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D. K. Bassett

The more precise definition of the European impact upon South-East Asian trade and society prior to the nineteenth century has become an important pre-occupation of historians of that region in recent years. The hypothesis of J.C. van Leur that "modern capitalism" took shape only after 1820[1] impelled him to suggest an equality or near-equality between Asian and European commercial organization in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[2] A corollary of this view was his negative assessment of the Portuguese achievement in South-East Asia, his refusal to accord them technical or organizational superiority except in a limited military sense, his insistence upon the small and unimportant Portuguese share of inter-Asian trade, and his denunciation of the Portuguese as little better than a band of *condottieri* who lacked an effective central administration.

Many of Van Leur's judgements, which he admitted frankly were not based on an adequate knowledge of Portuguese sources, have been challenged in recent years. As early as 1953 Professor Boxer refuted Van Leur's dismissal of Portuguese naval activity as "a shifting combination of parasitic buccaneering and petty trading". Two years later in his review of Van Leur's *Indonesian Trade and Society* Boxer referred to Van Leur's ignorance of the highly organized Indo-Portuguese bureaucracy at Goa and to his neglect of the Portuguese cinnamon monopoly in Ceylon and the predominant position of the Portuguese in the China-Japan trade between 1555 and 1609.[3] Professor Bastin has also suggested that the diversion of trade from Malacca to other ports after the Portuguese conquest of 1511, and the marked political changes which resulted, must be considered as indirect effects of Portuguese expansion.[4]

1. J. C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society,* (The Hague and Bandung, 1955), 10,31. He defined "modern capitalism" as "the pacification of world markets, political control of possessions and spheres of influence....., mobilization of the world as a market for sale and production of goods and raw materials, mechanization of big industry, rational organization of free labour and free capital".
2. *Op.cit.,* 117-8, 188-9.
3. C. R. Boxer, "The Portuguese in the East, 1500-1800", in H. V. Livermore, *Portugal and Brazil,* (Oxford, 1953), 194; also Boxer's review of Van Leur's *Indonesian Trade and Society* in *Indonesië, 8,* (1955), 426-7.
4. J. Bastin, "The Western Element in modern Southeast Asian History", in *Essays on Indonesian and Malayan History,* (Singapore, 1961), 5-6.

But no-one has seriously challenged the circumscribed nature of Portuguese political influence and trade in South-East Asia.

Against his few Portuguese *condottieri* Van Leur set a multitude of Asian traders: Gujerats, Bengalis, Coromandel Hindus, Malays, Javanese, Chinese, Arabs, Abyssinians, and even travellers from Fez, Morocco and Constantinople. The trade of Indonesia as he envisaged it was essentially an exchange of limited quantities of highly valuable wares; a "peddling trade" was the term he used most frequently. The organization and financing of the trade, however, sprang from forms as well-developed as those prevailing in contemporary Europe. Asian capital holdings were as extensive; the ships involved were as large, if not larger, than their European counterparts; and the Indonesian princes, nobles, state officials and "merchant gentlemen" were the equivalents of European banking families such as the Fuggers and Welsers of Augsburg.[5] Despite his contention that the Javanese *élite* engaged in overseas trade, Van Leur adhered to his conception of South-East Asian commerce as "peddling" and recognized only the rice trade as involving the purchase and shipment of vast quantities.[6] Similarly, although Van Leur accorded to the Dutch East India Company the complete technological superiority over its rivals which he denied to the Portuguese, he claimed that the Dutch did not enjoy a political preponderance in the archipelago by 1650 and that even the coveted spice trade was not entirely in their hands by that time.[7]

Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's recent book *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago*[8] is a scholarly comparison of the position of Asian trade in Malaya and Indonesia before and after the coming of the Europeans. She reassesses but does not denigrate the pioneer work of Van Leur. Instead she recognizes the validity of many of his conclusions and his inability to use the wealth of material which has since become available. Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz gladly acknowledges her immense debt to the *Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires,* the commercial compendium of the Portuguese accountant of Malacca between 1512 and 1515, which Dr. Cortesao published two years after Van Leur was killed in the battle of the Java Sea.[9] Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz may have accepted Pires' descriptions of Malay-Indonesian society, trade and government with fewer reservations than a historian trained in more prolifically-documented fields would approve. Even a historian of South-East

5. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society,* 117-8, 130-4.
6. *Op.cit.,* 129.
7. *Op.cit.,* 188.
8. M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630,* (viii & 471 pp., Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1962).
9. A. Cortesao (ed.), *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires,* 2 vols., (London, 1944).

Asia, I suggest, would prefer to apply more stringent tests to the internal evidence of the *Suma Oriental* than Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz has done.[10] But Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz would be the first to admit the tentative nature of her conclusions and her critic must recognise in turn the impossibility of comparative judgements in the absence of alternative descriptions. The *Suma Oriental* is unique, and the gap between Pires' account of the north Java ports in 1515 and the Dutch descriptions of the early seventeenth century is a glaring one. Apart from minor misgivings on Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's use of the *Suma Oriental,* the present writer gladly acknowledges her impressive and painstaking sifting of Dutch, English, Portuguese, French, German, Javanese and Malay sources. It is impossible to rival Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz in her knowledge of the facts and such criticisms of interpretation as may be advanced in the present article are based admittedly on a less extensive knowledge of the sources.

The first chapter of *Asian Trade and European Influence* establishes the importance of the Malay-Indonesian region as a commercial transit area between western and eastern Asia. The types of goods which were exchanged in South-East Asia changed remarkable little before 1800 or so. The only feature which seems to have distinguished seventeenth century commodity exchange from all earlier commerce was the existence of pepper cultivation and export in such Sumatran centres as Palembang, Jambi, Tiku and Priaman. Historical changes must be sought in the carriers of goods and the fluctuating population of specific *entrepots* rather than in the content of the trade.

Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz has related Indonesian political changes, such as the fluctuating hegemony of Çrivajaya, Singhasari and Majapahit, and religious changes such as the spread of Islam, to

10. For example, the failure of Pires to mention Gujerat merchants in Malacca of the standing of the Hindus Nina Chetti and Curia Deva cannot be used to demonstrate that the pre-1511 Gujerat merchants must have been men of limited means. (Meilink-Roelofsz, 56), The Gujerat merchants fled in 1511, so that Pires could not cite individuals comparable in wealth to the Hindus who stayed. Nor is Pires' reference to foreigners in the Gujerat army directly or by implication evidence of collaboration between Turkey and Egypt against the Portuguese (Meilink-Roelofsz, 63). The Ottoman invasion of Egypt in 1517 is proof to the contrary, and a minor weakness in Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's bibliography is her omission of the articles on this subject by Sir E. Denison Ross and M. Longworth Dames in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* London, 1921-2. Again, the statements by Pires that Kedah was outside Malacca's direct sphere of influence refer to the mid-15th century (Meilink-Roelofsz, 337, f.n.21; *Suma Oriental,* II, 243, 248), and his comment that "Kedah *is* under the jurisdiction of the king of Siam" (*Suma Oriental,* I, 107) does not preclude a brief period of allegiance to Malacca which was interrupted by the Portuguese conquest. Finally, the fact that "the people of Malacca" went to Pegu (*Suma Oriental,* I 98; Meilink-Roelofsz, 39, 339 f.n.19) is not evidence that they sailed on their own ships. In the same sentence Pires records that the people of Pase also visited Pegu, but Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz is adamant that Pase possessed no junks of its own. (Meilink-Roelofsz, 20, 90).

economic factors. She emphasizes the importance of the control and taxation of the Malacca and Sunda Straits to Çrivajaya, although she is uncertain whether the decline of Çrivajaya can be attributed to undue exploitation of this power or to the loss of it.[11] Thereafter she discerns in the absence of a single comprehensive *entrepôt* the principal characteristic of Malay-Indonesian commerce prior to the rise of Malacca. In describing the background to the Malacca sultanate Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz is balanced and non-partisan, perhaps because it is not necessary for her to adopt strong views on the more controversial aspects. The problems with which she is concerned relate to the degree of participation by the various merchant groups in each segment of Asian trade. Did the Arabs and Persians sail their own vessels to Çrivajaya or did they tranship to those of other nationalities?[12] Did the Chinese transport spices to western India at that time or were they transported in Indian ships exclusively?[13] When did direct Gujerat trade with the ports of Java end?[14] Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz poses some interesting lines of enquiry but does not pretend to suggest a present solution.

Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz criticises the suggestion of Van Leur that the conversion of the north Java coastal states to Islam was an act of political expediency by the local princes in their reaction against the declining hegemony of Majapahit.[15] She points to the evidence of Tomé Pires that many of the port-kingdoms were *founded* by Moslems and that Tuban was the only example of a peaceful conversion to Islam.[16] This contention and the evidence to support it is undoubtedly damaging to Van Leur's argument that Moslem proselytization was not related directly to trade[17] and that it did not involve "newly arrived foreign colonists coming to power".[18] But is Van Leur's erroneous explanation of the establishment of Islam in coastal Java a consequence, as Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz suggests, of his concept of Asian commerce as a "peddling trade"?[19] The "little men" to whom Van Leur referred were the *Javanese* exporting goods *from* north Java, and he described them as such in order to refute Schrieke's contention that the Javanese aristocracy sailed overseas on trading ventures.[20] As far as I am aware, Van Leur did not imply that the Moslem traders *coming to* north Java

11. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade,* 16-7.
12. *Op.cit.,* 14-5.
13. *Op.cit.,* 15-6.
14. *Op.cit.,* 24.
15. *Op.cit.,* 6, 105, 113.
16. Cf. however the statement that "the conversion of the other rulers of coastal territories in Java invariably led to a break with Majapahit". Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade,* 105.
17. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society,* 112.
18. *Op.cit.,* 168.
19. Meilink-Roelofsz, *op.cit.,* 6.
20. Loc. cit.; Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society,* 363, f.n.122.

were " 'little men' without any spiritual or economic influence".[21] If he had done so, surely he would not have held the view that the Hindu-Javanese rulers were converted to Islam, for who could have persuaded them to adhere to the new faith? The issue seems to be whether the Hindu-Javanese rulers were converted or overthrown, not the economic and spiritual influence of the Moslem visitors. When Van Leur believed firmly that the alien trading community possessed no contact or influence with the Javanese aristocracy, as in the Hinduization of Java, he stated this quite categorically. He denied the Hinduization of Java by foreign merchants, not because they were peddling traders, "little men", but because the profundities and ritual of that particular faith were the preserve of a Brahminical *élite*.[22] By way of contrast, he admitted that every Moslem trader was a natural missionary.[23] Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz effectively refutes Van Leur's description of the establishment of Islam in north Java but ascribes his interpretation to the wrong cause.

The Peddling Trade

Another matter which requires definition is Van Leur's use of the term "peddling trade". The inconsistent or inadequate definition of terms in his writing makes it difficult for his critic to be consistent, and difficult too for a reviewer to reconcile Van Leur's actual statements with the views ascribed to him. Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz equates the word "peddling" with "primitive", but Van Leur did not use it in this derogatory sense because he deemed Asian forms of capital investment, shipping and business management to be equal to those in contemporary Europe. This inconsistency between his concept of a "peddling trade" and his belief in well-developed business structure was one for which Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz took Van Leur to task. "Another objection to the term 'peddling trade' ", argues Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz, "is that it has to include not only the real pedlars, the hawkers of merchandise of little value, but also the dealers in luxury articles, merchants who were very well provided with capital, while it leaves out altogether the carriage of bulk cargoes which, as we shall see, was just as important a branch of trade in Asia".[24] The term "peddling" is a clumsy one if Van Leur used it as a measure of the status and wealth of Asian merchants in general. But this supposition is invalidated by his recognition of a "bourgeois patriciate" or class of "merchant gentlemen" which was distinct from the pedlars and

21. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, 6.
22. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, 98-9.
23. *Op.cit.*, 114.
24. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, 5.

merged into the Javanese or Malay ruling class. His weakness lay in his failure to present enough examples of this bourgeois-patrician type and thus to define its limits and function accurately. Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz can do little better in this respect because of the lack of the right kind of information. She can offer Tun Mutahir, the *bendahara* of Malacca, as "the type of patrician merchant sketched by Van Leur",[25] and one might point also to Nina Chetti and Curia Deva as Hindu "merchant gentlemen"; but Van Leur too listed Chetti Muluku and Andamohi Keling at Bantam, the Chinese wholesale merchants Simsuan and Aytuan, and the Chinese Bingouw of Jambi.[26]

The term "peddling" as used by Van Leur is not intended to deny the existence of a wealthy merchant group which dealt in luxury goods. Nor does he suggest that Asian trade was wholly an exchange of luxury goods, although he restricts his range of "bulk" commodities more narrowly than Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz. His use of the term "peddling" becomes consistent and intelligible if one accepts it as referring to the piecemeal sale and purchase of commodities and the shipment of small quantities on a particular account, i.e. methods of purchase and oceanic shipment, rather than to the total value of the trade in a specific commodity or the total wealth of the purchaser. The evidence of the piecemeal sale and purchase of all types of goods presented by Van Leur is substantial and there seem to be few examples of bulk buying by Asian merchants to suggest that his general impression is wrong. The "richly variegated" nature of the trade at Malacca during the sultanate does not invalidate Van Leur's analysis. Variety is not an indication of the method of handling goods, and the costly nature of luxury commodities implies surely that even a wealthy merchant would purchase them in small quantities.

Similarly, Van Leur's failure to classify cloth as "a mass product" despite the large sales of cloth in South-East Asia is open to criticism,[27] but if the method of sale and conveyance is made the criterion rather than the total quantity involved, then Van Leur's" peddling" description still applies. The analysis of shipping frequenting Moslem Malacca made by Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz strengthens Van Leur's case rather than weakens it. When, for evample, Ruy d'Araujo mentions the wreck of a Gujerat ship in 1510 "with a cargo of 60,000 crusados and a ship's company of 250 persons",[28] can one describe the average capital holding of the individual passengers as large? The characteristic of most branches of South-

25. *Op.cit.*, 54.
26. Van Leur, *op.cit.*, 139, 201-2.
27. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, 5, 329 f.n.24.
28. *Op.cit.*, 65.

East Asia trade was the large number of merchants who were engaged in it and the small number of ships on which they travelled. Even assuming that Pires' estimate of 1,000 Gujerat merchants frequenting Moslem Malacca is excessive, they must have come on the four annual ships from Gujerat, which carried cargo worth a maximum of 120,000 crusados. The merchants of Bengal and Coromandel formed into companies for the voyage to Malacca but only four or five ships came from Bengal, four from Coromandel, and a large, exceptionally valuable vessel from Pulicat.[29] When goods were sold at Malacca, ten or twenty merchants combined to buy each parcel of goods, dividing the consignment amongst them in proportion to their investment.[30]

Finally, while recognizing with Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz the value of the Malay maritime code as a guide to theoretical shipping practise and conceding the authority of the *nakhoda* as the representative of the owner during a ship's voyage, I would suggest that in practice the *nakhoda* may not have controlled "a large part of the tonnage"[31] and that the itinerant merchants, the *Kiwis,* may not have been limited to the 7 or 8 *petaks* or compartments allotted to them by the maritime code.[32] The use of the *petak* system suggests a flexibility in the allocation of tonnage or cargo space to a number of merchants with a limited capital. Years later, in the 1670's, English and Danish sea-captains employed on Bantamese or Coromandel country ships received a share of the profits in *lieu* of pay as did the *nakhoda* of the Malay maritime code; but their ships were crowded with itinerant Moslem and Portuguse merchants who sold their cloth in a hurry at Bantam. The English agent at Bantam, Henry Dacres, noted "that in one weekes time wee had 10 or 12 shopps in ye China rowe kept by ye sd. Portaguezes duringe their aboade heere".[33] The quantity of cloth sold by these fleeting visitors was so great as to ruin English textile sales in western Java, but their method of doing so could certainly be described as "peddling".[34]

29. *Op.cit.*, 67-8.
30. *op.cit.*, 45.
31. *Op.cit.*, 46.
32. Op.cit., 47.
33. Bantam to Company, 27 Oct., 1670. Java Records, vol. IV, f.67. India Office Library (IOL), Commonwealth Relations Office, London.
34. Cf. Meilink-Roelofsz, 246. "The fact that there were so many [Chinese] buyers [of pepper in the Bantam hinterland] meant that a large quantity could be gathered together in a short time". This piecemeal method of purchase was employed at Bantam at the beginning of the seventeenth century, although most of the officials of the Bantamese government then were Chinese and might have been expected to resort to bulk-buying.

Nobility in trade

The remainder of Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's criticisms of Van Leur are trenchant and sound. She minimizes the participation in trade of the Javanese and Malay nobility and draws a distinction between them and the state officials who were usually of foreign origin. Van Leur's analogy of the nobility as a commercially-active group equivalent to the wealthy merchants and bankers of Europe is an erroneous one. The Bantamese nobility were indifferent when commercial matters were discussed at the state council,[35] and at Malacca the type of Malay aristocrat was the dashing *laksamana* Hang Tuah not the *bendahara* Tun Mutahir.[36] The nobility prospered indirectly from the commercial activity of others, but a well-established nobleman showed a preference for landownership. Pate Zeynall (Zainal), the oldest *pate* of Java, was a landowner and possessed no ships. The ruler of Surabaya was equally single-minded. The Javanese merchants who are known to us were not nobility attached to the land but relative newcomers who often sought foreign places of residence. Pate Kadir, one of the six important merchants in Cheribon, went to Malacca, as did his compatriot Utimuturaja from Japara. Pate Cuçuf became governor of Grise, but he was part Malay by birth and had family ties with Malacca: he owned a large fleet of freighters. The port of Japara, which had a sizeable fleet, was ruler by Pate Unus who also came from the commercial environment of Malacca. It is possible that one can see here the transformation of the "bourgeois patriciate" described by Van Leur into Javanese landed gentlemen. The same process of assimilation is apparent in the early seventeenth century. The leading merchant of Jambi was a Chinese called Ketjil Japon, who was later acepted into the local nobility with the title of Orangkaya Siri Lela.[37] Is it possible that the Turkish governor of Tegal, the Gujerati or Persian governor of Japara, and the Bantam shabandar from Meliapur[38] began life as merchants, acquired their wealth as officials of trading ports, and then sought entry to the Javanese nobility by acquiring land?

In antithesis to the commercially-apathetic native aristocracy Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz sets not only the semi-alien state officials, but also the ruler himself. "All over the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago the local ruler had a predominant share in trade and shipping, but the more primitive the society, the more he promoted his own

35. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, 250.
36. *Op.cit.*, 53.
37. *Op.cit.*, 259-60.
38. *Op.cit.*, 240-244.

interests with the assistance of traders who came mostly from abroad". [39]There are references to the royal ownership of junks or of part of a cargo in a private ship, but that these instances amount to a predominant share in trade and shipping is debatable. Why should the sultan, who presumable was as attached to land-ownership as his nobles, differ so markedly from them in his attitude to overseas trade? If the ruler was commerciallly inclined it is not easy to explain the complete absence of locally built shipping in Tuban, Surabaya and Sedayu at the beginning of the sixteenth century.[40] The first serious attempt by a Javanese ruler to build a fleet of ocean-going ships seems to have been that of the sultan of Bantam in and after 1667. The success which attended his efforts was attributable to the assistance of English shipwrights, officers, navigators and gunners, and the interest with which contemporary Europeans watched the expansion of the Bantamese navy is a clear indication of its novelty. During the Anglo-Dutch war of 1672-4 the sultan sought clearance for his ships from the Dutch government at Batavia, but neither he nor his nobility found it necessary to do this during the wars of 1652-4 and 1665-7. Was this because they had no ships to send to sea?

There are very few examples of extensive trade by South-East Asian rulers in Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's book. In brief, they are Tomé Pires' references to the shipping ventures of the early sultans of Malacca, based obviously on hearsay; the capture by the Portuguese of a ship owned by Sultan Mahmud in which he had a large investment in 1511; and the ruler of Grise's extensive participation in the spice trade with Banda in 1610.[41] Van Leur, too, can adduce instances of "royal" participation in overseas trades, but it is questionable whether the people he mentions – the governor of Nagasaki, a mandarin of Changchow, the governors of Surat and Ahmadabad, the *temenggongs* of Kendal and Tegal, the *shabandar* and *datu besar* of Patini[42] – belong to Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's category of rulers or of state officials. The values of royal cargoes mentioned by Van Leur in the seventeenth century bear no resemblance to the 12,000-15,000 crusados invested in Coromandel cloth by Sultan Mahmud in 1511. The *pangeran* of Palembang, for example, consigned less than a ton of pepper with a Chinese to Batavia in 1637; and the governor of Martapura sent twenty-five tons of pepper to Cochin-China.[43] The fact that three of the six ship employed in the Grise-Banda spice trade in 1610

39. *Op.cit.*, 8-9.
40. *Op.cit.*, 106, 110.
41. *Op.cit.*, 51-2, 341 f.n.88-9, 271.
42. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, 205-7,
43. Van Leur, *op.cit.*, 207.

belonged to the ruler of Grise must be set against the Dutch statement that the ports of Grise-Jaratan and Sedayu possessed one thousand ships, albeit mainly *prahus*.[44] A few years later, in 1615, it was the Bandanese, who did not possess a monarchy, who brought their junks in large numbers to Grise.[45] The ruler of Jambi sent a junk to Grise in 1620, but it was to the plebian Chinese Ketjil Japon that the Dutch turned in their pepper transactions.[46]

The participation of the ruler in trade seems to have been sufficiently occasional to prevent him acquiring a predominant share in trade and shipping. It is possible that he relied upon investment in the cargoes of foreign merchants, as Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz suggests, rather than used this own ships, but even so the evidence produced is too slight to support the view that he was the predominant commercial figure. The sultan undoubtedly played the passive role of financier, money-lander, collector of customs duties and occasional pre-emptor of commodities, but surely the true merchant who participated actively in the daily exchange and shipment of goods was the man of alien origin, the Coromandel Hindu, the Gujerati, the Chinese? When the regent of Bantam, Aria Rana di Manggala, insisted that the Dutch might buy pepper only through him, it was not his intention to exploit the market for his own commercial gain but to ensure adequate supplies for the Chinese. Similarly, when Sultan Abul Fatah (Agung) of Bantam imposed a monopoly on the pepper exports of Lampong and Silebar after 1660, he sought to satisfy the growing demand of his English customers and to augment his customs revenue from the duty on re-exported pepper. But it is rare to read of the sultan selling pepper to the English Company. The numerous non-royal and non-official merchants, who must have handed the bulk of the South-East Asia trade if Pires's figures are correct and the descriptions of seventeenth century Bantam are true, will never possess individuality. The activities of sultans and influential state officials tend to be recorded more fully because of the status they held and the diplomatic repercussions which often arose from European interference with their trading ventures. Some consideration must be paid to this fact in assessing the commercial role of the ruler.

The Portuguese

The detailed organization of Asian trade may still be a matter for dispute but there is no doubt that it was not as advanced capi-

44. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, 272.
45. *Op.cit.*, 274.
46. *Op.cit.*, 259-60, 262, 283.

talistically as that of Europe. Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz rejects Van Leur's negative assessment of the Portuguese impact on South-East Asia and asserts the technological superiority of the West as early as the sixteenth century. Let me add, before the historians of the various Asian civilizations make an indignant response, that Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz is careful to define technological superriority in terms of *applied* science, as expressed in artillery, ship-construction and navigation, and the centralised management of shipping and capital investment. Also, she seeks to explain the initial success of the Portuguese onslaught on Asia in these terms rather than to suggest that the Portuguese enjoyed in consequence a greater predominance in South East Asia trade and politics than that admitted by Van Leur. Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz is under no illusions as to the limited extent of Portuguese control in Malaya, the precarious condition of Malacca and its dependence upon Portuguese sea power for survival, and the abuses perpetrated by some of its captains. Nor does she deny the failure of the Portuguese to obtain more than a fractional proportion of the coveted spice trade and recognizes the revival of the Red Sea as a major spice route in the second half of the sixteenth century. She acknowledges, too, the feebleness of Portuguese missionary enterprize in South-East Asia until the stimulus of the Catholic Counter-Reformation in Europe and agrees that the intolerance of the Jesuits in the Moluccas in the second half of the sixteenth century was a disaster for the secular authorities.

The contrast between the unbroken succession of victories gained by the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean between 1498 and 1515 and the defensive role which they played in South-East Asia in the second half of the sixteenth century is a startling one. But Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz is mistaken in her attempt to explain the change in predominantly technological terms. She ascribes the early success of the Portuguese to their possession of a centralised organization which was directed to the solution of specific problems; to their national unity, which was comparatively greater than that of their opponents; to Portuguese superiority in hips weapons and nautical experience; and to their intensity of purpose, which Professors Boxer and Sansom also regard as of prime importance.[47] Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz also suggests that the Portuguese enjoyed initially the advantage of surprise. In the second half of the sixteenth century the Asians passed to the offensive, argues Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz, because they "adopted much of Portuguese

47. C. R. Boxer "The Portuguese in the East, 1500-1800" in H. V. Livermore, *Portugal and Brazil* (Oxford, 1953), 196-7; B. G. Sansom, *The Western World and Japan* (London 1950), 68-9.

technical science and strategy".[48] The navigational knowledge which Japanese and Chinese pilots acquired from the Portuguese[49] is scarcely relevant because by that time the Portuguese enjoyed good relations with China and Japan, but the argument that the adoption of sturdier construction and heavier armament in Asian ships prevented the imposition of a Portuguese trade monopoly in South East Asia in the second half of the sixteenth century appears to have greater validity.[50]

Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz is rather neglectful of the evidence if she can ascribe the original Portuguese scheme for the control of the Indian Ocean to "the truly visionary discernment" of Afonso de Albuquerque, the second governor of Portuguese India (1509-15).[51] The Portuguese had already evolved the concept of strategic fortresses supplemented by sea power on the Guinea Coast, and so many of the component parts of Albuquerque's "grandiose idea" were conceived before he took office. As early as 1505 his predecessor, Almeida, built forts at Kilwa, Anjediva and Cananor and strengthened the existing fort at Cochin. D'Abreu erected the fort, factory and hospital at Mozambique two years later. The plan to take Socotra and then Aden, thus closing the mouth of the Red Sea, was formulated while Albuquerque was still a junior commander. The plan to seize Goa was the brainchild of a minor Indian ruler which Albuquerque adopted. The expeditions of Sequeira and D.M. Vasconcelos to Malacca in 1509 and 1510 were organised in Lisbon, but events conspired to divert Vasconcelos' ships to Albuquerque's attack on Goa and his abortive voyage towards the Red Sea in 1511. When Albuquerque finally set out to punish the Malaccan government for its treatment of Sequeira, he was able to divest the Malabar coast of most of its Portuguese defenders because Almeida's defeat of the combined Egyptian-Gujerati fleet at Diu in February 1509 had removed any threat from the Red Sea. His subsequent freedom of movement against Ormus in 1515 can be ascribed to the same cause.

The element of surprise to which Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz partially attributes Portuguese success is a rather nebulous factor.[52] It must have been of short duration, because the intentions of the Portuguese became obvious after the outbreak of fighting between Cabral and the Hindu zamorin of Calicut in December 1500. For five years thereafter the Portuguese maintained a tenuous hold

48. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade,* 10.
49. *Op.cit.,* 124.
50. Ibid.
51. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade,* 116-7. The value of Ballard, *Rulers of the Indian Ocean* (London, 1927) is questionable in this connection.
52. Meilink-Roelofsz, *op.cit.,* 118.

on the Malabar coast by means of annual fleets from Lisbon, scarely a form of warfare likely to yeild a surprise. The Portuguese gained a foothold on Malabar, as they did later in the Moluccas, not by violence but by the skilful manipulation of local rivalries. On occasion, the advantage of surprise was enjoyed by the Moslems, as when the Egyptian-Gujerat fleet overwhelmed Laurenco Almeida's squadron at Chaul in 1508 because Albuquerque had neglected his station off Socotra to threaten Ormuz in the Persian Gulf. Where the Portuguese achieved a genuine surprise of the enemy, as at Goa in March 1510, they were unsuccessful; the Turks of Adil Khan repulsed their first attack. It was the second attempt eight months later which was successful. In the case of Malacca it is claimed by most Portuguese chroniclers that the improvement in the treatment of Ruy d'Araujo and the other Portuguese survivors of Sequeira's squadron was caused by the bendahara's fear of punitive action by Albuquerque. If this allegation was true, the Malays had almost a year in which to prepare their defences. So the element of surprise was not important. Portuguese tenacity of purpose, upon which Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz also lays emphasis, was of paramount importance. The conquest of Goa, Malacca and Ormuz took place at the second attempt; that of Bintang after four attempts; and the Portuguese made repeated expeditions to the Red Sea although they never captured Aden.

Technology and Manpower

Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's contention that the Asians assimilated European technology and strategy by the second half of the sixteenth century poses many questions. Does this generalization have validity for South-East Asia? What weapons did the Malays and Javanese have at their disposal in 1511? What evidence is there of an improvement in Malay or Achinese shipping and weapons in the second half of the sixteenth century? Assuming that the enemies of the Portuguese acquired their first artillery, or better artillery, is there any evidence that they used the new weapons more effectively? Or did they impose a check to the Portuguese by more traditional methods? Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz and R. J. Wilkinson are probably correct in challenging the Portuguese claim that they captured 3,000 pieces of artillery at Malacca in 1511.[53] Most of these were probably small-arms or light cannon such as bombards. It is possible, however, that the absence of significant Portuguese casualties reflected bad Malay gunnery rather than

53. Meilink-Roelofsz, op.cit., 123, 357 f.n.29; R. J. Wilkinson, "The Fall of Malacca" *JMBRAS*, XIII (2), (1935), 68.

a lack of guns. In November 1587, by which time the technological assimilation envisaged by Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz would have progressed appreciably, D. Paulo da Lima informed D. Helena de Sousa that he had captured "eight hundred pieces of bronze artillery" in the sack of Johore Lama. But Malay gunnery was no better than in 1511 and the Portuguese casualities were variously estimated at 55 to 80 killed.[54] we also know that the Achinese acquired abandoned Portuguese cannon at Pasai and on several pillaged Portuguese ships in 1519-24 and that they ecquired others from Egypt. But there is no indication that the Achinese handled these guns markedly better in their naval battles with the Portuguese off Singapore and Johore in 1577-8 than they did in Perlis in 1547.[55] Certainly the Achinese never endangered Portuguese maritime supremacy even in 1627-9.

In the days of the Malacca sultanate, the Malays sailed on but did not possess ocean-going ships.[56] There is no suggestion of a Malay equivalent of the mighty Javanese merchant ships which Fernão Peres de Andrade fought off Malacca in 1513. The Malay fleet commanded by the *laksamana* which was encoutered by Sequeira in 1509 and Albuquerque in 1511 consisted of *lancharas,* a small single-sail square rigged vessel steered by two oars mounted in the stern.[57] The *lanchara* was still the standard craft of the Malay navy at Johore Lama in 1587, which does not suggest a marked advance in naval design. The merchant ships which ploughed the Indian Ocean and sought new routes through Acheh and the Maldives to the Red Sea may have been of sturdier construction than in the past, but their home ports were usually in India, not South-East Asia.

The Malay and Javanese princes were not renowned in European circles for the care and management of their artillery. The many cannon which the Portuguese supplied to Brunei were found dismounted during the Spanish attack of 1578. A well-informed British memorandum proposing the invasion of Bantam in 1677 was contemptuous of the many cannon possessed by the Bantamese because they were "absolutely Ignorant of ye use of them more then

54. I. A. Macgregor, "Johore Lama in the Sixteenth Century "*JMBRAS,* XXVIII (2) (1955), 112.

55. Twelve or thirteen Portuguese were killed in the battle off Singapore in January 1577, which lasted between three and six hours. The Achinese were greatly superior in their number of ships and the weight of their artillery, but their casualties may have reached 1,600 killed and captured. I.A. Macgregor, "A Portuguese sea fight off Singapore in the 1570's", *JMBRAS.,* XXIX (3), (1956), 13-5, 17.

56. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade,* 39, 57.

57. For an example, see I.A. Macgregor, "A Portuguese sea fight off Singapore in the 1570's", *JMBRAS,* XXIX (3), 16.

in popping them of [f] uppon great dayes".[58] In 1772 the Hon. Edward Monckton advised the Madras Council from Kedah that there was no risk in supplying the Malays with additional cannon because the dozens they already owned were allowed to lie unserviceable in the mud.[59] Malay and Achinese dependence upon foreign skills tends to be confirmed in the sixteenth century by the arrival of Turkish guns and gunners in Acheh before each new wave of Achinese expansion.

Whatever may have been the case in Western Asia, the Portuguese advance in South-East Asia was halted by the simplest weapon of all – manpower. If Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's theory of technological assimilation is applied to South-East Asia, one would anticipate a continuation of the Portuguese victories in the Indian Ocean until the middle of the sixteenth century. Ye it was in the 1520's that the Portuguese suffered their most serious setbacks in Malaya and Indonesia and were induced thereby to limit their aims and their anti-Moslem fervour. The Portuguese expeditionary force to Pedie in north Sumatra was caught by the ebb tide and overwhelmed by the Achinese in 1522. The Portuguese garrison at Pasai was withdrawn in 1524, and Francisco da Sa's force received a sharp repulse when it tried to build a fortress at Sunda Kalapa (Djakarta) in 1526. At the seige of Pasai the Achinese relied upon manpower and elephants to batter down the Portuguese stockade, not upon artillery. The Javanese did not possess artillery, as the helplessness of Pate Unus' fleet in the battle with Ferõã Peres de Andrade in 1513 testified.

The only South-East Asian commander to possess light artillery at that time was the Malay *laksamana,* with whose fleet Pate Unus tried to unite in his retreat towards Muar. But the *laksamana,* who was the real organizer of Malay resistance after the debacle of 1511, destroyed a considerable number of Portuguese galleons and galleys in 1523-6 by avoiding naval battles at sea in approved European fashion. Instead, he relied upon catching the Portuguese ships in confined waters, as in the Muar and Pahang rivers in 1523 and in the estuary at Bintang. His guile in luring Portuguese *lancharas* and galleys upstream at Bintang among the stakes in the river bed proved highly rewarding, and the Portuguese conquered Bintang at their fourth attempt in 1526 only after doggedly lifting the stakes which retricted their manoeuvrability. The first major

58. *Original Correspondence Series,* No. 4285, (IOL).

59. Monckton to Madras Select Committee, 22 April, 1772. *Sumatra Factory Records,* vol.15, f.88 (IOL). Monckton wrote: "The King of Quedah and all the Malay Kings have got Guns enough to drive all the Europeans out of India if they knew how to use them, and yet they want more". In a letter of 2 May, 1772, Monckton estimated that there were 300 guns lying in the mud at the capital in Parlis.

defeat suffered by the *laksamana* was at Lingga in 1525, where the Malays were attacking Lingga from the sea and thus could not withdraw up the estuary from the two ships of Alvaro de Brito: they lost 600 men in consequence. Similarly the *laksamana's* technique of night raids on Malacca to exhaust the Portuguese garrison was far more successful than a formal siege. Although the Portuguese finally conquered Bintang, the strength of the resistance and their failure in Sumatra and Java must have affected their political thinking. It is significant that in their contemporary overtures to the sultanates of Ternate, Tidore and Brunei, the Portuguese south to win Moslem friends rather than add to their religious enemies. The plan to occupy Sunda Kalapa was abandoned. The Malays, Achinese and Javanese induced this frame of mind by techniques which had a purely indigenous inspiration. In passing, it is worth remembering that the Ternatens lacked any form of firearm, but they could reduce the Portuguese garrison of Fort St. John to terms with their traditional weapons and by cutting off food supplies. The Ternatens and Achinese in particular passed to the offensive in the 1570's, but the Portuguese offensive had expired several decades previously.

What then can be written of Portuguese activity in South-East Asia in the thirty years after the capture of Bintang? In this respect Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's account of Malayan history is open to serious criticism because it lacks a sense of chronology, of development, and presents as a general condition an event or set of events which had only a limited effect in time. There are minor examples of this vagueness. Consider, for example, the statement that after 1511 or thereabout the sultan of Malacca was "from now on usually called the sultan of Johore".[60] When? The Portuguese referred to him as the sultan of Kampar as late as 1528 and Macgregor has shown that Mahmud's successor did not settle at Johore Lama until at least 1540. It should also be made clear in the text rather than in the footnotes[61] that the attraction of Chinese junks to Johore Lama appears to date from the 1570's and 1580's. It is impossible to determine when this development began from the text, but the implication is that it occurred soon after the Portuguese conquest of Malacca. In reality, the centre of the Chinese junk trade appears to have been Patani, not Johore Lama, and there is evidence of Chinese junks frequenting Malacca again in 1527-8, despite the breakdown of official Portuguese relations with China in 1521-2.

60. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, 139.

61. *Op. cit.*, 139-40, 364 f.n.24.

Malay-Portuguese Relations

Far more serious is Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's over-simplified version of Malay-Portuguese relations. Her allusion to "the repeated devastation" of Johore Lama by the Portuguese suggests a semi-continuous enmity between Portuguese Malacca and Johore.[62] The keynote of their relationship, apparently, was the infliction of mutual injury. It was only Achinese expansion along the east coast of Sumatra which produced a temporary entente in 1536.[63] "Trade in Malacca revived once commercial traffic was no longer obstructed by Johore". But during the second half of the sixteenth century "there were repeated conflicts arising out of commercial rivalry" between Portuguese Malacca and Johore, culminating in the sack of Johore Lama by Dom Paulo da Lima in August 1587.[64]

This is the picture which Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz seeks to present, but few of her generalizations will bear detailed analysis. The Malay capital was not devastated repeatedly because it suffered destruction by the Portuguese only in 1535/6 and 1587.[65] In the fifty year interval, Johore Lama enjoyed considerable prosperity, as Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz acknowledges elsewhere, and within six years of the sack of 1587 the new Malay capital was being built at Batu Sawar. The burning of a city made predominantly of wood cannot have produced serious long-term effects. Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz recognizes the rapidity with which Grise recovered from the Mataram conquest of 1613 and resumed the trade with Banda.[66] Surely the same criterion must be applied to Johore Lama? One must refute in passing Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's contention that the second half of the sixteenth century was characterised by "repeated conflicts" between Portuguese Malacca and Johore. The only occasions of Malay-Portuguese warfare between 1526 and 1587 were the hostilities of 1535-6 and the Malay-Javanese siege of Malacca in 1551. Serious continuous warfare between the Portuguese and Malays ceased after Pero Mascarenhas' conquest of Bintang in 1526. Two years later the new sultan, Ala'ud-din Riayat Shah, and the *laksamana* made peace overtures to Jorge Cabral, the captain of Malacca, which he welcomed on condition that the sultan of Kampar, as he then was, accepted the overlordship of the Portuguese crown. The outcome of these negotiations is not known, but Cabral was convinced that the Malays were too exhausted to want a renewal of the war. The battles in the Muar and Johore rivers

62. *Op. cit.*, 140.
63. *Op. cit.*, 141.
64. *Loc. cit.*
65. Johore Lama was devastated by the Achinese in 1564 but this does not affect this discussion of Malay-Portuguese relations or obviate the ease with which Johore Lama was rebuilt.
66. Meilink-Roelofaz, *Asian Trade*, 277, 279.

in 1535-6, which occurred because of a misunderstanding over ambassadors, represented the breakdown of a mutual tolerance rather than an incident in a period of uninterrupted hostility.

Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz also appears to be mistaken in stating that Johore sought Portuguese support when Acheh threatened the Malay dependencies in east Sumatra.[67] Fernãõ Mendes Pinto may be a "liar of the first magnitude" in many respects, but there is no reason to doubt his account of the Portuguese diplomatic missions to Batak and Aru during the captaincy of Pero Faria (1539-43). Neither is there any reason to doubt Faria's cynical indifference to the fate of Batak and Aru at Achinese hands. Perhaps "realistic" would be better adjective than "cynical" because the defeat of the Portuguese troops at Pedie and Pasai in 1522-4 was an object lesson in the futility of challenging the manpower of Acheh with a few hundred Portuguese arquebusers. In 1539-40 Johore neither sought nor had any prospect of obtaining Portuguese support against Acheh. Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz also overlooks the fact that Johore did not need Portuguese assistance to check Acheh in east Sumatra. When Faria declined to help the queen of Aru recover her kingdom, it was the Johore forces which achieved this feat and then shattered the Achinese navy at the battle of the Paneh river. Later in the sixteenth century, it is true, the mutual danger from Acheh brought about Malay-Portuguese military co-operation, but the Malay *lancharas* came to the relief of Malacca almost as frequently as the Portuguese foists and galleys protected Batu Pahat and Johore Lama.

It is difficult to reconcile these instances of co-operation in the 1570's and 1580's with Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's picture of "repeated conflicts" between Malacca and Johore. Even when a personal *entente* existed between the sultans of Johore and Acheh in 1571-9, the sultan of Johore limited his anti-Portuguese inclinations to extending the shelter of the Johore estuary to Javanese and Achinese vessels. The Malay-Portuguese treaty signed at Goa in 1583 specifically forbade a Malay-Achinese alliance. In the 1580's Malay-Portuguese relations were cordial again, and would not have deteriorated to produce the war of 1586-7 had not Lisbon ordered the closure of the Portuguese factory in Johore Lama.

Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's attitude to the commercial fortunes of Portuguese Malacca needs to be more clearly defined. The diversion of a large part of Malacca's trade to other ports immediately after the Portuguese conquest is a well-known fact. Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz, however, also postulates a consistent commercial rivalry between Johore and Malacca in the sixteenth century and suggests

67. *Op. cit.*, 140-1.

that the maintenance of peaceful relations, as in the Malay-Portuguese settlement of 1536, was necessary before the trade of Malacca could revive.[68] In defence of an alternative view, might I refer to the marked improvement in the trade of Malacca, particularly the attraction of junks from China and Laue, which followed the capture of Bintang in 1526. This trend was well marked by the time sultan Ala'ud-din of Kampar sought peace in 1528. Similarly, Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's contention that the trade of Malacca revived *because* of the peace of 1536 is difficult to reconcile with Urdaneta's description of Malacca at the height of the war. Urdaneta stayed at Malacca between July and November 1535, while being repatriated to Spain from the Moluccas. He wrote:[69]

> "In this city of Malacca the Portuguese have a fort with a garrison of 500 men. It is a place of great trade, for many junks come here from all parts, as well from Maluco as Timor, Banda with much sandal wood, all Java, Sumatra, India, Ceylon, Paliacati [Pulicat] with much cotton cloth of Bengal, where they make the finest in these parts. Vessels also come from Pegu with provisions, gems, and musk, and from many rivers and lands which are near Malacca, bringing gold and tin. From Sumatra they bring more gold than from any other part whatever, and it is very fine gold. While we were at Malacca there was a day when the merchants received seven *quintals* of gold from Sumatra. Much gold and camphor also come to Malacca from Siam, Patani and Burney [Brunei].
>
> There is also great trade with China, as well porcelains as silks of all kinds, musks, and other precious things. China, according to what the Portuguese say who have been there, produces the best things there are in these parts".

Private Trade

Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz gives timely recognition to the role of the Portuguese private adventurer as a disseminator of Portuguese influence and language beyond the official confines of the empire. The proportion of inter-Asian commerce carried by the Portuguese "country" trader was probably negligible compared to the total volume of Asian trade.[70] On the other hand, it is questionable whether evasions of the crown monopolies by Portuguese private traders were so slight as to concentrate their efforts in "smalltime

68. *Op. cit.*, 141.

69. Sir C. Markham (ed.), *Early Spanish Voyages to the Strait of Magellan*, (London, 1911), 81.

70. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, 130.

trade in the less valuable products".[71] This limitation to investment in trival commodities by regulation was typical certainly of the burghers of Dutch Batavia and Malacca, and the English country traders suffered from the same handicap until the demand for Indonesian produce at Canton gave them their opportunity in the late eighteenth century. But the Portuguese administrative structure was less effective in curbing its adventurous subjects than that of the East India Companies. Professor Boxer's description of "Turbulent Timor" scarcely suggests that the writs of the Portuguese crown had as much effect there as the personal decisions of the Da Costa and De Hornay families.[72] But was the export of sandalwood to Macao and Coromandel a "smalltime trade"? In the Moluccas, despite the efforts of occasional honest captains like Antonio Galvao (who died in a pauper's hospital for his pains), the soldiers of Ft. St. John appear to have obtained a larger share of the Moluccan spice crop than the king they served. Spasmodic attempts to enforce the right of the crown to its *teco* or third share of the cloves provoked violent resistance to, and even the murder of, the commandant responsible. In the 1520's and 1530's the royal investment at Ternate is usually given as about 5,000 crusados. It may have increased later, but scarcely compares with the cargoes exported by private Portuguese, which Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz estimates to have reached 100,000 crusados at times.

The trade of the Portuguese private trader in eastern Asia may well have exceeded that of the crown in scope and value until the introduction of the royal monopoly of the China-Japan trade in 1550. The presence of 300 Portuguese in Patani, the leading silk *entrepôt* outside Canton, and the extensive Portuguese contraband trade off the China coast in 1522-54 suggests a much larger private trade in luxury goods than Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz is prepared to recognise. Leonel de Sousa had 17 ships with him off Macao in 1554 when he concluded the agreement which legitimized Portuguese trade with the Chinese maritime provinces. If one accepts Fernao Mendes Pinto's identification of individual Portuguese and their particular sphere of activity, as distinct from his more questionable personal participation in every event he describes, there emerges an interesting outline of Portuguese private enterprize in the China Sea. Pinto was a personal friend of the rajah of Patani, whose relations with the Portuguese were exceptionally cordial. Pero de Faria sent his kinsman to conclude a commercial agreement with Patani in 1540 and maintained Tomé Lobo as his personal agent in Pahang. Most of the Portuguese whom Pinto mentioned owned junks or ships, and some, such as Diogo Soares de Mello, participated

71. *Loc. cit.*
72. C. R. Boxer, *Fidalgos in the Far East, 1550-1770,* (The Hague. 1948), chap. XI.

with equal enthusiasm in trade at Patani, in war with the Achinese, and as mercenaries in the Thai-Burmese war of 1548.[73] Large contingents of Portuguese adventurers fought in the armies of Burma, Martaban and Siam in 1541-8, and in 1545 Simão de Melo, the captain of Malacca, complained that there were 200 Portuguese roaming the Far East "without fear of God or Your Majesty".[74] Pinto, who was not always blessed by good fortune, had accumulated considerable wealth by the time he became a Jesuit novice in 1554. His enterprizing compatriots may well have done the same.

The activies of Portuguese private traders in Borneo and Indonesia are more obscure. One of them, Afonso Pais, was on friendly terms with the sultan of Brunei when Dom Jorge de Menezes opened that route to the Moluccas officially in 1526.[75] Another man, unknown except for his name of Pero Fidalgo, is supposed to have been the first Portuguese to reach Luzon in a junk from Brunei in 1545.[76] Bantam and Panarukan seem to have become frequent ports of call for the Portuguese in the 1530's and 1540's. Were the Portuguese whom Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz describes as calling at the Javanese ports "on their voyages to Solor and Timor and the Spice Islands"[77] predominantly private traders? The route used by royal galleons in their passage to the Moluccas was almost invariably via Singapore Strait and Brunei; it was the return voyage which was made via Banda and Panarukan. It is also difficult to understand why the Portuguese were unable to supply the people of Timor and Solor with attractive goods, when the Chinese were able to do so.[78] The Portuguese traded extensively on the China coast after 1522 and settled at Macao in c.1555. What goods were they unable to obtain from the Chinese with whom they smuggled which were available to the Chinese themselves?

The captains of Malacca sometimes complained that the lure of private trade deprived the fortress of an adequate garrison, but Malacca was not seriously threatened between 1526 and 1568 except during the Malay-Javanese siege of 1551. Despite the heroics of Portuguese chroniclers, against which Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz rightly warns us, the Achinese raids on Malacca in 1537 and 1547 were trivial affairs. Thus for three decades after the capture of Bintang,

73. Galeote Pereira, who was a contemporary of Pinto at Malacca, was at Malacca when the Achinese were defeated in 1547, fought on the Thai side at Ayuthia in 1548, made several voyages to China, where he was a prisoner in 1549-52. See C. R. Boxer, *South China in the Sixteenth Century,* (London, 1953), 1-lv.
74. M. Collis, *The Grand Peregrination,* (London, 1949), 232.
75. M. Teixeira, Early Portuguese & Spanish Contacts with Borneo", *Proceedings of the Second International Conference of Historians of Asia,* (Taipeh, 1962), 28-9.
76. C. R. Drinkwater Bethune (ed.), *The Discoveries of the world...by Antonio Galvano, governor of Ternate,* (London, 1862), 239.
77. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade,* 151.
78. *Op. cit.,* 153.

the Portuguese developed without distraction their trade connections with Pegu, Patani, Ligor, Siam, China, Japan, Brunei, the Moluccas, Jambi, Bantam and Panarukan. Malacca owed much of its prosperity to this fact.

Portuguese Abuses?

Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz is somewhat equivocal in her consideration of the damage caused to the trade of Malacca by the abuses and extortion of the Portuguese officials. Much of her evidence of the malversation of the Portuguese captains is taken from the report of the Dutch commissioner Schouten after the Dutch conquest of Malacca in 1641. The danger of bias here is obvious. That there were arbitrary and avaricious Portuguese captains is indisputable, but against their misdoings has to be set the appeal of the Indian merchants for the retention of Jorge Cabral as captain for life in 1527,[79] Urdaneta's enthusiastic description of Malacca in 1535, the growing number of Moslem merchants who served as factors for the Portuguese in Fernão Mendes Pinto's time, and the excellent relationship which the Portuguese always enjoyed with Brunei. By 1574, at the height of the Achinese and Javanese sieges, the revenues of Malacca showed a large surplus despite the fact that the Portuguese missionary stations in eastern Asia were charged to the Malacca government.[80] Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz admits that the Asian trade of Malacca increased in the sixteenth century,[81] but remains at a loss to explain this trend because she attaches too much importance to the strictures of Winstedt, Whiteway, Tiele and Schouten on Portuguese government. If conditions at Malacca were as bad as Schouten describes them, why was the population of Malacca 20,000 in 1640 as compared to 5,000 under the Dutch government at the end of the seventeenth century? Why did Jacob Couper's blockade squadron capture five Portuguese ships, a Spanish ship and over fifty Asian junks in the Malacca fareway in 1633-4?[82] Finally, why did the Dutch conquerors regard the customs tolls of

79. Petition of the Bendahara and Indian merchants of Malacca to King Joao III of Portugal, 10 September 1527. *Macgregor Papers,* University of Singapore Library.

80. "Revenue and expenditure of the income which the King of Portugal has in the East Indies", 7 November, 1574. *Macgregor Papers.* The bishop of China and the Portuguese missionaries in Solor, Cambodia, Siam, Japan, the Moluccas and Amboina received salaries from the Malacca government according to this account. The cloth investment in Banda and the Moluccas was also paid for by the Malacca government. But the revenue of Malacca was given as 17,118,000 reis and the expenditure as 13,769,460 reis, leaving a surplus of 3,348,540 reis.

81. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade,* 170.

82. Brouwer & council to XVII, 27 December, 1634. W.Ph. Coolhaas (ed.), *Generale Missiven van Governeurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie,* I, (1610-38), 467-9, (The Hague, 1960).

Malacca inherited from the Portuguese as equitable and even increase them slightly?[83]

A port of international significance does not exist *in vacuo*. Conditions there are tolerable or intolerable in relation to abuses elsewhere. Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz explained the popularity of Moslem Malacca on the ground that "abuses were certainly no worse in Malacca than in other ports". This criterion should also be applied to Portuguese Malacca. In the absence of adequate data on extortion, customs duties, royal pre-emption at Acheh, Brunei, Japara, Grise, Patani, Johore Lama, Sunda Kalapa and Bantam, it would be unwise to attribute trade fluctuations in Portuguese Malacca predominantly to local abuses. Would Dr Meilink-Roelofsz treat the malversation of Speelman and Bort at Batavia as evidence that Batavia was suffering a commercial decline in 1684?

Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz sees in the need of the Javanese to export rice to Portuguese Malacca a major cause of the softening of Moslem hostility to the Portuguese in north Java. Demak was the chief rice exporter to Malacca in the first half of the sixteenth century and Japara became important thereafter.[85] On this basis one would anticipate friendly relations between the Portuguese and Demak prior to 1550 and a similar tolerance between Japara and Malacca after 1550. But it was Demak and its vassal state of Bantam which attacked the Hindu-Javanese state of Padjadjaran and repulsed the Portuguese bloodily at Sunda Kalapa in 1526. The unwillingness of Demak to enter into a coalition with Acheh in 1564 is not wholly inexplicable in terms of rice-export requirements if Demak was no longer the leading exporter to Malacca. Japara, which Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz describes as wanting to export rice to Malacca after 1550, launched two great sieges of Malacca in 1551 and 1574.

It is doubtful if diplomatic relations can be explained in such simple economic terms.[86] The contradiction between the need to use Malacca as a market and the desire to conquer it is too glaring. Similarly, it is difficult to believe that Grise reverted from a pro-Portuguese to an anti-Portuguese attitude in 1523 because of "Portuguese monopoly policy and Portuguese activity in the Moluccas".[87] Fort St. John, Ternate, was barely a few months old at that time and the Portuguese exercised no control whatever in Amboina and Banda. It was with Banda that Grise

83. P. A. Leupe (ed.), "The Siege and Capture of Malacca from the Portuguese in 1640-1641", *JMBRAS.*, XIV (1), (1946), 98-9, 120, 135.
84. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, 42.
85. *Op. cit.*, 149.
86. *Op. cit.*, 150.
87. *Op. cit.*, 148.

had especially strong trade connections. During the next two decades the Portuguese commandants were unable to prevent their own soldiers flouting the crown monopoly of spices and military action against the Javanese was very rare because the troops preferred to ship their cloves from Ternate with the monsoon to Malacca. Antonio Galvao's attack on the Javanese at Amboina in 1538 was the act of an unusually conscientious captain. Is it likely in any case that the Portuguese would have tried seriously to disrupt Javanese trade to the Spice Islands, when, as the Dutch discovered later, the inhabitants were completely dependent on imported foodstuffs? The hostility of the Javanese of Japara to the Portuguese seems to have been governed not by the economic requirements of rice-export or spice purchase, but by resentment at the Jesuit missionary activity which followed Francis Xavier's visit to the Spice Islands in 1546-7. Amboina became a religious battlefield between the Javanese and Portuguese, to which the Javanese attacks on Malacca in 1551 and 1574 may well have been a Malayan extension.

Was the propagation of Christianity more important to the Portuguese than the prosecution of trade?[88] It is true that the Dutch were less inclined to endanger their profits for the sake of religion than the Portuguese, but the contrast between the attitudes of the Dutch and Portuguese civil administration was not as pronounced as Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz suggests. The crucial question, surely, is "To *which* Portuguese was religion more important than trade?" There were two types of Portuguese in Asia: the clerics and missionaries on the one hand; the soldiers, seamen, traders and mercenaries on the other. Francis Xavier's strictures on the materialism of the Malaccan Portuguese are well known. He had to embark on a Chinese junk when he sailed from Malacca to Japan in 1549 and he was positively obstructed by Dom Alvaro de Ataide da Gama in his fatal voyage to China in 1552. The captains-major of the Japan voyage preferred to build up a *clientele* in a recognised port than to risk the *nao* in various localities to aid Jesuit missionary work. The enthusiasm for carrying Jesuits to Japan decreased markedly as the Tokugawa persecution of Christians intensified in the seventeenth century. When sultan Hairun of Ternate, whom the Jesuits denounced as the principal obstacle to the conversion of the Moluccas, was deposed by Duarte D'Eca in 1555, the Portuguese garrison repudiated their commandant and insisted on Hairun's restoration. An apology to the sultan from the viceroy at Goa followed. The secular Portuguese showed impressive formal respect for their

88. *Op. cit.*, 181.

missionary compatriots, but their enthusiasm for the propagation of the faith was modified by more mundane considerations.

Moluccas

Certain of Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's generalizations concerning the Moluccas are open to question. Were the Spice Islands "the scene of the greatest Portuguese activity" and the strongest Portuguese influence on native trade and economy in South-East Asia?[89] Did the "competitive struggle between Spaniards and Portuguese and their respective proteges . . . . continue until far into the 16th century"?[90] Were there repeated skirmishes between the Spaniards and Portuguese in the Moluccas until 1546?[91] Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz fails to produce evidence of exceptional Portuguese influence on the trade and economy of the Moluccas, nor, even if proved, need influence of this type be treated as evidence that "the scene of the greatest Portuguese activity" in South-East Asia lay in the Spice Islands. The Moluccas was one of the few areas where the Portuguese usually had the co-operation of the sultan until Jesuit zeal ended the *entente*. Any influence the Portuguese exerted on the economy arose from this fact, rather than from a large Portuguese trade or Portuguese control of spice cultivation comparable to that exercised later by the Dutch. The Portuguese royal fleet to the Moluccas usually consisted of a galleon and a galley or junk, and the quota of spices obtained by the crown in the 1520's and 1530's varied between the trifling level of 1520's and 1530's varied between the trifling level of 50-250 quintals. The soldiers of the Portuguese garrison must have secured additional cloves, but even so it is doubtful whether Portuguese commercial enterprize in the Spice Islands was as great as in the lands bordering on the China Sea.

The damaging effect of Spanish competition in the Moluccas was not as prolonged as Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz suggests. She mentions the Treaty of Zaragossa (1529) but minimizes its effectiveness in the Spice Islands.[92] It is true that the treaty, by which the Spanish crown agreed to withdraw its claims to the Spice Islands, did not come into local operation until Tristao d'Ataide reached Ternate in October 1533, but the Spaniards in the Moluccas remained passive after they signed a truce with Dom Jorge de Menezes in 1529. The Spanish survivors, of whom Urdaneta was one, were glad to escape to Portuguese protection under cover of a Portuguese attack on Djilolo in 1533. After the repatriation of the survivors

89. *Op. cit.*, 153.
90. *Op. cit.*, 155.
91. *Ibid.*
92. *Ibid.*

to Spain in 1534-5, the visits of Spanish ships to the Moluccas were fortuitous, arising from their inability to beat back across the Pacific to Mexico. When the remnant of Gijalva's squadron arrived in the Moluccas from Peru in 1537, Antonio Galvao, the Portuguese commandant, enjoyed complete local support and was not disturbed by the few Spaniards he saved from massacre. Rug Lopes de Villalobos was careful not to violate the 1529 treaty during his involuntary visit to the Moluccas in 1544-6 and his Spanish troops actually assisted the Portuguese and Ternate to attack Djilolo in November 1545. Thus the only period during which the Spanish trans-Pacific expeditions gave the Portuguese Moluccan government grounds for anxiety was in 1527-9.

The Hispano-Portuguese union of 1580, which Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz describes as the first instance of Spanish support for the Portuguese in the Moluccas, exposed Portuguese possessions in due course to the attacks of the Dutch. Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz recognizes the more positive appreciation by modern historians of the tenacity of the Portuguese defence, but argues that this was simply characteristic Portuguese stubbornness in behalf of a lost cause.[93] But surely resilience in adversity is a comparative quality? If forty years of courageous resistance is to be dismissed as the irrelevant reaction of a decadent and maladministered empire, by what standard would Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz judge the condition of the Dutch empire which yielded its eastern possessions so meekly to the British in the wars of 1780-4, 1795-1802 and 1803-14? The defects in Portuguese government were many, but the fact remains that the Portuguese had already survived Asian attacks on their empire from Mombasa to Malacca and Ternate when the additional burden of the Anglo-Dutch expansion bore them down. Despite her description of the rise of Acheh and the rebellion of Baabullah against the Portuguese in the Moluccas, Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz does not give enough weight to the pressures which the Portuguese had surmounted for a century. Instead, she reaches the odd conclusion that the Asians "showed themselves more kindly disposed towards her [Portugal] than towards other European nations".[94] In that case, what becomes of Said Berkat's alliance with the Dutch against the Portuguese and Tidore, of Johore's assistance to the besiegers of Malacca in 1606 and 1641, and of Acheh's attacks on Malacca in 1615, 1627 and 1629? In writing about South-East Asia it is best to make generalizations which apply to that region and not to other parts of the East.

It is difficult to determine when Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz first

93. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, 125.
94. *Op. cit.*, 186.

perceives an inefficient and exhausted Portuguese Asia. Her unqualified acceptance of the statement that the Portuguese were incapable of offensive war by 1588 is untenable in view of the Portuguese sack of Johore Lama in the previous August, the relief of Colombo in 1588, and the large Portuguese expeditions to East Africa which culminated in the building of the new fortress, Fort Jesus, at Mombasa in 1593. Similarly, once the Dutch joined the enemies of enemies of Portugal, how is one to describe Andre Furtado de Mendoza's offensive against Bantam and Amboina in 1601-3, the relief of Malacca by the sixteen galleons of the viceroy in 1606, the plan, albeit ruined by Vasconcelos, for a combined Hispano-Portuguese offensive against the Dutch in 1610-11, and the similar plan in 1615-6? The standard by which Portuguese resistance can be measured is the number of galleons the viceroy could muster for defence of the Asian sea lanes. By 1615 only four were available to meet the Spanish fleet at Malacca and these were destroyed by the Dutch and Achinese.

Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz is clearly neglectful of these events if she can ascribe the survival of Portuguese Malacca in 1607 to the help of the Spanish governmnt at Manila.[95] Matelieff's seige of Malacca in 1606 was defeated and Verhoeff's projected attack in 1608 was foiled by Portuguese resistance alone. The Spaniards never fired a shot in defence of Malacca, although the arrival of Juan de Silva's galleons there in 1616 caused the withdrawal of Van der Hagen's blockade squadron. Nor, I suggest, was the pride of the Malaccan Portuguese as subdued by 1606 as the Dutchman Solt liked to believe.[96] It is equally doubtful whether the *casados* of Malacca had ceased to trade by that time in view of the later Portuguese voyages to Japan (using *navetas* instead of the *nao*) and the capture of five Portuguese ships when the Dutch blockade of Malacca was properly enforced in 1633-4. Why did Van Diemen deplore the departure of the wealthy Portuguese inhabitants of Malacca to Negapatnam in 1641 if pauperdom had been their lot since 1606? Finally, it is probable that the connection between Portuguese Malacca and Macassar remained strong and that the large Portuguese community at Macassar in the early seventeenth century was not part of an exodus of merchants from doomed Malacca.[97] The sale of Coromandel piece-

95. *Op. cit.*, 184.
96. *Ibid.*
97. *Op. cit.*, 164. There is considerable evidence in W.Ph. Coolhaas, *Generale Missiven van Governeurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII*, I, (Hague, 1960) that the Portuguese of Malacca maintained trade with Grise until 1615 and with Macassar, Timor, Solor and Macao until Couper enforced the blockade in 1633. Similarly, Portuguese competition from Malacca and via the Mergui Peninsula seriously affected Dutch pepper purchases and cloth sales in the Bay of Patani in 1626. See Coolhaas, *op. cit.*, 47, 84, 137, 138, 182, 191, 208, 226, 264, 281.

goods in Macassar would have demanded the maintenance of a connection from Macassar via Malacca to Negepatnam or Pulicat. The Portuguese at Macassar may well have been agents of the Malacca merchants seeking to develop the clove smuggling trade after the capture of Amboina and Tidore by the Dutch in 1605. Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz recognises the severity of Portuguese competition in the east Java ports such as Grise and stresses the importance to the Dutch of controlling the areas of textile production in Cambay and Coromandel in order to ruin the Portuguese trade in South East Asia. But this policy can only have been necessary if the Portuguese were getting through to Indonesia with piecegoods via Malacca.

Dutch and English

The second part of Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's *Asian Trade and European Influence* is accurate, incisive and of great value to a student of the Dutch and English East India Companies. She presents a penetrating analysis of the advantages possessed by the Dutch Company over its Portuguese adversaries. Among the more obvious were its more efficient business administration and greater capital resources; the retention by the Dutch Company of the disposal of Asian commodities in Europe in its own hands, unlike the Portuguese crown which leased this function increasingly to aliens; the large reserves of manpower available to the Dutch Company in the Netherlands and Germany; the superior training of Dutch personnel at all levels; the advanced gunnery and ship design of the Dutch; the regular payment of salaries by the Dutch Company and the tighter discipline it maintained in consequence. The English East India Company also suffered in comparison to the Dutch Company because of its lack of a centralized administration, its dependence upon short-term capital investment, and its shortage of shipping and ready money.

Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's picture of the administrative and financial superiority of the Dutch Company needs only minor qualifications. Although the English Company did not possess at this time a centralized administration comparable to the Dutch government at Batavia, the English directors eliminated the more obvious weaknesses in their management by replacing the system of separate voyages with the Joint Stock and the two presidencies of Bantam and Surat in 1614. The English factories in and to the east of Sumatra were controlled by Bantam, while those in India, Persia and the Red Sea were responsible to Surat. Disputes between the English factors of the type which had arisen prior to 1614 did not then have to be referred to London for settlement.

The contrast which Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz draws between the detrimental effects of private trade in the English Company and the comparative integrity of the servants of the Dutch Company would also be difficult to support. There is no evidence that the English Company was hampered more seriously by illicit trade than its Dutch rival. A shortage of capital and a lack of confidence arising from inadequate support from Charles I and Cromwell prior to 1657 were far more important in determining the level of English trade in South-East Asia.

It is heartening to notice Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's spirited defence of governor-general Laurens Reaal and the Dutch moderate party in her discussion of the Dutch attitude to English and Asian competition in the Spice Islands. The weakening of the moderates, who recognised the complete dependence of the people of the Spice Islands on imported rice and the undoubted right of the Asian shippers to trade with the Spice Islands provided they did not smuggle spices, is ably presented here. The triumph of J. P. Coen, the ruthless exponent of force against the English and Asian "intruders" in the Spice Islands, was facilitated by the death of Dedel and the resignation of Van der Hagen and Reaal from the Council of India. It might be added that just as Reaal found his relations with the Dutch directors damaged by the greater appeal of Coen's recommendations, so his own restrained course of action was rendered untenable by the patriotic, but embarrassing, stubbornness of John Jourdain, the English president at Bantam. Jourdain achieved nothing by his policy of sending ships to the Spice Islands to challenge the Dutch monopoly claims which could not have been secured by the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of Defence in 1619. But his exacerbation of Anglo-Dutch relations discredited Reaal and ensured that the opponent whom Jourdain had to face in the naval battle of December 1618 was Coen. It was Coen, also, who was required to implement the Anglo-Dutch agreement as the new governor-general, and Dr. Meilink Roelofsz is under no illusions as to the niggardly spirit in which he interpreted its provisions. Nor does she ignore the connection between the Amboyna Massacre and the spirit of mistrust towards the English which Coen encouraged in his subordinates. On the other hand, she argues rightly that Coen was not directly reponsible. The range of disagreement which exists between Dutch and British historians on the subject of Anglo-Dutch rivalry in Indonesia in the seventeenth century has been greatly reduced when both parties can recognise the sterling qualities of Reaal and see Coen and Jourdain as extremists rather than patriots.

The arguments which were used by Coen, Reaal and Van der

Hagen to support or deplore a policy of force against the Asian traders have been able marshalled by Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz. Once Coen committed the Dutch Company to the violent course by depopulating the Bandas in 1621, the Company became involved in military action in the "ooster kwartieren" which ceased only with the conquest of Macassar in 1667-9. The difficulties encountered by the Dutch in preventing clove smuggling from Amboina and Ceram provoked disagreement in governmental circles as to the policy to be adopted towards Macassar in the 1630's which closely resembles the arguments of Coen, Van der Hagen and Reaal prior to 1621. Brouwer embarked on a particularly unsuccessful war against Macassar in 1634-7 which the directors required Van Diemen to stop. Spice smuggling to Macassar flourished, according to English accounts, until Anthony Caen crushed the rebellion in Ceram and executed Kimelaha Luhu in 1643. Another rebellion broke out in the Moluccas in the 1650's. Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz suggests, by implication, that the peaceful encouragement of Asian trade in the Spice Islands favoured by Van der Hagen would ultimately have been the wiser course. To the alternative procedure of a costly and partially-effective monopoly, she applies Reaal's words: "we have begun to pull on a chain and one link drags the other along with it".[98] The refusal of the English Company to embark upon comparable military commitments and Coen's alarm at the development of English trade at Surat while the Dutch Company's profits were swallowed up in the Spice Islands are seen by Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz as portents of the future prospects of the two Companies.[99]

It is questionable whether the directors and employees of the English Company were as cynically prophetic as this, despite the letter of 1615 quoted by Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz. The English Company did not shirk its commitments under the Treaty of Defence, as Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz suggests, and English laughter at the cost of Dutch forts and garrisons must have had a particularly hollow sound by 1622-3. The ill-fated alliance with the Dutch Company brought the English Company close to bankruptcy and compelled president Fursland to close the English factories in the Spice Islands, Japan, Patani, Ayuthia, Sukadana and Indragiri. It must be remembered, too, that the English factors did not believe that the expense accounts which the Dutch presented for payment in the Spice Islands were genuine and the spice trade remained an object of envy for years to come. During the first half of the seventeenth century the splendour and might

98. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, 219.
99. *Op. cit.*, 204.

of the Dutch Company was more apparent to the penny-scraping English than its expenses and the English dislike of fortresses was not sufficient to prevent the building of Fort St. George, Madras (1639) or the acquisition of Bombay (1661). It was only when the markets of India had proved exceptionally valuable, when spices were no longer smuggled to Macassar, when pepper fell to 6d. per lb. in London, that the English directors began to estimate the Dutch Indonesian empire at its true worth. When Bantam fell to the Dutch in 1682, the English settled at Bencoolen simply to buy enough Sumatran pepper to keep Dutch sales prices down in Europe. Otherwise, the English directors sought only to be a nuisance of the edge of the Dutch preserve, "to keep them so buisy in the South Seas that they must necessarily neglect their Trade as now they do in other parts of India, while Wee resolve to drive ours through, having the Marketts here in Effect to ourselves, especially in Silks and callicoes".[100] Professor Glamann has shown the fruits of this policy in the predominant position held by the English Company in the Indian textile market as early as 1730-40.[101] The failure of the Dutch Company to encourage a substantial "country trade" by its Batavian citizens, which Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz discusses in detail, must also be considered an error of far-reaching importance, in view of the role of the British country trade as a purveyor of South-East Asian produce to the Canton market in the eighteenth century.

In conclusion, certain reservations must be added to Dr. Meilink Roelofsz's general hypothesis that European technology and commercial management was more advanced than contemporary Asian forms. This was undoubtedly true, but Asian backwardness in methods of capital investment and their lack of a centralized administration comparable to those of the Portuguese crown or the Dutch East India Company did not prevent them from offering effective competition. It is difficult to find a South-East Asian market in which the European organizations sould surpass the established Asian trader in his knowledge of the local demand and the low level of his prices. The "pedling Choullyas", as one English factor called them, were precisely the people who ruined the market at Bantam for English piecegoods from India in the 1670s. The damage caused to Dutch cloth sales at Batavia was equally serious and the Dutch governors of Malacca would have been the first to admit the futility of competing with the Gujeratis and Coromandel merchants in the sale of piecegoods in the

100. Company to Surat, 31 May, 1683. *IOL*, Letter Book VII, f.152.

101. K. Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic Trade, 1620-1740*, (Copenhagen and the Hague, 1958) chap. VII.

Malay states. Similarly, the organizational superiority of the Dutch Company as a trading body over the Portuguese royal administration cannot conceal the commercial acumen of individual Portuguese. Dutch and English complaints of Portuguese competition at Bantam, Macassar and Grise are too frequent for that. The techniques of the newcomer to South-East Asia were formally superior to those of the veteran trader, but the displacement of the veteran was not an automatic consequence. The centralized administration of the Portuguese enabled them to exploit extensively the trade of Malabar, China and Japan, but their participation in South-East Asia trade was not much more significant than Van Leur originally imagined. The Dutch Company ultimately curbed Asian and European competition by the political conquest of the Spice Islands, Macassar and Bantam, not by the superiority of its commercial methods.

A tribute has already been paid to the exhaustive nature of Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz's source materials. Those historians whose appeal for an Asian-centred history of South-East Asia has been particularly vocal in recent years would do well to ponder her conclusions. Dr. Meilink-Roelofsz was particularly anxious to avoid that most heinous crime in a nationalist age, the "Europocentric" point of view, but she was handicapped by her dependence upon European sources. "It was difficult enough to extract adequate information from these [European] documents about the trade of the Asians themselves, in fact this was only possible after prolonged research among widely dispersed and sometimes quite fortuitous data. But it was really only the European sources which qualified as material for this study as the economic element does not play an important part in such native sources as exist at all in an accessible form, so that we are entirely dependent on what the Europeans had to say about the trade and industry of the peoples wiht whom they came into contact".[102] The book which has resulted indicates how rewarding the sifting of European archives for references to Asian activity can be, but the observer will probably always stand, in Van Leur's words, "on the deck of the ship, the ramparts of the fortress, the high gallery of the trading-house".[103].

102. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, 3.

103. Van Leur, *Asian Trade and Society*, 261.