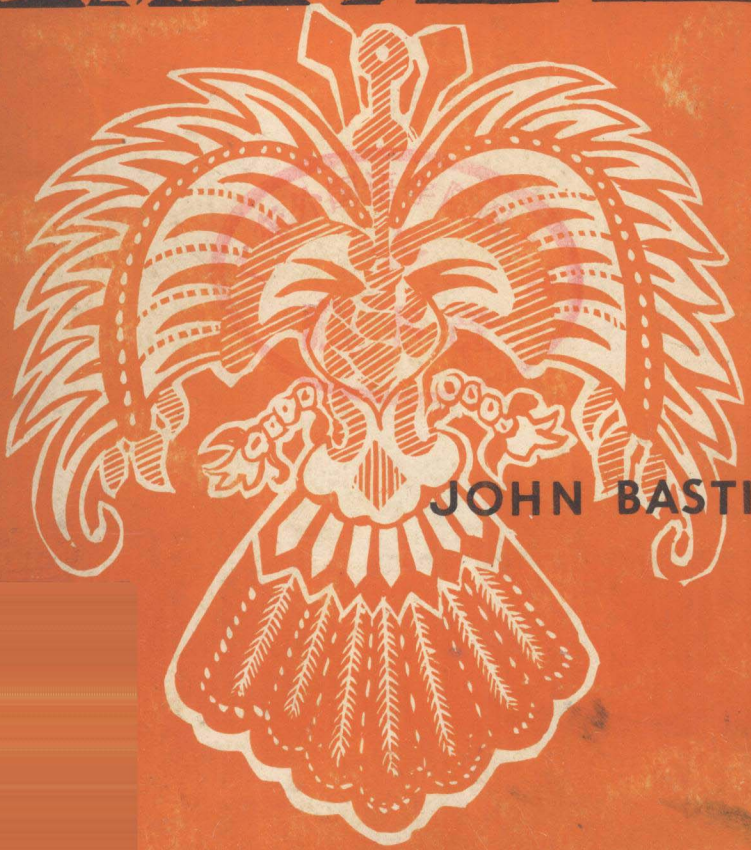
Essays on INDONESIAN & MALAYAN HISTORY



JOHN BASTIN

MONOGRAPHS ON SOUTHEAST ASIAN SUBJECTS

No. 2

ESSAYS ON INDONESIAN AND MALAYAN HISTORY

by

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PREFACE

FOUR of these essays relate directly to the period of the British occupation of Java and its dependencies (1811-16), and another to the years immediately following the restitution of these possessions to the Netherlands. The remaining essays are concerned with the somewhat broader theme of Western influence in Indonesia and Malaya. Any unity which the essays possess derives from their main, though not exclusive concern with events in the Indonesian and Malayan region during the early years of the nineteenth century.

I am grateful to the editorial board of the *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (The Hague) for permission to re-publish in a revised form essays III and V,[1] and to the editor of the *Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society* (Singapore) for permission to re-publish essay VI.[2] The first essay is a revised and shortened version of an inaugural lecture given in the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur during 1959. Both this and the second essay have already been published in a limited edition in the series *Papers on Southeast Asian Subjects*.[3] Essay IV, which incorporates some new material, was originally published in the now defunct journal, *Indonesië*.[4]

Throughout these essays the term *Spanish dollar* has been used in its widest sense, and has been regarded as the equivalent of approximately five shillings sterling, although in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries its sterling value was rather less. Rijksdaalders, or Rix dollars, and Java rupees may be considered as the

1 "Palembang in 1811 and 1812", *BKI*, CIX (1953), 300-20, CX (1954), 64-88; and "The Working of the Early Land Rent System in West Java", *ibid.*, CXVI (1960), 301-12.

2 "Raffles and British Policy in the Indian Archipelago, 1811-1816", *JMBRAS*, XXVII (i) (1954), 84-119.

3 *The Western Element in Modern Southeast Asian History* (Kuala Lumpur, 1960); *The Changing Balance of the Early Southeast Asian Pepper Trade* (Kuala Lumpur, 1960).

4 "The Chinese Estates in East Java during the British Administration", *Indonesië*, VII (1953-4), 433-9.

equivalent of three shillings and eightpence, and half a crown sterling respectively.[5]

For information on weights and measures, the reader should refer to Appendix M of T.S. Raffles, *The History of Java* (London, 1830), II, clxv-clxvii. A *kati* was equal to about 1¼ avoirdupois lbs., and 100 *katis* made a *pikul* of 125 (Dutch) lbs., or 133⅓ (English) lbs. The Dutch *koyan* was 3,400 lbs., and was considered equal to a *last*, or two tons. The *bahar* varied between 360-600 lbs.[6]

In citing directly from manuscript sources I have sometimes altered the punctuation; and for the sake of clarity I have removed many of the capital letters and replaced the abbreviated & by *and*.

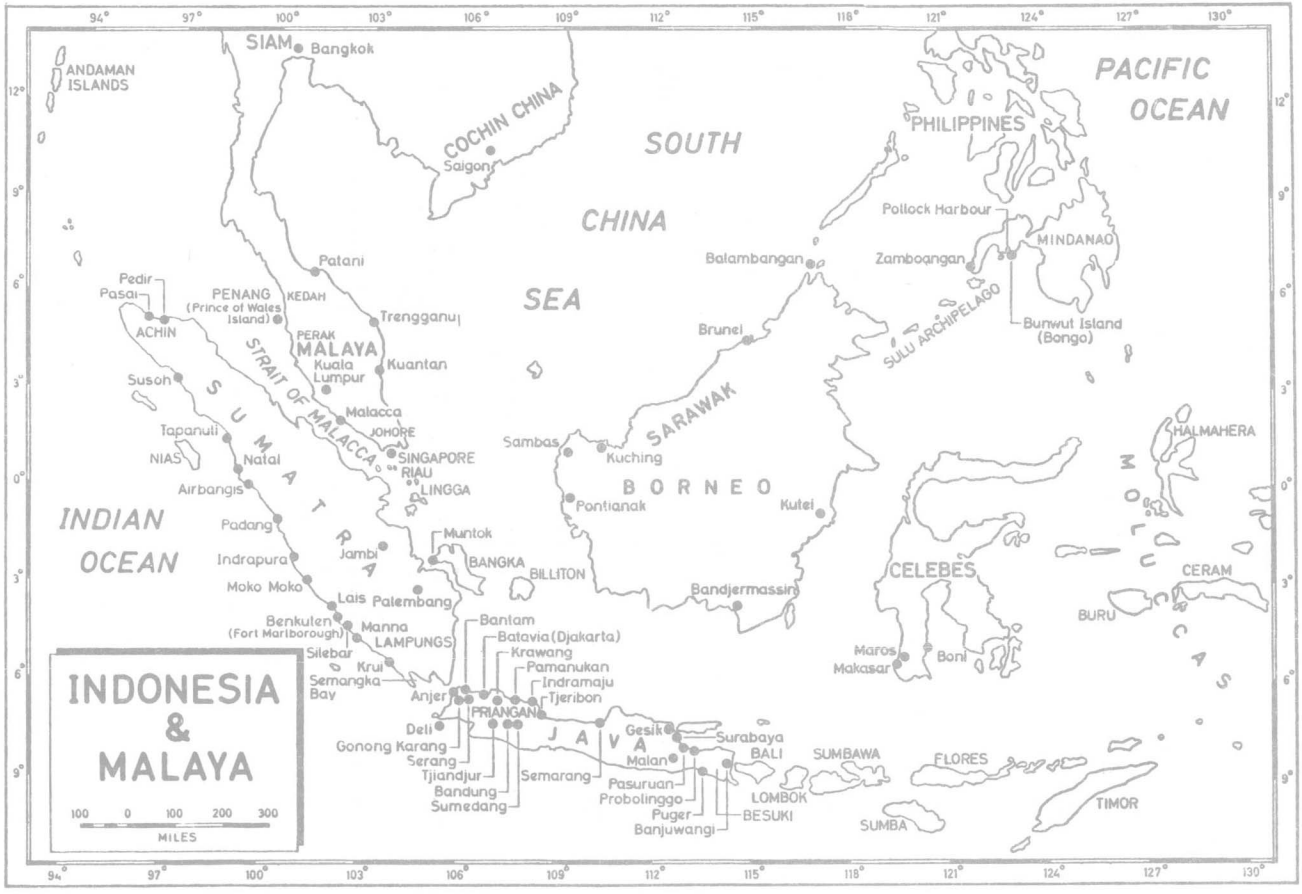
To the following persons who, in one way or another, have contributed something to this book of essays I offer my sincere thanks: Professor V.T. Harlow, Professor W. Ph. Coolhaas, Sir Richard Winstedt, Professor A.A. Cense, Dr. P. Voorhoeve, Dr. H.R.C. Wright, Professor R. Roolvink, Dr. C. Hooykaas, Professor K. Glamann, Dr. D.K. Bassett, J. Ngai, and Miss Khoo Gaik See.

J. B.

Kuala Lumpur
August 1961.

[5] See F. Pridmore, *Coins and Coinages of the Straits Settlements and British Malaya, 1786 to 1951* (Memoirs of the Raffles Museum, 2, (Singapore, 1955); C. Scholten, *The Coins of the Dutch Overseas Territories 1601-1948* (Amsterdam, 1953); E. Netscher and J. A. van der Chijs, "De Munten van Nederlandsch Indië", *VBG*, XXXI (1864), 1-230.

[6] See Art. "Maten en Gewichten", *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* (The Hague/Leiden, 1917-39), II, 684-8. (All future references to this *Encyclopaedie* are to the first edition of 1895-1905).


INDONESIA & MALAYA
100 0 100 200 300
MILES
SIAM
Bangkok
ANDAMAN ISLANDS
COCHIN CHINA
Saigon
SOUTH CHINA SEA
PACIFIC OCEAN
PHILIPPINES
Pollock Harbour
MINDANAO
Zamboangan
Balambangan
Bunwut Island (Bongo)
SULU ARCHIPELAGO
Brunei
Patani
Pedir
Pasai
PENANG (Prince of Wales Island)
KEDAH
Trengganu
ACHIN
PERAK
MALAYA
Kuala Lumpur
Kuantan
STRAIT OF MALACCA
Susoh
Malacca
JOHORE
SINGAPORE
RIAU
LINGGA
Tapanuli
NIAS
Natal
Airbangis
SUMATRA
INDIAN OCEAN
Padang
Indrapura
Jambi
Muntok
BANGKA
BILLITON
Moko Moko
Lais
Palembang
Benkulen (Fort Marlborough)
Manna
LAMPUNGS
Silebar
Krui
Semangka Bay
Bantam
Batavia (Djakarta)
Krawang
Pamanukan
Indramaju
Tjeribon
Anjer
PRIANGAN
Deli
Gonong Karang
Serang
Tjiandjur
Bandung
Sumedang
Semarang
JAVA
Gesik
Surabaya
Malan
BALI
SUMBAWA
FLORES
Pasuruan
Probolinggo
Puger
Banjuwangi
LOMBOK
BESUKI
SUMBA
TIMOR
SARAWAK
Sambas
Kuching
BORNEO
Pontianak
Kutei
Bandjermassin
CELEBES
Maros
Makasar
Boni
HALMAHERA
MOLUCCAS
CERAM
BURU
94°
97°
100°
103°
106°
109°
112°
115°
118°
121°
124°
127°
130°
12°
9°
6°
3°
0°

ABBREVIATIONS

Add. MSS.	Additional Manuscripts, British Museum, London.
AN	Arsip Negara (State Archives), Djakarta.
ARA	Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague.
BKI	*Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* (The Hague).
BM	British Museum, London.
Gillespie Charges	An untitled volume of documents relating to the charges preferred by Major-General R. Gillespie against Raffles in Java. The volume was printed privately in Batavia in 1815.
IOL	India Office Library, Commonwealth Relations Office, London.
JMBRAS	*Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society* (Singapore).
JSBRAS	*Journal of the Straits Branch Royal Asiatic Society* (Singapore).
TBG	*Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (Batavia).
VBG	*Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (Batavia).
VKI	*Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* (The Hague).

CONTENTS

		Page
	PREFACE	v
	ABBREVIATIONS	ix
	MAP	x
I	THE WESTERN ELEMENT IN MODERN SOUTHEAST ASIAN HISTORY	1
II	THE CHANGING BALANCE OF THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN PEPPER TRADE	19
III	PALEMBANG IN 1811 AND 1812	53
IV	THE CHINESE ESTATES IN EAST JAVA DURING THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION	92
V	THE EARLY LAND RENT SYSTEM IN WEST JAVA ...	102
VI	RAFFLES AND A BRITISH INDONESIA	115
VII	THE BRITISH IN WEST SUMATRA	143
VIII	RAFFLES' ATTEMPTS TO EXTEND BRITISH POWER IN SUMATRA	164
	APPENDICES	180
	I THE DATING OF THE PALEMBANG CORRESPONDENCE	
	II PALEMBANG CORRESPONDENCE: LETTERS C AND D	
	III PALEMBANG CORRESPONDENCE: LETTER L	
	IV THE ORIGINAL MALAY LETTERS TO PALEMBANG	
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	189
	INDEX	199

I

THE WESTERN ELEMENT IN MODERN SOUTHEAST ASIAN HISTORY

"It seems to me impossible to avoid the conclusion that the new Asia and Africa which are emerging with such revolutionary suddenness do not represent simply the reaction of Asiatic or African culture against the influence of an alien civilization, but rather the extension of Western civilization and Western international society into the extra-European world".

Christopher Dawson, *The Movement of World Revolution* (London, 1959).

(i)

THE task of the historian is to interpret the past to the living, and he should, therefore, be concerned to show how the past actually 'touches on the present'.[1] If he does this then he has fulfilled the main function of his discipline, which is to provide a sense of proportion, of balance, indeed another dimension, to the lives of his contemporaries. The historian is not concerned with the past as such, but with the interpretation of the past; not with the collection of historical facts, but with their significance; not with events and happenings in the past, but with the explanation of those events and happenings. 'The nature of our intelligence is such', the French medieval historian, Marc Bloch, has written, 'that it is stimulated far less by the will to know than by the will to understand'.[2] It is the function of the historian to provide this understanding of the past.

It is obvious, however, that because historians bring to their study widely different abilities, and differing points of view, so their understanding—their comprehension and interpretation—of the past will differ. History can never be produced in a definitive form; it is, to borrow another phrase of Marc Bloch, 'a thing in

1 Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (London, 1956), 22.
2 M. Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (Manchester, 1954), 10.

movement'.[3] There are only interpretations of history by individual historians, and, however much some of them may attempt to hide the fact, historians are human-beings, and therefore subject to the same limitations as the rest of their kind. One should beware, therefore, of those who profess to see patterns of development, those who derive laws of human behaviour from their study of the past. For there are no laws, no patterns to be found in history: there are only those laws and patterns which individual historians impose upon the historical evidence, or lack of evidence. Human behaviour and experience has been too wide, too rich in its variety, to fit the narrow categories of any single interpretation. Every age interprets the past by its own standards; every age writes its own history. The present age is no exception.

Simultaneously with the challenge in Asia and Africa to Western political and economic domination, and to Western ideals and values, has come the challenge to what has been generally described as 'colonial history' — history written by Westerners from their own point of view, with undue emphasis on the activities of Westerners. And the point of view, with its various ramifications, which is now being seriously challenged as being unhistorical, is that early Western penetration into Asia represented a superior civilization on the march: that the early Europeans were responsible for the transmission to Asia of advanced technological forms, of superior political and economic organization, and of more enlightened rules of conduct and behaviour. This view received an apparently decisive blow with the publication in 1953 of the book, *Asia and Western Dominance*, by the Indian historian, K.M. Panikkar;[4] but it was not the first blow delivered, even by Panikkar. Writing nearly a quarter of a century earlier, he had, in his monograph *Malabar and the Portuguese*, employed very forceful language to contradict this view. 'An influential school of history', he wrote, 'holds that the benefits, that India has received from the direct contact with Europe, are of such a nature that, in spite of all their faults, the Portuguese should be considered as the pioneers of civilisation and as the forerunners of the British Empire. It may be permitted however, to question the correctness of the

[3] *Ibid.*, 12.

[4] *Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History 1498-1945* (London, 1953), 18-19.

point of view, wrongly called historical, which thus tries to import retrospective values into events of an earlier date. Even accepting that the connection with Europe has been beneficial to India, it is open to doubt whether a century and a half of barbarous outrages, of unscrupulous plunder and of barren aggression is not too great a price to pay for the doubtful benefits of having the way opened for other European traders.... The Portuguese could not even claim what the Mahommedan Rulers of India could legitimately put forward in their justification, that they had a cultural contribution to make to the life of India, such as we may, even now, see in the magnificent architectural monuments at Agra, Delhi, Ahmedabad. The Portuguese of the 16th and the 17th centuries had nothing to teach the people of India except improved methods of killing people in war and the narrow feeling of bigotry in religion'.[5]

That the Portuguese intrusion signified a stage of higher economic development for Asia has also been vehemently denied by the Dutch historian, J. C. van Leur. 'The Portuguese colonial regime', he wrote as long ago as 1934, '... did not introduce a single new economic element into the commerce of southern Asia. The forms of political and economic domination — monopolies, financial exploitation, 'fiscalization' of the government — all of them originated in the caliphates and Byzantium, and were transferred to Portugal, and perhaps carried on there, by Jews and Italians. The political power of the Portuguese, based on their military superiority, now made possible the large-scale application of those forms in Asia. That military superiority was the only thing the Portuguese carried overseas to Asia as a new and European element.... The Portuguese regime only introduced a non-intensive drain on the existing structure of shipping and trade'.[6]

Even Europe's supposed advance in technical knowledge, as represented by the improved navigational aids and naval construction which made the early Portuguese voyages to India possible, has now to be seen in an Asian perspective.[7] Bartolomeu Dias and Vasco da Gama's rounding of the Cape of Good Hope had been achieved because of improvements in European shipbuilding

5 *Malabar and the Portuguese* (Bombay, 1929), 211-12.
6 *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (The Hague, 1955), 118.
7 *Ibid.*, 159.

techniques during the fifteenth century, among other things by the construction of three-masted ships. Yet these ships, which were not in general use in Europe until the middle of the fifteenth century, were being built in China centuries earlier, and were employed in the Chinese voyages to Southeast Asia and to the east coast of Africa. Those same Chinese ships were frequently larger than seven hundred tons burthen, whereas the average size of the galleons of the Spanish armada was considerably less. It is true that the Portuguese trading carracks and Spanish Manila galleons were often much larger than seven hundred tons, but the perspective is restored by Fernão Peres de Andrade's description of the Sultan of Demak's war-junk, compared to which his own flagship 'did not look like a ship at all'.[8]

If, in recent years, we have had to readjust our thinking with regard to the idea of a primitive and cannibalistic negro Africa, when confronted with evidence which suggests that the contemporaneous cultural development of some of the states of western Africa compared favourably with that of medieval Europe, it is not now so hard for us to arrive at a proper appreciation of the South and Southeast Asian cultures at the time of Western intrusion. If Djenne, Walata, Gao, and Agadès were 'the Milans and Nurembergs of the medieval Sudan: much less magnificient, indeed, yet rich and powerful and imposing in their time and place'; if medieval Timbuktu 'might reasonably have claimed as much of civilisation as most of the university cities of medieval Europe';[9] then it is no longer difficult to understand the feeling of awe which one of the earliest English visitors to Asia experienced when he gazed on the Indian cities of Agra and Fatehpur-Sikri, 'either of them', as he recorded, 'much greater than London and very populous'.[10] Nor is there need to doubt Robert Clive's description of Murshidabad nearly two centuries later, 'as extensive, populous, and rich as the city of London, with this difference that there are individuals in the first possessing infinitely greater

[8] B. Davidson, *Old Africa Rediscovered* (London, 1959), 163; C. R. Boxer (ed.), *The Tragic History of the Sea 1589-1622* (Hakluyt Society, Cambridge, 1959), 1 ff.; Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade*, 366 n.2; G. B. Sansom, *The Western World and Japan* (London, 1950), 61-2.

[9] Davidson, *Old Africa Rediscovered*, 89, 79.

[10] J. Courtenay Locke, *The First Englishmen in India* (London, 1930), 103.

property than in the last'.[11] Professor J. M. Romein has done well to remind us that it is only 'the unconscious conceit of a narrow-minded European' to regard as primitive the early Arab, Indian, and Chinese cultures.[12]

(ii)

Yet, as salutary as this new perspective is, and as challenging as it is in calling for a careful and detailed reappraisal of modern South and Southeast Asian history, it is a perspective which is easily capable of distortion. Panikkar has stated that the battles won by the Portuguese in India were more 'mythical than actual', as they never had the mastery of any territory in India 'outside the range of their ships' guns'.[13] That may be true enough; but when this line of argument is extended to include Malaya, as it has been recently,[14] then it seems to me to invite a sharp rejoinder. In a long two-part article entitled 'A New Approach to Malayan History', Professor K. G. Tregonning has contended that although 'it was commerce that brought both [the] Portuguese and Dutch to Malaya, neither of them was able to secure more than a minimum control over the Asia-Europe trade, and even less over the intra-Asian trade. They were a few heretical fish in a Muslim sea, and... they did not affect Asia much at all. Rather the contrary; Asia profoundly affected them'. And elsewhere: 'Asia, not the European in Asia, must be our theme, and suddenly, if you think of that, it makes the Portuguese and the Dutch most insignificant, and almost extraneous'.[15]

Now whatever one may think, nothing will alter the fact that it was those 'insignificant' Portuguese who brought to an end the Malacca sultanate, and set in motion a whole series of events which affected profoundly the subsequent history of Malaya.[16] It was

11 Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 282.

12 J. M. Romein, "The Common Human Pattern : The Origin and Scope of Historical Theories", *Delta*, II (ii) (1959), 12.

13 Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*, 212-13.

14 K. G. Tregonning, *Journal of the South Seas Society*, XIV (i and ii) (1958), 124.

15 *The Straits Times*, 21 and 24 November 1958.

16 *Cf.* C. A. Gibson-Hill, "Johore Lama and other ancient sites on the Johore River", *JMBRAS*, XXVIII (ii) (1955), 141-2. Consider also the important rôle which one Portuguese frigate, sheltering against the monsoon, played in Johore politics as late as 1718, T. D. Hughes (transl.), "A Portuguese Account of Johore", *JMBRAS*, XIII (ii) (1935), 111-156.

those few heretical fish in a Muslim sea — in Malacca they rarely numbered more than six hundred[17] — who, by their restrictive policies against Muslim merchants, caused a diversion of the Arab and Gujarati trade to Achin which, with the wealth derived from this trade, set about its imperialistic mission to capture the west and east Sumatran pepper regions.[18] A large part of Sumatra came under direct Achinese control as a result of those few hundred Portuguese in Malacca, and they were indirectly responsible for the port of Achin becoming in the middle of the sixteenth century 'the chief station in the intermediary trade of the Mohammedans of western Asia and India with the Indonesian Archipelago'.[19] Malacca itself, which was the busiest port in the whole of Southeast Asia before the Portuguese conquest — the Italian, Ludovico di Varthema, who visited the city only six years before it passed into Portuguese hands, declared that more ships arrived there than anywhere else in the world[20] — began steadily to decline under the Portuguese regime, and when the Dutch seized control of it in 1641 they pursued a policy of raising Batavia to pre-eminence as a trading centre at the expense of Malacca. From its former position of importance in the Southeast Asian world, Malacca, under Western rule, sank into insignificance.

The fact that in the past some colonial historians exaggerated Western cultural and political preponderance in the Southeast Asian region, particularly during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, is no reason why the important indirect effects which Westerners had on the course of Southeast Asian history during those centuries should now be totally obscured by the zealous critics of those historians. Professor W. F. Wertheim, a keen admirer of Van Leur, and a leading exponent of the new school of interpretation, has argued, for example, that in general, 'neither Asian agriculture nor Asian industry was affected by Western

17 I. A. Macgregor, "Notes on the Portuguese in Malaya", *JMBRAS*, XXVIII (ii) (1955), 6; W.H.C. Smith, "The Portuguese in Malacca during the Dutch Period", *Journal of the South Seas Society*, XIV (i and ii) (1958), 70.

18 B. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies* (The Hague, 1955), I, 42-4.

19 *Ibid.*, I, 44.

20 R. C. Temple (ed.), *The Itinerary of Ludovico di Varthema of Bologna from 1502 to 1508* (London, 1928), 84. See also A. Cortesão (transl.), *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires* (Hakluyt Society, London, 1944), I, 228; and P.E. De Josselin de Jong and H.L.A. van Wijk, "The Malacca Sultanate", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, I (2) (1960), 22.

influence in an appreciable way before the beginning of the nineteenth century'.[21] That statement is true, however, only if by *affected* is understood *directly affected*, for the indirect influences which the early Westerners exerted on South and Southeast Asian trade and agricultural development were marked.

Consider, for example, the cultivation of pepper, which was the most important of all the commodities in the East-West trade during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[22] When the early Westerners reached Asia, most of the pepper consumed in Europe came from the Malabar coast of India; the south Indian pepper cultivators had been the traditional producers of this commodity since Graeco-Roman times, and the economic foundations of the Malabar coastal regions rested, to an important degree, upon the pepper trade. But the Portuguese, in attempting to exert monopolistic control over the Malabar trade during the sixteenth century, forced the Muslim merchants to resort to the less developed, but independent pepper producing regions of Malaya and Indonesia: to Kedah, to Achin, to Priaman and Tiku, to Jambi and Palembang, to Silebar and the Lampung districts, to Bantam, and to Banjermassin. Under the stimulus of this new demand, these regions began producing more pepper than previously, and when the additional stimulus was given later by Dutch and British traders, who also found the Malabar ports closed to them by Portuguese action, Malayan and Indonesian pepper production so increased that by the beginning of the nineteenth century it was meeting most of the world demand — Malabar having been reduced to producing less than one-tenth of the total Asian output.[23]

If this changing pattern of agriculture and trade, which was due primarily to the commercial and political conflicts between the Asian and the Western powers, resulted in poverty for the pepper cultivators of Malabar, it meant relative prosperity for the Malayan and Indonesian producers. In Bantam in west Java, for instance, it has been calculated that the Dutch paid to the people of this

[21] W. F. Wertheim, *Indonesian Society in Transition: a Study of Social Change* (The Hague, 1956), 39.

[22] K. Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic Trade 1602-1740* (The Hague, 1958), 73. This subject is examined in detail in the second essay.

[23] J. Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China* (London, 1830), II, 178n; W. Milburn, *Oriental Commerce* (London, 1825), 155-6.

region during the eighteenth century more than twelve million Spanish dollars for the pepper which was produced there and in the Lampung districts.[24] The agricultural decline of one part of Southeast Asia, and the agricultural advance of another part during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, is often directly attributable to Western influence.

We may accept the view, although to my mind it requires qualification, that the Portuguese, and the early Dutch and British, were no more than 'country' powers in the Southeast Asian region, to be compared with some of the more powerful of the local Malay and Indonesian sultanates, and we may possibly agree with Professor Wertheim that the trading establishments of these early Europeans were far from being centres for the radiation of Western culture;[25] but the European powers were, after all, new powers, and as such represented new factors in the turbulent and complex Southeast Asian world. It would be extremely dangerous if, in an anxiety to meet the political demands of a resurgent Asian consciousness, historians of Southeast Asia began to minimize too much the part played by the Westerners in the region. The argument that the Portuguese and Dutch were 'most insignificant, and almost extraneous' may meet the demands of the new Asian consciousness, but it does not meet the requirements of impartial history. Surely the plea for reinterpreting Southeast Asian history from an Asian point of view means something more than the convenient removal of Westerners from the historical narrative?

(iii)

It has long seemed to me that the full implications of what is involved in such a reinterpretation, at least for Western historians of Southeast Asia, have escaped serious examination, partly because the appeal for such a reinterpretation has been so constantly voiced, and partly because the appeal itself has seemed so reasonable. One of the implications — perhaps the most important — was touched upon by Professor Pieter Geyl in his valedictory lecture in the University of Utrecht, when he attacked

[24] See p. 33 below.
[25] Wertheim, *Indonesian Society*, 281.

the notion of writing history from a universal point of view. He maintained, and he is surely right, that no matter how noble are the intentions of a Western historian to abandon a Europe-centric outlook, he will never quite escape from his own past, from his own cultural heritage. How, Geyl asked, 'can a human being — and the historian must not, above all, try to pass himself off as anything but a human being — allow his mind, shaped in his own cultural environment and by its centuries of sustained action, to be dissolved in an unorganic and anarchic world without losing hold of his most fertile life-principle'?[26] How, one may equally ask, can the Western historian allow his mind to be dissolved in the strangely different, and frequently confusing, Southeast Asian world? This is not to say that in writing Southeast Asian history the European historian should subordinate everything to a Western interest, nor is it to deny the validity of Asian historians writing Southeast Asian history as they see it, but it does seem to me to set severe limitations to the possibility of Western historians ever successfully interpreting this history from an Asian point of view. The Western historian of Southeast Asia may, with Van Leur, readily deplore the fact that much of Asian history has in the past been observed from the decks of European ships, from 'the ramparts of the fortress, the high gallery of the trading-house',[27] and he may attempt to remedy this defect by concentrating his attention on the Asian scene. But can he do more than this? Can he ever escape the dominating fact that his mind has been conditioned from his birth by Western thought patterns and cultural influences?

In 1955 Professor D. G. E. Hall of the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London published his massive *A History of South-East Asia*. In the preface to this book the author stated that he had attempted to analyze the history of Southeast Asia from a Southeast Asian perspective, and he implied that he had done so by concentrating less attention on the activities of Westerners in the region than had the earlier European historians. That statement did not prevent the book from being attacked by historians in Malaya and elsewhere as being thoroughly

[26] P. Geyl, "The Vitality of Western Civilization", *Delta*, II (i) (1959), 14.

[27] Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade*, 261.