

Kettle on a Slow Boil: Batavia's Threat Perceptions in the Indies' Outer Islands, 1870–1910

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In the years between 1870 and 1910 a frontier linking institutions and state capabilities was erected between Dutch and British possessions in Southeast Asia.¹ Lands and seas that were partially unknown to Batavia and Singapore were explored and then mapped; *the rapidly evolving science of cartography became a major tool in empire-building in Southeast Asia, just as it had elsewhere on the globe.* As these two colonial capitals expanded their influence into the spaces that separated them, contracts were closed with area potentates, and borders were drawn up which were increasingly meaningful on the ground. Dotted lines that had meaning for policy-makers in European metropolises increasingly started to become realities in the archipelago; armed-forces, police-units, and legal structures were utilized to ensure that this would remain so. By the turn of the twentieth century, a whole range of mechanisms existed to strengthen the Anglo-Dutch frontier. *Improved communications brought the periphery closer to Batavia and Singapore,* and agents of the state — including ethnographers, missionaries, and administrators in the field — enforced different aspects of colonial control. The year 1910 saw a more or less “finished frontier” in the region, one which looks remarkably like the Malaysian-Indonesian boundary of the post-independence period.

Despite this evolution, however, the “Outer Islands” of the Indies remained a terrain weighted with anxiety for the Dutch throughout this period. Why? What potential terrors did Batavia see in these far-flung lands and seas of the border arc? Why were these spaces deemed continually dangerous, despite the fact that Dutch power was steadily growing over time? Which populations or phenomena particularly caused worry amongst Batavia's planners, and for what reasons? Perhaps most importantly, why were these anxieties so pronounced, when the Dutch were on the cusp of building a massive island empire in the region?

This article seeks to answer some of these questions by examining events along the Western “Outer Island” rim of the Indies, encompassing Sumatra, the islands of the South China Sea, and the forest frontier of Borneo. It is divided into three parts. The first looks at “uncontrolled violence” as a spectre of anxiety to the state, in connection both with piracy (which was rampant, especially in the early years under investigation), and with other forms of violence, also thought to be pervasive in the Indies. The second focuses on *Vreemde Oosterlingen*, or Foreign Asians — often identified by Batavia as a separate threatening element. Large populations of Chinese, Japanese, and Middle-Eastern Arabs criss-crossed the Indies, many of them regarded by the state with utmost suspicion. The final section concentrates on the greatest “threat” of all, at least numerically — the people

¹I would like to thank Barbara Watson Andaya, Ben Kiernan, James Scott, John Sidel, Jonathan Spence, and an anonymous reviewer from this journal for comments and critique on an earlier version of this article. The views expressed (and any errors of fact or judgement) are of course only my own.

native to the Indies themselves, now called "Pribumi Indonesians". Dutch administrators were responsible for a wide range of unpopular policies directed toward these groups — wars of conquest, attempts to restrict hitherto unfettered population movements, and the imposition of discriminatory laws. It is the contention of this essay that Batavia continually saw dark forces at work along its Outer Island frontier, only some of which were ever real. This article looks at these "threats" from the standpoint of Batavia, examining whom and what the Dutch feared in the Indies at the turn of the twentieth century.

Uncontrolled Violence

Piracy

One of the principal perceived threats to colonial state-making in insular Southeast Asia was piracy — the looting, robbing, and violence practised by various seafaring peoples in the region. Nineteenth-century British and Dutch treatments of the phenomenon of piracy were numerous and (primarily) policy-grounded: authors such as the Dutchman J.H.P.E. Kniphorst, and the much more famous Stamford Raffles and James Brooke, saw piracy as a manifestation of cultural anomie that needed to be stamped out if "civilization" were to come to the region.² It has subsequently become clear that the realities of what has loosely been called "piracy" were far more complicated. Scholars of our own time have shown how such maritime violence, slaving, and attacks on commercial shipping can often be much more accurately understood within the context of local political and economic systems, providing the necessary status and surplus which made whole societies run. Some of the best revisionist scholarship in this vein has focused on piracy in Borneo waters, though the contested areas often stretch further afield to include North Sulawesi and the Sulu basin as well.³ Other scholars, working in different locales, have problematized

²See the series of articles by J.H.P.E. Kniphorst entitled "Historische Schets van den Zeerof in den Oost-Indischen Archipel", in *Tijdschrift Zeewezen*, 1876: "Inleiding" (p. 3), "De Bewoners van den Oost-Indischen Archipel" (p. 48), "Oorsprong and Ontwikkeling van den Zeeroof" (p. 159), "Philippijnsche Eilanden en Noordelijk Borneo I, II" (pp. 195, 283); "Philippijnsche Eilanden en Noordelijk Borneo, III" (p. 353); 1877: "De Moluksche Eilanden en Nieuw-Guinea" (p. 1), "De Moluksche Eilanden en Nieuw-Guinea, II" (p. 135), "Timorsche Wateren" (p. 237); 1878: "Celebes en Onderhoorigheden" (p. 1), "Celebes en Onderhoorigheden, II" (p. 107), "Sumatra" (p. 213); 1879: "Sumatra, II" (p. 1), "Het Maleische Schiereiland" (p. 85), "Riouw en Onderhoorigheden" (p.173); 1880: "Banka en Billiton" (p. 1), "Borneo's Oost-, Zuid- en West-Kust" (p. 89). See also Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles* (London: James Duncan, 1835); and Sir James Brooke, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes, Down to the Occupation of Labuan* (London: John Murray, 1848). Many of the sea-peoples described here (especially in Borneo) were in fact led by land-dwelling Malays.

³See Adrian Lapien, "The Sealords of Berau and Mindanao: Two Responses to the Colonial Challenge", *Masyarakat Indonesia* 1,2 (1974): 143–54; and Anne Reber, "The Sulu World in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries: A Historiographical Problem in British Writings on Malay Piracy" (M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 1966). Both of these somewhat supersede Nicholas Tarling, *Piracy and Politics in the Malay World: A Study of British Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Donald Moore, 1963); and Owen Rutter, *The Pirate Wind: Tales of the Sea-Robbers of Malaya* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986), which has primary accounts of an earlier age. The best single study is still James Warren, *The Sulu Zone: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981).

the conception of piracy from other angles, showing how these depredations could be seasonal or temporary survival strategies which had little to do with any overt, political challenge against a particular state.⁴

Piracy remained a threat to processes of colonial state formation at the beginning of our period for several inter-connected reasons. Perhaps first among these was the fact that the geography of the long frontier between Dutch and British spheres of interest lent itself admirably to concealment and evasion on the part of potential marauders. The writings of *Dutch Residents in the Outer Islands in the 1870s* comment on this prodigiously: the maze of tiny islands that make up the Riau Archipelago opposite Singapore served as a natural choke-point for these sorts of activities, as did the huge Gulf of Gorontalo in North Sulawesi, which became a haven for *prahus* operating on the northern fringes of Dutch authority.⁵ The fens and creeks of long, unprotected coastlines also served as natural refuges for pirates. Dutch and British administrators found this out in Aceh and the Malay Peninsula, respectively, when Malay potentates complained about the Straits' labyrinthine coastal swamps and the protection these offered to lurking Chinese corsairs.⁶ Men with guns seemed to be everywhere in the Straits of Malacca, a state of affairs noted on both sides of the international waterway.

The presence of the many rivers of this region also abetted piracy as a threat to colonial states. Networks of rivers have been the traditional arteries of commerce and contact in much of insular Southeast Asia for centuries. As early as 1849, the British were conducting expeditions up the rivers of Borneo against pirates, while Dutch Residents on the eastern coast of the island posted warnings that the mouths of the Berau and Barito (made famous in many of Joseph Conrad's stories) were unsafe due to high levels of piracy.⁷ Yet the waters in and around Borneo were not the only sites of potential trouble for Europeans. Even in Palembang, South Sumatra, which had been officially conquered by the Dutch for 50 years by the start of our account, the uplands of the Musi River continued to pump piracy, chaos, and violence into the sea-lanes until after the end of the

⁴See Dian Murray's work on the South China/Vietnamese coasts of the turn of the 19th century, *Pirates of the South China Coast, 1790–1810* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987). The shipping activities of various European nations (English, Dutch, Spanish, etc.) can easily be described as "piratical" during this time period as well. For an indigenous account of piracy in the region (focusing primarily on the first half of the 19th century), see Virginia Matheson and Barbara Watson Andaya, trans., *The Precious Gift (Tuhfat al-Nafis)* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1982). See also Carl Trocki, *Prince of Pirates: The Temenggongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore 1784–1885* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1979). Though "corsairs" occasionally attacked European ships, most piracy in the region was directed at indigenous or Chinese shipping.

⁵Arsip Nasional Indonesia (hereafter ARNAS), "Maandrapport der Residentie Riouw 1873" (Riouw #66/2: July); "Verslag Omtrent den Zeeroof over het Jaar 1876", *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* (hereafter *TBG*) 24 (1877): 475.

⁶J.A. Kruijt, *Atjeh en de Atjehers: Twee Jaren Blokkade op Sumatra's Noord-Oost-Kust* (Leiden: Gualth. Koff, 1877); Captain Woolcombe to Vice Admiral Shadwell, China Station, 6 Sep. 1873, no. 38, PRO/Admiralty 125/140; "Rajah Abdullah Mohamat Shah ibn Almarhome Sulatan Japahar to the Chinese Chiefs of the Sening Tew Chew and the Tew Chew Factions of the Chinese at Larut", 11 Aug. 1873, PRO/Admiralty 125/140.

⁷Rear Admiral Sir F. Collier to Secretary of Admiralty, 4 Sep. 1849, CO 144/3; ARNAS, *Politiek Verslag der Residentie Borneo Zuid-Oost 1871* (Borneo Z.O. #4/1).

century. The "rebellion" of Taha in the Jambi uplands contributed to this, as did the proximity of the flourishing harbour of Singapore, with all of the rich maritime prizes this port offered.⁸ One Dutch naval officer theorized that the rivers of Sumatra connected in many places in the (inaccessible) interior, allowing pirates to enter the Straits of Malacca from multiple sources — and exit, under European duress, just as quickly.⁹

Yet colonial European states knew very little, in the early period, about who the area's pirates actually were. Attempts were made to classify suspected culprits at sea based on the designs of sailing craft and sails, with Lingga (in Riau) being identified as one possible source for many pirates of the Outer Islands.¹⁰ When the Dutch did come across former captives of pirates, they interrogated such people relentlessly to find out as much as possible about pirate whereabouts and practices. One such escapee, a woman named Amina, was questioned as to how many weapons her captors had, how many ships, and even as to the men's customs and habits, all in an attempt to procure valuable information which was otherwise unavailable.¹¹ What Batavia and Singapore did come to know through experience was that they were often up against vessels that were only marginally inferior to their own, at least in these early decades. Piratical craft off the coast of the Malay Peninsula were mounted with swivel guns and manned by up to 80 men at a time, so that the British, in chases across the Straits of Malacca to Sumatra, often could not overtake them.¹² Towing-cables and impressive stocks of firearms were also not uncommon on pirate ships, while these vessels also carried planking and shielding devices to render them impervious to cannon fire.¹³ When European ships gained advantages through technological advances (as with the gradual advent of steam in these waters after 1870), pirates learned to adapt. One English warship reported that it was unable to approach and capture a group of pirates operating along the Borneo coast, as the draught of the ship was too great to operate in tidal mud-flats.¹⁴ Another account states that pirates in Dutch waters recognized that a light-beacon near the Sumatra coast was an ideal place to trap passing ships of prey, because all European craft naturally made for the lights to guide their passage toward the coast. By lying in wait nearby, the pirates could come upon these vessels unawares.¹⁵

Yet perhaps the largest problem facing early colonial administrators in their battle against piracy was the fact that pirates seemed to be able to appear or disappear out of thin air. Batavia and Singapore slowly came to understand that there was, in fact, no ontological category of "pirates" at all; people moved freely between piracy and many

⁸ARNAS, "Maandrapport der Residentie Banka 1871" (Banka #97/4: April).

⁹Kruijt, *Atjeh*, p. 169.

¹⁰ARNAS, "Politiek Verslag der Residentie Banka 1871" (Banka #124).

¹¹Algemeen Rijksarchief (hereafter ARA), [Report of Marsaoleh Tenaloga, chief of Bone, including a transcript of his interview with Amina, a woman who had escaped from Tobello pirates (18 Mar. 1876)] in 1876, MR #624.

¹²Capt. Woolcombe to Vice-Admiral Shadwell, China Station, 6 Sep. 1873, #38; Capt., *HMS Midge* to Capt. Woolcombe on the *Thalia*, 20 Aug. 1873, both in PRO/Admiralty 125/148.

¹³ARNAS, "Maandrapport der Residentie Banka 1871" (Banka #97/5: July); C. Northgate Parkinson, *Trade in the Eastern Seas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), p. 348.

¹⁴Statement of W.C. Cowie to Act. Gov. Treacher, 4 May 1879, CO 144/52.

¹⁵ARNAS, "Maandrapport der Residentie Banka 1871" (Banka #97/5: July).

other activities. Governor Treacher of Labuan was among the first to state this explicitly, commenting in 1879 that "for a gunboat to cruise about, expecting to pick up pirates at sea would be of no avail, as they can quickly assume the appearance of quiet traders".¹⁶ Chinese shrimping villages on the coast developed a particularly evil reputation for these chameleon-like qualities, though there is also evidence of Chinese and Malay traders in Riau moving in and out of "legal" occupations as opportunities arose.¹⁷ Off the eastern coast of Borneo, it was no secret at all that the Sultans of Berau and Gunung Tabur, among others, sponsored piracy, despite their protestations to the contrary. In these waters and off neighbouring Sulawesi, *trepang*-fishers took on the notoriety of Chinese shrimpers further west — the sight of men collecting edible sea cucumbers was an immediate and international sign for caution.¹⁸

As late as the 1890s, an uneasy balance prevailed between piracy and expanding colonial power in the waters of the *Buitenbezittingen* ("Outer Possessions"). Though Dutch legal codes started to become more sophisticated and direct in dealing with the perpetrators of such actions, enforcing these new realities on the ground was a whole other matter.¹⁹ The historical Captain Lingard of Singapore, one of the chief personages upon whom Conrad's "Eastern Waters" stories were based, was attacked repeatedly by pirates off Eastern Borneo in the late 1870s, with Malay informants stating that the corsairs were after his cargoes of valuable cloth.²⁰ When attacks on shipping in the Anambas Islands in the South China Sea (the northernmost islands of Dutch control in the western archipelago) became prevalent, a steamer from Jambi in Sumatra was eventually sent to patrol the area. This worked for a while, but in the vacuum left behind Sumatran piracy soon picked up again, with one famous bandit in particular robbing shipping and burning coastal settlements to the ground.²¹ In Borneo, the beginnings of British North Borneo Company oversight on the northern extremity of the island (between 1878 and 1881) allowed London to partially wash its hands of the piracy problem in these notoriously "infested" waters. One Foreign Office official noted dismissively that the disorder was "now the Company's problem".²²

¹⁶Gov. Treacher to Senior Naval Officer, Straits, 12 Jun. 1879, CO 144/52.

¹⁷Capt. Grant of the *HMS Midge* to Capt. Woolcombe on the *Thalia*, 11 Sep. 1873, PRO/Admiralty 125/148; JHPKE Kniphorst, "Historische Schets van den Zeerof in den Oost-Indischen Archipel: Riouw", *Tijdschrift Zeewezen* 1879: 224.

¹⁸ARNAS, "Politiek Verslag der Residentie Borneo Zuid-Oost 1872" (Borneo Z.O. #4/2); "Maandrapport der Residentie Borneo Zuid-Oost 1871" (Borneo Z.O. #10a/6: May). These particular sultans in Eastern Borneo seem to have given piratical craft safe haven in their dominions; we can safely assume that they received a cut of any profits as well.

¹⁹For punishments against piracy, as well as legal competencies of Dutch captains against piratical craft, see *Indische Staatsblad* 1876, #279, and 1877, #181, respectively.

²⁰See the statements of Dungen and Nauduah enclosed in W.C. Cowie to Act. Gov. Treacher, 2 Jun. 1879, CO 144/52.

²¹ARA, Resident Riouw to Gov. Gen. NEI (22 Apr. 1881, #823) in 1881, MR #396; also Resident East Coast Sumatra to Gov. Gen. NEI (10 Aug. 1885, #523) in 1885, MR #523.

²²See Gov. Leys, Labuan to the Foreign Office, 30 Jan. 1882, and the jacket enclosing this letter, CO 144/56. The Crown did not hold these lands at any point previous to the Company's title, but London was constantly preoccupied with geo-strategic considerations *vis-à-vis* Spain and Germany. The Company's firm lease of the lands, and the treaties which were signed between the European powers, relieved London of pressure to adopt some sort of policy regarding this area.

By the first decade of the twentieth century, piracy was in retreat in most parts of the Outer Islands. The phenomenal growth of steam shipping and its incorporation into Dutch and British naval forces in the region had much to do with this development, but the general "civilizing projects" of both states also played an important role. As people were forced into more sedentary lifestyles and the states' reach into the periphery grew, less and less space was available for such free-wheeling forms of politico-economic activity. This does not mean that piracy disappeared altogether. It just moved into the interstitial seams between the "sinews" of state power, seeking out places and moments where such attacks had a chance of success. In 1910, for example, two Dutch traders were killed by seven "Moros" ("Moors"), who had crossed from the Southern Philippines into the Dutch waters of Sulawesi; the Dutch and American colonial regimes cooperated in sending out reconnaissance parties and naval forces, until the Filipino marauders were killed.²³ A second incident in 1909 further illustrates the shrinking spaces available to marauders on this frontier: when an American citizen was kidnapped in Dutch waters off Borneo, Batavia alerted the British ship *Merlin* and nearby American forces to help retrieve the hostage. The pirates were eventually "annihilated", in the words of the British Foreign Office, but the incident touched a raw nerve in Holland. The Dutch envoy to London wrote home of British grumblings that the "Dutch territories in the East are too big for us", a seemingly off-hand statement that nevertheless caused great concern among policy-planners in The Hague.²⁴

General Low-level Violence

Piracy was not the only kind of "uncontrolled violence" to alarm Batavia during the years around the turn of the twentieth century. Residency reports from the great majority of Outer Island locales show that general, low-level violence was pervasive throughout the Indies as well. "Low-level violence" does not refer to Dutch wars against local rajas and sultans, or to urban crime, which colonial armies and police forces began to deal with more effectively toward the beginning of the twentieth century. The violence of the border arc that worried Europeans in the period under discussion was of a more tenuous character than these forms of "disorder". The Dutch did not seem to understand that their own state-making project in fact created much of this violence: in large parts of the Indies people were being asked to live under new sets of rules, and under terms and conditions set by the colonial state. It was only natural that there would be resistance to this evolving matrix of power, proscribed behaviour, and hierarchy in the Indies. If conditions in the outer spaces of the archipelago were already seen as inherently unstable in the years before 1870, the imposition of Dutch rule over large parts of the archipelago only exacerbated these conditions in the next several decades.

²³ARA, Executive Secretary Philippine Islands (Thomas Cary Welch) to Dutch Consul, Manila (PKA Meerkamp van Embden), 13 May 1910, Telegram (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken [hereafter MvBZ/A/277/A.134]).

²⁴ARA, Louis Mallet for Sir Edward Grey, F.O. to Minister for Foreign Affairs, The Hague, 4 Nov. 1909, #1927; and Dutch Consul, London to Minister for Foreign Affairs, The Hague, 6 Jul. 1909, #1900/1203 (MvBZ/A/277/A.134).

Violence and instability were still judged to be normal components of life in the Outer Islands, at least by certain Dutchmen in the nineteenth century. This was particularly true of the civil servants who wrote monthly reports and had to live outstation, for they understood the limits of Dutch authority in the 1870s and 1880s. It was less true of many government planners in Batavia, however, who with their own projects in mind received these reports, and came to their own conclusions. The Governor General reported back to the Ministry for the Colonies in the Hague that a worrying lack of safety prevailed in the Indies, and this statement — founded on the reports of Residencies all along the border arc — was to some degree correct.²⁵ Several kinds of “spaces” became zones where violence and instability particularly thrived in the Outer Islands. Areas along the Anglo-Dutch border were one of these places; the Resident of Western Borneo declared this openly, tying the frontier to robberies and murders that occurred frequently under his jurisdiction.²⁶ Outlying regions where Dutch authority was only nominal, such as the long coasts of New Guinea, constituted another of these spaces, as was reported when 18 English subjects were mysteriously (and embarrassingly, for Batavia) killed there in early 1873.²⁷ Yet perhaps the most violent space of all was in the vicinity of mining colonies, whether these were Chinese gold-mining cooperatives (*kongsis*) in Borneo or tin-mining cooperatives on Bangka, Billiton and in the Malay Peninsula. These places produced continual agitation against colonial regimes throughout the late nineteenth century. We need only read the frantic despatches from Singapore to London in 1873, when heavily-armed war junks from Macau sailed all the way to Malaya to support rival Chinese tin-mining *kongsis*, to see the anxieties mining caused nearby European administrators.²⁸

An added worry, from the perspective of Batavia, was that an increasing number of attacks and depredations in the Outer Islands seem to have been directed against Europeans. A glance across these Residencies in the early 1870s alone shows this definitively: acts of defiance and violence were committed against Europeans regularly, and statistics of these affairs quickly reached the centre. We can provide here just a few examples of the many reported cases: in Palembang in 1870 wandering bands of men who burned down a Dutch house at Muara Bliti were still at large, while in neighbouring Jambi three years later a Resident Sergeant Major (van Kesteren) was stabbed to death by a local resident.²⁹ Further up the coast, in Asahan, a messenger sent by the local *Controleur* into the interior was shot as he tried to deliver his letter.³⁰ A European woman was killed on Banda, far to the east in the Indies, while the Assistant Resident of Benkoelen, one of the most secure and long-standing areas of Dutch occupation in all of the Outer Islands, was nearly slain in the quiet dawn by people of his own regency. “I have the honour to report to Your Excellency”, he said “that at about 6 o’clock in the morning today an attempt was made — without favourable result — directly on my life.” Though he had to flee his house in

²⁵ARA, 1872, MR #24.

²⁶ARNAS, “Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1874” (Borneo West #5/4).

²⁷ARA, “Kort Verslag van de Stand van Zaken, en van Personeel in de Residentie Ternate over de Maand Maart, 1873 — Bijzondere Gebeurtenissen” in 1873, MR #257.

²⁸Gov. SS to Earl Kimberley, 24 Jul. 1873, no. 216, PRO/Admiralty 125/148.

²⁹ARNAS, “Maandrapport der Residentie Palembang 1870” (Palembang #74/8: May); ARA, Resident Palembang to Gov. Gen. NEI (5 Apr. 1873, #1798/6) in 1873, MR #281.

³⁰ARNAS, “Maandrapport der Residentie Riouw 1870” (Riouw #66/2: April).

a night-robe in disgrace, he escaped unscathed — although, he noted in the postscript of his letter, the same could not be said for his belongings or his home.³¹

The violence practised by Dutchmen against the local populations of the Indies far exceeded the reverse, of course. Yet we can see how the Outer Islands were continually deemed unsafe by the Dutch, even if by the end of the century, statistics from some Residencies began to show a slowing in the frequency of violent crime. In Western Borneo attempts on the lives of *controleurs* in outlying areas, such as an attack reported by E.F.G. Lorrain in Sanggau (1890), still occurred, however, while in Eastern Borneo the “*veiligheid van goederen en personen*” (“safety of goods and people”) was still considered poor by the Resident, with headhunting, robberies, and murder remaining prevalent in lands not under direct control.³² Across the frontier in the English dominions of Borneo, low-level violence also continued in peripheral areas: Chinese sago-collectors working in upriver Brunei preyed on Malay traders from Sarawak when they could, and armed bands from the British North Borneo Company's dominions attacked Brunei settlements on occasion, murdering Chinese villagers and Dayak policemen in the process.³³ Statistics from other Residencies, however, began to show a drop in some of the most serious examples of these depredations, as Dutch authority seeped into the *desas* (villages) and was felt more discernibly on the ground. In Riau, for example, the numbers on murders and armed insurrection went steadily down over the late 1880s. Murder, arson, and piracy were being replaced by the “disorder” of a more sedentary, effectively-policed Residency — petty theft, unruly conduct, and the like.³⁴

In keeping with our discussion of certain “spaces” where low-level violence was able to continue even until very late in our period, however, it is important to note that the general trend of instability diminishing over time in the border arc did not affect all places equally or simultaneously. Certain stretches of the frontier remained more troublesome to the Dutch than others, with Batavia singling out these places as areas where special surveillance should be employed. In Sumatra, unpacified uplands (*hulu*) were among these liminal spaces, as in the Gangsal area of Indragiri in 1905, where several policemen were murdered by roving bands from Jambi.³⁵ Acehese rebels also periodically struck within Sumatra's East Coast Residency in 1904, taking advantage of the relative quiet (and lax security) of that neighbouring administration, while outlying villagers resisted heavy corvee duties in parts of the Lampongs by burning down the houses of local officials.³⁶ Other violent spaces existed besides the “untamed hills”, the

³¹ARA, 1873, MR #337; and Asst. Res. Benkoelen to Gov. Gen. NEI (18 Apr. 1873, #983) in 1873, MR #262. Accounts of violence against Europeans were given far more careful scrutiny and attention than “internecine” attacks between indigenes, and the paper trail for the former is disproportionately large in the European historical record.

³²ARNAS, “Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1890” (Borneo West #5/21); “Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Borneo Zuid-Oost 1890” (Borneo Z.O. #9a/11).

³³Rajah Sarawak to Consul Trevenen (Brunei), 12 Apr. 1892, CO 144/69.

³⁴See the statistical chart in ARNAS, “Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Riouw 1890” (Riouw #64/1–2).

³⁵ARA, Asst. Res. Deli to Gov. Gen. NEI, 12 Mar. 1904, Telegram #117 (Sumatra O.K., fiche #156) (MvK, PVBB).

³⁶ARA, 1906, MR #634, 711, 828 (Riouw, fiche #296) (Ministerie van Kolonien [hereafter MvK], Politieke Verslagen Buitenbezittingen [hereafter PVBB]); MR 1906/1907, #1054, 1352, 1629 (Lampongs, fiche #386) (MvK, PVBB).

borders of Aceh, and the remote flatlands of Sumatra. In Billiton Chinese miners fought raging battles amongst themselves even into the twentieth century, with the police often unable to interfere until reinforcements could be ordered from outside the regency.³⁷ And in Borneo the boundary with British possessions was used as a buffer-space for indigenous raiding parties, as “Dayaks” on both sides of the frontier made lightning stabs into Dutch and British territory and then beat a hasty retreat back across the border.³⁸ What the Dutch called “low-level violence”, then, was able to survive well into the twentieth century in certain generic spaces and places. Batavia had laid claim to most of the lowlands and important waterways by 1910, but the hills, swamps, and forests continued to be sites where violence flowed rather freely, challenging the Dutch “civilizing project” from afar.

“Foreign Asians”

General Considerations

Beyond the threats to Dutch legitimacy and order that “piracy” and “uncontrolled violence” presented, Batavia also worried about another potential category of danger to the State: Foreign Asians, or the *Vreemde Oosterlingen*. A number of ethnic actors subsumed under this category were scattered across the Dutch Indies — Chinese, Japanese, and foreign Muslims (Arabs and Turks) being among the most important. Batavia, and even the Hague, constantly worried about the potential consequences if these Asians managed to acquire large quantities of arms. One of the main reasons for this fear was very straightforward: there were extremely few Dutchmen in the Indies compared to the combined populations of these ethnicities, an unfavourable ratio that was exacerbated outside Java in the outlying lands of the border arc. In Western Borneo in 1870, for example, there were only 207 Europeans in the entire Residency (just 60 of them adult men), compared to 24,000 Chinese and a population of “Dayaks” approaching 250,000; in Southeastern Borneo, the numbers were even more skewed, according to statistics reported by the Resident in 1871.³⁹ On the islands of Bangka and Riau, the figures are roughly similar for the same period: 63 European men on Bangka compared to almost 19,000 Chinese and over 40,000 Malays; 123 Europeans on Riau, against a population of 25,000 Malays and over 30,000 Chinese.⁴⁰ Palembang in Sumatra, and even Singapore itself reproduced these ratios.⁴¹ The Dutch, masters of a vastly

³⁷ARA, Asst. Resident Billiton to Gov. Gen. NEI, Feb. Verslag, 18 Mar. 1911 (Banka, fiche #389) (MvK, PVBB).

³⁸ARA, N.F. Deshon (Officer Administering the Sarawak Gov't in Absence of the Raja) to Resident, West Borneo, 21 Apr. 1904, #F 12/04 (Borneo West, fiche #394); Resident, Borneo Southeast to Gov. Gen. NEI, 22 May 1909 (April 1909 Report) (Borneo Z.O., fiche #477) (MvK, PVBB).

³⁹ARNAS, “Politiek Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1870” (Borneo West #2/8); “Politiek Verslag der Residentie Borneo Zuid-Oost 1871” (Borneo Zuid-Oost #4/1).

⁴⁰ARNAS, “Politiek Verslag der Residentie Banka 1871 (Banka #124)”; “Algemeen Administratie Verslag der Riouw 1871” (Riouw #63/2).

⁴¹ARNAS, “Algemeen Administratieve Verslag der Residentie Palembang 1870” (Palembang #64/13); S.H. Saw, *Singapore Population in Transition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), p. 11. The vast majority of Dutchmen in the Outer Islands during this period were civil servants.

overextended island colonial empire in 1870, gathered these statistics and were alarmed by what they saw.⁴²

Chinese Population

The Chinese constituted by far the largest population of Foreign Asians in the Indies. Chinese migrants and settlers had been coming to Southeast Asia for centuries by the time of our narrative: Carl Trocki has proposed a periodization of these travels which starts in the early seventeenth century, when the first large-scale communities settled in cities like Manila, Ayutthaya, and Batavia.⁴³ The establishment of *kongsis* — Chinese cooperatives based on mining and agriculture — started soon after this, and the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was the “golden age” of these semi-independent polities. By the middle third of the nineteenth century, however, burgeoning European colonies were attracting more of the passengers of the junk trade, rivalling the *kongsis* as destinations for Chinese migrants. The *kongsis*, especially the powerful confederations in Western Borneo which had developed their own roads, defences, and foreign policies, eventually lost out to the settlements created by Europeans on both sides of the Straits.⁴⁴ Hokkien, Teochew, Hainanese and Cantonese populations were still spread out all over the archipelago, but they increasingly came under the authority of expanding colonial states.

Popular attitudes about the Chinese and their place in the Indies were often very fearful, and certainly negative among many Dutchmen. The “Yellow Peril” sentiments that were slowly gaining credence across the Straits were mimicked by a similar term in Dutch, “*Gele Gevaar*” (the translation is approximately the same). So-called experts such as the Inspector of Agriculture on Java spread venomous accounts of the role of the Chinese in impoverishing the native population, while other, more generalized accounts portrayed the Indies Chinese as “thieves, falsifiers, and the perpetrators of a thousand

⁴²The colonial state relied on a certain proportion of these populations as compradors (such as Chinese tax farmers) and sub-contractors (such as certain indigenous elites who were used for governing), even while it attacked others as nuisances or enemies of the state. Carl Trocki's *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore 1800–1910* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) shows this dynamic at work very clearly across the frontier in colonial Singapore. Meanwhile, the writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer and the anthropologist James Siegel have seen in these growing populations something akin to the birth of the “modern” in the Indies, with their presence partly responsible for presenting a huge range of new cultural and intellectual possibilities to local inhabitants. The possible cross-pollination of these forces was considered dangerous by the Batavia regime. See Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Bumi Manusia* (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1980), and James Siegel, *Fetish, Recognition, Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977). I am indebted to John Sidel for fascinating discussions about these ideas.

⁴³Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, p. 30.

⁴⁴Jan J.M. de Groot, *Het Kongsuwezen van Borneo: Eene Verhandeling over den Grondslag en den Aard der Chineesche Politieke Vereenigingen in de Kolonien met eene Chineesche Geschiedenis van de Kongsj Lanfong* (Hague: Nijhoff, 1885). For a more recent account, see James Jackson, *Chinese in the West Borneo Goldfields: A Study in Cultural Geography* (Hull: University of Hull Occasional Papers, 1970).

other dishonourable acts".⁴⁵ One journal spoke of the "*Chineezenplaag*", or "Chinese plague", that was said to be afflicting the Indies, while another asserted, "the dangers [presented by the Chinese] are certainly not imaginary — now already men should be questioning what the future holds, and how to do something about it".⁴⁶ It did not matter that many of these views were uninformed. While it was true that Chinese were disproportionately involved in trade and commerce in the Indies during these years, at least as compared to native populations (a situation that was indeed legislated and partially brought about by the Dutch themselves), huge numbers of Chinese lived under conditions that were anything but threatening to Batavia. They worked as miners, farmers, fishermen, or petty-traders, and never posed any real threat to the security of the Netherlands Indies state.

Certain "categories" of Chinese made Batavia especially nervous, for reasons that are explored below. One of the foremost was the secret societies (*geheime genootschappen*), which were spread throughout the Indies but seemed particularly prevalent in the border regencies. A report on a Chinese secret society document linking the East Coast of Sumatra with Penang was published by the Sinologist Schaalje in 1873; the diploma seems to refer to Penang as the "headquarters" of the Sumatra society, a prospect of cross-Straits secretive unity which alarmed Batavia greatly.⁴⁷ Ten years later, another article was published on secret society documents found in Borneo: at issue this time were a small book and a scroll of red Chinese paper. The book, described as an extract from one of the standard texts of the Heaven and Earth Society, related how the sect had spread from China to a place in Malay waters known as "Baan-saan". The scroll, apparently a Ghee Hin *Kongsi* request for contributions from its members, placed the locality of the society in the sub-district Sangouw of West Borneo.⁴⁸ The existence of such documents verified what the Dutch were already noting in their Residency reports: Chinese secret societies were highly active in the Residency, including operations such as smuggling opium across the Borneo border, which deprived the Batavia exchequer of huge sums of money.⁴⁹ For this reason, the Dutch also kept an

⁴⁵See F. Fokken's Reports of 1896 and 1897, "Rapport Betreffende het Onderzoek Naar den Economische Toestand der Vreemde Oosterlingen op Java en Madoera en Voorstellen tot Verbetering", ARA, Ministerie van Kolonien, V, 17-4-1896-27; also *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 8 Apr. 1896 (quoted in M.R. Fernando and David Bulbeck, *Chinese Economic Activity in the Netherlands Indies: Selected Translations from the Dutch* [Singapore: ISEAS, 1992], pp. 43-57).

⁴⁶G.A. Romer, "Chineezenvrees in Indië", *Vragen des Tijds* 23, 2 (1897): 193; ARA, "De Chineesche Kwestie in Nederlandsch-Indië", *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*, 12 Jun. 1907, pp. 1-2 (MvBZ/A/43/A.29bis OK).

⁴⁷M. Schaalje, "Bijdrage tot de Kennis der Chineesche Geheime Genootschappen", *TBG* 20 (1873): 1-6.

⁴⁸J.W. Young, "Bijdrage tot de Kennis der Chineesche Geheime Genootschappen", *TBG* 28 (1883): 547, 551-52, 574-77. The "*Sekajam*" document is a receipt stating that the sum of one dollar had been given to the *kongsi*. The date on the paper is the 26th day of the 7th month of the year "*Sin-joe*", which Young identified as 1861 on the Western calendar.

⁴⁹ARNAS, "Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1874" (Borneo West #5/4); "Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1889" (Borneo West #5/20).

eye on developments across the Straits of Malacca, to see how the British were faring in their own struggles against these organizations.⁵⁰

"*Geheim genootschappen*" were not the only threat the Dutch perceived in their Chinese populations, however. Also disturbing to Batavia was the way the Chinese navigated the Indies legal system, as well as their status as potential "subjects" of a new and dynamic Chinese state after 1911. Manoeuvring within the restrictive colonial legal system was something the Chinese managed to do throughout the period under discussion: tricks like jumping between the different legal spheres of Java and the Outer Islands to avoid prosecution in the former, and borrowing travel passes under assumed names to travel in the latter, were popular strategies.⁵¹ More "disturbing", however, and potentially far more destructive in Batavia's view, were the increasing demands of China and many Indies Chinese to be classified as Chinese citizens rather than Dutch subjects. This was a question that occupied some of the best Dutch legal minds of the late nineteenth century.⁵² When a letter from Peking arrived in The Hague in 1886,⁵³ informing the Dutch that Chinese in the Indies should be considered imperial subjects and not under Dutch jurisdiction, the Minister for the Colonies was aghast. He instructed the Dutch consul in Peking to say nothing of the "nationality" of the Indies Chinese, but only to refer to them as "subjects".⁵⁴ By the early twentieth century, however, this question was becoming so urgent that consuls in Washington, Berlin, and London were being requested to report back to The Hague immediately, in an effort to see how other Western governments were

⁵⁰See ARA, Dutch Consul, Singapore to Gov. Gen. NEI (9 Jan. 1889, #37) in 1889, MR #38. British successes in dealing with Chinese secret societies went from "useless, for any practical purpose" in 1872 to significantly better after that; a whole codex of laws was drawn up to insure that the State would win this battle. See "Report of the Inspector General of Police on the Working of Ordinance #19 of 1869, the Dangerous Societies Suppression Ordinance, *Straits Settlements Legislative Council Proceedings* (hereafter *SSLCP*), 1872, p. 98, for the (Singapore) Inspector General of Police's disparaging comment above; for the evolution of Straits laws on these societies, see Ordinances no. 19 of 1869, no. 4 of 1882, no. 4 of 1885, and no. 20 of 1909. By 1913 British North Borneo was adopting legislation that gave the State powers to enter meeting places, rights of seizure, and the right to photograph, fingerprint, and summon witnesses, all *vis-à-vis* secret societies. See Gov. BNB to Chairman, BNB Co. London, 31 Dec. 1913, #4066/13, in CO 874/803. For a very good volume on the nature (and often, the misrepresentation) of Chinese secret societies in Southeast Asia, see "*Secret Societies*" *Reconsidered: Perspectives on the Social History of Modern China and Southeast Asia*, ed. David Ownby and Mary Somers Heidhues (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), especially ch. 3–5.

⁵¹"De Privaatrechtelijke Toestand der Chineezzen in Nederlandsch Indië", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (hereafter *TNI*) 17 (1898): 210.

⁵²"De Invloed der Vreemdelingschap op het Rechtswezen in Nederlandsch Indië", *Wet en Adat* (1897): 159–97.

⁵³See the letter (in Chinese) from the Chinese ambassador to the Netherlands authorities at the Hague, dated 12th year of the Guangxu reign, 7th month, 27th day (1886), in ARA, Minister for the Colonies to Minister for Foreign Affairs (9 Nov. 1886, A3/21-9471) in MvBZ/A/43/A.29bis OK. The ambassador makes the case for considering Chinese in the Indies as imperial subjects only, and not under Dutch jurisdiction; he refers to Chinese mixed marriages in the Indies, and also the United States' dealings with Chinese as examples.

⁵⁴ARA, Dutch Minister of the Colonies to Minister for Foreign Affairs, 9 Nov. 1886, #A3/21-9471 (MvBZ/A/43/A.29bis OK). The instructions were sent to Foreign Affairs first, and then relayed to Peking.

dealing with the issue.⁵⁵ The erection of Chinese schools in the Indies, the raising of the Chinese flag, and the visit of imperial envoys to cheering crowds of Indies Chinese all laid the groundwork for increased Dutch paranoia, as Batavia saw its grip loosening on a sizable number of its "Foreign Asian" subjects.

Paranoia over the Outer Islands was even worse than for the core, "inner-areas" of Dutch authority like Java. One of the main reasons for this was because the Chinese population was growing rapidly in the Outer Islands, especially in areas close to the borders. In Bangka, for example, the population of miners grew by 50 per cent between 1869 and 1873; the Resident felt it necessary to add that these men were also among the "lowest of their race", as they were made up of the "worst elements of Chinese society back home".⁵⁶ In Riau the government did not even possess accurate statistics on the numbers of Chinese, though the men here were also reckoned to be on the low end of the "moral scale".⁵⁷ Continual reports of instabilities caused by the Chinese in these islands, from the robbing of passing ships to chronic (but violent) disturbances in the mines, accumulated in Batavia over the years.⁵⁸ In other Residencies, like the Western half of Borneo, the threat of Chinese in the Outer Islands was more directly linked with their connections across the frontier. In 1870, a "lively traffic" of secret societies that tied together this region with Singapore was already being discussed, though by the late 1880s such radicals were also being traced across the land-border to Sarawak. Within the Brooke dominions, Pontianak, Mempawah, Montrado and Mandor were all implicated as having Ghee Hin connections, especially in the smuggling of vast quantities of illicit opium.⁵⁹ Dutch officials were sent across the border to consult with Brooke civil servants about the problem, and extradited Chinese "rabble-rousers" were sent in the opposite direction, but such "illegalities" and connections continued into the twentieth century.

These fears were given concrete form in 1912 when violent unrest among Chinese exploded across the archipelago. On the frontier that concerns us here, particularly serious episodes occurred in Borneo, Bangka and East Sumatra. In Balikpapan, East Borneo, a fight between a Chinese man and a Malay escalated into a pitched battle with knives and sharpened sticks; according to newspapers in Swatow, the police eventually fired on the Chinese as instigators, killing and wounding a number of people.⁶⁰ In Western Borneo, Chinese populations killed tax-collectors in both Sambas and Mempawah; anonymous Chinese leaflets then circulated widely, threatening more violence if tax burdens were not reduced.⁶¹ The Peking newspaper *Pei Ching Jih Pao* reported the killing of a Chinese

⁵⁵ARA, Dutch Consuls in Washington (14 May 1907, #294/120) and Berlin (5 Jun. 1907, #2555/1011) as well as the Foreign Office, London (9 Jul. 1909, #21833), all replying to the Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken in The Hague (MvBZ/A/43/A.29bis OK).

⁵⁶ARNAS, "Politiek Verslag der Residentie Banka 1871" (Banka #124) and 1873 (Banka #125).

⁵⁷ARNAS, "Algemeen Administratieve Verslag der Residentie Riouw 1871" (Riouw #63/2).

⁵⁸ARA, 1873, MR #526; ARNAS, "Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Banka 1888" (Banka #79).

⁵⁹ARA, Resident Banka to Gov. Gen. NEI (14 Nov. 1876, #948) in 1876, MR #948; ARNAS, "Politiek Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1870" (Borneo West #2/8); "Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1886" and "1889" (Borneo West #5/17; 5/20).

⁶⁰Translated from *Sun Chung Wa Po* (3 May 1912) in Dutch Consul, Peking to Minister for Foreign Affairs (20 May 1912, #954/176) in MvBZ/A/40/A.29bis OK.

⁶¹ARA, Minister for the Colonies to Minister for Foreign Affairs (7 Nov. 1912, K16-#21448) in MvBZ/A/40/A.29bis OK.

coolie by police in Deli, East Sumatra under suspicious circumstances,⁶² while in Bangka, right off the coast, more than 300 coolies were fired upon when they refused to be separated and taken to different mines.⁶³ Casualties in this last incident were nine dead and twenty wounded; a letter about the massacre said that the men had been "treated as horses and cows ... their conditions are that of slaves."⁶⁴ All along the frontier, seemingly, the border arc had started to burn.

Japanese Population

A second group of *Vreemde Oosterlingen* who presented difficulties for Batavia's concept of "state security" were the Japanese. This population represented quite a different kind of "threat" to Indies policy-makers from the Chinese. Even in the middle decades of the period under analysis, there were still few Japanese in Dutch territory, with the majority of these consisting of prostitutes from southern Kyushu.⁶⁵ Japanese started to filter into the Indies in greater numbers around 1900, however, with traders, pearlers, and shippers scattering into the Outer Islands in a variety of places. The Meiji Restoration (1868) back home, and the country's concomitant industrialization pushed these Japanese southwards. Some came as the agents of business and state development (the aforementioned ship hands, timber-workers in Borneo, and small tramp-steamer companies, etc.), while others worked in peripheral industries that these new changes engendered (poor women off the land who became prostitutes, impoverished traders to Java, etc.).⁶⁶ By the early decades of the twentieth century, Japanese were starting to make significant inroads into the Indies economy, so that Batavia began to notice the phenomenon and keep tabs on its development. Geographically closer to the Indies than the Western nations that traded there, Japan forged ahead with its economic ties to the islands, linking both economies through export and the spread of steamship services.⁶⁷ Though the number of Japanese in the Indies was miniscule compared to the Chinese community at any given time, Batavia attributed expansionist ambitions to Tokyo that were not discernible in China. If the multitudes of "uncontrollable" Chinese on the borders presented an immediate threat to state law and order, the Japanese menace to the Indies was deemed distant but no less real.

⁶²Translated from *Pei Ching Jih Pao* (8 Apr. 1914) in Dutch Consul, Peking to Minister for Foreign Affairs. (9 Jan. 1914, #48/8) in MvBZ/A/40/A.29bis OK.

⁶³Translated from *Pei Ching Jih Pao* (5 Oct. 1912) in MvBZ/A/40/A.29bis OK.

⁶⁴Translated from *Pei Ching Jih Pao* (2 Aug. 1912) in ARA, Dutch Consul, Peking to Minister for Foreign Affairs (25 Sep. 1912, #1611/291) in MvBZ/A/40/A.29bis OK.

⁶⁵ARA, MvK, Verbaal 16 Apr. 1898/22. See also Peter Post, "Japanse Bedrijvigheid in Indonesie, 1868-1942: Structurele Elementen van Japans Vooroorlogse Economische Expansie in Zuidoost-Azie" (Ph.D. diss., Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1991). Japanese prostitutes were actually an export industry sanctioned by the Japanese government for much of the late nineteenth century. They helped create conditions useful to the opening of Japanese shops and were reported on regularly by Tokyo's consuls in the region.

⁶⁶The best single book on both sides of this process is Mikiso Hane, *Peasants, Rebels, and Outcasts: The Underside of Modern Japan* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

⁶⁷Kaoro Sugihara, "Japan as an Engine of the Asian International Economy, 1880-1936", *Japan Forum* 2,1 (1990): 139; see also Peter Post, "Japan and the Integration of the Netherlands East Indies into the World Economy, 1868-1942", *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 27, 1-2 (1993): 134-65.

The major reason for this appraisal was that Japan was developing politically and industrially by leaps and bounds at the end of the nineteenth century. The unequal treaties signed with European powers between 1856 and 1866,⁶⁸ which gave the latter all sorts of rights and privileges at Japan's expense, were being reversed by the late 1890s — "Japan is moving quickly" one Dutch authority pronounced, "in a certain direction these past few years."⁶⁹ Batavia's quarrel with this movement was that it seemed to be heading south. One Dutch expert, J.H. Engelbregt, asked his countrymen to regard the rise of the Japanese "with an eye toward the future of our East Indies possessions, from commercial as well as political and military standpoints"; he published data showing massive increases in the Japanese state budget, especially in departments such as the War, Trade, and Colonization divisions. New consulates were being planned for Hawaii, Sydney, Bangkok, and Manila, while the government was setting aside hundreds of millions of yen for military projects. Engelbregt calculated that "by 1906 — and maybe much earlier — Japan will have in these waters a navy greater than those currently employed (in Asia) by all of the Western powers combined". All of this, he added, was from a nation that thirty years ago "was still in the Middle Ages".⁷⁰

Such widespread changes in Japan's capabilities and international status, especially after its surprise rout of China in the war of 1894–95, led the Dutch to re-consider the Japanese community's status in the Indies as well. In 1897, a new treaty between Tokyo and the Hague gave full most-favoured-nation rights to Japanese citizens in the Indies: the older article 109 of 1854 was thus superseded, and the Japanese now enjoyed equal status under the law with Europeans. The legal revision, called "*gelijkstellingen*" or "equating" in Dutch, did not meet with unqualified approval in Dutch spheres of public opinion, though. The *Avondpost* in The Hague, in an article ominously titled "*Waarschuwing*" ("Warning"), categorically called the move a big mistake.⁷¹ Even Indies jurists, such as J.A. Nederburgh writing in the journal *Wet en Adat* [Law and Custom], questioned the propriety of changing the classification: "As a rule, the most undeveloped and uncivilized components of Asians come to the Dutch Indies, a sort of folk with a dun Western varnish ... under which is hidden the real, unfalsified Asian."⁷² Nederburgh went on to ask if there had really been a turn in the "morals and understanding, in the very nature of the people", implying that Japan's political and economic transformation meant little in terms of "civilizing" its people.⁷³ The juxtaposition in attitudes is paradoxical but clear: on the one hand, the Japanese were feared for their rising military might and expansionist policies, while on the other they were held in contempt as barbarians in civilized dress. Several phenomena of the early twentieth century helped codify and enforce these opinions.

⁶⁸"Het Tractaat van Handel en Scheepvaart Tusschen Nederland en Japan", *Indische Gids* (hereafter *IG*) 1 (1897): 351.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 354.

⁷⁰J.H. Engelbregt, "De Ontwikkeling van Japan met het Oog op het Gele Gevaar", *TNI* (1897): 800–803, 807–808, 814.

⁷¹M.C. Piepers, "Waarschuwing", *De Avondpost* (den Haag), 21 Oct. 1898.

⁷²J.A. Nederburgh, "Wijziging in Art. 109 Regeeringsregelement Japansche Europeanen", *Wet en Adat* 3 (1898): 287.

⁷³*Ibid.*

The first was the rising numbers of Japanese living in the Indies, only some of whom were visible to the state. A list prepared by the Dutch envoy to Tokyo, and mailed to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in the Hague, provided details of how many Japanese were leaving the country's shores, and where they were going; the figures included various Southeast Asian colonies, East Asia, and other destinations in the greater Pacific.⁷⁴ Because the United States and Canada had recently established laws limiting the number of Japanese immigrants, the Minister of the Colonies advised his government that the numbers going to the Indies should in future be examined very closely.⁷⁵ Indeed, by 1909 Batavia's data on the Japanese population in various parts of the colony — especially the Outer Islands and border regencies — revealed marked increases.⁷⁶ Japanese could be found everywhere, from pearling stations in the most isolated island chains to timber camps in the heart of Borneo's rainforest. More alarming, from the Dutch standpoint, was that the numbers of Japanese immigrants Batavia entering the Indies did not nearly correspond with Tokyo's figures. Even the Japanese press admitted that large numbers of Japanese were leaving for the archipelago,⁷⁷ a statement which caused the Dutch consul in Kobe to check on matters further. What he found astounded him: Japanese were being brought to the Indies secretly, as fictitious "boat-crews", as stowaways, and even in small sailing craft.⁷⁸ Other ships were bypassing Dutch quarantine regulations, and landing Japanese in the archipelago via circuitous eastern routes.⁷⁹

Other events at the end of our period consolidated and enforced these fears. In January of 1908, the *Controleur* of Sampit sent a communication to the Resident of Southeastern Borneo, enclosing a Malay-language letter which appeared to seal a contract between a local ruler and the Japanese government. The arrangement had been mediated by a Japanese middleman named K. Nonomura: the *Controleur* ordered that if the man returned, he was not to be hindered, so that Batavia could figure out exactly what he was doing.⁸⁰ Shady dealings on the Borneo frontier were not the only circumstances worrying the

⁷⁴The destinations for 1905/1906 include Hong Kong, French Indochina, Siam, the "Malay Islands", Singapore, Penang, the United States, Mexico, Peru, Hawaii, the Philippines, Borneo, Java, Sumatra, and the "East-India Islands". See ARA, Dutch Consul, Tokyo to Minister for Foreign Affairs (11 May 1908, #448/57-12128) in MvBZ/A/589/A.209.

⁷⁵ARA, Minister for the Colonies to Minister for Foreign Affairs (8 Jan. 1908, Kab. Litt Secret, #678) in MvBZ/A/589/A.209.

⁷⁶The Residencies reported on included "Tapaneoli, Benkoolen, Lampungs, Palembang, Djambi, Oostkust Sumatra, Atjeh, Riouw, Banka, Billiton, W. Afd. Borneo, Z.O. Afd. Borneo, Menado, Celebes, Amboina, Ternate, Bali en Lombok"— in other words, virtually all of the Outer Islands of the Dutch Indies. See enclosure in Minister of the Colonies to Minister for Foreign Affairs (28 June 1909, Kab. Litt. Secret #13422) in MvBZ/A/589/A.209.

⁷⁷"Japanese Immigration", *Kobe Herald* (27 Jul. 1907), in MvBZ/A/589/A.209.

⁷⁸The consul's observations were repeated in a circular, ARA, Gov. Gen. NEI to Regional Heads of Administration (3 Dec. 1907, #407 Very Secret) in MvBZ/A/598/A.209. The mechanism of using a partially fictitious crew was emblematic of this process. Japanese coaling ships putting into Surabaya, for example, came in with listed crews of 65 men; only half of these, the consul reported, might be legitimate crew members, while the rest were secret immigrants. Only 30 or 35 Japanese would sail away with the boat.

⁷⁹ARA, Dutch Consul, Kobe to Gov. Gen. NEI (12 Oct. 1907, #1209) in MvBZ/A/589/A.209.

⁸⁰Controleur, Sampit to Resident, Borneo Southeast, 2 Jun. 1908, #2 (Borneo, Z.O., fiche #395) (MvK, PVBB).

Dutch, however. A new cause for concern developed right off the coast of Batavia just a few years later, following a puzzling series of letters from the Dutch consul in Tokyo. This man reported that the Dutch embassy had been receiving telephone queries about the Prinsen Islands, which lay scattered across the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra. This was one of the major strategic waterways of the Indies, and within close range of Batavia, the centre of Dutch rule. The callers had asked for population figures on the islands and other information, without getting any definite answers from the embassy staff. The Dutch envoy told his superiors that without wishing to blow the incident out of proportion, he thought it should be brought to their attention, especially since these particular islands (which served as an entry-way into the greater Asian sea routes), were repeatedly mentioned in the Japanese press.⁸¹ Batavia and the Hague saw in both of the above events silent forces in motion.⁸² A captured letter, anonymous phone calls, press-clippings and discrepancies on immigration figures eventually added up; strategic planners in the Indies began to shift the "axis of threat" to include possible invasions from the north.

Aside from the increase of Japanese migrants to the Indies around 1900, and Tokyo's supposed designs on certain strategic islands, there was one other aspect of Japanese "penetration" that still concerned the Dutch: the flow of capital, much of it entwined with Chinese banks. Batavia saw in this linkage an equal cause for concern. When a combined Sino-Japanese bank was set up in the colony of Taiwan in 1918, with the express purpose of uniting the capital of the two ethnic groups to further their combined business interests in the Indies, the Dutch took note immediately: correspondence and translations of Japanese accounts of the merger were quickly sent back to the Hague.⁸³ The principals of the operation, all of whom were ethnic Chinese, garnered official Japanese government support for the project. The bank, called the "*Kwakyō*" or "Colonists" Bank, was erected in Taiwan, however, to avoid "misunderstandings with the Netherlands Indies government".⁸⁴ The placing of the bank in an offshore site did not fool the Dutch, and it was clear to everyone where the financing had come from. With a starting capital of between five and ten million yen⁸⁵ and a manifesto to provide easier credit to East Asian traders in the Indies than they could obtain from Europeans,⁸⁶ the venture was watched very carefully

⁸¹ARA, Dutch Consul, Tokyo to Gov. Gen. NEI (28 Aug. 1916, #1268/97) in MvBZ/A/589/A.209.

⁸²ARA, Dutch Consul, Tokyo to Gov. Gen. NEI (28 Aug. 1916, #1269/112); Minister for Foreign Affairs to Minister for the Colonies (7 Nov. 1916, #48470), both in MvBZ/A/589/A.209.

⁸³ARA, Dutch Consul, Tokyo to Minister for Foreign Affairs (19 June 1918, #1012/89) in MvBZ/A/43/A.29bis OK. For a more general discussion of Japanese business expansion in the Indies, see Anne Booth, "Japanese Import Penetration and Dutch Response: Some Aspects of Economic Policy Making in Colonial Indonesia", in *International Commercial Rivalry in Southeast Asia in the Interwar Period*, Sugiyama Shinya and Milagros Guerrero, ed. (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1994), pp. 134–64.

⁸⁴[Prognosis Concerning the Establishment of a Kwakyō Bank], Dutch translation from *Tokyo Nichi Nichi* (9 May 1918), in Dutch Consul, Tokyo to Minister for Gov. Gen. NEI (18 May 1918, #836/60) in ARA, MvBZ/A/43/A.29bis OK.

⁸⁵Dutch translation from *Osaka Mainichi* (11 Jun. 1918) in Dutch Consul, Tokyo to Minister for Foreign Affairs (19 Jun. 1918, #1012/89) in ARA, MvBZ/A/43/A.29bis OK.

⁸⁶Dutch translation from *Tokyo Asahi* (14 Jun. 1918) in Dutch Consul, Tokyo to Minister for Foreign Affairs (19 Jun. 1918, #1012/89) in ARA, MvBZ/A/43/A.29bis OK.

by the Dutch. Holland's envoy to Tokyo, aside from providing the above information, also reported on the geographic spread of Japanese companies with investments in the Indies, as well as the fact that the Dutch language was now being taught so as to "further the expansion of Japanese interests overseas".⁸⁷ All of these facts helped create a psychology in the Indies which feared and mistrusted the Japanese. When a Japanese magazine said in April of 1918 that there were no "civilized Dutchmen any longer who are uneasy with the intentions of the Japanese", this was more of a sales pitch to investors than hard-boiled truth: Japan was perceived as a real threat in the archipelago, on both sides of the Straits.

Pan-Islam

While the Dutch often perceived the threat to established authority in the Indies in ethnic terms, it was also sometimes seen as religious, and the potential threat posed by Pan-Islam, or "the striving of Muslims toward political unity" as one Indies Islamic expert termed it, was one of the most pressing topics among policy-makers and administrators of the day.⁸⁸ Throughout the archipelago, and especially in the Outer Islands, where Batavia wielded far less control than in Java, the proselytizing of "militant Islam" was regarded with suspicion. The Dutch kept a close watch on the movements of religious teachers from one Residency to another: in Bangka, for example, the Resident reported that famous Koranic teachers visited the island in 1871 from Madura, and in 1872 from the Padang Uplands, filling mosques on both occasions.⁸⁹ In Western Borneo, the movements and population ratios of Arabs and Indian Muslims were also tracked, as there was a feeling that "Arabs can't be trusted, and Klings even less so."⁹⁰ Batavia knew that various sultans of the Indies had regular contacts with each other through messengers; this was a fact that made the state suspicious, as Islamic conspiracies were imagined around every corner.⁹¹

The long war against Aceh that began in 1873, and did not really taper off until the early twentieth century, increased these stakes enormously. Aceh became the religious rallying cry for Pan-Islam in the Indies, and many local sultans and rajas watched the

⁸⁷Japanese concerns were well-established in many Outer Island Residencies by this time, including Sumatra, Borneo, the Aru Islands and New Guinea. See ARA, Dutch Consul, Tokyo to Gov. Gen. NEI (10 Jun. 1918, #956/72) and Dutch Consul, Tokyo to Gov. Gen. NEI (25 May 1918, #876/68), both in MvBZ/A/43/A.29bis OK.

⁸⁸L. van den Berg, "Het Pan-Islamisme", *De Gids* 4 (1900): 228. For scholarship on this topic, see Anthony Reid, "Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia", *Journal of Asian Studies* 26,2 (1967): 267-83; W.R. Roff, "The Malayo-Muslim World of Singapore at the Close of the Nineteenth Century", *JAS* 24,1 (1964): 75-90; Tom van den Berge, "Indië, en de Panislamitische Pers (1897-1909)", *Jambatan* 5,1 (1987): 15-24; and D.H. Evans, "The Meanings of Pan-Islamism: The Growth of International Consciousness Among the Muslims of Indonesia in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century", *Itinerario* 9,1 (1987): 15-34.

⁸⁹ARNAS, "Politiek Verslag der Residentie Banka 1871", *idem*, 1872" (Banka #124, 125).

⁹⁰ARNAS, "Politiek Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1870", *idem*, 1872" (Borneo West #2/8, 2/10).

⁹¹Arabs in Palembang sent messengers to "notorious" Acehnese in Penang, for example, and Singapore Arabs corresponded with the Sultan of Sulu. See Consul Read (Singapore) to Gov. Gen. NEI, 12 Jan. 1876 (Conf.) and 7 Feb. 1876, in ARNAS, Atjeh #12 (Bogor Repository): "Stukken Betreffende Atjehsche Oorlog".

fortunes of this conflict extremely carefully for omens as to their own impending fates under colonialism. It is very interesting to see how the *categories* of Residential reporting in the Outer Islands changed as soon as the war in Aceh had begun: from 1873/74 onwards, new kinds of information were requested from the centre as to conditions in the periphery, much of it having to do with Islam. In Bangka we see the Resident being asked to describe for the first time the “*Uitbreiding van het Mahomedanisme, en Invloed van de Hadjies op de Bevolking*” (“Expansion of Islam, and Influence of Hajis upon the Population”); the same category also suddenly appears in Palembang, where the Resident’s answer pointed to Islamic gains in the interior.⁹² In Borneo, the Residents were very forthright in their appraisal of the situation: the director of the eastern half of the island found that “the declaration of war against Aceh has woken discontent in the Muslim populations”, while his opposite number in Western Borneo described a steady crawl of Islam into the forest interior of his own Residency.⁹³ These answers, and the fact that there was further enquiry in this general direction, are not surprising. Even a few years before the Aceh War had begun, commentators in the Indies were speaking of the ongoing dynamics of a “Holy War” in the archipelago. Veth went so far as to say that even the non-Muslim “pirates” of the Eastern Seas (such as the “Sea-Dayaks”, and the “Orang Laut” or “Sea Gypsies”) were now part of this process, as they had been egged into their depredations by “Islamic corsairs”.⁹⁴

This last analysis was certainly far-fetched, but even by the middle decades of our period the spread of Pan-Islam was generating significant anxiety in Batavia and The Hague. Indeed, the 1880s brought the beginnings of a crescendo of activity as regards state supervision of Islam in the Indies. More and more attention was paid to the ways that Islam entered the archipelago: Batavia wanted to know where and how “militant” Islamic doctrine entered its domains, as well as how to stop this flow. Although earlier legislation attempted to some degree to regulate the abilities of foreign Muslims to “infect” local populations,⁹⁵ it was only in the 1880s that the state was able to act on these desires in a more concerted and effective fashion. Arabs who had overstayed their permits in the Indies were carefully tracked down and evicted from the archipelago, while others who were about to enter the Indies were spied upon in offshore ports like Singapore.⁹⁶ By 1885, the Netherlands’ consul in the Straits Settlements was keeping detailed statistics on how many Arabs crossed into the Dutch sphere, as well as the Residencies (particularly those in the Outer Islands) to which they were heading.⁹⁷

⁹²ARNAS, “Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Banka 1874” (Banka #65); “Algemeen Administratieve Verslag der Residentie Palembang 1874” (Palembang #64/17).

⁹³ARNAS, “Politiek Verslag der Residentie Borneo Zuid-Oost 1873” (Borneo Z.O. #4/3); “Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1874” (Borneo West #5/4).

⁹⁴P.J. Veth, “De Heilige Oorlog in den Indischen Archipel”, *TNI* 1 (1870): 175.

⁹⁵ARA, Resident West Borneo to Gov. Gen. NEI (8 Jul. 1878, #78) in 1878, MR #474.

⁹⁶ARA, Resident Sumatra East Coast to Dutch Consul, Singapore (2 Oct. 1881, W/Secret) in 1881, MR #1107; Dutch Consul, Singapore to Resident Palembang (15 Sep. 1881, #541) in 1881, MR #860.

⁹⁷ARA, Dutch Consul Singapore to Gov. Gen. NEI (28 Sep. 1885, #626) in 1885, MR #638. From March to August 1885, 295 Arabs crossed from Singapore into the Dutch Indies; the range of their destinations included Palembang, Deli, Siak, Bandjermassin, Macassar, Pontianak, Bali, Muntok, Djambi, Indragiri, and Padang, as well as Java.

Foreign Muslims bearing letters to their compatriots in the Indies were zealously followed, and their packages confiscated, whenever the State caught wind of such activities.⁹⁸

Yet it was not only those Arabs specifically suspected of fomenting religious rebellion who were watched and followed along the border arc. Merely being an Arab living in a frontier Residency meant that one's movements and daily activities were subject to examination.⁹⁹ Batavia's vision of Pan-Islam as a movement of subversion left little room for Indies Arabs who might be quiet, loyal subjects. The 1883 explosion of the Krakatoa volcano off Java provided an additional incentive for watchfulness on the part of the state; Batavia was furious that some Muslims used the disaster as proof of the "impending end of the world", and exhorted their fellows to rise as the end of subjugation was nigh.¹⁰⁰

By the turn of the century, state anxieties about Pan-Islam, like those about the Chinese and Japanese populations, had risen to uncomfortable levels. Two of the Indies' most famous Islamic scholars, L.W.C. van den Berg and C. Snouck Hurgronje, jostled in print about whose fault it was that Islamic brotherhoods had been neglected by the state; such societies had come to be viewed as transmitters of militancy and rebellion, particularly in corners of the world like Africa and Asia.¹⁰¹ Batavia's response to outside stimuli of Pan-Islamic tension was usually swift and decisive. Islamic "propaganda" from abroad was routinely confiscated and banned, as with one Turkish paper from Constantinople, which declared, "all Muslims around the world are brothers, and if one Muslim suffers an injustice, it is the duty of others to come to his aid".¹⁰² The article had been about the treatment of Arabs in the Dutch colonies; rumours even circulated that the Ottomans would come to the archipelago to free local peoples from the Dutch Christian yoke. What seems to have been at the bottom of these discussions, however, was that Pan-Islam acknowledged only one master — Allah — and that this equation was unacceptable to the Netherlands Indies state. The idea that "Muslim chiefs do not belong to their sovereigns", as van den Berg put it, "has its roots in the teachings of orthodox Islamic law".¹⁰³ European negotiations over this principle were not entertained, and this was a situation that Batavia, as well as other colonial states throughout the world, ultimately could not abide.

⁹⁸ARA, Resident Surabaya to Gov. Gen. NEI (30 Nov. 1881, #15258) in 1881, MR #1139; also Dutch Consul Djeddah to Minister for Foreign Affairs (30 Aug. 1883, #632 Very Secret) in 1883, MR #1075.

⁹⁹ARA, Resident Sumatra East Coast to Gov. Gen. NEI (4 Sep. 1881, Secret); also Resident Madura to Gov. Gen. NEI (7 Sep. 1881, G/3 Secret), both in 1881, MR #839.

¹⁰⁰ARA, Resident Bantam to Gov. Gen. NEI (18 Dec. 1883, R/1 Secret) in 1883, MR #1173.

¹⁰¹"De Mohammedaansche Broederschappen in Ned. Indië", *TNI* 2 (1889): 15–20; "Mohamedaansch-Godsdienstige Broederschappen", *TNI* 2 (1891): 189.

¹⁰²"Resume van Artikelen in de Turksche Bladen te Constantinopel over de Beweerde Slechte Behandeling van de Arabieren in NI en van de Beschermingen ter Zake van de Ned. Pers", *IG* 2 (1898): 1096–97.

¹⁰³L. van den Berg, "Het Pan-Islamisme [ook in de NI Archipel]", *De Gids* 4 (1900): 228.

“Pribumi Indonesians”

Wars and Laws

A final broad category perceived by Batavia consisted of threats from those we would now call “Pribumi Indonesians” — the various indigenous populations of the Indies themselves. As we have seen from the demographic statistics above, the Dutch were only a *tiny minority compared to other ethnic groups*. As we have seen from the demographic statistics above, the Dutch were only a tiny minority compared to other ethnic groups, small in comparison with the *Vreemde Oosterlingen* and altogether dwarfed by the people native to the archipelago.¹⁰⁴ The Dutch used several methods to subjugate and control these much larger populations for its own benefit. They fought a series of wars with various sultanates and kingdoms across the archipelago in order to advance Dutch interests on the ground, and expand Batavia’s authority into the periphery. They also developed a body of laws that made Indies natives inferior to the Dutch within the Netherlands Indies state, rendering these indigenes less threatening to established authority and “stability”, as Indies jurisprudence leaned heavily in favour of Dutch policing power and control. In this section we will deal with these two dynamics of state action and legislation, and then move on to a final indigenous phenomenon which caused Batavia anxieties — the physical movement of Indies peoples in certain places and contexts. The pilgrimage to Mecca, the Minangkabau *merantau*, and the nomadic wanderings of border peoples — both in the forests and on the sea — all posed serious problems for Dutch control. This was especially so when such movements were accompanied, as was often the case, by an increased access to firearms.

One of the main ways Batavia strengthened its hold on indigenous populations was through outright conquest. Dutch expansion in the archipelago moved in fits and starts, sometimes on the basis of policy decisions, but at other times in response to events in various peripheral locations. There was no coherent programme to this forward movement, a point discussed in the historiographic literature relating to Dutch expansion, particularly in writings by Dutch authors.¹⁰⁵ At the end of the eighteenth century, in fact, as the VOC declined and then collapsed, Dutch territory in the Indies was not so much an empire as a set of trade outposts, with the main nodes of importance widely scattered throughout the region. The middle years of the nineteenth century saw some expansion, yet Batavia

¹⁰⁴Under the rubric “native” the Dutch (and British) in Southeast Asia classified Acehnese, Bataks, Boyanese, Bugis, Javanese, Malays, and a variety of other peoples indigenous to the region. Up until 1871 in Singapore, all of these groups were classified individually; after that year, they were subsumed under the category “Malay”.

¹⁰⁵See Cornelis Fasseur, “Een Koloniale Paradox. De Nederlandse Expansie in de Indonesische Archipel in het Midden van de Negentiende Eeuw (1830–1870)”, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 92 (1979): 162–86; J. à Campo, “Orde, Rust, en Welvaart. Over de Nederlandse Expansie in de Indische Archipel Omstreeks 1900”, *Acta Politica* 15 (1980); I. Schoffer, “Dutch ‘Expansion’ and Indonesian Reactions: Some Dilemmas of Modern Colonial Rule (1900–1942)”, in *Expansion and Reaction: Essays on European Expansion and Reactions in Asia and Africa*, ed. H.L. Wesseling (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 78–99; J.J.C. Voorhoeve, *Peace, Profits, and Principles: A Study of Dutch Foreign Policy* (Leiden: Nijhoff, 1985); H.L. Wesseling, “The Giant That Was a Dwarf or the Strange History of Dutch Imperialism”, in *Theory and Practice of European Expansion Overseas: Essays in Honor of Ronald Robinson*, ed. A. Porter and R. Holland (London, Frank Cass, 1989).

still saw any large extension of existing possessions as costly and unlikely to pay for itself in future prospective revenues.

This perception started to shift during the 1860s, but it was the start of the Aceh War in 1873 that signalled the real beginnings of a sea-change in Dutch policy.¹⁰⁶ Expansionism now became a vital part of government discourse, as the civilizing mission of the Netherlands was trumpeted with great fanfare, and nationalism grew as a shaping force in politics and policy. By the mid-1890s, the tentacles of Dutch control had spread significantly. Lombok was overrun in 1894, while parts of Sumatra, Bali, Sulawesi, Borneo and the Eastern Islands (Maluku and Nusa Tenggara) followed in the early twentieth century. Various interpretations have been forwarded trying to explain the guiding forces behind these wars, from economics and European competition to troubled peripheries or internal prestige.¹⁰⁷ The important fact for our purposes is that much of the Indies was overrun in the space of a few years; by 1910, the end of our period, almost the entirety of the border arc was under strict Dutch control.

These wars of conquest against "native enemies" are important in understanding perceptions of threats against the state at the turn of the century.¹⁰⁸ Though the Dutch invariably won conventional conflicts against sultanates and petty kingdoms, these victories rarely resulted in neat demarcations of absolute Dutch control. As Batavia's planners scanned their contemporary archipelago, they discovered that low-level insurgencies were everywhere apparent, and especially along the border arc. Such testings and proddings of authority were only exacerbated by a flow of illicit arms. In Western Borneo, numerous revolts against local Dutch proxies (almost always Malays "ruling" over Dayak populations) were reported in 1870; in Southeastern Borneo, the "river-rebel" Wangkang was also active (in addition to the Sultans' party discussed above), at times amassing forces of 100 prahus and 500 men.¹⁰⁹ Insurrections had to be quelled in Northern Sulawesi facing the southern Philippines, and in Palembang and Jambi, where disturbances were only partially related to Taha's revolt further inland.¹¹⁰ In Aceh, we read of constant sniping at Dutch

¹⁰⁶See Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi Aceh, *Perang Kolonial Belanda di Aceh* (Banda Aceh: Pusat Dokumentasi Aceh dan Informasi Aceh, 1977); and Paul van 't Veer, *De Atjeh Oorlog* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Arbeiderspers, 1969).

¹⁰⁷See, in that order, J. Thomas Lindblad, "Economic Aspects of the Dutch Expansion in Indonesia", *Modern Asian Studies* 23 (1989): 1–24; Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, *The Netherlands and the Rise of Modern Imperialism: Colonies and Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1991); Ian Black, "The 'Lastposten': Eastern Kalimantan and the Dutch in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16,2 (Sep. 1985); and Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, *Sumatraans Sultanaat en Koloniale Staat: De Relatie Djambi-Batavia (1830–1907) en het Nederlandse Imperialisme* (Leiden: KITLV, 1994).

¹⁰⁸Local polities looked for allies wherever they could against the Dutch. Aceh sounded out Italy and the United States in this regard, while Riau explored the possibilities of an alliance with Japan. For the latter, see Barbara Watson Andaya, "From Rum to Tokyo: The Search for Anti-Colonial Allies by the Rulers of Riau, 1899–1914", *Indonesia* 24 (1977): 123–56.

¹⁰⁹ARNAS, "Politiek Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1870" (Borneo West #2/8); "Maandrapport der Residentie Borneo Zuid-Oost 1870" (Borneo Z.O. #10a/5).

¹¹⁰"Kraing Bonto-Bonto; Verhaal van den Opstand in de Noorder-districten van Celebes in 1868 en van het Dempen van dien Opstand", *Indische Militair Tijdschrift* (hereafter *IMT*) 3 (1872): 198–233; Gov. Heckler to Gov. Gen. NEI, 27 Sep. 1905, Telegram #554 (Riouw, fiche #294, 296) in MvK, PVBB.

patrols well into the twentieth century.¹¹¹ Guns were apparently available to indigenous peoples everywhere on the frontier, from North Sumatra to North Sulawesi, and even in the heart of Borneo.

Many indigenous peoples of the periphery made no attempt to hide their insurgencies. Even at the very end of our period, Batavia was facing resistance to its state-making projects, and punishing those “recalcitrant” populations who did not accept forms of centralized control.¹¹² An 1889 Dutch expedition sent to explore tin mines in Flores, for example, was attacked by local inhabitants, and Batavia responded with a series of punitive strikes that continued as late as 1907.¹¹³ In Borneo and on Ceram (in the eastern archipelago), headhunting also served as a magnet for Dutch interference, setting off small-scale insurgencies as local peoples fought Batavia’s “incorporation” into “civilized behaviour”.¹¹⁴ In Halmahera, Maluku, the cause for resistance was taxes, as it was in South Sumatra around 1908.¹¹⁵ Finally, the twentieth century also brought insurrection in the central regions of North Sumatra, as Acehese resistance spilled over into the Gayo and Batak lands, on the outskirts of the main theatre of resistance.¹¹⁶ All of these examples are variants of a common theme: expanding state control, and local reactions of violence against this control, along a wide swath of frontier. Insurgencies lasted until the very end of our time period. By the second decade of the twentieth century, however, such resistance was increasingly futile, as the power of the state had grown in new and unexpected directions.

A second way in which the Dutch Indies state tried to deal with any potential threat from the indigenous population was through its law codes. We have already seen how these laws were shaped to fit concerns over the *Vreemde Oosterlingen*, or Foreign Asians, in the Netherlands Indies. Native populations presented a different challenge to Batavia’s policy makers, because indigenes far outweighed any other populations in terms of numbers, necessitating a different tactical approach under the law. In 1873 a separate criminal code was drawn up for these communities, which lacked the protections against government arbitrariness that European codes definitively espoused. Rights of the accused, custody, and protections against search warrants were all significantly less than those outlined for Europeans. To make matters worse for the indigenous population, the court officers who sat in judgement upon them were very rarely trained jurists; more often than not, they

¹¹¹See, for example, van Daalen, Kotaradja to Gov. Gen. NEI, 20 Nov. 1905, Telegram #909, and 16 Dec. 1905, Telegram #962, both in Atjeh, fiche #10 (MvK, PVBB). Many more citations exist on the phenomenon.

¹¹²A good source of information is the *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift* (IMT, Military Journal of the Indies), which chronicled the penetration of the frontier in graphic detail.

¹¹³P.G. Schmidhamer, “De Expeditie naar Zuid Flores”, *IMT* 24,2 (1893): 101–115; 197–213; A. Tissot van Patot, “Kort Overzicht van de Gebeurtenissen op Flores en Enige Gegevens Betreffende dat Eiland”, *IMT* 38,2 (1907): 762–72.

¹¹⁴Ps. Troupier, “Borneo; een Goed Gelukte Overvalling”, *IMT* 40,1 (1909): 1046–1051; “Kort Overzicht van den Stand van Zaken op het Eiland Ceram”, *IMT* 37,1 (1906): 167–69.

¹¹⁵“Kort Overzicht van de Ongeregelheden op Halmahera”, *IMT* 38,1 (1907): 328–31; see also Kenneth Young, *Islamic Peasants and the State: the 1908 Anti-Tax Rebellion in West Sumatra* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Monograph Series, 1994).

¹¹⁶J. Alting von Geusau, “De Tocht van Overste Van Daalen door de Gajo-Alas- en Bataklanden (1904)”, *IMT* 70,2 (1939): 593–613; J.C.J. Kempees, “Na Dertig Jaren”, *IMT* 65,1 (1934): 111–16.

were simply local civil servants. An effort to redress this less than fair situation was made in Java fairly early on in our period, but changes were slow in coming in the Outer Islands.¹¹⁷ The end result was that the indigenous peoples of the archipelago were kept firmly under the thumb of Dutch law, in an effort to keep them amenable to Batavia's wishes.

Though the Indies legal structure treated indigenes as potentially dangerous to the power of the state, not all peoples of the archipelago were judged to be equally threatening. Native Christians were equal to Europeans under the law until 1854; for civil, trade, and criminal matters, they were essentially classified with the power elite, though this altered with a new emphasis on race (rather than religion) after that date.¹¹⁸ A significant proportion of Europeans in the Indies never liked this change, however, and continued to press for Native Christian rights under the law. The spread of Christianity in the Indies certainly encouraged this lobby; Christian communities were to be found on most islands of the archipelago, though their concentration was larger in some places than in others.¹¹⁹ These autochthonous populations had shed their blood for the Dutch for centuries in the Indies, and Christians were over-represented in some key institutions, most notably the Indies army. Many Dutchmen felt that religion should make a difference in whether the state treated a particular group as potentially threatening.¹²⁰ The government started to open this debate again in the 1890s, though there were still many who felt that race, not religion, should determine Batavia's threat perception. "Men rightly hold the prospect of individual equality under the law with Europeans as a goad or stimulus to spur the native forward toward development", said one commentator matter-of-factly.¹²¹

A last aspect of Dutch law and local practice needs to be discussed here, as it pertains to Batavia's control over indigenes and their activities: the concept of *adat*, or traditional law. The Netherlands' expansion into the thousands of islands of the Indies brought it into contact with many different peoples and their customs. *Adat* was the Malay term (derived from Arabic) used to describe the diverse cultural practices of the archipelago, which were only rarely codified into written compendia of laws. As a colonial state with a "civilizing" (and repressing) agenda, the Netherlands Indies questioned whether Dutch or local law held final sway in many conflicts and cases over the years. Batavia developed a piecemeal approach to this question in the period under discussion. Some peoples, like

¹¹⁷Cornelis Fasseur, "Cornerstone and Stumbling Block: Racial Classification and the Late Colonial State in Indonesia", in *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands Indies 1880-1942*, ed. Robert Cribb (Leiden: KITLV, 1994), p. 34.

¹¹⁸See F.C. Hekmeijer, *De Rechtstoestand der Inlandsche Christenen in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Utrecht: Utrechtsche Stoomdrukkerij, P. den Beer, 1892).

¹¹⁹Hekmeijer, writing for a legal audience in *Wet en Adat*, gave the numbers of native Christians in the Indies around 1896 as follows. He counted approximately 26,500 native Catholics, mainly in Minahasa, and on Flores and Timor; around 212,000 native Protestant Church members, mostly in the Moluccas, and parts of Java and Minahasa; and approximately 90,000 native Christians not belonging to any particular Christian denomination, who were primarily to be found on Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Nias, Savu, Sumba, the Sangi and Talau Islands, and New Guinea. See F.C. Hekmeijer, "De Rechtstoestand der Inlandsche Christengemeenten in Ned. Indië", *Wet en Adat* (1896/97): 31.

¹²⁰C.J. Schich, "De Rechtstoestand der Inlandsche Christenen", *IG* 2 (1892): 1532.

¹²¹J.M. le Rutte, "Is Gelijkheid van den Christen-Inlander met den Europeaan Wenschelijk?", *Het Recht in Nederlandsch Indië* 72 (1899): 56.

the Kubu or “forest dwellers” of inland Palembang Residency, were left more or less alone to their own forms of jurisprudence, as they were seen to be marginal, “primitive” groups whose society was not really worth interference.¹²²

In other parts of the Outer Islands, however, such as on Lombok, Hindu criminal law as developed by local peoples was only partially allowed to stand as it was; aspects deemed to be “incompatible with Western justice” were excluded.¹²³ These practices included certain punishments and trials, like maiming and torturing, which the Dutch declared repugnant to “civilized” standards. Still another option was the fusion of existing legal codes and Dutch law: shipping contracts from Makassar, in Southwest Sulawesi, show evidence of this variant, as *trepang* (edible sea cucumber) voyages to Northern Australia were solemnized before the Dutch court, but contained many stipulations whose origins rested in Makassarese traditions.¹²⁴ The diversity of these practices in different Outer Island localities shows the legal syncretism that held sway in these regions, often against Batavia’s best efforts to the contrary. Administrators in the field sometimes bent the rigidity of Dutch law to accommodate local practice. The Leiden professor Cornelis von Vollenhoven became the great chronicler and champion of *adat* traditions, but it was only around 1920 that he and other proponents of *adat* law began to win more sweeping victories against the primacy of Dutch jurisdiction. Batavia’s decision-makers held onto the repressive force of Indies law for as long as they could.¹²⁵

Movement

One phenomenon of indigenous life in the Indies presented a particularly serious challenge to Dutch control of the Indies — free and unrestricted movement. Though many peoples of the archipelago were more or less sedentary in their daily lives, certain groups moved in and out of the Dutch sphere — or simply through it — whenever and wherever they pleased. This was especially the case for many nomadic and semi-nomadic groups who inhabited areas of the frontier (such as certain forest and sea peoples along the Anglo/Dutch border), but there were also ongoing migrations in the Indies, such as the Muslim pilgrimage (or Hajj) and the Minangkabau *merantau*. Free movement subverted controlling mechanisms the state erected to mediate autochthonous contacts and commerce, and also created opportunities for people to get their hands on threatening commodities like guns. The last sub-section of this study focuses on the problems presented by unhindered movement in the Indies, and how the Dutch responded to this issue.

The Hajj

Perhaps the single most important instance of free movement was the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. By the mid-1880s somewhere between forty and sixty thousand Muslims from all over the world were undertaking the Hajj to Arabia each year; in 1880, 12,000 of this

¹²²G. J. Gersen, “Oendang-Oendang of Verzameling van Voorschriften in de Lematang Oeloe en Ilir en de Pasemah Landen”, *TBG* 20,3 (1873): 108.

¹²³A.A. Hoos, “Hindoe-Strafrecht op Lombok”, *TNI* 1 (1896): 166.

¹²⁴“Makassarsche Scheepvaart-Overeenkomsten (Tripangvangst)”, *Wet en Adat* 2 (1897): 48.

¹²⁵See Cornelis van Vollenhoven’s master-work, *Het Adatrecht van Nederlandsch-Indië* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1906).

number came from the Malay Archipelago.¹²⁶ Commentators on this grand, unifying event of the Muslim world wrote in awe of the multi-ethnic scenes to be witnessed in Arabian cities during the pilgrimage season.¹²⁷ Not all Europeans saw in these gatherings the makings of a grand spectacle, however, for the Hajj and its increasing influence on Islamic populations also elicited grave concern. A "revival" was said to be occurring, which was "difficult to believe had not received anxious consideration at the hands of those whose official responsibility lies chiefly in the direction of Asia".¹²⁸ In fact, colonial administrators in Batavia were already tracking Hajj voyages and writing of their concerns back to The Hague. By the early 1870s, for instance, a triangular Hajj-surveillance had already been instituted by the Dutch in Asia, linking consuls in Jeddah and Singapore with supervisory structures in Batavia.¹²⁹

Surveillance was also practised on an internal level within the Indies. The movements of people involved in the pilgrimage were routinely monitored, with particular interest lavished on the islands of the border arc. In Palembang, South Sumatra, the Resident reported in 1874 that the numbers of pilgrims were going up year by year; one of the three steamers which regularly plied the route between Palembang and Singapore, in fact, had been specially converted to carry them back and forth.¹³⁰ In Bangka, the Resident's figures also showed a rise in local people undertaking the Hajj: in 1873 the figure leaving for Arabia was 29, while the next year the number jumped to 87, and the year after that to 124.¹³¹ Western Borneo kept statistics for the entire Residency, and also for individual *kampong* (villages); 247 people left in 1870 from the capital regency of Pontianak alone.¹³² And Southeastern Borneo compiled careful charts that reveal a correlation between districts with large numbers of pilgrimages and those with the largest numbers of Netherlands Indies soldiers.¹³³ Undertaking the Hajj was certainly not illegal, but the process was associated in administrative discourse and procedure with areas of particular anxiety to the state.

By the middle decades of our period, the numbers of archipelago peoples making the journey to Mecca were generally on the increase. This particularly worried Batavia because the Hajj was being blamed as a transmitter of militancy to other parts of the world precisely at this time. In Western Borneo the annual number of pilgrims exceeded one hundred for most of the late 1880s, while in Southeastern Borneo the figures often

¹²⁶A. Wolluston, "The Pilgrimage to Mecca", *Asiatic Quarterly Review* 1 (1886): 408.

¹²⁷Wilfred Scawen Blunt, *The Future of Islam* (London: Kegan Paul Trench and Company, 1882), pp. 1–2; see also C. Snouck Hurgronje's important work *Mekka in the Latter Part of the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1931). For a contemporary scholarly appraisal, see Marcel Witlox, "Met Gevaar voor Lijf en Goed: Mekkagangers uit Nederlands-Indië in de 19de Eeuw", in *Islamitische Pelgrimstochten*, ed. Willy Jansen and Huub de Jonge (Muiderberg: Coutinho, 1991), pp. 24–26.

¹²⁸Ibid., pp. 3–4.

¹²⁹ARA, 1872, MR #820.

¹³⁰ARNAS, "Algemeen Administratieve Verslag der Residentie Palembang 1874" (Palembang #64/17).

¹³¹ARNAS, "Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Banka 1875" (Banka #66).

¹³²ARNAS, "Politiek Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1870" (Borneo West #2/8).

¹³³ARNAS, "Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Borneo Zuid-Oost 1871" (Borneo Z.O. #9/2). See the statistics on Amoenthajj and Martapoera in particular.

doubled (and sometimes tripled) year after year.¹³⁴ Riau did not see significant increases in pilgrims, but Palembang reported that more and more people were making the trip, especially in years of agricultural prosperity.¹³⁵ Such movements had often led to the mixing of Arab and indigenous bloodlines over time, and it was in residencies where this situation existed that Pan-Islam became a recurring “problem” for the Dutch. In Jambi, Sultan Taha and his lineage had long-standing Arab ties, and in Western Borneo there was also extensive Arab and indigenous intermarriage, especially among the former Sultan of Pontianak’s house.¹³⁶ Batavia therefore saw in the passage of Islamic pilgrims the seeds of conspiracy and dissension, especially in the so-called “trouble-spots” of the Outer Islands. This point was made explicit in 1883, when the Governor General warned that Hajjis were using the Outer Islands (in this case Bali and Lombok) as “staging areas” for insurrection, knowing that such places were still out of Dutch reach.¹³⁷

By the turn of the twentieth century, statistics gathered in the Netherlands Indies relating to the pilgrimage were revealing an interesting trend: Hajj departures from the Outer Islands (especially from areas along the border arc), were fewer in absolute terms than those from most parts of Java, but as a percentage of total population, they were often higher than the Javanese figures.¹³⁸ Put another way, a “Muslim arc” seemed to be becoming more and more discernible in the “Outer Possessions”. Important Indies thinkers like P.J. Veth understood the connection between undertaking the Hajj and local prestige: returning pilgrims were treated with enormous respect.¹³⁹ In the years after 1910, with the founding and growth of Islamic organizations like Sarekat Islam and Muhammadiyah, this vigilance and uneasiness about the Hajj in Dutch policy circles only grew. The Dutch never banned their subjects from undertaking the Hajj, but at best it was seen as a troublesome exercise to be monitored. At worst, colonial administrators saw the pilgrimage as yet another threat to European rule, exposing local populations to material and ideas that all were far better off without.

Nomadism, Border Peoples, and Other Forms of Movement

The Hajj was only one, albeit the most important, of many aspects of indigenous movement seen to be potentially threatening to state-making in the region. Nomadism, such as forays across the Indies’ borders and the Minangkabau *merantau*,¹⁴⁰ also elicited

¹³⁴ARNAS, “Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1886” (Borneo Z.O. #517); “Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Borneo Zuid-Oost 1886” (Borneo Z.O. #9a/7).

¹³⁵ARNAS, “Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Riouw 1890” (Riouw #64/1–2); “Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Palembang 1886” (Palembang #65/6).

¹³⁶ARA, Resident Palembang to Gov. Gen. NEI (1 Jun. 1881, Very Secret) in 1881, MR #563; see also J. van Goor, “A Madman in the City of Ghosts: Nikolaas Kloek in Pontianak”, *Itinerario* 9,2 (1985): 196–211.

¹³⁷ARA, “Extract Uit het Register der Besluiten van dan Gouverneur General van Nederlandsch-Indië” (8 Mar. 1883, Very Secret #4) in 1883, MR #252.

¹³⁸“De Bedevaart naar Mekka, 1909/1910”, *IG* 2 (1910) : 1638.

¹³⁹P.J. Veth *Java: Geographisch, Ethnologisch, Historisch*, 4th ed. (Haarlem, De Erven F. Bohn, 1907), pp. 128–67.

¹⁴⁰The *rantau* of the Minangkabau peoples of Western Sumatra was a culture-based migration pattern that took young Minangkabau men away from their villages in Western Sumatra, sometimes for long periods at a time.

various levels of European concern. These phenomena will be briefly discussed below as they related to threat perception, but a linking factor in all of these movements was the rising power of the market in the Indies, which encouraged and enabled movement in the pursuit of profit. Archipelago peoples had been accustomed to distant trade ventures for many centuries, so that the idea of journeying in quest of commerce was by no means new. Yet the changing structural conditions brought about by European rule intensified the role of movement and of the market in new ways. Daniel Chew has shown how rising demand for forest produce drove many Iban to downgrade their own rice agriculture and concentrate instead on journeying to find such products — sometimes as far away as Malaya, New Guinea, and the eastern coast of Sumatra.¹⁴¹ Warren has also commented on the effects of rising prices and competition for forest and sea produce, showing how certain Bornean peoples began to move great distances to protect their access to birds' nest caves, as the nests themselves became more and more valuable.¹⁴² Descriptions of a vast array of goods in circulation even in the heart of Borneo should make the attractions of journeying clear: local peoples could obtain metals, textiles, salt, and dried fish, if they were willing to search out the markets that provided them.¹⁴³ If the market encouraged movement even in this kind of forbidding terrain, it should come as no surprise that in other locales — where the Dutch were building roads, steam connections, and later even rail lines — mobility grew apace. The problem from the Dutch vantage was that Batavia's own infrastructure might ultimately be used against her: these same "blessings of modernity" could be used to move arms, dissent, and dangerous ideas.

A quick glance at Western Borneo shows some of these dynamics in action, particularly as they relate to the frontier. Local peoples used the border as a tool, moving back and forth across it to gain advantages in particular contexts. In the early 1870s, when the Dutch were acknowledging certain Malay chiefs as vassals in the Sintang interior, these men used Dutch sponsorship to increase exactions on local Dayak populations, for both corvee duties and the collection of forest products. Many Dayak groups responded by relocating across the border, revealing the shallow penetration of Malay (and by extension, Dutch) power in the area at this time.¹⁴⁴ By the mid-1880s, the problem had still not gone away; the Sarawak government was sending representatives to Pontianak, asking for Dutch help in controlling the Batang Lupar Dayaks, who made regular incursions over the border into the British sphere. The Dutch Resident responded by burning Dayak settlements on the frontier and forbidding further settlement there, as well as by trying to force the Batang Lupar groups to settle permanently by lakes in the interior.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹See Daniel Chew, *Chinese Pioneers on the Sarawak Frontier 1841–1941* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 109.

¹⁴²See his discussion of the Segai-i and other peoples of the forest interior and littoral; competition was intense, and spurred much violence (including headhunting raids) over large parts of the island. James Warren, *Sulu Zone*, p. 90.

¹⁴³Some of the goods being traded in marketplaces in Borneo were guttah, rottan, iron, copper, textiles, tobacco, gambier, dried fish, timber and rice; also much desired, but in shorter supply, were glass, oil and salt, beads, and gold. See ARNAS, *Algemeen Administratieve Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1874* (Borneo West #5/4).

¹⁴⁴ARNAS, "Politiek Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1870" (Borneo West #2/8).

¹⁴⁵ARNAS, "Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1886" (Borneo West #5/17).

By the late 1880s Dayaks were also adeptly exploiting internal Dutch administrative boundaries, realizing that European authority fractured along such lines, making punishment and enforcement more difficult. Even by the turn of the twentieth century such movements leading to "breaches of the peace" were still fairly common; in 1905 the Raja of Sarawak wrote that armed bands of Dayaks were still finding refuge on the Dutch side of the frontier, while four years later violence spilled the other way, this time incensing Pontianak.¹⁴⁶ The movement of local populations across the border was the key, as Dayaks realized that they could ensure a better deal for themselves in terms of corvee, forest-product collection, and tax obligations, only if they maintained access to both sides of the frontier.

Such freedom of movement was not only found in the forested interior of Borneo, but also on the seas. Archipelago people often moved great distances through the vast maritime spaces of the archipelago, causing Batavia (and Singapore) considerable anxiety. In the first half of the nineteenth century, this had taken the form of maritime slaving in Southeast Asia, which reached from lower Burma all the way east to Luzon. By the end of the century, these sorts of expeditions were being stamped out by European steam-power, but lower-level movements of people still occasioned state surveillance and control. Residents in the Outer Islands sent a constant stream of information on this subject to Batavia. The administrator for Southeast Borneo reported that thousands of people were leaving his Residency by boat in 1889, looking for work in Sumatra.¹⁴⁷ In Western Borneo, it was the Bugis who were most active by sea; the Resident there cautioned Batavia about huge movements of Bugis migrants entering his Residency, sometimes from the East (in *prahus* from Sulawesi) and other times from the West (en route from Singapore).¹⁴⁸ Batavia investigated these movements to decide which peoples — in which contexts — were dangerous, and which were not. The primary concern of the state was to keep its own *authority paramount on the frontier, and that authority could be challenged if population balances radically changed, or if the sea-lanes were threatened in any way.*

The spectre of large-scale movements of specific ethnic groups made Batavia particularly nervous. Not all groups fit into this category; the Kubu of South Sumatra, for example, were a migratory population, but their relative isolation, and supposed "lower stage of development", rendered them unthreatening to the state.¹⁴⁹ Other populations were seen in less benign terms. We have already seen that the movement of ethnic Arabs, or people of mixed Arab and Malay descent, into the interior of Palembang and the Lampongs was frowned upon by the Dutch. The movement of Bugis populations, with their relatively

¹⁴⁶Raja Sarawak to Resident West Borneo, 12 Apr. 1905, and 16 May 1905 (Borneo West, fiche #394); Resident Southeast Borneo to Gov. Gen. NEI, 22 May 1909 (Borneo Z.O., fiche #477) both in MvK, PVBB. For contemporary scholarship on this topic, see Robert Pringle, *Rajahs and Rebels: The Ibans of Sarawak under Brooke Rule, 1841–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970).

¹⁴⁷ARNAS, "Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Borneo Zuid-Oost 1889" (Borneo Z.O. #9a/10). Most were searching for work on Sumatra's tobacco plantations.

¹⁴⁸ARNAS, "Algemeen Verslag der Residentie Borneo West 1889, 1890" (Borneo West #5/20, #5/21).

¹⁴⁹A.W.P. Verkerk Pistorius, "Palembangsche Schetsen. Een Dag bij de Wilden", *TNI* 1 (1874): 150.

strict traditions of Islam and formidable reputation for violence, was carefully tabulated as well. Moreover, Acehnese travelling in other parts of the Indies were closely watched after 1873 because of the bitterness of the war in Aceh, and even Minangkabau travellers from West Sumatra — undertaking the cultural complex of wandering known as *merantau* — elicited concern.¹⁵⁰ The extreme complexity of different kinds of population flows in the Outer Islands therefore produced different narratives of how to deal with such movements in the centre. All Dutchmen generally agreed, however, that large movements of “natives” — in 1870 as in 1910 — were potentially dangerous to the Indies state. Alongside existing patterns of violence and suspect “Foreign Asians”, this troika of concerns occupied Batavia's planners well into the twentieth century.

Conclusion

In 1870, the Dutch looked at the “Outer Islands” from their capital in Batavia and were alarmed by what they saw. Most of the vast border arc with England's possessions in the region — in the Straits of Melaka, the South China Sea, and overland in Borneo — was only nominally under European control. Various Asian peoples along this 3,000 kilometre stretch of forest and sea paid little attention to the two imperial powers; nor did they need to, for neither of the two metropolises was in a position to enforce its will in the area. By 1910, however, and after four decades of state-formation in the region, the lands and seas of the archipelago had a different feel. Newly created coercive state structures had brought capitals in closer contact with the frontier, and there was an apparatus of power in place to ensure that this situation would continue. Batavia certainly still had its concerns along the length of this border arc, but many of the state's insecurities of the preceding half century were now only a memory.

One of the main reasons for this change was that “uncontrolled violence” in the Indies seemed to be waning. Piracy, and other forms of low-level violence, no longer had as much space to operate as in the past. As the Dutch imperium grew, it funnelled its resources to the corners of the archipelago, attempting to eradicate the means to employ violence by any actors but itself. This was always an uneven process, but phenomena like piracy were increasingly marginalized as opportunistic activities. Batavia was never able to control violence fully in its own territories, but the years between 1870 and 1910 saw a qualitative change in its outward expression. Widespread killing, looting, or resistance against the state were gradually no longer tolerated; Batavia now had the resources (and

¹⁵⁰See Mochtar Naim, *Merantau: Pola Migrasi Suku Minangkabau* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1979), especially pp. 2–3 and the map on p. 65. Colonial accounts of Minangkabau cultural practices can be found in J.C. van Eerde, “De Adat Volgens Menangkabausche Bronnen”, *Wet en Adat* 3 (1896): 209–220; and E.A. Klerk, “Geographische en Etnographische Opstel over de Landschappen Korintji, Serampas, en Soengai Tenang”, *TBG* 39 (1897): 1–117. For a good discussion on the period being studied here, see Elizabeth Graves, *The Minangkabau Response to Dutch Colonial Rule in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1981), pp. 19–21; Tsuyoshi Kato, *Matriliny and Migration: Evolving Minangkabau Traditions in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), especially p. 23; and Taufik Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927–33)* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1971), especially pp. 18–22. Other archipelago peoples also undertook comparable movements, and the Minangkabau complex is only the most famous.

the know-how) to end such demonstrations quickly. This state of affairs held true for the next several decades, with very few exceptions. This does not mean that violence disappeared in the Indies, but it was effectively diluted, peripheralized, or contained so that it no longer presented a threat to the survival of the state.

Foreign Asians, or *Vreemde Oosterlingen*, were also deemed to be a serious threat by policy-planners in Batavia. The many thousands of overseas Chinese, Japanese, Arabs, and Turks in the Indies were thought to present a real danger to the well-being of the state, each for different reasons. For the diverse and dispersed Chinese populations of the Indies, the threat was mostly seen in numbers; especially in the Outer Islands, Chinese miners, planters, and settlers were viewed as ominously numerous. Japanese migrants to the Indies presented a different "problem", it was thought, as the threat here was ultimately deemed to be an external one. The Japanese in the Indies comprised a potential "fifth column" for an industrializing Japan, a notion that was fuelled by various reports and rumours. Arabs and Turks were also suspect populations, simply based upon their Islamic faith. The dangers of Pan-Islam as a movement were taken extremely seriously by the Dutch, as it was never forgotten that the autochthonous populations of the Indies were overwhelmingly Muslim.

If these same "Pribumi Indonesians" were potentially threatening because of their religion, then they were also seen as anxiety-provoking to the state for several other reasons. Wars needed to be fought to command their allegiance, and this happened all across the archipelago for the entire period under discussion. Once conquered, these populations also needed to be policed, and one of the best ways to do this was through the imposition of discriminatory laws. Yet it was the uncontrolled movement of peoples native to the Indies, whether nomadic, devotional, or economic, which concerned Batavia's statesmen more than any other issue. If local people could move outside of the knowledge (and enforcement) of the state, they could potentially accrue all sorts of dangerous paraphernalia. This "paraphernalia" included ideologies, alliances, or modern Western firearms, all of which Batavia preferred its subjects to do without.

The Dutch, therefore, looked toward their northern frontiers at the end of the nineteenth century and saw a kettle on a slow boil. Potential threats to the security of the state were thought to be everywhere, and existed in many forms. It did not ultimately matter how many of these "dangers" were real, or how many were apparitions of collective paranoia. Dutch policy planned for the worst, and surveillance — as well as strict structures of control — was exercised over all these potential threats. The Netherlands Indies state evolved in this climate of fear and apprehension in the decades after 1870, and carried these anxieties into the early twentieth century. Such concerns became a part of the ruling psychology in Batavia, and were textured into policy and planning. By the 1910s there would soon be new forces to worry about as well, as a burgeoning political consciousness in the Indies generated the first seeds of eventual independence.