marriage lasts as long as he keeps his residence there, in good peace and unity. When he wants to depart ... she may look for another man as she wishes, in all propriety, without scandal.<sup>36</sup>

Because Southeast Asian women played a dominant part in retailing, such contract wives were doubly valued by traders to help them sell their goods.<sup>37</sup>

Prostitution was less common, but was reported more frequently as the seventeenth century progressed, perhaps because European and Chinese traders who were increasingly numerous were accustomed to shorter port visits and required more immediate gratification. But the prostitutes reported in Brunei in the 1570s, Patani in 1602, Ayutthaya in the 1680s, and Rangoon in the 1790s were all slaves.<sup>38</sup> In most cases they belonged to the king or some high court official to whom the bulk of their earnings returned. As late as the nineteenth century Balinese and Malay rajahs reportedly put their female slaves regularly to work as prostitutes. In Ampanan, the port of the flourishing kingdom of Lombok in the 1840s, such slave prostitutes were expected to give half their earnings to their royal owners.<sup>39</sup>

It would be a mistake to imagine that everybody in these cities was either a slave-owning aristocrat or a slave, even if that is the picture given by some sources.<sup>40</sup> There was, however, enough servile labour to create a social model in which labour itself was seen as servile. In sharp contrast to our own value system, to labour for wages was considered even more demeaning than to labour for one's legitimate master. The king, in particular, demanded the unpaid services of all his subjects, or at least of all who were not in a position to send or pay another to work for them.

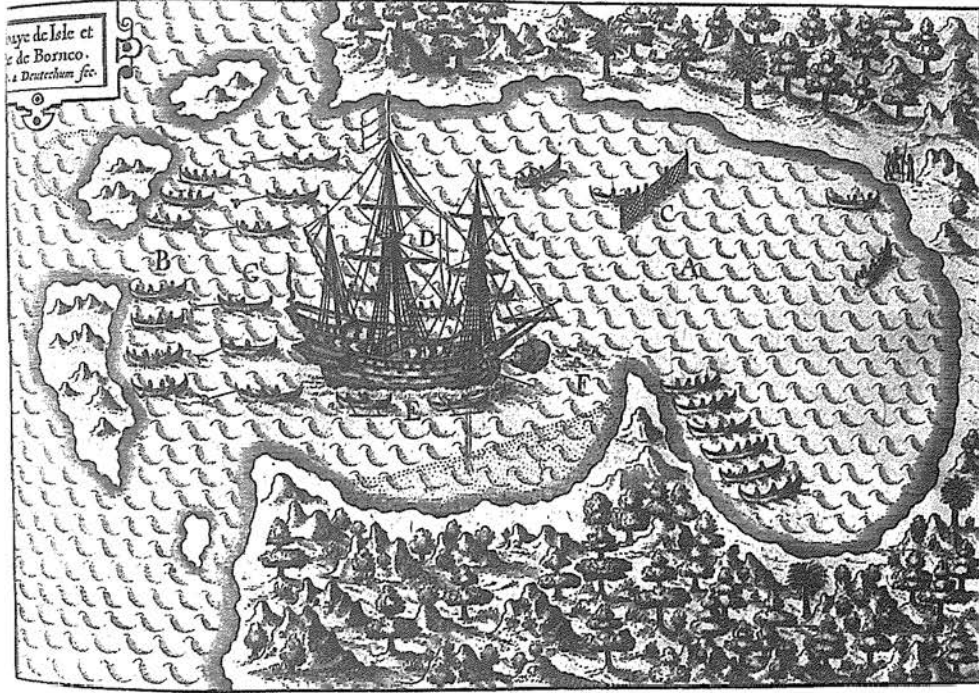
At times of war or crisis the whole population could be mobilised for royal purposes, either directly or through the great men of the realm who had their own subjects and bondsmen. Some were more completely dependent on the king. In Siam for example, the *phrai luang* category which comprised the bulk of the population owed the king a half or a third of their time. War captives (*chaloai*) were bonded more fully and in practice it was often these who must have carried out the more onerous tasks of construction and other labour for the king in the city.<sup>41</sup> In Aceh the major forts and other royal building projects in the city seem to have been erected by royal slaves (*hamba raja*) captured in Aceh's many wars. 'The king uses them to cut wood, dig stone from the quarries, make mortar and build.' These royal slaves were spared from being a burden on the royal purse for upkeep by having half their days free to seek their own livelihood.<sup>42</sup> Non-Muslim captives, 'black Portuguese' and Chinese, were especially prominent in the servile labour force, even after they had been forcibly converted to Islam. Forty Portuguese were captured in 1635, for example, when their ship was wrecked near Aceh and forty-two Chinese when two Chinese junks from Batavia were captured by royal galleys off the Malayan coast. Three years later 150 Portuguese (mostly of Asian or Eurasian blood) were captured, enslaved and converted to Islam.<sup>43</sup> It was this labour force, used normally on royal construction projects, which the Dutch were attempting to hire in 1642, but the captives were closely controlled by one of the most powerful eunuchs of the court and a few of them were made available only after lengthy negotiations.<sup>44</sup>

Craftsmen with some particular skill were especially in demand by the wealthy courts. Even if they were frequently well treated and even honoured for their talents, they were not so much paid for their service as bonded to the king or a powerful official, so that their labour was essentially an unpaid obligation. As Crawford complained of Bangkok as late as 1822:

Every mechanic of skill is immediately seized upon, and becomes the retainer of the King, or of some courtier, or other man in authority, who employs him for life on some useless service of vanity or ostentation. It is accordingly a matter of difficulty for a private individual, or a stranger, to obtain the services even of the most homely mechanic and the few that can be procured are usually natives of China, or Cochin-China.<sup>45</sup>

Sultan Iskandar Muda of Aceh reputedly retained 300 goldsmiths in his palace compound, 'besides diverse sorts of other artisans'.<sup>46</sup>

The urban culture of Makassar in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was remarkable for both its openness to technical innovations and its concern to record them in writing. From the Makassar chronicles we learn a good deal about not only the point at which various new techniques were adopted, but also the way production for the court appears to have been organised. Under King Tunipalangga (1548-86) bricks, gunpowder, large cannons and various other items were first manufactured in Makassar, probably through learning from Malay and Portuguese traders. The same king is recorded as creating a number of officials called *tumakkajannanggang* (from the



*Bypassing the port city: direct trade in a bay in Borneo.  
From Isaak Commelin *Begin ende Voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlandsche Geocroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie* Amsterdam, 1646.  
Courtesy of Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.*

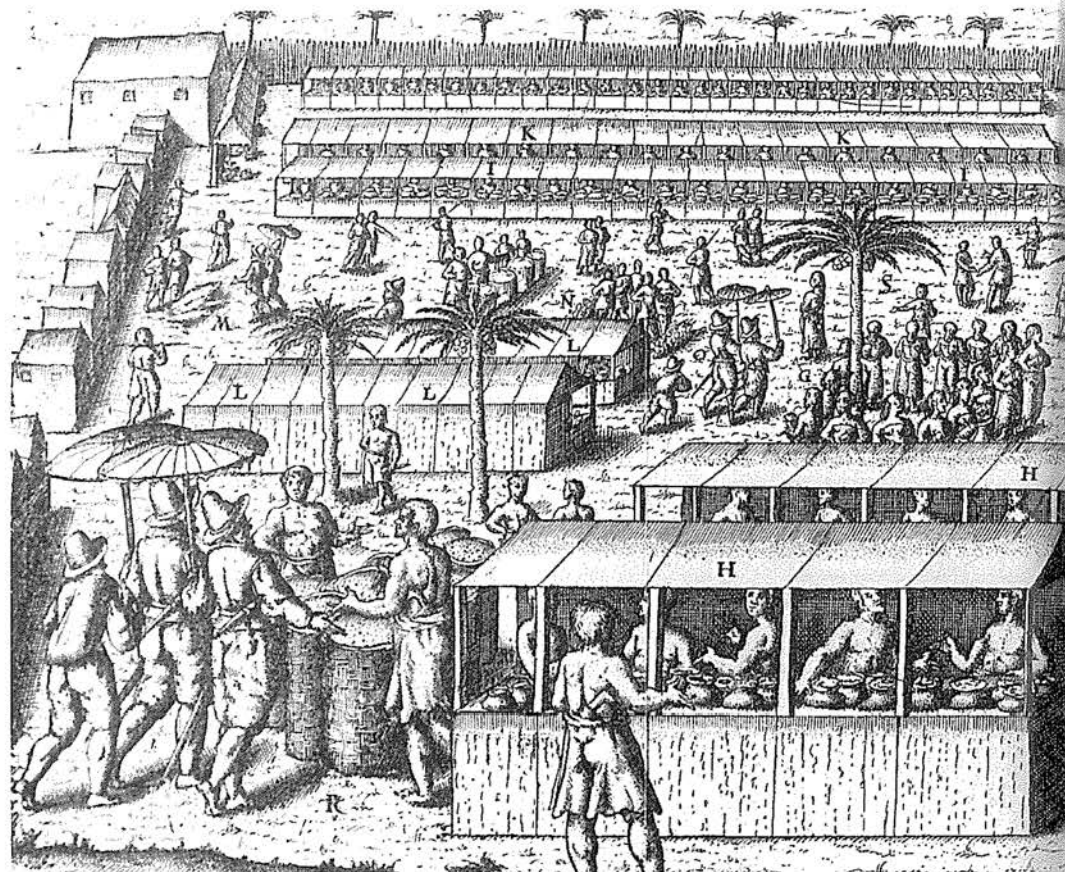
trade and construction—were performed by their slaves or dependents. Even so, as Dampier reported, 'there is nothing of rigour used by the Master to his Slave, except it be the very meanest, such as do all sorts of servile work: but those who can turn their hands to anything besides Drudgery, live well enough by their industry. Nay, they are encouraged by their Masters who often lend them Money to begin some trade or business withall'.<sup>54</sup>

In Melaka before the Portuguese conquest of 1511, as in seventeenth-century Patani, it appears to have been Javanese slaves or dependents who performed much of the productive work. Duarte Barbosa, who can have known the Javanese only in Melaka, described them as 'very clever at cabinet-making. Other trades which they follow are the making of arquebuses and all other kinds of firearms ... They are also very cunning locksmiths and they make weapons of every kind'.<sup>55</sup> Albuquerque, the conqueror of Melaka, was so impressed with the Javanese craftsmen he found there that he shipped out sixty Javanese carpenters of the dockyard, 'very handy workmen', to help repair Portuguese ships in India. The carpenters never reached India, but mutinied and took their Portuguese vessel to Pasai where they were also very welcome.<sup>56</sup> Most of the Melaka Javanese appear to have been bought to the city by wealthy Javanese merchants who had settled in Melaka and wielded great influence there. The wealthiest of them, who bore the title *Utama Diraja* (Port. *Ultimuti Raja*), was alleged to control as many as 8000 Javanese 'slaves' in the settlement of Upeh, just across the Melaka river from the city centre.<sup>57</sup>

As I have sought to explain elsewhere,<sup>58</sup> the most important element in what Europeans perceived as 'slavery' in Southeast Asia was debt and the assumption that indebtedness entailed an obligation to work without pay for the patron or master. As we can see from Dampier's observation of Aceh above, masters frequently advanced money to their 'slaves' to enable them to work more profitably. Indeed this may often have been the essence of the bondage relationship. Except with the most menial captives, masters were expected to provide credit and protection and bondsmen to provide labour or any other form of service on demand.

One very important effect of this type of relationship was to inhibit craftsmen from developing into small capitalists themselves. In the Southeast Asian context craftsmen could rise to comfort and security only by acquiring a powerful patron/creditor, such as the king himself. Their position was never sufficiently secure to enable them to accumulate wealth independently. Thus Dampier noted in the city of Mindanao that gold and silversmiths would 'make anything that you desire, but they have no shop furnished with ware ready made for sale'.<sup>59</sup> And even two centuries later, in Surabaya of the 1850s, craftsmen would refrain from working until they had received an order accompanied by an advance, which would establish a relationship of patronage and protection if only of a temporary kind. 'When the workman has no further debt, he considered the relationship broken and will not work again until he feels a need again to expose himself to new debts'.<sup>60</sup>

Our tentative conclusion, then, is that in Southeast Asian port cities



The diversity of skills and goods. The markets of Banten (Bantam), West Java, Indonesia, the centre of social and economic life.

Legend:

- a. Women fruit sellers
- b. Sellers of 'sugar and honey in pots'
- c. Sellers of beans
- d. Sellers of bamboo
- e. 'The place where they sell krisses, sabres, spears and bussen'
- f. Selling cloth for men

- g. Selling cloth for women
- h. 'Indicates booths where all kinds of spices and drugs are sold'
- i. 'The booths where Bengalis and Gujeratis sell all kinds of ironwork and small manufactures'
- k. 'The Chinese booths'
- l. 'The meat stalls'
- m. The fish market
- n. 'The fruit market'
- o. The vegetable market
- p. The pepper market

- q. The ayun and leek market
  - r. The rice market
  - s. 'The place where the merchants and adventurers walk'
  - t. The jewellers' stalls
  - v. The poultry market
- From G. P. Rouffaer and J. W. IJzerman (ed.) *De eerste schipvaart der Nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Cornelis de Houtman 1595-1597* The Hague, 1915.



production was primarily a matter of obligation. Where the king was in a strong and monopolistic position most artisans and productive workers were dependent on him. In many urban situations, on the other hand, wealth and power was spread sufficiently widely among an oligarchy of merchant-nobles to allow some movement on the part of capable workers, including working for others than their master for part of their time. By working for a wider than just the local market—result of the extensive development of maritime trade in the region—and apparently being able to retain a share of the profits made, they could thus hope for economic, and perhaps, social betterment. Even so, by contrast to other parts of the world, the opportunity for skilled craftsmen to develop into independent entrepreneurs or capitalists appears to have been low.

## Notes

- 1 Rhoads Murphy Traditionalism and Colonialism: Changing Urban Roles in Asia' *Journal of Asian Studies* 29, 1969, p.83
- 2 Fernand Braudel *Capital and Material Life 1400-1800* London, 1968, p.4
- 3 O.W. Wolters *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* Singapore, 1982, p.37; R. O'Connor *A Theory of Indigenous Southeast Asian Urbanism* Singapore, 1983, p.117
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