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12 Slavery and the Slave Trade in South Sulawesi, 1660s–1800s

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Introduction

In the 1930s the Dutch historian J.C. van Leur criticized historians' use of European categories to analyse Indonesian realities. He should have given "slavery" as a particularly telling example of how inadequate our terminology is, as the struggle to describe the complex hierarchies and various practices which typify Indonesian "slavery" both frustrates and exhausts the researcher. It is rather like trying to work with theories concerning "modes of production": ultimately it seems you have to choose between an apparently endless debate on definition, or else simply go ahead and use a given term to cover a generally recognizable type. In this paper I choose the latter course. "Slave" refers to those who "belonged" to someone, who had limited social and legal rights, and could be bought and sold. It is hoped that the development of a solid research base will eventually enable us to create more precise and differentiated categories, but at this stage all I can do is sketch in some general features which helped shape Indonesian slavery.

This paper presents preliminary findings drawn from a first survey of archive sources. As such, it reflects the emphases of the documentation: for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the focus is on the slave trade as it affected the VOC (Dutch East India Company 1602–1799), while abolition forms the main theme of the nineteenth century material.¹ A wealth of information has not yet been tapped. Notarial sources such as wills, records of court cases, census data, extensive shipping and trade statistics and general reports can be used to build up a picture of the Dutch-sponsored slave trade, which should also illuminate the indigenous networks which fed or paralleled it. Urban slavery in the VOC period should also be relatively well documented,

but Indonesian rural slavery is sure to prove much more elusive. Nonetheless, my ultimate intention is to try to indicate the pattern of slave trading and use within the wider Makassarese-Buginese world, focusing on Makassar. Here I give only a first impression which will be worked out in more detail, and no doubt revised, in further publications.

Any student of Indonesian slavery is immediately confronted with a bewildering kaleidoscope of images, ranging from ethnographic descriptions of varying statuses in dozens of local social systems, to accounts of the businesslike Dutch use of slave manpower. Indeed, at first glance it is tempting to try and reduce chaos to order by imposing a neat dichotomy between indigenous and European slavery. By implication, the former was "customary and traditional", unchanging, "domestic and mild". Slaves had a recognizable human worth within the social system — admittedly at the bottom — but nevertheless they were protected members of the family. European slavery, on the other hand, seemed to encompass both harsh domestic servitude and impersonal forced labour in VOC warehouses and shipyards. Slaves of Indonesians were gained by foreclosure on debt, by judicial sentencing, by warfare, raiding and the birth of slave children. While in theory the Dutch only traded in already enslaved people, in practice many were seized in armed raids or snatched in a manner reminiscent of the African coast.

In reality, of course, no clear demarcation existed between a "native" and "white man's" slave trade, or even between the functions of slaves in local and European communities. While it is undoubtedly true that in many Indonesian societies slavery was small scale and domestic, and easily supplied by local sources, there was also a large scale indigenous commerce in human beings, fed by many small networks funnelling their goods through a hierarchy of local, regional and major entrepôts. To some extent this wide system fed the VOC's insatiable demand for slaves, but it also supplied manpower to Indonesian chiefs and entrepreneurs. There were then many economic networks of varying range and scale; in most, people were only one of the items traded, while others specialized in the valuable slaves. These variations in the extent and volume of the trade were both caused by and reflected in differentiation in the use of slaves. Here also there is no clear line between exclusively European and exclusively native types of slavery.

On a first glance at the scanty literature it would seem that the Dutch used their slaves purely as labour within an encapsulated economy directed towards the world market, while slaves of Indonesians had ceremonial and display functions, or were used to provide armed men of fixed loyalty, or for domestic and subsistence production. But many Dutchmen also used their slaves for status display, while

evidence suggests that at least in some regions Indonesians needed slaves to overcome the labour shortage which limited profitable exports of agricultural, forest or sea products. Indeed, most Indonesian societies made a general distinction between "inside" and "outside" slaves. Ruibing (1937) points to this widespread phenomenon, whereby "inside" slaves lived and worked in their master's house, while "outside" people worked in the fields or other enterprises and lived apart from their owner.

The fact that there is no absolute dichotomy between European and Indonesian slavery and slave trading is not surprising, since all formed part of the same general economic system. The more integrated an Indonesian community was into long range commerce, the more likely it was to have an expanding need for labour. Manpower had cash value in proportion to its ability to produce goods for the market, while in isolated societies with a limited and easily saturated market there were built-in boundaries to labour requirements. So although there were Indonesian groups whose use of slaves approximated the "traditional, mild and domestic" ethnographic image, there were also those whose labour needs were governed by a colder logic and who treated men like beasts. The larger slave markets had their own sources — including cruising pirates, systematic and opportunistic traders — who obtained their slaves for retail by purchase or seizure.

It is obvious then that any categorization of slavery in Indonesia cannot be made on the basis of "native" versus "European". Since practice diverged from theory, I would suggest also that indigenous law codes and accounts of social hierarchies be treated with caution. While law codes do suggest the importance of slaves both as a social category and as wealth, the lack of sanctions in many cases means that although "house slaves" might have been protected, the slaves who were traded over long distances were often beyond the law, at least until they were finally absorbed into some sort of community. The best basis for categorization would seem to be in terms of social and economic function, with the caveat that such functions within any given society would change as wider structures changed, and that there were no doubt many gradations within most societies.

Company factories in the Indies drew their slaves and most of their trade goods from Indonesian societies. This contact stimulated various responses, including not only changes in production but also intensified slave trading. That this could happen in apparently remote areas is demonstrated by Warren's work on Sulu in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Warren 1981). It would be my contention that this Sulu-centred system was to a large extent a replacement of an earlier Makassar-focused network which declined in the early nineteenth century, if not before.

Participation in extensive trade systems involved various Indonesian peoples, including the Buginese and Makassarese of South Sulawesi, in wide-ranging networks of commerce and migration. South Sulawesi itself had long been a major trading centre before the definitive Dutch conquest in 1667. The kingdom of Goa's port was a central entrepot linking east and west Indonesia, frequented by Malay, Javanese and Acehnese traders, and providing a base for Portuguese, English, Danish and Dutch traders in the early seventeenth century. Among the goods which passed through the port were human beings, and Makassar was a major source and trans-shipment point for slaves through the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see chapter by Reid in this volume; *ENI* 1905, III, "Scheepvaart en Handel", p. 529).

The Makassar Connection: the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Buginese, Makassarese and Dutchmen had established patterns of slave trading long before the formal establishment of Dutch control in the area, with the 1667 Treaty of Bungaya. From its very early days, the VOC had complained about the shortage of manpower, and relied on slave labour to work in the docks and shipyards, in the artisan quarter and in officials' houses, and even to fill the gaps in the army's lower ranks. In many ways the Netherlands must have been influenced by precedents established by other nations, notably the Portuguese. Their influence was undoubtedly very strong in Makassar, where sporadic contact during the sixteenth century had become real influence in the early 1600s, and must have helped shape not only the slave trade but also attitudes and habits of slave use and urban living. This early period is beyond my reach; here I will simply sketch in the probable situation in the 1660s, but even then I will begin with the Portuguese connection.

From 1623 until the late 1660s, VOC slave buying from sources outside the archipelago seems to have been dominated by Bengali slaves bought from the *feringhi* (Portuguese and mestizo raiders) of the Arakan coast. Both official Company buying-missions and, when permitted, Batavia free burghers, sought slaves and slave-grown rice at the *feringhi* port of Dianga. It was only when depopulation and devastation of the coastal areas forced the Mogul ruler to go beyond diplomacy to war, defeating the Portuguese, that this source of manpower was lost to the VOC. In part this was compensated for by developing new suppliers — the first slave run to Madagascar was made in 1663 — but also, no doubt, by intensifying purchase within the archipelago. The *Generale Missiven* make it clear that Nias, Timor, Buton and Ternate

were important sources, while Bali is always named as a major supplier of Company slaves (Hall 1968, pp. 390–400; Coolhaas 1960–71, III, pp. 48, 132, 222, 259, 328).

But the VOC was only one factor in the trade in human beings, and even the Company's influence has to be broken down into several aspects. On the most obvious level, there was the official Company purchase of slaves for its own use, but there was also private trade in slaves by Company employees and burghers.² Most interesting from my point of view, however, was the impact of the VOC as a market for slaves, both at the dispersed local level, when Dutch ships came to outlying areas to buy people or demanded them as part of political tribute or retribution, and also on a more centralized and wider level, where networks of native traders were directed towards the Dutch, or where VOC ships bought larger numbers of slaves from native entrepot markets. With their endless need for labour, the Company drew on indigenous slave-trading networks, and probably stimulated their expansion and intensification.

One native network, of particular interest, was centred on Makassar and extended across the archipelago from extreme east to west. Both Malay/Sumatran and Makassarese/Buginese traders were involved. In his description of Makassar's trade just before the Treaty of Bungaya, the leader of the Dutch expedition, Cornelis Speelman, makes clear that the main catchment area for slaves was in the east; that they tended to be gathered together in Makassar and then exported to the big markets in the west. From their distribution, it seems that the purchasers were the main pepper-growing areas, plus the wealthy white and Chinese buyers at Batavia (Noorduyn 1983; Blussé 1980). Speelman describes how the Buginese exports from Buton consisted entirely of slaves, while many were drawn from "Borneo" (Brunei?), from Mindanao and Sulu (where they were sometimes re-exports of slaves originally taken from north-east Borneo), from Timor, Manggarai, Tanimbar, Solor and Alor. These slaves were exported to Banjarmasin, "to work in the pepper gardens", to Palembang, Jambi, Aceh, Johor, Sukadana and Batavia. In general, they seem to have been exchanged for cloth (Noorduyn 1983). Coolhaas adds the information that Acehnese and Johor traders came to Makassar to exchange cloth for slaves, while there were also slave markets — notably in Jambi — where pirates from the straits would sell their catch. Large scale raiding also occurred: the *Generale Missiven* record an expedition by two hundred armed Makassarese vessels which sailed to the Sula Islands in late 1665 and returned with between a thousand and fifteen hundred newly acquired slaves (Coolhaas 1960–71, III, p. 526). In the same year, Batavia issued a prohibition on the purchase of slaves from Bali and Celebes, because they were not real

slaves, but "stolen people" (van Hovevell 1848). In general, wars and famine seemed to generate slaves, and the numbers of Toraja slaves in the late seventeenth century reflected the heavy periods of fighting in South Sulawesi (see Andaya 1981; chapter by Bigalke in this volume); there seems to have been little subsequent trade in Toraja slaves until the later nineteenth century.

The impression of the late seventeenth century slave trade is of extensive networks stretching from the Malay peninsula to the southern Philippines, drawing on local populations for their slaves, by incidental raiding and piracy, by large expeditions, or by enslaving peoples defeated in war. After the Noorderdistricten north of Makassar had been devastated in the campaigns of 1668 and 1669, the inhabitants were either killed or enslaved. The area was then distributed among chiefs allied to the Dutch, who populated it with "immigrants" who grew the rice used to provision Makassar and much of the Moluccas, usually under the *tesang* form of land tenure, a sort of share cropping with at least a third of the crop going to the chief. Given that in the late nineteenth century the Noorderdistricten was the area with the largest concentration of slaves, and that Dutch officials feared abolition would dislocate rice production, it would seem to be a reasonable hypothesis that much of the labour used in rice growing in the Noorderdistricten had always been slave (van der Muelen 1910; 1851 census; Tromp Report 1878). This would seem to be a variant on the use of slaves in pepper areas, or, as Reid (1975, p.54) has noted, for rice production in Aceh.

The native market for slaves was, at least partly, a direct result of the need for labour. This market was supplied by the native slave trade, which also fed people into the VOC market, via such networks as that based on Makassar, or connections with the Acehnese and Malay slave run, such as that providing Nias slaves from Baros, or the Jambi market. Lists of VOC slave populations for main towns in the 1680s suggest that the largest single ethnic group (over thirty per cent) among the Company's slaves were the Buginese and Makassarese (Coolhaas 1960–71, IV, pp. 792–94). It is quite probable that there were two types of slave exports from Makassar. Not only was there an entrepot trade in slaves, with people obtained from the east and south being re-exported by local traders or visiting Sumatrans and Malays, but there was also a considerable export of local people, presumably victims of the recent wars, or the "robbed people" mentioned in the Batavian prohibition.

There are plenty of sources which document the Company's trade in, and dependence upon, slave labour. Demographic information on the early history of Dutch-controlled Makassar shows that the city had more unfree than free inhabitants. In 1676, of a total population of nearly fourteen hundred in the residential quarter of Vlaardingen, fifty-

five per cent were slave, ten per cent were *mardijkers* (freed slaves, Asian Christians, mostly Indian origin), and twelve per cent were debt-bondsmen. In 1688 the combined slave and debt-bondsmen population was somewhat lower (fifty-eight per cent), and by 1730 the slave population constituted seventy-one per cent of the town. In particular, the mestizo group seemed to increasingly specialize in slave holding, leading observers to comment that they lived off their slaves and property (Sutherland 1980a, Tables 3 and 4; VOC 1320 [OB 1677] fol. 274).

Information is scanty on slave owning by the Makassarese and Buginese themselves. Urban natives owned relatively few slaves; if in 1730 there were 5.33 European-owned slaves for each adult European male, nearly 10 mestizo-owned for each mestizo adult male, and 5.30 Chinese-owned for each Chinese adult male, the Makassarese/Buginese community owned a mere 2.37 for each adult male. But these sorts of figures, although they tell us something, are limited and too general. Fortunately, there is a full list of slaves owned by a Buginese aristocrat, Aru Teko, a refugee from Bone who was ultimately banned from Makassar. This list gives some insight into elite use of labour.

Aru Teko controlled a total of 786 people in 1701; most of them were bound to him in some way. Theoretically "free" were 449, though most of these were debt-bondsmen; 337 were slaves, of whom 124 were described by the Dutch as not legally slaves but robbed people seized in raids from Tambora and Dompu (Sumbawa). The slaves were organized under their own leaders, and their use seems to reflect the general distinction between "house" and "outside" people. Aru Teko kept a concentration of people in his house at Ujung Tanah, a village bordering on Makassar; of these 404 retainers 210 were free, 106 were slave, and 88 were Sumbawan prisoners. Among the free (debt-bondsmen) and slaves, about a third were single males and the rest were family groups or a very small group of single women; the Sumbawans were overwhelmingly in families. The other main concentration of people were in Aru Teko's fishing enterprise at Ayer, where there were 65 families (including one slave family which owned 2 slaves) and 19 single males, totalling 229 people, of whom 150 were free. Apart from these two major concentrations, he also had five pockets of followers — each of a few families — at other places in south Sulawesi, plus a group of followers in Manggarai (VOC 1663, fols. 174–86). All in all, his people were mixed groups, consisting of real slaves, prisoners, debt-bondsmen, free followers, and 80 residents of a village allocated to him as a *sirih* (betel-quid) by the ruler of Bone for services rendered. Apart from the mixed, but primarily unfree, nature of the people, the general conclusion would seem to be that the Aru kept a concentration of single men in his house and compound as an armed force, while the

rural followers engaged in production were mostly family units. It is particularly noteworthy that there was no correlation between "free" or "slave" status and function.

So far, information obtained on the eighteenth century has focused upon Company traders. The general estimate given for slave exports from Makassar to Batavia throughout the eighteenth century was a round figure of 3,000 per annum, roughly equal to contemporary Dutch exports from West Africa, or Warren's figures for Sulu. Most of this trade must have been private, and very lucrative. One 1824 estimate was that the profit cleared per head was about 100 guilders, giving a pool of capital in Batavia of some 300,000 guilders which was used to purchase goods for trade in Makassar (Schneither Collection, no. 127). The VOC itself had trouble getting slaves from Makassar, until Governor Clootwijk (1752–56) introduced a new system which allowed him to export about 1,500 "pieces" during his tenure. It seems probable that this was done by contracts with burghers, who would undertake to provide so many head until the demand from Batavia for, for example, 150 men and 50 women for the artisans' quarter, was finally filled (Clootwijk 1756). If Clootwijk was proud of his 400 per annum, and the estimate of 3,000 was correct, then the private trade was more than six times that of the Company trade.

Fortunately we can get an impression of the mid-eighteenth century private trade by Europeans from the cash books of the Company official and private businessman Jacob Bickers Backer. These survive in part for the period 1757–72 (Koopmansboeken Collection, no. 16). The general practice was for Backer to buy his slaves cheaply from local traders; mostly he bought a few at a time, and nearly all were Buginese or Makassarese. His main suppliers seem to have been Ince Abdulla (a Malay) and the wealthy mestizo slave dealer Alexander de Siso, though he also bought from other Malays and Chinese. He seems to have resold many of the slaves locally, mainly to Dutchmen, Chinese or burghers, but also to local natives, mostly for almost double the purchase price. He bought women for an average of 120 guilders, men for an average of 30; it is possible that this was unusually highly differentiated. Despite his losses – an apparent death rate of about ten per cent and costs such as chains and foodstuffs – it seems certain that he was making a good profit. Backer was not exclusively a slave trader; he also dealt in cloth and other goods, and was a well-placed VOC employee. His books, though incomplete, will repay more careful analysis: here I have given only preliminary impressions.

Descriptions of the Makassar slave trade in the late eighteenth century suggest a commercial and brutal undertaking. One report, written in 1790 (Blok 1817, III), described the widespread robbing of people, with slave dealers keeping their illegal purchases locked in

specially fortified cellars until they were able to load them at night on ships bound for Batavia. Despite attempts to enforce the registration of slaves and sales, and to prevent the enslavement of free men, abuse was apparently widespread. Not only were people stolen from the native states, notably Bone, but they were even kidnapped in the city itself. The official report noted that the stealing of local people was not only horrific but also inconvenient, as they had to be smuggled out, whereas "the more moderate trade in slaves, many of whom, it is true, are stolen, but not in our vicinity", provided goods which could be exported quietly, and with less violence and death, or could even be used in broad daylight.³

This VOC and private European/mestizo trade in slaves cannot be separated from the native trade. While it is true that there were fairly isolated systems, where triangular trade might take place in such items as coconuts, rice and a few head of slaves, it seems probable that the high prices paid for stolen people drew the native networks towards the slave markets patronized by Europeans. Information on other slave trades remains so scarce at the moment that conclusions would be premature.

Looking back over the patchy information on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is apparent that slaves were a very important element in the total trade pattern, and that the trade must have had deep effects on many Indonesian societies. Not only is it linked to the production of market crops in certain areas, but the scale and value of the trade to Java must have had a strong impact on the many scattered and lesser networks which collected human beings and brought them to Makassar for resale. Occasional references to deserted coastal villages, or the high death rate which accompanied the larger raids, suggests that this commerce had negative demographic effects, although it replenished manpower in other areas. Moreover, the temptation to make enslavement a more frequent punishment must have been great. Indications are that rulers in Nusa Tenggara, for example, did tend to discover a number of wrongdoers liable for punishment by enslavement around the time that the trading *perahus* were due. Once the structure, scale and function of the slave trade systems are more clearly understood, we should be able to place local slavery properly in context.

The Nineteenth Century: Indigenous Slavery and Abolition⁴

It seems likely that the early nineteenth century saw a strong continuation of the slave trade as, with weakened central authority, wars,

blockades and expanded piracy, the sources of slaves must have been many. When the English established themselves in Makassar at the beginning of 1812, it was with a brief to investigate and oppose the slave trade. But, as was typical of the whole history of colonial policy towards slavery in Indonesia, realism prevented action. In early 1812 Captain Phillips, the Makassar representative, wrote to T.S. Raffles that "Makassar and its neighbours may be regarded as a principal source . . . it must be observed that in consequence of it being the favourite source of revenue among the chieftains it will require much delicacy and caution in attempting any measure to restrain where argument could be of no avail and force would be inconvenient . . . men stealers are very common over the country". He also noted the importance of debt as a source of slavery. Raffles, repeating these words to Lord Minto (Mackenzie Collection, Pr. 13, paragraph 218, p.421), stressed both the sensitivity of the slavery issue, and the difficulty of obtaining reliable information (see also Wright 1960, pp. 184-91).

Despite their caution, the British interregnum did strengthen the anti-slavery spirit in The Hague, and much of the nineteenth century information on slavery — little as it is — is concentrated around the problems of abolition.

British influence (as in the Emancipation Act of 1833) and general European political trends moved the Dutch gradually towards the idea of abolition, beginning from 1842. It was, however, considered a West Indian problem, focused upon plantation use of slaves from Africa. Finally, in 1863, some forty-three thousand slaves were freed in Surinam and the Antilles. It should not be forgotten that it was the same politicians who were involved in this abolition who, as a side issue, also confronted the slavery question in the East Indies. On Surinam, for example, J. van den Bosch was anti-abolition, while, importantly, J.C. Baud was provisionally for; the key abolitionist was W.R. van Hoëvell, editor of the influential *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië*. It was this West Indian-generated abolitionist movement which built upon the first anti-slavery regulations for Indonesia, drafted by Raffles (see Emmer 1972, pp. 728-47; Kuitenbrouwer 1978, pp. 69-101; Siwpersad 1979). But just as Raffles and Phillips, on becoming familiar with the Indies situation, had been forced by circumstances to modify their anti-slavery hopes, so too did Batavia have a much more pessimistic view of abolition than did the fiery moralists in Holland.

Until about 1850 most steps against slavery in Indonesia were in fact restricted to Java and Madura, where slavery does seem — at least by then — to have been of the "mild and domestic" type. The slave trade was abolished (or became clandestine) in 1818, and in 1819 it was decreed that all slaves in the Indies should be registered. It was decided

that this did not apply to native-owned slaves in Sulawesi essentially because it was regarded as too politically dangerous a step, as it might be seen as a move towards abolition, and so anger local chiefs. So also, the introduction in 1824 of a tax of one *rijksdaalder* per head applied only to slaves owned by Europeans, Chinese and a very few Arabs. By then the wider trend in abolition was becoming clear: The Hague, influenced by an unusually aware public opinion, by pressure from the press and periodicals, and by the momentum of the West Indian debate, was moving against slavery, but had actually no idea of the situation in Indonesia. Batavia was also ignorant, but had its suspicions as to the complexity and sensitivity of the issue, and these were acute enough to make local officials pro-slavery, or at least opposed to any intervention whatsoever. (Parallel problems seem to have typified abolition in India, where the Indian government opposed "meddling" in custom; despite pressure, slave holding in India was not made a criminal offence until 1862). In 1848, van Hoëvell published his brochure on the emancipation of the slaves in the Netherlands Indies, and intensified horror stories on the evils of slavery in the *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië*. Attention then focused on an anti-slavery clause (Article 115) to be included in the new colonial "constitution", the *Regeerings Reglement* of 1855 (Arsip Nasional 1971).

In the Indies as a whole the slave trade seems to have continued. The Political Report for 1837 complains about the trade in Bali, where rulers sold subjects for use as army recruits; the Palembangers (especially around Bengkulen) were still active, as were the Acehnese trading out of Baros (Arsip Nasional 1973). The Political Report for 1839-48 also cites familiar places. Baros was still a centre, as also Palembang, Indragiri and the Pasumah lands; in Kalimantan, states like Sintang and Sambas were still involved, and there were said to be heavy slave raids among the Dayaks. Menado (especially Bolaang Mongondow) was another centre of slavery, as were also the Sangir islands, while Nusa Tenggara, Sumbawa, Sumba and Timor had slave populations and trade. Endeh, on Flores, continued to be a focus of the slave trade, and may have been functioning as an entrepot for the region (Arsip Nasional 1973).

The situation in and around Makassar is as yet unclear. The abolition of the trade stopped the official and highly profitable European runs between the city and Batavia, and probably other ports. However, it seems certain that the native trade continued, perhaps more from Bone ports, or Palopo (and later from Pare-Pare), and perhaps more directed to Kalimantan. The use of slave labour in the Noorderdistricten continued, and certainly also in the native states, but the official end of the trade had important results for the economy of the city, and

probably for the region. An 1824 report attributed much of Makassar's economic decline after 1820 to the end of the slave trade, referring to the loss of capital (the 300,000 guilders referred to above) which destroyed the trade of the inhabitants of the city, as its only product was slaves. (It is tempting to connect this view with the subsequent decline of the mestizo's fortunes.) More usual explanations for Makassar's deteriorating fortunes refer to the competition from Singapore (an efficient free port), and the end of the pivotal role of Makassar in the East Indonesian-China trade. Both these axes, the Singapore and the China connection, are not unconnected with the slave trade, but require further research.

Despite the temptation to go into detail, I will only give the key points concerning abolition and the *Regeerings Reglement*. Pressure against slavery was generated by forces outside Indonesia, and the level of ignorance was so high that the "abolition of slavery in the entire Netherlands Indies" was called for, apparently because in the initial stages the politicians thought only of Java and Madura and the *perk-slaven* of Banda (who worked the spice gardens) as being affected. The ensuing confusion, both inadvertent and deliberate, was actually consistent, as all sides were primarily concerned with their own political interests. The *Tweede Kamer*, faced with anti-slavery sentiment, put pressure on the Minister of Colonies, who in turn leaned on the Governor-General, who was essentially pro-slavery. In fact, through political caution and conviction, Batavia remained officially anti-abolition until 1864. Hypocrisy reached new heights, including one line of argument that the abolition of the slave trade only applied to trade in slaves, and since most people being bought and sold were not slaves but stolen people, legally free, the trade in such non-slave human beings was not prohibited.

The implications of the whole debate are interesting, as it confronted both the Indies and Dutch governments with discrepancies between theoretical and actual power, the problems of social intervention in alien societies, and even involved disagreement about the legal status of many areas: "direct rule" or "self rule" (for example, on Sumatra's west coast) (Arsip Nasional, Mak. 7/7). But perhaps the thorniest question of all was the status of the native-owned slaves in the Celebes and Dependencies. Here the problem was that the large slave population existed in an area of undoubted direct rule, where there was no doubt that it was illegal. But, despite direct rule, political control in the area was shaky; there were regular confrontations with Bone, and the "Dutch" areas were still under their own Karaengs who ruled and lived as they saw fit.

The *Regeerings Reglement* had decreed all slavery illegal, as of 1

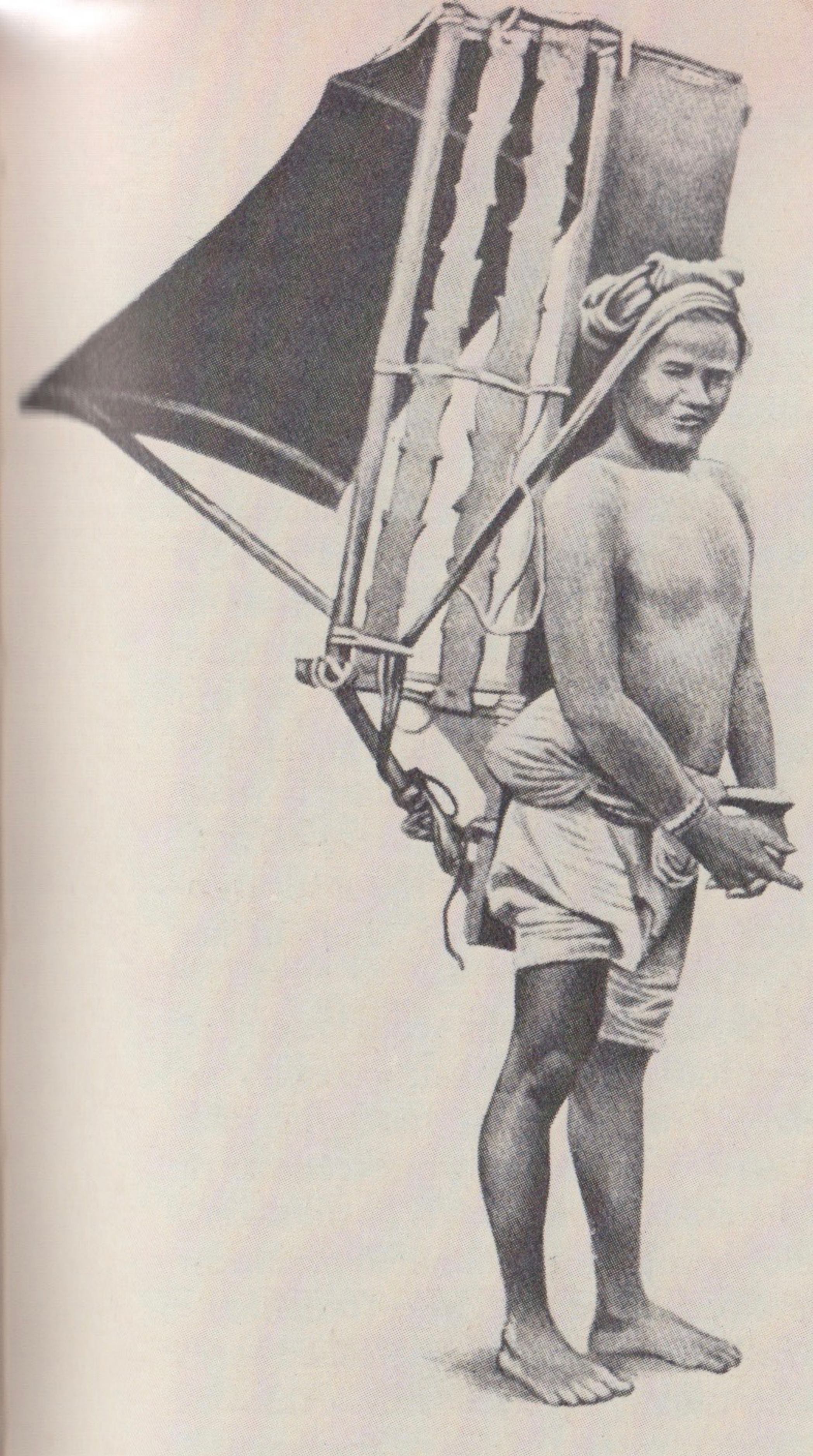
January 1860, but it was quickly decided that this did not apply to native-owned slaves in Celebes, who were always referred to as "*pusaka-slaven*", hereditary slaves. In 1858 the Governor of Celebes had evaded the problem by saying that since these slaves were not registered, they were not slaves, so there was no problem. The Justice Department, both local and in Batavia, took exception to this, and applied pressure on the Governor-General; but the next Celebes Governor still maintained that the slaves did not exist, and that anyway they were an ancient social institution, and it was too dangerous to do anything. The Governor-General stated in 1861 that the *Regeerings Reglement* did not apply to Sulawesi; alerted by the press, the Minister said it did, and further conflict followed between legal and administrative arms. From all the documentation this dispute generated, the most useful for our purposes were two extensive reports on the conditions and nature of the slaves in Celebes: that of Governor Kroesen in 1863 (Kroesen Report 1866), and Governor Tromp in 1878 (Tromp Report 1878).

In 1839 Governor Bousquet had estimated the slave population in Celebes ("Dutch" areas) at 9,000; but the registration of 1857 solemnly listed 432. Meanwhile, the 1851 census noted, in the city of Makassar, a slave population of 465 owned by non-natives, and 917 owned by natives. For the Noorderdistricten, however, the census estimated a total population of 95,000, *all* classed as slaves, while the Zuiderdistricten had a free native population of nearly 15,000 and a slave population of 4,600. Governor Kroesen estimated the slaves in the Celebes government areas to number 16,000 to 18,000, and that became the generally used figure.

Here follows a brief summary of Kroesen's description of the *pusaka* slave population. They had no rights, they were certainly slaves; their position depended entirely on the character of their master. It was true that some were like family members, and some traded on their own account, but their position was precarious, and most worked hard for little food and often rough treatment. People then opposed the idea of selling slaves, and the usual way for a master to get rid of a slave he no longer wanted was to force the man to become a *pandeling* (a debt-bondsman). The former master took the money of the new creditor (the "owner"), and the slave had to work until he had paid off the debt, though tricks to keep adding to the debt were common. People became slaves by purchase; by placing themselves under the protection of a chief; for stealing from chiefs; as prisoners-of-war; for incest; for adultery; for stealing/eloping with slaves; and by selling themselves (or their children) to avoid famine. Slaves were just slaves for three generations; thereafter they were *pusaka* slaves and had lost the right to buy back their freedom.

Most slaves, according to Kroesen, worked on their master's land and divided the produce with him; there were, however, gradations in the residence and work patterns. Some slaves worked and lived all the time in their master's house, and most were poorly fed and clothed. Some lived with their master for part of the year, either in his house or accompanying him on journeys, and were free the rest of the year to live as best they could. Some never lived with their master, but worked his land, and had their own house and garden. Some were independent, maintained themselves, and only worked for their master when there were special festivities. Some were traders and traded for themselves, some even being rich enough to support their masters. Finally, Kroesen noted that some slaves were owned by groups, usually family members who had jointly inherited the slave; in these cases the slave would usually work part of the year for each owner. The children of slaves were slaves themselves; if only the mother was a slave there was a distinction in the position of the children, depending on the application of *shari'a* (Islamic law) or customary law. In *shari'a* law all the children were slaves: according to *adat* law, alternate children were free. Since it was considered impossible for slave men to marry free women, there was no need to determine their children's status.

The freeing of slaves could proceed in several ways. Sometimes old and incapacitated people were freed — as a means for the master to avoid the expense of maintaining useless hands. It was common to free slaves who had done exceptionally well — at trade, by saving their master, by bravery in war. Also, the master's female slaves were freed should they bear his child. Since, however, the freed person's family remained slaves, such a step often had little practical effect. It was also possible for some slaves to buy themselves free. Should a master cruelly abuse his slaves, they could appeal to a higher chief. If he found in their favour, they could be freed; if not, they were returned to a no-doubt vengeful master. Kroesen concluded his report, which concerned the condition of slaves in government lands, by commenting on information gathered by J.A. Bakkers on the situation in the native states. This was very much the same, except that in cases of misconduct a slave could still be sold in the native states and, interestingly, the children of slave mothers were alternately slave and free, thus following the *adat* rather than the *shari'a*. Kroesen's findings were that the position of slaves was worse than was often thought, that abolition was desirable, and that the first step should be a registration of slaves. He also felt that there was a false image built up of the violent and dangerous Buginese/Makassarese, and that if treated fairly and in a reasonably consistent manner, abolition would not prove the disaster that many people feared.



The carrying chair of a Bugis noble of Luwu (Celebes), carried by one of his slaves, 1896. (From Sarasin, *Celebes*)

In the following year the attitude of Batavia changed, particularly as the high advisory council, the *Raad van Indië*, altered its composition and came into line with the abolitionist member, Keuchenius. A series of embarrassing incidents intensified the government's awareness that the situation must be settled. In Buleleng and Timor, anti-slavery steps by individual Assistant Residents resulted in their reprimand, which was afterwards reversed. In Sumatra and Celebes, Dutch courts acting against runaway slaves gave rise to comment. Reports of Arabs from Pontianak slave trading around Sumba were also a cause of embarrassment, while the long-feared outburst of violence on the slavery question occurred in 1866, when the imposition of direct rule of the south Sumatran Pasumah lands was accompanied by a threat of uncompensated abolition of slavery. As Batavia recognized that slavery would have to be abolished, The Hague also came to recognize the limits of Dutch power, and the resulting policy was typical: abolish slavery when it was possible, diminish it whenever the opportunity offered, pay compensation if it was necessary, and avoid regulation and publicity.

A relatively quiet eight or nine years followed, until in the early 1870s attention was again focused on Bali, Sumatra's west coast and Celebes, where complaints about slavery kept recurring. This led to a more definite decision that the treatment of the slavery question was to be determined by actual power: in directly ruled lands with real Dutch power, abolition was to be carried out quickly; in directly ruled lands (for example, West Sumatra, Bali) with little power, there was to be a gradual movement against slavery, with registration and compensation. In territories with self-rule but under contract to the Dutch, the tactic was to be one of limitation and amelioration when possible, but no abolition (for example, Sangir islands, Kalimantan states, Timor). For Celebes, the end result was that in 1875 the slaves in the directly ruled areas were registered, there was official recognition that slavery existed, but all children born of slaves were to be free, so that the institution would gradually die out. The Hague found this weak, and further pressure generated the 1878 report by Tromp.

Tromp's detailed description echoed the main conclusion of Kroesen, but included some information on the minor category of *ornamentsslaven*, who were state slaves, owned by the state (the ruler or high officials), as a result of war, or by seeking protection, or because they were sentenced by the state council (*hadat*) or the *shari'a* court for major crimes. There were only some eight hundred ornament slaves. Tromp emphasized that the worst-off slaves, who formed the great majority, were those who worked on the land. Tromp called them little more than "work animals", who usually received only a third of the crop and were continually available for extra work or harassment; such slaves were ground down by the struggle for survival. He also considered the important question of possible large scale economic dislocation in rice production if such slaves were freed. He concluded that there would be undoubted effects, but that since slaves only constituted about five per cent of the total population, he believed that after a difficult period of adjustment the society would adapt. He foresaw slave demands for more of the produce, possibly a half, but felt that most would be forced by necessity to stay on the land. Some areas — the Noorderdistricten and Takalar — would probably remain rice-growing, but with a drop in productivity and in owners' profits, but in the Zuider- and Oosterdistricten, some slaves, with a new freedom of choice and individual motivation, might leave rice to go into the more profitable coffee production.

Apart from possible economic effects, fear of an uprising had been the main brake on abolition in Celebes. Tromp saw a real potential for trouble, not only because most slaveowners were influential people, but also because their influence was partly based on, and certainly

reinforced by, their ownership of rather large numbers of slaves. He cited the case of Karaengs in the Noorderdistricten who had over a hundred "male slaves". (The specification of male could imply their use as a possible armed force.) This, plus the commitment of many slaves to their owners, and distrust between chiefs and Dutch officials, did provide a real possibility of violence, especially given the region's rebellious history. Areas other than the Noorderdistricten were less problematic, and in general Tromp felt abolition must go ahead, as in any case it would provide a clear example of effective Dutch intervention, and as such — whether it was violent or peaceful — abolition would lead to law and order (and clear colonial rule) in the region.

Tromp proposed abolition with compensation. The average price suggested was 50 guilders, with young women worth about 80 guilders; old people were worthless. He estimated a total of about ten thousand registered slaves, plus two thousand unregistered in general and three thousand unregistered in the Noorderdistricten, so abolition would cost about 750,000 guilders. He was against the idea of another registration, and simply felt everyone who produced a slave should get compensation. His proposal was accepted, and abolition went ahead without trouble. The clandestine trade continued, especially out of smaller ports, and probably with more Torajan slaves, but the real trade was circumscribed. The social and economic position of the "ex-" slaves still requires investigation. In any event, the total abolition of slavery (in theory effective since 1860) was more real after 1878, despite regular mentions of incidental trade throughout the area and possible large scale activity in the Irian region and parts of Kalimantan.

Conclusion

The essence of slavery in the Indies was the obtaining and keeping of manpower. Such additional people were useful in many ways. At the most basic level they helped maintain the demographic levels necessary for the survival or expansion of the community. This was important not only for agriculture-based groups, but for societies ranging from hunters and gatherers to trading port cities. The white population of Makassar, for example, was predominantly male and had an extremely high death rate. Immigration (again mostly of men) and a very high birth rate enabled the community to reproduce itself; the necessary women were often slaves, or later mestizos. Apart from the sexual and demographic functions of slavery, there was also the Company's and burghers' need for labour, and preferably for tightly controlled labour which could not be withdrawn (see Reid 1980, pp. 248–49; Knaap 1981, pp. 84–122; Sutherland 1980a).

It is commonplace to observe that in most Indonesian societies the accumulation of followers, control over manpower, was the key to wealth and political advance. Individual chiefs and heads of state strove to gather peasants, traders and fighters within their jurisdiction, either by expanding their territory, by forcibly relocating populations or by offering security of life and goods, thus attracting settlers away from less able rulers. People were the source of products to be consumed or traded or taxed; they carried the spears and umbrellas which enforced and symbolized power, while their very numbers were the measure of the state's glory or the individual's prestige. But control over manpower was precarious in regions which usually had a low population density, a surplus of land, poor communications and where, above all, there was constant competition between rival chiefs for power over the common people.

It is clear then that the necessity of access to a steady supply of manpower was a structural feature of many Indonesian societies. But slavery was only one of the possible answers to this need. There were a number of ways in which people could lose their "freedom" and hence their mobility, and so be reduced to a dependent status. The existence of these various methods of filling the same structural need accounts for much of the confusion in defining slavery: there were many roads, and many labels, but function and actual status were often very similar.

There was an almost infinite variety in the actual conditions of people within the same formal category of "slave". There were occasional examples of wealthy men being slave-holders in their own right, though slaves themselves, but also of wretched starving beings of virtual non-human status. Domestic slaves could indeed be "members of the family", or abused and exploited; "outside slaves" could differ very little from independent peasants, or work as sharecroppers, but they might also be used in the intensive cultivation of specific crops, such as pepper, rice, coffee or copra. In extreme cases, slavery merged with debt-bondage, but also with the ordinary subject status of "free" men. Its character shifted according to internal and external pressures, and theory was often far from practice. For these reasons, it should be remembered that slavery was just one form of bound labour, and could be located on various parts of the continuum of "controlled people".

The blurring of functional categories is clearly seen in our account of Aru Teko's use of his people: free men, debt-bondsmen, prisoners and slaves lived and worked alongside each other in his fisheries, fields and households. Yet at the same time the distinction between the groups was made, and may well have affected their lives in matters such as marriage rights or minor freedoms which have yet to emerge from the documents.

During the nineteenth century bound labour continued to be necessary, particularly in areas where sparse populations and a lack of subservient manpower formed the major brake on local entrepreneurial initiatives. In Kalimantan (Borneo), for example, migrants from other islands would receive money and support in kind to enable them to make their journey and establish themselves in their new homes, and in return they would be bound to work for their master and creditor until their debt was repaid. It seems likely that this type of debt-bondage, linked to an expanding economic frontier, underlay such migrations as those of the Buginese to Kalimantan, the Acehnese to Kedah, and even of Javanese labour to the Malay peninsula. Indeed, this remains a common feature of migration in many areas up until now. For Dutch observers, however, the boundary between this debt-bondage and slavery was often very vague, and this gave rise to outcry several times in the later nineteenth century, as did the remnants of slaving around Irian (New Guinea) and the trade in debt-bondsmen in Sumatra (see, for example, *Indische Gids* 1879, 1892, 1902a, 1902b; *Indische Weekblad van het Regt* 1890).

The Europeans in the Indies were also confronted with the problem of access to regular supplies of products and labour. They introduced, adapted or developed various techniques, but the problems remained. Even that most powerful politico-economic apparatus, the Dutch administration on Java, was plagued by the *arbeidsvraagstuk* (labour question) right up to the end of the nineteenth century. In its early days the VOC discovered that a monopolistic skimming of native trade was hardly enough. Market mechanisms helped, and native economies in many regions of the archipelago adapted to produce for the new market, but such sources were often unpredictable. Direct intervention into production (via local rulers) was an advance, but still insufficient. In order to overcome the losses inherent in supplies of an unreliable quantity and quality, state-organized forced cultivation was introduced on Java (c. 1830-70). This was perhaps a nice example of class alliance and articulation of modes of production, but administrative force proved inadequate and a mixture of free and forced labour soon emerged. Even after the abolition of this *cultuurstelsel*, plantations and enterprises were confronted with the problems of labour control. The most effective technique used to overcome this was probably the giving of cash advances — the long established and still current *voorschot* or *ijon* system (see for example, Burger 1975) — and so using debt as the tether. But the final solution came only when population growth and poverty created a labour surplus round the turn of the century. This surplus of manpower enabled wages to be held down for decades, or even decreased, while women and children could often be engaged in

preference to the more expensive — and henceforth unemployed — males.

But for most areas outside Java, population growth was slow and offered no easy answer to the labour question. With the expansion of Dutch and English power, abolition, more effective patrolling (including that by steam gunboat in the latter half of the nineteenth century) and a general tightening of colonial control, slave trading and owning became increasingly problematic. But if the need for labour persisted, and slavery was only one way of filling this need, then it should follow that, as slavery contracted, other mechanisms for obtaining docile manpower expanded.

Debt-bondage existed alongside slavery, and the line between the two was often very vague. Reid (in this volume) has discussed the interplay between the two in some detail, and suggests that growing Islamic influence in the archipelago caused Muslims to cease enslaving their co-religionists, and turn more to debt to create the necessary control. Sources for Sulu and Makassar, however, suggest that many Muslim slavers failed to discriminate on religious grounds (Warren 1981; Lapien 1978). Lists of slaves shipped to Batavia from Makassar show that many were Muslim, and some of these were obtained from Muslim owners (VOC 2501 [OB 1741] fol. 13; VOC 2533 [OB 1742] fol. 992 and VOC 3332 [OB 1742] fols. 45, 57–58). Nonetheless, the central point remains that as slaving networks shrank and keeping slaves became uncertain, debt-bondage probably expanded.⁵ This would also have been encouraged by a growing need for cash as monetization of trade and taxation increased.

This last point brings us back to the wider context of slavery and the slave trade. On the one hand it is clear that definition and regulation of status, particularly of such “unfree” status as debt-bondage and slavery, was of considerable concern to many Indonesian communities; but at the same time it also appears that despite status differentiation the social and economic function of bound and free individuals was often very similar. This could mean that, for example, within the household close ties bound slave, servant and dependent relative or follower to the master in similar ways, while “outside” labour, be it slave or share-cropper, was characterized by more distant and exploitative relations. In that case, important questions remain as to the significance and permeability of categories. Nonetheless, several conclusions do emerge from this preliminary survey.

Sources from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries underline the extent and reach of the various levels of slave-trading networks, with their linked hierarchies of entrepôts and clearing markets. The impact of these networks on local societies, their demographic, political

and economic significance, should emerge more clearly after further research. In any event, this significance was great, and the interlocking of indigenous and European systems quite clear. The need for labour is a major theme in the history, with slavery one strand within it, paralleling and merging with debt-bondage. The abolitionist movement of the nineteenth century, by its very hesitations, underlined the complexity and social centrality of the slavery issue, and in many areas only gained ground in a process of attrition that lasted at least until the end of the century. But perhaps the main lesson to emerge is one that van Leur would have understood very well: if we are to try to understand Indonesian societies in their own terms, then we need not only a new conceptual vocabulary, but also a grasp of wider structures and their significance.

Notes

1. For a more detailed discussion, see my paper “The Historiography of Slavery in Indonesia”, given at the Eighth Conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia, Kuala Lumpur, 25–29 August 1980.
2. The slave trade was not illegal for the VOC, although at various times limits were placed on private trade (by both Company officials and “burghers” or non-Company personnel). What was prohibited was the trade in people who were not legitimately enslaved. *ENI* (1905, III, “Scheepvaart en Handel”) summarizes regulations which were, however, often ignored. In theory, since 1699, all slaves had to be properly documented and sales had to be registered but, given the high profits, this stipulation was evaded by many traders, and a high proportion of slave transactions involving Europeans were in fact illegal, while the indigenous trade was beyond the Company’s reach.
3. This report was translated into English during the British occupation of Makassar, and published in Calcutta along with other Dutch reports on Makassar (Blok 1817). Much of it was also copied by Raffles in an Appendix to his *History of Java* (1817). Dirk van Hogendorp, *Proeve over den slavenhandel en de slavernij in Nederlandsch Indië* (1801) must have drawn on this report also for his description (quoted in *ENI* 1905, III, p. 529, “Scheepvaart en Handel”): “Most Company servants and burghers have cells or stocks in their houses where they shut up the slaves that they have bought from Makassarese and Buginese merchants during the year, until their vessels take them to Java and Batavia for sale”.
4. The most important dossiers in the Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague, on abolition to 1860 are Vb. 3 Nov. 1858 no. 39; Vb. 3 Mei 1859 no. 28; Vb. 11 Feb. 1859 no. 8. On abolition 1860–80 see particularly Vb. 24 January 1866 no. 7, Vb. 31 March 1874 no. 43 and Vb. 5 November 1874 no. 36; but also: Vb. 27 January 1864 no. 20, Vb. 8 March 1867 no. 18; Vb. 5 August 1875 no. 52, Vb. 20 September 1875 no. 34, Vb. 10 December 1874 no. 25, Vb. 19 January 1876 no. 36, Vb. 1 April 1876 no. 2, Vb. 3 April 1878 no. 5.
5. The classification of unfree people as “debt-bondsmen” or “slave” could occur independently in the sources as well as in the society itself, so that the problem of interpreting categorization has at least two levels (see Sutherland 1980b).

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