



The Bookkeeper and the Sultan, the First Dutch Visit to Pontianak, 1778

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In the many letters that Indonesian princes wrote to the Governor-General of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) at Batavia, the relative status is expressed in the address. The titles range from 'friend and ally' to 'father' and 'grandfather', reflecting the formal relationship laid down in the contracts. The address shows the position the VOC occupied during the greater part of the 17th and 18th century.¹ The Dutch East India Company, though a large bureaucratic apparatus, was approached in a personified way. The formal distance to the Governor-General was expressed in terms derived from daily social life. It also makes one realize that a trading company had become an Asian ruler and in the Indonesian archipelago the VOC constituted an important political power.

From the beginning the Dutch traders were drawn into politics by the harbour-princes they had to deal with. Strife and rivalry in the Indonesian archipelago were very intense in the beginning of the 17th century; there was no central power. A number of new states, connected with the trade in spices and pepper, had come to the fore. In these kingdoms there was a strong connection between royal power and the management of the proceeds of that trade, which made the customers interesting partners for more than one reason. They could bring wealth to the ruler, enabling him to overcome his rivals, embellish his court and subdue local grandees. Trade was an economic tool

for political gain. Enlightening in this sense are the descriptions of the first arrival of the Dutch in Banten, Aceh and the Moluccan kingdoms.² Everywhere they were asked to take part in campaigns against neighbouring princes or against the Portuguese, in exchange for shiploads of spices. Within a relatively short time, three quarters of a century, the Dutch had firmly established themselves as a new central power, running an economic and political network that stretched out into the most remote corners of the archipelago. The actual Company state that had arisen was a conglomerate of territorial possessions, exclusive trade rights, a network of vassals or client states, and a number of allies.³

Batavia was neither the exclusive power, nor the only state in the area; it was a 'primus inter pares.' The Dutch East India Company had not only become a great force and an important factor to reckon with; it was also a potential patron. The requests for Dutch aid, protection or friendship did not diminish after the Company's first establishment. The regular occurrence of exactly this phenomenon through the 17th and 18th centuries makes clear that the Dutch had become part and parcel of the political landscape. This situation deeply influenced the position of its servants vis-à-vis local rulers. Instead of remaining mere trading-agents, they also had to act as diplomats in the cities where they were established. Their superiors in Batavia were primarily interested in trade and did not want them to dabble much in politics. To withdraw completely from

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Portuguese anonymous, "Mapa das costas asiáticas da Insulíndia à Formosa", in *Livro das Plantas das Fortalezas, Cidades e Povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental*, c. 1640

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politics was never possible. Some Company agents, probably most of them, were well-enough suited to their task, but others failed, like Nicolaas Kloek in Pontianak.

The story of the first contacts between the Sultan of Pontianak and the company's bookkeeper Kloek is an example of the many problems inherent to this relationship. The opportunity to analyse so deeply these first personal contacts is due to the richness of the Company archives and the mental disposition of Nicolaas Kloek. As a representative of the Company he was a downright failure; as a recorder of his own miseries and reporter of the situation at the Pontianak court it would be difficult to find his equal.⁴ Therefore, the relationship between these two men provides us with an interesting example of daily political life on the local level.

Before we start the analysis, it is useful to bear in mind the statement of the Dutch historian J. C. van Leur. He once characterized the influence and power of the VOC as follows: 'The threads coming together at Batavia stretched far and wide, but they were fragile and often without political significance.'⁵ Van Leur's viewpoint embraced the entirety of the VOC's Asian contacts, and formed part of a chain of reasoning which set out to contradict the idea that in the 18th century one could speak of a European Asia. 'It knew,' he went on, 'a mighty fabric of a strong, broad weave with a more fragile Western warp thread inserted in it at wide intervals.' Van Leur's words offer a good starting point for the analysis of the relationship between the Dutch and Pontianak on the western coast of Kalimantan between 1778 and about 1840. The threads between Batavia and Pontianak were indeed fragile, and even non-existent between 1791 and 1819. Both in 1778 and 1819 the reigning Sultan of Pontianak was very eager for Dutch recognition of his position. The Sultanate had been founded only a short time before the first Dutchman visited the place in 1778.

The requests of the Sultans of Pontianak in themselves did not constitute an exceptional phenomenon in the history of the Indonesian archipelago. The Sultan of neighbouring Sambas did the same, and there are many other examples of a ruler looking for the support of a great power in the archipelago. The histories of Perak, Palembang and Banjarmasin, to name but a few, show the same characteristics. In this sense the activities of the Sultans

of Pontianak are an illustration of a recurring theme in the history of the Indonesian archipelago: the attraction between a powerful centre and a state on its periphery. Translated into general terms, this implied the emergence of a strong polity based on Java, Sumatra or mainland Asia, which came to dominate, more or less successfully, the archipelago and parts of the Malay Peninsula. Smaller or regional powers, dissatisfied factions within the royal courts, unruly princelings, *anak raja* (son of a prince), and royal pretenders were always willing to look for support elsewhere to gain a foothold or a more secure position. Smaller polities that dominated parts of the archipelago were states like Aceh, Malakka and the Moluccan Sultanates. Among the greater powers were Srivijaya, Majapahit and the VOC or *Kompenie*. In the 17th century, the Thai kingdom of Ayuthaya wielded also great influence in the Malay world. An outward symbol of obedience or vassalage was expressed in the habit of sending golden and silver flowers to the Thai court. Afterwards the ambassadors left richly remunerated. It sometimes occurred, for instance in the case of Jambi around 1680, that local rulers applied for support to more than one great power, which in this case were Thailand and Mataram.⁶

This pattern of alliances and vassalage did not alter after the coming of the Europeans. It just meant that more powers had entered the arena, and could be drawn into the political vicissitudes of the area. From the first moment Dutch traders arrived, Indonesian rulers tried to use them in struggles with other princes and against the Portuguese. A hundred years after their first arrival, when the Dutch had established themselves firmly in the Spice region and had founded their headquarters in Batavia, the situation had not changed fundamentally. Repeatedly princes requested the Dutch to settle in their country, offering glittering prizes like half the proceeds of the gold rivers of Jambi, a monopoly of pepper in Banjarmasin, and so on. The Dutch, for their part, were by no means eager to enter into these propositions, for they feared being drawn into internal struggles. They were aware of the fact that a Dutch settlement was meant as a barrier against invaders from the sea, and that an exclusive monopoly often meant an enlargement of the royal revenue and an according increase in royal power.

Here the emphasis will be upon a case of interaction between centre and periphery in which the

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Dutch were involved. It should be stated at the start that the influence and power of the Dutch East India Company and, after 1816, the Dutch East Indian government, should be considered one of a kind. The *Kompenie* operated as one of the greater powers in the archipelago: it exercised its influence directly in certain areas, while with other local powers alliances or monopoly contracts were concluded; the *Kompenie* regularly patrolled large areas of the waters in the East. In this way the VOC and later on the Dutch East Indian government can best be characterized as an Ancien Régime state, a conglomerate of territorial possessions, rights and pretensions exercised in a certain area without definite boundaries. Until far into the 19th century the Dutch government was unwilling to indicate exactly where its territorial claims ended. The transition from Company to state about 1800 did not constitute a break with the past as great as might be expected from the change in name, and certainly not if the matter is seen in an Asian perspective. After 1800, tendencies towards formal state-formation were stronger in Dutch circles than before, although one should not forget that the basis for the Dutch East Indies had been laid in the heyday of the Company.

The regional states shared a number of characteristics with the *Kompenie* state. Local lords were not always omnipotent within their realm, but were dependent upon relatives, allies and chiefs. Boundaries were very often not fixed, for the possession of a strategic position on a river was more important for maintaining superiority in a given area.

ECONOMICS AND POLITICS: THE RISE OF PONTIANAK

In and around the basin of the Kapuas River several states existed in the 18th century. On the coast were to be found Sukadana, Mampawa and Sambas, while further inland were situated Landak, Tayan, Sanggau, Sekadau and Sintang. In terms of the genealogy of the ruling houses, these states could be divided into three different groups. Sukadana and Landak claimed extraction from Majapahit; Sambas originally stemmed from Brunei, while Mampawa was in Buginese hands. All houses were interrelated by marriage. Sukadana had been the superior power in the area in older days. It had disintegrated, and Landak had broken away at the end of the 17th century, enlisted

the help of Banten, and had since been its vassal. Sukadana offered only a token acceptance of the Banten overlordship, and maintained itself independently. Mampawa was originally a Dayak kingdom that came under the influence of Sukadana through the wedding between a princess of the ruling house and the Sultan of Sukadana. Their daughter married the Buginese Daeng Menambong, whose descendant ruled thereafter. The states on the river were 'Malay kingdoms.' All of them consisted of a 'Malay' minority, which provided the ruling houses, the ministers and other officials, and a Dayak majority that lived in a more or less subordinate position. Several cultural traditions and ethnic origins had influenced these rulers. Javanese influence can be gauged from the claim to Majapahit origins by Sukadana, Sanggau, Sintang and Tayan. The suzerainty of Banten over Landak was expressed in the bestowal of titles. The Buginese had mixed with the Malays, the rulers of Pontianak were Arabs from Hadhramaut, and all of them had married Dayak women. Although these differences were sometimes expressed in dress and behaviour, the 'Malays' also had much in common. The origin of these river states was a combination of Malay/Javanese/Buginese trading activities with a Dayak willingness to submit to certain tribute obligations in exchange for highly prized commodities that were very scarce in the interior.⁷

Among the goods imported were salt, iron, cloth and tobacco. Exports included rice, gold, diamonds and certain forest products. The relationship between the Dayaks and the Malays was never purely commercial, but was always tinged by traditional and sacral elements. For instance, the myth of the origin of the rulers of Sanggau relates that this kingdom was founded on the spot where the entourage of Princess Dara Nanti from Sukadana met a group of people who were not able to talk because of their hairy tongues. After the distribution of salt they had learnt to speak. Dara Nanti married a leper she had healed—not an unusual theme in many a myth of origin in the Indonesian archipelago—and they produced the first kings of Sanggau. The kings more or less organized trade between the Dayaks and the people on the coast. Part of this trade was subjected to fixed rules about the exchange rates whereby the Malay rulers, their *menteris* (ministers), and descendants were entitled to exchange a fixed number of items on specified occasions at established prices with the Dayaks they held in

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appanage. The volume of exchange goods permitted depended on a person's rank. Our sources indicate that it was not always easy for a collector of goods to get what he was entitled to, and in order to coerce the people, the *anak raja* sometimes sent out a large party to live in a Dayak village until the inhabitants had paid. According to oral traditions taken down by Dutch civil servants, the Malays gradually became more oppressive, and the equal position between the original inhabitants and the newcomers was altered to the advantage of the latter. The process in which enterprising Malays obtained an influential position within a Dayak community was still to be seen at the end of the 19th century.⁸

At the time the first Dutchmen visited the western coast of Kalimantan, the subjection of Dayak communities to the Malays was still in progress. In the river kingdoms a clear distinction was maintained between the two parties. The obligations of the Dayaks to the ruler were more onerous than those of the Malays. The institutionalization of the relationship between the two groups was clear from the habit of the Malay rulers of awarding titles and ranks to the Dayak

chiefs. Dayaks served as part of the fighting force of the Malay princes. Marriages between the rulers and Dayak girls regularly took place. On the other hand Dayaks were not allowed to transgress the religious border and embrace Islam, for otherwise the rulers would have lost their tribute-payers. Apart from standardized exchange, private trade between dealers in forest products and Dayaks also occurred. The only items that fell outside the general trade categories mentioned were the large Chinese jars, or *tempajan*. These were held in high esteem and were a token of personal wealth.

The Malay kingdoms on the river were based on trade; the stronger the position, the better the opportunity to monopolize trade. Sanggau for instance forbade traders from the coast to pass its boundaries and bring goods up the river. All merchants had to sell their wares there at a fixed price. People from kingdoms further up the river were not permitted to bypass Sanggau on their way downstream, but were

Dayak people in their war dress by F. Boyle, *Illustrated London News*, November 5, 1864.



DYAKS IN THEIR WAR DRESS.

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forced to buy all necessities there. It is not yet clear who dominated the entrance to the estuary of the Kapuas before the foundation of Pontianak. Probably Sanggau, together with Landak, had the best claim to being the most important state. Landak was situated on a tributary of the Kapuas and could be reached only by several days of rowing.⁹ The *dalem* (palace) of its *panembahan* (prince) was less refined than the one at Pontianak. In dress and behaviour Landak looked more like a mixed Malay-Dayak state than a Javanized Malay kingdom. The mouth of the Kapuas offered a much better inlet for ships than the river at Sambas or Sukadana. The hinterland of the Kapuas comprised a much larger area than that of the other kingdoms. On the other hand it should be stressed that easy access to a river could constitute a danger. The possibility of a sudden attack by pirates from the sea was a constant threat. Overland roads were also important. No one could claim complete control of the whole of the Kapuas: several states were to be found along its borders deep inland, like Meliau, Sekadau, Sintang and others, each with its own clientele of Dayaks. The foundation of Pontianak on a site much nearer to the mouth of the river was partly intended to ward off any pirates.

Originally the name Pontianak was attached to an island in the river near the confluence of the Kapuas and Landak rivers. All traffic on the river had to pass this spot. The reasons it had not been occupied permanently much earlier than 1772 are probably twofold. Firstly, most states on the western coast of Kalimantan preferred a less open access from the sea. Secondly the place was haunted: it derived its name from the spirits of women who had died in childbirth, and who were said to linger on there. Only Buginese had on occasion dared to settle there temporarily.

On 14 Rajab 1185 A.H. (1772) *pangeran* (prince) Sayid Syarif Yusuf Alkadri, with fourteen *proas* (small ship) and two European ships, manned by two hundred followers, attacked the island from all sides. After a heavy bombardment to chase away the *pontianak* (spirit of a woman died in childbirth), the *pangeran* was the first to jump on land and to start clearing the island. First of all a mosque was built, and then a house for Syarif Yusuf. Those accompanying him were members of the leader's family, Buginese and Malays. The great charisma of the *pangeran* became manifest in the way he had overcome the dangers associated with

the island. This did not mean however that he held undisputed power over his followers. The sovereignty over Pontianak was vested in the first founders, and only those who lived within the city were entitled to elect the new ruler. The inhabitants could not be taxed, nor was the ruler allowed to demand services except for the defence of the city. The ruler had to pay for his own. Within a relatively short time, the *pangeran* succeeded in founding a settlement that seemed destined to rule over the older kingdoms on the coast. In 1778 he was given the title of sultan. His career and the first fifty years of his kingdom offer some insights into the way in which these kingdoms functioned, and how their rulers rose in rank and power.

The origins of Pontianak had much to do with the special qualities of its founder Syarif Yusuf, also called Sultan Syarif Abdurachman ibn Husayn Alkadri. Personal charisma, an excellent education, and noble blood were the ingredients for a successful start in the world. Another element important for the rise of the new state was its position as a trading station. A third factor was a good relationship with the greater powers in the archipelago: the princes of Johor and the Dutch.

Syarif Yusuf's father, Syarif Husayn ibn Achmad Alkadri came from Hadhramout to the Indonesian archipelago in about 1734, and settled in Sukadana. He soon made a name for himself through his great religious knowledge and personal devotion. The Sultan gave him a former slave-girl in marriage, who also happened to be the mother of the current sultan of Matan. She gave birth to Syarif Yusuf. Due to problems with the ruler of Sukadana about the administration of justice, Husayn moved to Mampawa, which was not entirely unexpected, for the ruler of Mampawa had already begged him many times to settle in his country. Here he became supreme judge with the title of Tuan Besar (Great Lord). In these places Yusuf spent the greater part of his boyhood. By both descent and breeding he became an *anak raja*, with the aspirations that went with this status. From his early youth he showed qualities that made him rise above other princelings.¹⁰

The intrepid way in which Yusuf led his men during the attack upon the island of Pontianak shows a fundamental trait of his character. Qualities of daring, leadership, and the ability to assemble and maintain a following, are features already present in the stories about his youth, another characteristic being the ability

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to win support from all corners. Undoubtedly the high esteem accorded to his father, not only on the western coast of Kalimantan, but also by the princes of Palembang and those of Riau/Johor, was important for his first beginning. His own qualities did the rest. In one of the first written accounts about his younger years it is stated that Syarif Yusuf assembled around him a gang of boys, who went out to kill and eat other people's goats. Although Syarif Husayn paid for the damage, he was neither willing nor able to stop his son. Another story makes clear that Yusuf was not lacking in imagination. While his father and other men were saying prayers for the body of a drowned man, from underneath the floor Yusuf put a stick in the corpse's clothes and so lifted him up. Whether or not it was true, it clearly displays the reputation that Yusuf had earned.

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After his coming of age, Yusuf and his friends made a living by attacking small ships in the coastal rivers, an occupation quite common among *anak raja*. In dress and behaviour Yusuf is said to have been an impressive man of gracious manners. His birth, together with his father's position and behaviour made him quite acceptable to the ruler of Mampawa, who gave him a sister in marriage. In 1768 during a long stay in Banjarmasin, he secured in marriage Ratu Sribanom, a daughter of the reigning Sultan of Banjar. This prince was by far the most impressive of the rulers of Kalimantan at that time. He could claim a long pedigree, and his predecessors stemmed from Majapahit. A large part of the coastal area of South Kalimantan was paying tribute to him, or had done so in the past. Great festivities accompanied the marriage. Syarif Husayn had come over from Mampawa to take

part in the celebration. According to the Banjarese *adat* (traditional law) Yusuf was elevated to the rank of *pangeran* by his father-in-law after the wedding. He stayed there for three years and had two children by Ratu Sribanom. It is more than likely that these years spent at a court full of splendour were crucial to the education of the future sultan. Banjar became more or less his standard. It is possible that in Pontianak the *adat* of Banjarmasin was applied. Banjar stood out head and shoulders above Mampawa in splendour. Banjar had grown rich in the pepper trade, while Mampawa at that time had a much smaller trade, mainly in salt and minor commodities with the Dayaks of the interior. The Chinese migration and gold mining was only beginning. In Banjarmasin, Syarif Yusuf was able to meet many more people than would have been the case in Mampawa. He established a good relationship with the Dutch Resident there, and once they were involved together in an endeavour to put another sultan on Banjarmasin's throne. In Mampawa, Dutchmen and other Europeans were seldom seen. The reigning *panembahan* only met his second Dutchman as late as 1778, although his ancestors had lived in Batavia.¹¹

Traders of many different countries visited Banjarmasin. Between the ruling house and the chiefs there was a continuous struggle over the sale of pepper. Pepper was the most important export crop of the region and the one that brought in large revenues. Chinese junks, European traders, and skippers from all parts of the archipelago frequented the port. The position of the Sultan as supreme ruler was undermined by the many outlets for illegal trade in pepper along the coast. Political positions depended upon the access to the pepper trade. The importance of pepper for the ruling dynasty can be gauged from the references to pepper cultivation in the *Hikayat Banjar* [Chronicle of the House of Banjarmasin], in which the forefathers exhort the later sultans not to grow pepper for export.¹²

As far as we can tell, Syarif Yusuf spent his time in Banjarmasin assembling enough riches to establish his position. An indication of the way he used economic means as a source of political influence is told in a story by a man from Banjar who had known him. Syarif Yusuf was said to have bought opium from a Frenchman and to have sold it for a much lower price. To dispense with his debts he had killed the Frenchman. Whatever the truth of this story—there are other versions of it—it points to an important problem: Syarif's constant need

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of money to pay the expenses of his entourage. At Pontianak, Javanese *juragan* (skipper), Bugis traders and Chinese skippers complained about the length of time they had to wait for their money. 'Robbing Peter to pay Paul' is probably the best way of characterising the quality of this economic policy.¹³

During his stay in Banjarmasin Yusuf ran into trouble with the Sultan as a consequence of his involvement in an attempt on the throne. He had to leave the country and went to Mampawa. The *panembahan*, afraid of his imposing brother-in-law, advised him to settle at Pontianak. The new settlement was founded with the approval of the older state of Sanggau, because of the barrier it constituted against pirates. According to the traditions of Sanggau, Pontianak was built with the help of the Dayak subjects of the *panembahan* of that state. Concerning the proceeds of the trade on the river, it was agreed to divide equally the profits made from the Chinese traders. Every Chinese had to pay one real of eight on entering the river. A Chinese who had worked in the goldfield had to pay a tael of gold on his return to his fatherland, a sum of money equal to a third or one half of the value of a debt-bondsman. Duties levied on the Chinese, and income from his personal trade, seem to have been the most important sources of Syarif Yusuf's income. He monopolized the trade in salt and rice. Both commodities could be bartered against gold and forest products. It also seems that the Syarif continued to fit out privateers. He owned a number of *penjajaps* (armed vessel), which were used to ambush other vessels. Debt-bondsmen and slaves often manned ships of this kind. A fixed share of the booty had to be given to the Sultan. Comparable relationships were used in other situations in order to bind a number of people to a rich man or noble. The constant need of Syarif Yusuf may be explained by his need to bind as many people as possible to his settlement and his person. Other reasons given for his great need of money were his growing family and the necessity to live as a prince. The growth of his family was not inconsiderable. He married twenty wives. By about 1850, 800 living men and women could claim him as a forefather. In contradistinction to other princes in the area, he had no gold or diamond mines in his territory, neither was he lord over any Dayaks who could mine gold. He was not able to tax his Malay subjects, so he was left to use his own wits and had to provide for himself by trade and commerce. He was

certainly living in a royal style, his *dalem* was full of attendants and other followers, the *benteng* (fortress) and *kraton* (palace) were extensive, and a *balai* (open council hall) was set apart in front of the *dalem*. At his inauguration as a Sultan by the Dutch in 1779 he organized great festivities in which several gamelans were used. More than a thousand people took part in the *selamatan* (ritual meal) afterwards. Compared with the 200 men he had brought with him seven years before, this meant an enormous increase, even if not all of them were inhabitants of the place. He also cut a good figure in comparison with his neighbours. Landak consisted of few Malay subjects, but numbered a lot of Dayaks. Therefore we may assume that Syarif Yusuf's forces were sufficient to defend his position and to bar the entrance to the river, but that he was not strong enough to attack neighbouring princes with his own forces alone. The strong defensive position of Pontianak becomes clear also from a comparison between the number of guns in the *benteng* at Pontianak and those at Landak. The *panembahan* owned only two, while the Syarif had many more.¹⁴

We may safely assume that the rise of Pontianak soon evoked bitter feelings among neighbouring princes. Within a few years of its foundation, Pontianak had grown so quickly that princes who lived higher up the stream threatened to burn it down. In the early stages the support of the rulers of Mampawa and Sukadana prevented an attack. Six years later, war actually broke out. In the local chronicles a number of reasons are mentioned, one of which was the refusal of the rulers of Sanggau to pay gold as a form of tribute to the king of Sukadana. The *panembahan* of Mampawa was requested to bring the people of Sanggau to terms. He was assisted by Syarif Yusuf and Raja Haji, the son of the former Buginese Raja Muda of Johor, Daeng Cellak. Raja Haji and the *panembahan* were cousins. Syarif Yusuf, who had married a niece of Raja Haji, strengthened the bond by giving him a sister in marriage. After one or two assaults, Sanggau was burned down, the population fled inland, and the strong ironwood palisade of the *dalem* of Sanggau was brought over to Pontianak and was used to strengthen the syarif's *kraton*. From Dutch sources one might gain the impression that the role of Mampawa was less important than stated in the chronicle. Syarif Yusuf had to pay for the upkeep of Raja Haji's following for fourteen months, which explains his shortness of funds

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when the first Dutch envoy reached Pontianak in 1778. The reason given was the heavy cost of the visit of his new brother-in-law.

Yet the costs were worth paying. Sanggau had relinquished its part in the Chinese trade. Syarif Yusuf had strengthened his grip on the river by building a *benteng* near Pulau Jambu to control the trade through the southern outlet of the Kapuas. After the return from Sanggau, Raja Haji elevated the Syarif to the rank of Sultan of Pontianak and Sesango. Although this did not mean a real increase in power over his subjects, the status of the new lord was enhanced among the princes of Borneo. The rulers of Sanggau never acknowledged this pretension. In later years the relationship was improved, and Raden Patih of Sanggau was adopted as Sultan Abdulrachman's eldest son. From this event the house of Sanggau claimed equality with the house of Pontianak. The strength of Sanggau lay mainly in the opportunity to impede the trade in foodstuffs with Pontianak and Landak, states with a shortage of rice.¹⁵

Besides its strategic position on the river, Pontianak profited from a more general increase in trade in western Kalimantan at the time. The Chinese junks that travelled between the mainland and Batavia or Banjarmasin also came to the area and left their people behind to dig for gold and diamonds. In this competition for wealth the Buginese traders from Mampawa were the most successful. The Sultan of Banten, who was the official overlord of the region in which Pontianak was founded, was not able to have his power enhanced. The Buginese outwitted his traders. It also seems that the settlement of Pontianak made it more difficult for traders from Banten to take part in this profitable trade. Not being able to make Landak pay its tribute, the Sultan of Banten decided to cede his rights and claims voluntarily to the Company. 'Son Paduka Sultan' offered Landak and Sukadana with all its income to the Governor-General at Batavia. The reason for the Dutch to accept the offer was the reported increase of trade. In order to organize the transfer of power, a mixed Bantenese-Dutch commission was sent out. The Bantenese had the task of explaining the new position, while the Dutch were to take over the rights and had to negotiate the relationship with the new vassals. The commission was empowered to nominate anybody as a ruler 'who was willing to serve the company in his own fatherland.' Whoever

this might become was no yet clear. In the instruction both the *pangeran* of Landak and Syarif Yusuf were mentioned.

On their way to western Kalimantan, the commissioners were told that the Syarif had been raised to the rank of sultan. In July 1778, shortly after the elevation of Syarif Yusuf as Sultan Abdulrachman, the envoys reached Pontianak. Raja Haji had left town together with a number of Buginese of Landak, who had spread the rumour that the Company had come to take Yusuf prisoner and would send him to Ceylon. Syarif Yusuf for a moment tried to counter a possible negative effect by sending one of his brothers to Batavia. Dutch sources suggest that he corresponded and traded with private Dutchmen on Java. Nothing came of the mission, however. The strategic position of Pontianak made Yusuf win the day. Before the contact could be established with Landak or Sukadana, the Dutch commissioners were already ensconced in his palace.

SYARIF YUSUF AND NICOLAAS KLOEK:
UNEASY ENCOUNTERS

At that time, Yusuf was in the prime of his life. Visitors describe him as a well-proportioned man of five-foot-six, with European looks, slightly brown, wearing a short beard and having a strong nose. He really behaved like a king, gracious and friendly toward his subjects, who were allowed audience at any time of the day. He took an active part in the deliberations of the council, and no decisions were taken without prior consultation. He attended all meetings in person. In matters in which he held the decisive vote, he did not let other people interfere. Generous, and even extravagant, he was willing to give everything away. His general friendliness did not exclude precaution, for he was said to be constantly on his guard against poison. Other qualities like pride, enterprising behaviour and good leadership are also mentioned.

Pontianak had grown rather quickly after its first foundation. Central to it were the great mosque and the palace. An impression of the state of the court, a mere six years after the foundation of the city, can be gauged from the description of the reception of the Dutch in 1778 and 1779. In the first year the commissioner was received in state by the captain of the Malay community on behalf of the Sultan. He was escorted to the palace by twelve musketeers and forty pikemen. Syarif Yusuf

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received him sitting on a sort of throne, while a high bench encrusted with small mirrors was reserved for the Dutchmen. The court dignitaries sat on the left on a common bench. The ceremonial followed the usual pattern of that at a Malay court. According to the *Tuhfat al Nafis* (The Precious Gift, the chronicle of house of Johor/Riau), the court of Pontianak was modelled on the one of Johor. Unfortunately, the titles of officials are not mentioned in the Dutch sources of those early years. In 1779, when another Dutch commissioner from Batavia brought the act of investiture of Syarif Yusuf as Sultan of Pontianak and Sesango, the attire was much more elaborate. The cortège consisted of twenty Buginese pikemen, the company's militia, two Malay scribes, a coach for the commission with two runners, Chinese and other chiefs of the city and the *juragan* of the vessels that were in the river. The Sultan's retainers lined the road on both sides while musicians played upon gamelans and other instruments. The Sultan was seated on a new throne covered with scarlet cloth and gold trimming, surrounded by more than twenty women from his household bearing regalia. The Dutch commissioners were seated on the right side on chairs. The crown prince and all the dignitaries were placed on the left side. The entire floor of the room was covered with carpets. When we read that more than a thousand persons were present at the *selamatan* afterwards, we get some idea of the number of inhabitants of Pontianak at that time.

The relative status of Pontianak becomes clearer if compared with the reception of the act of investiture in Landak. The *pangeran* of Landak had fewer guns and gamelans and fewer Malay retainers; the men of his following were dressed in the Malay fashion, the women wore only a sarong. The ceremonial was less well organised. Guns were discharged, while some Dayaks jumped around swinging with their cleavers. The obverse of the coin was less splendid. The stay of Raja Haji and his following, two Dutch commissions, and the festivities on these occasions left the new Sultan practically broke. But also in this respect his relative position vis-à-vis Landak can be ascertained. The *pangeran* had much smaller debts.¹⁶

Foremost among the commission was Nicolaas Kloek, bookkeeper in Banten, who was designated to become the first Dutch Resident in Pontianak. Kloek came from Glückstadt in Schleswig-Holstein, nowadays Germany. He had already served the

company for twenty years in different outposts in Eastern Indonesia. He came from the military ranks, having been a corporal in Ternate. Being a bookkeeper in Banten did not mean that he could boast much experience in dealing with Indonesian princes: this was the primary concern of the Dutch commander and other high-ranking officials there. Kloek, who saw the commission as an opportunity to become head of a station, volunteered for the job. As such he was entrusted with the negotiations with the local rulers he was to meet. His instruction was to take possession of the land and install a ruler, to hoist the Dutch flag and to inquire after the proceeds of the country. No fort or *benteng* should be built before a clear insight had been gained into the income the Company was to get from tolls and other dues. The mission became Kloek's first major assignment. From his letters one can glean a strong consciousness of facing an important task. Alas, he was not up to it. The long time he had spent in subaltern positions and his military approach were the main handicaps. Preoccupied with security, he was not able to deal with Syarif Yusuf or other princes in an open way, mistrusting their intentions too deeply. His letters also show contempt of indigenous rule, which he considered to be tyrannous and arbitrary. In his letters and in the talks with the people of Pontianak and Landak he posed as a friend of the 'common man', offering them his protection against their rulers.¹⁷ As a consequence of these ideas, Company rule should be introduced. This train of thought was too deeply ingrained to alter under pressure of circumstances. Kloek wanted to introduce direct Dutch rule. He was not satisfied with a nominal acceptance of suzerainty but wanted to bring it about completely. After an altercation with Syarif Yusuf over the use of Company passes, he disclosed his views in a letter to Batavia saying that he had to give in, 'because I'm not able to prescribe the law to him yet. But when by means of a stratagem, I can penetrate into his government in such a way that I win the regard of his subjects, while keeping the *benteng* in good order, I hope to set limits to his violence and tyranny.'¹⁸ The ensuing sequence of events after Kloek's arrival was full of drama until the end, when Kloek completely broke down in a frenzy. In one of his last letters he confessed that he never in his life had wanted a native to be his friend. The conflict that arose very soon between the Syarif and Kloek undoubtedly had to do with Kloek's character and his

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inability to understand the ruler of Pontianak. Yet apart from the picturesque anecdotes in this history, some fundamental elements of the relation between Batavia and a ruler in the region can be discerned. It also throws light on the actual position of the Sultan.

The reason we know so much of the daily skirmishes between the Sultan and Klock, has most probably to do with Klock being a German. In that country many boys and men were accustomed to write a travelogue with a strong autobiographic character. Klock's moralistic and personal remarks strongly suggest such an aim.¹⁹

From the beginning Klock showed ignorance masked by overdone bravado. Without enquiring into the state of affairs or weighing the position of Landak, he almost directly accepted the Sultan of Pontianak as the new potentate in the area. In a dramatic session, Sultan Abdulrachman had succeeded in finding favour with Klock. The Sultan used all his diplomatic skill and psychological insight and was willing to go rather far in order to make Klock his friend and ally. This meeting was the first of a series of bizarre encounters between the two men, who very soon were to become antagonists. The following episode is 'no novel by aggrandizement' to quote Klock's words, but is directly taken from the sources.²⁰

In their first meeting, the Sultan did his best to take away all suspicions the Dutch might harbour. He pointed out that neither he nor any of his subjects had ever done the Company any harm. He tried to counter possible reproaches beforehand, so he did not deny having been in possession of a former Company vessel, saying that he had not taken it himself, but that he had bought the ship in order to get the guns on it. Nor had the robbery of another, French, ship been an act of piracy; it was a case of honour, the Frenchmen having bought gold and jewels without paying him. He went on 'saying not to fear anybody, being strong enough to fend for himself.' Hereupon Klock remonstrated that the Company had no fear either, and could be a formidable opponent. Even if Syarif could muster a thousand men, he might win for the moment, but in the end, perhaps after ten years, the Company would destroy him. The message was clear: the best thing would be to accept the Company's sovereignty. Yusuf retaliated by saying that he had not meant to threaten the company, but that he had always wanted to live in peace with the Dutch. The atmosphere was tense. Klock

who was sitting opposite the Sultan, held a double-barrelled gun ready on the table, while his slave-boy was guarding his back with a drawn Japanese sword. 'I wanted to make clear I felt no fear whatsoever.' A request of the Sultan to disarm was met by a refusal stating that Dutchmen did not lay off their arms first. Hereupon the Sultan called one of his wives, handed over his *keris* and returned smilingly to Klock, trying to embrace him. 'I however evaded him suspecting another weapon in his dress.' Thereupon the Sultan opened his gown and showed his bare chest. 'Then I let my suspicion go and went towards him. He did the same and embraced me shedding many tears. I asked him to sit down and to feel at ease, because the Company had not come to take him prisoner, but only to take possession of the effects it was legally entitled to. Then he promised always to remain faithful to the Company, even if he should be banished to Ceylon.'

A few days later the agreement was officially sealed by the reading of the act of cession by Banten of Landak and Sukadana to the Company in front of the throne of Pontianak in the presence of the inhabitants. Publicly Syarif Yusuf announced his willingness to attach himself to the Company and to send his son to Batavia. On the Sultan's request that one Dutchman should stay behind, Klock willingly yielded. As a token of goodwill the Sultan offered the heavily armed *benteng*, his fort, as a place to stay. Apparently both parties enjoyed the new situation. The Company without much trouble had won a foothold in western Kalimantan, while the Sultan had found a mighty suzerain to protect him, who acknowledged his title, enhanced his status by a higher number of salutes than other princes in the area were accorded, and who lent extra prestige to the weekly visit to the mosque by accompanying the Sultan with a Dutch guard of honour. As a token of the new alliance, the Dutch flag was hoisted in Pontianak. The position of ruling family was strengthened by a Dutch guarantee of the future succession of Syarif Kasim: an important promise considering that the ruler of Pontianak had to be chosen by the descendants of the original inhabitants of the town. And last but not least, the Company could lend money and was a source of credit; princes in western Kalimantan did not hesitate to plead for Company support if their subjects were maltreated elsewhere. In sum, there was no reason to mistrust Yusuf's willingness to accept Batavia as his suzerain.

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The importance of the new alliance can be gauged from the gamut of reactions among other princes in the area. Within the shortest time possible, Kloeck had drifted into the middle of politics in western Kalimantan. From the reactions, two elements can be discerned. First and foremost, other princes strongly felt that they had been outmanoeuvred by the newcomer Pontianak, who reaped all the advantages of the Company's advent. Secondly, all of them tried to induce the Dutch to ally with them, too. In order to lure the Dutch away from their new friends, some princes did not shrink from offering to exterminate Pontianak and its ruler. All tried to impress the Dutch with stories about the number of men they could muster and the allies they were able to bring into the field against the new city. Within two months after the Dutch arrival at Pontianak, the *pangeran* of Landak, who felt offended because his family had older claims on pre-eminence in the area, approached Kloeck with the offer of an alliance against Syarif Yusuf; in order to emphasize his words, he came to Pontianak with eight hundred men and sixty ships. Gusti Bandar, a brother of the ruler of Sukadana, had already preceded him with three hundred men, and with the same message. The lord of Mampawa also opened overtures about an alliance; he, too, tried to interest Kloeck in ventures against another ruler. Syarif Yusuf did not lag far behind; he proposed to bring the whole island under Dutch rule. Aside from the reactions of a number of smaller princelings who in the same way tried to make the best of the coming of the Dutch, it should be sufficiently clear that regional politics in western Kalimantan were constantly in motion. A continuous reshuffling of alliances, secret plotting and intriguing and defection of vassals are the main features of this process. Outsiders could influence the system strongly by bringing new forces and means to the game. Syarif Yusuf, by playing out his strategic position on the river, was able to get the upper hand and score off his neighbours. By giving Kloeck entrance to his *benteng* and advising him on some crucial matters he made full use of his new suzerain. At first all the rewards of the new alliance seemed to be his. None of his neighbours would dare to face him openly thanks to the Company flag that was hoisted above the *benteng*.

The establishment of the Company at Pontianak only meant the beginning of a struggle for power between Kloeck and the Sultan. The main reason for the friction was Kloeck's wish to introduce Dutch rule.

He felt entitled to do so because of the cession of the territory by Banten and the alliances concluded afterwards with Pontianak and Landak. If this policy had been executed in reality the Sultan would have been robbed of all he had won in the previous years. The ensuing conflict and the reaction of W. A. Palm, who was sent in 1779 to settle the problems, show not only that Kloeck overstepped his instructions, but also misinterpreted the position of the Sultan. This problem was aggravated by Kloeck's distrust of native rule.²¹

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The material position of the Sultan of Pontianak mainly depended upon his share in the trade that passed on through the city. He owned a number of ships and was said to take part in certain freebooting expeditions. He was not able to tax the inhabitants of the city directly. Trade was the mainstay for his large household, consisting of at least twenty wives, relatives and an unknown number of *panakawan*, armed men. To keep up his position not only meant the maintenance of a high material status, but also honour, outward splendour and recognition of the royal character by others. In all these fields Kloeck partly on purpose, partly unknowingly, became a direct menace to the Sultan. He even insulted him in his own house. In a number of altercations the limits placed by the Sultan became clear. For as long as possible he tried to protect Kloeck against the consequences of his own deeds and to maintain a good relationship. But the acceptance of Company suzerainty did not mean that the Sultan was without a will or policy of his own.

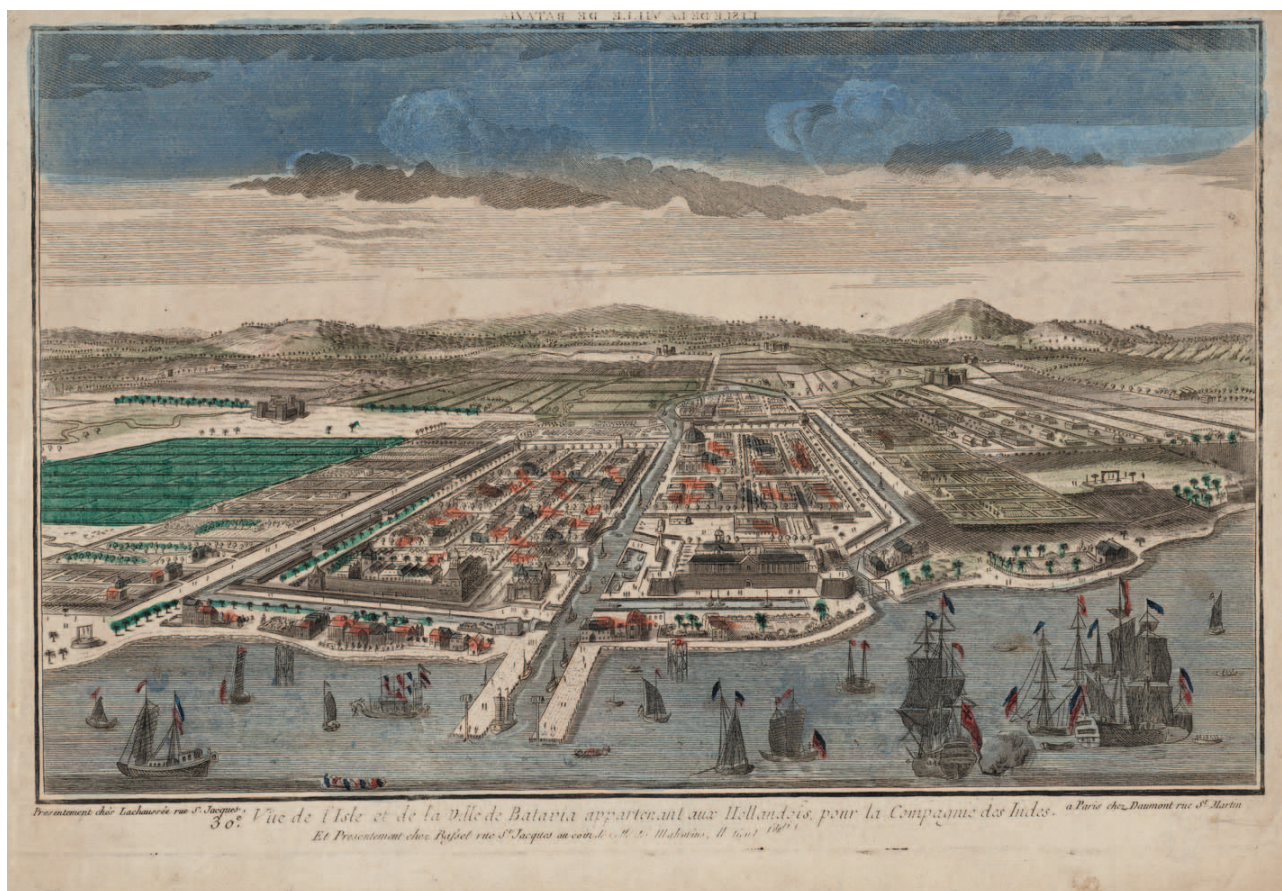
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The beginning was not too bad: on request of Syarif Yusuf, Kloek addressed him as Sultan although the Company had not yet recognized him as such—a token of honour ‘for the eyes of his subjects.’ The Sultan was willing to accept the Company as suzerain provided Batavia was willing to recognize his title and allow him to pass it to his descendants, and provided the Company was willing to provide him with a living and allow him to deliver products to Batavia.

Trade with Batavia meant much to Yusuf; he was practically broke when the Dutch arrived. He was heavily in debt to the traders from Java and the Bugis who frequented the city. The war with Sanggau and the long stay of Raja Haji had cost much. The Sultan promised to deliver to Batavia yearly a number of diamonds and some *pikul* (porters load) of gold in exchange for rice and salt. As Kloek’s computation of the profits of the new settlement was based on figures provided by the Sultan, a much too rosy picture was projected, as was shown afterwards. The Sultan’s want

of money was so great that he had to borrow from Kloek to send some diamonds as a present to Batavia. He exploited the strategic position of Pontianak to the utmost. People from Landak who had to pass his city were forced to cede their trading goods unless they could make direct tax payments, a practice also familiar in other places of western Kalimantan. The Sultan tried to exploit the Dutch in the same way, for within a short time he was heavily in debt to the Company. Several times he sounded Kloek for a loan or yearly subsidy, in order to be able ‘to live according to his rank and character and to be able to leave trade to others.’ The narrow connection between royal position and income was manifest. Thus, one may easily understand the danger for the Sultan’s position when Kloek started to meddle with trade and shipping in Pontianak and tried to undermine the Sultan’s relation with Landak.

I. Van Ryne, “Vue de l’isle et de la ville de Batavia appartenant aux Hollandois pour la Compagnie des Indes”, 1754. Courtesy of Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies.



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Some months after his coming, Klok and the Sultan had already quarrelled about the right to levy tolls on the river to Landak. Another point was whether people from Landak could deal with the Dutch directly without the intermediary of the Sultan. An endeavour of Klok to have a house built outside the *benteng* in which he could receive people from up-river was forbidden by the Sultan, and Yusuf was able—with some difficulty—to keep Klok from attacking another prince on the river. In consequence, some people were already telling Klok that the Sultan was more powerful than the Company.

Wilfully spread rumours, mutual spying, remonstrances and unnecessary shows of vigilance raised the tension, while open communication became more difficult. When Syarif Yusuf by accident walked into a thorough Dutch examination of Pontianak's weapons and guns, he reacted two days later by mounting a gun in front of his palace. The piece was removed when Klok complained to some locals that he considered it an unfriendly act. The tension erupted into an open conflict when Dutch soldiers made advances to the women from the Sultan's household who daily brought food. It seems that one of the women who had been kissed by the sergeant afterwards sent *sirih* (betel) as a token of willingness to meet again. When one evening two women from the Sultan's household were missing, an extensive search of the whole compound was started. Armed *panakawan*—retainers—also wanted to look in the Dutch lodgings. Klok, who had been roused by the noise, considered it only a pretext to surprise the Dutch, had all his men mount guard, and refused the *panakawan* entrance. When all the Dutchmen as one man jumped to their feet on the wooden boards of the stilted house, many fled from under the house, for Klok a clear indication of a ruse. During the rest of the night he and his slave boy sat up armed with his double-barrelled gun and the Japanese sword. Syarif Yusuf, who wanted to talk with him, was not allowed to come close. Hereupon the Sultan withdrew. The man who had brought the *sirih* was executed.

In the morning another encounter followed. The Sultan, who tried to appease Klok, was rebuffed. The bookkeeper even challenged him to a duel, accused him of treason, and questioned the fatherhood of the successor to the throne. When the Sultan, who remained silent, wanted to leave, Klok requested a safe place in which to live in peace. Hereupon the

Sultan was said to have implored him not to leave his palace, because the presence of the Company had given him more prestige with the other princes. Klok was completely out of his mind, as he confessed afterwards to have considered shooting the Sultan. Strange as it may seem at first sight, Klok was not insane as many might think. His behaviour was typical for military officers of his time, who were expected to fight any supposed slight upon their honour. Rude words, great insults were used to belittle the opponent. Showing off by playing a part as if on stage were elements of the Baroque style of conduct.

The inhabitants of the city closely followed the outcome of the conflict. Several traders, especially those who came from Java and Bugis, implored Klok to leave the *benteng* in order to prevent a war. Whatever may have been true of this, Klok indeed settled in the Chinese *kampong* (village), but for only one day, when all the soldiers became drunk owing to the bounteous supply of *arak*. He then moved out to 'Company territory' and made a new *benteng* on Batulayang, a piece of higher land, some miles downstream. Here he tried to blockade the city, not allowing ships to pass. He ended up with systematically firing shots every hour into the neighbouring wood. He once more rebuffed the Sultan by refusing to return runaway slaves from the Sultan's household.

A month before Klok had written down his version of what had happened, the Sultan had already warned Batavia about his unusual behaviour. 'Mister Klok does not want to trust me, and if you do not believe me then ask the traders.'²² The complaints led to a second Dutch mission to Pontianak, this one headed by W. A. Palm, an experienced hand, who knew Syarif Yusuf from the time they both spent in Banjarmasin. Within a day Palm was able to sort out fact and fancy and re-establish the relationship on the old footing. He ascribed the strange course of events to 'Klok's faintheartedness, and his being a man of insufficient experience with Malay princes, not being able to appraise Syarif's interest.'²³ A formal contract was agreed upon; the Company solemnly invested the Sultan in his rank and as a vassal. A new Resident was nominated, a man with long experience at the courts at Java. Though being a bookkeeper he was a real diplomat. His letters were mainly concerned with matters of trade and only hinted at political affairs in a minimal way. The relationship, however, was sound and stable.

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The advantages of the pact concluded between the Company and Pontianak were mostly in the Sultan's favour, if not always in writing, invariably in practice. The Dutch acknowledged his elevation as a Sultan. They provided him with money at a time when he was in dire financial straits, and they gave him support against neighbouring rulers. It seems more or less likely that Sultan Abdurachman changed his political preference. The Bugis of Landak who supported him in the fight with Sanggau had tried to set him against the Company, but in vain. From Klock's reports we get the impression, to say the least, that the relations between the states on the Kapuas were rather complicated. The prince of Landak felt himself passed over by the Dutch, and considered that they should have settled in Landak. The rulers of Landak and Sukadana were hardly on friendly terms with Pontianak. All of them envied Sultan Abdurachman's success. Company troops and ships were used during Klock's visit to keep Landak quiet. To sum up: the new Sultan seemed to be the outright winner. The kingdom with the smallest number of inhabitants was able to outmanoeuvre the other states in the neighbourhood with the help of outsiders, first by siding with Raja Haji, and then by entering into an agreement with the Dutch. The financial rewards of the new Dutch trading post, which were nicely computed beforehand by Klock, never came about. The Sultan kept the larger part of the profits. The Company supported him in his regional conflicts. In 1786 the Company and Abdurachman waged war against Sukadana and Mampawa. Mampawa's trade, which had seemed to expand considerably, was wiped out by a combined endeavour in which the Dutch led the attack, while the Sultan entered the scene in a very late phase of the blockade. He was, however, the first after the surrender to enter the *negeri* (state) and to accept the oath of fidelity of that part of the population that had stayed behind: truly the end of a successful intrigue.²⁴

The reasons given for the struggle between Mampawa and Pontianak are manifold. According to the Sultan of Sambas it had to do with a fraternal struggle. Syarif Abdurachman told the Dutch he had started the war because of the interdict on visiting his father's grave in Mampawa. The *Tuhfat al Nafis*, a Riau source, suggests that greed moved the ruler of Pontianak. Without intending to settle the matter definitely here, it seems that economic aspects played a

prominent part. After the establishment of the Dutch in Pontianak, the number of incoming ships dropped dramatically.²⁵ Whether this should be ascribed to the presence of the Dutch or to other factors is not clear. According to the Dutch Resident, this should not be attributed to the imposition of a Dutch tax upon incoming goods, but to the unwillingness or inability of the Sultan to pay the traders for the goods they had sold to him. All his money was dissipated by gifts and spent on his court. Although one might assume that the Sultan was building up his number of debt-bondsmen and dependents, it is also clear that at a certain moment he hardly had the money to pay for the upkeep of his household. Another explanation might be the greater proficiency of the Bugis of Mampawa in the gold trade. They paid higher prices than the Dutch. Bugis were also active in the hinterland of Pontianak. It seems that they had been able to oust the Bantenese influence in the area in the same way by offering higher prices for the diamonds. The Sultan of Pontianak had never been able to deliver the quantity of gold he had promised.

The outcome of the attack on Mampawa was very much in favour of the Sultan. Syarif Kasim, designated successor to the throne of Pontianak, was installed as ruler of Mampawa and a vassal of the Company. A small Dutch garrison was left behind to protect him against the former ruler, who had withdrawn into the woods. It looked as if in a very short time Pontianak would overrun all the other kingdoms in the area. In reality the influence of Syarif Kasim was limited to the groups who had supported his father's coming: members of his family, including an extensive entourage, a number of Chinese, and some Bugis from Riau. Did Kasim want to emulate his father's example? The greater part of the Dayaks remained loyal to the old ruler.

This expansionist policy was not stopped after the departure of the Dutch in 1791, who left because the settlement had proved too expensive. The reactions of the rulers in western Kalimantan to the English presence on Java followed more or less the same pattern. Kasim (1809-1819), who had in the meantime succeeded his father, invited the Dutch back to Pontianak. Again he was able, like his father before him, to lure the Dutch into an alliance. Sambas, his competitor at that time, was less successful in capturing the attention of the Dutch, and indeed was blamed by the newcomers for the sea robbery and piracy in western Kalimantan, a culpability cleverly fostered by Sultan Kasim. To explain

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Kasim's successes in terms of better diplomatic skills alone, however, does not seem correct. Although it is hard to substantiate, I have the impression that Kasim and his father before him maintained private relations with Company officials on Java: Kasim spent much time trading in Semarang. The ease with which the Alkadri family could obtain entrance to official circles in Batavia presupposes a network of interested Dutchmen.²⁶

Kasim held a high reputation among the Dutch commissioners who were sent out to negotiate a new contract in 1818. He skilfully managed to put the idea into their heads that the up-river state of Tayan needed a lesson, because it had not paid the correct tribute to Pontianak, a duty that, according to other sources, Tayan was not actually obligated to fulfil. Zealous Dutch officers were very willing to accompany the Sultan on his trip to Tayan. From the sources it is obvious that the people of Tayan held quite a different view of the rights of Pontianak, but the presence of the Dutch army made them comply.

Similar actions were launched against Sanggau in 1825 and 1831. A Dutch-supported expedition from Pontianak forced the abolition of tolls in Sanggau and the introduction of free trade on the river. No wonder the population of Pontianak enthusiastically supported the expedition, although they were not obliged to carry arms for aggressive aims outside their city. Another indication of the growth of the influence of the Sultan of Pontianak in the Kapuas area is the stationing of representatives of the Dutch government along the river. Instead of European civil servants, members of the Sultan's family acted as *inlands gezaghebber* (native civil servant) of the Dutch East Indian government in Mampawa, Landak and Tayan. The Sultan of Pontianak was witness to the contracts between the government and Sanggau, Silat, Suhaid and Jonkong, Selimbau and Bunut. The *Pangeran Bendahara* (minister of finance), the Sultan's brother, was said to be a very influential man on the Kapuas.²⁷

EPILOGUE

The foundation, rise and expansion of Pontianak was due to not one, but a number of factors. It had much to do with the qualities of the founding family. Not only the first generation but also later generations of the Alkadri clan were very adept in making the best of the circumstances. Although little is known about the

relationship between the first Sultan and the inhabitants of his town, it would seem that they shared certain interests: the encouragement of local and overseas trade constituted a bond between rulers and inhabitants. In order to channel trade through their station, the rulers of Pontianak were in need of a strong outside power that could be used against neighbours like Sanggau, Mampawa and Tayan, who were unwilling to accept the upstart competitor. The citizens of Pontianak were not obliged to follow the Sultan in his aggressive exploits, but nonetheless contributed voluntarily to expeditions in the neighbourhood. The expansion of trade was considered a sufficient reward for these efforts.

Pontianak was founded as a protection against invasions from the sea. The protector very soon turned against the protected, but never without outside support, firstly from the Bugis from Mampawa and Riau, and later on from the Dutch. Under the guise of the expansion of Dutch influence, Pontianak was able to achieve a hold on the river and the surrounding princes. But, like Dutch influence in Pontianak, the influence of Pontianak was at times rather shallow in the surrounding states. The breaking of the tolls on the river, and the abolition of the intermediary position of Sanggau by the Dutch, meant greater opportunities for trade in Pontianak, which, together with unfettered access to the higher reaches of the river, caused not only trade in Sanggau to wither, but also the power of its rulers to decline. Support by an external sea power was a constant and important factor in the history of Pontianak, and was instrumental in its rise.

The profits for the central Dutch state from the connection with Pontianak seem at first sight to have been rather disappointing. There were the high costs of maintaining a settlement (which, not unlike *Almayer's Folly*²⁸, threatened to sink away into the morass), costly wars, and the payment of a vast sum of money for the rights to administer the proceeds of the kingdom. In the first half of the 19th century Pontianak remained a constant drain on the Dutch treasury. Although several residents made calculated forecasts in which the future income from western Kalimantan was shown in bright lights, Batavian circles were apparently not dazzled by the economic prospects. To explain this, attention should be paid to the political context. Pontianak constituted the capital of the residency of western Borneo. The contracts made it possible to keep out other European competitors, while future

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income from the area would eventually flow into the coffers of the Dutch East Indian government. In this situation one can speak of a division of labour between the government and the Sultan. In order to obtain a foothold and gain an ally, the government entered into an agreement with Pontianak's Sultans. In this co-operation the maintenance of a naval empire, patrolling the sea, and warding off pirates were considered tasks for the central government. The Lord of Pontianak on his side acted as local agent to ensure the Dutch influence in the area. In this light the relationship can be seen as a possible explanation of the foundation of even greater empires in the archipelago in earlier days, and of how those empires worked. This kind of alliance could only be based on the idea of mutual profit. Whether it always worked to that effect is another question. Much

depended on the force both parties could muster. In the case of Pontianak one gets the impression that only in the second half of the 19th century did the relationship undergo gradual change in which the tables were definitely turned in favour of Batavia.

To end by turning once more to van Leur, the case of Pontianak makes clear the political significance of the Dutch connection with the newly founded sultanate. That connection meant a great deal to Pontianak's political existence and economic expansion. The Dutch, on the other hand, could claim sovereignty over western Kalimantan. This entanglement of politics and economics leads us to a reformulation of Van Leur's quotation: the threads coming together at Batavia may sometimes have been fragile, but they always had political significance. **RC**

NOTES

- 1 E.g. National Archives (NA) The Hague, VOC archives, 3558, f. 351-382, Letters of Asian Princes received in 1780.
- 2 See H. Terpstra in F. W. Stapel, *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indië* Amsterdam, 1938-1940, Vol. II, pp. 337, 360, 372, 386.
- 3 Jurrien van Goor, 'A Hybrid State: the Dutch Economic and Political Network in Asia' in Claude Guillot, Denys Lombard and Roderich Ptak eds., *From the Mediterranean to the China Sea Miscellaneous notes*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 1998, pp. 193-215.
- 4 The most important sources are: NA, VOC 3524, f. 1-146; VOC, 149 3554, f. 1469-1509; VOC 3553, f. 1-125.
- 5 J. C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*. The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1967, pp. 274, 289.
- 6 Cf. J. van Goor, *Kooplieden, Predikanten en Bestuurders overzee. Beeldvorming en plaatsbepaling in een andere wereld*. Utrecht: HES, 1982, p. 35.
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- 9 VOC 3534, f. 1495-1497. Description of a trip to Landak in 1779.
- 10 W. L. Ritter, 'De oorsprong van Pontianak', in *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië*, 1893, pp. 401-427; VOC 3553, Dagregister Pontianak, 29 October 1779.
- 11 VOC 3234, f. 10; VOC 3534, f. 1470; f. 1507-1509, VOC 3524, f. 130-134; Raja Haji ibn Achmad, *The Precious Gift*, annotated and translated by Virginia Matheson and Barbara Watson Andaya. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 70-75.
- 12 J. J. Ras, *Hikajat Banjar*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968, *passim*.
- 13 E.g. VOC 3553, Dagregister Pontianak 1778, October 12.
- 14 Bakker, 'Sanggau', p. 368; VOC 3524, f. 24; R. C. van Prehn Wiese, 'Aantekeningen omtrent de Wester-afdeling van Borneo' in *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 1881, p. 491.
- 15 *Tuhfat al Nafis*, pp. 153-158; VOC 3524, f. 6, 7, 11, 12.
- 16 VOC 3553, f. 1478-1480; *ibid.*, f. 139.
- 17 Cf. Van Goor, *Kooplieden*, Chap. 4.
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