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THE PRIVATE TRADE OF THE BRITISH IN WEST SUMATRA,

1735-1770

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BKI	<u>Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië</u> (after 1949, <u>Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde</u>).
Carter Papers	Papers relating to the executorship for Roger Carter, Governor of Fort Marlborough, and classified accounts begun by Roger Carter and continued by Robert Carter Thelwall as executor. Redbourne Hall Deposit, Red. 3/1/3, Lincolnshire Archives Committee, The Castle, Lincoln.
Cons.	Consultations.
Court	Court of Directors of the English East India Company.
Donston Papers	Correspondence and papers of Stokeham Donston of the East India Company, 1755-1774. Nottinghamshire County Record Office, Shire Hall, Nottingham.
FM	Fort Marlborough (Benkulen).
FSG	Fort St. George (Madras).
Hall Papers	Letters and papers of Alexander Hall (brother of Sir John Hall, 3rd Baronet), 1749-1764. Dunglass Papers, Section II, Nos. 499-505, Scottish Record Office, Register House, Edinburgh.
HMS	Home Miscellaneous Series, India Office Library, London.
IOL	India Office Library, London.
KA	Kolonial Archief division of the Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague, Netherlands.
JMBRAS	<u>Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.</u>
MLR	Miscellaneous Letters Received, India Office Library, London.
SFR	Sumatra Factory Records, India Office Library, London.
Steuart Papers	Collection of Hew Steuart's Letters. MSS. Eur. D 737, India Office Library, London.
VOC	Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company).

Note on Chronology: The English did not shift to the reformed Gregorian calendar in use in much of the rest of Europe until 14 September 1752, and they eliminated eleven days between 2 and 14 September as a result of the transition. Prior to 1752, Fort Marlborough's records began the new year on 25 March in accordance with the old calendar. Although for purposes of clarity, dates given in both the text and notes of this thesis have been adjusted to begin the new year on 1 January even before 1752, it should still be remembered that before 14 September 1752 there is an eleven-day difference between English and Dutch correspondence bearing ostensibly identical dates.

P R E F A C E

The English East India Company first established a permanent post on the West Coast of Sumatra in 1685, in order to ensure continued supplies of Indonesian pepper after the Dutch had effectively excluded the British from the pepper trade of West Java by expelling them from Bantam in 1682. The Company's Court of Directors in London had originally selected Aceh as the site of its projected Sumatran settlement but had subsequently turned to Pariaman, a centrally located West Coast port, after the Achehnese queen had refused to agree to the construction of an English fort at her capital. Nevertheless, Ralph Ord, whom the Directors had entrusted with founding the British factory, settled instead at Benkulen in the southern half of the island - either because the Dutch East India Company (VOC) had forestalled him at Pariaman or because he had decided on his own initiative that a more southern location, close to Silebar and the Bantam-controlled Lampung districts, was more likely to fulfil the English Company's pepper requirements. The Court of Directors, who had already rejected Benkulen as a possible site precisely because its proximity to South Sumatra and West Java accorded the Dutch further opportunities for commercial obstruction, were nevertheless unwilling to reverse Ord's fait accompli,¹ and Benkulen, commanded first by York Fort and after 1714 by Fort Marlborough, remained an East India Company possession for 139 years. During most of this period it was the sole British foothold in the Malayo-Indonesian area.

From a commercial viewpoint, the Benkulen settlement was never a success. Bal Krishna has estimated that Fort Marlborough provided about 44,000,000 pounds of the 103,908,000 pounds of pepper imported into England between 1711 and 1760, or an

1. J. Bastin, 'Introduction', The British in West Sumatra (1685-1825) (Kuala Lumpur, 1965), pp. xii-xiii.

average of about 435-2/3 tons per year.¹ The average produce of English West Sumatra computed by the Court of Directors reached only about 420 tons annually from 1734 to 1751, with the output dropping to only about 8000 hundredweights (373-1/3 tons) or less per year in the 1740s.² Production had improved to over 600 tons per year by the mid-1750s and in the 1770s ranged between 900 and 1600 tons per year.³ Nevertheless, the ever increasing running costs of Fort Marlborough swallowed up the Company's pepper profits, and in 1765 the Court estimated the total loss suffered by the Company from its West Sumatran establishment between 1743 and 1766 at no less than £266,429.⁴

Strategic considerations, however, always prevented the Company from abandoning Fort Marlborough. Initially such a base had been needed to prevent the VOC from totally engrossing the importation of pepper into Europe. The profits from such a trade, the English calculated, would enable the Dutch to maintain a navy capable of dominating the seas of both India and Europe.⁵ By the mid-eighteenth century, after the eastern trade had become more diversified and the relative importance of earnings from pepper had declined for both the English and Dutch Companies, the burgeoning China trade perpetuated the necessity of a base in Indonesian waters to justify and protect British claims to free navigation in that region. As a consequence, the Directors in London clung doggedly to their unsatisfactory settlement in South Sumatra and attempted repeatedly to make it at least

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1. Bal Krishna, Commercial Relations between India and England (1601-1757) (London, 1924), p. 203.
 2. Annual State of the Charges and Losses, Profits and Revenues at Fort Marlborough, Public Despatches from England, 1752-3, Records of Fort St. George (Madras, 1931-71), vol. 56, pp. 124-8.
 3. J. Kathirithamby, 'British West Sumatra during the Presidency Period, 1760 to 1785' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1965), Appendix I, p. 345.
 4. Court to Fort Marlborough (hereafter referred to as FM), 25 Jan. 1765, Sumatra Factory Records (hereafter referred to as SFR), vol. 31, India Office Library, London (hereafter referred to as IOL).
 5. T. C. P. Edgell 'English Trade and Policy in Borneo and the Adjacent Islands, 1667-1786' (M.A. Thesis, University of London, 1935), p. 81.

self-supporting; they simultaneously cast about for another port in South-East Asia more suitable for servicing the Company's China shipping and for developing a trading centre where local produce could be stapled to help finance the Company's deficits from tea and silk purchases at Canton. This latter ambition was gradually realised with the settlement of Penang in 1786 and of Singapore in 1819.

In the meantime, an establishment of between twenty and fifty covenanted servants sent from England and several hundred soldiers and African slaves was maintained by the Company at Fort Marlborough and its subordinate out-stations. From the Company's point of view these servants were posted in West Sumatra to expedite the cultivation and collection of pepper at the lowest possible cost for sale in Europe and China on the Company's account. The servants themselves, however, went to Benkulen as much to acquire a personal fortune as to administer Company policy. Their careers were consequently a series of conflicts and compromises of interest between their private goals and public duties, and their activities influenced not only the Company's local objectives but also its international relations in Indonesia. The Fort Marlborough servants' efforts to make money of their own are of interest not only as an element in the social history of eighteenth-century colonial endeavour but also as an explanation both of the sea-change which frequently affected London's directives when implemented on the spot and even of certain shifts in the balance of economic and political power on the West Coast of Sumatra. It is therefore worth investigating the means employed by the Company's servants at Benkulen to gain a 'competency' in the years between 1735 and 1770, their success in doing so, and the ways in which their actions embroiled them both with their superiors in London and Madras, and their neighbours the Dutch and Achehnese.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

THE QUEST FOR A COMPETENCY

In 1756, a young man of twenty-three named Stokeham Donston, who had just resigned his position in the London offices of Mr. John Payne after having been refused an advance in salary or rank, wrote to his cousin, a Nottinghamshire squire:

When I had the conversation with Mr. Payne, I asked if there was any possibility of getting anything abroad in the service of the East India Company (as he is in the direction of that company) that he thought would be of service to me, and also desired he would be so obliging as to give me his opinion in the affair; his answer was, that I knew the best, but that young people who had a little fortune of their own, had good advantages as they had a privilege, allowed them by the Company of doing business for themselves. The Salary allowed by the Company is about £80 or £90 p. year, but that is nothing in comparison to the advantage made in that part of the world by care and diligence, the station, if I do go, is to go as factor to some part of the Indies and there to reside; some says [sic] the climate is unhealthful, and does not agree with the Constitutions of the Europeans, but that I believe, is in some measure owing to the irregularity of their living...and I fancy it might be avoided by resolution; however, he [Payne] said if I had an Inclination for a voyage into Asia, he would do what he could to be of service to me.¹

Stokeham Donston won his appointment as a Factor and on the advice of two returned Fort Marlborough servants requested a post on the West Sumatran establishment. He arrived at Benkulen in September 1757. As his motives for seeking employment with the East India Company were fairly typical, others like him came to Sumatra from all over Great Britain. It is impossible to make a systematic survey of the geographical origins of the West Coast servants without the information contained in the Writers' petitions to the Court of Directors requesting appointments in the service, which are extant only after 1749. Nevertheless miscellaneous personal information does occur in other records, and it is possible to sketch the

1. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 15 July 1756, Correspondence of Stokeham Donston of the East India Company, 1755-1774, Nottingham County Record Office, Shire Hall, Nottingham (hereafter referred to as Donston Papers).

background of some of Fort Marlborough's more prominent citizens from the 1740s through the 1760s. Deputy Governors Robert Lennox (1736-1744) and Joseph Hurlock (1746-1751) appear to have come from London and Winchester respectively.¹ Deputy Governor-designate Thomas Combes (1756) also seems to have come from London, while Governor Roger Carter (1756-1760, 1762-1767) was from Redbourne Hall, Lincolnshire, and his successor Richard Wyatt (1767-1776) was from Essex.² There was also a large number of Scots. Not only was Deputy Governor William Rigg (May 1745 - February 1746) from Morton, near Edinburgh, but in 1764 five out of nine members of the Benkulen government were Scottish: Henry Idell, Robert Hay, Alexander Hall, Robert Nairne, and Hew Steuart. Two of them subsequently became Governor - Hay in 1776 and Steuart from 1780 to 1781.

The social origins of the Company's servants were as varied as their geographical distribution. Some like Stokeham Donston were members of gentry or propertied families in Britain and had 'a little fortune of their own'. Such men were Roger Carter, Alexander Hall and Hew Steuart whose private papers give glimpses of life in eighteenth-century Fort Marlborough.³ Another was Robert Hay who after

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1. Lennox, at any rate, retired to London. His address on a security offered for Joseph Gunn was listed as Southampton Street, Covent Garden. Court of Directors, 12 Nov. 1755, Court Minutes, vol. 66, IOL. A petition from Hurlock to the Court was dated 'Avington near Winchester', 11 July, 1755, Public Despatches from England, 1755-6, op. cit., vol. LIX, pp. 125-6. Hurlock, however, probably retired to London; he served at one point on the Direction of the East India Company. L. S. Sutherland, The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics (Oxford, 1962), p. 288.
 2. Court of Directors, 25 Nov. 1755, Court Minutes, vol. 66; 'Redbourne Hall', Lincolnshire Archives Committee, Archivists Report, 22 March 1956 - 23 March 1957, pp. 46-51. Wyatt's father, Richard Wyatt Sr., lived at 'Hare Street near Rumsford in Essex'. FM Consultations (hereafter referred to as Cons.), 6 March, 28 Dec. 1759, SFR 70. Wyatt himself also retired to Hornchurch, Essex, where he died at the age of eighty-five in 1812. The Gentleman's Magazine, vol. LXXXII, pt. 1 (1812), p. 489.
 3. Papers relating to the Executorship for Roger Carter, Redbourne Hall Deposit, Red. 3/1/3, Lincolnshire Archives Committee, The Castle, Lincoln (hereafter referred to as Carter Papers); Hew Steuart, Collection of Letters, MSS. Eur. D 737, IOL (hereafter referred to as Steuart Papers); Letters of Alexander Hall, Dunglass Papers, Section II, Nos. 499-505, Scottish Record Office, Register House, Edinburgh (hereafter referred to as Hall Papers).

his brother's death in the 1770s became heir to his father's fortune of £3000 per year.¹ At the other end of the scale was a man like Joseph Gunn, who appears to have been born at Benkulen and was educated at the charity school at Madras after the death of his father, the Fifth of Council at Fort Marlborough. He returned to Benkulen in 1740 as a 'monthly writer', and the Council requested covenants on his behalf as a benefaction for the penniless orphan.² Gunn remained on the West Coast until his death in 1760, never having seen England.

The East India Company's service on the West Coast was also a means of rapid social mobility for some. John Broff, who was the Benkulen blacksmith in the 1740s, produced two sons who eventually became Governors of Fort Marlborough. William Broff, who was sent back to England for his education and returned to Benkulen as a Writer in 1760 at the age of nineteen, was appointed Governor sixteen years later. His brother Robert, who had been born at Fort Marlborough in 1752, also became Governor in 1793. From 1750 to 1759, \$100-120 was remitted annually to England by John Broff or his widow, presumably for the support of his son.³

Unfortunately for these men, Fort Marlborough was not a place where the great wealth associated with the eighteenth-century stereotype of the 'nabob' was obtainable. Governor Joseph Collet had written home in 1712 that he could recommend a friend coming over to Madras, where 'there are a great many Posts of Profitt without picking the Company's Pocket....Here I could not do so, how much soever I were dispos'd to it'.⁴ The Sumatran servants' disadvantages in relation to the service in India increased greatly after Clive proved the immense riches of Bengal in the

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1. Hew Steuart to his father John Steuart, 15 Dec. 1774, Steuart Papers.
 2. FM Cons., 3 Sept. 1740, SFR 63.
 3. FM Cons., 26 May 1749, SFR 65; 23 Sept. 1755, SFR 68; List of Marriages, Baptisms and Burials, Chaplain Arthur O'Neil, 1752, SFR 9, p. 388; List of Free Inhabitants at Fort Marlborough and its Dependencies, 30 Jan. 1756, SFR 10, p. 266; Bastin, *op. cit.*, p. 95, n. 295; Hew Steuart to his sister, Mrs. Christian Steele, 10 July 1777, Steuart Papers.
 4. Joseph Collet to Samuel Collet, 22 Sept. 1712, in The Private Letter Book of Joseph Collet, ed. H. H. Dodwell (London, 1933), p. 23.

late 1750s - a circumstance of which they were painfully aware. Hew Steuart, who held a responsible post as Resident at Manna, suggested in 1760 that should his brother want to join the Company's service, the family should try to get him 'sent out a Writer to Bengall or Madrass, which Settlements I wou'd recommend in preferance to any other in India'.¹ He later remarked wryly, 'We have no Nabobs here to help us at making our Fortunes with such rapidity as they are done in other parts of India'.²

A number of servants attempted to get themselves transferred to Bengal. Stokeham Donston urged his relatives regularly from 1759 to 1770 to use whatever influence they possessed to obtain him a posting to Bengal.³ Another such supplicant, Alexander Hall, explained to his family, 'It's true there's Troubles at Bengal, but it's good fishing in Muddy Water'.⁴ These attempts at transfer generally failed, and the members of the Benkulen establishment were obliged to reconcile themselves to a competency or less, rather than a fortune. Clive might return to England in 1760 with £200,000, but Hew Steuart at Fort Marlborough set his sights on £10,000, 'such a moderate fortune as will suffice for me'.⁵ Steuart felt fairly certain of earning this amount, and similar references in other private letters of the eighteenth century confirm it as a reasonable or perhaps optimistic level of expectation. Collet reckoned on acquiring £8000 by legitimate means in his projected four year tenure as Governor, and Stokeham Donston remarked on 'a pretty competency' acquired by his father-in-law Wotton Braham before he left Fort Marlborough in December 1759.⁶ Braham, who had been a surgeon on the establishment, had managed to remit at least \$32,345 (c. £8088) to England between 1745 and 1759.

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1. Hew Steuart to his father, 10 Jan. 1760, Steuart Papers.
 2. Hew Steuart to his sister, 25 Dec. 1768, loc. cit.
 3. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 15 March 1759, 4 April 1764, 10 March 1765, 7 Dec. 1767, 10 Jan. 1770, Donston Papers.
 4. Alexander Hall to Sir John Hall, 3 Sept. 1763, Hall Papers.
 5. Sutherland, op. cit., pp. 81-2.
 6. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 1 March 1759, Donston Papers.

Charles Miller reported in 1776 that he expected an income of nearly £500 per year from his Residency at Ipuh but added that the high cost of living there made this worth no more than £200 would be in England.¹

As judged from the surviving private correspondence of the Benkulen servants, the ultimate aim of the majority was to return to England and live on the income from capital acquired in Sumatra. This could be done either through investing money in stocks and bonds at an average of three to five per cent interest per year, or through buying an estate as Hew Steuart and Alexander Hall wished to do.² Stokeham Donston expressed this latter dream when he wrote to his cousin in England in 1765:

I want devilishly to make up about 500 p[er] an[num]. The Lord knows when that will be, it will satisfy my ambition and then you and I will join and keep a Pack of Beagles for the diversion of ourselves and the Worksop Gentry, do you think we can do it? If not we'll keep only hunters.³

It had been estimated that £300-500 per year was the minimum income on which one could live the life of a gentleman, with appropriate houses, servants and horses, at the end of the eighteenth century in England,⁴ so that £10,000 capital was barely adequate for the purpose.

How many Company servants actually reached this target is difficult to assess. The amounts of money remitted to England and Fort St. George in Madras, in the form of certificates and bills of exchange provide the best guide to the profits that the Sumatran servants were making, since although other types of remittances were available, little record of them survives. Gold was probably the most important of these, but remittances in diamonds also occurred. Collet had managed to send

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1. Charles Miller to Sir Thomas Gery Cullum, 23 Jan. 1776, Manuscript Correspondence of Heralds, Botanists and others with Sir Thomas Gery Cullum, Bury St. Edmunds and West Suffolk Record Office, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk.
 2. Hew Steuart to his sister, 25 April 1773, 10 July 1776, Steuart Papers; Sir John Hall to Alexander Hall, 12 Jan. 1758, Hall Papers.
 3. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 10 March 1765, Donston Papers.
 4. G. E. Mingay, English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century (London, 1970), pp. 10, 19-26.

a single diamond to his brother in England in 1715 with instructions to 'take care not to let it be known to any Person that may inform the Court of Directors',¹ since the Company, although no longer trading in diamonds on its own account, still required that they be manifested as part of a ship's cargo and sold at its own sales in London.

Collet appears to have obtained his diamond only through the good offices of his friend, Governor Edward Harrison, at Madras. Gold, on the other hand, was a much more accessible commodity for the West Coast servants. It was produced locally in the areas to the north of Muko Muko³ and occurs fairly frequently in the inventories taken of deceased servants' effects. It therefore seems likely that it was remitted to England or Fort St. George with some regularity. Certainly Governor Collet was experimenting with remittance in gold, for he requested Governor Harrison to send him a complete set of scales, weights both troy and Indian, and a set of 'Gold touches', so that he could assay Sumatran gold personally.⁴ Depending on the quality of metal he could obtain, he considered that 'It [gold] will be better if 4 or 5 p. ct. advantage can be made on returns than to send Dollars or Bills of Exchange'.⁵ Similarly, Alexander Hall appears to have remitted small amounts regularly to England in the 1750s to pay interest charges due annually to members of his family who had lent him money for his ventures in Sumatra. He sent an unspecified amount on the Company ship Dragon in March 1754, and another parcel of 17½ ounces on the Exeter early in 1756.⁶ It is perhaps noteworthy

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1. Edward Harrison to John Bedwell, 9 Feb. 1715, Collet's Letter Book, op. cit., p. 116.
 2. H. D. Love, Vestiges of Old Madras (London, 1913), vol. II, p. 232.
 3. William Marsden, The History of Sumatra, Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints (London and Kuala Lumpur, 1966), pp. 168-9.
 4. Joseph Collet to Edward Harrison, 22 Oct. 1712, Collet's Letter Book, op. cit., p. 35.
 5. *ibid.*
 6. Alexander Hall to William Hall, 4 Dec. 1754, 5 Dec. 1755, 29 Dec. 1757; Innes and Clark to Alexander Hall, 5 Feb. 1757, Hall Papers.

that he remitted only one certificate worth \$280 between his arrival at Benkulen in August 1751 and 1760.¹ There is also a record in 1739 of Deputy Governor Robert Lennox consigning one hundred ounces of gold dust (valued at \$1500) to his agent in London via the ship Britannia, and Charles Barbut, the Fourth of Council, sending eighty ounces (valued at \$1200) home by the same conveyance.²

Nevertheless, it is rare for gold to be listed in the manifests of private trade loaded on Company ships outward bound from Fort Marlborough, and in any case few of the manifests themselves survive. It was apparently not unusual for the servants in Sumatra to declare officially the amount of precious metal they remitted. The Directors, on discovering a parcel of 214½ ounces of gold shipped to England by Robert Hay in 1766, complained that it constituted an infringement of Company regulations and threatened in the future to consider as unlicensed and therefore forfeit to the Company any gold, diamonds or other goods or merchandise shipped without being registered.³ In reply to this, the Fort Marlborough authorities alleged that they had 'always understood the Orders for entering Things in the Manifest extended to Goods & Merchandize only, on Account of Tonnage and not to Gold'. They also professed to be unaware that gold paid any duty in England.⁴

From these few examples it seems that the amount of gold remitted from Sumatra may have been considerable. On the other hand there were several disadvantages associated with remittance in gold which may increasingly have made certificates a preferable form of payment. In the first place, there was some risk attached to purchasing gold or accepting it as payment for goods. The fineness of the metal found in the northern areas of Sumatra varied considerably from

1. See Appendix III.

2. FM Cons., 5 Dec. 1739, SFR 62.

3. Court to FM, 11 Feb. 1767, pars. 7-8, SFR 32.

4. FM Cons., 22 Dec. 1767, SFR 75.

district to district. The best quality came from Muko Muko (22-23 carats) and Natal (19-21 carats), while that from the Padang region was of inferior purity.¹ Determining the quality of the alloy, as well as ensuring the accuracy of its weight, was no easy matter. Quoting, on request, the prices of the different varieties of gold at Madras, Alexander Hall's agent there cautioned his client that 'The Wastage in melting of Gold dust (particularly the coarse sort from Padang which loses sometimes 9 pr. cent) is so great, that unless the Touch [fineness] can be very correctly ascertained, it is a precarious Article to deal in - Lately I know our Mint Undertaker to have lost Pags 1400 & upwards by Purchase of a Quantity to the Amount of Pags 11,000 only'.² There were also various forms of adulteration practised by the Sumatran dealers to contend with.

Moreover, there was the danger of loss in shipping gold long distances. This was aggravated by the open hostilities between England and France which put merchant vessels at risk for much of the period from 1730 to 1760. The two nations were embroiled in the War of the Austrian Succession between 1740 and 1748, with the French holding Madras from 1746 to 1748, and the struggle continued during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). There is evidence that the Fort Marlborough servants regarded the possibility that their remittances might become a French war prize as a very real one. In 1744, after the West Coast establishment had been informed that France and Britain were at war, the same Charles Barbut who five years earlier had shipped gold on the Britannia applied for a certificate for \$1000 to send to England as 'the War in Europe would render [it] very precarious to remit in Specie'.³

It is also possible that the profitability of gold as a commodity was already declining in the 1740s and 1750s as its purchase price in Sumatra increased. Marsden claimed that once its cost had reached \$21 per tael, or about 78 shillings

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1. Marsden, op. cit., p. 168.
 2. Claude Russell to Alexander Hall, 13 March 1764, Hall Papers. See also Appendix I.
 3. FM Cons., 29 Aug., 30 Nov. 1744, SFR 63.

an ounce, those who used it as a remittance to Europe actually made a loss once duty, insurance, assay and commission charges had been deducted, whereas when it had cost \$18 per tael some profit was to be made.¹ Although twenty taels of gold belonging to the estate of Charles Gibson had sold for \$370 or \$18½ per tael in 1734,² it appears that the price of gold subsequently floated between \$19 and \$20¼ per tael. The gold that Lennox and Barbut shipped in 1739 was manifested at \$15 per ounce. If this represented the purchase price, it works out at about \$20¼ per tael. By 1746, a parcel of gold from the estate of the dead Deputy Governor Rigg was auctioned at \$19 per tael, and the final balance of the estate was, perhaps significantly, remitted by certificates.³ In 1756, fifty-one taels of gold belonging to John Massey was also sold at outcry for \$19-1/8 per tael.⁴ By the 1760s the price of gold no longer dropped below \$20 per tael. The Benkulen Board paid \$20 per tael for one parcel of a hundred taels and \$21½ per tael for two other parcels of gold to make up about 579 ounces of gold sent to Batavia to finance repairs to the ship Earl Temple and to buy supplies in 1763.⁵ Although this gold sold for \$137.1.95 less in Java than its Benkulen purchase price, the experiment was repeated the next year with 410 taels of gold for which the Board paid \$22 per tael.⁶

Certainly, by the 1770s there was no question as to which was the preferable form of remittance. Hew Steuart summed up all the objections to gold when he complained in 1774 in a letter to his father that despite his desire to wind up his

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1. Marsden, op. cit., p. 170.
 2. FM Cons., 29 June 1734, SFR 61.
 3. FM Cons., 7 July 1746, SFR 64.
 4. FM Cons., 4 Oct. 1756, SFR 69.
 5. FM Cons., 14 Jan., 30 June 1763, SFR 71; 14 March 1764, SFR 72.
 6. FM Cons., 20 April, 30 Aug. 1764, SFR 72; 5 Jan. 1765, SFR 73. This parcel was also sold at a ten per cent loss. In the same year Councillor Henry Idell was offering to accept gold at \$20 per tael for payment of some debts owed him at Ketaun. FM Cons., 6 Sept. 1764, SFR 72. It is uncertain if the Board had overvalued the gold for Batavia slightly, knowing that the Company would bear any loss, or if Idell undervalued his exchange rate since it would help absorb the losses he was suffering from his inability to obtain payment from his debtors.

business in Sumatra, he would only be able to send home £500 in gold dust that year, 'the Company, having since the perplex'd State of their affairs forbid our drawing any Bills on them from India; a great inconvenience risque & loss to those who have Remittances to make to Europe'.¹

The presence of gold as an unknown factor greatly increases the difficulties of attempting to calculate the amount of remittance from Fort Marlborough between 1735 and 1770. Nevertheless, the problems associated with shipping gold do seem to vindicate the use of certificates as the principal yardstick of how much money was being made on the West Coast, and who was making it - always bearing in mind that the earning levels they reflect are probably lower than was actually the case. Accepting these limitations, an analysis of the certificates can reveal a great deal about the financial condition of the West Coast community. A summary of the total amounts remitted for each year from 1735 to 1770 seems to indicate that the general level of wealth was increasing. Between 1735 and 1740, for example, the total value of certificates drawn was below \$10,000 per year. In the decade between 1741 and 1750, however, the volume of remittance rose substantially, and it increased even further in the ten years from 1751 to 1760:

1741-1750

- 2 years in which under \$10,000 were remitted (1742, 1743)
- 3 years in which \$10-20,000 were remitted (1746, 1747, 1749)
- 1 year in which \$20-30,000 were remitted (1741)
- 1 year in which \$30-40,000 were remitted (1744)
- 1 year in which \$40-50,000 were remitted (1750)
- 2 years in which over \$50,000 were remitted (1745, 1748)

1. Hew Steuart to his father, 10 March 1774, Steuart Papers.

1751-1760

- 0 years in which under \$10,000 were remitted
- 2 years in which \$10-20,000 were remitted (1758, 1760 - this latter including only two months before the French captured the West Coast)
- 2 years in which \$20-30,000 were remitted (1751, 1754)
- 2 years in which \$30-40,000 were remitted (1753, 1757)
- 1 year in which \$40-50,000 were remitted (1755)
- 3 years in which over \$50,000 were remitted (1752, 1756, 1759) ¹

The number of people drawing certificates also seems to have increased with the passage of time from normally half a dozen or fewer per year in the 1730s and 1740s to about twenty in the late 1750s.

The certificates also give some idea of the distribution of earning power. Of the ninety-nine people who drew certificates between 1735 and 1760, the vast majority were covenanted servants, sixty-four in all. Surgeons (6), military officers (12), and seafaring men (10), including both the masters of Company sloops attached to the Benkulen establishment and the captains of private vessels, also made a good showing in terms of their numbers. Only two free inhabitants, however, and one private soldier remitted money. The covenanted servants also accounted for most of the high remittances. Only two surgeons, two military officers and two seafaring men sent home over \$5,000, whereas twenty-one servants did so. Moreover, eight of the twelve top money-earners (\$10,000 or over) were either Deputy Governor or Second in Council when they died or retired from Sumatra.² Wealth appears to have accompanied high office, and as promotion, barring some great lapse of duty, was strictly by seniority, a servant's standing or place on the list of the Company's employees in Sumatra was jealously guarded.

This picture remains essentially the same during the first decade of the Presidency period in the 1760s. The volume of remittances compares favourably with the 1750s in spite of the heavy losses suffered by the servants during the French attack on the West Coast in 1760:

1. See Appendix II.

2. See Appendix III.

1762-1771

- 0 years in which under \$10,000 were remitted
- 1 year in which \$10,20,000 were remitted (1762)
- 2 years in which \$20-30,000 were remitted (1763, 1770)
- 0 years in which \$30-40,000 were remitted
- 0 years in which \$40-50,000 were remitted
- 7 years in which over \$50,000 were remitted (1764, 1765, 1766, 1767, 1768, 1769, 1771) ¹

The distribution pattern also changed little during the 1760s. About two-thirds of the forty-seven people who made remittances were still covenanted servants as compared to seven military officers, four surgeons, four seafaring men and one chaplain. Similarly, only one military officer and one sea captain remitted over \$5,000 while eight covenanted servants did so, and great earning power remained the prerogative of high office. The only difference in the 1760s appears to have been the increased speed with which money for remittance could be acquired.

Within seven years of the resettling of the West Coast, four men, all of them Council members, had remitted over \$10,000 and two of them over \$30,000.²

Since only five servants managed to remit more than the £10,000 capital needed for a gentleman's income between 1735 and 1770, it was obviously not easy to acquire a competency on the West Coast. Moreover, the official salary and allowances paid by the Company played little part in its employees' attempts to make their fortunes. Salaries were low and remained unadjusted for all but the highest ranking servants until 1769. The standard salary of a Writer throughout the period under study was thus £20 per year for the first five years of his service in India. He was then promoted to Factor with an additional £10 per year and continued so until gradually by the death or departure of his superiors on the salary list he could succeed to a vacant seat on the Fort Marlborough Council. When he had reached the position of Fifth (out of eight) of Council, his salary rose to £40 and subsequently increased to £50 for the Fourth of Council, £60 for the Third and £80 for the Second.

1. See Appendix IV.

2. See Appendix V.

If he lived long enough, he could eventually become Deputy Governor at £200 per year.¹ Since the salary of £30 or below paid to the vast majority of the establishment was merely the equivalent of what might be earned in England by 'a shopman out of his apprenticeship in one of the more prosperous London trades' or 'experienced clerks in merchants' offices',² it was little inducement of itself to leave friends and family and to risk early death from tropical fevers or fluxes at one of the East India Company's Indian settlements.

The salary was supplemented by diet money, an allowance fixed by Supervisor James Macrae in 1724 in lieu of board, which in the immediately preceding period appears still to have involved the issue of set quantities of various provisions in kind. Macrae, noting the high charges that the Company had been obliged to absorb 'by frequent purchases of Stores at high rates' settled the diet money at £5 per month (£60 per year) for each Factor, and £3.15.0 a month (£45 per year) for each Writer.³

The provision of diet money did not materially improve the financial position of the Company's servants vis-à-vis their counterparts in England, since board was normally furnished for the London clerks and shopmen referred to above.⁴ Indeed, their standard of living was for the most part not as good. The diet allowance settled by Macrae remained in force until Fort Marlborough was upgraded to Presidency status in 1760 and took no account of rises in the cost of living in the interim.⁵ If it had been adequate in 1724, it most certainly was not twenty-five years later. In 1751, sixteen Writers and Factors petitioned the Council at Fort Marlborough to increase the diet money on the grounds that it was not sufficient to provide subsistence, as the prices of nearly all ordinary footstuffs had

1. See Appendix VIII.

2. G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, The Common People, 1746-1946 (London, 1966), p. 69.

3. FM Cons., 15 Nov. 1723, 25 March 1724, SFR 59.

4. Cole and Postgate, op. cit., p. 69.

5. See Appendix VIII.

doubled since Macrae's time. The cost of arrack, they noted, had risen from about \$30 to \$60-70 per leaguer; sugar from \$6 to \$9-12 per pikul; oil from 80 cash to 2-3 sukus per gallon; rice from 18 bambus per \$1 to only 6-8 bambus per \$1; fowls from 8-24 per \$1 to only 4-16 per \$1; and firewood from \$1.3.0 per fathom to \$3 per fathom.¹ It is significant that all the goods mentioned in the petition were so-called 'country' provisions, rice instead of bread, arrack instead of beer or wine. Maintaining a European style of cuisine was quite beyond the reach of the main body of the Company's employees. As Alexander Hall, who arrived on the West Coast shortly before the petition was signed, wrote to his brother:

You speak of making only one visit here. I would [like to] be in England three times a day viz. Breakfast, Dinner and Supper, to eat bread of which we have none on this Coast, without buying Flower at the exorbitant [rate] of £3.10; p.100 lb. & Beer £11.5. per Hogshead the first of which is only 13 shillings & the latter 40 in England.²

In 1759, the Company Storekeeper was even ordered to try to sell the beef and pork in his godowns at prime cost (the sum it had cost the Company), because they were perishable commodities and so expensive that the members of the Benkulen establishment would not buy them at the normal twenty-five per cent advance.³

The only other official supplements to a servant's income came from special allowances attached to a few positions in the service. A man well-versed in the Malay or Dutch languages might be appointed Linguist at an allowance of \$10 per month (£30 per year) to translate letters from local rulers or the Dutch settlements at Padang and Batavia.⁴ The servant who acted as Secretary enjoyed a five per cent commission for collecting in the debts and making up the estate of persons who had died intestate. This practice was stopped by Supervisors Pybus and Walsh in the mid-1750s, but a £75 per year allowance was subsequently attached

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1. FM Cons., 14 Nov. 1750, SFR 65. See also Appendix VIII.
 2. Alexander Hall to William Hall, 4 March 1755, Hall Papers.
 3. FM Cons., 24 July 1759, SFR 70.
 4. FM Cons., 31 Dec. 1756, SFR 69; 30 Aug. 1736, SFR 62.

to the Secretaryship during the Presidency period.¹ On certain occasions when Fort Marlborough lacked a Chaplain appointed by the Company (at a salary of £100 per year), one of the covenanted servants was temporarily appointed Reader or de facto chaplain with a gratuity of £50 per year.² This also sometimes occurred at subordinate settlements where there was a large European garrison. The Reader's allowance was a sizeable sum for less than arduous duties, but the only other special allowance available before 1762 was quite the reverse.³ The Accountant's employ was one of the most difficult and time-consuming of the Fort Marlborough offices, involving responsibility for drawing up or at least checking and correcting the monthly accounts of every other office at Benkulen and of each of the pepper-producing out-settlements, as well as drawing up the General Books of accounts for dispatch yearly to Europe. The additional pay for directing these duties was a mere £20 per year until 1747. The Board then decided to raise it to £50 as 'so small a Salary in Consideration thereof as £20 p. annum is by most looked upon [as] so inconsiderable an Encouragement that there are very few of the Gentlemen that are capable [who] care to undertake it'.⁴ The Board hoped that increasing the allowance would stimulate the younger servants to qualify themselves for the Accountant's employ. This hope was not fulfilled and the Board was obliged to raise the allowance again in 1756 to £100 per year. The Directors, however, refused to approve this as it was the equivalent of the pay for the same post at Madras where the volume of business was much greater. They did, however, agree to £75 per year as reasonable encouragement,⁵ and this remained the Accountant's allowance for the rest of the 1750s and the 1760s.

1. FM Cons., 29 Sept. 1764, SFR 72.

2. FM Cons., 8 Nov., 5 Dec. 1756, SFR 69; 5 June 1758, SFR 70.

3. Only two new posts which carried special allowances were added during the Presidency period: a Sub-treasurer with an allowance of £40 per year; and a Deputy for the new Benkulen Bank at £50 per year.

4. FM Cons., 11 March 1747, SFR 64; 20 Jan. 1756, SFR 69.

5. Court to FM, 29 Dec. 1756, par. 89, Public Despatches from England, 1756-7, op. cit., vol. 60, p. 73.

Nevertheless, it was almost impossible to attract competent people to the Accountant's post. Joseph Darvall, a junior servant, but considered by the Board to be the only suitable candidate, was persuaded to exchange his position as assistant to the Resident of Manna for the Accountant's employ in 1751 only after Deputy Governor Hurlock promised that he should succeed as Resident at Manna when that post became vacant, and in the meantime would collect \$35 per month of the profits from the licence for retailing arrack at Fort Marlborough.¹ Darvall still accepted only with reluctance. The reason is not difficult to find. Hew Steuart, who was Accountant in 1759 and enjoyed the £75 allowance, wrote to his father that he was soon to be allowed to quit that post for one more advantageous:

Notwithstanding the addition which I have had to my pay since my arrival here, I have only been able to live upon it. - This is no singular case in India but more especially in this part where the expence of living is much greater than in any other, however, as I am now going to the Country [outside Fort Marlborough] where things are very cheap, I hope in time to be able to acquire a sufficiency to make me live happy with my friends in my own Country.²

There were also other attractions in a move to the country which will be discussed in detail later.

With even the Deputy Governors complaining in the 1750s that their salary and allowances alone were inadequate for their needs,³ other methods obviously had to be found to obtain money for remittance to England and eventual retirement there. The methods most generally used were private trading and exploiting the special opportunities offered by certain offices in the service to acquire unofficial emoluments. This latter activity the Company defined as corruption and the servants' operations in this respect are difficult to trace, since they necessarily kept them, as far as possible, from the notice of their superiors in London or Madras.

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1. FM Cons., 14 Sept. 1753, SFR 66. Darvall was appointed on 27 Nov. 1751 when Charles Smith, the previous Accountant, was sent to replace Robert Hindley as Resident of Muko Muko. Hindley was to take over the chair at Fort Marlborough.
 2. Hew Steuart to his father, 29 Sept. 1759, Steuart Papers.
 3. Pybus to Court, 14 Jan. 1755, SFR 10; Carter to Court, 10 March 1759, SFR 12; See also Appendix VIII.

Nevertheless, in periods of what these superiors considered intolerable extravagance, negligence or malfeasance, usually defined in London in terms of rising costs and declining pepper exports, Supravisors were dispatched to the West Coast to investigate the circumstances, reorder the administration and punish the transgressors. At least two such visitations occurred at Fort Marlborough in the years between 1720 and 1770: one by Supravisor James Macrae from January to July 1724; and the other by Supravisors John Walsh and John Pybus from December 1753 to August 1754. The enquiries of these men provide the best source of information concerning the forms of 'picking the Company's pocket' most prevalent on the West Coast of Sumatra.

CHAPTER I

'PICKING THE COMPANY'S POCKET' ¹

The investigations by Supravisor Macrae in 1724 and Supravisors Pybus and Walsh in 1754 indicate that corruption at Fort Marlborough followed standard patterns and in essence varied little over the years. The means of using Company office for private gain ranged from direct embezzlement of cash to sharp practices almost indistinguishable from legitimate private commerce. Opportunities for illegal emolument were presented by virtually every position in the Company's service, both at Benkulen and the pepper-producing out-residencies. At Fort Marlborough they seem to have been most generally available to the Deputy Governor, and the Paymaster and Storehousekeeper who were normally members of Council.

It was the suspected embezzlement of \$12,000 found missing from the Company's treasury on the death of Deputy Governor Thomas Dunster in November 1721 which precipitated Macrae's enquiries of 1724. Preliminary investigations at the end of 1723, however, largely exonerated the dead Deputy Governor and implicated his Paymaster Peter Shelley and his successor Lewis Dean. Dunster's private cash books recorded a total of \$6187.1.0 issued to Peter Shelley, and the Captain of the Guard testified that Shelley had ordered a large chest of treasure removed from Dunster's lodging immediately prior to his death. The sum did not, however, appear in Shelley's Paymaster's books, and he had requested \$4000 from Thomas Wilford, who had taken over as provisional Deputy Governor for a few days after Dunster's death, allegedly to refund himself for money of his own that he had used to defray the preceding month's charges. It seemed doubtful that Shelley possessed enough cash of his own to cover the Paymaster's disbursements, and since he had simultaneously

1. Collet, Letters, op. cit., p. 23.

promised repayment to several of his numerous creditors, it was concluded that he had diverted the missing \$6187.1.0 to his own use. Shelley had been promoted to the Residency at Moko Moko after Dunster's death but had hurriedly resigned that post and left the West Coast on a country ship in May 1723. He was therefore not available to answer for his misdeeds, and Supravisor Macrae had to be content with stopping a bill for \$1181.1.89 which Shelley had drawn on the Fort Marlborough Council prior to his departure, in order to obtain partial restitution of his debt to the Company.¹

Another part of the missing \$12,000 was soon traced to Dunster's successor Lewis Dean. As was customary on the accession of a new Deputy Governor, the silver in the Company's treasury had been weighed off after Dunster's death by Secretary Thomas Blackall in the presence of the Council. Blackall, however, claimed that he no longer possessed the account of the silver's value made on that occasion, having given it to Thomas Wilford, who was then acting Deputy Governor. Wilford, in turn, alleged that he had subsequently lost the account but insisted that it had shown the value of the Company's silver to be \$46,220. Wilford was eventually forced to produce the silver account, and it showed that the Company treasury was supposed to contain \$50,220 rather than \$46,220 as he had claimed. Moreover, it was also discovered that the pages of the cash book where the silver remains had been entered were glued together and the sum entered in the Consultation Books scratched out and altered. Wilford confessed to doctoring the books, but he was not the final culprit. The missing \$4000 had gone to Lewis Dean who had obtained it from Wilford on the pretext of a debt due to him from Dunster.² Dean was subsequently indicted for further fraud for having blandly allocated himself \$150 per month more than the stated diet allowance (a total of \$1500) while acting as Deputy Governor - an action which he tried to justify on the grounds that his predecessors

1. FM Cons., 26 Oct., 11 Dec. 1723, 2 March, 6 May 1724, SFR 59.

2. FM Cons., 26 Oct., 11 Dec. 1723, 6 May 1724, SFR 59. Another \$200 had also been advanced to the Resident of Silebar without being entered in his books, but this appeared to have been a genuine mistake.

Cooke and Dunster had done the same thing.¹

By this time \$10,387.1.0 of the original \$12,000 deficit had been accounted for and the remaining \$1863.1.0 was debited to Dunster's estate since he was assumed to have diverted it to his personal use. When Dunster's accounts were finally settled and his estate made up, his debt to the Company appeared little enough in a monumental total of \$49,742.3.4 due to his creditors. The sale of his effects realised \$23,976.1.96 and this plus a number of debts owed to the estate provided his creditors with a return of seventy per cent of the money due them.²

No such spectacular cases of embezzlement were uncovered by Supravisors Pybus and Walsh thirty years later. The only instance of direct misappropriation of funds discovered by them involved Storekeeper Daniel Tottie and occurred at a time when the Supravisors' investigations were nearly completed. In January 1755, Assistant Storekeeper Henry Idell reported to Pybus that he suspected Tottie's reluctance to make up his monthly accounts stemmed from an inability to pay the cash balance due from the Storehouse to the Company's treasury. Idell had pressed Tottie to confess to having used the Storehouse money on his private account and then laid the matter before the Supravisor to avoid being implicated as Tottie's accomplice. Supravisor Pybus demanded payment of the Storehouse funds but received only \$445, while \$580.0.63 remained outstanding. Tottie's only explanation for his misappropriation of Company funds was 'his necessitous Circumstances, and being pressed hard by some of his Creditors for Money'.³ Such an attempt, under the very nose of the Supravisor, was clearly an act of desperation. Pybus's and Walsh's other reforms must have deprived Tottie of whatever minor emoluments had allowed him to make ends meet and reduced him to the alternatives of bankruptcy

1. FM Cons., 6 March, 11 March, 6 May 1724, SFR 59.

2. FM Cons., 27 April 1724, SFR 59. The Board had taken over the administration of Dunster's estate on 26 Oct. 1723.

3. FM Cons., 3 Jan. 1755, SFR 67.

or unauthorised borrowing in the slender hope that the money could be replaced before it was missed. The gamble failed, and Tottie was dismissed from the service and part of his effects ordered auctioned to repay his debt to the Company. He eventually consented to surrender all his goods for auction to satisfy the rest of his creditors and was then granted an allowance of $\$15$ per month to maintain himself until he could arrange to leave the Coast.¹

Supravisors Pybus and Walsh also discovered several other irregularities involving the Company treasury when, as one of their first acts after their arrival at Benkulen in December 1753, they checked the cash on hand against the books. Two relatively small deficiencies were revealed: $\$410.0.16$ in copper cash, and $\$579.0.83$ in silver. In neither case did the money appear to have been stolen, so they resolved the matter by billing all eight Council members for an equal proportion of the deficit, since each possessed a key to the cash chest, and all should have kept track of the whereabouts of the money.²

The most suspicious irregularity relating to the Company's cash in 1754, however, involved a surplus of $\$699.3.0$ in the cash chest rather than a deficiency. On enquiry, Pybus and Walsh were informed by Deputy Governor Hindley that the discrepancy arose from valuing each bag of silver brought from England at a standard $\$1000$ in the accounts, when on actual count the silver usually averaged about $\$4$ per bag more.³ The Supravisors were then obliged to trace the utilisation of what they calculated must have been a large surplus of silver amassed during the eight years of Governors Hurlock's and Hindley's administrations, as the forty-four bags of silver currently in the cash chest counted out at exactly $\$1000$ as noted in the books. They requested both Governor Hindley and John Massey, who as Paymaster had held a key to the cash chest during part of Hurlock's term of office, to report

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1. FM Cons., 17 Jan., 28 Feb., 9 April 1755, SFR 68; Inventory of the Effects of Daniel Tottie and Outstanding Debts due him, 4 Jan. 1755, SFR 10.
 2. FM Cons., 12 Jan., 14 Jan., 21 Jan., 28 June, 1 July, 14 Oct. 1754, 13 Jan. 1755, SFR 67.
 3. FM Cons., 12 Dec. 1753, SFR 66.

what they knew concerning the accumulation of surplus silver and whether Hurlock had transferred any to his successor on his departure from the West Coast.¹

The enquiry was complicated by the fact that no regular accounting of the surplus silver had ever been kept. Hindley explained that disbursements of it had been made according to a Benkulen 'Custom of a long Standing' which permitted the Deputy Governor to purchase household furniture or pay occasional extraordinary expenses with this fund. He added that no note had been made in the Consultations precisely because expenditures of this kind had been considered so normal.² Moreover, Hurlock had kept a separate cash chest, to which he alone possessed a key, containing his private money and about \$10,000 of Company cash for current expenses.³ This was for the sake of convenience since Hurlock had lived some distance from the fort while Cumberland House, the new Governor's residence inside the fort, was under construction. Hindley had continued this practice for several months after he had become Deputy Governor, but with Cumberland House completed Councillor Thomas Combes had pressed the Board to have all Company monies returned to the official treasury. A deficiency of \$800 which appeared when the two cash chests were reunited was made good by Hindley at that time.⁴

Nevertheless, Massey reported to the Supravisors that an estimated \$980 in surplus silver had been received during Hurlock's tenure: 280 bags via Company storeships, with the surplus per bag reckoned at \$3.2.0. Of this Hurlock had spent \$490 on horses and household goods and another \$150 to pay extraordinary services to the Company, leaving \$340 which Massey thought that Hurlock had delivered to Hindley in 1751.⁵ Hindley's own report listed \$795.3.0 in surpluses acquired since Hurlock's departure: \$100 of which had been relegated to miscellaneous disbursements

1. FM Cons., 12 Dec., 13 Dec. 1753, SFR 66.

2. FM Cons., 17 Dec. 1753, SFR 66.

3. FM Cons., 21 Dec. 1753, SFR 66.

4. *ibid.*

5. *ibid.*

on Company account; and \$695.3.0 which remained in the cash chest. Hindley had originally denied receiving any surpluses from Hurlock, but learning of Massey's report claimed a lapse of memory. He then quickly pointed out that there was still no real contradiction between his account and Massey's; the ships Walpole and Bombay Castle had, according to Hindley, delivered \$360 and \$56 respectively in surplus silver, and these sums added to the \$340 which Massey claimed Hindley had received from Hurlock and another \$40 resulting from an error in Massey's account still totalled \$795.3.0, the amount that Hindley had reported as his receipts.¹ With \$695.3.0 of the total \$795.3.0 still intact and satisfactory explanations from Hindley as to how the remainder was spent, the Supervisors acquitted Hindley of embezzlement, particularly since the other Council members had also held keys to the cash chest. Nevertheless, they condemned the Council's failure to bring the surplus silver to account and ordered that all current and future supplies be entered in the Company's books in a regular manner.²

To their credit, the Fort Marlborough servants in 1754 appear to have engaged in little of the barefaced embezzling so common in 1724, and the cash deficiencies discovered by Pybus and Walsh were minor compared to the \$12,000 found missing on Dunster's death. Nevertheless, Pybus and Walsh uncovered precisely the same types of malfeasance in the Paymaster's office which Macrae had tried to eradicate thirty years earlier. The Paymaster's office normally handled several thousand dollars of Company cash each month, paying wages and salaries due to all employees of the Company, military personnel and artisans, as well as the covenanted servants, who were paid quarterly. The Paymaster was, however, also responsible for keeping Company buildings in repair and adding such new ones as the Board, Fort St. George or London deemed necessary. It was the Paymaster's dual function as both the procurer and distributor of building materials on Company account which led to the

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1. FM Cons., 17 Dec., 21 Dec., 1753, SFR 66. The Paymaster's receipts for the money supported Hindley's explanation of his use of the money.
 2. *ibid.*

worst abuses of trust.

In February 1724, Supravisor Macrae had accused Paymaster Edmund Bugden of intentionally overcharging the Company \$4510.2.70. This sum included \$1068.2.8 for 356,174 bricks, \$1399.1.59 for chunam mortar, and \$1045.3.92 for kulit kayu, a bark used for roofing - all of which were entered in his account of expenditures but not actually used. This calculation of Bugden's overcharges was, moreover, based only on public works which he was known both to have begun and completed, since the investigating committee could not determine in other buildings what was Bugden's and what was his predecessor's work.¹ He was also subsequently charged for \$2063.1.74 worth of deficiencies in the materials which were listed on the books but could not be located when he relinquished the Paymastership to Lewis Dean in October 1723.² Although Bugden was able to explain the absence of some of these materials and reduce his debt to the Company on account of deficiencies by \$544.1.78, he admitted to the overcharges.³ He tried to transfer responsibility for them to his subordinates on whom, he claimed, his ill-health had forced him to rely.⁴ Macrae noting only his admission of guilt, fixed the final balance that Bugden owed the Company at \$4667.3.36 and ordered his effects impounded and

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1. FM Cons., 21 Feb. 1724, SFR 59. The investigations of Bugden's affairs had begun before Macrae's arrival when the bricklayer had accused Bugden of dismissing him for refusing to sign a voucher which stated that 100,000 bricks rather than 40,000 had been used in a building under Bugden's supervision. The Board had then appointed a committee to investigate the quality and use of materials under the Paymaster's care. FM Cons., 30 Dec. 1723, SFR 59. The final overcharges attributed to Bugden were estimates, calculated by counting eighteen bricks to one foot built at the standard price of \$3 per thousand bricks, and six bambus of chunam for every twenty-five bricks used at \$10 per koyan of chunam.
 2. FM Cons., 21 Feb. 1724, SFR 59. Counting the remains was a normal procedure when each office changed hands, and consisted of comparing what stores, wares or utensils actually existed (the remains in specie) with the goods listed in the books as ostensibly in existence (the remains per books). The servant resigning the office then was obliged to pay for everything missing unless he could give a reasonable explanation for its absence - a procedure designed to ensure his attentive care to the Company goods entrusted to him.
 3. FM Cons., 19 March, 30 April 1724, SFR 59.
 4. FM Cons., 29 Feb. 1724, SFR 59.

auctioned to reimburse his employers.¹ Since Bugden had requested permission to resign the service in January 1724, just as the enquiry into his activities was beginning, it was unnecessary to dismiss him for his misuse of authority while Paymaster.² Lewis Dean, who had succeeded Bugden, was also convicted of overcharges worth \$384.1.19 by having openly charged \$2 more than the established price of \$3 per thousand for bricks in his Paymaster's accounts.³

In order to prevent similar frauds in future Macrae directed that 'no building whatsoever' was to be undertaken without 'express orders from England or Fort St. George', and no new building materials were to be purchased on Company account except those needed to finish the fort and keep old works in repair. Nevertheless, the Paymaster's purchase of building materials remained, as Macrae had labelled it, 'the Sink of the Company's Estate ever since the Settlement of this place',⁴ and despite his precautions, Supervisors Pybus and Walsh uncovered practices virtually identical to Bugden's which by 1754 had come to be regarded almost as a legitimate perquisite of the Paymastership.

Investigations into the conduct of Paymaster John Massey had begun in April 1753, nearly a year before Pybus and Walsh arrived at Benkulen, as a result of complaints by Governor Hindley and Councillor John Beach about the bad quality of building material purchased by Massey for the settlement's use. The Board suspected that 'some underhand dealings...[had] been carried on to the Prejudice of our Honble Masters',⁵ on the assumption that Massey had pocketed the difference between the low price he must have paid for inferior quality materials and the standard price settled by the Company for these goods. Massey was asked to resign as Paymaster and one of his assistants, John Broff, was dismissed, while the Board

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1. FM Cons., 11 March 1724, SFR 59.
 2. FM Cons., 25 Jan. 1724, SFR 59.
 3. FM Cons., 6 March, 11 March, 6 May 1724, SFR 59.
 4. FM Cons., 6 May 1724, SFR 59.
 5. FM Cons., 10 April 1753, SFR 66.

probed further into the matter. A committee was appointed to make an inventory of the materials then under the Paymaster's care, the bricklayer was ordered to report the amounts of bricks and chunam actually used in public works constructed by Massey, and the Accountant was instructed to audit the Paymaster's books on the basis of the committee's and bricklayer's reports.¹

As a result of their findings a formal charge was exhibited against Massey in May 1753 and he was dismissed from the service on the same day, without being given time to prepare his defence.² The first two articles of the charge related to his use of bricks: first that he had used 200,000 Company bricks to build a kiln to burn lime to manufacture chunam without paying for them; secondly, that he had charged the Company for a total of 223,230 bricks more than he had actually used in the buildings for which he was responsible, particularly Cumberland House and the fort parade-ground. Another three articles related to similar frauds involving chunam, since it had been estimated that only half the chunam charged to buildings erected by Massey and his predecessor Isaac Barbut had been necessary for those works. Massey was accused of using an inflated rate for allocating the amount of chunam expended per brick laid - one bambu of chunam for every three bricks, instead of the allowance of six bambus of chunam for twenty-five bricks set by Supervisor Macrae in 1724. Massey was also alleged to have charged the Company for more chunam than had actually been used even at this inflated allowance. The third charge however was the most serious. Since the amount of chunam listed as expended in Massey's books far exceeded that actually used, a surplus of chunam should have been found among the materials under the Paymaster's care. A deficiency of chunam had instead been discovered, indicating that Massey had defrauded the Company by recording more chunam purchased on Company account than he had actually delivered or even produced as the private contractor of the chunam kiln. This inference appeared to be corroborated by the Malay employed by Massey

1. FM Cons., 10 April, 21 April, 7 May, 16 May, 17 May 1753, SFR 66.

2. FM Cons., 21 May 1753, SFR 66.

to operate the chunam kiln. He stated that Massey had fired the kiln less frequently than ex-Paymaster Barbut had done, while the accounts showed that Massey, at least theoretically, had purchased more chunam on Company account than Barbut had.¹ This the Board described as 'an Embezzlement of their Honours Cash committed to his Custody, and a high Breach of Trust'.² The formal charge then ended by accusing Massey of receiving poor quality materials (timbers, boards, ataps, bamboos, etc.) from the Malays and paying for them with over-priced cloth, in contravention of the Company's express orders, and of having sold large amounts of Company materials to private persons without bringing them on to the accounts.³

Massey's first response to these charges was an acrimonious counter-accusation that personal malice rather than zeal for the Company's service had prompted them. He then protested against the illegality of dismissing him before he presented his defence.⁴ Three months later, however, he produced a substantive reply in which he attempted to refute the Accountant's calculations on which the charges were based.⁵

Massey admitted overcharging bricks in public works erected by him, but he stressed that this had been a standard procedure used by previous Paymasters to compensate for large numbers of unusable bricks in the parcels delivered by the brick contractors. It could hardly be considered fraud on his part since he had had no hand in making the bricks and derived no personal profit from them. He then insisted that he had built the new chunam kiln only on the recommendation of Deputy Governor Hurlock and had used Company bricks because he had understood it to be Company property, since it had been decided when the production of chunam was first farmed out to a private undertaker that the individual concerned would

1. FM Cons., 16 May, 21 May 1753, SFR 66.
2. FM Cons., 21 May 1753, SFR 66.
3. *ibid.*
4. Massey to Board, FM Cons., 21 May 1753, SFR 66.
5. FM Cons., 11 Sept. 1753, SFR 66.

have the use of a Company kiln. The former Accountant Charles Smith and the bricklayer had always approved the numbers of bricks entered as expended in the Paymaster's books, Massey concluded, and his accounts had regularly been passed by the Board.¹

The same principles, Massey continued, applied to the overcharges of chunam attributed to him. The so-called extravagant allowance of one bambu of chunam to three bricks laid had been the allocation used by Barbut and other former Paymasters. Moreover, the existing deficiencies in both bricks and chunam, from which the Board had calculated the extent of his overcharges, had arisen from natural wastage over a long period. The Paymaster's remains, through no fault of his, had not been adjusted since 1737 when William Rigg had assumed the office, and the remains shown on the books were therefore unrealistically large. Isaac Barbut had tried unsuccessfully to have the accounts settled. When Barbut had left the West Coast in December 1747, Massey and his assistant had taken an inventory and had informed Governor Hurlock that none of the 500,000 bricks and only fifteen of the hundred koyan of chunam listed in the General Books were still in existence. Hurlock had told him that large wastage was normal in these articles and that the fault was Barbut's for not writing off materials used or spoiled. The Accountant, however, had never completed adjusting the books in accordance with Massey's findings.²

Massey devoted most of the remainder of his defence to refuting the gravest charge, namely that he had used his authority as Paymaster to augment his income as chunam contractor by charging the Company for more chunam than he had delivered. He dismissed his Malay kiln operator's allegations that it was physically impossible for the kiln to produce as much chunam as Massey claimed to have delivered, on the grounds that 'most of them [Malays] wou'd swear a Man out of his Life for a Dollar'.³

1. FM Cons., 11 Sept. 1753, SFR 66.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

Massey then proceeded in tortuous detail to try to demonstrate that he could and did manufacture the quantity of chunam for which he had billed the Company. Since the labour available to prepare and stoke the kiln and sift and measure the newly produced chunam determined how frequently the kiln could be burned, Massey stressed that he had employed as many men as Barbut had for several months and had also gained extra time by inheriting a kiln already prepared for firing from Barbut. He also cited Barbut's accounts, which showed twenty kilns worth of chunam delivered to the Company in eight months to prove the feasibility of burning chunam as many as three times per month - a fact which unfortunately could as easily indict Barbut as clear Massey of fraud. Massey also offered his private accounts to prove to the Council that he had purchased limestone for burning nearly equal to the total amount of prepared chunam which his Paymaster's accounts listed as sold to the Company, after deducting fifteen koyan which he had purchased from Barbut when he took over the kiln.¹

Massey then quickly concluded his defence by insisting that the charge of selling cloth to those Malays who brought in building materials for the Company was unfair. The Company's orders only prohibited forcing Malays to accept cloth instead of cash. He asserted that he had always given them money when they requested it and often had advanced them cash out of his own pocket, since the Company would never receive any materials unless advances were made, despite the standing orders to the contrary.²

The Board made no response to Massey's defence, and he remained dismissed and residing at Benkulen as a free inhabitant until the arrival of Supervisors Pybus and Walsh reopened the question of abuses of the Paymastership. Pybus's and Walsh's request in March 1754 for fresh reports from Massey and Accountant Joseph Gunn produced little but a prolonged dispute over what constituted an overcharge as opposed to a fair allowance for breakage and wastage, and whether

1. FM Cons., 11 Sept. 1753, SFR 66.

2. *ibid.*

a standard rate for the allocation of chunam could even be established when the amount of mortar needed varied with the type of building and even the weather.¹

In the end the Supravisors were obliged to settle Massey's fate somewhat arbitrarily. On 10 June 1754, Pybus and Walsh accepted Massey's oath and the testimony of several Board members that no bricks and only fifteen koyan of chunam had been extant when he became Paymaster. Despite a remaining overcharge of 103,387 bricks calculated from the purchases and expenditures of bricks listed in the Paymaster's and General Books during Massey's tenure, the Supravisors acquitted him of fraud in this instance. As he was not the brick contractor he derived no profit from the overcharge, and his personal papers indicated that he had actually paid out the sums he had charged for bricks in the Company's accounts. Pybus and Walsh attributed Massey's attempt to inflate the issues per books of bricks and chunam beyond the actual purchases of these goods to his need to cover enormous deficiencies, estimated at 616,878 bricks and over 43 koyan of chunam, which he had inherited from Barbut.²

Massey's conduct respecting the purchase of chunam, however, was considered very suspect, since he was not only its receiver in his public office, but also its producer in his private capacity. Much of his expenditure, not only of bricks but also of chunam, had been imaginary, as he had always listed chunam as used even for the overcharges of bricks and allotted it at the high rate of one bambu of chunam for every three bricks theoretically laid. As the surplus of chunam which should therefore have remained when he left the Paymaster's office did not exist, the Supravisors agreed that Massey must have delivered less chunam to the Company than he had claimed.³

The difficulty then was to ascertain the degree to which he had indulged in such short deliveries. The Supravisors thus embarked on another set of laborious

1. FM Cons., 13 March, 15 April 1754, SFR 67.

2. FM Cons., 10 June 1754, SFR 67.

3. *ibid.*

computations to decide how many bricks had really, rather than theoretically, been expended and then to determine the amount of chunam likely to have been used with them. After an independent count of the bricks in the fort parade-ground had confirmed the accuracy of the bricklayer's original estimates, which had been reached principally by computation, the Supravisors decided to fix Massey's overcharge of bricks at 150,000, a rough average of the 103,387 worked out from the accounts and the 196,664 estimated by the bricklayer. Then more or less reversing the mathematics by which they had reached the 103,387 total, the Supravisors calculated the number of bricks actually used. From 932,317 bricks that Massey's accounts claimed were expended, they subtracted the 150,000 overcharge, leaving 782,317. From this they also deducted 27,077 bricks listed as sold and sent to the out-residencies leaving 755,240, a figure which was accepted as the number of bricks used in buildings at Benkulen during Massey's term as Paymaster.¹

The next problem was to decide how much chunam was necessary to mortar 755,240 bricks. Pybus and Walsh rejected Massey's allowance of one bambu of chunam for every three bricks as excessive but accepted his claim that the amount really used varied with the type of building and the weather in which construction was carried out. Constant rain, for example, washed away mortar and occasioned a higher than normal consumption of chunam. Again they decided somewhat arbitrarily that twenty-four bambus of chunam for every hundred bricks should be adequate for most kinds of masonry, and on this basis calculated that 226 koyan and 458 bambus of chunam were needed to lay 755,240 bricks. To this sum was added 35 koyan and 486 bambus of chunam sold and sent to the out-settlements, making the actual consumption of chunam 312 koyan and 376 bambus - 164 koyan and 437 bambus less than Massey had entered as expended in his accounts. Massey was ordered to repay the Company for this overcharge to a total of \$2468.0.77. He was likewise to reimburse the Company for 103,387 overcharged bricks, 34,470 bricks and 7 koyan

1. FM Cons., 10 June 1754, SFR 67.

and 65 bambus of chunam sold to private individuals and not paid for, and 3 koyan and 578 bambus of chunam which he had allegedly sold to the Chinese at the exorbitant rate of \$40 per koyan. The chunam kiln was ruled to be Company property and Massey was to be refunded the small sum that he had personally spent on its construction. With regard to receiving poor quality timbers, bamboos, ataps and kulit kayu on Company account, the Supravisors finally fined Massey \$500 for negligence as they could discover no method of determining what should be charged him on this account.¹

The Supravisors concluded over a year of investigations into the Paymastership by stating that Massey was 'a very improper person' to be entrusted with a responsible position in the Company's service and they confirmed his dismissal. Nevertheless, they attributed his bad conduct more to negligence than outright dishonesty and particularly noted his misfortune in following the bad examples of his predecessors. They also upheld his complaints concerning the injustice of dismissing him before his defence had been heard, especially since the Presidency had already informed the Benkulen Board that it possessed only the power of suspension, not of dismissal.²

Massey's final debt to the Company for all charges totalled \$6774.1.95.³

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1. FM Cons., 10 June 1754, SFR 67. With regard to building materials, Massey claimed that he had been more honest than his predecessors, who had sold Company goods at the stated twenty-five per cent mark-up and replaced them with similar goods. Neither transaction had been brought on the Company's books and the transgressors had simply pocketed the profit which should have belonged to the Company. This appeared to be true since Massey's accounts of materials issued agreed with his assistant's book of deliveries. FM Cons., 15 April, 10 June 1754, SFR 67.
 2. FM Cons., 10 June 1754, SFR 67. The Supravisors also attempted to prevent abuses relating to building materials from recurring by altering the nature of the Paymastership. The allocation of materials and the hiring of artisans and coolies were to become the duties of an Intendent of Works, and Captain Edward Pero, the artillery officer at Fort Marlborough, was appointed temporarily to this post at a salary of \$20 per month until an Engineer arrived from Madras. The Paymaster was still to buy building materials, but he no longer had a hand in directing their use. FM Cons., 12 June 1753, SFR 66; 21 June 1754, SFR 67.
 3. FM Cons., 8 July, 8 Aug., 28 Aug., 21 Oct. 1754, SFR 67; 17 Feb. 1755, SFR 68; 17 June 1763, SFR 71.

By January 1756 the sum stood at \$5106.2.45 and when Massey died five months later, he still owed the Company over three-fifths of this total, the trustees who had taken charge of his affairs on behalf of the Company having deposited \$1975.1.50 in the Company's cash. His estate was not finally made up until 1758 when the trustees paid in the final sums and submitted a list of outstanding debts. The attorneys of ex-Governor Hurlock at once presented a note for \$2075.2.46. The Board allowed \$1887.1.82 of this and Massey's estate was left with a final balance of \$906.3.40. Isaac Barbut had also been charged \$4120.0.30 for his deficiencies and overcharges while Paymaster, but there is no indication that the debt was ever collected.¹

Like the Paymaster, the Storehousekeeper at Fort Marlborough functioned as both a procurer and distributor of supplies on Company account, and Storekeepers consequently were tempted into similar types of speculation, although according to Supravisor Macrae the 'dealings were smaller'² than the Paymasters'. In 1724, Macrae charged Storekeeper Thomas Blackall on five separate counts of malfeasance: two involving his purchasing practices; and the other three relating to his subsequent attempts to frustrate the Supravisor's investigation. Blackall was accused both of having brought stores onto the Company's books at higher rates than he had actually paid for them and of having sold the Company his own goods at exorbitant prices without obtaining prior permission from the Council or even listing the goods regularly in the Consultation Books.³

Earlier investigations of Lewis Dean's affairs had revealed his partnership

1. List of Quick Stock at Fort Marlborough, 1 Dec. 1754, SFR 10; FM to Court, 31 Jan. 1756, SFR 10; FM Cons., 29 Aug. 1758, SFR 70; FM to Court, 9 March 1759, IP 146-8, SFR 12. Unfortunately the Consultation Books for 1757 are lost, so it is impossible to obtain anything like a full account of Massey's estate or the trustees' transactions on his behalf. Some of the trustees' accounts were also entered in the Register Book rather than the existing volumes of Consultations, and the Register Books prior to 1767 have not been preserved.
2. FM to Court, 30 June 1724, SFR 8.
3. FM Cons., 20 March 1724, SFR 59.

with Blackall to sell arrack to the Company. Despite Company orders to stop the allowance of the liquor to Company personnel if arrack could not be procured for less than \$36 per leaguer, Dean and Blackall had sold the Company $43\frac{1}{2}$ leaguers of arrack at \$65 per leaguer of 120 gallons each - arrack which they had purchased for \$54 per leaguer of 160 gallons each. Macrae had charged them with violating their duties as Deputy Governor and Storekeeper in order to engage in 'fraudulently Lavishing away the Comp.^y Cash' to a profit of \$1262.2.0 for themselves. He had ordered each of them to repay half of the illegal overcharge for arrack.¹ This evidence of Blackall's breach of trust was corroborated by other sales of his private goods to himself as Storekeeper. He had for example bought over nineteen hundredweight of twine at the auction of Governor Dunster's effects at \$3.2.0 per hundredweight and then brought it onto his Storekeeper's books at more than \$10 per hundredweight. Since Benkulen normally consumed no more than one hundredweight of twine per year, Blackall had not only sold it to the Company at a mark-up of over two hundred per cent but also in a quantity which he must have known was unusable.² Moreover, it seemed unlikely that these were the only instances of Blackall's self-serving. After October 1723 he had completely neglected to note from whom he had purchased stores for the Company and before October most of those brought to account had been bought from either Dean or himself. An audit of the Storekeeper's books showed that over \$2000 worth of stores had been purchased in May, June, October, November 1723 and January 1724 without the Council's authorisation.

Blackall was also charged with a clandestine attempt to secure money owed to him by ex-Paymaster Bugden in preference to the Company's claims, although debts to the Company were traditionally the first to be paid out of a servant's estate

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1. FM Cons., 6 March, 11 March 1724, SFR 59. Dean's final debt to the Company reached \$7481.1.56: \$4000 obtained falsely from Dunster's cash box, plus \$533.1.33 interest of it; \$1500 for overcharges of diet money; \$384.1.19 for the brick overcharge; and \$517.3.64 for the arrack overcharge; plus other minor charges.
 2. FM Cons., 4 April 1724, SFR 59.

before other creditors were considered. Blackall eventually surrendered to the Supravisor a deed of conveyance signed by Bugden which transferred a large part of the latter's effects to Blackall and Captain Jeddere as security for debts owed to them. The conveyance was dated 20 February 1724, the precise time when Bugden had been charged with defrauding the Company of over \$5000. Blackall had, moreover, conspired with Lewis Dean, who also appeared to have been involved in collusive contracts with Bugden, to break the seal which Supravisor Macrae had ordered fixed to Bugden's escritoire in order to remove the conveyance and incriminating accounts and papers concerning Dean's and Bugden's partnership.¹

Blackall's reply to the charges against him clearly illustrated the conflict of public duty and private interest which perennially afflicted the West Coast servants. He denied every charge and claimed that he had done the Company no disservice. He did not consider selling his own stores to the Company a breach of trust because he had sold them at 'a very reasonable advance' and much more cheaply than the Company could have obtained them from other suppliers. Much of the arrack which he and Dean had sold to the Company had still been resold at a twenty-five per cent profit for the Company, and even the twine, he claimed, was charged at a lower rate than the Company usually paid after the risk of shipping, and freight and boat-hire charges had been considered. He also denied ever making unauthorised purchases since all the items had been entered in his monthly records and these accounts passed by the Board.²

Blackall then claimed that Bugden's debt, secured by the deed of conveyance, was for Company stores which he had issued to Bugden for Company business. Bugden had failed to pay him and he had been obliged to use \$1033.3.42 of his own money to make up his monthly accounts. He had therefore acquired the mortgage on Bugden's effects to ensure reimbursement at a time when the Company had not yet

1. FM Cons., 11 March, 20 March, 4 April 1724, SFR 59.

2. FM Cons., 4 April 1724, SFR 59.

attached the ex-Paymaster's goods. Blackall also disputed that the Company had any legal right to preferential treatment in the division of a debtor's estate. He continued to insist that he had co-operated in breaking the seal on Bugden's escritoire only at the instigation of Lewis Dean, who had claimed that he had the Supravisor's authorisation to sort through Bugden's papers, and cited his handing over the deed of conveyance to Supravisor Macrae as evidence of his good faith.¹

Despite these arguments, Supravisor Macrae judged the charges against the Storekeeper generally proved by the evidence produced when the articles had been drawn up. In Macrae's eyes Blackall was condemned by his admission that he had added any mark-up at all, 'reasonable' or otherwise, to the cost of the goods which he had sold to the Company. The Supravisor also noted that the debts which the conveyance from Bugden was to secure were not, as Blackall alleged, for stores issued on Company account but mostly for notes bought from Blackall at discount. In Macrae's view Blackall had sought at every turn to promote his personal interests above those of his employers. Merely having the Storekeeper's accounts passed by the Board, Macrae added, was not an adequate defence, particularly as the Accountant held no Council seat. Blackall was dismissed from the Company's service and ordered to repay £867.1.20 for his overcharges in the Storehouse.² Nevertheless, the Storehouse continued to offer enticing opportunities for fraud, and this combined with the Benkulen servants' chronic schizophrenia concerning their public and private roles virtually guaranteed that similar offences would be discovered by Supravisors Pybus and Walsh in 1754.

Pybus's and Walsh's investigations into the Storekeeper's office focused on the selling rather than purchasing of goods and were prompted by complaints from

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1. FM Cons., 4 April 1724, SFR 59. Dean admitted to opening the escritoire but denied the rest of Blackall's story. Dean had been allowed to resign from the service on grounds of 'ill-health' a week after the broken seal on Bugden's escritoire had been discovered.
 2. FM Cons., 4 April, 10 April 1724, SFR 59. The twine was returned to Blackall to dispose of as best he could. He was to refund the entire sum that he had charged the Company for it.

Chinese residing at Benkulen that they had been forced by the Storekeeper to pay enormous prices for certain goods. They allegedly bought iron and steel at \$7-9 and \$24.3.0 per pikul respectively, although the Company's list prices for these articles were \$4.3.80 per pikul for iron and \$7.3.68 per pikul for steel. The Supravisors, remarking that inflated prices would hurt the Company's revenues by decreasing consumption of these goods, demanded an explanation.¹

The current Storekeeper, Daniel Tottie, swore that in the three months that he had held the office he had issued less than two hundred pounds of iron and had sold these small parcels at the stated Company price with no additional profit to himself, although 'Advantages of this Sort...[had] been always looked upon as Perquisites annexed to the Storekeeper's Employ'. He also pointed out that Assistant Storekeeper Henry Idell had handled all receipts of cash at the Storehouse from Thomas Combes' resignation in June 1752 until Tottie's appointment on 31 October 1753.²

Idell, when questioned by the Supravisors, rapidly implicated not only himself and Tottie, but also former Storekeepers Joseph Gunn and John Beach in the abuses described by the Chinese. Idell asserted that Tottie, despite his protestations of innocence, had indeed sold the iron at an exorbitant mark-up. He had ordered one sale to be entered in his own name but had refunded the surplus profit from a second sale to the Chinese on learning that the Supravisors had begun to investigate the Storehouse. Tottie, who appears to have perjured himself in his first statement to Pybus and Walsh, countered Idell's allegations by claiming that he had at first been unaware of how much the Chinese were paying for iron and steel but had reimbursed the money as soon as he discovered it to be an inflated price. Further enquiry, however, revealed that Tottie had knowingly overcharged for iron from the beginning of his term as Storekeeper.³

1. FM Cons., 28 January, 13 Feb. 1754, SFR 67.

2. Tottie to Board, 30 Jan. 1754, FM Cons., 13 Feb. 1754, SFR 67.

3. FM Cons., 25 Feb. 1754, SFR 67.

Having settled Tottie's guilt, the Supravisors then probed further into Gunn's and Beach's conduct. According to Idell, Beach had reaped \$195.1.6 in illegal profits from the sale of iron and steel and Gunn gained \$17.2.15 on steel and \$205.3.64 on iron, with Idell allowed a \$77.3.1 share in the latter commodity. Idell also reported that the nails which the Chinese had complained were sold at unreasonable prices had not come from the Storehouse but were his personal property. Gunn and Beach admitted the truth of Idell's account to the Supravisors but pleaded that they had seen no harm in the practice as it had always been a customary benefit of the Storekeeper's employ. Gunn also claimed that he had enjoyed no personal gain from such dealings because he had allowed his assistants to take all the profits with the exception of one parcel of iron which he had sold at \$6 per pikul. Beach stated that he had given his assistant Idell a one-third share of the profits.¹

Unlike Supravisor Macrae, Pybus and Walsh merely censured the various Storekeepers for their conduct and ordered them to refund the excess profits from sales of iron and steel to the Company. They also cautioned the Benkulen servants that it was the strict duty of the Storekeeper to notify the Board if any of the goods under his supervision could be sold for more than the listed rates so that the Company could enjoy the benefit. Idell was reprimanded for selling his own nails in preference to the Company's but since it was his first offence and he was generally considered a useful servant, this lapse was forgiven.²

This was, however, not the end of investigations of the Storehouse. One more ex-Storekeeper, Thomas Combes, came under scrutiny. He too acknowledged selling iron and steel at inflated rates, but his dealings were more complicated than the simple rake-offs collected by the others. Combes claimed that his procedures had involved no breach of Company orders and had done no damage to the Company's profits. The standing orders permitted stores to be sold to Company servants for their own

1. FM Cons., 25 Feb. 1754, SFR 67.
 2. *ibid.*

use at a twenty-five per cent mark-up and at fifty per cent if intended for future sale. Nearly all of the iron and steel sold from the Storehouse at this latter rate Combes himself had purchased. He admitted that he had subsequently resold about 20,020 lbs. of iron and 1609 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of steel at much higher prices. Nevertheless, as the Company demanded, he had paid cash to the Storehouse accounts for these purchases but had offered very long credit when he had resold them. Combes asserted that the Chinese blacksmith to whom he had sold most of the goods could confirm this. The rest of the iron and steel had been sent away from Benkulen, chiefly to the North, for sale.¹

Combes claimed, however, that reselling the iron and steel at higher prices was actually a service to the Company. He had not operated in competition with the Company which had reaped its stipulated profit, and he had increased not decreased the sales of these two commodities. The Chinese could rarely afford to pay cash for iron and steel even at the Company's list price, so in buying for cash and reselling for credit he had performed an essential function as middleman. Moreover, he had not failed in his duty as Storekeeper, for as soon as he had discovered that the quantity of iron sales could be increased, he had raised the indent for Company iron from ten to twenty tons. He was even, Combes concluded, doing the Company a favour by buying its iron and steel, since both commodities could be purchased at cheaper rates from the captains of the Company's European ships.²

The fact that Combes' behaviour appeared to be within the letter if not the spirit of the Company's orders left the Supervisors in a dilemma. They pressed Combes to confess that he had resold some of the iron and steel for cash, but he continued to assert that it had all been sold on at least three months' credit on which no interest had been charged. Pybus and Walsh considered the forty per cent mark-up on iron and sixty per cent on steel which Combes had added to the

1. FM Cons., 26 Feb. 1754, SFR 67.

2. *ibid.*

Company's prices excessive, but they felt unable to censure him because the Company never sold on credit and Combes appeared to have done nothing else. The Supervisors therefore referred the matter to Madras to determine the extent to which Combes' actions could be excused.¹

The Presidency, however, saw no distinction between Combes' conduct and that of Gunn, Beach, Tottie and Idell. Fort St. George demanded in a letter of October 1754 that Combes repay all surplus profits on iron and steel on the grounds that 'he has nothing more to say in his justification than the other Gentlemen, to wit that he bought them on his own Account and sold them in the same manner to the Native'.² All forms of competition with Company merchandise by Company servants were condemned, and the Presidency concluded

that if the Storekeeper knowing the Company to be in want of any Articles buys them upon his own Account in order to sell them to the Company at an advanced price, & on the other hand if when he perceives any Articles in the Company's Storehouse are in demand to take them out in his own name in order to sell them at an advanced price leaving those that are likely to lay on hand, all this we say is a palpable abuse of the Company's Indulgence to their Servants to take out of the Storehouse at a moderate price what they may want for their own use.³

Combes protested against Madras's demand for a refund on the grounds that the iron and steel which he had sent away from Fort Marlborough could not be considered unfair competition for goods in the Storehouse, which served only the head settlement. Nevertheless, when he submitted his report of the amounts and intended markets of the iron and steel he had disposed of, he was unable to determine the exact quantity which had been sent northward for sale. The Board therefore decided to allow only half of it as exports, and Combes was charged \$195.2.78 for surplus profits on his sales at Benkulen, which sum he duly paid in August 1755.⁴

1. FM Cons., 26 Feb. 1754, SFR 67.

2. Fort St. George (hereafter referred to as FSG) to FM, 21 Oct. 1754, par. 48, Letters from Fort St. George, 1754, Records of Fort St. George (Madras, 1931-46), vol. XXX, p. 156.

3. *ibid.*

4. FM Cons., 6 Jan. 1755, SFR 67; August Cash Account, 1 Sept. 1755, 18 May 1755, SFR 68.

The Supravisors also found two other abuses relating to the Storehouse. One was the lending of stores to private persons without payment which, as the goods were presumably returned in kind, deprived the Company of its twenty-five per cent profit. Idell, who appeared to have been responsible for much of this practice, was ordered to pay all bad debts on this account to a total of \$583. Idell at first refused, claiming that he had lent out stores only on the orders of the various Storekeepers. The Supravisors responded that he should have known better than to obey an order so patently inconsistent with the Company's interest and eventually threatened to dismiss him if he failed to reimburse the Company. After some further prevarications, Idell finally deposited the sum demanded in the Company's cash.¹

The other abuse was the provision of storage facilities in the Storehouse for private goods. This not only saved the servants rent for warehouse space, but also preserved them from losses from wastage in perishable goods like salt, rice and arrack. The full amount of stores privately deposited was always returned to the owners on demand and any wastage which occurred was written off to the Company's goods stored alongside them. To remedy this loss to the Company, the Supravisors ordered the godowns cleared of all private goods, according to a list of depositors prepared by Idell, with fifteen and two per cent respectively deducted from private rice and salt to cover wastage. When it was discovered that the padi in the Storehouse was insufficient to fulfil the demands of all the private depositors, the Supravisors declared that the Company was to retain the full amount shown on its books and any padi left over was to be divided proportionately among the various claimants. In this instance it was to be the private individuals rather than the Company which suffered.² The Supravisors' action, however, had no lasting effect.

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1. FM Cons., 8 June, 2 Sept., 11 Sept., 16 Sept., 23 Dec. 1754, 2 Jan. 1755, SFR 67. Idell was to make repayment at the rate of \$70 per leaguer for arrack; and 12 bambus per dollar for rice and salt.
 2. FM Cons., 8 June 1754, SFR 67. This practice was discovered when the goods in the storehouse were counted to settle the deficiencies chargeable to four ex-storekeepers. The total deficiencies of \$5591.2.8 were divided as follows: \$800 charged to the estate of Robert Raines; \$1300 to the estate of Henry Coales; \$1400 to John Massey; and \$2091.2.8 to Charles Hampton.

In 1764, the Storekeeper reported that three leaguers of arrack belonging to Governor Carter had been issued from the Storehouse in the mistaken belief that they belonged to the Company.¹

Malfeasance in the Paymastership and Storehouse in 1754 were variations on themes discovered by Macrae thirty years earlier; the profits seem for the most part to have been smaller in the 1750s and one is inclined to believe the malefactors' perennial pleas that their dealings were customary practice at Fort Marlborough which they had never really regarded as a breach of trust. Nevertheless, although little direct embezzlement was uncovered in 1754, Pybus and Walsh did find one case of large scale profiteering which appears to have had no precedent in Macrae's investigations. It involved the Deputy Governor's manipulation of the sale of the arrack licence, which gave its farmer a monopoly of retailing this highly alcoholic beverage. The Directors had been informed privately that the principal Benkulen servants regarded 'the Farming [of] these Licenses as Perquisites [and] intimidate[d] all other Persons from Bidding against them and in [due] course get them into their Hands at their own Prizes [sic]'.² The Supravisors were instructed to investigate the possibility of such collusion carefully.

The Supravisors had begun their enquiries even before they received these instructions from the Court. After a disastrously unprofitable attempt to manufacture arrack at Benkulen had been terminated in 1738, Deputy Governor Hurlock had revived the venture in 1751 upon finding a group of Chinese willing to undertake the project.³ These people informed the Supravisors shortly after their

1. FM Cons., 20 April 1764, SFR 72.

2. Court to FM, 28 Nov. 1753, par. 29, Public Despatches from England, 1753-4, op. cit., vol. LVII, p. 81.

3. FM Cons., 24 Jan., 6 Feb., 13 March 1751, SFR 65. The earlier venture of the 1720s and 1730s ended with the sale of the manufacturing utensils in 1738. At this time the Chinese contractor See Jibb stood \$6858.2.52 in the Company's debt. The money was not recovered. FM Cons., 20 July 1736, 28 May 1738, SFR 62. See Appendix XIV.

arrival that Hurlock had also promised them the licence for retailing arrack and running a gaming table as an incentive to increase arrack production. These men then offered to rent the licence for two years at \$300 per month, over twice the sum it was currently fetching.¹ The Supravisors noting that the licence had sold for only \$130 per month throughout both Hurlock's and Hindley's administrations concluded that the licence had for some time been earning less for the Company than it was actually worth. When questioned the Board agreed that it could have sold for \$300 per month during this entire period.²

As Supravisor Pybus subsequently told the Court, the licence had indeed been let for \$300 per month (\$3600 per year), but the difference between that and its formal purchase price at auction, \$2040 per year, had been appropriated by Hurlock and Hindley 'to private Emolument'. Twelve hundred dollars per year had been paid to the Deputy Governor 'in whose name the Farm was purchased at a kind of pretended sale of it, by the Chinaman to whom he granted the License, who likewise paid for it the Rent of it 200 Dollars monthly, 130 of which was brought to the Company's Credit'.³ Hindley admitted as much, informing the Supravisors, 'I accepted of it in compliance with the Custom as an Annual Gift which had been received by all my Predecessors'.⁴ He went on to stress, however, that he had intended to abolish this 'bad practice' and had even promised the chief undertaker of the sugar works in writing that he and his colleagues should have the farm in future. In addition to the 'gift' of \$70 per month to the Deputy Governor, the difference between what the Chinese paid and what was brought to Company account, was divided usually between the Surgeon and the Secretary.⁵

1. FM Cons., 12 Jan., 14 Jan. 1754, SFR 67.

2. *ibid.*

3. Pybus to FSG, FSG Cons., 5 Sept. 1758, Fort St. George Diary and Consultations Book, Records of Fort St. George (Madras, 1930), vol. 68, pp. 139-44.

4. FM Cons., 14 Jan. 1754, SFR 67.

5. Pybus to Court, 6 April 1754, Pybus to Court, 14 Jan. 1955, SFR 10.

Meanwhile Hurlock and Hindley were billed for the profits they had enjoyed between 1 May 1746 and 30 April 1752 at a rate of \$170 per month: a total of \$10,200 for Hurlock, and \$3570 for Hindley. Hindley referred the bill to the trustees who had taken over his affairs on behalf of the Company as a result of the Supravisors' earlier enquiries into a deal between Hurlock and Hindley for the purchase of the Deputy Governorship. Hurlock's attorneys, who had prudently remitted \$15,400 to the ex-Deputy Governor in England just after the Supravisors had arrived at Benkulen, protested that they had no money of his with which to pay the bill. They promised to surrender what funds they might in future collect on his account if a certificate were granted for the money, leaving the Court to decide if it could be granted to him or kept back on account of the Company's claims.¹

The Court's initial response was to praise the Supravisors for detecting 'a most notorious Piece of Injustice in the Sale of the Arrack Farm' and for obtaining recompense for the Company, since 'neither they [the Secretary and Surgeon] or the Deputy Governours had a Right to one Dollar without our express Consent'.² The Directors were, however, soon obliged to retreat from this uncompromising stand. According to his attorneys' agreement with the Supravisors, a certificate payable to Hurlock on the approval of the Court had been drawn out for \$5200 at Fort Marlborough. Hurlock presented this for discharge in England in June 1755 and discovered that payment was to be withheld because of the Supravisor's bill for surplus profits from the arrack farm. Hurlock promptly petitioned the Court to honour the certificate, asserting that no real proof had been provided to support the Supravisor's accusations of collusion.³ The fact that the arrack licence was currently earning \$170 per month more than it had during his administration was merely circumstantial. It might lead the Supravisors 'to suspect

1. FM Cons., 21 Dec. 1753, SFR 66; 12 Jan., 14 Jan. 1754, SFR 67.

2. Court to FM, 3 Dec. 1755, par. 41, Public Despatches from England, 1755-6, op. cit., vol. LIX, p. 68.

3. Hurlock's Petition to the Court, 11 July 1755, Public Despatches from England, 1755-6, op. cit., vol. LIX, pp. 125-6.

Clandestine practice', but it did not demonstrate conclusively 'that I could influence everybody not to bid [at open auction] and indeed [I] defy proof that I ever attempted to intimidate any single person'.¹ The auction had always been held in public with due notification each year, and the highest bidder declared the farmer for the next year. The Supravisors, Hurlock concluded, 'cannot deem me answerable and accountable for the difference in Revenues, between Year and Year, if they do, I hereby appeal to Your Honours who I don't doubt but will weigh the Equity of the case with impartiality'.²

In the face of this appeal, the Court was forced to keep the matter of Hurlock's certificate pending while it forwarded his petition to Fort St. George and requested the Supravisors to provide an explicit description of the arrack licence transactions, with depositions on oath from people at Fort Marlborough acquainted with them, as proof of the charges against Hurlock.³ The authorities at Fort Marlborough did not produce the required depositions until December 1758.⁴ The texts of these unfortunately have not survived, but they must have supported Pybus's initial accusations of collusion, for the Court's Committee of Correspondence concluded that the Company had been 'greatly Injured by the Clandestine Management of the Arrack Farm as before-mentioned; That the Amount of the said Certificate be not paid to Mr. Hurlock, but that it be reserved in the Company's hands in part of Satisfaction for what they have suffered on this occasion'.⁵ The Court approved this recommendation on 11 June 1760 and the matter was settled. There is, however, no evidence of further efforts to recover the remaining \$5000 for which Hurlock had been billed initially.⁶

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1. Hurlock's Petition to the Court, 11 July 1755, Public Despatches from England, 1755-6, op. cit., vol. LIX, pp. 125-6.
 2. ibid.
 3. Court to FSG, 11 Feb. 1756, par. 30, Public Despatches from England, 1755-6, op. cit., vol. LIX, p. 57; Court to FM, 25 March 1757, par 8, Public Despatches from England, 1756-7, op. cit., vol. LX, p. 75.
 4. FM Cons., 22 Dec. 1758, SFR 70; FM to Court, 10 March 1759, SFR 12; Pybus to FSG, FSG Cons., 5 Sept. 1758, Fort St. George Diary and Consultations Book, op. cit., vol. 68, p. 144.
 5. Committee of Correspondence, 3 June 1760, Court Records, Correspondence Reports,
 6. Court of Directors, 17 June 1760, Court Minutes, vol. 69. [vol. 22, IOL.

Corruption at the Out-settlements

The pepper-producing out-settlements offered in certain respects even more fertile fields of self-enrichment to the West Coast servants than Fort Marlborough. The Court was alive to the possibility of malfeasance there and specifically directed Supervisors Pybus and Walsh in 1753 to investigate 'the motives for encreasing the Number of Settlements upon the West Coast, and whether our servants have not been induced thereto more for their own Interest than Ours'.¹ The West Coast establishment had expanded from three main European-staffed Residencies in the late 1730s (Muko Muko, Lais and Silebar) to nearly a dozen a decade later with a corresponding rise in running costs. By the early 1750s the smaller Residencies of Talo, Selumah, Kawur, Ipuh and Ketaun, as well as the more sizeable ones of Lais, Muko Muko, Manna, Krui and Natal, each had a house and pagar with at least one European Resident and a garrison of between three and thirty men.² Some of the new settlements met London's requirements in terms of pepper production. Manna, for example, was already one of the best pepper-growing areas on the Coast when the first European was sent to manage affairs there in 1740. Nevertheless the expansion from an ensign and thirteen Bugis to protect the Company's effects at Manna to a fully fledged Residency with a garrison of over twenty headed by two Europeans greatly enhanced expenses.³ Ensign To Assing had managed on \$167 to cover running costs for an entire pepper season exclusive of the cost of the pepper itself in 1739;⁴ three years later expenses were averaging between \$250 and \$750 per month.⁵ The foundation of a Residency at Krui in 1743 was a less happy experiment, and Krui became a particular target for the Directors' ire when

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1. Court to FSG, 24 Jan. 1753, pars. 20-1, Public Despatches from England, 1752-3, op. cit., vol. LVI, p. 47.
 2. Military Reductions List, FM Cons., 27 April 1754, SFR 67.
 3. FM Cons., 29 Sept. 1739, SFR 62; 25 Jan. 1740, SFR 63.
 4. FM Cons., 30 Aug. 1739, SFR 62.
 5. Cash Accounts, Jan.-June 1742, FM Cons., 22 March, 20 April, 22 May, 23 June, 19 July 1742, SFR 63.

they noted that it 'stands the Company in as much money as Moco Moco and hardly Produces a Quarter part of the Pepper'.¹ Since the Directors already viewed the number of out-settlements on the West Coast as excessive, they were also concerned by Benkulen's plans for several others at Natal, Pariaman and the Nassau Islands which 'we apprehend will greatly increase our charges without an adequate advantage'.²

Despite their intention to tour the various Residencies in order to assess their value to the Company first-hand, Supravisors Pybus and Walsh never got beyond Fort Marlborough. Their regulation of the out-settlements' affairs was limited to attempts to cut costs by reducing the size and allowances of the various establishments and to obtain recompense for past mismanagement by adjusting often long neglected accounts and settling deficiencies in the remains. Information is, therefore, more difficult to acquire on the servants' illegal emoluments at the out-settlements than on those operating at Benkulen. Nevertheless, several examples came to light in the early 1750s which helped to induce the Court to launch the Supravisors' enquiry, and these give some indication of the special opportunities open to Company servants residing outside Fort Marlborough.

The out-settlements were acknowledged by the Benkulen servants in the 1740s and 1750s to be superior stations to any but the highest Council seats at Fort Marlborough. The Second of Council was normally given the Residency of Muko Muko in the 1740s and by the 1750s about half the Council lived away from Benkulen as the heads of their own settlements at Manna, Krui, Natal and even Selumah, as well as Muko Muko.³ The desire for a Resident's post generated a number of disputes

1. Court to FSG, 24 Jan. 1753, par. 20, Public Despatches from England, 1752-3, op. cit., vol. LVI, p. 46.

2. *ibid.*

3. After the settling of Natal in 1751 that Residency became the prize offered to the Second of Council while the Third of Council was given Muko Muko. The Court finally objected to the small number of Councillors actually conducting the government at Fort Marlborough as a result of 'Servants of Station being at every petty Residency', and forbade in future Council members holding Residencies anywhere but Natal, Muko Muko and Manna. Court to FM, 6 Feb. 1760, par. 97, SFR 31. These orders, however, had limited effect. George Scott and Henry Idell, for example, both acted as Resident at Krui while they were Councillors in the early 1760s, and Stokeham Donston remained on as Resident at Selumah after he joined the Council in 1767.

within the Fort Marlborough Council. For example, the appointment of Randolph Marriot as Resident at Muko Muko in June 1753 brought protests from Robert Jack and William Smith who asserted that they stood prior to Marriot on the civil list.¹ Roger Carter, who had been acting as provisional Resident at Muko Muko, also complained that unless the appointment was made strictly by seniority, it was an adverse reflection on his abilities.² Later in 1753 a similar quarrel broke out over the appointment of Joseph Darvall as Resident at Manna. Darvall had in 1751 been promised the Residency by Governor Hurlock if he would take over the Accountant's office at Fort Marlborough until the Residency fell vacant.³ Both Richard Wyatt and Daniel Tottie, however, considered that they had better claims to Manna and that a private promise of this nature was an insufficient excuse for overturning the rule of promotion by seniority.⁴ Darvall had only been doing his duty in taking charge of the Accountant's office, Wyatt complained to the Board, and added that it was 'poor Encouragement indeed, if Junior Servants are [permitted] to run away with the places of Credit and Advantage', Manna being one of 'the Most Material Settlements on the Coast'.⁵ Tottie was even more explicit. He had been denied Manna on the grounds of his poor financial circumstances, as well as reputed lack of ability. He wrote bitterly to Madras:

...It has hither to been my fate to be kept at Marlbro. Without any other advantage than my pay to live upon at which place without a large fund it is impossible for a Man to get a Cash, and consequently out Settlements^{ts} are the only places where a man that has but little can improve his Circumstances to which by my standing I have been long entitled.⁶

Hew Steuart, who five years later was delighted to resign as Accountant to go as Resident to Manna, reckoned that the post would bring him £1000 per year.⁷

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1. FM Cons., 4 June, 21 June, 30 June, 11-31 July, 25 Aug., 4 Sept., 1753, SFR 66.
 2. FM Cons., 11-31 July 1753, SFR 66.
 3. FM Cons., 31 Oct. 1753, SFR 66.
 4. FM Cons., 14 Sept., 29 Sept. 1753, SFR 66.
 5. Wyatt to Board, 29 Sept. 1753, FM Cons., 29 Sept. 1753, SFR 66.
 6. Tottie to FSG, 15 Feb. 1755, SFR 10.
 7. Hew Steuart to his father John Steuart, 20 Sept. 1759, Steuart Papers.

Unfortunately he did not indicate the sources of this extra income. Supravisor Pybus, however, writing to the Court of Tottie's dismissal for malfeasance as Storekeeper, applauded the earlier refusal to send him to Manna, since there 'he might have embezzled your Estate to a large Amount without much danger of discovery'.¹

Certainly distance from Fort Marlborough and the minute size of the European population at most of the out-settlements increased the possibilities for collusion and fraud and decreased the fear of detection. The amounts of cash and stores under the Resident's supervision were much smaller than at Fort Marlborough, ranging from between a few hundred dollars a month to several thousand at large and far-away settlements like Muko Muko and Krui, but the Residents had all the opportunities, within the limits of these smaller resources, for the types of corruption practised by the Paymaster and Storekeeper at the head settlement.

Certainly access to the Company's cash was easier. The fact that only two examples of embezzlement were uncovered at the out-settlements between 1735 and 1770 indicates that only a Resident's sudden incapacity or death was likely to reveal illicit borrowing from the Company's cash.

The first case involved John Savage, the Resident of Muko Muko, in 1737. He was reportedly so ill that the Board sent a replacement, Samuel Greenslate, to take over weighing and paying for the pepper then coming down from the country. When Greenslate took charge of the Company's treasure on his arrival at Muko Muko, he discovered a deficiency of \$4011.3.62, of which Savage disclaimed any knowledge. The Board, on learning of this, suspended Savage, exhibited a formal charge of embezzlement against him and ordered his goods seized as security for repayment of this sum. Savage then acknowledged the deficiency but alleged that it had resulted not from 'fraudulent design' but from keeping his own money and the Company's in one chest and being unable to keep proper accounts because of his

1. Pybus to Court, 4 Jan. 1755, par. 14, SFR 10.

illness. The Board rejected this excuse and ordered Savage's effects sold. He was allowed \$20 per month subsistence until he could clear his debt to the Company and leave the Coast. Savage's assets proved barely adequate. They totalled only \$4870.3.32, including \$1936.1.76 worth of piece goods, \$881.0.25 worth of debts collected from the Malays, and \$1168.3.32 in debts still uncollected at Muko Muko. The final balance he owed to the Company, on the other hand, reached \$4706.2.73, including not only the cash deficit, but also \$628.0.94 for other deficiencies at Muko Muko. Savage was also deeply in debt to various people on the Benkulen establishment who likely received little or none of their money back from his estate.¹

Another similar incident occurred about ten years later at Krui. Alexander Christie, the Resident there, died unexpectedly. On his death-bed he turned over the Company's cash chest to his assistant, who discovered a deficiency of \$877.0.56 and a list of debts owed to Christie, which the Resident had deposited in the chest to cover his hitherto unsuspected debt to the Company. The Board directed that the assistant collect the debts owed to Christie to reimburse the Company, and this was done with considerable success, but on this occasion they also attempted some measures to prevent such practices. They ordered that in future, assistants at out-settlements, as well as the Residents, were to hold a key to the cash chest, so that each could keep a check on the other's activities.² Nevertheless, it seems likely that other instances must have occurred where the Resident or the Resident and his assistant in collusion used Company money for private commerce or money-lending and were able to replace the funds before they were discovered to be missing in a formal count of cash remains.

The Resident at an out-settlement was responsible not only for keeping the Company's cash, paying the garrison and workmen, and issuing stores, but also for

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1. FM Cons., 8 July, 30 July, 2 Aug., 20 Aug., 29 Aug., 13 Sept., 29 Sept., 7 Oct. 1737, 20 March, 31 March 1738, SFR 62.
 2. FM Cons., 15 June, 21 July, 24 Aug. 1748, SFR 65.

ordering and paying for materials needed for erecting and repairing buildings under his charge. The Court had noted that their employees 'squander'd away great sums of Money in Buildings at several subordinate Residencys' and wondered 'whether they have not wrong'd us by being undertakers to Furnish Bricks and other Materials for such Buildings'.¹ It is evident that the kinds of abuses already encountered in the Paymaster's office at Fort Marlborough also flourished elsewhere on the Coast. Brick contracting was, the Court thought, a particularly popular swindle, and it seems worth considering a few examples in detail because they illustrate the slow pace and genuine difficulties which beset the construction of public works as well as the related opportunities for fraud.

As the number of European-staffed Residencies increased, the pace of building, to house the Resident and soldiers, also naturally accelerated, and experiments were begun with brick-works at out-settlements to avoid the high cost of shipping bricks from Fort Marlborough. Sometimes these efforts succeeded. Roger Carter, for example, as Resident at Selumah, discovered that bricks produced locally for public works at Talo were badly burnt and suggested to the contractors that they try again with a different sort of clay. The rate offered by the undertakers^{contractors?} was high, \$8 per thousand, owing, Carter noted, to the fact that only a small number of bricks were needed for current building, while constructing the facilities to make them remained as expensive as if large quantities were needed. The Board agreed to the brick-making venture but stipulated that not more than \$6 per thousand, a price still \$1½ higher than at Fort Marlborough, was to be paid. Carter confirmed a month later that the undertakers accepted the Board's conditions, and two years later Carter's successor, Robert Jack, asked the Board's permission to receive the bricks contracted for by Carter. The Council wished to examine the goods before purchase and delegated Jack and Charles Hampton to survey the bricks. They sent the requested muster and reported that 120,000 of

1. Court to FSG, 24 Jan. 1753, par. 27, Public Despatches from England, 1752-3, op. cit., vol. LVI, p. 47.

the bricks were of very good quality. Within a month the bricks had been formally purchased and paid for at the agreed rate to a total of \$720.¹

Similar attempts to provide bricks and materials for buildings at Lais and its sub-settlements at Poli and Bintunan were, on the other hand, considerably less happy. The poor condition of the Company's house at Lais had been a source of complaint by Residents since at least the early 1740s. In 1747, Resident Robert Dunckley offered a plan for a new house at the settlement, twenty-four feet wide by forty-eight feet long and twelve feet high. He also reported about the same time that a contractor, who was subsequently revealed to be himself, had offered to fire bricks at Lais for the foundations of the new house. The Board approved his plan for the projected house and suggested that the floor of the godown as well as the foundations of the building be made of brick. They cautiously requested a sample of the bricks, however, before any contract for them was concluded. Work was delayed by the necessity of getting the pepper from the Lais districts weighed and the ship Grantham dispatched at the end of 1747, and building had apparently not begun by the time Dunckley was promoted to Krui Residency and Lewis Bonnet took over at Lais in July 1748.²

The contracts for both bricks and other material had, however, been made before Dunckley's departure, although there is no indication that the requested muster of bricks had ever been sent to the Board. Bonnet reported on his arrival at Lais that Dunckley had made an agreement with eight peroatins (headmen) to cut timbers for the new house and apparently had planned to pay them in goods for their labour, since the peroatins had insisted to Bonnet that they be paid in cash not merchandise. The Board cautioned Bonnet always to pay for materials in cash according to the Company's express orders, but approved giving the timber contractors the \$10 advance they demanded on the condition that the materials were delivered within three months.³ Bonnet subsequently reported that they had

1. FM Cons., 30 March 1747, SFR 64; 21 July, 24 Aug. 1748; 29 Sept., 31 Oct. 1750; Talo Accounts for Nov. 1750, 30 Jan. 1751, SFR 65.

2. FM Cons., 11 June, 29 July, 25 Sept., 26 Dec. 1747, SFR 64; 30 May, 8 June, 21 July 1748, SFR 65.

3. FM Cons., 21 July 1748, SFR 65.

agreed to these terms. Bonnet next asked to repair the Company's house at Bintunan and the Board agreed if it could be done cheaply. Within a month Bonnet reported that he had Bintunan House half re-roofed and was ready to receive the season's pepper. Once again building work was halted by the arrival of the Europe ships, but it was delayed even after their departure by an outbreak of smallpox.¹ Early in 1749, Bonnet asked permission to erect a shed at Bintunan to receive the next season's pepper and to resurface the leaky roof of the Company house at Poli.² Work on the large house at Lais, however, was at a standstill. In April 1749, Bonnet confessed that it was unlikely the foundations of Lais New House could be laid that year before the pepper began to come in again, and consequently asked the Board to build a shelter in which to store the boards and kulit kayus already delivered, since they were currently kept in the pepper godown and he therefore had no place to store the pepper when it was brought down to the kuala.³ He also complained that the eight peroatins who had contracted for timbers for the new house had been very slow in delivering the remainder of those materials. He added that he had found three others who were willing to provide timbers for the same price and asked to make new contracts with them. The Board advised Bonnet to be patient, since the smallpox which was still present in Lais districts made the local people unwilling to visit the kuala for fear of infection. They allowed him, however, to change the contractors if the original eight proved too slow after the disease abated.⁴ By early June 1749, however, Bonnet was dead and the Residency once again changed hands, passing into the charge of Randolph Marriot who arrived early in October 1749.⁵

Seven months later Marriot once more raised the matter of the materials for Lais New House. The bricks, made two years before during Dunckley's time there,

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1. FM Cons., 24 Aug., 31 Aug., 24 Sept. 1748, 31 Jan., 10 April 1749, SFR 65.
 2. FM Cons., 31 Jan., 10 April 1749, SFR 65.
 3. FM Cons., 10 April 1749, SFR 65.
 4. FM Cons., 10 April, 31 July, 20 Aug. 1749, SFR 65.
 5. FM Cons., 31 Oct. 1749, SFR 65.

he wrote to the Deputy Governor, were unfit for use.¹ The Board appointed Marriot, Cranmer and Christopher Watson to inspect them carefully and report further. By September 1750 the report was submitted and stated that Dunckley's bricks were all 'quite rotten and mouldering to pieces occasion'd as We imagine by the Clay not being properly work'd and not sufficiently burnt when moulded'.² The Board, with the Court's approval, ordered Dunckley to refund the money he had been paid for the useless bricks³ and also ordered him to stop making bricks at his new Residency of Krui, an enterprise which he appears to have begun almost as soon as he arrived there.⁴ This, however, was not the end of the affair. At the instigation of Dunckley's attorney, Robert Jack and William Smith made an independent survey of the bricks at Lais and reported to the Board that they were much better than Marriot represented.⁵ They sent a sample to Fort Marlborough, which the bricklayer pronounced satisfactory, and stated that there were 60,000 of similar quality at Lais. Smith and Jack also said that Marriot had neglected to include in his calculation an entire kiln's worth of bricks. The Board ordered bricks of the standard shown by the sample sent to Fort Marlborough to be accepted on Company account and at the same time ordered Marriot not to make any new bricks.⁶ Marriot submitted to this order, but reported that he had surveyed the bricks again and found the so-called kiln of bricks merely to be the end of a kiln's worth protruding from a clump of bushes.⁷ Although never explicitly stated, it appears that he had ambitions of brick contracting in his own right and his report on

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1. FM Cons., 30 May 1750, SFR 65.
 2. FM Cons., 29 Sept. 1750, SFR 65.
 3. Court to FM, 29 Nov. 1751, par. 56, Public Despatches from England, 1751-2, op. cit., vol. LV, p. 53.
 4. Dunckley arrived at Krui in September 1748 and by 25 October reported that the brick manufacturer had 50,000 bricks ready and wanted to sell them for \$5 per thousand. The Board agreed to buy at no more than \$4.2.0 per thousand, the price set for bricks at Muko Muko.
 5. FM Cons., 24 Jan. 1751, SFR 65.
 6. *ibid.*
 7. FM Cons., 26 Feb., 3 April 1751, SFR 65.

Dunckley's bricks may not have been entirely disinterested. In any case, three months later in June 1751, he again approached the Board concerning the making of bricks, this time in relation to building the Company house at Bintunan.¹ He asked if the foundations were to be brick, and if so, whether the bricks were to be made at Bintunan or sent from Fort Marlborough or Lais. The Board again decided to have the bricks at Lais surveyed in an attempt to reconcile the radically differing reports they had received of their quality and requested samples of both good and bad bricks and the quantities of each on hand to be sent to Fort Marlborough. At the same time they also ordered 20,000 bricks to be made at Bintunan for the foundation of the house there at a price of $\$8$ per thousand, since shipping them from Benkulen would cost about $\$15$ per thousand in boat-hire alone.²

This order seems to have been picked up by Marriot's successor at Lais, and difficulties began anew. In August 1752, William Norris, who was the assistant to Resident John Cranmer, offered to survey bricks which his superior had made at Bintunan, noting that he had no concern in the manufacture of them and that he had only signed the accounts in which they were charged because Cranmer had assured him that he had the Board's orders to make them.³ The Fort Marlborough government, which had also changed with the departure of Governor Hurlock in December 1751, responded that it had given Cranmer no such order and demanded that the charge of $\$216$ for 27,000 bricks be stricken from the Residency accounts. Daniel Tottie was dispatched to inspect the bricks with Norris, so that an agreement could be made with the undertakers. They reported that the bricks were badly burnt and very difficult to count because they were stacked in such a haphazard manner. They considered them too under-sized to be used in the foundations of the building.⁴

1. FM Cons., 26 June 1751, SFR 65.

2. *ibid.*

3. FM Cons., 29 Aug. 1752, SFR 66.

4. Daniel Tottie and William Norris to Board, 25 Sept. 1752, FM Cons., 28 Sept. 1752, SFR 66.

This report too was perhaps less than impartial since Tottie was in the process of applying for the Residency if it fell vacant, and Norris was on very bad terms with Cranmer.¹

At this point, October 1752, William Smith was sent to Lais to replace Cranmer and George Scott was appointed his assistant. The Board ordered him to begin work on the houses at Lais and Bintunan at once and offered to send down the bricklayer to expedite this.² They also decided to accept the bricks Cranmer had made at Bintunan since their principal fault was that they were undersized - if Cranmer would settle for a reduced price.³

The final act of the drama was played out in June and July 1753. Resident Smith asked the Board for clarification of the Company's position regarding the bricks at Lais and Bintunan since they had, on the one hand, been condemned but, on the other hand, were ordered to be received on Company account if any were found to be good. It was imperative that a final decision be taken soon, since the chunam sent to begin the buildings would waste away if not used quickly. Moreover, the other materials collected for the long awaited houses had been on hand nearly eight years. The buildings were very bad. There was no pepper godown at Bintunan since the shed erected by Bonnet was falling in, and the house at Lais was as bad as it had been when Deputy Governor Hindley had been Resident there in 1743-4. The bricks, Smith thought, were usable, but he asked that a bricklayer be sent down to assess them and pick the ones good enough to be used on the pillars of the new house.⁴ The Board agreed and about a month later Smith had got the

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1. FM Cons., 29 Aug. 1752, SFR 66. Norris wrote to the Board on 1 Oct. 1752 that Cranmer had ill-treated him ever since he had gone to Lais. He added that when he had refused to sign the Residency's accounts after Cranmer had been censured as a result of the Bintunan bricks, Cranmer had knocked him down. Cranmer retorted that Norris had asked him to come to Poli to see him and then abused him verbally.
 2. FM Cons., 16 Oct. 1752, SFR 66.
 3. FM Cons., 12 Dec. 1752, SFR 66.
 4. FM Cons., 30 June 1753, SFR 66.

Company slaves at Lais to sort out the bricks and reported that the bricklayer considered enough of them fit for use to build the godown. John Ogier, who had also been sent to survey the bricks disagreed with this, stating that there were only about 28,000 of them, and they were fit for only the lightest construction work and had to be kept under cover. Ogier, however, concurred with Smith that the other materials were on the point of disintegration and would have to be thrown away unless used at once.¹ In view of the cost of replacing the materials, which had already been lost and replaced once, the Board decided to purchase the bricks if the owner would accept \$4½ per thousand for them, rather than risk a prolonged delay while new ones were made and the other material became unusable. Smith was told to get the bricklayer to work and to tell him to add an extra coat of chunam to the walls inside and out to help make the construction more durable. Smith soon after reported that Dunckley was willing to sell the bricks at the price suggested by the Board and the matter was finally settled.² Dunckley had also finally paid in March 1753 for 112,000 bricks counted as deficient at Lais, presumably the ones deemed unfit for use.³

Each of the Residents of Lais in turn appears to have considered the production of bricks as a personal prerogative, to be manufactured as cheaply as possible, whether the quality suffered or not, and sold at a high rate to the Company. Such proceedings were not limited to Lais. The Muko Muko books listed a total of 1,164,000 bricks supposedly in existence at the Residency at the end of April 1751 when the General Books were balanced. The Accountant, Charles Smith, reported this

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1. John Ogier to Board, 20 July 1753, FM Cons., 20-30 July 1753, SFR 66.
 2. FM Cons., 31 July 1753, SFR 66. The August Cash Account for Lais shows payment of \$182.2.80 for bricks but unfortunately does not specify to whom the money was given. FM Cons., 13 Oct. 1753, SFR 66.
 3. FM Cons., 20 March 1753, SFR 66. This was a charge of \$895 (\$8 per thousand bricks) for 112,000 bricks deficient at Lais. They were listed as deficient when Will Smith took over the remains at Lais at the end of 1752. Dunckley finally paid only \$418.2.35. He was allowed \$455 for some military clothing he had sold the Company at Krui and a rebate for some salt at Lais for which he had been mistakenly charged.

to the Board and recommended that the manufacture of bricks should be discontinued there since there were more than enough bricks for current needs.¹ Much of this large number, however, appears to have been illusory. When the remains at the Residency were counted in November 1752, Norris, Forbes and Swinton, who had been responsible for this procedure, refused to sign a receipt for the bricks, chunam and other materials since they reported the numbers were very large, but many were broken and they were all lying in heaps overgrown with weeds.² The bricks were eventually counted by Roger Carter in conjunction with Norris. They estimated that there were not more than 250,000 in broken bricks except for two small parcels which were so undersized that they could not imagine how they had ever been accepted on Company account.³ The Board headed by Deputy Governor Hindley, who until December 1751 had been Resident at Muko Muko, merely expressed surprise that the number was so small since the books showed 1,164,000 and ordered a recount to ensure that no mistake had been made. The Supravisors, Pybus and Walsh, eventually took up the matter in the course of adjusting the accounts of the out-settlements. The remains taken at Muko Muko showed an enormous total of 457,807 bricks deficient and another 104,000 too small to be usable.⁴ Hindley's only defence was that the Board had approved his purchase of bricks by passing the accounts in which they were entered and that his ill-health when many of them were delivered prevented his making proper enquiries into their quality. He had also accepted the remains when he took over the Residency from Hurlock 'on trust' and later discovered many of the building materials to be of bad quality.⁵ Hindley was eventually charged \$3910.2.17 for deficiencies at Muko Muko,

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1. FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1751, SFR 65.
 2. FM Cons., 29 Nov. 1753, SFR 66.
 3. FM Cons., 30 June 1753, SFR 66.
 4. FM Cons., 20 June, 30 June 1753, SFR 66.
 5. FM Cons., 10 Aug. 1754, SFR 67.

₹2060.0.53 on account of deficient bricks.¹

A post at an out-settlement also offered special opportunities for speculation not available at Fort Marlborough. These were less obvious than frauds involving cash and building materials, though equally damaging to the Company's estate, and stemmed from the Resident's ability to misuse his authority over the pepper planters in his district. One such form of malfeasance was pepper fraud, illustrated by the conduct of the Resident of Kawur, Thomas Fivey, who in 1774 simply paid the planters ₹10 per bahar less than the price stipulated by the Company for white pepper and pocketed the difference, trusting to the collusion of one of the local headmen to protect him from discovery. Fivey's profits were calculated at ₹1632 during his eight year tenure at Kawur, and he was dismissed from the service and required to repay this sum to the Company.² There were also more subtle varieties of pepper fraud involving the manipulation of the bahar, the local measure by which pepper was sold. In the southern pepper districts, pepper was customarily delivered to the Resident in measured bahars. Although the Company's treaties had standardised the bahar in most districts at 560 lbs., pepper received by volume frequently weighed more. In this case the Resident paid the planters for a measured bahar and entered the pepper receipts in the Company's books by weight, keeping the cash difference between the two for himself.³

Other ways in which a Resident could exploit the Sumatran people are illustrated by the career of Robert Dunckley, the very man who had been involved in brick dealing at Lais, during his term as Resident of Krui. The nature of

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1. The Estate of Robert Hindley in Account Current with the Company, 1 March 1759, SFR 12. On the evidence of Joseph Gunn, who had been the assistant at Muko Muko for much of the time that Hindley had been Resident, the Supravisors acquitted Hindley of fraud and concluded that he had been imposed on by the brick manufacturers. Hindley's estate, however, was still charged for the deficiency, since the Supravisors saw no reason for the Company to suffer from his negligence. FM Cons., 11 Sept. 1753, SFR 66; 7 July, 9 July, 1755, SFR 68.
 2. J. Kathirithamby, op. cit., p. 140.
 3. ibid., pp. 96-7.

Dunckley's conduct at Krui came to light during his long and unauthorised absence from his Residency. In May 1751, his assistants reported to Fort Marlborough that Dunckley had left Krui on the Company sloop Cuddalore bound for Benkulen. In August the Board learned that the Cuddalore had arrived instead at Batavia. When by November, Dunckley and the sloop had still not returned to the West Coast, Deputy Governor Hurlock and the Board censured his conduct and, deciding that Krui could no longer be left in the sole charge of the assistants, deputed Richard Preston, Alexander Forbes, and James Stevenson to take joint charge.¹

No sooner had the new officials been installed than they began to receive complaints from the inhabitants concerning Dunckley's behaviour as Resident. The local pengeran and peroatins complained that they had not been paid the customs due on their pepper deliveries for two or three years past. They asked Preston to pay off the arrears and told him that Dunckley had claimed that lack of cash was the reason the customs had not been paid when due. The people charged that all footstuffs brought in from the countryside had had their prices fixed by Dunckley.² They also accused him of appropriating for the use of his assistant, the eighth of a dollar which they had formerly paid to their own headmen for each cock-fight.³ Dunckley had allegedly taken away people's working tools on the pretext that they belonged to the Company. Moreover, he had fined them over \$60 for bathing in a certain part of the river which they had always used for this purpose and had likewise fined all of them indiscriminately \$20 for a hog which had been killed in the woods by persons unknown.⁴

1. FM Cons., 25 May 1751, SFR 65.

2. FM Cons., 7 Feb. 1752, SFR 66.

3. It is perhaps significant in this context that cock-fighting at Krui had been reintroduced at the request of Dunckley. He represented the people of Krui as so discontented by the banning of the sport that they threatened to move out of the Company's districts. The Board as a result of this had agreed to allow cock-fighting once a week on the condition that all other forms of gambling were forbidden. FM Cons., 25 April, 28 June, 1749, SFR 65.

4. FM Cons., 7 Feb. 1752, SFR 66.

The problem of fines and seizures had even more serious implications. The Krui people alleged that Dunckley had seized their wearing apparel on various occasions and in one instance returned the clothes only after the people had sent him a buffalo instead. Dato Condong also complained that he had been illegally deprived of half of three koyan of salt which he had imported. Dunckley had purchased half the salt on Company account and then confiscated the rest on learning that the Dato's people had sold three or four bambus of salt to someone else. An even graver charge against Dunckley was that he had encouraged 'Bechars [civil disputes] of 50 or 60 Years standing which former Residents had always declined meddling [sic] with', had these brought before him and enriched himself by making the loser pay money to him and forcing the winner to accept cloth in lieu of the money the loser had been condemned to pay.¹

Dunckley's reply to these charges waited on his return from Batavia in March 1752, when he was already embroiled in trying to explain his ten month absence from his post and in justifying the expenses he had caused the Company at Batavia. Nevertheless, he attacked Preston and Forbes for their charges of bad conduct and attempted to demonstrate that the several fines and seizures had been in the interests of the settlement's welfare. The prohibition on bathing at the traditional spot, he claimed, had been imposed on the surgeon's recommendation to protect the purity of the drinking water and thus the health of the Company's personnel. He had repeatedly warned the Malays before he had actually fined them and in the end had fined only persistent offenders, five in all, having returned their money to some who promised future good behaviour.²

The other fine, Dunckley asserted, was also the result of repeated transgressions of his orders to the Krui people to fence the padi plantations, as was customary at other kualas where cattle were kept, to prevent the animals from destroying the crops. When they had failed to do so and then killed a pig and

1. FM Cons., 7 Feb. 1752, SFR 66.

2. FM Cons., 13 April 1752, SFR 66.

lanced one of his cattle for invading their fields, he had justly fined them \$20 for damages to his property which could have been avoided if they had obeyed his instructions.¹

Dunckley admitted to fixing the prices of provisions at Krui but claimed that he had done so only to circumvent the monopoly of supplies held by the bazaar Malays. These people set their buying prices so low that the country people were disinclined to bring provisions down to the kuala, and Krui had consequently faced a food shortage. They then sold what they had obtained to the Company servants at an enormous mark-up. Dunckley claimed that he had on his own initiative encouraged the country people to bring down supplies to a house he designated and this he considered commendable attention to the settlement's welfare, not the restraint of trade that the bazaar Malays alleged.²

The so-called seizures of goods cited by the Krui people, Dunckley asserted, were actually legitimate confiscations of contraband. The salt seized from Dato Condong's people had been placed in the Company's godown until he could obtain the Board's orders relating to it when he arrived at Fort Marlborough on the Cuddalore. He also stated that the cloths he had taken from people were not wearing apparel but new cloth brought from Bantam for sale, and confiscations of this variety were customary at all Residencies.³

He denied any knowledge of the toll for cock-fighting and swore that he had never conducted court cases on his own or forced the disputants to take cloth instead of money against their will. It was obvious that the peroatins and jurutulis had always been present at such hearings since he did not understand the Lampung language, and if any injustice had been done, it could only be because they had advised him improperly concerning the laws of the country.⁴

1. FM Cons., 13 April 1752, SFR 66.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

4. *ibid.*

Dunckley concluded his defence by questioning the validity of Malay testimony in these matters. The Malays would vilify one Resident in order to ingratiate themselves with his successor, and the Krui Malays were a particularly untrustworthy lot since they had often fled there to escape punishment for having caused trouble elsewhere and sought after their arrival at Krui to enrich themselves by oppressing the genuinely indigenous inhabitants. Dunckley considered that it had been his attempts to control them that had earned their dislike and generated the unjust complaints against him which Preston and Forbes had reported.¹

The new Residents at Krui, however, persisted in their conviction of Dunckley's misconduct. He had demonstrated in their view a desire 'to oppress out of wantonness or an Ostentation of Power',² and even if his motives had been as disinterested as he claimed, more effective solutions could have been found for the problems which he had tried to resolve with fines and confiscations. Safeguarding the supplies of drinking water could, for example, have been accomplished simply by ordering the slaves who drew the Company establishment's water to walk forty yards further upstream. In any case, a five dollar fine was unlikely to have prevented bathing in the prohibited area. The Malays refused to bathe at the place designated by Dunckley because the water was brackish and they were 'perhaps nicer' than Europeans in such matters. Similarly Dunckley's indiscriminate fining of all the Krui inhabitants for the death of his hog was patently unfair, particularly when the people denied ever having received orders to fence their padi fields. He should instead have tried to catch the actual culprit.³

As far as Preston and Forbes were concerned, Dunckley's other activities at Krui were at least by implication an abuse of authority for his personal benefit. Dunckley had been told that the levy on cock-fighting was the perquisite of the headmen at the time that the cockpit was under construction, but after he

1. FM Cons., 13 April 1752, SFR 66.

2. FM Cons., 29 June 1752, SFR 66.

3. *ibid.*

had decided to allocate the proceeds to his assistant, the headmen had been afraid to ask for their due. Preston and Forbes also noted that Dunckley admitted to fixing the price of provisions. They queried his excuse that it was to prevent a scarcity of foodstuffs at the settlement, since they had encountered no difficulty obtaining supplies from the country people without resorting to Dunckley's tactics. A monopoly of distribution, they concluded, seemed an unlikely method to increase either the supply of goods or a friendly attitude among the local people.¹

Neither had Dunckley's confiscations been in the interests of the Company as he alleged. According to Preston and Forbes, the salt taken from Dato Condong had been appropriated to Dunckley's own use and not placed in the Company's godowns, since when they had taken charge at Krui the remaining salt had been delivered to them as Dunckley's personal property. This confiscation had occurred a full twelve months before he left on the Cuddalore ostensibly for Benkulen, so it appeared that Dunckley had never intended to refer the affair to the Board. Preston and Forbes also suggested that quantity not newness must be the test of whether cloth was to be judged as wearing apparel or piece goods. They submitted a list of twelve people who had lost small amounts of cloth to Dunckley and who insisted that they had been obliged to give him a buffalo to obtain the return of their property. Dunckley had again surrendered no part of the so-called confiscation to the Company. The new Residents also dismissed Dunckley's defence regarding his role in local bicharas as a red herring. No one had accused him of acting alone in such hearings; the dispute concerned the extent and direction of his influence in them. Whether or not Dunckley had forced the Malays to accept cloth instead of money as compensation awarded in the bichara, he generally prevailed on them to do so and Preston and Forbes considered this to be his principal motive in encouraging old disputes. As to Dunckley's attempt to discredit the

1. FM Cons., 29 June 1752, SFR 66.

testimony against him, Preston and Forbes merely expressed surprise that he should have allowed as villainous a lot as he claimed his accusers to be to settle at Krui and noted that he had made no attempt to summon witnesses in his defence.¹

Before Preston's and Forbes' comments on Dunckley's defence reached Benkulen, he had been suspended in May 1752 'from any place of trust' as a result of his activities in Batavia where he had spent \$6000 of unauthorised Company funds.² Dunckley had tried to fix the blame for the Cuddalore's trip to Java on the sloop's master, but the latter responded that Dunckley had suggested heading for Batavia even before the sloop had left Krui ostensibly bound for Benkulen with a cargo of pepper.³ The captain of the ship Fanny, which had been at Batavia while the Cuddalore was there, also testified that the sloop could have been repaired much more quickly than Dunckley had claimed in his attempt to explain the vessel's prolonged absence from Sumatra.⁴

Fort Marlborough's superiors at Madras requested more information concerning Dunckley's behaviour at Batavia and Krui before ruling on his suspension,⁵ but London, noting Dunckley's bad conduct over several years, confirmed the Benkulen Board's decision and instructed Supravisors Pybus and Walsh to see if there were grounds for his dismissal from the service.⁶ Dunckley, however, died in November 1753, a month before the Supravisors' arrival at Benkulen. His estate was finally charged with \$805.1.0 due to the Company for various debts and deficiencies at Krui, including \$93.3.84 for pepper short-delivered by the Cuddalore on her return from Java.⁷ The Supravisors concluded that as it was known that Dunckley had gone

1. FM Cons., 29 June 1752, SFR 66.

2. FM Cons., 26 March, 29 April, 4 May, 19 May, 29 May 1752, SFR 66.
Gov. Hindley considered that Dunckley should be dismissed not suspended.

3. FM Cons., 4 May 1752, SFR 66.

4. FM Cons., 19 May 1752, SFR 66.

5. FSG to FM, 5 Jan. 1753, par. 35, Letters from Fort St. George, 1753, op. cit., vol. XXIX, p. 5.

6. Court to FM, 28 Nov. 1753, par. 34, Public Despatches from England, 1753-4, op. cit., vol. LVII, p. 82.

7. FM Cons., 18 May 1754, SFR 67; 15 Dec. 1755, SFR 68.

to Java more 'by design than necessity' it was likely that either the quantity of pepper invoiced at Krui had not been loaded on the sloop or that the amount deficient had been embezzled at Batavia. In either case Dunckley was culpable. The sum of his debt to the Company was, however, finally reduced to \$500 because of his widow's poor circumstances and the fact that his deficiencies had been settled after his death. Bastian Smith, the Benkulen Factor who became Mrs. Dunckley's third husband, eventually produced a bond for \$500 to cover the Company's demand on the estate.¹

Private Trade and Borderline Corruption

The cases discussed above, whether aimed at exploiting the Company's financial resources directly through frauds and rake-offs or exploiting the Company's authority to impose on the planters which produced its pepper, are reasonably clear instances of corruption. There were, however, areas of activity in which malfeasance as defined by the Company overlapped to a considerable degree with legitimate commerce as defined by its employees. One example of the difficulty of distinguishing between the two was the cause célèbre of Supravisors Walsh's and Pybus's investigations of 1754. It involved determining whether, as the Court had been informed, 'our late Deputy Governor Mr. Hurlock quitted his station to Mr. Hindley in consideration of a sum of money given to him for that purpose by the latter'.² The Court had not been told if the governorship had actually been sold for a sum of money, but considered 'if it was a Debt or Debts to be forgiven, the taking off of desperate Debts, money to be paid in future or a Pecuniary consideration in any shape whatsoever, it amounts to the same'.³ If such a transaction was proved, the Supravisors were to dismiss Hindley from the service.

Supravisors Pybus and Walsh discovered from three members of the Benkulen

1. FM Cons., 20 Jan. 1756, SFR 69.

2. Court to FSG, 24 Jan. 1753, par. 32, Public Despatches from England, 1752-3, op. cit., vol. LVI, p. 48.

3. ibid.

Board who had been residing in Fort Marlborough when Hurlock resigned, that an agreement had been made between Hurlock and Hindley. Charles Smith, the attorney and close friend of Hindley, who was then living at Muko Muko, had concluded a contract with Hurlock in mid-June 1751 to take over his household effects, outstanding debts at Muko Muko and Benkulen, and remaining trade goods on behalf of himself and Hindley. Hurlock retained the right to invalidate the agreement until twenty days before the arrival of the annual storeship on which he proposed to return to England if he had managed to wind up his affairs, with an added provision, presumably at Smith's insistence, that the agreement was to be scrapped if the Court's letter appointed anyone but Hindley as Deputy Governor. In the meantime, Hurlock promised to draw up a list of his outstanding debts and to contract no new ones.¹ The actual total for which Hindley and Smith were to be accountable was later established at \$29,423.1.96.²

It was, however, not unusual for one servant to sell his personal effects, trade goods and even Malay debts to another, when he was transferred to a different post, departed for England, or even when he merely thought he had found a good bargain. Judgment of Hindley's conduct, therefore, rested solely on an assessment of his motives - whether he had made a bargain with Hurlock from which he could reasonably hope to profit, or if not, whether a bad bargain was covert bribery or merely the result of poor commercial foresight. The Board split down the middle on these points in the course of discussing the terms of the contract. Daniel Tottie, Joseph Gunn and Randolph Marriot considered that the transactions between Hindley and Hurlock did not constitute a pecuniary reward as defined by the Court. The debts at Muko Muko totalling \$4208.2.90 had been for the most part collected and few of the remaining ones seemed likely to prove irrecoverable, so in this respect Hindley had not given Hurlock any special advantage by taking them over.

1. FM Cons., 28 Dec., 31 Dec. 1753, SFR 66.

2. FM Cons., 8 Jan. 1754, SFR 67.

Smith, moreover, had written Hindley that the debts and piece goods at Fort Marlborough, worth about \$7802.0.62 and \$8494.0.50 respectively, would be profitable, and although they subsequently turned out the reverse, Hindley could not be blamed for initially entering the contract under the influence of poor advice.¹

The other three Board members, however, concentrated on the parts of the agreement which had proved disadvantageous to Hindley and concluded from them that he had offered a pecuniary reward to Hurlock for resigning the governorship. Thomas Combes noted that the money paid, or rather bonds for payment given, by Smith and Hindley for Hurlock's consignment of piece goods by the snow Brilliant, which Hindley had received at \$5431.1.85 - only a twenty per cent mark-up on the invoice price - as well as the household goods and Hurlock's share in the Fanny snow, constituted a sound commercial proposition because the goods were reasonably priced. This accounted for about \$9000 of the total and Combes doubted if this could constitute grounds for dismissal as defined in the Directors' brief. Combes, William Smith and Robert Jack were, however, dubious about the remaining \$20,000 worth of the deal. Smith noted that it was very unusual to sell Malay debts at face value. Potential bad debts were usually excluded from such a deal and some sort of discount demanded to indemnify the buyer from losses from unsuspected bad debts. In this case, however, notes for debts due Hurlock from Malays and Chinese, almost the entirety of his outstanding debts, had been accepted not only without a discount but with a promise of ten per cent interest if Charles Smith and Hindley were unable to pay Hurlock what they owed on this account within a year. Combes concurred with Smith and added that he considered the Fort Marlborough debts a demonstrably bad bargain for Hindley. Only half of them had been received in the two years since Hurlock's departure, and Massey, who was responsible for their collection, had tried to sell Combes his three-tenths share of them at the unusually high discount of twenty-five per cent. Combes,

1. FM Cons., 8 Jan. 1754, SFR 67.

Smith and Jack all agreed that the eighty-one corge of piece goods and four chests of opium which Hindley had bought from Hurlock for \$8494.0.50 were largely unsaleable. Jack stated that the samples which he had seen in the Fort Marlborough godowns were so damaged that he would not have accepted them at prime cost as Hindley had, and Combes asserted that he would not have taken them even at a ten per cent discount on invoice price. Moreover, Hindley had admitted to knowing that about \$3000 worth of them were damaged or up to seven years old and therefore likely to be difficult to resell. This to Combes, Smith and Jack constituted a premeditated bad bargain and thus appeared to be a clear financial consideration offered to Hurlock by Hindley.¹

The Supravisors finally judged Hindley guilty and dismissed him from the Company's employ.² They considered Charles Smith, however, more culpable than Hindley. The letters between the two presented for the Board's perusal, showed that Hindley had expressed no desire to enter a contract with Hurlock until manoeuvred into it by his friend's 'pathetick Representations' of his financial difficulties. The deciding piece of evidence for the Supravisors appears to have been the offer of \$4000 cash which Combes and Massey swore Smith made to Hurlock to resign the governorship.³ Since this offer had been made after the contract of June 1751 was mooted, the Supravisors construed it as an attempt by Smith to get out of his earlier engagement. 'The taking off his [Hurlock's] Goods and Debts has', they concluded, 'not proved a bad Bargain, merely by unlucky and unforeseen Events, but was considered as such at the time, by the Deputy Governor's Agent, Mr Charles Smith, who offered \$4000...to be quit of it.'⁴

Large scale bribery in high places was, however, less of a problem for the Company at Fort Marlborough than the perennial fact of Malay indebtedness as a

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1. FM Cons., 8 Jan. 1754, SFR 67.
 2. FM Cons., 12 Jan. 1754, SFR 67.
 3. FM Cons., 31 Dec. 1753, SFR 66.
 4. FM Cons., 12 Jan. 1754, SFR 67.

result of either money-lending or trading on credit by the servants. The Board had tried to curtail those aspects of the servants' private commerce which tended to prejudice the Company's affairs at least as early as 1739. In that year Deputy Governor Robert Lennox forbade servants to encourage Bugis and Arab soldiers and coolies in the Company's employ to run into debt by offering them credit.¹ Regarding Malay debtors, only the debtor himself and his effects were to be considered as proper security for repayment of money and the practice of seizing a Malay's wife and family as security for debts was prohibited for Europeans on the grounds that it alienated the local people from the Company. The Company's repeated injunctions always to pay money for goods purchased on Company account were also reaffirmed for the same reason. The Company's servants were enjoined 'to have as few dealings as possible with the Country people, the Planters Dupattys &c. to avoid causes of misunderstandings, & also that it may not take them off from their Plantations, as their falling into the way of Merchandizing will be apt to do'.² These optimistic directives, however, had predictably limited success. Many of the varieties of corruption already described involved dealings with the Sumatran people, and several of them paying with goods instead of money. Another instance of money-lending involving the planters came to light in 1751 at Ketaun and implicated the Resident Richard Preston.

Preston's assistant at Ketaun, who was later dismissed for negligence,³ laid the charge against Preston, accusing him of lending money to the pepper planters of the district at the exorbitant interest rate of ten per cent per month. He also intimated that Preston actively encouraged the Malays to borrow from him to finance their gambling debts. Preston was alleged to permit cock-fighting, which was generally discouraged at the Company's out-settlements because it distracted the planters' attention from their gardens, during the entire year.⁴

1. FM Cons., 24 Feb. 1739, SFR 62.

2. *ibid.*

3. FM Cons., 8 Oct. 1754, SFR 67.

4. FM Cons., 29 March, 3 April 1751, SFR 65.

In his reply to these charges, Preston admitted to allowing cock-fighting but only during the season when pepper was shipped off the coast. It was the only means of attracting enough people to the kuala to provide the labour needed to load the boats, since the slaves which the Company was supposed to provide for this work often did not arrive until the ships had departed. He also stated that the amount that he had lent to the people was very small, not more than \$400 during his entire time at Ketaun.¹

The Board ordered Resident Hindley at Muko Muko to make an independent investigation, and he promised to question the Ketaun headmen when they came to collect their pepper customs. Hindley's initial report stated that the peroatins of Sablat and Ketaun had told the pepper surveyor in their district that Preston had indeed charged the interest rate alleged by his assistant, but they had also corroborated Preston's statement that cock-fighting was permitted only when the Company's ships were there and so had not hurt the pepper investment. The peroatins had added that while they had signed the paper which the Ketaun assistant had submitted to the Board as proof of his charges, they had not read it before signing.²

Further enquiry indicated that the Sultan of Anak Sungei, in which both Muko Muko and Ketaun were located, considered that the dispute at Ketaun had resulted at least in part from the desire of certain people there for revenge against Preston who had prevented them from selling opium, except at the kuala, in order to protect the pepper planters from the ill effects of the drug. Hindley therefore wrote the Board that he considered that Preston's services to the Company, particularly in restricting the sale of opium, outweighed 'the Error he has been guilty off [sic] in being too Solicitous in his private Affairs' and that the Board should merely warn Preston to be more careful in future rather than censuring him.³

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1. FM Cons., 3 April 1751, SFR 65.
 2. FM Cons., 25 May 1751, SFR 65.
 3. FM Cons., 18 July 1751, SFR 65.

The Court was not entirely satisfied with this enquiry and directed Supravisors Pybus and Walsh to investigate further.¹ They concluded after interviewing Preston when he came to Fort Marlborough to take his seat on the Board, that the affair was really insignificant. No censure was laid on Preston who had conducted himself blamelessly since 1752 at his new Residency at Krui.² The Supravisors however may have been rather lenient with Preston. A virtually identical case in 1771 involving Christopher Terry, who was also Resident of Ketaun, culminated in Terry's recall from that Residency.³

Another instance of Malay indebtedness, on the other hand, resulted in the dismissal of a Council member and a bitter dispute within the Board over the justice of this. When the East India Company returned to the West Coast after the French invasion of 1760, Henry Idell who had also been Resident at Ketaun, attempted to collect debts due him when he had been taken as a French prisoner off the Coast. Since he was currently stationed at Krui, he tried to enlist the help of the Sultan of Anak Sungei to collect them. The Sultan first agreed to buy the debts from Idell at a twenty per cent discount and then collect them at his leisure, but he subsequently would agree only to collect them for Idell without paying him first. After two years Idell still had recovered little of his money, and he then began to bring pressure on the Sultan to honour his promise and speed up the collection. Idell offered, if the Sultan co-operated, to use his influence as a Board member to ensure that the Sultan's brother Raja Ketjil, who was also his political rival, would be sent from the West Coast into exile. If the Sultan did not help him, however, Idell threatened to see that Raja Ketjil was returned to Muko Muko. He told the Sultan to tell the debtors that their wives and families would be taken from Ketaun as security unless they paid quickly and that the Board would support

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1. Court to FSG, 24 Jan. 1753, par. 33, Public Despatches from England, 1752-3, op. cit., vol. LVI, p. 48.
 2. FM Cons., 17 June 1754, SFR 67.
 3. Kathirithamby, op. cit., pp. 137-9.

whatever methods were necessary to get the money collected.¹

By this stage Idell's correspondence with the Sultan had come to the notice of the Board. The Sultan was clearly unhappy and there were also difficulties at Ketaun, where some of the people had actually abandoned their pepper gardens and fled to the hills. The problem before the Council was to determine how much of this was Idell's fault. His opponents in the Council declared that Idell's attempts to extort the sum of his debts from the Sultan before the money had even been collected combined with the political threat contained in his references to Raja Ketjil had alienated one of the Company's most important allies. The goodwill of the Sultan of Anak Sungei was vital for controlling the northern pepper districts. The Sultan as a result of the pressure on him had applied severe methods in collecting the debts and frightened the Ketaun people away from their pepper gardens to a refuge outside the Company's territories.²

Idell's supporters, on the other hand, suggested that the ex-Resident had little to do with either the Sultan's grievance or the Ketaun people's flight. The Sultan, they said, was disaffected with the Company as a result of the strict government imposed on Muko Muko by the current Resident Joseph Darvall.³ Moreover, the Ketaun people's complaints, as represented by their peroatins, who had come to Fort Marlborough to consult with the Board, related to Resident Walter King's reduction of the prices paid for building materials which they had contracted to supply. Idell had not even been mentioned in their discussions with the Board. It also appeared that many of the people who had fled to the hills were not even in Idell's debt, and it seemed more likely that they had neglected their pepper gardens and run away from the displeasure of the pepper surveyors and not through

1. Idell's debts at Ketaun were over \$1000 and \$1734.2.51 more was owed him at Sablat. Raja Ketjil was then in exile at Natal. FM Cons., 6 Sept., 13 Sept., 14 Sept., 18 Sept., 21 Sept., 4 Oct., 11 Oct., 10 Nov. 1764, SFR 72; Nairne, Hay and Hall to Court, 2 Nov. 1764, SFR 13; Kathirithamby, op. cit., pp. 126-36.

2. *ibid.*

3. See Appendix IX.

fear of Idell. Moreover, they concluded, the Malays rarely paid debts until they were compelled to do so; their own laws obliged them to give their families as security for debts to spur them to do the work necessary to repay the money they owed. The Sultan was perfectly within his rights to apply this sanction to his own subjects, and Idell's action in urging him to threaten the Ketaun people with this was therefore not as barbarous as it might appear to the Court. In addition to this, there was not a single case of the threat actually having been carried out. Idell in his own interests could hardly want to force the Ketaun people to move out of the Company's districts when his debts would be irretrievably lost. They therefore concluded that Idell had neither damaged nor desired to damage the Company's interests at Ketaun and his only error had been his imprudent language to the Sultan. The pro-Idell faction won the vote at the Board, but only because two Council members arrived from Fort St. George shortly before the final judgment was scheduled. The first vote had been two to one for dismissal; the second vote was three to two against it. Governor Roger Carter upheld Idell's dismissal, which his supporters alleged had been rushed through before the full Board was assembled. This led to an even more acrimonious debate over whether the Governor or the majority of Council was to administer the Company's affairs on the West Coast.¹ The Court ultimately supported Carter's decision in relation to Idell.²

Money-lending or trading by credit meant debt, and debt meant some form of collection procedures. The possibility that these might involve force and consequently hurt the pepper investment was one of the areas of greatest friction between the Company and its servants. Lennox's injunctions in 1739 that the servants were to have as little contact as possible with the planters were useless; the servants were hardly likely to ignore their largest potential market. The Fort Marlborough establishment claimed in the early 1740s that 'Retailing Piece Goods in small Parcels'

1. FM Cons., 6 Sept., 13 Sept., 14 Sept., 18 Sept., 21 Sept., 4 Oct., 11 Oct., 10 Nov. 1764, SFR 72; Nairne, Hay and Hall to Court, 2 Nov. 1764, SFR 13; Kathirithamby, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-31.

2. Court to FM, 16 Jan. 1766, par. 92, SFR 32.

to the local inhabitants was the only trade they possessed.¹ This was only partially true even during that early period. Nevertheless, this traffic was without doubt important to them and was one of the principal reasons why most servants desired a post at one of the out-settlements, where the Resident possessed a near monopoly of sales to the Sumatran planters, rather than at Fort Marlborough.

The Directors approved their servants trading with the planters provided it was 'kept within due Bounds and no way Interferes with Our Interest'.² Their strictest proviso was that 'Our Servants Goods must upon no pretence whatsoever be Bartered with the Malays for Pepper or Forced upon them instead of hard Dollars as they Value Our Service'.³ The problem was that the Company's servants tended to interpret the 'due Bounds' imposed by the Company far more liberally than the Court. The point at which a Resident ceased to be a private merchant selling goods to customers who freely wished to buy, and began to exploit his authority as a Company official to compel his 'subjects' to accept cloth they did not want in exchange for pepper, while he pocketed the Company silver intended for them, was for ever at debate. The Company tended to regard taking advantage of any special opportunities offered by a particular office in their service for private profit as a breach of trust. The servants usually believed, or at least claimed to believe, that they were merely indulging in legitimate private trade. John Massey, in his defence against the charge of having used cloth to pay for building materials which he had purchased as Paymaster, summarised this conflict neatly. He asserted that he had never forced cloth on anyone, always giving them money if they asked for it, and therefore concluded that he had done nothing wrong.

I will acknowledge I sold Cloth to the dealers in Materials and that I gave them sometimes Credit on the probability of their paying me when they brought those Materials. But this can be no more said to

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1. Court to FM, 7 Jan. 1743, pars. 26-8, Public Despatches from England, 1740-3, op. cit., vol. 47, p. 110.
 2. *ibid.*
 3. *ibid.*

be buying them with Goods, than a Resident can be said to buy Pepper with Cloth, because he sells some to the Planters, on the prospect of being paid when the Pepper is brought in, and in either Case I think there is no Violation of the Company's Orders and surely it would be putting a Resident and a Paym[aster] on a worse footing, than the rest of the Company's Servants to deprive the one of the Liberty of trading with the Planters and the other with the Dealers in Materials.¹

The Directors disagreed with Massey and tended to be as hard on Residents in this respect as on Paymasters. In fact, they were inclined to suspect such malpractice by the Resident if any notable decline in pepper production was observed. In the early 1740s, for example, the Board asserted that a shortage of rice had caused the planters to switch from raising pepper to cultivating padi in order to feed their families. The Court, however, questioned this as sufficient explanation for a one hundred tons shortfall in the expected pepper output of the Anak Sungei region. They cautioned Fort Marlborough to make sure that the Muko Muko Resident had not been 'Bartering...his Goods to the Natives instead of paying Our Money and Long Cloth or otherwise bore hard upon them'.² Although the Muko Muko Resident, Greenslate, protested that he had always paid promptly for Anak Sungei's pepper and 'that his private trade...[had] never interfered in the least to the Honble. Company's Prejudice',³ the Court was apparently not satisfied. A commission was sent dismissing Greenslate from the Company's service via the ship Orford which arrived at Fort Marlborough in May 1745.⁴

Nevertheless, such actions did not deter the servants from trading with the local inhabitants, and they even formed business partnerships based on the European personnel at a particular Residency to exploit the commercial potential of the territory under their control. Information on private commercial activities was not generally entered in the official Fort Marlborough records but fragmentary

1. FM Cons., 15 April 1754, SFR 67.

2. Court to FM, 7 Jan. 1743, pars. 40-1, Public Despatches from England, 1740-3, op. cit., vol. 47, p. 111.

3. FM Cons., 10 Oct. 1743, SFR 63.

4. FM Cons., 18 May 1748, SFR 65.

evidence, usually concerned with settling the estates of deceased servants, suggests that such private partnerships or Residency concerns were a common pattern of business organisation among Europeans living at the larger out-settlements.

Opium was at least theoretically a forbidden article of trade. The Court did not permit its sale in the pepper planting dusuns, since like gambling it was held to have a deleterious effect on the pepper investment. Its sale at the kualas, where the Residencies were normally situated, was by licence, a farm auctioned yearly which gave the farmer a monopoly of retailing the drug within stated geographical bounds. Consequently opium did not, at least legally, form a substantial part of the servants' Residency trade. The Benkulen opium licence was held by the Bugis Captain since most opium was retailed to the Malay and Bugis garrison and the Chinese population.¹ Until 1751, Muko Muko was the only Residency with a kuala population large enough to support a separate opium licence, which was habitually farmed by the Resident for \$30 per month and must have constituted some part of the commercial attractions of that settlement.² The Supravisors increased the number of Residency licences, but none except Muko Muko fetched over \$20 per month in rent in the 1750s and 1760s, and the prices paid by the farmers could not have been unrealistically low, for when Pybus tried in 1755 to raise the Muko Muko rent to \$100 per month and the Krui rent to \$50, both farmers defaulted.³

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1. The garrison formed so large a part of the Benkulen opium market that in 1741 after virtually every soldier there had been sent out to quell troubles caused by one Siddee Ibrahim in Anak Sungei, the opium farmers were unable to meet the March licence payments because there had been no one at Fort Marlborough to whom to sell opium. FM Cons., 20 April 1741, SFR 63.
 2. FM Cons., 10 April 1749, 3 April 1751, SFR 65; 29 May 1752, SFR 66.
 3. FM Cons., 26 April, 9 May, 16 May, 18 July, 19 Aug., 28 Aug., 11 Sept., 23 Sept., 8 Oct., 14 Oct., 25 Nov., 24 Nov., 17 Dec., 23 Dec., 1754, SFR 67; 2 Jan., 28 April 1755, SFR 68. In 1755 the licences for Talo, Lais and Manna sold for \$16, \$20, and \$18 respectively. Because of the Krui default of 1754, no bidders were found for that licence in 1755 and the Resident was obliged to retail opium on Company account for \$8 per kati. FM to FSG, 31 Jan. 1756, par. 52, SFR 10. The Supravisors had also required that the licences be sold to non-Europeans as was customary elsewhere in India. This was done for several years but by the 1760s the Residents were once more buying the opium licences for their settlements, until orders from the Court in 1766 again forbade this. Court to FM, 16 Jan. 1766, par. 87, SFR 32; FM Cons., 25 April 1764, SFR 72; 28 April 1766, SFR 74; 30 April 1767, SFR 75.

Cloth was therefore the principal merchandise offered by the Residents. Large amounts of piece goods were ordered annually from Fort St. George, and a significant number of the people who ordered cloth were the chiefs of out-settlements.¹ Similarly, there are other indications of the presence of cloth for sale at out-settlements. In 1751, for example, the assistant at Krui offered to buy all the piece goods belonging to the estate of the surgeon Benjamin Greenall at prime cost. The Board refused this low price and ordered the goods auctioned at Krui or sent to Fort Marlborough to be sold if they fetched no more than prime cost at the public sale at Krui.²

No partnership appears to have existed in this case, but Residency concerns nevertheless operated at Lais, Krui and Muko Muko. In September 1743, the assistant at Lais, John Rowles, died intestate. As was usual in such instances the Board took over the administration of the estate. Rowles' effects were auctioned and debts owing him collected.³ The accounts presented for settlement included one from the Resident of Lais, Robert Hindley, showing a partnership between Hindley and Rowles. This account indicated that a total of \$618.3.34 was due to Rowles' estate: \$320.2.13 for his one-third share of goods remaining at Lais, Poli and Bintunan, \$191.3.58 for one-third of debts owed to the partnership; and \$1606.1.63 for his proportion of money from cash sales.⁴ These figures provide some idea of the scale of trade conducted by the Residency concerns in the 1740s. It is unlikely that this partnership could have been in operation longer than six months. Rowles had only been appointed to replace Charles Gibson as Hindley's assistant in March 1743 and he died on 23 September of the same year.⁵ In that time, according to the shares

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1. See Appendix VI.
 2. FM Cons., 14 Sept., 21 Dec., 31 Dec. 1751, SFR 65; 11-31 July 1753, SFR 66.
 3. FM Cons., 28 Sept., 28 Oct., 5 Nov., 10 Nov., 21 Nov., 25 Nov. 1743, SFR 63.
 4. FM Cons., 21 Nov., 25 Nov. 1743, SFR 63.
 5. FM Cons., 28 Sept., 19 March 1743, SFR 63. It also appears that Hindley might have been in partnership with Charles Gibson, the assistant at Lais before Rowles. At any rate, Gibson, while at Lais, ordered at least two parcels of cloth from Madras: one valued at Pagodas 453 shipped on the Princess Augusta in May 1742, and another valued at Pagodas 357.14.32 on the snow Brilliant in Oct. 1743. On 4 Dec. 1743, Hindley paid not only his debt to Rowles' estate but also paid \$750 due to the estate of Gibson who had died at Krui on 9 June 1743.

assigned the partners in Hindley's account, \$318.3.99 worth of goods had been sold for cash and outstanding debts to a total of \$575.2.74 acquired, presumably largely for goods sold on credit - a turnover of \$896.0.88 in the space of six months. The partnership also possessed another \$964.2.39 worth of goods still unsold making the total value to the partnership, \$1859.1.12. Unfortunately, the account gives no idea of the original cost of the merchandise being traded so it is impossible to assess the percentage of profits enjoyed by this Lais Residency concern.

A similar but more valuable Residency partnership was also revealed between Resident Richard Preston and his assistant John Saul at Krui on Saul's death in November 1753. Like Rowles, Saul had left no will and when Preston submitted his account of the estate to the Board in October 1754, Saul's one-third dividend of 'our joint concerns' from December 1753 to June 1754 was shown as \$2205.3.74, making the total profits of the Krui partnership about \$6617.3.22 for this seven month period.¹

Another valuable Residency concern operated at Muko Muko. Although the assistants may also have been involved, this series of partnerships appears to have existed principally between the Deputy Governor and the Resident, a sensible arrangement since prior to 1753 the Deputy Governor was usually the Resident at Muko Muko before his succession to the chair and did not always have time to wind up his affairs in the North before having to leave for Fort Marlborough.

Deputy Governor Roger Carter asserted in the 1760s that the Deputy Governor had always possessed a share in the trade at Muko Muko,² and it does indeed appear to have been a long-standing and jealously guarded prerogative. For example in 1734, William Rigg, the Fourth of Council, complained to the Board that he had sent several of his agents northward to sell about \$150 worth of goods and to

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1. FM Cons., 14 Dec., 21 Dec. 1753, SFR 66; 11 March, 18 March, 12 June, 1 July, 14 Oct. 1754, SFR 67.
 2. FM Cons., 13 June 1767, SFR 75. Carter had not been Resident at Muko Muko before becoming Governor but still possessed a share in the trade.

buy buffaloes. The Sultan of Anak Sungei, however, had ordered the merchandise seized before Rigg's people had reached Muko Muko, saying that it was forbidden for anyone but the Deputy Governor or the Resident of Muko Muko to sell piece goods within the borders of Anak Sungei by the terms of a contract made several years earlier with Stephen Newcome, the Deputy Governor between 1730 and 1731.¹ Rigg, citing the freedom of trade granted to all Company servants by the Directors, questioned the legality of such a contract and asked the Board to intervene with the Sultan and enforce the Court's directives concerning liberty of trade. The Board headed by Deputy Governor Francis Everest was, not surprisingly, unsympathetic. They first castigated Rigg's undignified trading methods. It was 'Scandalous', they said, to send people to the country with packs on their backs to peddle off cloth. The time-honoured custom was for the Malays to come to the Company servants' houses to buy what they wanted and for the Malays to act as retailers. Moreover, they added, as the Sultan of Anak Sungei had full authority over his own people, it would be undue interference to contravene his orders merely 'to make room for a little peddling Cloth trade, which no way in the World concerns the Honble. Company'.² In conclusion they noted blandly, it was true that the Company's servants were as free as the Deputy Governor to trade anywhere, but no restraints had been put upon them and 'if People are not dispos'd to buy as lately they were not at Sablet [Anak Sungei] We cannot oblige them'.³

Three years later this association for trade at Muko Muko was still in operation, involving Deputy Governor Robert Lennox and Resident John Savage. The partnership came to light as a result of Savage's embezzlement of Company funds at Muko Muko which necessitated the auctioning of his effects to make good his debt to the Company. The inventory of his goods made by his successor at Muko Muko included

1. FM Cons., 23 Dec. 1734, SFR. 61

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

a large quantity of piece goods. These, Savage explained, were 'half of the Stock in partnership between the Dep^{ty}. Governour & him'.¹ He also stated that the terms of their partnership provided that on the removal or death of one, the other was obliged to buy what merchandise was left unsold at the prices charged in their accounts when the goods had been put into stock and pay the other party for his half share within a year. The Board allowed Deputy Governor Lennox to follow this procedure, since it would be of advantage to Savage's and therefore to the Company's affairs. The piece goods belonging to the partnership had been rated at a twenty-five or thirty-five per cent mark-up when put on the partnership's books, while it was calculated that they would not earn even prime cost if sold at auction because 'a Glutt of Cloth' then afflicting Fort Marlborough.² Lennox subsequently signed a bond for \$1936.1.76 as payment for Savage's half share of the goods.³ The total value of the existing stock of the Muko Muko partnership was therefore \$3872.3.52 or over three and a half times the scale of Hindley's and Rowles' trading concern at the less important Residency of Lais.

As far as can be determined the concern continued to flourish. The next reference in the Fort Marlborough Consultations occurs about ten years later, when William Rigg, then Deputy Governor, died in February 1746. Three weeks later Joseph Hurlock arrived from Muko Muko to take the chair and requested the Board to appoint deputies to settle his 'joint Concerns' with Rigg at Muko Muko.⁴ Whether these were organised on lines similar to the partnership between Savage and Lennox is uncertain, but Hurlock's share of the stock was assessed at \$2010.2.94 in cash and over 81 taels of gold which he deposited in the Company's cash for the benefit of Rigg's estate.⁵

1. FM Cons., 29 Sept. 1737, SFR 62.

2. *ibid.*

3. FM Cons., 7 Oct. 1737, SFR 62.

4. FM Cons., 18 Feb., 21 March 1746, SFR 64.

5. FM Cons., 3 April 1746, SFR 64. The gold must have been worth about \$1458 at \$18 per tael.

Hurlock then apparently proceeded to enter into partnership with Robert Hindley who had succeeded him as Resident at Muko Muko in April 1746. The investigations of Supravisors Walsh and Pybus in 1754 disclosed that Hindley had given Hurlock bonds worth \$43,771.1.83. Of this total, \$29,423.1.96 were deemed by the Supravisors to form a collusive contract designed to bribe Hurlock into resigning the governorship.¹ The remaining \$14,473.3.87, however, related to what Hindley called his 'other concerns' with Hurlock and had no connection with the attempt at bribery.² These 'other concerns' seem to have been associated primarily with trade at Muko Muko. Hindley testified that Hurlock had surrendered his share of that commerce in May 1751, and his portion of the piece goods remaining in stock there had been taken over by Hindley.³ The debts due to their partnership at Muko Muko had also been assumed by Hindley.

The Residency concerns, at least as judged by the Krui and Muko Muko partnerships, reached substantial proportions, although there was always some question concerning the degree to which their dealings depended on the Resident's political authority. Nevertheless, the concerns' profits appear to have surpassed virtually all the forms of fraud uncovered by the Supravisors, which had rarely netted more than a few thousand dollars and more usually a few hundreds. The Residency trade was, moreover, not the only or perhaps even the richest commerce available to the West Coast establishment. It is notable that the wealthiest men Fort Marlborough produced, whatever they may have gained by illegal emoluments or semi-legal Residency trade, were also country traders trafficking in their own ships to areas that were not, at least initially, within the domains of the East India Company.

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1. FM Cons., 8 Jan. 1754, SFR 67.
 2. FM Cons., 8 Jan., 12 Jan. 1754.
 3. *ibid.*

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FORT MARLBOROUGH'S COUNTRY TRADE,1735-1760

It is difficult to assess the relative importance of corruption and legitimate private commerce as money-making activities for the Fort Marlborough servants in the 1740s and 1750s especially since the line between the two, at least in relation to the Residency trade, was by no means clear-cut. Nevertheless, Benkulen-based country trading, a form of commerce independent of any special opportunities provided by a position of trust in the Company's service, persisted throughout the period between 1735 and 1760, and there is abundant evidence of the Fort Marlborough servants' active efforts to extend their overseas trade before, as well as after, Supervisors Pybus and Walsh curtailed many of the traditional forms of fraud in 1754.

The volume of trade goods ordered from India is one measure of the importance of commerce in the quest for a competency, and it is significant that most of the wealthiest men at Fort Marlborough, as judged by the certificates that they drew between 1735 and 1760, seem to have been engaged in substantial trading operations. According to the manifests of private trade on Company ships bound from Madras for Benkulen, nine of the ten covenanted servants whose total remittances exceeded \$10,000 (Spanish dollars) indented for piece goods from India, and seven did so regularly.¹ These totals are incomplete since the manifests exist for only twelve of the twenty-five years between 1735 and 1760 and take no cognizance of the merchandise which also came consigned to West Coast servants on private vessels from the Coromandel Coast. Enough information is, however, available to demonstrate

1. See Appendix VI.

that a considerable volume of trade goods was ordered from Fort St. George for the use of Fort Marlborough's private commerce. Deputy Governor Robert Lennox indented for merchandise from Madras in every year for which the manifests of private trade exist, and the total value of his known purchases reached Pagodas 22,687.36.0.¹ The size of this sum indicates that trading profits must have provided an important contribution to his remittances, which totalled \$49,740.2.0 by his departure from Sumatra in August 1744. His successor as Deputy Governor, William Rigg, also ordered large quantities of Indian cloth yearly to a total value of at least Pagodas 13,911.18.0.² The sum of his remittances reached \$48,440 with \$40,000 of this sent to England after his death in February 1746 - the proceeds from the sale of his effects, including a share in a ship, thirty chests of opium and a large parcel of gold.³ Isaac Barbut sent \$10,400 home to England on resigning from the Company's service in 1748 and had ordered goods from Madras on his own and his brother Charles's account valued at Pagodas 5210.36.0 between 1736 and 1744.⁴ William Coles purchased Pagodas 7166.18.0 worth of piece goods from Madras between 1739 and 1743 and remitted a total of \$12,975 to England and Fort St. George.⁵ The two top money-earners, Thomas Combes and Joseph Hurlock, who remitted \$38,467.3.74 and \$45,161.0.25 to England respectively, seem, however, to have

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1. See Appendix VI.
 2. This sum includes both the Pagodas 9,168.18.0 listed for Rigg in the Fort St. George manifests, and a parcel of goods worth Pagodas 4,743 which arrived after his death, on the ship Fort St. George in April 1746. Rigg had also ordered another lot of piece goods of unspecified value via the ship Sumatra in the same year. Gov. Hurlock purchased these goods with the Board's approval at a forty per cent mark-up on six months' credit. Rigg's total also does not include another Pagodas 1,562.0.0 ordered in 1743 by him and Lennox in partnership. Appendix VI. FM Cons., 26 April 1746, 10 June 1746, SFR 64.
 3. FM Cons., 26 March, 7 July, 26 Aug. 1746, SFR 64; FM to Court, 25 Jan. 1748, SFR 9.
 4. See Appendices III & VI. The Barbuts, Charles and Isaac, are considered together here, as Isaac took over as sole heir and executor to his brother's estate when Charles died at Muko Muko on 12 March 1745, FM Cons., 19 March 1745, SFR 64.
 5. See Appendices III & VI.

indented for merchandise from India on Company ships on a lesser scale. Combes' known purposes from Madras were valued at only Pagodas 6972.10.64, but it is likely that he ordered more than this.¹ His remittances to Fort St. George indicate that he paid \$14,568 (about Pagodas 9712) to Walsh and Vansittart who customarily provided him with the goods that he ordered from India. Hurlock's indents from Madras are even smaller. He ordered only Pagodas 5460.18.10² worth of Indian merchandise and there is little correlation between the men who manifested his goods and the recipients of his remittances to Madras. Hurlock, moreover, is known to have acquired at least \$10,000 of his fortune from illegal commissions charged on the sale of the arrack licence at Fort Marlborough between 1746 and 1751. Roger Carter also indented for merchandise worth only about Pagodas 3718.27.0 between 1749 and 1754, a comparatively small sum when compared with the total of \$20,988.1.43 which he remitted between 1750 and 1760.³ This does not necessarily mean, however, that these three men concentrated on defrauding the Company as their major source of revenue.

An even more significant indication of the importance of trade in the pursuit of wealth is the fact that seven of the ten servants remitting fortunes of more than \$10,000 from Benkulen were known to be ship-owners. This includes Combes, Hurlock, and Carter whose orders of trade goods from Madras on Company vessels appear so suspiciously low in relation to their earnings. Ship-owning is a vital clue to the nature of these men's business interests. It was unnecessary to possess a vessel of one's own if one were simply selling or forcing piece goods ordered from Fort St. George on pepper planters living under one's authority. It was essential if one planned to transport trade goods beyond the limits of the Company's

1. See Appendices III & VI.

2. *ibid.* The other men who remitted over \$10,000 include Robert Hindley who ordered goods worth Pagodas 484 in 1744 and John Massey who ordered Pagodas 409.18.0 in 1744. No manifests are available for the period between 1731 and 1735 when Francis Everest was Governor.

3. See Appendices III & VI.

territory, and also made it possible to convey merchandise from Madras without waiting on the Company's shipping. Ship-owning, therefore, means that these men were country traders, engaged in commerce which did not depend exclusively on their position as Company servants.

The markets of the Benkulen-based country trade in the 1740s and 1750s seem to have been Borneo and the North Coast of Sumatra although the precise nature of these activities, particularly in the earlier decade, is difficult to chart. Banjarmasin may have been the major market in the 1740s, but the North Coast came into prominence in the 1750s. The number of Fort Marlborough-owned vessels increased fairly steadily throughout the entire period.

Although not involving a large number of vessels, there seems to have been regular shipping activity at Benkulen between 1737 and 1747. The shipping diaries in the Fort Marlborough Consultation Books generally include only vessels engaged in Company business and are consequently incomplete as a record of country trade. Nevertheless, at least thirteen country vessels are cited as having called at Fort Marlborough during this period. Of these, six were Fort Marlborough-owned. The other seven touched at Benkulen only once, rather than as a part of a regular trading run.¹

Practically no information concerning two of the Fort Marlborough-owned vessels exists. The sloop Success appears only briefly in the records when her owners offered her for sale to the Company for \$2500. Since she was newly sheathed, in good repair and possessed eight half-pounder guns, the Board agreed to purchase her to carry dispatches to the Coromandel Coast in 1747.² She was subsequently detained by Fort St. David for the use of the British fleet then engaging the French in the area.³ Little more is known about the sloop Marlbro. She first appears officially when hired by the Board to carry supplies to Krui Residency

1. See Appendix X.

2. FM Cons., 16 April, 28 April 1747, SFR 64.

3. FM Cons., 13 Nov. 1747, SFR 64.

after the Company sloop Hawke miscarried. Her owners had agreed to take the stores for Krui freight-free if guaranteed \$300 for bringing back a cargo of pepper.¹ The Marlbro sailed on 2 April 1746 but also missed her port. She was driven by strong north-west winds in to the Sunda Straits and wrecked there losing all the Company's stores. The sloop's master managed to obtain a perahu to take him to Batavia from whence he returned on the sloop Young Joseph in June 1746 bringing news of the accident.²

Somewhat more, however, is known about the ownership and movements of the other four Fort Marlborough-based country vessels: the sloops Shoreham (sixty tons burden) and Macassar, the Marlbro ketch, and the Neptune brigantine. The Shoreham's career extended from at least 1737 until about April 1741. In September 1737, a five-sixteenths share in the sloop was sold as part of the effects of John Innes, a factor, who had died on 2 September. One-fourth was purchased by William Rigg, then Third of Council and Paymaster, and the other one-sixteenth by Captain John Williams, Commandant of the military, for \$216 and \$54 respectively. The remaining eleven-sixteenths of her ownership remains unknown.³

The Shoreham appears to have been employed for much of the late 1730s on hire to the Company, carrying stores to and pepper from the out-settlements. She was sent to Muko Muko for this purpose in December 1738 and again in January 1739 and then on to Manna in March 1739.⁴ There is no further record of her employment until October 1739 when she was hired at \$200 per month to accompany the Company ship Duke to Banjarmasin.⁵ A month after her return from Borneo in August 1740

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1. FM Cons., 21 March 1746, SFR 64.
 2. FM Cons., 30 June 1746, SFR 64.
 3. FM Cons., 7 Sept., 29 Sept. 1737, SFR 62. Hurlock had sold an eighth share in this vessel to Innes. FM Cons., 31 March 1737, SFR 62.
 4. FM Cons., 27 Dec. 1738, 30 Jan., 3 April 1739, SFR 62. The Shoreham was so late returning from the trip to Manna that the Board, at least one of whom was a part owner of her, became concerned for her safety. They sent the Company sloop Bonetta just before the Shoreham arrived at Fort Marlborough early in April to take her supplies in case she had been into the Sunda Straits.
 5. FM Cons., 28 Oct. 1739, SFR 62.

she was again hired by the Board to take James Wheeler, the first Company Resident for Pulau Pisang, to that most southern of the Company's pepper districts.¹ She sailed on 12 October and this was to be her last trip. After reaching Krui she was driven by bad weather toward the Sunda Straits and was last reported seen in February 1741. No further word of her was received until May 1741 when her master, Anthony Hughes, arrived in a small perahu from Batavia and reported that the Shoreham had limped into port at Gresik in north-eastern Java and eventually made it to Surabaya, the nearest Dutch settlement, to seek aid. The sloop had been hauled ashore there and was found to be irreparable, so Hughes had left her and the Company's pepper in the care of the Dutch Resident. He himself had been obliged to wait nearly two months at Semarang before being allowed to go to Batavia to obtain permission to return to Fort Marlborough.² This pepper (about 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ tons) was finally collected by the Company ship Neptune en route from Benkulen to Banjarmasin in July 1742.³ In the same month the Shoreham's owners demanded freight of \$200 per month from the time that she had set out for Pulau Pisang until she had run ashore at Surabaya - a period of at least five months. The Board agreed on the grounds that she had been hired by the month and the cargo was safe.⁴ The minimum of \$1000 which she collected for this trip plus the \$1800 hire for her trip to Banjarmasin earned her owners over three times the value of the vessel herself in 1740 alone, quite apart from any private trading in which she might have been simultaneously engaged.

The other three vessels appear to have been more involved in actual trading and less in supplementing the Fort Marlborough marine. A five-sixteenth share in the Macassar sloop, like the Shoreham, formed part of John Innes' estate and was also purchased by William Rigg and John Williams for \$200 making the vessel worth

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1. FM Cons., 30 Aug., 2 Sept., 13 Sept., 20 Oct. 1740, SFR 63.
 2. FM Cons., 29 May 1741, SFR 63.
 3. FM Cons., 31 May 1743, SFR 63; 12 Oct. 1742, SFR 63.
 4. FM Cons., 22 July 1742, SFR 63.

§640. At the time of the sale she was lying stranded at Pulau Bay near Benkulen.¹ The Macassar vanishes from the shipping diaries of the Fort Marlborough Consultations in 1741, but unlike the Shoreham the circumstances remain unknown.

The ventures of the Marlbro ketch and the Neptune brigantine extend from 1741 to 1746. The Marlbro first appears on the scene officially in December 1741 when she was dispatched from Benkulen to fetch pepper from Ketaun. Her captain was Anthony Hughes, ex-master of the Shoreham, and her owners were listed as William Rigg and Deputy Governor Robert Lennox, who indented for Pagodas 1562 worth of piece goods on her account from Madras in October 1743. By this time, however, the Marlbro ketch had disappeared from the records. She had set out on a voyage to Borneo in November 1742 to conduct Company servants and Banjarese envoys there,² but it was the Neptune brigantine which returned in her place in May 1743.³ The owners of the two were identical since the brigantine's proprietors collected the §500 which the ketch's owners had demanded for the passage to Banjarmasin.⁴ Lennox and Rigg were still the Neptune's owners in 1746 when Rigg died. His share of the brigantine was put up for sale in March 1746 with the rest of his effects but remained unsold because of her bad condition.⁵ She was not finally disposed of until August 1746 when both Rigg's three-eighths and Lennox's five-eighths shares were auctioned. John Delamotte, the only bidder, purchased her for §1310 and that is the last reference to her in the Fort Marlborough records,⁶ Delamotte having died at Krui within a year.

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1. FM Cons., 29 Sept. 1737, SFR 62. An eighth share in this vessel had also been sold by Hurlock to Innes.
 2. FM Cons., 17 Nov. 1742, SFR 63.
 3. FM Cons., 31 May 1743, SFR 63.
 4. FM Cons., 17 Nov. 1742, 31 May 1743, SFR 63.
 5. FM Cons., 26 March 1746, SFR 64.
 6. FM Cons., 15 Aug. 1746, SFR 64.

The Borneo Trade

The movements of these vessels, particularly the Macassar, Marlbro and Nentune, give some indication of the scope and direction of Fort Marlborough-based country trade during the years between 1737 and 1747. Banjarmasin and the Sumatran coast to the north of the Dutch settlement of Padang seem to have formed the principal branches of this commerce, with the Borneo trade being probably the most valuable.

The servants' Borneo trade appears to have opened up as a consequence of the East India Company's renewed contacts with Banjarmasin in 1737. The Company had purchased pepper at this South Bornean port early in the eighteenth century but had been ousted by the Dutch in the mid-1720s. The Dutch signed a treaty with the Sultan of Banjar in 1733 reserving the sultanate's pepper to the VOC but abandoned the trade in 1737 because of decreasing supplies of pepper and a simultaneous shortage of silver at Batavia with which to pay for them.¹ On the departure of the Dutch the Banjarese turned to the English as a means to prevent any resurgence of Batavia's influence in the area, and an invitation to trade at Banjarmasin signed by two pengerans arrived at Fort Marlborough in January 1737. The Board responded by dispatching Joseph Hurlock on the India-based country ship Jane, Captain Robert Milne, which was already destined for Banjarmasin, to inquire into the pengerans' terms.²

The Jane arrived at Borneo in March 1738, only a month before the Company ship Prince of Wales, which the Court had ordered to stop at Banjarmasin en route from London to China as a result of Fort Marlborough's communication of the Banjarese overtures. The Prince of Wales' supracargoes obtained an agreement

1. Goh Yoon Fong, Trade and Politics in Banjarmasin, 1700-1747 (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1969), p. 257. According to Goh, the Banjarese desired protection against the Dutch and possible Bugis raiders rather than new customers, since Chinese junks called there annually and usually offered better prices for pepper than the Europeans did.
2. FM Cons., 7 Feb., 21 Feb. 1738, SFR 62.

allowing them to purchase pepper at \$6 per pikul but discovered that they were unlikely to get more than 4000 pikuls (about 218 tons). The Sultan, however, promised a chop to load another English ship the next year. He subsequently repudiated this pledge, presumably from fear of Dutch displeasure, although he indicated verbally that he would give favoured treatment to any English ships calling at Banjarmasin the next year.¹ Hurlock's mission on behalf of the Benkulen government also proved unexpectedly difficult. The Sultan was annoyed because the letters from Fort Marlborough were addressed to the two pengerans who had invited the English to Borneo, men with whom he was at odds, and the price he demanded for pepper was \$9 per pikul, which the Chinese junk traders had paid the preceding year. Hurlock managed to reduce it to \$6 (including the Sultan's customs of \$1.1.0 per pikul) only by long negotiation.² Hurlock, however, reckoned the annual production of pepper at Banjarmasin at 9000 pikuls which he judged well worth the effort of persevering in the trade.³ Hurlock himself did not return directly to Benkulen but went on to Madras in the Jane, arriving at Fort Marlborough in December 1738 on the Galatea, another country vessel commanded by Robert Milne.

The Court of Directors had high expectations from renewed contacts with Banjarmasin, hoping not only for pepper cargoes to help with 'enlarging and improving our China Trade', but also for 'a continual account of all Transactions in those Eastern parts, ...[to] thereby further enlarge Our commerce with the Mallays of all Sorts as occasion may offer'.⁴ As a consequence, the Directors planned, without waiting for news of the Prince of Wales' reception at Banjarmasin to send two or more ships a year to Borneo, one direct from London en route to China and another via Benkulen. They instructed the Fort Marlborough authorities to appoint 'some

1. FM Cons., 16 Aug. 1738, SFR 62.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

4. Court to FM, 26 April 1738, pars. 5, 9, Despatches from England, 1737-40, op. cit., vols. 42-4, pp. 48-9.

of the best and ablest' of the West Coast servants who were well acquainted with the language and temper of the Malays to transact business at Banjarmasin for the first of the Court's regular ships there, the Marlborough, Captain Thomas Smith,¹ which arrived at Fort Marlborough in December 1738. The result of these orders was a steady stream of Benkulen servants and vessels dispatched to Banjarmasin to service not only the Marlborough but every subsequent Company ship at that port, until by 1744 it began to appear that the Borneo trade had perhaps become more beneficial to the West Coast servants than to the Company.

Joseph Hurlock and James Wheeler were sent to Banjarmasin in January 1739 on the Galatea, which had brought Hurlock back from Madras, to try to collect pepper for the Marlborough, which had been detained at Benkulen by an outbreak of scurvy among her crew, before the Chinese junks arrived in Borneo and cornered the market.² The Company sloop Fame also accompanied the Marlborough when she finally sailed on 3 February 1739, to help bring treasure in and pepper out of the Banjarmasin river. At this point the Board also ordered that no English country ships were to be allowed to buy pepper there until the Marlborough was loaded,³ although this prohibition was waived for Captain Milne of the Galatea, after he petitioned the Board that he had left debts at Banjarmasin the preceding year which were to be paid for with 350 pikuls of pepper.⁴

No word had been received at Fort Marlborough from Hurlock and Wheeler by the arrival of the next Borneo-bound Company ship, the Duke, Captain Thomas Hindeman, in October 1739.⁵ The Board, concluding that the two West Coast servants had been detained at Banjarmasin to expedite the loading of the ship Walpole, which had left England in November 1738 direct for Borneo, therefore decided to appoint Henry Coales, another Malay-speaking Fort Marlborough Factor, to sail

1. Court to FM, 26 April 1738, pars. 3, 5, Despatches from England, 1737-40, op. cit., vols. 42-4, pp. 48-9.

2. FM Cons., 16 Aug., 5 Dec., 9 Dec., 11 Dec., 16 Dec. 1738, SFR 62.

3. FM Cons., 16 Dec. 1738, SFR 62.

4. FM Cons., 21 Dec. 1738, SFR 62.

5. FM Cons., 10 Oct. 1739, SFR 62.

with the Duke in case any accident had befallen Hurlock and Wheeler.¹ The privately owned sloop Shoreham was also hired at \$200 per month to accompany the Duke. The Board justified their use of her by noting that the Company sloop Hawke was too small and in too poor condition for a journey of this length and the Company sloop Bonetta was needed to take stores to the southern out-settlements.²

The result of these initial ventures, however, was relatively disappointing, at least from the Company's point of view. The Duke, which had sailed for Banjarmasin on 24 November 1739, returned to Benkulen two weeks later, accompanied by the sloop Fame and the ship Marlborough carrying Hurlock and Wheeler, which she had met returning from Banjarmasin.³ Little pepper was available there, because, so the Sultan had explained to Hurlock, of the dryness of the season which had prevented it from being transported down-river to the kuala from the country. Consequently the Walpole which had arrived at Borneo in April had taken all the pepper Hurlock had collected for the Marlborough and still had sailed with only 2043 pikuls. Hurlock had been able to gather a mere 863 additional pikuls for the Marlborough and had been unwilling to detain the ship longer because her charter-party was near expiration. The Marlborough finally left Benkulen for England in January 1740 with a cargo of 351½ tons of pepper derived principally from Sumatra.⁴

Nevertheless, as the Sultan of Banjar had promised a cargo for the Marlborough if she could wait until August 1740 and Hurlock had obtained his chop for 6000 pikuls of pepper per year at \$6 per pikul for future English ships, the Benkulen authorities decided that sending the Duke back to Banjarmasin was preferable to an abrupt break in the trade with Borneo.⁵ The Duke with Hurlock aboard and the

1. FM Cons., 18 Oct., 22 Oct. 1739, SFR 62.

2. *ibid.*

3. FM Cons., 27 Nov., 8 Dec. 1739, SFR 62.

4. FM Cons., 8 Dec. 1739, SFR 62; 5 Feb. 1740, SFR 63.

5. FM Cons., 8 Dec. 1739, SFR 62.

sloop Shoreham consequently resumed their journey to Borneo.

The results of this voyage were disruptive as well as disappointing. Not only did the Sultan deny promising a cargo for the Marlborough but Hurlock's and Captain Hindeman's subsequent efforts to obtain pepper for the Duke also alienated the Sultan and several of the principal headmen and threatened to end English traffic with the area permanently. At first Hurlock and Hindeman had tried to by-pass the official appointed to conduct commercial transactions with them, alleging that he was giving preferential treatment to the Chinese junk traders. They then tried to induce the Sultan to allow them to travel inland to collect pepper as the Chinese did. The Sultan refused on the grounds that the Chinese had gone up-country to collect payment in kind for about \$10,000 which they had already advanced to the merchants, while the English factors on Company orders could pay only on delivery, a practice contrary to Banjarese custom. The Banjarese were also reluctant to accept the new-milled coins which the English had brought because of a shortage of Spanish dollars at Fort Marlborough. Frustrated by their inability to obtain a full cargo because of Chinese competition, Hurlock and Hindeman committed the ultimate folly of interfering with the junk trade. They told the nakhodas that they were breaking the Sultan's commercial edicts by offering more than \$6 per pikul for pepper to which the Chinese replied that the price had been fixed only between the English Company and the Sultan and placed no limits on them. Hurlock and Hindeman then pressed the Chinese official in charge of pepper deliveries to the junks to give them his remaining pepper since the Chinese vessels had already loaded over 3000 pikuls. When this brought no response, they threatened to remove pepper forcibly from a junk if on inspection it proved to carry more than 1000 pikuls. The junk's nakhoda reported this to the Sultan and as a consequence on 16 July 1740 the two English vessels were attacked in Banjar Bay. After three days of fighting, the supracargoes decided to withdraw and set sail for Benkulen on 20 July.¹

1. Goh Yoon Fong, op. cit., pp. 265-71.

The Board, on learning this, decided that trade with Banjarmasin was effectively halted. The Duke was sent to Muko Muko to complete her cargo and finally sailed for Europe in January 1741 with 447 tons of pepper, only about a quarter of which (1920 pikuls) had come from Banjarmasin;¹ her journey to Borneo had been less than profitable for the Company, but the owners of the sloop Shoreham collected \$1800 for nine months' hire of their vessel.² When the Company ship Edgebaston arrived at Fort Marlborough in April 1741, the Board ordered the goods she had brought for the Borneo trade put into storage in hopes that the traffic might be reopened.³ The only encouraging note for Benkulen was the fact that the Dutch appeared disinclined to renew their connection with Banjarmasin.⁴

By this time, however, the Court was beginning to have doubts about the Fort Marlborough servants' conduct of the Company's Borneo trade. The Directors complained about the frequency with which freight charges had been paid for the sloop Shoreham⁵ and later blamed the Duke's difficulties at Banjar on Hurlock's behaviour 'which is so like the Conduct of the Dutch We dont wonder [that] it created ill blood betwixt them'.⁶ The Court, nevertheless, did not share Fort Marlborough's fear that the Borneo trade was finished. The ship Neptune had already been sent from England for Banjarmasin in August 1741, and even after London had learned of the Duke's misadventure, the Court decided to send the ship Severn direct to Borneo in 1742.⁷

Before the Court's letter of 1742 reached Fort Marlborough, the Board had already moved to resume traffic to Borneo. The opportunity was provided by the

1. FM Cons., 30 Aug. 1740, 2 Feb. 1741, SFR 63.
2. FM Cons., 3 Sept. 1740, SFR 63.
3. FM Cons., 29 April, 15 July 1741, SFR 63.
4. FM Cons., 29 April 1741, SFR 63.
5. Court to FM, 28 Jan. 1741, par. 21, Despatches from England, 1740-3, op. cit., vols. 45-7, p. 12. This letter is dated 1740, but it is in answer to letters received from Fort Marlborough via the ships Britannia and Marlborough which left Benkulen in December 1739 and January 1740 respectively.
6. Court to FM, 20 Jan. 1742, par. 7, Despatches from England, 1740-3, op. cit., vols. 45-7, p. 57.
7. *ibid.*, pars. 1, 7, 8, p. 57.

war in Java between the Dutch and Chinese which had begun in 1740. As many junks had visited Borneo en route to Batavia, Banjarmasin's Chinese trade dwindled during the period that Chinese were not welcome at Dutch-controlled ports.¹ In February 1742, the Benkulen Council therefore decided to send James Wheeler as envoy to Banjarmasin on Rigg's and Lennox's ketch Marlbro, which was about to sail in that direction, to see if Banjarmasin's commercial difficulties might induce the Sultan to renew trade with the English.² The Marlbro ketch sailed for Borneo on 28 February 1742, and on 30 May the Company ship Neptune, which had arrived at Benkulen in April, was also sent on to Banjarmasin with Joseph Hurlock aboard. The Neptune was accompanied by the Company sloop Hawke,³ the same vessel which had been rejected the preceding year in favour of the Shoreham, because she was judged too small to be useful on such a mission. From this time on Fort Marlborough's private vessels were increasingly involved in the Borneo trade with results which ultimately were less than happy from London's point of view.

The Marlbro ketch returned to Benkulen on 22 July 1742 and Wheeler's report was encouraging. The Chinese no longer offered much commercial threat at Banjarmasin. Only two or three junks had visited there the preceding season, and they had brought no money. Wheeler thought that they would be unable to acquire as much pepper as they had formerly because the Banjarese needed dollars. Even the junks which had been at Banjarmasin during Wheeler's stay had obtained only 2500 pikuls of pepper between them, their cargoes consisting mostly of tin and rattans.⁴ In these circumstances the Sultan had welcomed Wheeler, expressed his regret that no English vessels had visited Borneo the previous year, and promised to provide 3000 pikuls of pepper per year to the English Company. He could not fill ships

1. Goh Yoon Fong, op. cit., pp. 272-4.

2. FM Cons., 23 Feb., 27 Feb., 18 March 1742, SFR 63.

3. FM Cons., 9 June 1742, SFR 63.

4. FM Cons., 29 July 1742, SFR 63.

as large as the English customarily sent, he claimed, because he was obliged to reserve some pepper for the junks which brought goods his people wished to buy.¹ He nevertheless gave Wheeler a letter promising 5000 pikuls of pepper to any English ship arriving there within two months and sent two envoys back to Fort Marlborough with Wheeler as an expression of goodwill.² Wheeler had encountered the Company ship Neptune at Batavia on his way back to Benkulen but had declined to accompany Hurlock and Captain D'Abbadie back to Borneo on account of ill health. The owners of the Marlbro ketch were paid \$150 for conveying the Banjarese deputies to Sumatra.³ The Board also agreed to buy twenty leaguers of arrack which she had brought from Batavia at the enormous price of \$120 per leaguer, and her rice cargo was purchased at five bambu measures of rice per dollar. These prices were inflated, the Board explained, because the troubles in Java made all provisions very difficult to obtain.⁴

Within four months, in November 1742, the Marlbro ketch was prepared by her owners for another 'voyage to the Eastward'. Fort Marlborough had learned in October via a VOC brigantine which called there that the ship Neptune and Hawke sloop, which had left Batavia for Borneo in July 1742, had been separated in a storm which drove the sloop back to Java.⁵ The Board consequently decided that it was necessary to send another vessel to provide Hurlock with transport back to

1. FM Cons., 29 July 1742, SFR 63.

2. *ibid.*

3. FM Cons., 7 Aug. 1742, SFR 63.

4. This was probably a genuine excuse since the Chinese controlled arrack production and many of the rice-growing areas of East Java. Prices of these scarce articles were already high at Fort Marlborough. In November 1741 an allowance of 6 bambus of rice per month was given the garrison since rice was then selling for 2½ bambus per dollar and the military's pay was too low to allow them to buy it. Rice was still scarce and expensive at Fort Marlborough in June 1742. Similarly, there was no arrack at all at Benkulen. In May 1742, sixty of the soldiers in the garrison petitioned the Board to give them some allowance in lieu of arrack which they had not received for over a month. The Board gave the military two sukus (half dollar) a month in cash and the slaves a buffalo until supplies of the liquor could be replenished. FM Cons., 14 April, 29 May, 22 July 1742, SFR 63.

5. FM Cons., 12 Oct. 1742, SFR 63.

Benkulen as the Neptune was scheduled to sail direct from Banjarmasin to Europe. Rigg and Lennox were therefore offered \$500 to convey the two Banjarese deputies, as well as Factors Thomas Combes and Alexander Christie, to Borneo and bring Hurlock back.¹ The ketch was provided with \$1000 of Company money for the expenses of the voyage and sailed from Fort Marlborough on 18 November 1742. In her place, the Neptune brigantine returned direct from Banjar on 31 May 1743 carrying Hurlock and Combes. The sloop Hawke had returned to Sumatra from Borneo three weeks earlier with Alexander Christie and the news that the Company ship Neptune had sailed from Banjarmasin for London on 5 December 1742 and the ship Severn on 9 January 1743, both with full cargoes of pepper. Hurlock also brought a chop from the Sultan promising the Company 6000 pikuls of pepper yearly.²

Although there is no reference in the Fort Marlborough records to private trading by the Marlbro ketch and the Hawke sloop, the circumstances of their sojourn at Banjarmasin appear most suspect. Three Benkulen servants and two extra vessels seem an excessive number to have been sent to Borneo to expedite the loading of two Company ships, which after all were provided with their own supracargoes. The accounts which Combes presented to the Board itemising the expenditure of the \$1000 given to him and Christie for the expenses of the voyage indicate that the Marlbro ketch (or Neptune brigantine) had not reached Borneo until mid-December 1742 - after the Company ship Neptune had left for Europe and only three weeks before the Severn also sailed. The two Factors sent on the Marlbro could hardly have contributed greatly to the dispatching of the ships. It is uncertain if this \$1000 was intended to cover the expenses of the Marlbro herself or merely the Factors she conveyed to Borneo, but these accounts do show that Combes, Christie and Hurlock maintained a trading post at Banjarmasin at Company cost until 3 April 1743³ - a full four months

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1. FM Cons., 6 Nov. 1742, SFR 63. The Company sloop Louisa was first proposed for this task but her master was too sick to travel and no one else in the Company's pay was considered capable of navigating her.
 2. FM Cons., 11 May, 31 May 1743, SFR 63.
 3. FM Cons., 30 June 1743, SFR 63.

during which there appears to have been no Company shipping at that port, and neither the Neptune brigantine nor the Hawke sloop returned to Benkulen until five months after the Company's ships had departed. This delay was not queried by the Board, and it seems likely that Lennox and Rigg, as Deputy Governor and Third of Council, sanctioned the Company's subsidising a private commercial venture not only by their own vessel but by the Hawke as well, either at Banjarmasin or in the surrounding waters, in addition to collecting \$500 hire for the voyage.

Fort Marlborough's involvement in the Company's commerce at Banjarmasin in the next years tends to confirm such suspicions. News came from Batavia that the Company ship Colchester had arrived there bound for Borneo in October 1743. The Court had instructed her supracargoes that if they found their predecessors had contracted with the Sultan to keep a guard ship at Banjar, they should send word to Fort Marlborough to forward the outward bound Company ship Swift there at all speed. They also asked for information concerning the state of Company affairs at Borneo and a small sloop to assist them. When by 28 October the Swift had not arrived at Benkulen, the Board decided to send the Company sloop Mary as requested, with James Wheeler as Company Resident at Banjar and John Massey as his assistant, to help load the Colchester.¹ The Mary sailed on 12 December 1743.

Five months later, the Board, concerned by the lack of any news from Wheeler and Massey, decided to send Walter Churchey to take care of transactions at Banjar if the new Resident were ill or dead. A letter for Wheeler and \$2000 to pay Churchey's expenses and to aid Wheeler were prepared. The Neptune brigantine, already destined by her owners for a voyage to Banjar, was to convey Churchey there.² She sailed on 2 June 1744, and her journey was to end in difficulties which provide the only definite clues available concerning the nature of Fort Marlborough's country trade in Borneo.

1. FM Cons., 10 Oct., 28 Oct. 1743, SFR 63.

2. FM Cons., 28 May 1744, SFR 63.

News of events began to trickle back to Benkulen about six weeks after the Neptune had departed. The Brilliant snow, which had been sent from Benkulen to Batavia in March to replenish supplies of arrack, returned to Sumatra on 14 July 1744. Her captain, R. S. Gay, reported that he had met Massey in Batavia. Wheeler had died in Borneo on 26 March. The Colchester had loaded 6000 pikuls of pepper at Banjar, but she, along with Massey and the sloop Mary, had been forced to leave the port after the Banjarese had attacked and destroyed a French brigantine, which had come there to trade, killing all the crew except the second mate, whom the English had rescued. Gay also informed the Board that the Colchester was preparing to sail for Europe from Batavia when he had left that port, and that Massey intended to return to Fort Marlborough in the sloop Mary as soon as the larger ship was under way.¹

Massey's plans, however, went sadly awry. The Princess Augusta, Captain George Goring, which had been dispatched to Batavia in June to buy salt for the Benkulen establishment,² returned on 30 July with even more disquieting news contained in a letter from Massey written at the Dutch capital on 17 July. Captain Goring had informed Massey of the Neptune brigantine's departure for Banjarmasin in June 1744. In the light of the Colchester's and Mary's experiences there, Massey had thought it necessary to send the Mary in search of the brigantine to prevent her proceeding to that now dangerous port.³ The Mary had not yet returned, Massey wrote via Goring, but he expected her daily.

On 31 July, the Neptune herself arrived at Fort Marlborough and the full extent of the difficulties became known.⁴ The brigantine's chief mate, who had brought her home, reported that he had indeed met the Mary sloop near Borneo and as a result of her warning the captain, Anthony Hughes, turned back for Sumatra. They lacked,

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1. FM Cons., 15 July 1744, SFR 63.
 2. FM Cons., 28 May, 29 May, 15 June 1744, SFR 63.
 3. FM Cons., 31 July 1744, SFR 63.
 4. FM Cons., 3 Aug. 1744, SFR 63.

however, sufficient provisions for the journey and had therefore called at Semarang on the North Coast of Java for wood and water. Sterrenberg, the Dutch chief of the settlement, had invited Hughes and Churchey ashore and promised to help them. While they were away seven boats full of armed men had attacked the brigantine as she lay at anchor and had tried to board her. The crew had managed to beat them off and the mate had at once set sail for Fort Marlborough, leaving Hughes and Churchey behind in the hope that they could reach Batavia in time to take passage back to Sumatra on the expected Company storeship from Europe.¹

The Board ascribed this Dutch action to 'the Jealousy they entertain[ed] of the English, whose growing Progress give[s] them some Uneasiness'.² The extent of Dutch 'uneasiness' soon became apparent. On 24 August 1744, the storeship Caesar, Captain Matthew Court, arrived from Batavia with a letter from the Dutch Governor General and Council stating that Hughes and Churchey had been seized at Semarang on suspicion of importing contraband.³ The Mary sloop had also been impounded on her return to Batavia and her crew and John Massey imprisoned on 27 July as accessories to Neptune's alleged illicit trading.⁴ The Dutch complained that the English had taken unscrupulous advantage of the good treatment their vessels had received at Dutch ports, despite all Fort Marlborough's assurances 'that nothing illegal should be suffered'.⁵

We [the VOC] should now be the dupes of all these pretended Ties of Friendship, if we any longer refuse to believe what has already been given out under-Hand* long since, that all these Caresses [overtures?] which are made Us by sending some small Vessels under Pretence of purchasing Necessaries for your Factory are only

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1. FM Cons., 3 Aug. 1744, SFR 63.
 2. *ibid.*
 3. FM Cons., 25 Aug. 1744, SFR 63.
 4. FM Cons., 6 May, 25 Aug. 1744, SFR 63.
 5. FM Cons., 25 Aug. 1744, SFR 63.

* This appears to be a direct transliteration of the Dutch 'onderhand' which sometimes meant 'secretly' but more usually translated 'meanwhile'.

*underhand [ambiguous]
sale by private contract
(i.e. not
publicly)*
S
in der hand

Illusions and Artifices, under which as formerly... Endeavours are made to plunge a bloody Iron into the Bowels of our Company's most valuable Trade, in getting Opium in Abundance conveyed by other Vessels to BanjarMasseen, to be by Stealth run thro' that Channel into the Places of this our private Commerce, which are brought in whilst We are amused with Stories, sometimes that it is for the Service of a Vessel that comes from England directly in order to purchase Pepper, and at other Times that it is even for a small Matter of Pepper that their Vessels so often traffick for between Bencoolen and Borneo.¹

The main source of Dutch anger was not the six year old pepper trade by the English Company at Borneo, but the fact that the Benkulen servants had systematically exploited this as a cover for pushing their private trade into the eastern waters which the VOC considered most particularly its exclusive domain. This was demonstrated by Neptune's captain calling at Semarang, ostensibly for provisions, while 'the true Cause of his coming... was the Sale of about 150 Chests of Opium that he had on Board'.² Batavia further charged that no one could be unaware that trading in opium in the territories of the VOC was forbidden on pain of death by the Dutch sovereign himself. Notices to this effect had even been posted in Bengal where the opium was purchased, and the Fort Marlborough servants, who had been warned against it 'as often as they have been in the road of this City [Batavia]',³ were the last who could claim ignorance. The people imprisoned in connection with the incident at Semarang were to be tried by the Council of Justice and until the affair was settled, Batavia asked that Fort Marlborough 'excuse Us in Future from the Correspondence between your Habitation and ours untill a Satisfaction proportionate to the Indignity of this Proceeding restore Us to the State that We would willingly have remained in'.⁴

The only response possible for Fort Marlborough was to await the outcome of the Council of Justice's hearings. On 28 August 1744, however, the Godolphin, Captain John Stevens, arrived from Madras and Bengal with news that war between

1. FM Cons., 25 Aug. 1744, SFR 63.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

4. *ibid.*

Britain and France had again been declared. The Dutch had requested that any report of the progress of the war in Europe be sent to them at Batavia, so the Fort Marlborough Board decided to dispatch the Brilliant snow on this pretext, with money for the support of the Company servants under confinement and instructions to try to obtain their release. In the meantime, no ships were to be dispatched from Fort Marlborough to Borneo.¹

Eight months later, on 6 May 1745, John Massey and the Neptune's captain, Anthony Hughes, returned to Benkulen on the Mary sloop. Massey had been freed about a month after his arrest at the end of July 1744, but Hughes' and Churchey's trial had not been completed until 28 December 1744. Either on the merits of the case or possibly because of the presence of four British warships at Batavia, Hughes and Churchey had been acquitted of the charge of trading opium illegally, at least at Semarang, and the Resident of that port, who had brought the accusation, had been obliged to pay the court costs. During the proceedings, however, the Dutch had seized all the papers carried by the Mary including two letters from the Sultan of Banjar and a letter from the Directors to the Benkulen Board. The sloop had also been returned to Massey stripped of most of her fittings, a loss of about \$880. Churchey had not come back to Benkulen but had gone on to Banjarmasin with the Company ship Portobello, which had arrived at Batavia en route from London to Borneo, to help with her loading.²

The Brilliant snow returned to Sumatra later in May with the Dutch Council's reply to Fort Marlborough's letter of September 1744. The Dutch remained adamant on the subject of the opium trade despite having to acknowledge that they had been

1. FM Cons., 29 Aug., 20 Sept., 1744, SFR 63.

2. FM Cons., 6 May 1745, SFR 64. These warships had taken three French ships bound for China and a Manila vessel as prizes. Although they were at Batavia when Massey left there in April or May 1745, it is uncertain if they were there when Churchey's and Jones' trial was actually in progress during November and December 1744. It is possible, however, that they might have been. Massey reported that the refitting of the Brilliant, which had left Benkulen in September 1744, had been delayed by the prior claims of the warships.

mistaken concerning the activities of the Neptune at Semarang. The only way to remove the friction between the two Companies, Batavia asserted, was to eradicate its cause - 'the Opium Trade at Bencoolen'.¹ The Board's response to this was predictable. They considered that having assured the Dutch that nothing illegal would be tolerated, it was unreasonable of them to expect to exclude the Fort Marlborough servants from

...that Branch of our private Trade, which our Honble Masters have been pleased to indulge us and all their other Servants in India, in,... [particularly] as We have never vended Opium at any Place belonging to the Dutch; We think it very hard that their Suspicions only, which have already appeared to be groundless by the Determination of their Court of Justice in this late Affair, should deprive us of it, and if sending that Commodity to Banjar or any other Places where We have a free Trade is a Fault, only because it is in the Neighbourhood of their Settlements, We may likewise in Time be deprived of every other Branch for the same Reasons and with as good Grounds, and the Dutch thereby engross the whole Traffick of these Parts to themselves.²

The Board agreed that an answer to the Council at Batavia must be sent by the Orford, which had arrived at Fort Marlborough on 18 May 1745 and was soon to set forth for Banjar, to assure the Dutch that the insult offered to the English Company's servants and vessels would be represented to London and compensation duly demanded. The Orford sailed on 5 June accompanied by the Mary sloop, carrying this letter and one to Churchey at Banjar, which prudently directed him to return the ship to Sumatra after loading her with Bornean pepper but not to send her via Batavia.³

The Court of Directors, however, were not only unsympathetic to Fort Marlborough's troubles with the Dutch but were also generally displeased with their West Coast servants' handling of Company affairs at Borneo. Fort Marlborough was thus forbidden to send any more Company servants or vessels to Banjarmasin on Company business and the conduct of the Borneo traffic was placed 'under our Own

1. FM Cons., 27 May 1745, SFR 64.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

immediate Direction by People Sent from hence [London] only'.¹ The Court had no objection to Benkulen servants trading to Banjarmasin in their own vessels but warned them that if contraband were carried into Dutch ports, they could 'expect no protection from Us in that Commerce'.² Even after news of Hughes' and Churchey's acquittal reached England, the Court expressed no great faith in the innocence of its West Coast servants. The Directors remarked on the great expense resulting from Benkulen sending 'Our Servants One after another to Benjar'. and again forbade this practice.³ They also noted caustically that Batavia's seizure of the Company sloop Mary 'was occasioned by your People going with Opium into one of their Ports, which hath so blended Our Affairs with your Illicit Trade, [that] We cannot demand that Satisfaction of the Dutch, that We should otherwise require'.⁴ and added that angering the Dutch by selling opium 'among their Dependents...under any pretence whatsoever' was to be 'Studiously avoided'.⁵ The Court clearly feared that Fort Marlborough's conduct of its private traffic might jeopardise the Company's trade to Borneo.

In this fear the Court was justified. On 12 January 1746 the Benkulen authorities received Batavia's answer to the letter they had sent via the Orford concerning English pretensions to a free trade. The Dutch rejected the Board's definition of what constituted places belonging to the VOC and expressed surprise that Benkulen claimed 'the Right of Carrying Opium or interfering with the Princes of the Eastern Seas'. Borneo was cited among several ports where the Dutch forbade trading without a VOC licence.⁶ The Board concluded that the Dutch were planning

1. Court to FM, 10 Jan. 1746, par. 20, Despatches from England, 1744-7, op. cit., vols. 49-50, p. 45.

2. *ibid.*

3. Court to FM, 16 Jan. 1747, par. 8, Despatches from England, 1744-7, op. cit., vols. 49-50, p. 90.

4. *ibid.*, par. 17, p. 91.

5. *ibid.*, par. 16, p. 91.

6. FM Cons., 20 Jan. 1746, SFR 64.

to exclude the English from Banjarmasin and that it could do little to prevent this but represent the matter to the Court.

The Dutch were angered not only by the Neptune incident but also by Fort Marlborough's subsequent involvement with the High Pengeran of Madura. In October 1745, two perahus had arrived at Benkulen from Madura bringing Radeen Temenggong Weero de Nevat, the ten year old son and heir of the High Pengeran, and his young cousin Radeen Amas with about eighty-five attendants. They also carried a letter from the Pengeran commending the young princes to English protection and asking aid against the Dutch. The right to maintain a fort or settlement on Madura was offered the Company as a reward for English assistance.¹ The Madurese visitors insisted that they were a free people and were embroiled with the Dutch only because Batavia had defrauded them. The Pengeran had been an ally of the Dutch in the recent actions against the Chinese in Java and had received a promise that he could continue to rule those districts that he succeeded in wresting from the hands of the rebels. The Dutch had also promised to cede him Gresik, a port on the Javanese coast opposite his island. On the strength of this the Pengeran had proceeded to reoccupy many of the North Java ports, which the Chinese had taken from the Dutch, and garrisoned them with his own men. As soon as the Chinese troubles had abated, however, Batavia had reneged on its treaty and demanded not only restitution of the territory he held but also of the valuable plunder he had taken from the Chinese. The Pengeran refused and hostilities between Madura and Batavia broke out.²

The Fort Marlborough authorities were clearly intrigued by the idea of an outpost on Madura. They noted that as far as they could learn the island produced cheap and plentiful provisions and had a thriving trade in perahus with Banjarmasin and Batavia. It was a place capable of great improvement, they asserted, if the

1. FM Cons., 14 Oct. 1745, SFR 64.

2. FM Cons., 19 Oct. 1745, SFR 64.

Company settled there. The Board told the Madurese deputies, however, that as allies of the Dutch they could not interfere in the affair without instructions from London. They would, they promised, represent the matter to the Court of Directors.¹

There were, however, also more immediate benefits from the Madurese presence at Fort Marlborough. The Madurese had found their way to Benkulen through the good offices of Robert Jones, the master of the Company sloop Mary which had been dispatched to Banjarmasin to help load the Orford in June 1745. The Mary had called at Madura in August for provisions, and on the request of the High Pengeran her captain had offered two of the sloop's crewmen to guide the Madurese princes to Benkulen.² It was later revealed that the High Pengeran had entrusted nearly \$50,000 in cash and two gold bowls worth \$108 and \$112 to Churchey and Jones at Borneo to be taken to Fort Marlborough for the use of his son. The Pengeran wrote to Governor Hurlock in 1747 that only \$18,400 had been delivered to the prince after the Mary's return to Sumatra in June 1746.³ The Board accepted without question Churchey's explanation that the High Pengeran had given him and Jones \$10,000 and a gold bowl each as a reward for helping him to save his treasure, leaving only \$18,400 which was to be transferred to the prince at Benkulen. The Board did not even query Churchey's contention that the High Pengeran's letter to Hurlock was likely a forgery.⁴ Although the Court later castigated Fort Marlborough for not making a proper investigation and obliging Jones and Churchey 'to make a Restitution of their illgotten Wealth',⁵ Governor Hurlock had little incentive to do so. On 1 August 1746, less than three months after the Mary's return from Banjarmasin, Hurlock had received £800 on loan from Jones at only five per cent interest.⁶

1. FM Cons., 19 Oct. 1745, SFR 64.

2. FM Cons., 5 June, 17 June, 14 Oct. 1745, SFR 64.

3. FM Cons., 19 June 1746, 21 May 1747, SFR 64.

4. FM Cons., 4 Sept. 1747, SFR 64.

5. Court to FM, 8 Dec. 1749, par. 22, Despatches from England, 1749-50, op. cit., vol. 53, p. 41.

6. FM Cons., 5 Dec. 1756, SFR 69.

Jones himself resigned his commission in the Company marine by September 1746 to go trading in a perahu of his own.¹ Moreover, by 1751 at least \$9000 of Radeen Temenggong's funds were out on loan to members of the Fort Marlborough Council: \$4000 to Hurlock; \$4000 to John Massey; and \$1000 to Charles Smith.²

It is uncertain precisely when the Benkulen authorities became aware of the financial advantages accompanying the Madura prince's residence at Fort Marlborough, but they were notably unwilling either to send him and his company to Batavia under guard or even to expel them from the English Company's domains as the Dutch demanded in a letter which arrived at Fort Marlborough in February 1746.³ Despite the English Company's responsibilities as an ally of the Dutch, all the Board did was ask Radeen Temenggong to live at Pulau Bay under the aegis of the Bugis Captain rather than at Fort Marlborough in the slender hope of dampening Dutch resentment by diminishing the appearance of official contact between the English and Madurese.⁴

By this time, however, Banjarmasin had also been drawn into the broil between Madura and the Dutch. The Sultan of Banjar, who was a relation of the Pengeran of Madura, had dispatched 800 Bugis troops to aid Madura against the Dutch in September

1. FM Cons., 29 Jan. 1747, SFR 64.

2. FM Cons., 30 Nov. 1751, SFR 65. How long these loans had been outstanding is unknown. They were listed in 1751 because Gov. Hurlock was settling his accounts prior to leaving the West Coast. It appears from this Consultation that Radeen Temenggong was acting as banker to the Board. He was to enjoy the interest from loans made of his money but was not allowed to touch the capital because of his youth and inexperience. Smith's debt was repaid from his estate (\$905.3.0 out of \$1000 owed) in August 1752, and Massey repaid the \$4000 he had borrowed in July 1753. In this same month \$4000 was lent out again to Roger Carter. FM Cons., 31 Oct. 1752, 4 Sept. 1753, SFR 66.

3. FM Cons., 8 Feb. 1746, SFR 64.

4. *ibid.* By 1747, the Board was so anxious to keep Radeen Temenggong on the West Coast that they refused his request to return home in December of that year. His father was by this time a Dutch prisoner at Capetown and the Board, noting that the Pengeran had trusted them to protect his son, decided that only the persuasion of his attendants had prompted his desire to leave Benkulen and that it was dangerous for him to do so. He might fall into Dutch hands. Moreover he was 'a Gentleman Young and inexperienced as to what concerns his real and true Interest, and at present very improper to be intrusted with the Management of that Considerable Sum of Money he is Master of, which We are apprehensive would be purloined or Squandered away by the People that are now his Attendants'. As a consequence Radeen Temenggong was still at Benkulen in the 1770s. FM Cons., 3 Dec. 1747, SFR 64; Marsden, *op. cit.*, pp. 269, 290, 345.

1745.¹ News also reached Benkulen from Batavia early in 1746 that the Dutch had landed troops on Madura, forcing the Pengeran to flee, and had closed the sea lanes between Madura and Banjarmasin with cruisers.² The loss of Madura was confirmed in June 1746 when the Mary returned from Borneo. Churchey reported that before he had left Banjarmasin, the Madurese High Pengeran had arrived seeking refuge from the Dutch.³

The flight of the High Pengeran to Banjar proved to be the final blow to the East India Company's trade in Borneo. He had arrived there by May 1746, shortly before the Company ship Onslow, and had requested protection from her captain and supracargoes. They permitted him and his family to take shelter on the ship although they refused to promise further aid against the Dutch. The Dutch, pursuing the Madurese ruler, found him apparently under English protection and threatened the Sultan of Banjar with swift reprisals if he did not immediately obtain custody of the Madurese.⁴ The Sultan, who had little choice, lured Captain Congreve of the Onslow to his house on the pretext of discussing pepper prices and put him in chains. The ship's supracargoes were then told that Congreve would be released only when the High Pengeran and his family were delivered to the Dutch commander. The Onslow's company were forced to agree and the English prisoner was released at the end of July 1746.⁵ By March 1747, the English were totally routed. The Sultan agreed to a preliminary treaty with the Dutch on 27 March 1747 promising to exclude all other Europeans from the trade at Banjarmasin and reserve all the sultanate's pepper for the Dutch at \$6 per pikul. A Dutch factory was also to be built. Navigation to Banjar was restricted with the Banjarese permitted to trade only to Batavia and

1. FM Cons., 14 Oct. 1745, SFR 64.

2. FM Cons., 8 Feb. 1746, SFR 64.

3. FM Cons., 19 June 1746, SFR 64.

4. Goh Yoon Fong, op. cit., pp. 282-5. Edgell, op. cit., pp. 125-8. Extracts from the Diaries of the Orford, Onslow and Dragon at Banjar, Dutch in India, Miscellaneous Letters, 1740-60, vol. VII, Europeans in India Series, IOL.

5. ibid.

North Java, and only one Chinese junk per year allowed to call at southern Borneo.¹ The supracargoes of the Onslow and the Dragon, which had arrived at Banjarmasin in October 1746, were unaware of this treaty until early April 1747 and continued to struggle unsuccessfully to obtain pepper cargoes. The Dragon finally sailed empty at the end of March 1747, and the Onslow's supracargoes were ultimately told that since a treaty had been signed, they would have to deal with the Dutch if they wanted any pepper. The Onslow left Banjar in June 1747.² A Dutch blockade prevented subsequent English ships, the Prince of Wales in 1747 and the Delaware in 1749, from reaching Banjarmasin, and hopes of keeping the English connection with Borneo alive were finally abandoned.³

The ten year Company connection with Banjarmasin provided few enough clues to the actual process and profits of Fort Marlborough's country trading, but it does at least seem clear that the servants' private vessels ventured eastward, frequently under the protection of the large heavily armed Company ships, primarily to trade and not merely to ferry Company personnel on hire, although this was obviously a sizeable and welcome supplement to their incomes. Both the Marlbroke and the Neptune brigantine in November 1742 and May 1744 respectively were already destined by their owners, Rigg and Lennox, for voyages to the East when they were taken into service, ostensibly to transport Factors to assist the Company shipping at Banjar. The Neptune's large cargo of opium when she was diverted to Semarang before reaching Banjar was a clear indication of her commercial purposes. The Board at Fort Marlborough admitted as much when they asserted their right to

1. Goh Yoon Fong, op. cit., pp. 280, 287-91.

2. ibid., Extracts from the Diaries of the Orford, Onslow and Dragon at Banjar, Dutch in India, vol. VII, Europeans in India Series.

3. ibid., pp. 282-8; FM Cons., 9 June 1747; Extracts from the Diary of the Delaware, Dutch in India, vol. VII, Europeans in India Series. The Court still had some hopes of reopening the trade to Borneo because they instructed Fort Marlborough to observe affairs at Banjarmasin and report to London regularly so that the Court could judge if the time was ripe to resume the traffic. Court to FM, 29 Nov. 1751, par. 45, Despatches from England, 1751-2, op. cit., vol. 55, p. 51.

a free opium trade at Borneo, as a place not belonging to the Dutch, in the face of Batavia's protests. It is also more than probable, as the Dutch asserted, that the trade was not confined to Banjar but included the surrounding islands as well. Certainly opium was a saleable commodity there. As a case in point, the Board at Fort Marlborough decided to send a Bugis serjeant and corporal on the Company ship Neptune, dispatched for Banjar in May 1742, to recruit their countrymen in Sulawesi for the garrison at Sumatra, in order to replace the Malays who were considered unreliable and at that point composed most of the so-called Bugis country guard. The chosen recruiters requested that opium in preference to money be sent with them to pay the people who chose to enlist, and eighty katis were accordingly issued to them for this purpose.¹ The progress of the Borneo trade also delineated what were to be continuing areas of conflict between the Dutch Company and the Fort Marlborough trading community: Benkulen's insistence on the right to traffic in merchandise like opium and piece goods which the VOC but not the English Company reserved as monopoly products, and the British refusal to accept as VOC possessions any ports not actually occupied by the Dutch.

The Trade to the North

Trade to North Sumatra existed concurrently with the Borneo trade and developed rapidly after the closure of Banjarmasin threw Fort Marlborough back on resources closer to home. Like the Borneo trade, however, it meant invading areas which the Dutch Company considered its private preserve. Sometimes this involved calling at ports which the Dutch actually garrisoned, but far more frequently it consisted of sailing to places where the Dutch claimed exclusive trade by right of treaty, but maintained no establishments. The rewards of the trade to the North were worth the risk of Dutch ire. With the exception of pepper, in which the English East India Company held a national monopoly of commerce, the southern districts of Sumatra produced little of commercial value. The central and northern coasts of the island,

1. FM Cons., 22 May 1742, SFR 63.

controlled at least in theory by the Dutch and Achehnese respectively, yielded on the other hand several items which were in demand in Europe, India and China. Gold, camphor and benzoin (benjamin) were the principal of these.

The only West Sumatran settlement belonging to the English Company which produced gold was Muko Muko at the northern edge of its domains. The districts containing gold mines extended from there through the mountains behind Dutch-held Padang to Analabo (Meulaboh) and Daja, which were known as the 'Treasuries of Atchin'.¹ The Dutch reaped the principal benefit of the mines since an estimated 10,000-12,000 ounces of gold were annually funnelled down to Padang.² There were, however, other important outlets which the private trader could tap - all producing better quality gold than that received at Padang: these were Muko Muko, receiving 600 ounces per year; Analabo, with 2000 ounces a year; and Natal, with 800 ounces a year.³

Similarly, camphor and benzoin production was limited to the Batak country north of the English Company's control, and the VOC maintained a post at Baros specifically to ensure the collection of the best varieties of these goods.⁴ Camphor was by far the more valuable of the two, although the quantity produced was small. Marsden calculated that only about 50 pikuls of camphor were collected each year on the entire West Coast.⁵ The best quality camphor could be bought for \$6 per pound in Sumatra and sold in China for \$9-12 per pound (or \$1200-1500 per pikul).⁶ A Dutch Company servant, Eschels Kroon, noted that the VOC bought camphor for \$500-1000 per pikul, depending on quality, and exported it to Japan where it earned

1. Adolphus Eschels Kroon, Account of the Island of Sumatra, trans. unknown, Mackenzie Collection of Manuscripts, 1822, vol. 17, p. 77, IOL.
2. Marsden, op. cit., p. 153.
3. ibid. Richard Wyatt claimed that Natal had never produced more than 300 tael per year while he was Resident there from 1758 through 1766. FM Cons., 15 Feb. 1766, SFR 74.
4. Eschels Kroon, loc. cit., p. 74.
5. Marsden, op. cit., p. 152.
6. ibid., p. 151.

₡1200-1500 per pikul. Most of this camphor was then mixed with the local Japanese product; it was sold back to the VOC in Japan and exported yet again to Europe where it realised at least 100 per cent profit for the Company.¹ It has also been calculated that camphor was only slightly less valuable than pepper as an import item for the English country trade to Canton, and the country trade in the second half of the eighteenth century constituted about one-third of total British trade to China.² Camphor was collected by the Batak people from trees growing wild in the hill districts and could be purchased in most of the kualas between Natal and Singkil.³ The great market, however, was Singkil, with much of the trade not directly controlled by the VOC in the hands of Achehnese based there.⁴

Large amounts of benzoin were also available in the North Sumatran kualas, with the best varieties coming from Tapus and Sorkam.⁵ The VOC attempted to monopolise traffic in the best quality benzoin, contracting for 100 pikuls a year for markets in Europe and Japan and 1500 pikuls for the Persian Gulf, India, mainland South-East Asia, and China.⁶ Thousands of pikuls, however, were also sold 'clandestinely' to private traders who paid higher prices than those the Dutch Company had fixed by treaty. In the 1760s and 1770s the private merchants

1. Eschels Kroon, loc. cit., vol. 18, pp. 51-3. Eschels Kroon actually put the price at Rix-dollars 1000-2000 per pikul but later stated that one Spanish dollar was worth two Rix-dollars in actual trading on the West Coast, although the official exchange rate at Batavia varied between 125 and 132 Rix-dollars for 100 Spanish dollars during this period. The VOC by a treaty with the King of Baros had stipulated that he provide six pikuls of camphor per year at Rix-dollars 500 per pikul.
2. Opium and cotton were the two most valuable items in the country trade to Canton, accounting for fifty and fourteen per cent of its imports respectively. The next three items in order of importance were tin (seven per cent), pepper (four and one-fifth per cent) and camphor (three and one-half per cent). E. H. Pritchard, The Crucial Years of Early Anglo-Chinese Relations, 1750-1800 (Pullman, Washington, 1936), pp. 174-5.
3. William Milburn, Oriental Commerce (London, 1825), pp. 361-5; Eschels Kroon, loc. cit., vol. 17, pp. 66-77.
4. Marsden, op. cit., p. 152.
5. Eschels Kroon, loc. cit., vol. 17, pp. 70, 75.
6. Eschels Kroon, loc. cit., vol. 18, p. 55.

purchased at \$15-17½ per pikul for the best quality, \$10-12½ for the second sort and \$5-6 for the black or worst quality, and it was estimated in 1759 that top grade benzoin could be sold in Europe for \$83 per pikul.¹ The product was utilised in both European and Indian medicine for its styptic properties, but its principal use was in the manufacture of incense, and enormous quantities were shipped throughout Asia from the Middle East to China for this purpose.² An estimated 60,000-100,000 pounds per year were imported into Britain in the 1820s,³ most of it destined for re-export to Arabia, Persia and Turkey.⁴ Benzoin's value at Fort Marlborough was high in the late 1730s, ranging between \$18 per pikul for the worst sort and \$43 for the best.⁵

In spite of the hostility of the Dutch Company, which reserved to itself trade not only in the two best varieties of benzoin but also in camphor and gold, the Fort Marlborough servants traded regularly in these products at least as early as the 1730s and 1740s, particularly at the ports of Natal and Singkil. In 1731, for example, the Dutch at Padang reported alarm at the great increase in English and Achehnese smuggling, in which it was noted the port of Natal as usual played 'a leading role'.⁶ Later in the 1730s, the country vessel Jane called at Singkil en route to Fort Marlborough from her base at Fort St. George.⁷ The Galatea, another

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1. Carter to Board, 9 July 1759, FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1759, SFR 70; Eschels Kroon, loc. cit., vol. 18, pp. 56, 66. The treaty of 1693 with Baros fixed the prices at Rix-dollars 20 per chest for the first sort and Rix-dollars 15 for the second sort, so that the private traders were offering fifty per cent more for benzoin than the VOC. Eschels Kroon also noted, however, that the price of benzoin for private traders had risen ten per cent during the eight years he had been dealing in it as Resident of Airbangis in the 1760s and 1770s.
 2. Marsden, op. cit., pp. 153, 155.
 3. J. Macgregor, Commercial Tariffs and Regulations, Resources and Trade of India, Ceylon and other Oriental Countries (London, 1848), p. 425.
 4. Marsden, op. cit., p. 155.
 5. FM Cons., 10 April 1738, SFR 62.
 6. J. L. van Basel, 'Begin en voortgang van onzen handel en bezittingen op Sumatra's West Kust', Tijdschrift voor Neerland's Indië, vol. IX, pt. 2 (1847), p. 74.
 7. FM Cons., 11 Jan. 1738, SFR 62.

country ship commanded by Robert Milne, who had also been captain of the Jane, seems also to have traded along the North Coast before her arrival at Benkulen in December 1738. Seven months later, Deputy Governor Lennox requested the Board's permission to load a parcel of benzoin on the Company ship George bound for Fort St. George on account of the Galatea's owners.¹ Lennox was also trading in this commodity himself, for he asked at the same time to freight another parcel on his own account, and also one belonging to the owners of the sloop Macassar in which he may have held a share.² The Company ship Britannia, which arrived at Fort Marlborough in July 1739, included a large amount of benzoin exported from Sumatra as part of the private trade privilege of her officers on her return trip to England. The manifest of private trade presented to the Board in December 1739 included seventeen chests of benzoin valued at \$1600 on account of her captain, J. Somner; seven chests valued at \$700 on account of the chief officer, John Clark; and two chests valued at \$200 on account of the ship's surgeon, Wotton Braham.³ The Britannia's officers might have acquired this benzoin by stopping illegally at the ports of North Sumatra en route to Benkulen, but it seems more likely that they purchased it at Fort Marlborough from either Company servants or perahus which had imported it there. Six months later the Sumatran servants again requested permission to send benzoin aboard the Company ship George, which had arrived from Fort St. George in April 1740. Deputy Governor Lennox, as agent for the Galatea's owners, wanted to export a parcel of cotton, but the owners of the sloop Macassar and Lennox on his own account asked to load a parcel of benzoin each, as well as four chests of it on account of Lennox and Rigg in partnership.⁴ About a year later the manifest of the Princess Augusta, a Company ship sailing for Madras,

1. FM Cons., 30 July 1739, SFR 62.

2. *ibid.*

3. FM Cons., 14 July, 5 Dec. 1739, SFR 62. The total value of the captain's private trade on this occasion was \$3710. Benzoin was the single most valuable item.

4. FM Cons., 26 May 1740, SFR 63.

included one hundred pikuls of swallow and five chests of benzoin on the account of Lennox, some elephant's teeth loaded by Rigg, and fifty-two chests of benzoin on account of the owners of the sloop Macassar.¹

Not surprisingly the sloop Macassar was well known to the Dutch at Padang as a smuggler and had been sighted in northern waters during every year in which her owners had freighted benzoin for Madras. In December 1738, she had been ordered out of Tapanuli Bay by a cruiser sent from Baros specifically for that purpose. On being asked the reason for his presence in the area, the Macassar's captain, Robert Ray, had explained that he had been sent from Fort Marlborough to obtain thirty or forty slaves for the Company at Nias and had been forced to take shelter at Tapanuli by bad weather. The Dutch, however, had found him anchored at Pulau Gaddong just inside the entrance to the Bay, surrounded by perahus which, according to native report, had been trading with him there for some days.² The Macassar was not easily discouraged. Although she sailed from Tapanuli and was watched out of sight by the Dutch cruiser, she appears not to have returned to Benkulen. Another Dutch vessel patrolling the navigation waters between Padang and Baros encountered her several times early in 1739, on each occasion obliging her to put to sea or to go elsewhere along the coast.³ It is perhaps significant in this context that the Dutch Resident at Baros reported in March 1739 that he was having difficulty fulfilling his yearly quota of benzoin for Batavia and that his Residency's profits had dropped to Florins 4278 in the last six months from Florins 10,539 in the preceding half-year period. One of the reasons he cited for this was the failure of Raja Simorang, the chief at Tapanuli, to come to Baros that year to sell his gum to the VOC.⁴ The Macassar returned to northern waters

1. FM Cons., 22 July 1741, SFR 63.

2. Altena to Gronsveld, Baros, 8 Jan. 1739, Bataviase Inkomende Brieven Overgekomen in 1740, Kolonial Archief (KA) 2360, Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague, Netherlands (Dutch records hereafter cited only by their KA number).

3. Padang to Batavia, 18 April 1739, KA 2360.

4. *ibid.*

the following year although she seems to have avoided the Dutch cruisers on this voyage. When she was passing Padang from the north in late January or early February 1740, she was stopped by the Dutch with a request that she transport the sick captain of the Company ship Somerset, which had called at Padang on 16 January for wood and water, back to Benkulen.¹ Similarly, she is known to have been at Sorkam, one of the sources of the best benzoin, early in 1741 from a Dutch report of a European crewman who had deserted there and asked for Dutch protection at Baros.²

Other Fort Marlborough-owned vessels were also involved in the North Sumatran trade, sometimes with political repercussions. The Marlbro ketch, commanded by Anthony Hughes (Hutsche in Dutch), was at Tapanuli early in 1742 when the headman there, Raja Simorang, murdered Pieter La Fort, the Baros official who had been sent with a cruiser to order a reported English vessel out of the Bay. The Dutch considered that Hughes had incited Simorang to the deed since the Tapanuli chief had been found aboard the ketch by the three Baros headmen who had been sent to investigate La Fort's death. They also reported that the Englishman had helped Simorang to construct a benteng or fort on the shore and had placed artillery there to fend off the expected Dutch reprisals.³ There are no indications of formal complaints, however, and the Dutch reported with some surprise in November 1742 that all was peaceful at Tapanuli and trade was going well,⁴ probably because Fort Marlborough was concentrating on the Borneo trade for most of 1742 and 1743. By mid-1743, however, Rigg's and Lennox's new vessel the Neptune brigantine was dispatched to the North, although her destination is known only because she was freighted on Company account to take some arrack and \$6000 in cash to Muko Muko for the use of

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1. Padang to Batavia, 31 March 1740, KA 2395.
 2. Baros to Padang, 25 Feb. 1741, KA 2948.
 3. Baros to Padang, 31 Jan. 1742; Padang Vergadering, 15 March 1742; Padang to Batavia 26 Nov. 1742, KA 2463.
 4. Padang to Batavia, 26 Nov. 1742, KA 2463.

the Resident there. The brigantine's owners agreed to call at Muko Muko to deliver these stores in the course of her trading voyage, and she set out on 24 August 1743.¹ The Neptune is next recorded as a result of her ill-fated journey to Borneo and Semarang from June through August 1744, but by the end of 1745 she was again engaged in trafficking at the North Sumatran ports. In January 1746, a Dutch brigantine en route from Padang to Batavia touched at Benkulen to deliver the Neptune's captain, Thomas Smith, and three sailors who had been cut off ashore at Analabo by the local people, who had apparently been planning to capture the vessel.² This was almost certainly the voyage for which the brigantine's part-owner William Rigg, who by this time was Deputy Governor, had requested thirty corge of white long cloth from the Company stores which he told the Board he needed 'to send to the Northward'.³ Rigg justified borrowing Company goods for private trade on the grounds that the Company had no immediate need for the cloth, a large supply was already expected from Madras, and the cloth was liable to damage if left lying too long in the warehouse. He offered to pay the usual Company mark-up or to return the same amount of cloth to the godowns after he received his own supplies. The Board considered that the deal would be to the Company's advantage and consented on the condition that Rigg made a deposit in the Company's cash equal to the value of the borrowed cloth and paid ten per cent on returning it.⁴ Gold worth \$1350 was subsequently deposited in the treasury,⁵ but the whole transaction looks very much like the trade in Company goods for which the Storekeepers were censured by Supravisors Pybus and Walsh ten years later....

This fragmentary evidence of ship movements and the kinds of local produce manifested as private trade on Company ships enables us to reconstruct something

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1. FM Cons., 29 Aug. 1743, SFR 63.
 2. FM Cons., 20 Jan. 1746, SFR 64.
 3. FM Cons., 15 Nov. 1745, SFR 64.
 4. *ibid.*
 5. FM Cons., 26 Aug. 1746, SFR 64.

of the pattern of Fort Marlborough's country trade to North Sumatra. We know cloth was sold from Rigg's borrowing thirty corge as a cargo for the Neptune's voyage to the North. We know benzoin was purchased from the frequency with which Lennox, Rigg, and the Macassar's owners loaded it on the Company's Madras-bound ships and from Dutch reports of English 'smuggling' in the gum-producing areas. It therefore appears that the servants at Benkulen were engaged principally in a coasting trade, indenting for piece goods from Coromandel on Company vessels,¹ hawking them along the North Coast in their own vessels and then transferring their purchases, apparently in the main of benzoin and gold, back on Company vessels to Madras for sale. The advent of the larger vessels like the Neptune brigantine in the later 1740s may, however, have made it possible to transport their own North Coast cargoes directly to the Coromandel Coast. There are at any rate no references to such local produce being loaded on Company vessels in the mid-1740s.

This composite picture is confirmed by two further incidents concerning the northern trade in 1746 and 1747. Robert Jones, the master of the Company sloop Mary, who had resigned from the Fort Marlborough marine after embezzling part of the Madura prince's money, set out on a trading voyage to Natal in his own perahu in September 1746.² During the course of it he was murdered by some of his crew. His will was presented to the Board and all his effects, including the wreck of the perahu and her cargo, were auctioned for the benefit of the estate. The result of this sale was most interesting. The total intake from the auction was \$4580.0.74, nearly three-quarters of which was composed of trade goods including piece goods valued at \$3350.2.62 and four chests of opium (damaged) sold at \$505.³ The opium was subsequently revealed to be the property of David Pugh who demanded

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1. We also know that opium was sold because of the large amount on the Neptune brigantine when she was almost cut off at Semarang, but this commodity rarely appears in the manifests of private trade on Company ships from Fort St. George and must have been ordered direct from Bengal or bought from passing country ships, as was the case in the 1750s.
 2. FM Cons., 12 Dec. 1746, SFR 64; 29 Jan. 1747, SFR 64.
 3. FM Cons., 19 Jan. 1747, SFR 64.

payment for it from the executors of Jones' estate at \$191.2.0 per chest rather than the \$126 per chest for which it had been auctioned. Pugh had apparently gone into partnership with Jones for this single voyage, and the contract which he produced to support his claims regarding the opium throws considerable light on the actual mechanics of the northern trade. The agreement stated that Jones was to take Pugh's opium, ten chests of it costing \$191.2.0 each, and sell it at the North Sumatran ports. Jones was to receive for his trouble half the profits of the amount he sold. He was, on the other hand, also to accept the entire risk of shipping and to return to Pugh at the end of the trip any opium left unsold.¹ The merchandise, it was specified, was also to be returned in good condition. Pugh therefore demanded to be paid the full purchase price of the opium on the grounds that it was so damaged by water that it was virtually unsaleable. The Board agreed that his claim was just and ordered that he be paid out of Jones' estate.²

The partnership of Pugh and Jones provides some details concerning the purchasing side of Fort Marlborough's traffic in northern produce; the predicament of the owners of the sloop Success gives information on the marketing side. After learning of the fall of Madras to the French in January 1747, the Board decided to send the Company sloop Louisa to Batavia to gather intelligence on the movements of French ships in the area.³ The owners of the Success then asked the Board's permission to send some benzoin on the Louisa to Batavia for sale. The loss of Madras had apparently ruined their principal market for the commodity, and although they stated that selling it at Batavia would bring them little profit, the market there being 'very Low and inconsiderable', this was preferable to having the benzoin left on their hands. The Board agreed to send their benzoin as ballast on the Louisa on the condition that the sloop's owners paid freight if the Company should subsequently demand it. The owners consented: but asked the Board to stress to the

1. FM Cons., 29 Jan. 1747, SFR 64.

2. *ibid.*

3. FM Cons., 15 Jan., 8 April 1747, SFR 64.

Court that this was 'the only recourse they have left since the taking of Madras to remedy the Losses they will probably sustain thereby'. Within a week the sloop Success herself was offered for sale to the Company.¹

The virtually simultaneous loss of Madras and the right of passage to Borneo appears to have been a heavy blow to the private commerce at Fort Marlborough. The customs revenue received at Fort Marlborough which had reached a peak of nearly \$2000 per year in 1742 and 1744-6 dropped to nothing in 1747 and 1749 and totalled only \$199.1.31 in 1748. The manifests of private trade shipped on Company vessels from the Coromandel Coast tend to reinforce this picture of commercial stagnation. Between 1748 and 1750 a maximum of three West Coast servants indented for Indian trade goods annually, to a total of only Pagodas 3000 or less per year - a bleak contrast to the sixteen members of the Benkulen establishment who had ordered Pagodas 22,225 worth of merchandise from Madras in 1742 and the eighteen who had indented for Pagodas 15,945 worth in 1744.² By 1750, however, a recovery seems to have begun. Customs revenues at Fort Marlborough climbed to \$636.2.76 in that year and continued to average between \$500 and \$700 per year in 1751 and 1752.³ The Benkulen servants by this time appear to have been rebuilding their country trade, but the process was a slow one and there are few indications of any large scale shipping activity around Fort Marlborough throughout the period between 1747 and 1753. In the years between 1748 and 1750 no more than three country vessels a year called at Benkulen and only one, the Fanny snow, was Fort Marlborough-owned.⁴

It was the Fanny snow which spearheaded the redevelopment of Benkulen's trade in the late 1740s and early 1750s, with her activities focused principally on the North Sumatran ports. She first appears in the Fort Marlborough records on 14 May 1748 when she was engaged by the Board to go to Batavia to fetch a cargo of

1. FM Cons., 8 April 1747, SFR 64.

2. See Appendix VI and APPENDIX VII.

3. See Appendix VII.

4. See Appendix X.

arrack which Captain David Rannie of another vessel, the ship Fanny, had refused to bring back to Sumatra. For this service her owners were to be paid \$1000 freight.¹ After her return from Batavia in September, she was prepared for a voyage to North Sumatra. This was not a success, for her owners petitioned the Board after her return concerning the 'great hardship they labour under on account of their being interrupted in their Lawful Traffick by the Governour and Council of Padang'.² They reported that the Dutch had presented the snow's master with a protest prohibiting him from trading north of Padang and asserting that the entire area was VOC domain. The Board promised to advise the Court of the incident, including the Dutch letter as proof of the extent of 'unjustifiable' Dutch pretensions.³

The Dutch had indeed sent a cruiser to warn the Fanny away from Pariaman, but from their point of view her presence there represented more than simply another instance of illegal commerce. The report that had reached Padang in November 1748 suggested not only that the snow had been trading and distributing gifts among 'great ones and mountain people', but also that she had been aiding one Zaide Kitjil, who was in rebellion against the VOC, and that the English were seeking a settlement at Pariaman.⁴ The letter written by Fort Marlborough to Padang protesting the interference with the Fanny tended to strengthen Dutch apprehensions. The Benkulen Board disputed the VOC's claim to the area on the basis of a letter they had received from the Sultan of Minangkabau inviting the English to trade and declaring that he had no special alliance with the Dutch Company. The Fort Marlborough Council also stressed that they had their superiors' permission to extend their boundaries to places still not inhabited by other Europeans and that they would continue to assert East India

1. FM Cons., 14 May, 9 Dec., 13 Dec. 1748, SFR 65.

2. FM Cons., 13 Dec. 1748, SFR 65.

3. *ibid.*

4. Padang to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1749, KA 2635, pp. 129-32; Padang Vergadering, 24 Feb. 1749, KA 2635. 'Omstandige Aantooning van de Principaalste Differenten zedert Anno 1748 Ontstaan, tussen de Ministers en Dienaren van de Engelsche en Nederlandsche Oost Indische Compagnien op Sumatra's West Cust', Batavia, 29 Sept. 1752, KA 2682, pp. 115-7.

Company rights in Indonesia in all harbours not closed by the Dutch - specifically Pariaman, Natal and Singkil.¹ Padang, with its garrison too weak to send a military detachment to the North, lamented that all it could do to forestall English adventuring was to try by friendly exhortations to win the Minangkabau princes and northern chiefs back to their contracts with the VOC.²

The Fanny snow, meanwhile, was being fitted out for another voyage to Batavia, at least ostensibly to collect Company stores for Fort Marlborough. She was gone between April and September 1749 and earned on her return \$2000 in freight charges on the grounds that she had transported on Company account four times the tonnage of her previous journey to Batavia in 1748.³ In November she was prepared for another voyage to North Sumatra. On this occasion, however, her owners took precautions against possible Dutch obstruction. They requested and obtained from the Board, twelve soldiers from the Fort Marlborough garrison to accompany the ship for three to four months to protect her. The owners agreed to pay their wages, and the Board justified this unusual step by citing 'the Necessity of guarding against the Encroachments of the Dutch who on all Occasions endeavour to infringe on...our Indulgence of Commerce'.⁴ The Fanny returned from this voyage apparently without incident on 15 March 1750 and within a month sailed again for Batavia.

By 1751, the Fanny snow was joined by yet another Fort Marlborough-owned vessel, the sloop Surprise, Joseph Bond, master. This vessel, however, was doomed from what appears to have been the beginning of her trading career. She had been sent to Singkil and Analabo in August 1751 and was seized three months later by the Dutch at Pariaman despite the pass she carried from Fort Marlborough. She was then impounded at Padang and carried to Batavia for illegal trading. Her owners, Richard Preston, Alexander Forbes and Robert Hay, calculated the value of the vessel and

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1. Padang Vergadering, 24 Feb. 1749, KA 2635.
 2. *ibid.*, Padang to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1749, KA 2635.
 3. FM Cons., 18 April, 30 Sept. 1749, 20 Feb. 1750, SFR 65.
 4. FM Cons., 30 Nov. 1749, SFR 65.

cargo at \$9000 and asked the Board to pressure Batavia either for her restitution or for compensation for what they considered the unwarrantable seizure of her.¹

The owners did not finally receive any compensation until two years later when Captain Burman of the Company snow Brilliant, who was empowered to act for them, regained much of her cargo, as well as Rix-dollars 2692½ to cover pilferage, from the Batavia Council.²

The development of the trade to the North was obviously a precarious business. Unlike the Borneo trade, it was not conducted under the protection of large Company 'Europe' ships. As a consequence, leapfrogging the Dutch settlements around Padang to reach the attractive trading centres of Pariaman, Natal, Singkil and Analabo was no mean feat as can be seen by the difficulties encountered by the Fanny snow, and the Dutch seizure, not only of the sloop Surprise in 1751, but also two perahus freighted for Singkil by a Chinese resident of Benkulen three years earlier.³

The fact that Fort Marlborough managed to support only two country vessels in this period is likely an indication of small trading capital and returns during the late 1740s. The large number of proprietors with a share in the Fanny is similarly a classic sign of capital shortage and/or the need to spread the risks of trading. As late as July 1752 the snow possessed no fewer than seven owners, none with a share larger than one-fourth.⁴

It was doubtless to lessen the insecurity of the trade to the North that the Fort Marlborough servants sought a post north of Padang. Pariaman may have been the original target. It seems unlikely that the Fanny snow's captain would have indulged in political activities there without the Benkulen government's knowledge

1. FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1751, SFR 65.

2. FM Cons., 20 March 1752, 11 Sept. 1753, SFR 66; FSG to FM, 15 Oct. 1753, Letters from Fort St. George, 1753, op. cit., vol. XXIX; p. 111.

3. FM Cons., 28 Sept. 1752, 6 Oct. 1753, SFR 66; 27 Oct. 1755, SFR 68.

4. In July 1752, the Fanny's owners were as follows: Robert Hindley, one-fourth; Thomas Combes, one-fourth; John Massey, three-sixteenths; Roger Carter, one-eighth; Alexander Hall, one-sixteenth; Joseph Darvall, one-sixteenth; Wotton Braham, one-sixteenth. FM Cons., 24 March 1756, SFR 69.

since Deputy Governor, Hurlock was almost certainly a part owner of her at this time.¹ Fort Marlborough had received several invitations from the Minangkabau Sultan and 'Priamang Datoos' to settle there which they had duly reported to London,² but by March 1750, Padang's fears concerning English intentions had prompted the Dutch to begin preparations to garrison Pariaman themselves.³ Even before the Court drafted its orders forbidding Fort Marlborough to embroil the Company in the extra expense and difficulties with the Dutch which would be engendered by settling at Pariaman,⁴ their Sumatran servants had already moved in another direction. The Board's Consultation of 26 June 1751 states simply that

Several Invitations being made Us from Natal for the English to settle there and the Natives [being] deem'd a free people & they themselves declaring so & not under Contracts with any Nation whatever, Agreed a Vessel be sent thither with a Covenant[ed] Servant to enquire into the truth thereof & if he finds it fact to take possession of the place in the name of Our Honourable Masters.⁵

This is the first mention of any such project. Three months later, despite the fact that John Saul, the covenanted servant chosen for the task, had discovered the Natal people had at one time signed contracts with the Dutch, Natal had become an English settlement,⁶ and the whole operation had been accomplished without any prior reference to either London or Fort St. George.

The Board had stated the opinion before dispatching Saul to Natal that the 'Port will prove greatly advantagious [sic] to Their Honours on many Accts.'⁷ Since the area produced none of the pepper which was the Company's chief rationale

1. Hurlock's share in the snow was transferred to his successor as Deputy Governor Robert Hindley, and Charles Smith when Hurlock resigned the chair in 1751. As Hindley and Smith each owned a quarter share in 1752, it seems likely that Hurlock had owned at least a quarter and possibly a half share in the snow. FM Cons., 8 Jan. 1754, SFR 67.
2. FM Cons., 28 Feb. 1748, 29 Aug. 1749, 25 July 1750, SFR 65.
3. Padang to Batavia, 15 March 1750, KA 2712; Van Basel, *loc. cit.*, p. 87.
4. Court to FM, 29 Nov. 1751, par. 41, Despatches from England, 1751-2, op. cit., vol. 55, p. 51.
5. FM Cons., 26 June 1751, SFR 65.
6. FM Cons., 28 Sept. 1751, SFR 65.
7. FM Cons., 26 June 1751, SFR 65.

for its presence in Sumatra, it is difficult to see what these advantages might be. In their subsequent attempts to induce their superiors to maintain the newly-founded establishment, the servants' interests are made plain. They are couched as appeals to the Court's solicitude for its servants' welfare and refer to the Sumatran establishment's general lack of trading opportunities in comparison with servants based on the Coromandel Coast. Clearly the Fort Marlborough servants hoped to reap the benefit of the Natal settlement while the Company bore the expense. As a foothold in their principal area of commercial activity it was invaluable to them.

The disputes which the settling of Natal generated, not only with Fort Marlborough's superiors and the Dutch, but also with the Achehnese, belong to a later chapter, but it is evident that despite the dangers involved Fort Marlborough's need to consolidate its hold on what after 1747 had become its single most important branch of commerce drove the Fort Marlborough servants to unauthorised expansion. Benkulen had been long and increasingly heavily involved in the area, and it is likely that the acquisition of Natal itself was the brain-child of Deputy Governor Joseph Hurlock. He was a quarter- or half-owner of the Fanny snow in 1751, and there are indications that he had been attempting to monopolise the trade at Natal even before the English connection was formalised. In a dispute in December 1751 over the right of the Natal headman to collect customs from a Company ship which called there en route from Fort St. David, the Dato Besar of Natal, after being told by Saul that customs revenue was now reserved to the Company, produced a letter allegedly from Hurlock stating that the Dato was to pay no regard 'to any Vessels but what came from him'.¹

As a means of promoting the trade to the North, the settlement of Natal proved of great value by the mid-1750s. Both the volume of shipping and the amount of custom revenues at Fort Marlborough increased sharply by 1754.² The initial

1. FM Cons., 15 Jan. 1752, SFR 66.

2. See Appendix VII and Appendix X.

exploitation of the port, however, was somewhat slow. In 1752 only two country vessels arrived at Fort Marlborough, the Fanny snow and the Success galley out of Bengal, the latter a ship which had come to the West Coast every year since 1749 under a variety of captains, including David Rannie.¹ The Fanny, however, was trading with considerable success. In November 1751 alone she had imported goods worth \$6344.1.0 at Natal and exported benjamin, camphor and swallow valued at \$5927.3.32.² Unfortunately she was lost sometime early in 1753 en route from the Coromandel Coast to Fort Marlborough,³ and so in 1753 the Benkulen establishment was left with no vessels of its own. The three country ships which touched at the West Coast that year were all based in Bengal.⁴ By 1754, however, a spectacular expansion had occurred. Nine private vessels called at Fort Marlborough, six of which were almost certainly Benkulen-owned, and this situation was maintained with only slight diminution for the remainder of the decade. In 1756, eight private vessels touched at the West Coast with five being locally owned, and in 1757 at least four country vessels were the property of the Fort Marlborough establishment. By 1759, eleven private vessels called at West Sumatra and seven were Fort Marlborough-owned.⁴

Moreover it is clear that most of this increased shipping activity was focused on Natal, and after 1756 on the new acquisition at Tapanuli as well. In the years of 1750 and 1751, with the exception of the Fanny snow and the sloop Surprise, the private ships seemed to ply mainly between Coromandel and Batavia and China. By 1752, however, the two private vessels which called at Fort Marlborough both touched at Natal first. By 1754 six of the nine country ships arriving at Benkulen had called at Natal or Tapanuli. Six out of seven traded at the northern ports

1. See Appendix X.

2. FM Cons., 13 Jan. 1753, SFR 66.

3. FM Cons., 26 March 1753, SFR 66. Alexander Hall to his brother William Hall, 4 Dec. 1754, Hall Papers.

4. The Swift, Adventure, Resolution and Tryall were all mentioned in Fort Marlborough's letter to the Court, 15 Sept. 1757, SFR 11. See also Appendix X.

in 1756, and seven out of eleven did likewise in 1759.

The rise in Fort Marlborough customs revenues also indicated that the northern ports were an increasingly valuable branch of commerce. The Supravisors Pybus and Walsh, in the course of suggesting ways of covering the expenses of Natal in 1754, described the port as 'a very beneficial Port to the Private trade of this Place' and noted 'the great part of Ours [Customs] at Marlbro that owe their whole Rise to a Communication with that port', leaving aside 'the Immediate Customs of Natal'.¹ A breakdown of customs revenues for 1757 and 1758 gives a rare glimpse of the actual value of customs duties collected at Natal, although it does not, unfortunately, indicate the proportion of the Fort Marlborough customs derived from exports and imports from the North. In 1757, Natal's customs revenues of \$1369.2.91 were nearly half the amount of those collected at Fort Marlborough (\$2875.3.20). The next year the northern port totalled \$1217.2.27 compared with \$3550.0.86 at the head settlement.²

The increase in ship-owning at Fort Marlborough in the 1750s is even more significant, as an ever higher proportion appears to have become concentrated in the hands of the Residents of Natal and Tapanuli. By 1759, four of the seven Fort Marlborough-owned vessels belonged to the members of the establishment at Natal and Tapanuli,³ who by this time had organised themselves into a trading syndicate, the Natal Concern.

1. Pybus and Walsh to FSG, 6 Aug. 1754, par. 36, SFR 10.

2. List of Rents and Revenues at Fort Marlborough and Its Dependencies for the years 1757 and 1758 Compared, 1 Dec. 1759, SFR 11.

3. These vessels were the Elizabeth schooner, Resolution sloop, Hawke sloop and Pocock snow.

CHAPTER III

THE NATAL CONCERN

The formation of the Natal Concern was the climax of Fort Marlborough's laborious expansion of its North Sumatran trade. It became the most prosperous commercial syndicate on the West Coast until the establishment of the Council's General Concern in 1765, and it outlived the General Concern to survive with apparently unbroken continuity into the nineteenth century.¹ Moreover, the Natal Concern represented an advance in business organisation on the West Coast, combining the main features of the two simpler structures which had hitherto been typical of Fort Marlborough - the Residency concern and the ship-owning partnership.

Although the history of the Natal Concern is difficult to reconstruct in any detail before 1758, it almost certainly goes back to at least the Residency of Roger Carter, who presided over Natal between September 1753 and February 1756. By that time the characteristics of the syndicate began to emerge. Carter was certainly a ship-owner. He possessed a sloop (unidentified) and a panchallang which he had employed on hire to the Company as guard vessels against expected Achehnese incursions against Natal in 1755.² He was also at least part-owner of the Kitty snow, a vessel of 170 tons. Shortly before his departure for England in April 1756 he requested, as her owner, a payment of \$150 for the use of the snow in transporting himself and a military detachment to Natal in 1754, so it appears likely that he had owned her since her first appearance on the West Coast from

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1. J. W. Gould, 'Sumatra - America's Pepperpot, 1784-1873', Essex Institute Historical Collections, vol. XCII, No. 2 (April 1956), pp. 101-2; Bastin, op. cit., p. 117, No. 330.
 2. FM Cons., 11 Aug., 7 Oct., 27 Oct., 25 Dec. 1755, SFR 68; 26 March 1756, SFR 69.

Batavia on 15 August 1754.¹ Alexander Hall, who had been assistant at Natal since April 1753, may have shared the proprietorship of all these vessels with Carter. We know that Hall had a concern in several vessels in 1754 since he wrote to his brother in December of that year:

The Snow I had a concern in I suppose you know was lost with her cargo on the Coast of Pegu about a 12 month ago & instead of her I have got a share of another a Brigg, a Sloop and several other country Vessels, so that we drive a strong trade here and to answer demands I have been obliged to borrow about 2 or 3000 dollars at the moderate rate of 10 p.c. interest.²

Hall certainly owned a share in the Kitty, for Carter refers to adjusting 'our Accots in Company', noting Hall's losses as 'more than you apprehend it, amounting now to upwards of \$800 and I fancy when the Kittys accounts are settled there will be as much more'.³ James Stevenson, the surgeon at Natal since December 1753, and Lt. David Pilmore, commander of the garrison there since July 1752, were also involved in these 'Accots in Company' for Carter later noted not only the \$795.3.10 owed him by Hall, but also \$500.0.88 due from Stevenson and \$206.2.45 due from Pilmore.⁴

The Kitty's trading career on the Coast was fairly brief. Having arrived from Batavia in August 1754 she proceeded to Natal carrying Carter on 9 September. She departed from that port for Singkil with a cargo of opium, iron and brass wire valued at \$12,000 on 25 October 1754.⁵ She appears to have returned to Natal about December 1754 or January 1755 since Carter mentions plans to send a number of supernumerary Arabs from his garrison aboard her bound for Madras and he wrote

1. FM Cons., 19 March 1756, SFR 69. She must also have had owners resident at Fort Marlborough, since they paid customs duties owed on her cargo there. FM Cons., 10 Feb. 1755, SFR 68.
2. FM Cons., 31 Jan., 11 April 1753, SFR 66; Alexander Hall to his brother William Hall, 4 Dec. 1754, Hall Papers.
3. Roger Carter to Alexander Hall, 23 Jan. 1759, loc. cit.
4. FM Cons., 19 May, 31 July 1752, 31 Jan., 30 Dec. 1753, SFR 66; Carter to Hall, 23 Jan. 1759; Carter to Hall, 17 July 1759, Hall Papers.
5. List of Ships arriving and departing from Natal, October-December 1754, signed by Carter at Natal, 27 Dec. 1754, SFR 10A, pp. 153-4.

to the Fort St. George Council via her by the end of January 1755.¹ She also landed at Natal some time during this period goods on which \$377.2.61 worth of customs duties were paid.² She presumably continued her voyage to Madras with a cargo of northern produce. There are no further references to her in the shipping diaries of 1755, and early in 1756 Carter left Natal for England.

There were also other trading ventures mounted by Carter and Hall in the years between 1754 and 1756. Hall's voyage to the north of Natal 'in one of our own vessels', from which he expected 'both a little pleasure and profit', late in 1754, was represented to the Board by Carter as an intelligence mission to determine Achehnese intentions toward Tapanuli Bay.³ He charged the Company \$35.2.0 for presents which Hall had distributed among the Tapanuli chiefs, and described the place as 'the grand Market, for Salt, Iron and Benjamin', the subjugation of which by any but the English would have adverse results for Natal's trade.⁴ Within a year Tapanuli was to be absorbed by the Company in much the same manner as Natal had been acquired five years earlier.⁵ Hall returned from this voyage impressed with Tapanuli Bay and repeated the trip about three months later.⁶ This was an unlucky voyage since on his return 'deeply loaded with Benjamin', he found his small vessel had sprung a leak and in order to bring it safely to shore he was obliged to heave some of the cargo overboard. This totalled about fifty cakes of benzoin, but as Hall later noted with relief 'it was of a bad sort [and] did not amount to above 50 or £60'.⁷

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1. FM Cons., 17 Jan., 10 Feb. 1755, SFR 68.
 2. FM Cons., 10 Feb. 1755, SFR 68.
 3. Alexander Hall to William Hall, 24 Dec. 1754, Hall Papers. FM Cons., 17 Jan., 10 Feb. 1755, SFR 68.
 4. FM Cons., 17 Jan., 10 Feb. 1755, SFR 68.
 5. The acquisition of Tapanuli was accomplished in Feb. 1756. FM Cons., 27 Feb., 12 March 1756, SFR 69.
 6. Alexander Hall to William Hall, 4 Dec. 1754; Alexander Hall to Sir John Hall, 30 Nov. 1755, Hall Papers.
 7. Alexander Hall to Sir John Hall, 30 Nov. 1755, loc. cit.

Other vessels apparently not connected with Carter's and Hall's Concern also trafficked at Natal; indeed the trade in the area was booming in the last months of 1754. The Natal Galley, which may have belonged to the men of that establishment, imported benjamin at Fort Marlborough early in 1755.¹ The forty-ton sloop Resolution, Captain James Sutherland, sailed for Natal and Singkil in August 1754 about a month after her arrival at Benkulen from Batavia, her first listing in the shipping diaries. She arrived at Natal from Tapanuli on 12 October with a cargo of benjamin valued at \$8000 and departed on 28 October for Fort Marlborough.² From there she sailed for Batavia on 18 December, after having paid \$96.3.20 in customs duties for goods landed at Natal.³ The Resolution was not, or at least not wholly, a Natal Concern vessel since the owners paid these customs into the Company cash at Fort Marlborough. Combes actually deposited the money and appears to have been a part owner although he may have done this in his capacity as Sea Customer.⁴ Two years later Combes had left the West Coast, and Richard Wyatt, later to become Resident of Natal, was listed as one of the Resolution's proprietors.⁵

There was also a large volume of trade by smaller native vessels, ranging from two koyan to eight tons burden, in which Europeans frequently had a concern. Seventeen such vessels arrived at Natal between 10 October and 26 December 1754 with cargoes of local produce worth \$5520: rice from Pasaman (three vessels) valued at \$270; coconuts and oil from Pulau Batu (two vessels) valued at \$400; rice and slaves from Nias valued at \$1150; benjamin and camphor (two vessels) from Tabujung valued at \$1100; benjamin from Tapanuli (five vessels) valued at \$2800; benjamin and Acheen cloth (one vessel) from Labuan Hadji valued at \$1800. Most of these vessels returned to their own or other northern ports with cargoes of opium, iron

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1. FM Cons., 27 Dec. 1754, 2 Jan. 1755, SFR 67.
 2. List of Ships arriving and departing from Natal, October-December 1754, SFR 10A, pp. 153-4.
 3. FM Cons., 18 Nov. 1754, SFR 67.
 4. FM Cons., 18 Nov., 9 Dec. 1754 (November Cash Account), SFR 67.
 5. FM Cons., 27 Feb. 1756, SFR 69.

and brass wire. There were also two vessels from Padang, a longboat and a panjajip of twenty tons burden. The first sold Padang cloth and brass wire at Natal and took \$700 in gold as a return cargo. The second proceeded from Natal to Batavia with a load of benjamin and camphor worth \$4500.¹

Even the Company ship Prince George called at Natal on 14 December 1754 with a cargo of salt, iron and steel on Company account and piece goods on private account, the total worth \$11,000.² When she sailed from Natal on 27 December, she took a cargo of 421 chests of benjamin valued at over \$10,000 on private account. This included 101 chests (worth \$2663.2.9) on account of her captain, William Ormston, as well as 320 chests or 66,057 pounds worth \$7701.1.0 on account of various members of the Fort Marlborough establishment: 52 chests (12,442 pounds worth \$1419.0.0) loaded for Supravisor John Walsh; 23 chests (5198 pounds worth \$586.3.0) for Thomas Combes; 19 chests (4027 pounds worth \$478.0.0) for Richard Wyatt; and 226 chests (44,390 pounds worth \$5217.2.0) for the Natal Resident Roger Carter.³ The transactions of the Prince George in the North generated considerable dispute after her arrival at Fort Marlborough because Captain Ormston had called at Singkil and Tapanuli, contrary to his sailing orders, before landing at Natal. Carter also reported that Ormston had sold five chests of opium and some piece goods in the road at Natal for gold and benjamin without paying any customs.⁴ Ormston replied that as he was trading from his ship, he had not imagined that he was liable to pay duties. As a consequence of these activities Ormston was required to give a detailed account of the quantity of his private trade goods loaded on the Prince George for Madras. This showed forty-three chests of benjamin of unstated

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1. List of Ships arriving and departing from Natal, October-December 1754, SFR 10A, pp. 153-4.
 2. *ibid.*
 3. Manifest of Goods laden at Natal on board the Company ship Prince George, signed by Carter at Natal, 27 Dec. 1754, SFR 10A, p. 151.
 4. FM Cons., 17 Jan., 10 Feb., 11 March 1755, SFR 68.

origin and at least forty-eight chests acquired at Natal.¹ It also demonstrated that the commerce in benjamin freighted on the Prince George in the North continued at Fort Marlborough. Ormston had purchased at Benkulen the nineteen chests loaded on Wyatt's account at Natal for \$611.1.9, giving Wyatt an immediate profit of \$133.1.9. He had also sold ten chests to Captain Wills of the Company ship Elizabeth, then in Benkulen road, for \$226.1.85.²

Nevertheless, Roger Carter, with his privileged position at the source of supply, remained the principal trader in benjamin. Not only had he loaded 226 chests of the commodity on the Prince George to be shipped to Madras on his own account, but he had also provided forty-eight of the chests which Captain Ormston had purchased in the North.³ Carter's Concern appears to have used the traditional method of shipping local produce for sale in India on Company ships as well as trading to the Coromandel Coast in their own vessels such as the Kitty snow. From the figures available on the amount of benzoin shipped, it seems that the Natal Concern's commerce was at least as valuable as the trade of the other Residency concerns and also equalled or surpassed the profits from most of the forms of corruption being uncovered by the Supravisors at about the same time.

The arrival of the Prince George, however, heralded more difficult times for the trade at Natal. The letter from the Council at Fort St. George of 21 October 1754, which she delivered, instituted restrictions on the private trade of the Benkulen establishment and imposed a new and more demanding set of customs regulations. These raised the duties on all goods imported at Fort Marlborough from the rate of two per cent ad valorem on prime cost fixed by Supravisor Macrae in 1724 to five per cent calculated on the actual price of the goods on the West Coast. The only exceptions were 'provisions & Necessaries for apparel imported by the

1. Manifest of Goods laden on the Company ship Prince George on Account of Captain William Ormston, Fort Marlborough, 23 Feb. 1755, SFR 10A, p. 150; FM Cons., 11 March 1755, SFR 68.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

Storeship' from Europe.¹ Moreover all merchandise not manifested at Fort St. George or one of the West Coast settlements was to be considered contraband and subject to confiscation, with two-thirds going to the Company and one-third going to the informer. The Fort St. George Council stated that it had already informed the Council at Bengal that the export of piece goods to the West Coast was prohibited unless manifested at Madras on account of a Company servant.² This may have been an attempt to ensure that the Company enjoyed the customs revenue due to it by requiring regular manifesting of private trade goods, but the Fort Marlborough men viewed it as an attempt by Madras to monopolise the provision of piece goods and other merchandise for the Sumatran trade.

The Benkulen Board attempted to mitigate these measures when it promulgated detailed regulations governing trade in the area early in 1755. They maintained the duty at Benkulen on piece goods manifested from Fort St. George at the rate of two per cent calculated on prime cost. The five per cent duty was applied to all other imports - benjamin, camphor, swallow, tobacco etc. Opium, if manifested from Fort St. George, was also to pay only two per cent at Benkulen since it had already paid five per cent customs at Madras. The Board also allowed the owners of goods, including northern produce, a three per cent drawback or refund if these were manifested at Fort Marlborough and re-exported to the Coromandel Coast, in consideration of the fresh duties these goods would have to pay in India.³ This practice was terminated three years later because it had been discovered that

1. FM Cons., 27 April 1724, SFR 59; FSG to FM, 21 Oct. 1754, pars. 31, 34, Letters from Fort St. George, 1754, op. cit., vol. 30, pp. 153-4.

The Fort Marlborough servants estimated that the change in the basis of valuing goods for customs purposes from twenty per cent below prime cost to thirty per cent above invoice price would in actuality increase the import duties at Benkulen to nearer seven than five per cent. They considered this intolerable when four per cent duties had already been paid on the goods at Madras, as well as four per cent freight charges and five per cent to the shipping agent. FM to FSG, 10 Jan. 1755, par. 62, SFR 10A, p. 83.

2. FSG to FM, 21 Oct. 1754, pars. 31, 34, Letters from Fort St. George, 1754, op. cit., vol. 30, pp. 153-4.

3. FM Cons., 23 Jan. 1755, SFR 68.

private vessels sailing to India were calling at non-British ports there and thus defrauding the Company of the required customs. A certificate allowing such traders to claim customs rebates on arrival at Madras was substituted.¹

Even worse, from the viewpoint of the private trader, was Fort St. George's attempt to cover the expenses of maintaining Natal. The port had been occupied by Benkulen servants, the Indian authorities noted, 'at a great Expence purely to serve their private Interest & Support a Trade for private Emolument at their Masters Cost'.² On the recommendation of Supravisors Pybus and Walsh, who had hoped to obtain an exclusive contract for selling opium at Natal,³ Madras's solution in this same letter of October 1754 was to remove the trade in iron, salt, and opium from the hands of private traders and order these goods retailed on Company account in the hopes that the profits from commerce in these items would offset the costs of the settlement. It was also specifically ruled that piece goods landed at Natal were required to pay a five per cent duty there if they had not already done so at Fort Marlborough.⁴ Fort St. George further noted that 'as the success of this Scheme will depend greatly on the faithful Execution of it, your greatest Attention is requisite to see that the Companys property be not made subservient to private gain'.⁵ They concluded by stating that any servant caught selling opium, salt or iron would be suspended, and any one else residing at Fort Marlborough contravening the regulations would be discharged from the Company's employ and 'excluded from the privilege of the Company's protection'.⁶

The effect of these edicts on the northern trade was predictable. Alexander

1. FM Cons., 22 Sept. 1758, SFR 70.
2. FSG to FM, 21 Oct. 1754, par. 29, Letters from Fort St. George, 1754, op. cit., vol. 30, p. 152.
3. See Appendix XI.
4. FSG to FM, 21 Oct. 1754, par. 29, Letters from Fort St. George, 1754, op. cit., vol. 30, p. 152.
5. *ibid.*
6. *ibid.*

Hall who had cheerfully described the 'strong trade' carried on at Natal in December 1754 wrote home the next year:

...I don't know but I shall take a trip home myself if this Coast is on the same bad footing it is at present. We are superceded [sic] in the Service, the Exchange from Madras raised 10 p[er] c[ent], High Duties of 5 p[er] c[ent] on Exports & Imports clapt on Decayed Trade ...& above all small hopes of any easy fortune, are prevailing arguments with me to leave the Coast & were I now assured of £100 a year besides what I have I would do it wh. pleasure.¹

I shall follow your Advice in not making haste to get Rich which to my Sorrow is out of my Power. I must also be too easily Satisfied I am afraid, my Losses at Sea, the Heavy Duties laid on by our Masters at Madrass and withall a Dull Trade are very bad circumstances for me and make my Hopes of Reaching an overgrown fortune or even a moderate Competency at a great distance.²

Nevertheless, shipping continued to traffic at Natal and Tapanuli despite what must have been declining profits. Fewer vessels, however, were involved than in the boom year of 1754. In 1756 the Fort Marlborough-owned vessels Adventure snow and Swift schooner voyaged north, and the Resolution sloop made at least two round trips between Natal and Batavia. Of these only the Swift appears to have been owned by the new Resident at Natal, Randolph Marriot.³ The Indian country vessels Bonetta and Prince Edward also traded at Natal and Tapanuli. In 1757 at least, the Adventure, Swift and Resolution continued to call there.

On 29 September 1757, the storeship Falmouth arrived at Fort Marlborough from London with orders from the Court rescinding many of the restrictions placed on Benkulen's private trade. The traffic in opium and iron was again opened to private traders, and even salt, though still reserved for the Company, could be bought by its servants at \$40 per koyan for export out of the Company's dominions.⁴ Imports

1. Alexander Hall to William Hall, 4 Dec. 1755, Hall Papers. The exchange rate between the Spanish dollar and the Pagoda, current in Madras, had already been altered to Fort Marlborough's disadvantage in 1753, raising the value of Pagodas 10 from \$15 to \$16½ for the purpose of remittance by certificate. FSG to FM, 15 Oct. 1753, par. 45, Letters from Fort St. George, 1753, op. cit., vol. 29, p.113
2. Alexander Hall to his sister, 9 Dec. 1755, loc. cit.
3. FM Cons., 14 Feb., 23 Feb. 1759, SFR 70. Marriot had gone north as Resident of Natal for the second time on 17 May 1756 on the Resolution sloop. The Swift schooner sailed north on 30 Dec. 1756.
4. Court to FM, 29 Dec. 1756, pars. 47-59, Public Despatches from England, 1756-7, op. cit., vol. 60, pp. 68-9.

were no longer required to be manifested only at Fort St. George, 'it being our Intention that our Servants upon the West Coast should have the liberty of Importing Goods from any parts of India'. The rates of duties were reduced to two per cent ad valorem on all goods imported from anywhere in the 'East Indies'. Camphor, benjamin, swallow, tobacco and gongs, however, continued to pay five per cent calculated on market price, but the duty on gold, silver, rice and padi could be calculated on ten per cent under market price. Moreover, if these goods were re-exported from the West Coast within a year, a three per cent drawback was allowed as compensation for the customs they were still obliged to pay in India.¹

The Natal trade began to revive, and happily it is at this point that we possess the most detailed information concerning the commercial partnerships that controlled it and the extent and variety of their operations. These data come from the letters written between December 1758 and September 1759 by Roger Carter, then Deputy Governor at Fort Marlborough, and Richard Wyatt, who had become Resident at Natal in August 1757, to Alexander Hall, the Resident at Tapanuli.

Wyatt's Natal Concern

In certain respects the activities of Wyatt's Natal Concern merely conform to the pattern of trade pieced together from the more fragmentary evidence of earlier decades. The syndicate indented for European and Indian goods from Madras on Company ships or bought them from passing country traders and then resold them in small parcels to the local populace at a large mark-up in the time-honoured fashion. For example, one of Wyatt's earliest letters to Hall mentions having unloaded at Natal ten bales of piece goods which the Concern had ordered from Madras via the Company ship Prince George, Captain Powney. These had apparently been sent on respondentia since Wyatt paid for them with 'one hundred Tail of Gold and declared it upon the risque of our Respondentia Creditors for these goods'.² Of these goods the white

1. Court to FM, 29 Dec. 1756, pars. 47-59, Public Despatches from England, 1756-7, op. cit., vol. 60, pp. 68-9.

2. Richard Wyatt to Alexander Hall, 18 Jan. 1759, Hall Papers.

long cloth was brought on the Concern's books at one hundred per cent mark-up and the blue long cloth and salem pores at seventy per cent.¹ Retailing cloth could bring enormous profits. Wyatt reported having disposed of nearly a corge (twenty pieces) of cambays for about $\text{₹}12$ a piece. This type of piece goods was priced in the Madras ships' manifests four years earlier at Pagodas 10-34 per corge, depending on the variety, or about $\text{₹}1\frac{1}{2}$ per piece - making a profit for Wyatt of over four hundred per cent.² Somewhat lesser profits were to be made on iron and steel. Carter estimated that about sixty tons of iron and thirty tons of steel could be sold per year in the North. He also reckoned that with steel costing £27 per ton in Europe and iron £18 per ton they could be sold for at least a fifty per cent profit in West Sumatra.³ It appears, however, that this was a conservative estimate. Wyatt, who was still selling the remnants of the Company's iron in August 1758, wrote to the Board that he was planning to dispose of a parcel of square iron at seven bars per tael which he noted was more than the usual fifty per cent mark-up.⁴ The Board approved. He later wrote to Hall that he would sell the Concern's iron at five bars per tael of gold, which calculating a tael at the fairly low rate of $\text{₹}18$, would make a profit of over one hundred per cent.⁵ It was therefore well worth-while for Wyatt to attempt to acquire the privilege of purchasing iron and steel from the Company's godowns at a standard fifty per cent mark-up. The Board

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1. Richard Wyatt to Alexander Hall, 18 Jan. 1759, Hall Papers.
 2. The word 'cambays' is unclear in this letter; it might also be 'cossaes' in which case the cost per piece would be $\text{₹}3\frac{1}{2}$ since they were usually invoiced at about $\text{₹}67\frac{1}{2}$ per corge in the manifests of private trade from Madras. Manifest of Private Trade shipped on the Prince George, Captain Edward Burman, 21 Oct. 1754, Letters from Fort St. George, 1754, op. cit., vol. 30, pp. 158-61.
 3. Carter to Board, 9 July 1759, FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1759, SFR 70.
 4. FM Cons., 22 Sept. 1758, SFR 70.
 5. Wyatt to Hall, 22 Dec. 1759. The price of a bar of iron works out here at $\text{₹}2\frac{1}{2}$. This is calculating the base price of iron bars at $\text{₹}1.2.21$ per bar, the price that Marriot paid for his deficiencies in this article as Resident of Natal ($\text{₹}6.0.78$ for four bars). FM Cons., 23 June 1759, SFR 70. It also assumes that the bars were of the same weight and variety as those Marriot was obliged to pay for.

agreed that as this was allowed at Fort Marlborough, it should also be permitted at Natal. Their only stipulation was that the iron and steel had to be exported out of the Company's territories and not resold at Natal or any other place where these goods were sold on Company account for gold or dollars.¹ Opium was another article which found ready sale in the North. Carter estimated that one hundred chests per year could be disposed of and set the price if indented directly from Bengal at \$100 per chest.² The proceeds from its sale appear to have been at least two hundred per cent; in December 1758 Wyatt sold 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ chests of opium to some Achehnese boats which had called at Natal for \$315 per chest in exchange at least in part for Achehnese cloth.³

Despite the conventional nature of its import trade, the Natal Concern enjoyed an enormous advantage over other Residency concerns. It not only controlled a potential market for European and Indian goods, it also to some extent controlled the local source of supply for specific trade goods saleable either elsewhere on the West Coast or at Batavia, India or China. It is this difference which helped to make it a large ship-owning syndicate while earlier ship-owning partnerships seem to have been ventures separate from the Residency concerns.⁴ The settlements at Natal and Tapanuli lay adjacent to camphor and benzoin country. They also faced the island of Nias which was a traditional source of rice and slaves for northern Sumatra, and these were also commodities which were in almost constant demand by the Company. Slave-trading provided a useful sideline in the Natal Concern's activities, and Wyatt had contracted with the Board in June 1758 to provide fifty

1. FM Cons., 14 July 1759, SFR 70.
2. Carter to Board, 9 July 1759, FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1759, SFR 70. The manifest of the snow Brilliant in October 1750 showed the price of three chests of opium loaded on account of Captain Edward Burman to be Pagodas 337.18.0 or about \$168.3.0 per chest. Fort St. David to FM, 16 Oct. 1750, Letters from Fort St. David, 1750, vol. III, p. 72, Records of Fort St. George.
3. Wyatt to Hall, 22 Dec. 1758, Hall Papers.
4. The owners of the Fanny snow, the sloop Surprise and the sloop Tryall, the only other vessels whose complete ownership is known appear to have included both servants based at the out-settlements and ones stationed at Fort Marlborough, with no particular pattern to the ownership.

Nias men for the rather high price of \$70 a head. By December 1758, at least fifteen slaves had been shipped down to Fort Marlborough earning the Concern \$1010.¹

The principal export trade of Wyatt's Concern was, as it had been since the settling of Natal, in benzoin and camphor, which it was attempting to dispose of in a variety of ways. To a certain extent the Concern's activities merely inserted one more middleman in the chain of country trade, buying the products from Malay merchants, who in turn had purchased them from the Batak growers further inland, and then selling them to other native merchants or passing country ships and Company captains who took care of the long distance transportation to the markets abroad. For example, Wyatt wrote to the Board in January 1758 that the Company sloop Cuddalore had a cargo of six chests of benjamin and four of camphor on which the duty had already been paid at Natal.²

The prices of benzoin and camphor appear to have been only moderate in the middle of 1758. Hall's agent at Madras wrote to him in May of that year that camphor was then selling at about Pagodas 7 or \$10½ per kati and benzoin from Pagodas 65 per candy or about \$25 per pikul for the best variety down to about Pagodas 12-15 or about \$5 for the very worst sort.³ By the end of 1758, the demand for benzoin was dropping sharply. Wyatt noted that it was very difficult to get either gold or dollars for the commodity from country traders calling at Natal,⁴ and he was therefore obliged to resort to the cycle of bartering benzoin for more of the European goods - steel, iron, opium, and piece goods - which had originally been used to obtain the benzoin. He attempted to sell some benzoin in December 1758 to Captain Wintle of the English sloop Anna Catherina, a private trader apparently not owned at Fort Marlborough, but discovered that Wintle hoped to acquire it at a lower price at Tapamuli. Wyatt therefore instructed Hall to

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1. FM Cons., 5 June, 22 Dec. 1758, SFR 70; Wyatt to Hall, 5 Dec. 1758, Hall Papers.
 2. FM Cons., 15 March 1758, SFR 70.
 3. Matthew Clark to Alexander Hall, 30 May 1758, Hall Papers.
 4. Wyatt to Hall, 5 Dec. 1758, loc. cit.

sell it 'something cheaper than usual' if he could exchange it for the Anna Catherina's cargo, which consisted mostly of '10 or 12 Pecool Brass Wire and some Dollars'.¹ In the end, however, Wyatt was able to sell Wintle some Singkil benzoin, which had the reputation of not being the best quality, and some head or first quality benzoin which Hall had sent from Tapanuli, at a price of \$12 per tompong or cake equalling seventy pounds, for dollars.² The Anna Catherina arrived at Fort Marlborough from Natal on 27 January 1759, having completed her trading in the North, and sailed for Batavia on 17 February.

Wyatt failed, however, to get rid of any more benzoin to Captain Powney of the Company ship Duke which touched Natal and Muko Muko en route to Fort Marlborough, where she arrived on 9 February 1759. As Powney had 'refused to deal in benjamin' on his own account, Wyatt loaded sixty chests on the Duke for the Captain to sell on the Concern's behalf 'as opportunity offers'.³

Meanwhile the Concern was also testing the market at Benkulen. The Elizabeth schooner, owned by the syndicate, had gone to the head settlement in October 1758 with an unspecified amount of benzoin in the care of the Natal surgeon, James Stevenson. A banting, which sailed from Natal on 9 November, had also brought foot or worst-quality benzoin, slaves and oil. Wyatt himself, who went down to Fort Marlborough on business on 13 February 1759, had taken twenty chests with him on the Company snow Fort Marlbro.⁴ The banting's cargo had been sold before he arrived, but the benzoin brought by the Marlbro perahu in December 1758 had not. Nevertheless, Wyatt managed to dispose of the benzoin brought by the Elizabeth at \$28, \$30, and \$33 per pikul in exchange for about forty tons of European brass wire at \$50 per pikul (a total of \$2000), seven tons of steel at \$145 per ton (total of \$1015), sixty brass musquetoons and other small items.⁵ He also sold

1. Wyatt to Hall, 22 Dec. 1758, loc. cit.

2. Wyatt to Hall, 18 Jan. 1759, loc. cit.

3. ibid.

4. Wyatt to Hall, 5 Dec. 1758, Wyatt to Gentlemen, 18 April 1759, loc. cit.

5. Wyatt to Gentlemen, 18 April 1759, loc. cit.

the twenty chests of benzoin that he had brought with him for \$33 per pikul in exchange for $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons more steel at \$145 per ton, as well as some piece goods and cash. Wyatt was unhappy about acquiring such a large amount of steel although the price was low, but he noted 'no money was to be got for it [the benzoin] and had not I done this it would certainly have laid in Hand as several people were keen to have taken the Barter that was offered me had I not struck as I did'.¹ The competition was fierce; 'so many people were eager to Cram off their Benjamin for any thing to be had....Benjamin without it is extremely good [Wyatt concluded] seems to be but a bad commodity and very little would have gone off this year had not it been for the Many Articles the Shipping Gentlemen had on hand that they could not get anything else for'.² There were three Company ships at Fort Marlborough at this time: the storeship Egmont which had arrived on 22 November 1758; the Duke from Fort St. George which had arrived on 9 February 1759; and the London which had arrived from Bengal on 17 February 1759. One of Wyatt's competitors was the same Captain Wintle to whom he had sold benzoin at Natal only two months earlier. As Wyatt remarked to his partners, 'had it not been for 33 Chests of Opium, the London brought from Bengal, None of Wintle's cargoe would have gone off; the Board gave permission for this Opium being sold on Conditions of its being exported out of the Companys districts, and it was valued at \$150 per chest for his [Wintle's] Benjamin at 30 p. pecl.'³ The brass wire, steel, musquetoons, etc. which Wyatt had obtained in barter were to be shipped on the Elizabeth schooner back to Natal on 19 April 1759 to begin the trade cycle all over again.⁴

In addition to merely peddling jungle produce to passing country vessels or shipping it as private trade on Company ships either at Natal or Fort Marlborough, the Natal Concern sought markets farther afield. As early as 22 December 1758,

1. Wyatt to Gentlemen, 18 April 1759, loc. cit.

2. ibid.

3. ibid.

4. Wyatt to Hall and Watson, 1 June 1759, loc. cit.

Wyatt and Hall had been discussing a voyage to Negapatnam on the Coromandel Coast.¹ Unfortunately, the Elizabeth was unsuitable for this purpose because she was a single-bottomed vessel and had been repaired locally with 'Malay work' which Wyatt considered untrustworthy for so long a voyage. She was, however, to be sent on her return from Benkulen to Nias 'with our unsaleable goods, for Rice, Slaves or anything to be got'.² The schooner did not, however, arrive as expected. She set out for Natal on 5 January 1759 but was forced back by bad weather, having lost her anchors and cables. Wyatt, obliged to cover the unexpected expenses of refitting her, hired her out to the Company to bring pepper up from Manna to load the Company's ships. By April she had made two such trips and earned \$313.2.0 in freight.³

The Concern's sloop, which figures not at all in the shipping diaries at Fort Marlborough in 1758, was apparently not on the Coast in December 1758 since Wyatt regretted 'the long stay of the old [sloop] Resolution as a very great loss' in delaying the venture to Negapatnam.⁴ She returned to Tapanuli early in 1759, however, presumably from a trading voyage since she landed goods there in March on which customs duties were paid.⁵ By mid-March the sloop had been dispatched for Coromandel with a cargo of benzoin.⁶ Unfortunately by arriving there in May 1759 she had come too late. The Concern's agent at Negapatnam, William Bodle, wrote to Hall on 31 July 1759: 'I am sorry to advise you your cargo of Benjamin came to so miserable a Market owing to the arrival of Capt. Oliphant from your Coast and several country vessels from Malacca with said article, besides the greatest part of what you sent last year remained unsold here'.⁷ The news must have been bitter

1. Wyatt to Hall, 22 Dec. 1758, loc. cit.

2. ibid.

3. Wyatt to Gentlemen, 18 April 1759, loc. cit.

4. Wyatt to Hall, 22 Dec. 1758, loc. cit.

5. FM Cons., 13 Nov. 1759, SFR 70.

6. William Bodle to Hall, 31 July 1759, Hall Papers.

7. ibid.

since Captain Oliphant of the sloop Watson, a country trader from Bengal, had sailed from Tapanuli in December 1758,¹ precisely the time that Wyatt and Hall had been regretting that the Resolution was not available for a similar voyage. The Resolution's trip was not a financial disaster, but it made no profit. The 'owners neat proceeds', presumably from the sale of other goods shipped on the sloop, amounted to Pagodas 3418.21.0. The return cargo of 'sundries' which the Concern had ordered absorbed Pagodas 2404.2.10 of the proceeds and the cost of the voyage ('Capt. Justice's Acct. disbursements') another Pagodas 792.10.52, leaving a balance in the Concern's favour of Pagodas 222.8.18, which Bodle subsequently spent buying some blue cloth on the Concern's account to a total of Pagodas 224.10.0. The final balance was therefore Pagodas 2.1.62 in Bodle's favour.² Hall's private account suffered somewhat less. The sale of a small parcel of gold for Pagodas 48.0.0, rattan for Pagodas 2.0.16, and sappan wood for Pagodas 2.0.0 netted Pagodas 52.0.16, leaving him a profit of Pagodas 25.0.7 after four armchairs, five pairs of brown silk breeches and six pairs of blue silk breeches had been purchased on his account.³ The principal object of the Resolution's journey to Negapatnam had failed. Although some of the benzoin, presumably of the preceding year's lot, had been sold for Pagodas 1800, the money had not yet been paid. Bodle, however, had noted that 'as he [the purchaser] is a good man there is no fear'.⁴ Nevertheless fifty-three chests of the Concern's benzoin lay unsold; the best offer for it had been only Pagodas 15 per candy, the price fetched by the worst variety a year earlier.⁵

Eighteen months later the benzoin still seems to have been unsold.⁶ Bodle

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1. FM Cons., 30 Dec. 1758, SFR 70.
 2. William Bodle to Hall, 31 July 1759, Hall Papers.
 3. William Justice to Hall, 25 July 1759, loc. cit.
 4. William Bodle to Hall, 31 July 1759, loc. cit.
 5. ibid.
 6. William Bodle to Hall, 19 Feb. 1761, loc. cit.

remarked that he had hoped the price would increase sharply 'as no vessels could bring said article from that Coast' after the French capture of West Sumatra. The offered price was not good but it was rising. Bodle had been offered Pagodas 35 for the best sort and Pagodas 20 for the rest; this, however, was still only half the standard price in May 1758. Bodle informed Hall that he would not sell at such a price, and was asking Pagodas 45 per candy for the lot, although he admitted he would let it go for Pagodas 40.¹ The Resolution returned to the West Coast early in August 1759 and remained there employed until December guarding Tapanuli Bay against Achehnese incursions, a service for which her owners eventually collected \$1083.2.66 from the Company for her hire.²

Meanwhile, Wyatt had already warned his partners as a result of his sojourn at Fort Marlborough to 'Run as little into Benjamin as possible for it certainly will bear no price, for 3 or 4 years to come in India, some of the best Head may be necessary for the Europe Market-, but I think no money ought to be given as it is very precarious whether it will sell or not'.³ Camphor, on the other hand, Wyatt discovered was 'a rising Commodity'. Captain Thomas Forrest, sometime of the Company marine but at this point commanding the Fanny sloop, a country vessel owned in Bengal, had contrived to sell his camphor, amount unspecified, for \$500 per pikul at Fort Marlborough, and the price at Batavia was even higher, Rix-dollars 11-1200 per pikul.⁴ Wyatt himself had been offered \$700 to transport some to Batavia for sale.⁵ The Concern seems to have been avoiding camphor for some months, owing perhaps to losses they had suffered in some of that product sold for them by Captain Duncan of the ship Ganges, presumably in June or July 1758.⁶

1. William Bodle to Hall, 19 Feb. 1761, loc. cit.

2. FM Cons., 17 Jan. 1767, SFR 75.

3. Wyatt to Hall and Watson, 1 June 1759, Hall Papers.

4. ibid.

5. ibid.

6. The ship Ganges, Captain Peter Duncan, had arrived at Fort Marlborough on 15 May 1758 bringing Carter to take over as Deputy Governor. She had touched at Natal and Tapanuli en route to Benkulen and sailed on for Batavia on 20 May. Carter to Hall, 23 Jan. 1759, Hall Papers.

A year later, however, Wyatt was giving his partners explicit instructions on how to corner the supplies of this product:

I hope before this you have been able to get some [camphor] in Barter for Opium or other Goods that don't immediately bring Gold, and as our Neighbours [the Dutch] will endeavour to engross as much of this as possible do what you can to prevent their getting any from our Districts and the more effectually to do this it will readily occur to you that a Strict Eye must be kept over Toobooyan and that no Boats be suffered to come from or go to Ayer Bongey from thence.¹

The results of this shift in emphasis from benzoin to camphor are unfortunately unknown because Wyatt's letters stop on 22 September 1759 after he returned to Natal in the sloop Hawke in August 1759. Moreover, the trade at Natal was soon to be affected by two important external circumstances - a change in the status of the opium trade, and the acceleration of the war with the French in India.

Opium, despite the reopening of the private trade by the Directors in a letter received in September 1757, continued to constitute a problem for the Fort Marlborough Board. The Directors were still dubious about the value of the settlements at Natal and Tapanuli, and the Benkulen government was therefore anxious to develop some scheme by which these posts could produce more revenue than simply the collection of customs duties. Consequently the acting Deputy Governor, Randolph Marriot, had in April 1758 decided to buy fifty-four chests of opium on Company account from Captain Powney of the ship Duke at \$260 per chest. These were to be sent to Natal for the Resident to sell for the benefit of the Company's treasury.²

Roger Carter, who had been appointed Deputy Governor in England, arrived a month later on the ship Ganges. He was furious about Marriot's transaction, although whether on his own account or the Company's is uncertain in the light of subsequent events. Marriot's purchase of Captain Powney's opium obviously involved Carter in an awkward conflict of interests, as his remarks to the Board

1. Wyatt to Hall and Watson, 1 June 1759, loc. cit.

2. FM Cons., 7 April 1758, SFR 70.

on the subject reveal. While acquitting the Council of any 'Sinister Designs' in the transaction, he castigated it for contravening the Court's orders disassociating the Company from any further share in the opium trade in Sumatra since the Directors were expected soon to order the settlements at Natal and Tapanuli, the projected market for the opium, withdrawn.¹ The main force of Carter's argument, however, was a tirade against the folly of buying any opium on Company account when a supply more than sufficient to fulfil the local demand was already available on the West Coast. Not only were there still twenty to twenty-five chests of Company opium left, ageing and unsold at Natal, but much more had also been purchased on private account from the Watson sloop, Bonetta ketch and ships Greyhound and Duke. The Board, Carter added, should also have considered the possibility that since the Court had allowed him to return to Sumatra via Madras, 'there was the greatest probability of his bringing a quantity of this commodity on his own Account, which is now really the Case'.² He subsequently reported that he had, in addition to what he had brought with him on the Ganges, another thirty chests on order from Bengal.³

Marriot defended his actions on the grounds that at the time of the purchase the Board had possessed no means of gauging either the amount of Company opium still at Natal or the quantity in private hands. Wyatt had not then submitted the Natal General Books for either 1756 or 1757 and his monthly accounts had been four months in arrears.⁴ Consequently, despite the thirty-one chests of opium which had been listed in that settlement's inventory in December 1757,⁵ the Board, learning in January 1758 that Wyatt had purchased five chests of inferior Munghir opium on Company account, had assumed that Natal was in need of supplies and that

1. FM Cons., 5 June 1758, SFR 70.

2. *ibid.*

3. FM Cons., 7 Dec. 1758, SFR 70.

4. FM Cons., 30 June 1758, 14 Sept. 1758, SFR 70.

5. Calculate of Quick Stock at Fort Marlborough and its Dependencies to Ult. Dec. 1757, SFR 11.

a demand for the product existed which would render the sale of Powney's opium profitable for the Company.¹ This expectation, Marriot added, had been reinforced by a report that Wyatt had offered to buy the Duke's entire opium cargo on his own account at Natal and when Powney had refused his terms, he had written to Fort Marlborough asking that it be purchased and sent north to him. On the other hand, Marriot justly noted, the Board could hardly have been expected to anticipate Carter's own imports via the Ganges or any subsequent ships - particularly since Captain Powney, who had forwarded at least one of Carter's opium indents to Bengal, had not mentioned this fact when he had been at Benkulen. Moreover, the Fort Marlborough Council had never been informed of any opium landed from the Bonetta ketch or Watson sloop, and Wyatt on the contrary had stated that the Bonetta had imported none but the five chests of Munghir opium which he had bought for the Company.² Marriot concluded by suggesting that an inquiry should be made into precisely why more Company opium had not been sold at Natal. This was a telling blow. As the Watson and Bonetta had called at Natal and Tapanuli in December 1757 and January 1758, and had not sailed south to Benkulen before returning to India,³ if either vessel had landed opium in the Company's territory, it could only have been at those northern settlements. Private purchases of opium by Wyatt at that time were not strictly illegal since the Company had reopened the trade without making specific provision for the disposal of its own remaining opium. Nevertheless, the Resident of Natal was implicated in marketing his own Concern's opium to the detriment of the Company's sales, and the Court eventually

1. FM Cons., 5 June 1758, SFR 70.

2. *ibid.*

3. FM Cons., 17 Jan., 15 March 1758, SFR 70.

demanded an explanation from Wyatt.¹

Carter wrote to Fort St. George publicly disavowing Marriot's action on the grounds that it would likely cause the Company losses for which he did not want to be blamed. 'There appears to me', he stated, 'scarse [sic] any probability of its selling, so much being in private hands. I am at the greatest loss what to do with it or which way to manage so as to get it off with no disadvantage to the Company, the price it was purchased at being so very extravagant'.² Nevertheless, as Deputy Governor, Carter was duty bound to try to retrieve the situation for the Company. It was imperative to find some means of disposing of the Company's opium quickly, preferably one which did not jeopardise the sale of his own. The commodity was perishable and if not sold in one or two years, became so dry and hard that it was unusable. There was also the danger that traders from India would bring fresh supplies to the West Coast which would be preferable to the Company opium and would further increase the glut.

Carter's first plan consisted of offering the opium to the members of the Natal establishment at prime cost (\$260) on six months' credit without interest while they sold it for their own profit before they were obliged to pay the Company for it. If they refused this proposal, they were to be required to auction it in the Malay bazaar at Natal on the Company's account for gold in lots of

1. Wyatt's purchase of five chests of opium on Company account at this time seems inexplicable unless he was obliged by Captain Edwards to contract for the Bonetta's entire cargo of opium, kept the good sort on his own account, and off-loaded the inferior Munghir variety onto the Company. The Court, while excusing the Benkulen Board for its ill-judged purchase of fifty-four chests of Captain Powney's opium, was not pleased with Wyatt. The Directors wanted to know why 'after declaring that a parcel of Good Opium there on hand [at Natal] was hardly vendible,..[he made] a fresh purchase of a very bad Sort upon Our Account'. Court to FM, 6 Feb. 1760, par. 50, SFR 31. In the absence of the Consultation Books for 1757, it is impossible to tell what arrangements were made to dispose of the Company's remaining opium after the arrival of the Falmouth brought the Court's orders reopening the private opium trade. Nevertheless, in all the Board's subsequent proceedings early in 1758, it appears that the Benkulen authorities expected Wyatt to continue selling Company opium.
2. Carter to Fort St. George, 14 June 1758, par. 8, SFR 11.

five chests at a time.¹ If the latter method of disposal was selected, no one employed either directly or indirectly by the Company was to be permitted to bid for the opium on pain of dismissal from the service. The Resident of Natal was to offer five chests first and if these sold for over prime cost, he was to repeat the procedure each week until all the Company's opium was gone.² The Board then moved quickly to get the opium from the Duke transported to Natal before the north-west monsoon made it impossible to voyage northward up the coast. Thirty chests were ordered to be loaded on the Wasp longboat and instructions were sent to Wyatt to sell the opium at \$330 per chest if he could obtain no better price.³ Meanwhile Wyatt had ostensibly been trying to sell what Company opium was already on hand at Natal, the gentlemen there having refused to take it on their own account. He reported that he had managed to dispose of five chests at auction in the bazaar for the stipulated sum but feared that he would not be able to sell more.⁴ The Board retorted that they could not lower the price, even though it was to be paid in gold, without the Company suffering losses. A month later in October 1758 Alexander Hall consented to take over the remaining Company opium at Tapanuli on the terms the Board had offered, but the opium at Natal was still not moving, since the merchants there already had a large stock on hand and there was no demand for the commodity.⁵

Finally in November 1758, after Wyatt wrote once again that there was no prospect of getting rid of the Company's opium and he feared it would prove to be of disadvantage to the settlement, the Board once more considered the problem of disposing of it. The question was whether to lower the price or to prohibit Company servants from importing any fresh supplies until the opium in the

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1. FM Cons., 30 June 1758, SFR 70.
 2. FM Cons., 29 Aug. 1758, SFR 70.
 3. FM Cons., 22 Sept. 1758, SFR 70. The Wasp's navigator was so ill that in the end she did not sail.
 4. *ibid.*
 5. FM Cons., 18 Oct. 1758, SFR 70.

Company's godown had been sold. Marriot, who had originally been responsible for purchasing Captain Powney's cargo, favoured reducing the price until the opium sold, since the Company, he suggested, would not willingly endorse interference with the free trading privileges which it gave its servants. Carter, and the other members of the Board, Joseph Gunn, Joseph Darvall and Robert Hay, voted for prohibition.¹ As a consequence, Company servants were ordered to stop importing opium on pain of dismissal from the service and forfeiture of the opium, half to the Company and half to the informer who caught the smuggler.

The next problem before the Board was to whom to sell the opium already on hand. The Board reversed its previous stand and rejected the idea of selling it to the Malays. It was unanimously decided 'that to preserve a due Medium between the interest of the Company, and that of their Servants on this Establishment, that the said opium shall be sold to them only, at the rate of \$300 p[er] Chest to be paid when taken out of the Warehouse'.² The Board also agreed that if any Malays or Chinese or other inhabitants of the West Coast were found to be importing contraband opium, the offender was to be punished as if he were a slave, or banished as a slave to St. Helena if he were a free man.³

The Board, mindful of their personal interests, however, provided too many loopholes for this plan to succeed. They exempted from the prohibition anyone who already possessed or had indented for opium before the regulation was promulgated. They also allowed opium not specifically ordered to be landed if the owner would swear that it belonged to him and was 'in return of Goods sent from this Coast' and that he had not indented for it after he knew of the prohibition. All people who had ordered opium at Bengal or elsewhere were to give an account of it to the Board by 1 December. Moreover, the prohibition did not apply to

1. FM Cons., 16 Nov. 1758, SFR 70.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

licensed independent traders or free inhabitants who did not fall directly under the Company's authority.¹

These regulations were bound to fail because, as the Board later admitted, in the sale of opium the Company was unable to compete with its own servants. '[As] Private merchants', they noted, 'must sell let the Profits be ever so small, they would always undersell the Company, let them reduce the price of theirs ever so much'.² The Company was at a further disadvantage because the private merchants could barter opium for benzoin, camphor, and other local products while the Company was limited to accepting dollars and gold. Moreover, an estimated hundred chests, a year's consumption, of 'licensed' private opium was already on hand at Fort Marlborough.³

It seems fairly clear that the Company's opium at Natal, which had been projected as the principal market for the large parcel bought from Captain Powney, had remained unsold because the Natal Concern was selling its own in preference. Certainly this was true in the early months of 1759 when the Board was faced with the pressing need to dispose of the Company's opium, already a year old, before it became completely unsaleable. Wyatt, then at Fort Marlborough, handled the prospect of even stiffer restrictions on the traffic in opium with typically brisk decision. He wrote in his private capacity to his partners in the North in April 1759:

I am at present resolved to return [to Natal] and nothing will prevent me, but the Company's Opium being sold for Benjamin and Camphire on their [the Company's] Accots. which at present there is a good deal of Talk about, and as this must be Hurting the place for a long time, I have since thought of engaging for 50 chests of the Company's Opium on Conditions of having an exclusive right to the Trade of Natal and Tappanooley in this Article for two years and as something must be done to get off theirs very soon, either in this respect or some other I would have you Sturr about to get rid of ours as fast as possible for Benjamin or anything and Don't be afraid of Camphire, only observe that the less

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1. FM Cons., 16 Nov. 1758, SFR 70.
 2. FM Cons., 9 July 1759, SFR 70.
 3. *ibid.*

of the Foot the Better as the Customs alone on the China [market] is much more than it will sell for-.¹

Wyatt's proposal for protecting his Concern's camphor and benzoin trade by contracting for the Company's opium on monopoly terms was the plan finally adopted by the Board in modified form as the only realistic compromise between Company and private interests. The matter was debated in a lengthy session on 9 July 1759 when the alternatives were assessed. Putting the Company's opium up at public sale, the Board considered, would produce a thirty per cent loss since it was unlikely to sell for more than \$200 per chest. Private merchants, who had purchased their opium at a much lower price, could undercut the Company and 'be still great gainers'. Moreover, they too had to sell their opium, however small the profit, before it grew old and the quality deteriorated. A second possibility, ordering the Resident at Natal to auction it to 'Black Merchants', had already been attempted unsuccessfully and was still unlikely to realise prime cost for the Company. Accepting benjamin and camphor on Company account in exchange for opium, the Board decided, was too complicated a procedure, and as such would render the Company liable to further losses. Keeping the Company's opium in stock for another year until all the private opium had been sold was impossible because it would by then be so old as to be virtually unsaleable. The only other alternative was to sell the Company's opium at auction for whatever price it would bring, but Deputy Governor Carter and Richard Wyatt rejected this on the grounds that it

would not only hurt them severely, but also every one who has any of that Article on hand, without being of the least Service to our Masters, as it appears to them a Truth incontestible and they observe also to the whole Board, that it would not, were even the Black Merchants permitted to buy, bring \$200 p. Chest, and...by such a proceeding both the Company and they must be consequently great Losers.²

They offered another solution. They proposed to buy the Company opium purchased

1. Wyatt to Gentlemen, 18 April 1759, Hall Papers.

2. FM Cons., 9 July 1759, SFR 70.

from Captain Powney at prime cost (£260 per chest) in return for the exclusive privilege of selling it at all the ports between Sorkam and Airbangis for eighteen months if credit were allowed for the purchase. They hoped, they told the Board, that prohibiting any vessel sailing with a pass from Fort Marlborough from trafficking in opium within these limits would ensure sufficient profit to indemnify them for the considerable risks they ran in making the proposal. They expected, for example, to incur losses on exporting the opium to foreign markets since they could not compete with the Bengal country traders at Malacca and Acheh because the initial cost of their opium was so high. There was an added danger that country traders would resort to the West Coast with fresh supplies which would also 'render their profits extremely precarious'.¹

Wyatt and Carter offered a bond as payment for the opium, a total of £13,520 for the fifty-two chests still on hand. They refused, however, to give actual securities as guarantee of payment as 'what stock they have being employed in Trade and consequently Fluctuating...to deprive themselves of any part thereof, would be attended with Loss to them'.² They also requested the Board to transport the thirty-one chests still at Fort Marlborough to Natal freight free at Company risk until delivered there.

The other three Board members, Darvall, Hay and Preston agreed to Wyatt's and Carter's proposition. They agreed that either auctioning or retailing the opium for the best price to be had would earn the Company less than prime cost. They also noted that Wyatt and Carter's proposal would end the grievances of the Fort Marlborough servants who in spite of the Court's recent declaration of free trade in opium had been restrained from selling their opium anywhere on the West Coast by the previous prohibition. They also accepted the form of payment for the Company's opium offered by Wyatt and Carter. A 'joynt Bond to be given by

1. FM Cons., 9 July 1759, SFR 70.

2. *ibid.*

the Deputy Governor Mr. Wyatt and the Gentlemen residing at Natal', they remarked, '...was unquestionably as good as any obligation of that kind can be', and they hoped that the Court would approve their relying on 'the Personal Credit of the Gentlemen concerned'.¹ They did, however, stipulate that public notice should be given offering the contract for opium to any one capable of giving the Company better terms. This was primarily to demonstrate to the Court that the agreement had not been made 'only for private Interest' since they considered that no one else was capable of offering such good terms or giving security for the performance of them.² As expected, no other potential contractors had come forward by the deadline on 14 July 1759, so Carter's and Wyatt's tender was accepted, the bonds arranged, and the opium trade at Fort Marlborough declared open. A licence was drawn up giving Carter and 'Messrs. Wyatt & Company' the sole right of selling opium by retail or wholesale within the boundaries that they had requested. The penalties for trespassing on the restricted area included dismissal for a Company servant, being sent back to Europe if the offender was a free inhabitant, and being made a Company slave for a native. As Resident of Natal, Wyatt was to be responsible for apprehending offenders and confiscating their contraband opium.³

The opium contract signalled the beginning of what was effectively the third 'Natal Concern' within the months between December 1758 and September 1759, with the signatories of the bonds as its membership. The organisation's recruitment procedures, however, were so smooth that the successive partnerships resolved themselves almost into a joint stock company. Membership in the Natal Concern was based on membership in the Company's establishment at Natal or Tapanuli and so was subject to appointments and transfers decided on by the Board at Fort Marlborough. When Wyatt's correspondence with Hall commenced in December 1758, the Concern was already in the process of winding up one partnership since two of its members had

1. FM Cons., 9 July 1759, SFR 70.

2. *ibid.*

3. FM Cons., 14 July 1759, SFR 70.

been transferred to other establishments.¹ James Stevenson, who had been the surgeon at Natal since December 1753, had arrived at Fort Marlborough from the North on 18 October 1758 and departed for his new appointment at Muko Muko on 18 December of the same year. The commander of the Natal garrison, Lt. David Pilmore, had been ordered back to Fort Marlborough even earlier, in April 1758. Robert Hunter had arrived at Natal to replace Stevenson as surgeon, but as yet had no place in the partnership since Wyatt specifically directed Hall in January 1759 that some opium and other goods belonging to Hunter which were to be taken north by the Marlbro perahu were to be considered 'out of the Concern'.²

Wyatt therefore suggested to Hall as early as December 1758 that a new partnership should be set up to take cognizance of these changes and ordered him in the meantime to avoid buying more benjamin with money as it would prolong the settlement of the old Concern's affairs.³ He later proposed that the new partnership begin on 1 March 1759 and consist of the same proportions of shares as the previous one, except that he was to take over Pilmore's share.⁴ 'For the Speedier Settling of the old Concern', Wyatt continued in his letter to Hall, 'you [are] to take everything at Tappanooly at Prime Cost (Benjamin excepted) at 3 mo.^s Credit and I'll do the same with everything here except the unsaleable Cambays and some few other things.'⁵ The ten bales of piece goods received via the Duke in January 1759 were to go on to the books of the new partnership.⁶ The steel, brass wire and musquetoons received in barter for benjamin at Fort Marlborough were also sent to Natal in April 1758 on 'the Joint Account and Risque of the new Concern'.⁷ The

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1. Wyatt to Hall, 22 Dec. 1758, Hall Papers.
 2. Wyatt to Hall, 22 Dec. 1758, 18 Jan. 1759, loc. cit.
 3. Wyatt to Hall, 22 Dec. 1758, loc. cit.
 4. Wyatt to Hall, 18 Jan. 1759, loc. cit.
 5. ibid.
 6. ibid.
 7. Wyatt to Gentlemen, 18 April 1759, loc. cit.

new partnership had obviously been instituted as scheduled. It was composed of Wyatt, Hall, Hunter and Christopher Watson, who was assistant at Natal. For some time, however, the books of the two partnerships coexisted while old trading ventures were completed. For example, goods apparently delivered by the Fanny sloop in April 1759 were brought on to both sets of books. 'Consignments to James Stevenson', Wyatt ordered Hall, 'must be credited for this Cargo & the new Company debted for the same.'¹

From May through July 1759, however, further changes occurred in the Natal establishment. On 30 April, Hall was ordered to Fort Marlborough to take his seat on the Board and Robert Nairne was appointed to replace him at Tapanuli. It was also decided that a shortage of servants made it impossible to allow Wyatt an assistant any longer, so Watson was also directed to leave Natal and proceed to Manna.² Wyatt, Nairne and Lt. Pilmore departed from Benkulen for Natal on the sloop Hawke in August 1759, and at the end of September, Wyatt, Watson and Hunter wrote to Hall that 'the alterations that have been lately made here renders it necessary that our Joint Concern in Trade should be Dissolved, and we therefore now declare off of any further Concern'.³ Hall was directed to come to an agreement with Nairne for the whole of the Concern's stock at Tapanuli, but if he was unable to do this, he was to deliver the other partners' shares to him, with the exception of the benjamin and camphor, at prime cost.⁴ Opium, however, was to be delivered not at prime cost but rated at \$250 per chest. No agreement appears to have been reached concerning the transfer of the Resolution sloop and her cargo. It was planned to settle this when Hall came to Natal en route to Fort Marlborough.⁵ Hall however was still at Natal when the West Coast was captured by the French, and the sloop seems to have remained part of the old Concern. Wyatt and Hall

1. Wyatt to Gentlemen, 18 April 1759, loc. cit.

2. FM Cons., 30 April 1759, SFR 70.

3. Wyatt, Watson and Hunter to Hall, 22 Sept. 1759, Hall Papers.

4. ibid.

5. ibid.

petitioned the Board in 1764 on behalf of themselves, Robert Hunter, and Christopher Watson, deceased, for payment of her hire as guard-ship at Tapanuli between August and December 1759, and the vessel herself may have been taken as a French prize.¹

The intervention of war made the third partnership of the Natal Concern and the opium contract which was its principal venture almost as short-lived as its predecessor. England and France had been in open conflict in Europe since 1756, and in 1758 French forces reappeared in India to push the claims of the French East India Company. On 30 April 1759 the ship Welcome arrived at Benkulen from Bengal with reports of another French siege of Madras, and the Fort Marlborough servants once again faced a considerable disruption of their trade. Wyatt, then at Benkulen, took steps to secure the Concern's property. He cautiously brought ashore from the ship Duke the sixty chests of benjamin which he and his partners had loaded for sale at Madras.² He also removed the hundred taels of gold which was to have been paid to the Concern's agent at Fort St. George, Mr. Ross, for goods received via the Duke, selling it to Captain Powney for \$1800 and using the money to pay off other debts.³ Hall was directed to begin building another 'reserve of 100 tail of Gold for Mr. Ross whenever we may have proper authority for returning it'.⁴ Wyatt explained to his partners in June 1759 that 'as it was then very doubtful what might be their [the French] success all those Gentlemen that had Goods from Mr. Ross in the same manner as we had, resolved to make no returns [payments] till particular Advices were received from him lest the Duke should be taken and the Loss laid at their Doors.'⁵

Unfortunately for Fort Marlborough, the effects of the war did not stop with insecurity in receiving and shipping goods to beleaguered Madras. As a kind of

1. FM Cons., 29 Sept. 1764, SFR 72.

2. Wyatt to Gentlemen, 1 June 1759, Hall Papers.

3. *ibid.*

4. *ibid.*

5. *ibid.*

footnote to the conflict in India, two French men-of-war, the ship Conde of fifty-six guns and the frigate Expedition of twenty guns, sailed down the West Coast with about eight hundred men under the command of Brigadier General Comte d'Estaing. News of the French approach reached Natal on 5 February, and the ships appeared within two hours before the settlement, which surrendered at once, seeing no chance of defending itself with only thirty-three able-bodied fighting men and one officer, Lt. Pilmore. Wyatt immediately sent word to Fort Marlborough of the French presence and this express arrived on 20 February. Meanwhile the French frigate moved on to Tapanuli, arriving on 13 February and capturing it on 15 February after three days of determined resistance led by Nairne, Lt. Tatam, and Ensign Grant. On 31 March the two French ships accompanied by a twenty-five ton sloop and eight longboats reached Fort Marlborough. A Council of War consisting of the Board and the military and ships' officers decided that although there were 366 men to defend the settlement including Malays, slaves, Company servants, and free inhabitants, only about 185 Europeans would prove reliable, and the odds were too great in pitting them against 800 Frenchmen. They therefore decided to abandon the fort and retreat into the country where it was hoped the French could not follow. The Company's treasure of \$153,000 had already been dispatched for Batavia, consigned to the Company's agent there. The assistance expected from Malays in the country, however, did not materialise, and the refugees were forced to camp out in the rain for several nights, without food or shelter. Finally on 3 April the bedraggled train sent three covenanted servants, Donston, Kier, and Blaquiére, back to negotiate terms with the French, who in turn promised only to treat the Company's personnel as prisoners of war and to protect their personal effects. This latter pledge was not kept. The Board (Carter, Darvall and Hay) wrote to the Court from Batavia where the Fort Marlborough civil and military establishment had been transferred by the French that they had saved little more than the clothes on their backs.¹ For although the French commander 'verbally

1. Narrative of Proceedings at Fort Marlborough from the First Advice from Natal of the French Presence on the Coast to the Capture of Fort Marlborough, 3 April 1760, Hay and Carter to Court, 21 Feb. 1761, SFR 12; Wyatt to Godfrey, 30 Aug. 1760, Home Miscellaneous Series (hereafter referred to as HMS), vol. 96 (14), pp. 335-8, IOL.

promised us our Effects, yet he afterwards suffered us to be plundered of every thing; even our Women were stript of their Cloathes and Necessaries....'¹

The same fate met the Company's servants at each of the out-residencies as far as can be judged from the many reports which were written to the Board after the English servants were reassembled at Batavia awaiting passage to India. There are, however, few details which allow us to judge the value of their possessions and so assess the size of the 'competencies' they were in the process of acquiring. Only Stokeham Donston actually put a figure to his losses in a letter to his cousin from Fort St. George in 1760:

You may desire to know by what means we should be so great losers, I answer for myself, We have generally money out amongst the Black Merchants, and in the Coarse of trade debts are commenced which are generally with Europeans, now when it was certain of the French being upon the Coast, it was impossible to get any money from the Black people; you might pay off as much as you was able, which I did of my debts to the Europeans, the rest I was obliged to let remain as I had no means of paying them, besides this the loss of my House my Slaves my Cattle both Cows & Sheep & Goats as also other sorts of Stock, these could not amount to Less than £1500 - so that I compute my Losses about £2500. I cannot be certain as to £100 or £200 because my Books & papers are destroy'd by the French but I believe I am very near it. If the place is re-established I may recover some part of this, and my outstanding debts, but it is even then very precarious and I am much afraid at the best I shall get very little.²

The members of the Natal Concern also endured heavy losses. Wyatt lost no time in writing to Peter Godfrey, one of the Court of Directors, from Padang, where he had been landed by the French, about the capture of the West Coast:

After this unhappy turn of Affairs I could have been glad to have gone to Europe, and have paid my respects to you personally, but the loss of all my Fortune, and more, together with my large Family will no ways admit of it, and I therefore shall embrace the first opportunity for Madrass, where I am in hopes the Gentlemen will think of some Provision for me, amongst the West Coast Servants, but as this is very uncertain as well as in what manner; the thoughts of your Friendship is no small Satisfaction under my present misfortunes, and as they have arose unavoidable on my part, so I flatter myself they will no ways lessen me in your Esteem, and is a strong Inducement for me to sollicit your further Favour and Interest in Stationing me again in the Service, in such manner and such place, as you judge my long Services any ways merit.³

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1. FM Board to Court, from Batavia, 11 Aug. 1760, SFR 12.
 2. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 22 Oct. 1760, Donston Papers.
 3. Wyatt to Godfrey, from Padang, 30 Aug. 1760, HMS 96 (14), p. 341.

He subsequently wrote to the Council at Fort St. George:

I have only to beg leave further to observe to your Honor &c. that private property as well as the Honble. Company's has suffered not a little by the Dutch taking possession of Natal & Tapanuli [from the French], as not only a part of such, is now in [the] possession of their Resident at that place, but the large Concerns myself and others...[have] among the Country People, are become quite desperate, as many of those who are in Friendship with us, have left their Habitations thro' a Terror of the known Severity of the Dutch government.¹

Nairne's situation was equally bad. Two vessels, James Sutherland's fifteen-ton sloop the London and the private trader Fanny snow, Captain William Dunn, from Bengal, had been captured by the French at Natal, but Wyatt had dispatched the sloop Resolution from there as soon as news had arrived that the French were at Airbangis, '15 leagues to the Southward'. The French gave chase but it is uncertain if she was captured. At Tapanuli Nairne was just preparing to dispatch the Company snow Pigot with his garrison to reinforce Fort Marlborough when the French appeared at the entrance of the Bay and trapped not only the snow but the sloop Hawke as well. Nairne elected to burn both vessels rather than allow them to fall into enemy hands. This was not, he remarked later, a step he had taken lightly since 'I had all my own private Fortune & even more embarked on board them, which I did not doubt of being able to have saved by a seasonable Capitulation'.²

The sloop Hawke was a Natal Concern vessel and was freighted for a trading voyage to Labuan Hadji and Pulau Nias when she was destroyed. Her cargo included looking glasses, piece goods and chinaware valued at \$379.2.74 intended for Nias, and cutlery, piece goods, iron, steel and opium valued at \$4206.2.0 for Labuan Hadji. The ten chests of opium worth \$2600 prime cost which were aboard her were the single most valuable item in the cargo and were part of that contracted from the Company by the Concern. The sloop herself was valued at \$3312.3.40, making

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1. Wyatt to Fort St. George, 4 Nov. 1761, in FM Cons., 28 Oct. 1762, SFR 71.
 2. Nairne to Carter, Darvall, Preston and Hay, at Batavia, 24 July 1760, SFR 12; Extract of Duplicate General Letter from the late President and Council at Fort Marlborough to the Court, from Batavia, 11 Aug. 1760, HMS 96 (14), pp. 83-9.

a total of \$7899.0.14 lost by the Concern in one stroke.¹

The Natal Concern's position was particularly difficult because it was still heavily in debt to the Company. It lost in the French attack not only whatever remained of the opium it had purchased from the Company in July 1759 but also the goods that had been received in exchange for the opium already sold. It had not, however, yet discharged the bonds given initially in payment for the opium. This debt, however, was later reduced when Wyatt, Carter and Nairne applied to the Directors for reimbursement for the sloop Hawke and her cargo on the grounds that she had been lost defending the Company settlement of Tapanuli. The Court responded by deducting the value of the sloop from the Concern's debt for opium, decreasing the total from \$13,520 to \$5620.3.86 which Wyatt and Carter eventually paid in 1766.²

It is likely that Wyatt's, Nairne's and Hall's losses were as serious as they represented them to be. Wyatt and Nairne, at least, had indicated on signing the opium contract that their capital was entirely tied up in trading ventures, and the stock of the Concern and at least one of its vessels had been lost. None of these three men had made substantial remittances by certificate during the course of their careers on the West Coast.³ Moreover, the possibility of large remittances in gold having occurred also seems unlikely since it appears to have been difficult for private merchants to acquire the metal after 1754. Fort St. George had required that dollars and gold be received for the iron, salt, and opium which it ordered sold on Company account between 1755 and 1757, and as late as December 1758, Wyatt had written to Hall, 'neither have I as yet got your gold, nor don't know when I shall, as I have orders to bring whatever is received for

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1. Owners of sloop Hawke, Petition to FM Board, 17 Sept. 1762, SFR 12.
 2. FM to Court, 18 Oct. 1762, par. 26, SFR 12; Court to FM, 16 Nov. 1763, par. 101, SFR 31.
 3. Wyatt remitted a total of \$1743.3.60 between January 1750 and March 1759. Nairne made only one remittance of \$1904.1.63 on 1 February 1755. Hall also drew only one certificate of \$280 in December 1752.

the Company's Opium etc. to their credit'.¹ It seems probable that such gold as they were able to collect, and their dealings at this point were mostly barter, was reserved for the payment of trading debts such as the hundred taels intended for their respondentia creditors at Madras.

Carter also pleaded the total loss of his fortune, but he seems to have fared rather better than the other members of the Natal Concern. His losses included his share of the Hawke sloop and a reported £3,000 worth of goods consigned to him from Bengal on the Company ship Denham which arrived at Fort Marlborough only three days before the French attack on the settlement.²

Carter had ordered the ship burned in Benkulen road to prevent the French turning her guns against the fort if they captured her. Carter had, however, made several large remittances totalling \$10,200 to himself and his family between September 1759 and February 1760; \$7800 of it was sent on the last two Company ships which left Fort Marlborough before the arrival of the French, the Earl of Holderness which sailed on 7 January 1760 and the Delaware which sailed on 9 February. The Pocock snow, a vessel of 120 tons of which Carter was an owner,³ and which may therefore have been a Concern vessel, also escaped the French. She had first appeared at Benkulen from Batavia in September 1759 under the command of Captain Thomas Wintle, ex-master of the sloop Anna Catherina which had long been a regular trader at Natal and Tapanuli. She brought a cargo of 450 teak timbers for which the 'Proprietors' were paid freight by the Company of \$682.2.0.⁴ She then left on 5 November on a trading voyage. On 16 January she arrived again at Fort Marlborough, from whence unknown,⁵ and must have departed again before the French arrived since she arrived on 31 September 1760 at Bombay coming from Batavia with news of the loss of the West Coast. She had

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1. Wyatt to Hall, 5 Dec. 1758, Hall Papers.
 2. Carter to Court, 28 Oct. 1760, SFR 12.
 3. FM Cons., 19 Dec. 1759, SFR 70.
 4. FM Cons., 14 Jan., 31 Jan. 1760, SFR 70.
 5. List of Ships arriving and departing from Fort Marlborough, 5 Feb. 1760, SFR 12.

met the Fort Marlbro snow en route to Batavia with the Company treasure and members of the Krui establishment who were the only Company servants to evade capture by the French. She had taken these servants aboard and sailed to Bombay. After landing them there she then sailed for Fort St. David where the English fleet was stationed.¹ Within six months, however, she appears to have gone back to the West Coast trading. The Dutch reported the arrival at Padang on 20 March 1761 of the English brigantine or 'sneuw' Pocock, a vessel of eighteen guns and forty men. She was coming from Bengal bound for Muko Muko, commanded by John Edwards.² By late August 1761 she had arrived at Batavia with the news that the Osterly, Captain Vincent, had reached Benkulen to take charge of the English Company's affairs there.³ The next year, however, she appears to have been wrecked, since one William Surtees was listed as having sailed from Batavia in 1762 and been lost in the Pocock snow, Captain Edwards, in the Persian Gulf.⁴

The information available concerning Carter's, Wyatt's, and Nairne's losses in 1760 does not enable us to assess the value of the Natal Concern's commerce, but there are other indications which at least provide a crude estimate of this. Wyatt's letters to Hall describe a large number of business transactions but rarely mention the total sum earned by the deal. Nevertheless, the half dozen in which such details are given show a commercial turnover of at least \$7-8000 in the space of six months:

\$1010 for slaves sold to the Company

\$550 for opium bartered to Achehnese boats

\$240 for a corge of cloth sold at \$12 per piece

\$3045 for brass wire, steel etc. exchanged for benzoin brought to Fort Marlborough by the Elizabeth schooner

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1. John Spence to Louis Sullivan from Bombay, 5 Oct. 1760, HMS 96 (14), pp. 44-6.
 2. Padang Vergadering, 12 March 1762, KA 2955, p. 145; Padang Vergadering, 17 April 1761, KA 2917, p. 517.
 3. John Herbert to Captain Frederick Vincent, 9 Sept. 1761, SFR 12.
 4. List of Civil and Military Establishments on the West Coast in the Beginning of 1760 and since, 25 Feb. 1764, SFR 13.

£1800 for gold sold to Captain Powney

£313 for the hire of the Elizabeth schooner to the Company

£660 - 990 for twenty chests of benzoin brought by the Fort Marlborough snow sold at £33 per pikul (with one chest considered the equivalent of a pikul, a conservative estimate)

Total £7618 - 8098

This is only a small percentage of the business deals Wyatt mentioned. Moreover, it does not include the value of the merchandise held in stock by the Concern at Natal and Tapanuli or the Concern's two vessels. Nor does it include the total of at least 113 chests of benzoin which had been shipped to Negapatnam or loaded on the Duke for Madras. It would seem that the Natal Concern between December 1758 and June 1759 was worth at least £10,000 - 15,000, and this at a time when trade in its principal export item was slack.¹ Even if the Concern's earnings alone are considered during this period, they appear to be equivalent to all but the largest scale profiteering uncovered at Fort Marlborough in 1754 by the Supravisors.

The volume of trade at Natal had been estimated in the early 1750s at £300,000 per year² and the value of the Residency to its occupant at £30,000.³ Although some allowance must be made for envy on the part of the author of this latter calculation, the disappointed Daniel Tottie who had been denied a place at any out-settlement, it would appear from the earnings of the Natal Concern in the

1. The Hawke was valued by her owners at over £3000, so that this sum might be considered as a reasonable or even conservative estimate of the value of the two older vessels, the Elizabeth schooner and the Resolution sloop. The value of the benzoin was found by estimating a chest as the equivalent of one pikul and multiplying by the fairly low price of £20 per pikul.
2. Marriot to FM Board, 16 June 1753, SFR 66. This figure included only the value of imports and not exports of gold and camphor.
3. Daniel Tottie to FSG, 15 Feb. 1755, SFR 10. It is perhaps significant in this context that although Carter had been indenting for piece goods from Fort St. George since 1749, after he became Resident at Talo, and imported a total of £6287 between that year and 1754 when the records of ships' manifests end, he did not make large orders until October 1754, when he was well-established as Resident at Natal. In that year he not only ordered £2937 (Pagodas 1958) on his own account but another £3978 (excluded from the above total) in partnership with John Pybus, the Supravisor. FSG to FM, 21 Oct. 1754, Letters from Fort St. George, op. cit., vol. 30, p. 158. Also see Appendix VI.

first six months of 1759 that perhaps he had not exaggerated too greatly. Moreover, there are other indications that the Natal trade, when operating without restrictions, had been very profitable for some years. The Kitty snow, for example, was listed as exporting a cargo of European and Indian merchandise worth \$12,000 in a single voyage. The fact that she returned to Natal a few months later and paid customs of \$377.2.6 makes the value of her imports about \$18,875.¹ Similarly, Randolph Marriot, when Resident at Natal owed at least \$215.0.45 in customs, making his exports of benzoin and camphor in 1757 worth about \$10,750.²

The settlement at Natal did not benefit merely the members of the Natal Concern. Virtually every ship-owner on the Fort Marlborough establishment trafficked there. Transporting supplies and personnel to Natal and Tapanuli on Company account was at least as lucrative to Benkulen's ship-owners in the 1750s as ferrying Company servants to Banjarmasin had been a decade earlier. In 1756, the owners of the Resolution and Martha sloops collected \$250 and \$200 respectively for conveying stores to the northern settlements.³ The Adventure brigantine also carried supplies there in 1756 and 1757.⁴ After a series of accidents in late 1756 and 1757 had reduced the Company's marine establishment to a single vessel, the private owners increased their freight charges. Randolph Marriot, then Resident at Natal, obtained \$400 for his own schooner Swift's journey to the settlement in December 1756.⁵ Wyatt, as one of the Resolution sloop's proprietors, later collected \$600 for hire for that vessel, transporting his family and a parcel of stores to Natal when he was appointed Resident there in August 1757.⁶

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1. FM Cons., 10 Feb. 1755, SFR 68. The value of the Kitty's cargo was estimated on the basis of two per cent duties, assuming that Carter took advantage of the three per cent drawback. If she paid the full five per cent duty, her cargo would have been worth \$7544.
 2. FM Cons., 16 Nov. 1758, SFR 70. The value of Marriot's benzoin is also calculated on the basis of two per cent duties. If he paid the full five per cent, the benzoin would have been worth \$4300.
 3. FM Cons., 26 June, 9 July, 27 Aug., 28 Nov. 1756, SFR 69.
 4. FM Cons., 30 Dec. 1758, SFR 70.
 5. FM Cons., 30 Oct., 24 Dec. 1756, SFR 69.
 6. FM to FSG, 15 Sept. 1757, SFR 11.

Moreover, a guard vessel was frequently maintained at the entrance to Tapanuli Bay to protect shipping from Dutch or Achehnese interference, and this furnished yet another source of income for Fort Marlborough-owned vessels. The Centurion sloop served in this capacity for five months in 1755, collecting a total of \$1250 from the Company for her hire.¹ She was replaced by the Company sloop Mary, but when the Mary had to be withdrawn for repairs, the privately-owned Martha sloop took over on the same terms that had been granted the Centurion - \$250 per month and the cost of the vessel if she were lost in any warlike operation.² The Natal Concern's sloop Resolution was also stationed in Tapanuli Bay on guard duty at Company expense between August and December 1759. Renting a vessel to the Company on such monthly terms could provide a means of trading with virtually no cost or risk to the owners, as Stokeham Donston, one of the proprietors of the Tryall sloop, explained in a letter to his cousin in England:

I have a share of a vessel w^{ch} is dispatched to Madrass on Account of the Company they paying us so much a month the seamen's wages and if she be lost or taken by the French an allowance for her which is near double her value, so that I am not in the least afraid of getting my own money again with I hope some profit by this trip.³

The Tryall had been hired at \$150 per month to take dispatches to Madras in December 1757, but she also appears to have collected some northern produce at Natal to take with her on respondentia.⁴ She did not reappear at Fort Marlborough until about a year later and had gone to Bengal instead of Madras. Nevertheless, Donston, with co-owners Richard Preston and George Freeth, presented the Company with a bill of \$493.1.50 for expenses and \$1950 for hire. Considering the Tryall's prolonged absence, her change of destination, and the fact that she had returned

1. FM Cons., 19 March, 11 Aug., 27 Oct. 1755, SFR 68.

2. FM to Court, 27 Feb. 1757, SFR 11.

3. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 28 Jan. 1758, Donston Papers.

4. FM Cons., 1 Feb. 1758. Wyatt asked Hall in his 18 January 1759 letter, to explain why he had not demanded the whole of the respondentia bond (due the Concern?) from Sam Elliot, the captain of the Tryall sloop on her return from the Coromandel Coast in January 1759.

with no official correspondence even from the Council at Bengal, the Fort Marlborough government refused to pay her proprietors until the captain's journal of the voyage had been examined. After two Company ship captains had declared that Captain Elliot, as he claimed, could neither have reached Madras nor left Bengal sooner than he had in the weather conditions described by the journal, the Board reluctantly agreed to honour its contract with the owners, but only if they agreed to enter a bond to be answerable for any refund which the Company might subsequently demand.¹

Spectacular coups such as the Tryall's were however rare, and although Benkulen-owned vessels bound for the North carried supplies to Natal on Company account whenever possible, they went there principally to trade. The customs duties collected on goods imported to and exported from the North demonstrates this. The frequency with which the Fanny snow and Resolution sloop visited Natal in the early and mid 1750s has already been noted. The Fanny was obviously supplying Resident Randolph Marriot with trade goods since he paid her owners \$200 in August 1752 and \$780 in February 1753 by bills of exchange drawn on Fort Marlborough.² Thomas Combes, a shareholder in both the Fanny snow and the Resolution sloop was certainly trafficking to the North. He paid \$96.3.20 in customs on goods imported to and exported from Natal by the sloop in November 1754, and another \$26.1.45 for customs on benzoin in January 1755,³ making his total merchandise for this venture worth about \$6150. There is also a record of Deputy Governor Pybus paying customs of \$227.1.63 about a year later for merchandise landed at Natal,⁴ a value, estimated at the new customs rate of five per cent, of about \$4540. Roger Carter's ventures to the North had not ceased when he left Natal early in 1756. He resumed trading to the northern settlements

1. FM Cons., 31 Jan., 23 Feb., 26 Feb. 1759, SFR 70.

2. FM Cons., 31 Oct. 1752, 26 March 1753, SFR 66.

3. FM Cons., 9 Dec. 1754, SFR 67; 1 Feb. 1755, SFR 68.

4. FM Cons., 19 March, 12 April 1756, SFR 69.

after his return to the West Coast in May 1758 even before he joined the opium syndicate formed with the Natal Concern in July 1759. Resident Wyatt reported with disgust that although Carter had promised not to send any opium to the Natal market for six months after he had sold a parcel to the Concern, he subsequently denied making any such pledge. Wyatt was thinking of taking the matter to arbitration with James Stevenson, who had been present at the conversation, as his witness.¹

By 1760, the traffic to the North had become a principal element in Fort Marlborough's country trade. It had expanded steadily since 1740 and had spread the commercial opportunities at Benkulen among a far greater number of men and vessels than had the trade to Banjarmasin. What had begun as a matter of smuggling local produce out of North Sumatra under the noses of Dutch cruisers, to be shipped as private trade on large Company ships to India or Europe, had developed to a point where Fort Marlborough-owned vessels were capable of carrying their own cargoes to widely dispersed markets. The extent to which these vessels might have ventured east of Batavia after 1747 is unknown, but to the westward, the Fanny, Kitty, Resolution, Tryall, and Pocock snow sailed not only to Coromandel, the Malacca Straits and Acheh, but also as far afield as Pegu, Bombay and the Persian Gulf. The profits to be made from this commerce were not of the scale obtained by traders in India, but they were a vital source of revenue for the men involved. Joseph Hurlock, Robert Hindley, John Massey and Thomas Combes had all been charged with illegal gains from exploiting their various offices in the Company's service by Supervisors Pybus and Walsh, but they were all simultaneously shareholders in the Fanny snow with a stake in the northern trade. Even William Rigg, who for eight years (1737-1745) had the opportunity as Paymaster of pursuing the activities which had earned Massey dismissal and incurred a debt to the Company of over \$6000, was regularly involved in trafficking to North Sumatra through

1. Wyatt to Hall, 22 Dec. 1758, Hall Papers.

his concerns in the sloop Macassar and Neptune brigantine. He was a trader of substantial proportions with an interest in at least four different vessels and in large amounts of piece goods ordered yearly from Fort St. George in the late 1730s and early 1740s. The same is true for Robert Lennox, and it is Rigg's and Lennox's vessel, the Neptune brigantine, which provided the only clue concerning the value of the Borneo trade in which they were also involved. The 150 chests of opium she carried on her voyage in 1744 must have been worth at least \$15,000 prime cost and likely even more.

All these men, Carter, Combes, Hurlock, Rigg and Lennox, who appear to have been most heavily involved in trade, were among the top money earners on the West Coast in the period between 1735 and 1760. Rigg might also have exploited the paymastership as Massey later did. Lennox probably enjoyed the same illegal emoluments from the arrack farm as Hurlock received since the price of that licence never rose above \$132 per month during his tenure as Deputy Governor. Nevertheless, the vigour with which these servants pursued their country trading indicates that they considered commerce at least as important, if not more so, as illicit activities in the acquisition of a 'competency'. Stokeham Donston summed up the matter in one of his letters to England:

You ask me how I am to make my Fortune, a very proper question
Truely For I can scarcely tell you, however if I do make one
it will be by trade and not by my Emoluments...¹

1. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 10 March 1765, Donston Papers.

C H A P T E R I V

FORT MARLBOROUGH'S COMPETITORS FOR THE TRADE OFNATAL AND TAPANULI, 1735-1758

Fort Marlborough's commercial drive into North-West Sumatra, culminating in the acquisition of Natal and Tapanuli and the formation of the Natal Concern, was accomplished in the face of considerable opposition from the Dutch East India Company and the Achehnese, both of whom had prior claims to the area which they continued to assert. The Achehnese capital at Kota Raja had quickly developed into the premier entrepôt for Moslem Indonesian trade after the Portuguese capture of Malacca in 1511, and by the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636), Acheh had established political control over most of the principal West Coast ports to ensure the flow of Sumatran pepper and gold to Kota Raja for purchase by the Gujerati traders who called there.¹ The Achehnese, however, were soon superseded in much of West Sumatra by the Dutch, whose entrance into the pepper trade had, by the mid-seventeenth century, helped to erode the Achehnese hold on the central sections of the coast. The Treaty of Painan (1663), which finally broke Achehnese political and commercial power south of Singkil, was negotiated between the VOC and the Minangkabau chiefs of the Achehnese-governed ports who agreed to rebel against their overlords in exchange for Dutch protection.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the VOC had effectively replaced the Achehnese Sultan as the commercial monitor of Sumatra's West Coast. Instead of Achehnese panglimas (governors) at Baros, Pariaman, Padang, Salida and Inderpura, there were VOC factories. Padang was established as the West Coast

1. J. Kathirithamby-Wells, 'Achehnese Control over West Sumatra up to the 1663 Treaty of Painan' (Conference Papers, International Conference on Asian History, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 5-10 Aug. 1968) pp. 4-12.

headquarters of the Dutch, and the Council there collected a ten per cent duty on imports just as the Achehnese had done.¹ No foreign vessels were allowed to call at the West Coast ports and the VOC's new subjects and allies were restricted to voyaging within the limits of the Company's Sumatran domains.² Control of navigation was used by the Dutch to ensure that their Company benefited from the monopoly of pepper, gold, benzoin and camphor given to the VOC by treaty. The only real difference from the preceding century was that Batavia was now the international outlet for West Coast produce instead of Kota Raja.

The establishment of permanent English settlement on the West Coast in the 1680s, where the East India Company had traded intermittently throughout the seventeenth century, and the persistence of Achehnese traders deprived the Dutch of a complete monopoly in the new VOC territories. The mounting challenge to Dutch supremacy by the English and the Achehnese during the course of the eighteenth century was so successful that by 1775 the VOC had abandoned its northernmost factories at Baros and Airbangis, and the Dutch influence north of Pariaman had been virtually eliminated. Fort Marlborough's drive to engross the trade of Natal and Tapanuli thus marks the first chapter of what was to become a major shift in the political and commercial balance of power on the North-West Coast of Sumatra.

The Benkulen servants' attempts to advance their position as principal distributors of North Sumatran produce at the expense of the Dutch and Achehnese, however, embroiled them not only in difficulties with their putative allies at Padang, but also in complexities of local Sumatran politics to which they were no longer accustomed, since their control of the South Sumatran pepper districts had been virtually undisputed since 1720. The kualas of North-West Sumatra - Natal, Tapanuli, Sorkam, Korlang, Tapus and Singkil - were classic examples

1. J. Kathirithamby-Wells, op. cit., pp. 13-15; van Basel, op. cit., p. 30.

2. van Basel, op. cit., pp. 33-4.

of pasisir culture.¹ They were essentially seafaring, fishing and trading communities controlling the passage of goods to and from the highlands on which they fronted by their positions at the mouths of rivers. Each was an individual political entity, independent and self-contained, with little or no overriding political allegiance beyond the enormous respect shown the Minangkabau royal house. Every district in the North, according to a Dutch report of 1760, was inhabited by two sorts of people, the shore folk and the inland or mountain folk, each with its own penghulu.² The inland folk were the Minangkabau and Batak of the highlands still tightly organised by descent groups according to their particular adat. The shore people were the polyglot collection of many tribes settled at the river mouths for the purpose of trade. This division was of long standing. A VOC treaty with Baros in 1693 mentions not only a Batak-backed Raja d'Hulu (chief of the upper course of the river) and a Raja d'Hilir (chief of the lower course of the river) who appears to have followed Malay law, but also a Malim Moara (leader of the estuary) who headed a separate community of presumably even more foreign shore-dwellers whom the Dutch hoped to keep segregated from the natives of the country.³ Similarly, the kuala of Natal in the mid-eighteenth century was settled by a mixture of Achehnese, Rau, Agam and Minangkabau people, with the last group apparently further subdivided by place of origin. Natal therefore in addition to its two head penghulus, also had the so-called orangtua, Raja Moudo (Soutan Bancahoulou) of Padang, Raja Mancoutoe of the Sapulubuah Bandhar, and Dato Sinaro Panjang of Minangkabau, all of them ethnically Minangkabau.⁴

The contacts between the kuala and the inland people were mainly commercial.

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1. Hildred Geertz, 'Indonesian Cultures and Communities', Indonesia, ed. Ruth T. McVey (New Haven, Connecticut, 1963), pp. 58-60.
 2. van de Wall to Senff, Padang, 25 June 1760, KA 2886, p. 178.
 3. Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum, ed. F. W. Stapel (The Hague, 1955), vol. IV, pp. 71-83.
 4. van de Wall to Senff, Padang, 25 June 1760, KA 2886, p. 179.

Goods were passed from the coast to the interior through a series of middlemen, and Marsden describes a system of fairs among the Batak designed to move merchandise along in four stages, each fair being placed within easy travelling distance of the next.¹ He indicates that the same arrangement of fairs called onan also existed among the Malays. As it was the funnelling of trade through the kuala ports which created wealth for the coastal people, they guarded their positions as intermediaries between the interior and the outside world closely. The second English Resident at Natal complained after spending over a year there, that he had been 'but seldom able to see any of them [the inland people], it being [in] the Interest of the Heads at the Qualloe to keep them strange to us and our manners'.² He also confirmed that 'the People inhabiting the Qualloe... are not the Natives of that part but only a Collection of Villains and Vagabonds, whom the laws of that Country have obliged to abscond from it'.³ The Dutch tended to agree with this assessment particularly after these 'Villains and Vagabonds' had signed a treaty with the English. Fort Marlborough, on the other hand, more usually characterised them as men of substance.⁴ Both views were correct and normal in pasisir culture as a history of several of Natal's leading citizens will illustrate.

One important merchant settled at Natal was Soutan Batarra, a son of the Minangkabau ruler of Trusang, whom that chief on Dutch advice had exiled as punishment for disobedience. He had been sent off to the North 'in order to learn to know poverty' but had done so well trading that by 1748 he was sailing his own vessels as far north as Aceh and was also trafficking with the English. He conferred secretly with the Raja of Baros and became a great confidant of Raja Simorang of Tapanuli. The Dutch were so alarmed by his growing influence that

1. William Marsden, op. cit., p. 153.

2. Marriot to FM, 16 June 1753, SFR 66.

3. ibid.

4. Carter to Pybus and Walsh, 4 April 1756, HMS 96 (14), p. 367.

they admonished his father to summon Soutan Batarra back to Trusang and control him or they would be obliged to seize him as an outlaw. This warning had not the slightest effect on Soutan Batarra's activities, as witnessed by the fact that he was still at Natal in 1756 and helped to smooth the way for English settlement at Tapanuli after Raja Simorang's death.¹

Another Natal notable was Soutan Bancaoulou (also called Raja Moudo or Sibinoang), who had originally been of Inderapura descent. He was a nephew (kamanakan) of the Dutch-appointed Panglima of Padang, Raja Johan, who had been exiled by the VOC to Banda for intrigues against the Company in the 1730s. He was also the brother-in-law of Raja Matoga, the son of the Tapanuli chief Raja Simorang, and one of Soutan Bancaoulou's sons assisted in settling the English there. The Dutch apparently expected him to return to Padang in the mid-1750s, but he remained at Natal and participated in trading ventures like the one to Anjengo in 1758 in which the Natal Concern seems to have been involved. He remained at Natal after the Dutch received the settlement from the French in 1760, but the Padang government was warned that he remained in the English interest and he finally obtained the Dutch Resident's permission to leave Natal in 1761.²

Another more specialised case was Sultan Awaladin, a son of Sultan Gulemat, the first independent ruler of Anak Sungei which had broken away from Inderapura with English assistance in 1691³ as a result of a long and complicated succession dispute in that state. After his prolonged absence from Muko Muko the British had replaced Gulemat with another candidate in 1717, who after his murder in 1728, was

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1. Padang to Batavia, 9 Feb. 1747, KA 2593, p. 17; Padang to Batavia 14 Jan. 1748, KA 2611, pp. 40-1; Padang to Batavia, 29 Sept. 1755, KA 2753, pp. 650-1.
 2. van Herzeele to van Idsinga, 13 Dec. 1754, KA 2753, p. 241; Baros to Padang, 6 March 1756, KA 2776, p. 8; Padang Vergadering, 15 Sept. 1760, KA 2917, pp. 123-4; van de Wall to Senff, Padang, 25 June 1760, KA 2886, p. 179; Padang Vergadering, 24 Feb. 1761, KA 2917, p. 610; Wyatt to Hall, 18 Jan. 1759, Hall Papers.
 3. Kathirithamby, 'British West Sumatra', op. cit., pp. 52-3, 60-1.

replaced in turn with Gulemat's ex-chief minister who reigned as Sultan Gondom Shah until his death in 1762.¹ On Gondom Shah's accession, Awaladin was sent to Madras on a Company pension in order to avoid any further disputes over the succession at Muko Muko.² Awaladin returned to the West Coast after the French capture of Fort St. George in 1746. He stayed for a while at Aceh and finally settled at Natal. After the English occupied Natal, Fort Marlborough agreed to continue his fifteen dollars per month pension to prevent his stirring up trouble at Muko Muko.³ Awaladin, however, requested Benkulen also to pay the arrears of his allowance from Madras between August 1746 and February 1752.⁴ The matter was pressing, he alleged, for not only had he been deprived of his allowance by the fall of Madras, but he had also lost all his effects (worth about \$1000). As a consequence he had fallen deeply into debt to the Sultan of Aceh with whom his children had been left as security. Awaladin wished to redeem his family, but was unable to raise the necessary \$500 or \$600 without English help.⁵ Fort Marlborough at first refused this request, but within a year Awaladin reported that his debt at Aceh had risen to \$800 and that the Aceh Sultan had taken advantage of the situation to press him to accept Acehnese military assistance in order to re-establish his claim at Muko Muko.⁶ This hint of possible Acehnese intrigue galvanised Fort Marlborough into action and within three months the \$960 arrears had been paid to Awaladin.⁷ The Benkulen authorities still hoped to persuade him to return to the Coromandel Coast after his children had been redeemed, but this proved more difficult than anticipated. The Natal Resident reported that

1. Marsden, op. cit., pp. 354-5.
2. Report of the West Coast Committee, FSG Cons., 14 Oct. 1728, Fort St. George Diary and Consultation Book, 1728, op. cit., vol. 58, pp. 145-7.
3. FM Cons., 7 Feb. 1752, SFR 66.
4. FM Cons., 14 Sept. 1753, SFR 66.
5. FM Cons., 29 June 1752, SFR 66.
6. FM Cons., 31 July 1752, SFR 66.
7. FM Cons., 14 Sept. 1753, SFR 66.

there would be problems in reuniting Awaladin with his children as the eldest son was in great favour with the Achehnese king who had married him to one of his relations.¹ Meanwhile Awaladin's own connections on the West Coast had increased. He was trading along the coast in 1754 and made at least two voyages to Tapanuli in 1755. There he married a daughter of the chief, Raja Simorang, in order, he said, to stimulate Simorang's friendship toward the English.² By this time the Natal Resident had profited greatly from the intelligence Awaladin had given on Dutch and Achehnese intentions toward Natal and considered him to be a man of religious rather than political temperament who was extremely useful to the English on account of his influence among the local people.³ Efforts to persuade Awaladin to return to Madras were consequently dropped.

The kualas like Natal were obviously not tightly organised politically. The divisions between ethnic groups and the factions and succession disputes, particularly among the Minangkabau segment of the population, provided a fertile field for manipulation by both European Companies and the Achehnese. The kuala populations, however, were also extremely mobile, as witnessed by the examples given above, and were linked to each other by a network of economic, kinship and affinal ties which cut across the arbitrary divisions imposed by the European spheres of influence. While this contributed to the political fragility of any given port, it made the trade system as a whole very resilient. People settled wherever trade was most easily carried on and moved away if traffic was prolongedly disturbed or oppressed, or simply if better commercial opportunities existed elsewhere. For example, in 1755, Deputy Governor Pybus at Fort Marlborough gloated in a letter to London that Dutch affairs at Padang were 'in a declining way owing to many of their Merchants and even Artificers being retired with their Families to Nattall'.

1. FM to Court, 6 April 1754, par. 14, SFR 10.

2. FM to Court, 6 April 1754, par. 14, SFR 10; Awaladin to FM Board, FM Cons., 10 Nov. 1755, SFR 68.

3. FM to Court, 31 Jan. 1756, par. 38, SFR 10.

He added, 'I am firmly of [the] Opinion that by maintaining this new Establishment of ours the Dutch will not much longer find it worth their while to Continue their Possessions on this Coast'.¹ Later the same year, however, the English Resident at Natal reported that after the burning of the local bazaar during disturbances fomented by the Dutch and Achehnese, he had only with difficulty prevented the merchants from leaving Natal.² As long as no single power was capable of garrisoning all the river mouths along the coast, there was always some place else to which merchants could go. It was apparently on this basis that Natal, in conjunction with Tapanuli, developed into a sizeable intermediate entrepôt by the mid-eighteenth century, described by one English official as 'a Port of pretty considerable Trade for this part of India'.³

Natal and Tapanuli appear not to have been harbours of particular importance during the seventeenth century. There is no indication that the Achehnese provided them with panglimas, and the Dutch did not bother to garrison either of them after the general rout of the Achehnese in the 1660s. The two ports were included by the VOC within the territories of the Raja of Baros by the treaty of 1682 which claimed the entire area from Singkil to Batahan as that Raja's domain,⁴ but the Dutch did not sign a separate contract with Tapanuli although they did so with Natal in 1693, as well as with Batahan (1693), Singkil (1672 and 1680), Sorkam and Korlang (1693) and several Batak tribes.⁵ After an embassy sent from Padang in 1710 to renew Dutch contacts with the neglected and so-called 'alienated' districts of Pasaman, Airbangis and Natal,⁶ there appears to have been little official communication with the area. Apart from expecting the

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1. Pybus to Court, 14 Jan. 1755, par. 11, SFR 10.
 2. FM Cons., 26 Oct. 1755, SFR 68; Carter to FM, 9 July 1759, FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1759, SFR 70.
 3. Pybus to Court, 6 April 1754, par. 28, SFR 10.
 4. Corpus Diplomaticum, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 72.
 5. ibid., pp. 18-22, 25-32.
 6. van Basel, op. cit., pp. 62-3.

merchants or penghulus of Natal and Tapanuli to appear at Baros to sell their gold, camphor and benzoin to the VOC, dispatching headmen from Baros to those areas with the same object in view, or sending off a cruiser if a known smuggler was in the district, the Dutch seem to have avoided undue intervention there. Lying almost equidistant from the Dutch forts at Baros and Padang, on the fringes of active Dutch authority, Natal was particularly well-placed for clandestine trading. Neglect from Padang not only allowed Natal to develop as a rival entrepôt on the basis of English, Achehnese and Javanese shipping, but also encouraged that port and Tapanuli to break free of the remnants of Dutch control by the 1720s and 1730s.

The Achehnese had never been completely excluded from the northwest districts of the coast even after what the VOC considered the conclusive military operations by Verspreet in 1667-8. In 1670 there was an uprising at Kota Tengah, incited by Achehnese and Pauers joined by the Sapulubuah Bandhar, which was finally put down only after the Dutch had burned Kota Tengah to the ground. An Achehnese fleet had appeared at Baros and moved the headmen there to expel the VOC servants, but the Dutch also sent a force to Baros and obtained a renewal of the treaties there and subsequently at Singkil. A new factory was erected at Baros and defended with eight metal field pieces.¹ Disturbances recurred at Kota Tengah, Baros, Pariaman and Singkil in 1674, and in 1675 Dutch trade was so hindered by the headmen's intrigues with the Achehnese that Batavia considered withdrawing the factory (logie).² The expulsion of one Raja Lela Wangsa, who had set himself up at Baros as panglima and continued to co-operate with the Achehnese, did not finally re-establish VOC supremacy in the area.³ As late as 1694, renewed VOC contracts with Baros stipulated the renunciation of allegiance to the Achehnese crown and the forfeiture to the VOC of all Achehnese 'kingly' lands and property in the district.⁴

1. van Basel, op. cit., pp. 27-8.

2. ibid., pp. 31-3.

3. ibid., pp. 34, 77.

4. Corpus Diplomaticum, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 77.

At about this time the Achehnese were also attempting to penetrate Airbangis and Nias. At Airbangis the absence of the chief, who had been taken captive by a rebel in the highlands in 1692, gave them the opportunity for smuggling there until they were routed by an expedition under Johannes Sas early in 1693. Sas also raided Achehnese outposts on Nias, captured two Achehnese vessels and renewed VOC contracts with the island's chiefs.¹

After 1693 the intensity of Achehnese activity in VOC-claimed territory appears to have declined for about a decade. By 1703, however, Pau, Pariaman and Tiku, all centres of Achehnese strength in the seventeenth century, were again trading openly with their former masters with such effect that by 1710 Padang reported that these areas had completely neglected pepper cultivation in order to collect benzoin and camphor to sell to the smugglers. This was probably at least partially a result of a 1709 edict which curtailed VOC purchases of gum because of overstocking at Batavia, leaving the Sumatran producers obliged to find an alternative market. Smuggling in these areas dropped off after yet another VOC expedition put down a rebellion by the VII and IX Kotas and left a garrison at Pariaman of thirty-five European and twenty-one native soldiers. Collection of camphor and benzoin was also reinstated by the VOC at least as early as 1717 although at a reduced purchase price. Meanwhile the English were also trafficking around Singkil in the later 1710s and at Natal in the 1720s. There were even rumours of an alliance between the Singkil people and the British Company about 1717.²

Smuggling in VOC districts appears to have tapered off somewhat in the second decade of the eighteenth century at least in the areas of old Achehnese influence, which were by this time under reasonably regular Dutch surveillance. It is possible, however, that the Achehnese had merely shifted their operations to less

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1. Stapel, 'Introductions to Airbangis and Nias treaties of 1693', Corpus Diplomaticum, op. cit., IV, pp. 13, 25.
 2. van Basel, op. cit., pp. 57-69.

frequently patrolled waters. By 1731, Padang reported 'greatly increased smuggling' by both English and Achehnese, and it was noted that Natal 'as usual played the leading role'.¹

Natal, by this time, was virtually independent of any VOC control. The Dutch dated the port's break with the VOC from 1728, when as a result of a quarrel with an English trader, the Natal people discovered themselves capable of capturing a well-armed European brigantine.² The final disengagement, however, came in 1734 after Natal joined Tapanuli, Sorkam and Korlang in an uprising by a Minangkabau prince and a Muslim priest which led ultimately to the assassination of the Dutch-supported Raja at Baros. The Minangkabau leader then retired to Sorkam where he attempted for the next two years to prevent traders from going to Baros. After three expeditions, the Dutch finally managed to force his retreat to the East Coast.³ Having disposed of their Dutch-backed suzerain at Baros, the Natal people subsequently refused to acknowledge any subordinacy either to Baros or to the Dutch. The growing enmity was crowned five years later by the burning of a VOC cruiser at Tabujung. The panchallang Baros had been set alight by prisoners taken from a smuggling vessel who had escaped from confinement. The Natal people fished the Dutchman's artillery out of the Tabujung River and steadfastly refused either to return the guns or offer the Company any compensation for the loss of the vessel. At this point Padang pressed Batavia for eighty European and thirty native military for an expedition against Natal and also requested permission to establish a post there.⁴ Batavia, with its resources strained by war with Macassar, denied this petition and merely ordered its West Coast servants to avoid becoming entangled in native quarrels.⁵

1. van Basel, op. cit., p. 75.

2. van de Wall to Senff, Padang, 25 June 1760, KA 2886, pp. 178-9.

3. ibid.; van Basel, op. cit., pp. 76-8.

4. Padang to Batavia, 18 April 1739, KA 2360, pp. 18-21.

5. van Basel, op. cit., pp. 78-9.

Dutch prestige in the area was further weakened in the next year when the VOC posts at Pariaman, Salida and Airhadji were evacuated to strengthen the garrison at Padang against another rebellion led by the Minangkabau prince, Abdul of Pagarrujong. This seems to have again involved Natal, Tapanuli, Sorkam and Korlang because the Baros penghulus reported rumours early in 1742 that a Minangkabau Jang di Pertuan, Abdul Jalliel, had called on Natal to recruit a force among these coastal negeris in order to destroy the VOC post at Baros while the Company's affairs were still in disarray in the South. Padang dispatched ten men to reinforce Baros expressing the hope that rebellion in the North would not come to a head before the troubles in the South had been resolved. No further news of this projected attack on Baros was heard and Padang subsequently learned that the Natal people had fallen into a quarrel among themselves.¹ This had finally been settled about August 1742 by the mediation of traders from Java who had appeared at the river in three large gontings and threatened to intervene if the conflict continued. With order restored, the Natal people, the VOC complained, reverted to their usual practice of trading 'with everyone except the Honble. [Dutch] Company'.² Not only were the three Javanese gontings there trading salt, opium and piece goods for benzoin and camphor, but there was another vessel from Benkulen at Natal as well.³ Early in 1743, the Baros headmen again informed Padang that six or seven gontings were at Natal and Sorkam. At least two had come from Java and were not only trafficking at Natal but also sailing to surrounding kualas to barter opium and cloth for great parcels of gum and camphor. The Dutch later noted with satisfaction that two of these craft had been wrecked near Natal losing their entire cargoes. A two-masted vessel from Benkulen had also reportedly run aground near Airbangis but had floated free.⁴

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1. Padang to Batavia, 12 April 1742, KA 2463, pp. 39-41; Baros to Padang, 31 Jan. 1742, KA 2463, p. 275; Padang Vergadering, 15 March 1742, KA 2463, p. 122; van Basel, op. cit., pp. 78-9.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 19 Oct. 1743, KA 2499, p. 14.
 3. ibid.
 4. Padang Vergadering, 29 March 1743, KA 2499, pp. 535-7; Padang to Batavia, 15 April 1743, KA 2499, pp. 487-8.

In 1744, eight gontings were trading at Natal, including four from Benkulen, one from Banjar and one from Bantam.¹ By the mid-1740s Natal's trade was increasing rapidly.

Tapanuli's evasion of Dutch control followed much the same pattern and chronology as Natal's and the two ports became closely linked commercially. Tapanuli's Batak chief, Raja Simorang, had participated in the 1734 attack on Baros and by the late 1730s, as a result of commerce with Benkulen, had stopped travelling to Baros to sell his benzoin.² Late in 1738 the Baros assistant, Altena, had arranged a conference with Simorang and the penghulus of nearby Sibuluang, Meela and Sirudin to remedy this situation. Although these chiefs promised to return to market at Baros, they explained that they could not provide the top quality white benzoin which the VOC demanded. This product, they explained, was sold by the Bataks to smugglers who paid high prices, in exchange for Natal gold, salt and cloth offered at low rates. Moreover, less of the best quality gum was being brought down from the hills. The smugglers were less particular than the VOC about the grades of benzoin they would accept and the Bataks therefore no longer bothered to produce good white gum when brown would do as well. It was impossible to control these small smuggling craft, the Tapanuli chiefs concluded, as they hid in every nook and cranny of the Bay.³

Despite their promises, it seems that these chiefs had little intention of renewing their contacts with the VOC. They had not appeared at Baros four months after Altena's meeting with them, and the Dutch Resident there was experiencing difficulty in fulfilling his yearly quota of benzoin for Batavia.⁴ By 1740, the Baros Resident seems to have been ordered to bring Tapanuli to heel but reported that he had been unable to get hold of Raja Simorang who had retreated to the

1. Padang to Batavia, 10 April 1744, KA 2521, p. 212.

2. Padang to Batavia, 18 April 1739, KA 2360, pp. 11-12.

3. Altena to Gronsveld, Baros, 8 Jan. 1739, KA 2360, pp. 227-31.

4. Padang to Batavia, 18 April 1739, KA 2630, pp. 11-12.

mountains and hidden among the Sibuluang people. The Resident was hopeful that he might still apprehend the Tapanuli chief since he doubted that Simorang would abandon his negeri at Tapanuli permanently.¹ Five months later Simorang sent a parcel of 'really good gum' to Baros, presumably as a peace offering, and Padang instructed the Resident there to treat the Tapanuli chief respectfully if he should visit Baros personally, despite the facts that Simorang had 'greatly hurt' the Company's trade in the past and Padang had little hope of any lasting reformation of his habits.² Simorang, as expected, soon found other outlets for his benzoin, as well as allies in his illicit trading. By July 1741, he was co-operating with Raja Parampuang of Sorkam and Penghulu Dagam of Korlang who had developed a back route by which the mountain Bataks could be diverted around Baros with the result that 'not one in fifty' came down to the Dutch factory and its trade fell off sharply. These rajas sold salt and iron to their customers from the interior, and what gum they obtained from the Bataks was then passed on in highly adulterated form to the Natal perahus which visited the Tapanuli area 'by the hundreds' in spite of Dutch patrols.³

The final blow to Dutch relations with Tapanuli, however, occurred in 1742. The Baros assistant, Pieter La Fort, who had been sent with a cruiser to chase the English ketch Marlbro out of Tapanuli Bay, was lured ashore by Raja Simorang on the pretext of inspecting benzoin. La Fort was then assassinated with several of his escort. The Tapanuli chief also took the small craft which had brought the Dutch party ashore, some swords, and four muskets. He refused to return them to Baros until he was exonerated of the crime. La Fort's murder, Simorang alleged, had been perpetrated by mountain Bataks who had followed the Dutch assistant from the interior where he had done 'improper things'. They had only coincidentally caught

1. Baros to Padang, 29 Feb. 1740, KA 2395, pp. 162-3.

2. Padang Vergadering, 1 June 1740, KA 2395, pp. 105-7.

3. Baros to Padang, 1 July 1741, KA 2428, pp. 1028-33.

and killed him outside Simorang's house. Some Nias people who had escaped the attack, however, told the Dutch authorities that La Fort had never travelled beyond the shore and that the party had been killed inside Simorang's house by several hundred Bataks who crowded into the dwelling after the VOC servants had entered. Moreover, Simorang had been aided after the deed, and possibly before, by the English trader who had helped the Raja raise a benteng and place artillery on shore to fend off Dutch reprisals. Raja Simorang was also reported to have offered gold to the Korlang people to join his force against the VOC.¹

The expected Dutch reprisals did not materialise. The Raja of Baros offered to lead an expedition against Simorang if the Resident could provide men, powder and guns, but Resident Gronsfelt lacked the manpower to accept.² Padang was unable to reinforce the Baros garrison, so the matter rested with the placing of a fifty Rix-dollar bounty on Simorang's head in the hope that someone would deliver him into Dutch hands for the reward.³ Meanwhile Gronsfelt was instructed to isolate Simorang and encourage the other chiefs in the Tapanuli Bay area to come to Baros to trade in spite of La Fort's murder. Gronsfelt enjoyed some success in this enterprise and reported that traders from Sorkam, Korlang and certain of the Tapanuli Bay negeris had all accepted invitations to trade at Baros. The Baros penghulu, Raja Bandahara, had been sent with some piece goods to Tapanuli to barter for benzoin and to assure the chiefs there that they need not fear to come down to trade because of Simorang's quarrel with the VOC.⁴ Although the Tapanuli people had been too frightened to accompany Raja Bandahara back to Baros, he had obtained the local benzoin and extracted promises from the headmen of Sibuluang, Sirudin and Meela to return to market at Baros.⁵ By July 1743, trade at the factory had been so heavy

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1. Baros to Padang, 31 Jan. 1742, KA 2463, pp. 275-85; Padang Vergadering, 15 March 1742, KA 2463, pp. 122-3; Padang to Batavia, 12 April 1742, KA 2463, pp. 39-42; Padang to Batavia, 26 Nov. 1742, KA 2463, pp. 60-1.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 12 April 1742, KA 2463, p. 41.
 3. Padang to Batavia, 19 Oct. 1743, KA 2499, p. 11.
 4. Padang Vergadering, 28 Nov. 1742, KA 2499, pp. 360-2.
 5. *ibid.*

that all the piece goods had been sold, and by August the supplies of salt and iron were also exhausted.¹ Simorang himself continued to evade capture, principally, the Baros Resident complained, because he trusted no one, but the Resident took heart from reports that the Tapanuli chief was beginning 'to lose his credit and be made poor'.²

This decline in Simorang's reputation was temporary. By mid-1744 he was trading with the Achehnese and hiring deserters from the VOC garrisons to man his 'robber vessels' which Padang feared would prey on the small craft sailing along the coast.³ Early in 1745 Simorang was trafficking with a rich Moslem who had arrived at Tapanuli in a well-armed brigantine and was planning to send his son and heir on this same vessel to Acheh to request men and arms from the Sultan for an attack on the VOC.⁴ It is uncertain if this mission to Acheh was accomplished, but by the next year Simorang was obviously capable of fending off VOC interference with no assistance. The Dutch cruiser de Haaij had anchored at Tapanuli and a party from her had gone ashore to cut firewood in late 1745. This group was attacked by Raja Simorang and his followers, aided by Raja Dagam, the Korlang chief. with whom Simorang had co-operated in benzoin smuggling. Two Europeans and a Bugis were killed in this sortie and another European wounded, but he and the surviving VOC servants managed to swim back to the de Haaij.⁵ The Dutch attributed the ambush to Simorang's anger at VOC attempts to hinder his commerce. They reported that as he attacked the de Haaij's party, Simorang had boasted that even if the VOC mustered a thousand men against him, he could raise two thousand. The Baros penghulus requested that an expedition be sent to destroy Raja Simorang and his 'rabble', but the Padang authorities could only inform Batavia of the incident at Tapanuli

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1. Padang Vergadering, 28 Nov. 1742, KA 2499, p. 360; Padang to Batavia, 26 Nov. 1742, KA 2463, p. 60.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 26 Nov. 1742, KA 2463, p. 60; Padang to Batavia, 29 Dec. 1744, KA 2542, pp. 8-9.
 3. Padang to Batavia, 29 Dec. 1744, KA 2543, p. 8.
 4. Padang to Batavia, 10 April 1745, KA 2542, p. 153.
 5. Padang Vergadering, 9 Feb. 1746, KA 2567, pp. 340-42.

and ask for the military reinforcements needed to enable them to hunt down Simorang.¹ The Baros Resident was meanwhile advised to be cautious in his dealings with Tapanuli. The situation was difficult. Not only was smuggling on the increase all over Tapanuli Bay, but Simorang also appeared to be involved in possible political intrigues. He was consulting with Soutan Batarra, a son of the chief of Trusang, who was known to trade with the English.² He had also been visited by a prince from Soerassa who had gone on to Natal and conferred with two rajas, Alam and Pamingen, whom the Dutch suspected of plotting a raid against Baros. The Dutch did not think it likely that sufficient hostile forces could be raised for this enterprise, but agreed to strengthen the fort at Baros.³

Events at Natal and Tapanuli were increasingly beyond Dutch control by the mid-1740s. The two ports had detached themselves from the VOC apparently with little outside assistance beyond the prosperity and population brought them by foreign trade. Moreover, their commerce before 1744 seems to have been almost exclusively with merchants from the English settlements and Java. The reappearance of the Achehnese in 1744, however, brought a new force into the traffic of the area and sharpened the competition for pre-eminence in the North Sumatra trade into an ever more hostile tripartite rivalry. In January 1744, the Padang authorities noted that a war in Aceh over the succession to the crown had ended with the retreat of one of the fraternal contestants.⁴ Almost at once the Achehnese presence along the North-West Coast was felt. There were numerous reports of expeditions being planned by the Achehnese Sultan and others against the kualas in the area. There were rumours of such a venture from Aceh late in 1744.⁵ In April 1745 intelligence reached Padang that one Sipadoe, an Achehnese who had been residing at Natal, had departed for

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1. Padang to Batavia, 17 March 1746, KA 2567, pp. 19-22; Padang Vergadering, 9 Feb. 1746, KA 2567, p. 341.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 9 Feb. 1747, KA 2593, p. 71.
 3. *ibid.*, pp. 71-2.
 4. Padang to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1744, KA 2521, p. 10.
 5. Padang to Batavia, 29 Dec. 1744, KA 2542, p. 9.

Acheh to raise a force for raids against the VOC districts which the Baros penghulus were certain would be directed against them.¹ In the same year Simorang at Tapanuli had sent a mission to Acheh to request similar aid against the Dutch. In 1748, there were new reports that Acheh planned to dispatch twenty vessels and two thousand men for an invasion of Singkil and the Padang government feared that if this happened, the Bataks in the area would rebel against the Dutch. The Baros Resident was consequently ordered to send envoys to the Gombong region to warn the Batak chiefs to obey their contracts with the Company.² In January 1749, the Baros regents warned the Resident that the Achehnese, in conjunction with the Natal people, were planning an expedition under the leadership of the third son of the King of Acheh against Baros district and the VOC fort, in order 'to reunite these lands with Acheh'.³ The Baros chiefs were so frightened that they insisted that all their negeris be protected with forts and the roads from Tapus be closed. The Resident granted the first request, but refused the second on the grounds that it would impede the passage of benzoin and camphor from the North.

None of these threatened expeditions from Acheh seems to have materialised, at least in VOC territory, but the steep rise in Achehnese trade in Company districts was also causing the Dutch anxiety. The Singkil people had complained to Baros that five well-armed Achehnese vessels were trading salt and muskets for benzoin and camphor at that port, and smuggling vessels were also reported at Tapus but were warned off, apparently by a Baros headman, before the VOC patrol could arrive.⁴

The Achehnese seem, however, to have concentrated much of their attention on Natal. Within four months of the end of the civil war in Acheh, nine Achehnese jallores were reported to have attacked Natal, as a result of a quarrel (cause

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1. Padang to Batavia, 10 April 1745, KA 2542, pp. 141-2. Sipadoe later arrived at Tiku with several vessels from Acheh ostensibly to confer with the penghulus there, but really, the Dutch claimed, to carry on illicit trade, which Padang was obliged to tolerate because of a lack of vessels to send there as cruisers. Padang to Batavia, 9 April 1748, KA 2611, p. 285.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 9 April 1748, KA 2611, p. 284.
 3. Padang to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1749, KA 2635, p. 13.
 4. Padang to Batavia, 24 Dec. 1744, KA 2542, p. 8; Padang to Batavia, 10 April 1744, KA 2521, pp. 210-1.

unstated) with the local inhabitants. A large number of Natal people had joined forces to beat off the assault and had captured one of the Achehnese vessels and four katis (64 tael) of gold. The vessel had eventually been restored to the Achehnese, but the gold was retained as compensation for one Natal man who had been killed and for several others wounded in the skirmish. Nevertheless, the Achehnese continued to trade at Natal.¹ Both they and the English returned there in 1746,² and early in 1748, four Achehnese vessels were reported to have been trafficking at Natal for nearly five months while Natal merchants like Soutan Batarra were also sailing to Acheh, taking great care and generally successfully avoiding Dutch cruisers.³ Even the Baros penghulus seem to have been implicated in the increasing smuggling. A Dutch patrol seized a serampoe laden with benzoin, camphor and 395 ponds of Malay salt which proved to be jointly owned by the Raja of Baros and the merchant Mage Baros. The cargo was confiscated but the vessel was returned to the Raja with a warning to adhere to his contracts with the VOC.⁴

Other foreign traders also continued to call at Natal and Tapanuli in the late 1740s and early 1750s. In 1749, five large gontings from Java, reputedly equipped with passes purchased at Benkulen, were at Natal. Their Chinese and Javanese crews sailed from Natal to Sorkam to buy gum which was then brought back to the gontings in small perahus.⁵ There was another large Javanese gonting, loaded with thirty koyan of salt, 600 bars of iron and some piece goods at Tapanuli, also carrying a pass from Fort Marlborough.⁶ The Baros Resident wrote to Padang that 'the whole North bows down to that [smuggling]' but added that his commercial situation was not as critical as anticipated because the Tapus, Sorkam and Korlang people, who

1. Padang to Batavia, 10 April 1744, KA 2521, p. 212.

2. Padang to Batavia, 17 March 1746, KA 2567, p. 23.

3. Padang to Batavia, 14 Jan. 1748, KA 2611, p. 40.

4. *ibid.*, p. 41.

5. Padang to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1749, KA 2635, p. 28.

6. *ibid.*, pp. 25-7. Smuggling was also reported at Sorkam, Singkil and Gunung Tua.

provided much of the top quality white benzoin, had come occasionally to market at Baros during the last six months of 1748.¹ In 1750, a large, armed vessel from Semarang called at both Natal and Tapanuli, and a gonting from Benkulen was sighted at Nias.² During 1751, three English gontings were reported at Natal.³

By the late 1740s, the Dutch were powerless to arrest the stream of foreign shipping which visited Natal and Tapanuli. The Padang Commander Elsevier wrote to Governor General van Imhoff in January 1748 that Natal had successfully excluded VOC vessels for a number of years. A large military force would be needed to enter the port, he judged, particularly since four or more well-armed Achehnese vessels were usually on hand to aid the Natal people against the Company. There was little that the VOC could do, Elsevier continued, to change conditions at Natal until 'an abundant strength of European [military]' was available to eradicate systematically all such 'robber nests'.⁴ Padang needed at least two panchallangs armed with heavy calibre guns to reduce the armed forts which guarded the shore, and sixty or seventy men as an invasion force for such an expedition.⁵ A year later the authorities at Padang confirmed that they dared not approach the shore at Natal with the small garrison they had on hand because of the artillery which the Natal people had placed at the river mouth.⁶

If the Dutch were incapable of suppressing the 'smugglers' nest' at Natal by force, neither could they compete with it commercially. English, Achehnese and other traders sold large quantities of piece goods and salt at lower prices than those set by the VOC and obtained gold for their merchandise while merchants dispatched by the Dutch often returned to their home ports with their goods unsold.⁷

1. Padang to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1749, KA.2635, pp. 27-8.

2. Padang to Batavia, 31 Dec. 1750, KA 2674, pp. 48-9.

3. Padang to Batavia, 10 Aug. 1751, KA 2674, p. 849.

4. Elsevier to van Imhoff, 15 Jan. 1748, KA 2611, pp. 263-5.

5. *ibid.*

6. Padang to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1749, KA 2635, p. 28.

7. Padang to Batavia, 15 March 1750, KA 2655, pp. 53-4.

The Dutch could sometimes obtain camphor and benzoin in the late 1740s, commodities with which the VOC was again rather overstocked, but even their dealings in these products were undercut by the foreign traders who were still willing to accept poorer quality gum than the VOC demanded.¹ The situation was so bad by 1750 that Padang proved its point by noting that all the people of the surrounding districts wore clothing which was not made from Dutch-imported cloth. When asked where they obtained their cloth, these people invariably answered that it came either from Natal or sometimes overland from the East Coast.² The only possible solution, given the lack of manpower for punitive expeditions, was to lower the prices of VOC goods or resort to continual cruising.³ Dutch authorities were nevertheless unwilling to reduce prices and ordinary cruising measures generally failed to prevent foreign traders from reaching their destinations. Padang suffered from an almost chronic shortage of patrol vessels and in any case the local people frequently used small craft which could run closer to shore than the Dutch cruisers. Even when the patrol boats managed to approach larger vessels, the result of the encounter was not always predictable. A Dutch panchallang had retreated from two gontings which had fired on her while she was cruising between Tapus and Singkil in 1739.⁴ An Achehnese jalore had escaped from another Dutch patrol in 1748 after an all night battle when the VOC boat had sprung a leak from the force of its guns' recoil.⁵

While the Dutch resources were inadequate to control the large numbers of smuggling craft which frequented northern waters, cruising did produce some effect

1. The Dutch tried to increase deliveries of benzoin by changing the proportions of gum that the VOC would accept from two pikuls of the worst grade and three pikuls of the middle grade for every one of the first grade to ten pikuls each of the two lesser grades for every one of the first grade, after the producers complained that they had no legitimate outlet for most of their benzoin. van Basel, op. cit., pp. 86-7; Padang to Batavia, 15 March 1750, KA 2655; Padang to Batavia, 31 Dec. 1750, KA 2674, p. 24.
2. Padang to Batavia, 31 Dec. 1750, KA 2674, p. 49.
3. Padang to Batavia, 10 Aug. 1751, KA 2674, p. 850; Padang to Batavia, 31 Dec. 1750, KA 2674, p. 49.
4. van Minne to Gronsveld, Baros, 28 Feb. 1739, KA 2360, pp. 222-3.
5. Padang to Batavia, 9 April 1748, KA 2611, pp. 283-4.

when used specifically against the English. The Dutch captured some half dozen vessels armed with passes from Fort Marlborough in the years between 1748 and 1751, but the final result was less to deter English smuggling than to encourage Fort Marlborough to seek a secure base for its shipping in the North.

The first Dutch seizure of traders from Benkulen occurred in 1748 and became something of a cause célèbre at Fort Marlborough. A Chinese resident of Benkulen, Nakhoda Poah, informed the Fort Marlborough Board in December 1748 that two perahus which he had sent to the North with passports from Deputy Governor Hurlock had been cut off by a VOC cruiser at Singkil and the entire crew, except for one survivor, murdered. The vessels themselves had been taken to Padang. At the same Council meeting the owners of the Fanny snow also cited the hindrance offered to that vessel's traffic by the Dutch. The Board agreed to represent both incidents not only to Padang but also to London, in the hope that the Court would support its West Coast servants in their 'just pretentions' to free navigation in the area.¹ About four months later Fort Marlborough also learned that two Achehnese perahus, which had sailed to Pulau Batu with English passes, had been similarly seized by the Dutch and not heard of since.² Fort Marlborough had already written to Padang protesting the massacre of the thirty-seven crewmen on Nakhoda Poah's perahus and demanding full restitution of the perahus and their cargoes, valued by the owner at \$11,600.³ Padang had merely referred the English to Batavia, and Fort Marlborough then wrote to Batavia at the end of January 1749 and again in April, instructing its agent there, Thomas Combes, to demand the restoration of the vessels and satisfaction for the injury to the English Company from the Dutch Governor General.⁴ Combes responded that VOC orders had gone out 'to seize upon

1. FM Cons., 9 Dec. 1748, SFR 65.

2. FM Cons., 22 April 1749, SFR 65.

3. Fort Marlborough's protest dated 4 Jan. 1749 was received at Padang on 12 Jan. and then reported to Batavia. Padang to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1749, KA 2635, pp. 20-3; Padang Vergadering, 24 Feb. 1749, KA 2653, p. 380; Padang to FM, 26 Feb. 1749, Dutch in India, vol. 14, Europeans in India Series, IOL.

4. Benkulen's letter of 30 Jan. 1749 was taken to Batavia by the ship Success Galley which sailed from Benkulen on 31 Jan. Another was sent by the Fanny snow which left Benkulen on 18 April 1749.

all vessels found trading between Indrapore and Baros without shewing the least regard to their passports', and reversing this policy would require more pressure than his verbal representations could bring to bear.¹ On the other hand, Combes added, the Batavian authorities accepted responsibility for any misconduct by their subordinates and were willing to punish the master of the VOC sloop 'whose Barbarity... they unanimously blame' for murdering the men on Nakhoda Poah's perahus.² A letter from the Batavia Governor General, which reached Fort Marlborough with that of Combes in April, indicated that the affair was under investigation and requested that the sole survivor be sent to Batavia to give evidence.³

Batavia had requested more information concerning Nakhoda Poah's perahus from its West Coast servants, but Padang's account of the incident at Singkil was in some respects radically different from Fort Marlborough's. Padang confirmed that the two perahus had been found at Singkil by the VOC sloop Eva Suzanna commanded by a stuurman, Ketelhoed, and had been brought back to Baros by him. The smaller of the two had been left there for lack of men to sail her; the larger had been escorted to Padang, where the vessel and cargo, except for the contraband benzoin, had been auctioned for Rix-dollars 2901.44. The smaller perahu was also scheduled for sale as soon as she could be brought down from Baros. On the basis of Ketelhoed's report, however, Padang vehemently denied Fort Marlborough's charge that the death of the perahus' crews constituted 'godless murder'. Ketelhoed claimed that the captives from the two perahus had been taken aboard his sloop and confined in the hold, but had started to cut a hole into the vessel's powder room and could have caused her loss. To stop them and save the sloop, he had thrown a grenade among the prisoners, killing all but one. Padang considered the action regrettable but justified. Padang also pointed out that the passes through which Fort Marlborough claimed

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1. Combes' answer arrived at Fort Marlborough on 27 April on the Company ship Duke of Newcastle. FM Cons., 28 April 1749, SFR 65.
 2. *ibid.*
 3. *ibid.*

protection for its vessels were invalid. In the case of the two perahus, the passes were crossed out, altered and incorrect in several details, and in any case the English were not entitled to grant such letters to VOC ports. Unrepentant, Padang expressed some hope that the punishment meted out to Nakhoda Poah's perahus at Singkil would prove to Fort Marlborough that the VOC was serious in its intention to prevent smuggling and would discourage the English from further ventures to the North.¹

Unfortunately for the Dutch the time was not propitious for this kind of pressure on English shipping. The Benkulen authorities had appealed for redress, not only to Padang, Batavia and London but also to their superiors at Fort St. David, who had referred the matter directly to Admiral Boscawen, the Commander-in-Chief of the British naval forces in India, which had just completed the defeat of the French. As a result, Admiral Boscawen informed Benkulen in a letter of 5 June 1749 that he had written to Batavia in May demanding satisfaction for the seizure of the two perahus at Singkil. He had also warned the Dutch that if they failed in the future to restrain their cruisers from such acts of violence, he would 'make Use of the Squadron under his Command to obtain Redress by repelling Force by Force agreeable to the Orders he had received'.² Shortly thereafter, possibly as a result of pressure from Admiral Boscawen, Fort Marlborough received a letter from Padang, dated 31 July, reporting not only that the trial of the men involved in the massacre at Singkil was in process, but also that Batavia had ordered in June 1749 that the trade of the VOC's West Coast domains be opened.³ The English were offered an equal right in this free commerce subject only to the restrictions which also governed the conduct of Dutch traders. These included a continuing prohibition on the importation

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1. Padang to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1749, KA 2635, pp. 20-3, 88-90; Padang Vergadering, 24 Feb. 1749, KA 2635, p. 383; Padang to Batavia, 10 Aug. 1751, KA 2674, pp. 849-50. Padang complained not only about Benkulen's granting passes to its own vessels to trade in VOC territory but also stated that Fort Marlborough was enjoying a 'dirty profit' from selling passes to vessels which originated outside English jurisdiction.
 2. FM Cons., 5 July 1749, SFR 65.
 3. FM Cons., 29 Aug. 1749, SFR 65. This Padang letter of 31 July was received at Benkulen in the packet from Muko Muko dated 4 August.

of any piece goods except those stamped with the VOC mark and the payment of six per cent duty on all imports and on any benzoin and camphor exported. Trade in salt, iron and silk was unrestricted and gold could be exported only if it were exchanged at Padang for seventeen and a half Rix-dollars for a real of twenty-four carats.¹

These conditions were, however, as difficult for VOC to enforce as its previous policy of excluding all foreign shipping had been, and the terms were not attractive enough to ensure voluntary compliance. The cotton piece goods, forbidden to any but the VOC, constituted a major English item for export to the North, and the exchange rate offered for gold was much lower than that obtainable at either Fort Marlborough or the Coromandel Coast. The Benkulen Board, not surprisingly, rejected these VOC overtures, stating that the regulations made by the Dutch Company to govern its own servants did not apply to the English.² Any acceptance of the Dutch regulations by Fort Marlborough would amount to tacit acceptance of Dutch claims to ports like Natal, Singkil and Pariaman which Benkulen continued to insist were free, neutral ports where they had every right to trade. Moreover, with Fort Marlborough's pretensions to a free navigation backed by Admiral Boscawen's support, it was the Dutch not the English who were under pressure to find an accommodation.

While Batavia was attempting to revise its trading policy for the West Coast of Sumatra, its proceedings concerning the two perahus taken at Singkil were also progressing. On 30 September 1749, Thomas Combes, who had been Benkulen's agent at Batavia, returned to Fort Marlborough with a letter from the Dutch Governor General of 17 September. This stated that the VOC position had been explained to Admiral Boscawen but also promised punishment for those guilty of the massacre at Singkil. Either on the merits of the case or because of the Admiral's threats of reprisal, Batavia had not accepted Padang's assertion that Stuurman Ketelhoed had killed the perahus' crews in defence of his vessel. Combes had also been offered goods which

1. van Basel, op. cit., p. 83. Padang to FM, 31 July 1749, Dutch in India, vol. 14, Europeans in India Series.

2. FM Cons., 29 Aug. 1749, SFR 65.

the Batavia Council had stated were part of the perahus' cargoes, but having no authorisation to receive this merchandise had refused it. The Fort Marlborough authorities supported Combes' stand and wrote to Batavia that they were unwilling to accept only a part of the goods as restitution until they had heard from Admiral Boscawen, and still expected 'full & ample Satisfaction for all Costs and Damages' sustained by the perahus' proprietor.¹

Fort Marlborough was, however, never to receive full restitution. The affair dragged on for another four years. Fort Marlborough's protests to London had prompted the Directors to condemn 'the late Cruel and Extraordinary Behaviour of the Dutch'.² The matter had been referred to the British King 'together with several other Papers relating to the Pretentions they [the Dutch] have lately set up to an exclusive Trade upon that Island [Sumatra], Borneo, and several other Places to which they have as little Right'. The Directors were certain that diplomatic representations to the States General would produce 'satisfaction for past Injuries' and 'have our Right to a free Trade effectually supported'.³

While the case was under consideration in Europe, Batavia on 17 November 1750 found the crew of the VOC sloop Eva Suzanna guilty of murdering the people of Nakhoda Poah's two perahus in 1748 and sentenced Stuurman Ketelhoed, his assistant Slang, and one sailor to death, another sailor to be whipped and branded and the rest to be banished.⁴ The Batavia authorities were also still attempting to return the remains of the two perahus' cargoes. They approached Robert Dunckley, who had taken an unauthorised trip to Batavia from his Residency at Krui in 1750, to take charge of Nakhoda Poah's merchandise, which lay spoiling in the VOC godown,

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1. FM Cons., 12 Oct. 1749, SFR 65; Batavia to FM, 17 Sept. 1749, Dutch in India, vol. 14, Europeans in India Series.
 2. Court to FM, 8 Dec. 1749, par. 18 (received via the ship Suffolk on 3 Sept. 1750), Despatches from England, 1749-50, op. cit., vol. 53, p. 41.
 3. *ibid.*
 4. Extract from the Criminal Roll of the Council of Justice, Batavia, 17 Nov. 1750, in FM Cons., 30 Oct. 1751, SFR 65.

but Dunckley, like Combes, refused to take the responsibility.¹

In August 1752, the Company ship Exeter arrived at Benkulen with the Court's letter of 29 November 1752 which confirmed that the English King's representation to the Netherlands had produced the desired result. The Directors, however, merely transmitted the news, which Fort Marlborough had received over a year earlier, that the Dutch cruiser Eva Suzanna's crew had been prosecuted for the massacre at Singkil. The Court's letter continued ominously 'that although the Dutch Company did not find any mention made in their Advices [from Batavia] of the Restitution of the said Two Vessels and their Cargoes to the Owners, it yet appeared to them very probable from several Circumstances that the Regency at Batavia had already given Orders in relation thereto'.² If VOC orders had not yet been carried out in this respect, Fort Marlborough was to 'make strong and pressing Instances' until the perahus and their cargoes had been restored or 'full satisfaction for them' received.³ From Fort Marlborough's point of view, the only encouraging section of this letter was the Court's orders 'to assert in the strongest Terms Our Right to a Free and uninterrupted Trade at all Ports and Places whatsoever not actually in the Possession of the Dutch'.⁴ On the basis of the Court's instructions, Benkulen again wrote to Batavia demanding full redress. The Batavia authorities responded that they were sure the English King would be 'satisfied with their Peaceable and reasonable Disposition' of the dispute.⁵ They had long since punished those guilty of murder and had been for two years attempting to return what was left of the merchandise but had found no one empowered to act for the owner.⁶ The Fort Marlborough Council, despite its anger over the success of the Dutch delaying tactics, was

1. FM Cons., 14 Sept. 1751, SFR 65.

2. Court to FM, 29 Nov. 1751, par. 47, Despatches from England, 1751-2, op. cit., vol. 55, p. 52.

3. *ibid.*

4. *ibid.*, par. 49.

5. FM Cons., 9 July 1753, SFR 66. The Batavia letter of 30 May arrived via the ship Delaware on 2 July 1753.

6. *ibid.*

obliged to accept Batavia's offer. Captain Edward Burman of the Company ship Prince George was delegated in July 1753 by the Benkulen Board and Nakhoda Poah to obtain what satisfaction he could. Nakhoda Poah finally received \$5700 of the \$11,600 he had estimated his perahus and merchandise were worth in return for a full discharge given the VOC for any further claims.¹

Other instances of interference with English-licensed shipping increased the tension between the two European Companies. In August 1750, the Muko Muko Resident informed Benkulen that his assistant, Thomas Coles, had been driven by bad weather to Inderapura while en route in his own perahu back to his post at Ipuh.² The Dutch Resident at Airhadji, because Coles had no pass, refused to believe that Coles' presence at Inderapura was accidental and had declined to release him without orders from Padang where Coles was eventually sent. Coles protested against the actions of the Airhadji Resident, the Muko Muko Resident protested to Padang, and finally Fort Marlborough protested to Padang. At the end of September 1750, on Batavia's orders, Coles was allowed to leave Padang, his vessel was repaired and returned to him, and provisions were given to him to expedite his return journey to Muko Muko.³ Padang regarded its treatment of Coles as generous and so informed Benkulen in a letter of 6 November. The Dutch authorities also took that opportunity to reiterate their demand that Fort Marlborough refrain from granting passes to vessels sent to trade in VOC territory.⁴ Fort Marlborough's Council, discussing this letter in February 1751, responded as usual that passes were never granted to VOC possessions, but only to places which were esteemed to be 'Free Neutral Ports'. The Board also remarked that since most of Coles' goods had been stolen while he

1. FM Cons., 24 Aug., 11 Sept., 6 Oct. 1753, SFR 66; Nakhoda Poah to FM Board, FM Cons., 27 Oct. 1755, SFR 68.

2. FM Cons., 31 Aug. 1750, SFR 65.

3. FM Cons., 31 Aug., 29 Sept. 1750, SFR 65; Batavia to FM, 12 Jan. 1751, Dutch in India, vol. 14, Europeans in India; Padang to Batavia, 10 Aug. 1751, KA 2674, pp. 837-9.

4. Padang Letter of 6 Nov. 1750 in FM Cons., 6 Feb. 1751, SFR 65.

was in Dutch hands and no restitution made, Padang had no basis for its claim of generosity.¹ At this same Council meeting, the English authorities noted Dutch interference with two more Fort Marlborough-owned perahus which had sailed for Natal and Singkil in May and July 1750. In December one of the perahus had returned to Fort Marlborough and its nakhoda had informed the Board that he had been met off Natal by a Dutch cruiser, boarded by a number of armed men and his pass and firearms seized. The master of the cruiser had then demanded \$300 as the price of his release. The other perahu had also had its pass confiscated and had not been seen since the encounter at Natal. Fort Marlborough again protested to Padang, insisting on the punishment of the cruiser's master and the return of the \$300 'extorted' from the Benkulen nakhoda.² Padang's answer, received in April 1751, merely reasserted VOC claims to the territory from Inderapura to Singkil and reiterated VOC objections to English vessels trading within those limits.³ At this time Padang also included within its domains the islands lying off the West Coast - an important addition, since Fort Marlborough was then investigating the feasibility of pepper-culture on the Pagai or Nassau Islands.

The Drive for Natal

With their shipping to the so-called neutral ports of the North harassed by Padang and little recompense received for Dutch-seized vessels, Fort Marlborough turned its attention toward securing a commercial base north of Padang. Natal was by 1751 an obvious choice, and conditions there were deteriorating from the English point of view. It appeared possible that the Achehnese or Dutch might soon be in a position to occupy the port. Achehnese influence at Natal seems to have increased

1. FM Cons., 6 Feb. 1751, SFR 65; FM to Padang, 9 Feb. 1750/1 (O.S.), Dutch in India, vol. 14, Europeans in India.

2. *ibid.*

3. FM Cons., 30 April 1751, SFR 65. The Dutch did, however, fine the master of the cruiser who had stopped the two perahus and extorted money from them. FM to Court, 6 Dec. 1751, Dutch in India, vol. 14, Europeans in India Series.

sharply in the late 1740s. By early 1750, Padang wrote to Batavia that the local people had requested a Dutch post to preserve them from 'the Achehnese rabble from whom they often had to endure much importuning and tyranny'.¹ By December 1750, Padang suggested that a state of near-anarchy existed at Natal in which local government was collapsing and murder was a daily occurrence.² Once again the Dutch authorities reported that 'the rightful inhabitants' of the place had complained to merchants sent by the VOC that the Company was neglecting its treaty commitments by leaving them exposed to 'the violence of the foreign folk' who had infested their negeris.³ The Padang Governor van Idsinga then recommended without success that a small VOC garrison be placed at Natal. Meanwhile the Achehnese had already obtained a fort in the area. Late in 1750, it was reported to Padang that the Achehnese had erected a benteng on the shore at Natal in collaboration with one of the local penghulus, Dato Sinaro Panjang, a Minangkabau. They had also placed artillery capable of firing on any vessel dispatched by the VOC.⁴

Although not noted in Benkulen's Consultation Books, these events must have persuaded Fort Marlborough to make its own bid for Natal in June 1751. Responding to what they termed the 'Several Invitations...from Natal for the English to settle there',⁵ the Benkulen authorities sent John Saul to enter into contracts with the Natal people who, according to his report, welcomed him joyously in September 1751.⁶ The Dutch alternately ascribed Natal's treaty with the English to fear of the Achehnese and the low and rebellious character of the chiefs who had signed the document. The English stated that the Natal inhabitants had been motivated by their hatred of the Dutch. It may have been that the English were first on the scene or merely the least of the various evils facing the Natal headmen. It seems clear that

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1. Padang to Batavia, 15 March 1750, KA 2655, pp. 52-4.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 31 Dec. 1750, KA 2674, pp. 23-4.
 3. *ibid.*
 4. *ibid.*, p. 49; van Idsinga to Batavia (secret letter), 20 April 1751, KA 2712, p. 271. Van Idsinga also wanted posts at Pariaman, Airbangis, Tapanuli and Nias.
 5. FM Cons., 26 June, 18 July 1751, SFR 65.
 6. FM Cons., 28 Sept. 1751, SFR 65.

they desired protection of some sort. Saul had been dispatched with six Bugis and a serjeant as his escort. The Company sloop Swallow, which had conveyed Saul to Natal, was not a vessel of force and had already been chased away from nearby Pulau Tamang by a Dutch cruiser in November 1751. Saul was then obliged to retain the Swallow at Natal until the Dutch vessel had departed for Baros to prevent the local people from concluding that she had left from fear of the Dutch. Matters improved, Saul reported, after the Dutch ship had passed by Natal without causing trouble, and the local people formed 'a better Opinion of the Honble. Company's Protection'.¹ Nevertheless, the second letter received at Benkulen from the Natal chiefs urged that a permanent force of thirty Europeans and twenty-five Bugis be stationed at the port.²

Restrained by the alliance of Britain and the Netherlands in Europe, the Dutch never resorted to overt hostilities against the new English settlement in the North. Padang had reported to Batavia with shock and outrage that the English had moved into Natal by stealth and had begun to raise several bamboo buildings and a pagar. They had even detained a Padang merchant who was at the port to prevent his laying information with the Dutch authorities, who consequently possessed no details concerning the English operations.³ Padang had apparently been preparing a cruiser reinforced with twenty-four military to send against Natal, but before its dispatch a letter dated 26 September 1751 was received from Fort Marlborough which notified the Dutch formally of the English take-over at Natal.⁴ Padang did not dare to send off its cruiser and bring the two Companies into open conflict.

As the only recourse remaining, the Padang authorities wrote to Batavia urging forceful measures against the English usurpation at Natal and their violent infraction of the treaty of friendship between the Dutch and British nations. Padang then

1. FM Cons., 15 Jan., 28 Jan. 1752, SFR 66.
2. FM Cons., 31 Jan. 1752, SFR 66.
3. Padang to Batavia, 2 Nov. 1751, KA 2674, pp. 861-2.
4. Padang to Batavia, 26 Nov. 1751, KA 2674, pp. 869-72.

carefully outlined to the Governor General the bases of VOC rights to exclusive possession of Natal. Not only did the post lie within the general boundaries of Dutch territory between Inderapura and Singkil, but VOC contracts with both Baros and Natal also placed Natal within the domains of the Raja of Baros, who had long recognised the Dutch Company as his suzerain and protector. Moreover, the men with whom the English had signed their treaty were 'lawless rabble' who had no legal claim to authority over the port and who had incited the local people to disregard 'their lawful regents or rather those entitled to their government'.¹ Padang concluded its résumé of the legitimacy of VOC rights at Natal with dire predictions on the future prospects of VOC commerce in the North if the English were allowed to remain there. Continual smuggling, principally by the English, had already caused a decline in Dutch profits, but an English base at Natal, Padang warned, would be in a position to control the flow of gold from that area and could also reduce the commercial value of VOC contracts with the surrounding districts to worthlessness.² Eight vessels from Benkulen, the Padang Government added in December 1751, had already visited Natal in the past seven months, including the three sighted there in August.³

Padang had written to Fort Marlborough in December 1751 and February 1752 demanding the immediate withdrawal of the post at Natal and promising 'bad Consequences' if VOC rights to the area were not respected.⁴ Batavia's formal protest did not follow until nearly a year later and for the most part reiterated Padang's succession of letters denouncing Benkulen's illegal acts and prohibiting trading in Dutch domains. Batavia also adopted Padang's exposition of VOC rights on the West Coast of Sumatra. The territory between Inderapura and Singkil, the Batavia authorities stated once again, was Dutch both by treaty and by conquest. The chiefs

1. Padang to Batavia, 26 Nov. 1751, KA 2674, pp. 872-83.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 884-5.

3. Padang to Batavia, 27 Dec. 1751, KA 2674, p. 23.

4. FM Cons., 26 March 1752, SFR 66; Padang to FM, 24 Dec. 1751 and 18 Feb. 1752, Dutch in India, vol. 14, Europeans in India Series.

of the kualas had 'acknowledged the [Dutch] Company as their Souveraigns [sic]' to the exclusion of all other nations since 1664,¹ whatever 'these Rebellious People of Natter', had told the English.

...We have exercised Jurisdiction there for some years which none before [Deputy Governor] Mr. Hurlock disturbed, under whose Protection the Servants of the English Company at Bencoolen have encreased their Fortunes by unlawful Trade in the Netherland Company's Territory and by money have corrupted the Natives from their Obedience to them and to accept the English Company as their Masters.²

In order to justify illegal English activities in the North, Batavia continued, Hurlock had pretended that districts like Natal, Singkil and Pariaman were 'free places' where the Dutch had no trade and for many years had not objected to English trade. The Dutch authorities trusted that their careful exposition of the bases of VOC dominion in these areas would destroy any erroneous supposition that they were open for the commerce of all nations and prove 'this undertaking of yours [at Natal] is a wilful usurpation of the Right and Possession of the [Dutch] Company on that part of the West Coast of Sumatra'. Batavia then concluded its letter with an assertion that it would press its case and 'represent these wrongs til they are revenged, and until we have received full Satisfaction for them'.³

...Your yet invading the Right of the said [Dutch] Company by maintaining Natter & upholding the Rebellious Subjects, and paying no manner of regard to our former Protests is breaking in upon the friendly Alliance between the Dutch and English Nation[s], and... the unlawful Invasion of one another's Territorys in the midst of Peace includes a perfect breach of the Treatys subsisting between Great Britain and Holland which we have sacredly observed on our side.⁴

Fort Marlborough did not answer Batavia's letter for over a year, on the grounds that there was nobody available to translate it. The English countercharges were therefore presented by Supravisors Pybus and Walsh in a letter to Batavia of

1. Batavia to Fort Marlborough, 10 Oct. 1752, SFR 9, pp. 335-7.

2. *ibid.*, p. 335.

3. *ibid.*, pp. 336-7. The Dutch also expressed the forlorn hope that English incursions in the North would decline with Hurlock's replacement as Deputy Governor by Robert Hindley.

4. *ibid.*, p. 336.

11 February 1754. This was based on information gathered by the third Resident of Natal, Roger Carter, and attempted to invalidate point by point each of the arguments put forward by the Dutch in support of their claim to Natal. The heart of the matter was as always what constituted a 'Free and Neutral' port. Pybus and Walsh asserted that the English had never intended to dispossess the VOC of 'their actual Possessions or where they have a real and acknowledged Jurisdiction, but at the same time they do not mean to give up their just Rights & prevent themselves from settling at neutral and independent Places where neither of those marks of Property subsist, such as Nattal or Nater'. Fort Marlborough considered completely spurious all the Dutch arguments set forth in Batavia's letter of 10 October 1752 to prove that Natal was a VOC domain. The English questioned when, if ever, the so-called King of Baros's dominions had extended as far south as Natal, particularly since other territories such as those of the 'Rajah of Tapanooley and others' lay between Baros and Natal which were 'in no wise tributary or subject to your King of Baros'. The so-called King of Baros, moreover, had for many years been 'a most petty Prince', and Fort Marlborough disputed that he was a king at all with any real claim in his own right to the territories which the VOC claimed through him. This 'King of Baros' and his predecessors, Benkulen asserted, were known to the English only as panglimas who were 'ever Vassals of the Kings of Acheen & Manancabo, alternately, as the Fate of War or private Compacts between those Monarchs determind [sic]'. Supervisors Pybus and Walsh added that the mere fact that the VOC attempted to claim Singkil undermined the credibility of its pretension to ownership of Natal, as that area had always been 'the undoubted property of the King of Acheen'. Fort Marlborough then dismissed any Dutch claims to Natal by right of conquest as unworthy of comment and concluded by stating that all their correspondence relating to the new English settlement was to be referred to London for consideration. The Benkulen Board also reaffirmed its previous protests against the harassment of British shipping and cited Dutch seizures of vessels voyaging to neutral ports as a breach of the commercial

treaties between Britain and the Netherlands.¹

Batavia answered this letter by stating flatly that the Dutch would 'pay no regard to any Passes granted [by the English] to the Usurped Port of Nattar'.² The Dutch Council also noted that Benkulen must be aware that the headmen supported by the English at Natal were rebels, who had attempted to supplant 'the true Chiefs' of the place, and added that as no objectivity could be expected from Benkulen on the subject of Natal, Dutch protests in the future would be addressed to Fort St. George.³ Such representations as the Dutch made to Benkulen's superiors at Madras, however, earned them little more satisfaction than they had received from Fort Marlborough. At the beginning of 1755, Fort Marlborough wrote to the Directors in London that Batavia had presented no new arguments to support its claim to Natal after the Supravisors' letter of 11 February 1754, and that Fort St. George considered the previous exposition of Dutch rights to Natal insufficient to warrant abandoning that port. Madras had consequently ordered Fort Marlborough to retain the new settlement.⁴

The paper war over the conflicting Dutch and English pretensions to Natal generated much heat but produced little genuine effect on day to day relations between the two Companies. Restrained by the superiors from openly hostile acts, in spite of the charges and countercharges of treachery and treaty violation, Padang and Batavia continued to co-operate with Fort Marlborough in matters of mutual interest such as aid to distressed shipping and the administration of criminal justice. In the midst of Padang's first shock over Natal's defection to the English, the Dutch authorities continued their efforts to capture and prosecute

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1. Pybus and Walsh to Batavia, 11 Feb. 1754, SFR 10; FM Cons., 6 Feb., 4 April 1754, SFR 67. Batavia had sent a French version of the 10 October 1752 letter to Benkulen with their letter of 30 May 1753, but Benkulen's answer was nevertheless delayed.
 2. Batavia to Fort Marlborough, 30 Sept. 1754, SFR 10.
 3. *ibid.*
 4. FM to Court, 10 Jan. 1755, par. 51, SFR 10A, p. 79.

several persons who had murdered Dennis Murphy, the overseer of slaves at the English Residency of Muko Muko, and fled into VOC domains. In May 1751 the Muko Muko Resident had sent twenty-two soldiers into VOC territory in pursuit of the suspects and had asked the Airhadji Resident to turn over any captives he might have apprehended to the expedition.¹ The Airhadji Resident had refused, and Padang had subsequently requested that English troops not be sent into VOC districts.² Nevertheless three suspects in the murder who had been held at Airhadji were sent to Padang, and the Dutch Council then asked for depositions from any English servants who had knowledge of the crime at Muko Muko to assist in the trial of the captives at Padang.³ By February 1752, in the same letter in which Padang lodged a protest against the English occupation of Natal, the Dutch Council informed Fort Marlborough that the prosecution of these suspects was proceeding, and about the same time word came via Muko Muko that the two male captives had been convicted and condemned to death and the woman, branded and enslaved.⁴ On the other hand, five Dutch deserters who had arrived at the English Residency at Krui from Surabaya were put in irons by the Benkulen Board in July 1752 on suspicion of having cut off a boat, but after an investigation were acquitted of the charges.⁵ Similarly, at the height of the quarrel over the capture of the two Benkulen perahus off Singkil, the English helped to rescue the crewmen of the VOC panchallang Achilles which had been wrecked near Ketaun and also advanced them expense money for their return trip to Padang. The goods saved from the panchallang were later sent back to Padang

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1. Padang to Batavia, 10 Aug. 1751, KA 2674, pp. 839-40; FM Cons., 14 May, 26 June 1751, SFR 65.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 10 Aug. 1751, KA 2674, pp. 839-40; FM Cons., 30 July 1751, SFR 65.
 3. FM Cons., 3 March 1752, SFR 66.
 4. Padang to FM, 18 Feb. 1752, Dutch in India, vol. 14, Europeans in India Series; FM Cons., 26 March 1752, SFR 66.
 5. FM Cons., 14 July 1752, SFR 66. Fort Marlborough also later returned one Jan Keyser to Padang from Natal where he had escaped after killing the master of the cruiser he served on. Padang to Batavia, 22 Dec. 1759, KA 2886, pp. 4-5; FM Cons., 22 Sept. 1758, 9 July 1759, SFR 70.

as well.¹ The Dutch reciprocated by aiding the English Company sloop Swallow which had put in at Pariaman en route from Natal to Fort Marlborough in January 1752. The Swallow's master requested provisions. The Pariaman Resident, however, asked Padang's permission before he complied and also detained a party sent ashore from the sloop. These people were soon returned to Fort Marlborough having been supplied with ten Rix-dollars by the Dutch to cover the cost of their journey.²

Fort Marlborough also continued to buy supplies, usually rice and arrack, regularly at Batavia and to depend on facilities there for refitting the Company's vessels. The Dutch authorities never hindered these activities and frequently even advanced money to the English representatives at Batavia in exchange for bills on the Fort Marlborough Council.³ Nevertheless, certain of these English transactions at Batavia, like an illegal purchase of naval cordage in May 1752 and an exchange of uncurrent money, which had been sent to Benkulen from London, were conducted secretly through Peter Garden, an English free merchant there, to prevent the Dutch from realising Fort Marlborough's shortage of funds.⁴ On a less co-operative note, the two Companies continued to employ deserters from each others' military services, unless the men were actual criminals since the English had refused Dutch overtures in 1746 for a mutual exchange of all 'eloping' servants.⁵

The Dutch, however, as they had warned Fort Marlborough, continued to assert their right to prevent English shipping from voyaging to VOC-claimed ports. As a result, Padang persisted in detaining such smugglers as it could capture. Shortly after the English occupation of Natal, the Fort Marlborough-owned sloop Surprise had been seized at Pariaman, where her owners insisted she had been driven by bad

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1. FM Cons., 9 Dec. 1748, 30 Jan. 1750, SFR 65.
 2. Padang Vergadering, 2 Feb. 1752, KA 2692, p. 66; FM Cons., 26 March 1751, SFR 66.
 3. The Batavia Council had advanced Rix-dollars 4800 to Robert Dunckley in 1751 and Rix-dollars 3000 to James Stephans in 1753, although these men had gone to Batavia without Fort Marlborough's permission. FM Cons., 29 May 1752, 9 July 1753, SFR 66.
 4. FM Cons., 29 May 1752, SFR 66; 12 Oct. 1749, 20 Feb. 1750, SFR 65.
 5. Padang to Batavia, 17 March 1746, KA 2567, p. 85.

weather and lack of provisions. The sloop was laden with opium, salt and iron and was provided with a pass from Deputy Governor Hurlock for a journey to Singkil,¹ but she had been found, Padang asserted, first around Tiku and later at Pariaman 'on the usual excuse of lack of supplies', but actually engaged in illegal commerce.² The Dutch, understandably nervous over the loss of Natal and having suspicions that the English also had designs on Pariaman, arrested the Surprise for trading in VOC territory without first paying the required tolls at Padang and sent her to Batavia. Fort Marlborough protested against the peace-time seizure of an English vessel as 'a high Indignity offered to the passports of our Honble. Masters & an infringement of their legal Right to a free Trade in India at all neutral ports' and demanded full restitution of the vessel and cargo to the sloop's proprietors.³ These demands were added to those of the owner of the two perahus taken off Singkil in 1748, but when both affairs were finally settled in 1753, the Surprise's owners, like Nakhoda Poah, settled for considerably less than full recompense. According to one Fort Marlborough servant, the affair 'was so badly performed, that they were to get one half of first Cost after Two or Three Years laying out of their money'.⁴

The Surprise incident was not the end of Dutch efforts to control English navigation in northern Sumatra. In July 1753, the Bengal sloop Orange Tree was also forced into Padang by a VOC cruiser, which her captain said had lain in wait for him off Natal. The Orange Tree was boarded and searched but released after it was discovered that her captain had not broken bulk. He reported later that the Dutch seemed 'determined to Molest all Vessels bound to Nattall, if not the Settlement [itself]'.⁵ Again Benkulen protested against the VOC cruiser's action as 'an

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1. FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1751, SFR 65.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 2 Nov. 1751, KA 2674, pp. 857-60.
 3. FM Cons., 29 May 1752, SFR 66.
 4. Alexander Hall to William Hall, 4 Dec. 1755, Hall Papers; FM Cons., 11 Sept. 1753, SFR 66; Pybus and Walsh to Batavia, 11 Feb. 1754, SFR 10.
 5. Captain Dogan to Fort Marlborough Board, 17 July 1753, FM Cons., [11-31] July 1753, SFR 66.

arbitrary Violation of the Law of Nations as well as a direct Infraction of the Treaties of Commerce subsisting between his Brittannick Majesty and the States General of the United Provinces' and requested that Batavia censure Padang for its high-handed behaviour.¹ Little, however, came of this affair. Batavia dismissed both Captain Dogan's and Fort Marlborough's complaints. The captain, Batavia suggested, had thought so little of the matter that he had made no complaint when the Orange Tree had subsequently visited Batavia. The sloop had been allowed 'a free liberty of Trade' there and had called on her return trip to India at another VOC settlement where, Batavia added caustically, she had doubtless persisted in her aim 'of carrying on a Clandestine Trade'.² If Fort Marlborough wished to pursue 'this trifling affair', Batavia invited depositions prior to further investigation.

In 1755 another Fort Marlborough-owned vessel, the Expedition perahu, was seized by the Dutch at Padang. She had been freighted by Peter Garden at Batavia on account of three Benkulen servants, Randolph Marriot, Henry Idell and John Williams, and had sailed north with a Fort Marlborough pass for Natal, Tapanuli, Singkil and Nias. In view of the fact that she was to traffic in VOC-claimed territory, she had imprudently called at Padang en route for supplies and was arrested there. The perahu, her 'illegal' pass and an inventory of her cargo were forwarded by Padang to Batavia.³ Fort Marlborough sent the standard protest, and Batavia responded that the same treatment would be meted out to any English vessel with or without a pass which penetrated VOC domains on any pretext whatsoever.⁴

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1. Pybus and Walsh to Batavia, 11 Feb. 1754, SFR 10.
 2. Batavia to Fort Marlborough, 30 Sept. 1754, SFR 10.
 3. FM Cons., 15 Dec. 1755, SFR 68; FM Cons., 7 Jan., 20 Jan. 1756, SFR 69; Padang to Batavia, 7 Nov. 1755, KA 2753, pp. 641-2.
 4. FM Cons., 17 May 1755, SFR 68.

Politics at Natal

Apart from obstructing English shipping to North Sumatra, there was little that the Dutch could do directly to dislodge the English from Natal. There was, however, an indirect means available in the person of one Bagindo Maharaja Lello, who had arrived at Padang from Natal in November 1751 to visit his father-in-law, the merchant Malim Soutan.¹ Bagindo Maharaja Lello told the Padang Council that he was the lawful head penghulu of Natal, the only remaining descendant of Raja Indra Soutan, his great-grandfather, who had signed a contract with the VOC. He also claimed that he had been appointed chief after the death of the previous headman Raja Puthia. His position, however, had been usurped by Dato Besar and Raja Darat, the two penghulus with whom the English had signed their treaty, who had made themselves his guardians during his minority. Bagindo Maharaja Lello's principal complaint, however, was that the customs due to the head regent from all foreigners trading at Natal and the people bringing gold down from the hills passed to Rajas Besar and Darat instead of himself although they had no right to these revenues, being 'recognised and respected only from their marriages with his mother's sisters (themselves being foreigners)'.² The Padang Council had investigated Bagindo Maharaja Lello's genealogy and informed Batavia that his story was well-known and his claim was just, 'on the basis of the laws in use among this coast's people'.³ Bagindo Maharaja Lello also had a number of supporters at Natal and was the grandson of the headman at Airbangis, Raja Gunung, whose district was well-situated to cut off the overland access routes of mountain people bringing produce down to Natal.⁴ Such a well-connected candidate in a genuine succession dispute was made to order for the Dutch, and Padang decided to encourage his attempts

1. Padang to Batavia, 26 Nov. 1751, KA 2674, pp. 887-9.

2. *ibid.* Raja Darat had been at Natal since at least 1734, since he had helped in the rebellion against the VOC in that year. Van de Wall to Senff, Padang, 25 June 1760, KA 2886, p. 178.

3. Padang to Batavia, 26 Nov. 1751, KA 2674, pp. 887-9.

4. Padang to Batavia, 2 June 1756, KA 2776, pp. 52-3.

to dislodge Dato Besar, Raja Darat and their English patrons with guns, powder and money - indeed all aid short of VOC troops.¹ The disturbances generated by Bagindo Maharaja Lello and by the Achehnese were to cause the English considerable trouble during the first decade of their occupation of Natal.

Both Dutch support for Bagindo Maharaja Lello and Achehnese designs on Natal were closely linked to the internal political organisation of the negeri. The English establishment found themselves to be primus inter pares among several competing groups, even after their take-over of Natal. Marsden notes that the English conciliated rather than controlled the various factions at the kuala,² and their actions during the mid-eighteenth century testify that this was not always an easy task. It was particularly difficult when the interests of the English servants conflicted with those of even their allies among the local headmen.

Fort Marlborough had justified the occupation of Natal to London on the basis of the district's potential as a new pepper-growing area, but this hope was rapidly proved to be illusory. Immediately after the English arrived, the datos had written to Benkulen of their willingness to plant pepper.³ but had added that as they were unacquainted with cultivation methods, it would 'be some time before they can bring it to perfection'.⁴ The second Resident, Randolph Marriot, who arrived at Natal in May 1752, took some pepper vines with him but most decayed before being planted. Nevertheless, Dato Besar took some of the remaining good ones, and Marriot discovered some already planted which were growing so well that he wrote an encouraging report on the long-range prospects for pepper culture at Natal.⁵ By the time Marriot was replaced at Natal a year later, his optimism had evaporated. In his final meeting with the headmen he stressed the Company's need for some return from Natal for the

1. Padang Vergadering, 10 March 1755, KA 2753, pp. 627-8.

2. Marsden, op. cit., p. 374.

3. FM Cons., 28 Sept. 1751, SFR 65.

4. FM Cons., 31 Jan. 1752, SFR 66.

5. FM Cons., 19 May, 29 June 1752, SFR 66.

'heavy expence' of maintaining an establishment there and reminded the chiefs of their promises to plant pepper. They responded that the English would not only have to advance them money to get cultivation started, but also keep a large garrison at Natal to reinforce their authority over their followers and oblige them to grow the crop.¹ Marriot concluded that the kuala people could not be compelled to plant pepper whatever force was established at Natal since the people would merely slip away to another locale, unless, he added, the Company also took control of Tapanuli and/or Airbangis to prevent their settling at those places.² The inland people, Marriot conceded, he knew less about, since the kuala people had attempted to block his contacts with them, but he thought that even they would be unwilling to exchange pepper-planting for their current occupations of gathering gold and camphor unless the former were at least equally profitable.³ At the end of the 1750s the Benkulen Board confirmed Marriot's opinion that the English would never induce the Natal people to plant pepper without increasing the Company's purchase price, 'as they have so many more lucrative ways of employing themselves'.⁴ Indeed it seems unlikely that the Fort Marlborough authorities had ever really expected a pepper boom at Natal. They had settled the place because it was a trading port, and the first of their many exhortations to the Natal people to plant pepper had stressed the advantages to the port in terms of the 'Increase of Trade' which would come there as a consequence of the vessels sent to collect the pepper produced.⁵

The only other source of revenue which could be used to cover the settlement's costs was customs duties. Marriot had suggested this as an alternative to pepper-planting but noted that 'to lay a Custom on all Vessels trading there' would raise the price of merchandise and arouse stiff opposition among the local people 'except

1. Marriot to FM, 16 June 1753, SFR 66.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

4. FM Cons., 9 July 1759, SFR 70.

5. FM Cons., 28 Sept. 1751, SFR 65.

we had a Sufficient force to secure the trade, as far as Singkell from the Insolence of the Dutch vessels & to keep those in Awe on the Spot'.¹ He later suggested that a five or six per cent duty might be laid on trade but again admitted that it 'would require a good Garrison in order to make them Comply with such [a] Demand'.²

The collection of customs revenue was an even more delicate subject than pepper-planting in English relations with the local datos. Disputes over this had arisen almost as soon as the English arrived at Natal. When the Company snow Brilliant made an unauthorised stop at Natal en route from Madras, Dato Besar expected to collect duties on her captain's commerce but had been restrained by Resident John Saul, who had indicated that any duties collected at Natal were now due to the English Company.³ Dato Besar was clearly unhappy about this, and Saul reported that he had been unable to prevent the Brilliant's captain from trading at Natal since the chief had desired it and had bought goods from him.⁴ Dato Besar subsequently commented to Thomas Combes, who held a special grievance conference two years later, 'that before We [the English] settled there, the Master or Commander of every Ship or Vessel that Traded there always made him [the Dato] some present'. and asked that this custom be reinstated.⁵ Combes replied that the captains of Company ships never made presents 'to the Chief of such Places as were in their [English] Possession' but made no objection to such an imposition on other vessels.⁶ Although the English authorities could not force such vessels to pay the datos, Combes explained, the captains would probably offer something 'if they found it for [sic] their interest'.⁷ Combes went on to suggest his surprise that Dato Besar would

1. FM Cons., 29 June 1752, SFR 66.

2. Marriot to FM, 16 June 1753, SFR 66. Marriot estimated that the trade of Natal was worth 300,000 Spanish dollars, excluding the value of gold and camphor that the country produced.

3. FM Cons., 15 Jan. 1752, SFR 66. Captain Burman was later censured at Fort Marlborough for disobeying his sailing orders to come directly from Madras to Benkulen.

4. *ibid.*

5. Combes to Fort Marlborough, 28 June 1753, SFR 66.

6. *ibid.*

7. *ibid.*

'seemingly...regret the loss of such a Trifle, without once reflecting on the many advantages that would accrue to him, his People, and his Country, from their now being under the Mild Government, and powerful Protection of the English Company'.¹

There are indications that the datos may have found the 'Mild Government' of the English a financial disappointment in other ways. Saul had allowed Raja Darat four dollars per month allowance when he proved helpful in obtaining building materials for the infant settlement and Marriot had continued this, having discovered that he could not get along without Darat's assistance.² Neither Resident, however, had obtained Fort Marlborough's permission for this added expense. Both Dato Besar and Raja Darat persistently requested Marriot to raise the amount, and when the Resident told Darat that Fort Marlborough's authorisation was needed for such a step, the Raja asked to go to Benkulen to present his case. The Benkulen Board offered to continue the allowance but apparently would not raise it, and Raja Darat refused to accept so small a sum.³

The Natal datos seem to have had inflated notions of the gratuities awarded by the Company to the chiefs of its other districts. During the meeting with Combes in 1753, they asked that as Natal was 'the Company's Youngest Child they might be treated with the same Kindness and Indulgence as their Elder Brothers were and have granted to them the same Dutys, Taxes and Allowances that were granted the Pangarans and Dattos here [at Fort Marlborough]'.⁴ Combes replied that the Company paid the southern chiefs only a gratuity on the pepper produced in their own districts which the Natal headmen could also collect whenever they grew pepper of their own. There matters stood. The Natal chiefs profited as merchants from increased English trade at their port and once again enjoyed revenue from non-Company vessels calling there, in addition to taxing traders coming down from the hills. The Company servants on

1. Combes to Fort Marlborough, 28 June 1753, SFR 66.

2. FM Cons., 29 June, 31 July 1752, SFR 66.

3. FM Cons., 31 July 1752, SFR 66.

4. Combes to FM, 28 June 1753, SFR 66.

the other hand, collected customs only from English vessels, not daring to impose duties on native craft.¹ The Natal Residents apparently kept trying to revise this latter circumstance, but as late as the end of 1755 Resident Carter informed Fort Marlborough that 'the Dattoo [Besar] would on no Account accept of a Pension from the Company in lieu of the Customs he taxes on Goods and Merchandize'.²

There were other ways in which the local population resisted English attempts to reorder conditions at Natal. After the wounding of a Company Bugis by a Natal man, Resident Marriot attempted to obtain satisfaction for the Company from Dato Besar. The datos would not allow Marriot to take the suspect prisoner because they said, according to Natal law, eye-witnesses, which Marriot had in abundance, were not sufficient proof of guilt unless some possession, weapon or piece of clothing had been taken at the scene of the crime. When Marriot issued the veiled threat that he could not answer for the actions of his other Bugis unless the guilty party were punished, Dato Maharaja Indo replied that the Bugis could do as they pleased, and if trouble came, 'there was [sic] enough people at Nattal to Return it with Interest'.³

The Dutch at one point in the early 1750s had complained that the only recourse open to the friends of a man murdered at Natal was to deal the same to his attacker.⁴ While justice by reprisal was not the normal state of affairs, it was not in the datos' interest to attempt to suppress violence. Marsden recounts a case in the early 1760s in which the Resident attempted to induce the Dato Besar to prevent assassinations in his territory. The Dato replied:

I cannot assent to any measures for that purpose,...I reap from these murders an advantage of twenty dollars a head, when the families prosecute.⁵

1. Pybus and Walsh to FSG, 12 Feb. 1754, par. 28, SFR 10.

2. FM Cons., 15 Dec. 1755, SFR 68.

3. Marriot to Hindley, 24 July 1753, FM Cons., 14 Aug. 1752, SFR 66.

4. Padang to Batavia, 31 Dec. 1750, KA 2674, p. 24; Padang to Batavia, 26 Nov. 1751, KA 2674, p. 878.

5. Marsden, op. cit., p. 374.

The Dato subsequently refused an allowance of thirty dollars per month in lieu of these judicial prerogatives, noting that he would be out of pocket as at least three men a month were murdered.

It appears that the English establishment was absorbed into the political patterns of Natal without altering them radically. The English served sometimes as mediators between the various conflicting factions, but more frequently as the backers of Dato Besar's and Raja Darat's group in opposition to other groups which also had outside support; of these the most troublesome in the long run were the Achehnese. An Achehnese community continued to trade and reside at Natal after the English settlement there but was apparently not strong enough alone to influence politics in the early 1750s. Nakhoda Pokallum, who later attempted to overthrow the English, had initially helped them to settle at Natal.¹ A dispute that the third Resident, Roger Carter, encountered on his arrival at the port in 1753 found the Achehnese ranged against the Minangkabau, Rau and Agam people. Carter tried to arrange mediation, but Dato Besar, who the Resident thought was secretly encouraging the anti-Achehnese party, at first refused to help on the grounds that he could not control the disputants:

...As the generality of the Inhabitants were from different parts, and not properly belonging to him, he could not command them, and [he] thought it would be better to let them fight till they were tired, when they would be more tractable.²

When Carter finally convinced the Dato to attempt conciliation, the Achehnese must have been in the weaker position, for they agreed to an accommodation while the other side insisted 'on the total Banishment of their Antagonists'.³ Carter managed to resolve this quarrel although the records do not state on what terms, after the Benkulen Board told him to support whichever side would most rapidly terminate the

1. FM Cons., 12 March 1756, SFR 69.

2. FM Cons., 22 Nov. 1753, SFR 66.

3. FM Cons., 14 Dec. 1753, SFR 66.

dispute, since without peace, Fort Marlborough wrote, 'nothing can be expected from those parts'.¹

Troubles between the Achehnese and Minangkabau communities were endemic at Natal² and often not subject to successful mediation by the English. The local Achehnese were frequently supported or manipulated by forces in the North which appear to have been dispatched by the Achehnese Sultan to reassert his long-lapsed claim to the West Coast negeris. Resident Randolph Marriot was plagued by recurring quarrels between the Achehnese and Dato Besar during the first year of the English settlement at Natal, but when these difficulties subsided in October 1752 Marriot feared the lull was calculated to enable the Dato's opponents to strengthen their party.³ Within a month Marriot's apprehensions were confirmed. It was reported that the Achehnese Sultan was arming several vessels for raids against the North Coast. Marriot had been told publicly that the force was directed against the Dutch at Baros, but the English Company's pensioner Sultan Awaladin secretly informed him that the head of the raiding party, Po Anteen, had notified the Natal Achehnese to prepare to rise against the English.⁴

Fort Marlborough hastened to reinforce its new outpost against its first external threat, preparing the Company sloop Mary to transport ten European and thirty Bugis military to the North with ten more soldiers to be seconded en route from the garrison at Muko Muko. Letters were written to Dato Besar, Sultan Awaladin and the Minangkabau Sultan assuring them of Benkulen's intention to defend Natal, and the Dutch at Padang were told as politely as possible not to meddle in the brewing troubles. Another letter was also written to the Achehnese Sultan expressing English desires for peace and harmony with his nation and asking him to

1. FM Cons., 22 Nov., 14 Dec. 1753, SFR 66.

2. Marsden, op. cit., p. 350. Marsden stated that warfare was so much a part of life at Natal that it operated according to strict rules, including being carried on only during certain hours of the day.

3. FM Cons., 10 Nov. 1752, SFR 66.

4. FM Cons., 12 Dec. 1752, SFR 66.

restrain his subjects.¹ Nevertheless, by mid-December 1752, twelve belalongs, bantings and jallores, carrying three hundred of the estimated eight hundred-strong Acehnesse force assembling to the north, arrived off Natal.² The expected assault, however, did not materialise. Although the sloop Mary did not actually depart for Natal until mid-February 1753, after Marriot had written to Benkulen in January that the settlement would have to be abandoned if supplies were not sent soon,³ Marriot had already reinforced his garrison by hiring extra Bugis. More important, the Benkulen-owned brigantine Fanny had arrived at Natal from Nias at the end of November. The Acehnesse appear to have concluded that the Fanny tipped the military balance against them, for they claimed publicly that they would attack Natal after she departed.⁴ The Acehnesse, however, seem to have left Natal before the brigantine, possibly in search of easier targets. Marriot's letters from Natal after January 1753 indicate no distress at that port, but the Padang authorities reported to Batavia their fears that the people of Tapanuli would join those of Aceh and Singkil in a foray against Baros.⁵ Once again, however, nothing seems to have come of this venture.

After the abortive Acehnesse feint of 1752, Natal was generally free of any but a few of the usual local disturbances until 1755. In April of that year Resident Carter reported that Bagindo Maharaja Lello, the Dutch-backed claimant, had returned to Natal and was proceeding to build up strong local support against Dato Besar.⁶ Fort Marlborough also received intelligence from Padang that the Dutch currently were arming some vessels and had already advanced Bagindo Maharaja Lello a large sum of money to support his anti-English activities. The Benkulen Board again moved to reinforce Natal, fearing that the Dutch might choose to back their candidate

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1. FM Cons., 12 Dec. 1752, SFR 66.
 2. FM Cons., 8 Jan., 31 Jan. 1753, SFR 66.
 3. FM Cons., 22 Feb. 1753, SFR 66.
 4. FM Cons., 8 Jan., 31 Jan. 1753, SFR 66.
 5. Padang to Batavia, 10 April 1753, KA 2712, p. 188.
 6. FM Cons., 9 May 1755, SFR 68.

openly. Combes' sloop Centurion was hired to carry thirty-five extra soldiers under Captain Joseph Gabbett, twenty-five muskets, ammunition and fifteen slaves to help dig additional entrenchments for Natal's fort. Carter was ordered to seize Bagindo Maharaja Lello, but only if he thought this would reduce rather than increase tensions at the kuala. Carter was also advised to hoist the Company flag at Pulau Tamang, where a stone with the VOC coat of arms had been found, as well as at Pulau Karang, Tabujung and 'any other places actually under the Jurisdiction of Nattall', to discourage Dutch infiltration.¹

The situation at Natal continued to deteriorate during the next two months, and Fort Marlborough decided to dispatch another thirty men under Lt. Frith on the sloop Mary early in June 1755.² On 13 June Carter wrote from Natal that the sloop Centurion, sent north nearly a month earlier, had not arrived and that the forces gathering in support of Bagindo Maharaja Lello had rendezvoused at Airbangis.³ Even worse, the Achehnese opponents of Dato Besar had allied with the Minangkabau adherents of Bagindo Maharaja Lello. They had requested aid from 'Panglemo Lout, who stiled himself the King of Atcheen's Admiral', and who was then at Tapanuli.⁴ In the face of such strong opposition Dato Besar appeared to be leaning toward an accommodation with his rival, so that the Resident feared that the English might be deprived of even his backing. Carter then urgently requested still more reinforcements. With its resources badly strained by the sixty-five soldiers and two senior officers already allocated to Natal, Fort Marlborough managed to scrape up another fifteen military who were sent off in three hired tombongans in July.⁵

By 25 July Carter appears to have received the reinforcements sent on the Centurion and the confrontation at Natal had occurred. Carter had tried to arrange

1. FM Cons., 9 May, 21 May 1755, SFR 68.

2. FM Cons., 9 June 1755, SFR 68. The Mary did not sail until 6 July.

3. FM Cons., 11 July 1755, SFR 68.

4. *ibid.*

5. *ibid.*

a compromise and when Bagindo Maharaja Lello's followers refused this, he had fired on them. The barrage continued for two days between the English fort and Bagindo Maharaja Lello's entrenchments in the town on the other side of the Natal River.¹ Finally Carter sent forty men across the river and Bagindo Maharaja Lello and 'some of his Choice Friends' fled. The English troops captured eight cannon but gained little from looting the town as the local people had 'hid all their effects in the country', a normal procedure during times of trouble.² Carter and his assistant, Alexander Hall, noted that the Natal populace stood in greater awe of the English after this successful foray from the fort, and they consequently hoped that the disturbances were over. Carter later obtained depositions from the Minangkabau leaders, Orangkaya Molea, who was a kinsman of Bagindo Maharaja Lello, and Nakhoda Lebbe, Dato Sinaro Panjang and Soutan Maharaja - each testifying that he had collaborated with Bagindo Maharaja Lello in the insurrection. Nakhoda Lebbe also surrendered four letters taken from Bagindo Maharaja Lello's chest which were offered as proof that the Dutch had encouraged the conflict.³ These chiefs were fined five hundred dollars for the expense the troubles had cost the Company.⁴

The disturbances at Natal, however, were not finished. Early in September 1755, two hundred Achehnese led by 'the King of Atcheen's Admiral', Panglima Laut, sailed to Tabujung to join Bagindo Maharaja Lello and the remnants of his party for a raid on the English settlement. They advanced to within a few hours' march of Natal before Carter ordered his Bugis garrison to head them off. The two forces met outside Natal in the middle of the night and both panicked and ran after two Achehnese had been killed. The next morning Carter dispatched a party of Europeans to pursue the fleeing Achehnese. The sloops Centurion and Mary were also sent off

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1. FM Cons., 9 June, 11 Aug. 1755, SFR 68; Alexander Hall to Sir John Hall, 30 Nov. 1755, Hall Papers.
 2. *ibid.*
 3. FM Cons., 19 Sept. 1755, SFR 68; Affidavits from Orankyo Molea, Noquedah Lebbee, Dattoo Senaro Panjong, and Sootan Maharaja, HMS 96 (14), pp. 355-7.
 4. FM Cons., 11 Aug. 1755, SFR 68.

to cut the Achehnese line of retreat by burning their vessels at Tabujung but were delayed by contrary winds. The Achehnese consequently reached Tabujung before the sloops and fortified themselves there with their vessels still intact. The Mary and Centurion later fired on the Achehnese entrenchments but with no effect.

Carter finally dispatched a large force of 60 Europeans and 130 Arabs and Bugis for an all-out assault. Even this unfortunately failed to dislodge the Achehnese¹ although according to Alexander Hall's description, the action was lively:

The Atchun people had but few muskets, our people being mostly galled by Swivels [guns] & one or Two Cannon, being supplied with Powder & Ball from the Dutch gratis, Ten or a dozen of the boldest made the Attack, by sallying out of the woods, throwing their Lances at a distance and then like Highlanders came down with sword & Target, upon which Bravo's depends the day.²

The Achehnese lost about twenty-five men in this encounter, the English four Europeans and one Malay dead and Ensign Pilmore seriously wounded, but the English were obliged to retreat, and their withdrawal, Carter reported, would have become a rout except for the courageous leadership of Lt. Frith. Carter feared that this debacle at Tabujung would nullify the good work accomplished by the expulsion of Bagindo Maharaja Lello in June, destroy the support for the English among the local population, and embolden the Achehnese to make another attempt on Natal.³ He requested additional supplies of powder and shot from Benkulen and detained the sloop Centurion at Natal for the continued defence of the settlement.

The Fort Marlborough authorities were so concerned by Carter's news that they decided to dispatch the Company storeship Exeter to the North with fifty more soldiers, fifty-eight barrels of gunpowder, and extra arms, rice, salt and arrack for the garrison at Natal, on condition that Carter did not keep the ship longer than two weeks in order to reduce the demurrage charges which would result from this unscheduled expedition. Carter was ordered to send the Exeter to Tabujung

1. FM Cons., 7 Oct. 1755, SFR 68; Alexander Hall to Sir John Hall, 30 Nov. 1755, Hall Papers.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

in the hope that the appearance of so large a vessel would frighten the Achehnese into abandoning their base there.¹ The Exeter, windbound at Mako Mako, never reached Natal, but even so the Achehnese retired from Tabujung to Tapanuli by the end of October. With the immediate threat to the settlement gone, Carter allowed the sloop Centurion to continue on her trading voyage and planned to place a corporal and six Bugis soldiers at Tabujung as instructed earlier by the Board.² The principal agent provocateur among the Natal Achehnese, Nakhoda Pokallum, was arrested and sent to Fort Marlborough, from whence he was deported to St. Helena.³

After the Achehnese withdrawal from Tabujung, Carter anticipated no further trouble from them. Nevertheless, morale remained low at Natal. The burning of the Malay bazaar in one of Bagindo Maharaja Lello's raids almost caused the flight of the merchants on whom Natal's status as a trade centre depended.⁴ In this uncertain situation the appearance at Pulau Tamang of a number of small craft and two Dutch sloops armed with fourteen four-pounder guns again caused alarm at the beginning of November. Although Padang claimed these vessels were destined for Baros, the reported presence in this fleet of Bagindo Maharaja Lello and Po Champa, an Achehnese leader who had also been summoned to Padang after the skirmish at Tabujung, made Natal believe that the Dutch were preparing to move openly against the English settlement.⁵ The Bugis garrison which Carter had placed at Tabujung refused to remain on duty when the Dutch were reported in the area. Carter numbered the rest of his garrison at only about thirty able men, and he told Benkulen that most of his officers were sick as well. Fort Marlborough reacted by redispaching the ship Exeter, which had only returned on 11 December from her previous unsuccessful attempt to reach Natal.⁶ The Dutch sloops had departed from Pulau Tamang by

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1. FM Cons., 7 Oct. 1755, SFR 68.
 2. FM Cons., 26 Oct., 12 Dec. 1755, SFR 68.
 3. FM Cons., 26 March 1756, SFR 69.
 4. FM Cons., 26 Oct. 1755, SFR 68.
 5. Alexander Hall to Sir John Hall, 30 Nov. 1755, Hall Papers; FM Cons., 15 and 22 Dec. 1755, SFR 68.
 6. FM Cons., 15 and 22 Dec. 1755, SFR 68.

9 December 1755, but Carter thought they had sailed north to occupy Tabujung and feared that they might attack Natal on their return. He had already been obliged to distribute \$100 among the country people, he reported, in order to forestall an uprising in favour of Bagindo Maharaja Lello. The Exeter sailed for Natal on 21 December 1755, and before she returned south, Carter, on Fort Marlborough's orders, had established another new English post at Tapanuli.¹

The Drive for Tapanuli

Events at Natal in the troubled year of 1755 had been closely linked to Tapanuli, which by that time was a focus of intense interest by the Achehnese and Dutch as well as the English. The English had enjoyed considerable trade with Tapanuli Bay even before their occupation of Natal, and after 1751 links between the two ports increased. Constantly at odds with the Dutch, the head penchulu in the northern Tapanuli Bay area, Raja Simorang, had been friendly toward the English. Padang feared that this would lead to immediate English expansion from Natal into Tapanuli, and the Dutch authorities reported to Batavia early in 1752 that Raja Simorang had visited Natal, probably to confer with a bastard son of the Minangkabau prince of Pagarrujong about placing Tapanuli under English protection. The Tapanuli chief allegedly had already helped the English to select an island in the Bay which would be suitable for a post. Padang feared such an eventuality would ruin the commerce at Baros by depriving it of trade not only with Tapanuli but also Gunung Tua and Sorkam where the local people were already inclined to traffic with foreigners. Nevertheless, Padang still hoped to discourage the expansion of English smuggling in Tapanuli Bay by equipping two cruisers to trade and patrol in the area,² and in the absence of any immediate English attempts to take over Tapanuli, Dutch fears receded. Beyond their usual patrols the Padang authorities did little further to promote VOC interests at Tapanuli during the next two years.

1. FM Cons., 22 Dec. 1755, SFR 68.

2. Padang to Batavia, 15 April 1752, KA 2692, pp. 15-8.

The Achehnese, on the other hand, were extremely busy in Tapanuli Bay in the early 1750s. Their thrust at Natal in 1752 was launched from Tapanuli, and they returned there after the failure of that raid. The subsequent report that Simorang intended to join these Achehnese and the Singkil people in a foray against Baros caused Padang to equip the panchallang Overmas and sloop Goudvink with fifty military for a sweep to the North early in 1753.¹ This expedition found no disturbance and its only accomplishment appears to have been the capture at Airbangis of a Chinese panchallang which had a pass stamped at Natal for trade at Singkil. This vessel and its cargo were auctioned at Padang for Rix-dollars 1147.36.² Within a year, however, the Achehnese had begun to prey on English shipping at Tapanuli. Resident Carter at Natal reported in October 1754 that 'a person said to be Deputed by the King of Acheen', was at Tapanuli disrupting English trade.³ This was the first specific reference to Panglima Laut who during the next seven years was to become the bete noir of both the English and the Dutch. A vessel from Natal had been seized by the Achehnese at Tapanuli, and an attempt was also made to capture the Benkulen-owned sloop Resolution.⁴ Carter also confirmed that the attempt to cut off the Bengal sloop Orange Tree at Singkil the preceding July, in which the sloop's linguist had been killed and several of its crew wounded, had been made 'in consequence of Orders from the King of Acheen'.⁵ Sultan Awaladin, the usual source of intelligence on local affairs, informed Carter that he had been told that this deputy of the Sultan of Acheh 'had orders to settle the Achehnese wherever he could'.⁶

By December 1754, the Achehnese presence in Tapanuli Bay had led to open

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1. Padang to Batavia, 10 April 1753, KA 2712, p. 188.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 5 March 1753, KA 2731, p. 15.
 3. FM Cons., 18 Nov. 1754, SFR 67.
 4. *ibid.*
 5. FM Cons., 18 July, 18 Nov. 1754, SFR 67.
 6. FM Cons., 18 Nov. 1754, SFR 67.

hostilities at Sorkam, a port on the border of the Bay. The Padang Governor, van Idsinga, wrote to his successor van Herzeele of a quarrel in progress at Sorkam between a roving party of Achehnese and the Minangkabau residents, mostly people from the Sapulutuah Bandhar, Trusang and Baijang. Van Idsinga was, however, not overly anxious and merely recommended that the VOC stand clear of local disputes among the Sumatran peoples, even those involving its allies (Sorkam). Experience had shown, he noted, that Dutch involvement tended to fan small skirmishes into 'general alarm'. Nevertheless, the Baros Resident was instructed to watch developments at Sorkam carefully and attempt to keep the Achehnese out of the waters around Baros. Protection at sea, van Idsinga stated, was all that the VOC had ever promised its allies on the West Coast, and he added that it was also the maximum of which Padang was capable, with its garrison too small and weak to mount the expeditions needed to eradicate all the rabble in the North.¹

The English, who unlike the Dutch had recently faced the threat of an Achehnese raid on their post at Natal, had greater reason to be concerned about Achehnese movements in the North. Moreover, the English possessed a much greater stake than the Dutch in the commerce of Tapanuli, which by 1754 was very important to Natal. No fewer than seven jallores, belalongs and perahus, four of them commanded by Achehnese, had called at Natal, coming from and bound for Tapanuli between October and December 1754.² The Dutch also noted that at least four English brigantines and sloops had bought up everything to be had at Tapanuli Bay in late 1754 and early 1755 and added that English, Javanese and Achehnese smuggling was so active between Tabujung and Singkil that profits at Baros had dropped to barely Florins 3000 in the preceding six months.³ With English shipping in Tapanuli Bay already plagued by Achehnese attacks, the English Resident at Natal, who as head of the first Natal Concern was himself deeply involved in the area's trade, took events at Sorkam very seriously. At the end of December 1754, he wrote to Fort Marlborough that the

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1. van Idsinga to van Herzeele, Padang, 13 Dec. 1754, KA 2753, pp. 239-40.
 2. Account of the Arrival and Departure of Vessels at Natal, October - 27 December 1754, SFR 10A, pp. 153-4.
 3. Padang to Batavia, 23 April 1755, KA 2753, pp. 393-4.

King of Acheh's deputy had taken Sorkea and was reputedly planning to subjugate Tapanuli as well. Resident Carter also warned Benkulen that this would badly hurt Natal's trade as Tapanuli was 'the grand Market for Salt, Iron and Benjamin'.¹ He suggested that the Achehnese would not dare to attempt further penetration if the English showed themselves willing to protect Tapanuli, 'but that otherwise they will inevitably get the command of that Bay'.² Carter added that he planned to send his assistant, Alexander Hall, to Tapanuli for further intelligence, and Fort Marlborough, as a result of Carter's representations, resolved to write Fort St. George concerning the potentially disastrous results of an Achehnese take-over at Tapanuli Bay.³

The death of the sturdily independent Raja Simorang early in 1755 appears to have provided the opportunity for all three rival nations to push their respective interests at Tapanuli. In the same letter, dated 9 April 1755, in which he reported Simorang's death and the growth of Bagindo Maharaja Lello's party at Natal, Carter noted that he had also been informed that the Dutch planned to settle at Tapanuli, an act which would damage Natal's commerce quite as irreparably as an Achehnese seizure of the Bay.⁴ Dato Besar and the other Natal chiefs also wrote recommending an English establishment at Tapanuli as a means of securing Natal's trade. Fort Marlborough then ordered Carter to send Hall to the Bay area before the Dutch plans could progress, in order to induce the Tapanuli chiefs to accept a contract with the English. Hall was to leave a garrison of one European and five or six Bugis as a mark of English possession of the Bay.⁵ The troubles at Natal with Bagindo Maharaja Lello and the Achehnese delayed this project until August 1755. Carter himself then went to Tapanuli with the sloops Mary and Centurion to arrange for English settlement.⁶

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1. FM Cons., 17 Jan. 1755, SFR 68.
 2. *ibid.*
 3. *ibid.*
 4. FM Cons., 9 May 1755, SFR 68.
 5. *ibid.*
 6. FM Cons., 11 Aug., 4 Sept. 1755, SFR 68.

He returned, however, before the end of August with his mission unaccomplished. The Tapanuli chiefs had flatly refused to allow a British post although they remained willing to trade with the English. Carter ascribed their reluctance to fear of the Acheknese since one of the Tapanuli headmen had asked Carter to leave behind a military force to help expel the Acheknese from the Bay.¹ Almost as soon as Carter returned to Natal that settlement was plunged into renewed disturbances by Bagindo Maharaja Lello and his Acheknese allies at Tabujung. Panglima Laut's participation in this raid and his aid to Bagindo Maharaja Lello may have been in retaliation for Carter's overtures at Tapanuli. While the English and the Acheknese were embroiled at Natal, the Dutch moved to secure Tapanuli for the VOC. Carter wrote to Fort Marlborough on 28 August 1755 that on the day after he had left Tapanuli the Dutch had arrived in force with two sloops, a panchallang and several country vessels from Baros.² Fort Marlborough, chagrined at Carter's failure to obtain a treaty, and apparent Dutch success, could only recommend that the Natal Resident keep alert for any future opportunities to place Tapanuli under English protection which might arise from a Dutch miscarriage or disturbances among the local people.³

There was nothing fortuitous about the timing of the Dutch arrival at Tapanuli; it was part of a systematic attempt by Padang to forestall Fort Marlborough's further expansion on the West Coast. With an eye on increased English activity, Batavia had ordered in 1754 a general renewal of existing treaties with the princes and headmen of VOC-claimed ports.⁴ By April 1755 Padang reported that Capt. Lt. Visboom had been sent on an expedition to the south and had succeeded in obtaining confirmation of the contracts with the negeris from Trusang to Inderapura, in which most of the chiefs had been persuaded to cede their domains to the Dutch Company, making them subjects

1. FM Cons., 19 Sept. 1755, SFR 68.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

4. Padang to Batavia, 23 April 1755, KA 2753, pp. 404-6; van Basel, op. cit., pp. 88-9; Stapel, 'Introduction to Trusang treaty of 1755', Corpus Diplomaticum, vol. VI, pp. 29-30.

not allies of the VOC. Contracts were subsequently renewed with Pau, Kota Tengah, Pariaman, V Kotas, VII Kotas, XII Kotas and IX Kotas. Padang also planned a similar expedition to the northern districts.¹

Meanwhile at some point after Raja Simorang's death, the Baros Resident had managed to appoint in his place as 'head regent' of Tapanuli, one Dato Poras who was friendly to the VOC. Padang consequently hoped that it could reclaim the commerce of Tapanuli and on this basis revive the 'languishing [Dutch] trade around the North'.² Carter's trip to Tapanuli, which the Baros Resident reported to Padang on 6 September 1755, however, aroused new Dutch fears that the English would once again anticipate them. According to the Baros Resident, Carter had arrived in the Bay with three vessels, tried to bribe Dato Poras with \$1000 into acquiescing to an English post and when this failed, threatened to resort to violence.³ Carter had been obliged to leave only by the appearance of VOC cruisers, and at Dato Poras's request the VOC panchallang Swaljow had been left at Tapanuli to prevent the Natal Resident returning with a larger force. Padang was pleased with Dato Poras's behaviour but resolved to keep patrol boats continuously at Tapanuli Bay to hinder English machinations and reinforce the loyalty of the local people who the Dutch thought were so timid that they would easily defect to the English if it seemed the VOC was not prepared to oppose an invasion of their negeris.⁴

As ordered by Padang, the cruisers which had arrived just after Carter's abortive mission to Tapanuli, remained there during September, October and November 1755. Carter at Natal appears to have been convinced that the Dutch planned to settle at Tapanuli. His fears were strengthened in November 1755 by news from the master of the English sloop Orange Tree, which had called at Padang en route to Madras, that the Dutch Captain of Military and Fiscaal were to be dispatched with eighty men and

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1. Corpus Diplomaticum, op. cit., vol. VI, pp. 29-40, 49-52, 74-6; Padang to Batavia, 23 April 1755, KA 2753, pp. 404-6.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 29 Sept. 1755, KA 2753, pp. 649-50.
 3. *ibid.*, pp. 650-1.
 4. *ibid.*

two sloops to occupy Tapanuli.¹ The Dutch, on the other hand, appear to have believed that new treaties with the area would be sufficient to ensure their claim to Tapanuli. The VOC patrol boats, which Carter noted bitterly had been left at Tapanuli 'to interrupt the Trade of other Nations',² seem to have stayed there only until the arrival of Capt. Lt. Visboom's long-projected northern round of contract renewals.

It was Visboom's expedition which the Orange Tree's master had heard about at Padang. Ordered north on 18 October, Capt. Lt. Visboom left first for Airbangis where he negotiated a new treaty on 23 November. He then moved on to the Natal area, signing another contract, presumably with Bagindo Maharaja Lello, on 30 November. It was Visboom's fleet, anchored at Pulau Tamang from 27 November to 9 December, which Carter warned Fort Marlborough might attack Natal, particularly since Bagindo Maharaja Lello formed one of the party. Visboom left Pulau Tamang for Tabujung, as Carter predicted, and he negotiated a contract there on 17 December 1755 after Carter's small Bugis garrison had decamped. Visboom then continued northward. He negotiated a new VOC contract with Sorkam on 20 December, and on 26 December 1755, he entered Tapanuli Bay. The next day he met with Dato Poras, the Baros-designated head penghulu.³

The treaty which Dato Poras signed with Visboom was the standard VOC contract. Tapanuli was given into full possession of the Dutch Company which was to enjoy the right to settle or fortify the negeri at will. No foreign Europeans or others were to be permitted to settle at or trade with the district, and the headmen were to deliver all its produce to the VOC. The chiefs were pledged to restore runaway servants, both free and slave, to the VOC in return for a fixed reward and were to harbour no enemies of the Dutch. All local quarrels were to be referred to Padang

1. FM Cons., 27 Oct., 15 Dec. 1755, SFR 68.

2. FM Cons., 15 Dec. 1755, SFR 68.

3. Padang to Batavia, 27 Dec. 1755, KA 2776, p. 22; Corpus Diplomaticum, op. cit., vol. VI, p. 74; FM Cons., 22 Dec. 1755, SFR 68; Alexander Eall to Sir John Hall, 30 Nov. 1755, Hall Papers.

for mediation, and the appointment of new chiefs was also left to the Dutch authorities. The Tapanuli headmen were bound neither to charge tolls on trade nor to sail their own vessels southward beyond Padang or northward beyond Baros. The Dutch, for their part, were pledged to protect their new subjects from attack by sea, a provision which constituted little more than the patrols Padang normally mounted against smugglers.¹ From Tapanuli, Visboom went on to Gunung Tua, an independent negeri at the south end of Tapanuli Bay, signing another contract there on 31 December. The expedition then returned to Baros, and from thence, on 29 January 1756, to Padang without having placed VOC personnel at any of the ports where Dutch contracts had been renegotiated.²

Although there is no mention of this general renewal of VOC treaties in the North in Fort Marlborough's records, it is difficult to believe that Carter was unaware of the object of Visboom's expedition. It is possible that Carter really feared an attack on Natal by Visboom's fleet; at least that was the public justification for redispersing the Company ship Exeter from Benkulen to Natal on 21 December 1755. Nevertheless, the Exeter, after her arrival at Natal on 20 January, some time after Visboom's departure from the immediate area, was not allowed simply to deliver the stores and reinforcements that she brought for the settlement and return to Benkulen. Carter's next letter to Fort Marlborough, dated 26 January, made no mention of the Dutch at all but merely stated that he planned to leave in the Exeter the next morning for Tapanuli, where it would be necessary 'in case he succeed[ed] to have a Vessel of Force and Burthen to protect the people he may leave there'.³ It seems probable that the Exeter's journey to the North had always been intended for

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1. Articles between Jan Jansz Visboom for the VOC and Dato Poras of Tapanuli, 27 Dec. 1755, KA 2776, pp. 74-7.
 2. Visboom's report and Depositions from Tuanku Jang di Pertuan Raja Peminggen Laut, Marahindo Wakil, Dato Cayo and Sutan Bongso concerning the signing of the Tapanuli treaty of 1755, 22 Sept. 1757, KA 2828, Lettra C; Carter to Pybus, 25 Feb. 1756, Home Correspondence, Miscellaneous Letters Received (hereafter referred to as MLR), vol. 39, pp. 104a-h, (IOL).
 3. FM Cons., 27 Feb. 1756, SFR 69.

this purpose. If Carter was aware of the general renewal of VOC contracts by Visboom, he must also have known that the Dutch Captain had not fixed VOC garrisons at the ports he visited. Having been prevented for nearly a year by the Dutch and Acheknese from establishing an English base at Tapanuli, the departure of Visboom's fleet from Tapanuli Bay provided just the opening which Carter had been ordered to seek.

Carter arrived at Fort Marlborough on 11 March 1756 in the Exeter, having been at Tapanuli from 29 January to 12 February. He reported to the Board that as ordered he had garrisoned that port with 'a Command of men', a rather inadequate description of the fifty-nine men and two sloops which he had left at Tapanuli.¹ Carter also had 'Entered into Articles with the Chiefs there on their declaring themselves under no Engagements with any European Power'.² This treaty signed on 5 February promised the English precisely what had been promised the Dutch. It stipulated that all Tapanuli's products were to be sold exclusively to the English, that no other nations would be permitted to trade there without English consent and that the English were free to settle or fortify any place they chose in the district - all in return for 'the Friendship and Protection of the aforesaid English East India Company against all Our [Tapanuli's] Enemies'.³ Two days after the signing of the treaty, Carter claimed that 'he accidentally [sic] discovered that one of the Chiefs had signed a Contract with the Dutch'.⁴ He confiscated the document and also brought back to Benkulen a sworn joint deposition from the chiefs of Tapanuli and Gunung Tua that Dato Poras had signed not only his own name but also that of his superior Raja Matoga to the VOC document and that Dato Poras had no authority to cede Tapanuli to anyone

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1. FM Cons., 12 March 1756, SFR 69.
Carter to Pybus, 25 Feb. 1756, MFR vol. 39, pp. 104a-b.
 2. FM Cons., 12 March 1756, SFR 69.
 3. Treaty between the East India Company and the Chiefs at Tapanuli, HMS 96 (14), pp. 352-3. The treaty was signed on 5 February 1756 by Poonee Mangootam, Raja Pangootonham, Raja Marahoodoran, Raja Mattaga and Dato Poras.
 4. FM Cons., 12 March 1756, SFR 69.

without the consent of the other chiefs - Raja Matoga, Dato Boongool, Poonee Mangootam, etc. Dato Poras, moreover, attested that he had been told that the paper he had signed for Visboom was merely a pass allowing free trade to Padang.¹

The Dutch response to the English garrisoning of Tapanuli was an even more heated repetition of the paper war over Natal. Informed of Carter's activities by letters from Baros of 5 and 15 February 1756, the Dutch authorities on the West Coast wrote to Batavia, almost at once, accusing the English of invading Tapanuli by force in defiance of the contract which the VOC had obtained from the chiefs there barely a month before.² The Benkulen servants, Padang continued, 'snatched away' the subjects of the VOC and wanted 'to stretch their conquests still further and establish themselves all along this coast, intimidating thousands of natives and making them indecisive since they cannot understand why the Dutch Company does not answer violence to her people with violence'.³ Padang included a copy of Visboom's contract with Dato Poras as proof of VOC ownership and urged Batavia to order the forcible repossession of Tapanuli in order to stop English expansion once and for all and prevent the 'total ruin of this splendid coast'. Padang requested a force of two ships, four sloops and three hundred men to move against Tapanuli 'with the utmost speed...before that [English] evil takes root too deep'.⁴ Another letter was also sent to Benkulen, protesting in the strongest terms against the illegal and violent usurpation of Tapanuli as robbery committed against an ally, which, the Dutch added, they could scarcely believe had been sanctioned by Fort Marlborough. The immediate restitution of Tapanuli to the VOC was demanded and the treaty of 27 December 1755

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1. FM Cons., 12 March 1756, SFR 69; Carter to Pybus, 25 Feb. 1756, MLR, vol. 39, pp. 104a-c; Joint Declaration of the chiefs of Tapanuli and Gunung Tua concerning their contracts with the Dutch, 11 February 1756, EMS 96 (14), pp. 354-5. This declaration was signed by Poonee Mangootam, Muggat Radeen, Dato Maharaja, Raja Mattaga, Dato Proass (Poras), Dato Boongool and Soutan Maharaja.
 2. Baros to Padang, 15 Feb. 1756, KA 2779 (Secret), pp. 35-40; Padang to Batavia, 23 Feb. 1756, KA 2776, pp. 68-9.
 3. Padang to Batavia, 23 Feb. 1756, KA 2776, pp. 69-72.
 4. *ibid.*, pp. 70-1.

offered as proof of Dutch rights in the district.¹

Fort Marlborough was now faced with the necessity of justifying its own insistence that Tapanuli was an independent port where the English had been invited to settle, in the face of the recent Dutch treaty. Brushing aside Padang's protests, the Benkulen authorities relied for support of English claims on the deposition Carter had extracted from the Tapanuli and Gumung Tua chiefs. They concluded predictably that a Dutch contract signed with Dato Poras alone was invalid and that in any case Poras had been tricked into signing the document in the first place.²

Nevertheless, the validity of the deposition itself was suspect. In the light of the Tapanuli chiefs' earlier refusal to allow English settlement, Fort Marlborough's assertions that it occupied the port at the invitation of the inhabitants rang hollow. The Baros Resident's report that Carter had taken not only the ship Exeter but also three sloops and four smaller craft on his expedition to Tapanuli goes some way toward supporting the Dutch contention that Tapanuli had been forcibly invaded,³ or at least that the English treaty and deposition had been extracted under the threat of duress. Moreover, Fort Marlborough's claim that Dato Poras had not understood the nature of the document he signed was demonstrably untrue.

Dato Poras had eagerly accepted confirmation as Tapanuli's principal chief at Dutch hands earlier in 1755, and according to the Baros Resident, had sought Dutch help almost as soon as the English had appeared in Tapanuli Bay. A Dutch boat sent from Baros to investigate English activities there had been chased from the entrance of the Bay to Sorkam by an English sloop. There its nakhoda had met a messenger sent from Dato Poras to Raja Boukit, the headman at Sorkam, asking Boukit to go to Baros and assure the Resident that Poras had not intrigued with the English. Poras's messenger reported that the English had occupied the trading place and deprived Poras of his contract with the VOC. Although Poras had ordered his Batak

1. Padang to Fort Marlborough, 20 March 1756, KA 2776, pp. 4-6.

2. FM Cons., 26 March 1756, SFR 69.

3. Baros to Padang, 15 Feb. 1756, KA 2779 (Secret), p. 35;
Baros to Padang (Extract), 6 March 1756, KA 2776, pp. 7-9.

followers not to bring down trade goods or provisions to the English, he dared not oppose them openly without Dutch support. Raja Boukit had then sent his brother to Baros with Dato Poras's letter and also requested VOC aid for Sorkam if it too should be attacked.¹

The strongest element of Fort Marlborough's case in support of English claims to Tapanuli was the denial of Dato Poras's right to act alone. Padang's subsequent investigation of Visboom's transactions at Tapanuli revealed that Poras had indeed signed not only his own name but Raja Matoga's as well. Although Poras had claimed this was his right as sole head of Tapanuli by VOC appointment, Visboom had prudently enquired if Poras had a 'Kamanakan' or heir who should also sign the contract. Poras had replied that there was Raja Matoga, but that he had 'no pretence to possession or ownership of the lands of Tapanoolij'. Raja Matoga himself had apparently raised no objection when Visboom had asked him if he agreed to what his uncle Dato Poras had done.²

It was Raja Matoga whom Carter had recognised as head penghulu at Tapanuli in the course of negotiating the English treaty, so the English and Dutch Companies were again on opposite sides of a succession dispute. The merits of the case are difficult to determine. Fort Marlborough backed Raja Matoga on the grounds that he was the son of Raja Simorang, 'who it is well known had the Supreme Command [at Tapanuli], & to whom as such every Vessel paid the usual Tribute for Anchoring, &c.'³ The English added that Raja Matoga had been unanimously elected by the other chiefs to succeed Simorang. Even Visboom admitted that like his father Raja Matoga was 'still alienated from the [Dutch] Company'.⁴ Part of the Dutch difficulty, however, appears to have been a genuine misunderstanding over the significance of the word kemanakan (literally nephew). Accustomed to Minangkabau usage, the Dutch tended

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1. Baros to Padang, 15 Feb. 1756, KA 2779 (Secret), pp. 36-8.
 2. Visboom's report and depositions, 22 Sept. 1757, KA 2828, Lettra C.
 3. FM Cons., 26 March 1756, SFR 69.
 4. Visboom's report and depositions, 27 Dec. 1755, KA 2828, Lettra C.

to use this word indiscriminately as a term denoting heir. Dato Poras, when asked if his kemanakan should sign the treaty, had apparently taken the term literally. He replied that Raja Matoga was his kemanakan (or nephew) but that according to Batak adat his own son would succeed him on his death.¹ On these grounds Matoga would appear to have had the better claim as successor to Simorang, but Matoga had told Visboom that Poras was 'not only my uncle, but also likewise chief and Orangtua of this whole negeri Tapanoolij'.²

In any case by this time the point was academic. Neither chief seems to have been in full control of Tapanuli when the English appeared. Fort Marlborough based its claim to Tapanuli not only on a treaty with the man it asserted was the legitimate chief, but also on rights of conquest. In the course of settling Tapanuli, Carter had forcibly dispossessed the Achehnese whom he had found 'in full Sovereignty of the place as is manifest by their having levied Customs on the Trade & executed every other Mark of Government there for some time before'.³ Carter had found the Achehnese Panglima Laut and his followers settled at Keela, to the south of Tapanuli, 'employed in fitting out his Vessels'.⁴ Before negotiating the treaty, Carter's force had driven the Achehnese into the woods. They had failed to capture Panglima Laut who escaped to Sorkam with only a few of his followers, the rest having deserted and gone to Singkil. The Achehnese had lost all their guns and boats in their retreat.⁵ Carter, and subsequently Fort Marlborough, used the presence of Panglima Laut in the Bay area and the threat he constituted to Natal to justify in part the English occupation of Tapanuli to the Dutch. As Carter explained to Resident Challier at Baros, Fort Marlborough had given him orders to make 'all our enemies retire from this Bay where at present the Achehnese live very tyrannically with the inhabitants and where

1. Visboom's report and depositions, 27 Dec. 1755, KA 2828, Lettra C.

2. *ibid.*

3. FM Cons., 26 March 1756, SFR 69.

4. Carter to Pybus, 25 Feb. 1756, MLR, Vol. 39, pp. 104a-c.

5. *ibid.*

they strengthen their fleet still more and more in order to assault us'.¹

The Fort Marlborough authorities had ordered the occupation of Tapanuli because it was vital to their private commerce at a time when their trade in North Sumatra was already badly impaired by the restrictions laid on it by Fort St. George. This new expansion, however, carried more risks than had accompanied the acquisition of Natal, where formal Dutch claims had not been renewed since 1693, and Fort Marlborough was correspondingly anxious about the VOC's countermove.

The authorities at Batavia, as expected, wrote to Benkulen reasserting once again the VOC's exclusive right to the West Coast between Inderapura and Singail, and repeating Padang's demands that the English evacuate Tapanuli or suffer the consequences.² Fort Marlborough took this threat so seriously that against Fort St. George's recommendation they retained the military intended for the Coromandel Coast which they had seconded from the ship Prince George the previous year to help in the troubles at Natal.³ Although the Batavia Council had denied Padang's request for a full-scale assault on Tapanuli, it did authorise continued clandestine support, including the commitment of VOC 'country troops', to disaffected local people.⁴ Dutch efforts 'to Spirit up the Atchinese & Country people about Natall & Tappanaouly'.⁵ kept the English in a constant state of apprehension during 1756. In June the Muko Muko Resident reported the arrival of three ships carrying two hundred Bugis at Padang which he assumed were to be used against Natal.⁶ A month later intelligence from Padang received via an English vessel indicated that the Dutch Council had tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to induce the chiefs of each of the rivers between Padang and Inderapura to contribute fifty men each to accompany Bagindo Maharaja Lello on a raid on Natal.⁷ At about this time it was also reported that Nakhoda Po Champa,

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1. Carter to Baros Resident Challier, 12 Feb. 1756, KA 2779 (Secret), p. 45.
 2. Batavia letter of 13 April 1756, FM Cons., 24 May 1756, SFR 69.
 3. FM Cons., 9 June 1756, SFR 69.
 4. Padang to Batavia, 2 June 1756, KA 2776, pp. 52-6.
 5. FM Cons., 9 June 1756, SFR 69.
 6. FM Cons., 26 June 1756, SFR 69.
 7. FM Cons., 12 July 1756, SFR 69.

an ally of Bagindo Maharaja Lello in the 1755 raids, had settled near Tabujung and Bagindo Maharaja Lello himself was at Airbangis.¹ The Natal Resident, Randolph Marriot, also feared trouble from the Airbangis chief, Raja Gumung, who was Bagindo Maharaja Lello's grandfather and 'much in the Dutch Interest'.² Marriot later noted that Raja Gumung was 'a Person of great Influence in the Country about Nattall' but hoped somewhat wistfully to be able to persuade him to enter an agreement with the English Company.³ There were rumours in November of another large sea force at Padang destined for an attack on Natal and hints that Bagindo Maharaja Lello and other headmen 'were going to Batavia to solicit being settled at Nattall'.⁴ Nevertheless, except for some disputes among the chiefs at Tapamuli, no real disturbances developed in 1756 and 1757.

The Dutch, however, moved beyond the clandestine tactics which they had employed against the English at Natal since 1751. They, not Marriot, obtained the co-operation of Raja Gumung and they established a new base at Airbangis in 1756 to harass Natal.⁵ Another post at Nias was also set up the following year.⁶ The two hundred-man force which the Muko Muko Resident had feared would be directed against Natal, he later confirmed, was to be used to establish the VOC at Airbangis and by September 1756 the Dutch were firmly entrenched there.⁷ Well before this time, however, the Dutch were in a position to interfere with Natal's trade. As early as February 1756, VOC

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1. FM Cons., 21 July, 28 Nov. 1756, SFR 69.
 2. FM Cons., 21 July 1756, SFR 69.
 3. FM Cons., 28 Nov. 1756, SFR 69.
 4. *ibid.*
 5. Padang to Batavia, 2 June 1756, KA 2776, pp. 51-2. A post at Airbangis had been under discussion since at least 1754, when Batavia asked Padang's views on moving the northern factory from Baros to Singkil. Padang suggested that Airbangis was better situated to compete with the English in the gold trade. Padang to Batavia, 9 July 1754, KA 2731, pp. 452-5.
 6. Instructions to Boekhouder Willem Frederik Meersz to erect a small fort on Pulo Nias, 10 March 1757, KA 2828, Lettera H.
 7. FM Cons., 26 June, 5 July, 21 Sept., 28 Nov. 1756, SFR 69; Padang to Batavia, 24 April 1757, KA 2801, p. 13.

Eugis stationed at Airbangis had intercepted rice boats from Pasaman which lay to the south, and this eventually caused a scarcity of rice at Natal.¹ In July, Resident Marriot reported that the lack of provisions was likely to grow worse as he had heard that the Dutch also planned to stop the flow of rice from Nias.² In this they succeeded so well that by September rice in the bazaar at Natal was selling for the astronomical price of two bambus per dollar and that Residency, which normally enjoyed a rice surplus, was requisitioning emergency supplies from Fort Marlborough.³

The Dutch also proposed to use Airbangis to lure trade away from the English establishment at Natal. Padang had enticed some of the Natal merchants to trade at Airbangis as early as April 1756 and hoped that a large supply of blue and white piece goods expected in the next year would continue the process.⁴ In June, the Natal Resident informed Benkulen that the Dutch planned to draw more trade from Natal by selling salt and iron cheaper than the English.⁵ This was particularly dangerous for Natal's commerce. Madras was to have supplied Natal with opium, salt and iron for sale on the Company's account under regulations of October 1754. Nevertheless, owing in part to the disruptions and rerouting of shipping on the Coromandel Coast, caused first by troubles in Bengal and then by war with the French, Natal and Taparuli were chronically short of trade goods during late 1756 and 1757. By mid-1756, the merchants at Natal were 'very uneasy at finding the settlement so indifferently supplied with Trade'.⁶ These men had asked the Resident to reduce the price of iron to six bars per tael in July and Fort Marlborough refused.⁷ In September they asked that the price of opium be lowered from \$400 to \$350 per chest.⁸ By November,

1. FM Cons., 14 June 1756, SFR 69.

2. FM Cons., 14 Aug. 1756, SFR 69.

3. FM Cons., 28 Nov. 1756, SFR 69.

4. Padang to Batavia, 24 April 1757, KA 2801, p. 13;
Padang to Batavia, 2 June 1756, KA 2776, pp. 51-3.

5. FM Cons., 21 July 1756, SFR 69.

6. FM Cons., 21 July, 28 Nov. 1756, SFR 69.

7. FM Cons., 14 Aug. 1756, SFR 69.

8. FM Cons., 28 Nov. 1756, SFR 69.

Resident Marriot reported information garnered from a captured Dutch dispatch, that the sale of opium, salt and iron at Baros was 'very large', while Natal was deficient in all these goods and had no opium at all left in the godowns.¹

In these circumstances Fort Marlborough sanctioned Marriot's adjustment of the sale price of opium, iron and salt 'by the prices the Dutch sell for, disposing of them at least as Cheap as they do, if not Cheaper, least [sic] the large sales of those Articles at Baros might draw the Merchants thither from Nattall'.² A consignment of merchandise and gunpowder was at once put aboard the Swift schooner for Natal, and Marriot was given permission to take supplies for the use of the settlement out of any Company vessels which called at Natal en route to Benkulen.³ Further relief was provided by the arrival of the storeship Oxford on 6 November, and part of the thirty-six chests of opium which she brought were sent off to Marriot, who was again reduced to only thirteen chests of opium in stock.⁴ The respite, however, was only temporary. By September 1757, the Fort Marlborough authorities complained to Madras that they had received only half their annual requirement of salt, 'which your [Madras] Committee observe[d] is a grand Article on this coast', and had been without supplies of cloth for over a year.⁵ Later they wrote to London that the lack of trade goods had 'frustrated the promising hopes that settlement [Natal] afforded of turning greatly to your Honours Emolument'.⁶

The Padang Council did not limit itself to indirect efforts to starve and bankrupt Natal and Tapamuli. The Dutch also intensified their campaign against Benkulen's shipping. Batavia's first formal complaint concerning the occupation of Tapamuli also warned Fort Marlborough that any English vessels with or without passes

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1. FM Cons., 28 Nov. 1756, SFR 69.
 2. *ibid.*
 3. FM Cons., 28 Nov., 24 Dec. 1756, SFR 69. The Swift schooner, Capt. Forrest, sailed for Natal on 30 Dec. 1756.
 4. FM Cons., 7 Nov., 8 Nov. 1756, SFR 69; FM to FSG, 15 Sept. 1757, SFR 11.
 5. FM to FSG, 15 Sept. 1757, SFR 11.
 6. FM to Court, 3 March 1758, par. 13, SFR 11.

which invaded VOC territory would be seized. The Dutch implemented this threat with some success between 1756 and 1758. They eventually offered to return the perahu belonging to Marriot, Idell and Williams which had been arrested in 1755, but the owners refused 'as the Vessel was entirely ruined, the Cargoe spoilt plundered & little or nothing left'.¹ They thought they were entitled to more satisfaction for the 'unwarrantable seizure' of the vessel which they asserted had merely put into Padang to escape bad weather. By late 1759 or early 1760, however, the Dutch had still restored nothing on account of the vessel.²

More seizures followed. Late in May 1756, the acting Resident at Natal, Alexander Hall, reported that the Dutch had captured another perahu at Tiku, which Deputy Governor Pybus identified as one he had sent trading to Singkil.³ Shortly thereafter the Dutch Resident at Airbangis detained two boats carrying dispatches from Natal to Benkulen, impressing their crews into forced labour on the fort then under construction at Airbangis. The Natal Resident, however, managed to obtain restitution. After the wreck near Natal of a Dutch dispatch-boat bound for Baros, he confiscated the Dutch letters and all the salvage from the vessel and refused to return them until his own dispatch-boats and their crews were released.⁴ Two months later, in January 1757, however, another English licensed perahu was captured,⁵ and late in 1757 the Randon sloop, another of Randolph Marriot's vessels, had been confiscated. The twenty-ton Randon had been sent to Nias but the crew had mutinied, murdered the master and run off. The Dutch had found the abandoned vessel, transported her to Padang and auctioned the ship and cargo for Rix-dollars 356.14, 'a mere trifle' in relation to her value which Marriot placed at \$1097.0.87.⁶

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1. Marriot's Petition to the Court, read 10 Sept. 1760, Dutch in India, vol. 7, Europeans in India Series.
 2. *ibid.*
 3. FM Cons., 14 June 1756, SFR 69.
 4. FM Cons., 28 Nov. 1756, SFR 69.
 5. FM to Court, 27 Feb. 1757, par. 35, SFR 11.
 6. Marriot's Petition to Court, read 10 Sept. 1760, Dutch in India, vol. 7, Europeans in India Series; FM to Batavia, 1 June 1758, SFR 11; FM to Court, 3 March 1758, par. 38, SFR 11.

Padang referred Marriot's complaints concerning the Randon to Batavia; Batavia responded five months later that they required more information on the affair from Padang. On Fort Marlborough's request, Padang eventually apprehended one of the crewmen who had allegedly murdered the sloop's nakhoda and returned him to Fort Marlborough where he died in prison.¹ By 1760, when Marriot finally petitioned the Court of Directors concerning his losses to the Dutch, he still had obtained no compensation for the sale of the Randon.²

Early in 1758, the VOC sloop Goudvink stopped a perahu belonging to the Manna Resident, Joseph Darvall, which was carrying pepper from Manna to Fort Marlborough. The vessel had escaped by running close to shore but the nakhoda and his documents were taken to Batavia. The incident had occurred near the English factory at Selumah, and Fort Marlborough was infuriated by the 'Insolence' of the Dutch cruiser within 'sight of the British Flagg'. Protests were again made to Batavia where the Dutch referred the matter to their Council of Justice and concluded that no damage had been done to Darvall's vessel and the Goudvink's master had been correct to arrest a vessel carrying pepper which possessed neither flag nor pass.³ Fort Marlborough, obliged to admit the truth of this, explained that it was not the English custom to equip small vessels plying between English settlements with a flag or pass, but that the Dutch cruiser should have realised Darvall's perahu was on official business from the letters she carried.⁴

In the face of its inability either to halt Dutch seizures of vessels or gain compensation, Fort Marlborough turned to London for redress. Headed by acting Deputy Governor Marriot, who by this time had lost three vessels to the Dutch, the

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1. Padang to FM, 8 Dec. 1757; FM to Batavia, 24 Jan. 1758; Padang to FM, 15 May 1758; Batavia to FM, 24 May 1758, SFR 11.
 2. FM to Batavia, 4 Sept. 1758, SFR 11; Marriot's Petition to the Court, read 10 Sept. 1760, Dutch in India, vol. 7, Europeans in India Series.
 3. FM to Batavia, 12 April 1758; Extract of Council of Justice Proceedings, Batavia, 29 May 1758; Batavia to FM, 1 June 1758; FM to Court, 31 Dec. 1758, SFR 11.
 4. FM to Batavia, 4 Sept. 1758, SFR 11.

Benkulen Board wrote to the Directors in March 1758:

Unless you are pleased to use Your Authority & demand Restitution for such flagrant & hostile Behaviour, It will not only Subject your servants Fortunes here to be unjustly swallowed up, but it must also make Your Honours Prerogative to this Coast appear of slender Moment, as well as reflect Dishonour on the British nation in General.¹

Marriot's successor, Deputy Governor Carter, notified Fort St. George three months later on 14 June 1758 that Dutch interference with shipping was having an impact on Fort Marlborough beyond the losses of private merchants. The local people were becoming frightened of either trading on their own account or serving in British vessels. People were increasingly unwilling 'to sail in our service', Carter asserted, because the English appeared unwilling or unable to obtain satisfaction for injuries from the VOC.² These appeals resulted in Fort St. George writing to Batavia on the subject and also requesting that Admiral Pocock, the commander of the British squadron in India, do the same.³ Enlisting the support of the British Navy once again appears to have produced the desired results. By early 1759, Benkulen informed the Directors that they hoped that it would no longer be necessary to trouble London with their problems. The Dutch, they noted, had behaved very civilly and offered no further interference with their vessels since their June 1758 letter to the Presidency.⁴

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1. FM to Court, 3 March 1758, par. 38, SFR 11. In 1759, Marriot was preparing to leave the West Coast a near-bankrupt. He was not considered a good businessman, but the loss of three vessels to the Dutch could not have helped his fortunes.
 2. Carter to FSG, 14 June 1758, par. 3, SFR 11.
 3. FSG to FM, 31 Oct. 1758, SFR 11.
 4. FM to Court, 10 March 1759, par. 28, SFR 12.

Reactions in London

It was, in fact, the intensity of Dutch pressure on Fort Marlborough's shipping which in part induced the Court to maintain the settlements at Natal and Tapanuli. The Directors had been unaware for some time of precisely the sort of commitments their servants on the West Coast had been making in their name. Fort Marlborough had initially presented the settlement at Natal as an area of potential pepper production as well as a base to secure English shipping from Dutch interference.¹ The Directors were dubious about the number of new posts projected by Deputy Governor Hurlock, but although they refused permission to settle at Pariaman, they approved posts on the Pagai or Kassau Islands on the understanding that little expense would be necessary to teach the local inhabitants to plant pepper.² When they learned of the occupation of Natal, in May 1752, the Directors were not happy that it had been undertaken without the prior approval of Fort St. George but left the review of an apparently excessive number of new posts to the Supravisors whom they had already asked Fort St. George to appoint to investigate reports of general malfeasance on the West Coast.³ At the same time Madras was instructed to maintain English rights to free trade at all neutral ports in North Sumatra but also to prevent private traders from causing the Company embarrassment with the Dutch.⁴

Supravisors Pybus and Walsh soon decided that Dutch claims to Natal were 'frivolous and without foundation' and added that the northern trade was of great importance to Fort Marlborough and gave the Company's servants 'another Source for enriching themselves than out of your own [the Company's] Estate'.⁵ Pybus and Walsh concluded it was too late to abandon Natal without encouraging the Dutch to take

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1. FM to Court, 6 Dec. 1751, pars. 81-7, SFR 9.
 2. Court to FM, 29 Nov. 1751, pars. 41-2, Despatches from England, 1751-2, op. cit., vol. 55, p. 51.
 3. Court to FM, 1 Dec. 1752, par. 2; Court to FSG, 24 Jan. 1753, par. 20, Public Despatches from England, 1752-3, op. cit., vol. 56, pp. 46, 50.
 4. Court to FSG, 24 Jan. 1753, par. 23, Public Despatches from England, 1752-3, op. cit., vol. 56, p. 47.
 5. Pybus to Court, 6 April 1754, pars. 25, 29, SFR 10.

further steps to limit English freedom of navigation. Nevertheless, the Supervisors also pointed out that there was 'not a single [pepper] Plantation in that Neighbourhood' and that the settlement was a dead expense for the Company.¹ This information drew the Court's first forceful objection to the new outpost at Natal. Already thoroughly annoyed by the general misconduct of their servants on the West Coast, the Directors wrote to Benkulen in December 1755:

It was a most notorious Presumption in our late Deputy Gouverneur and Council to make a Settlement at Natal without Ours or the Permission of their Superiours [at Fort St. George], and the more so, as it evidently appears it was purely undertaken for their own private advantage, covered over with a specious pretence of making an Investment of Pepper, it is now certain that no Pepper is to be had, that We have been drawn into dispute with the Dutch, and saddled [sic] with an heavy Expence.²

Since the affair had gone so far, the Court agreed to maintain Natal, but only on the condition that Fort St. George's plan to cover the post's cost by selling opium, iron and salt on Company account worked. '...If We find you amuse us with Schemes that are not likely to have the desired Effect', the Court warned, 'We shall in earnest, consider of evacuating a Settlement, that must be supported at the Expence of the Company for your private Emolument only'.³

Unfortunately the disturbances at Natal in 1755 indicated just how heavy an expense the port was likely to prove to the Company. Natal's running costs, which had totalled only about £130 per month in 1751, rose to £5991.0.55 in the financial year May 1752 - April 1753. By the 1755/1756 financial year costs had risen to £8612.2.21,⁴ excluding special charges like the £1250 hire for the sloop Centurion. In only five months of 1756, with the charges of Tapamuli now included, the northern

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1. Pybus to Court, 6 April 1754, par. 28, SFR 10.
 2. Court to FM, 3 Dec. 1755, par. 37, Public Despatches from England, 1755-6, op. cit., vol. 59, p. 66.
 3. ibid.
 4. FM Cons., 7 Jan. 1756, SFR 69; Statement of Charges at Fort Marlborough and Dependencies for 1752 and 1753 Compared, SFR 10; Charges for 1755-56 estimated on the basis of money sent to Natal and the Residency's monthly balances, as per FM Cons., 18 June, 25 Aug., 1 Dec. 1755, SFR 68.

settlements cost the Company about \$8726.3.34.¹ In 1757 the committee at Fort St. George responsible for overseeing West Coast affairs reviewed the disproportionate share of Fort Marlborough's resources devoted to the maintenance of Natal and Tapanuli and concluded that the settlements should be withdrawn.² In addition to the Centurion, the Company's vessels Marlbro Hoy and Mary had been lavishly assigned to the service of Natal. The sloop Mary in particular had remained in the North from June 1755 to July 1756. There were also the demurrage charges incurred by the ship Exeter owing to the four months she had spent protecting Natal and Tapanuli which had delayed her departure from the West Coast until 6 April 1756. 'The dead Expence', Fort St. George commented, 'will Appear heightened, when we Consider that most of the Charge might have been Appropriated with profit to the Service of the Pepper Residencies, had not this great Object [Natal] engrossed all Attention'.³ Even worse, the increased costs and decreased trade resulting from local troubles had made nonsense of the committee's original calculation that \$10,000 per year could be derived from the sale of salt, iron and opium at Natal from which the Company could retrieve that costs of the settlement.⁴ The process of expansion also seemed to be self-perpetuating. Tapanuli had been taken to secure the commerce of Natal and Fort St. George remarked that

...some other Places may, and Certainly will be found to affect the trade of Tappanooley, and soon perhaps [even] up to Atcheen. Both places are Residencies Established against the Will of many of the Natives, and at both Places the Dutch will allways spirit up the People of Atcheen and Disatisfied Chiefs to Interrupt and Molest us.... From this Review it seems to us little probable, that the Expence of keep- ing Natal will Ever be Reimbursed to the Company....⁵

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1. Charges for 1756 estimated on the basis of money sent to Natal and the Residency's monthly balances as per FM Cons., 17 May, 6 Sept., 24 Dec. 1756, SFR 69.
 2. Report of the West Coast Committee to Fort St. George Council, 13 April 1757, par. 23, SFR 11.
 3. *ibid.*
 4. *ibid.*, par. 24. This sum had been calculated on 7 Oct. 1754.
 5. *ibid.*

Fort St. George, however, indicated that it did not intend the proposed evacuation of Natal and Tapanuli to vindicate the VOC's claims to the ports and recommended that a flag or other mark of possession be placed at Natal and Tapanuli and the right of English private traders there continue to be asserted. The West Coast committee also recommended that the commerce of that part of Sumatra be reserved to the Benkulen servants as compensation for the loss of Natal and Tapanuli and the Bengal Council be told to prevent its traders from trafficking there.¹

The Court had reached these same conclusions virtually simultaneously and in a letter to Fort Marlborough of 25 March 1757 ordered Natal and Tapanuli withdrawn on the grounds that the districts had produced none of the promised pepper and 'the nature and turn of the People' made it unlikely they ever would.² Lacking pepper which was the only reason the Company maintained any establishments on the West Coast, the Court continued, 'no distant Prospect of the Profits arising from Monopolys of Opium, Iron and Salt, or the Customs upon private trade can induce the Company to continue it',³ especially when as a result of continuing disputes with the Dutch and Achehnese the costs had proven so heavy. The Directors also later refused to reserve the trade of the West Coast to the Fort Marlborough servants. They had reopened the commerce in opium, salt and iron to the Company servants in December 1756 in expectation of evacuating Natal and Tapanuli and considered this sufficient encouragement to the Benkulen establishment's private trade.⁴

This was, however, not the Court's last word on the subject of Natal and Tapanuli. The Directors' letter to Benkulen of 8 February 1758 reversed the decision to evacuate the settlements. The Court's newly appointed Deputy Governor,

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1. Report of the West Coast Committee to Fort St. George Council, 13 April 1757, par. 25, SFR 11.
 2. Court to FM, 25 March 1757, Public Despatches from England, 1756-7, op. cit., vol. 60, pp. 76-7.
 3. *ibid.*
 4. Court to FSG, 5 July 1758, par. 30, Public Despatches from England, 1757-8, op. cit., vol. 61, p. 69.

Roger Carter, credited this victory for Fort Marlborough to the representations of Thomas Combes, who with Carter had resigned from the West Coast service early in 1756 and returned to England. Both Combes and Carter subsequently presented memorials to the Court explaining their reasons for leaving the Company's service.¹ Combes also delivered two written reports, one on the detrimental effect of Fort Marlborough's subordinacy to Fort St. George and another entitled 'Considerations on the Settlement of Natal'. Unfortunately the texts of these reports appear not to have survived, but the Correspondence Committee considered the points they raised so important that they were referred to the full Court.² The reports were considered in October and November 1756 several months before the Court drafted its instructions for the withdrawal of Natal and Tapanuli, but Combes' arguments obviously carried some weight for on 25 November 1756 the Directors agreed to establish Fort Marlborough as an independent Presidency and so instructed its West Coast servants in 1760.³ Possibly on the basis of Combes' reports, the Court also anticipated increased revenues from Natal and Tapanuli either from attempting to develop them as entrepots for Indonesian trade or from exporting North Sumatran produce on Company account. The intensified Anglo-French conflict in India may

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1. Carter to FM, 9 July 1759, in FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1759, SFR 70. Carter to Court, 1 Dec. 1756; Combes to Court, read in Court 13 Oct. 1756, MLR, vol. 39, pp. 83, 102; Court of Directors, 13 Oct., 1 Dec. 1756, Court Minutes, vol. 67; Both Carter and Combes stressed their dissatisfaction at being superseded as Deputy Governor by ex-Supravisor John Pybus who was junior to them in the Company's service. They saw it as an instance of favouritism and oppression by Fort St. George.
 2. Combes' memorial to the Court stated that the West Coast was in decline not only because of mismanagement at Benkulen but also because of 'the regulations lately established' - almost certainly meaning those governing the conduct of private trade promulgated by Fort St. George. Combes to Court, 13 Oct. 1756, MLR, vol. 39, p. 83. Combes' two subsequent memorials were considered by the Committee of Correspondence on 5 and 18 November 1756, Correspondence Reports, vols. 21, 22, IOL.
 3. Court of Directors, 25 Nov. 1756, Court Minutes, vol. 67; Court to FM, 22 Oct. 1760, cited in Court to FM, 4 Feb. 1761, pars. 4-6, SFR 31. The Court had already requested that samples of cassia be sent to London by 1759. Court to FM, 13 Feb. 1759, par. 34, SFR 31.

also have increased the strategic value of Tapanuli Bay.¹ Moreover, by 1758 London had received Benkulen's letter of February 1757 describing the resumption of VOC depredations on English shipping. As a consequence of these considerations, the Court wrote to Fort Marlborough in February:

We have since reflected upon the encreasing Encroachments of the Dutch, which might be greatly encouraged, by giving them [Natal and Tapanuli] up and considering that there is a prospect of our Settlements upon the West Coast being in a very improving condition, especially if there could be a convenient Harbour, of which they are entirely destitute, excepting that at Tappanouly, which is a very good one, for these reasons if the Orders in our said letter have not been carried into execution, we are induced to countermand them, and you are accordingly hereby directed to keep Possession for the Company of the said two Places Natal and Tappanouly at as moderate an Expencc as possible until you have our further Orders.²

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1. Fort Marlborough had received news from Batavia on 28 April 1757 of two French men-of-war in the Sunda Straits, FM to FSG, 6 May 1757, SFR 11.
 2. Court to FM, 8 Feb. 1758, par. 50, Public Despatches from England, 1757-8, op. cit., vol. LXI, p. 46. The Court later considered that the cession of Natal and Tapanuli by the French to the English in the Treaty of Paris (1763) effectively ended any further Dutch claims to those ports. Court to FM, 16 Nov. 1763, par. 56, SFR 31.

CHAPTER V

THE CHANGING BALANCE OF POWER IN THE
NORTH-WEST SUMATRAN PORTS, 1758-1775

London's decision to retain Natal and Tapanuli in 1758 ended any possibility that Fort Marlborough's North Sumatran trade and settlements would be lost to the Dutch at the diplomatic table and guaranteed continued English participation in the commerce and politics of the North-West Coast for the foreseeable future. Despite London's earlier instructions to abandon Natal and Tapanuli, the two posts had not been withdrawn - ostensibly because of a lack of vessels to transport the Resident and his effects south - by November 1758 when the Court's letter rescinding this evacuation order reached Fort Marlborough. Although Benkulen's northern traffic had already begun to improve with the reopening of private commerce in opium, iron, steel and salt in September 1757¹ and the decline of Dutch depredations on English shipping in 1758, British supremacy at Natal and Tapanuli still faced a final challenge from the Achehnese in the late 1750s. Achehnese antipathy subsequently focused increasingly on the Dutch settlements around Baros, and the concerted pressure from both Achehnese and English finally led to the withdrawal of the VOC from the North-West Coast.

Renewed Achehnese Pressure, 1758-1761

The failure of the Achehnese thrusts at Natal in 1752 and 1755 and their expulsion from Tapanuli in 1756 appear to have damaged temporarily the reputation and striking power of their principal leader, Panglima Laut, as witnessed by the decline of his following from about 300 men in 1753 to less than 100 by 1756. The Natal

1. Court to FM, 29 Dec. 1756, pars. 58-9, via the ship Falmouth, received 29 Sept. 1757, Public Despatches from England, 1756-7, op. cit., vol. 60, p. 69.

Resident also reported that Panglima Laut had been recalled to Aceh at the Acehnese Sultan's order, as a result of Fort St. George's complaints about 'the Trouble & disturbances' he caused,¹ although this summons might also have been a response to his loss of Tapanuli. Nevertheless, while Natal and Tapanuli remained free of attack in 1756 and 1757, Acehnese power on the North-West Coast was far from broken, and Panglima Laut did not remain long absent from the scene.

It seems likely that the English enjoyed a respite in 1756 and 1757 principally because the Acehnese were busy consolidating their hegemony further to the north, particularly at Singkil. The English, in order to undermine Dutch claims to the area, had asserted in 1754 that Singkil had been the unquestioned possession of the King of Aceh 'for a great number of Years',² but there is some doubt about how firmly the Acehnese controlled the district. Although the population of the kuala had become almost entirely Acehnese by the early nineteenth century, it was still a mixture of Malay and Acehnese in the mid-eighteenth century.³ Some segment of that population had appealed for aid to the Dutch at Baros against five armed Acehnese vessels which had appeared there in 1744, and at least one of the several expeditions rumoured to be fitting out at Aceh in the late 1740s was alleged to be directed at Singkil.⁴

The concentration of Acehnese at Singkil, however, appears to have risen proportionally to their progressive exclusion by the English from areas further south. It was reportedly Acehnese at Singkil who organised and manned the abortive raid against Natal in 1752. By the mid-1750s their hold on the area had grown stronger. Singkil had been neglected in the general renewal of VOC contracts in

1. FM Cons., 21 July 1756, SFR 69.

2. FM Cons., 6 Feb., 4 April 1754, SFR 67.

3. Comparative Statement of the Ports on the North-west Coast of Sumatra, Enclosure No. 16, Captain J. Canning's Report, 24 Nov. 1814, SFR 27; van de Wall to Senff, Padang, 25 June 1760, KA 2886, pp. 177-8. Thomas Forrest, A Voyage from Calcutta to the Merqui Archipelago, lying on the East side of the Bay of Bengal (London, 1792), p. 64.

4. Padang to Batavia, 29 Dec. 1744, KA 2542, pp. 8-9; Padang to Batavia, 9 April 1748, KA 2611, p. 283.

1755, partly because the sloop carrying Visboom on his rounds was so leaky that she had to return to Padang, but mainly because the Singkil people refused to accept any contract which did not promise specific protection against the Achehnese. The Achehnese, the Dutch reported, had set up a headman there and the other chiefs had appealed for a VOC post to defend them against 'the tyranny...of that Rabble'.¹

The Natal Resident confirmed in 1757 that 'the Achen People had seized on the Quallo of Singkel, and [he] was suspicious of their being further troublesome'.²

Having tightened their hold on Singkil, the Achehnese turned to eject the English from Tapanuli. The first attack came early in 1758. Fort Marlborough was informed of disturbances there by the Muko Muko Resident who had rescued the crew of a wrecked dispatch boat from Natal. The Benkulen Board sent off the Company ship Duke with military reinforcements and supplies,³ but she was turned back before reaching the northern settlements by Deputy Governor designate, Roger Carter, who found peace restored when he called at Natal and Tapanuli en route to Benkulen from Madras.⁴ He reported to the Board that the rebels at Tapanuli had been defeated and a letter from Natal Resident Richard Wyatt which he delivered confirmed that by the end of April Panglima Laut and his followers had 'been forced out of that Bay [Tapanuli] by our Party, with the loss of all their Craft, Guns and many of their people'.⁵ The English casualties had totalled five men.

Both Wyatt and the Benkulen Board concluded that this stinging defeat would cripple further Achehnese ventures in the area, but to the surprise of the English, within six months Panglima Laut had re-entered Tapanuli Bay 'with a considerable force'.⁶ Resident Wyatt noted uneasily that although the Achehnese leader had not

1. Padang to Batavia, 24 April 1756, KA 2776, pp. 26-7.
2. FM to FSG, 15 Sept. 1757, SFR 11.
3. FM Cons., 29 March, 4 April, 11 April 1758, SFR 70.
4. FM Cons., 6 May, 15 May 1758, SFR 70.
5. FM Cons., 15 May 1758, SFR 70.
6. FM Cons., 18 Oct. 1758, SFR 70.

renewed hostilities, 'such an appearance so soon after his former defeat at Tappanooley with so large a body of Men, evidently shews that he is still in great Credit with the Atcheeneese, who may probably again soon attempt something against the [northern] Settlements'.¹ Wyatt was particularly worried because the Natal garrison was so weak that he had been unable to reinforce Tapanuli with more than six men, and he wrote Benkulen urgently for more military. The anticipated attack, however, seems not to have materialised, and nothing more is noted about the Achehnese in Fort Marlborough's Consultations during 1758.

Nevertheless, the Achehnese remained on the scene and troubles recurred in 1759. In July of that year, Wyatt reported that his assistant at Tapanuli had sent off a belalong to gather intelligence concerning Achehnese intentions in the North, and the craft had been captured off Singkil and carried to that port by three Achehnese bantings. About a month later Panglima Laut returned to Tapanuli Bay with a somewhat reduced force of one hundred followers. Christopher Watson, the acting Resident of Natal, sent an ensign and twelve men to reinforce the Tapanuli garrison, hoping to inflict an early and decisive defeat on the Achehnese. By early October, however, the Achehnese had moved inland to solicit support among the Batak chiefs and raise forces among their 'former confederates'. At the end of October, the Achehnese had succeeded in allying themselves with 'a great Number of Batta Men'. Resident Hall did not fear for Tapanuli factory itself; it was well fenced and manned by a large garrison which he had supplemented with a number of hired Malays. The sloop Resolution had also been on guard duty in the Bay since August. Nevertheless, the assault proved stronger than anticipated. The combined Achehnese and Batak forces attacked the compound of the English-supported Raja Matoga on 3 November. They were beaten off and withdrew first to Seroodoot and then to Panjanon about seven miles from the factory. There they entrenched themselves so firmly that the Bugis force sent by Hall failed to dislodge them.

1. FM Cons., 18 Oct. 1758, SFR 70.

Another twenty Europeans under Lt. Tatam, Ensign Cockup and Resident designate of Tapanuli, Robert Nairne, managed to drive the Achehnese from Panjanon but not to expel them from Tapanuli Bay. They retired to the hills, where Panglima Laut remained. On 5 November Hall sent sixty Malays and ten Europeans under Ensign Cockup and Nairne to punish the Batak compound, Latonong, for assisting Panglima Laut. The attack failed and resulted in the death of Cockup, four Europeans and four Malays - heavy casualties for this sort of operation. Resident Wyatt at Natal was able to send only another ensign and three European soldiers to help replace the losses at Tapanuli.¹

The Benkulen authorities once again hastened to the relief of their northern settlements. The Company snow Pigot was dispatched on 10 December 1759 with some Bugis and thirty-two European soldiers under Ensign Grant. Wyatt, however, was ordered to keep the snow only if an emergency persisted and to return her and the ensign to Fort Marlborough as quickly as possible. The Board also decided to ask Fort St. George to address another complaint to the Sultan of Acheh threatening reprisals if he failed to restrain his subjects from harassing English settlements.² There are no letters from Natal cited in the Benkulen Consultations for 1760, but operations against the Achehnese may have continued, for the snow Pigot did not return south. The Achehnese were still at Tapanuli when the French captured the English West Coast in February - April 1760. The English establishment at Natal was handed by the French to Dato Besar and Bagindo Maharaja Lello, who had come hurriedly from Airbangis, for immediate transfer to the VOC in the person of Jan Abraham van Moschel, the Dutch Resident at Nias.³ Tapanuli, including all the goods captured by the French, was left to Panglima Laut's Achehnese,⁴ who as soon

1. FM Cons., 9 July, 16 Nov., 28 Nov. 1759, SFR 70.

2. FM Cons., 28 Nov. 1759, SFR 70.

3. Nairne to FM Board, Batavia, 24 July 1760, SFR 12; Account of the French Capture of Fort Marlborough, Extract of letter from FSG to Court, 31 July 1760, HMS 96 (14), pp. 51-8.

4. *ibid.*

as the English were removed turned their attention to plaguing their other European rivals, the Dutch.

Achehnese enmity appears to have come as a surprise to the Dutch who in the late 1750s considered the Achehnese their natural allies as a consequence of their common hostility to the English. The Dutch authorities, citing as a sign of friendship the number of Achehnese vessels from Singkil which sailed past Natal and Tapanuli in 1759 to trade at Padang and concluding from his raids against the English that Panglima Laut was 'not uninclined' toward the VOC, decided to cement Dutch-Achehnese co-operation by renewing the long dormant Company contracts with Singkil, as ordered by a letter from Batavia of 27 August 1756.¹ Joseph Challier and Geritt Coerte were commissioned to depart on the sloop de Roos for Singkil early in 1760. News from Airbangis of French preparations against Natal, however, altered Padang's plans, and the mission was sent instead to Airbangis to organise Bagindo Maharaja Lello and his followers to be ready, with the help of his grandfather Raja Gunung, to seize Natal as soon as the English were gone.² As a consequence the de Roos never reached Singkil, but the Dutch belatedly discovered that the projected mission had been unrealistic:

...The Coast of that people [Singkil] is held completely in the possession of the Achehnese, ruled over by a so-called Governor who levies tolls on all incoming and outgoing goods, although the desire of the natural owners and regents for the VOC is good, a renewed contract is of little use as long as they remain groaning under another's yoke, unable to perform the principal article - namely to supply to the VOC all their products....³

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1. Padang to Batavia, 22 Jan. 1760, KA 2886, pp. 23-4. The Heeren XVII, on the other hand, ascribed Achehnese trade with Padang, in preference to Natal and Tapanuli, not to friendship with the Dutch but to a need to find a market for their benzoin and camphor. Considering the glut of gum which the Natal Concern was suffering in late 1758 and 1759 the Heeren XVII's view was the more reasonable one. The Heeren also added that they doubted if much advantage would be gained from dealing with Singkil since the VOC still had 125,817 ponds of benzoin unsold at Batavia left over from the 1759/60 financial year. Extract from Patria letter of 25 Oct. 1762, in Padang to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1764, KA 3014, p. 12.
 2. Padang Vergadering, 14 Feb., 16 Feb. 1760, KA 2889 (Secret), pp. 65-9.
 3. van de Wall to Senff, Padang, 25 June 1760, KA 2886, p. 177.

Padang's disillusionment with the Achehnese had begun soon after the French defeat of the English. The Baros king and penghulus started reporting disturbances caused by 'roving Achehnese' around Baros in February 1760. Padang was obliged to ask Batavia for reinforcements. The Dutch West Coast garrison then stood at only 130 men, insufficient both to protect Baros and garrison Natal and Tapanuli against further Achehnese inroads.¹ By April the alarm at Baros had increased and the Achehnese were reportedly well-established at Tapanuli. Padang, however, still tended to discount any 'evil intentions' against the VOC and concluded that Achehnese movements around Baros had been only the result of previous trouble with the English which would quickly terminate now that the English were gone.² By June however, the Dutch were much less sanguine and drafted a letter of protest to the Sultan of Aceh whose 'name not only is used by said usurpers at Singkil, but also by all that roving riff-raff that stir up continual disturbances around the North in the districts of Baros, Tappionolij, Surcame and elsewhere'.³ This letter was dispatched at the end of June and asked the Sultan to restrain the Achehnese from treating VOC people like Achehnese subjects. The forcible Achehnese take-overs at Singkil and Tapanuli and the imposition of taxes on trade there were cited as examples. The Sultan was also requested to prevent his subjects from sailing south of Singkil into VOC territory.⁴

Nevertheless, Achehnese 'brigandage' in VOC territories increased, and Padang, receiving no answer from the Achehnese Sultan, resolved to attempt the exclusion of Achehnese from the navigation of waters south of Baros. Two sloops, Hazewind and Taxisboom, and twenty-five military were therefore sent off to Baros, one to remain patrolling the area and the other to return with Baros's half-yearly collection of

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1. Padang Vergadering, 15 March 1760, KA 2889 (Secret), p. 76. A corporal and a small force had already been posted at Natal.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 10 April 1760, KA 2886, pp. 102-3.
 3. van de Wall to Senff, Padang, 25 June 1760, KA 2886, p. 177.
 4. Padang Vergadering, 30 June 1760, KA 2917, pp. 188-93.

northern produce. The expedition was to be headed by Secretaris Jan Boudewijnsz and set out from Padang on 7 October 1760 accompanied by the sloop de Roos carrying supplies to Natal.¹ The Dutch authorities also decided that they must discourage the growing number of Achehnese traders who called at Padang since there was no way of determining if these men had been involved in violence committed elsewhere in VOC districts. The nakhodas of the ten Achehnese vessels then in port were assembled and told to leave within two weeks and not to return within VOC limits without a pass from the Sultan of Aceh. The Dutch also misleadingly informed the nakhodas that their king was considering a contract with the VOC on the basis of Padang's letter to him of June 1760.² By 16 October most of the Achehnese traders had left Padang and the rest were preparing to do so.³

Almost at once troubles broke out in the North. On 19 October 1760 an express boat arrived from Baros reporting that Panglima Laut, whom the Dutch now labelled 'the notorious Achehnese pirate', was at sea with twenty vessels raiding continually in the vicinity of Baros.⁴ The Residents of both Baros and Natal feared for their safety, and the Achehnese fleet had even tried to cut off the dispatch boat to Padang although she flew a Dutch flag. Padang hastened to instruct Boudewijnsz, then at Natal, to move on to Baros, taking with him the sloop de Roos, as well as the two vessels originally assigned to his expedition, to increase his firepower.⁵ At the end of December, the sloop de Roos returned unexpectedly to Padang with news that Panglima Laut, aided by the chief of Sorkam, Raja Boukit, had attempted to cut off the sloop Hazewind with Boudewijnsz aboard, intending to plunder and destroy the sloops and then attack Baros factory. The raiders had been beaten back, and

1. Padang Vergadering, 23 Sept., 16 Oct. 1760, KA 2917, pp. 335-7, 376.

2. Padang Vergadering, 6 Oct. 1760, KA 2917, pp. 369-70.

3. Padang Vergadering, 16 Oct. 1760, KA 2917, p. 380.

4. Padang Vergadering, 13 Nov. 1760, KA 2917, pp. 381-2; Padang to Batavia, 15 Dec. 1760, KA 2917, pp. 14-5.

5. *ibid.*

Panglima Laut and twenty or thirty of his followers were killed in the fight. The Achehnese fleet had later been completely dispersed and Raja Boukit and his son taken prisoner to be tried at Padang for assisting the enemy.¹ Boudewijnsz then requested twenty-five more military to finish purging the coast of the remaining Achehnese 'rabble'. Padang agreed to send half its latest Bugis contingent from Batavia north for Boudewijnsz's use.²

The Dutch authorities were pleased with Boudewijnsz's results and hoped that the loss of their principal leader would cause a rapid collapse of Achehnese efforts in the North.³ By the beginning of March 1761, Boudewijnsz had returned to Padang leaving the sloop Taxisboom and twenty-five Bugis to cruise at Baros and the Baros Raja to appoint a new head penghulu at Sorkam.⁴ The Padang Council praised Boudewijnsz's bravery in defeating Panglima Laut and approved the expenses of his five month expedition, particularly since over half of them had been covered by mercantile ventures which Boudewijnsz had carried on simultaneously. Padang was, however, forced to dismiss Boudewijnsz's contention that he had expelled the Achehnese totally from VOC districts.⁵ The same Council meeting which approved Boudewijnsz's report also considered letters from the Resident and King of Baros requesting assistance in addition to the sloop Taxisboom to be used against a party of Achehnese who had murdered and enslaved a number of the king's subjects and had even tried to capture Baros negeri itself.⁶ Resident Sieben feared that the death

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1. Padang Vergadering, 31 Dec. 1760, KA 2917, pp. 450-2; Padang to Batavia, 6 Jan. 1761, KA 2917, pp. 32-3; Boudewijnsz's Report, in Padang Vergadering, 17 April 1761, KA 2917, pp. 14-6.
 2. *ibid.*
 3. Padang Vergadering, 31 Dec. 1761, KA 2917, pp. 450-2; Padang to Batavia, 6 Jan. 1761, KA 2917, pp. 32-3.
 4. Raja Baros to Padang, received 19 Feb. 1761, in Padang Vergadering, 24 Feb. 1761, KA 2917, pp. 607-8; Padang Vergadering, 17 April 1761, KA 2917, pp. 7-8.
 5. Padang Vergadering, 17 April 1761, KA 2917, pp. 14-9; Padang to Batavia, 15 June 1761, KA 2917, p. 160; Padang to Batavia, 15 May 1761, KA 2917, pp. 143-4.
 6. Padang Vergadering, 17 April 1761, KA 2917, pp. 5-9.

of Panglima Laut would generate a series of vengeance raids against VOC people and asked for sufficient men and material to drive the Achehnese at least from the immediate vicinity of Baros. Padang therefore agreed to send the sloop Hazewind with another twenty-five Bugis and eighteen European military to enable Sieben to mount yet another expedition in the Baros-Natal areas.¹ By June the Hazewind returned to Padang carrying 250 chests of good white benzoin and the Taxisboom was expected daily, having been obliged to stay only a short time at Natal. The Achehnese, Sieben reported, had all fled back to Singkil. The sloops, however, had not pursued them there. The bar of the Singkil River was so shallow that it was too dangerous for the sloops to attempt. Sieben added that the expedition had nonetheless inspired such terror among the Achehnese that 'many are already advised to remove with sack and pack to Acheh'.²

The death of Panglima Laut and Boudewijnsz's and Sieben's expeditions of 1760 and 1761 appear to have discouraged Achehnese activity in the Baros-Tapanuli-Natal areas for at least two years. The Dutch were not, however, to enjoy prolonged pre-eminence in the North. Within a month of Padang's report to Batavia in June 1761 of the successful conclusion of Sieben's drive against the Achehnese, Captain Frederick Vincent arrived in the ship Osterly to resettle the English at Fort Marlborough.³ Within a year, the English also repossessed Natal and Tapanuli.

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1. Padang Vergadering, 17 April 1761, pp. 5-9; Padang to Batavia, 15 May 1761, KA 2917, pp. 143-4.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 15 June 1761, KA 2917, pp. 168-9.
 3. Court to FM, 4 June 1762, par. 3, SFR 31.

The Return of the English

The Padang authorities had begun to consolidate their hold on what they still considered their rightful possessions as soon as the French had left Natal and Tapanuli. As a result of the French eagerness to leave the West Coast, Natal had been pressed unexpectedly on the Dutch Resident of Nias, Jacob van Moschel, without Padang's prior consent.¹ Van Moschel's superiors, however, approved his action, confirmed him as Resident at Natal, and by April 1760 had sent a garrison to back his authority.² Bagindo Maharaja Lello, either because of Dutch pressure or because of his own support in the district, was reconciled with Dato Besar and also settled at Natal.³ By 6 September 1760, Padang had negotiated a new treaty with the Natal headmen which recognised the validity of the VOC contracts of 1693 and 1755 and renewed Natal's acceptance of exclusive Dutch rights of settlement and trade. Natal was, however, placed directly under Padang rather than under Baros as the Natal chiefs still refused to acknowledge any subordination to the Baros King. The Company promised, as was usual in its contracts, to protect Natal from its enemies by sea and also to give the chiefs a douceur of one-fourth Rix-dollar per tael value (calculated at twenty Rix-dollars per tael) of all VOC piece goods sold there, to be paid yearly to the head penghulu for redistribution by him among his lesser colleagues. The chiefs on their part, as well as pledging to refer all their disputes and the choice of new penghulus to Padang, were also obliged to be 'friendly to the mountain people coming to trade with the Company, and not handicap them with tolls or tribute'. The treaty was signed by Bagindo Maharaja Lello as head penghulu, Raja Darat, who succeeded to the title of Dato Besar on the death of his brother, and seven lesser penghulus: Orangkaya Molea, Dato Sinaro Panjang, and Nakhoda Lebbee, all of whom had backed the Dutch claimant against the English and Dato Besar in the

1. Wyatt to FSG, 4 Nov. 1761, in FM Cons., 28 Oct. 1762, SFR 71.

2. Padang to Batavia, 10 April 1760, KA 2886, p. 104.

3. Bagindo Maharaja Lello to Padang, Dato Besar and Raja Darat to Padang, received 10 April 1760, KA 2886, pp. 110-2.

Natal troubles of 1755; Penghulu Jagam; Penghulu Jamboen; Raja Mancoutoe; and Nakhoda Palembang, who if not an active supporter of the English had at least been involved in some of the Natal Concern's commercial ventures.¹

There seems to have been no local opposition to the VOC take-over and the transition from English to Dutch rule proceeded smoothly. After the departure of the English, van Moschel and his garrison lived for several months in the English Company's buildings while erecting a small house apart from the old British settlement. The English fort, houses and warehouses were subsequently burned with Bagindo Maharaja Lello first seizing the cannon.² A Dutch fort, despite 'solicitations from the head penghulu', was not constructed.³ Tapanuli stayed under Dato Poras, but it was decided early in 1761 that a post there was unnecessary. VOC lodges at Airbangis, Tiku and Pariaman were also withdrawn. Padang perceived Natal as the most important port in the area, and as long as the VOC possessed it these other northern settlements were superfluous.⁴

Within a year, however, the VOC lost Natal. In April 1762, Henry Russell, a junior servant, stopped at Natal en route from Madras to Fort Marlborough and backed by the captain and crew of the two hundred-ton Company ship Prince Henry reclaimed

1. Natal treaty of 20 Sept. 1760, Padang Vergadering, 6 Oct. 1760, KA 2917, pp. 349-60. The Dato Besar, who had signed the treaty with the English in 1751, had reportedly died in early April 1760, and the common people wanted Raja Darat to replace him, a move which Padang decided not to oppose. Padang Vergadering, 16 April 1760, KA 2917, p. 91. This may call into question Padang's assertion that Bagindo Maharaja Lello was head penghulu at Natal, since the title Dato Besar, or 'chief magistrate' was normally the title attached to the head position there. Marsden, op. cit., p. 374; Wyatt to Hall, 22 Dec. 1758, Hall Papers.
2. Wyatt to FSG, 4 Nov. 1761, in FM Cons., 28 Oct. 1762, SFR 71. There are some hints of an abortive rebellion late in 1761 led by an unidentified mountain raja in which Raja Darat was implicated, but it appears to have been scotched before it came to a head. There were also complaints from Natal over a shortage of Dutch-supplied trade goods. Padang to Batavia, 15 Dec. 1761, KA 2955, p. 62; Padang to Batavia, 15 March 1762, KA 2955, pp. 130-5; Bagindo Maharaja Lello to Padang, received 10 April 1760, KA 2886, p. 112; Wyatt to Godfrey, Padang, 30 Aug. 1760, HMS 96 (14), p. 242.
3. Padang to Batavia, 15 June 1761, KA 2917, p. 157.
4. Padang to Batavia, 31 March 1761, KA 2917, p. 107. The VOC did place marker stones at Tabujung, Sinkuang, Tapanuli and Gunung Tua, Padang to Batavia, 15 Dec. 1761, KA 2955, pp. 63-4.

the settlement in the name of the English East India Company. Russell, who had no particular authority for his action, justified it on the grounds that the local people had urgently requested the return of the English Company, and English reoccupation of the area might be permanently forestalled if it were delayed until a VOC fort mooted for Natal were actually built.¹ Russell obviously envisaged the lucrative Residency of Natal as the reward for his initiative and was somewhat disgruntled when he subsequently received only the Residency of Tapanuli.² Van Moschel, unprepared for Russell's demand for Natal, abandoned the post without a struggle and retreated at once to Airbangis, an action for which his angry superiors at Padang later arrested and fined him.³ About a month after Russell's take-over at Natal, he also sent seven Company Bugis to hoist the Company flag at Tapanuli. Padang protested to Benkulen concerning Russell's invasion of VOC territory, and the Baros Resident sent a European serjeant and some Baros penghulus to press Dutch rights at Tapanuli, but this group was successfully turned away by the Bugis Russell had stationed there.⁴ The English reoccupation of the northern settlements was complete, and since another West Coast servant had already been dispatched to Batavia to demand formally the restitution of Natal and Tapanuli, Fort Marlborough approved Russell's unexpected coup.

By 4 June the formal protest from Padang concerning Russell's activities had reached Fort Marlborough, but the English authorities, bitterly angry at what they considered Dutch complicity in the French capture of the West Coast, were in no mood

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1. FM Cons., 4 May, 9 Sept., 28 Oct. 1762, SFR 71.
 2. Russell complained to Benkulen that the arrival at Natal of the new acting Resident, James Stevenson, a man of long experience at Natal in the 1750s, reflected dishonour on him and caused dissatisfaction among the Natal chiefs. He also asked permission to remain at the port until he could collect his outstanding debts. Russell had obviously begun trading as soon as he had arrived at Natal. FM Cons., 20 Sept. 1762, SFR 71. His temper improved when he learned that he had been appointed Resident at Tapanuli on 9 Sept. 1762. FM Cons., 14 Feb. 1763, SFR 71.
 3. Padang to Batavia, 25 Oct. 1762, KA 2955, pp. 9-10; Padang to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1763, KA 2983, p. 75; Padang to Batavia, 27 Dec. 1764, KA 3046, p. 23.
 4. FM Cons., 17 June, 20 Sept., 28 Oct. 1762, SFR 71.

for any accommodation. They moved to back their assertion of British claims to Natal and Tapanuli with the threat of force. Two British men-of-war, H.M.S. Panther, Commodore William Newson, and the Company frigate Revenge, Commodore John Watson, had been temporarily assigned to the newly established Fort Marlborough Presidency. The Revenge arrived at Benkulen from Batavia on 25 May 1762 with a letter from Commodore Tinker of H.M.S. Medway indicating that he had received Dutch acquiescence to English demands for the restoration of Natal and Tapanuli and had dispatched the Revenge to ensure Padang's compliance. About a week later, however, the Panther arrived, also from Batavia, with word that the Dutch Council had reneged on its promises to Tinker as soon as the British warships had left that port.¹ Almost at once acting Deputy Governor Ardley decided to send the Panther and Revenge to Padang to insist on British rights at Natal and Tapanuli 'in the strongest Manner possible with Menaces of Reprisals in Case they [the Dutch] continue to commit their usual Depredations'.² The Panther was by this time scheduled to rejoin Admiral Cornish's fleet, but on 19 June the Revenge sailed for Padang and Natal carrying James Stevenson as Resident of Natal, William Albertson as his assistant, ten sepoy and ten slaves for the settlement. The sloop Juliana sailed five days later with stores for Natal, to remain as guard vessel there at \$300 hire per month to protect Natal 'from any Attempts or Insults' by Dutch cruisers.³

Meanwhile, Russell, fearing overt Dutch action to retake the northern settlements, had hired twenty mercenaries and was requesting further reinforcements to defend Natal.⁴ The new Resident Stevenson after his arrival at Natal on 8 August further reported that only the appearance of the Revenge in northern waters had

1. FM Cons., 4 June, 25 May, 26 May 1762, SFR 71.

2. FM Cons., 10 June 1762, SFR 71.

3. FM Cons., 10 June, 17 June, 18 June, 19 June, 24 June 1762, SFR 71.
The Juliana belonged to Governor Roger Carter. †

4. FM Cons., 13 July 1762, SFR 71. Fifteen sepoy and fifteen Bugis had been ordered to Natal on the ship Earl Temple on 4 May but had not yet arrived.

thwarted a Dutch attack. On her arrival at Padang, he and Commodore Watson had learned of the recent departure of two sloops and a large perahu carrying forty Europeans and a large number of Malays commanded by the Padang Fiscaal Boudewijnsz. The Dutch Governor Senff had first told them that this expedition was intended for Airbangis but later that Boudewijnsz had been instructed to go to Baros. Stevenson considered this contradiction an indication that the expedition was really directed against Natal, a view which, he reported, was confirmed by further intelligence collected when the Revenge actually passed the Dutch fleet, which remained windbound at Tiku for seven weeks. Boudewijnsz in conversation with Commodore Watson had repeated Senff's assurance that the expedition was headed for Airbangis, but the soldiers on the Dutch vessels thought they were headed for Natal. Stevenson and Watson later learned that the Dutch fleet had returned south.¹

On this occasion English fears of open Dutch hostilities appear to have been justified. The Padang Council sent instructions to Boudewijnsz requiring him not only to establish a post at Airbangis but also to repossess Natal for the VOC² - apparently in the hope that this could be accomplished as bloodlessly as Russell's dispossession of van Moschel in April, and before Fort Marlborough was able to reinforce the northern settlement. Such hopes faded with the appearance of the Revenge, and Padang had to be content with rebuilding and expanding the Airbangis factory. Padang considered Airbangis less useful as a factory than Natal but it was a place of 'tolerable trade', and its re-establishment became a necessity after the English reoccupation of Natal. By early 1763, construction of a fort and out-buildings at Airbangis was well-advanced and Boudewijnsz had overcome the initial resistance of some of the chiefs there to a VOC post. Padang had already sent four sloop-loads of merchandise, mainly salt, iron and cloth, to the settlement and received 330 taels of gold as trading returns.³

1. FM Cons., 20 Sept., 28 Oct. 1762, SFR 71.

2. Instructie voor de Ondercoopman en Fiscaal J. Boudewijnsz, 1762, KA 2957 (Secret), pp. 93-109.

3. Padang to Batavia, 25 Oct. 1762, KA 2955, pp. 9-10; Padang to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1763, KA 2983, pp. 75-6; FM Cons., 14 Feb. 1763, SFR 71.

By this time English fears of a Dutch attack on Natal had receded, but their anxiety concerning a resumption of the pressure that Airbangis had exerted on the commerce and provisioning of Natal in the 1750s mounted. Richard Wyatt, who had been reappointed to his old Residency at Natal in September 1762, later wrote to Fort Marlborough that the Dutch planned to make Airbangis 'a free Port to draw the Trade from Natal'.¹ He also blamed the depressed economic condition of the Natal merchants, which he had encountered on his arrival there, on the Airbangis people intercepting Pasaman, Minangkabau and Rau traders coming to traffic at Natal.² As a consequence, Fort Marlborough authorised Wyatt to build new roads to the English settlement to circumvent Airbangis territory and even allowed him 'to be at some Expense' if necessary in this endeavour.³

Formal relations between the two European Companies on the West Coast remained correct but very cool. Henry Russell had provided Fort Marlborough with depositions from a number of Natal chiefs asserting that the Dutch had been responsible for the burning of English buildings and the plundering of the English servants' property at the kuala.⁴ The survivors at Benkulen of the French invasion of 1760 also swore that Padang had provided a ship's pilot and a small number of troops to assist Comte d'Estaing's capture of Fort Marlborough.⁵ On these bases, a formal protest was drafted by the Benkulen authorities against Dutch collaboration with the French in violation of Netherlands' neutrality. Richard Wyatt was deputised to deliver the protest at Padang en route to his Residency at Natal,⁶ a duty he must have relished since much of the property destroyed had been his own and he had last sojourned at the Dutch port as a prisoner of war. The protest was delivered in December 1762,

1. Wyatt was appointed Resident at Natal on 9 September and ordered to call at Padang on 28 October. He was there during December 1762.
FM Cons., 14 Feb. 1763, SFR 71.

2. *ibid.*

3. FM Cons., 16 April 1763, SFR 71.

4. FM Cons., 13 July, 28 Oct. 1762, SFR 71.

5. FM Cons., 28 Oct. 1762, SFR 71.

6. *ibid.*

but the Padang Council refused to accept it and tried to deliver a counter-protest concerning the reoccupation of Natal and Tapanuli, which Wyatt in his turn declined to accept.¹ The Dutch had already received a similar protest from Commodore Watson, who had remained in the North after transporting James Stevenson to Natal in June and had returned to Padang in November 1762. The Padang Council had asserted that the troops which d'Estaing had acquired at Padang were about twenty French nationals whom the French commander had impressed from the VOC garrison. The Dutch had also declared to Watson and repeated to Wyatt that the Natal chiefs' depositions concerning the burning of the settlement were lies designed to foment trouble between the Dutch and English. The Dutch Governor Senff had even produced a man called Mornin who had sworn to Watson that one of the French officers had paid him \$100 to fire the English post at Natal.² Fort Marlborough, however, rejected this explanation as the Natal factory had been handed intact to van Moschel by the French.³ Relations between the two Companies as a consequence remained strained.

Once at Natal, Wyatt began to restore English hegemony over that port and its environs. Marker stones with the VOC coat of arms, which Padang had ordered placed at Tapanuli, Gunung Tua, Tabujung and Sinkuang, had been removed by Commodore Watson, with the exception of the one at Sinkuang which was too heavy to transport over the bar.⁴ Wyatt subsequently stationed a small detachment of Bugis at Sinkuang in June 1763 and a year later sent two Bugis with the Company flag to Pulau Musala, after the Tapanuli chiefs had assured him that the island was part of English domains and some Dutch vessels had interfered with local traffic there.⁵ Raja Amat, Raja Boukit's replacement as chief at Sorkam, also offered in 1763 to remove the Dutch marker stone at his kuala if the English would settle there. Fort Marlborough,

1. FM Cons., 14 Feb. 1763, SFR 71.

2. FM Cons., 30 Dec. 1762, SFR 71.

3. Padang Vergadering, 15 March 1760, KA 2889 (Secret), p. 76.

4. FM Cons., 12 Nov. 1762, SFR 71.

5. FM Cons., 30 June 1763, SFR 71; 5 Sept. 1764, SFR 72.

however, mindful of Company commands not to adventure into Dutch territory, refused but told Wyatt that he could offer Raja Amat sanctuary if that chief's disagreement with the Dutch resulted in his expulsion from Sorkam.¹ Wyatt had also been instructed by Benkulen to try to get 'a solid Footing at the Nias Islands', by obtaining exclusive contracts and a lodge there. His predecessor, Stevenson, had already opened negotiations with the chiefs of Gunung Limbo, and Wyatt followed this initiative by dispatching his assistant, William Albertson, to Nias in March 1763 in the sloop Juliana.² The Benkulen Board noted in its public records that the Nias people might be persuaded to produce pepper, but it must also have remembered the privation caused at Natal in the mid-1750s by Dutch interception of rice boats from the island.

Wyatt also began reconstructing an English post at Natal, which would be secure both politically and physically. Resident Stevenson had already noted that the renewal of treaties with the chiefs required careful thought as 'some of the Heads of the different Tribes...[were] dead & others improper for the Charge.'³ A particular problem was Bagindo Maharaja Lello. He had refused to leave Natal when the Dutch Resident van Moschel retreated and had even signed in July 1762 the declaration that the Dutch had been responsible for the destruction of English property at Natal. Stevenson had written to Benkulen in August 1762 that the other chiefs unanimously requested that Bagindo Maharaja Lello be allowed to remain at Natal and added that 'he had worked himself so effectually into the Esteem of the People that an Opposition thereto at present might be attended with bad Consequences'.⁴ Wyatt was therefore instructed to include Bagindo Maharaja Lello in the contract renewal once he had ensured that the chief's renunciation of his Dutch allegiance was genuine and not 'founded only on Artifice [in order] to assist them...underhand'.⁵

1. FM Cons., 16 April 1763, SFR 71.

2. FM Cons., 20 Sept., 28 Oct. 1762, 16 April 1763, SFR 71.

3. FM Cons., 20 Sept. 1762, SFR 71.

4. FM Cons., 13 July, 20 Sept. 1762, SFR 71.

5. FM Cons., 28 Oct. 1762, 14 Feb. 1763, SFR 71.

Other changes were also made among the local political establishment. Raja Mancoutoe, whom Stevenson described as 'very obnoxious' to the local people and who had signed the Dutch treaty in September 1760, was ordered to be sent down to Fort Marlborough but left Natal before Wyatt arrived.¹ Raja Pootee, on the other hand, had not signed the VOC contract and was reinstated as Lieutenant of Bugis at Natal more because of his family connections than any real expectation of his usefulness in the post. He was dismissed five years later for deserting Sultan Awaladin during an expedition sent to Nias to obtain satisfaction for a Fort Marlborough perahu cut off there.² Of the other headmen from the 1750s the names of the three Minangkabau supporters of Bagindo Maharaja Lello who had signed the VOC treaty of 1760 were conspicuously absent from the declaration against the Dutch in 1762, and they may have left Natal.

Although the Dutch continued to inconvenience Fort Marlborough whenever possible, for the most part during the 1760s they were obliged to treat the English circum-spectly. A boat which the Tapanuli Resident had sent after an Achehnese pirate was arrested by the Baros Resident early in 1763 but subsequently returned on Padang's orders. Fort Marlborough retaliated by ordering the Natal Resident to make reprisals if the Dutch persisted in such seizures.³ A year later the Airhadji Resident stopped some cattle coming from Korintji to Muko Muko through territory under his jurisdiction. Both the Muko Muko Resident and Fort Marlborough protested to Padang that provisions were not contraband and had never before been hindered in their passage. Padang again instructed its subordinate to let horses and cattle pass through VOC domains en route to English settlements.⁴ The Dutch also went so far as to deny Fort Marlborough the facilities of Batavia. They refused to allow first Randolph Marriot and then John Herbert to reside there as official English agents in the

1. FM Cons., 20 Sept., 28 Oct. 1762, 14 Feb. 1763, SFR 71.

2. FM Cons., 28 Oct. 1762, SFR 71; 29 Nov. 1768, SFR 76.

3. FM Cons., 16 April 1763, SFR 71; Padang to Batavia, 15 May 1763, KA 3014, pp. 21-2.

4. FM Cons., 3 Nov., 1 Dec. 1764, SFR 72.

early 1760s and in 1764 expanded this into a formal prohibition against any Batavia resident acting for or even corresponding with the English. Nevertheless, this had only nuisance value. Benkulen was at this time getting its supplies from India, and as John Herbert noted after his return from Batavia in September 1763, the English certainly 'would not to be treated with any degree of Levity at least during the stay of any of his Majesty's Ships in India'.¹ During the difficult period of resettlement from 1761 to 1763 when Fort Marlborough was vulnerable to Dutch interference, the British Navy was very much in evidence - triumphant in India and then in Manila. The Revenge was actually on the West Coast for much of 1762, and in July 1763 Rear Admiral Cornish had written Batavia in support of Fort Marlborough's complaints about Dutch 'Insults'.²

Although they were unable to hinder the re-establishment of their rivals in North Sumatra, the Dutch did manage to forestall English expansion into Pasaman, an undertaking which became a major source of friction between the two Companies on the West Coast from 1762 to 1767. The Padang authorities, watching the almost effortless repossession of Natal and Tapanuli by the English, feared they would soon be in a position to offer support to Raja (Soutan) Kinali, a Pasaman chief, who had gone into rebellion against the VOC in 1762.³ Fort Marlborough had considered this possibility seriously. Invitations from Raja Kinali to settle at Pasaman had come to Natal almost as soon as the English were re-established there. Stevenson had reported in October 1762 that Commodore Watson's 'spirited Behaviour' against the Dutch had gained 'great Credit' for the English Company and stimulated 'pressing Invitations from all Quarters to come and settle amongst them'.⁴ The Pasaman envoys had even refused to leave Natal without an answer and had offered

1. Herbert to Fort Marlborough Board, 7 Dec. 1763, in FM Cons., 17 Dec. 1763, SFR 71; FM Cons., 31 Aug. 1764, SFR 72.
2. FM Cons., 16 Nov. 1763, SFR 71.
3. 'Begin en voortgang van onze bezittingen op Sumatra's West Kust', TNI, vol. IX, pt. 4 (1847), pp. 27-33. This article is a continuation of van Basel's narrative, but not written by van Basel.
4. FM Cons., 12 Nov. 1762, SFR 71.

to drive the Dutch from Airbangis if the English would establish a post at Pasaman. Raja Kinali repeated these solicitations in December 1762 and January 1763. In April 1763, aware that Pasaman had formerly been an important rice supplier for Natal, the Benkulen Board reluctantly ordered Wyatt to decline the invitation from Pasaman, because the requirements of organising the new Presidency at Fort Marlborough precluded diverting resources to a new settlement. Wyatt was instructed, however, to encourage the Pasaman people to ward off the Dutch by promising to settle at Pasaman if future circumstances permitted.¹

Three years later Wyatt was still pressing Fort Marlborough to make a commitment at Pasaman. In February and April 1766, envoys had come from Raja Kinali asking Wyatt for a definite conclusion to what he had told them was a mere deferment of Fort Marlborough's decision concerning Pasaman. The district, Wyatt told Benkulen, had never had any contract with the Dutch, and it produced yearly not only 100 koyan of rice and 3000 pikuls of cassia, which the Directors had ordered Fort Marlborough to buy in bulk for the European market, but had also once produced pepper and could do so again. Wyatt added that Fort Marlborough must decide quickly before the Dutch actually settled at Pasaman and promised that he would keep the envoys at Natal until he heard from Benkulen. Four days later, Wyatt again wrote to Fort Marlborough that the Dutch had occupied Pasaman. There had been no opposition to the Dutch landing as Raja Kinali's negeri was situated four hours' march up-country, and the Dutch 'had taken Possession of a Fisherman's House and hoisted Dutch Colors'. Raja Kinali had written to Wyatt stating that he would never consent to the Dutch take-over and suggesting that there was still room in his country for an English post.²

This news from Natal prompted another lengthy debate over Pasaman at the Fort Marlborough Board in May 1766. The Council concluded that a post at Pasaman would

1. FM Cons., 30 Dec. 1762, 14 Feb., 16 April 1763, SFR 71.

2. FM Cons., 15 Feb., 30 April 1766, SFR 74.

be useful to Fort Marlborough. The district was fertile and populous. Rice was plentiful and as cheap or cheaper than what was brought to the West Coast from Bengal. The large production of cassia and prospect of pepper-culture would make Pasaman profitable to the Company. The Board then insisted, in terms that almost duplicated its justification for the initial occupation of Natal and Tapanuli, on the legal right of the English to accept Pasaman's overtures. Not only had an English post been repeatedly requested by the Pasaman people and the Minangkabau sultan, but 'the most diligent enquiry amongst the oldest people' there had also uncovered no evidence of prior Dutch contacts with the area. The Board further noted Pasaman's attractive potential for private trade - a 'very Considerable Inland Trade for piece goods and opium the returns for which would be in Gold'. A British post at Pasaman, Fort Marlborough conjectured, could draw the gold trade away from Padang and, since the Dutch maintained settlements on the coast solely for that trade, might even result in the VOC quitting the West Coast altogether. Their competitive spirit aroused, the Board members declared unanimously that they would have taken possession of Pasaman at once had the Dutch not already hoisted their colours. Although the Council did not think this act, accomplished by violence, gave the Dutch valid territorial rights at Pasaman, it admitted that however 'arbitrary & illegal' VOC claims might appear, the Dutch would 'as usual... bring, in support thereof, some Antient [sic] agreement, which however spurious, cannot perhaps be so easily refuted in Europe, and therefore would give them an advantage of Complaint against Our Honble. Masters for infringing on their possessions'. The Board consequently decided not to interfere openly at Pasaman but instead instructed Wyatt to move in at once if the Dutch were forced out.¹

A reinforcement of twelve Europeans, ten Arabs and twenty slaves was sent to Natal to facilitate this project. Fort Marlborough clearly hoped that the circumstances which had permitted the English occupation of Tapanuli would be repeated.²

1. FM Cons., 7 May 1766, SFR 74.

2. *ibid.*

In this instance, however, the Dutch did not withdraw their men. Reinforced by a large contingent from Batavia, they finally stormed Raja Kinali's negeri and drove him from Pasaman in late 1766 and early 1767. A Minangkabau prince was installed to replace Kinali and this new chief signed a contract with the VOC on 13 July 1767.¹

The Beginning of the Dutch Withdrawal: Tapus and Korlang, 1763-9

Although the successful conclusion of the long Dutch campaign for Pasaman enhanced VOC control of the coast between Padang and Airbangis, Dutch possessions north of Natal were still being progressively nibbled away. The English took one final initiative in the North in the late 1760s and Acehnesse pressure on the area was mounting throughout the decade.

Before 1769 the Acehnesse appear to have troubled the English little. There is only one report in Fort Marlborough's records of Acehnesse depredations near English settlements in the period between 1762 and 1769 - a raid fitted out from Singkil which plundered the kuala of Sinkuang south of Natal. Moreover, this incident appears to have been noted by the English as evidence more of Dutch rather than Acehnesse wrongdoing, as it ended with the Baros Resident's seizure of one of the two cruisers sent out from Natal in pursuit of the raiders of Sinkuang.² The English continued to keep a vessel in Tapanuli Bay to protect their trade from 'pirates' and they likely met occasional Acehnesse raiders, but if such encounters were unworthy of report they could not have approximated to the determined and persistent campaign of Panglima Laut in the 1750s.

The Dutch on the other hand suffered increasingly from Acehnesse incursions. The Dutch had laboured with some success in 1761 to exclude the Acehnesse from VOC navigation waters, 'in order to remain sole master of the [northern] trade'. The return of the English shattered this hope and Padang was obliged to invite Acehnesse traders back to Dutch ports in the expectation that a revival of the old

1. 'Begin en Voortgang', loc. cit., pp. 32-3.

2. FM Cons., 16 April 1763, SFR 71; FM to Court, 22 July 1763, par. 63, SFR 13.

estrangement between the Achehnese and English would allow the VOC to corner at least the Achehnese section of the coasting traffic. Advertisements were posted at Padang, Baros and Airbangis early in 1763 which fallaciously asserted that the prohibition of 1761 had been directed only at 'sea rovers and other hostile riff-raff' and had not been intended to obstruct genuine merchants; legitimate Achehnese traders would be welcomed at Padang should they return.¹ Achehnese resident in Dutch districts carried this news to their compatriots in the North, and by May 1763 six vessels direct from Singkil had arrived at Padang.² Achehnese trade at Padang, however, did not exempt the VOC from Achehnese attack in the northern quarters. The first real test of strength came at Tapus, the main kuala between Singkil and Baros. As early as January 1763, the Baros King complained to Padang that English and Achehnese smuggling at Tapus had become so general that none of that district's extremely high quality gum was reaching Baros. He requested a VOC post of six military there to turn away unauthorised foreign commerce and to take advantage of the tendency of traders from the mountains to visit Tapus and Karsahan as well as Tapanuli instead of coming to Baros. Padang rejected the suggestion, having decided that the only utility of such a post would be to calm the Baros King's 'unreasonable' fear of the Achehnese. Little could be done, even by cruisers, the Dutch concluded, to restore the VOC's trade around Baros as long as the English held Natal and Tapanuli.³

The next year the Baros King, joined by the Resident there, again appealed for a post at Tapus, reporting that traffic at Baros had virtually stopped. The mountain people either took their goods to Natal and Tapanuli or to Tapus, where a large number of Achehnese had settled who paid more for benzoin and camphor than did the Dutch. Faced with not only a diminution of the collection of northern

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1. Padang to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1763, KA 2983, p. 57.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 15 May 1763, KA 3014, p. 20.
 3. Padang Vergadering, 18 Jan. 1763, KA 2983, pp. 21-3, 33; Raja Baros to Padang, received 5 April 1763, KA 2983, pp. 124-8.

produce at Baros. but also a sharp drop in the factory's earnings, which declined about Florins 6000 in the financial year 1763-4, Padang finally agreed to test the efficacy of placing VOC military at Tapus.¹ The Achehnese, however, were not willing to relinquish this lucrative port, and on 5-6 September 1765 a party of Achehnese led by one Po Qualla overran the new Tapus garrison, killing one VOC Bugis and capturing the other soldiers. The Bugis corporal escaped and reported the attack to Baros.² It was the Baros Resident Sieben who was blamed by Padang for the VOC's misadventure at Tapus, and he was reprimanded for suggesting that so small a post would be effectual. Padang resolved to abandon further efforts at Tapus, at least until Batavia's orders were received. Sieben meanwhile was given the impossible task of avoiding public confrontation with the Achehnese and simultaneously preventing Po Qualla from settling permanently at Tapus, which the Dutch feared was the object of his raid.³ In order 'to keep that old comptoir Baros alive', Sieben was directed to send his perahu occasionally to Tapus to show the VOC flag and discourage Achehnese activity in the area. Padang noted optimistically that 'despite a lack of external power, much can still be done by wise conduct',⁴ but this proved a vain expectation in relation to the Achehnese. Sieben subsequently protested about the dangers of sending the perahu unaccompanied on such an exercise, and Padang finally revoked these orders, thus terminating Dutch contact with Tapus.⁵

The Achehnese consequently remained at Tapus and their small success there stimulated further incursions around Baros. Late in 1766 the Baros Resident reported increased raiding all around the factory and by December 1766, in a secret letter to Padang, he warned that he no longer judged even the VOC pagar safe from Achehnese attack. Padang sent a Bugis corporal and five soldiers north in the

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1. Padang to Batavia, 27 Dec. 1764, KA 3046, pp. 12-4. Raja Baros to Padang, undated, in Padang to Batavia, 27 Dec. 1764, KA 3046, pp. 29-30.
 2. Padang Vergadering, 30 Sept. 1765, Padang to Batavia, 30 Nov. 1765, KA 3076, pp. 5-6, 193-5.
 3. *ibid.*
 4. Padang to Batavia, 15 Aug. 1766, KA 3076, pp. 17-8.
 5. Padang Vergadering, 6 Sept. 1766, KA 3076, pp. 175-6.

sloop Goudvink on 12 January 1767 but could not spare more reinforcements for Baros because of a campaign then in progress against Raja Kinali of Pasaman. The feared Achehnese attack did not materialise but the state of continual alarm further damaged Baros's already faltering commerce. Moreover, discouraged by low VOC prices, the local growers turned from collecting benzoin and camphor to cultivating rice, and the Baros Resident admonished Padang that unless prices were raised the VOC's northern trade would disintegrate completely.¹

The northern quarter was quieter in the first half of 1767, but by September the Achehnese threat to Baros recurred. In an express letter the Baros Resident advised Padang that the Achehnese 'rabble' were anchored in a large gonting and seven bantings off Pulau Talabus and reportedly intended to take Baros. Padang did not believe the factory itself to be in danger but nevertheless again ordered the sloop Goudvink to Baros with another five European and twenty-five Bugis soldiers.² The Goudvink, delayed by bad weather, did not arrive until 14 October, having lost her anchor and nine of her two-pounder cannon during the passage, but the Achehnese had already been frightened away from the Baros area by the appearance there of the large VOC ship Vlissingen which carried a sizeable contingent of military. The Achehnese remained in the vicinity, but the Baros Resident noted in October 1767 that their only action to date had been an attempt to persuade the Baros King to install Siradin, a son of the exiled chief of Sorkam, as headman of that port. The King had refused and referred Siradin's Achehnese sponsors to the VOC. As nothing more had been heard of the matter, the Baros Resident concluded that the Achehnese had abandoned it.³ In December 1767 the Achehnese were sighted at Pulau Kara Kara (Karang ?) but still had not attempted anything against Baros. The Raja and chiefs

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1. Padang Vergadering, 2 Jan. 1767, KA 3138, p. 4;
Padang to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1767, KA 3105, pp. 6-7.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 25 Sept. 1767, KA 3105, pp. 6-7;
Padang to Baros, 24 Aug. 1767, KA 3138. Pulau Talabus was near the mouth of the Tapus River.
 3. Padang to Batavia, 6 Nov. 1767, KA 3105, p. 55.

were terrified, however, and continually begged the Resident and Padang for VOC troops to garrison their negeris. Padang ascribed their apprehension to the 'fearful disposition' of the natives but still authorised the Baros Resident to provide them with such assistance as would not weaken the VOC garrison.¹ The long expected attack on Baros still had not occurred by the end of 1767 and the next year was relatively calm, although the Resident was warned by Raja Amat of Sorkam and Soutan Bancahoulou that 'the Achehnese nation always hold their desires fixed on Baros' and the factory should remain on guard. As a consequence, although the Resident dismissed the Nias people hired during the earlier troubles, he refused to return other supernumerary soldiers to Padang as requested. Sickness, he explained, had already reduced his reinforced garrison to its stipulated strength and the continuing Achehnese presence made the security of VOC goods and people uncertain.²

The uncertainties of the Dutch position in the North increased noticeably in 1769. On the one hand, the Achehnese feints of 1766 and 1767 began to develop toward a full scale assault on Baros; on the other, the Dutch became embroiled with the English in a jurisdictional dispute over Korlang and Sorkam, the kualas lying between Tapanuli Bay and Baros, which culminated in the only direct confrontation between soldiers of the two Companies in the period between 1735 and 1770. The incident was the result not only of the antipathy generated by two decades of rivalry in the North but also of the aggressive tempers of Resident Bastensz at Baros and Resident Joseph Darvall at Natal. Darvall, who had a large personal stake in the area's commerce, became concerned in 1768 with what he conceived as illegal Dutch efforts to infiltrate Tapanuli Bay. He complained to Benkulen in May 1768 that the Dutch had placed their flag at Sorkam and that VOC vessels were continually in Tapanuli Bay itself, seeking to extend Dutch traffic in benzoin into

1. Padang to Batavia, 20 March 1768, KA 3138, p. 37.

2. Baros to Padang, 8 Sept. 1768, KA 3167; Padang to Batavia, 20 Dec. 1768, KA 3167, pp. 24-5.

English domains at the expense of English traders. He reported that he had placed Bugis guards at each of the Tapanuli kualas exporting white benzoin and asked for further directions on how to deal with the Dutch. He also suggested that the Dutch had designs on Korlang.¹

Although both Sorkam and Korlang had signed contracts with the VOC in 1693, Korlang appears not to have been included in the general renewal of Dutch treaties in 1755. The Padang authorities had also taken a much more active interest in Sorkam than in its sister port as a result of Raja Boukit's contacts with Panglima Laut in the late 1750s. Accordingly, Fort Marlborough recognised Dutch sovereignty at Sorkam but notified Darvall to post Bugis at Korlang as a sign of English ownership. A year later, still fearing a Dutch take-over at Korlang, Darvall reported that he had ordered a contingent of Bugis to raise the Company's flag there and had assembled the chiefs to negotiate contracts with the English.²

The Baros Resident had been informed of Darvall's plans by Raja Amat of Sorkam who had been castigated by Darvall in 1768 for his treatment of a Chinese trader from Natal. The Dutch, however, had not surrendered formal claims to Korlang and learning from Amat that the principal of the four Korlang chiefs, Maharaja Lello, was against the English connection, Resident Bastensz sent a small party of men to erect a VOC marker at Korlang kuala. Maharaja Lello then visited Baros and informed Bastensz that one of his co-penghulus, Raja Gendom, had already left for Tapanuli to offer Korlang to the English.³

Unfortunately the expedition sent by Darvall to occupy Korlang found the Baros party sent to set up the Dutch boundary stone already at the kuala. Nevertheless,

1. FM Cons., 20 May 1768, SFR 76.

2. Corpus Diplomaticum, op. cit., vol. IV, pp. 30-3; vol. VI, pp. 74, 76; FM Cons., 20 May 1768, SFR 76. Darvall hinted at such agreements between the English Company and Korlang. FM Cons., 17 June 1769, SFR 77.

3. Baros to Padang, 29 March 1769, KA 3197, pp. 68-71. The four heads of Korlang were Maharaja Lello, Poenimaina, Raja Gendom and Raja Puti. Darvall claimed that Raja Amat had mistreated a Chinese trader from Natal and had seized a boat of Amat's in retaliation until ordered to restore the vessel by Fort Marlborough.

Darvall's Bugis hoisted the English flag, ordered two Dutchmen away from the port and took the VOC marker back to Natal with them. A corporal and five Bugis were left at Korlang to form what Darvall seemed to have envisaged as a permanent garrison there. Darvall reported to Benkulen that several Korlang chiefs, presumably including Raja Gendom, had visited Tapanuli to renew their contracts. Darvall also added that he had stationed two Bugis at the Tapanuli Bay kualas of Batang Taro, Pinang Sori and Gunung Tua although he now justified this expenditure of Company resources in terms of protecting the Company's cassia trade rather than his own traffic in benzoin. Benkulen approved all these actions.¹

Having recently forestalled the English at Pasaman, however, the Dutch were not prepared to surrender Korlang. A VOC sloop appeared at the kuala, the English Company flag staff was cut down, the Bugis guard house burned and all twelve Korlang chiefs seized and marched off to Baros. In response Darvall sent a serjeant and ten Bugis to Tapanuli and ordered his assistant there, William Broff, to send what appears to have been a Natal Concern sloop, the Tryall, with a force to retaliate in kind at Sorkam. The Baros Resident consequently wrote to Padang in July 1769 that fifty English troops had disarmed the VOC Bugis at Sorkam, hauled down the Dutch flag, and fired the guard house. The Sorkam chiefs were not taken captive because the Korlang penghulus had already been released by the Baros Resident.²

The Benkulen Board, hearing of these events, belatedly instructed Darvall in future to refer such disputes to Fort Marlborough before taking direct action, as Company policy allowed defence only against attack, not reprisals.³ Nevertheless, the Board supported Darvall's initiatives despite Dutch protests. The Padang authorities' demands for satisfaction for 'the Affront and Violence put upon them

1. FM Cons., 17 June 1769, SFR 77.

2. FM Cons., 9 Sept. 1769, SFR 77; Baros to Padang, 6 Aug. 1769, KA 3197, pp. 79-80.

3. *ibid.*

and the damages they...suffered' from the forcible English take-over at Korlang and the raid on Sorkam were similar to the protests lodged against the occupation of Natal and Tapanuli nearly twenty years earlier. The seizure of Korlang was represented as being against the inclination of the local headmen and in violation of VOC contracts, the Netherlands-Great Britain treaties, and 'the rights of the Sultan of Baros' in whose domains the kuala stood.¹ Fort Marlborough merely responded with a counter-protest against the 'unwarrantable and hostile' actions of the Baros Resident against English personnel and property at Korlang. Governor Wyatt and the Benkulen Board asserted that the Dutch had invited retaliation at Sorkam by their own aggression at Korlang where they had possessed no right to set a marker stone as the port had been ceded to the English with the Tapanuli Bay kualas 'many years' before the French capture of the West Coast. Fort Marlborough dismissed any possibility that Korlang was a part of Baros territory because the secret efforts the Baros Resident had been obliged to employ to try to woo the district's Batak chiefs to the Dutch interest indicated the contrary. If the VOC still pretended to any claims to Korlang, Benkulen recommended that the matter be referred to Europe.²

The Dutch had never been able to retrieve any West Coast port which the English had occupied and Korlang was no exception. By the 1770s a Dutch writer listed twelve kualas which the English had 'debauched...from the obedience of the King of Baros'³ and then occupied - in effect, every port from Natal to Sorkam. The kingdom of Baros, for which the VOC had so bravely claimed the entire north-central quarter of the West Coast from Singkil to Batahan, was by 1770 reduced to two kualas, Baros and Sorkam.

1. Padang to FM, 23 Aug. 1769, in FM Cons., 24 Oct. 1769, SFR 77.

2. FM to Padang, 27 Oct. 1769, in FM Cons., 28 Oct. 1769, SFR 77.

3. Eschels Kroon, loc. cit., vol. 17, pp. 68-70. According to Eschels Kroon, who was referring to a time in the mid-1770s, these kualas were Natal 'Cancam', Tabujung, Sinkuang, Batu Mandam, Batang Taro, Pinang Sori, Badiri, Sibuluang, Tapanuli, Korlang and Sorkam.

The Dutch Withdrawal: Baros, 1770-5

The Dutch establishment at Baros had been caught in a slowly closing pincer between the English to the south and the Acehnese to the north since the late 1740s and early 1750s. While the English advance halted at Korlang in 1769, pressure from the Acehnese under the leadership of a second Panglima Laut reached an intensity in the early 1770s that finally caused the Dutch to abandon Baros factory as a liability in 1775. Having absorbed Singkil and Tapus, Baros was the next major kuala in the path of the Acehnese. The commercial competition from Tapus, which had prompted the ill-fated VOC post there, continued after 1765. Between March and June 1769, the Baros Resident Bastensz complained that he had not collected a single pound of top quality benzoin since he had taken charge of the factory nor seen a single trader from the mountains because they all went to Tapus or elsewhere with their gum.¹ Moreover, the Acehnese were also still smuggling in VOC territory. The expedition sent by Bastensz in March 1769 to set VOC markers at Korlang had encountered three Acehnese vessels trading contraband piece goods for benzoin at Sorkam on its return trip to Baros. These vessels were seized, apparently without resistance, and their cargoes impounded at Baros, pending instructions from Padang. Resident Bastensz sent a sample of the confiscated Acehnese benzoin to his superiors and reiterated the perennial lament that smuggling was the cause of the decay of Baros.² Despite Baros's commercial problems, the Padang authorities in this instance did not approve Bastensz's seizure of the Acehnese craft. They had learned that the vessels had come from the King of Aceh and were provided with his pass. Bastensz was consequently instructed to return the cargoes to their owners and merely enjoin them not to trade illegally within

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1. Baros to Padang, 29 March 1769, KA 3197, p. 71. Bastensz had taken over at Baros about March 1769, having previously been assistant to Resident Sieben. The same situation still held, however, three months later, for Bastensz again wrote Padang that not a single mountain man had been to Baros and he was obliged to buy the VOC's benzoin secondhand from 'roving traders' at Sorkam and Tapus. Baros to Padang, 5 June 1769, KA 3197, p. 72.
 2. Baros to Padang, 29 March 1769, KA 3197, pp. 70-1.

VOC limits. Padang, for once, was willing to give foreign traders the benefit of the doubt and suggested to Bastensz that their contraband cargoes did not prove conclusively that they had been smuggling at Sorkam. More important from Padang's point of view were the 'very difficult results' which could issue from Bastensz's action;¹ already faced with almost continual troubles from the Achehnese in the North, Padang was not eager to antagonise the Sultan of Acheh.

Another incident at Baros in June 1769 also indicated that the Dutch were trying to give the Achehnese no excuse for hostilities. A party of Achehnese, led by one Pobintra, who had called at Baros in three vessels, had decapitated a Nias man who was cutting wood near the negeri. The Baros Resident appears to have raised no objection to the deed but he asked Pobintra why they had killed the man. The Achehnese leader merely stated that he had nothing against the VOC but had thought the Nias man was one of the Baros King's people. The Achehnese then left Baros for Batu Labi where they appear to have remained.²

This Pobintra (Sibentara ?) may have been involved in events at Singkil which helped to precipitate the very confrontation with the Achehnese that the Dutch had attempted to avoid. According to one account of the history of Singkil, Captain Canning's report of 1814, it was a power struggle at Singkil that brought the second Achehnese Panglima Laut to the West Coast in 1769. By 1814, Singkil was the premier independent harbour principality on the North-West Coast, controlling six other ports, one-third of the population, half the pepper, half the benzoin, and two-thirds of the camphor production of the entire coast from Baros to Meulaboh.³ Its chief, Leube Dapa, was powerful enough to attempt king-making at Banda Acheh

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1. Padang to Baros, 19 April 1769, KA 3197, p. 50; Baros to Padang, 5 June 1769, KA 3197, p. 73. Bastensz returned the goods to their owners, which he said appeared to satisfy them, and they subsequently left Baros.
 2. Baros to Padang, 5 June 1769, KA 3197, pp. 76-7. This letter was written by Bastensz. A year earlier Sieben had referred to a Sibentara.
 3. Comparative Statement of the Ports on the Northwest Coast of Sumatra, Enclosure No. 16, Captain J. Canning's Report, 24 Nov. 1814, SFR 27.

in a rebellion of 1805.¹ It was Leube Dapa and his brother Leube Koontee who had engineered this spectacular economic development and Po Koontee who had actually gained control of Singkil by ousting the 'King's Governor'. Canning described retrospectively the events that had brought Leube Koontee to power:

The king on being made acquainted with the insurrection of Lebbee Koontee lost no time in dispatching a Considerable force under the Command of an Achinese named Lackee Po Syed for the purpose of re-establishing His Authority, But this expedition was after a Sharp attack discommoded by the Superior prowess of Lebbee Koontee to whom the King finding the impossibility of displacing him is stated to have granted a license Authenticated by His Seal for retaining possession of the place, Shortly after which Lebbee Koontee died and was succeeded in the possession of Singkell by His Brother the present Chief Lebbee Dappah.²

Leube Dapa, by his own account, had ruled Singkil for forty-five years in 1814.

Canning did not believe this but confirmed that he had been chief for at least thirty years. If Leube Dapa's figure is accepted, he had come to power about 1770 and there are several tantalising hints in the Dutch and English records which tend to corroborate this chronology for the rise of Singkil. In July 1768, the Baros Resident noted troubles which he stated had been going on for some time at Singkil between two Achehnese, Sibentara (Pobintra ?) and Po Konde (Leube Koontee). Sibentara had demanded five hundred dollars of the taxes on trading profits which Po Konde had collected from his people. The result was a war in which Sibentara was wounded and had to sue for peace.³ The subsequent appearance of Pobintra at Baros in 1769 and his remaining at Batu Labi would tend to confirm that he had been ejected from Singkil. Sibentara may merely have been a rival chief rather than the royal governor at Singkil, but his demand for a share of trading revenue would have been suitable behaviour for an agent of the Achehnese King. Later events are more suggestive. Within a year of the troubles at Singkil, in accordance with Canning's description

1. Radeen Hoesein Djajadiningrat, 'Critisch Overzicht van de in Maleische Werken Vervatte Gegevens over de Geschiedenis van het Soeltanaat van Atjeh', Bijdragen tot de Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indie, vol. 65 (1911), p. 207.
2. Captain J. Canning's Report, 24 Nov. 1814, par. 34, SFR 27.
3. Baros to Padang, 18 July 1768, KA 3167.

of Leube Koontee's career, a man who was almost certainly dispatched by the King of Aceh had appeared on the West Coast. He was known in both English and Dutch records as Panglima Laut and his object was the disciplining not only of Singkil but of other West Coast kualas as well. The first European contact with this second Panglima Laut came in August 1769 when he sent a letter to the Baros Raja demanding, 'on account of his principal the King of Atchien', the yearly tribute which he alleged the Raja owed as a vassal of the Achehnese crown. The Baros Raja declined to answer the letter and there the matter rested until August 1770.¹

Meanwhile Panglima Laut was busy elsewhere on the coast. The Natal Resident Darvall reported to Benkulen in December 1769 that James Stevenson, whom he had sent to Singkil,

...was not able to do anything at Singkell in behalf of the people I mentioned in my last [letter], Panglemo Laut still continues there and he will not suffer a Boat to come this way. Not long since he seized upon a Banting and all her Cargoe which Mr. Broff [the Resident at Tapanuli] had sent, belonging to the [Natal] Concern to Soosoo for Rice, and it was with great Intreaty of the Inhabitants at Singkell that he returned her, but not without embezzling about \$150 of her Cargoe.

If you [Fort Marlborough] do not fall upon some method immediately, to afford Aid, and Assistance to the above people, particularly those at Singkell, our Trade there, which is very considerable, as well as that at Soosoo is inevitably ruined. So that we shall be entirely confined to the Trade of the Bay and even that will be insecure....²

Darvall also feared difficulties from the Dutch as a result of the dispute over Korlang and recommended that the Company sloop Borneo be sent to Natal to protect the 'Trade both public and private', to aid Singkil, and to secure the rice trade of Susoh. Darvall also asked 'permission to hoist the Company's Colours at Soosoo or Singkell, or even at both places if I see it necessary'. Fort Marlborough

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1. Baros to Padang, 6 Sept. 1770, KA 3227, pp. 75-6. This Achehnese leader is never referred to by any name other than Panglima Laut, so although the timing of the events matches Canning's account, it is not possible to confirm this chronology by identifying the Lackee Po Syed mentioned by Canning with the Panglima Laut of the contemporary sources.
 2. FM Cons., 20 Jan. 1770, SFR 78. Darvall also mentioned that the chief of Analabo, Imam Bali, had asked for help against Achehnese attack, and Forrest confirmed that Imam Bali was at war with the Sultan of Aceh. Forrest, op. cit., p. 46.

agreed to station the Borneo sloop at Natal to defend commerce 'against the Atchinese or any other people that may attempt to disturb it'. but refused to settle the English at either Singkil or Susoh on the grounds that such an establishment could not be properly defended 'without drawing a very heavy Expence on the Company'.¹ Six months later Darvall reported that Panglima Laut was still cruising around the islands north of Tapanuli and obstructing 'all the small Vessels & Traders coming from that way'. He had raided near Baros and then gone to Pulau Musala, which Benkulen considered part of Tapanuli territory, and 'insulted some of the Inhabitants there'. The Baros Resident was reported to have fitted out a sloop to pursue him but Panglima Laut had escaped. The Resident at Tapanuli, Broff, had also sent off a banting to protect trade in the Bay, but the vessel was not capable of cruising against the Achehnese leader and 'had no other Effect than to keep him at a greater distance'.²

Panglima Laut had indeed been causing new trouble around Baros at this time. In August 1770 he returned to Baros and renewed his demands for tribute, with the added threat that the Baros Raja would 'see the effects to his trade if he refused a second time'. The Raja, who no longer dared remain silent, replied that he had accepted the protection of the Dutch Company and therefore acknowledged no dues owed to the Sultan of Acheh. He also warned the Achehnese against harming his subjects. Without returning a reply Panglima Laut sailed past Baros with four bantings in pursuit of two rice boats. These escaped at Korlang where, according to the Baros Resident, the Achehnese turned back from fear of the English. Panglima Laut then came to anchor at Sorkam where he sent another letter to the old dato, Panglima Raja Amat, requiring that Siradin, the son of the ex-chief of Sorkam, Raja Boukit, who was a member of his party and the commander of a large banting, be placed in his father's position as a penghulu at Sorkam or at least be admitted

1. FM Cons., 20 Jan. 1770, SFR 78.

2. FM Cons., 28 July 1770, SFR 79.

to settle there under the protection of Raja Amat. Raja Amat refused and secretly sent the Achehnese letter to Baros requesting aid. The Baros Resident, afraid of open hostilities, declined to support Sorkam where the VOC had insisted so strongly on its rights of ownership only a year earlier. The letter was returned to Sorkam with the bland comment that it was addressed to Raja Amat not Raja Baros and enjoining that if Panglima Laut had business with Baros, he should contact the authorities there directly.¹

Faced with defiance from Raja Baros and evasion from the VOC, Panglima Laut at once made good his threat to raid against the Baros area. In September Baros learned that he had seized fifty-six Bataks from Batu Gadong and four from Tapus. He had also taken a Bugis deserter from Baros into his service. The Baros Resident demanded the return of the captives but offered only ten Rix-dollars for the surrender of the Bugis. The Resident then learned that Panglima Laut and four vessels were at Pulau Panij where some of the inhabitants had been killed and their houses burned. The Achehnese moved inland from there to raid Batak negeris opposite the island. With much of Panglima Laut's force in the mountains, the Baros Resident exhorted the chiefs to assemble a hundred, armed Malays which he would reinforce with thirty VOC mercenaries to attack the Achehnese left at Pulau Panij. The Baros Raja, clearly frightened, responded that he could not collect his force so quickly and the chance for counter-attack was lost. Panglima Laut, his depredations among the Bataks completed, left Pulau Panij and on 5 September sailed past Baros to Tapus where he landed. The Resident then asked Padang for a well-armed sloop and two native craft to attack the Achehnese at Tapus in retaliation for his insults to the Baros Raja and his audacity in committing 'such lawlessness as close to the Residency as Pulo Panij'.² Padang responded to this plan by castigating the Baros King for not attacking at Pulau Panij. It was the fault of his cowardice, the

1. Baros to Padang, 6 Sept. 1770, KA 3227, pp. 76-7.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 77-80.

Dutch Council pointed out, that his enemy had escaped and his sixty Batak subjects remained unrecovered. If he expected continuing Dutch assistance, he must acquit himself better in the future. Nevertheless, Padang agreed to honour its obligation to protect Baros by sea and dispatched the sloop Ida Wilhelmina, which managed only to expel Panglima Laut from the immediate vicinity of Baros.¹ Nevertheless, the Resident was able to return the sloop to Padang by the end of 1770 and reported early in 1771 that Panglima Laut had retired to Singkil. The Resident, however, feared that this retreat was only intended to mobilise a greater force and that the Achehnese leader remained firmly resolved to install Raja Boukit's son at Sorkam.²

These fears proved correct. By July 1771, despite Padang's orders to Baros to prevent Panglima Laut from 'breaking into Tapus', the Achehnese leader and his band had landed at that kuala and were reportedly intending to attack Baros again. The Baros Resident attempted to strengthen the factory's defences but at 2 a.m. on 26 July, the Achehnese managed to breach the fort itself, by cutting through the pagar. A serjeant, two Europeans and a Bugis soldier were killed in this onslaught and the rest of the garrison narrowly avoided being massacred before the Achehnese were finally forced back outside the pagar. The panic-stricken Resident Sieben wrote at once to Padang for aid, sending one letter to Sorkam to be forwarded by Raja Amat and another direct to Padang via the Achehnese 'Po Konde', who had come to Baros from Sorkam on hearing of the troubles. The Resident, fearing that a letter entrusted to an Achehnese messenger would not arrive, wrote again six days later repeating his description of the attack and again urgently begging reinforcements to prevent the collapse of the factory and the death of all the Company personnel. He had already hired an additional thirty-eight Nias mercenaries and planned to take on fifty more to fend off the Achehnese, who were then blockading Baros with five vessels and about two hundred men, until the requested sloop and

1. Padang to Batavia, 3 Jan. 1771, KA 3227, pp. 17-9.

2. Baros to Padang, 14 March 1771, KA 3253, p. 34.

military arrived from Padang. The Resident, prostrate from illness and terror, also asked that someone be sent to replace him at Baros.¹ News of the attack quickly reached the English settlements and the acting Resident at Natal, James Burnett, fearing a similar action against Tapanuli, hastily sent reinforcements there and requested Benkulen to replenish his own reduced garrison.² Padang responded to the threat to Baros by dispatching the sloop Catherina Louisa with Gerrit Coert to the North, and by the end of October Resident Sieben reported that Panglima Laut had retired to Tapus where he had erected two bentengs. Lack of provisions had already caused a diminution of the Achehnese force to fifty or sixty men, and Sieben hoped that the dispersal would continue.³

From this point Tapus rather than Singkil appears to have provided Panglima Laut's base. He remained in his bentengs there during October and November 1771 raiding on both sides of that kuala, terrorising the inhabitants of Baros negeri and robbing them of slaves and animals. Although Padang had not approved an expedition against Tapus itself, Resident Sieben no longer feared another attack on his now reinforced fort or on the VOC sloop on guard before the river since the Achehnese admiral's force was still decreasing in number. In December, however, Panglima Laut, still settled at Tapus, moved to extend his influence by erecting more bentengs in the vicinity of Baros negeri. A sortie from Baros fort destroyed these constructions early in December, killing two Achehnese and severely wounding several others. At this point Panglima Laut, while still marauding at night, also sent vessels off around the North trying to muster more support, but Resident Sieben did not know with what success. The Achehnese force remained at Tapus,

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1. Baros to Padang, 12 June 1771, KA 3253, p. 37; Baros to Padang, 27 July 1771, KA 3253, pp. 40-1; Baros to Padang, 2 Aug. 1771, KA 3253, pp. 41-3; Padang to Batavia, 20 Aug. 1771, KA 3253, pp. 3-4. Padang actually received news of the attack on Baros in a letter (1 Aug. 1771) from the Airbangis Resident who had got the news from Natal, so it is impossible to determine whether the letter the Baros Resident gave to Po Konde was actually delivered. Padang to Batavia, 20 Aug. 1771, KA 3253, pp. 3-4.
 2. FM Cons., 20 Sept. 1771, SFR 79.
 3. Baros to Padang, 26 Oct. 1771, KA 3253, p. 43; Padang to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1772, KA 3253, p. 47.

raiding around Baros factory and negeri, until finally in late January 1772 Panglima Laut put to sea. There he and his followers attacked every vessel he found and as a result, Resident Sieben reported, 'the traffic around here is almost completely halted and the strand people in continual unrest'. Baros fort was, however, temporarily out of danger and Sieben felt secure enough to release his eighty extra Nias military at the end of January. Nevertheless, with little faith in the prospect of prolonged peace, Sieben made sure that he had Padang's permission to rehire the Nias men at the first hint of a new Achehnese threat to Baros.¹

The Baros area seems to have remained quiet during 1772; Panglima Laut appears to have vanished from the scene. Giles Holloway, Resident of Tapanuli, whom Fort Marlborough had dispatched as a Company emissary to the Sultan of Acheh to negotiate among other things over the problem of Panglima Laut, reported on his return from Acheh in March 1772 that the Sultan had assured him that Panglima Laut had acted without his consent and would be put to death if caught. Holloway added that he had heard on the day he left Acheh that Panglima Laut had arrived there and been taken captive.²

There was, however, one more report of his reappearance on the West Coast, which subsequently turned out to be a false alarm. In January 1773, the Raja Baros informed the Baros Resident that an Achehnese vessel had arrived at Tapus reputedly from Panglima Laut, who was soon to follow with five more bantings. The King of Baros also produced a letter from an Achehnese merchant at Tapus which indicated

1. Baros to Padang, 26 Oct., 31 Oct., 26 Nov., 15 Dec. 1771, KA 3253, pp. 43, 44, 47, 49; Padang to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1772, KA 3253, p. 47; Baros to Padang, 16 March 1772, KA 3279, pp. 57-8; Padang to Batavia, 25 Aug. 1772, KA 3253, pp. 28-9.
2. Giles Holloway to Fort Marlborough Board, 7 March 1772, SFR 79, pp. 609-12. Holloway had been dispatched by Benkulen as an envoy to the Sultan of Acheh not only to request a curb on the activities of Panglima Laut, but to check on the activities of Gowan Harrop and the Madras Concern and to attempt to gain a Company factory at Acheh, as ordered by the Court. FM Cons., 24 Aug. 1771, SFR 79. Lee Kam Hing, 'Acheh's Relations with the British, 1760-1819' (M.A. Thesis, University of Malaya, 1969), pp. 47-50. The Dutch later reported that they had also heard that the Sultan of Acheh had arrested Panglima Laut. This intelligence came from Gov. Palm and although its source was not stated, it may have come from the English. Padang to Bavaria, 25 Aug. 1772, KA 3253, p. 29.

that the Achehnese Sultan was expected to write to his nationals there demanding their support. The people were frightened. The Bataks even warned the Baros Resident that if the VOC did not promise to protect them, they would go for help to the English. The Resident sent a letter to the headmen at Tapus 'asking them not to fall away from the Dutch Company' and once again requested an armed sloop, reinforcements and ammunition from Padang. The Baros King had also asked for military protection, but the factory's garrison was so weak that the Resident could spare him neither arms nor men and could only offer the Raja room for himself and his followers inside the VOC fort. The Raja refused to abandon his negeri.¹

Padang considered that, as Baros had been forewarned of Panglima Laut's presence at Tapus, it would be difficult, if proper watch were kept, for the Achehnese to launch another successful surprise attack on the fort. The need for further reinforcements, however, spelled the beginning of the end for Baros factory. Padang had no men to spare and had already received orders to break up the factory if it could not be defended with its normal garrison. The Dutch authorities therefore decided to dispatch the sloop Ida Wilhelmina with a man experienced in military affairs to determine precisely how defensible Baros was. Ensign Lodewijk Kaijsel, the commandant of Pariaman was chosen for the task. Kaijsel was instructed to investigate the strength of Panglima Laut's forces and the state of Baros's fortifications. If the factory was judged capable of repelling an Achehnese assault, Kaijsel was to unload supplies for Baros from the sloop and return to Padang. If on the other hand the factory was judged indefensible, he was to embark the Company's servants, merchandise, supplies, artillery and ammunition on the Ida Wilhelmina and blow up the fort and burn the buildings before he left Baros. The Raja and penghulus of Baros were to be told that because the Raja had on several occasions neglected his duty to the Dutch, the VOC 'no longer was duty bound to maintain the alliance with him'.

1. Baros to Padang, 15 Jan. 1773, in Padang Vergadering, 30 Jan. 1773, KA 3281 (Secret), pp. 1-3.

Kaijsel and Resident Leuftink were given the ultimate decision of whether to maintain or withdraw the factory, but Kaijsel was forbidden to take any offensive action against the Achehnese.¹

The Ida Wilhelmina and Kaijsel arrived at Baros on 14 February 1773 and found everything peaceful. The vessel at Tapus supposedly from Panglima Laut had already left and the reports of Panglima Laut's imminent appearance turned out to be mere rumours. Baros factory, freed from the threat of attack, consequently received a temporary reprieve.² Trade even revived for a short time. Resident Leuftink reported early in 1773 that he had been able to purchase two pikuls of extra white benzoin. In July 1773 he noted that several Batak penghulus from the mountains had been entertained at Baros and had promised to bring down more white gum. Fifteen hundred ponds of top grade white benzoin were collected in the financial year 1773/1774, one thousand more than 1772/1773, but by 1774/1775 the purchase of gum at Baros had again dropped to only five hundred ponds.³

Meanwhile, informed of Panglima Laut's attack of 1771, the Heeren XVII in Amsterdam reviewed the question of continuing support for Baros in October 1773. Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, they noted, the VOC's West Coast establishment had cost more than it earned, and they recommended that Batavia reconsider its policy toward West Coast comptoirs like Baros, Pariaman, Airbangis and Pasaman on the basis of their ability to contribute to the Company's coffers. The Heeren XVII left the final decision to Batavia, admitting that the Company authorities in Europe could not be conversant with rapidly changing local circumstances. Nevertheless, the Heeren left no doubt of their sentiments. The VOC's outlay at many places in India was considered too large and in need of contraction, particularly at factories which once had helped to extend VOC trade but could no

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1. Padang Vergadering, 30 Jan., 2 Feb. 1773, KA 3281 (Secret), pp. 3-12.
 2. Baros to Padang, 16 March 1773, KA 3307, pp. 51-2.
 3. Baros to Padang, 3 July 1773, KA 3307, p. 53; Padang to Batavia, 31 March 1775, KA 3335, pp. 42-3; Padang to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1776, KA 3359, p. 23.

longer compete with the 'increased trade and navigation of the English and other private traffickers'. Regarding the West Coast, they noted that Baros had been maintained only for 'political reasons' and on the assurances of Batavia and Padang that its commerce would improve, but trade there remained so bad that there was still unsold merchandise from 1766. The Heeren XVII concluded by saying that they would await Batavia's decision concerning the West Coast and its commerce.¹

By the end of 1774 Batavia ordered the evacuation of Baros, and the Padang authorities dispatched Lodewijk Kaijsel to accomplish this. He returned to Padang on 20 February 1775 and reported that the Company's fort and buildings had been handed over to Raja Baros and, as instructed by Batavia, a treaty had been signed on 23 January 1775 binding the Raja and his successors to return the factory to the Dutch should they ever wish to reoccupy Baros.² The factories at Airbangis and Pasaman were also withdrawn.³

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1. Extract of Patria Letter, 15 Oct. 1773, in Padang to Batavia, 31 March 1775, KA 3335, pp. 32-7. By 1772 orders had already come to the West Coast from Batavia to reduce places which could not be defended with their normal garrisons, but Padang wrote Batavia in August of that year that since Panglima Laut had left the area and Baros was again at peace, they had decided to continue the factory since it could now be protected without reinforcement. Padang to Batavia, 25 Aug. 1772, KA 3253, p. 29.
 2. Kaijsel had received his instructions on 22 December 1774 and he and the Baros Resident Leuftink returned to Padang on 20 February 1775. Leuftink had brought down four pikuls of extra white benzoin which were on hand at Baros. Padang to Batavia, 25 Feb. 1775, KA 3335, pp. 10, 31; Baros treaty of 25 Jan. 1775, Corpus Diplomaticum, op. cit., vol. VI, p. 393.
 3. FM to Court, 15 April 1775, par. 22, SFR 16.

The Role of the Achehnese

The abandonment of Baros factory terminated over a century of Dutch influence in North Sumatra; the English and the Achehnese were left as uneasy neighbours until Leube Dapa of Singkil and the English at Natal reached an accommodation in 1786. The failure of the Dutch in the North was essentially a commercial one, and the withdrawal from Baros only the culmination of a process of decay which had begun at least as early as the 1740s. The inability of the VOC to compete was apparent even to the Dutch by 1756 when Governor van Herzeele at Padang attempted to demonstrate to Governor General Mossel at Batavia that it was impossible for the West Sumatra establishment to cover its expenses. Van Herzeele listed the fixed costs of the West Coast at Florins 249,000 per year. He then estimated the maximum sales possible, on the basis of the coastal population's purchasing power, at Florins 450,000, which produced Florins 225,000 income if profits were calculated at fifty per cent, and the VOC engrossed the entire trade. He then pointed out that an estimated two-thirds of the total commerce already belonged to the smugglers: Florins 150,000 to about ten English vessels which traded annually in Dutch districts; and Florins 150,000 more to other foreigners, mainly Achehnese and Indians.¹

Added to the financial burden of foreign competition was the Achehnese military threat which finally tipped the fiscal balance against the Dutch. The relations of the English and Dutch in West Sumatra, however antagonistic, were never allowed by their superiors in Europe to degenerate into an open trade war. The Achehnese suffered from no such restraints. They raided actively in the vicinity of European posts during thirteen of the twenty years from 1751 to 1771. They consistently outmanned the Europeans. The three hundred men mustered by Panglima Laut in 1752 were a formidable force in West Coast terms, and even the body of sixty to one hundred men he led in later raids was two to three times the size of the normal garrisons at the posts he was attacking. On the other hand, the Achehnese were always out-gunned. Although

1. van Herzeele to Mossel, 9 Nov. 1756, KA 2776, pp. 94-9.

their vessels were equipped with swivel guns and small cannon, their men rarely possessed firearms. As a result, with the exception of the 1765 raid on Tapus they never won a victory. Nevertheless, the heavy cost of continually reinforcing their factories against Achehnese attack, real or expected, made West Coast trading very expensive for the Europeans. The cost became too much for the Dutch at Baros in the 1770s and had come perilously close to causing London to evacuate Natal and Tapanuli, despite Fort Marlborough's protests, in 1755 and 1756. Having won no battles, the Achehnese were still genuine victors in this war of attrition.

There were several bands of apparently unrelated Achehnese operating in the North, but the most redoubtable and organised of the raids against the Europeans were led by the two Panglimas Laut. These men therefore provide the key to Achehnese intentions on the West Coast in the mid-eighteenth century and it is worth examining what their interests in the area were. The first Panglima Laut, active between 1752 and 1761, is the more enigmatic of the two. The Europeans were uncertain of his precise relationship to the Sultan of Aceh, on the one hand, and the port of Singkil on the other. This ambiguity is evident in the Natal Resident's (Marriot) description of the first European encounter with this man in 1752. Marriot first stated that the leader of a sizeable Achehnese fleet approaching Natal had called for support from the Natal Achehnese in the name of the Sultan of Aceh. Marriot added that he had been told that

The reason the King of Atcheen has for acting in this manner is that he's jealous that if we settle here [at Natal] it will greatly hurt his Opium Trade w^{ch} commodity notwithstanding its being so strictly prohibited is nevertheless carried into his Ports by stealth.¹

This places Panglima Laut's actions within the classic mould of a punitive expedition mounted to enforce the royal trading monopoly. Marriot, however, then

1. FM Cons., 12 Dec. 1752, SFR 66. The Dutch also noted later that their letter to the Sultan of Aceh of 30 June 1760 was not likely to bring relief from Achehnese raiding, since most of the 'rabble' were based at Singkil and paid 'not the slightest obedience to the king of Adchien [sic]'. Padang Vergadering, 23 Sept. 1760, KA 2917, p. 336.

continued that local intelligence also indicated that the expedition was actually organised by 'the People from Singkil & more southwardly' and not by the Sultan of Aceh, who had lent his name to the enterprise as a face-saving device.

...As they [the Singkil people] live so straggling from Atcheen... it is out of the King's power to hinder 'em from acting in this manner, but...not withstanding, he [the Sultan] would have it thought so 'tis at his expence & particular orders 'tis undertaken....¹

Panglima Laut's behaviour at Tapanuli before the English take-over is equally open to two interpretations. When Carter arrived at Tapanuli in 1756, the inhabitants complained bitterly over 'the Behaviour of the Atchinese who they alledged have since the Arrival of Panglema Lout used them very ill, and would not Permitt them to trade with any Vessell except they Paid him a Custom of 5 p. cent.'² The people then asked that the English expel all Achehnese from Tapanuli Bay. There were, however, also divisions among the Achehnese which demonstrate that Panglima Laut represented a force outside the local Achehnese establishment. Carter found Panglima Laut and his followers settled at Meela, fitting out cruisers, while the principal Achehnese merchants resided at Tapanuli negeri, a mile to the north. These merchants, Carter asserted, had been compelled by Panglima Laut 'to support him in his Schemes'.³ Once again such control and taxing of trade would have been behaviour suitable to either an agent of the King or the 'head regent of Tapanuli' which the Dutch later insisted Panglima Laut had intended to become.

Panglima Laut's relationship with Raja Boukit of Sorkam is perhaps more revealing. A litany of 'atrocities' committed by the Panglima and Raja Boukit, including considerable raiding among the Bataks, was published by Padang in the course of Boukit's trial for complicity in the raid against Baros in which Panglima Laut had been killed⁴ and exposes some of the background of the link between the two.

1. FM Cons., 12 Dec. 1752, SFR 66.

2. Carter to Pybus, 25 Feb. 1756, MLR, vol. 39, p. 104a-d.

3. *ibid.*

4. Fiscaal J. A. Thierens, Charges against Raja Boukit of Sorkam, Padang Vergadering, 21 Jan. 1761, KA 2917, pp. 468-80. Depositions Against Raja Boukit by inhabitants of Sorkam and Bataks to Assistant Christian Raaf, Baros, 21 Feb. 1761, Padang Vergadering, 10 Aug. 1761, KA 2917, pp. 152-9.

Sorkam had reportedly been subjugated by the Achehnese in 1754, so it is arguable that Raja Boukit was forced to assist Panglima Laut, but the evidence points in the other direction. After Panglima Laut was driven from Tapanuli in 1756, he returned to Sorkam with only five or six men while the rest of the force deserted and went to Singkil. He was then in no position to compel support, but Raja Boukit continued to provide men and supplies for the Achehnese raids on Tapanuli in 1758 and 1759.¹ Moreover, Raja Boukit, who had a larger following than the Baros King, consistently relied on Panglima Laut to advance his own position at Sorkam. The Batak and Minangkabau residents there accused the two of making Sorkam 'completely an Achehnese compound' and of planning to extend Achehnese control to Tapanuli by establishing Panglima Laut as headman there.² They also stated that Raja Boukit had called Panglima Laut from Tapus and elsewhere to make war on the non-Achehnese at Sorkam, particularly Raja Amat, Boukit's 'co-regent', because he was one of the best merchants and presumably richest men there.³ Sometime in the 1750s, Boukit and Panglima Laut had brought Raja Amat to such a pass that he was obliged to ransom his head with two katis of gold. As late as 1760 Boukit had called Panglima Laut from Singkil and promised his daughter in marriage if the Panglima would kill Raja Amat.⁴ This was clearly politics not piracy, but still explicable in the context of the ethnic rivalries normal to the West Coast kualas.

The first Panglima Laut was reputedly a West Coast man. Alexander Hall reported in 1755 that he had been 'formerly a fisher at this place [Natal]'.⁵

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1. See Appendix XII.
 2. Padang to Batavia, 10 April 1760, KA 2886, p. 101; Depositions of Sorkam inhabitants and Bataks, 21 Feb. 1761, in Padang Vergadering, 10 Aug. 1761, KA 2917, pp. 152-9.
 3. *ibid.* Raja Amat, by the time of Boukit's trial was being referred to by the Dutch as his 'co-regent'. In June 1760, although he was called Panglima Raja Amat, the Padang Governor said that he was 'only a merchant, but still on account of his riches and great following would not submit willing to being subordinate to another man'. van de Wall to Senff, 25 June 1760, KA 2886, pp. 180-1.
 4. Depositions of the Bataks, 21 Feb. 1761, in Padang Vergadering, 10 Aug. 1761, KA 2917, p. 155.
 5. Alexander Hall to Sir John Hall, 30 Nov. 1755, Hall Papers.

He seems to have recruited much of his force among local Achehnese from Singkil, Sorkam and elsewhere, as well as whatever Bataks he could ally with or coerce into co-operation. Nevertheless, the unusual scale of Panglima Laut's activity and the level of his prestige indicate that he was much more than a mere local adventurer. Carter had alleged that Panglima Laut's 'Interest amongst the Atchinese...[had] been on the Decline'¹ ever since his defeats at Natal in 1755, but after every military setback the Achehnese leader was still able to rebuild his forces with local levies. He operated from numerous bases other than Singkil and expected to command the loyalty of the local Achehnese, not only at Singkil but Tapus, Sorkam, Tapanuli and Natal as well. He did not limit his raids to shipping and the native negeris but mounted no less than six attacks on European outposts, the most difficult targets on the West Coast. Raja Boukit, who was so status-conscious that he protested not only to Padang but also to the Achehnese Sultan when the VOC revoked the five gun salute granted him as a mark of honour,² would never have offered his daughter to a man of neither wealth nor reputation. Indeed, in such a society it seems most unlikely that Panglima Laut could have been known so universally by that title or as the King of Acheh's admiral or deputy, without some commission or sarakata from the Sultan. Whatever force he might have commanded, only the Sultan could have legitimised its use in this particular way.³

The timing of Panglima Laut's operations on the West Coast also hints at a royal connection, corresponding almost exactly with periods of peace at Banda Acheh when the Sultan might be expected to turn his attention to recovering his ancestors' commercial empire. Sultan Ala ed-din Juhan Shah, for example, came to the throne in 1735 and was immediately plunged into a ten-year civil war. In 1744, about the

1. Carter to Pybus, 25 Feb. 1756, MLR, vol. 39, pp. 104a-c.

2. See Appendix XII.

3. C. Snouck Hurgronje, The Achehnese, trans. A. W. S. O'Sullivan (Leyden, 1906), vol. I, pp. 7-8, 127-31. The English also called Panglima Laut 'the King of Atcheen's Minister at Singkell', FM to FSG, 27 Feb. 1757, par. 37, SFR 11. The Dutch directed the Baros Resident to have their letter to the Achehnese Sultan delivered to the 'so-called Governor of Atchin at Chincol [Singkil]'. Padang Vergadering, 30 June 1760, KA 2917, p. 193.

time this war ended, large numbers of Achehnese traders began to return to the Natal-Tapanuli area and reports of expeditions from Acheh to regain the West Coast began, culminating in the appearance of Po Anteen's fleet at Natal in 1752. Civil disturbances recurred in Acheh about 1753-4 but peace was restored between 1755 and Sultan Juhan Shah's death in 1760 - the precise period of Panglima Laut's fiercest raids against Natal, Tapanuli, and Baros.¹ Similarly, the rather vague European intelligence concerning Singkil, including the reported Achehnese take-over there in 1757 and the attack on an English trader at that port on either the Sultan's or the Singkil government's orders in 1754, also tends to support the view of Panglima Laut as an agent of the King of Acheh.

The second Panglima Laut was much more clearly the Sultan's man. His specific demand for tribute to the Sultan from the Baros King, his attempts to reinstate Raja Boukit's son at Sorkam, and the fact that he was simultaneously attempting to control and tax Singkil's trade with Darvall's Natal Concern indicate this. All these acts were designed to reassert the Sultan's political suzerainty or redirect West Coast trade back to Acheh proper. His activities also fit into a period when Sultan Ala ed-din Muhammed Shah was at peace and end abruptly in 1772 or 1773 when the Sultan briefly lost his throne for the second time.²

The Achehnese had always played a dual role on the West Coast, as Achehnese nationals and as part of the fabric of local commerce. The Europeans recognised this ambivalence and while they were rivals of the Sultan at Banda Acheh for paramountcy in the international distribution of West Coast produce, they still needed local Achehnese traders. The Natal Resident reporting his fears that the Achehnese might be 'further troublesome' after their seizure of Singkil in 1757 added that

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1. Marsden, op. cit., pp. 459-60; Djajdiningrat, loc. cit., pp. 200-3; 'Translation of the Annals of Acheen', Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia, vol. 4 (1850), pp. 600-1.
 2. T. Braddel, 'On the History of Acheen', Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia, vol. 5 (1851), p. 21; 'Translation of the Annals of Acheen', loc. cit., pp. 601-2; Marsden, op. cit., pp. 460-1; Djajadiningrat, loc. cit., pp. 204-5.

he thought

...the trading part of them wou'd willingly renew their Trade if Encouragement was given them which induced him to send Mr. Stevenson his Surgeon to offer them Liberty and Countenance provided they conform'd to the rules of Trade. This he thought necessary least the Dutch by our [Fort Marlborough] pressing too much this [Achehnese] nation on their late bad behaviour [at Natal] shou'd draw them irrevocably from our Interest, that if that was effected and our trade properly supplied it wou'd greatly detriment the Dutch at Padang.¹

The Dutch in their turn rejoiced when the Achehnese from Singkil sailed past Natal and Tapanuli in the late 1750s to trade at Padang. They tried to exclude Achehnese traders from VOC waters only after their English competitors had been eliminated by the French in 1760 and were obliged to call them back after the return of the English had destroyed all hopes of the Dutch remaining 'sole masters' of the traffic.²

By 1769-71 the growth of Singkil's commercial contacts with the English at Natal was well advanced as witnessed by Darvall's letter to Benkulen of December 1769, and the mercantile interests of the West Coast Achehnese were rapidly overcoming whatever allegiance they felt to the Sultan.³ It is in this context that the operations of the second Panglima Laut must be understood.

With the Dutch virtually eliminated in the North, the implicit rivalry between the entrepôts at Natal and Acheh was clarified. The English subsequently endured sporadic Achehnese raiding in the 1770s and 1780s, culminating in the successful capture of Tapanuli in 1786.⁴ After this the English concluded an agreement with Leube Dapa not only requiring him to punish the attackers of Tapanuli, which he did, but also to prevent the settlement of Achehnese south of Singkil and the sailing of Achehnese vessels into English waters without his licence.⁵ Nevertheless, Singkil

1. FM to Madras, 15 Sept. 1751, SFR 11, p. 70.

2. Padang to Batavia, 28 Feb. 1763, KA 2983, p. 57.

3. FM Cons., 20 Jan. 1770, SFR 78; Lee Kam Hing, 'Foreigners in the Achehnese Court, 1760-1819'. (Conference Papers, International Conference on Asian History, University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 5-10 August 1968), pp. 6-7; Lee Kam Hing, 'Acheh's Relations with the British, 1760-1819', op. cit., pp. 78-82, 86-7, 95.

4. FM to Court, 31 July 1774, par. 24, SFR 16.

5. Lee Kam Hing, 'Acheh's Relations with the British, 1760-1819', op. cit., pp. 82-6. See Appendix XIII.

did not become merely an English satellite. It continued to enjoy a latitude of commercial and political choice which Natal had possessed forty years earlier; it was able, for example, to deflect English reprisals for the raid on Tapanuli by claiming allegiance to the Achehnese crown but¹ equally able to fend off the constraints that monarch wished to impose. Singkil traded not only with Natal and Tapanuli, but also with Banda Aceh where an estimated 700 candies of Singkil benzoin was sold for Pagodas 23,800 in 1772.² It grew so rich on its commerce that by the time the pepper boom began during the Napoleonic Wars, Leube Dapa was in a position to create the first of the new pepper-growing areas on which this was based. He advanced no less than \$40,000 to his followers in the late 1780s and early 1790s to introduce pepper-culture first at Susoh and later at the ports of Ayem Dammah, Terumon, Rhambong, Selucat and Kuala Batu - half of which were developed by pioneer settlers.³

The Dutch had been squeezed out of the North by the independent but simultaneous efforts of the English from the south and the Achehnese from the north. The Achehnese, Sultan's men or local, failed in their bid for political control of Natal, Tapanuli and Sorkam, and the English gained the lion's share of the old VOC-claimed kualas.⁴ Nevertheless, the local Achehnese remained secure at Singkil and Tapus and prospered from a wide variety of trade, while the Sultan progressively lost his economic and consequently his political advantage in even the

1. FM Cons., 23 Aug. 1786, SFR 89.

2. Exportation from Atchin and the Coast of Pdeir in One Year, 23 June 1772, SFR 15, p. 61; Combes estimated exports of about three thousand pikuls of benzoin per year from Aceh in 1814. J. Anderson, Acheen, Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints (London and Kuala Lumpur, 1971), p. 162.

3. Captain J. Canning's Report, 24 Nov. 1814, par. 41, SFR 27; FM to Court, 19 May 1798, SFR 25, p. 320; Gould, op. cit., pp. 96-106; J. Bastin, 'The Changing Balance of the Southeast Asian Pepper Trade', Essays on Indonesian and Malayan History (Singapore, 1961), pp. 40-4.

4. The British took Sorkam in the aftermath of the capture of Tapanuli in 1786. Resident Maidman at Natal was instructed to hoist the Company's flag there. FM Cons., 28 June 1786, SFR 89.

Achehnese sections of the North-West Coast.¹ By the end of the eighteenth century, relations between Singkil and the English had shifted from rivalry to collaboration, and as a result Leube Dapa was the wealthiest and most powerful independent chief on the North-West Coast and that Coast as a consequence of his efforts had become more ethnically Achehnese than ever before.

1. Achehnese possession of Tapus, in spite of the fact that the kuala lay south of Singkil, was confirmed in an agreement between Resident Broff of Natal and Tuanku Hadji Leube Guni, signed on 28 December 1787. Enclosure No. 23, Captain J. Canning's Report, 24 Nov. 1814, SFR 27. See also Lee Kam Hing, 'Acheh's Relations with the British, 1760-1819', (pp. 78-82, 86-7, 121-5) on the progressive decline of the Sultan of Acheh's power on what Lee calls 'the rebel west coast'.

CHAPTER VI

NEW COMMERCIAL ORGANISATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

AT FORT MARLBOROUGH, 1762-1770

While the Achehnese were turning their attacks against the Dutch in northern Sumatra, the British were simultaneously at work in their newly founded Presidency at Fort Marlborough re-establishing the Company's authority in the southern pepper districts and attempting to rebuild a system of private trade which could replace the fortunes that they had lost in the French attack of 1760. Their efforts involved experimentation with a number of new organisational forms, some official and some private, which were developed in the mid-1760s and ultimately succeeded in bringing great prosperity to Benkulen in the 1770s. The trade to northern Sumatra was reconsolidated in its old channels and the main thrust of Fort Marlborough's drive to expand commerce was then turned to eastern Indonesia, an area from which the British had been effectively excluded by the Dutch since the late 1740s.

The Reclamation of the Northern Trade

The restoration of the West Coast servants' private trade required several years after the British reoccupation of Fort Marlborough and its dependencies in 1761. The North Sumatran trade, as the most accessible and long-standing of Benkulen's commercial connections, was the most easily re-established, especially since Achehnese incursions after 1760 were directed principally at Baros. Indeed, British trading links with the West Coast had never been entirely broken. Within a year of the French capture of the British settlements in February and March 1760, four English country traders had returned to the area. Two of these, the brigantine Bonetta and the snow Pocock, moreover, had Benkulen connections. Captain Thomas Forrest, previously of the Fort Marlborough marine, was apparently sailing the

Bonetta for Bengal owners when he arrived at Padang in March 1761. Captain John Edwards, an habitué of the West Coast trade in the 1750s, was commanding the snow Pocock which appears still to have been owned by Roger Carter, Fort Marlborough's Governor in absentia. Both the Bonetta and the Pocock, which called at Padang in May 1761, were bound for Muko Muko which unlike Natal possessed no Dutch garrison. All four British captains told the Dutch authorities that they had stopped at Padang only for provisions, but the Dutch, noting their cargoes of moderately priced piece goods, opium, salt and iron, articles with which the Dutch had experienced difficulty supplying the Natal trade, suspected 'private smuggling' and informed the captains that English traders were not to call at Padang in future except in cases of real emergency. The Padang government also threatened to fine anyone caught trafficking with the English in Dutch territory ten to thirty Rix-dollars. Captain Forrest, who was already well known to the Dutch for benzoin and opium smuggling in the 1750s, made the mistake of touching at Padang again in July 1761 and despite his protests found his cargo of cloth confiscated by the Dutch.¹

These English country traders, however, did not limit their activities to Fort Marlborough's traditional private trading sphere in the North-West Sumatra. At least one, Captain Austin of the snow Success, was also purchasing pepper on private account at the English Company's ex-factory of Manna. This practice was stopped and the pepper collected for Austin appropriated by Captain Frederick Vincent when he arrived in July 1761 to re-establish Company authority on the West Coast. Vincent stressed to London the good offices of the country traders in helping to maintain a British presence and authority on the southern coast during the Company's absence.

1. The other vessels were the Success brigantine, Captain Austin, from Madras, which called at Acheh and Baros in February 1761 and the ship Golconda, Captain Balnevius, which called at Padang en route from Madras to Batavia in May 1761. The Company ship London which had been sent by Madras to re-establish contact with the West Coast, also called at Baros in October 1760 but was forced to leave the area by Dutch cruisers early in November. Padang Vergadering, 24 Feb., 5 April, 12 May, 20 July 1761, KA 2917, pp. 5, 145, 122, 211; Padang Vergadering, 12 March 1762, KA 2955, p. 145.

The Directors, while expressing gratitude for this service, nevertheless gave firm orders that the pepper investment 'must be sacredly preserved for the Company only'. They also recommended an investigation of Captain Austin's commercial activities and especially the alleged contracts between him and John Herbert, the Company's agent at Batavia, concerning pepper trading in southern Sumatra.¹

British country trade to West Sumatra remained slack for at least two years after the re-establishment of Fort Marlborough. Only four country vessels called at Benkulen or Natal in 1762 and only three in 1763 - one quarter of the number visiting those ports in 1759. Moreover, during 1762 and 1763, Fort Marlborough boasted only one private vessel of its own, Carter's sloop Juliana, which perhaps significantly was devoted almost exclusively to the service of Natal. She sailed on 24 June 1762 with supplies for the newly repossessed northern settlements and apparently remained there as guard ship at £300 per month hire until her return to Fort Marlborough in May 1763.²

When the Benkulen authorities first resumed control of their old posts at Natal and Tapanuli, trading prospects were discouraging. Acting Resident James Stevenson reported in October 1762 that the Natal people were 'impoverished to the last degree by the oppression of the Dutch', while conditions at Tapanuli were even worse. The latter kuala was virtually abandoned since 'fear of the Dutch & Atchinese... [had] induced the Natives to seek Sanctuary inland amongst the Batta People'.³ Resident Richard Wyatt confirmed Stevenson's view of the northern settlements' depressed state after he returned to his old post at Natal. He wrote to the Court in January 1763:

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1. Court to FM, 12 Jan. 1763, pars. 39-40, SFR 31; FM Cons., 14 Feb., 12 March, 9 Aug., 16 Sept. 1763, SFR 71.
 2. FM Cons., 20 Sept., 15 Oct. 1762; 14 Feb., 16 April, 3 May, 17 June, 30 June, 5 July 1763, SFR 71. Councillors Henry Idell and Robert Nairne shared ownership of the Juliana with Carter.
 3. FM Cons., 12 Nov. 1762, SFR 71.

...Almost all those that were Substantial Merchants formerly, have now little or nothing to carry on Trade, owing to an entire stop having been put to all Business, since the Dutch were in possession of the place, and their Tyrannical Government, which those who were well inclined to your Honours were sure by one means or another to feel the weight of.¹

Nevertheless despite his description of commercial ruin at Natal and Tapanuli, Stevenson was still optimistic concerning a revival and even extension of English trade in the North, mainly because he judged that the inland people had grown so anti-Dutch during the interregnum that they had 'resolved to carry no part of their produce to the Dutch Settlements'.² Indeed, traffic in northern produce resumed almost as soon as Henry Russell repossessed Natal and Tapanuli for the English in April 1762. When Russell was replaced by Stevenson in the following August, he requested Benkulen's permission to remain in the area long enough to collect his outstanding debts, presumably incurred in the course of commerce. By October 1762, Russell, still in the North, had raised over \$1000 to repay the Company in part for a large parcel of cloth and other goods which he had bought without permission on Company credit from the captains of the private trader Adriana out of Bombay and the Company ship Prince Henry. When Russell died intestate at Tapanuli in February or March 1763, his effects included forty-five tompongs of benzoin which were ordered to be auctioned at Benkulen for the benefit of his estate.³

The Natal Concern appears to have been reinstated, apparently along the lines of the 1759 opium contract, almost as soon as Wyatt took control at Natal in 1763. Governor Carter, at any rate, reported that he had enjoyed 'by contract' eleven-fortieths of the Natal profits until John Ashburner and Michael Tierney joined that establishment early in 1765 when Wyatt cut his share to eight-fortieths without informing him of the change.⁴ 'Messrs. Carter, Wyatt & Co.' still owed Henry

1. Wyatt to Court, 3 Jan. 1763, SFR 13.

2. FM Cons., 12 Nov. 1762, SFR 71.

3. FM Cons., 17 May, 20 Sept., 28 Oct., 31 Oct. 1762, 16 April, 19 April, 19 Oct. 1763, SFR 71.

4. FM Cons., 13 June 1767, SFR 75.

Russell's estate \$120 as late as June 1766.¹ In the absence of private letters written by members of the Natal Concern it is impossible to document its operations or assess its profits. Nevertheless, Wyatt renewed the contracts with Fort Marlborough to supply rice and slaves for Company use as early as October 1762, offering rice at 10 Natal bambus (nearly 11½ Benkulen bambus) per dollar, male slaves at \$70 per head and female slaves at \$50. The slave contract alone earned the Concern at least \$2030 for twenty-nine Nias slaves delivered before the Benkulen Board, sufficiently supplied with coolie labour, abrogated the contract in May 1764.²

The Natal Concern and members of the Fort Marlborough establishment were also almost certainly trafficking in benzoin. This, however, was done with circumspection, and the only reference to it in the Benkulen records relates to a dispute settled by the Board over a mistake in the invoice of thirty-two pikuls of benzoin purchased at Padang on John Herbert's account for shipment to Bussorah.³ Having succeeded in eliminating Fort St. George's interference in their private trade in the 1750s, the Fort Marlborough servants discovered with dismay in the 1760s that the Court of Directors had become interested in the products which had formed the staples of their northern trade. In search of cash crops to supplement its pepper returns from the West Coast, the Court in 1760 not only ordered Fort Marlborough to experiment with the cultivation of coffee and indigo but also commanded that Benkulen purchase all the cassia lignum obtainable on Company account and send samples of top quality benzoin to Europe as well.⁴ Although on the one hand the Fort Marlborough Board

1. FM Cons., 10 June 1766, SFR 74.

2. FM Cons., 28 Oct. 1762, 3 May 1763, 18 Aug. 1763, SFR 71. Ten bambus of rice per dollar was a moderate price at Benkulen but still gave Wyatt nearly a fifty per cent profit since he could obtain rice from Pasaman and elsewhere for fourteen Natal bambus per dollar. FM Cons., 7 May 1766, SFR 74. FM Cons., 12 April, 17 May 1764, SFR 72.

3. FM Cons., 24 June 1766, SFR 74.

4. Court to FM, 6 Feb. 1760, pars. 62-6, SFR 31; FM Cons., 25 Oct. 1762, SFR 71; Court to FM, 4 Feb. 1761, pars. 62-3, SFR 31. See also J. Kathirithamby, 'British West Sumatra', op. cit., Appendix VII, pp. 353-7. Roger Carter had recommended that the Company might take over the benzoin trade as one means of covering the expenses of Natal and Tapanuli in July 1759. Carter to Board, 9 July 1759, in FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1759, SFR 70.

ordered Wyatt at Natal to acquire five hundred pounds of 'head' benzoin, it is evident that on the other, they attempted to impede the Company's intrusion into the North Sumatran trade for as long as possible. In June 1763, Wyatt reported that the samples of benzoin which Russell had collected at Tapanuli were very bad quality and that he had ordered William Albertson, the new Resident at Tapanuli, to procure a better grade of gum for shipment to the Company. The Benkulen Board informed the Court of this and after Russell's benzoin was transported down to Fort Marlborough, confirmed Wyatt's opinion by declaring the gum unfit for the European market and ordering it sold at auction. In February 1764, Fort Marlborough reported continuing difficulties in obtaining a proper grade of benzoin for the Court. By October 1764 another three chests of benzoin had been sent from Natal, and the Benkulen Board again ruled two of them unsuitable and instructed Wyatt that unless higher quality benzoin was obtainable, 'Speculating in this Article on the Company's Account will by no means answer'.¹

By this time, however, the Court had lost patience with Fort Marlborough's prevarications, as it became obvious that its West Coast servants were perfectly capable of acquiring for themselves what they allegedly could not procure for the Company. The ship Houghton, which had conveyed Fort Marlborough's excuses to Europe in 1764, also carried a parcel each of cassia and benzoin on the private account of Governor Roger Carter. The Directors not only censured Carter's 'Remarkable Breach of Orders' but also threatened London's 'Severest Resentment' toward the Benkulen government in general for flagrantly evading Company directives to provide 'Samples of every product of the Island of Sumatra'.² This letter arrived at Fort Marlborough by the Company ship Grosvenor in July 1765, and when

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1. FM Cons., 25 Oct. 1762, 30 June 1763, 18 Aug. 1763, SFR 71; 27 Sept. 1764, SFR 72; Court to FM, 22 July 1763, par. 32, SFR 31; FM to Court, 25 Feb. 1764, par 67; FM to Court, 20 March 1765, par. 119, SFR 13.
 2. Court to FM, 25 Jan. 1765, pars. 77-8, SFR 31. The Grosvenor which brought this letter arrived at Benkulen on 3 July 1765, and sailed for Canton on 30 July 1765.

that vessel returned to Sumatra from Canton the following March, the Benkulen authorities had capitulated to Company demands. In April 1766, thirty-two chests of cassia and two chests of benzoin, as well as samples of ginger, tumeric, coffee and cardamon were loaded on the Grosvenor for Europe although Fort Marlborough again cautioned London that the benzoin was of inferior quality.¹ The Court in turn rejected all these offerings except the cassia as unsaleable, reporting that even the cassia, despite its very high quality, had reached a depressed market because of competition with imports from the Malabar Coast. Nevertheless, the Directors renewed their orders to persevere in efforts to obtain the first grade of 'head' benzoin on Company account and to continue to dispatch fifteen to twenty tons of cassia yearly to England.²

Finally in March 1767, the Benkulen authorities stated bluntly their objections to a Company trade in the first grade of benzoin. The consequence of this, they wrote to the Court, would be 'curtailing your Servants Trade on this Coast, of which the Benjamin which you have now taken into your hands is the principal Article, leaving us in a manner confined to the retail trade in Cloth, the State the Coast was in before the settlement was made at Natal'.³ They then continued:

What is principally wanted for the Encouragement of private trade here is returns or Gruff Cargoes to continue towards the Charges of Navigating Vessels to other Parts, and this Coast affording nothing of the kind fit for other Markets of India, except Benjamin, and of that the first sort being reserved for the Company, the Middle [sort] compounded of that and the worst will no longer be procurable, and the foot or lowest sort, of itself without an Assortment not being merchantable, what Goods We can procure for Exportation to other Parts of India must come from the Eastward, and by the Vigilance of the Dutch and treachery of the Eastern People the trade thither is attended with so many difficulties that these Ports are frequented by no other European Vessel[s] except the Dutch.⁴

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1. FM to Court, 19 April 1766, pars. 62-3, 99-100, SFR 14. The Grosvenor arrived from Canton on 30 March 1766, and sailed for England on 21 April 1766.
 2. Court to FM, 24 Dec. 1766, pars. 19-21, SFR 32.
 3. FM to Court, 5 March 1767, par. 53, SFR 14.
 4. *ibid.* For the Benkulen authorities to claim at this point that they neither traded to the East nor possessed vessels of their own was a considerable exaggeration, although it would have been true two years earlier.

At the same time, Benkulen also began in earnest to collect benzoin for the Company and had thirty-two chests (7766 pounds) of the gum and 26,967 pounds of cassia ready in January 1768 for shipment to Europe on the Earl of Middlesex.¹ Happily for Fort Marlborough, the ship Duke of Richmond arrived at Benkulen in September 1768 with the Court's letter of February 1768 relinquishing the Company's interest in the benzoin trade in response to its servants' complaints concerning the prejudice done to their private commerce.²

Almost at once the volume of the servants' benzoin traffic burgeoned. In October 1768, Councillor Robert Nairne imported over 150 pikuls worth \$2138 from Natal, and Herbert, Donston and Coles 60 pikuls of benzoin and 10 pikuls of swallow worth a total of \$2000 on their sloop Fanny.³ Even more revealing, the Duke of Richmond, the ship which had brought the Court's orders reopening the benzoin trade, carried 187 chests of benzoin, a value of \$5230 out of the total of \$7710 worth of private trade manifested by her captain and officers, on her departure from Benkulen early in 1769.⁴

By 1770, the traffic in benzoin was booming, with exports surpassing the peak years of the 1750s. In July 1770, the Fort Marlborough-owned snow Jenny loaded about 1038 pikuls of benzoin worth \$15,915.2.98 at Natal, which she then transported to Muscat and Bombay, two of the principal terminal markets for the gum; here 987 pikuls were sold for Rupees 45,116.1.0 or about \$21,484.⁵ The Jenny's cargo was almost certainly acquired from the Natal Concern, now headed by Joseph Darvall, who had replaced Wyatt as Resident there on Wyatt's succession to the chair

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1. Invoice of sundries laden on the ship Earl of Middlesex, 1 Jan. 1768, SFR 14, p. 279.
 2. Court to FM, 5 Feb. 1768, par. 62, SFR 32.
 3. An account of imports at Fort Marlborough on which duties were collected, 1 May - Ult. November 1768, 30 Nov. 1768, SFR 14.
 4. Manifest of Private trade laden on the ship Duke of Richmond, 31 Dec. 1768, SFR 14.
 5. Captain Robert Hobson's Account Current, and first and second Accounts Sales in Account Current with the owners of the snow Jenny, John Herbert, 31 Oct. 1771, SFR 152, pp. 148-60.

at Fort Marlborough in January 1767. A Company ship captain noted about 1770 that commerce at Natal which had formerly been a favourite port of call for country traders was now completely dominated by the Resident.¹ The high purchase price, about $\$15\text{-}1/3$ per pikul, of the benzoin carried by the Jenny would also tend to indicate profits for the Natal Concern as middleman in the transaction, since the supposedly top quality gum acquired by Wyatt for the Company only four years earlier had been bought at $\$6\frac{1}{2}$ to $\$8$ per pikul.² In November 1770, 'Messrs. Darvall & Co.' also loaded another 270 chests of benzoin, 380 pikuls worth $\$3800$ or $\$10$ per pikul, on the ship Experiment bound for Bengal.³ By this time Darvall's Concern had also contracted to supply opium to those Natal datos who traditionally enjoyed 'the sole Privilege of selling Opium by retail, excluding all others whatsoever'.⁴ The northern trade was obviously flourishing again and the Natal Concern appears to have controlled both the import of opium to the settlement and local supplies of northern produce for export. Councillor John Crisp, in a memorial to the Court in June 1779, estimated that in the nine years from 1767 to 1776 the net profits of the private commerce of Natal and Tapanuli amounted to about $\$12,000$ per year, at a cost to the Company of about $\$20,000$ per year.⁵ Darvall's own estate at his death in September 1772, only a year after he had resigned from the Residency of Natal to take over the new sugar and arrack manufacture at Benkulen, totalled at least $\$62,436$ although part of this must have been his share from the profits of

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1. A. Dalrymple, A Collection of Plans and Ports in the East Indies in 1774 and 1775, 3rd ed. (London, 1787), p. 82.
 2. FM Cons., 30 April 1766, SFR 74.
 3. Manifest of private trade exported on Company vessels, 1 January - Ult. Dec. 1770, SFR 14.
 4. Duncan Campbell to Board, FM Cons., 5 Sept. 1778, SFR 84. Campbell was complaining about a similar opium contract entered into by Natal Resident Giles Holloway which he said had obstructed his own trade in opium. He cited Joseph Darvall's Natal Concern as the originator of such practices. Since Campbell had been appointed surgeon at Natal in 1766 and had served there while Darvall was Resident, he would have been in a position to know Darvall's commercial arrangements first-hand. FM Cons., 20 Sept. 1766.
 5. John Crisp, Letter to the Court of Directors of the East India Company, (London, 1780), p. 51.

the general trading syndicate or co-partnership formed by the members of the Fort Marlborough Council in May 1765.¹

It was this co-partnership or General Concern of the Fort Marlborough Council which raised Benkulen to its peak of commercial prosperity in the late 1760s and 1770s, reducing the West Coast servants' heavy reliance on the North Sumatran traffic by extending their country trade back into eastern Indonesia, a region with which no active commercial connections had been maintained since the exclusion of the English Company from Banjarmasin in 1747. As Fort Marlborough had so pointedly noted to the Court in 1767, East Indonesia was, aside from North Sumatra, the only possible source of exports for the servants' private trade and was thus the logical area for an expansion of the West Coast's traffic.

Fort Marlborough's wishes in this respect marched happily with the Directors' desire to acquire Indonesian produce to help cover the Company's deficits in the China tea trade, and toward this end to focus Indonesian trade on Benkulen until a more suitable entrepot for both Indonesian and Chinese junk traders could be found.² Nevertheless, it was not until 1765 that Fort Marlborough's first venture to the 'Eastward' was accomplished, after several years in which the Benkulen servants experimented with other organisational forms in their struggle to overcome the formidable problems facing the newly established Fort Marlborough Presidency. The principal difficulties for the West Coast traders were a chronic lack of capital and the competition of Indian, especially Bengal, country traders. In an attempt to combat these problems, Fort Marlborough established an opium monopoly in 1763 and a bank in 1764.

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1. Darvall's executors had remitted \$15,436.1.46 on his account in 1772 and 1775. FM to Court, 26 Nov. 1772, 15 April 1775, 26 Aug. 1775, SFR 16. The limitations which the Court then placed on the amount of remittances from India, however, left Salmon and Steuart with \$47,000 of Darvall's estate which they asked to deposit in the Company's cash at Benkulen for safe-keeping. Salmon and Steuart to FM Board, 18 Aug. 1775, SFR 152.
 2. D. K. Bassett, 'British Trade and Policy in Indonesia, 1760-1772', Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië, vol. CXX, pt. 2 (1964), pp. 199-202.

The Foundation of the Benkulen Bank

A deficiency of capital was nothing new at Fort Marlborough. Stokeham Donston, who had arrived at Benkulen as a Factor in September 1757, wrote somewhat optimistically to his family in England that 'if the Europeans here had money sufficient to carry on the trade wch. might be had here, they might make as good fortunes as at Madrass or Bengal'.¹ At Fort Marlborough in the 1740s and 1750s, the accumulation of capital was a matter of time. Since Company servants came to the West Coast to make their fortunes, only a few, usually the younger sons or connections of gentry in Britain, came with much in the way of a trading stake. Stokeham Donston himself was among these. He arrived on the West Coast with £420.15.0 worth of silver bullion, at least £150 of which was a loan from his cousin George Donston, a squire in Nottinghamshire, who seems to have been the guardian and executor of Stokeham's branch of the family.² More important, George Donston continued to provide his cousin with a source of extraordinary funds on credit for most of Stokeham's career on the West Coast. He paid Stokeham's debts (about £100) on his departure from England and honoured a draft for £150 which Stokeham had drawn soon after his arrival in Sumatra to pay for merchandise purchased for a senior servant, Richard Preston.³ With such financial backing from home, Stokeham was able to launch rapidly into trading ventures and within four months of his arrival had ordered Pagodas 423.8.9 worth of goods from Madras and had purchased a share in the sloop Tryall.⁴ By this time, however, Stokeham was already pressuring his cousin to forward him another £400-500 to be invested in trade either as a loan at ten per cent interest per year or in partnership.⁵ Stokeham was also able to draw on his cousin for living expenses

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1. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 28 Jan. 1758, Donston Papers.
 2. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 15 July, 26 Nov. 1756, 11 Jan. 1757, 28 Jan. 1758, Freight bill for silver shipped on the Company ship Falmouth to Fort Marlborough, 11 Dec. 1756, loc. cit.
 3. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 28 Jan. 1758, loc. cit.
 4. *ibid.*
 5. *ibid.*

in India after the French capture of the West Coast in 1760 had reduced the Benkulen establishment to penury, but from the re-establishment of Fort Marlborough in 1762 until 1773, a year before Stokeham Donston's death, although the interest was paid fairly regularly, the £340.14.11 principal of his accumulated debt to George Donston remained unpaid.¹

Alexander Hall, the younger brother of a Scots baronet, enjoyed even more support from his family. Hall had begun investigating the East India Company service in 1750, on the grounds that otherwise he would 'inevitably land in the Army', and enquired of his brother, Sir John Hall, if £600 could be raised to finance him in India with interest on the sum to be remitted yearly to London.² In the end Alexander Hall had gathered together £1153.3.0 for his Sumatra outlay, including £828.17.4 invested in 3026 ounces of Mexican silver. Of this total £403.5.0 consisted of Alexander's own patrimony, £400 in funds lent him by Sir John Hall and £300 lent him by another brother, William Hall.³ Like Donston, Hall also quickly ventured into fairly large-scale trading operations. Within three years of his arrival on the West Coast, he owned an interest in a brig, a sloop and several country vessels.⁴ Also like Donston, he found initial funding inadequate to his ambitions and was obliged to borrow \$3000 locally at ten per cent per year to maintain this level of commercial activity.⁵

Hall and Donston were, however, the exceptions rather than the rule. For the vast majority of the West Coast servants trading capital was slowly amassed over a period of ten to fifteen years by the constant reinvestment of profits in commercial ventures of gradually increasing scale. A sizeable trading stake was thus the

1. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 22 Oct. 1760, 3 Feb., 26 Feb., 26 July 1761, 6 Sept. 1762, 10 March 1765, 16 May 1773, Donston Papers.
2. Alexander Hall to Sir John Hall, 9 Nov. 1749, 26 April 1750, Hall Papers.
3. Alexander Hall to Sir John Hall, 15 Nov., 24 Nov., 29 Nov., 13 Dec. 1750, loc. cit.
4. Alexander Hall to William Hall, 4 Dec. 1754, loc. cit.
5. ibid.

result of luck and survival as well as business acumen. Even Roger Carter, who as Governor came to dominate the commercial scene at Fort Marlborough in the late 1750s and 1760s, reached his pre-eminence by this means, although as the younger son of a landed Lincolnshire family he may have enjoyed some initial family financing.

Carter arrived at Fort Marlborough in 1742 and by 1746 was co-proprietor of several perahus which he and his partners hired to the Company to carry pepper up to Benkulen from the out-settlements. Nevertheless, he ordered no trade goods from India until after he became Resident at Talo in 1747, and he made no remittances until 1750.

By the early 1750s he had acquired a share in a larger vessel, the snow Fanny, but it was not until he became Resident at Natal, thirteen years after his arrival in Sumatra, that he made any large remittances or purchased any sizeable quantity of trade goods from Madras.¹ The general average of eight to twelve years between the arrival of servants at Benkulen and their first remittances abroad would indicate that Carter's was a fairly typical success story.²

The necessity among the less well-endowed members of the Benkulen establishment of obtaining capital for trade appears to have prompted at least some of the instances of corruption uncovered by Supervisors Pybus and Walsh in the mid-1750s. Several of the practices they banned, such as servants selling their own stores to the Company or buying Company goods to retail on their private accounts, were in any case borderline commercial ventures. Moreover, even cases of outright embezzlement seem to have been aimed less at pocketing the ill-gained proceeds than at investing them in commerce. Alexander Christie, for example, had clearly used funds found missing from the Company's cash at Krui in 1748 to purchase stock for his private trade with the local pepper planters since on his death a list of his debtors was found deposited in the cash chest as security for his illegal borrowings.³

1. FM Cons., 6 Dec. 1746, SFR 64; 'Redbourne', loc. cit., pp. 46-51.
See above p. 172, n.3.

2. See Appendix III.

3. FM Cons., 15 June, 21 July, 24 Aug. 1748, SFR 65.

The only case of embezzlement reported in the 1760s was very similar. After several attempts to evade paying the \$910.3.92 cash balance due from his office in 1766, the Benkulen Military Storekeeper, George Nicholson, finally admitted to 'having made use of it on his private Account'. Nicholson, it soon became apparent, had badly over-extended his commercial operations. Although he had been on the West Coast less than a year, he had already purchased a sloop of his own, the Liberty, and was deeply in debt to a number of his fellow servants. In August 1766, Nicholson offered sixty thirds of Batavia arrack to the Council at \$20 per third to reimburse the Company, but at his creditors' request the Board ordered first his sloop and her cargo and later all his personal effects attached and auctioned to provide at least partial repayment of his other debts.¹ Even windfall profits from shady activities like Walter Churchey's and Robert Jones' appropriation of treasure entrusted to them by the High Pengeran of Madura for the use of his refugee son seem to have been applied at once to commerce. Within four months of returning from the voyage during which he had encountered the Madurese prince, Jones had resigned his command of the Company sloop Mary and gone trading to North Sumatra in his own perahu.²

It was to cure this 'almost total want of Credit', that the Court proposed a bank for Fort Marlborough in February 1761 and allocated £10,000 of Company cash for the purpose to be managed by the Governor and four senior Board members as bank managers. The bank's capital was to be lent to Company servants at ten per cent interest per year 'for the purposes of Trade only'. To protect the Company from loss, each borrower was to nominate 'an unexceptionable Person as Security' to sign a joint bond with him for the amount of the loan, and the bank managers were enjoined to refuse loans to any questionable applicant or guarantor.³ London went to considerable lengths 'to show how anxious We [the Directors] are for your [the servants'] Prosperity' and to prevent the stagnation of trade. The Court even

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1. FM Cons., 24 May, 31 May, 26 July, 2, 9, 23 Aug., 20, 26 Sept. 1766, SFR 74.
 2. FM Cons., 19 June 1746, 29 Jan., 21 May, 4 Sept., 3 Dec. 1747, SFR 64.
 3. Court to FM, 4 Feb. 1761, par. 88, SFR 31.

authorised loans of not more than \$4000 at respondentia,¹ a form of credit which carried a much higher risk to the lender than a bonded loan. In respondentia loans the merchandise being shipped was itself used as security for the loan, and if the vessel was lost, the creditor was entitled only to a proportion of the salvage instead of full repayment of the original loan. Respondentia interest rates were thus correspondingly higher, covering only the time at sea and ranging up to twenty-five per cent depending on the duration and distance of the voyage.²

Although the expense to the borrower was higher, respondentia credit was much favoured by country captains of limited capital because it virtually eliminated the risk of being totally ruined by losses at sea. The Court also promised to try to contribute additional funds annually to the bank until its resources amounted 'to a Considerable Capital'.³

By these means the Court hoped to eradicate the twin misfortunes 'that there are no merchants of Substance residing at Bencoolen, and [that] as few among you [the servants] have Capitals, there can be no Sources for the Extension of Trade'.⁴ London's plans for the bank were drafted before the Court had learned of the French capture of the West Coast, and after the French attack the need for credit institutions on the West Coast became desperate. Few of the Benkulen servants salvaged anything from the debacle of 1760. Governor Carter appears to have managed to transfer part of his funds in 1759 and early 1760. Two Councillors with well-heeled families, Robert Hay and Alexander Hall, refinanced themselves after they returned to England during the Franco-Dutch interregnum in Sumatra. Hall raised at least £2000 in Europe and lent £1500 of it on respondentia or bottomry on four separate East Indiamen bound for Madras and Bengal at 12 to 14½ per cent interest for the voyage. Hall consequently earned about £200 in interest

1. Court to FM, 4 Feb. 1761, par. 88, SFR 31.

2. Henry Dodwell, The Nabobs of Madras (London, 1926), pp. 129-30; Alexander Hall to Sir John and William Hall, 14 March 1764, Hall Papers.

3. Court to FM, 4 Feb. 1761, par. 88, SFR 31.

4. *ibid.*

on his investment even before his return to Sumatra. His friend Robert Hay must have been even more successful in raising cash in Britain since he also made respondentia loans on the Company's ships to the Coromandel Coast, lending £1100, as compared to Hall's £400 loan, to the captain of the British King. In 1764, Hay and Hall in partnership then reinvested their funds at Madras in a 250-ton snow, Speedwell, spending Rupees 14,000 or about £1633 for the vessel and her outfitting and another Rupees 33,000 or £3850 for a cargo - partly bought outright, partly at respondentia - which they planned to convey back to Sumatra.¹ Carter, Hay and Hall appear, however, to have been the exceptions rather than the rule, and the newly established Presidency at Fort Marlborough in 1762 found most of its servants not only stripped of funds, aside from any unpaid debts they might be able to collect from their Malay subjects, but also often in debt themselves as a result of the French attack. This was a particular hardship for the senior servants who after fifteen or more years of service should in the normal course of events have been preparing to retire to England with their accumulated earnings. Instead, they were forced to begin again to make their fortunes, and their frantic haste to recoup their losses, interpreted by their subordinates as ruthless greed, generated much conflict and bad feeling at Fort Marlborough in the mid-1760s.

For nearly eighteen months after Governor Carter's return to Sumatra in September 1762, Benkulen remained too short of specie to allocate the authorised £10,000 of Company cash to a bank. Consequently the bank was not set up until February 1764 and even then the initial float of \$20,000 was issued in paper currency - an emergency measure first adopted by the Fort Marlborough authorities in 1762 to ease the liquidity crisis in conducting the Company's business while

1. Alexander Hall to Sir John Hall, 3 Sept. 1763, Alexander Hall to Sir John and William Hall, 14 March 1764, Alexander Hall to William Hall, 26 Dec. 1763, Hall Papers. Hall indicated when at Calcutta in December 1763 that opium might be his and Hay's 'chief commodity' for a cargo to the West Coast. Since the Opium Society was already in force at Benkulen, if this were true and they were prevented from disposing of their cargo on their arrival there in September 1764, it might explain the bad feeling between Hay and Governor Carter in the last months of 1764.

reserving the available silver to pay the planters for pepper. On the bank's foundation, the Board also modified the Court's original plan in order to give the West Coast servants even easier access to bank funds; the minimum permissible loan was thus reduced from £500 to £200 in order, Carter said, to allow Chinese residents to borrow on the security of gold trinkets; the minimum duration of a loan was cut from six to two months; and the general interest rate was lowered from ten to eight per cent, which Carter fallaciously claimed was 'the General Premium of India'. Carter also proposed that servants be allowed to borrow money to build dwellings because of the acute lack of housing at Benkulen and to deposit money at the bank at five per cent interest, as well as borrowing funds. The respondentia rates were also fixed at fourteen per cent outward bound and nine per cent back for voyages to Bengal and Bombay, twelve per cent outward and eight per cent back for Madras, seven per cent outward and five per cent back for Batavia, five per cent outward and two per cent back for Natal, and four per cent to China.¹

The new bank was an overwhelming success. Within six months of its founding, £64,298 was out on loan and applications had been filed which would increase that amount to £80,000, twice the sum authorised by the Court. The Board was thus obliged to consider the implications of increasing the bank's funding without specific approval from London. Governor Carter argued that it was quite legitimate to raise the ceiling of bank stock to £80,000 in view of the Court's expressed intention of shipping more money annually for the use of the bank. The capital-hungry Board members were inclined to agree, but the difficulty was how to accomplish this when the cash then in the Company treasury totalled only £88,490, and an estimate of the Presidency's cash needs for six months left a surplus of only £10,000 to cover contingencies until the next consignments of silver were expected from Europe. Carter admitted that in these circumstances specie could not be used to raise the stock to the mooted £80,000, but he judged that there was

1. FM Cons., 28 Feb., 3 March 1764, SFR 72.

no bar to issuing more paper currency for that purpose. He proposed that the Board issue another \$18,000 in large notes with the stipulation that they would only be redeemed in return for remittance certificates payable in England, Bombay, Madras and Bengal, or as payment for rent, customs duties or goods sold out of the Company's Storehouse. In this way, the paper notes could be circulated without depleting the Presidency's already slender supply of silver.¹

Councillor Robert Nairne, however, disagreed with Carter's plan. He judged it unlikely that a new issue of paper notes could be circulated as the Governor intended or that they would prove of much use in the current course of trade. According to Nairne's calculations, few remittances to the Indian Presidencies could be anticipated because the large parcel of piece goods recently imported on the ships Bute and Lord Clive obviated any need to order more merchandise or remittances to pay for it in the near future. Moreover, any remittances required to Padang, Batavia or the East necessitated using specie. Nairne therefore considered that a new issue of \$18,000 in paper for the bank, in addition to the \$16,000 already in circulation, would merely increase the pressure on the available specie beyond a point where Fort Marlborough could retain enough cash to cover its operating expenses, particularly since even the Europeans were getting rid of the notes then in use as quickly as they could. Nairne thought Carter's estimate of Benkulen's expenses optimistic if the need to redeem the \$16,000 of paper already circulating was taken into account, and he also considered the Governor's calculation of the Presidency's costs too low. Nairne therefore concluded that it would be far safer to limit the bank's capital to \$40,000 in specie as the Company had directed and not expose the Board to possible censure from London for failing to reserve enough cash for current expenses.² The rest of the Council, however, sided with Carter and, with Nairne dissenting, ordered the bank stock increased

1. FM Cons., 5 Sept. 1764.

2. *ibid.*

to \$80,000 by the issuing of \$18,000 in paper money. These notes were to be redeemed solely for remittances, and in order to avoid confusion, the previous issue of \$16,000 was to be recalled and destroyed. It was also decided that no further increases in the bank's capital were to be made without Company orders, and to keep funds available every loan was to be repaid within a year.¹

The bank, however, was again soon stripped of cash; a balance of only \$1048.1.55 remained in November 1764.² With a ceiling set on the amount of capital, subsequent loans waited on the reaccumulation of funds as the interest and principal of loans already made were repaid. The bank therefore had less to lend, and in these circumstances the Council, whose members also approved loan applications as bank managers, increasingly came to dominate the use of bank monies. While only about one-third (\$21,665) of the \$62,095 lent by the bank in the months from March through August 1764 had gone to Board members,³ nearly three-quarters of the money lent during the next sixteen months was allocated to the Councillors: \$17,250 of the total \$24,000 lent between September 1764 and May 1765;⁴ and \$16,400 of the total \$21,050 lent from June through December 1765.⁵

In mid-1766, the now established Council control of bank funds was institutionalised. By early 1766 the junior servants had begun to complain about the management of the bank. Two Writers, George Rochfort and Henry Botham, asked the Board to explain its denial of their requests for loans of \$500 and \$400 respectively, on the grounds that they understood bank funds were 'free for any Covenant Servant, offering another for his Security'.⁶ The Councillors replied that they

1. FM Cons., 5 Sept. 1764.
2. November Bank Cash Account, FM Cons., 15 Dec. 1764, SFR 72.
3. See Bank Cash Accounts for March-August 1764, FM Cons., 12 April, 17 May, 5 June, 7 July, 21 Sept. 1764, SFR 72.
4. See Bank Cash Accounts for September 1764-May 1765, FM Cons., 3 Nov., 15 Dec. 1764, SFR 72; 16 Feb., 5 March, 13 April, 18 May, 16 June 1765, SFR 73.
5. See Bank Cash Accounts, June-December 1765, FM Cons., 2 July, 11 Sept., 12 Nov. 1765, SFR 73; 11 Jan. 1766, SFR 74.
6. FM Cons., 22 Feb. 1766, SFR 74.

were responsible to London for the security of Company monies and had refused Rochfort's and Botham's applications because of 'their Youth and inexperience in affairs of Trade'.¹ In May 1766, having received 'numerous' similar requests for loans from the most junior servants, the Board moved further by cancelling any future bank loans to servants who had resided on the West Coast for less than three years, unless they were to be appointed assistants to a Resident.²

The Board possessed some justification for excluding inexperienced servants from the resources of the bank, as the embezzlement by George Nicholson uncovered in May 1766 demonstrated. Nevertheless, the Council members must also have wanted to ensure their own access to trading capital at a time when it had become apparent that the bank stock would not again be increased for some time. The Directors had accepted most of Carter's original modifications to their plan for Benkulen's bank, with the exception of his reduction of the interest rate, in their letter to Fort Marlborough of January 1765.³ Nevertheless, at the same time, London had sent no further cash for the bank and declared that it had no immediate intention of increasing the capital. The Directors had also disapproved the use of paper currency for the first bank float and banned its future use in any but the direst liquidity crisis and then for Company use only.⁴ By the time that these orders had reached the West Coast in June 1765, the Benkulen Board had already again issued paper currency to finance its unauthorised doubling of the bank stock to \$80,000. This, predictably, the Directors flatly rejected in their letter of January 1766 which arrived at Fort Marlborough in June 1766.⁵ Within a month, in July 1766, the Benkulen Board had ordered the proportions of bank capital available for loan

1. FM Cons., 22 Feb. 1766, SFR 74.

2. FM Cons., 10 May 1766, SFR 74; Kathirithamby, 'British West Sumatra', op. cit., pp. 254-5.

3. Court to FM, 25 Jan. 1765, pars. 94-8, SFR 31. In this letter the Court also withdrew permission for respondentia loans, having decided that they constituted too great a risk to Company funds.

4. Court to FM, 25 Jan. 1765, pars. 94-8, SFR 31.

5. Court to FM, 15 Jan. 1766, pars. 68-70, SFR 32.

to be fixed by rank, with \$16,000 reserved to the Governor, \$8000 to the Second of Council, \$6000 to the Third, \$5000 to the Fourth, \$4000 each to the Fifth and Sixth, \$3000 each to the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth, \$1500 each to the Junior and Senior Merchants, \$1000 each to Factors of three years' standing and \$500 each to Writers of three years' standing.¹ This arrangement guaranteed the Council sixty-five per cent of the current bank stock, and it seems likely that while appealing for a reversal of London's orders of January 1766, the Board members were simultaneously taking steps to protect their control of the funds on hand. At the same time, all paper currency was recalled.²

The Board's complaints concerning the damage done their private trade by insufficient capital were heeded in London and the Court relented, directing Fort Marlborough in February 1768 to raise the bank stock to \$100,000 on the understanding that money would be lent only to 'responsible Persons'. The Court also recommended that the West Coast Presidency should have two or more servants sign a joint bond to protect the money on loan to those 'who probably may send it to Sea'. On the basis of these orders, the Benkulen Board then revised the proportions of bank stock allowed the various grades of servants in November 1768, reducing the Council's overall share slightly to about fifty-nine per cent, or \$59,000 of the new capital of \$100,000.³

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1. FM Cons., 12 July 1766, SFR 74.
 2. FM Cons., 10 May 1766, SFR 74. Large deposits for remittances via the ship Grosvenor in April 1766, the Board stated, had provided Benkulen with enough cash, so that it was possible to destroy the \$24,015 in paper currency which remained outstanding.
 3. Court to FM, 5 Feb. 1768, pars. 63-4, SFR 32; FM Cons., 16 Nov. 1768, SFR 76. By this time \$55,000 was on more or less permanent loan to the Council's General Concern. Wyatt, Darvall, Hay, Nairne, Herbert, Steuart and Guild had signed a joint bond for that amount in January 1767 and the bond was redrawn in the name of Hay and Company instead of 'Messrs. Wyatt and Company' when Wyatt resigned the chair to Robert Hay at the end of 1775. September Bank Cash Account, FM Cons., 10 Oct. 1767, SFR 75; FM to Court, 8 Feb. 1776, SFR 16.

The Establishment of the Opium Society

During the same period in which the Fort Marlborough authorities were attempting to develop and dominate credit to finance the regeneration of their private commerce, they were also trying to establish control over the opium traffic of the West Coast. This was to be accomplished by an Opium Society which as first proposed by Roger Carter in 1759 was designed both to eliminate the competition of Bengal country traders and to confine the profits of the opium traffic to the Fort Marlborough Council.

The idea of a Company monopoly of opium imports, farmed by a group of West Coast servants, was not new. Supravisor turned Governor, John Pybus, had proposed such a system in 1754, but the scheme was not countenanced until Carter, Wyatt and Nairne gained an eighteen months' monopoly of the sale of opium between Sorkam and Airbangis in return for purchasing left-over chests of ageing Company opium in July 1759. Carter clearly hoped to make this temporary opium contract permanent, for at the same Board meeting in which he and Wyatt offered their terms for buying the unsold Company opium, Carter also presented a long-range plan for the opium trade which he represented as a masterful compromise of Company and private trading interests.¹

Carter first proposed that the Company resume control of the West Coast opium trade which it had relinquished less than a year before. The Court was to instruct Calcutta to meet Fort Marlborough's opium indents on Company account, with Benkulen guaranteeing the Company \$100 profit per chest in addition to the prime cost of the opium at Patna and charges for bringing it down river to Calcutta, which he estimated at another \$100 per chest. Although Carter admitted his scheme contravened the freedom of trade which the Directors traditionally allowed all their servants, he judged that the Company possessed the right to take over whatever aspect of the eastern trade it wished. In any case, he asserted, only the Bengal

1. Carter to Board, 9 July 1759, FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1759, SFR 70.

country traders would be hurt by such an arrangement, a sacrifice which Bengal could well afford and which would greatly benefit both the Company and its West Coast servants. While Bengal's Sumatran traffic represented only a small portion of that Presidency's 'Extensive Trade', the West Coast offered the only field of commerce open to the Benkulen servants, 'whose Latitude in Trade is so small' and whose prerogatives were already negligible in comparison with the Indian Presidencies. Not only was Fort Marlborough unable to compete with the Bengal traders in the Malacca Straits and eastern Indonesia because these traders had procured their opium cheaply at its source, but the Bengal traders had also 'run away with the greatest part of the Profits' from the North Sumatran trade, largely as a result of their unfair commercial practices. The British forts at Natal and Tapanuli protected the traffic of the Indian traders who, Carter claimed, would otherwise have enjoyed no access to any port from Singkil to Inderapura. Nevertheless, the Bengal country captains frequently called at nearby Malay ports instead of these British settlements, cheating the Company of its customs revenues and so undercutting the West Coast servants whose merchandise was always subject to these duties. The Bengal traders also supplied Padang with opium, thus succouring the rivals of the English Company and thwarting Benkulen's attempts to expand English trade on the West Coast. If the opium trade continued in this course, Carter even envisaged the possible ruin of Natal and Tapanuli, as the native traders were drawn away by the cheaper goods offered by the Bengal traders to form a new entrepôt at 'some obscure place not now known', since the population was so mobile that 'a little more profit is an invincible Temptation to them, and will always induce them to quit their old Habitations'. Free trade in opium, Carter concluded, had therefore brought no advantages to the Fort Marlborough servants, and he added with considerable exaggeration that the local servants' lack of their own vessels had made them mere factors for the Bengal merchants and obliged them to buy from the Bengal traders at whatever price was demanded.¹

1. Carter to Board, 9 July 1759, FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1759, SFR 70.

For these reasons, Carter hoped that the Court would be willing to restrict the Bengal traders' access to West Sumatra. If this were done, the only remaining problem was how to organise the distribution of Company opium in the area. Rejecting direct retailing to 'the Black Merchants' on Company account because of the failure of that method during the monopoly of 1755-7, Carter suggested that the best method would be selling the Company's opium to the Benkulen servants. There were three possible ways of arranging this: periodic public auctions; retailing small amounts from the Company's Warehouse; and farming the entire opium supply 'to a Company of Gentlemen [servants]'. Carter however dismissed the first two alternatives as unsatisfactory. Both permitted the junior servants, who could be content with the smallest margin of profit, to degenerate into mere agents of the native merchants who, although they could not buy opium directly, could still acquire it very cheaply in this manner. The auction method in particular also exposed the Company to a high risk of bad debts from people who bid without sufficient funds to cover their purchases. Both auctions and retail sales from the Warehouse, Carter insisted, could produce 'extreamly fluctuating' and insecure profits for the Company. Farming a monopoly of opium sales on the other hand would eliminate these difficulties and provide a considerable advantage for London, particularly if the proposed 'Company of Gentlemen' consisted of the Fort Marlborough Council with Carter at its head. The senior servants would always possess sufficient funds to see that the Company received a substantial return, and they would have an important interest in promoting and expanding the opium trade to both their own and the Company's benefit. The scheme would also encourage the senior servants to stay at Fort Marlborough to manage the Company's affairs instead of continually seeking appointment to out-settlements as they had hitherto done. Neither, according to Carter, was his plan unfair to the junior servants, as they had the expectation of rising in the Company's service and succeeding to a share in the opium profits as one of the emoluments of rank.¹

1. Carter to Board, 9 July 1759, FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1759, SFR 70.

The most important advantage of such a monopoly, however, was the power it would give the Council to regulate the supply of opium and thus to guarantee both the members and the Company a fair profit. Carter hastened to explain that maintaining opium prices by preventing overstocking would not yield the farmers exorbitant profits, as they would always have to compete with the Dutch. Nor would it diminish the volume of opium sales. The demand for opium on the West Coast was, according to Carter, inelastic and the amount purchased by native traders, he claimed, had varied little with the fluctuations of price at Fort Marlborough for as long as he had been in Sumatra. This resulted from the organisation of inland sales of opium, long controlled by certain recognised native merchants who always sold for a high price in the interior no matter what price they had paid at the coast. This situation was beyond Fort Marlborough's remedy, so that the low prices produced by an over-supply of opium at Benkulen hurt only the English merchants, who were obliged to sell their perishable goods however low the price, without encouraging increased consumption or expanding the volume of the traffic.¹

If the Court approved his proposals, Carter concluded, not only would the West Coast servants be guaranteed control of the most profitable branch of their trade, but the Company would gain enough profits to cover the estimated \$14,000 per year running expenses of Natal and Tapanuli and as long promised these northern settlements would finally be self-supporting. Although the Company had agreed to the retention of Natal and Tapanuli over a year earlier, Carter added, in a rather dubious appeal for co-operation from the junior servants, that everyone at Benkulen should be prepared to surrender part of his trade in order to prevent its total loss to the Dutch, the result which would occur if the northern settlements were abandoned as too great a financial burden for the Company. Carter then stated that opposition to his plan could be expected from 'Individuals' and Bengal, but he reminded the Court that these people had possessed no share in the northern trade

1. Carter to Board, 9 July 1759, FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1759, SFR 70.

before the founding of Natal and would have none if the settlement was withdrawn.¹

Carter's proposal for an opium syndicate limited to the members of Council created an uproar among the junior servants and earned him a reputation for grasping meanness which was to dog him for the remainder of his career on the West Coast. Most of the complaints were voiced privately, and the young Factor, Stokeham Donston's, comments in a letter to his cousin in England were probably fairly typical. Donston wrote in March 1759:

I am afraid recommendations to our Governour will avail little, where interest clashes he seems to have nothing in view but getting money and I cannot help suspecting he will be guilty of many meannesses to gain his ends.... I would not have you communicate this to any person it may be of prejudice, but (entre nous) whoever lives to see it, the trade of this Coast will rather diminish than increase under his Government.... He is proposing to the Company to prohibit the Goods they by his persuasion took the prohibition from, at that time he thought he could deal very largely in these articles, he now finds himself mistaken and in order to be revenged proposes this in which if he succeeds we may wistle [sic] for a Livelihood except our pay.²

Nine months later Donston's worst fears had been realised and he wrote to his cousin:

Our Governour Mr. Carter will carry all the trade at Marlbro, and nobody can do anything worthwhile;....

Mr. Payne [a Director] as well as the rest of the Gentlemen in England are much mistaken in regard to our trade. Its true there is sufficient for every person was he under no restraint, but Mr. Carter whom every person looked on as a very worthy man, has now shewn himself & lets the world see there is a difference betwixt him when a private person & now he is Governour, my meaning is in regard to the advantages of us Junior Servants from whom he endeavours to take even that little they have, and he cannot bear to see a person lay out a trifle in trade without shewing his resentment.... I would put a greater Confidence in a person who I knew would take my purse on the Highway than I should in him, in short he has not one thing to speak in his favour and nothing but his station prevents him from being daily affronted, which from what I have seen he has the meanness to put up with when it don't affect his Pocket.... Mr. Carter has now sent home a scheme (in order to ingratiate himself into the Company's favour) for them to take the principal Branch of our Trade into their hands (which is that of opium) and renting it out to the Governour &

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1. Carter to Board, 9 July 1759, FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1759, SFR 70.
 2. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 15 March 1759, Donston Papers.

Council at about \$10,000 p. annum by which means he ties the hands of us Junior Servants so that we shall be more ready to starve than ever think of making a fortune which was my inducement for coming here.¹

Such complaints must have reached the ears of the Directors, for when final orders for the formation of the Benkulen Opium Society were drafted in London, they were not entirely along the lines Carter had envisaged. The Court, in response to the complaints of 'our Servants at Bencoolen who do not yet share Emoluments equal with our other Presidencys', agreed to take over the import of opium to the West Coast and to restrain all persons under Company protection from transporting opium there. The Directors also agreed that the Fort Marlborough servants should have the sole prerogative of retailing opium and allowed them three months to pay for opium delivered from the Company godowns. The Court refused however to farm the monopoly exclusively to the Governor and Council, on the grounds that eliminating India-based competition should produce profits 'extensive' enough to benefit the entire West Coast establishment. Thus although the Benkulen Board was to manage opium sales, all servants were to share in the earnings according to rank; six-sixteenths to the Governor; four-sixteenths to be equally divided among the eight Council members; three-sixteenths for the Senior and Junior Merchants; two-sixteenths for the Factors; and one-sixteenth for the Writers. It was left to the Fort Marlborough authorities to decide on the exact amount of the profit to be reserved for the Company.²

The actual inauguration of this Opium Society waited until August 1763, nearly two years after the reoccupation of the West Coast by the English, when the first of 150 chests of opium indented from Bengal on Company account arrived at Benkulen. At this time the Board agreed on \$100 per chest as the profit guaranteed the Company, appointed the officers of the new Society, and instructed the Residents of Natal and Muko Muko, which were to be prime fields of operation, that

1. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 12 Dec. 1759, loc. cit.

2. Court to FM, 4 Feb. 1761, pars. 86-7, SFR 31.

private imports of opium were now forbidden and they were henceforth answerable to the Society's managers for opium delivered to them from the Company's warehouse. Resident Wyatt at Natal was also permitted to buy opium on the Society's account from passing private traders if the settlement was ever in need of the commodity.¹

The new Society was plagued, however, almost from its inception by lack of co-operation from Bengal and dissension at Fort Marlborough. Only 50 of the 150 chests indented from Bengal arrived during 1763, 25 via the snow Syren in August from Bengal and another 25 in September on the snows Greyhound and Leopard from Madras. The latter shipment turned out the equivalent of nearly $3\frac{1}{2}$ chests short in weight, apparently from embezzlement while the chests were stored in the Madras godowns awaiting transport. Nevertheless, the Society appears to have cleared about \$12,000 in the first year of its operation, a net profit of about \$240 per chest in addition to the estimated cost of the opium and the \$100 allowed the Company.²

In 1764, however, problems with the supply of opium mounted. In March 1764, the Lord Clive, Captain William Webber, arrived from Bengal with news from the Fort William Council that troubles in Bengal had disrupted their trade and prevented their obtaining opium from Patna. Supplies, the letter from Bengal added, would be forwarded as soon as possible via the ketch Nancy. Nevertheless, Captain Webber of the Lord Clive carried a reported forty chests of opium on private account, which the Council considered purchasing for the Society's use until it was learned that the price Webber asked was 'so exorbitant' that there could be no hope of

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1. FM Cons., 18 Aug. 1763. Acting Governor Samuel Ardley had already ordered fifty chests of opium and asked for the prohibition of private imports of opium to the West Coast in August 1762, but Carter later decided to postpone restricting the trade since receiving supplies from Bengal was expected to take some time, and opium could not be bought from private traders at low enough prices to supply an Opium Society, and still pay the Company and leave 'to the Servants but a very reasonable Profit, for the Trouble they must be at in conducting it [the trade]'.
FM Cons., 31 Aug. 1762, 28 Oct. 1762, SFR 71.
 2. FM Cons., 18 Aug., 30 Sept., 17 Dec. 1763, SFR 71; 30 Jan. 1764, SFR 72.

re-selling the opium at a profit.¹ The ship Bute, which arrived in June 1764, also brought no opium for Fort Marlborough's use and the Board complained that 'every Private Trader' could acquire opium from Bengal while the Benkulen servants were ignored. The Board feared that as a consequence of this Fort Marlborough was in 'the greatest danger of losing the most beneficial Commerce at this Place'. If supply problems continued, the Board added, their only recourse would be to request the Court to reopen the trade and perhaps thus prevent the total ruin of Fort Marlborough's share of the opium traffic.² Complaints were to be addressed to Calcutta, but meanwhile alternative stocks of opium had to be found. As a consequence, in August 1764, the Board agreed to buy about twenty chests brought to Fort Marlborough by Commodore Watson of the Company frigate Revenge for the enormous price of \$450 per chest, only slightly less than the West Coast selling price appears to have been in 1763. The Board justified this purchase on the grounds that without immediate supplies, Natal would be 'destitute' of opium and the expected perahus from the East disappointed, but the Benkulen authorities also noted that at such an extravagant price they would be unable to pay the Company its guaranteed profit of \$100 per chest and so informed the Court in their letter of 23 August 1764.³ By October 1764, Fort Marlborough's remaining hopes for further supplies of opium from Bengal that year were destroyed. Captain Roberts of the private trader Maria Marcellina, which arrived at Benkulen on 17 October, reported the loss in August of the ketch Nancy en route from Bengal with seventy chests of opium aboard.⁴

As a result of this dearth of opium in 1764, the Opium Society's profits dropped to \$8000, but the overstock which succeeded it the next year was to prove even more damaging to the Society's earnings. To compensate for the loss of the

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1. FM Cons., 19 March 1764, SFR 72; FM to Court, 19 April 1766, par. 54, SFR 14; Court to FM, 25 Jan. 1765, par. 52, SFR 31.
 2. FM Cons., 19 June, 7 July 1764, SFR 72.
 3. FM Cons., 22 Aug. 1764, SFR 72; FM to Court, 23 Aug. 1764, SFR 13.
 4. FM Cons., 20 Oct., 23 Oct. 1764, SFR 72.

Nancy's cargo, Calcutta ordered twice the amount of opium requested by the Benkulen authorities to be sent to the West Coast in 1765. In February of that year, the Company snow Diligent arrived from Bengal with seventy-five chests of opium and a letter from the Fort William authorities apprising Fort Marlborough that they had forbidden any private export of opium to West Sumatra and ordered any country traders calling there to touch first at Fort Marlborough or Natal. Two months later, the Company ship Admiral Watson arrived from Madras with another seventy-five chests and a letter from Calcutta promising fifty more via the snow Leopard. The Leopard arrived in July with further news that the Bengal Council had given orders to procure another two hundred chests for the West Coast and planned to ship that amount yearly unless advised by Fort Marlborough to the contrary. Benkulen was now swamped with opium. Even before the arrival of the Leopard, the Board had estimated that the 160 chests on hand would more than fulfil the demand for opium in West Sumatra and had already requested that Bengal send only 50 additional chests in the ensuing year.¹

Unfortunately, opium sales were declining during the very period in which Benkulen was being flooded with opium from Bengal. The Opium Society's market in Sumatra had been eroded by opium sold at Dutch and Malay ports by country vessels like the Bombay Galley, Captain Read, the Jenny snow, Captain Price, and the Betsy Galley, Captain Symonds, which persisted in calling there despite Calcutta's orders and Fort Marlborough's protests to the Indian Presidencies. Moreover, at the same time far fewer perahus from eastern Indonesia, which Fort Marlborough counted on as major purchasers of opium for export, had called at Benkulen as a result of the scarcity of opium to be found there in 1764 and the tightened surveillance over the Sunda Straits exercised by the Dutch.²

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1. FM to Court, 19 April 1766, par. 55, SFR 32; FM Cons., 23 Feb., 23 March, 18 April, 30 April, 2 July 1765, SFR 73.
 2. FM Cons., 12 Nov. 1765, SFR 73; Kathirithamby, 'British West Sumatra', op. cit., pp. 250-1.

The First Voyages from Fort Marlborough to the East

With over two hundred chests of opium, twice the annual consumption of the West Coast, on hand and the normal channels for export outside Sumatra blocked, the only possible remedy for the overstock was active exporting of opium organised by Fort Marlborough. The only question was whether to ship the opium on a private vessel, the two hundred-ton snow Success, purchased by Governor Carter and Councillors Joseph Darvall and John Herbert in March 1765, or by a Company vessel. Carter, Darvall and Herbert requested forty chests of Society opium as a cargo for the Success, offering \$365.1.20 per chest on three months' interest-free credit if the Board would allow a rebate of \$50 per chest 'as an encouragement to open this Trade [to the East]'.¹

Councillors Robert Nairne and Robert Hay, however, favoured shipping the opium on a Company vessel. In a written dissent Nairne outlined three possible means of disposing of the one hundred chest surplus: inviting perahus from the East to come to Benkulen to collect it; selling it to the owners of private English vessels at a moderate price to encourage its export to the East as suggested by the Success's owners; or shipping it on Company account on a Company vessel. Nairne admitted that selling opium to the proprietors of a private vessel could guarantee the Company and the Society some profit without the risk and expense of having to undertake a voyage to the markets in the East. Nevertheless, he believed that it would prove much more advantageous to both the Company and the Society to reserve the whole of the surplus opium for shipment on the Company ship Admiral Watson which was already scheduled for a voyage to Banjarmasin for pepper. Selling opium in eastern Indonesia would create little additional danger, expense or loss of time for the Admiral Watson and, since the price of opium was 'known to be Considerably higher' there, her voyage should produce a large profit for the whole Society which otherwise would be enjoyed only by the owners of the Success snow.²

1. FM Cons., 23 Feb., 14 March, 23 March 1765, SFR 73.

2. FM Cons., 23 March 1765, SFR 74.

The remainder of the Benkulen Board, comprising the three proprietors of the Success and Natal Resident Richard Wyatt, attempted to refute Nairne's contention that exporting opium on the Success would merely rob the Fort Marlborough servants of enormous profits from the eastern opium trade. Carter, Darvall and Herbert pointed out that the snow's voyage entailed large risks for them because of the great fluctuations in the price of opium. Their hopes for a profit depended entirely on their ability to forestall the competition from Bengal opium which had been sold in the Malacca Straits for distribution throughout Indonesia. Despite the high price of opium at Bengal, Rupees 650 or about \$303 per chest in 1764 as a result of 'its being engrossed by the Gentlemen of Patna', large amounts of the commodity had still been purchased by Bengal private traders who expected that being first at the market would ensure their sales. As a consequence an estimated five hundred chests of opium had been carried from Bengal to the Malacca Straits the preceding year and the Dutch were fully supplied. The Success's owners doubted that so much opium could actually be re-sold and the high selling price in the area was therefore soon likely to plummet. Even the eastern nakhodas at Benkulen in 1764, Carter pointed out, had refused to buy more than three chests at \$600 each 'so fearful were they that they should be undersold'. In these circumstances it was too hazardous to wait for the Admiral Watson, which it was predicted could not be ready for dispatch eastward before June 1765, as Fort Marlborough's chances of finding any market for its opium 'solely depend' on reaching eastern Indonesia before the perahus from Selangor and the Malacca Straits could arrive there.¹

The Success's owners also noted that providing the snow with forty chests of opium still left sixty chests in reserve for the Admiral Watson. Not only would it be dangerous to consign the entire surplus to a single vessel, but it was doubtful if the Watson could carry or sell more than sixty chests. She was also

1. FM Cons., 23 March 1765, SFR 73.

to be laden with 'a Considerable Investment of Madras Goods', and her destination, Banjarmasin, was not known as 'a considerable market for Opium [as] it is said to be prohibited by the Sultan'. It would moreover be expensive for the ship to make a special tour of other ports merely to dispose of so large a parcel of opium as one hundred chests.¹

The Success's owners also claimed that the actual sale of opium could also be more easily accomplished by private traders than Company supracargoes because the Company could accept only gold or dollars while private merchants could receive goods as payment. Even if the opium could be bartered for pepper and tin, the only commodities acceptable to the Company, the value of the transactions 'would be attended with much trouble to settle & adjust to the Satisfaction of every one & perhaps puzzle most of the Accountants on this place'. The only real advantage the Admiral Watson possessed over their vessel, the Success's proprietors claimed, was a greater ability to defend herself, and they asserted that their snow was strong enough to fend off any Malay attack and could avoid any trouble with the Dutch by 'not interfering with their Territories & Settlements'.²

Governor Carter then noted that he was the only person accountable as 'the promoter & sole agent in planning this' if the Success's voyage eastward failed and added that his share in the Opium Society was larger than his share in the vessel, thus giving him every incentive to work for the profitable sale of the Society's surplus opium. He also offered to accept into partnership any persons who cared 'to Venture to any share they may like' in the Success's voyage in order to allay fears that his proposals proceeded solely 'from private pecuniary motives'. With Nairne and Hay dissenting, Carter, Herbert and Darvall, supported by Richard Wyatt, approved in their capacity as Councillors the sale of forty chests of opium to themselves as owners of the Success snow for \$316 per chest.³

1. FM Cons., 23 March 1765, SFR 73.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

The Success sailed from Fort Marlborough on 2 April 1765 under Captain David Rannie on what appears to have been the first venture of any Benkulen-owned vessel east of Batavia since 1747.

The Admiral Watson, which arrived at Fort Marlborough barely two weeks after the Success's departure, however, never made the voyage eastward which the Directors had recommended in their letter to Benkulen of November 1763. By the time that fresh supplies of silver, which were needed to purchase pepper at Banjarmasin, had arrived at Fort Marlborough on the Thames and Grosvenor in June and July 1765, the Board judged it too late to dispatch the Watson to the East. She would face opposing winds sailing both to and from Banjarmasin and would have to wait there until the next pepper crop was harvested in November, giving the Company the expense of maintaining her an extra year in India. The Board therefore decided to postpone any further venture to Banjarmasin until the return of the Success brought more certain intelligence of conditions in the area and rescheduled the Company's voyage to Borneo for the ship Royal George which was expected later in the year.¹

The Royal George arrived at Fort Marlborough in September 1765, but when the Success had still not returned from her voyage by November, the Council was again obliged to consider the merits of another voyage to the East. Despite Company orders to return the Royal George direct to Bombay, the Benkulen authorities decided that a slight detour to examine the commercial potential of the East and to renew old English contacts with Banjarmasin would not delay her arrival in India more than three months. The Royal George had already missed the season for the southern passage to Bombay and would in any case be obliged to sail via the Malacca Straits. The need to export the remaining surplus opium was pressing since it was nearly a year old and would soon be spoiled and unsaleable.²

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1. FM Cons., 9 May, 16 July 1765, SFR 73; Court to FM, 16 Nov. 1763, par. 54, SFR 31. The Admiral Watson arrived at Benkulen on 7 April 1765 and was dispatched back to Madras on the following 14 August.
 2. FM Cons., 12 Nov. 1765, SFR 73.

The Board therefore decided to dispatch the Royal George eastward immediately. The captain, Nicholas Skottowe, Councillor Robert Nairne and Factor and Accountant Alexander Chalmers were appointed supracargoes, and a lieutenant and twenty men selected for her defence. The Company snow Diligent was also to accompany her to expedite pepper-loading at Banjarmasin. On the dubious information of a native nakhoda, the Benkulen authorities concluded that the presence of a Dutch factory at Banjarmasin would offer no hindrance to the Royal George's trade there, so the supracargoes were instructed to acquire 6000 pikuls of pepper at \$6 per pikul as stipulated in the contract with the Sultan of Banjar obtained by Joseph Hurlock in 1739. They were also to try to procure a treaty with Banjarmasin and permission to erect a factory, preferably at Pulau Laut, off the south-eastern coast of Borneo. Fort Marlborough considered this island a potentially more valuable site than Banjarmasin itself. Not only did it control the entrance to the port of Banjar, but it also had 'a free Communication with the South & East Coast of Borneo, the Spice Islands, the Coast of Java and every other part to the Eastward, & would be a central Spot for Trade; & from being under the Company's sole Command might be Peopled by a sett of Industrious persons who would prove of great Emolument'.¹

The Royal George was also to collect information on Banka and its tin trade on the outbound voyage and to gather intelligence concerning 'the Commerce of Passeer, Sembowa, Balley & other Ports to the Eastward'. Seventy chests of Society opium were then loaded on the Royal George, to be shipped at the Company's risk, with the Company to receive \$300 per chest if it sold for that much and any surplus profit to be divided: half going to the Opium Society's membership, and a quarter each to the supracargoes and the ship's officers. The Board also prudently consigned \$20,000 in silver to Supracargo Nairne to be used to buy a pepper cargo for the Company if the opium could not be sold. Two Chinese and two Malays were also embarked on the Royal George to help with opium sales.²

1. FM Cons., 9 Dec. 1765, SFR 73.

2. Bassett, loc. cit., pp. 212-4; FM Cons., 9 Dec. 1765, SFR 73.

On 30 December 1765 the Royal George and Diligent snow departed for Banjarmasin. They returned to Fort Marlborough on 14 July 1766 in company with the Friend snow carrying Edward Coles, supracargo of the Success, and the Success snow herself, last from Bengal and the East. Neither the Royal George's voyage on Company account nor the Success's on private account had proved profitable. The supracargoes of the Royal George returned intact the \$20,000 issued them for the purchase of pepper. On the advice of the Dutch the Sultan of Banjar had refused to deal with them. Even worse, although the Royal George did bring back oil and sugar as partial returns for opium sold at other ports, their opium trafficking had been forestalled by Bengal traders at Pasir and by Dutch power at Sumbawa.¹ Only twenty-two chests of the seventy loaded on the ship had been disposed of and on inspection about one-third of those brought back were found to be unfit for use - so dry that in some instances the chests had lost thirty per cent of their weight. It was judged that the remainder would also be unsaleable within three months, and the Board therefore ordered them auctioned at once with six months' credit offered as an inducement to buy. The opening price at the auction was set at only \$50 but even so no bids were received.²

The only potentially promising aspect of the Royal George's voyage was the offer of a base at Pangpang Bay apparently made to the British by Gusti Agung of Mangoei, a Balinese prince who claimed suzerainty over the eastern extremity of Java. The supracargoes were enthusiastic about the site, as Pangpang had a good harbour, an abundance of timber and foodstuffs, and a resident Chinese population which with British encouragement could both rebuild a profitable sugar and arrack manufacture and perhaps be increased in numbers to a point where local trade would create the desired alternative entrepôt for Chinese trade in the heart of the

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1. Bassett, loc. cit., p. 214; Nairne, Skottowe and Chalmers to FM Board, 15 July 1766, SFR 14.
 2. FM Cons., 14 July, 9 Aug., 26 Sept., 30 Sept. 1766, SFR 73; 10 Jan. 1767, SFR 75; Bassett, loc. cit., pp. 214-5; Nairne, Skottowe and Chalmers to FM Board, 15 July 1766, SFR 14.

eastern seas.¹ Benkulen's hopes for a base at Pangpang, however, were frustrated long before the Directors instructed Fort Marlborough in 1768 to maintain 'a friendly Correspondence' with the area while London considered the Balinese offer.² The Dutch Governor General van der Parra had learned of British activities in East Java and had ordered a military expedition which in March 1767 successfully invaded the Blambangan region, broke Gusti Agung's influence there and established Dutch hegemony.³

The Success's prolonged voyage had proved equally fruitless, partly from bad luck and partly from intentional mismanagement of the owners' affairs by Supra-cargo Edward Coles. The snow had lost her passage to Pasir, her proprietors claimed, because of the Board's extended debate over whether a private vessel was a suitable exporter for the Society's opium. As a consequence Coles had been obliged to dispose of the opium in the Malacca Straits 'to little or no Advantage'. In addition, nine of the forty chests obtained from the Society had been so hard and short-weighted that they had sold for only about half their purchase price causing Carter, Darvall and Herbert a loss of about \$1600. The Success had then sailed to Bengal where Coles had purchased eighty chests of fresh opium from Vansittart and Plowman for his employers and an even larger amount on his own account. She then returned to the East but opium sales were again poor at Riau, according to Coles because of supplies offered by the Fortune at Selangor, and according to Carter because of Coles' unscrupulous trafficking in his own opium at the expense of his employers'. The Success enjoyed no better luck when she sailed on to Pasir because Coles found that the nakhodas to whom he had sold opium in the Malacca Straits had preceded him in Borneo.⁴ All in all, Carter, Herbert and Darvall protested that

1. Bassett, loc. cit., p. 215; Nairne, Skottowe and Chalmers to FM Board, 15 July 1766, SFR 14.

2. Court to FM, 5 Feb. 1768, pars. 59-60, SFR 32.

3. Bassett, loc. cit., p. 211.

4. ibid., p. 211; FM Cons., 25 March 1766, SFR 74; 8 Aug. 1767, SFR 75; 19 Oct. 1772, SFR 79; FM to Court, 19 April 1766, par. 58, SFR 14.

they had been 'considerable losers' as a result of the Success's voyage when, as the final blow, the Court in its letter of December 1766 disapproved the \$50 per chest rebate originally allowed to reward this 'first trial of a Trade to the Eastward'.¹ The Success did bring back at least eighty tons of tin and some birds' nests which were loaded in July 1766 on the Company ship Hawke to be sold at Canton, but once again Coles appears to have undercut his employers with tin he had purchased on his own account.² Nevertheless, the Success was prepared almost at once for another voyage to eastern Indonesia, but when she sailed from Benkulen in October 1766 'for Batavia & Bengal', the Fort Marlborough sub-treasurer, Giles Holloway, had replaced Coles as supracargo.

The End of the Opium Society

Even before the arrival of the Royal George and Success at Benkulen in July 1766 revealed the extent of the Opium Society's losses for that year, the Fort Marlborough Board, as a result of growing complaints concerning its management of the opium trade, had taken the first steps toward the dissolution of the Society. Disputes over the division of declining opium profits had erupted within a year of the Society's formation. In July 1764, it was discovered that, according to the shares apportioned by the Court, the cash due to each of the three Junior Merchants, John Guild, Michael Tierney and Stokeham Donston, was over twice the sum to be distributed to each of the eight members of the Council. The Board adjudicated the injustice its members claimed had been done them as Society shareholders and directed that the Junior Merchants receive no more than Councillors and deposit the \$1123.2.46 surplus in the bank until the Court's orders were received. Guild, Donston and Tierney protested against this decision as contrary to London's

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1. FM Cons., 8 Aug. 1767, SFR 75; Court to FM, 24 Dec. 1766, par. 17, SFR 32; Court to FM, 14 Dec. 1768, par. 24, SFR 32. In 1768 the Court finally agreed to drop demands for repayment of \$2000 for the \$50 per chest rebate if Benkulen's investigations showed that the Success's owners had indeed suffered a loss.
 2. FM Cons., 19 July 1766, SFR 74; 19 Oct. 1772, SFR 79; Bassett, loc. cit., p. 211.

instructions of 1761, requesting payment of the disputed surplus in return for bonds promising to repay it plus ten per cent interest should the Court rule against them. When this demand was denied, they petitioned the Directors concerning the President and Council's illegal revision of their opium dividend.¹ The matter was not resolved until the receipt of the Court's letter of January 1766 in June 1766, in which London upheld the Board's action on the grounds that the Company had never intended Council members to profit less from the Society than those of inferior rank. The Court then ordered the surplus \$1123.2.46 added to the next season's dividend and revised the scale of shares in the Society a second time to prevent a repetition of the problem. The Governor's share was thus cut to four-sixteenths of the total earnings, the Council's remained at five-sixteenths, and the Senior and Junior Merchants were grouped with the Factors, Chaplain and Head Surgeon to divide five-sixteenths, while the Writers shared two-sixteenths.²

By this time, however, even more serious complaints concerning the Board's handling of the opium traffic had been registered by other junior servants as a result of the sale of Society opium for private export on the Success. In February 1766, Factor John Crisp implied that the Board was manipulating the opium trade for its own advantage, at least since the formation of the General Concern in May 1765. He complained formally that the low price of the opium sold to the Success's owners and the fact that it was still not paid for reduced his own and every other servant's dividend in the as yet undistributed profits of May 1764 - April 1765.³

The Council moved at once to clear itself of the charge of price-fixing and to reorganise the conduct of the opium trade on the West Coast. The Board members first asserted that they had always sold Society opium for the best price

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1. FM Cons., 31 July, 22 Sept. 1764, SFR 72; Guild, Donston and Tierney to Court, 10 Dec. 1764, SFR 13.
 2. December 1766 Bank Cash Account, FM Cons., 10 Jan. 1767, SFR 75; Court to FM, 15 Jan. 1766, pars. 65-6, SFR 32.
 3. FM Cons., 28 Feb. 1766, SFR 74.

obtainable and brought all the profits onto the Society's books, even attempting in their private transactions to get Malay and eastern merchants to accept opium in return for the commodities they brought to Fort Marlborough. It was the receipt of the large surplus of opium in 1765, they claimed, that had obliged them to reduce the price of opium to \$365 per chest, and this had been decided well before their co-partnership had been established. Moreover, they had still managed to obtain \$450 or even \$500 for most of the chests sold to Malay merchants. Governor Carter added that since his share in the Opium Society was larger than his share in the General Concern, he had a strong interest in demanding the highest price possible for opium.¹

The Board then completely revised the regulations for the Opium Society as a means of protecting Councillors from any further accusations of *mismanagement*. The retailing of opium on the West Coast was to be opened to all Fort Marlborough servants instead of being handled by managers seconded from the Council. The opium on hand in the godowns and all future consignments were to be sold at auction to the highest bidders among the servants on the condition that the price offered was at least equal to the opium's invoice price plus the \$100 per chest guaranteed the Company. One-tenth of the price bid was to be deposited as down-payment and the balance paid in full within eight months of the date of purchase, with each buyer providing a responsible person as his security for the whole cost to insure the Company against defaults. The Board also stated that until the Court's instructions concerning the future of the Opium Society were known, no more opium than was necessary to satisfy consumption on the West Coast would be ordered from Bengal.²

The Benkulen Council then produced a comprehensive survey of the organisational failings of the Opium Society and concluded that the experiment should be

1. FM Cons., 28 Feb. 1766, SFR 74.

2. *ibid.*

terminated. The Board praised Carter's proposal of 1759 as the most workable structure for the opium trade but asserted that the Opium Society as subsequently constituted provided none of the advantages originally envisaged. The principal problem was continuing competition from Bombay and Bengal country traders. The Indian Presidencies had been unenthusiastic about prohibiting the private export of opium to Sumatra since they had judged it an infringement of the general liberty of navigation. Even when the Indian authorities co-operated, many traders had regarded the ban as applicable only to the British West Coast settlements and simply directed their vessels to nearby Dutch and Malay ports. Since Fort Marlborough was unable to compete with the Bengal traders' prices, this alternative source of supply destroyed the Society's ability to engross the retail trade in opium in West Sumatra and thus to guarantee the profits promised to both the Company and its membership. As a consequence the opium monopoly was actually having a depressing rather than stimulating effect on Fort Marlborough's commerce and threatened to reduce the local servants' trade to traffic in Madras piece goods. In such circumstances Benkulen could have little hope of supporting vessels of its own or extending its country trade.¹

In the Board's opinion, the universal sharing of opium profits among all Fort Marlborough's servants also tended to exacerbate the problems the Presidency faced in rebuilding its country trade. It effectively prevented any merchant or group of merchants from fitting out vessels to open an export trade to the Malacca Straits or eastern Indonesia both by hindering the accumulation of reasonable amounts of capital and by enhancing the local price of opium. The proprietors of such trading ventures were required to advance the Society the cost of the opium plus a profit, and Malay traders, who not only sailed their vessels more cheaply than Europeans but also obtained Bengal opium in the Malacca Straits for less than it could be sold for at Fort Marlborough, consistently undercut Benkulen merchants.

1. FM Cons., 28 Feb. 1766, SFR 74.

The current formula for dividing the opium profits, the Board claimed, was inherently unfair, hurting both junior and senior servants. The Residents of Natal and Muko Muko 'whose Principal Profitt' had formerly been the opium trade at their Residencies now shouldered most of the burden of marketing the Society's opium locally with far less profit to themselves. The Fort Marlborough servants were obliged to divide opium profits with servants at the other out-settlements, where opium had never been a major article of trade, while these servants continued to reap the normal commercial incomes from their Residencies without having to share in return with the head settlement. Worst of all, the opium dividend gave no one any profit of consequence. It was the senior servants in particular, the Council complained, 'who find their hopes and Wishes cutt off, and [it] is really some Hardship as they never enjoyed these Advantages when Junior Servants'; the juniors on the other hand were being subverted by exaggerated expectations of easy profit. Drawing on memories of their own early careers, the Board members declared that junior servants could bear a lean present if they could anticipate their circumstances improving with their rank. The current crop of juniors, however, were discontented with the little they gained from the opium dividend as witnessed by the several disputes in progress at Benkulen and simultaneously had little hope of greatly increased income as a reward for many years' service. Moreover, they were being encouraged to run into debt on the basis of their ever sanguine expectations from future opium dividends.¹

The Council wrote to London in April 1766 formally requesting the reopening of the opium trade on the West Coast on the grounds that the Opium Society's monopoly had failed. Benkulen's control of the local opium trade, the Board explained, required a ban on private sales for the entire West Coast from Acheh to Flat Point. Otherwise, as Fort Marlborough had learned from experience, the country traders simply drew commerce away from British settlements to other ports.

1. FM Cons., 28 Feb. 1766, SFR 74.

Since constant cruising was too expensive a way to police the traffic, Fort Marlborough saw no means of eliminating private competition from India. Moreover, the Councillors admitted that their supposition that opium would fetch as high a price in eastern Indonesia as it sold for locally was erroneous, and it was thus impossible to export opium and still guarantee a profit to both the Company and the Society. The Directors had already indicated dissatisfaction with only \$100 per chest as Company profit, regarding this as too little in relation to the 'very great price' they had been informed opium sold for in Indonesia. The Board responded that it had been a struggle to ensure even that much profit for London, and the opium prices quoted to the Directors had been greatly exaggerated. While some chests had been sold by 'private People' for \$700-800 when troubles in Bengal had cut off supplies at Patna, the Society had since suffered from such an overstock that the Benkulen Board would be happy to receive the \$360 per chest currently being asked for Society opium. All in all, the Board concluded, the Society would be lucky if it cleared \$4000 in the 1765-6 season, half the earnings of the previous year. Fort Marlborough could do nothing to reverse this decline in profits and if the Directors were no longer willing to import opium to the West Coast for a fixed profit of \$100 per chest, then there was no alternative to abolishing the Opium Society.¹ Faced with this catalogue of woes, the Court could only agree that opium earnings had been 'very short of what was expected' and were not worth the trouble to the Company of continuing the trade. Therefore in their letter to Benkulen of December 1766 the Directors declared an end to the Society and its monopoly of opium sales on the West Coast.² The Benkulen Board, however,

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1. FM to Court, 19 April 1766, pars. 54-7, SFR 14; Court to FM, 25 Jan. 1765, par 56, SFR 31; Kathirithamby, 'British West Sumatra', op. cit., pp. 252-4.
 2. Court to FM, 24 Dec. 1766, pars. 28-30, SFR 32.

deferred opening the trade until 1 January 1768, to allow for the disposal of the large supply of Society opium still on hand at Natal and Muko Muko.¹

The Eastern Trade and the Formation of the General Concern

The Fort Marlborough authorities also had private reasons for desiring the termination of the Opium Society by early 1766. The Society's failure either to engross the opium trade of the West Coast or to push Fort Marlborough's private commerce into eastern Indonesia did not terminate Benkulen's efforts to accomplish these aims. By the mid- and late-1760s Natal Resident Joseph Darvall appears to have re-established the Natal Concern's control over the opium traffic in that area and the northern trade had again begun to flourish. The Benkulen Board simultaneously started its most concerted thrust eastward under the auspices of another experiment in commercial organisation, the General Concern. This joint-stock trading syndicate was composed exclusively of Council members, apparently on the model of Carter's original design for the Opium Society, and was ultimately to bring Fort Marlborough the highest level of prosperity that the settlement had yet enjoyed.

With the formation of the General Concern in May 1765, it became clear to the Board that their commercial objectives would be better served by the removal rather than the continuance of the Opium Society. Since Fort Marlborough's theoretical opium monopoly had never ended Bengal competition even locally, it was necessary that Benkulen's opium be made more price competitive. This could be accomplished at least in part by eliminating the \$100 per chest reserved for the Company. Moreover, the snow Success, which had been absorbed into the General Concern even before the completion of her first voyage,² had, by late 1765 or early

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1. FM Cons., 8 Aug. 1767, SFR 75. This appears to have made little difference to the sales of Society opium in the North. Although Natal Resident Darvall deposited \$365.1.20 in opium profits in July 1767, no further deposits were made, and Darvall also sent 8½ chests of opium back to Fort Marlborough on the grounds that it was unsaleable because of large and recent imports at Analabo. The Board disapproved this since if it would not sell at Natal, it would certainly not sell at Benkulen. FM Cons., 14 July 1767, SFR 75.
 2. FM Cons., 13 June 1767, SFR 75.

1766, circumvented the Society's restrictions on private traffic in opium. After attempting to sell the forty chests of Society opium with which she had begun her voyage in March 1765, she had obtained fresh supplies of opium on private account at Bengal and then sailed directly back to eastern Indonesia to sell this new cargo. The Success had in effect joined the Bengal competition about which Benkulen had so bitterly complained, and although this particular voyage proved unprofitable, the pattern she established spelled the end of any further expectations of exporting Society opium to the East. The Board members, as private merchants, had moved into competition with the very opium which, as managers of the Opium Society, they were supposed to be selling for the benefit of the entire Fort Marlborough establishment. After eleven months of silence concerning the whereabouts of the Success, Benkulen received word from Bengal of her intentions in February 1766.¹ Although the snow's manoeuvre was not a direct breach of Company orders, as she had not called at Fort Marlborough en route from Bengal to the East, it was nevertheless an embarrassing conflict of public and private interest for the Board members and may explain the speed with which they moved to disband the Society and limit its opium imports to the requirements of West Coast consumption.

The formation of the General Concern and its drive for the eastern trade outraged the Fort Marlborough community in general. The degree of opposition it roused is a measure of the deficiencies of commerce at Fort Marlborough prior to 1765. As late as 1764, three years after the British reoccupation of the West Coast, Benkulen's country trade in locally-owned vessels was virtually non-existent. Only the 250-ton snow Speedwell belonged to the Fort Marlborough establishment, and she had been purchased by Robert Hay and Alexander Hall in Madras just prior to their return to Sumatra in September 1764. The Speedwell, moreover, appears to have been sold after Hall's death in December 1764, for she never returned to Benkulen after her departure for the Coromandel Coast in January 1765.

1. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 10 April 1766, Donston Papers.

The volume of trade in the early 1760s was correspondingly low if judged by Roger Carter's list of his trading transactions from September 1762 to May 1765, and Carter as Governor would traditionally have possessed a share in much of the settlement's commercial activity. Carter lists no trade deals at all in 1762, and in 1763 his purchases of merchandise totalled only \$19,877 - \$2200 on his own account and \$17,671 in partnership with other servants, usually Councillors Henry Idell and Robert Nairne, and Juniors Stokeham Donston, Edward Coles and James Stevenson. This sum appears to be less than the value of his trade as Resident of Natal in the 1750s. In 1764, Carter's purchases rose to \$36,552 - \$14,552 on his own account and \$22,000 in partnership. Some of this increase must be attributed to the establishment of the Benkulen bank in March 1764.¹ It is known that Carter borrowed \$12,165 at respondentia on goods shipped on the Lord Clive to Canton, the snow Luconia to Padang and Natal, the snow Syren to Bengal and the Neptune Galley to Batavia and Bombay, as well as borrowing another \$20,300 on the security of five separate joint bonds.² The value of certificates issued for Fort Marlborough servants' remittances abroad also indicates low levels of commercial activity. Only \$18,644.0.52 worth of certificates were issued in 1762 and only \$26,851.1.20 in 1763, the lowest annual levels since the late 1740s. By 1764, remittances had jumped to \$64,134.0.98, but about three-quarters of this amount (\$47,961.2.89) was payable in Madras and simply showed that a much larger volume

1. FM Cons., 13 June 1767, SFR 75.

2. The amounts of these respondentia loans were \$2665 on the Lord Clive in May 1764, \$4000 on the Luconia in May 1764, \$1500 on the Syren in September 1764, \$4000 on the Neptune in September 1764. FM Cons., 5 June, 1764, SFR 72; 5 July, 11 Jan. 1766, SFR 74. There was also \$4000 respondentia lent in February 1765 on the snow Amelia which was lost en route from Benkulen to Bombay. FM Cons., 5 March 1765, SFR 73. The loans on bond issued to Carter were as follows: \$1000 to Scott and Carter in April 1764; \$4000 to Herbert and Carter in October 1764; \$1000 to Ashburner and Carter in May 1764; \$12,000 to Carter, Idell and Coles in August 1764; and \$2300 to Carter and Darvall in October 1764. FM Cons., 17 May, 5 June, 21 Sept., 3 Nov. 1764, SFR 72; 13 April 1765, SFR 73. It is uncertain what proportion of these joint bonds was Carter's, or even if in some instances, he merely acted as a guarantor for other servants.

of merchandise had been ordered from India than in the preceding two years, probably again as a result of cash available from the bank.¹

More important, Carter's survey of his private trade indicated that virtually all Fort Marlborough's private commerce was conducted via the Company's shipping. Of eighteen separate transactions listed by Carter, eleven of them involve Company vessels. With the exception of \$4000 worth of cloth bought at two local auctions and a \$3500 share in goods brought by John Herbert from Batavia, all of the Madras and Bengal cloth and 'sundry European goods' which Carter purchased for his private commerce were imported by Company captains. The Governor of Fort Marlborough, the settlement's most notable merchant, appears to have been conducting a completely passive trade.²

Benkulen's export trade was equally tied to the Company's ships, as witnessed at least in part by Carter's respondentia bonds of 1764. Consequently, the only new commercial avenue available in the early 1760s resulted from the Directors' diversion of Benkulen's pepper shipments from Europe to Canton. In February 1761, the Court had characterised the China trade as the Company's 'Principal resource for valuable Returns' and enjoined Fort Marlborough 'to feed it with as plentiful remittances as Circumstances will admit of', meaning chiefly the forwarding of all excess silver from India and Sumatra for the use of the China Council.³ Since certain types of South-East Asian produce were also particularly saleable in China, the Fort Marlborough community took whatever advantage it could of the Company's China ships to increase its private exports, and incidentally provided additional finance for the Company's exports of tea and silk. For example, in June 1763, Carter bought \$11,700 worth of cloves in partnership with the captain and officers of the Company ship Valentine to be sent for sale in Canton.⁴ A year later in

1. See Appendix IV.

2. FM Cons., 13 June 1767, SFR 75.

3. Court to FM, 4 Feb. 1761, pars. 20-1, SFR 31.

4. FM Cons., 13 June 1767, SFR 75.

May 1764, he borrowed \$2665 from the bank at respondentia for an unspecified cargo for China on the Lord Clive.¹ In December 1764, Carter, Robert Hay, John Herbert and Edward Coles offered the Board a special contract by which the profits from the sale of a large parcel of camphor and cloves which they planned to ship to Canton on the Earl of Elgin would be turned over to the Company's representatives there while the Company paid them for the value of the goods in advance at Benkulen. These four men suggested that if the goods sold for less than the sum advanced, they would repay the Company the difference and ten per cent interest; if on the other hand they fetched any extra profit, the Company could return this surplus to them.² The Company, it was claimed, would benefit from this arrangement by the provision of additional resources for the purchase of tea. As the goods were to be shipped at Company risk and freight-free, the Benkulen venturers obtained cheap and riskless access to the China market. They also gained immediate use of funds from the cloves and camphor without having to wait for returns from their sale in China. The Board accepted this proposition and on 29 January 1765 Carter presented \$19,300 worth of camphor (23 pikuls, 93 katis), Hay \$8800 worth of camphor, Coles \$3594.2.26 worth of cloves (29 pikuls, 93 pounds) and Herbert \$1050 worth of cloves and birds' nests for lading on the Elgin.³ Carter, Hay, Herbert and Coles were then paid a total of \$32,400 in paper money from the Company's treasury and the Elgin sailed for Canton on 2 February 1765.

This experiment, however, was not repeated. The Court's letter of January 1766 forbade such contracts in future on the grounds that they provided no real advantage for the Company, particularly since the goods loaded on the Elgin had cost the Company more than was necessary. Produce which was sent to Canton on Company account, the Court stressed, should be purchased 'first hand' for the Company, not second-hand from 'Private people'. Nevertheless, the Directors

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1. May 1764 Bank Cash Account, FM Cons., 5 June 1764, SFR 72.
 2. FM Cons., 15 Dec. 1764, SFR 72; 29 Jan. 1765, SFR 73.
 3. FM Cons., 15 Jan., 29 Jan. 1765, SFR 73.

permitted the Benkulen servants to continue to load private merchandise on Company ships for Canton freight-free if this did not interfere with the Company's cargoes.¹ By the time that the Court's orders arrived at Benkulen in June 1766, the Fort Marlborough authorities had also learned via the Grosvenor in March 1766 that the bulk of the Elgin's consignment remained unsold. Coles' cloves had found the best market and he owed the Company only \$428.0.39 shortfall for the advance he had received, while Herbert owed \$938.3.36 and Carter and Hay the full amounts of their advances for camphor, \$19,300 and \$8800 respectively.² Carter in particular was aghast and blamed the disaster on 'the Restrictions which the European Trade is laid under there [at Canton]'. According to the Board, the same quality of camphor had been sold clandestinely to junk traders at Batavia in 1765 for Rix-dollars 1100 or about \$880 per pikul. This was the price at which Carter had estimated the value of his lading on the Elgin, and the junk traders must have expected a much larger profit in China in order to cover the high respondentia charges which they normally paid on their voyages.³ Not having anticipated such a setback, the four venturers were unable to repay the Company immediately for the losses suffered on the Elgin's cargo, and the Board granted them twelve months' credit for the debt at ten per cent interest, in consideration of the 'great Detriment to them in their Private Capacities'. as a result of a plan which protected the Company from loss and which they had hoped would be of 'Mutual Benefit'.

Future consignments to China were more successful.⁴ By May 1767, when the Board demanded repayment of their bond, the goods shipped on the Hawke in July 1766, including tin and birds' nests acquired on the Success's first voyage, had been disposed of, and the Elgin's camphor was expected to sell within a few months. Carter, Hay and Herbert thus had more than sufficient funds to repay their debt to

1. Court to FM, 15 Jan. 1766, pars. 55, 74, SFR 32.

2. FM Cons., 31 March, 28 April 1766, SFR 74.

3. FM Cons., 28 April 1766, SFR 74.

4. *ibid.*

the Company but had no means of transferring the money from Canton. The Company agents there were by this time over-supplied with cash and had refused the request of the Sumatran servants' attorneys for certificates payable at Fort Marlborough.¹ At first the Benkulen Board accepted Carter's, Hay's and Herbert's bills on their Canton agents even though it was conceivable that the Company authorities there would again refuse the remittance, but when neither the British King nor the Middlesex brought large supplies of bullion for Benkulen, the Board required immediate cash repayment. Carter was obliged to pay \$22,034.10.66 in August 1767, despite the inconvenience of raising the sum in specie so close to his departure for Europe.²

Fort Marlborough's export trade to China was closely tied to its trade with eastern Indonesia. With the Company dabbling in the benzoin trade in the early 1760s, North Sumatran camphor and imported cloves were practically the only items of value Fort Marlborough could procure for export, and the importance of cloves in the early 1760s is illustrated by Carter's dealing in that spice. Cloves accounted for nearly half of the total value of his purchases of merchandise in 1763 (about \$7977 out of \$19,871). Camphor and cloves together made up about one-third of his purchases in 1764 (\$12,500, including \$5000 for ten pikuls of camphor, out of \$36,552).³ In the absence of Benkulen-owned vessels during this period, Fort Marlborough was dependent for its supplies on spices smuggled out of eastern Indonesia by native nakhodas in defiance of the Dutch monopoly.

The annual visits to Sumatra of Mandar, Bugis, Javanese and even Balinese perahus had constituted Benkulen's principal link with the 'Eastern Islands' after the Dutch had excluded the British from trade at Banjarmasin in 1747. The contact had been maintained even in the 1750s, at a time when Fort Marlborough was concentrating on developing its commerce in North Sumatra, as witnessed by a request in

1. FM Cons., 16 May 1767, SFR 75.

2. FM Cons., 17 July, 8 Aug, August Bank Cash Account, 5 Sept. 1767, SFR 75.

3. FM Cons., 13 June 1767, SFR 75.

1764 from Daeng Marupa, the Bugis Captain at Fort Marlborough, for permission to go to Sumbawa to collect debts owed to his deceased father Daeng Macooley who had been Bugis Captain in the 1750s.¹ Captain Thomas Forrest had also sold opium to eastern perahus when he had voyaged to the West Coast during the Franco-Dutch interregnum.² After the restoration of British authority at Fort Marlborough, the Council had taken some pains to ensure the continuation of the perahu traffic from the East. When perahus arrived from 'Java, Balley and other places to the Eastward' in August and September 1762, Carter had purchased the salt they brought on Company account at \$40 per koyan and contracted to buy whatever amount the nakhodas transported to Benkulen the next year. In 1762, the Council also agreed to eliminate customs duties on imported Indonesian produce with the exception of Bugis, Java, Bali and Acheh cloths which had long carried a fifteen per cent duty to prevent them from competing with the Indian piece goods traded by the Benkulen servants and the long cloth which the Company used as partial payment for pepper at Muko Muko. Carter even permitted the sale of gunpowder from the Company's military stores to several Mandar and Bugis nakhodas in November 1762 to enable them to defend themselves on their passage home.³ These efforts at encouragement succeeded. In June and August 1763, at least 196 pikuls of cloves and 630 pikuls of cassia were imported at Fort Marlborough, with 90 pikuls of the cloves being purchased by Governor Carter and the Valentine's officers, and the rest by a partnership of Carter, Idell, Nairne, Coles, Donston and Stevenson.⁴

In spite of Carter's heavy investment in cloves, the eastern trade was not dominated by the most senior servants. By 1764, the involvement of the junior

1. FM Cons., 7 Nov. 1764, SFR 72. There are also occasional references to the arrival of Mandar perahus in the Benkulen records in the 1750s.
FM Cons., 4 Aug. 1756, SFR 69.
2. Bassett, loc. cit., p. 204.
3. FM Cons., 25 Aug., 13 Sept., 22 Nov. 1762, SFR 71; Bassett, loc. cit., p. 205.
4. FM Cons., 13 June 1767, SFR 75. The total imports of cloves from August 1763 to April 1764 appears to have reached 250 pikuls.
Court to FM, 25 Jan. 1765, par. 80, SFR 31.

servants had increased. Donston and Coles in partnership, having entered into a contract with the eastern nakhodas, bought most of the cloves imported by the perahus in July 1764, although Carter became entitled to twenty-five pikuls worth \$2500 as a result of their using cloth which they held in partnership with the Governor to pay for the spices.¹ Donston and Coles also launched into the spice trade actively in 1764. In December of that year, Coles borrowed swivel guns and muskets from the Company armoury for the protection of five perahus which he was dispatching to Ceram.² It appears that other Fort Marlborough inhabitants had also begun trading in this manner, for in November 1765, while explaining the reasons for scanty opium sales at Benkulen, the Board noted that 'fifteen to twenty Praws, the greatest part of which belonged to this Settlement', had been caught and burnt by Dutch patrols at Ceram while awaiting their loadings of cloves.³ Donston subsequently wrote to his cousin in England that although he and Coles had missed their returns in 1765 because of this misadventure, the cloves had not been destroyed but were ashore at Ceram protected by the local people and were expected to reach Benkulen in 1766.⁴ In so far as it involved buying spices imported to Fort Marlborough by the eastern nakhodas and sending native perahus to Ceram to collect cloves, Benkulen's eastern trade was within the reach of even the under-capitalised junior servants. Nevertheless with limited scope for commercial activity at Fort Marlborough in the early 1760s, quarrels soon developed over the equitable division of the trade.

In November 1764, Governor Carter proposed that the Company guarantee a market for imported cloves if the eastern nakhodas were unable to find private buyers. The Directors had authorised such a move in 1760 in order to stimulate

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1. FM Cons., 13 June 1767, SFR 75. The total imports of cloves from August 1763 to April 1764 appears to have reached 250 pikuls. Court to FM, 25 Jan. 1765, par. 80, SFR 31.
 2. FM Cons., 1 Dec. 1764, SFR 72.
 3. FM Cons., 12 Nov. 1765, SFR 73. The Dutch destroyed about forty vessels in this raid on Ceram and as a result only 120 pikuls of cloves reached Benkulen in 1765. FM to Court, 19 April 1766, par. 101, SFR 32.
 4. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 10 April 1766, Donston Papers.

spice smuggling out of Dutch territory, and Carter claimed that the Company could not lose from the contract because spices could always be shipped with profit to either Europe or China. Some means was also needed to ensure the continuation of the eastern perahus' voyages to West Sumatra since some had not found the opium they sought at Benkulen in 1764 and three or four late arrivals then in port had been unable to find private buyers for the hundred pikuls of cloves they had brought. They would not accept cloth in barter because the rate was currently too high and cash was so short at Fort Marlborough that none of the servants was prepared to offer the nakhodas ready money. As a consequence, the nakhodas had threatened to stop calling at Benkulen unless they were promised a fixed price for several years to come. They claimed that they could sell cloves for \$100 per pikul at Selangor and other ports which involved less danger of Dutch interference to visit than West Sumatra. The nakhodas who had purchased their cargoes at Pasir even asserted that \$110 was the lowest price they could accept at Benkulen without a loss. Carter therefore suggested a two-year Company contract to purchase at \$100 per pikul whatever cloves the nakhodas were unable to sell to individuals, and the Board agreed to this, noting the vital need to maintain the link to the East until Fort Marlborough's fiscal position improved.¹

Less than a week later, however, Councillor Robert Hay complained that he had been prevented from purchasing cloves for his private trade because the Bugis nakhoda with whom he had dealt feared reprisals from Daeng Marupa and Radeen Temenggong. The Board questioned the nakhoda but he then denied that he had been intimidated and no proof could be found against Daeng Marupa or Radeen Temenggong.²

Although nothing could be done officially, the matter did not end there. It developed as a minor skirmish in the factional disputes then rife at Fort Marlborough. Governor Carter had by this time antagonised much of the Benkulen establishment.

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1. FM Cons., 3 Nov., 7 Nov. 1764, SFR 72; Court to FM, 6 Feb. 1760, par. 84, SFR 31.
 2. FM Cons., 10 Nov. 1764, SFR 72. This Radeen Temenggong appears to be the son of the High Pengeran of Madura who had come to Benkulen as a refugee in 1745.

He was already deeply distrusted by the junior servants as a result of his efforts to have the opium trade farmed to the Council in 1759. The Junior Merchants had just lodged their complaints concerning the division of the Opium Society's profits, and nearly half the Council, including Robert Hay, had also lately dispatched a letter to the Court protesting at what they considered to be Carter's illegal suspension of their fellow Scot, Henry Idell, from his Council seat for alleged misconduct in his private trade at Muko Muko.¹ As a consequence, the Governor apparently viewed Hay's complaints about his difficulties in buying cloves as a covert accusation that Carter had himself somehow managed to obstruct other servants from engaging in the spice traffic. Carter responded with an unprecedented and lengthy explanation of his conduct commercial and otherwise.² He stressed the seriousness of such a charge in view of the Directors' insistence that commerce at Benkulen be open to all servants, and he then defied anyone to offer proof that he had in any way restricted trade. He asserted that on the contrary he had 'never engaged in any Trade, but with some Reluctance', since the re-establishment of Fort Marlborough. He had brought no merchandise with him when he returned to the West Coast in September 1762 and in the two years since had ordered only about Rupees 3000 worth of trade goods from Bengal and only Pagodas 3000 worth from Madras, which he had sold to junior servants rather than to 'Black Merchants'. Moreover, he had always acted in partnership with a variety of servants when purchasing goods locally and had always accepted whatever share of stock his partners chose to assign him. These facts Carter noted 'as Proofs...that I have not [been] nor am grasping' and stated his desire thus to avoid further misrepresentations of his character to London. Concerning the disputed cloves, Carter then claimed that he had told the eastern nakhodas before witnesses 'to go round and try the Market', adding that he himself had not intended to purchase cloves on his own account this

1. See above pp. 78-80.

2. FM Cons., 10 Nov. 1764, SFR 72.

year. He understood that the nakhodas had been negotiating with Henry Idell and even Hay and his partner Alexander Hall but that no agreement had been reached because the nakhodas demanded cash and the prospective buyers offered goods not suitable for the eastern market.¹

Carter then turned to a defence of his 1759 proposals for the Opium Society in an attempt to refute allegations made to the Company that it was a scheme designed to engross all Fort Marlborough's commerce. With the trading capital he had possessed in 1759, Carter asserted, he could have obtained at least as large a share of the existing opium trade as the Company had first assigned him, that is, six-sixteenths of the profits, without recourse to any subterfuge. He had made his proposals openly, and his memorial concerning the reorganisation of the opium trade had been tabled by the Board for six months to allow time for comment and debate. In all that time, Carter noted, only Robert Nairne had stated any objections to him either publicly or privately. People had only complained secretly to their friends in Europe depicting him as an autocrat and saying that they were afraid to oppose him openly. Carter still considered his 1759 proposals the most workable system for the opium trade and called on Nairne to testify that he had never been penalised for disagreeing with the Governor.²

Hay's complaints were, however, just the beginning of the quarrels at Fort Marlborough over the eastern trade. In the eyes of the junior servants, the formation of the General Concern in May 1765 made a mockery of Carter's assertions that he had made no efforts to engross Benkulen's commerce. They regarded the Council's co-partnership as proof positive that they were being systematically robbed of their prerogatives by their superiors, and the result was a new series of charges of misconduct against the Board in general. When Factor. John Crisp

1. FM Cons., 10 Nov. 1764, SFR 72. Carter nevertheless acquired fifty pikuls of cloves in December 1764 purchased for him by Edward Coles. The figures he gives here for his private trade are also rather less than those he produced in June 1767. FM Cons., 13 June 1767, SFR 75.

2. FM Cons., 10 Nov. 1764, SFR 72.

was summoned by the Council to explain his refractory behaviour in September 1765, he responded 'that the Junior Servants were oppressed in Trade' and cited the alleged refusal by a recently arrived eastern nakhoda to sell cloves to another Factor, Thomas Forbes, 'thro' fear of displeasing the Council'.¹ The Board then summoned Forbes who confessed that he had been unable to relocate the nakhoda for questioning.² Nevertheless, Forbes subsequently wrote to the Board quoting Carter's remarks of 10 November 1764 concerning the Court's resentment of any attempt to sabotage the general liberty of trade. He added with careful, possibly sarcastic, courtesy that although there was no danger that 'Gentlemen of so Just & Honble Sentiments' as the Council would restrict commerce unfairly, the Board should still make this clear to the Malay traders:

...The Consequence of allowing that Opinion to remain amongst the Natives might prove as Detrimental as an actual Monopoly, and in that Case I beg leave to say that a Junior Servant at Fort Marlbro' would be in a worse Situation than a Companys slave, the first being in the Character of a Gentleman without a Sufficiency to support it, while the other might subsist agreeable to his Station on the Allowance of his Honble Masters.³

At about the same time two other junior servants, Robert Innes and Lodovick Grant, also became involved in a quarrel with Councillor John Herbert, apparently over a sugar tub costing \$2 which had been made for Innes by one of Herbert's slaves. The dispute culminated in charges by Innes and Grant that Herbert had been selling firearms to the Malays through Chinese merchants in the Benkulen bazaar in direct contravention of Company orders. Herbert successfully defended himself by claiming that the Company ban extended only to natives living in Company districts and that his sales had been to eastern nakhodas who needed arms to protect themselves from Dutch interference en route to and from Benkulen. The arms, he added, were only delivered to the nakhodas immediately prior to their departure from Fort Marlborough.⁴ Innes and Grant were dismissed from the Company's

1. FM Cons., 11 Sept. 1765, SFR 73.

2. FM Cons., 13 Sept., 8 Oct. 1765, SFR 73.

3. *ibid.*

4. *ibid.*

service for insolence to Herbert and John Crisp for refusing the Governor's summons to attend to his business in the Secretary's office.¹ All three were sent back to Europe on the Grosvenor in April 1766.

Nevertheless, these measures did not stop criticism of the Board although not all of it was public. Stokeham Donston summed up the juniors' views in a letter to England early in 1766:

The Agreement of trade entered into by the Governor & Co[uncil] from which all under that Station were excluded could not but be very detrimental to all of us, particularly Mr. Coles, (the Gentleman who is concerned with me) and myself as we had launched out more deeply than any others with the Branch [the trade to the East] it would most affect.²

It is within this context that Crisp's final shot - his accusation that the Council was manipulating the Opium Society for its own benefit - must be understood. Although the Council members attributed this charge to Crisp's pique over his dismissal, they were nevertheless obliged in February 1766 not only to explain the problems of the Opium Society but also to attempt to quell the 'great ferment... raised in this Settlement on account of this Copartnership' by justifying publicly their motives for forming a General Concern.³ They claimed that anyone judging their partnership impartially must admit 'that nothing Considering the present Circumstances could be better calculated for improving and extending the Commerce of the West Coast', an activity long recommended by the Court. Their main aim in joining together for trade had been to eliminate individual rivalries and so concentrate their common efforts on this objective. If this were the sole result of the syndicate, the Directors should be well-pleased, in view of Fort Marlborough's recent record of divisiveness and quarrels. Only malcontents, or those incited by them, could suppose that 'such a Union must prejudice the[ir] Interest', as Forbes had suggested in his letter of 13 September 1765, or flatter themselves that the Court would dismiss a body of servants en masse for forming a trading association.

1. FM Cons., 13 Sept., 8 Oct. 1765, SFR 73.

2. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 10 April 1766, Donston Papers.

3. FM Cons., 28 Feb. 1766, SFR 74.

The Council then explained that its members 'seperately [had] but very small Capitals & therefore [were] incapable of carrying on any other than the little Peddling Trade of Piece Goods', but that united they should gain access to greater credit in a tight money market and therefore be able 'to carry on a large Trade to the Eastern Island[s] and to the Streights of Mallacca [sic], Bay of Siam, &c.' This would benefit the Company by increasing its customs revenues at Benkulen and also give its West Coast service 'some Repute, which it is impossible can be the Case as long as their Servants confine themselves to the small Trade they have hitherto carried on'. As proof of the good effects produced by the General Concern, the Board pointed out that they had already acquired three snows and hoped in time to own even larger vessels to upgrade the scale of the West Coast's trade.¹

The Board also concentrated on proving that 'any actual immediate Oppression which the Gentlemen here seem to suppose must arrise [sic] to them from such a Copartnership...[was] merely Ideal and without any just Grounds'.² They swore that no one had been kept from trading how and when he chose and defied anyone at Fort Marlborough, European, Chinese or Malay, to produce the slightest proof of obstruction or intimidation. With specific regard to the disputes over cloves imported to Benkulen by the eastern perahus, the Board members asserted that they had every right to use the commercial advantages given them by experience and capital. If they could offer better prices or more desirable goods in exchange for these imports, they saw no reason 'to forego their own Advantage just to satisfy their Juniors'. The Board also noted that the General Concern could not in any way hurt the servants at the out-settlements who continued to enjoy the traditional prerogative of forming a Residency trading concern, with 'the Additional Benefit of being always supplied with constant & regular Assortments [of merchandise]'. The Board members then concluded their explanation with hopes that they had clarified the advantages which the General Concern could bring to

1. FM Cons., 28 Feb. 1766, SFR 74.

2. *ibid.*

its membership, the Company and in time to the whole settlement and expressed their willingness to document their every action if asked to do so by the Directors.¹

The Court's letter of December 1766 which reopened the opium trade on the West Coast also gave guarded approval to the Council's General Concern. The Directors, noting the discontent of the junior servants, warned the Council against using 'their Power and Stock to engross all the Goods that come to your Market or at least such sorts as best suit the Trade of the place' or preventing the juniors from 'laying out such Sums as they may be possessed of' in trade.² Nevertheless the Directors agreed that many of the Board's arguments in favour of their General Concern carried 'some weight'. They also accepted the Benkulen Council's contention that the junior servants should not expect greatly increased incomes until they had served many years and 'by standing rose to Superior Stations'; otherwise the Company's affairs would be entrusted to inexperienced men. While the Court wished to indulge the juniors 'in every thing that is proper and that they are intitled [sic] to, consistent with their Rank' and to encourage their hopes of 'encreasing their Fortunes', London still insisted that they 'be satisfied to go through the usual gradations in the Service before they arrive at it [wealth]'.³ The next year the Directors confirmed Fort Marlborough's dismissal of Crisp, but repeated that they would not stand for any obstruction of the juniors' trade 'by any unjustifiable means in consequence of the beforementioned Partnership or otherwise'.⁴

1. FM Cons., 28 Feb. 1766, SFR 74.

2. Court to FM, 24 Dec. 1766, pars. 40-3, SFR 32.

3. *ibid.*

4. Court to FM, 11 Feb. 1767, pars. 5-6, SFR 32. The Court agreed with Benkulen that Crisp's accusations that the Council was monopolising Benkulen's trade were motivated by a desire for revenge.

The Impact of the General Concern

During the five years from 1765 to 1770, the General Concern accomplished all that the Council had anticipated at its formation. It pioneered Fort Marlborough's country trade to the East and for three years practically eliminated disputes among the senior servants. Hew Steuart, the Sixth of Council and Resident of Manna, describing the General Concern in a letter to Scotland in 1766, stated:

...We have great hopes [it] will prove more beneficial to all, than by acting seperately [sic], having since its Commencement begun a new branch of trade to the Eastern Islands, from whence spices & other rich kinds of Merchandize are brought'.¹

He added in another letter that 'since our engaging together in trade, there is a very good understanding betwixt the Governor & all of us, & indeed it is much for our mutual interest, to continue so'.²

Even more significant, within a year of its establishment, the General Concern had once again made Fort Marlborough a ship-owning community. The Council had reason to point with pride to the Concern's three 200-ton snows in February 1766. They were vessels of greater burden than had been common in the best days of the 1750s, and they represented a phenomenally rapid increase in Fort Marlborough's capacity for private trade.

The three vessels appear to have plied principally between eastern Indonesia and India. The identify of one of them is uncertain, but she was probably the Elizabeth snow, whose master, Captain Wilmott, succeeded to the command of another Concern vessel after the Elizabeth disappeared from the shipping records in 1768. The Elizabeth was the only vessel besides the Success and the Tartar to reappear regularly at Fort Marlborough from 1765 to 1768 and she was certainly Benkulen-owned as early as April 1765 when three bills totalling \$6000 payable to her captain were drawn at Fort Marlborough by 'Richard Wyatt Esq.^r & Owners of the Snow Elizabeth'.³ The Elizabeth then sailed for Madras returning to Sumatra in

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1. Hew Steuart to his sister, Mrs. Christian Steele, 10 Feb. 1766, Steuart Papers.
 2. Hew Steuart to his sister, 25 Dec. 1768, loc. cit.
 3. April 1765 Cash Account, FM Cons., 18 May 1765, SFR 73. Wilmott became captain of the ship Fortune in 1768.

1766. She departed from Benkulen for Batavia in March 1767, returned in June and in July left the West Coast for Bengal. The Concern's second snow, the Success, was more clearly a participant in the eastern trade. After her first unsuccessful voyage under Supracargo Edward Coles, she was again sent eastward in October 1766. She seems to have returned from this voyage, including a stop at Bengal, in April 1767 and in June of that year she was again dispatched to eastern Indonesia. The sailing pattern of the Concern's third snow, the Tartar brig, is very similar. She first arrived on the West Coast from Madras in June 1766, sailed to Batavia in August and within a month had returned to Benkulen and was prepared for a voyage to Bengal, with Factor (ex-Natal surgeon) James Stevenson as supracargo.¹ She returned to Benkulen in March 1767 and was dispatched for the East in the same month. This voyage is significant because it provides the only available details concerning the value and destination of Benkulen's eastern trade as a result of the captain's description of his difficulties with the Dutch in North Java - the sole instance in which the Dutch appear to have been able to thwart the General Concern's thrust to the East.

Captain Netherton of the Tartar informed the Benkulen Board in May 1767 that he had left Bengal in December with a cargo of opium and piece goods bound for Sulu and 'other Eastern ports' but that the Dutch had prevented his reaching that destination. He had put the Tartar into Bonang in North Java to replenish his water and provisions, but on learning that the Dutch refused to supply British ships, he had sent his syrang ashore posing as a nakhoda from Malacca bound for Macassar to arrange the necessary purchases clandestinely. The syrang had returned to the brig with encouraging news and the Tartar's second officer had then gone ashore to load fifteen bags of rice, several dozen fowls, a buffalo and two boat loads of water. Before this had been accomplished, however, the Dutch Resident of Rembang arrived at Bonang with 'a Party of 200 Horse' and

1. FM Cons., 13 June 1767, SFR 75.

arrested the officer and the boat's crew taking them back to Rembang. Captain Netherton had visited the Dutch Resident but had failed to obtain his crew's release. He was told that Batavia had ordered all English vessels bound for the eastern islands to be stopped; the Dutch Resident also invited him to bring the Tartar into Rembang road, where several large Dutch vessels were anchored, while awaiting Semarang's orders concerning the release of his crew. At this point Netherton concluded that the Rembang Resident planned, if possible, to arrest the Tartar herself and he at once set sail. After attempting in vain to locate another port where he could obtain supplies, he had finally been obliged to set his course back to Sumatra. Prior to leaving North Java, however, he had filed a formal protest against the Rembang Resident 'for the sum of fifty thousand Spanish Dollars, the amount of her [the brig] & her Cargo', for the damage done his owners by the loss of the vessel's passage.¹

The Benkulen authorities, as the owners of the Tartar, could hardly accept the Dutch 'rendering it unsafe for any Vessel to sail into the Eastern Seas, the Navigation of which they are endeavouring to confine to themselves to the Exclusion of others'.² They at once drafted another protest to Batavia. The Dutch Governor-General van der Parra, however, dismissed English complaints just as his predecessors had done regarding similar incidents in North Sumatra in the 1750s. He claimed that Netherton had been engaged in smuggling and that his real destination had been Macassar not Sulu. The snow's hasty departure from Bonang and failure to return for her captured crew were cited as proof of the Captain's illegal purposes, and the Tartar's loss of her passage was blamed on the change of monsoon. Batavia not only rejected Benkulen's demands for satisfaction but also demanded in turn that Fort Marlborough cease encouraging country traders to invade Dutch territory by issuing passes to Dutch claimed ports.³ Not surprisingly, the General Concern's

1. FM Cons., 6 June 1767, SFR 75.

2. *ibid.*

3. Bassett, *loc. cit.*, pp. 218-9; FM Cons., 31 May, 7 Nov. 1769, SFR 77.

trade to the East continued, and the Dutch thereafter appear to have been unable to interrupt its course.

The number of vessels owned at Benkulen continued to increase in the late 1760s. In 1768, four out of the nine country vessels which called there were locally owned: the 150-ton snow Jenny; the 30-ton sloop Fanny; the 30-ton sloop Betsy; and the 200-ton ship Fortune. By the end of the next year, two more vessels had been added at Fort Marlborough: the 35-ton sloop Assistance; and the first large ship to belong to the West Coast in at least forty years, the 400-ton ship Experiment. Therefore, in 1769 and 1770, Benkulen owned half of the twelve country vessels which called there in each of those two years.¹ Moreover, the tonnage of locally owned private shipping had increased from 410 tons in 1768 to 845 tons in 1770. Fort Marlborough had finally realised the Council's ambition of owning full-scale ships.

By this time, however, shipping at Benkulen was controlled by two rival syndicates: the General Concern, headed by Richard Wyatt who had succeeded Roger Carter as Governor in January 1767; and John Herbert and Company. The General Concern had almost completely dominated Fort Marlborough's country trade from 1765 to 1768. Only two small vessels, George Nicholson's sloop Liberty, which was both acquired and auctioned in 1766, and the sloop Betsy, owned by Factors George Salmon and Philip Patch from 1767 to 1770, were not possessions of the Council. In 1768, however, John Herbert withdrew from the General Concern, apparently in order to return to Europe to 'take charge of a house in Trade'.² This prospect must have failed, for in December 1768 he was still at Fort Marlborough and had acquired the snow Jenny and sloop Fanny in partnership with Stokeham Donston, who had not joined the Council's co-partnership on being called

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1. There was also the sloop Tryall which appears in the shipping diaries in 1769 and 1771 and seems to have been owned by Darvall's Natal Concern. FM Cons., 9 Sept. 1769, SFR 77.
 2. FM Cons., 31 Oct. 1769, SFR 77.

to the Board in 1767, and Junior Merchant Edward Coles.¹ Wyatt's Concern, on the other hand, had been reduced to only the ship Fortune, probably as a result more of the withdrawal of Carter's capital on his retirement than of Herbert's defection. This breach within the Board became openly hostile within a year when Herbert challenged the other Councillors' attempt to exclude him from any share in the General Concern's proposed venture into the manufacture of sugar and arrack.² Nevertheless, the factional divisions among the senior servants seem not to have hampered the extension of Benkulen's commerce, despite Wyatt's assertions to the contrary.³ Although remittances to Europe virtually ceased between 1769 and 1770, the funds appear to have been applied to a rapid expansion of both partnerships. Wyatt and Company acquired the ship Experiment and sloop Assistance in 1769 and purchased the snow Ruby two years later while Herbert and Company also bought their first ship, the Bencoolen Merchant, in 1771.⁴

Moreover, Fort Marlborough's country trade was by this time sufficient to support both syndicates. Herbert's vessels Jenny and Fanny appear to have taken over much of the carrying trade in North Sumatran produce to the Indian Presidencies and Batavia and extended the range of this traffic to the ultimate markets for benzoin in the Persian Gulf, thus eliminating the middlemen who seem to have

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1. Thomas Fivey, Philip Mannington, Philip Patch and James Burnett also held shares in the Jenny, at least by 1771. Captain Robert Hobson in Account Current with the owners of the snow Jenny, 31 Oct. 1771, SFR 152.
 2. See Appendix XIV.
 3. FM Cons., 31 Oct. 1769, SFR 77.
 4. Lists of Private vessels belonging to the West Coast in 1768, 1770, 1772, SFR 14; Lists of private vessels belonging to the West Coast in 1776, SFR 16; Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 10 Jan. 1770, Donston Papers; Robert Hobson in Account Current with the owners of the ship Bencoolen Merchant, John Herbert, 31 Oct. 1771, SFR 152; Account of the arrival and departure of the ship Experiment to and from Fort Marlborough, SFR 152, pp. 334-5; Petitions concerning the loss of the ship Experiment on 20 September 1773, SFR 152; Wyatt to Warren Hastings, 28 Sept. 1772, Warren Hastings Papers, General Correspondence, vol. 11, Jan.-June 1773, British Museum Additional Manuscripts 29, 133. There may, however, have been some financial pressure as a result of competition from Herbert as Wyatt and Company decided to sell the Experiment to the Company for Bombay Rupees 72,000 in October 1770. FM Cons., 13 Oct. 1770, SFR 78.

handled the transport of Sumatran goods between Madras and Bombay in earlier decades.¹ Wyatt and Company on the other hand appear to have concentrated on the eastern trade. Both the ship Fortune and the sloop Assistance voyaged eastward in 1769 and the ship Experiment was in eastern Indonesia between January and September 1770.

Details concerning the transactions of Herbert's and Wyatt's syndicates are not readily available, but some estimate of the value of their traffic can be gained from local customs records which give a partial account of private imports to and exports from Fort Marlborough in 1768 and 1770. The customs list for 1768 covers only seven months but shows a total of \$50,940.2.44 worth of goods imported between May and November: \$18,470.1.60 consigned to Wyatt and Company, and \$15,626.2.75 to Herbert and Company, giving the two companies about sixty-nine per cent of the total imports.² In the same year \$7100 worth of piece goods and brass wire were shipped by Wyatt and Company on the Company snows Diligent and Luconia for Natal while about \$7710 worth of local produce, mostly cassia and benzoin, was loaded on the Company ship Duke of Richmond for Europe on account of the ship's captain and officers.³ During eleven months of 1770, the customs list also records a total of \$124,530.1.2 worth of merchandise imported at Benkulen on European vessels: \$35,827.3.80, principally piece goods, consigned to Wyatt and Company; and \$24,736.2.16 to Herbert and Company.⁴ There were also goods valued at \$31,257.3.72 imported under the names of the various ships' captains so that it

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1. Ashin Das Gupta, Malabar in Asian Trade, 1740-1800 (Cambridge, 1967), p. 106.
 2. An account of imports at Fort Marlborough on which duties were collected, 1 May - Ult. November 1768, 30 Nov. 1768, SFR 14.
 3. Manifest of private trade laden on the ship Duke of Richmond, 31 Dec. 1768, SFR 14; Manifest of private trade exported from Fort Marlborough on Company vessels, 1 Dec. 1767 - Ult. December 1768; SFR 14, pp. 336-8.
 4. List of imports to Fort Marlborough on which duties were collected, 1 January - Ult. December 1770, 31 Dec. 1770, SFR 14. These goods were imported on five Company ships and eleven private vessels including the Benkulen-owned Jenny and Experiment.

is impossible to determine to whom they were sold among the Benkulen servants.¹

In September 1770, \$44,209,0.40 worth of Indonesian produce was exported to Bengal on the ship Experiment. Her cargo included 270 chests (380 pikuls) of benzoin worth \$3800 shipped by 'Messrs. Darvall & Co.' (the Natal Concern) and \$37,690 worth of goods shipped by Wyatt and Company, composed mainly of 2460 pikuls of Bornean black pepper valued at \$28,200² which had almost certainly been acquired on the Experiment's voyage to the East earlier that year. These consignments must have represented only a portion of Fort Marlborough's private trade since Wyatt and Company's ship Fortune was not even reported on the West Coast in 1770 and exports on other private vessels were not recorded in the Company's records.

The General Concern's affairs did not always progress smoothly. After December 1771 when Herbert left Fort Marlborough for Madras and his partner Stokeham Donston finally joined the Council's co-partnership, the General Concern seems once again to have dominated Benkulen's shipping. Nevertheless, before the partnership's five year contract approached its second renewal in November 1775, it appeared that the association might dissolve, apparently from the fear that either Herbert or Edward Coles, then managing the Balambangan expedition, might attempt to join on his return. Hew Steuart wrote to his father in Scotland of this upset:

One of the Members of our Council, had, while he was concern'd in trade with us, acted in such a manner as gave great dissatisfaction to many of the Partners, and tho' this Gentleman is now absent, on a Station, where he will probably be continued, if not remov'd to Madrass, yet, as there was still a possibility of his return amongst us, Mr Hay, who is next to Mr Wyatt in Council,

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1. List of imports to Fort Marlborough on which duties were collected, 1 January - Ult. December 1770, 31 Dec. 1770, SFR 14. These goods were imported on five Company ships and eleven private vessels including the Benkulen-owned Jenny and Experiment. Another \$20,028 worth of goods, including gambier, tortoise, benzoin and swallow as well as foodstuffs, were also imported at Benkulen duty-free on fifty-one native craft from Mandar, Banjarmasin, Bantam, Bali, Padang, Tapanuli, the Pagai Islands and Trusang. List of Prows, Tombongans etc. importing at Fort Marlborough from which no duties were collected, December 1767 - Ult. November 1768, 31 Nov. 1768, SFR 14.
 2. Manifest of private trade exported from Fort Marlborough on Company vessels, 1 January - Ult. December 1770, 20 Feb. 1771, SFR 14, p. 497.

was determin'd not to subject our Affairs again, to intricacy & uncertainty, by leaving any chance for his admission; for, as our Articles of trade expressly mention, that all Members of Council, shall, on their rise to that Station, have the option of engaging also in our Copartnership, it was on that account become absolutely necessary, that we shou'd come to the determination of excluding him by a new Article, expressly made for the purpose.¹

One partner, however, disagreed with this plan and the prospect of disunity was so great that the other members considered terminating the Concern. This, in Hew Steuart's view, constituted a considerable problem, since

...what remains [of the Concern's stock] then, must either be divided according to the proportions of each Partners share, or sold at Outcry to the best Bidder; as no one partner, nor no number of them, once we are seperated, wou'd chuse to take the risque of so large a Capital as ours (which is not less than £100,000) on their hands.²

As a consequence of this, by July 1774 the original difficulty seems to have been overcome with the acceptance of 'a new Regulation that new Members of Council are to be admitted to the Copartnership by Ballot', a happy result since Hew Steuart also noted that the Concern had been 'more fortunate [in] this last year than since the first Commencement of our Trade'.³ The General Concern was back in its 'old Channel' and remained there for another four years until it seems finally to have been disbanded in 1778.⁴

1. Hew Steuart to his father, 10 Jan. 1774, Steuart Papers.

2. *ibid.*

3. Hew Steuart to his sister, 20 July 1774, *loc. cit.*

4. In 1778 Hew Steuart wrote his sister 'that our affairs in trade are nearly drawing to a Conclusion...& I embark in nothing new'. The stock had been sold, letters were expected from Bengal, Madras and Bombay closing the partnership's affairs there and only trading debts at Benkulen and the out-settlements remained to be collected. By this time only Steuart and Robert Hay remained of the 1770 contractors, the others having died or retired. Hay had succeeded Wyatt as Governor in 1775. but resigned from the service on learning that London had appointed William Broff, who was much his junior in the service, to replace him. Hay left for Europe in December 1778 and Steuart, who had been suspended, was obviously planning to do the same as soon as his affairs could be settled. Neither man wished to leave any funds invested at Fort Marlborough after his departure. Steuart had already decided in 1774 that aside from Nairne, Donston and Hay (the first two dead by 1777), 'the other Partners, being Men of no great Capital nor long enough in their present Station, to be thoroughly known' to him, were not to be

[continued in footnotes on following page]

For over a decade, the General Concern presided over the greatest expansion in Fort Marlborough's trade since the occupation of Natal and Tapanuli. The tonnage and range of Fort Marlborough's shipping increased to levels beyond those of the 1750s and there was an unprecedented degree of security and integration in local commercial affairs. Even the traditional Residency concerns appear to have been drawn into the General Concern's pattern of trade. There are, at any rate, numerous remittances of \$1000 to \$4000 payable to 'Richard Wyatt & Co.' from Natal, Muko Muko, Manna and Krui which tend to indicate that in the late 1760s at least those Residencies whose chiefs were also Council members turned to the General Concern as the supplier of merchandise for their local commerce,¹ just as the Board had predicted in February 1766. Even more important, the General Concern produced a continuity of capital and easy accommodation to unavoidable alterations in the Council's membership which greatly enhanced the efficiency of commercial operations. The Concern's capital of £100,000 was not only very large in traditional West Coast terms but was also not subject to abrupt fluctuations. As Hew Steuart explained in 1774:

...There has been so great a certainty of its [the Concern's] continuance, that, on a Partners returning to Europe or a vacancy happening by death, the next who succeed'd to Council had an offer of the lowest share of our trade and, the other Members, when the vacancy fell out above them, rose to higher shares likewise- In such vacancies, the retiring Partner continued his stock in the trade, six Months after he left us, free of interest, and he was paid off the Balance of his Account Stock, according to its value on our Books.²

trusted with his funds in his absence. In any case, the Company ordered in 1779 that the Governor and Second of Council were to receive much larger salaries, £3000 and £2500 respectively on condition that they refrain from engaging in trade. Hew Steuart was reinstated as Second of Council and designated to succeed as Governor if Broff died. He thus did not return to Europe as he had planned in 1779 but took over the government on Broff's death in August 1780. Steuart himself then died in 1782 en route to Britain. Hew Steuart to his sister, 20 Aug. 1778, 25 May 1779, Hew Steuart to his father, 15 Dec. 1774, Steuart Papers.

1. See for example, Cash Accounts Oct. 1767, Jan. 1768, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct. 1768, FM Cons., 7 Nov. 1767, SFR 75; 7 Feb., 23 July, 10 Sept., 9 Oct., 12 Nov. 1768, SFR 76.
2. Hew Steuart to his father, 10 Jan. 1774, Steuart Papers.

The best barometer of the General Concern's success, however, was its ability to make fortunes for its members - the purpose for which it had been founded. There were abundant indications of prosperity at Fort Marlborough in the years after the formation of the Concern. Hew Steuart wrote to his sister in Scotland as early as 1767:

This Coast which was really a poor place when I first came upon it [in 1756] is much alter'd for the better. The Gentlemen belonging to it have more property of their own than formerly, which has enabled them to provide all the necessaries of life in much greater plenty.¹

Benkulen's remittances abroad dropped below \$50,000 annually in only one year between 1764 and 1770, and the sums remitted to London climbed to \$151,325.1.31 in 1771 and \$143,037.0.60 in 1772, three or four times the annual totals in the 1750s. There is also evidence that the senior servants rebuilt their fortunes more quickly and to larger amounts than seems to have been common before 1765. Four of the Council members, Carter, Hay, Wyatt and Nairne, had already remitted between \$18,000 and \$63,000 each within six years of their return to a destitute West Coast in 1762. Although it is difficult to put a figure on Governor Carter's remittances because of his 'large Concerns at the other Presidencys',² which do not show up in Benkulen's lists of remittances, he not only remitted \$28,664.3.0 to London while residing at Benkulen but also received another £12,316.11.5 in remittances in London from the West Coast and Balambangan after his departure from Fort Marlborough in August 1767. He was able to leave £10,000 to a spinster sister at his death, and his estate may have been as large as the total £40,000

1. Hew Steuart to his sister, 20 Dec. 1767, loc. cit.

2. FM Cons., 9 Feb. 1767, SFR 75.

shown in a trial balance sheet drawn up by his brother and executor in 1774.¹

Even Hew Steuart, who was only Fifth of Council in 1774, already calculated his earnings at £9000, only £1000 short of the 'modest competency' he desired.²

Hew Steuart also wrote the most fitting tribute to the attainments of the General

Concern when he described Governor Wyatt's retirement in December 1774:

Our Gov. Mr. Wyatt goes home this year, with a moderate Fortune of about £30,000 which he has acquired within these twelve years past, tho' he has been thirty [years] abroad.³

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1. Carter also remitted a total of \$20,359.1.60 to Madras, \$2500 to Bombay, and \$12,304.1.0 to Bengal between 1762 and 1767. The total of the trial balance is £43,235.11.1. Of this £40,000 is credited to 'stock', and although it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much of Carter's funds were cancelled by money he owed, this £40,000 seems to correspond with numerous sums listed in his ledger under the same heading, 'stock', which itemise debts owed him by a number of people at Benkulen, Madras and Bengal. Trial Balance, 31 March 1774 and List of Bills drawn by the Gov. & Council of Fort Marlborough, loose papers in a Ledger of classified Accounts begun by Roger Carter and continued by Robert Carter Thelwall as executor to Roger Carter, beginning in 1769, Carter Papers.
 2. Hew Steuart to his father, 10 Jan. 1774. Steuart's fortune finally reached £12,500 which was divided among his five surviving children all born at Benkulen. Several papers relating to the Children of Hew Steuart, 1792-4, Steuart Papers.
 3. Hew Steuart to his sister, 15 Dec. 1774, loc. cit.

C O N C L U S I O N S

The quest for a competency at Fort Marlborough produced few fortunes comparable to Governor Wyatt's £30,000. In the thirty-five years between 1735 and 1770, 227 men had been sent as servants to Benkulen and only seven remitted more than \$30,000 abroad. This total does not compare too unfavourably at least to that of Bombay where only nine of the 150 servants sent from England in the twenty years from 1762 to 1783 acquired fortunes,¹ but Bombay had the reputation of a 'Cinderella' among the Indian Presidencies in the eighteenth century.² Fort Marlborough's deficiencies as a producer of private wealth are better illustrated by a comparison with Bengal, where £500,000 per year was remitted to England on private account between 1757 and 1772. This sum was nearly twelve times the £37,500 remitted from Benkulen in its best years of 1771 and 1772. Even considering the much larger size of the Bengal establishment - 250 servants to Fort Marlborough's 50 in the 1770s - it is evident that the Bengal servants were remitting roughly 2½ times as much per capita as the Benkulen servants, if the respective civil establishments alone are considered.³

The long odds against acquiring a personal fortune in Sumatra did not, however, dampen the pursuit of wealth by the Benkulen servants, and their efforts to attain this goal influenced their management of affairs on the West Coast, usually to the Company's cost. With the volume of pepper exported from Sumatra increasing only gradually in the mid-eighteenth century, the Company's pepper profits from the West Coast were inadequate to cover even the establishment's expenses. In these circumstances the Company's aim of reducing Fort Marlborough's chronic deficit

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1. H. Furber, John Company at Work (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1948), p. 27.
 2. T. G. P. Spear, The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India (Oxford, 1932), p. 66.
 3. P. J. Marshall, East Indian Fortunes: The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century (Oxford, 1976), pp. 15-7, 262.

could be achieved either by decreasing the settlement's operating costs or by increasing other forms of revenue. In both these endeavours, the Court of Directors ran foul of the private interests of its employees. The Company's plans to administer British West Sumatra as economically as possible were nullified, at least in part, by its servants' desires to make whatever money possible from their official positions and their consequent clandestine efforts to insert themselves as unwelcome private middlemen into most of the day-to-day business transacted on Company account in Sumatra. In a spectrum of activities ranging from direct embezzlement to shady dealings which bordered on legitimate private commerce the Company's employees consistently either increased the Company's expenses or reduced its profits. Paymasters at Fort Marlborough doctored their books to include payments for non-existent or poor quality building materials which they had provided as private contractors for the manufacture of bricks or chunam. They also pocketed the difference between the ostensible and real payments made to Malays who delivered timbers and bamboos for Company buildings. They even sold materials from the Company's stocks, replaced the articles in kind and kept the twenty-five per cent profit that the Company should have received from the transaction. Storekeepers either delivered their own, often unsaleable, merchandise to the Company's Storehouse at inflated rates or purchased Company goods like iron and steel, which were in demand, for resale on their own account at much higher prices without informing London of the increased profit margins which the Company could obtain from the sale of these goods. Residents at the out-settlements frequently engaged in all these activities on a scale limited only by the size of the Residency and its treasury. They also defrauded both the Company and the Sumatran pepper planters by paying for less pepper than was actually delivered or forcing the cultivators to accept their private merchandise at an exorbitant mark-up as payment for pepper while they kept the silver that the Company had allocated for this purpose.

The Court's efforts to increase supplementary revenues from the collection of customs duties and the sale of licences were similarly undermined by its servants.

Since most of the customs duties levied were on merchandise imported by the servants, it seems unlikely that the full value owed was actually paid. Moreover, the servants also had a stake in the retailing of opium and arrack, the only revenue farms which the small West Coast community could support. The Residents farmed the opium licences at the out-settlements for all but a brief period in the years from 1735 to 1766 although apparently not at unrealistically low rents. The Deputy Governor, on the other hand, customarily retained for his own use one-third of the money actually collected from the farmer of the arrack licence until Supervisors Pybus and Walsh exposed this practice in 1754.

The servants also raised the West Coast's running costs substantially in the 1740s and 1750s by increasing the number of separate out-settlements which the Company was obliged to finance. This appears frequently to have been done with an eye toward enlarging the field of their private operations rather than the Company's pepper returns. The settlement at Krui, where successive Residents appear to have enjoyed income from all the usual forms of corruption, as well as from a number of illegal fines and confiscations perpetrated on the local populace, was one instance where a new 'pepper Residency' did not earn its way. The settlements at Natal in 1751 and Tapanuli in 1756 cost the Company an estimated £14,000 per year by 1759 and provided no pepper at all. The Fort Marlborough servants also resisted the Court's periodic injunctions to cut costs by reducing the number of out-settlements. Since the cost of living was lower, the chances of being detected in illicit activities smaller and the opportunities of private trading brighter at the Residencies than at Benkulen, they were the most sought-after positions on the West Coast. The most lucrative of them were staffed by senior Councillors whose personal interests deafened them to appeals for retrenchment by the Court. The role of private ambition in this case, however, should not be overstressed, as the Fort Marlborough servants asserted with considerable justification that only compulsion obliged the planters to grow pepper in return for the low price offered by the Company, and they would cease to do so without the widespread European supervision of cultivation

provided by the Residents at the out-settlements.

How much the servants' malfeasance increased the Company's expenses in West Sumatra is impossible to determine. The incomes from the various types of corruption uncovered by Supravisor Macrae in 1724 and Supravisors Pybus and Walsh in 1754 were with few exceptions small, ranging from several hundred to a few thousand dollars - petty indeed when contrasted with the enormous sums obtained by the Bengal servants in presents, bribes, indemnities and the sale of revenue farms.¹ Nevertheless, substantial amounts of money must have accumulated over time from the trickles of illegal income provided by most of the offices in the Fort Marlborough service. There were only two Supravisors' investigations in the fifty years between 1724 and 1774 and what these uncovered could only have been the tip of the iceberg.

Nevertheless, if it had been possible to acquire a fortune solely from illegal emoluments, the Benkulen servants would scarcely have bothered with their demonstrably persistent efforts to organise and expand a Fort Marlborough-based country trade. Much of the long-term, small-scale corruption prevalent at Benkulen must therefore be attributed first to the high cost of living at Fort Marlborough, which by the 1750s at the latest had made it impossible for a servant to provide even the necessities of living from his salary and allowances, and secondly to the need to obtain capital for purposes of trade. Unlike the Indian Presidencies, British West Sumatra provided no access to a well-organised and wealthy indigenous mercantile community which could be drawn on to fund commercial ventures.² Prior to the establishment of the Benkulen bank in 1764, the servants were obliged to amass their own investment capital gradually over a period of years, before any sizeable personal trading could be financed.

Since many of the Benkulen servants had gone to Sumatra principally to acquire

1. Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-213.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 53-64, 69-71, 265-8.

a personal fortune, it was understandable that their private interests should override the Company's injunctions concerning the proper administration of the West Coast. Their efforts to develop a country trade beyond the confines of British territory in southern Sumatra, however, conformed less awkwardly to the Court's stated policy than did their activities within the Company's settlements. Such friction as occurred between Fort Marlborough and the Directors in the former instance was mainly the result of the contradiction between the Company's dual objectives of asserting British freedom of navigation in South-East Asia while not antagonising the Dutch. Fort Marlborough tended to emphasise the former of these aims at the expense of the latter, to London's occasional embarrassment. Since the VOC claimed most of the areas which were within Benkulen's immediate reach as markets, the West Coast servants could scarcely build their own trade without penetrating Dutch preserves. The rise in the volume of shipping at Fort Marlborough in the middle decades of the eighteenth century is one index of their initiative and determination in this endeavour.

The number of private vessels calling at Benkulen quadrupled between the late 1730s and 1750s. Only thirteen country vessels visited Fort Marlborough in the entire decade from 1737 to 1747, six of which were locally owned, six based in India and one from Batavia. In 1739 only three country vessels touched at Benkulen, a Madras ship and two locally owned sloops. Twenty years later, however, eleven vessels traded at Fort Marlborough and seven of them were owned by the local servants. By 1770, Fort Marlborough's country trade had been rebuilt and the heavy losses suffered by the servants in the French attack of 1760 recouped. Twelve vessels visited Benkulen in that year and the local servants owned six, including the ship Fortune and the sloop Tryall which do not appear in the 1770 shipping diaries. Although the total number of vessels was little larger in 1770 than in 1759, the tonnage they represented had increased greatly, because in 1770 half the vessels recorded were full-scale ships rather than the smaller sloops and snows which predominated in the 1750s. By 1770 the Benkulen community boasted two

ships of its own - the first large vessels based in British West Sumatra in at least thirty-five years. Customs revenues during this same period also indicate an ever increasing volume of trade, jumping from less than \$500 in 1737 to over \$4000 in 1759 and over \$3000 in January-August 1769.

In regard to the volume of shipping calling there, Benkulen once again compares unfavourably with the Indian Presidencies. Bombay, for example, had twelve country vessels in 1749/50 and thirty-eight by the 1760s,¹ while Bengal was visited by eighteen vessels in 1739/40 and thirty in 1759/60.² Nevertheless, the rise in shipping at Fort Marlborough indicates a steady advance in the commercial fortunes of that settlement. In one sense, increased ship-owning at Fort Marlborough simply offered another means of siphoning off the Company's cash through the ever higher freight rates which the servants in their official capacity paid to themselves as the proprietors of vessels for carrying Company stores, personnel and dispatches to the out-settlements or abroad. This type of income, however, rarely justified the initial capital outlay entailed in ship-owning. Vessels were thus purchased by the Benkulen servants principally to carry on the overseas trade which they opened with Banjarmasin in the 1740s, North Sumatra in the 1740s and 1750s, and China and East Indonesia in the 1760s.

In no case does it appear that the Fort Marlborough servants actually pioneered entirely new areas of trade. They were, however, quick to exploit opportunities for expanding their traffic offered by changing external circumstances. The Madras country ship Jane had trafficked at Borneo in 1738 before the Benkulen mercantile community was able to mobilise its resources to take advantage of the Dutch withdrawal from Banjarmasin and the resumption of the English Company's pepper trade there. Nevertheless, by late 1739 Fort Marlborough had prepared a private vessel for dispatch to Banjarmasin, and during the next seven years the Benkulen servants

1. Furber, op. cit., p. 222.

2. Marshall, op. cit., p. 55.

developed a sufficiently prosperous country trade to Borneo to support remittances to England and India of \$30,000-50,000 in the mid-1740s. They also appear to have extended their trade in opium beyond Banjarmasin into East Indonesia and possibly North Java in a manner which caused real alarm to the Dutch, who before the Battle of Plassey in 1757 were the principal exporters of Bengal opium and reserved sales of the drug as a VOC monopoly in Dutch-controlled territory. It was Benkulen's private traffic in opium rather than the English Company's trade in pepper at Banjarmasin which generated Batavia's protests to Fort Marlborough concerning the invasion of VOC domains and prerogatives in the 1740s. The Court of Directors in London also recognised a potential threat to the English Company's Bornean pepper trade from their Sumatran servants' private commerce and forcefully cautioned Fort Marlborough against angering the Dutch by selling contraband to VOC dependants. The temptation to do so, however, was strong, and Fort Marlborough's opium trade to the East, plus its involvement with the rebel Madurese royal house, appear to have been two of the factors prompting the Dutch re-occupation of Banjarmasin in 1747, which terminated the English Company's traffic there.

Benkulen's trade to Borneo had been conducted principally under the cover of the Company's large, well-armed Europe ships and without this protection it dwindled rapidly. Nevertheless, Fort Marlborough's Borneo trade in the 1740s represented a systematic penetration of VOC preserves in eastern Indonesia twenty years before the Dutch were obliged to accept British shipping in the area in order to obtain the Indian goods which they could no longer acquire directly as a result of the British take-over of Bengal.¹ In this sense perhaps Fort Marlborough can be included among the pioneers of British commercial expansion in Indonesia although without recourse to the shipping records of Batavia it is impossible to assess what proportion of British country trade to the East in this early decade belonged to Benkulen.

1. Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-1.

When the chance to trade to China and resume traffic to eastern Indonesia occurred in the 1760s, the Benkulen servants again took energetic advantage of changed circumstances. In this instance Fort Marlborough's efforts paralleled those of the Bengal country traders, in response to the same stimuli. The Company's increased emphasis on the China tea trade and consequent willingness to allow overseas remittances from Canton, and even to offer such incentives as freight-free transport for private merchandise on the Company's China ships, encouraged the Fort Marlborough servants to begin exporting South-East Asian goods to Canton. Like the Bengal country captains they also began to invade Dutch-claimed areas in eastern Indonesia ever more deeply in search of suitable China cargoes. Benkulen's activities in this respect virtually duplicated Bengal's. The Fort Marlborough servants sent their private vessels to Calcutta for opium which was then sold in the Malacca Straits and eastern islands for goods like the tin and birds' nests that were brought back to Sumatra by the snow Success and then sent to China on the Company ship Hawke in 1766. If, unlike the Bengal traders, the Fort Marlborough servants were unable to send their ships direct to Canton, they nevertheless were capable of competing with the India-based traders within the Indonesian area, despite the necessity of an extra round trip from Sumatra to Bengal to fetch cargoes to sell in the archipelago. The amount of opium that the Sumatran servants exported from Fort Marlborough or direct from India to the Malay ports appears large in relation to the small size of the Benkulen community. The two hundred odd chests of opium which were sold during the Success snow's eastern voyage in 1765-6 comprised fully one-tenth of the total 1500-2000 chests which the Bengal traders estimated could be sold at Riau, the premier of the Malayan ports, in the 1780s, a time when the opium traffic had greatly expanded.¹

It was the need to reduce their commercial handicaps in relation to the

1. FM Cons., 19 Oct. 1772, SFR 79; Marshall, op. cit., p. 102; P. G. de Bruijn, 'Trade in the Straits of Malacca in 1785', trans. B. Harrison, Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, vol. XXVI, pt. 1 (1953), p. 58.

Bengal captains which persuaded the Fort Marlborough servants once again to undermine the Company's efforts to decrease the West Coast's operating deficit by seeking additional revenues from the sale of opium and the collection of North Sumatran produce like benzoin on Company account. Although the Fort Marlborough authorities had proposed the Benkulen Opium Society to the Court in 1759, they also made sure that it was scrapped in 1766 after it became evident that the plan merely raised the price of opium at Benkulen by the \$100 per chest profit promised to the Company without, as had been hoped, eliminating their India-based rivals from the local traffic. Similarly the Company's half-hearted foray into the trade in North Sumatran goods in the 1760s was first clandestinely thwarted and then openly opposed at Fort Marlborough because the servants there needed 'Gruff Cargoes to contribute towards the Charges of Navigating [private] Vessels to other Parts',¹ presumably voyages such as those to Bengal to fetch opium for the Indonesian market.

It was in the North Sumatran traffic in benzoin and camphor that the Fort Marlborough servants' commercial adaptability and initiative proved most effective. There they actually created a new branch of British trade. The ports of North-West Sumatra had been visited both by Benkulen and India-based vessels long before 1735, but the Fort Marlborough servants' commerce there appears to have been subsidiary to the Borneo trade during the 1740s. After the Dutch closed Banjarmasin to British shipping in 1747, however, the Benkulen servants embarked on a rapid and aggressive development of their northern trade in the 1750s. Despite what must have been lower returns than those obtainable in Borneo, North Sumatra offered two great advantages; it provided a source of goods for export, namely gold, benzoin and camphor, which were generally lacking in the Company-controlled districts in the southern section of the island, and it was close enough to Fort Marlborough to be protected militarily from Dutch obstruction. As a consequence, within four years

1. FM to Court, 5 March 1767, par. 53, SFR 14.

of their eviction from traffic at Banjarmasin, the Benkulen servants established, without the prior approval of their superiors in London or Madras, a new British settlement at Natal, in the heart of the Dutch-claimed territory between Inderapura and Singkil. They consolidated this foothold in the North with the occupation of Tapanuli in 1756 and maintained and developed these northern commercial bases in the face of ten years of diplomatic pressure and confiscation of Benkulen-owned vessels by the Dutch, protests over increased West Coast expenses from London, and attacks by the Achehnese. The British authorities at Natal also gradually extended their political control northward along the Sumatran coast until by the 1770s they had absorbed and placed small Bugis garrisons at every kuala from Sinkuang to Korlang, most of which were under contract to the VOC.

This expansion of the English from the south combined with simultaneous and independent pressure by the Achehnese from the north eventually isolated Baros, the principal Dutch factory on the North-West Coast from its historic commercial hinterland. When, after 1760, the Achehnese turned from their unsuccessful bid to wrest Natal and Tapanuli from the English to attacks on the VOC at Baros, the rising cost of providing continual defence against the Achehnese and ruined trading profits at that factory caused the Dutch to abandon Baros in 1775, thus losing any foothold in North Sumatra for the next fifty years.¹ The elimination of the Dutch from North-West Sumatra was not, however, the only consequence of the political changes set in motion by the extension of Fort Marlborough's private trading interests on the northern coast. The gradual decline of VOC power in the area had also facilitated ever-increasing trade between the British at Natal and Tapanuli and the Achehnese at Singkil. This helped to lay the groundwork for Singkil's

1. The Dutch acquired Natal and Tapanuli along with the other British West Sumatran settlements, in exchange for recognition of the English title to Penang, Malacca and Singapore, by the Treaty of London in 1824. The Dutch did not, however, expand further northward along the coast until 1839, when a military expedition of two hundred men attacked and defeated the Achehnese at Baros, Tapus and Singkil. Baros and Singkil were then occupied and garrisoned. E. B. Kielstra, 'Sumatra's Westkust, 1836-1840', BKI, vol. 39 (1890), pp. 311-7.

rapid economic development and caused the progressive erosion of that port's ties to its traditional suzerain at Banda Aceh, in spite of the military expeditions led by Panglima Laut which were sent from Aceh in the late 1760s to enforce the Sultan's authority on the West Coast. As a result, Singkil emerged by the early nineteenth century as the most powerful and prosperous independent harbour-principality in North-West Sumatra and by this time was already supplying pepper from new plantations which it had established in the area to American traders who undercut the English Company's pepper sales in Europe.¹ Between them, the private mercantile interests of Fort Marlborough and Singkil had effected a significant shift in the balance of power in North Sumatra at the expense of the VOC, the Acehinese crown, and, to a limited extent, the English Company. The Benkulen servants' acquisition of Natal and Tapanuli is thus perhaps a classic example of the role of private enterprise in imperial expansion and the results, expected and unexpected, of such activity.

The trade in benzoin and camphor which the Fort Marlborough servants secured by the establishment of British bases in North Sumatra became the backbone of their commerce for over a decade. It was intrinsically not a very valuable traffic. The \$300,000 estimated annual value of Natal's commerce was little more than the worth of a single ship's cargo from Bengal to Manila or the Persian Gulf in roughly the same period.² Drugs and dyestuffs, of which benzoin and camphor provided only a small part, had moreover never accounted for more than six or seven per cent of the VOC's profits from the sale of Asian produce in Europe, even at that point in the late seventeenth century when the Dutch had established their post at Baros in order to control traffic in these two items.³ Nevertheless, the trade was

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1. J. Bastin, The Changing Balance of the Early Southeast Asia Pepper Trade, University of Malaya, Department of History, Papers on Southeast Asian Subjects, no. 1 (Kuala Lumpur, 1960), pp. 43-53; Gould, op. cit., pp. 102-37.
 2. Marshall, op. cit., pp. 90, 94. This \$300,000 estimate, it should be noted, referred only to Natal's imports and did not include income from camphor and gold exported, so it does not represent the full value of Natal's commerce.
 3. K. Glamann, Dutch-Asiatic Trade, 1620-1740 (The Hague, 1958), p. 14.

sufficient to renew the prosperity of the small Benkulen trading community in the 1750s, and the English servants expanded the traffic to its fullest. Although there are no reliable figures from which to assess the quantities of North Sumatran goods exported, it appears that the volume of benzoin and camphor shipped from the area increased rapidly in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Within eight years of the occupation of Natal, enough benzoin had been exported to create a glut in the Indian market.¹ In 1765, Fort Marlborough again complained that 'Benjamin and Camphire are the only considerable Articles We have, and they are become Drugs in all the Markets in Europe and India'.² The Benkulen Council then pressed the Court to revive the manufacture of sugar and arrack on the West Coast, primarily as a means of providing another commodity for export. It also seems likely that this second failure of their staple trade in benzoin and camphor must have helped to determine the timing of Fort Marlborough's attempts to re-enter the trade to East Indonesia in the mid-1760s. An apparent drop in the price paid for benzoin at Fort Marlborough from the 1730s to the 1750s also tends to indicate a growing volume of exports as a result of increased English access to the gum after the occupation of Natal and Tapanuli. Benzoin which had sold at Benkulen for \$43 per pikul for the best grade in 1738 was fetching only \$33 per pikul by 1759 when the effects of the overstock were beginning to be felt. This latter sum, however, still represented a one hundred per cent profit over the price customarily paid for the best gum in the North. A Dutch observer in North Sumatra also reported that the purchase price of benzoin in the production zones had risen by ten per cent during the 1760s and 1770s.³

1. Both camphor and benzoin were produced in Borneo as well as Sumatra, but although Borneo exported large amounts of so-called 'camphor Baros', Sumatra seems to have been the principal Indonesian source of benzoin, at least in the early nineteenth century. The only non-Sumatran benzoin included by Milburn in his lists of exports from the Indonesian ports was three pikuls which formed part of a junk's cargo from Cancao, on Cambodia's western coast. None was listed among the exports of the Bornean ports. Milburn, Oriental Commerce (London, 1813), vol. II, pp. 389-452. Similarly Wong Lin Ken suggests that much of the benzoin sold at Singapore a few years later came from Sumatra. Wong Lin Ken, 'The Trade of Singapore, 1819-69', JMBRAS, vol. XXXIII, pt. 4, (1960), p. 54.

2. FM to Court, 20 March 1765, par. 126, SFR 13.

3. Eschels Kroon, loc. cit., vol. 18, pp. 56, 66.

The increased demand for benzoin must have caused expanded cultivation of benzoin trees by the Bataks whose principal cash crop was formed by the gum. It is difficult, however, to determine to what extent increased production might have brought increased prosperity to the interior regions of Sumatra. According to Governor Carter's description of Sumatra's inland traffic in opium in 1759, the British settlements at Natal and Tapanuli seem to have effected little change in the indigenous organisation of trade. The kuala Malays and Achehnese still controlled the retail trade with the Batak growers, and Carter reported that these middlemen sold their goods in the interior at uniformly high prices regardless of how cheaply they had acquired them from the British at the coast.¹ It is therefore impossible even to conjecture how much of the rising purchase price for benzoin actually filtered back to the Batak cultivators, however much it appears to have enhanced the wealth of the kuala population.

At the local level, the only real British impact on the mechanics of the benzoin trade was the injection of one more middleman in the chain leading from Batak growers to overseas markets. The British at Natal and Tapanuli purchased Sumatran produce from the kuala merchants and resold it locally or at Fort Marlborough to the captains of Company ships or passing country traders; they also transported benzoin abroad to an increasing extent in their own vessels. In either case, Fort Marlborough's private stake in Natal and Tapanuli contributed to a growing British ascendancy in the carrying trade in North Sumatran goods, previously dominated chiefly by the Dutch at Batavia and the Chulia shippers at Banda Aceh. The Fort Marlborough servants also eliminated several of the normal points of transshipment in the overseas trade in benzoin. By the late 1750s they were not only importing benzoin clandestinely at Batavia but also voyaging direct from Natal as far as Negapatnam and Anjengo. At least as early as the 1770s the route had been extended all the way to the ultimate Middle Eastern markets for the gum at Muscat and the Persian Gulf.

1. Carter to Board, 9 July 1759, FM Cons., 8 Nov. 1759, SFR 70.

If the English servants had relatively little impact on the internal organisation of the benzoin trade, the prosperity provided by that traffic profoundly influenced the organisation of commerce at Fort Marlborough. The great expansion in ship-owning at Benkulen occurred during the 1750s. With the opening of the Borneo trade in the 1740s, Benkulen's commercial planning had moved a stage beyond reliance on the Residency concerns which were engaged principally in retailing cloth to the pepper planters at the out-settlements. Nevertheless, the traffic to Banjarmasin had been conducted almost exclusively in vessels owned by a partnership of the Deputy Governor and Third of Council. In the 1750s, ship-owning partnerships among the other servants became more widespread, with the Natal Concern, formed by the servants stationed at the British northern settlements, emerging as the dominant and most sophisticated commercial syndicate on the West Coast during that decade. Even the General Concern, which brought Fort Marlborough to a peak of prosperity and commercial integration via the redevelopment of the eastern trade in the 1760s and 1770s, owed something to the Natal Concern. The organisation and recruitment procedures of this Council co-partnership appear to have been modelled on Carter's original plan for the Opium Society in 1759, which in turn seems to have been copied from the Natal Concern's opium contract of the same year.

Commercial organisation at Fort Marlborough gradually became richer and more complex as the country trade grew. The various types of syndicates conducting Fort Marlborough's commerce between 1735 and 1770 do not, however, resolve themselves into an orderly progression from, for example, the simple single-voyage ventures described by Lockyer at Madras in the early eighteenth century, into longer term ship-owning partnerships, and finally into the agency houses which developed in India by the end of the century.¹ Fort Marlborough's mercantile traffic remained too small to support agency business of itself, although many West Coast servants

1. C. Lockyer, An Account of the Trade in India (London, 1711), pp. 15-17; Dodwell, op. cit., pp. 126-32; Marshall, op. cit., pp. 47-8, 155.

appear to have acted on commission for principals in India as well as trading in their own right. Junior servants with limited capital, moreover, must have persisted throughout this period in freighting goods on other people's vessels or entering into partnerships for a single coasting voyage, as Surgeon Pugh had done with Captain Robert Jones in 1746. Independent concerns also continued to flourish at the various Residencies as they had done for at least thirty years. Nevertheless, the existence of the Natal Concern from the 1750s onwards and especially of the General Concern in the 1760s and 1770s proves Fort Marlborough's ability to sustain stable, efficient, long-term commercial consortiums that continued to operate smoothly, irrespective of the death or departure of any of the individual partners.

The West Coast servants' commercial accomplishments in increasing both the volume and organisation of their trade pale beside those of the Indian Presidencies, with their vastly greater resources in terms of available export produce and indigenous capital. Fort Marlborough did, however, contribute to the expansion of British commerce in South-East Asia. The Benkulen servants carved out and secured a new and virtually exclusive sphere of British trade in North Sumatra. They provided a small proportion of the cargoes for the China trade which the Court of Directors desired, and they seem to have competed on equal terms with the numerous Bengal captains who were swelling British traffic to eastern Indonesia in the 1760s and 1770s. The private interests of the Fort Marlborough servants made them wayward as Company officials in implementing the Court's directives aimed at the economical administration of the West Sumatran establishment. Nevertheless, those same private interests also turned the servants into country traders, and as such they operated in basic harmony with the foremost of London's policy objectives in South-East Asia - the protection and extension of British rights of navigation in Indonesian waters. The best will in the world could not have turned Benkulen, with its mediocre harbour, general lack of goods for export and unfortunate distance from the major shipping lanes, into the South-East Asian entrepôt which the Company sought from the mid-eighteenth century on, but the Fort Marlborough servants created considerable commercial success out of the unpromising material at their command.

WEIGHTS, MEASURES AND CURRENCIES, INCLUDING GOLD

- 1 Dutch pond = 1.066 English pounds avoirdupois
- 1 pikul (picul, pecul) = 100 katis (catties) = 125 Dutch ponds or 133-1/3 English pounds.
- 1 kati = 16 tael.
- 1 tael = approximately 1-1/3 ounces. The tael was the normal measure by which gold was sold and its weight varied in different areas of the West Coast. It was equal to only 24 pennyweight, 9 grains troy weight at Natal, but 26 pennyweight, 12 grains at Padang, Benkulen and elsewhere. Marsden, History, op. cit., p. 171.
- 1 bahar = conventionally three pikuls, but its actual weight varied in practice. This was the measure by which both the Dutch and English purchased pepper. The English at Benkulen had standardised the weight of the bahar in their treaties with the pepper planters at 500 or 560 pounds depending on the district.
- 1 bambu (bamboo) = various weights from 3 pounds, 10 ounces, 10 drams avoirdupois to 6 pounds or even 8 pounds. It was the measure by which rice and salt were sold. Conventionally, at least at the end of the seventeenth century, 200 bambus = 1 bahar. Milburn estimated that a bambu was equal to about one English gallon. Bastin, British in West Sumatra, op. cit., p. 10, n. 168.
- 1 koyan (coyan) = 40 pikuls or about 5,333-1/3 pounds. The Dutch apparently used a smaller koyan at Batavia, as the Fort Marlborough authorities estimated that 1 Benkulen koyan equalled about 1.6 Batavia koyans. FM Cons., 28 Jan. 1754, SFR 67.
- 1 candy = an Indian measure of weight equal to 560 pounds at Bombay, 746-2/3 pounds at Surat and 500 pounds on the Coromandel Coast in the mid-eighteenth century.
- 1 leaguer = the measure by which arrack was sold, normally equal to 160 gallons.
- 1 third = one-third of a leaguer of arrack.
- 1 chest = the measure by which opium and sometimes benzoin and camphor were sold. A chest of opium normally weighed 140 or 150 pounds. The Dutch calculated the weight of a chest of camphor or benzoin at 125 ponds. A chest of camphor was supposed to be made up of set proportions of three main grades or qualities of the product: 62½ ponds of capella or head, the first sort or best quality; 32½ ponds of awa or belly, the second sort; and 30 ponds of kakki or foot, the third or worst sort. Benzoin was also divided into three separate grades. The weight of a chest of benzoin, at least in English trading, however, appears to have been much greater than 125 ponds. The only British ship's manifest which lists both the number of chests and the weight in pounds of the benzoin loaded shows a variation of between 206.4 and 239.2 pounds per chest. Eschels Kroon, loc. cit., vol. 18, pp. 51-5. Manifest of Goods laden at Natal on Board the Company ship Prince George, 27 Dec. 1754, SFR 10A, p. 151.

tompong = a cake in which benzoin was sold. Milburn stated that a tompong should weigh twenty katis or seventy pounds, with a kati of benzoin calculated at 56 ounces avoirdupois and a kati of camphor at 56 ounces troy weight. Milburn, op. cit., pp. 362, 365.

Currencies

- Pagoda - the standard currency at Madras until 1818.
 42 fanams = 1 pagoda
 80 cash = 1 fanam = c. 2 old pence sterling
 10 pagodas = 15 Spanish dollars before 1753, 16½ Spanish dollars after 1753.
- Spanish dollar - the standard currency of West Sumatra in which Fort Marlborough's accounts were kept. Also the general trading currency of much of the Indonesian area.
 4 sukus (soocoos) = 1 dollar = 5 shillings sterling
 100 cash = 1 suku
- Tael - Chinese silver monetary unit equal to about 1-1/3 Spanish dollars.
- Current rupee - Bengal currency equal to about 2s. 4d. sterling or slightly more than 2 rupees per Spanish dollar.
- Rix-dollar (rijksdaalder) - currency and unit of account for the VOC at Batavia.
 48 stuivers = 1 Rix-dollar
 125-135½ Rix-dollars = 100 Spanish dollars in the official exchange at Batavia in the 1750s and 1760s.
 1 Rix-dollar = 2½-3 florins.
- Florin or guilder - currency and unit of account in the VOC's general ledgers at Batavia and on the West Coast.
 2¾ guilders = 1 Spanish dollar in the early 1760s.
 FM Cons., 30 June 1763, SFR 71.
- Gold - Gold was bought and sold on the West Coast as a commodity, although it also served as a medium of exchange in commercial transactions. Its price varied with its quality, according to its so-called 'touch' or 'fineness'. For example, the prices current for West Coast gold at Madras in 1764 were quoted as follows:
- Muko Muko gold dust - the best sort usually turned out at 93½-94 touch or percentage of pure gold and sold for Pagodas 112½ for 100 pagodas weight;
- Natal gold dust - from 90½-91 touch sold at 109 pagodas per percentage weight;
- Padang gold - the first sort, 90½-91 touch, sold at 109 pagodas per percentage weight; second sort - 85-86 touch, sold at 95-96 pagodas per percentage weight;
- Acheh gold - if 90 touch sold at 109 pagodas per percentage weight, but it had recently been turning out at only 87-90 touch.
 Claude Russell to Alexander Hall, 13 March 1764, Hall Papers.

ABSTRACT OF TOTAL ANNUAL REMITTANCES FROM FORT MARLBOROUGH
TO ENGLAND AND FORT ST. GEORGE, 1735-1760

Year	Total Amount Remitted	Amount Attributable to Co. Ships' officers	Large Remittances
1735	\$7,417.0.87		\$7,000 - F. Everest
1736	\$4,439.1.20		\$4,000 - F. Everest
1737	\$5,561.3.50	\$4,000 - Capt. White	
1738	\$ ---		
1739	\$5,019.1.33	\$5,019.1.33 - Capt. Westcott	
1740	\$ ---		
1741	\$20,000		\$8,000 - R. Lennox \$6,000 - W. Coles \$4,000 - F. Haag \$2,000 - W. Rigg
1742	\$228		
1743	\$ ---		
1744	\$32,554.1.98		\$15,500 - R. Lennox \$8,000 - H. Sterling-estate
1745	\$53,885.0.0	\$1,000 - Capt. J. Tuck <u>\$2,200</u> - Capt. C. Milne \$3,200	\$6,400 - W. Rigg \$8,000 - R. Lennox \$4,000 - W. Coles'-estate \$4,500 - C. Barbut-estate \$4,100 - D. Pugh \$3,000 - W. Braham, Surgeon \$3,500 - I. Barbut \$4,000 - J. Williams, Captain
1746	\$19,607.0.0	\$2,000 - Capt. Mason <u>\$2,001</u> - Capt. Tolson \$4,001	\$9,000 - R. Lennox
1747	\$12,617.2.0	\$6,000 - Capt. Cheyne	\$4,500 - R. Lennox
1748	\$72,357.0.80	\$7,454 - Co. ships' officers <u>\$10,500</u> - D. Rannie, \$17,954 country trader	\$40,000 - W. Rigg-estate \$6,400 - D. Pugh-estate \$10,000 - I. Barbut \$2,000 - W. Coles-estate \$4,000 - W. Braham
1749	\$19,572.3.33	\$2,400 - Capt. J. Stevens \$2,000 - Capt. F. Fowler <u>\$1,500</u> - Capt. E. Burman \$5,900	\$3,200 - J. Williams, Captain \$2,677 - Chas. Smith

Year	Total Amount Remitted	Amount Attributable to Co. Ships' officers	Large Remittances
1750	\$46,019.3.63	\$9,775 - Co. ships' officers \$1,500 - D. Rannie, country trader <u>\$3,438.2.2</u> - Capt. Wm. Petch \$14,713.2.2	\$10,643.3.0 - Hurlock and Braham, much of this may be as executors to estates \$2,602.1.16 - Hurlock
1751	\$24,388.2.46	\$13,650 - Co. ships' officers <u>\$2,285</u> - D. Rannie, \$15,935 country trader	\$2,000 - J. Hurlock
1752	\$53,671.2.16	\$15,880.3.10 - Co. ships' officers	\$17,000 - J. Hurlock \$6,000 - T. Combes \$4,500 - J. Massey \$3,000 - J. Williams, Captain \$1,123 - R. Carter
1753	\$38,661.2.60	\$1,964.2.75 - Co. ships' officers	\$15,400 - J. Hurlock \$10,500 - T. Combes
1754	\$28,542.2.68	\$2,000 - Capt. Kent <u>\$3,600</u> - W. Dogan, \$5,600 country trader	\$1,312.2.69 - T. Combes \$5,500 - J. Walsh
1755	\$44,343.3.14	\$4,500 - Capt. James Barton, country trader	\$12,000 - T. Combes \$5,200 - J. Hurlock \$8,740 - J. P. Morriset, Captain \$2,356 - A. Forbes
1756	\$51,966.1.37	\$5,800 - Co. ships' officers	\$15,600 - T. Combes \$2,000 - R. Carter \$4,000 - W. Braham \$1,622 - J. P. Morriset, Captain
1757	\$34,237.0.4	\$12,632 - Co. ships' officers	\$7,372 - W. Braham \$3,200 - A. Neil, Chaplain \$2087.2.23 - R. Preston \$1,000 - J. Darvall \$1,000 - S. Dutton
1758	\$18,140.1.75	\$7,127.0.95 - Co. ships' officers	\$2,000 - A. Gray, Surgeon \$2,000 - W. Braham
1759	\$86,432.0.47	\$11,700 - Co. ships' officers	\$15,400 - W. Braham \$9,400 - R. Carter \$2,800 - R. Hay \$2,957.1.74 - R. Preston \$3,765.3.94 - J. Gayer \$6,425 - J. Duff-estate \$1,186.1.4 - S. Donston
1760 (Jan. and Feb. only)	\$18,097.1.80	\$11,686 - Co. ships' officers	\$1,638.0.35 - R. Hay

Sources: Monthly Cash Accounts, 1735-56, SFR 62-9, FM Cons.; 1757-No FM Cons., FM to Court, 2 Feb. 1757, FM to Court, 15 Sept. 1757, SFR 11; 1758-FM Cons. 17 Jan., 1 Feb., 19 Feb., SFR 70; 1759-FM Cons. 6 March, 21 Sept., 28 Dec., SFR 70; 1760-FM Cons., 4 Feb., SFR 70.

ABSTRACT OF PEOPLE DRAWING CERTIFICATES AT FORT MARLBOROUGH,
1735-1760

Summary

Covenanted Servants

\$50,000 or above	2	
\$20-50,000	2	
\$10-20,000	6	
\$5-10,000	10	
\$2-5,000	6	
\$1-2,000	13	
\$500-1,000	4	
\$100-500	14	
Below \$100	<u>7</u>	
Total	64	
Surgeons	6	
Chaplains	3	
Free Inhabitants	2	
Sea Faring Men	10	
Military Officers	12	
Private soldiers	1	
Hadje Hamet	<u>1</u>	
	35	
Total Number of Remitters	99	

BREAKDOWN OF REMITTANCES MADE BY SELECTED WEST COAST SERVANTS ACCORDING TO
PLACE CERTIFICATES PAYABLE, 1735-1760

Name	Total Amount Drawn	Payable in Fort St. George	Payable in England	Total payable to Self or Family	Remarks
*Thomas Combes	£69,889.0.22	£31,421.0.48	£38,467.3.74	£32,731.0.74 (This includes £11,131.1.74 remitted to Combes or his executors after he left Benkulen in Jan. 1756)	Arrived Ft. Marlborough, 27 Aug. 1742; 1748 - absent as agent at Batavia; 1752 - absent on expedition to Negrais with D. Hunter; 2nd Council - end 1753-55; Left Ft. Marlborough for England 13 Jan. 1756; Dead by 6 March 1759. Remittances on his account Dec. 1750-March 1759
*Joseph Hurlock	£50,538.0.41	£ 5,377.0.16	£45,161.0.25	£40,000 (£39,600 of this was remitted by Hurlock's attorneys after he left Benkulen in Dec. 1751)	Arrived Ft. Marlborough, 12 July 1731; Deputy Governor, Feb. 1746-Dec. 1751; Left Ft. Marlborough for England, Dec. 1751. Remittances on his account between Feb. 1744 and Feb. 1760.
*Robert Lennox	£49,740.2.0	£37,740.2.0	£12,000	He drew no certificates made out specifically to himself and there is no way of knowing who among the people he paid might have been acting as his attorney	Arrived FM, Dec. 1726; Deputy Gov. April 1736-Aug. 1744; Left FM 8 Aug. 1744 for Ft. St. George; Remittances, 1741-1749.

* Denotes a known ship-owner

Name	Total Amount Drawn	Payable in Fort St. George	Payable in England	Total payable to Self or Family	Remarks
*William Rigg	£48,440	£8,440	£40,000	£40,000 (The whole amount was remitted to Rigg's father in Jan. 1748. Rigg had died in Feb. 1746)	Arrived FM, 19 Nov. 1725; Paymaster, end 1737-May 1745; Deputy Gov. May 1745-Feb. 1746, when he died. Remittances, 1741-Jan. 1748.
*Roger Carter	£20,988.1.43	£6,099.1.93	£14,888.3.50	£12,780 (£2,800 remitted to himself, the remainder to his brother)	Arrived FM, 27 Aug. 1742; Resident at Tallo, 1747-9; Resident at Manna, 1749-53; Resident at Natal, 1753-6; Left FM for England, March 1756; Returned May 1758 as Deputy Gov. 1758-60. Remittances April 1750-Feb. 1760.
Isaac Barbut	£14,300	£3,500	£10,800	£10,400 (Payable to himself and drawn immediately before he left for England in Jan. 1748.	Paymaster and 2nd of Council May 1744-Dec. 1747; Left FM for England Jan. 1748. Remittances 1745-9.
*Richard Preston	£8,560.3.12 (This total does not include an additional £4,172.1.43 which Preston paid to Combes. He was known to be Combes' attorney, although this is not specifically stated in the certificates. It is therefore uncertain if he paid the money on his own account or as Combes' attorney)	£526.2.72	£8,034.0.50	£4,998.1.43	Arrived 11 Sept. 1743; Suspended Sept. 1756; Remained at FM as free inhabitant; Reinstated 1758 as 6th Council. Remittances Nov. 1755-9.

* Denotes a known ship-owner

Name	Total Amount Drawn	Payable in Fort St. George	Payable in England	Total payable to Self or Family	Remarks
William Coles	<p>£12,975 (This total includes £575 refunded to his executors after the ship <u>Sumatra</u> was lost off Madras. Refund made in Dec. 1747.</p>	£12,575	£400		<p>Resident of Laye 1736-41; 10 March 1743 left Ft. Marlborough for St. Helena; Dead by June 1745. Remittances, 1741-8.</p>
*John Massey	£11,849	£9,591	£2258		<p>Arrived FM 28 April 1741; Paymaster, 1748-May 1753; Dismissed May 1753; Died at FM, May 1756.</p>
*Wotton Braham	£44,112.2.55	£11,758.2.55	£32,354	£17,200	<p>Surgeon; Remittances 1745-59.</p>
*Robert Hindley	<p>£11,857.0.33 (£5,489 was actually remitted)</p>				<p>Arrived FM 26 Aug. 1736; Resident, Lais 1741-4; Resident, Muko Muko 1746-51; Deputy Gov., 1752-3; Dismissed Jan. 1754; Died at FM, Sept. 1754. His trustees collected £14,301.1.39, of which £6,368.0.33 remained after debts to the Company were paid. There were still large private demands on the estate.</p>
Francis Everest	£11,800				<p>Deputy Gov. 1731-5; Left FM for England, Dec. 1735.</p>
Henry Sterling	£8,000				<p>Remittances 1744 only.</p>

* Denotes a known ship-owner

Name	Total Amount	Remarks
*John Pybus	\$7,691.1.21	Arrived FM 12 Dec. 1753; Remained as Supravisor and Deputy Gov. until Aug. 1757.
Charles Smith	\$7,055.3.0	Arrived 24 June 1738; Died FM, 1752. Remittances 1745-9.
Charles Barbut	\$6,728	Remittances 1742-5.
James Duff	\$6,425.0.40	
John Walsh	\$6,325.0.0	Arrived FM 12 Dec. 1753 as Supravisor; left FM for Ft. St. George, Aug. 1754.
Hew Steuart	\$6,239.3.74	Arrived FM, 6 Nov. 1756.
*Joseph Darvall	\$5,601.2.76	Arrived FM, 24 Sept. 1748.
*Robert Hay	\$5,608.0.35	Arrived FM, 22 Sept. 1749.
*Alexander Forbes	\$4,456	
Robert Swinton	\$2,142.1.0	
John Saul	\$1,010.3.30	Arrived FM, 3 June 1747.
Samuel Greenslate	\$3,100	
William Culliford	\$3,206	
Christopher Dixon	\$1,316.1.80	
Alexander Christie	\$1,635.0.0.	
Charles Gibson	\$1,040.3.70	
Richard Gripton	\$3,010	
William Harries	\$1,216.0.5	Arrived FM, 11 Sept. 1753.
Henry Coales	\$4,973.1.35	Died 27 Oct. 1748 at FM of smallpox.
John Ogier	\$1,677.5.30	
Samuel Dutton	\$3,706.1.50	
John Fabry	\$1,246.3.0	
*Stokeham Donston	\$1,186.1.4	Arrived FM, 27 Sept. 1757.
Robert Nairne	\$1,904.1.63	Arrived FM, 29 Sept. 1753.
*Richard Wyatt	\$1,743.3.60	Arrived FM, 24 Aug. 1744.

* Denotes a known ship-owner

Name	Total Amount	Remarks
Robert Jack	\$1,800.0.0	Arrived FM, 27 Aug. 1742.
John Williams	\$1,700	Arrived FM, 17 Aug. 1752.
Joseph Gunn	\$35.0.87	Arrived FM, 27 Aug. 1742.
*Alexander Hall	\$280	Arrived FM, 4 Aug. 1751.
Henry Gregory	\$220	Arrived FM, 11 Sept. 1753.
Henry Idell	\$80	Arrived FM, 4 Aug. 1751.
James Le Marchant	\$60.2.6	
Micheal Jeddere	\$268.0.36	
Edmund Edlyn	\$548.1.92	
John Garnsey	\$410	
William Teshmaker	\$346.2.0	
Henry Plowman	\$270	Arrived FM, 22 Nov. 1758.
Matthew Blaquiere	\$410	Arrived FM, 22 Nov. 1758.
John Douglas		
William Morris	\$400	Arrived FM, 22 Sept. 1749.
William Keir	\$340	Arrived FM, 29 Sept. 1757.
James DuBois	\$40	
John Milne	\$383.2.20	
Lewis Jones	\$248.2.35	
George Atkins	\$901.1.76	
Lewis Bonnet	\$694.3.81	Arrived FM, 27 Aug. 1742; died 10 June 1749 of convulsions.
* Randolph Marriot	\$820	Arrived FM, 27 Aug. 1742.
Strange Pickard	\$282.1.2	
Alexander Smith	\$39.2.80	
Alexander Fotheringham	\$84.1.20	
Charles Gee	\$369.1.51	
Stephen Newcome	\$82.2.88	

* Denotes a known ship-owner.

Name	Total Amount	Remarks
<u>Surgeons</u>		
Frederick Haag	\$4,000	
Edmund Pratt	\$160	
Thomas Price	\$1,120	
Alexander Gray	\$2,000	
David Pugh	\$5,940	
<u>Chaplains</u>		
J. Burges	\$377.3.80	
F. Fordyce	\$629.1.0	
Arthur O Niel	\$6,434.0.0	
<u>Free Inhabitants</u>		
John Broff	\$1,030	
*George Freeth	\$6,903.1.45	
<u>Military Officers</u>		
Babington Stodart	\$200	
Joseph Gabbett	\$1,400	
Joseph Kendall	\$1,600	
Edward Frith	\$400	
James Paul Morrisset	\$12,208.2.71	
William Tobison	\$500	
Edward Pero	\$805	
*John Williams	\$13,400	
John Colgon	\$286.3.32	
Nathaniel Huckbody	\$706.0.52	
William Sticklin	\$282.3.80	
William Christian	\$1,400	
Morris Strainer	\$?	Private soldier
Capts. Morrisset and Gabbett	\$1,200	to Fort St. George in 1754.

* Denotes a known ship-owner

Name	Total Amount	Remarks
Capts. Kendall and Gabbett	£700	to Fort St. George in 1755.
Capts. Kendall, Gabbett and Pero	£830	to Fort St. George in 1756.
<u>Sea Faring Men</u>		
Robert Jones	£3,000	
Walter Kennedy	£3,425.3.0	
John Thompson	£559.3.0	
John Whiteway	£200	
Stephen H. Bunyon	£580.2.32	
Patrick McTaggart	£378	
James Arthur Tuck	£1,000	Country trader not based at FM.
William Petch	£3,438.2.2	
William Dogan	£3,600	Country trader from Fort St. George.
David Rannie	£14,285	Country trader based at Bengal.

Sources: Monthly Cash Accounts, 1735-56, SFR 62-9; FM Cons.; 1757-No FM Cons., FM to Court, 2 Feb. 1757, FM to Court, 15 Sept. 1757, SFR 11; 1758-FM Cons. 17 Jan., 1 Feb., 19 Feb., SFR 70; 1759- FM Cons. 6 March, 21 Sept., 28 Dec., SFR 70; 1760- FM Cons., 4 Feb., SFR 70.

ABSTRACT OF TOTAL ANNUAL REMITTANCES FROM FORT MARLBOROUGH
TO ENGLAND AND THE INDIAN PRESIDENCIES, 1762-1771

Year	Total Amount Remitted	Amount Remitted by Co. Ships' Officers	Amount Payable in London by Co. servants	Amount Payable in Madras by Co. servants	Amount Payable in Bombay or Bengal by Co. servants
1762	£18,644.0.52				
1763	£26,851.1.20				
1764	£67,643.1.29	£12,292	£7,962.2.57	£42,380.1.89	£5,008.0.83
1765	£57,413.2.30	£2,000	£17,772.2.52	£18,551.3.78	£19,089 (Bengal - £16,377; Bombay - £2,712)
1766	£52,978.2.62	£6,936.3.56	£42,741.3.6	£3,300	
1767	£74,262.3.40	£2,000	£72,032.1.19	£230.2.21	
1768	£62,172.2.14	£37,000	£24,692.2.14	£480	
1769	£62,439.2.83 (£51,516 of this sum is attributable to bills drawn by Wyatt and Co. on Madras, Bengal and Bombay to pay their debt to the Opium Society)			£26,923.2.83	£35,516 (Bengal - £25,500; Bombay - £10,016)
1770	£29,017.1.80		£23,887.1.80	£5,130	
1771	£154,425.1.31	£10,959.0.3	£151,325.1.31	£3,100	

N.B. These totals are incomplete as the Cash Accounts were not drawn out in Sept. 1764, Sept. 1765, Oct. 1766, April and Nov. 1768, Aug., Oct., and Dec. 1769, and March, Nov. and Dec. 1770.

Source: Monthly Cash Accounts, 1762-1771, SFR 71-9.

ABSTRACT OF PEOPLE DRAWING CERTIFICATES OR BILLS OF EXCHANGE
AT FORT MARLBOROUGH, 1762-1770

Summary

Covenanted Servants

\$50,000 or above	1
\$10-50,000	3
\$5-10,000	4
\$1-5,000	11
\$500-1,000	4
\$100-500	5
Below \$100	<u>2</u>
	30

Surgeons	4
Chaplains	1
Free Inhabitants	1
Seafaring Men	4
Military Officers	7
Private Soldiers	<u>0</u>
	17
Total Number of Individual Remitters	47

Partnerships

\$50,000 or above	1
\$5-10,000	1
\$1-5,000	3
\$500-1,000	1
\$100 or below	<u>1</u>
Total Number of Joint Remitters*	7

* Each of the members of partnerships also remitted money on his individual account.

ABSTRACT OF PEOPLE DRAWING CERTIFICATES OR BILLS OF EXCHANGE
AT FORT MARLBOROUGH, 1762-1770

Covenanted Servants

Name	Total Amount Remitted	Amount Payable in London	Amount Payable in Madras	Amount Payable in Bengal or Bombay and Remarks
Roger Carter	£63,828.1.60	£28,664.3.0	£20,359.1.60	£12,304.1.0 - Bengal £2,500.0.0 - Bombay
Robert Hay	£35,581.0.73	£20,889.1.97	£10,591.1.12	£4,100.1.64 - Bengal
Richard Wyatt	£18,078.2.59	£10,016.0.59	£ 8,062.2.0	
Robert Nairne	£18,289.3.92	£6,456.3.42	£11,833.0.50	Nairne's total does not include another £1,583.1.54 which he appears to have remitted as agent or executor for the owners of Capt. Austin's <u>Success</u> in 1762 and C. Noble in 1767.
John Herbert	£6,748.2.36			Remittances 1767-9
Edward Coles	£6,259.3.90			1763-7
George Salmon	£5,473.2.74			1763-9
Henry Idell	£5,053.3.43			1764-5
Joseph Darvall	£4,420			1763-7
Stokeham Donston	£4,166.1.18			1762-7
James Hall	£2,743.1.24			1765-6 Much of this amount may have been paid into the Company's cash in Hall's capacity as Secretary, since most of the certificates he drew were payable to the legal representatives in England of deceased servants.
Hew Steuart	£1,794.2.86			Remittances 1763-9
Philip Mannington	£1,720.0.0			1769
John Guild	£1,600.0.0			1767

Name	Total Amount Remitted	Amount Payable in London	Amount Payable in Madras	Amount Payable in Bengal or Bombay and Remarks
John Marsden	£1,481.0.61			Remittances 1767
Elidad Blackwell	£1,038.1.53			1767-estate
Samuel Gatward	£1,038.0.0			1766-9
George Scott	£1,031.1.0			1764
Robert Rogers	£1,000.0.0			1769
Philip Patch	£710.0.0			
William Broff	£700.0.0			1767
Edward Weston	£655.1.63			1763-estate
Thomas Armour	£607.1.80			1764-estate
Edward Dallowe	£343.3.82			1763-estate
Anthony Desmaretz	£229.0.0			1767
William Flockhart	£206.1.0			1764
James Rosindell	£200.0.0			1769
Alexander Noble	£188.0.33			1769
Charles Noble	£97.2.50			1769
Edward Holmes	£70.3.0			1763-estate
<u>Military Officers</u>				
Captain Tolley (Engineer)	£282.2.29			1765
Major Edward Frith	£5,400.0.0			Remittances 1763-6 when he retired to England.
Captain David Pilmore	£400.0.0			Remittances 1769
Captain Christian Justen	£180.3.1			1769
Captain Robert Frazer	£1,800.3.57			1763-4
Cadet Ambrose Baldwin	£2,300.0.0			1762-4
Ensign Robert Alsop	£430			1770-estate

Surgeons

Name	Total Amount Remitted	Amount Payable in London	Amount Payable in Madras	Amount Payable in Bengal or Bombay and Remarks
James Stevenson	£6,480.0.6			Remittances 1763-4. Stevenson after several requests was appointed a Factor by the Court's Letter of 25 Jan. 1765, SFR 31.
Thomas Blankern	£4,348.2.50			Remittances 1767-9
Patrick Edwards	£1,500.0.0			1762-7. This total does not include another £13,809.0.52 which Edwards appears to have remitted as executor to the estate of Captain William Foster.
Duncan Campbell	£104.2.50			
<u>Seafaring Men</u>				
Captain Richard Dawson	£19,025.1.51			Remittances 1764-6
Captain James Burnett	£4,500.0.0			1770
Captain Burrington Netherton	£355.3.31			1769-estate
Captain Thomas Forrest	£277.0.0			1765
<u>Chaplains</u>				
Rev. Mr. Joseph Baines	£200.0.0			1766
<u>Free Inhabitants</u>				
Mrs. Elizabeth Braithwaite (wife of Captain of Military, John Braithwaite)	£200			1770

Name	Total Amount Remitted	Amount Payable in London	Amount Payable in Madras	Amount Payable in Bengal or Bombay and Remarks
<u>Partnerships</u>				
Joseph Baines and Robert Rogers	£2,266.1.0			Remittances 1767
Robert Nairne and Ambrose Baldwyn	£46.0.71			1765
Robert Nairne and Stokeham Donston	£1,740.1.12			1763
Stokeham Donston and Edward Coles	£7,305.0.0			1767
Stokeham Donston and James Stevenson	£603.3.14			1764
John Herbert, Stokeham Donston and Edward Coles	£4,800.0.0			1770
Richard Wyatt and Co. (the General Concern)	£82,659.1.79	£21,675.3.99	£25,467.1.80	£25,500.0.0 - Bengal £10,016.0.0 - Bombay

N.B. There were also £10,923.2.83 worth of bills of exchange drawn in 1769 and another £6,420 worth in 1770 in which the person depositing the cash was not identified.

Source: Monthly Cash Accounts, 1762-1770, SFR 71-8.

VALUE OF PRIVATE TRADE LOADED ON COMPANY SHIPS FROM
FORT ST. GEORGE TO FORT MARLBOROUGH

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Ships</u>	<u>Total Value in Pagodas</u>
1736	Ship <u>George</u>	6,581.5.0
1737	Ship <u>George</u> Ship <u>Lyell</u>	17,460.0.0
1739	Ship <u>George</u> Sloop <u>Carolina</u>	6,805.11.0
1740	Ship <u>George</u> Ship <u>Princess Augusta</u>	14,214.19.30
1742	Ship <u>George</u> Ship <u>Sumatra</u>	28,377.27.75
1743	Snow <u>Brilliant</u>	9,115.0.44
1744	Ship <u>Princess Augusta</u> Ship <u>Sumatra</u>	20,692.18.0
1748	Ship <u>Benjamin</u> (estimated) *	2,955.10.48 - 3,146.31.48
1749	Snow <u>Brilliant</u> (estimated) * Sloop <u>Cuddalore</u>	6,265.22.0 - 6,615.22.0
1750	Snow <u>Brilliant</u> Ship <u>Swallow</u>	6,214.41.12
1753	Ship <u>Prince George</u> Ship <u>Prince George</u>	13,039.18.75
1754	Ship <u>Dragon</u> Ship <u>Prince George</u>	16,492.31.4

* The values of the total indents in 1748 and 1749 are estimates because no prices are listed in the manifests for these years. The estimates are based on the value of similar goods found in the manifests of 1744 and 1750.

VALUE OF PRIVATE TRADE LOADED BY SELECTED FORT MARLBOROUGH
SERVANTS ON COMPANY SHIPS FROM FORT ST. GEORGE

<u>Name</u>	<u>Total Value Manifested, 1736-1754 (in Pagodas)</u>	
William Rigg	9,168.18.0	
Robert Lennox	22,687.36.0	
William Coles	7,166.18.0	
Roger Carter	3,718.27.0	plus another 22 <u>corge</u> of piece goods manifested but not priced, estimated value Pagodas 450.0.0 - 536.0.0.
Isaac and Charles Barbut	5,210.36.0	
Joseph Hurlock	2,816.18.0	plus another 116 <u>corge</u> of piece goods manifested but not priced, estimated value Pagodas 2,644.0.0 - 3,000.0.0.
Thomas Combes	6,376.10.64	plus another 38 <u>corge</u> of piece goods manifested but not priced, estimated value Pagodas 596.0.0. - 660.0.0.
John Savage	1,645.0.0	
Samuel Greenslate	2,477.0.0	
Robert Hindley	600.0.0	
Richard Preston	400.0.0	
John Massey	401.18.0	
Joseph Darvall	274.0.0	
John Innes	615.0.0	
Wotton Braham	780.0.0	plus another 19 <u>corge</u> of piece goods manifested but not priced, estimated value Pagodas 455.33.18 - 557.21.0.

N.B. Manifests for Private Trade exist in the Records of Fort St. George only for 1736, 1737, 1739, 1740, 1742, 1743, 1744, 1748, 1749, 1750, 1753 and 1754, in the period between 1735 and 1760. The above totals are therefore incomplete.

ABSTRACT OF PRIVATE TRADE MANIFESTED AT FORT ST. GEORGE
BY FORT MARLBOROUGH SERVANTS

1726 Goods manifested on Ship Grantham, 22 June 1726, on account of the following:

George Torriano	Pagodas	1,811.22.2
Joseph Hubbard		311.0.0
John Lander		478.6.6
Padre Thomas		?
David Pyot		<u>312.9.0</u>
	Pagodas	2,912.37.8

Goods manifested on Ship Marlborough, Captain William Montgomery, 15 October 1726, on account of the following:

David Carnegie	Pagodas	876.2.0
Julius Gallop		1,332.0.0
Capt. Montgomery for himself and his officers		1,062.0.0
Robert Lennox		<u>1,222.0.0</u>
	Pagodas	4,492.2.0

1736 Goods manifested on the Ship George, Captain John Taylor, 28 January 1736, on account of the following:

Barbut and Pickard	Pagodas	204.18.0
William Rigg, Fourth of Council Storehousekeeper		174.18.0
R. Lennox, Deputy Governor		2,439.18.0
Perrey and Coales		360.0.0
Page		110.0.0
F. Haag, Surgeon at FM		160.0.0
J. Savage, Second of Council Resident of Muko Muko		645.0.0
Capt. John Williams, Captain of Military at FM		476.23.0
Capt. Taylor for himself and officers		<u>2,011.0.0</u>
Total of 79 bales and chests	Pagodas	6,581.5.0

1737

Goods manifested on the Ship George, Captain John Taylor, 7 February 1737, on account of the following:

W. Rigg, Fourth of Council Storehouse Keeper	Pagodas	1,215.0.0
F. Haag, Surgeon at FM		292.0.0
Joseph Hurlock, Factor Pepper Godown Keeper		496.0.0
R. Lennox, Deputy Governor		4,120.0.0
W. Coles, Eighth of Council Resident of Lais		1,150.0.0
J. Savage, Second of Council Resident of Muko Muko		1,000.0.0
F. Haag, Surgeon at FM		1,025.0.0
C. Barbut, Seventh of Council Warehouse Keeper		605.0.0
S. Greenslate, Third of Council Paymaster		465.0.0
John Innes, Factor		615.0.0
Capt. Taylor for himself and his officers		2,015.0.0
Capt. J. Williams, Captain of Military at FM		<u>412.0.0</u>
Total of 167 Bales	Pagodas	13,410.0.0

Goods manifested on the Ship Lyell, Captain John Acton, 31 August 1737, on account of the following:

R. Lennox, Deputy Governor	Pagodas	2,500.0.0
Captain Amyand		1,440.0.0
Captain Amyand		<u>110.0.0</u>
Total of 40 Bales	Pagodas	4,050.0.0

1739

Goods manifested on the Ship George, Captain John Taylor, 10 February 1739, on account of the following:

Capt. Williams, Captain of Military at FM	Pagodas	705.11.0
Capt. Horne		327.23.0
Capt. Williams		549.13.0
J. Hurlock, Last of Council Envoy to Banjarmasin		44.0.0
R. Lennox, Deputy Governor		1,375.0.0
W. Rigg, Third of Council Paymaster		382.0.0
W. Coles, Fifth of Council Resident of Lais		680.0.0
F. Haag, Surgeon at FM		295.0.0
D. Pugh, Surgeon at Muko Muko		72.0.0
Captain Taylor for himself and his officers		<u>1,599.0.0</u>
Total of 87 bales	Pagodas	6,020.11.0

Goods manifested on the Sloop Carolina, 28 September 1739, on account of the following:

R. Lennox, Deputy Governor	Pagodas	220.0.0
W. Coles, Fifth of Council Resident of Lais		265.0.0
Capt. Dutton for himself and his officers		<u>300.0.0</u>
	Pagodas	785.0.0

1740

Goods manifested on the Ship George, Captain John Taylor, 28 January 1740, on account of the following:

W. Rigg, Third of Council Paymaster	Pagodas	484.0.0
W. Coles, Fifth of Council Resident of Lais		921.0.0
F. Haag, Surgeon at FM		460.0.0
Capt. Williams, Captain of Military at FM		250.12.0
Lt. Sterling, FM Military		543.18.0
R. Hindley, Factor		116.26.40
? Person unknown		314.0.0
Capt. Taylor for himself and his officers		<u>805.0.0</u>
Total of 61 chests and bales	Pagodas	4,050.20.40 [sic]

Goods manifested on Ship Princess Augusta, Captain George Goring, 7 October 1740, on account of the following:

Mr. Sterling, Factor	Pagodas	310.0.0
R. Lennox, Deputy Governor		2,780.0.0
W. Coles, Resident of Lais Fifth of Council		1,187.0.0
W. Rigg, Paymaster Third of Council		1,011.0.0
Barbut, Accountant Fourth of Council		455.0.0
F. Haag, Surgeon at FM		630.0.0
D. Pugh, Surgeon at Muko Muko		209.0.0
J. Williams, Captain of Military at FM		597.23.32
Capt. Goring for himself and his officers		<u>2,983.73.64</u>
Total	Pagodas	10,164.13.16

1742

Goods manifested on the Ship Princess Augusta, Captain George Goring, 21 May 1742, on account of the following:

Mr. Sterling, Resident of Talo	Pagodas	281.18.0
W. Rigg, Third of Council Paymaster		?
J. Williams, Captain of Military at FM		1,706.27.0
Mr. Christian, Lieutenant of Military at FM		218. 9.0
R. Lennox, Deputy Governor		5,233.18.0
W. Rigg, Paymaster Third of Council		1,616. 0.0
Samuel Greenslate, Resident of Muko Muko Second of Council		2,477. 0.0
W. Coles, Fifth of Council Pepper Godown Keeper		3,092. 0.0
C. Barbut, Accountant Fourth of Council		1,344. 0.0
J. Hurlock, Resident of Manna Sixth of Council		625. 0.0
Henry Sterling, Resident of Talo		218. 0.0
Mr. Barbut (Charles or Isaac?)		622. 0.0
F. Haag, Surgeon at FM		795. 0.0
David Pugh, Surgeon at Muko Muko		606. 0.0
Charles Gibson, Assistant at Lais		453. 0.0
Capt. Goring for himself and officers		3,195.18.75
Capt. Gay		<u>630. 0.0</u>
Total	Pagodas	23,062. 9.75

Goods manifested on the Ship Sumatra, Captain John Taylor, 9 October 1742; on account of the following:

Walter Churchey	Pagodas	46. 0. 0
R. Lennox, Deputy Governor		1,521. 0. 0
W. Rigg, Third of Council Paymaster		628. 0. 0
W. Coles, Fifth of Council		509.18. 0
J. Hurlock, Sixth of Council		284. 0. 0
Capt. Taylor for himself and his officers		<u>2,327. 0. 0</u>
Total	Pagodas	5,315.18. 0

1743

Goods manifested on the Brilliant Snow, Captain Robert Somerville Gay, 16 October 1743, on account of the following:

Capt. Williams, Captain of Military at FM	Pagodas	3,003.27. 0
R. Lennox, Deputy Governor		1,605. 0. 0
W. Rigg, Third of Council Paymaster		1,063. 0. 0
Rigg and Lennox, Owners of the Ketch <u>Marlbro</u>		1,562. 0. 0
W. Coles, Fifth of Council (left FM 10 March 1743)		?
Henry Sterling, Seventh of Council Storekeeper		854. 0. 0
D. Pugh, Surgeon at FM		357. 0. 0
Charles Gibson, Assistant at Krui (transferred from Lais, Sept. 1743)		357.14.32
Wotton Braham, Surgeon at Muko Muko		323. 0. 0
Capt. R. S. Gay		<u>420. 0. 0</u>
Total	Pagodas	10,892. 5.32

1744

Goods manifested on the Ship Princess Augusta, Captain George Goring, 16 February 1744; on account of the following:

R. Lennox, Deputy Governor	Pagodas	1,919. 0. 0
W. Rigg, Third of Council Paymaster		1,499. 0. 0
W. Coles (Left FM 10 March 1743)		963. 0. 0
H. Sterling, Seventh of Council Storekeeper		378. 0. 0
J. Hurlock, Fifth of Council Resident of Manna		815.18. 0
C. Barbut, Fourth of Council Warekeeper		848.18. 0
Francis Fordyce, Chaplain at FM		331.18. 0
D. Pugh, Surgeon at FM		710.18. 0
W. Braham, Surgeon at Muko Muko		257. 0. 0
R. Hindley, Resident of Lais		484. 0. 0
Henry Coales, Resident of Bentunan		230.18. 0
W. Culliford, Resident of Talo		296. 0. 0
Alexander Christie, Pepper Godown Keeper		208. 0. 0
John Massey, Assistant Resident at Banjarmasin		409.18. 0
I. Barbut, Resident of Silebar		739.18. 0
Thomas Combes, Resident of Krui		584. 0. 0
William Christian, Military Officer at FM		280. 0. 0
Capt. George Goring for himself and his Officers		<u>2,977. 0. 0</u>
Total	Pagodas	13,922.18. 0

Goods manifested on the Ship Sumatra, Captain Charles Milne, 30 September 1744, on account of the following:

R. Lennox, Deputy Governor to 9 Aug. 1744	Pagodas	1,478. 0. 0
W. Rigg, Second of Council Paymaster		1,094. 0. 0
C. Barbut, Resident of Muko Muko Third of Council		497. 0. 0
J. Hurlock, Resident of Manna Fourth of Council		552. 0. 0
D. Pugh, Surgeon at FM		439. 0. 0
J. Williams, Captain of Military at FM		1,040. 0. 0
Capt. Milne on behalf of himself and officers		<u>1,670. 0. 0</u>
Total	Pagodas	6,670. 0. 0

1748 Goods manifested on the Ship Brittania, Captain George Meard, 2 September 1748, on account of the following:

Wotton Braham, Surgeon at FM	19 <u>corge</u> piece goods	456. 0. 0 -	557.21. 0
J. Hurlock, Deputy Governor	29 <u>corge</u> piece goods	984. 0. 0 -	1,174. 0. 0
Capt. George Meard		<u>1,415.10.48</u> -	<u>1,415.10.48</u>
Total		Pagodas 2,955.10.48 -	3,146.31.48
[no prices listed, values estimated]			

1749 Goods manifested on the Brilliant Snow, Captain Edward Burman, 28 July 1749, on account of the following:

J. Hurlock Deputy Governor	87 <u>corge</u> piece goods	1,666. 0. 0 -	1,826. 0. 0
T. Combes, Storekeeper Fourth of Council	38 <u>corge</u> piece goods	596. 0. 0 -	660. 0. 0
Capt. Burman	92 <u>corge</u> , 11 pieces of piece goods	<u>1,743. 0. 0</u> -	<u>1,743. 0. 0</u>
Total		Pagodas 4,005. 0. 0 -	4,229. 0. 0
[no prices listed, values estimated]			

Goods manifested on the Sloop Cuddalore, Captain William Petch, 17 September 1749, on account of the following:

R. Carter Resident of Manna	22 <u>corge</u> piece goods	450. 0. 0 -	536. 0. 0
Capt. Petch	75 <u>corge</u> piece goods	<u>1,810.22. 0</u> -	<u>1,852.22. 0</u>
Total		Pagodas 2,260.22. 0 -	2,388.22. 0
[no prices listed, values estimated]			

1750 Goods manifested on the Brilliant Snow, Captain Edward Burman, 16 October 1750, on account of the following:

T. Combes, Sixth of Council Storekeeper	Pagodas	375. 0. 0
R. Carter, Resident of Manna		397.27. 0
Capt. Burman		<u>3,429. 0. 0</u>
Total 38 bales and chests	Pagodas	4,201.27. 0

Goods manifested on the Ship Swallow, Captain John Bell, 17 October 1750, on account of the following:

Capt. Bell on account of himself and his Officers		<u>2,013.14.12</u>
	Pagodas	2,013.14.12

1753 Goods manifested on the Ship Prince George, Captain Edward Burman, 10 April 1753, on account of the following:

Joseph Darvall, Factor and Accountant	Pagodas	274. 0. 0
R. Carter, Resident of Manna		467. 0. 0
T. Combes, Third of Council (29 bales, bundles and chests, including 7 chests of opium; no prices given)		?
Capt. Burman		<u>1,930. 0. 0</u>
	Pagodas	2,671. 0. 0 (incomplete)

Goods manifested on the Ship Prince George, Captain Edward Burman, 15 October 1753, on account of the following:

Capt. Burman for himself and his Officers	Pagodas	2,036. 0. 0
R. Carter, Resident of Natal		226. 0. 0
Robert Swinton		180. 0. 0
Robert Swinton		225. 0. 0
T. Combes, Second of Council		1,746.10.64
John Walsh, Supravisor Appointee		3,939.35.11
John Pybus, Supravisor Appointee		<u>2,016. 9. 0</u>
Total	Pagodas	10,368.18.75

1754

Goods manifested on the Ship Dragon, Captain Henry Kent,
7 February 1754, on account of the following:

R. Swinton	Pagodas	269. 0. 0
R. Carter, Resident of Natal		670. 0. 0
Capt. Kent for himself		<u>500. 0. 0</u>
Total	Pagodas	1,439. 0. 0

Goods manifested on the Ship Prince George, Captain
Edward Burman, 21 October 1754, on account of the
following:

R. Carter, Resident of Natal	Pagodas	1,958. 0. 0
J. Pybus, Supravisor		3,300. 0. 0
T. Combes, Second of Council		1,000. 0. 0
R. Carter and J. Pybus		2,652. 0. 0
Capt. Morriset and Gabbett, Military at FM		570. 5. 4
Alexander Gray, Surgeon		768. 0. 0
J. Pybus and T. Combes		2,550. 0. 0
W. Braham and Henry Idell Surgeon at FM and Assistant Storehouse Keeper		1,250. 0. 0
Richard Preston, Resident of Ketaun		400. 0. 0
Capt. Edward Pero, Military Officer at FM		120. 0. 0
John Broff, Superintendent of coolies		119.19. 0
Hadji Amot Subadar		376. 6.40
J. Pybus		1,050. 0. 0
Capt. Burman for himself and his Officers		<u>2,409.18. 0</u>
Total 186 bales and chests	Pagodas	18,523.13. 4

Sources: Fort St. George to Fort Marlborough, 22 June 1726, 15 Oct. 1726,
28 Jan. 1736, 7 Feb. 1737, 31 Aug. 1737, 10 Feb. 1739, 28 Sept.
1739, 28 Jan. 1740, 7 Oct. 1740, 21 May 1742, 9 Oct. 1742,
16 Oct. 1743, 16 Feb. 1744, 30 Sept. 1744, 17 Oct. 1750, 10 April
1753, 15 Oct. 1753, 7 Feb. 1754, 21 Oct. 1754, Letters from Fort
St. George, Records of Fort St. George, vols. XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII,
XXIV, 25, 25A, XXIX, XXX (Madras 1932-9)

Fort St. David to Fort Marlborough, 2 Sept. 1748, 27 July 1749,
17 Sept. 1749, 16 Oct. 1750, 17 Oct. 1750, Letters from Fort
St. David, Records of Fort St. George, vols. I-IV (Madras, 1935)

ABSTRACT OF REVENUES FROM SEA CUSTOMS AT FORT MARLBOROUGH,
1735-1770

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount (in Spanish Dollars)</u>
1735	282. 2. 5
1736	638. 0. 0
1737	484. 3. 7
1738	1,197. 1.59
1739	651. 1. 6
1740	293. 3.97
1741	702. 3. 3
1742	1,929. 3.33
1743	442. 0.33
1744	1,965. 2.55
1745	1,903. 1.31
1746	1,881. 3.42
1747	---
1748	199. 1.31
1749	---
1750	636. 2.76
1751	587. 2.27
1752	702. 3.76
1753	882. 3.48
1754	2,012. 2.95
*1755	3,810. 0.79
1756	4,206. 0.60
1757	2,875. 3.20
1758	3,582. 3.77
1759	4,092. 3.75
1760	---
1761	---
**1762	---
(September-December only; no formal accounts were entered in the Consulations before Governor Carter returned in September 1762)	
1763	(1 Jan. 1763 - 31 March 1764) 1,373. 0.58
1764	(1 April 1764 - 30 April 1765) 3,981. 3.41
1765	(1 May 1765 - 31 March 1766) 2,060. 0.54
1766	(1 April - 31 Dec. 1766) 2,016. 3.71
1767	(1 Jan. - 10 Dec. 1767) 2,363. 0.85

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount (in Spanish Dollars)</u>
1768 (1 Jan. - 30 Nov. 1768)	1,933. 2.51
1769 (1 Dec. 1768 - 31 Aug. 1769)	3,325. 0.08
1770 (Sept. 1769 - 30 June 1770)	1,252. 0.11

* The level of these totals from 1755 to 1760 is somewhat deceptive for purposes of comparison, since the duties on a number of goods were increased from two per cent to five per cent ad valorem after December 1754.

** It is impossible to obtain totals of sea customs corresponding to either the calendar year or the financial year from 1762-1770 because during this period the balances ceased to be paid in monthly as they had been in the 1740s and 1750s, but were sometimes left as long as six months or more before the Sea Customer deposited the cash due from his office in the Company treasury and had this recorded in the Cash Accounts. Moreover, the running balances were also not always entered in the Consultations from month to month. The totals from 1762 to 1770 are therefore rough calculations from the less than adequate information available in order to provide at least some basis for comparison.

Sources: Monthly Accounts of the Company's Cash, 1735-1756, SFR 62-9; 1757- FM to Court, 27 Feb., 15 Sept. 1757, SFR 11 (no Consultation Books for this year survive); 1758-1760- Monthly inspection of accounts (the Cash Accounts themselves are no longer entered), FM Cons., SFR 70; Monthly Cash Accounts, 1762-1770, SFR 71-8; FM Cons., 11 Feb., 14 Oct., 29 Dec. 1769, SFR 77.

The annual totals used in this abstract were based on the calendar year, January through December, rather than the financial year, May through April.

THE SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES OF THE FORT MARLBOROUGH SERVANTS

The salaries and allowances paid by the Company to its West Coast servants remained generally unadjusted from at least 1724 until 1769. During this period the only Benkulen official to receive any substantial increments in pay was the Deputy Governor. By the 1750s the Deputy Governor's £200 salary had been raised by an additional £100 per year granted as a gratuity attached to his titular status as Commander-in-Chief of the military garrison. Nevertheless, Supravisor Pybus complained to London in 1755 that the official allowances of the governorship without 'the dishonest Perquisite made by the Arrack Farms of about Three hundred Pounds a Year more will not half Clear the Expense of maintaining a Table which whoever is at the Head of Affairs here will be under an indispensable necessity of keeping in a kind of Public manner as well for Your [the Court's] Credit as his own'.¹ As a result the Directors agreed to increase the Deputy Governor's diet allowance from the £300 set by Supravisor Macrae in 1724 to £450 per year.² This apparently was still not enough, for in 1759 Deputy Governor Carter wrote to the Court asking if the £100 per year income as Commander-in-Chief was included in his £300 salary and added that 'the whole is not sufficient in this dear place to maintain a moderate Table'.³ Once again the Court responded with an increase in the Deputy Governor's diet allowance which was raised from £450 to £700 per year in 1760, when Fort Marlborough was established as an independent Presidency. At this time various other members of the Council were also given modest increments. The salaries of the Fifth through Ninth of Council were raised from £30 to £40 per year, and the diet allowances of all Councillors were increased from the levels set in 1724. The allowances of the Second of Council thus rose from £120 to £170 per year and

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1. Pybus to Court, 14 Jan. 1755, par. 24, SFR 10. The Court was apparently considering discontinuing the Commander-in-Chief's gratuity and this prompted Pybus's remarks.
 2. Court to FM, 29 Dec. 1756, par. 69, Public Despatches from England, 1756-7, op. cit., vol. 60, p. 70; FM Cons., 25 March 1724, SFR 59.
 3. Carter to Court, 10 March 1759, SFR 12.

those of the Third through Ninth of Council from £105 to £140 - on the condition that these men were actually residing at Fort Marlborough.¹ A fixed living allowance was simultaneously proposed by London for the Residents of out-settlements; the Benkulen Board set this at £200 per year for the Residents of Muko Muko, Natal and Krui, and £80 per year for the Residents of Tapanuli, Lais, Selumah, Manna and Kawur.²

The junior servants' allowances, on the other hand, were not supplemented by the Directors until 1769. The Writers' and Factors' complaints in 1750 that they were unable to maintain a decent standard of living on their pay were ignored by the Court on the grounds that 'The Present Circumstances of Affairs upon the West Coast will not admit of an encrease of charges'.³ Although two new ranks were added to the service in the reorganisation of 1760 - Senior Merchants, allowed £40 in salary and £80 in allowances, and Junior Merchants, with £35 in salary and £65 in allowances⁴ - these promotions affected only the most senior Factors and carried a maximum of £10 to £30 of additional pay. In 1769, however, the Directors finally admitted 'that the Juniors more especially from the dearness of the Necessaries of Life are put to a heavier Expence for their Support than the Appointments assigned them are sufficient to provide for'.⁵ As a consequence the salaries of the lower ranking servants were doubled. A Writer's pay thus rose from £20 to £50 per year, a Factor's from £30 to £60, a Junior Merchant's from £35 to £70, and a Senior Merchant's from £40 to £80. The diet allowances appear not to have been revised.

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1. Court of Directors, 19 Dec. 1769, Court Minutes, vol. 69; Court to FM, 4 Feb. 1761, pars. 102-6, SFR 31.
 2. *ibid.*, par. 107; FM Cons., 25 Oct. 1762, SFR 71.
 3. FM Cons., 14 Nov. 1750, SFR 65; Court to FM, 29 Nov. 1751, par. 65, Public Despatches from England, 1751-2, op. cit., vol. 55, p. 54.
 4. Court to FM, 4 Feb. 1761, par. 103, SFR 31.
 5. Court to FM, 10 Feb. 1769, pars. 14, 16, SFR 32.

Further pay increments were also offered to the Councillors in 1769, but these were made contingent on increases in pepper exports from Fort Marlborough. A commission of ten shillings per ton of pepper exported was proposed by the Court, to be divided among the Board members, with $5/22$ going to the Governor, $3/22$ to the Second of Council and $2/22$ each for the other seven Councillors.¹

1. Court to FM, 10 Feb. 1769, par. 15, SFR 32.

RESIDENT JOSEPH DARVALL'S RELATIONS WITH
THE SULTAN OF ANAK SUNGEI

Extracts of the Sultan of Anak Sungei's correspondence with Councillor Henry Idell, which were examined by the Benkulen Board during the debate over Idell's methods of collecting his outstanding debts at Ketaun, included a number of derogatory references to Joseph Darvall, the current Resident at Muko Muko, which were submitted to Darvall for his explanation. The Sultan's comments and Darvall's reply provide interesting sidelights concerning the Resident's private trade at Muko Muko in the early 1760s, as well as indications of increasingly direct administration of the Anak Sungei people by Company servants.¹

The Sultan's letters outlined a number of sources of friction with Darvall, many of which related to alleged restraints on trade. Darvall, the Sultan charged, had reduced the prices of everything from provisions to building materials to such an extent that people were no longer bringing goods to market at Muko Muko. He also demanded supplies of provisions from the Sultan and then frequently failed to pay for them. The Resident had allegedly prevented anyone from driving buffaloes to Fort Marlborough for sale, a contention which the Sultan offered as the reason for his inability to advance money to Idell for the latter's debts at Sablat. Similarly, the Resident had prevented a Bali Bookit man, who had brought cloth for sale at Muko Muko with a pass provided by Idell, from selling his goods and had thrown him in jail, with the result that the Bali Bookit people refused to come down to trade. The Sultan also accused Darvall of forcing him to surrender a half share in Anak Sungei's traffic in gambier, which had formed a major portion of royal revenues at Muko Muko for at least a decade.² This, the Sultan declared, had virtually

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1. The political, as well as commercial, implications of Darvall's and Idell's administrations in Anak Sungei are discussed in Kathirithamby, 'British West Sumatra', op. cit., pp. 126-36.
 2. FM Cons., 11 Aug. 1755, SFR 58.

bankrupted him since he had received no pepper customs since the English resettlement of the West Coast in 1761. Having no trade, he could not afford to support his followers and consequently had no means of enforcing his authority or regulating pepper-growing. All these alleged abuses of authority the Sultan offered as proof that Darvall had been treating 'the people of Moco Moco in general as if they were the Company's slaves' during the two years of his Residency.¹

Darvall flatly denied every charge and cited his twenty-two years of honest and faithful service to the Company as evidence that he would not misuse his power in the manner alleged by the Sultan. He claimed that on the rare occasions when he had received provisions from any of the Sultan's followers, he had always paid for them at once. Moreover, he had never altered the prices of building materials from the rates to which the Sultan had agreed. He had only attempted to circumvent the monopoly of delivering materials to the Company held by some of the Sultan's followers. These men, Darvall explained, extorted the goods from the country people at very low prices and then delivered them to the Company at the standard rates, gaining a fifty to one hundred per cent profit for themselves. With the Sultan's agreement, he had simply had the country people deliver direct to the Company. When the Sultan had later suggested that the country people wished to be relieved of the burden of providing building materials, as well as cultivating pepper and padi, Darvall had agreed to leave the provision of materials to the bazaar Malays. He had since heard that the Sultan had taken over this trade and enjoyed all the profits from it. Darvall also asserted that he had encouraged not hindered the export of buffaloes to Fort Marlborough in order to facilitate the payment of debts owed by the Sablat people to Idell and offered his written orders to the Sablat officials as proof of his contention. As regards the Bali Bookit man referred to by the Sultan, he had been confined in the guardhouse for a few days for

1. FM Cons., 4 Oct. 1764, SFR 72.

insolence and disturbing the peace, not for selling cloth. Far from discouraging people from coming to trade at Muko Muko, Darvall declared that the numbers of people in the bazaar had increased by one-third during his administration, and they were more secure from robbery and murder than they had been before he came to Muko Muko. Even the so-called disaffected Bali Bookit people came to market there. It was the Sultan and not the Company officials, Darvall suggested, who was trying to make 'slaves' of the Anak Sungei population, and he challenged the Sultan to produce a single witness who would support his accusations.¹

Regarding the gambier trade, Darvall claimed that soon after he had arrived at Muko Muko the Sultan had offered to sell him all the wax and gambier he acquired, if Darvall would supply him with piece goods. Darvall had not solicited the agreement but after it had been made, he had delivered a large amount of merchandise to the Sultan. The Sultan, however, had not kept his part of the bargain and had delivered no gambier at all to Darvall until July 1764, although he had reportedly sold parcels to Malays and Chinese for cash instead of goods. Darvall had discovered, on sending the July delivery of gambier to Fort Marlborough, that the product was in great demand, and he calculated that the Sultan would receive a thirty or forty per cent profit from dealing with him. He had even offered the Sultan a full half share in the profits from the trade and claimed that no former Resident had 'ever shewed the Sultans of the Place so much Favor'. Indeed, Darvall stated that the Sultan had often thanked him 'for putting it into his Power to Trade, a thing he has told me, no other Resident would allow of, either to him or the late Sultan'.²

As the Sultan had produced no proof in support of his charges against the Resident, the Board unanimously exonerated Darvall from any abuse of trust

1. Darvall to Board, 27 Oct. 1764, FM Cons., 10 Nov. 1764, SFR 72.

2. *ibid.*

at Muko Muko and attributed the Sultan's disaffection to the Resident's efforts to restore order in Anak Sungei after the disturbed conditions that had prevailed there during the two-year English absence from the West Coast. Even the three Councillors who were supporting Henry Idell against Governor Carter's attempts to dismiss him for impropriety in his methods of debt collection at Ketaun and Sablat agreed that the Sultan's letters, which had been offered in defence of Idell's conduct, should not have prompted any query of Darvall's probity.¹

1. FM Cons., 10 Nov. 1764, SFR 72.

PRIVATE VESSELS CALLING AT FORT MARLBOROUGH IN SELECTED YEARS,
1737-1760

- 1737-
1747 A total of seven country vessels, in addition to Fort Marlborough-owned vessels, called at Benkulen during this decade:
- 1738- The ship Jane, Captain Robert Milne, called at Benkulen on 20 January 1738 en route from Fort St. George to Banjarmasin.
- 1739-
1740 The ship Galatea, Captain Robert Milne, also apparently based at Madras, called twice at Benkulen, once from Fort St. George on 11 December 1738 carrying Fort Marlborough's envoy to Banjarmasin, Joseph Hurlock, and seemingly for a second time in late 1739 or early 1740. FM Cons., 26 May 1740, SFR 63.
- 1743- The brigantine Tryton, Captain Michael La Haigne, was a French vessel out of Bengal and called once on 7 June 1743 for refitting after she had been driven from her anchors at Analabo by bad weather.
- 1745- The ketch Cleopatra, Captain Tuck, arrived at Benkulen from Bengal and was hired by the Board on 6 February 1745 to deliver stores at Krui en route to Batavia. She sailed from Fort Marlborough on 10 February and on 8 March the Resident at Krui, Thomas Combes, reported that she had run aground. He purchased the wreck from Captain Tuck to provide spare parts for refitting the Company's sloops.
- 1746- The sloop Young Joseph, Captain Hamilton, called at Benkulen on 25 June 1746 with a cargo of sugar and arrack from Batavia.
- The sloop Friendship, Captain Timothy Tolley, was owned by Peter Garden, an English resident of Batavia. She appears to have touched at Fort Marlborough about August 1747, since the Consultations mention sending a letter by her to Batavia dated 11 August 1747. FM Cons., 27 Nov. 1747, SFR 64.
- The ship Fanny, Captain David Rannie, arrived at Benkulen from Bengal and Fort St. David bringing letters from the Company authorities in India. Captain Rannie also brought merchandise from Bengal which the Fort St. David Council asked that he be allowed to sell to the Benkulen servants after a two per cent import duty had been paid. Rannie, however, refused to sell only a part of his cargo and the Fort Marlborough servants were unwilling to buy the whole, as the settlement was short of ready money and they already had on hand the kinds of goods Rannie offered. Rannie also demanded \$486.3.20 as passage money for twenty-two lascars whom he had brought from Bengal for service in the Fort Marlborough marine. The Board at Benkulen considered the bill exorbitant since the lascars had helped to man the ship during the voyage to Sumatra. The Board, however, decided to pay Rannie and represent their complaints to the Fort William Council. Four chests of opium sent by the Fort St. David Council on the Fanny were so spoiled that the Benkulen opium farmer declined to take them and they were returned to India on the Company snow Brilliant in December 1747. The Fanny sailed for Batavia on 6 January 1748, having contracted with the Board to return to the West Coast with sixty leaguers of arrack and sixty koyan of rice in exchange for \$2000 for the trip if he failed to obtain the full amount specified. Rannie subsequently broke this agreement and refused to come back to Benkulen from Batavia. FM Cons., 13 and 25 Nov., 30 Dec. 1747, 9 Jan. 1748, SFR 64.

- 1748- The sloop Friendship, ninety tons, called at Benkulen from Batavia.
- The ship Fanny, Captain David Rannie, arrived at Fort Marlborough from Batavia en route to Surat.
- * The Fanny snow. Her owners were at Benkulen when they hired her out to the Company to go to Batavia for arrack. FM Cons., 9 Dec. 1748, SFR 65.
- 1749- The snow Sumatra, Captain Hamilton Parkinson, arrived at Benkulen on 26 September and departed on 1 October for Coromandel.
- The ship Success Galley, Captain James Barton, arrived on 24 January from Fort St. David and sailed on 30 January for Batavia. She returned to Benkulen on 4 July and sailed back to Batavia on 24 July.
- * The Fanny snow.
- 1750- The ship Fort William, Captain James Dalcott, arrived at Benkulen on 13 July from Fort St. David and sailed on 1 October for Batavia, after having been forced back to Benkulen three times by bad weather.
- The ship Success Galley, Captain David Rannie, arrived 4 June from Coromandel and sailed on 22 June for Batavia and Coromandel.
- The Fattee Bouchers, Captain Taylor, arrived at Fort Marlborough from Bombay on 20 March and sailed for Batavia on 2 April.
- * The Fanny snow.
- 1751- The ship Elizabeth arrived on 29 March from Bombay and departed on 19 April for Batavia and China.
- The ship Success Galley, Captain David Rannie, arrived on 27 April and departed for Batavia and China on 16 May.
- The brig Three Brothers, Captain Saul Domingo Cives, arrived from Batavia on 11 July and sailed for Madras on 13 July.
- The sloop Elizabeth, Captain Christopher Harrison, arrived on 13 July from Batavia and sailed on 3 August for Fort St. David.
- * The Fanny snow, Captain Walter Kennedy, owned at Fort Marlborough.
- * The sloop Surprise, Captain Joseph Bond, owned at Fort Marlborough.
- 1752- The ship Success Galley, Captain Peter Duncan, arrived at Fort Marlborough from Bengal and Natal on 16 May and sailed for Batavia on 22 May.
- The Fattee Bouchers called at Benkulen on 20 March from Bombay and sailed for Batavia on 2 April.
- * The Fanny snow, owned at Fort Marlborough.
- 1753- The ship Success Galley, Captain Peter Duncan, touched at Fort Marlborough en route for Batavia.
- The sloop Phoenix, Captain William Boonydy, arrived at Fort Marlborough from Bengal, bound for Batavia.

1753- The sloop Orange Tree, Captain William Dogan, arrived at Benkulen en route to Batavia from Madras.

1754- *The Adventure snow, Captain Stephen Holloway Bunyon, owner, arrived at Benkulen from Bengal on 12 February. Bunyon wanted to and apparently succeeded in selling the snow at Fort Marlborough. She sailed for Natal on 24 February and arrived from Batavia on 30 April under another master, Thomas Ringrose. She then sailed for Muko Muko under yet another captain, Arthur Churchill, on 27 August.

* The Resolution sloop, James Sutherland, arrived from Batavia on 30 April, sailed back to Batavia on 13 May, arrived from Batavia on 30 July, sailed for Natal and Singkil on 26 August, returned from Natal on 13 November and sailed for Batavia on 18 December.

The ship Prince Edward, Captain Hamilton Parkinson, arrived at Benkulen from Batavia on 28 April and sailed for Madras on 16 May.

The Speedwell ketch, Captain John Edwards, arrived from Bengal and Natal on 3 May, sailed for Batavia on 16 May, returned from Batavia on 16 August and sailed for Bengal on 26 August.

The Orange Tree sloop, Captain William Dogan, arrived at Benkulen from Madras and Natal on 17 July and sailed for Madras on 8 August with Supervisor John Walsh as a passenger.

* The Kitty snow, Captain Stephen Holloway Bunyon, arrived from Batavia on 15 August and sailed for Natal and Singkil on 9 September with Resident Roger Carter and twenty-two military aboard.

* The sloop Tryall, Captain James Davenport, sailed for Batavia from Fort Marlborough on 3 November. Within two years she was certainly Fort Marlborough-owned, and it seems likely she had Benkulen proprietors even as early as 1754.

* The Natal Galley arrived at Fort Marlborough from Natal on 27 December. From her name it seems probable that she was owned by West Coast servants.

* The Fortune prau (perahu) sailed from Fort Marlborough to Batavia on 19 December. From her English name and Malay destination, it seems likely that she was owned by English West Sumatran servants.

1756- The Prince Edward snow arrived at Benkulen from Madras and Natal on 11 March and sailed for Batavia on 18 April.

The Hopewell, Captain John Whiteway, sailed for Batavia on 13 April.

The Bonetta ketch, Captain John Edwards, arrived at Tapanuli and Natal c. 28 May. Captain Edwards purchased 550 tompongs of benzoin at Tapanuli and then sailed past Benkulen en route to Batavia apparently to avoid paying duties on his cargo of northern produce. FM Cons., 14 June, 14 August 1756, SFR 69.

* The Martha sloop sailed northward on 9 July. She was probably Benkulen-owned, as she was hired by the Natal Resident in October 1756 to remain at Tapanuli as guard vessel. FM Cons., 28 Nov. 1756, SFR 69.

- 1756- * The Resolution sloop arrived on 23 February from Batavia, sailed on 7 March for Batavia, arrived on 26 April from Batavia, sailed on 4 May for the North, put back to Benkulen on 8 May, sailed for Natal with Resident Randolph Marriot aboard on 17 May, arrived back at Fort Marlborough ?, and sailed again for Natal on 15 August.
- * The Tryall sloop sailed to southward on 26 July and again on 7 August. She arrived from Krui on 5 October.
- * The Adventure brig was reported off Krui in a leaky condition on 15 March and feared lost. FM Cons., 12 April 1756, SFR 69. She arrived, however, from Batavia on 10 June, sailed for Natal and the North on 5 July, and returned to Benkulen on 26 November.
- * The Swift schooner, Captain Thomas Forrest, sailed for Natal on 30 December. She was owned by Resident of Natal Randolph Marriot and apparently built at Fort Marlborough. FM Cons., 30 Oct., 24 Dec. 1756, SFR 69.
- 1759- The Fanny sloop, Captain Thomas Forrest, was owned in Bengal.
- The Anna Catherina sloop, Captain Thomas Wintle, was an English vessel, but it is not known where she was based.
- The ship Welcome, Captain Alexander Balnevius, arrived at Benkulen from Bengal and was likely owned there.
- The snow Fanny, Captain William Dunn.
- * The sloop Young London, fifteen tons, was owned by her captain, James Sutherland. Sutherland was based at Fort Marlborough.
- * The sloop Tryall, Captain Samuel Elliot, was owned by Benkulen servants Richard Preston, Stokeham Donston and George Freeth.
- * The Elizabeth schooner was owned by Richard Wyatt's Natal Concern.
- * The sloop Resolution, Captain William Justice, was owned by Richard Wyatt's Natal Concern.
- * The sloop Hawke, Captain Samuel Elliott, was owned by Roger Carter, Richard Wyatt and Robert Nairne.
- * The Pocock snow, Captain Thomas Wintle, was owned by Roger Carter and others unidentified.
- * The Cattown (Ketaun) sloop, from her name, was also likely Benkulen-owned.
- * Denotes Benkulen-owned vessels.

Source: The shipping diaries of the Fort Marlborough Consultation Books, SFR 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69, 70.

SUPRAVISOR JOHN PYBUS AND FORT MARLBOROUGH'S PRIVATE COMMERCE

John Pybus, whom Fort St. George sent as joint Supravisor with John Walsh to reorder the administration of British West Sumatra, appears to have been drawn rapidly into the private trade of the area. A local servant, Daniel Tottie, accused Pybus in 1755 of using the Company sloop Mary principally to carry his personal merchandise to Muko Muko when her voyage there was justified officially by the necessity of transporting stores and 20,000 bricks to the settlement. Tottie also alleged that Pybus had threatened Roger Carter with a transfer from his lucrative Residency at Natal unless Carter agreed to certain, apparently commercial, 'terms', a procedure which Tottie likened to ex-Governor Hindley's contract to buy the governorship from his predecessor which had resulted in Hindley's dismissal by the Supravisors barely a year earlier.¹ Some sort of trade agreement does seem to have existed between Carter and Pybus as goods worth Pagodas 2652 were shipped on their joint account from Madras in October 1754.² Nevertheless, Tottie's charges were not substantiated and, as he had recently been dismissed from the service by Pybus for embezzlement, they seem to have been disregarded by the Court.

Pybus does, however, appear to have been involved in dealings in the Fort Marlborough opium trade which were disadvantageous both to the Company and to the West Coast servants. Although he had informed the Directors that the new settlement at Natal could provide no returns for the Company from pepper, he still recommended that the Court maintain the post there because of its importance to Benkulen's private commerce. He also suggested to his superiors as early as April 1754 that Natal's expenses could be covered by importing opium, salt and iron, large quantities of which were sold in the North, on the Company's account, and he calculated that a fifty per cent profit on sixty

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1. Tottie to FSG, 15 Feb. 1754 (misdated in the original, actually 1755), SFR 10.
 2. See Appendix VI.

chests of opium and two thousand bars of iron would be sufficient to meet Natal's running costs. These articles could be retailed directly to the Malays, Pybus suggested, or 'delivered [sic] to certain Contractors at a stipulated Price'. Pybus favoured the latter alternative.¹ There is no open suggestion that the proposed contractors should be Pybus and Walsh in the public correspondence from Fort Marlborough, but the two Supervisors wrote to Madras that their private views concerning the best way to organise the West Coast's opium trade would be presented by Walsh in person on his return to Fort St. George.²

Walsh returned to India in August 1754, and Pybus, who remained as sole Supervisor at Benkulen, was clearly upset when Fort St. George chose to retail opium directly instead of farming a monopoly licence to do so. He expressed his hope to Governor Saunders at Fort St. George that Madras's plan would produce the expected advantages for the Company but added:

The Proposal made by Mr. Walsh & me for Farming the Ophium Licenses at Nattall and the Ophium to be supplied by the Company at fifty p[er] Cent advance to be paid in money; I cannot still help thinking would be the most advantagious method for our Honble Masters, unless You may be pleased to determine that Benjamin Camphire & Gold dust shall be received in Exchange for it....³

He also suggested that a monthly rent for an opium farm might be paid in addition to the fifty per cent profit which the Company was to enjoy from the provision of opium to the contractor.

Pybus's proposals for an opium licence for Natal may of course have been entirely disinterested, but he subsequently proceeded to circumvent the restrictions which Fort St. George had placed on all private trade in opium by having his own opium sold at high cost to the Company for resale at Natal. On 8 November 1756, he reported to the Benkulen Board that thirty-six chests of opium had been consigned to him without his knowledge on the Company ship

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1. Pybus to Court, 6 April 1754, pars. 28-9, Pybus and Walsh to FSG, 6 Aug. 1754, pars. 36-8, SFR 10.
 2. Pybus and Walsh to FSG, 6 Aug. 1754, pars. 36-8, SFR 10.
 3. Pybus to FSG, 23 Feb. 1755, SFR 10A.

Oxford, which could scarcely be sent back now that they had arrived at Fort Marlborough. As opium was badly needed on the West Coast, these thirty-six chests were purchased at the high price of \$260 per chest and sent north.¹ By March 1758, however, part of this consignment was still unsold, and the Natal Resident informed the Board that it was very dry and hard and so short-weighted that the local merchants refused to buy it. The Board then informed the Court that the attempts to make Natal self-supporting had failed through lack of supplies of iron, salt and opium to sell on Company account and that opium in particular had been a problem because most of it had been purchased secondhand instead of being sent directly from Calcutta.² By this time the Court had terminated the experiment in selling opium on Company account and had disapproved Fort St. George's appointment of Pybus as Deputy Governor at Fort Marlborough.³ The Court concurred with the Benkulen authorities that

Interested views seem to have deprived us of the advantages we might have expected from our Settlement of Nattal, for as you justly remark, Ophium should come directly from Bengal for our Account where as our late Deputy Governor Mr. Pybus sold it [to] You on his own Account or for his Friends at a Price that we must conclude from your own observations could give little Prospect of Profit.⁴

The Court was particularly incensed because the poor quality of the opium Pybus had sold could have lost the Company its northern customers and thrown the trade in 'this valuable Article into Dutch channels'.⁵

On the Court's orders, Pybus left the West Coast to return to Madras in 1757. Not surprisingly, he had been bitterly disliked by the West Sumatran establishment, not only for having gained the governorship at the expense of the senior Benkulen servants, but also for having disrupted all the servants' private trade in opium, salt and iron.

1. FM to FSG, 15 Sept. 1757, SFR 11.
2. FM to Court, 3 March 1758, par. 13, SFR 11.
3. Court to FM, 29 Dec. 1756, par. 60, SFR 31.
4. Court to FM, 13 Feb. 1759, par. 30, SFR 31.
5. *ibid.*

RAJA BOUKIT OF SORKAM'S RELATIONSHIP WITH
THE VOC AND THE ACHEHNESE

Raja Boukit of Sorkam, who was under contract to the VOC but was also ethnically an Achehnese, was caught between the demands of Padang and Panglima Laut in the 1750s. There is some evidence that he was under pressure from the Panglima at least as early as 1756; after Panglima Laut had been expelled from Tapanuli Bay by the English and had retreated to Sorkam with only a fragment of his original force intact, the Baros Resident nevertheless wrote to Padang that Boukit did not dare to leave his negeri, in order to bring the Dutch-backed Tapanuli chief's appeal for aid against the English to Baros, 'on account of Achehnese wishes', although he did send his brother with this message.¹

The Dutch to some extent encouraged Raja Boukit's co-operation with Panglima Laut and on or before 1758 even offered Boukit a 'military honour' and a five-gun salute when he visited Baros, as an incentive to attack the English at Tapanuli.² Boukit, by his own account in 1760, had provided opium, rice and oil worth Rix-dollars 130 for Panglima Laut's first attack on Tapanuli in the late 1750s, as well as five matchlocks, five hundred bullets and some oil for the Bataks who took part in this foray. It resulted, according to Boukit, in two dead and three wounded for the English and eight killed for Panglima Laut. For the Panglima's second attack on Tapanuli, Boukit again supplied oil, opium and rice, worth Rix-dollars 130, plus a can of oil, four hundred bullets, five katis of lead, three buffaloes and six matchlocks for the Batak forces. This raid resulted in one dead and three Bataks wounded for Panglima Laut and ten English wounded, of whom nine were subsequently eaten by the Bataks. Boukit explained all this to Padang early in 1760 in

1. Baros to Padang, 15 Feb. 1756, KA 2779, pp. 37-8.

2. Padang to Baros, 12 April, 6 Aug. 1758, in Padang Vergadering, 21 Jan. 1761, KA 2917, pp. 475-6.

an attempt to obtain reimbursement from the Dutch for his expenses, and he added that Panglima Laut had come back to Sorkam because he was once more short of supplies.¹

There is no indication that Raja Boukit ever received the requested compensation from Padang, and the Dutch somewhat unfairly later included Boukit's and Panglima Laut's demand for Rix-dollars 3000 as an indemnity for military ranks killed in the Tapanuli raids among the formal charges against Raja Boukit which resulted from his participation in Panglima Laut's raid on Baros at the end of 1760.² The absence of any tangible Dutch gratitude for his efforts at Tapanuli may have induced the Sorkam chief to join in this attack against the Dutch. Not only had Padang granted Boukit no compensation, but the Baros Resident had even confiscated 3345 ponds of his benzoin as contraband, although the gum was later returned to him. More important, in September 1760, the Dutch had cancelled his 'military honour', of which he was very proud, on the grounds that he had failed to make good his promise to drive the English from Tapanuli. The withdrawal of Boukit's 'military honour' was the result of complaints from the Raja of Baros, who considered it inappropriate for one of his supposed subordinates, and the decision had been a difficult one for Padang because political realities in the Baros area no longer corresponded with formal political status. Raja Baros was justified in his demands from the standpoint of protocol, but the Dutch authorities feared trouble from Boukit if he were insulted because the Sorkam chief had 'a considerably greater following of Achehnese than Raja Baros can make up out of his whole negori's people'.³ The raid on Baros soon confirmed Padang's fears.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which Raja Boukit's commitment to Panglima Laut's cause was genuine and voluntary. As late as June 1760

1. Padang Vergadering, 15 Sept. 1760, KA 2917, pp. 325-8.
2. Padang Vergadering, 21 Jan. 1761, KA 2917, p. 473.
3. Padang to Batavia, 10 April 1760, KA 2886, p. 102; Padang Vergadering 15 Sept. 1760, KA 2917, pp. 325-8.

Padang had described Boukit as a 'sly dog' who bore watching but still considered him generally loyal to the Dutch interest.¹ After the raid on Baros, however, Padang charged that he had always used this supposed co-operation with the Dutch merely as a cover for his increasing involvement with Panglima Laut, and most of the charges at Boukit's trial concerned acts committed by Panglima Laut in which the Sorkam chief was allegedly guilty of complicity.² It appears that in the 1750s Raja Boukit was attempting to placate and to reap whatever practical benefits were possible from both of the powers with whom he was obliged to deal and that until the Achehnese defeat at Baros in 1760, his association with Panglima Laut was proving by far the more advantageous connection.

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1. van de Wall to Senff, Padang, 25 June 1760, KA 2886, pp. 178-9.
 2. Padang Vergadering, 21 Jan. 1761, KA 2917, pp. 468-80.

THE CAPTURE OF TAPANULI BY THE ACHEHNESE IN 1786

The only successful attack on a British settlement in West Sumatra between 1735 and 1787, with the exception of the French capture of Fort Marlborough in 1760, was accomplished by only about thirty Achehnese who surprised the post at Tapanuli in 1786. Word of the attack reached Fort Marlborough in March 1786, and an expedition of over one hundred men was fitted out to avenge the insult to the Company and punish the Achehnese raiders, who by this time had plundered and left the factory. During April, May and June, this expedition, commanded by John Griffiths, pursued the Achehnese and engaged them at Sorkam, Tapus and Moara Tellore but failed to capture their principal leaders - Po Nallee, Leube Batta, and Panglima Po Chindi.¹

Suspicious that the Achehnese at Singkil had been behind the raid and had used 'known pirates' in order to be able to disclaim responsibility, Griffiths went on to Singkil at the end of June to demand satisfaction. He landed his forces at Singkil but in the end he was unable to use them. He possessed no firm proof of the chiefs' complicity in the raid on Tapanuli, and they not only denied any involvement in it but also stated pointedly that Singkil was under the protection of the Achehnese crown. Griffiths was unwilling to risk possible confrontation with the Sultan of Aceh, and so he was able only to obtain Leube Dapa's and Leube Mudan's written agreement to capture the Achehnese responsible for the attack and to control future Achehnese movements south of Singkil - an engagement which the Singkil chiefs kept, at least in part.²

Of the Achehnese whom Fort Marlborough considered culpable, Po Moodo See Colay and Leube Byer had gone to Banda Aceh by September 1786, and Po Chindi

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1. FM Cons., 27 March, 30 April, 4 May, 28 June, 10 Nov. 1786, SFR 89; Lee Kam Hing, 'Aceh's Relations with the British', op. cit., pp. 81-4.
 2. FM Cons., 28 June, 23 Aug., 6 Sept., 16 Sept., 10 Nov. 1786, SFR 89; Lee Kam Hing, 'Aceh's Relations with the British', op. cit., pp. 84-7.

and Po Nallee were at Labuan Hadji. The Singkil chiefs fitted out cruisers against them, and by November Singkil reported to the English that Po Chindi had been killed with four of his followers. Po Nallee, on the other hand, survived to become Dato Besar of the North Sumatran port of Maunghin, which he founded after being driven from Labuan Hadji. By 1814, Maunghin was acknowledged as a dependency of the Sultan of Acheh and had so developed under Po Nallee's leadership that its population was estimated at 10,000 Achehnese and its produce at 20,000 pikuls of pepper per year.¹

1. FM Cons., 16 Sept., 10 Oct., 10 Nov. 1786, SFR 89;
John Prince to Captain J. Canning, 4 June 1814, Memorandum A,
Enclosure No. 6, Captain J. Canning's Report, 24 Nov. 1814, SFR 27;
Captain J. Canning's Report, 24 Nov. 1814, par. 39, SFR 27.

THE MANUFACTURE OF SUGAR AND ARRACK AT FORT MARLBOROUGH

The arrack and sugar works begun at Fort Marlborough in 1769 was at least the third attempt at this industry during the eighteenth century. One venture had ended in the late 1730s with an irrecoverable debt of \$6858.2.52 owed to the Company from the Chinese contractor; nevertheless another attempt to produce arrack and sugar locally was made about a decade later. The Benkulen Board instructed Governor Hurlock to investigate the chances of reviving the manufacture in 1750 as a means both of avoiding the expense of importing these products from Batavia and of finding another source of merchandise for export from British Sumatra. In order to induce some of the Chinese resident at Benkulen to invest their own funds in such a project, the Fort Marlborough authorities offered to purchase on Company account all the sugar and arrack produced, at \$6 per pikul and \$60 per leaguer respectively, for a period of at least five years.¹ The Bugis Captain at Fort Marlborough, Daeng Macooley, and five Chinese, including Nakhoda Benjar, eventually volunteered to undertake the project in 1751. When their contract with the Company was signed, however, they requested an advance of \$2000 to buy refining and distilling equipment at Batavia and draft animals and slaves for the use of the plantation, plus the promise of an additional advance of \$5000 if further capital was found to be necessary. Although the Benkulen authorities had intended to avoid the use of official money to preclude the possibility of further losses to the Company from the manufacture of sugar and arrack, they agreed to the requested advance on the grounds that a flourishing sugar and arrack industry would benefit both the Company and the West Coast servants. As only one contractor had been involved in the disastrous venture in the 1720s and 1730s, the Board judged that six men jointly responsible for repaying the money advanced to begin the new project should be sufficient insurance against another default.² Nevertheless, although moderate amounts of

1. FM Cons., 31 March 1750, SFR 65.

2. FM Cons., 24 Jan. 1751, SFR 65.

sugar and arrack were delivered to the Company's godowns in the 1750s, when the French captured the West Coast in 1760, a debt to the Company of \$6-7000 remained unpaid by the contractors.¹

The Fort Marlborough authorities once again broached the subject of re-establishing a sugar and arrack works in 1765, principally as a means of diversifying the West Coast's exports at a time when their private trade in benzoin and camphor had slackened owing to a glut of both products in India and Europe.² The Court, as a result of its previous losses from sugar and arrack, was reluctant to commit more funds to the undertaking and finally agreed only when Fort Marlborough promised to devise a plan by which the local servants would indemnify the Company for any losses from the project, except those occasioned by the recapture of the West Coast settlements in a war.³

On 24 October 1769, within a month of the arrival at Fort Marlborough of the letter containing the Court's permission for a sugar and arrack works, the members of the Benkulen Council offered themselves as private contractors to establish the manufacture. They proposed that \$20,000 of Company money be advanced to them for the project, free of interest for three years and carrying only five per cent interest for another seven years. The Company was also to supply them with fifty slaves and provide the equipment needed at a twenty-five per cent mark-up on prime cost. The arrack produced was to be sold to the Company for \$60 per leaguer of 160 gallons and the sugar at \$4½ per pikul of 132 pounds.⁴

These proposals generated a storm of protest from the rest of the Benkulen servants on the grounds that the Council's General Concern was once again attempting to monopolise the most lucrative branches of the settlement's trade. The resistance

1. FM Cons., 31 Oct. 1769, SFR 77.
2. FM to Court, 20 March 1765, par. 126, SFR 13.
3. Court to FM, 25 Jan. 1765, par. 51, SFR 31; Court to FM, 24 Dec. 1766, par. 27, 14 Dec. 1768, par. 39, SFR 32.
4. FM Cons., 24 Oct. 1769, SFR 77.

was led by Councillor John Herbert, who had already withdrawn from the General Concern and set up a rival commercial syndicate in 1768. According to Councillor Stokeham Donston, who was one of Herbert's partners, the Council had awarded themselves the contract to manufacture sugar and arrack without giving any public notification of the fact or requesting any alternative tenders. Although a Councillor, Herbert had not been informed of the proceeding and had learned of it only when he entered the Council room for a meeting just after the award had been made. Donston stated that 'except for Mr. Herbert, the Board made the proposals and were the acceptors of them, being their own Carvers, one may easily imagine how a set of selfish people wou'd cut'.¹ Donston also said that Governor Wyatt had signed Second of Council Joseph Darvall's name to the agreement without his knowledge.

On 28 October 1769, Herbert, Donston and Edward Coles promised to protest the illegality of these proceedings to the Court and told the Board either to include them and twenty-eight other Benkulen servants in the scheme or to consider other bids to manage the sugar works. They then proposed their own terms, which underbid the General Concern's in every respect. They suggested a capital outlay of \$15,000, only two-thirds of which was to be provided by the Company with the remaining one-third to be raised by the proprietors, who could subscribe according to their means by purchasing shares at \$50 each. They requested only thirty Company slaves for a maximum of three years until they could acquire their own labour force. They also offered to deliver all the sugar and arrack produced to the Company at \$4 per pikul of 133-1/3 pounds and \$55 per leaguer of 160 gallons respectively.²

Governor Wyatt and Councillors Nairne and Tierney, the only three General Concern members residing at Fort Marlborough, replied to Herbert's proposals three days later, rejecting his bid to manage the arrack and sugar manufacture. Their

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1. Stokeham Donston to George Donston, 10 Jan. 1770, 21 Jan. 1771, Donston Papers.
 2. FM Cons., 28 Oct. 1769, SFR 77.

proceedings, they claimed, had not been conducted in secret as Herbert alleged; it was common knowledge that revival of the manufacture had long been mooted at the settlement. Governor Carter had regularly posted invitations for bids to undertake the project but had found no one brave enough to accept the risk. They themselves considered it a very hazardous undertaking and noted as evidence of this that Nakhoda Benjar, one of the contractors in the 1750s, refused to invest any of his money in the project, although he had agreed to oversee the works for them. They were relying on their proven ability to co-operate among themselves to make the venture a success and to preserve them from losses which they were pledged to repay to the Company. The terms they proposed were not extravagant but had been carefully calculated to provide sufficient men and material to put the operation on a sound footing from the outset, as Europeans had never before attempted to manage the manufacture.¹

The Court, however, was furious at what it considered the Council co-partnership's 'too evident Self interest' in clinging to its own proposals instead of accepting the lowest bid offered to undertake the manufacture. The General Concern's contract was nullified and the project awarded to Herbert and his partners by the Court's letter of 23 November 1770. The Directors also censured Wyatt for subscribing Darvall's name to the Concern's tender without his consent.² As a result in July 1771, the sugar and arrack manufacture was turned over to the new contractors. They included Councillors Herbert and Donston, Senior Merchant Edward Coles and thirty-nine junior servants, and were chaired by Joseph Darvall who had resigned his Residency of Natal to head the new company.³

Wyatt and his partners presented a bill for \$14,462.3.67 invested by the General Concern in the venture between 1 November 1769 and 31 May 1771 and once

1. FM Cons., 31 Oct. 1769, SFR 77.
2. Court to FM, 23 Nov. 1770, pars. 14-6, SFR 32.
3. FM Cons., 8 June, 13 and 27 July 1771, SFR 79.

again protested that the new contractors were so under capitalised and so numerous that they could not hope to build a successful enterprise, even on the solid foundation which they had inherited from the General Concern.¹ There may have been some truth in this contention, for the new company was not a success. Hew Steuart, one of the original contractors, noted with glee early in 1773 that the sugar and arrack works had been in decline ever since the General Concern had lost control of it.² By January 1776, at the proprietors' request, the Company reluctantly took charge of the sugar and arrack manufacture at Fort Marlborough in yet another attempt to put it on a profitable footing.³

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1. FM Cons., 27 July, 8 Sept. 1771, SFR 79.
 2. Hew Steuart to his sister, 1 Dec. 1772, 25 April 1773, Steuart Papers.
 3. Kathirithamby, 'British West Sumatra', op. cit., pp. 225-6.

G L O S S A R Y

- adat customary law.
- atap roofing for buildings made of a thatch of palm leaves.
- banting a two-masted Achehnese vessel capable of carrying twenty or thirty men and of mounting swivel guns. Marsden suggests that it was usually used for trading.
- belalong a two-masted Achehnese vessel with double or single outriggers, narrower in the beam than the banting but like it capable of mounting guns and carrying a number of men. Generally used as a war-boat.
- benteng a fort or stronghold.
- chop (chap) ruler's seal on an official document, therefore an edict or agreement.
- chunam prepared lime.
- colay (koleh) single-masted Achehnese fishing boat.
- daeng a Bugis title of distinction.
- dato (datok) a Malay title of distinction usually given to an adat chief in West Sumatra.
- dusun literally orchard, used by the English at Benkulen to denote the villages in the pepper-growing regions.
- gonting one of the several varieties of Indonesian sailing craft, apparently used principally in trading.
- jalore
(jalor) a two-masted Achehnese vessel with outriggers, capable of carrying men and mounting swivel guns, used principally as a war-boat.
- juritulis a Malay writer, employed by the English on the West Coast as interpreter and Malay clerk.
- kulit kayu the bark of certain trees used in Sumatran buildings as roofing or siding.
- kuala river mouth or estuary.
- kemanakan literally nephew, and therefore according to Minangkabau matrilineal adat, heir.
- lascar a term of Persian derivation denoting an Indian or East Indian sailor.
- nakhoda a term of Persian derivation denoting the captain of an Asian ship or vessel.
- negeri a term of Sanskrit derivation denoting a town, state, or settlement.
- padi unhusked rice.

<u>pagar</u>	fence or palisade.
<u>panchallang</u>	a type of Indonesian sailing craft.
<u>panglima</u>	military leader, also the title given to Achehnese-appointed governors of provinces.
<u>pengeran</u>	a title of nobility used in Java and Borneo, in southern Sumatra applied to the chief of a district composed of a number of <u>dusuns</u> , whose principal authority lay in the determination of judicial appeals.
<u>penghulu</u>	village headman or local chief.
<u>peroatin</u>	semi-hereditary village headman in southern Sumatra.
<u>perahu</u> (<u>proaw</u> , <u>praw</u> , <u>proa</u> , <u>prahu</u>)	generic Malay term for boat or ship, usually referring to a coasting vessel of about thirty feet in length with both sails and oars.
<u>pulau</u>	island.
<u>orang tua</u>	old man or village elder.
<u>raja</u>	a term of Sanskrit derivation meaning king or prince, in West Sumatra frequently appropriated by lesser officials, <u>datos</u> and <u>penghulus</u> .
<u>rakan</u>	companion or comrade, often used to refer to the followers of an Achehnese or Malay chief who constituted his private army.
<u>regent</u>	a standard Dutch term denoting <u>penghulu</u> or chief.
<u>sarakata</u>	an official document, letter of patent or commission stamped with the Sultan of Acheh's seal.
<u>serampoe</u> (<u>serempu</u>)	a small Malay vessel with a dug-out hull.
<u>stuurman</u>	literally helmsman, also a Dutch naval rank.
<u>syrang</u> (<u>serang</u>)	a petty officer or quarter-master on an Asian ship or vessel.
<u>temenggong</u>	a Malay dignitary of high rank.
<u>tombongan</u>	a type of Indonesian coasting craft.

Source: R. J. Wilkinson, An Abridged Malay-English Dictionary, 8th ed., rev. (New York, 1961); H. Yule and A. C. Burnell, Hobson-Jobson: a Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words (London, 1903); Marsden, History, op. cit.; Forrest, Voyage to Mergui, op. cit.

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[Sections for Sumatra's Westkust only]

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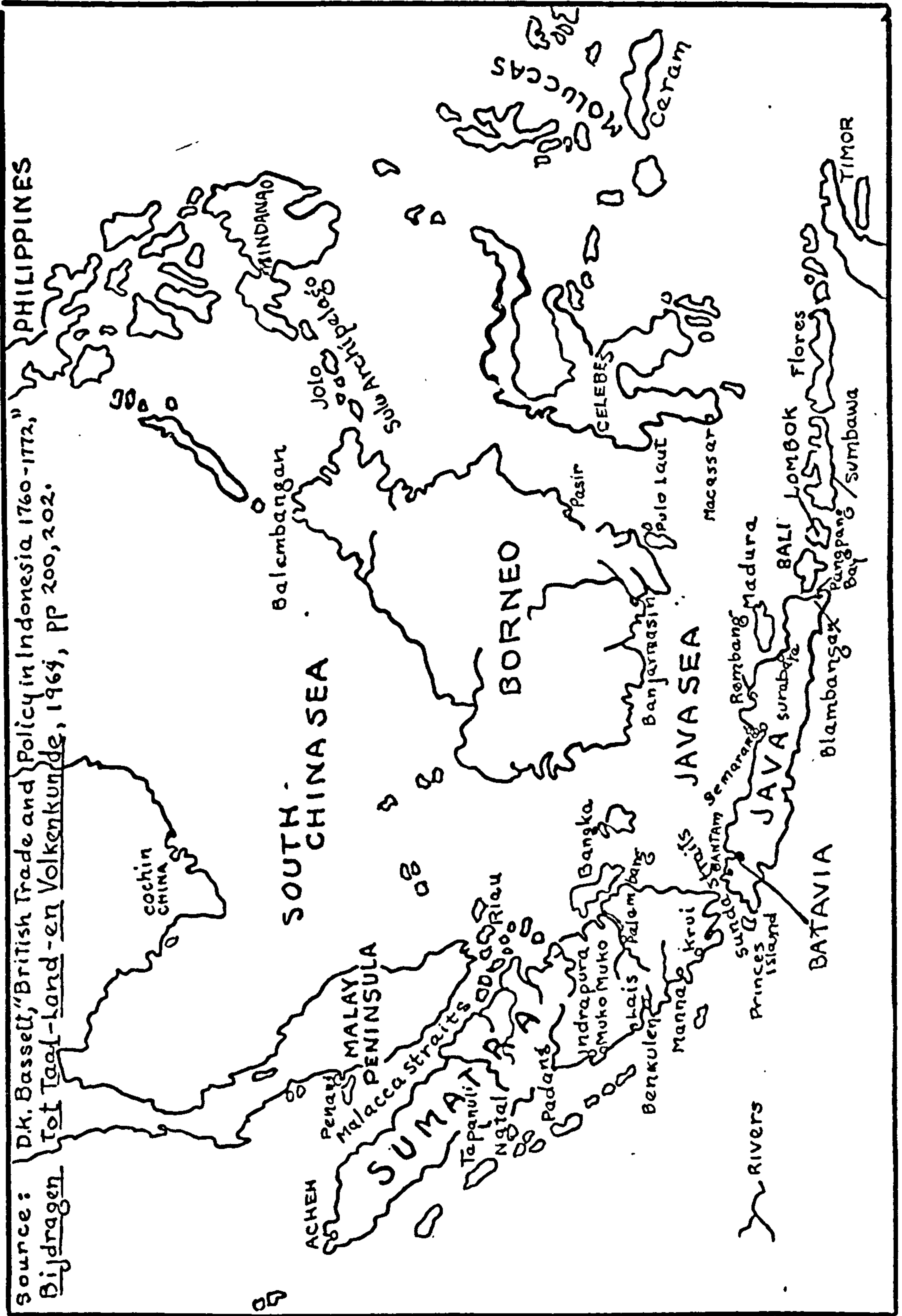
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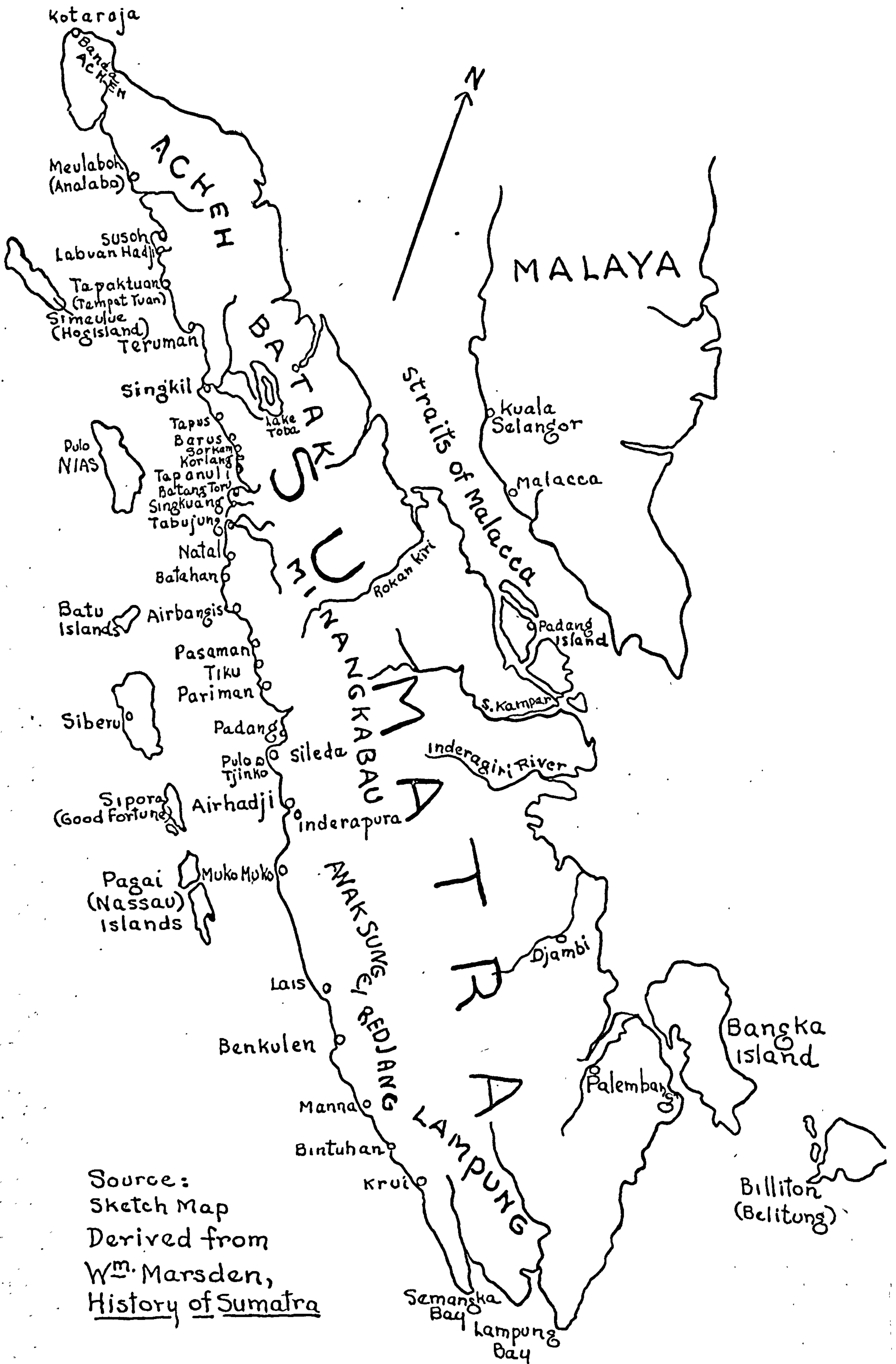
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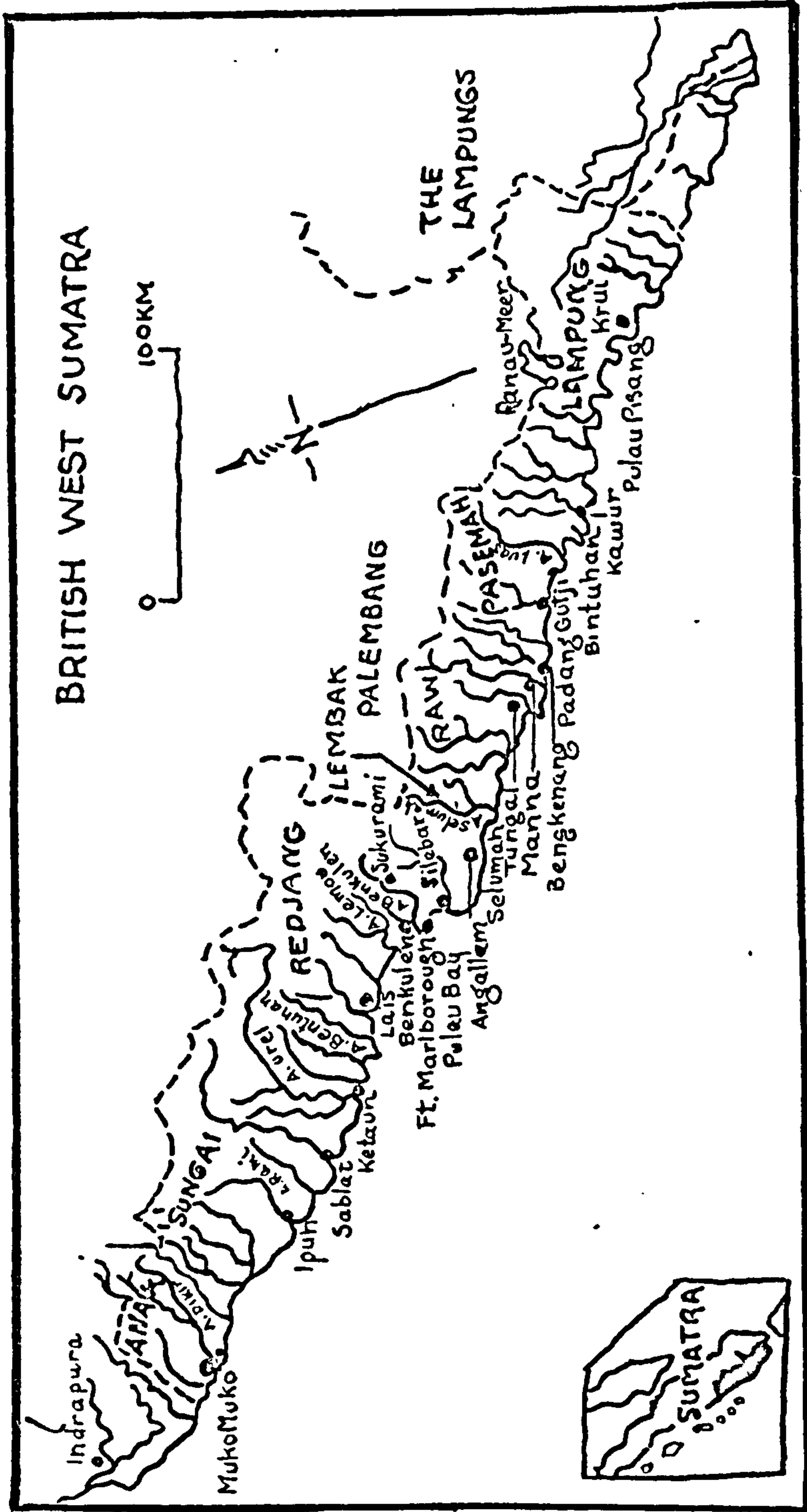
source: Dk. Bassett, "British Trade and Policy in Indonesia 1760-1772," PHILIPPINES
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Source:
 Sketch Map
 Derived from
 W^m. Marsden,
History of Sumatra

J. KATHIRITHAMBY-WELLS

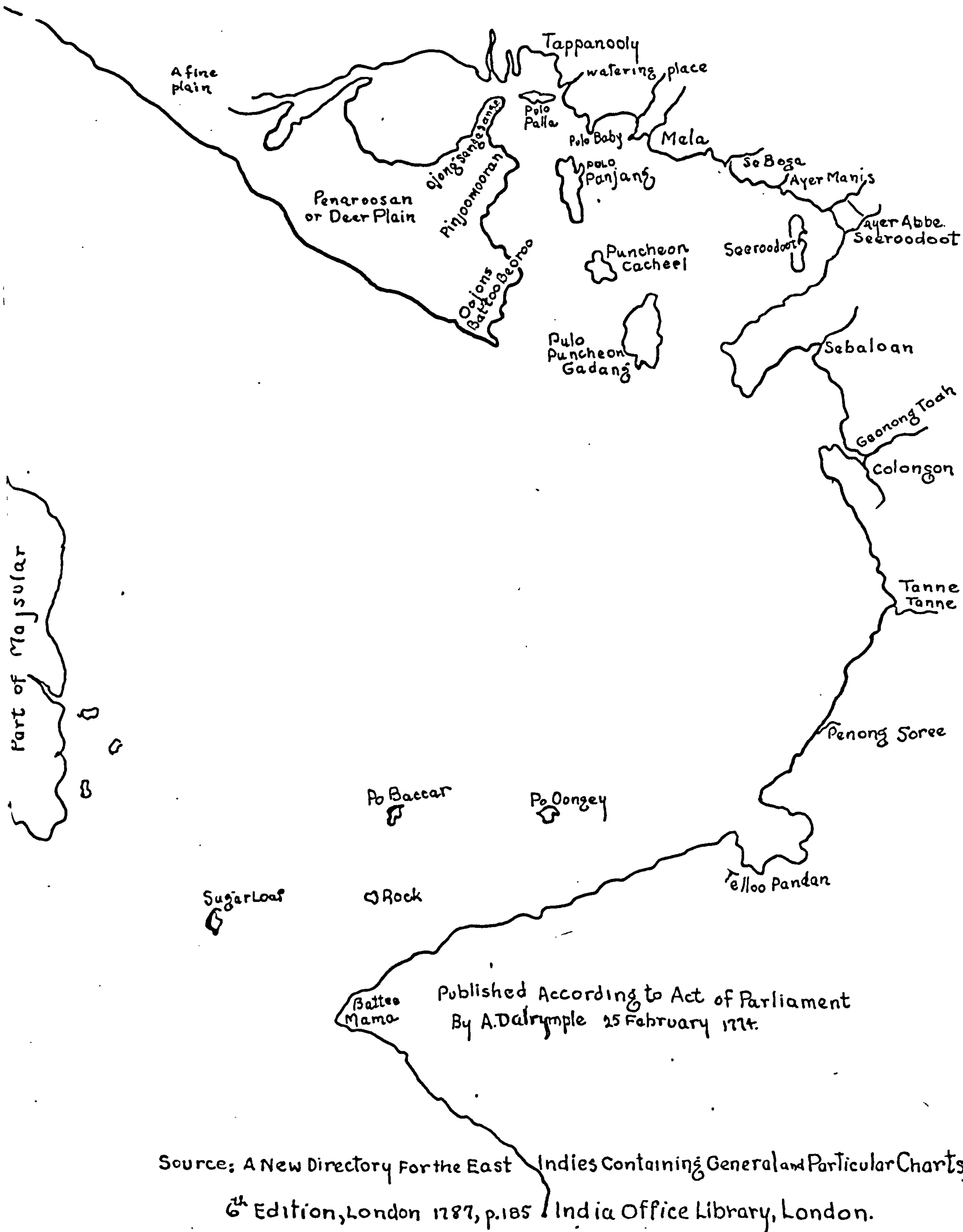


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Plan of Tappanooly or Tappanooly

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Source: A New Directory For the East Indies Containing General and Particular Charts,
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