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Chinese Economic Activity in Netherlands India

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DATA PAPER SERIES
Sources for the Economic History of Southeast Asia
No. 2

Chinese Economic Activity in Netherlands India

Selected Translations from the Dutch

Edited by

M.R. Fernando

Australian National University

David Bulbeck

Australian National University



ECONOMIC HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA PROJECT
Research School of Pacific Studies
Australian National University
Canberra

ISEAS
ASEAN ECONOMIC RESEARCH UNIT
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
Singapore

Published by
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Pasir Panjang
Singapore 0511

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Cataloguing in Publication Data

Chinese economic activity in Netherlands India: Selected translations from the Dutch / translated by M.R. Fernando; edited by David Bulbeck.
(Data paper series. Sources for the economic history of Southeast Asia; no. 2)

1. Chinese—Indonesia—Economic conditions.
2. Chinese—Indonesia—History—Sources.
3. Indonesia—History—1478-1789—Sources.
4. Indonesia—History—1798-1942—Sources.

- I. Fernando, M.R.
- II. Bulbeck, David.
- III. Series.

DS511 A81D no. 2

1992

sls91-213094

ISBN 981-3016-21-3

Printed in Singapore by Prime Packaging Industries Pte Ltd.

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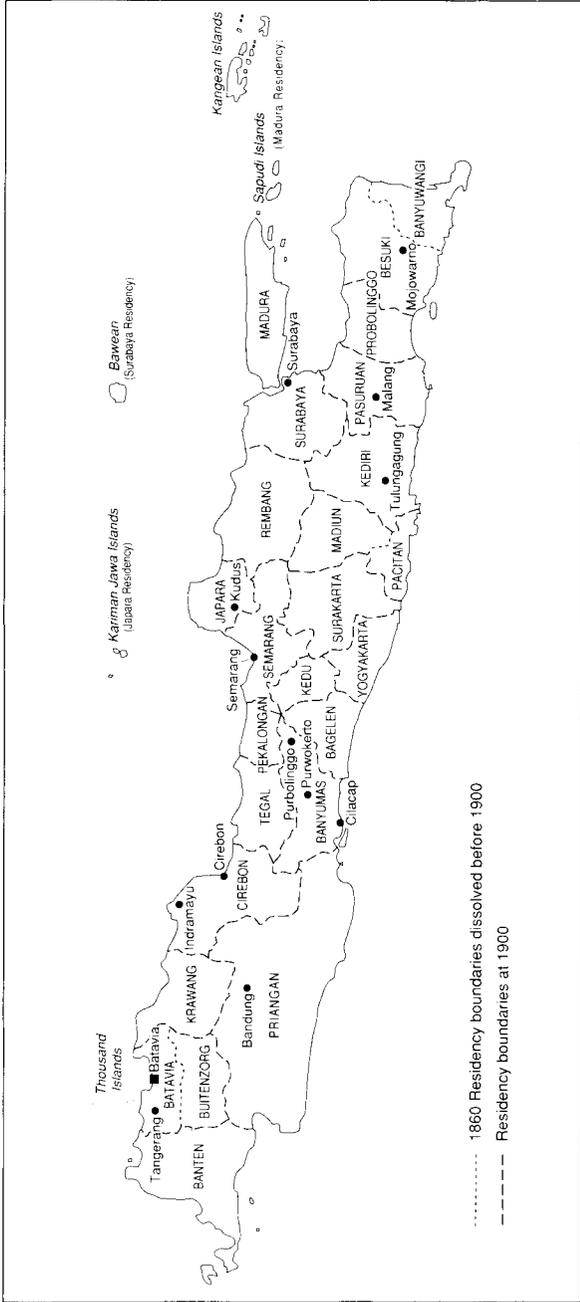
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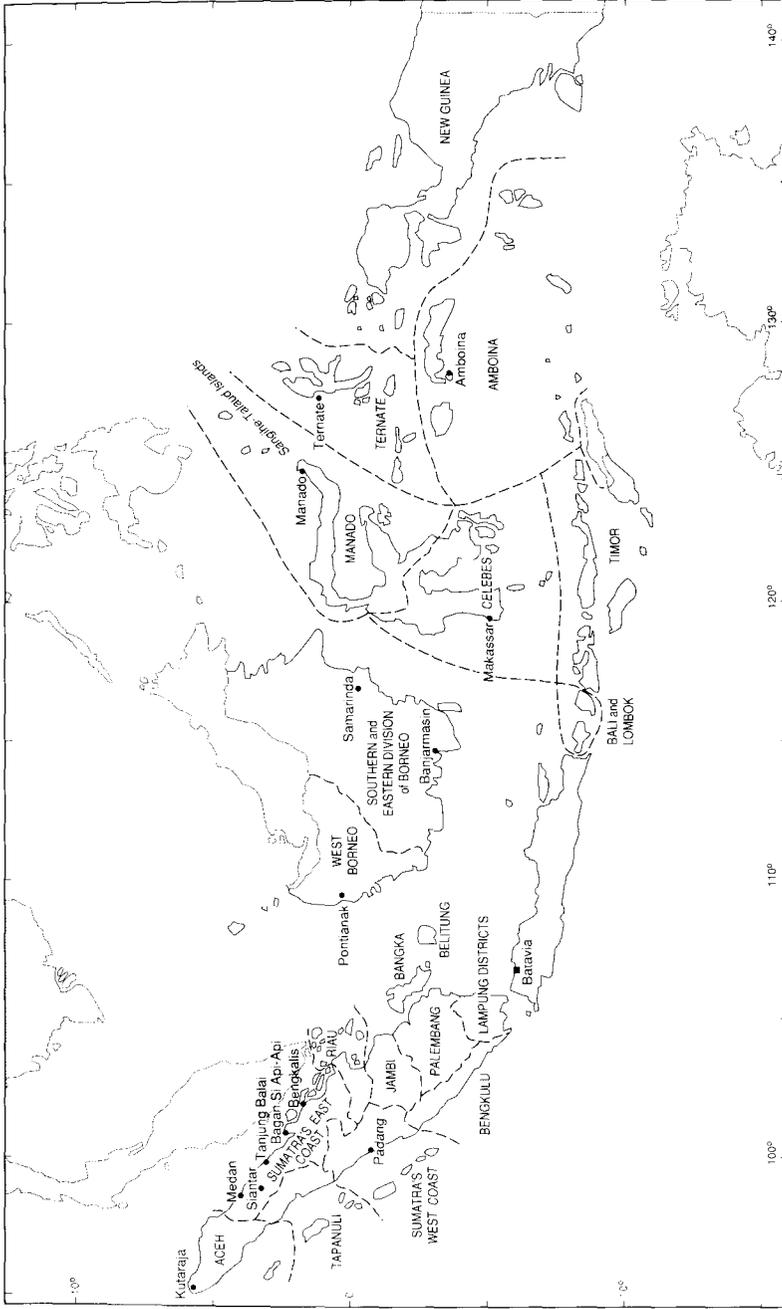
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Map 1. Java and Madura: Residencies and Main Commercial Centres Mentioned in the Text



Map 2. The Outer Islands: Residencies and Main Commercial Centres Mentioned in the Text

PREFACE

Anthony Reid

The Project on the Modern Economic History of Southeast Asia was established by the Australian National University's Research School of Pacific Studies in 1989, in the belief that progress in this neglected area was critical to a better understanding of all other aspects of Southeast Asia's evolution into its dynamic contemporary shape, as well as to clarifying some important debates in economic history and development studies in general.

The Project has commissioned a substantial number of volumes which should transform our understanding of Southeast Asian economic history over the next decade. One of the problems which has always impeded satisfactory broad works of synthesis in this region, however, is the diversity of source material, much of it in languages and forms accessible only to the specialist. The Project therefore undertook, in cooperation with the ASEAN Economic Research Unit of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, to prepare, assemble, translate and publish crucial sources and data series.

A provisional bibliography of statistical sources for Southeast Asia since 1850 has already been published (available from Bibliotech, ANU, Canberra). Other source publications are in preparation translating Chinese, Dutch and French sources on central Vietnam in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; assembling data on Southeast Asian exports in the long term; translating late seventeenth and early eighteenth reports submitted by Chinese-manned junks which had come to Japan from Siam and its vassals; and introducing some of the problems with modern Vietnamese statistics.

The present volume on the economic activity of Chinese in Netherlands India has been conceived, assembled and (primarily) translated by Dr M.R. Fernando. Though seen principally through the distorting lens of Dutch colonial officials, it offers much important detail on the penetration by Chinese entrepreneurs of the local economies of Indonesia in the nineteenth century through colonial revenue farms, and on Chinese business practice in the twentieth century. The reasons for the success of the NICs, and of Chinese entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia in general, has become a favorite topic of economic and political analysts.

Mystifications (such as the "neo-Confucian ethic") tend to flourish in the field, however, because Chinese business practice appears impenetrable to many modern economists. As this volume shows, the colonial situation at least made possible some very concrete studies of how such business operated in an earlier era when the foundations were being laid for modern growth.

David Bulbeck also put in an enormous amount of work in checking the translations, editing the volume for publication and preparing the glossary and index. Thanks are also due to Evelyn Winburn who prepared the camera-ready copy of the whole book with immense care; Kristine Alilunas-Rodgers who assisted the technical aspects of production; the Cartography Unit in the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, for producing the two maps; Peter Carey for allowing us to adapt one of his reproductions of Payen's sketches into the cover design; and the publishing company Uitgeverij Het Spectrum (Utrecht) for kindly making available the two illustrations reproduced in the text. The Project also acknowledges the valuable points raised by an anonymous reviewer on the ISEAS Publications Review Committee. Finally, the initial stimulus for the volume was provided by George Hicks, who had had Vleming's *Het Chineesche Zakenleven in Nederlandsch-Indië* translated in the 1950s into a kind of Dutch/English. He generously made this available to the Project, and though the gift horse's mouth was frequently examined and often found wanting, the horse did take us in the right direction.